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TRUST DIALOGUE

Speakers fault FG's reforms

Eminent scholars and renowned economists who spoke at the Second Annual Trust Dialogue yesterday at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers in Abuja said that wrong approach and lack of political will have made sense of

By Habeeb L. Pindiga & Zainab Alimi, Political Reporters

government's reform programmes.

One-time chairman of the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC), Professor Sam Aluko and

Head of Risk Management of the United Bank for Africa (UBA), Malam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, said instead of reforming the system, what the nation needed first was dedicated leaders who are enthusiastic to the development of the country.

The two experts made the

suggestion in separate papers delivered during the second edition of the dialogue, titled: Reforming Nigeria: Which model? Organised by Media Trust Limited, publishers of Daily Trust and Weekly Trust newspapers.

In a 55-page detailed presentation with 12 tables of

economic data, Aluko said: "Reforming an economy must first and foremost begin with the analysis and the understanding of the economy, particularly its people. This is because it is the people that can reform an economy. An economy, per se, cannot reform the people. It is people that build roads, bridges, factories, schools and colleges rather than the reverse."

The economist lamented that government's approach to reforming the economy was too nebulous and self-serving to the ruling class to make any impact.

"I make bold to say that the on-going reform is also merchantilist, not a market-oriented one. By merchantilist, I mean a system that

puts premium on short-term activities and that regards the redistribution of the nation's wealth as more important than the production of wealth. Of course, the redistribution itself is increasingly being confined to a favoured small clique that depends on the state and that exploits the system, and on which the state depends. The state is no longer the expression of the majority of the people," he said.

The reforms, according to Aluko, has made Nigeria's real average per head income to decline steadily in the last 18 years from an average of \$1450 per annum in 1980 to about \$446 in 2003. "Nigeria has thus fallen from a world-

Contd. on Pg 2

... Atiku urges patience

Vice President Atiku Abubakar has called on Nigerians to remain patient with federal government economic reform policies, saying that reforms take time and are sometimes painful but that the government is working hard to ensure that the expectations of the people are met.

The vice president made the call yesterday in a speech delivered at the Second Annual Trust Dialogue held at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja.

Represented by the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, Vice President Abubakar said Nigerians

By Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter (Reps)

must build a strong economy that is private sector-driven, and market-oriented.

"The days of the dominant role of government are over," he said. "we must rely on the strength and drive of our private sector and allow government to do what it can do best."

He said that the current government reform policy which is anchored on the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), is aimed at facilitating transformation through empowering the Nigerian people to create wealth on their own and reduce the level of poverty.

"We have adopted a market-based, people friend strategy, reducing the role of the state and refocusing it for better serve delivery. Our experience in the last five years has shown that we took the right decision," he said.

He said that the present

Contd. on Pg 2



L-R: HRH Eze Nwaezi, Alhaji Yahya Abubakar, representative of the vice president, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai (FCT Minister) and the chairman of the occasion, Former Head of ING, Chief (Dr.) Ernest Shonekan observing the national anthem during the Media Trust Limited 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue held in Abuja, yesterday.

PH: Kennedy Eghosorfor

Aluko, Awoniyi berate due process

Elder statesman, Chief Sunday Awoniyi and eminent economist, Prof. Sam Aluko yesterday descended heavily on government's due process mechanism, describing it as an avenue of breeding corruption and sabotaging development in the country.

Both Awoniyi and Aluko spoke in Abuja at the Second Annual Trust Dialogue, organised by Media Trust Limited, publishers of Daily Trust and Weekly Trust newspapers.

Awoniyi, who is chairman

By Habeeb L. Pindiga, Political Reporter (Senate)

of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) said it amounted to drawing back the hands of the clock to subject all government organs to a heavily centralised system like the budget monitoring and price intelligence unit of the presidency.

According to the seasoned civil servant, who was permanent secretary in the Federal Civil Service in the late 70's, there was prudence in fiscal management during

their time without the present form of due process.

Awoniyi narrated an example when his ministry then was able to save N896 million

for the country, "because due process was embedded in every ministry."

"For you to say now all that to be congregated in one

Contd. on Pg 2

Shonekan advocates economic empowerment of people

Former Head of Interim government, Chief (Dr.) Ernest Shonekan said that although Nigeria's progress in most of the relevant areas has so far not matched the ambitious expect-

tations which accompanied the attainment of political independence, economic empowerment of the people to eradicate poverty and self-sustaining growth should be at the centre of any reform

effort.

Chief Shonekan was speaking yesterday at the second annual national dialogue on "reforming Nigeria, which model?" organised by

Contd. on Pg 2

LOOK OUT FOR

ABU, Zaria admission list for 2004/2005 Academic session in Daily Trust of Monday, January 17, 2005

NEWS

Speakers *Contd. from Pg 1*

middle income status in 1980 to a world low-income status as the 21st poorest nation on earth."

Consequences of this, he said, was that "government and the elite have lost their social, political or military standing giving rise to widespread disenchantment with, and loss of confidence in, the economic and the political system by the majority of our citizens."

Instead of the apparently non-performing policies, Aluko said, Nigeria must embrace the ethics of hardwork with sustained government subsidies in sectors like agriculture and economic discipline.

"It is my considered view that we should abandon many of the on-going reform packages in order to avert the social, political and economic catastrophe that are endemic in their contribution," he said.

On his part, Sanusi said that, "no matter how good a model is, it cannot work in a nation where those responsible for its implementation are self-serving, corrupt persons and where the very representatives of the people undermine their interest and sell their conscience for a share of the loot."

Tracing the nation's economic woes to previous policies like the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the banker said government has unwisely increased money supply without concomitant domestic product growth.

He said: "Money supply in the Nigerian economy doubles every three years while GDP growth remains in the range of 2-3 per cent annually," adding that this is inflationary and adversely affect real income.

Sanusi, however, commended the present government for being the first to appreciate the need to tackle corruption and other similar crimes.

Presenting a 10-point recommendation, the banker suggested that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) be broken into two, where one will handle money management while the other will be an amalgamation of other financial regulatory agencies.

Government economic team, he said further, should be non-partisan and engage other stakeholders in moving the economy forward.

Sanusi also canvassed for the rehabilitation of existing refineries and establishment of new ones by private firms.

According to him, such steps were similar to the ones adopted by the Asian tiger economies.

"Ultimately success depends largely on one factor; political will on the part of government to make difficult choices that will hurt vested interests, specifically corrupt public officers and exploitative international capital," he concluded.

Also delivering a paper,

Special Adviser to the vice-President on Economic Matters, Professor Mike Kwanashie, has said that reforms must be based on the aspiration of the majority of the people, and must be owned and driven by them to succeed, just as he admitted that the present administration's efforts to re-construct the policy process in the country is being hindered by non-involvement of people at the grassroots.

He said that though the administration has initiated a genuine process of good governance which can only be effective if all stakeholders mobilise around it, the failure of the reform process has resulted in the inability of the country to transform the huge natural resources into growth and development.

"Reforms will work if we advance the promotion of security and good governance, which are prerequisites to social and economic development. Reform is about development and development is about people. Central to development is the ability of the people to advance their material well-being," he enthused.

He added that Nigeria's development must be people-centred, grassroot-based and should rely on that tier of government that is most closely related to the people. "The problem of empowerment at the grassroot level which is now critical to move the economy forward cannot be achieved without the active participation of the people in governance at the local level."

Kwanashie said further that social formations of African countries have been transitional capitalist formations dominated by the capitalist mode of production, hence, developing countries today have little choice but to get incorporated into a process for which they have no control and under rules that they have no input.

"Each country must take into account its history, level of development of productive forces, and the nature of the dominant social formation as reforms must be based on the aspirations of majority of the people."

He added that for reforms to be successful in Nigeria, it must find a base in rural communities among her peasants who constitute by far the largest single group in the country as well as confront the paradox of the deepening crisis of mass poverty and the enormous wealth of the country. "The point remains that just as the present epoch of globalisation has created more massive wealth than all previous modes of production, it has also generated more incredible squalor than any previous epoch in human history."

Exalting the success recorded so far at the federal level by adopting the NEEDS

initiative, which he described as the response to the developmental challenges in Nigeria, Prof. Kwanashie noted that the due process mechanism has proven to be one of the most far-reaching policies of the reform programme of government as it has directly challenged the one critical means of expropriating public funds by an unproductive elite.

He said that the present attempt at re-constructing the political process in Nigeria stems from democratisation of the process, and is based on some core principles like building a broad-based, participatory process that is coherent, result-oriented, transparent, comprehensive, anchored on medium and long-term perspectives that are consistent with the generality of the Nigerian people.

Yesterday's Trust Dialogue, which held at the Sheraton Hotel & Tower, Abuja had in attendance former head of state, Chief Ernest Shonekan, who was chairman of the occasion; Governor Bukar abba Ibrahim of Yobe State, Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, who represented Vice President Atiku Abubakar; ex-Speaker of the House of representatives, Alhaji Ghali Na'Abba; minister of Sport, Col. Musa Mohamedi; the Esu Nupe, Alhaji Yahya Abubakar, who was royal father of the day; Chairman of Bulet International Construction Company, Alhaji Ismaila Isa; chairman of the Arewa consultative Forum (ACF), Chief Sunday Awoniyi; and President of the Nigeria Labour congress (NLC), Mr. Adams Oshiohale.

Others include Dr. Ibrahim Tahir, Prof. Munzali Jibril, Dr. Usman Bugaje, Dr. Haruna Yerima, col. Habibu Shuaibu, Dr. Tijani Naniya and a number of senators and members of the House of Representatives.

A communiqué is expected to be issued today on the dialogue, which was co-sponsored by UBA, the Kano State government and the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Atiku *Contd. from Pg 1*

administration made economic revitalisation its main priority having inherited a moribund economy characterised by broken infrastructure, prostrate manufacturing industries, low capacity utilisation, high import dependency, massive budget deficits and a grossly inefficient and archaic public service, hence its moves to implement "a series of difficult, but necessary economic reforms."

He pointed out that countries which have faithfully implemented reforms in the last few decades have been shown to have recorded rapid economic growth and poverty reduction, and restated government's intention to further deepen its privatisation exercise this

Anambra crisis: Ngige must resign - Uba insists

By Isa Sanusi, Political Reporter (Senate)

Chief Chris Uba had in a fresh submission to the Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola-led committee investigating the protracted political crisis in Anambra state insisted that Governor Chris Ngige should be compelled to vacate the governorship of Anambra State while also calling on the committee to expel Governor Ngige from the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

In the two-page submission, Chief Chris Uba reiterated that his position was based on the admission by governor Chris Ngige that he did not win the Anambra State governorship election of April 19, 2003, noting that Governor Ngige had admitted before President Olusegun Obasanjo and in the presence of Barrister Olisa Metu and Alhaji B. Faruk.

Uba said: "It is pertinent to state that I know as a fact that Dr. Chris Ngige did not win election. In view of the fact that Dr. Chris Ngige have previously resigned his office as governor of Anambra State

and also admitting before Mr. President that he did not win the Anambra State governorship election; and in view of his numerous anti-party activities of which there is overwhelming weight of evidence placed before your panel by me and my witness, I hereby humbly pray that Dr. Chris Ngige should be compelled to vacate and relinquish the governorship seat of Anambra State.

Chief Uba noted that the

new submission is to set out in clear terms his position on the crisis adding that: "For the avoidance of doubt, I hereby state categorically that Dr. Chris Ngige also admitted before the National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party that he did not win election."

The PDP chairman further said that he had submitted to the investigative committee evidences that governor Ngige did not win election, while referring to his position as a final prayer to the committee.

Shonekan *Contd. from Pg 1*

Media Trust Limited at Sheraton hotels, Abuja.

Describing reform as a fact of human life, Chief Shonekan said that there must be a focus on ensuring economic diversification and promotion of appropriate technology for moving the economy forward.

Proffering suggestions on the way forward in the country, he said that constructive engagement and dialogue

among the ethnic nationalities that make up the country should be embraced, that we need to reform our misplaced value system and arrive at an equitable formula for sharing revenue among the tiers of government as key socio-cultural reform efforts.

Further, he posited that it will be particularly challenging to see how Nigerians can have two sovereign bodies at the same time in relation to the support of the need to organise a sovereign national conference, maintaining

Aluko *Contd. from Pg 1*

programmes. Aluko also faulted the government's approach to fighting corruption, saying it must start from those in government.

He, however, disagreed with the rating that says most Nigerians are corrupt.

"I don't accept that all Nigerians are corrupt. People steal money, yes. But more than 95 per cent of Nigerians are very, very upright. Its only the remaining few that are corrupt. Those who claim they are fighting corruption are those who nurture corruption, they are the beneficiaries of corruption, but they are also those who point accusing fingers at the others who are upright," he said.

Developed nations like the United States, he said, are worst culprits in corruption, adding, however, that theirs was "a productive corruption."

Awoniyi also spoke on the rot in the nation's civil service, saying: "without good civil servants, you can't succeed."

He lambasted the government of "development through the barrel of the mouth. That's what we have in Nigeria: Television appearances, jingles - barrel of the mouth, instead of development through push of the leader, who is transparent, who is not self-seeking and is result-oriented and able to create the enabling atmosphere, and more importantly the mood and the will, but more importantly the eagerness of the common man to fell committed to produce because he knows that production is going to benefit him."

However, federalism must be preserved as a compromise arrangement to ensure the survival of a multi-ethnic state.

Describing the political dimension of reforming Nigeria as the most controversial, Chief Shonekan ridiculed the systematic whittling of the powers and capabilities of the federating states.

"From just three regions at independence, we now have 36 states, most of which are not fiscally viable and are at the same time expected to maintain a vast and expensive bureaucracy. As we have all seen, most of them are only able to pay salaries and allowances of civil servants and political office holders with little or no resources left for real development."

Noting that the involvement of government in economic activities has so far not produced satisfactory results, Chief Shonekan said that reforming the economy should consider allowing the market system and market determined prices steer Nigeria in the direction of a growing economy.

"Our economy is still confronted with severe problems that continue to call into question, the efficacy and indeed, acceptability of the whole reform process. However, economic reforms generally require time to work themselves through the system for this reason therefore, one might argue that it may be premature to pass a verdict on the on-going reform measures. Still, it is important to evaluate them and determine whether or not we are on the right track," he said.

NEWS

APGA to participate in national dialogue

All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) has said that it would accept an invitation to be part of the federal government national dialogue. APGA had been consistently critical of the proposed dialogue and instead canvassed for a sovereign national conference.

Hut addressing newsmen at the party's secretariat in Abuja yesterday, APGA's national chairman, Chikwas Okorie said they have decided to join the conference to avoid being left behind in contributing to reforming the polity.

He said since government was bent on convening the conference, despite having opposition, APGA had decided to be part of it.

Okorie said in the event of any buyout, opposition parties may be blackmailed by the government and made to appear as if they were not faithful in their crusade for a better polity. This, his party would be part of the conference.

By Habeeb I. Pindiga
Political reporter (Senate)

malicious and lacking in substance."

Upon the expulsion of the protesting officers, a resolution was adopted replacing them. The new secretary is now Bello Umar, while Prince O. Akanogbo is treasurer.

Meanwhile, the European and American wings of APGA have sent in their endorsement to Okorie and urged for a roundtable with the sacked officers for peace to reign in the party.

Chairman of the European and America zones, Iyk Otu and Mike Ozulumba respectively, said in two separate letters that Okorie's accusers must provide concrete proof if they were to be taken seriously.



A cross section of foreign diplomats and others during Media Trust Ltd 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue held in Abuja, yesterday. *Pic: Kennedy Eghenigie*

Reps recommends more judges for Appeal, High Courts

By Hammed M. Bello,
Political Reporter (Senate)

The House of Representatives has received a recommendation for increase of judges of the Appeal and the High Courts each from 50 to 70.

This is part of two separate reports of the Joint Committee on Justice and Judiciary on bills to make provisions for increase in the number of judges of the court of Appeal and the High Courts.

The reports exclusively obtained by *Daily Trust* were jointly signed by chairman of the Judiciary and Justice Committees, House Bala Ibn Nallah and Alex Nwofe.

On courts of Appeal, the committee said it considered the provisions of the original bill and recommended that "the Court of Appeal Act, as amended, is hereby further amended in section 1 by substituting there of the following new section, that is the number of Justices of the Court of Appeal, including the president of that court, shall be seventy."

The committee said the increase is intended to ensure that there is a sufficient number of justices for the new division of the court just created and those to be created in the future.

"The increase is also intended to ensure the appointment, in sufficient number, justices to serve in the existing division of the court considering that the work load of the court has increased with the coming of democratic rule in 29th May, 1999 as the court entertains appeals from all High Courts, Election Petition Tribunals, Code of Conduct Tribunals, disciplinary committees of several professional bodies etc.," the report said.

Regarding the recommendation for increase in High Court Judges, the report said the increase was intended to ensure that there are sufficient number of judges for the new division of the court just created and those to be created in the future.

Hajj Airlift: Mantu gives 24 hours ultimatum

The National Aneurul Hajj, Senator Ibrahim Mantu had yesterday given 25 hours ultimatum to IRS airline to airlift all pilgrims attached to it or he would re-assign to another operator.

Senator Mantu made the declaration when he was in Maiduguri, yesterday for few hours assessment visit to the Borno zone hajj exercise.

"It is not only in Borno state, wherever IRS airline has been contracted for airlifting, there is problem. I have received a call from the governor of Osun few minutes ago on problems associated with IRS operation. So I am saying it loud and clear that IRS have between us and tomorrow morning airlift all the pilgrims attached to IRS otherwise

From Isa Umar Gusau,
Correspondent (Maiduguri)
and Kashim Sule
Correspondent (Minna)

I will bring in another airline operator to airlift pilgrims. All Nigerian pilgrims must be airlifted within the stipulated time" Senator Mantu said.

The National Aneurul Hajj noted that IRS airline was clearly not properly ready for the hajj operation, saying that the airlines did not station aircraft as should have been the case.

Senator Mantu said that the federal government had already made alternative arrangement for airline operators that would take over airlifting of pilgrims should there be any failure.

Mantu told Borno pilgrims that Kabo Airlines was among that operators tipped for possible intervention should IRS fail to meet the 24 hours deadline.

The over 3,000 Niger pilgrims stranded at the Maima International Airport may have a sigh of relief as efforts are being made by the state governor who is trying to bring planes to airlift the intending pilgrims.

Reliable source told *Daily Trust* in Minna that the governor Engr. Abdulkadir Kete who arrived Saudi Arabia ahead of his state contingent was visibly angry over the delay of pilgrims when he spoke on the telephone.

The source revealed that the government has begun talks with Saudi Airlines so as to come and airlift Niger pilgrims before the deadline on Saturday.

According to the information available to *Daily Trust* the state governor swung into action when he learnt that members of contingents airlifted so far are just

1,500 in five trips.

Confirming the number of the trips made so far, the IRS station officer in Minna, Alhaji Idris Sani Bida, said that tonight (Thursday) the IRS would airlift 330 pilgrims.

"After this trip, it would remain 6 trips for the airlines to evacuate the pilgrims completely he said.

Interest Rates: CBN to review MRR

By Ahmed I. Shekarau,
Group Business Editor, with agency report

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) is to review its Minimum Rediscount Rate (MRR) this year as part of a monetary policy management initiative. The MRR which is currently fixed at 15 per cent is the rate at which the apex bank lends to the banks and serves as the nominal anchor of lending rates in the country.

Currently, bank lending rates hover between 18 to 32 per cent as, charged by various banks across the country. The CBN governor, Professor Charles Soludo, said that the review of the MRR was aimed at reducing the overall cost of capital for the real sector during the year.

In his end of year address to his staff, copies of which were released in Lagos yesterday, the CBN governor said that the bank had established an Economic Policy Department as a new policy apparatus.

He said that the new department would play a more active role in policy formulation and advocacy while the Research and Statistics Department would concentrate on core research and production of key statistical information on the economy.

Soludo promised that the pace of implementation of the bank's "Project Eagles" would be raved up in all its aspects in 2005. He said that appropriate attention would now be given to deployment of appropriate information technology infrastructure, the reform the security system, restructuring of communication strategy and the review of staff welfare.

The CBN governor promised that higher currency denominations would be introduced in 2005 to ease transactions with appropriate mix of coins and bank notes. "The external reserves management is to

be re-focused to preserve and enhance the values of the reserves while exploring an optimal currency composition of reserves to minimize the transaction shocks on any individual currency on the reserves," he said.

Soludo said that the bank would continue to promote external economic relations with neighbouring countries to realise the goal of a common currency (Eco) in the West African Monetary Zone.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the CBN boss promised to adopt a team approach in achieving the goal of building a financially stronger, healthier and a competitive financial sector for the Nigerian economy.

Dariye demands compensation over emergency rule

Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau today asked the federal government for compensation for the period of six months of emergency rule in the state.

Dariye is demanding compensation to be paid to him and members of the State's House of Assembly for the loss of their emoluments during the six months they were suspended from office.

"Rights have been wronged and to right the wrong, compensation has to be paid," Dariye's counsel, Prof. Ben Nwabuzze (SAN), told a panel of Supreme Court Justices presided over by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Uwais.

The panel was constituted to review the constitutionality of the state of emergency as declared in Plateau on May 18 by President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Obasanjo had cited inability and incompetence of Dariye to guarantee security of lives and property generally in the state as his reasons.

The National Assembly had also approved the suspension of the elected organs in the state as well as the appointment of retired Maj.-Gen. Chris Ali as the Sole Administrator of the State.

Chief Rotimi Williams (SAN), filed the suit to this effect on behalf of the State con-

tending that Obasanjo violated constitutional provision particularly Section 305, in declaring the emergency rule.

Today's hearing was short lived as parties to the suit failed to comply with the order of the court which directed filing of written briefs within specified dates.

Govs meet Obj over excess crude earnings

Isa Sanusi Political
reporter (Senate)

The Governors Forum yesterday met behind closed doors with President Olusegun Obasanjo in which the excess crude oil income, the general economic state of the nations as well as Nigeria's contribution for victims of the Tsunami disaster were discussed.

The meeting which had in attendance governors cutting across party line also discussed, "not oil the crude only issue but we could say that excess crude income was part of it and there are some other few problems which we discussed on the economy. Thing concerning the economy, that concerns the states. You know, the overall running of the economy," said Governor Achike Udenwa of Imo State.

"The governors had earlier met with the federal govern-

ment's committee for relief to Tsunami victims led by the Sultan of Sokoto Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido with Emir of Gwandu, Alhaji Al-Mustapha Jokoto, Archbishop John Onyiah and the chairman First Bank of Nigeria, Alhaji Umar Mutallab.

President Obasanjo's spokesperson, Mrs. Remi Oyo, had in a statement said the governors forum expressed their solidarity and support for the president's effort to raise contributions for the victims of the Tsunami disaster.

It added that the governors party with the president took the collective decision to involve all Nigerians in the effort to offer help to the people of South East Asia in their time of urgent need.

Masari harps on debt cancellation for Nigeria, Africa

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Aminu Bello Masari, has again stressed that the huge foreign debt incurred by Nigeria and other countries in Africa is depriving them of meaningful development and called for cancellation of the debt to facilitate development.

Hon. Masari made the statement yesterday while hosting the Netherlands Ambassador to Nigeria, Aart Jan Verburg, who said he visited the National Assembly because of the value his country attaches to its relationship with Nigeria and role it is playing in Africa.

The speaker, Aminu Bello Masari said Nigeria is being held back by the debt hanging on its head, adding to had infrastruc-

ture, poverty among other variables that are making it difficult for the country to achieve meaningful development.

He decried the situation in which the country is constrained by continued servicing of debt which amount far outweighs what was originally borrowed.

He called on the Netherlands and other European Union countries to assist in the cancellation of the debt to enable Nigeria and other African countries properly fight poverty, illiteracy, AIDS and of other development impediments.

He said democracy cannot take proper roots in the midst of economic stagnation and called on the Ambassador to impress upon his country the need to cancel Nigeria's debts.

News

Towards 2007: Afenifere embarks on massive restructuring

The Pan Yoruba socio-political organization, Afenifere, has embarked on an aggressive membership drive up to the Ward Level as part of a massive restructuring process aimed at repositioning the group for the 2007 general elections.

The Acting Leader of Afenifere, Chief Reuben Fasoranti, disclosed this in Ibadan on Wednesday while addressing supporters from the various Local Governments of Oyo State who had converged at Mapo Hall to receive the national leadership of the organization currently on a working tour of the state.

Chief Fasoranti was accompanied to Ibadan by many leaders of Afenifere including Chief Olu Falae, the erstwhile former presidential candidate of Alliance for Democracy (AD). Senator Mojisoluwa Akinfenwa, factional national Chairman of AD; Senator Femi Okunrunmu, Afenifere national secretary; Sir Olaniwun Ajayi, Chief Ayo Adebajo,

From Dele Ogunyemi, Freelancer (Ibadan)

Alhaji Ganiyu Dawodu and Alhaji Gbenga Kaka, among others.

The Afenifere Acting Leader expressed concern over the rift that had engulfed the organization saying that the leadership had decided to find a lasting solution towards reconciling the aggressive parties with a view to making the group a big party "where nobody is left behind."

He maintained that Afenifere and Alliance for Democracy (AD) could not be separated since, as he put it, both were built on the same socio-political philosophy of fairness, truth and justice for all as propounded by the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

Speaking specifically on the alignment of forces for 2007, Chief Fasoranti, advised his supporters to be very careful and not be deceived by money as the candidature of the former military President, General Ibrahim

Babangida, Vice President Atiku Abubakar and others are being dangled before them on daily basis.

"When the time comes, Afenifere will decide which party to join," he declared.

Chief Olu Falae had earlier charged the Yoruba people to continue to embrace the philosophy of Afenifere which he said stands for honesty, hard work and ability to "plan for the people."

According to Falae, the current hard times being faced

by Nigerians under the People Democratic Party (PDP) government headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo had only under scored the need to review their position politically and vote in AD came 2007.

In that regard, Chief Falae stressed the need for urgent convocation of a sovereign National Conference and return to the Old parliamentary system of Political governments.

To Chief Mojisoluwa Akinfenwa, for the 2007 gen-

eral elections to be credible, the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as presently constituted should be reviewed with members drawn from the various political parties and interest groups.

Akinfenwa condemned, in strong terms, the recognition given by INEC to Chief Bisi Akande manipulation as AD Chairman.

"I regard Bisi Akande as INEC's Nigge in the South West. And since Nigge cannot be without Uba, I regard

Governor Bola Tinubu of Lagos State as Akande's Uba," Akinfenwa asserted.

NDLEA arrest 85 drug suspects

The Niger State Command of the NDLEA arrested 85 suspected drug pushers last year, the Commander, Mr Joshua Majin, has said.

Majin told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Minna yesterday that the agency also seized hard drugs weighing more than 3,256 kg during the period.

He said the arrests and seizures were more than those of 2003, adding that the drugs seized were mostly Indian hemp.

The commander expressed regret at the increase in the number of youths involved in drug abuse in the state.

Majin said unlike in 2003 when 10 drug addicts were counseled by the Drug Demand Reduction Unit of the agency, 24 persons were counseled in 2004 and four referred for rehabilitation.

He said the success recorded last year was due to the command's initiatives and intensified patrol of major highways, especially along the Suleja-Kaduna road.

He said the command would boost its enlightenment programmes this year to ensure more successes and that it would work closely with sister agencies and the anti-liaison board of the state government.

Majin appealed to parents, schools proprietors and other stakeholders to join the agency in its war against drug abuse.

Bafarawa signs 2005 budget

Governor Attahiru Bafarawa of Sokoto state on Wednesday signed into law the 2005 appropriation bill passed by the state House of Assembly on Tuesday.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the state government budgeted more than N32.37 billion for the 2005 fiscal year.

NAN also reports that out of the figure, over N21.5 billion is for capital expenditure while about N10.7 billion is for recurrent expenditure.

Signing the bill into law, Bafarawa said that the 2005 budget was geared towards enhancing the living standard of the people.

According to him, the provision of basic social amenities and infrastructure would continue to be given due priority.

Bafarawa directed all government officials to ensure the religious implementation of the budget and commended the members of the Assembly for its speedy passage and "positive modifications."

Presidency explains VP's absence from two meetings

The presidency yesterday explained Vice President Atiku Abubakar's absence from two crucial meetings on Wednesday, saying he is on a bed rest.

Abubakar was absent from the weekly Federal Executive Council meeting and the National Council of State which also met on Wednesday.

A statement signed by Dr Onukaba Adinoyi-Ojo, senior special assistant to the vice president on public communications and media affairs, said 'Abubakar was advised

by doctors to take a bed rest following travel-related exhaustion and cold.'

Adinoyi-Ojo debunked speculations that the vice president had been staying from public functions following the resignation of PDP Chairman Audu Oghbeh last weekend.

The vice president last appeared at public functions on Tuesday during the reception, bilateral talks and state dinner for Iranian President Mohammed Khatami.

Adinoyi-Ojo stated that the president was duly informed about the vice president's state, saying that the relationship between the two was "warm and cordial."

He also denied allegations that the vice president had been holding meetings at his residence, explaining that only "a few of his close aides and friends" had been calling to wish him well.

The spokesman said the two men had "continued to work together as a team to deliver on the promises made to the Nigerian people during the 2003 Elections."



Vice-president Atiku Abubakar

Adamawa commends Media Trust for objective journalism

The government of Adamawa state has commended the management of Media Trust, (Publishers of the Weekly and Daily Trust Newspapers) for upholding the time-honoured ethics of balance and objectivity in journalism practice in the country.

The state government, in a statement signed by the Chief press secretary to the governor, Abdulrazzak Namdas said, by so doing, Media Trust not only, strikes a balance by allowing people to air their opinions but at the same time protect public institutions and persons from

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin, Health Reporter

unfair attacks and blackmail.

According to the statement, the measures will help in strengthening the ethics of journalism practice in the country, just as it noted that the media is supposed to uphold truth and objectivity.

Adamawa state government, in the statement "expressed the hope that other independent media houses will emulate the shining example of Media Trust in order to restore the confidence of Nigerians in the nation's media industry."



L-R: Chairman, House committee on judiciary, Hon. Bala Iba Nu'Allah, chairman House committee on sports, Hon. Sirio Danagbe during the public hearing on the National Lottery bill organised by the sports and judiciary committees, at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja. Pfx: Felix Onigbade

Businessman sues Rep over NDDC contract

A serving member on the board of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and member of the House of representative representing Abia state, Mr. Okey Nurubani, is to appear before in Abuja federal high court to answer charges on serious allegations of corrupt practices leveled against him.

The plaintiff in the suit, chief Manasseh Nwoli who is a businessman, a titled chief and community leader in Uzuaku/Ukwa west local government area of Abia state in a statement of claim filed before the court by his counsel, Oloasoji Olowolafe Esq., alleged that the defendant has abused his office to appropriate to himself, contracts from NDDC at inflated rates without due process.

Joined as defendants in the suit are Mr. Okey

By Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter (Reps)

Nwubani, the president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the senate president Adolphus Wabara, the independent corrupt practice commission (ICPC) and the Attorney-General of the federation.

The plaintiff alleged that the action of Mr. Nwubani has consequently amounted to "ill-gotten accumulated wealth which is not commensurate with his legitimate income as director in NDDC."

Alleging that Mr. Nwubani had not always been rich prior to his assumption in office, the plaintiff added that the defendant through an abuse of his office, "diverted the course of a road planned and budgeted to link two oil communities to link his mansion to his village, even as he (plaintiff) was a signatory to a petition encompassing his allegations to the fourth defendant (ICPC) with a view to investigating and prosecuting the first defendant since June, 2004.

The plaintiff, however, alleged that despite the statutory duty of carrying out investigation and prosecution, the ICPC has "failed, refused and/or neglected to act, despite his repeated demands and that this has prompted the first defendant to now seek to forward (or has already forwarded) his name to the senate president for screening for re-appointment to the NDDC board.

He further alleged that if allowed to forward his name

for re-appointment, the first defendant "will continue the acts of corrupt practices to the detriment of the plaintiff and his community, and that the president and the senate will be abandoning their constitutional duty should they allow the first defendant to be screened and/or admitted as a board member of NDDC without first ensuring that the Attorney-General investigate and prosecute the allegation in the petition."

FG declares Jan 20th, 21st as public holidays

The federal government has declared Thursday and Friday 20th and 21st January 2005 as public holidays to mark this year's Id-El-Kabir celebrations.

In making the announcement on behalf of the federal government, the minister of internal Affairs, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, sent sincere and warm greetings to all Muslims at home and abroad, as well as our foreign friends who are resident in the country.

He urged all Muslims to emulate the exemplary attributes of Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) among which are tolerance, love and peaceful co-existence between people of same and different faiths.

Dr. Ayu urged all Nigerians irrespective of their religious beliefs to use this occasion for sober reflections and pray for the peace, unity and progress of this our great country, Nigeria.

News

2nd Annual Media Trust Dialogue in pictures



HRH Enu Nape, Abaji Yuhaya Abubakar (R) discussing with the former speaker, House of Reps, Hon. Ghali Umar Na'Abba (L) at the Ladi Kwali conference hall's entrance.



Governor Babat Abba Ibrahim of Yobe State discussing with one of the dignitaries, Dr. Yuhaya Abdullahi.



The guest speaker at the occasion, Professor Sam Aluko during Media Trust Ltd



Another guest speaker, Malam Sa'ud Imanita Sa'ud (DGM B&A management department) (U.R.A.)



L-R: The chairman, Media Trust Board, Malam Abdulmuminu Bello, Editor-in-Chief, Media Trust Ltd, Mallam Kabir Yusuf and the guest speaker, Professor Sam Aluko during Pre-Dialogue Dinner held in Abuja, Wednesday.



The Executive Director (operations), Media Trust and other dignitaries at the occasion.



L-R: Deputy Chairman, House Committee on Media, Hon. Fiqak Adams Alifu, chairman, House Committee on Media, Mr. Mike Patrick, Special Assistant to the President, Mr. Chikako Ojo, Editor and Daily Trust columnist, Mallam Adams Haruna.



The Talibatu Rauchi, and President, Red Cross Society of Nigeria, Dr. Ibrahim Tahir (L), discussing with the Editor-in-Chief, Media Trust Ltd.

ABBA GANA SHETTIMA

on Fridays ashettima@hotmail.com

Opinion

Ripples in the polity

Since the Anambra political imbroglio started, I have tried very hard to resist every temptation to comment on it. No doubt, the crisis represents a grave national malady and one cannot avoid discussing it. However, I have always considered the Anambra crisis simply as a manifestation of a deeper and more serious problem in the polity, and hence must be addressed as such. Specifically, it must have been obvious to all perceptive observers of the Nigerian political scene that things have not been going very well since 1999 and more particularly, since the sham elections of April 19, 2003.

Democracy is, of course, more than the conduct of elections but the proper conduct of elections certainly constitutes the foundation of all genuine democratic systems. Or else how can leaders who emerged fraudulently promote the basic democratic principles of accountability and transparency?

How could a Chris Ngige, who knew he did not win the election, feel accountable to his people? And is there not some elements of a Chris Ngige in almost every politician in power today? Are there not a Chris Ngige, a Chris Uba and a combination of the two in almost every state of the federation? Indeed, in some states, ordinary people talk of the presence of political vampires, who, at the end of every month suck dry, the states, of millions of Naira—just like that! Do our politicians think that they can continue to subvert democracy to serve their personal interests, and keep hoping that the institution can be maintained?

Politicians at all levels keep talking about the need to nurture democracy, while

"The ripples in the polity are deep and worrying, and may eventually sweep everybody on its way—in the manner of a tsunami! Or even a guerilla war, which may not be entirely ruled out, considering the situation in the Niger Delta and other places. What I am talking about is a Ukrainian styled revolution—orange, blue or velvet!"

intentionally engaging in acts that are directly inimical to the very substance of democracy. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the awful and fraudulent way in which elections were conducted into the various elective posts, especially beginning with the 2003 General Elections. The politicians keep on tendering flimsy excuses—that it is all part of the learning process; that no democracy is perfect and so on. Certainly, enduring democracies, like Rome, were not built in a day and the nation must go through a difficult period of learning, which must, of necessity, include some positive leaps as well as painful pitfalls.

But we cannot keep on inflicting deliberate blows on the system under the guise of a 'learning process' while in reality we are not ready to learn anything. When it comes to the conduct of elections, for instance, it appears that we have been 'learning' very well—to rig better with every election; and perhaps, gradually, not to conduct any elections at all. Come to think of it, what is the need for the entire facade called elections if those who were not even candidates in elections are today presiding over the affairs of our country?

And the nation goes on unperturbed as if all this is a simple matter that must be endured in the hard, painful 'learning process'. Worse, many fiend politicians argue that there was indeed no serious rigging in the 2003 elections, and that those complaining were simply bad losers.

Imagine! Some, like the now beleaguered PDP chairman, Audu Oghbeh, kept talking about 'celebrating victory'; while they know very well that they did not win the elections in many

states of the federation, including Anambra.

In an address at a Southwest meeting of the PDP in June 2004, for example, Audu Oghbeh described the meeting, as 'a celebration of victory, victory brought about by what some, in a different circumstance, would call, a paradigm shift'. Well, if there was a 'paradigm shift', it was one made possible by the crude politics of bald-faced vote robbery across the nation. Under the guise of bringing them into the mainstream of national politics and supporting a fellow Yoruba man, the people of the Southwest were conned into believing that their salvation lies with the PDP. But it is becoming clear by the day to all those who care to discern that the PDP is a party without the people, and certainly, devoid of democracy. Many of the other parties are not different either.

The April 2003 election was widely condemned as fraudulent but by March 2004 when elections into Local Government Councils were conducted in many states across the country, the 'learning process' had transformed itself into a brazen act of political violence and thievery—with the state governors and their army of thugs determining who eventually emerged victorious in each local government.

We are now saddled with many governors who are also the local government chairmen. Indeed, in many cases, the governors are the states, which they treat as their personal estates. What's more, in many states of the federation, the state governors are all in one—the executive, the legislator and the judiciary, thereby making nonsense of the pristine principle of the separation of power in a presidential democracy. Certainly, this is a classic case of how not to nurture democracy.

The crisis in the polity is therefore certainly beyond Anambra, beyond Ngige, Chris Uba and the vitriolic exchanges between President Obasanjo and the PDP chairman. The ripples in the polity are deep and worrying, and may eventually sweep everybody on its way—in the manner of a tsunami! Let some overzealous political pundits accuse me of treason; I am not here talking about a coup, which our military must have realized that it is old fashioned. Or even a guerilla war, which may not be entirely ruled out, considering the situation in the Niger Delta and other places. What I am talking about is a Ukrainian styled revolution—orange, blue or velvet!

Still on Gombe and its clique

By Ado Umar

There has, of late been a cacophony of desperate voices anxious to rubbish Goje's achievements in Gombe state through paid agents who they use to sell off their variety of merchandise: chorus of lies in the newspapers such as the one written by Bashir Abdullahi in the *Daily Trust* of December 30th 2004.

Ordinarily one would not have any cause to respond to such a write up, if not for the packaged lies as presented by the writer. True, democracy comes with the principle of a free speech, therefore Bashir can exercise that right like any citizen of the state to advice or criticize

attested to the "few roads" (I am sure he nearly choked to admit!). The few roads that he was talking about is the six asphalt township roads in Gombe Metropolis and the dual road from Tunfure to Liji with streets light. I therefore challenge Bashir to print pictures of any crevices in any of the roads. Bashir should reflect on the four years of Hashidu's Government, not a single road did he see, nor any hospital built or renovated.

Bashir talked on the Gombe state regional water project been inherited from the Hashidu regime; didn't Bashir know that government is a continuum? Or has Bashir

three deposed traditional rulers who he admitted tingly stated, opposed Goje. He should know that certainly, Goje cannot work with traditional rulers who allow their turbans fall on the ground in their desperate haste to eat the crumbs falling from the table of their corrupt masters forgetting their role of bipartisan leaders. The writer's assertion of disagreement between Goje and the Emir of Gombe is not only mischievous but a figment of his imagination!

Bashir did not talk about the creation of Gombe State University, the School of Nursing and Midwifery among others.

As for the linking of rural areas to the national

"He should know that certainly, Goje cannot work with traditional rulers who allow their turbans to fall on the ground in their desperate haste to eat the crumbs falling from the table of their corrupt masters, forgetting their role of bipartisan leaders. The writer's assertion of disagreement between Goje and the Emir of Gombe is not only mischievous but a figment of his imagination!"

constructively, but such a right should not be abused as to make sweeping and unsubstantiated assertions.

Reading Bashir's piece, I was marveled and wondered if Bashir is hibernating of the past four years Hashidu's tenure, as he has shown his bias clearly.

It was then that we had a government bereft of ideas, full of ineptitude, governed by a clique who expended the states federal allocations and tax payers money on unproductive ventures with nothing to show except midnight settlement of political cronies, bootlickers and pen hackers! (The Hashidu's government was more in the papers than on ground.)

Governor Goje's achievements have been attested to by no less a person than Gen. Buhari, Bashir himself painfully

forgotten that both Governor Goje and Hashidu were once in their lifetime ministers? Even when Hashidu has the chance to a helping hand to Gombe as a minister in charge of Water Resources, he failed, still given the chance as a governor, what progress has Hashidu made, how genuine was Hashidu's intention towards the water project? Wasn't it the prudence of Goje that Seven Hundred Million discount was secured from one of the contracts awarded by the past administration?

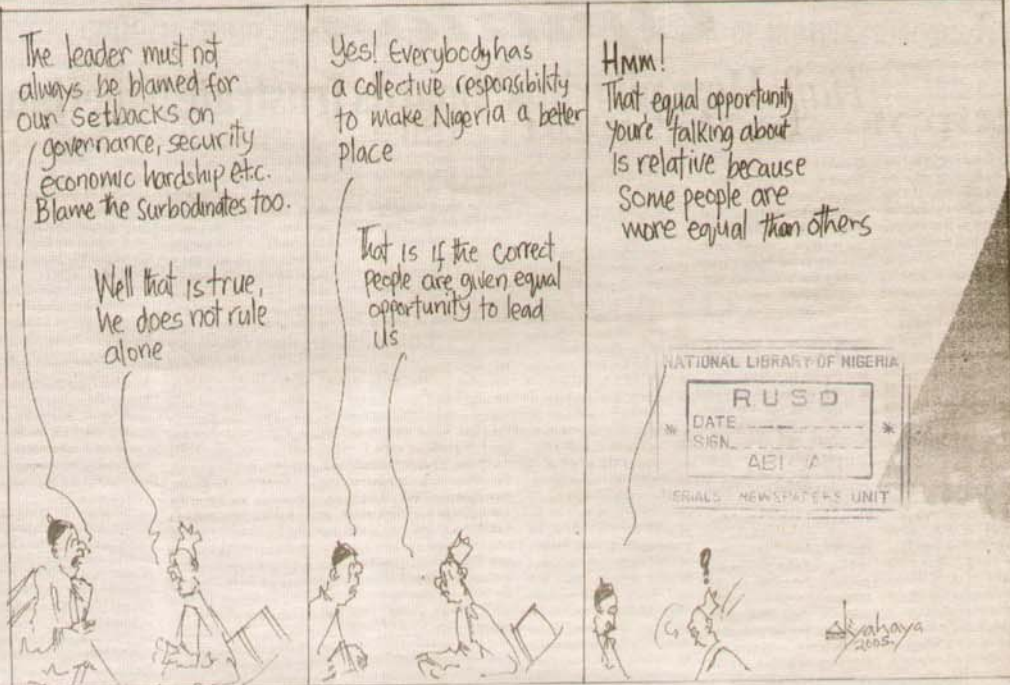
So lol! Where is the allegation of mind-boggling contracts coming from? But as it is said "the sign of a good Friday comes on a Wednesday" Governor Goje as a minister has shown the evidence of being a good leader of his people by bringing about the rural electrification and this has continued to the state.

Bashir talked about

grid, Bashir will never talk on these but will rather try to put a cog on Goje's achievement, talking about non-existence, political intimidation and thuggery.

The reality today, is that less than two years into Goje's administration, Gombe, the state capital is wearing a new pleasant look that even the blind can feel. The chain of people-oriented projects dotting the state have opened new vistas of opportunities and benefits to the people. In Gombe, democracy is showcased to the people not through any political rhetoric of the "more you look the less you see" but through a well-articulated plan far away from the vagaries and vanities of the past. Goje, through hard work, and accommodative leadership has brought development in all facets of life to the people of his state. I rest my case.

Umar writes from Government House Gombe.



YOUR LETTERS

The north after Wada Nas death

Clearly, northern Nigeria is the worst hit by the death of Wada Nas for the stood in defence of the north and fought for the emancipation of its people.

In the process, he had been titled Sarkin Yakin Arewa meaning the leading fighter of the Northern people. Secondly, it is a loss to the Nigerian democracy. As a politician, he was a highly principled and consistent man who contributed immensely in politics since the first republic in which most of his contemporaries had left the struggle for the liberation of Nigerian masses.

Till his death, he remained consistent and fully committed to his ideals despite all the pressures and intimidation. He must be remembered for his doggedness in fighting bad governance and abuse of human rights. No doubt he was an advocate of fairness and justice for all, an embodiment of honesty, and accountability.

Therefore, it is important for Nigerian politicians to emulate the late Wada Nas by ensuring good conduct in politics and fair-play in which the Nigerian people would

greatly feel the impact of their leadership so as to strengthen and promote Nigeria's democracy.

We missed him at this critical time of Nigeria's journey to full-fledge democracy and the rule of law.

I therefore pray that the nation gets those politicians who would promote democratic ideals, and good governance with a view to moving the nation forward. I urge northern leaders in particular to find a way of immortalizing the late Wada Nas for generations yet unborn.

Ibrahim Kawule Liman
Plot 1081, Garki Abuja.

JAMB what's wrong?

Please allow me a space in your widely read newspaper to register my displeasure over the withholding of my 2004/05 MPCE exams result.

I my registration number is 44346425A and exams number is 10504097. I prepared day and night

for the examination but to my surprise after paying through the nose for the JAMB access card and internet service at an inflated price landed a 'bombshell' that my result is being withheld for reasons unknown to me.

So, I am using this

medium to appeal to JAMB to please release my result, to enable me use it for the purpose for which it is meant because, I believe they are out to help dedicated candidates secure admission and not otherwise.

Mukhtar A Saiki Okeke,
Kogi state.

N5b boreholes project: SOS to water resources minister

Please permit me a space to extend my open letter to the honorable minister of water resources in your widely read newspaper I am writing to draw the attention water resources minister to something very strange and sinister taking place in the ministry. Only last week, your ministry published in some national dailies hundred of names of companies approved to be awarded the contract of drilling boreholes all over the federation.

Certainly, this is a landmark project for which you will be remembered for its initiation as well as its execution. The credit will no doubt be your own.

Over the last two years, many of the prospective contractors for this project have been utilising various banks across the country to

obtain bid security bond to meet your ministry's selection requirements. At no time, these prospective contractors were asked by your ministry to patronise particular banks.

However, to the surprise of many contractors now, while collecting their respective letters of offer, a certain paper purported to have been written by the management was issued instructing all contractors to patronise only 11 banks in securing their advance payment guarantee and performance bonds.

The purported paper reads as follows:

"Notice is hereby given to all contractors who have been awarded contracts for boreholes that only the underlisted banks are

approved by the management for the issuance of advance payment guarantee and the performance bond guarantee".

This particular act has already spurred various negative reactions from many of the contractors, especially those who have been patronising other banks not included on this list. Fears are already being entertained that this arrangement was deliberately made by some ministry officials to squeeze the contractors very well using these 11 banks as their tools.

Also going through the list, there is apparently no due process, no transparency at all in the selection as the list looks

sectional. Almost 80 per cent of the banks selected are from one section of the six geopolitical zones of the country.

"Where is the federal character?" At least not a single bank from the entire northern Nigeria was included.

In an exercise where over 5 billion naira will be expended, to corner this entire money to only 11 banks is totally unfair, unjust and lacks any moral justification in this era of transparency and accountability.

This is the kind of unscrupulous action of some ministry officials which goes a long way in giving the Obasanjo government terrible image and considered too sectional in outlook.

The Honorable Minister, as someone who hails from a society where social justice was established over 100 years ago, this inequity must not be allowed.

It appears this arrangement must have been done without your prior knowledge. Sir, you must redress this issue here and now!

Mallam Umar
Maigaskiya, P.O.Box 2415
Garki, Abuja.

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

Opinion

Hajj: How pilgrims' boards frustrate Nigerians

By Adam Idris

It is very sad and shameful to visit a Nigerian hajj camp, be it in Kaduna, Lagos Abuja, Maiduguri or Kano. The story and process is the same, corruption and illiteracy not from the intending pilgrims but among the officials. One will wonder when will all this be corrected so that Nigeria will have a hajj that is hitch free?

Segregation is openly practised, sufferings and manoeuvring at their peak. The situation whereby a person working in Pilgrims Board is sure of going to hajj every year is only practised in Nigeria regardless of whether such official knows how to take care of the pilgrims or not.

From inception to date, every year our intending pilgrims don't know how to use the leu (toilet) facilities either in the plane or there in the Holy Land, after spending not less than four days in camp. Some even spent two to three weeks doing nothing but waiting for ticket instead of training.

Problematic is the illiteracy of the teachers or trainers, who don't even have time for their students (pilgrims), but are busy going about trying to secure more seats for themselves or selling the one given to them.

Nigerian pilgrims are rated among the dirtiest in Saudi Arabia. Just recently a Nigerian pilgrim was arrested by the Saudi authorities for improper dressing. According to reports the pilgrim, who is from Sokoto state, dressed very rough and the authorities, said they don't tolerate that kind of

dressing in their country. Where are the officials, didn't they see him? What about the uniforms sewed by all the state contingents? Honestly, this is a mess. They are rated high in terms of missing (not finding their way home), still the officials are doing nothing to correct these lapses.

Whenever a Nigerian pilgrim need assistance or is looking for an official there in Saudi Arabia, he will never find one. Reasons: They are somewhere busy shopping, they are not there for anybody or for religious duty but for business, making contacts here and there against next hajj operation. He has been to hajj more than enough, not to mention his family members, girl friends and Gigolos all at the expense of the government simply because he is working in the pilgrims board. This alone has given him the guarantee of a sit or two every year, not minding whether he is rendering service to the pilgrims or not. I know of one official from one of the mosques in Abuja who is always sure of a ticket or two for doing nothing in terms of rendering services to the pilgrims.

Imagine the process whereby an airline must be ready to sacrifice some seats apart from the dollars it is to dish out to officials before it is given approval or license to airlift the pilgrims. Is it a disgrace,

not only to the umma, but Nigeria in general? Also the officials, those who issue tickets to intending pilgrims are selective.

On the 5th of January, this year around 11:30 am, a friend of mine who happens to be among those that will perform this year's hajj called me and requested that I inform my other friend that the officials are distributing tickets he should hurry up and bring his wife. Luckily, the person I was supposed to convey the message to was near by.

He immediately took off for Gwagwalada, the Abuja Hajj Camp. To cut the story short until the next morning, that is the 6th day of January, 2005 they were still in the airport, he slept there, no plane on the ground talkless of handing them the tickets. I became enraged, but I was told that it is the system. They did that to cool down the tempo in the camp. Some intending pilgrims, especially the Fulanis have been there for close to two weeks. Don't ask me why, I am not a hajj official, but the little I know is that they were asked to come, and they are afraid to go back home for fear of communication as some are from remote areas and cannot be reached. So the officials will come back and distribute say two hundred tickets and pretend that the tickets are finished, and that they will go and bring more, till another day.

Here, pilgrims are forced

to stay put, pinned down and glued to the camp for fear of missing their flight tickets. Those that are privileged to live in Abuja Municipal are left with the risk of plying the dangerous Gwagwalada road every day.

Money meant to be spent in the Holy Land will be spent here. Of course they have to eat. No water or food in the camp, food sellers are making brisk business. I also learn that some intending pilgrims because of the delay in issuing ticket have started changing their dollars to buy food and water. There is no good provision of toilet.

On the 5th day of January, two officials from the pilgrims board went to the pilgrims camp around 1 pm and tried to distribute N200, each to the pilgrims from the board to buy food. They were held hostage and had to sleep in the camp with the pilgrims. In their own words (the pilgrims) you have to sleep here with us and experience what we are experiencing.

Clothes are worn for three days without changing. If a pilgrim is lucky to have been issued his tick-set he will arrive Saudi Arabia smelling, dirty and emaciated without much energy to worship, because of the suffering he had encountered in the camp.

On arrival they will be parked like refugees, that is the beginning of another mayhem; screening here and there, medical check-up, and all other unnecessary scrutiny, only Nigerian

pilgrims are subjected to prolonged scrutiny for fear of transmitting disease.

After scaling through all these, then expect the worst, you are on your own; don't even bother to look for your officials just say bye bye to them, for you will never see them even in the worship centres, yes remember I told you they had performed more than enough Hajj for their short stay in the Pilgrims Board.

They are the last to be airlifted, but first to come back leaving their wards in state of confusion. You need to see how countries like Turkey protect their pilgrims especially the old and women, but Nigerians are left at the mercies of the Askars (Saudi officials).

And again the airlines are not helping matters, an airline suppose to have fleet of aircraft assigned to this exercise, but due to the malpractices or fraud involve in securing the license will decide to assign one aircraft to uplift pilgrims from Kano, Jigawa and Katsina for example.

Some days ago a plane was hijacked from Borin to Abuja to convey pilgrims, to prevent a fracas, because the Fulani threatened to break any aircraft they met in the airport because they said they are long over due in the camp.

Some pilgrims said they are still in Nigeria while their counterparts from Nasarawa state have already left

Madina. The way things are going, I tell you some may end up not going. Allah's apostle had spoken the truth.

I learnt it takes four hours to Saudi Arabia but it will take them almost six hours, then the engine has to cool down for another flight.

But I don't blame them, what else do you expect after spending alot in addition to sacrificing some sits, they too have to maximise their profit, after all it is the Nigerian syndrome of chop-chop, if you chop alone, you go die alone. For me I prefer to chop alone and die alone. I have never seen where two people chop together and die together e.g the National ID card case.

Solution: To make this service better, effective and Godly, we as Nigerians have to sit up and remember this is not just a service to humanity but also to the Creator Himself. And that He is watching us. Let us not think we are having a free day, they said ninety nine days of the thief...

We have to save our national image, uphold our pride and correct our lapses. Both the Muslims and Christians Pilgrims Board should stand up to the challenge, train their personnel for two to three months before the pilgrims exercise, those they think are hardworking, dedicated and ready to serve our dear nation should be employed.

Idris is of the dept of Political Science, Abuja University.

Zamfara: Anka's error of judgement

I have read the piece of one Abdullahi Ahmed Dahawa of Anka in the Daily Trust of 29th December 2004. Dahawa claimed to have been in Congo and Sudan for the last four years. I would have dismissed his claim in the article with a wave of hand and read most serious news items and important articles in the newspaper, but for the fear of

By Abubakar Musa Gusau

allowing his article to confuse and mislead the innocent people who maybe unfortunate to read it.

Coming back from war ravaged Sudan by Janjaweds and political turmoil and unstable Congo, what one expected Dahawa to have done is immediate psychiatric examination to

first ascertain his mental health.

Who ever stayed at those two places for the duration Dahawa did, it will not be out of question if he is found to be mentally unstable only such person can pass a no performance verdict on the Gov. Ahmed Sani government.

I would like Dahawa to know that, Zamfara State government is the first to embark on housing scheme, which culminated in construction of over 1500. Dahawa sojourn in Sudan and Congo made him lost touch with reality in his state. He would have known that, before the emergence of Sani as the Zamfara state Governor, there was only one road that linked Gusau township with Tudun-Wada area: thank God today there are more than one hundred roads that link Gusau township with Tudun-Wada is this not infrastructural Development?

(Achievement) I believe Dahawa is an (I don't care type of people) who does not observe positive development in their environment before passing comments.

Whoever cares to go round Gusau bye-pass and other areas would have seen rapid and even expansion of Gasau Township which is adjudged to be the most fast growing state capital amongst its contemporaries.

In the area of economic empowerment, Dahawa was very economical with the truth, for denying to give honest account on the success of Gov. Ahmed Sani through the provision of ZAPA vehicles to the less privilege Zamfara indigenes, who would not have been able to procure them. Without the humanitarian nature of Yerima's government. If it is true that Gov. Ahmed Sani bought 200 jeeps for his party faithful, this further exposes

him as a reasonable person who always carries along him, those who make it possible for him to be where he is today. I would like Dahawa to investigate the neighbouring ANPP states and find out how many of those who helped the governors can afford three square meals a day, let alone having any vehicle to ride in.

Dahawa mischievously or deliberately refuse to identify the difference between Federal Government responsibilities and that of the state, he would have accepted the fact that provision of uninterrupted supply of electricity is NEPA's responsibility which is a Federal Government agency. Notwithstanding the state government has today achieved a Giant Stride in her Rural Electrification Programme providing well over one hundred villages/towns with electricity supply. Water shortage problem

is a global problem that demands serious attention, if Dahawa can visit our Federal Capital City Abuja, he would understand what I am talking about. Nevertheless, all being equal I know that the State government is doing extremely well in this area. With the water supply scheme coming up early this year, I strongly believe that water shortage will be a thing of the past in the state.

I advice Dahawa to travel to other states in the country, that is only when he can appreciate the progress Governor Sani is making in Zamfara State.

I am sincerely happy with your safe return from the hands of Janjaweds and Kabilas. I will therefore advice you to join hands with the governor and his compatriots if you have the love of your community at heart.

Musa Gusau writes from No13 Jangebe road Gusau.

"Water shortage problem is a global problem that demands serious attention, if Dahawa can visit our Federal Capital City Abuja, he would understand what I am talking about"

Trust International

Palestinian election: a farce of democracy

As expected, Mahmoud Abbas, the new chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), also known as Abu Maazen, was elected president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) on January 9.

The election of Abbas has been welcomed by world leaders as representing a new dawn of democracy that holds out the prospect of a negotiated peace and the development of an independent Palestinian state.

There was, however, very little that was democratic about the election. It was held at gunpoint under Israeli military control, with Washington placing enormous pressure on the Palestinians to ratify the elevation of its favoured PLO official. The Bush administration and Israeli Prime Minister Sharon turned the election into a form of blackmail, offering Palestinians the choice of voting in their preferred candidate or being shelled, bulldozed and starved.

President Bush immediately congratulated Abbas in a 10-minute phone call, during which he invited Abbas to visit the White House. This was an offer he conspicuously refused to make to the late Yasser Arafat, whom he branded a terrorist.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw offered his congratulations and declared, "The Palestinian people have already demonstrated their commitment to democracy." He went on, "The challenge now is for the new president to use his mandate to lay the foundations for a new Palestinian state."

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier added his voice to the general acclaim. The vote was, he said, "a victory for democracy, a first victory for peace."

President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso said, "The elections went well." The EU sent 200 observers to oversee the election process and is one of the main financial backers of the Palestinian Authority.

There is a stark disparity between the talk of democracy and peace from these world leaders and the reality of the situation. Only one politician drew attention to the circumstances under which the election was held. Former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard, who was head of the European Union election monitoring team, said, apparently without conscious irony, that it was "unique in the world to have

By Jean Shaoul and Chris Talbot

general elections conducted democratically under foreign military occupation."

The election was held on terms imposed by the US and Israel, the latter having occupied the West Bank and Gaza since the 1967 war in contravention of UN resolutions. Even the conditions for campaigning and voting were dictated by the Israeli armed forces. The US and Israel had demanded that the election platform call for an end to violent opposition to Israel and its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, and made clear that Abbas was their preferred candidate.

It would indeed be unique if a democratic election could be held under foreign military occupation. But this is the new doctrine emanating from the White House. Bush is insistent that elections will go ahead under the military occupation in Iraq. The Palestinian and Iraqi elections serve the interests of a propaganda campaign that claims that US foreign policy is to introduce democracy into the Middle East.

Palestinian leaders close to Abbas have been only too happy to accept the fraudulent claim that the US is seeking to extend democracy in the region. Ziad Abu Amr said that the result "could be the beginning of a new era." He went on, "We may be laying the foundation for the second working democracy in the Middle East."

Abbas, echoed by the international media, was quick to claim that he had won a landslide victory. He won 62 per cent of the vote, which, on the face of it, is a sizeable majority. His nearest rival, Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, who is associated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) but was standing as an independent, got 20 per cent of the vote. Abbas was chosen by Fatah, the largest organisation

within the PLO, to be its presidential candidate following the death of Arafat in November.

More significant than Abbas' margin of victory was the low voter turnout. The Palestinian Authority have refused so far to publish an official figure, but press reports indicate that less than half of eligible voters cast

reflected enormous skepticism among Palestinians, if not outright opposition, to the entire process, as well as lack of enthusiasm for the presumptive victor.

Abbas, who for a time was Arafat's prime minister, sought to wrap himself in Arafat's mantle after declaring himself the winner

perspective demanded that he come to an agreement, he retained a personal commitment to the aspirations of the Palestinian people, to which he had devoted his entire adult life.

Sunday's election was organised with unseemly haste after the death of Arafat in order to shoehorn Abbas into office. The US and Israel have made clear that they expect the new president to quickly move to suppress Hamas and other groups that oppose the so-called "peace process" and support armed actions, including suicide bombings, against the Israelis. It remains to be seen whether Abbas will be able to satisfy the demands of the Israeli and Western governments that have praised his election.

The nature of the election indicates the character of any state that might be formed on the basis of a deal with Israel and the US. It is simply not possible to build a viable state or economy out of the scattered enclaves that have been defined as Palestinian territory.

Whatever agreement Abbas is able to reach would leave the Palestinian people politically oppressed and economically impoverished. Only a tiny minority, like Abbas himself, would benefit from the funds allocated for the Palestinian Authority by the European Union and other donors. This would be a recipe for a corrupt regime of patronage, whose assigned task would be the suppression of popular resistance.

Sharon has expressed his willingness to meet with Abbas, but stressed that, "The main thing that needs to be concentrated on now, following yesterday's election, is that the Palestinians take action in the field of terrorism." The test for Abbas, he said would be, "the way he battles terror and acts to dismantle its infrastructure."

One of the main objections that Sharon and

Bush had to Arafat was that he was unable or unwilling to suppress the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Islamic Jihad and Hamas. They are now putting pressure on Abbas to move against these organisations.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad boycotted the presidential election, but both have accepted Abbas' legitimacy. They have expressed their willingness to move towards a ceasefire. Hamas spokesman Mushir al-Masri said, "We will work with Mahmoud Abbas in what we believe is a sensitive coming period."

The willingness of Islamic Jihad and Hamas to accept Abbas' leadership point to the essential bankruptcy of a nationalist perspective, whether in a secular guise or in the form of religious fundamentalism. Neither secular nor Islamic nationalism has been able to offer the Palestinian people the prospect of a secure and peaceful future.

In his election campaign, Abbas made promises about bringing the refugees home and regaining control of East Jerusalem. To the extent that he won support, it was largely on this basis. However, Bush and Sharon will not allow him to carry out these promises.

Sharon has now won parliamentary support for his proposal to pull out of Gaza, but this plan does not offer any positive prospect for the Palestinians. Israel's construction of a wall around the Palestinian territories is proceeding. The residents of Gaza will find that they have exchanged a direct military occupation for something resembling a prison camp or ghetto. Israeli troops may be absent on a day-to-day basis, but Israel will still control the air space and reserve the right to send in troops at any time.

The illegal Israeli settlements in Gaza are to be removed under Sharon's unilateral plan, but settlements on the West Bank will be extended. They will be linked by a network of military roads which cut up land that is supposedly under Palestinian control and make daily life a permanent torment.

Whatever deal Abbas attempts to put together in the next weeks, no credibility can be given to the illusion touted by world leaders and the liberal press that Sharon's "withdrawal" from Gaza will lead to anything other than a continuation of the bloody suppression of the Palestinian people.

HSWS



Mahmoud Abbas

ballots. The low poll was despite the fact that voting was extended by two hours in an attempt to increase the turnout. The rules on residency were also changed during the election in an attempt to boost numbers. An extra 30,000 votes were added by these measures. In East Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities made voting difficult in accordance with their insistence that the city is an integral part of Israel. They forced Palestinians there to cast absentee ballots and did not permit voting to begin until the afternoon. But the generally low poll cannot be accounted for in this way.

The low participation

of the election, saying, "I present this victory to the soul of Yasser Arafat, and I present it to our people, to our martyrs, and to 11,000 prisoners of war" in Israeli jails. A veteran leader of Fatah, long-time financial manager of the PLO, and multi-millionaire who made his fortune in exile, Abbas played a key role in the Oslo Accords and opposed the four-year armed Palestinian uprising.

Negotiations with Arafat broke down at the Camp David talks in 2000 because Arafat would not accept the Israeli demand that the Palestinians give up Jerusalem. Even though the logic of his bourgeois nationalist political

"There is a stark disparity between the talk of democracy and peace from these world leaders and the reality of the situation. Only one politician drew attention to the circumstances under which the election was held. Former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard, who was head of the European Union election monitoring team, said, apparently without conscious irony, that it was "unique in the world to have general elections conducted democratically under foreign military occupation."

Trust International

Thatcher pleads guilty over 'coup plot'

Sir Mark Thatcher has pleaded guilty in South Africa over his part in an alleged coup plot in Equatorial Guinea.

The son of former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was fined three million rand (£265,000) and received a four-year suspended jail sentence.

Sir Mark, who denied any knowledge of the plot, agreed a plea bargain with prosecutors.

He admitted breaking anti-mercenary legislation in South Africa by agreeing to charter a helicopter.

It has been reported the businessman said he did not know the helicopter's alleged purpose - that it was to be used in the coup attempt, instead believing it was to be used as an air ambulance.

Speaking outside court, an emotional Sir Mark said: "There is no price too high for me to pay to be reunited with my family and I am sure all of you who are husbands and fathers would agree with that."

Baroness Thatcher also expressed her relief at the outcome, saying: "This has been a difficult time for all of the family - obviously I am delighted that it has been brought to an end."

"I know that what matters to Mark now is to be reunited with Diane and the children as soon as possible."

Her son will now be able to leave South Africa for the first time in five months.

But the Equatorial Guinea authorities are likely to continue pressing for the opportunity to question him.

If Sir Mark was unable to pay the South African fine, he would incur a five-year prison sentence, with his four-year suspended sentence on top of that.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwean lawyer for a close friend of Sir Mark accused of leading the alleged coup plot, former SAS officer Simon Mann, said that his jail term has been reduced from seven years to four by a court in Harare.

Mann was last year found guilty of illegally buying weapons in Zimbabwe, which were allegedly intended to be used in the Equatorial Guinea coup plot.

A further 14 men were found guilty in Equatorial Guinea of being involved in the alleged plot to overthrow President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has ruled Africa's third-largest oil producer for the past 25 years.

Nick du Toit was jailed for 34 years, while opposition leader Severo Moto, who is in exile in Spain, was given 63 years in absentia.

Both men escaped the death penalty demanded by the prosecution.

Sir Mark, 51, was arrested in August at his home in South Africa and released on bail.

News of yesterday's hearing in Cape Town came

as a surprise. The defendant was not expected back in court until 18 February.

After his plea, his lawyers released a statement saying: "It should be noted that Sir Mark was not charged with any involvement in the attempted coup d'etat in Equatorial Guinea."

"The plea bargain was entered into solely as a result of his financing of the charter of a helicopter in circumstances where he should have exercised more caution."

Sipho Ngwema, a spokesman for South Africa's Directorate of Special Investigations, also known as the Scorpions, said Sir Mark had promised to co-operate with South African investigators.



Sir Mark Thatcher

Uganda, LRA to discuss ceasefire
The head of the Presidential Peace Team and Internal Affairs Minister, Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, has said his team is in touch with the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) over the general ceasefire amidst resumed hostilities.

"Contacts between the LRA and us through the mediator, Ms. Betty Bigombe, have been on constantly and she has been informing us of every development in these negotiations," Rugunda said in an interview on Tuesday.

"Negotiations have been and are still on course and the government is committed to ensure that this peace process is concluded to end hostilities," he added.

On Monday, the chief negotiator, Ms. Betty Bigombe, held a meeting with two senior LRA commanders namely, Sam Kolo and Onen Kamudulu in Pararo, outside Gulu.

Bigombe's meeting with the LRA came 10 days after the peace process that started late last year suffered a hitch on December 31, when both sides failed to sign a general ceasefire.

"What happened was just a delay but the talks did not collapse," Rugunda insists.

The LRA, according to Bigombe, has asked for more time to "consult amongst themselves."

In the initial ceasefire draft the government had asked the rebels to assemble in gazetted zones and appoint members of the Joint Monitoring Team (JMT).

On November 14, 2004, the government announced a month-long ceasefire to enable the rebels to gather in designated areas of northern Uganda, to discuss the possibility of peace talks.

This ceasefire was later extended to December 31, when a more comprehensive truce was due to be initiated.

Bigombe, a significant figure in the process and former Minister for Pacification of the North, has currently taken leave of her World Bank job in the United States.

Her talks with LRA leader, Joseph Kony, in 1993 collapsed after President Museveni accused the rebels of using the ceasefire to plan for more attacks.

Mbeki in DR Congo for peace talks

South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki is in the Democratic Republic of Congo for talks in an effort to keep the country's shaky peace process on track.

Four people died in riots this week after indications the election scheduled for June might be delayed.

Members of the transitional government have also threatened to pull out of government if progress is not made.

Former colonial power Belgium urged DR Congo to keep to the schedule of the 2002 deal that ended five years of war.

Under the South African-brokered peace deal signed by all the main factions, a power-sharing government was tasked with organising elections.

"Any lack of clarity about the date of the elections will undoubtedly lead to some frustration," Belgium's Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht said.

Last year, Mr de Gucht sparked a diplomatic row when he questioned the ability of Congolese politicians to end corruption and facilitate a transition to democracy.

According to the BBC's correspondent in Kinshasa, Mr Mbeki is shuttling between President Joseph Kabila's office and his hotel suite where he holds separate talks with DR Congo's four vice-presidents.

Among them, vice-president and former rebel leader, Jean-Pierre Bemba, who has threatened to pull out of the government by the end of January if the issue remains unresolved.

Last week, elections Chief Apollinaire Malu Malu indicated the poll will probably take place in October, before heavy rains make parts of the country inaccessible.

But this has not gone down well with the electorate, anxious to participate in the country's first democratic elections since independence in 1960.

Protests continued this week. On Wednesday morning violent demonstrations took place in Mbuji Mayi, an opposition stronghold in the centre of the country.

UN chief Kofi Annan said in a report last week that there were "serious challenges" to holding the election in June.

Further fighting in eastern DR Congo last month - involving former Rwanda-backed rebel soldiers - highlights the challenges the transitional government faces, correspondents said.

It is an issue expected to be discussed by President Mbeki and his Congolese counterpart.

At a summit of African leaders on Monday, the African Union resolved to help the country in disarming and neutralising militias linked to Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

US to aid Somalia after Govt move

US ambassador William Bellamy has said his country's aid to Somalia will depend on the new government's relocation to its motherland.

It will then be upon the Somali government to lobby donors on its priorities, he said.

Mr Bellamy said the US was prepared to rally other donors to help Somalia - which has remained without a government for 14 years - when its newly-formed Cabinet shows determination to settle down to work.

He said, however, that the interim government had indicated it would move home by month end, adding that his country will assist Kenya and I to relocate the Somali government.

The envoy, who had paid a courtesy call on the minister for Regional Development Mr. John Koech however said the position was different for Sudan which signed its comprehensive peace agreement on Sunday.

"The US has been the only donor country which has been giving humanitarian assistance to Sudan and which will be sustained," he said.

He assured that the improvement of southern Sudan's poor infrastructure will be top on the agenda of the US alongside the education and health sectors.

He thanked Kenya for its contribution in resolving

conflicts in the two countries, adding that the position by Kenya "had opened floodgates of opportunities to the country."

Mr Koech said he and Mr Bellamy had discussed at length the strategies of ensuring that the peace agreements reached by factions in the two countries would be sustained.

Zanzibar flies new flag

The autonomous island off the coast of Tanzania, Zanzibar, celebrated its Indian Ocean islands' 41st revolutionary with the launch of a new flag.

It is the first time for four decades that the archipelago has had its own flag since uniting with Tanganyika to form Tanzania in 1964.

Zanzibar's government has stressed the adoption of a flag does not mean that this is a move towards independence.

But the BBC's correspondent said Zanzibar is pleased it symbolised their separate identity.

Inaugurated by President Amani Abeid Karume on Sunday, the flag is significant to Zanzibari politics, as the archipelago already has its own parliament, executive, legal system and national anthem, our correspondent says.

But the protocol for flying the flag is likely to prove complicated, BBC correspondent said.

It is not to be raised at international forums such as the United Nations or African Union as Zanzibar is not a sovereign nation, Tanzania's Guardian newspaper reported.

Mr. Koech, who was accompanied by his assistant minister Mr Joseph Nyaga, said plans to have a common market for the three East African countries in the next five years were still on course.

It is expected that this will boost economic development in the three neighbouring countries and in effect create more wealth.

And the new design of blue, black and green horizontal stripes with the Tanzanian flag shown in a corner, has not found favour with everyone.

The opposition Civic United Front (CUF), some of whose members want independence from mainland Tanzania, disputed the inclusion of the Tanzanian union flag.

Under the 1964 act of union - after the revolution - Zanzibar was allowed to remain semi-autonomous and to have its own president while benefiting from economic and political clout of the mainland.

But according to BBC correspondent, one of the main contentions for islanders over the last 41 years has been the economic disparity between Zanzibar and the mainland.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, attending the island's revolution celebrations, delighted the crowds when he spoke in Kiswahili before continuing in English to say both Zanzibar and Zimbabwe share a common history of anti-colonial struggle.

Trust International

Top Shiite cleric's aid killed in Baghdad

An aide to Iraq's top Shiite cleric has been murdered barely a fortnight before elections the Shiites are tipped to win, while gunmen seized a Turkish businessman and killed seven Iraqis outside a Baghdad hotel.

As the country prepared for its first free and fair polls in half a century despite the relentless bloodshed across the country, US-led forces stepped up operations against insurgents, rounding up almost 50 suspects.

An aide to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, his son and four bodyguards were murdered Wednesday night after they left prayers in the lawless Sunni-majority town of Salman Pak, southeast of the capital, an official at Sistani's office in the holy city of Najaf said yesterday.

Sheikh Mahmud al-Madahaani had been the target of several threats and attempted assassinations in the past, the official added.

Israel asks Russia to scrap missile deal

Israel asked Russia to cancel a reported deal to sell missiles to its Syrian enemy whilst striving to avert a deterioration of its vital ties with Moscow.

"We spoke to the Russians and we asked them to scrap this contract," Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom told reporters.

"Syria is a country that supports terrorism and continually transfers weapons to Hezbollah," he said yesterday, referring to the radical Lebanese Shiite Muslim group. "The entire world is acting to isolate Syria because of its support to terrorism."

A high-ranking official had said earlier that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon sent Russian President Vladimir Putin a message asking him to nix the reported deal.

"The prime minister sent a message to the Russian president to explain that this sale could be a threat to Israel and that these missiles risked ending up in the hands of Hezbollah and other Damascus-based terrorist organizations," the Israeli official said on condition of anonymity.

A report in the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* said Moscow was ready to ink a deal with Damascus for Iskander missiles. The mobile weapon has a range of 50-280 kilometres. If fired from Syria, they could hit almost any spot in Israel.

On Wednesday, Russia categorically denied it intended to sell missiles to Syria.

Sharon's government has received the backing of the United States, which issued a stark warning to both and Russia over the reported deal.

Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Zeev Boim said he expected firm intervention from Washington to foil the sale, as he claimed SA-18 missiles could be used to shoot down cargo planes bringing supplies to troops in Iraq.

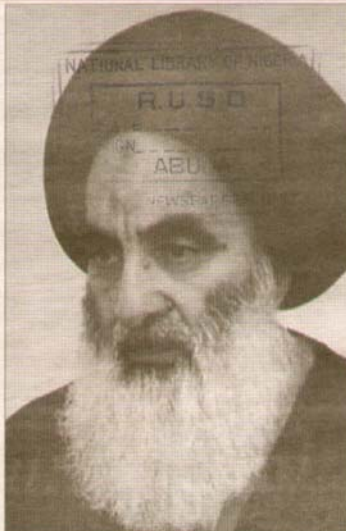
Salman Pak lies on the highway linking the capital with Kut, further to the south-east. It is a lawless area where armed men hijack trucks and carry out kidnappings.

Sistani, the spiritual leader of the country's majority Shiites, is not running for office but has emerged as the kingmaker after he blessed the United Iraqi Alliance, a grouping of political and religious parties.

A Turkish businessman was meanwhile kidnapped outside his central Baghdad hotel by men who machine-gunned a mini-van of his employees who had come to collect him, killing all seven, a hotel employee said yesterday.

"At 6:00 am, like every morning, seven employees of the (Turkish construction company) arrived to pick up their boss, a Turk named Abdel Kader Tam," the source said.

"Today, 10 armed men in two cars were waiting for them. They machine-gunned the bus, killing all seven occupants, and kidnapped the Turk."



Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani

Abbas set for cabinet shake up

Newly-elected Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas was preparing a clear-out of officials from the Yasser Arafat era, with a new government to be unveiled soon after he is sworn in at the weekend.

No formal announcement on a new-look government was expected to be made before Abbas's installation on Saturday but political sources said Thursday that a number of close allies of his late predecessor Arafat were facing the axe.

"At least four or five ministers will leave," one official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "We know for sure that (interior minister) Hakam Balawi will go."

Abbas said yesterday that he is ready to honor the security commitments in an internationally backed peace plan, adding that he hopes to resume peace talks with Israel soon.

Abbas, elected Palestinian president earlier this week, said he is eager to restart talks on the "road map," a peace plan backed by the United States, European Union, Russia and the United States.

The plan, which envisions an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, has been stalled since it was launched in mid-2003 amid violations by both sides. The road map requires Israel to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza, while Palestinians must dismantle militant groups.

"We emphasise before you that we are committing to the road map," Abbas said after a meeting with local and international Christian leaders.

"As you know, this plan starts with security commitments and eventually deals with the final status issues, like borders and Jerusalem. We are committed to implement our commitments. We hope the Israeli side will do the

same," he added.

Abbas did not specify what sort of security measures he is ready to take. He has rejected Israeli calls to confront militants, preferring instead to persuade them to halt their attacks.

The communications minister Azzam al-Ahmed said that while a certain number of changes would be announced in the next few days a more widespread shake-up would take place in July after elections to the parliament.

"What we are expecting is

a light reshuffle but the real changes will come after the legislative elections," Ahmed told AFP.

The moderate former Prime Minister Abbas's landslide election victory on Sunday has boosted hopes of a breakthrough in the troubled peace process.

While Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon kept Arafat under virtual house arrest for the last three years of his life, he made a point of phoning Abbas to congratulate him on his victory.

Iran cautions UN nuclear inspectors

Iranian officials vowed to carefully watch for any attempted espionage by international inspectors visiting a military complex Thursday that the United States alleges may be involved in nuclear weapons research.

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency, arrived in Iran on Wednesday for a visit to the huge Parchin military complex just outside the capital Tehran, according to state-run television.

Iran has said it will allow U.N. nuclear experts to take environmental samples from landscaped areas outside the military complex's ammunition production workshops but that it won't allow them to inspect military equipment.

The IAEA has been pressing Tehran for months to be allowed to inspect the complex, long used to research, develop and produce ammunition, missiles and high explosives.

In links to media last year, unidentified U.S. intelligence officials were quoted as saying Iran could be using a secured site at Parchin in

Odd World

Disaster changes use of word 'Tsunami'

Before, musicians produced a "sonic tsunami," Wall Street analysts foresaw "tsunamis" of bad earnings news and Japanese restaurants served "tsunami" sushi rolls.

The word was used in dozens of different contexts, but now it likely will appear with just one, tragic, meaning, a language group said on Wednesday.

Because of the South Asian tsunami disaster that has killed more than 150,000 people, the word assumes a solely solemn use, much the way "Ground Zero," for the site of the World Trade Centre, had its meaning changed from "starting point" to the centre of the Sept. 11 tragedy, said Paul Payack, head of Global Language Monitor.

Payack said that since the Dec. 26 tsunami, the Japanese word has appeared more than 18.5 million times and been the subject of 88,000 articles in major media.

"Before Sept. 11, 2001, the term ground zero was a business cliché meaning starting point, especially when beginning a project over again as in 'going back to ground zero.' That term now represents what many consider to be hallowed ground and its old usage is rarely employed," he said.

"In the same manner, we envision that the word tsunami will be the subject of considerable discretion before being used in anything other than a most serious manner," he said.

Payack said thousands of sports teams around the world use tsunami into their names, like the Tsunami Aquatics Swim team of Livermore, California.

He said there are also some 10,000 products called tsunami, like Tsunami Point-to-Point Wireless Bridges, Tsunami Multimedia Speakers and Tsunami Image Processors.

Newspaper headline writers also liked the colorful word, as the Detroit News' "Ford Releases a Tsunami of New Products" and "Heading for the presidency on a tsunami of visions" in London's *The Times*.

Colombia offer cash for rebel hunt

Colombia on Wednesday invited the world's bounty hunters to scour its jungles and mountains and drag back rebel chiefs in return for cash rewards.

"It would be great if all the bounty hunters in the world came to capture those bandits. The money's there for them, and the rewards are good," Vice President Francisco Santos told reporters.

The Colombian government has put rewards of up to about \$2 million on the heads of outlaws like Manuel "Sureshot" Marulanda, veteran Marxist commander of the 17,000 fighters of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Santos' comments came after officials said they had paid an unspecified reward to an anonymous informant who helped them catch Rodrigo Granda, a top rebel who authorities called the FARC's "foreign minister."

Granda's capture has caused a diplomatic squabble with neighboring Venezuela, which says he was kidnapped from a street in Caracas. The Colombian government, which has long suspected Venezuela's leftist President Hugo Chavez of sympathies for the FARC, insists they nabbed Granda within their borders.

Colombia's war with the FARC and other illegal armed groups has lasted 40 years and claims thousands of lives annually.

President Alvaro Uribe owes his 70-percent approval rating to a military campaign against the FARC but the group's top commanders keep safe in hideouts in the country's extensive mountains and jungles.

But Colombia is outgunned in the reward stakes by its ally the United States, which has offered up to \$25 million for information leading to the arrest of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Couple names son Yahoo!

A Romanian couple named their son Yahoo as a sign of gratitude for meeting over the Internet, a Bucharest newspaper said yesterday.

Daily Libertatea said Cornelia and Nonu Dragoman, both from Transylvania, met and decided they were meant for each other following a three-month relationship over the net.

They married and had a baby this Christmas, whom they decided to name after one of the worldwide web's most popular portals. "We named him Lucian Yahoo after my father and the net, the main beacon of my life," Cornelia Dragoman was quoted as saying.

Police fingers snake for \$12,000 fire damage

An unlikely source is to blame for about \$12,000 in fire damage to a home. Police speculate Landon Nielsen's pet boa constrictor wrapped itself around a heat lamp inside the cage and pulled the lamp down, which set the cage ablaze.

The fire spread, destroying the snake, the bedroom where the snake was kept and causing damage throughout the home, Lt. Doug Edwards said. The home's occupants escaped unharmed.

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Trust International

Indonesia rebels seek truce

Separatist rebels in the Indonesian province of Aceh have called on the government to join their ceasefire.

They said a temporary truce is needed to allow an effective humanitarian relief operation in the province, worst hit by the earthquake and tsunami.

A spokesman for the rebels said they wanted to do all they could to minimize the suffering of the Acehese people.

Indonesia's vice president welcomed a cease-fire offer by Aceh's rebel movement, saying yesterday that Jakarta would "make efforts" toward keeping peaceful relations as it seeks to rebuild the tsunami-battered region.

"Of course we welcome it. Indonesia will also make efforts toward it," said Jhoni Kalla, speaking at the vice presidential palace.

The exiled leader of the Aceh rebel movement, Malik Mahmud, reaffirmed the rebels' commitment so long as they are assured that the line of the demarcation between military chief and civilian leader offer this.

In welcoming the group said the truce is inevitable and will last for an indefinite period.

The authorities said the measures are necessary because the separatists have been shooting at aid workers and attempting to kidnap them, but the rebels have denied this.

And for the first time, Gani has called on the government to reciprocate so as to allow the "unfettered humanitarian assistance to reach the people of Aceh".

The BBC's correspondent in Jakarta said it is a clever political move by the rebels, coming a day after the government imposed restrictions on the movement of foreign aid workers around Aceh.

The government said on Wednesday that foreign aid workers and journalists in the ravaged province must now log their travel plans and will be given a military escort for journeys outside the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, and the separated town of Meulaboh.

The government said the requirements are designed to protect foreigners against attacks by clan guerrillas.

Some minor skirmishes have been reported and both sides have accused the other of using the tsunami as a pretext for renewed offensives. The claims have not been independently verified.

Aid workers in the field have told the BBC that the measures appear to be more about monitoring movement than restricting access, but that it is too early to say how the guidelines will affect their work.

The US has also said it wants clarification of news that Indonesia wants all foreign troops helping the relief effort to leave by the end of March.

Troops from the US, Singapore, Australia and Japan are in Aceh. Military helicopters have enabled aid to reach remote communities on Aceh's west coast which were worst hit by the tsunami.

Before 26 December, Aceh was under emergency rule and was closed both to aid agencies and the international media.

Unrest leaves 17 dead in Pakistan

Authorities imposed a round-the-clock curfew in a second, remote town in northern Pakistan yesterday to contain sectarian unrest that has left 17 people dead, officials said.

Hundreds of Shiite Muslims took to the streets in Skardu to mourn the death yesterday of a prominent Shiite cleric whose shooting last week triggered deadly riots in another town in the Himalayan region, Gilgit.

Federal Minister for northern areas Faisal Saleh Hayyat confirmed that troops had been summoned in Skardu, about 100 miles southeast of Gilgit, "after an

unfortunate incident took place there."

He refused to give any details.

A security official, who did not want to be named, said some of the mourners attacked homes and shops of rival Sunni Muslims. It wasn't clear if anyone was injured.

The cleric, Agha Ziauddin, was critically wounded Jan 8 when at least two unidentified gunmen opened fire on his car in Gilgit, about 150 miles north of the capital, Islamabad.

His shooting sparked sectarian violence in Gilgit, leaving 15 people dead, in-

cluding two of Ziauddin's body guards and six members of a family who were burned alive when an angry mob attacked and torched their home.

It was the second bout of violence in seven months between Sunnis and Shites in Gilgit, a tourist destination and home to about 25,000 people.

Ziauddin and a third security guard died of their injuries on yesterday, said Ishaq Bukhari, a spokesman for the cleric. Mourners subsequently took to the streets in Skardu, a predominantly Shiite town of 60,000.

A round-the-clock curfew remains in force in Gilgit; aid troops have been deployed to keep the peace, blocking roads into the town.

Pakistan has often been troubled by sectarian violence. About 80 percent of its 150 million people are Sunnis and 17 percent Shites, although Shites are in a majority in Gilgit and some other northern areas.

Most Muslims live together peacefully, but small groups of activists on both sides stage attacks. The violence between Sunnis and Shites dates back to the 19th century, over who was the true heir to the Prophet Muhammad.



Volunteers carry a dead body retrieved from debris at a camp in Nigeria, south, last month.

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For further information in Nigeria, please contact:

S.G.H. Madinah-African Countries Co-ordinator Alh. Idris S.A.M Mobile No: 08028184700, 08036344790

Business Trust

ENERGY

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air
Lagos - Abuja 07:20
10:30
15:15
13:00
Abuja - Lagos 8:45a.m.

11:00
13:15
17:00

Maiduguri - Abuja 06:50
Abuja - Maid. 17:00

Lagos - Yola 1:00 p.m.
Abuja - Yola 14:30
Yola - Abuja 15:30

Yola - Lagos 4:00 p.m.

Chanchangi Airlines
Lagos - Abuja 8:15a.m.
11:00a.m.
12:10p.m.
4:45p.m.

Kaduna - Lagos 8:30a.m.
PH - Lagos 9:00a.m.
4:30p.m.

Abuja - Kaduna 2:30p.m.
Kaduna - Abuja 1:30p.m.

IRS Airlines

CBQ - Abuja 8:00 a.m.
Abuja - Lagos 9:45a.m.
Lagos - Kaduna 9:30a.m.

Kano - Lagos 7:30p.m.
Lagos - Kano 11:15a.m.
Kaduna - Lagos 11:00a.m.

Lagos - Abu/MM 2:30p.m.
Abuja - MM 1:45p.m.

MM - Abuja 3:45p.m.
Abuja - CBQ 5:15p.m.

Kano - Abuja 1:15p.m.
Abuja - Kano 2:30p.m.

Kano - Lagos 3:45p.m.
Lagos - Kano 6:00p.m.

EAS Airlines

Lagos - Abuja 8:15p.m.
11:45a.m.
5:45p.m.

Abuja - Lagos 10:15a.m.
7:15p.m.

Lagos - Jos 11:45a.m.
Jos - Lagos 2:30p.m.

Dasab Airlines

Abuja - Lagos 8:30 a.m.
Lagos - PHC 10:30 a.m.
PHC - Lagos 12:30 a.m.

Lagos - Kano 2:30 p.m.
Kano - Lagos 4:30 p.m.
Lagos - Abuja 6:30p.m.

ADC Airline

Lagos - Abuja 7:15 a.m.
12:45 p.m.
8:55 a.m.

Abuja - Lagos 11:15 a.m.
Calabar - Lagos 7:20 a.m.
PH - Lagos 9:45 a.m.

Lagos - Sokoto 8:55am.
Sokoto - Lagos 11:55am

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

Shell raises crude output to 65,000 bpd

Shell has increased crude oil output to 65,000 barrels per day following the reopening of some oil pumping stations shut down as a result of community unrest in southern Nigeria, a spokesman said.

"Ekulama II is up and running," he said, referring to one of several oil pumping stations recently reopened after more than a month's closure.

Community unrests had obliged Shell to shut down some facilities accounting for a daily output of some 130,000 barrels since

By Hamisu Muhammad, Reporter (Business) with agency reports

December 5, 2004, when angry villagers from Kula briefly occupied them.

The shut-down forced Shell to declare "force majeure", warning clients that it would not be able to meet export contracts from its Bonny terminal until early February.

Last week, the company resumed production of 47,000 barrels with the reopening of its Belema and Santa Barbara plants in Rivers State, leaving some 90,000 barrels still halted in other stations in the coastal swamps of the Niger

Delta region.

But a spokesman told AFP another plant - Ekulama II - resumed production on Wednesday after successfully carrying out inspection checks on the facility, raising its output to 65,000 barrels from the area.

He said inspection checks were progressing on Ekulama I, adding: "we hope to reopen it before the end of the week."

The spokesman said the company was holding talks with irate villagers who last week attempted to occupy the Odeama Creek station, some 30 kilometers (19 miles) to the west of Ekulama, causing a production loss of 8,000 barrels.

The villagers were protesting because a power generator provided for them by Shell had broken down and

they expected the company to repair it for them.

Shell is Nigeria's largest operator, accounting for almost half of the African country's exports of 2.5 million bpd. The company, like other majors operating in coastal swamps of the delta, regularly targets community protests, hostage-taking.

Nigeria to plans second LNG plant

Nigeria plans to build a second multi-billion-dollar liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant in the southwestern state of Ondo, officials said.

The new plant is the second in the west African country of some 130 million people after the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) at Bonny Island, Rivers State, began commercial production in October 1999.

A spokesman for the state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), quoted the company's managing director, Funsu Kupoakun as saying on Wednesday that the new plant will be sited at Olokola in Ondo state.

He said the project will cost six billion dollars (4.5 billion euros) and will be financed by the NNPC, Chevron Texaco and the British Gas West African Limited.

The spokesman said the

plant, to be known as OK-LNG, will produce 30 million metric tonnes of liquefied natural gas per annum, but the project will be executed in three phases, with the first phase producing 10 million metric tonnes by 2008.

He said a final decision to invest in the first phase of the project will be taken in 2006 to ascertain the financial involvement of the three partners, while other partners will be needed for the remaining phases.

He said the new plant is designed to meet Nigeria's target of 70 million metric tonnes of LNG by 2009.

The first LNG, the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is the single largest industrial investment in Africa, exporting LNG to buyers in Europe and America.

It is owned by the NNPC, Anglo-Dutch Shell Gas, TotalFinaElf and Italy's Agip under a joint venture partnership.

Asian ministers plan gas pipeline

Energy ministers from Bangladesh, India and Burma are meeting in the Burmese capital, Rangoon, to discuss a joint gas pipeline project.

Officials in Dhaka think the pipeline, proposed by a private company, would help boost energy co-operation across South Asia.

Authorities in Dhaka agreed to consider the proposal after years of reluctance.

Bangladesh could earn up to \$125m a year in fees and charges from a pipeline connecting India and Burma.

The project was proposed by a Bangladeshi private company, Mohona Holdings Ltd.

Bangladeshi Energy Minister Mosharraf Hossain said that although the project

was proposed by a private company, it needs to be supported by state-level policy decisions.

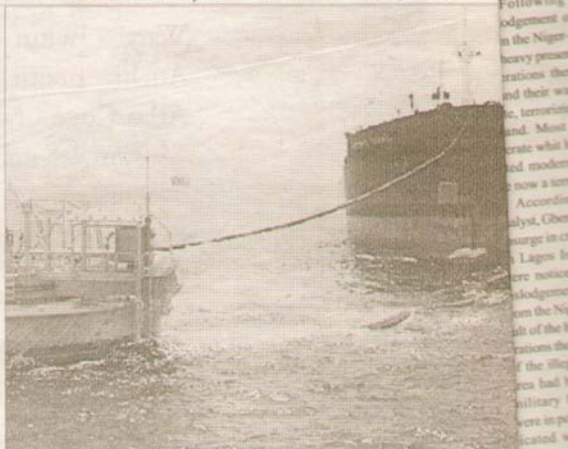
India's petroleum minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, is attending the tri-partite meeting.

He said his energy-hungry country would explore the possibility of laying the pipeline from Burma to the eastern Indian city of Calcutta.

He told reporters that the signals he had received from Burma and Bangladesh indicate there should not be much problem in arriving at an agreement.

But Mr Hossain said he would push for regional co-operation in the energy and power sectors before agreeing.

Officials in Dhaka



A single point mooring (SPM) anchored on the sea. A facility used for reception of petroleum products from vessels via pipelines.

Oil climbs towards \$47 on supply concerns

Oil prices climbed toward \$47 a barrel on Thursday after bullish fuel stocks data in the United States and a series of production hitches across the globe rekindled worries of a major supply disruption.

US light crude reached an intraday peak at \$46.76 a barrel before easing to \$46.58, a gain of 21 cents.

Prices were lifted by statistics in the United States that showed a drop of 3 million barrels in national crude inventories in the week to Jan. 7 to almost 289 million barrels.

The fall was almost double market expectations of a 1.7-million-barrel decrease.

The data also showed a 500,000-barrel decline in US heating oil stocks to 49.6 million barrels, although overall distillate supplies increased by 1.9 million barrels to 123 million.

"It's risky to be short so long as Murphy's Law is governing supply," said Societe Generale in a weekly note.

Global supply outages and forecasts for colder weather in the USNortheast have underpinned the market this week, keeping prices at the top end of their six-week range.

More than 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) of output in the US Gulf of Mexico, Nigeria and Norway's North Sea remains offline, although

Norwegian authorities have allowed for the restart of about half the 205,000 bpd of output halted by a gas leak in late November.

Iraqi exports have been reduced by continued sabotage on its northern pipeline infrastructure and power problems in the south, forcing Baghdad to cut all its February-June Basra Light sales contracts by 10 percent, or about 160,000 bpd.

Stormy weather has interrupted loading operations and tanker traffic in parts of the UK North Sea and at Latvia's Ventspils terminal and in Turkey's Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.

The disruptions coincide with OPEC implementation of a 1-million-bpd output cut from January 1.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is scheduled to meet on January 30 to discuss whether further cuts may be necessary as the northern winter ends and oil demand seasonally falls in the second quarter.

Some members say the cartel will consider tightening taps if prices fall below \$40 a barrel.

Business Trust

Insurance coys want guarantee on Naira stability

In a bid to get foreign investment into the country, a consortium of insurance companies led by Hallmark Assurance Plc, have asked the federal government to provide assurance that there would be stability of the naira over the next five years.

Speaking during a courtesy visit to the minister of finance in Abuja yesterday, the managing director of Hallmark Bank, Mr. Oluashola Ajo said an offer of substantial amount of money in the neighbourhood of a hundred million dollars in foreign investment is being made by some foreign investors to be utilised principally in the construction of several units of houses to be allocated through mortgage, to deserving Nigerian workers.

Mr. Ajo added that to build confidence in the investors, attempts need to be made to ensure that the repayment process is as stress free as possible. "It is in the above regard that the consortium of banks came together to guarantee repayment through the issuance of a bond," he said.

He added that "however, the repayment process for such offshore facilities are usually hindered by an unstable exchange rate environment." It is in line with this that they are requesting for an assurance on the stability of the naira over the next five years.

However, where the exchange rate exceeds the stipulated benchmark, the consortium requests that "the government should provide a buffer fund for the purpose of repayment of the excess on any outstanding facility."

"This request" according to Ajo, "is not novel as the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) established an exchange rate equalisation fund during the era of the National

We are not in haste to merge - Omegabank

The management of Omegabank Plc has disclosed that the bank is not in a haste to merge but that it believes in making haste slowly.

In a statement signed by the corporate affairs manager of the bank, Gbenga Omolewa, and made available to Daily Trust, the bank decried the "Speculative reporting on Omegabank's plans" by some newspapers.

"In a much as we acknowledge that we are in merger talks, we have not revealed the banks we are merging with to any reporter we found it embarrassing that some reporters are speculating that we are merging with bank A or B," the statement said.

By Anas A. Galadima, (Reporter) Business

Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND).

Mr. Ajo said the total number of the insurance companies that will participate is not yet known but that some of the companies present during yesterday's visit were Hallmark Assurance Plc, Heirs Alliance Assurance, Admiral Insurance Company, and WAPIC Insurance.

Mr. Ajo also requested the finance ministry to continue

to do its best to ensure greater participation of the local insurance companies in insurance activities in the oil and gas sector.

He added that "the local firms would no doubt witness an accelerated phase of growth if a substantial proportion of assets of oil companies and some other multinational companies insured abroad are underwritten by local underwriters as provided for by the insurance act of 2003."



Dr Umar Mustapha (right) chairman First Bank Exchange greetings with Abi. Kwaki (Hudaja) chairman mountain investment Ltd at the unveiling of the First Bank new logo in Lagos—recently. (Pic: Oluashola Oluwalana)

Euronext holds talks with LSE shareholders

Euronext — the operator of the Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels and Lisbon stock exchanges — has held "positive" talks with the major shareholders of the London Stock Exchange, as the bidding battle for the LSE heats up.

Euronext is competing with its German arch-rival Deutsche Boerse to take over the London market.

The Financial Times (FT) Deutschland quoted banking sources as saying that the talks between Euronext and LSE shareholders focussed primarily on "the construct of a merged exchange" and that the echo from the talks was

"positive". LSE's biggest shareholders include British investment fund Threadneedle with a stake of 10 percent, US asset manager Fidelity Investment with 6.7 percent, pension fund Scottish Widows with 4.5 percent and major banks including Deutsche Bank with 5.3 percent and UBS with 3.9 percent, the newspaper said Thursday.

Euronext was hoping to convince shareholders to put pressure on LSE management to accept its bid rather than a rival offer from Deutsche Boerse, it continued.

LSE is currently holding parallel takeover talks with

both Euronext and the operator of the Frankfurt stock exchange, but no formal offer has so far been put forward by either suitor.

The Frankfurt exchange made an informal offer to buy the LSE on December 13, offering to pay 530 pence per LSE share in a bid worth around two billion euros (2.6 billion dollars).

The London market immediately rejected the offer as insufficient but said it was willing to continue negotiations with the aim of securing a higher price.

Euronext also entered the fray, saying it was also interested in buying the LSE.

Dollar rebounds against Euro

The dollar clawed back after sustaining heavy losses on news of a record US trade deficit in November, dealers said.

The single European currency fell to 1.3224 dollars against 1.3255 late on Wednesday in New York.

The dollar gained to 102.42 yen compared with 102.31 on Wednesday.

Dealers were awaiting interest rate decisions from the European Central Bank and the Bank of England, but both were expected to leave their official borrowing rates unchanged, at 2.0 percent and 4.75 percent respectively.

The dollar fell Wednesday after data showed the US trade deficit unexpectedly

widened to a record 60.3 billion dollars in November, well above the market consensus for a narrowing to \$3.3 billion.

Major currency pairs have been trading in relatively narrow ranges "as market players continued to absorb the magnitude of yesterday's November US trade deficit", said Bank of New York analyst Neil Mellor.

After the US currency went into freefall during thin and volatile trading over the Christmas period, the market then took the opportunity to focus on the strength of the US economic recovery and prospects for aggressive in-

terest rate hikes, causing the dollar to stage a recovery.

The trade data, however, put the focus back firmly on the fundamental concerns over the United States' ballooning current account deficit.

"If, amidst the haze of New Year hangovers, investors had truly forgotten the rationale behind the greenback's slide in 2004, then yesterday's figures were a timely reminder," Mellor said.

WestLB analysts argued, however, that the data was "unlikely to put the dollar back on a stable downward trajectory, but will rather cap

Tsunami: Paris Club agrees on debt freeze deal

Seychelles to take up the offer.

The 19 members of the Paris Club met in Paris to discuss the plight of Asian countries hit by the Dec. 26 catastrophe. The external debts of the stricken nations total about \$272 billion, with Inf some \$48 billion.

Some countries hit by the tsunami have said they do not think a debt freeze is the best way to assist them, but French Finance Minister Hervé Guyard said he expected Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the

group was waiting to hear which countries would accept the offer.

"The suspension takes effect immediately," Paris Club President Jean-Pierre Jouyet told a news conference after talks in Paris, adding that no conditions were attached and the group was waiting to hear which countries would accept the offer.

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group was waiting to hear which countries would accept the offer.

would owe the Paris Club creditors \$3 billion, while Sri Lanka would owe the group \$320 million. The G7 countries — France, the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, Italy and Canada — are all in the Paris Club.

More than 150,000 people were killed by the huge waves that followed an earthquake off the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Some 105,000 of the victims were in Indonesia.

Indonesia said Monday it expected Western creditors to allow it to freeze up to 30 trillion rupiah (\$3.2 billion) in debt repayments through 2006 to deal with the disaster.

That would amount to about one-third of its \$8.8 billion in scheduled repayments over the next two years to the group of sovereign creditors.

A debt repayment freeze could offer short-term gain but bring long-term pain as the cost of servicing debt could rise in the future.

Jouyet also said the affected countries would not automatically have to start repaying their debts straight after the two financial institutions have issued their assessments.

In Washington, World Bank President James Wolfensohn said it will take weeks or months to fully calculate the reconstruction needs, but preliminary assessments by country should start appearing within two weeks.

"We're not yet sure what the total amount will be for reconstruction," Wolfensohn told a news conference.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, whose country was the hardest hit by the tsunami, had welcomed the prospect of a debt freeze deal but said Jakarta also needed more donations to cope with the disaster.

Sri Lanka hoped to secure at least a two-year debt moratorium, an official of the country's Finance Ministry said.

It has multilateral and bilateral debts of \$8.82 billion, and debt servicing is expected to cost about \$476 million in 2005.

A Paris Club official said that this year, Indonesia

that this year, Indonesia

the upside in any dollar recovery.

With the focus back on the US current account deficit, a strong US retail sales number later Thursday might give the dollar some support, but this was likely to be temporary, analysts said.

"Following the blow-out record November trade deficit and the sharp dollar sell-off that ensued, (Thursday's) data may come as some relief to the dollar," said CALYON analyst Mike Carey.

The euro was changing hands at 1.3224 dollars against 1.3255 late on Wednesday in New York, 135.47 yen (135.62), 0.7006 pounds (0.7010) and 1.5481 Swiss francs (1.5486).

The dollar stood at 102.42 yen (102.31) and 1.1704 Swiss francs (1.1679).

The pound was at 1.8882 dollars (1.8904), 193.48 yen (193.36) and 2.2099 Swiss francs (2.2084).

On the London Bullion Market, the price of an ounce of gold stood at 425.95 dollars against 426.60 dollars late on Wednesday.

Business Trust

JDA reviews companies' bids for award of licenses

The Nigeria-Sao Tome and Principe Joint Development Authority (JDA), has invited some companies to review their bids in the last bidding round for final award of licenses.

The JDA has in December put five blocks on offer where 26 companies including some indigenous ones submitted bids.

Sources in the industry told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Abuja that the move was part of efforts to ascertain the capabilities of the companies in offshore deep waters.

"Some of the companies

invited are in partnership with reputable organisations with immense offshore deep water experience," the source said.

The sources confirmed that most of the companies invited are indigenous ones.

NAN learnt that the JDA would announce winners of the five blocks anytime from today.

Presidential adviser on petroleum, Dr Edmund Daukoru said most of the Nigerian companies that participated in bidding round do not have deep water experience, but the JDA would consider them seriously.

He said the move would further domicile local content in the upstream sector of the oil industry.

NAN gathered that in all the 26 companies that participated in the exercise, only few American companies really have offshore deep water experience.

Such companies include Anardako and ECI among others.

Among the indigenous, ERHC appears to have an edge over others considering its partnership with Pioneer Energy, Noble Energy Resources and Devon.

ERHC has entered into partnership with these companies in blocks 2, 3, and 4 to capture the real economic value of the blocks given their experiences in deep offshore in other parts of the world.

It is widely believed that ERHC stands a good chance of winning the licenses considering these factors as well as its activities in the Gulf of Guinea before the setting up of the JDZ.

ERHC and its partners would pool resources together to explore hydrocarbon resources in the JDZ for the benefit of both Nigeria and Sao Tome as well as the parties involved.

The JDZ was established in February 2002 to explore and manage hydrocarbon and non-hydrocarbon resources in the zone on 60/40 basis in favour of Nigeria.

Globacom launches fibre optic transmission

The second national telecommunications operator, Globacom, is set to boost the voice and data transmission services for mobile and fixed telephone services in the country as it commences transmission on its fibre optic ring.

The Chief Operating Officer of Glo Mobile, Mr Mohammed Jameel, said in Lagos yesterday that the Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano axis had made history, becoming the first route in the country to use the Globacom fibre optic transmission.

The sophisticated infrastructure was inaugurated on Dec. 8 last year with the rollout of Globacom services in Kano and the Kano-Abuja highway.

According to him, all calls on the Globacom network from Kano to Abuja are being routed through the fibre optic ring while the microwave backbone serves as back up.

Jameel said that other parts of the country would soon be connected to the high bandwidth fibre optic ring.

He said that the Lagos-Epe and Ijebu-Ode-Ore -Benin and the second route which covers the Lagos-Sagamu-Abeokuta-Owode Ibadan axis, currently under construction, are almost ready for operation.

The Glo Mobile Chief noted that the link from Ibadan to Ilorin, Minna-Abuja-Makurdi, Port-Harcourt-Owerri, Enugu-Onitsha -Benin would be completed before September this year.

Globacom's fibre optic cables loop up to Abuja to reconnect the Northern parts of the country.

Explaining the intricate details of the structure of the ring, Jameel said the infrastructure travels a ring

topology to provide a self-healing network, with an every inch back up of various routes.

"This ensures that if there is any problem at a point, the traffic will be re-directed and connection will be automatically re-established by a parallel loop in the ring," he added.

Jameel said further that calls originating from and terminating on the Glo Network would not only be crisp and clear by reason of the robust nature of the fibre optic technology, but would also not suffer breaks and drops because of the back ups.

...rolls out in Makurdi

The city of Makurdi, capital of Benue has joined the long list of cities, towns and villages currently enjoying the services of Glo Mobile.

Sources in the company told NAN yesterday in Lagos that the roll out was "Glo's new year gift to the people of Makurdi in particular and Benue State in general."

The network's rollout in Makurdi is part of its aggressive coverage of the entire country which has already taken it to 287 cities, towns and major road networks across the country.

It will be recalled that in November 2004 Glo Mobile launched its services in Kaduna, Yola and Kano city including Kano-Abuja Road.

Between November and December 2004, the Network had added over 30 new towns and link roads to its coverage zones.

The additions then included, Escravos, Ekpoma, Akure, Umunede, Agbor, Iwo, Auchi, Ondo, Owo, Oro, Obaagun, Ikirun, Lalupon, Ejigbo, Moro, and Edun-Abon. Others are Sapele, Ugheli, Forcados, Abraka, Owerri Oshogbo,

Abakiliki and Ede.

The roads which also came live on the Glo Network included Enugu- Abakiliki road and Ilorin -Ogbomosh Road.

Soon to be placed on the Glo map are the cities of Jos, Maiduguri, Zaria, Bauchi, Amaimo and Mbaise. A major attraction on the Glo network is the clarity of its signals.

Some of the expressways previously covered include Aba-Port Harcourt road which starts from Aba, Abia State, in the

South East and leads to Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers in the South-South geo-political zone.

Others are Abeokuta-Offa road, which crosses three states of Ogun and Oyo in the South West and Kwara, in the North Central.

The network has also covered Epe-Ijebu Road, which keeps the subscriber in touch with family, friends and business partners across three states of Lagos, Oyo and Ogun.

Ibadan-Ile-Ife and Ile-Ife-Ilesha expressways, which cross two states of Oyo and Osun, are also live on the network.



(L-R) Mr. Alkeem Babatunde, Company Secretary and Samuel Adegbite, Chairman, Gateway Bank and Mr. Samuel Olatundi, MD, at the Extra-ordinary general meeting of the Bank, in Lagos...recently Pic: Ola Dipupo Odunewa

Japan Airlines to buy 50 A320 jets from Airbus

Asia's biggest carrier Japan Airlines (JAL), which historically has relied on Boeing, is in talks with European consortium Airbus for an order of up to 50 short-range A320 jets, industry sources say.

Airbus executive vice president John Leahy told the Nihon Keizai Shimbun from Paris in the daily's Thursday evening edition that Airbus was competing with Boeing to replace about 50 older planes in the JAL fleet.

Airbus believes it has a 50-50 chance of winning the order of that size, a person close to the negotiations told

AFP.

JAL is expected to make its choice between the Boeing 737 and the Airbus A320 in the coming weeks, with a decision seen as likely before the fiscal year closes at the end of March.

JAL asked Boeing and Airbus in October for proposals on aircrafts of about 150 seats, airline spokesman Geoffrey Tudor said.

"We are still studying their proposals and we haven't decided on either the number of the aircraft or when to decide and of course which type," Tudor said.

He said JAL saw a need for single-aisle aircraft for the growth of its domestic network, particularly in light of the expansion of Haneda airport near Tokyo.

Haneda, Asia's biggest airport, is primarily for domestic flights and is set to open a fourth runway in 2009, expanding by 40 percent its number of takeoff and landing slots.

JAL said last month it will place a firm order for 30 Boeing 7E7 Dreamliner jets with an option to buy 20 more in a crucial boost for the US giant's next-generation project which is facing a tough challenge from the just-launched Airbus A350.

VACANCIES

Gendys International Limited under the auspices of an international donor agency based in Abuja seeks applications from suitably qualified Nigerians for the underlisted positions in each of the stated duty stations. Successful candidates would be part of the implementation team for a Global Program on AIDS.

POSITIONS:

(1) PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER (2) ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

DUTY STATIONS:

- (i) Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital (AKTH) Kano, Kano State
- (ii) Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital (NAUTH) Nnewi, Anambra State
- (iii) University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) Benin, Edo State

(1) PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS

Requirements:

- University post graduate degree in Public Health or Epidemiology.
- At least 3 years experience working in an international donor agency or NGO
- Must possess computer skills with demonstrable competence in software applications such as spreadsheet, EPI-Info software and slide preparations.
- Must have interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate fluently in the dominant local language.

Responsibilities:

- Provide management oversight for the office in accordance with project action plan
- Liaise between CDC/GAP Abuja and management of Teaching Hospitals and designated satellite facilities.
- Report to the Medical Epidemiology in CDC/GAP Abuja.
- Monitor, collate, report and provide feedback on service access and treatment monitoring data for the PMTCT, Care and Treatment Program for people living with HIV/AIDS within the Teaching Hospital and designated satellite facilities.
- Ensure judicious use of human and material resources provided by USG in beneficiary health care facilities, and provide monthly reports to CDC/GAP Abuja.

(2) ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

Requirements:

- Must possess a first degree in any of the Arts, Social sciences or relevant equivalent such as HND with at least 3 years job experience in similar position.
- Must have computer working experience in word processing and spreadsheet.
- Ability to communicate fluently in the dominant local language is desired.

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ONLY SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES WILL BE CONTACTED

Business Trust

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2005

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(S)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
CUTIX PLC	3	1.50	14,200	21,300.00
Sector Totals			14,200	21,300.00
AGRICULTURE & AGRO ALLIED				
THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	14	15.40	29,292	453,459.35
PRESCO PLC	16	12.00	79,584	955,674.84
Sector Totals	30		108,876	1,389,134.19
AVIATION				
AVIATION DEVELOPMENT COMPANY PLC	1	1.01	1,143	1,154.43
Sector Totals	1		1,143	1,154.43
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC	48	1.98	2,257,960	4,478,098.58
INCAR NIGERIA AFLC	1	1.20	300	360.00
R. T. BRISCOE PLC	6	7.22	8,382	60,518.04
Sector Totals	55		2,266,642	4,539,004.62
BANKING				
ACCESS BANK PLC	6	3.42	22,119	75,646.98
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC	15	6.63	71,367	473,163.21
FIRST ALLIANTIC BANK PLC	13	3.41	51,408	175,361.68
CHARTERED BANK PLC	166	3.70	12,670,669	46,913,302.94
COOPERATIVE BANK PLC	15	1.35	10,226,100	13,822,135.00
COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT BANK PLC	1	0.73	2,000	1,460.00
EIB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	1	2.26	21,400	48,364.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	545	24.45	199,648	39,759,675.66
FBS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	28	1.38	562,648	794,968.74
GLUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC	100	11.69	918,540	10,737,732.60
GILT BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	25	0.83	594,300	529,107.00
HALLMARK BANK PLC	1	2.06	5,000	10,300.00
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC	90	0.74	19,110,071	14,545,952.79
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC	5	1.07	258,625	276,728.75
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC	10	7.81	60,379	471,559.99
ION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	1	0.94	133,288	121,526.00
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC	52	1.27	8,241,843	10,466,740.61
NAL BANK PLC	68	2.14	6,951,000	14,848,439.87
OCEANIC BANK PLC	1	6.30	305	1,921.00
OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC	13	1.39	60,034	83,797.26
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC	6	7.41	38,590	283,449.07
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	12	1.47	575,757	809,964.24
TRADE BANK PLC	1	1.35	1,000	1,350.00
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC	444	20.80	1,745,892	36,439,384.10
WEMA BANK PLC	76	1.03	16,591,363	51,042,729.03
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	23	3.83	1,878,452	16,500,688.78
ZENITH BANK PLC	63	15.69	677,250	7,382,316.36
Sector Totals	1,880		84,999,632	255,480,359.02
BREWERIES				
CHAMPION BREWERIES PLC	2	4.68	200,001	890,004.68
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC	170	113.00	444,026	49,562,208.04
NIGRIAN BREWERIES PLC	418	41.95	655,306	40,065,579.70
Sector Totals	590		1,599,333	90,520,742.42
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC	119	24.45	308,244	7,354,498.05
BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC	29	4.10	187,210	742.10
CEMENT COMPANY OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	47	7.00	782,799	2,451,301.00
WEST AFRICAN PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC	196	11.92	834,669	2,146,701.01
Sector Totals	472		1,972,922	11,053,242.16
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC	18	6.00	485,300	680,881.69
CAP PLC	9	0.90	299,500	291,057.50
D. N. MEYER PLC	11	0.30	18,750	391,300.00
IPWA PLC	1	4.25	29,950	14,525.00
NIGERIA GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC	12	1.20	75,522	33,617.00
Sector Totals	59		779,938	1,713,441.19
COMPUTER & OFFICE EQUIPMENT				
HALLMARK PAPER PRODUCTS PLC	300			261.00
Sector Totals	300			261.00
CONGLOMERATES				
A. O. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC	6	1.14	108,769	121,122.04
C. F. A. O. NIGERIA PLC	14	5.09	758,187	790,019.71
CHELLARAMS PLC	4	1.51	2,003	3,453.15
JOHN HOLT PLC	1	0.99	115	509.85
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC	194	16.71	800,806	13,211,230.59
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC	98	12.28	400,540	6,809,699.86
S. C. D. A. NIGERIA PLC	6	1.19	109,161	130,923.92
U.A.C. NIGERIA PLC	65	14.17	190,491	2,699,257.47
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC	5	1.20	20,512	19,814.40
Sector Totals	393		2,027,484	23,160,002.97
CONSTRUCTION				
COSTAIN (W.A.) PLC	5	0.96	4,464	4,172.36
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC	7	16.00	30,200	483,200.00
Sector Totals	12		34,664	487,372.36
FOOD BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	48	24.70	188,755	4,675,533.48
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC	57	57.60	443,440	26,254,411.29
LOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC	252	16.61	146,856	2,439,278.16
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	83	57.49	156,146	8,981,340.87
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC	70	150.00	209,019	31,483,340.04
Sector Totals	480		1,144,216	73,833,932.84
HEALTH CARE				
EVANS MEDICAL PLC	22	3.30	1,217,700	4,032,704.00
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC	14	5.01	193,898	1,078,772.98
MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC	1	2.13	50,000	56,400.00
NUMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC	13	2.85	169,600	497,276.00
PHARMA-DEKO PLC	4	4.75	4,000	19,000.00
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	16	8.15	275,762	2,321,166.10
Sector Totals	90		1,912,960	8,005,419.88
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC	33	1.12	2,434,010	2,655,729.18
B.O.C. GASES PLC	10	3.09	144,604	434,312.00
VITAFAM NIGERIA PLC	16	4.24	118,504	502,456.96
VONO PRODUCTS PLC	1	1.90	1,384	2,628.60
Sector Totals	60		2,698,502	3,595,127.74
INSURANCE				
AICO INSURANCE PLC	14	2.01	587,487	1,180,848.87
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC	9	1.32	91,301	118,116.22
CRUSADER INSURANCE PLC	4	0.73	26,808	18,985.84
LAW UNION AND ROCK INSURANCE PLC	2	1.30	1,500	2,000.00
LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	9	1.59	464,568	767,483.12
N.E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG) PLC	1	0.79	468	369.72
NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC	1	4.03	30,000	120,900.00
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC	4	3.53	51,000	181,330.00
UNIC INSURANCE PLC	8	1.15	79,665	90,100.91
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COV. PLC	15	2.84	315,704	890,386.16
Sector Totals	67		1,647,901	3,369,420.84
MANAGED FUNDS				
C & I LEASING PLC	16	1.68	558,400	948,034.00
NIGERIAN ENERGY SECTOR FUND	17	889.00	558,420	17,780.00
Sector Totals	33		1,116,820	965,814.00
PACKAGING				
AVON CROWN CAPS & CONTAINERS PLC	3	0.72	30,376	36,270.72
NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC	7	1.15	27,700	30,520.00
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC	28	5.18	10,083,758	53,302,364.52
POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC	2	0.54	20,800	11,070.00
Sector Totals	40		10,182,334	53,380,225.24
PETROLEUM(MARKETING)				
AFROIL PLC	15	0.86	511,754	440,108.44
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC	131	67.86	3,310,664	226,478,882.25
AFRICA OIL & GAS SERVICES PLC	31	2.21	592,942	883,436.78
MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC	53	179.67	67,970	12,146,702.90
CONOIL PLC	78	127.00	47,255	5,988,127.60
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC	31	163.00	73,903	4,265,518.45
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC	51	179.50	62,754	11,260,490.82
OANDO PLC	252	107.10	234,114	25,239,735.86
Sector Totals	632		4,763,420	286,693,022.50
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC	5	1.64	66,600	109,224.00
Sector Totals	5		66,600	109,224.00
REAL ESTATE				
UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC	50	9.00	633,905	5,665,384.44
Sector Totals	50		633,905	5,665,384.44
TEXTILES				
AFRITEX NIGERIA PLC	1	0.51	400	204.00
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC	17	2.49	130,243	346,715.07
Sector Totals	18		130,643	346,919.07
Overall Totals	4,674		115,916,718	825,860,504.11

NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(S)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
3	1.50	14,200	21,300.00
14	15.40	29,292	453,459.35
16	12.00	79,584	955,674.84
30		108,876	1,389,134.19
1	1.01	1,143	1,154.43
1		1,143	1,154.43
48	1.98	2,257,960	4,478,098.58
1	1.20	300	360.00
6	7.22	8,382	60,518.04
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1	0.73	2,000	1,460.00
1	2.26	21,400	48,364.00
545	24.45	199,648	39,759,675.66
28	1.38	562,648	794,968.74
100	11.69	918,540	10,737,732.60
25	0.83	594,300	529,107.00
1	2.06	5,000	10,300.00
90	0.74	19,110,071	14,545,952.79
5	1.07	258,625	276,728.75
10	7.81	60,379	471,559.99
1	0.94	133,288	121,526.00
52	1.27	8,241,843	10,466,740.61
68	2.14	6,951,000	14,848,439.87
1	6.30	305	1,921.00
13	1.39	60,034	83,797.26
6	7.41	38,590	283,449.07
12	1.47	575,757	809,964.24
1	1.35	1,000	1,350.00
96	9.22	1,745,892	36,439,384.10
444	20.80	16,591,363	51,042,729.03
76	1.03	16,591,363	16,500,688.78
23	3.83	1,878,452	7,382,316.36
63	15.69	677,250	10,628,052.50
1,880		84,999,632	255,480,359.02
2	4.68	200,001	890,004.68
170	113.00	444,026	49,562,208.04
418	41.95	655,306	40,065,579.70
590		1,599,333	90,520,742.42
119	24.45	308,244	7,354,498.05
29	4.10	187,210	742.10
47	7.00	782,799	2,451,301.00
196	11.92	834,669	2,146,701.01
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11	0.30	18,750	391,300.00
1	4.25	29,950	14,525.00
59	1.20	75,522	33,617.00</



NATIONAL PENSION COMMISSION

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MAITAMA DISTRICT
PMB 5170 WUSE, ABUJA

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In the discharge of its supervisory and regulatory mandate, the National Pension Commission will consult all stakeholders and the general public in formulating rules, regulations, guidelines and circulars. In this regard, the National Pension Commission invites all prospective operators to participate in a consultative forum to be held as follows: -

Date: 24th January 2005

Venue: AGIP Recital Hall
The Muson Centre
8\9, Marina, Onikan, Lagos

Time: 10.00 AM

Participating Organisations are kindly requested to limit their representation to a maximum of two persons each.

All enquiries should be directed to the:

Director-General
National Pension Commission

09-6720091, 6720095
www.pencom.gov.ng



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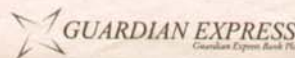
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THE HOME FRONT

Fragments

By Safiya I. Dantiye, *Woman Editor*

How old is forty years?

Life begins at forty, they say, even though it has an ironic underlining, because, well, forty years is not exactly young.

People also say that you are as old as you feel. And if it is so, some people will be perpetually young, at least in their hearts.

In any case, forty years is a turning point in a person's life, because the fact of ageing stares you squarely in the face, and whether you like it or not you've reached your peak and you are now in a downward slide.

The ironic thing about ageing is that if you think a certain age is old, you will cease to think so if you reach that age. The age is not 'old' after all, you'll think ruefully.

People dread to be twenty, thirty, but the most dreaded age to reach is forty. After all people that are forty are categorized among the 'old' people. Therefore why shouldn't one dreads it?

"People dread to be twenty, thirty, but the most dreaded age to reach is forty. After all people that are forty are categorized among the 'old' people. Therefore why shouldn't one dreads it?"

Someone pointed out that people aged faster in the years gone by, as according to him people married very early (both men and women) and that they would become grandparents before they reach forty years. And as custom demanded, they would assume the posture of old people and resigned themselves to their 'fate' as it is.

Well, this still happens in some places, especially in rural areas. In fact about two weeks ago in Kano, one of the almajiris in our house who was about seventeen or eighteen years old was summoned to go to his village in Zaria for his marriage.

Anyway, the person above continued to point out that nowadays, unlike the olden days, with education, finer clothes and the fact that people marry late, forty years does not look as ominously reaching the grand old age as before. In fact, some people, especially men marry at the age of forty, in other words, starting their life at forty, so to speak.

Mid life crisis or not, I think reaching the age of forty is more telling on women than men.

I recall a family discussion forum on Kano state owned television, CTV 67 years back, one of the participants aptly said: "A man of forty can marry a ten year old girl, while a woman of forty can hardly think of marrying a thirty year old man."

Thereafter, women can hardly bluff their way through forty years as men do. After all, a man of forty or sixty as pointed out above, can marry a girl young enough to be his daughter and 'revive' his youth, unlike a woman who (naturally?) considers herself out of the race by younger girls. It is rather like contending with her own daughters, which will only make her age more pronounced, and as such become a subject of ridicule.

Surprisingly I dreaded reaching the age of thirty than the forty staring at me in the face. In those years, thirty seemed so old to me, probably because people think that twenties is kind of young, and there is the tendency to hold on tenaciously to the twenties.

All the same, perhaps I am not panicked by approaching forty because there is nothing I could do about it with grown up children to make people speculate and guess at my age.

But the issue still is how old is forty years? Is it really a stage to reach then to pick up again with vigour, as if time is running out on you or is it a peak you reach then solemnly landslide?

I guess it is a matter of opinion or how life turns out for one. Some have accomplished a lot by the age of forty, while some seem to be starting their life at the same age.

At any rate, the irony of beginning life at forty is not lost, even on those who are forty years 'young'.

Jamila Tangaza – First woman to head the BBC Hausa service

By Safiya I. Dantiye, *Woman Editor*

London, and now Open University London.

Been with the BBC for more than twelve years, she initially started with the Hausa service then moved around the BBC Africa

productions, focus on Africa, Network Africa, Outlook, BBC Editor in Nigeria until her latest appointment.

Married with two children, Jamila Tangaza has just been nominated by the Africa and Middle East Region for the BBC leadership programme at Ashridge, a leading

international business school in the United Kingdom.

Jamila Tangaza also created, produced and presented the most popular Hausa listeners competition series "Labarina," literally meaning "my story" where people sent the stories of a particular experience.

It is often said that women have come of age, in other words they have achieved earned recognition in areas thought to be the exclusive domains of men.

At the same time, while some women achieve prominence and excellence in obscure fields or fields that do not make them in 'direct' contact with the public, some are in the profession of broadcasting media that makes them household names.

Thereafter, it is not mere rhetoric to say that Jamila Tangaza has made history as the first woman to head the BBC Hausa Service.

Born in Kano, Jamila Tangaza had attended St Louis Primary School and St Louis Secondary School, Kano, she then attended Bayero University, Kano (BUK). She also attended Kings College University of

Japan, UNFPA to end VVF in Nigeria

By Aisha Umar, *Reporter (Women Affairs)*

The government of Japan has extended assistance worth \$1.84 million (N255,760,000) through the Trust Fund for Human Security of Obstetric Fistula (TFHSA) to be implemented in the Federal Republic of Nigeria by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

This was disclosed in a statement made available to the *Home Front*.

According to the statement the project will establish a freestanding fistula treatment centre, which will not only increase access to services but also serve as a structured training and research centre in Nigeria.

Most obstetric fistula caused by prolonged obstructed labour, it highlighted was a hole that forms between the women's vagina and bladder or rectum, leaving them with chronic incontinence, and, in most cases, killing the baby during childbirth. Obstetric fistula is a reflection of poor maternal health indicator such as poverty, early pregnancy, poor education, inaccessible family planning service and childbirth unattended by skilled health personnel.

Women with fistula not only suffer from poor health, noted the statement, but also are subject to increasing vulnerability due to the social stigma attached to the condition. Obstetric fistula represents a threat to women's survival, livelihood and dignity, and consequently human security.



Jamila Tangaza.

Women, key to poverty alleviation – Perm sec

By Abubakar Haruna, *Reporter (Women Affairs)*

The outgoing permanent secretary of the federal ministry of women affairs, Mr. Oloche Edache, has said that poverty could not be effectively tackled in the country, without addressing the poverty of women.

Mr. Edache made the statement while responding to the encomiums poured on him during his handover to the acting permanent secretary of the ministry, Mrs. Omobola Iminyan, at the ministry's conference room, within the week.

Mr. Oloche Edache said "70 per cent of the country's population are made up of women, most of whom are poor and bear the burden of raising the future generation of the country."

He commended the minister for what he called her formidable and firm leadership, particularly in the execution of most of the projects he met on ground which according to him, aimed at capacity building and economic empowerment of women.

He further expressed satisfactions at the positive air of cordiality, understanding and co-operation that pervaded his stay in the ministry which he attributed to the excellent co-operation of the senior management in the ministry.

He called for the need to maintain that spirit of fellowship to achieve greater results in the ministry and the country in general.

The outgoing permanent secretary also called for the need to transform the ministry and

on computer.

Mrs. Omobola Iminyan, the acting permanent secretary, congratulated outgoing permanent secretary for moving into the United Nations as a special ambassador of Nigeria, promising to uphold the standard of the ministry.

make it a model in terms of record management in the new electronic age, this he said could be made possible by alternating the ministry's record, such as the payroll, filing and so on, through the IT system for proper networking

Minister makes case for Nigerian women

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin, *Health Reporter*

For Nigerian women to attain the highest possible level of health and live socially and economically productive lives need a holistic approach, the Minister of State for Health, Princess Olufunke Adedoyin has said.

The minister stated this Tuesday in Abuja while addressing the inaugural consultative meeting organized by the African Women's Health Initiative (AWHI). She said the rise of integrated approach to meet women's needs has been demonstrated in the Female Functional Literacy for Health (FFLH) project which she noted, was targeted at the adult and illiterate women in order to improve their personal and family's health as well as providing a sustainable means of livelihood for them.

Princess Adedoyin who noted that the FFLH project was presently in 53 communities in 23 states further hinted that, efforts were on to integrate the project into the national programme for mass literacy.

Lamenting the risks accompanying pregnancy and child births, the Minister of State for Health said this development put Nigeria as having one of the highest records of maternal mortality rates in the world,

adding that, for every woman who dies of pregnancy related causes, between 30 and 100 others suffer short or long-term disabilities like obstetric fistula, chronic depression, urinary incontinence, infertility, maternal exhaustion and chronic anaemia.

She disclosed that the women in health development unit has been established within the Federal Ministry of Health to articulate and facilitate projects and activities aimed at improving women's health. This, Princess Adedoyin said was in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) resolution which stressed the need to enhance the health status of vulnerable groups using intersectoral action.

In her speech at the occasion, former first lady of Nigeria and the initiator of the Better Life Programme for African Rural Women, (Mrs.) Maryam Babangida pointed out that addressing the many problems associated with rural woman would be the entry point for addressing the issues of growth, development and sustainability in rural communities.

THE HOME FRONT

Culture, religion limit girl-child education - UNICEF

The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) Education Project officer in Kaduna, Mallam Adamu Ndagi has said that cultural and religious bias embibed by many Nigerian parents, especially in large families with limited resources have been responsible for poor female children education in most northern parts of the country.

Mallam Ndagi stated this at the launching of girls child education programme organized by Nigeria Army Officers Wife Association (NAOWA) in Kaduna, within the week.

According to him some parents also keep their female children out of school due to mis-interpretation of tenets of Islamic religion, adding that with 70% of the population living below the poverty line, girls were often sent to generate income for families by selling wares in the market.

He also said that in teaching and learning processes, boys were given more opportunities to ask and answer questions more often than the girls in classroom.

The UNICEF scribe said that majority of schools were not girl-friendly, as they do not guarantee adequate protection of children's rights, due to high level of studentism in schools especially in urban slums.

From Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent (Kaduna)

Mallam Ndagi said that the Northern states and those of Bayelsa, Ebonyi, and Rivers in the southern states have

serious problems of girls education, thus putting them as disadvantage states.

He declared that investing in girls education was the best investment in terms of development for long benefit

including making women more economically active and productive.

Also speaking, the National President of NAOWA who is also the wife of chief of army staff, Mrs. Ruth

Agwai said that a girl child was on daily basis affected by the despicable tradition of eulogizing the boy, pointing out that it was insensitive to the plight and needs of a girl child.

According to her, given cross cultural influences in our barracks the girls were in a more precarious position and week in the scheme of things adding that they were also faced with unequal set of difficulties just like their counterparts in the larger society.

She also said that girls in the barracks were also restricted by gender discrimination and most were denied education in favour of their brothers, pointing out that this has forced them into early marriages or even pregnancy outside wedlock, thus further ostracizing them.

She disclosed that all those ugly trends were being reversed by NAOWA in its bold step to ensure that equal opportunity was given to all children in the barracks community.



Mr. & Mrs. Abdulfattah Adeleye of the Daily Trust Newspapers, Lagos, posed for photograph after their wedding ceremony on January 24, 2004.

Lady mechanic initiative requires N25m for projects

The Lady Mechanic Initiative, a non-governmental organisation, requires about N25 million to build a workshop for the training of female mechanics in the country. Sandra Aguebor, founder and initiator of the programme, disclosed this to

newsmen in Lagos on Tuesday. She said that in addition to a workshop, which required about N15 million, there would also be a hostel and a garage, as well as a spare parts shop and office.

Aguebor, who had been to the U.S. on women

development issues, added that N10 million was required to equip the workshop in Lagos, which would train young girls and women with genuine interest in becoming auto-mechanics.

She said potential female mechanics would be drawn from school dropouts and commercial sex workers and even married women, as well as those deported from Europe.

"Our initiative also absorbs students on industrial training from tertiary institutions as well as NYSC members and we pay them N3,000 monthly," she said.

Aguebor, who currently has 25 girls in her workshop in Lagos, plans to open others to pursue her campaign, especially in Edo, her home state, to debunk the erroneous belief that girls could only progress through prostitution.

The 25 girls also collect N3,000 monthly.

She explained that she did not go into the profession because she was from a poor family, but because she wanted to realise a dream.

Aguebor claimed that Lagos State government had asked for N23 million for a plot of land it intended to allocate to the initiative.

She attended Benin Technical College and Auchi Polytechnic, both in Edo, where she studied automobile engineering.

She worked briefly with the defunct Bendel Transport Company and the Nigerian Railway Corporation before opening her own workshop.

Mrs Tinubu charges children on good behaviour

The first lady of Lagos State, Mrs. Tinubu has urged children to appreciate the effort of their parents and be of good behaviour and obedient to them.

This statement was made when Union Bank of Nigeria hosted children of its staff in Lagos and other less privileged children from some charity homes to a New Year party.

The Executive Director (Corporate Resources), Mr. Mika Okonkwo, who represented the Group Managing

By Kanu Ndidiomaka, (Intern)

Director/Chief Executive, Dr. Godwin Oborh, said the event was just for the bank to show their responsibility to the society.

The bank also used the occasion to present some gift items which include Bags of rice and beverages, N30,000 each to Pacelli school for the blind, SOS village, Isolo and Wesley school for the deaf.

Mr. Mike on behalf of the bank thanked the children for their sacrifices in allowing

their parents to offer services to the organisation, while reminding the children that they are the future employees of the bank, also urged them to take their education seriously.

Other officers who represented other charity homes also thanked the bank for the items and money they received from them.

The cake of the anniversary was later cut by the first lady's representative who crowned Master and Mrs Union Bank.

NGO trains traditional birth attendants

Fifty traditional birth attendants were trained in modern techniques by an NGO - "Mayaka Health and Education Mobilisation Agency" (MAHEMA) in Bauchi, last year.

The project coordinator, Hajija Lubabatu Jibrin, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Bauchi that the gesture was aimed at

enhancing reproductive health services in the area.

Jibrin said the programme was initiated to equip women and encourage them to adopt community-based solutions to their problems.

She said the NGO, founded in 1986, had established mini health clinics in Gwallaga, Yetwa and Wunti Dada, all in Bauchi, to provide easy access to health care facilities

and services in the communities.

Jibrin further said the organisation had also distributed some insecticide treated mosquito nets to the communities on loan to encourage its use among the people and check the spread of malaria.

She explained that the scheme was introduced to assist the poor to pay for such commodities instalmentally.

Between professional associations and NGOs

By Hauwa M. Abdullahi,

A professional association and non-governmental organization are two similar things but different in many ways. An Association or organization as the name implies is the coming together of individual members of a community or group for a particular purpose.

There are a lot of distinctions between professional Association and non-governmental organisation which are not very clear even among some members of professional groups.

For a professional Association to function it must undergo a national registration which was mostly done under trade union act while a non governmental organization acquired its registration from corporate affairs commission, state ministry of information, Youth sports and culture or local government under youth club, etc.

A professional association has a very solid foundation because its leadership starts from top (National) to State branches. Such Associations are recognised even Internationally while NGOs mostly exist or function effectively in the State, Local government or Community where they are established.

A professional association has a strong and sustainable source of revenue. Check of dues, membership or annual dues which are paid or directly deducted from member's salaries. These are the major source of fund which keep the Association's activities moving, such strong and sustainable revenue generation source don't exist in NGOs and even where check of system exists, one will find that it is not as strong and sustainable as that of the former.

The objectives of professional Association are mostly to protect and safeguard the interest of members, to promote the profession, enhance the capacity of members through training, fostering unity among members, etc. In a nut shell the activities of an ideal professional Association revolved around its objectives upon which it was established.

Associations such as Nigeria Bar Association, (NBA) Nigerian union of Teachers (NUT) Academic staff University union (ASSU) Nigerian union of Journalists NUJ, Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) Nigerian Institute of public Relations, (NIPR) Nigerian Medical Associations (NMA) etc are professional Associations that speak only on issues that affect their profession and their members while NGOs are free to play any role irrespective of their objectives in order to get support and assistance within and outside their scope of activities.

Due to the yearning for assistance from donor agencies by Associations in the country some professional Associations have now deviate and forget their primary functions by concentrating on activities that will yield them money from donor agencies.

One is not saying that professional association should not participate in the activities that affect the well-being of the community or the general public but it has to be done with caution because that is not it's objective.

Hauwa M. Abdullahi is the chairperson, NAWOJ, Kano State chapter

THE HOME FRONT

WRAPA stands by women whose rights are violated - Saudatu Mahdi

Saudatu Shehu Mahdi, the Secretary General of Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) was born on April 20, 1957 in Katsina, and married in Bauchi State. A mother of six children, Saudatu Mahdi joined women's rights activism in 1999 after retiring as an acting registrar of Abubakar Tafari Ali Polytechnic in Bauchi.

She joined WRAPA when it was being formed by Honourable Justice Fati Abubakar, the first lady, at that time, as a member of Board of Trustees before her present appointment when the first administrative secretary, Dr. Zainab Alkali was leaving to go back to the university.

In this interview with The Home Front, the Secretary General of WRAPA emphasized that one of the issues that determined the focus of WRAPA was Nigeria's women access to justice, WRAPA's involvement in the enactment for prohibition and protection of women from all forms of discrimination and violence against women. And much else. Excerpts:-

What is the historical background that led to the formation of WRAPA?

Well, as you are aware since the era of Mrs. Maryam Babangida, First Ladies came to the lane-light with programmes related to women and of service to humanity in support of their husbands.

So when Mrs. Abubakar came of course people were expecting a First Lady initiative and it took her a lot of thinking. She finally agreed to the suggestion that she starts her own initiative even as she was conscious of the short time frame within which her husband was to serve.

The outcome of her thinking and the suggestions of well-meaning Nigerians, who advised her then, was to set up a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) which would outlive her tenure as First Lady and continue as a source of succour and support for Nigerian women. In setting up an NGO they looked at what would really be of long-term benefit for Nigerian women and because of her background as a Judge she decided to address the plight of women in terms of their legal rights. The issues that determined the focus of WRAPA included how much access to justice do women in Nigeria have? What assistance can be rendered to enhance their legal rights? Was it enough to canvass for rights or could we extend protection for those rights especially when women needed to seek redress for violations met on them in private and in public?

So those issues, and her experiences at the Bar and on the Bench crystallized the focus and activities of her initiative which was named Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) for short. This acronym served to reflect the national outlook of the organization underscoring the common denominator of the mode of dressing of Nigerian women regardless of class, ethnicity or religion. So the acronym of WRAPA gave us strength in terms of coverage, our neutrality and intent which is to assist the woman wherever she is and within the context of whatever she believes in.

How far have you gone in achieving the objectives of WRAPA?

Alhamdulillah! Even though it is not for us to say how well we have done, however and with all modesty, I can say we have come along way.

Considering that we are just a little over five years in terms of operations, and six years in terms of our establishment, we believe that there are lots of testimonies for our success rating as an NGO. If you go to the street or talk to women and men of Nigeria, the general consensus is that we have done tremendously well in our contributions towards raising awareness about the rights of women, about accessible protection for the rights of women through legal representation (largely free), counseling and reconciliation for women and families. WRAPA has stood by

By Safiya I. Dantye, Human Editor & Abubakar Haruna, Reporter (Women Affairs)

women whose rights have been violated either by the State or State agents or by family members. Overall, and for sustainable respect and protection of women's rights, WRAPA has been actively engaged in the enactment of laws at state and national levels for prohibition and protection of women from all forms of discrimination, violence and ensuring that a culture of recognition and respect for the human dignity of women is entrenched in our communities and institutions.

In many states, you find that the institutions of the administration of justice are aware of WRAPA and its activities for women (the police, the judiciary, the prison service). On many occasions when there is a woman in prison or before the police and even the courts, and where it is obvious she needs help but can not access or afford it, the first port of call is the WRAPA Coordinator in that state or the headquarters in Abuja. Some of it also comes from some high profile cases we have handled for example the case of Aisha Makiadi, the girl whose hands were burnt, when we were able to raise support through well-meaning Nigerians and she was taken abroad for a plastic surgery that restored her hands to reasonable utility.

The case of Amina Lawal was another case that propelled the profile of WRAPA at local and international levels. Our intervention strategies have seen us through and we have been able to stand up for women. We are doing our bit, and would continue until the woman believes in herself, until the man believes the woman has dignity, until our sons and daughters live together as complimentary and equal partners in progress either as family members, as husband and wife, as colleagues in school without discrimination or harassment, that would be the day we can say we have arrived.

At any rate, WRAPA is still seen as cosmopolitan in nature, what are you doing to check abuses of women's rights at the grass root levels?

As I said earlier, one of the things we pride ourselves in WRAPA is our ability to set up support structures. Right from the beginning in 1999 and part of 2000, we spent time looking for volunteers (women) who would carry the banner of WRAPA in those states. We found men volunteers, selected and assigned them and they have been doing very well. We have a performance rating that is very high for some states where their activities and interventions have been of immense benefit to women. Such states include Oyo, Ilorin, Gombe, Katsina, Lagos, Nasarawa, Bauchi, Borno, Niger, Benue, Jigawa, Anambra, Plateau, Ondo, Bayelsa, Kogi, Kwara, Ogun, Kano and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

As it is, and for now our reach is growing to a few local governments in the states, especially the central local governments. To also help our reach most of WRAPA sensitization and education programme activities are done in



Saudatu Shehu Mahdi

the rural areas. Between November and December 2004 we conducted ten activities outside of ten state capitals. Any programme activity we do in capital cities will normally have strong participation of senior government functionaries. Meanwhile, most of our advocacy programmes go right to the grassroots where we meet the traditional rulers, religious and community leaders, as well as the grassroots woman whose life is the subject of the advocacy affects. So we are there at the grassroots where we eventually hope that women, men and the youth in communities will take responsibility for the eradication of all vices against women and girls. For now the states are trying and the local governments would be brought in gradually.

People see WRAPA as an organization that strives to make women to see themselves as equal with their male counterparts. What would you say about this assertion?

You see the question of equality is something that has been raging with time, but equality in what context? If you look at the context of equality in religion, where God says "we are equal before him, we are only superior in terms of our piety, that is the fear of God, and worship". When we talk about equality we are not talking equality in terms of shoulder to shoulder but equality in terms of being basic human beings, what hurts a man will definitely hurt a woman, what elevates a man will definitely elevate a woman. We refer to equality in terms of our potentials within a context of equal opportunities and space. Women should not be seen to be

struggling to say they must be men. Though men are the acclaimed leaders in religion and culture however, that leadership puts a responsibility on them which puts again the responsibility on the woman, makes a complimentary picture and not a mathematical equation of higher or lower in human dignity or potential. When people look at the word of equality and say we are teaching women their rights so that they will say they are equal to men, I believe there is a misunderstanding, and mischief in some cases. That is why in WRAPA we have a difference in our approach in doing things. Our experience is that some people hold this view and when we invite them (that is when there are problems) we find that the first reaction of the men is skeptical. However, by the time

play and given a chance some of them will do something to change the situation. I think for me that is an eye opener and the challenge for us as women's rights activists and as women is to be able to bring those men on board so that they bring other men on board. Whatever we are doing we should carry the men along side as a means of putting a stake for them and reducing the avenues for mischief for our intentions and activities.

WRAPA as a membership organization of women, men and youth has been able to break barriers by the involvement of men who ultimately should be concerned with the well being of a woman who is either their mother, wife, daughter or sister. Perceiving or treating the men as enemies or antagonists has not worked and we need to work with them as partners in the struggle to elevate the status of women both in private and in public spheres. The elevation of women should not be perceived as a threat to the men.

Then the third challenge is the fact that whatever we do we need resources. Resources not only in terms of naira and kobo but resources in terms of how much media coverage we have for our activities, good or bad? As you are aware media coverage of women has been limited to sensational issues.

You also have resources in terms of logistics. You referred to how far we have gone down to the grassroots. That requires money and patronage to facilitate the logistics of transport, space and so on. For instance if you are to start an adult literacy programme for women or skills empowerment programme you need space as renting is not sustainable. Who in that community is willing to give space free of charge for the good of that community? You also need teachers, who is willing to volunteer or subsidize?

What role has WRAPA played in the issues around the cases of adultery (under Shariah), which mainly focus on women victims than bringing the men to task?

As I said earlier, one of the high profile cases that brought WRAPA to lime light is one of the cases of women charged for adultery under the Shariah, when Shariah was implemented, and even as Muslims many of us not just as civil society groups, argued that while we support the reintroduction of Shariah, we advised and canvassed for its judicious implementation in accordance with the tenets of the Qur'an, Hadith and other accepted sources of the law. We argued for its detailed, exhaustive and meticulous application in enforcing behaviour change or its criminal aspects. We also argued that a legal system that grants every one equality before it is epitomized by Shariah, hence our pursuance of the due process of Shariah for the women we supported. But as you are aware and you know what happened and what is still happening. No one is saying we can't have convictions but if convictions are to be made let them be on the expounded tenets of justice for all under Shariah.

For example in Islamic law, we know that the privacy of an individual is protected, and no one has the right to pry into the privacy of an individual. In that way, some of the offences especially zina (adultery) have been met within the private realm. If any Muslim commits "zina" (adultery), it is she or he that may voluntarily come and say she or he has committed the offence. If however somebody else says a Muslim has committed the offence, then there is a set of rules about how the proof of the

accusation is processed to find the accused guilty or otherwise. Even in voluntary confession, there are rules about validating the confession.

We believe that Allah is a just God and He has made rules that should cover the accused and the accuser and has put responsibility on the accused and the accuser for proof either way but especially on an accuser. So when the case of Amina Lawal, Safiya Hussaini and Bariya came up, WRAPA along with other groups and individuals worked to see that the implementation of the application of the law on adultery was done in line with the Shariah principles. There were calls for us to move out and may be use the High Court, we said no! The Shariah legal system is recognized in the constitution of this country and it is also a sufficient legal system to look after itself, as such we will go to the defence of these women not through the common law courts, but we will go through the Shariah legal system. We are happy today to say that the Shariah legal system has vindicated itself as a system that can look after itself without any addition or without any interference. The principles of Shariah have been used to acquit these women. In some cases you find that these women don't even know that they can either deny or they can accept the accusation against them and given their circumstances, however, just their physical appearance (being pregnant) is a factor that only affects a woman and therefore opens a case of accusation against her while a man would not be so exposed. He is then left to proof through witnesses or admission where he is pointed in an accusation of the offence of zina (adultery). Consequently, there is a need to ensure that if a single woman or a divorcee is found pregnant, all the rules of Shariah be abided by before she is accused with adultery.

Now, another thing is people keep saying that it is the poor who are convicted. It is not just poverty, it is also a factor of ignorance among the social class that have so far been affected. These things are committed by the rich men and women but they have the knowledge or some one near them has the knowledge of how to defend themselves and escape, since in Shariah law until proven guilty, you can not be convicted.

I believe that any system that intends to establish itself should be able to use its own standards and mechanisms for entrenchment and value worth to its adherents and protect itself from perceived or un-informed criticism. So far the due process of the Shariah legal system has been up to the task. It has not been easy for everyone, the judges, those supporting the appeals of the women (and men) and those accused. However, if it is what it takes to ensure that the implementation of Shariah is done in accordance with the tenets of Allah, so be it. Our hope is that within this time nobody gets to suffer an error of judgment. This is our prayer but I am sure with time it will be much better, the judges are being trained and retrained in the Shariah states, the monitors of Shariah are also being trained and retrained and given more defined roles, with limits of what they can do and what they cannot do which was all absent before some of these determined cases. My hope is that with time these things will bare themselves and we will see a difference where the accused are not only poor women (and men) but include those in power and the influential in the society.

ABUJA TRUST

On Abuja's numerous fire disasters



Survivors carry their belongings across a pool of water in Banda Aceh, Indonesia

successfully execute the...
 on but this is the main...
 Sir, most of the letters...
 materials donated to...
 Nigerian relief effort...
 and financial resources...
 committee.
 I happened to be the...
 person chairing the publicity...
 sub-committee, our main...
 assignment is to mobilise and...
 enlighten the entire Nigerian...
 community to appreciate the...
 magnitude of this disaster...
 (Tsunami) and appeal to their...
 conscience to come forward...
 with all kind of assistance in...
 cash and in kind in spirit of...
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 Christianity) where by we are...
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 i.e. First Bank, Zenith Bank...
 and Habib Bank every state...
 government headquarters...
 (Government House) and...
 every local government...
 headquarters (office of the...
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 this sentence if my state...
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 As a Shariah compliant...
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 what specifically have Kano...
 State government contributed to

from any body we will take it to any of these banks and if any body collects from any local government can either bring it to the state government or send it direct to one of these three banks through out the nation. These banks were selected not on any theme but on the basis of their spread nation and at least we minimised the number of the banks for control purposes.
 As a Shariah compliant government and a government, what specifically have Kano State government contributed to

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 As a Shariah compliant government and a government, what specifically have Kano State government contributed to

Tsunami's victims?
 I actually have not discuss the issue with the state executive council but we are gong to contribute quite substantially in our efforts to contribute towards minimising the suffering of the human being and in the spirit of our focus and our policy of human development we have to save lives first before any other thing. I will be tabling this before my state executive council and we will decide what our own government is going to donate In Sha Allah.
Sir there is the problem of orphans who lost their parents as a result of this disaster can Nigeria encourages Nigerian to adopt such orphans?
 Well, I think this is a very good idea and we will try to sell it out to Nigerians and there would be agencies I am sure through which this can be facilitated, is a good idea I know it may not be possible as an individual to jump in there and pick a child, you see this is an issue that cut-across territories but is a very good idea I assure you I will sell this out to my committee and see how it can extent support to the orphans.
With the 'calibre' of people in the FG committee on Tsunami disaster, success could be achieved, but did the FG put measures on the ground to ensure that the donations reach the target?
 Yes of course, we the members of the committee under the able leadership of his eminence the 'Sufan' of

Sokoto, Alhaji Mohammadu Maccido will not allow any kobo to be missed or deviated to other ways. We will Insha Allah make sure that all the donations reach the targeted victims. We will not disappoint our president, Nigerians and Nigeria.
Sir if you may recall after the Lagos explosion such donations were gathered with a view to distributing are among the victims but most of the victims did not enjoy it. What would happen if such happened to the victims of Tsunami's disaster?
 Well, wherever such a disaster happened not only in Nigeria but in any other country around the globe and something in that nature happened it is serving people as lesson and may be the people chosen are not appropriate and maybe the problem is from the side of those to distribute the donations to the victims because it is not a one man responsibility. In our case for example if we take donations ours is to hand over the donations to the concerned authorities, it is left for them to arrange how to distribute the donations to the victims, the most interesting issue is that we have taken it to the affected country. But it is not our responsibility to see that the donation have been distributed among the victims. What we are assuring people is that all what they have donated will reached the target countries Insha Allah.



A woman walks among the ruins of a house near the village of Hikkaduwa, Southern Sri Lanka.

Yes of course, we the members of the committee under the able leadership of his eminence the 'Sufan' of

Yes of course, we the members of the committee under the able leadership of his eminence the 'Sufan' of

EKO TRUST

The worrying upsurge of pirates in Lagos

“What if we throw you inside this water, how do you hope to get home?” Well, if it is the wish of God for me to get home, I would.” This dialogue took place on one of Island’s waters recently, unfortunately it is being replicated at an alarming rate.

Following the dislodgement of sea pirates from the Niger-Delta region by heavy presence of military operations there, they have found their ways into Lagos state, terrorizing residents of Island. Most of them who operate with highly sophisticated modern ammunitions are now a terror in Lagos.

According to Maritime analyst, Gbenga Olumide, the upsurge in criminal activities on Lagos Island waterways were noticed following the dislodgement of the pirates from the Niger-Delta as a result of the heavy military operations there. “The activities of the illegal bunkers in the area had been halted by the military but because they were in possession of sophisticated weapons, they decided to face Lagos to con-

By Olumide Bajulaiye,
Correspondent

carted away fishes and valuables. The ineffectiveness of the Marine police in tackling the problem has resulted in increased pirates’ activities on the Nigerian waters particularly those that run through the Island coast.

The recent survey by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) revealed that about half of those killed all over the world in pirate attacks in the last twelve months, met their death on Nigerian waters. Maritime analysts attribute the upsurge to the high prevalence of illegal bunkering in the Niger-Delta region.

The trade has in turn funded further arms procurement and been behind the spawning of a wide range of criminal activities, including sea pirates.

Crime on Island waters is a reflection of societal ills on land. An official of the Maritime police speaking on condition of anonymity revealed that at least two major crimes are committed on Island waters every other day.

The rate of crimes is get-

sels that run across Island deep seas on their way to berth at Apapa port or out of the country from the port.

According to the Whesu he initially had doubts over the safety of the expedition that night but had to go because

were the normal travelers that we usually encounter, we tried to warn them to be careful not to move over our traps. They

houses built very close to shorelines. In addition to stealing outboard engines, they also rob others of their boats and their contents. In the process, they maim and kill.

Several houses with waterfront locations come regularly under attack by people largely suspected to be living in shanties like Ilubirin and Makoko.

The helpless state of the Marine police today may have in no small ways according to the industry watchers contributed to the upsurge being presently witnessed in pirate attacks.

The man saddled with the Marine police in Lagos, Police Superintendent Fredrick Egbonwan admitted that things have not been rosy with the police and that the police being a part of the society is also affected by what he termed “a general problem”.

Our correspondent learnt that the over thirty boats owned by the Marine police has reduced to four. While one could be said to be in manageable order, the other three are mere relics adorning the harbor of the Awolowo Road, Ikoyi headquarters of the Marine police. It was also discovered that only one walkie-talkie serves the entire Lagos Marine Police. The equipment, which is a vital tool in fighting crime, is shared between the state marine officer and his controller both of whom are expected to drop it at the station for the use of another.

Both the federal and the state police share the same problem. The federal marine is tasked with purely administrative matters. In this regard, it takes custody of all the boats to all the state Marine police whose concerns are mainly operational in nature. Both federal and state Marine police, it was gathered have for long been crying out to the police authorities to equip them in order to meet with the rising challenges posed by the threat of sea pirates.

As pirates continued to have a field day especially on the people of Lagos, the question is how long will they hold out against these marauders?



IG Tafa Balogun (2nd right), Mr. Ahmed Abdulkadir DIG “C” department at the commissioning of 10,000 units of motorcycles for police personnel in Lagos...recently. Pix: Oladipupo Odunewu

According to our source these people do not just steal, they maim and kill at the same time.

If they were not fortunate to make a big haul, they would pounce on whatever is available on their way. And these in most cases turn out to be

he needed money to offset some commitments.

They got safely to their destination farther into the lagoon off Osborne, Ikoyi coastline and soon went about setting their traps. Not long after they finished set-

ted our warning and took another path but on sensing that one of our canoes had an outboard engine, they came rushing at us.

“Meanwhile, my partner and his son were fast asleep and as I made to alert them that we were being attacked, the pirates started throwing broken bottles and iron rods at me”, Whesu recounted.

This was to be the most frightening in the lives of the three. The pirates moved closer and started first by beating them with sticks. Soon they brought out machetes to frighten them. On sighting the machetes, the two partners including the six-year-old boy plunged into the water. That was how they abandoned their canoes in the hands of the pirates who took out the outboard engine, the paddles, nets and even the small plastic bowl that the fishermen used in scooping water away from their boats.

The pirates also used machetes to cut into pieces all the wooden seats in the two canoes, which also served the purpose of balancing the canoes in the period of high tide. There was nothing left in the two canoes as the pirates succeeded in rendering the fishermen immobile.

The incident was reported at the Adeniji Adele Central Police Station and eventually abandoned when there was no headway.

It was learnt that a large number of pirates prowl the coastline especially around



A scene from the popular Oshodi market in Lagos.

tinuing their nefarious activities.”

Recently, seven members of pirates attacked the crew of a fishing vessel owned by Ocean Fisheries. The vessel was attacked early last month, about a kilometer off the Marina shore. Majority of the vessel’s crewmembers were shot, some died and others with serious injuries were taken to a local hospital. The pirates numbering seven

ting to an epidemic proportion. As more and more cases are reported, so also has the sophisticated of the criminals. In the past they operate with knives, broken bottles and cutlasses, but now they use machine guns to affect their trade.

Informed sources said they usually come in large numbers and are armed with sophisticated weapons. Their targets are well-loaded ves-

sel fisherman, majority of them live in Island whose outboard engines become instant attraction.

About three weeks ago, Suru Whesu, a fisherman and chairman of the Ilubirin Cooperatives Society set out on a fishing expedition with his partner and the partner’s six-year-old son. They left home a little before midnight in two canoes, one of which was fitted with an outboard engine.

ting the traps, they suddenly took time off to sleep, one after the other. It was in this position that the pirates met them.

“As they moved nearer to us and over our traps, we initially thought they were people traveling along that lagoon because we are used to seeing people like that and usually exchange pleasantries with them without trouble. Thinking that they

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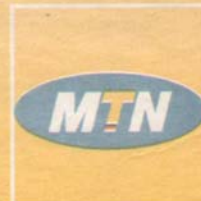
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News

2nd Annual Media Trust Dialogue in pictures



HRH Ensa Napa, Alhaji Babayo Abubakar Royal Father of the day, chairman of the occasion, former Head of Nigeria, Chief (Dr.) Ernest Shonekan (Mr.) Chairman Media Trust Board of Management, Mallam Abulmawana Bello, former military governor of Plateau and Niger States, Col. H. I. Shaibu (Rtd) (r) and others during Media Trust 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue held in Abuja...yesterday.



A cross section of dignitaries at the occasion



The Executive Director (Operations) Alhaji Isiq Ajibola (l) welcoming the guest speaker, Professor Sam Aluko (r) to the venue of Media Trust Ltd 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue



A cross section of dignitaries at pre-2nd Trust Dialogue Dinner held in Abuja...Wednesday.



Special Adviser to the Vice President on economic matters, Professor Mike Kusunmbi speaking at the occasion.



ACF chairman, Chief Sunday Awoniyi (middle) in handshake with NLC president, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole (l) during Media Trust Ltd 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue held at Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja

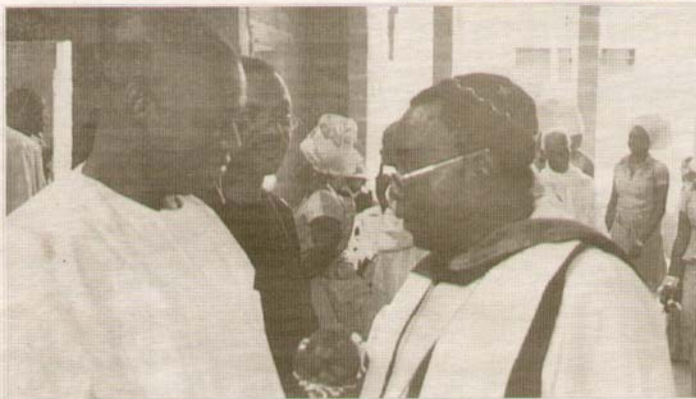


L-R: The chairman ACF, Chief Sunday Awoniyi (middle) the representative of the Governor of Kano State, Dr. Tijan Nantaga and Dr Babayo Abubakar during the event.



L-R: Secretary Nigeria Garment and Textile Union, Comrade Tai Aruna, Adams S. Lawan, SA Media (Electronic) to the Rep/Speaker and Seyi Adesayo, Editorial Trustee members, Nwagwu at the occasion. Pictures by Kamal's Labandji

News



Abia State Governor, Dr. Orji Kalu with Methodist Archbishop of Umuahia, Most Rev. Dr. Rogers Uwadi after a thanksgiving service organised by former NDDC Chairman, Chief Onyema Ugochukwu at Umuahia, Umuahia State.

N500m suit: Deputy gov appears in court

The Kano State Deputy Governor, Engr. Magaji Abdullahi, yesterday appeared before the state's High Court presided over by Justice Abdu Aboki for cross-examination on a hearing of a continuation on N500m libel suit filed by the former against *The Sun* newspapers and four others.

The deputy governor had last year dragged the publishers of *The Sun* newspapers before the Kano State High Court, demanding the sum of N500 million as damages done to his image and reputation in a story captioned: "Dirty deal: Deputy governor in N83m Hajj scandal", published in the *SUN* of December 23, 2003 edition.

At yesterday's sitting, Engr. Abdullahi, while being cross-examined by his counsel, Barrister Kayode Olatunji, dismissed allegations of misappropriation of N83 million meant for the securing of pilgrims to the last year's Hajj, describing them as malicious and totally false.

He told the court that the perpetrators of the said publication never contacted him to clear the air on the issue or seek his opinion to make the story balanced in accordance with the ethics and principles of journalism.

The deputy governor expressed dismay that the mastermind of the report is a correspondent of *The Sun* newspapers in the state, a clear signal that the entire story was mere allegations, and therefore baseless.

Engr. Abdullahi noted that the story portrayed him as a thief and unreliable person with low moral character, adding that it ruined his 34 years career in public service.

From Mustapha Isa Kwar, (Correspondent Kano)

"When I was alerted on the purported story, my lawyers were contacted, following which a letter was written to *The Sun* newspaper management, asking them to publish an apology to me because the entire story was false, but the one week ultimatum given to them for the publication of the apology expired without positive response. Instead, the paper wrote to me maintaining the status quo on the issue," he added.

Also testifying, the former Managing Editor of the *Triumph* newspapers, Mr. Ajayi Memaiyetan, said the

plaintiff had been his friend for over 30 years and that his exemplary and selfless services indicated that the allegations contained in *The Sun* newspapers were initiated for character assassination.

Mr. Ajayi Memaiyetan, during cross-examination by the defence counsel, Barrister Moses John Jackson, stated that when the story was published, he hurriedly invited *The Sun* correspondent in Kano, Malam Ibrahim Barde, for clarification but the latter claimed ignorance of its source since he did not report it.

The defence counsel however prayed for an adjournment to enable him to

secure relevant documents to open a cross-examination against the plaintiff, but the plaintiff's counsel objected to the prayer on the basis that the former had been delaying the court's proceedings.

The presiding judge however granted the prayer and fixed February 22 and 23 for the commencement of the cross-examination.

Commissioner absent as Gov Saraki pays surprise visit

From Abdulrazak Adebayo, (Correspondent Ilorin)

Governor Bukola Saraki of Kwara State yesterday paid a surprise official visit to the state's Ministry of Education headquarters in Ilorin at 9 a.m but could not find the Commissioner in charge, Alhaji Saka Isemi, in his office.

The governor, who was received by the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Dr. Zainab Ambali, expressed displeasure over the manner with which science equipment and instructional materials meant for distribution to post-primary schools in the state were locked up in the main store of the ministry.

Consequently, he ordered the immediate distribution of the items to schools before the end of this month with a charge to officials of the ministry to expedite action and address the dearth of teachers in post-primary schools in the state.

Governor Bukola Saraki, who was at the ministry to assess the level of progress on the award of contract for the construction and renovation of classrooms across schools in the state as well as the recruitment of more teachers under the rural voluntary scheme and distribution of science equipment to schools was

angry at the sight of the instructional materials locked up in the main store of the ministry.

At the Directorate of Education Support Services where he was received by its Director, Venerable Sunday Adigun, Governor Bukola Saraki directed that rural schools be separated from urban schools to accommodate the required number of teachers needed for recruitment.

Meanwhile, the state's Ministry of Works has emerged the best performing ministry in 2004. Presenting the award to the ministry's Commissioner, Engr. Yinusa Afolabi at the Government House, Ilorin, Governor Bukola Saraki commended the ministry for the positive records to its credit.



Gov. Bukola Saraki



PUBLIC NOTICE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT (FMENV)

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

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

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

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

SIGNED
PERMANENT SECRETARY
FOR: HONOURABLE MINISTER.

VENUES OF DISPLAY

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

DURATION OF DISPLAY

Date: 12th January-10th February, 2005

Time: 8:00a.m. - 4:00p.m

News

Khatami tasks Africans on spiritual rebirth

The President of Iran, Hojatoleslam Sayyed khatami, yesterday, urged Africans to continue on the spiritual path of establishing equality of all humans and their sovereignty which will provide a foundation for diversity, coexistence and cooperation.

He made this statement in his lecture entitled: Harmony, Peace, Equality, Tolerance in a heterogeneous society at the Shehu Musa Yaradua Centre in Abuja.

"You and your people in Nigeria, as well as all Africans, by passing through the paradigm of colonialism, and

From Ekanab Chawal, Reporter (Foreign Affairs)

by going through the stage of being colonised, have gained very worth experiences in this spiritual connection, and have therefore, achieved a golden opportunity to embark on this prospective path", he said.

He added that spiritual foundation is the strong basis for diversity of cultures, stating that "cultural diversity can boost the regional and international harmony".

"Nigeria, which enjoys the grand experience of the co-existence of two of the great religions, namely Islam and

Christianity, as well as other religion as its background support, can play a very gracious and powerful role in development of Africa", he added.

He expressed his belief that Africa can be built with the help and resources of Africans, and commended the NEPAD project which he said is a comprehensive development plan for all Africans. "It is a great step in this direction, creating great hopes for the emancipation of Africa from the evil rule of undevelopment and poverty. The Islamic republic is fully prepared to participate in implementing the ravious projects of this plan, to the best of its ability", he stated.

The Iranian president various that theIran model of struggle and development can be a shared experience to flagship programme of national development and NEPAD.

He stated that efforts aimed at realising the goal of just and balanced development will facilitates the utilisation of human capabilities and natural resources and further narrow the present straits.

He urged the world to be duty bound in developing and participating in the regeneration of a whole African continent, poverty reduction and insecurity reduction.

IITA saves Africa from N28b cassava mealybug

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the CABI Bioscience have enabled African and Latin American countries to save between \$8 billion (approximately N11 trillion) to about \$20 billion (approximately N27 trillion) cassava produce value.

A research work on biological control methods has already-proven themselves extremely effective in Africa as a consortium.

That was disclosed yesterday by Dr Peter Neuenchwander of IITA to the prestigious science journal Nature.

Dr Neuenchwander said that one study of 27 African countries estimate control of the cassava mealybug by a parasitic wasp imported from Latin America has saved US\$20 billion in crop losses since it was first deployed 20 years ago.

He added that cassava is the major starch staple for more than 100 million Africans and the mealybug destroyed up to 40 per cent of cassava yields.

By Hassan Idris, Reporter (Agriculture)

Similarly, eco-friendly control agents for water hyacinth and the mango mealybug have had huge economic consequences, the reduction in damage to the environment that would have been caused by synthetic chemical solutions is incalculable, he said.

He said "Implementation of eco-friendly options requires political will and public support, with a clear vision... and good leadership, many could adopt this approach today."

Belgian envoy commends Obasanjo, Akunyili

Belgian Ambassador Mr. Eeckhout has said that President Olusegun Obasanjo and the NAFDAC boss, Dora Akunyili are one of the few patriotic Nigerians who have good vision for the country and also striving hard to better the lot of the citizenry.

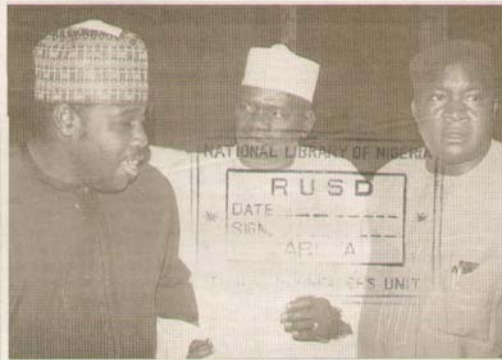
The Belgian Envoy who

paid a visit on the NAFDAC boss maintained that the European Union has watched with keen interest how NAFDAC's strict and efficient regulatory activities have helped to nurture a congenial business environment and strong economic ties between Nigeria and the European-nations.

He described the work of the agency as important economic intervention and image-making programme which must be actively supported by President Olusegun Obasanjo.

According to him, the visionary leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo and the impressive record of performance by NAFDAC under Dr Akunyili have eroded the wrong conception on Europeans countries that "Nigeria is a country of 419 people, fraudsters and human traffickers."

His words "The negative



L-R Governors Alimodu Sherrif of Borno State, Danjuma Goje of Gombe State and Achike Udenwa of Imo State during the council of state meeting held at the State House Abuja, Wednesday. pic: Joe Dreye

Cross River police get N100m lifeline

The police in Cross River is to get a financial grant of N100million to boost its operations, Governor Donald Duke has pledged.

Making the pledge while commissioning the new quarter guard recently, Governor Duke stated that the amount will be paid in four installments of N25 million each.

Duke directed the police officials to prepare an estimated budget of all its

From Bassey Ita, Correspondent (Calabar)

requirements and make same available to him for consideration.

The governor also announced a donation of forty pick up vans, digital camera, computer sets to boost the operations of the command in containing crime.

He called for the formalisation of the police funding policy which according to him enables states and the federal government to contribute certain per centage of funds to the upkeep and maintenance of the police, even as he enjoined them to reciprocate government's concern on them by beefing

security across the state.

Duke described the state police command as a "perfect of class" adding that the N100 million grant will take care of barracks renovations and other incentives.

The governor also expressed appreciation to the governor for being friendly with the police since his assumption of office and however requested the extension of the ongoing water scheme in the state to police barracks to ease the problem of water scarcity.

He described the quarter guard as a very vital arrangement in perfecting security of lives and property as the system was bound to guarantee law and order in the society.

Rivers moves to regulate Okada riders

Worried by the level of road accident involving motorcycle riders popularly called okada and the use of same for various crimes in Port Harcourt, the Rivers state government has introduced new regulations to check these.

Speaking at the inauguration of the United Motorcycle Operators Association in the state, the Commissioner for Transport, Chief Glory Emeh, said the city of Port Harcourt has been divided into areas of operation in such a way that okada riders these areas can be identified by the colour of their apron.

He said all okada operators are expected to wear helmets and aprons for tracking down criminals who use motorcycles for armed robbery and other crimes.

According to him, all okada operators are expected to wear helmet and are not allowed to carry more than a single passenger.

The commissioner said men of the police force and the road safety corps are sensitised on how to deal with okada riders and assured them that they will not have any problem if they abide by the new rules.

Chief Emeh called on all the okada riders to ensure that their motorcycles are duly registered and have the right plate number to enable the government track down those that are being used for crimes.

The Rivers State government has pronounced that more than 50 per cent of cases of road accidents in Port Harcourt city were due to reckless driving by motorcyclists.

From Ikenna Emeke Okpani, Bureau chief (Port Harcourt)

wear the aprons for their respective areas of operation as that will help in tracking down criminals who use motorcycles for armed robbery and other crimes.

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Cross River loses former deputy gov

The former deputy-governor of Cross River State in the third-republic, Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong, has been reported dead.

Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong was the deputy-governor during the administration of Mr. Clement Ebrri as governor of state. She was an astute member of the defunct-National Republic Convention (NRC) the platform that took her to political limelight and to power as deputy-governor.

She was the chairperson of the All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANC-OPSS) before joining politics; a position which also show her to the honour of Principal Emeritus of Nigeria (PEN).

A fulfilled academic and disciplinarian, Mrs. Ekpenyong took her disquieting

From Bassey Ita, Correspondent (Calabar)

disposition to better the moral and academic attainment of most students especially those of the famous Edgerley Girls Memorial Secondary School and the Holy Child Secondary School, Calabar, where she served as principal at different times.

Commenting on the deceased during a condolence visit on the family recently, Governor Donald Duke stated that Mrs. Ekpenyong exuded warmth and love in critical situation and advised the family members to be consoled by these dispositions as well as exhume in them the traits of the deceased.

Responding, the deceased sister, Barrister (Mrs.) Collot Yong, thanked the state governor for standing with the deceased family in their grief.

Begging worries Katsina LG chairman

Ahaji Bala Saulawa, the Chairman of Katsina local government council in Katsina State has expressed concern over the increasing number of beggars in his domain.

Saulawa told newsmen in Katsina on Wednesday that beggars were constituting a nuisance in the capital city and that the menace was particularly disturbing to his administration.

impression about this country unfortunately dominates Europe. I feel about this negative perception because people like you and the president want this country changed for the better. This is the vision I have come to share with you."

Responding, the Director General, Dr. Dora Akunyili, thanked the Envoy for the commendation and promised to ensure that the existing bond of friendship and ties between Belgium and Nigeria was sustained through the provision of enabling regulatory and economic environment.

Dr. Akunyili expressed the readiness of NAFDAC to facilitate inflow of foreign investment by Belgium companies as it will create gainful employment for youth and also stimulates the country's economy.

He also said the involvement of housewives and underage children in the act could create more problems for the society.

Saulawa said Katsina, being the seat of government, should not be hosting large number of beggars, adding that the local council would tackle the menace.

He said the council would

News

Church bans use of Aso Ebi at weddings

The use of "Aso Ebi" (choice ceremonial dresses) by members of the bridal train of couples has been banned by the Abakaliki district of the Assemblies of God Church.

The ban was announced to newsmen yesterday in Abakaliki by the District Superintendent, Rev. Emmanuel Nshii.

He said the ban was to ensure proper spiritual sanity and real sacred order during weddings.

Nshii explained that the ban, already communicated to church members, became

Kwara set to ban hawking of herbs

The Kwara State government is set to stop the indiscriminate hawking of local herbs or "agbo" by young girls in the state, says Health Commissioner Bola Olaosebikan.

Olaosebikan announced this when he briefed newsmen in Ilorin on Wednesday on the first state executive council meeting for the year.

"Only hawkers who carry identity cards from registered herbal practitioners will be allowed to sell," he stressed.

Olaosebikan said the state government had given its approval for the registration of traditional healers to take off.

"A new registration fee of N2,500 and annual renewal fee of N1,500 have been approved for traditional healers," he announced.

The commissioner said such healers would need to come to the health ministry for proper screening and inspection of their premises before registration.

According to him, the ministry is working with the Justice Ministry to review the 1988 edict on herbal practice in the state.

"We aim to monitor and give stiffer penalties to fake practitioners, those giving false claims and those breaking the laws related to the practice," he said.

Olaosebikan stressed that "henceforth, it will be a crime for traditional healers to engage in blood transfusion, give injections, practise dental surgery, engage in eye operations and any other surgery that involves blood usage or spillage."

Relevant laws had been put in place "so as to stop the spread of infections and AIDS which are possible through contact with blood", he added.

necessary because of material waste associated with "Aso Ebi".

He said wedding was a divine injunction which prepare young couples on the way to commence their marital lives, adding that introduction of unnecessary material waste such as "Aso Ebi" was uncalled for.

Nshii, who described "Aso Ebi" as an aberration, stressed that the ban was to avoid a mixture of divine injunction with worldly ceremonies.

He said the prohibition order was a way of setting a new agenda to overhaul existing marriage culture in the area.

The clergyman lamented that couples, who went into unnecessary wedding expenses had been exposed to undue hardship shortly after their weddings.

Nshii warned that any member of the church who disobeyed the new rule, would not only be viewed as a rebel, but would be sanctioned.

Education ministry reforms inspectorate unit

The Federal Ministry of Education has launched reforms to reshape its inspectorate services for improved performance, according to Minister Fabian Osuji.

Osuji announced this at a retreat for federal education inspectors in Bauchi.

Part of the reforms initiated in 2004 include the education sector analysis programme involving senior officers of the Federal Inspectorate Service (FIS) of the ministry, he said.

According to Osuji, "the reforms have culminated in the diagnosis of the problems and challenges facing the functional legal framework, inadequacies of the inspectors and environmental challenges".

Although Decree 16 of 1985 provided legal backing for the operations of the inspectorate, "there are limitations concerning the imposition of sanctions on erring schools, as the decree did not spell out in clear terms criteria for running schools," he said.

Some of the sanctions were also not responsive to the contemporary demands and benchmarks in the society, said the minister, represented by his Permanent Secretary, Malam Ibrahim Talba.

Osuji said he had received information that most inspectors lacked basic work tools.



Director General of NAFDAC, Dr. Dora Akunyili (Middle) presenting the Agency's enlightenment materials to the Ambassador of Belgium to Nigeria, H.E. Dirk Van Eeckhout (left) and the Deputy Head of Mission (right), Dr. Bart De Groof when they paid a courtesy visit on her...recently

Bauchi command sacks 26 policemen for extortion

The Bauchi State police command has dismissed 26 policemen for extortion and other corrupt practices, says the commissioner, Alhaji Muktar Abbas.

Abbas told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Bauchi on Wednesday that 23 of the policemen were constables, while two were inspectors and one was a sergeant.

Three other inspectors were demoted for alleged involvement in criminal activities, he said.

Abbas noted that the command last year recorded a drop in armed robbery cases compared to 2003.

Eighty-three armed robberies were recorded last year, as against 96 in 2003, while 86 armed robbery suspects each were arrested in 2003 and 2004.

Abbas said although the command lost five of its men in encounters with armed robbers, 94 robbery suspects were killed during the period under review.

The number of homicide

cases dropped from 64 to 48, while theft cases also declined from 486 to 394 between 2003 and 2004.

Sixteen assorted firearms were recovered last year, Abbas said, commending the public for assisting the police in their crusade against crime in the state.

As part of measures to boost welfare, 250 motorcycles had been distributed on a loan basis to officers and men at almost zero interest, he added.

Hospitals to pay N50,000 for rejecting accident victims — FRSC

From this year, any hospital that rejects accident victims will pay a fine of N50,000 of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC).

Also fines for traffic offences have been reviewed upwards with the fine for under-age drivers topping the new rates at N5,000.

The Delta Sector

NPC sends 52 enumerators to Awe LGA

The National Population Commission in Nasarawa State has sent 52 officials to Awe council area in preparatory to the enumeration area demarcation ahead of the 2005 census.

Receiving the officers in Awe on Wednesday, the Chairman of the local council, Alhaji Musa Sa'idu, pledged the co-operation of the council to ensure the success of the exercise.

Sa'idu promised to provide the enumerators with accommodation and other assistance.

He directed all the councillors in the area to work with the publicity committee set up for the enumeration and head count for maximum results.

Similarly, the Acting Director of the National Orientation Agency in the state, Malam Ishaku Abari, appealed to the people to offer their maximum co-operation for the success of the enumeration and the census.

He made the appeal while speaking with officials of the agency in Lafia and described the two-exercises as crucial to the socio-economic development of the nation.

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The Delta Sector

Commander of the FRSC, Mr Sunny Maku, said in Asaba on Wednesday that any motorist who assaults a road marshal on duty would be liable to a N10,000 fine.

Maku said at a public enlightenment forum organised by the command that as with other fines, the ones on hospitals and assault of marshals were not negotiable.

He explained that the fine on hospitals became necessary because of the incessant cases of rejection of accident victims.

The offences and the new fines, the commander said, were speed violations; N3,000, driver's license violation; N3,000, caution sign violation; N3,000, vehicle license violation; N1,000.

Others are seat belt violation; N1,000, fire extinguisher violation; N10,000 and number plate violation, N1,000.

Maku said the new fines were intended to make motorists more responsible in their care for their vehicles and observance of traffic rules.

He said 2004 recorded less cases of accidents in the sector than 2003 and attributed the decline to the enforcement of traffic rules by road safety officials.

Maku gave the assurance that the commitment of FRSC officials to their jobs would be sustained and appealed to motorists to "obey traffic rules in order to reduce accidents on the roads".

Prosecutor faults Al-Mustapha's request

Chief Lateef Fagbemi lead prosecutor in the security breach case against Maj. Hamza Al-Mustapha and two others, has described Al-Mustapha's request for access to

investigation documents as nebulous and unethical.

Al-Mustapha, the Chief Security Officer (CSO) to late Gen Sani Abacha, was on Oct. 21, 2004, arraigned along with Lt.- Col.

Muhammed Adeka and one Onwuchekwa Okorie on a two-court charge of conspiracy and intention to overthrow the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Al-Mustapha later prayed the trial judge, Justice Dan Abutu, to order the prosecution to make available to him some statements and materials, including video and audio recordings of the panel, which investigated the alleged offence to enhance his defence.

Replying yesterday, Fagbemi said the former CSO already had adequate materials to guarantee his fair trial, adding that his application, which, he described, as mere speculation, was "an attempt to fish for evidence."

"It is not the practice to ask for the list of persons arrested during investigations unless you are able to show that the people will be called as witnesses in the matter," he argued.

Vigilante group kills four robbers

A vigilante group in Bauchi State has killed four members of a notorious robbery gang for terrorising motorists on the Bauchi-Azare-Kano highway.

Alhaji Muktar Abbas, the Commissioner of Police in Bauchi State, announced this to newsmen in Bauchi while parading the four dead robbers on Wednesday.

According to him, "They were found with military and police uniforms and helmets, which they apparently use to deceive people during their

operations. "We have set up an investigation into the source of the uniforms and how they were acquired by the robbers."

The joint vigilante group/police patrol team in the state had also recovered four guns and ammunition from the gang, he said.

Abbas commended the vigilante group, led by one Alhaji Ali Kwarah, "for assisting the police and the state in the arduous task of waging war against men of the underworld".

SURVEYORS COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (SURCON)

(ESTABLISHED BY DECREE NO. 44 OF 1989, CAP 425 L.F.N 1990)



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

R U S D

DATE

SIGN



SEPTEMBER 2005 PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS

The Professional Examinations of the Council have been scheduled to take place from 12th to 16th September, 2005. Entry forms are now available at the following centres:-

- i) Council's Secretariat 2nd floor, Old Fed. Survey Hq, 5, Tafawa Balewa Square (Near Lagos High Court Building), Lagos.
- ii) Council's Abuja Office: Suite 14, 1st Floor, Block 3 (DAP Block), Urban Mass Building, Area 3 (Behind Open University), Garki-Abuja.
- iii) Office of the Surveyor-General of the Federation, Mobush-Abuja.
- iv) Offices of all Surveyors-General in all the States of the Federation, and
- v) Office of the Director of Planning and Surveys, Federal Capital Development Authority Abuja.

A) Professional Examinations and Interviews for Pupil Surveyors seeking full registration as qualified Surveyors.

Candidates seeking to undergo this examination must have been **enrolled as Pupil Surveyors by the Council for at least two years** and must have at least two years' practical experience in an approved office.

Duly completed application form and synopsis of projects to be included in the folder are expected to reach the Secretariat in Lagos not later than **Thursday 31st March, 2005**. The examination fee of N25,000 in Bank Draft (drawn on Chartered Bank Plc., UBA, Union Bank, First Bank or Afriland) issued in favour of the Surveyors Council of Nigeria must accompany the completed form and synopsis of projects. So also is (are) the letter(s) from project supervisor(s).

Other examination fees are:

Reference in L.O. N20,000
Reference in Written Papers N15,000

Submission of folders (in approved format) containing approved projects to be effected between **Monday 11th July 2005 and Friday 15th July 2005 at Abuja**.

Candidates must ensure that the Supervisors of their projects are current on the payment of practice fees and annual subscriptions/levies of SURCON and NIS respectively. Supervisors are warned not to endorse for candidates' projects which are not carried out under their direct supervision as false attestation shall attract outright disqualification of the candidates and appropriate sanctions will be instituted against such Supervisors.

B) Direct Professional Examinations for Survey Technologists seeking to be upgraded to Pupil Surveyors' Status.

Candidates are required to submit to the Council's Secretariat, their duly completed examination forms together with a non-refundable examination fee of N10,000.00 in Bank Draft (drawn on Chartered Bank Plc., UBA, Union Bank, First Bank or Afriland) issued in favour of the Surveyors Council of Nigeria, not later than **Friday 15th July 2005**.

C) Preparatory Workshop for Professional Examination Candidates.

A one-day workshop to assist Pupil Surveyors to have a better understanding of Rules and Regulations governing the submission and professional examinations will take place on **Saturday 26th February 2005**. The aim is to enhance the general performance of candidates in the forthcoming examinations. Examination guidelines are available for sale at the centers and at the Council's Secretariat.

The Centres for the Workshop are:

- i) University of Lagos, Lagos
- ii) University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Enugu
- iii) Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna.

The Co-ordinators for the centers are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| i. Surv. (Prof.) O.O. Ayeni (Lagos) | tel. 08023045582 |
| ii. Surv. (Dr.) N.K. Ndurwe (Enugu) | *(042) 456888; 08037107505 |
| iii. Surv. W.O. Ayeni (Kaduna) | 08037041062 |

Interested candidates are requested to enrol with the Co-ordinators of their center of choice on or before **14th February 2005**. Enrolment fee is N2,000.00 per candidate in Bank Draft drawn on Banks indicated above and made payable to SURCON.

(Sgd.)
SURV. AFOLABI O. SOLES, fms
REGISTRAR

SURVEYORS COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (SURCON)

(ESTABLISHED BY DECREE NO. 44 OF 1989, CAP 425 L.F.N 1990)

2005 PRACTICE FEES

This is to bring to the notice of all Council-registered Surveyors that the statutory practice fees for year 2005 has fallen due and **must** be paid not later than **Monday 31st January 2005**. The list of Surveyors entitled to practise in the year will be published by the **middle of March 2005**.

Following the reluctance of some Surveyors to pay their practice fees as at when due, Council has ordered that:

- i) any Surveyor who by 31st May of each year is not up-to-date in the payment of practice fees should have his/her name struck off the register of Surveyors.
- ii) any such Surveyor having lost the right to have his name on the register of Surveyors will cease to be so recognized and his/her name will be published in national dailies as having been de-registered.
- iii) any such Surveyor will have to re-apply to Council for registration which will not be automatic.

Surveyors are enjoined to please take steps to avoid the embarrassing consequences of being in default.

(Sgd.)
SURV. AFOLABI O. SOLES, fms
REGISTRAR

PRINTERS OF REPUTE IN NIGERIA

The printing industry in Nigeria has been providing monumental printing designs that projects the creativity of the industry thereby justifying its efforts in bringing out colourful and beautiful prints for the use of their various class of clients. Indeed, the last four decades has witnessed their astronomical development at improving the nation's economy.

In spite of their impacts and contributions to the economic development of the country, due to lack of adequate publicity, the activities of most printers are not known to majority of Nigerians.

Giving the appreciable efforts of the players in the industry both public and private, suppliers of printing machines and equipment, accessories, etc, and in spite of the harsh economic environment under which they operate, there is the need to appraise the contributions of the industry, X-raying its challenges as well as publicise their achievements and activities.

Media Trust Limited, the publishers of *Daily* and *Weekly Trust* Newspapers plans to feature some of the reputable and outstanding printing companies, manufacturers and suppliers of printing machines and accessories in a special project package. The date of publication is **Monday, January 24, 2005**.

For participation and further enquiries, please contact the **Special Projects Department** on any of the following nos: **08037038663, 08042145839, 08023262061, 08028494170 or 09-6720346, 5235787 extensions 124 or 117.**

Inside Politics

Don't derail our democracy, PDP told



Senator Kanti Bello

The Chairman Senate Committee on Sports, All Nigeria Peoples Party's (ANPP), Senator Kanti Bello has called on the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) to put its house together maintaining that the way the party has been conducting its affair was not be in the good interest of democracy and the nation.

From Isa Sanusi,
Political Reporter

The lawmaker representing Katsina North constituency also told Daily Trust yesterday that the immunity clause in the constitution must be removed to strengthen democracy saying "it is a fact it has to go because that is why governors are behaving the way they are doing".

He further said "I hope the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) will not destroy this democracy. All the people telling them that they can go ahead and do whatever they like, nothing will happen, they are just deceiving them. People are tired, people are fed up", he said.

Senator Kanti Bello also

called for the scrapping of state independent electoral commissions pointing out that it's the only way of checking excesses of governors during local polls: "People know that there was no election in some states. They know that votes were allocated not cast. If we are sincere about strengthening democracy I think we have to

scrape states independent electoral commissions. We then have to look again at INEC".

The lawmaker also proposed that an amendments should be made to the constitution to make provision for all those holding elective offices to vacate their positions two months before another round of general elections.

2007: I am not fronting for IBB- Marwa insists

The chairman of Albarka Air Plc, Brigadier General Buba Marwa (Rtd), has refuted insinuation that he embarked on his nationwide consultation in order to pave way for the presidential ambition of the former military President, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (Rtd).

From Aliyu Haruna,
Correspondent (Kaduna)

Speaking to newsmen in Kaduna, general Marwa said that he could not have publically engaged in consultation to satisfy another person's political ambition, if he does not believe in what he is doing.

He said that he had been moving round the country for consultation in order to see and hear how Nigerians feel and what they believe in, adding that the responsibility to move the nation forward rests on all of us.

No more crisis in ANPP

- Gov. Abba

From Godwin Tyonang,
Stringer Abuja

The Governor of Yobe State, Bukar Abba Ibrahim has said that the battle of wits amongst the top brass of the opposition All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) which nearly split it, had been resolved with Chief Don Etebet maintaining the seat of chairman and Gen. Jeremiah Useni as the vice.

Governor Ibrahim, who spoke to Daily Trust at Sheraton Hotels, venue of the 2nd Annual Trust Dialogue yesterday, said, "we did not have any faction before".

He said, "the crisis is finished, its gone. The last meeting Bafarawa, Useni and Magashi who earlier opted out, decided to come back because we have been following them".

On the proposed National Dialogue officially named as National Political Reforms Conference, Governor Bukar said it was borne out of National interest and "not by myopic interest or people who do not wish this country well".

HE contended that across the globe, people disagree on how to move or live but in the long run, they come to a consensus, noting that for Nigeria, the conference is an opportunity to get the best out of the system.

The governor was optimistic that with the inclusion of NASS members, president, the vice president and others, the outcome of the dialogue would certainly yield fruitful results.

General Marwa, who is also the chairman of the Mohammed Marwa Foundation, said that his foundation had been providing social amenities to many communities in all parts of the country with a view to improving the life of the less privileged.

On his political ideology, General Marwa said that what his ideology stood for basically is leadership that is people oriented.

He commended the present administration under the leadership of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo for laying a solid foundation in changing the orientation and thinking of Nigerians towards productive ideas urging the people to be more patients and give the government's reform time to succeed.



Member, House Committee on Petroleum, Hon. Kurefi Ishaq Idris (Right) and Hon. Ike Chinywa during the Committee Press Conference held at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja, yesterday. pic: Felix Onighinde

...as Gwadabe confirms IBB's presidential ambition

From Hassan A. Karofi,
Correspondent (Dutse)

The coordinator of the IBB campaign for 2007 in the North-West zone, Colonel Lawal Gwadabe (rtd) has said that the issue of IBB's presidential ambition was no more speculation and that the General will contest the 2007.

Election, even as he revealed that concrete arrangement have already been concluded for the success of the IBB Nigeria Project 2007.

He told a gathering of supporters at the inauguration of the presidential campaign

organisation in Dutse, Jigawa state that a working platform had been set up to harmonise all the organisations clamouring for the IBB presidency in 2007 saying that the decision to harmonise the groups is to ensure fairness, equity and transparency in the pursuit of just cause.

Colonel Gwadabe declared that IBB would run for the presidency to salvage the country from its present state of economic and political

problems, adding that with his experience the general will ensure that the nation had been taken to greater heights.

He admonished members of the pro IBB organisation to work in harmony and ensure the actualisation of the vision 2007 project which assured Nigerians would transform their socio economic wellbeing to a more solidified and prosperous position.

"All insinuation over IBB's candidature is now over as the General is surely contesting the 2007 presidential election" he declared.

The inauguration of the project IBB Nigeria in Jigawa state, according to him, will signal launching of the North-West campaign project for the actualization of the IBB presidency in 2007 in Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi states.

The inauguration saw the emergence of Alhaji Danladi Auyo as the chairman of the Jigawa state campaign office of the Nigeria project 2007 while Alhaji Saidu Dadubus emerged Vice chairman with Alhaji Yusuf Gumel became the Secretary of the promise.

Constituents endorse Rep for Benue guber race

Hon Gabriel Suswan representing Katsina-Ala, Ukun, Logo Federal Constituency in the National Assembly, has been tipped for Benue state governorship position by his constituents.

The people of the Federal Constituency, who are called Sankara, who thronged the Chief Emmanuel Atongo Memorial Stadium in Katsina-Ala to witness the award and launching of a N10 million scholarship scheme initiated by Hon. Suswan for Sankara students, unanimously adopted the federal lawmakers as their

From Hir Joseph,
correspondent (Makarfi)

candidates for the exalted position come 2007.

Speaking at the occasion, that was graced by prominent personalities in the state, including Governor George Akume and his state executive members, the National Association of Sankara Students (NASAS) extolled the virtue of the lawmaker, naming his various contributions to the development and return of peace in the area.

"Hon. Suswan contributed in no small measure in ensuring the return of peace

to Sankara after the Tiv-Jukun crisis by building bridges of understanding and harmonious relationship with the people and government of Taraba State", said SASAS' National President, Comrade Justin Tor Damsa.

Similarly the three chairmen of the area, namely, Hon. Tsenonko Abancha of Katsina-Ala, Hon. Terngu Tyokyaa of Ukun and Hon. Mike Kondoum of Logo counoil, in their welcome address at the occasion expressed confidence that if given a bigger capacity including governorship position, Hon. Suswan will still serve well.



Kaduna State Commissioner for Local Government, Alhaji Mohammed Bello Kagarka (right), former Secretary-General, Alhaji Umar Abashi (centre) and Chairman of Miyetti Allah Group Alhaji Ahmadu Kasuwar Magami, at the presentation of staff of office to the Commissioner by Alhaji Ahmadu at Kasuwar Magami in Kaduna... recently. pic: Shehu K. Goro

Inside Politics

Joint Account system injects sanity in our conduct—LG Chairman

Alhaji Ya'u Umar Gwajogwajo is a three-time Chairman of Mai'adua local government in Katsina State, who had to contend with the intimidating popularity of ANPP's presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) whenever he contested elections. In this interview with our Katsina state correspondent, Lawal Ibrahim, Alhaji Gwajogwajo explains his consistent electoral victory against General Buhari's ANPP and the operation of joint state/local government accounts among other issues.

Excerpts:

You have only been sworn into office by the governor who disclosed that there is a sum of N7.3 billion in the state /LGs joint account, but already there are complains about the constraints of the joint account on local governments. What is your view on that?

Well I don't think there is any constraint on the local governments on account of the joint account. I think there are serious misconceptions about this joint account thing. The governor has already made a fair budgetary provision of 7 billion naira that will be expanded as direct intervention fund between local governments and the state government on the very crucial areas of primary health care, education, agriculture and provision of electricity to the rural areas.

To be honest with you, I was a chairman during the previous dispensation when we used to receive allocation direct from the federation account but there is no way you can compare achievements recorded then to what obtains now that we are operating a state/local government joint account system. Basically, you cannot compare a situation where things are conducted under the guidance of a leader that is a sticker for due process and who lead by example through diligent observation of due process, accountability and

immediate past caretakers administration in the local government which, even though have awarded projects worth over 3 billion naira, yet they did not leave any controversial liability, in addition to the saving of over seven billion naira (7 billion) in the joint account. This is in sharp contrast with what used to be the case when contracts would be awarded which evidence could not be sighted anywhere.

Now the permanent secretary will not only have to give you approval but will also monitor the execution of the project up to completion. If our people are really interested in getting development they should then be grateful to the supervising institution for helping them to do what they are expected to do rather than looking at it as a constraint.

But some people alleged that only projects that have no relevance to the need of the people are being executed under the joint account at the expense of projects that are of direct benefit to the people.

No, this is also another misguided assumption because the local government now receive 50% of their allocation, and still enjoy the liberty to forward any project that is of serious need to the people of their constituency.

You see, even in the joint account each local government has a separate account into which is

the relevant stakeholders of all the local governments and it is from that pool that all submissions from local governments would be fed. If the local government has as much money as the proposed project requires, approval is then given and the money released. On its part, the local government inspectorate, as the supervisory authority,

generated and the principal deposit are being shared according to the stake of the respective local governments accounts. Infact, given the strict measures being employed in Katsina, our joint account system differs with that of other states because in other states the governor will just take away the money and do as he pleases in contrast to what is obtained here. You

account in any state based on proven record of accountability and prudence in the management of the local government resources.

To what would you attribute your and PDP's electorate success in local government elections despite the immense popularity and mass appeal of the presidential candidate of ANPP,

team up a joint hands together to salvage and improve the well being of our people, since we are all brothers and sisters and our common aim is to develop our locality.

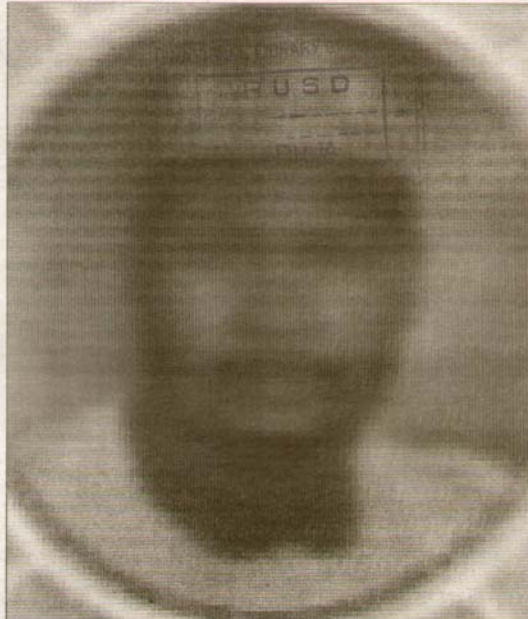
There is no amenity in our midst.

What areas are you going to prioritise during this current mandate as chairman of Mai'adua local government council.

Thanks be to God that we have recorded some achievements in the areas of education, water supply and health care. Our major challenge now is to complete the construction of general hospital in Mai'adua and try to see that we equip it with necessary drugs and medicines. We will also try to see that we have impacted positively on infrastructural development. And being an area that is wholly agrarian, we are going to focus substantial part of our attention to animal rearing as well as irrigation activities. For this, we have made adequate provision, Insha Allah.

At the swearing in, governor 'Yar'adua warned the chairmen against misappropriation and even directed the inspectorate to deal with any local government chairman found wanting. How did the warning come to you?

It is not surprising at all. What people should understand is not about releasing money to a local government chairman, but the question of utilisation of the resources in every practical terms. I must tell you the lesson of the joint account has brought some kind of sanity in our conduct. The problems are usually with politicians who come with their personal problems and insist that these problems must be solved for them. I however, support any appropriate disciplinary measure to be taken against any erring chairman. Interestingly, most of the people sworn-in as chairmen are not new as they have been there two or even three times before. So they are very much conversant with the situation and I think they will try to justify the confidence reposed on them by the electorate and governor Yar'adua for operating a transparent state/local government joint account which ensures that local governments in Katsina state remain solvent at all time



Alhaji Ya'u Umar Gwajogwajo

monitors the executions of the project to ensure that the funds are expended for the purpose they are intended for.

As for the insinuations that interest is accruing from the joint accounts, I would not disagree with that

sec, any time there is a plan for a joint project, the permanent secretary will call us and inform us and we are free to speak for or against it until a consensus is reached.

I think that is why the National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) honoured the state with the award of the best operating local government joint account system in the country.

But the federal government insists that the system is illegal and not in conformity with what the states are clamouring. Now should it be abolished what method would you recommend to check the issue of mismanagement by some chairmen?

I think the federal government should first of all try to get to the grassroots and seek their opinions on the merit or demerit of the system. Perhaps, it may not be unwise to empower the National Assembly to step in and legislate in support of the joint

General Muhammad Buhari (rtd) who is the son of the area?

Well, it is normal in politics that people especially from opposition camp to have their say General Buhari as an elder, we have tremendous respect for him. You know it is natural for a politician to have areas of strength and support just like we have from our people here. I think by and large, it is just a question of performance. You see, once you perform creditably, people will naturally go with you any day. Let me tell you something, the politics of Mai'adua local government differs from other areas because our people appreciate our closeness to them and the achievements we have been able to cause in the local government.

I believe, they always use our performance as the basis of their decision to re-elect us again and again. Moreover, once a government is formed we all

"Now the permanent secretary will not only have to give you approval but will also monitor the execution of the project up to completion. If our people are really interested in getting development they should then be grateful to the supervising institution for helping them to do what they are expected to do rather than looking at it as a constraint."

transparency to a situation where you were allowed to do what you like, when and as you like. For instance, just consider the times of

credited its statutory percentage after every allocation after due consultation with and the approval and consent of all

because there is no way you can keep that much money in the bank without generating substantial interest. But both the interest

Sports

Romania hails Mutu's transfer to Juventus

Romanian soccer has welcomed the transfer of ex-Chelsea striker Adrian Mutu to Serie A leaders Juventus since it will boost the national team's prospects in their World Cup qualifiers later this year.

"I'm very glad for Mutu. He is valuable to world soccer and he will stay that way," Dumitru Dragomir, the head of the Romanian Professional League and vice-president of the Romanian soccer federation told Reuters on Thursday.

Juventus announced on Wednesday that Mutu — sacked by the west London Premier League club in October after testing positive for cocaine — has signed a five-year contract.

The 26-year-old is serving a seven-month worldwide ban but will be able to play in the last two rounds of Serie A matches for the Turin-based club when his suspension

ends on May 18.

Dragomir said Mutu could successfully play in the role now occupied by Italy forward Alessandro Del Piero. "He can play better on the left side," Dragomir said. "I bet Mutu is going to be the Italian championship revelation (later) this year."

Romanian commentators also hailed Mutu's transfer, saying the move will benefit the national team, which has important World Cup group one qualifying matches to play this year.

Romania, second in Group One level on 10 points with the Netherlands but having played a game more, host the Dutch on March 26 and then travel to Macedonia four days later.

The suspended Mutu cannot play in those games but will be eligible to return to the squad for their visit to the Netherlands on June 4 and Romania's remaining

four games in the campaign to reach the 2006 finals in Germany.

"Mutu is a must for the national team," sports daily Pro Sport's Sorin Dumitrescu told Reuters. "Training in Italy might help him get in the best shape to help the squad win the tough games that lie ahead."

The arrival of Mutu at Juventus, who lead Serie A by four points from champions AC Milan, reinforces an attack already bristling with internationals, including David Trezeguet, Alessandro Del Piero and Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Mutu played for 3-1/2 seasons in Italy's top flight after joining Inter Milan from Dinamo Bucharest in January 2000. He went on to play for Verona and Parma.

His exploits brought him to the attention of Chelsea, who bought him for 15.8 million pounds (\$29.79 million) in 2003.



Romania's Adrian Mutu, right, signs for Juventus of Turin

Netherlands to play England in anti-racism kit

The Netherlands will wear a special kit in next month's friendly against England to support Thierry Henry's racism initiative called Stand Up/Speak Up.

A Nike spokesman told Reuters they will sport a shirt with black and white halves plus black shorts and white socks.

It will be a one-off gesture by the Dutch FA (KNVB) to back France and Arsenal striker Henry's initiative supported by Ruud van Nistelrooy, Ronaldinho, Roberto Carlos and Adriano.

England host the Netherlands in a Villa Park friendly on February 9 before the teams meet again in Amsterdam in 2006.

Tsunami

benefit match to be played in Barcelona

The "Football for Hope" benefit match to help victims of the Asian tsunami will be played at Barcelona's Nou Camp stadium on February 15, FIFA and UEFA said in a joint statement on Thursday.

Soccer's world and European governing bodies said that one side would be led by World Player 2004 Ronaldinho, the other by European Footballer of the Year 2004 Andriy Shevchenko, with the other players involved to be named in due course.

The Brazilian's team will be jointly-coached by Brazil's World Cup winning-coach Carlos Alberto Parreira and Dutch coach Frank Rijkaard while Juventus boss Marcello Lippi and Arsenal's French manager Arsene Wenger will take charge of the Ukrainian striker's lineup.

All proceeds from the match will be donated to the FIFA/AFC Tsunami Solidarity Fund, which has been set up jointly by FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

"Just like the rest of the international community, the worldwide football family is determined to do everything possible to help the individuals and football associations that have been so severely affected by the terrible tsunami tragedy," said FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

Robinho insists he staying at Santos

Brazil's 20-year-old forward Robinho has repeated that he is staying at Santos for the time being and is not moving to Real Madrid.

"I'm not interested in what people are saying," he told reporters. "I want to stay at Santos. When the time comes to leave, everyone is going to know about it."

Speculation began over a possible move after Robinho's mother spent six weeks in captivity after being kidnapped late last year.

The rumors increased after former Santos coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo took over at Real and it was thought logical that he would try to take Robinho with him.

"The move was good for Vanderlei and I'm very happy for him," said Robinho. "But I want to help Santos in the Libertadores Cup (the South American equivalent of the

Champions League)."

Robinho, whose cheeky skills make him one of Brazil's most exciting players, has al-

ready won the Brazilian championship twice with Santos and helped them reach the final of the 2003 Libertadores

Mourinho stirs up conspiracy theory

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho raised the stakes for the second leg of the League Cup semi-final with a thinly disguised attack on Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson after the teams drew 0-0 in the first leg at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

Without naming him directly, Mourinho intimated the United manager had somehow influenced referee Neale Barry by walking down the tunnel with him at halftime.

"What I thought, what I saw, what I heard at halftime was important for me to understand a few things," said

Mourinho, whose side were frustrated by Ferguson's side.

"We saw one referee in the first half and one referee in the second half. We saw dozens and dozens of free kicks in the second half. It was foul and then dive, foul and dive and only two minutes added on."

Asked what exactly he was suggesting, the Portuguese coach added: "What I'm suggesting is that the referee didn't walk alone to the dressing room at halftime, he should walk with the fourth official or the linesman, but there was somebody else with him."

"You only have to analyse the referee's performance in the first half and the second half, maybe one day when I'm 60 and I've been in this league for 20 years and I know everybody and everybody respects me, I will have this power."

United were also accused of having too much contact with match officials by former Tottenham Hotspur manager Jacques Santini in a league match last September.

League leaders Chelsea battered away at United in a pulsating semi-final, with Frank Lampard and late substitute Jiri Jarosik both hav-

ing efforts cleared off the line while Eidar Gudjohnsen had a first-half effort disallowed for offside.

Wayne Rooney, back after a three-match suspension, had United's best chances in the first half, while the visitors had two penalty claims turned down.

Despite failing to capitalise on home advantage, Mourinho said he was still confident Chelsea can stay on course for their first silverware in his reign by reaching the League Cup final in Cardiff on February 27.

"It's 50-50," he said.

"They got the result they wanted tonight and I give them credit for that. If we go there and defend as well as they did tonight, albeit with a bit of luck, I will be very happy."

"The result wasn't fair tonight, but I accept it, because that's football."



Mourinho

Milan ease past Palermo into finals

AC Milan moved smoothly into the quarter-finals of the Italian Cup with a 2-0 win over Palermo at the San Siro stadium on Wednesday.

A first-half goal by midfielder Cristian Brocchi and a late Jon Dahl Tomasson penalty ensured Milan advanced with a 4-1 aggregate victory.

Milan were joined in the last eight by city rivals Inter, who advanced courtesy of a hat-trick by Obafemi Martins, Fiorentina and Sampdoria.

Milan took the lead in the 19th minute, when a dipping drive by Brocchi bounced over diving goalkeeper Nicola Santoni.

Milan's dominance grew

after the break and they sealed the result in the 77th minute, when Christian Terlizzi tripped Tomasson in the box to give away a penalty, which the Danish international calmly slotted home.

Milan will face the winner of Thursday's tie between Lecce and Udinese.

In the earlier matches on Wednesday, Martins scored three second half goals as Inter beat Bologna 3-1 to seal a 6-2 win on aggregate.

Jonathan Binotto put Bologna ahead at the start of the second half. Martins, however, equalised 10 minutes later when he fired home a rebound from a Alvaro Recoba shot that had hit the



Tomasson

post. The 20-year-old sealed victory when he ran on to a Dejan Stankovic pass and tucked the ball past the keeper in the 82nd minute before he completed his hat-trick three

minutes later when he jinked past his marker and fired into the net.

Inter will face the winner of Thursday's tie between Atalanta and Juventus in the quarter-finals. Atalanta hold a 2-0 lead after the first leg.

Fiorentina brushed aside Parma 3-0 with goals from Enrico Fantini, Eneo Maresca and Christian Maggio to complete a 5-0 aggregate win. The six times winners meet the winner of Thursday's tie between Siena and AS Roma.

The last remaining non-Serie A side in the draw, Torino, slipped out of the competition. Their 2-1 win over Sampdoria was not enough to reverse a 2-0 defeat in the first leg.

Sports

AFRICAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP

Is Benin ready to host Africa's youth?

On Saturday, the small West African nation of Benin stages the African Youth Championship for the very first time.

The hosts welcome seven other countries - Angola, Egypt, the Ivory Coast,

- Group A**
- Benin
- Ivory Coast
- Nigeria
- Mali
- Group B**
- Angola
- Egypt
- Lesotho
- Morocco

Lesotho, Nigeria, Mali and Morocco - to their small nation for the under-20 tournament.

Yet as the competition looms, Beninois officials are worried that adverse publicity surrounding the poor preparation of the finals may dampen both local fans' enthusiasm and their willingness to attend games.

The fourteen edition of the competition will only be staged in the capital Cotonou after plans to play some games in Porto Novo were dropped because of a lack of funds.

In addition to the inadequate funding, the poor quality of the pitches is also said to be giving football authorities sleepless nights.

And with the fortnight-long tournament just days away, it is unclear whether the changing rooms at the main Friendship Stadium will be ready for use.

Despite all the problems, the two ministers in charge of overseeing sports facilities in Benin, Valentin Aditi Houde and Luc Gnacadja, are in upbeat mood.

"We are confident that

we'll add the finishing touches very shortly - and this will be well in advance of Saturday," Gnacadja, the Minister of the Environment, told BBC Sport.

Aditi Houde, the Minister of Sports, urged football enthusiasts to come out in their numbers and support the competition throughout.

Last weekend, the chairman of the local organising committee, Lieutenant Colonel Sebastien Ametepe, went on national television last weekend to say that Benin was ready, but he admitted to covering various expenses.

But not everybody in Benin believes that every-

thing will be in order by the time the competition gets underway on Saturday, when Benin entertain Nigeria and Mali take on the Ivory Coast in Group A.

Most are waiting to see what will happen given all the uncertainties that have marred the preparations of the tournament.

One problem is that the pitch at the Rene Pleven Stadium, the tournament's second venue, is awash with weeds that re-surface just hours after they've been removed.

There also seems to be a lack of enthusiasm and public excitement - which is in direct contrast to this time last

year when Benin's national team, the Squirrels, made their African Cup of Nations debut in Tunisia.

Furthermore, budget constraints have forced the local organizing committee to post only a few bills and posters at crossroads in the centre of Cotonou.

Some makeshift banners are visible at various roundabouts, but critics say this is not the proper way for a host country to publicise the tournament.

Nonetheless, locals are hoping that by the time the tournament ends with the final on 29 January, African football fans will remember Benin 2005 as a great success.

Jordaan to head 2010 World Cup c'ttee

South Africa is prepared to let Danny Jordaan head the 2010 World Cup Local Organising Committee (LOC) in line with the wish of Fifa president Sepp Blatter.

South African Football Association (Safa) president Mofeti Oliphant said on Thursday that Jordaan is almost certainly going to be

appointed chief executive of the 2010 LOC.

Blatter, the head of football's world governing body who is visiting South Africa, said on Wednesday that he believed the LOC should be chaired by Irvin

Khosa and Oliphant should remain at the helm of Safa.

Blatter also said that Jordaan, who spearheaded South Africa's successful bid to host the 2010 World Cup, should be brought in as chief executive of the LOC.

Speaking at a press briefing, Oliphant said: "I said that we would put Mr Blatter's suggestion to the Safa executive and after discussion on the matter it was accepted."

The acceptance of Blatter's suggestions means Oliphant will stand for re-election as Safa president instead of stepping aside later this year as he had indicated he would.

Blatter said he was delighted with the decision.

"These are the three men who helped bring the World Cup to South Africa."

"It is important that we have continuity," the Fifa boss said.

Jordaan - currently chief executive of Safa - remained tight-lipped on the matter.

"My opinion is irrelevant," he said.

"You have heard from the Fifa president, you have heard from the Safa president and you have heard from the chairman of the LOC."

Martins grabs hat-trick for Inter

Nigerian striker Obafemi Martins scored a superb hat-trick as Inter Milan reached the quarter-finals of the Italian Cup on Wednesday.

The 20-year-old scored all Inter's goals in the second half of their 3-1 victory at Bologna.

Using his blistering pace to serious effect, Martins struck twice from close range before rounding off the scoring with a stunning drive that flew into the top corner of the net.

The youngster recently came third in a public poll to select the 2004 BBC African

Footballer of the Year, an award which was won by Nigerian captain Jay-Jay Okocha.

The win secured a 6-2 aggregate score for Inter, who were a goal down at half-time after Jonathan Binotto had seized on an error in the Inter defence.

Inter will now play the winners of Thursday's third round tie between Serie A leaders Juventus and Atalanta.

Joining Inter in the quarter-finals are Fiorentina, AC Milan and Sampdoria.

The winners of the competition are rewarded with a place in the UEFA Cup.

Kotoko sack coach Schmidt

Ghana's beaten Confederation Cup finalists Asante Kotoko have dismissed their German coach Hans Dieter Schmidt.



Schmidt

Kotoko chief executive Major Yaw Larsen told BBC Sport that Schmidt had been fired for insubordination.

"In assessment of this gentleman, the management decided that he had breached a number of clauses in his contract and we therefore decided to relieve him of his contract," Larsen said.

"For example, he blatantly refused to take instructions for me on many occasions. He tried to kick against them, which was unacceptable and in his contract he was not supposed to do that." Larsen said that Kotoko's

penalty shoot-out defeat against local rivals Hearts of Oak in Sunday's Confederation Cup final was not the reason for Schmidt's dismissal.

"The decision is in no way related to the match," the chief executive explained.

"The decision was more or less cooked before then, although the match might have accelerated the departure."

Kotoko lost 8-7 on penalties after the two-legged tie had ended 2-2 on aggregate.

Before the game, Schmidt had boasted that Hearts needed a "miracle" to win the maiden Confederation Cup.

Trust Classified

THE EVERLASTING SETTLEDOWN GOSPEL MINISTRIES (TUSGOM)

Notice is hereby given to the general public that the above named Organization has applied for registration under Part C of the Companies and Allied Matters Act of 1990.

The Trustees are:

- 1. PASTOR AGHEDGOS OSAGIE - General Overseer
- 2. PASTOR (MRS.) SHARY OSAGIE - Treasurer
- 3. HESHAMA OHALIMBER - Secretary Gen.
- 4. DR. BENI OYEKAN - Financial Sec.
- 5. SUNDUB ENDO - Church Administrator

Any objection to the registration should be forwarded to the Registrar - General Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse Zone 5, P.M.B. 198 Garki Abuja within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:

Gadwa Garuba & Associates

18A Koforidua Street, Zone 2 Wuse Abuja.

LIVELY HOPE WORLD OUTREACH

Notice is hereby given to the general public that the above named body has applied for registration under Part C of the Companies and Allied Matters Act of 1990.

The Trustees are:

- 1. EZEM BENSON NNAMDI
- 2. EZEM PATRICIA AKUOMA
- 3. IBEGBU GEORGE ONYEBUCHI

Any objection to the registration should be forwarded to the Registrar - General Corporate Affairs Commission, Wuse Zone 5, P.M.B. 198 Garki Abuja within 28 days of this publication.

Signed:

Secretary

MISSING DOCUMENT

This is to inform the general public especially Ministry of Federal Capital Territory of the Loss of Statutory Right of Occupancy No. FCT/ABU/MISC 19348 granted in favour of SHAZSK Limited on Plot No 67 within Kukwaba District measuring 5,613.16 Square Metres.

If found please return to Upper Chambers Law Firm, Suite 12 Bataiya Plaza, Area 11, Garki, Abuja

Signed

Shehu D. Obaika Esq.

(08033175375)

LOSS OF CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

This is to inform the general public and the Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja of the loss of Original Certificate of Occupancy No. FCT/ABU/KN 741 dated 14th December 1983 issued in favour of Alhaji Shuaibu Ahmadu Barma and all efforts to locate it has proved unsuccessful.

Signed:

ALHAJI SHUAIBU AHMADU BARMA

Change of Names

1. Formerly, referred to as BALLA ALIYU, now wish to be known and called SULEIMAN ALIYU UMAR. All former documents remain valid. Afribank International Limited (Merchant Bankers) and general public to take note.

1. Formerly MISS LILLIAN VANDE, now wish to be known as MRS LILLIAN BWALA. All former documents remain valid. African Petroleum Plc please take note.

1. NKEDEKA OFORUA, now to be called MRS NKEDEKA OKELEKE. All former documents remain valid. General public to note.

1. Formerly known as MOJISOLA OLUBUSOLA OLABANZANA, now wish to be known as MOJISOLA OJABUSOLA ADENYI. Former documents remain valid. Public to note.

Sports

Ogunjobi's woes not yet over

Minister to present fresh evidence

Sports Minister, Musa Mohammed, whose reforms sparked off raging controversies in Nigeria football, may submit documented evidence against the sacked but temporary recalled NFA management staff on Monday to the three-man panel set up by the NFA board to investigate allegations against the management.

The Chief Taiwo Ogunjobi-led management, which currently enjoys reprieve sequel to FIFA's intervention, is alleged to have exhibited financial impropriety in the handling of various grants up to the tune of 4million dollars.

Besides the management is alleged to have soiled its hands in the adidas deal, which yielded "Peanut" to Nigeria in terms of financial reward as the official sponsors of the national kits. Impeccable sources hinted that the Ogunjobi-led management is to be asked to account for funds raised within the domestic scene including Globacom, Coca-cola, and dividends from investments as well as CAF

NFA Board hails minister for rescinding decision

The NFA board has lauded the Sports Minister, Musa Mohammed, for putting the interest of Nigeria above personal ego.

The minister had backed peddled in the termination of the services of the NFA management following a letter from FIFA that the sack, though justified, was not done through the right channel.

Consequently, the minister had penultimate Thursday extended reprieve to the sacked management pending the determination of the three-man panel set up by the NFA to investigate the allegations leveled against it.

"The minister took everyone by surprise; he showed how much he valued due process and is willing to work with the NFA board to effect necessary changes to the advancement of Nigeria football."

"He showed to everyone, who may have doubted his good intention", that Nigeria is over and above any one's based interest. He has done this by deciding to allow the board assume its functions in harmony with FIFA's rules on such matters", Sabo Jumba the spokesman for the board said yesterday.

By Patrick Andrew, Senior Sports Reporter

grants and proceeds from other international engagements.

Specifically, the minister may take advantage of the Col. Joro Dogo Yabisi's audit report which was said to have indicted Ogunjobi as well as

the review panel constituted by the board to re-evaluate the Yabisi report.

This latter report was said to have been "even more damaging than the former one provoking unanimous decision by the board to adopt sterner disciplinary measures against Ogunjobi and his cohorts before the minister's

sledge hammer descended on the management.

Late Mark Aku had initiated similar reforms, which though was tainted, generated a lot of hiccups largely because some person who could not measure up to the required administrative mark were eventually given the job.



Hameed Shahimi, left, of Ibadan Challenge in ball possession with Shehu Lawal Kaita of Katsina Kangiwa at the ongoing VMobile/Niger Delta Polo Tournament in Port Harcourt

VMobile/Niger Delta Polo: Ibadan Challenge lifts Governor's Cup

Dr. Femi Awolaja-led Ibadan Challenge has won Governor Peter Odili Cup in the ongoing Vmobile/Niger Delta Polo fiesta with the walloping of Katsina Kangiwa by 5 goals to 1, while the latter secures the runner-up position, having beat PH Ggamac with 5 goals to 2* in the last match for the Cup.

To emerge tops, the Oluyole big boys, which comprised of Saidu Umar + 3, Bola Adeyemi -1, Ahmadu Umar 0, and Dr. Femi Awolaja + 1 as Captain, earlier in the opening match for the Cup beat PH Ggamac 7 goals to 5 to proof their readiness to make a mince of any team that come their way in the tournament.

PH Ggamac's 5 goals loss to Ibadan Challenge's 7 goals and their 2* goals loss to Katsina Kangiwa's 5 made the team to lose out in the keenly contested tournament. With this victory, the Oluyole big boys seem to be sending signal to other teams willing to visit Ibadan for the Vmobile/Ibadan Challenge coming up later in the month, to beware.

Saidu Umar, who spoke on behalf of the team, noted

that although they planned to win the Cup, their team work and understanding of one another on the field of play contributed to their victory. "We have the courage, we have the quality, we have players, and we have the horses to make us win", Saidu enthused.

The Maiduguri-based Yola ABTI also looks good to lift General T.Y. Danjuma Cup in the tournament, having won two of their matches. In their first match against Bauchi Marshpearl, Yola ABTI proved their mettle when they defeated the former by 6* goals to 3. They also beat PH Crushed Rock by 3* goals to 3 in their second match. The opening match for the Cup saw PH Crushed Rock tying with PH Le Meridien with 4 goals apiece, but the forth match between PH Le Meridien and Bauchi Marshpearl ended 3* goals to 3 in favour of the former. Also, in the fifth match for the Cup, PH Crushed Rock pulled the wool off Bauchi Marshpearl's eye when they defeated them by 3* goals to 3. With these results, the coast seems clear for Yola ABTI to lift the Cup as the final match between them and PH Le Meridien is a mere formality.

Lagos MRS tip to win Gen. Hassan Cup

Lagos MRS has been tipped to win the General Hassan Cup in the ongoing Vmobile/Niger Delta Polo tourney. The polo club was thrown into some form of frenzy jubilation on Wednesday as Lagos MRS, one of the teams vying for honours in the prestigious General

Hassan Katsina Cup in the ongoing Vmobile-sponsored Niger Delta polo tournament, turned the table against the highly favoured Lagos Ashbert Raiders.

Ashbert Raiders opened the scoreline through its patron, Prince Albert Esiri, but later succumbed to the firing

power of Sayyu-led side and lost the match by 2 goals to 4.

Lagos MRS showed their resolve to carry the day, when Sayyu Dantata, the teams engine room displayed good horsemanship by seizing the midfield and terrorizing their

opponents until it caved in few minutes into the opening chukka through a shot from his brother, Madugu Dantata

The match which was tightly fought saw star player, Hamisu Buba equalizing for the Ashbert side. But on return for the third chukka, the MRS,

playing like a team infused with the winning bug, tore through the defensive wall of Raiders and slot in a goal to the admiration of polo fans who turned out in their hundreds to watch the encounter.

The story was the same in the fourth chukka as Sayyu Dantata once again played his way into the hearts of his numerous fans through his solo effort, which brought the tally to four against two for the Ashbert team that has Adamu Yaro, Hamisu Buba, Jamilu Mohammed playing for the side.

In the other matches also decided today, Port-Harcourt Le Meridien outscored Bauchi Marshpearl by 31/2 (three and half) goals to 3 (three). In the encounter involving Katsina Kangiwa and Ibadan Challenge, the Oluyole boys carried the day by beating the desert team by 5-1.

Lagos Agad patroned by Adamu Yaro was also at his best in the match against Lagos Ikoyi. It won by 8 goals to 21/2. Also Yola ABTI defeated PH Crushed Rock by 31/2 goals to 3.

The week long encounter enters its fourth day today and would be rounded off on Saturday

NFA crisis:

Splinter group nullifies Galadima's meeting

As the NFA ongoing reform unfolds, a member of its splinter group, Clive Ka'ave has declared Tuesday's meeting which reinstated Chief Taiwo Ogunjobi as irre-gular.

Seven elected members of the board led by its chairman, Ibrahim Galadima,

held an emergency meeting at the Glass House on Tuesday where they took decisions on the reforms.

The meeting excluded all 13 government no-mines and representatives of interest groups who were withdrawn from the board.

But Ka'ave, who is one of

those excluded from the meeting, said that the seven-man meetings breached both decree 101 and the new statute approved by the NFA congress in Port Harcourt.

"As far as I am concerned, they have not met the requirements of either the decree or the new statute in

convening their meeting."

Ka'ave, who was a vice chairman of the board, said.

He told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), yesterday in Abuja that FIFA's letter which reque-sted the sports ministry to rescind its decision on the sack of Ogunjobi was silent on government nominees.

"We should read between the lines because the spirit of the letter was just to get the minister of sports to rescind his decision on perceived interference in soccer management."

"We intend to hold our meeting on Wednesday in Lagos and invitations will be extended to all members."

"Once we form a quo-rum, we will take decisions on all issues discussed" last Tuesday by the seven members," he said.

Robson keen to keep Kanu

West Brom manager Bryan Robson has dismissed reports that he wants to offload Nigerian striker Nwankwo Kanu.

Kanu joined the Haggies on a free transfer from Arsenal last summer but has only scored two goals.

And with the arrival of Kevin Campbell from Everton, Kanu's future was in doubt with

Robson reportedly ready to sell the 28-year-old.

But Robson said: "Is Kanu going anywhere? No. All the strikers are part of the squad and we need them all."

Robson believes he needs strength in depth in his forward line if he is to keep the club in the Premiership this season.

"Last weekend Kanu had a virus and Geoff Horsfield was

feeling his hamstring and all of a sudden you are down to two strikers," Robson added.

"The last thing you need to have is a problem with strikers because if you don't score goals, you don't win games which is exactly what we've got to do."

Robson also paid tribute to Kanu for his willingness to dig in during the club's relegation

This space is for sale

The Hajj—this once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to participate in the global assembly of Muslims evoking and re-enacting the struggles of Abraham, the father of monotheism—is not supposed to be an easy journey. In it a test and a trial. And considering the fact that Muslims, according to the Holy Qur'an, are expected by God to "witness that which is of benefit to them," encountering difficulties is only to be expected.

This is because, in this life, nothing good is easy, and, perhaps, nothing easy is good, either. And in Hajj, all the great difficulties—the minor and major jihads, with all the semblances of physical and spiritual migration, have been combined into one.

"And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways."

"So that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them; and that they might celebrate the name of Allah through the Days appointed [for sacrifice] over the cattle which He has provided for them [to this end]; then eat ye thereof and feed the distressed ones in want."

Holy Qur'an 22:27-8

For many it is a long haul—from great distances on foot, by every manner of mount, across deserts, jungles and plains, over rivers, mountains and hills. It is a grueling, even if rewarding, experience. And even with all the ease and speed brought by technology, the journey is full of difficulties and deprivations. For everyone who comes to it, even from among those living in the vicinity of the Holy Places, the Hajj is a real test of endurance.

That is why part of the preparation for it is the writing of a will, for the pilgrim is embarking on a journey from which he may not return; but it is a necessary journey; for, he is going to a home that is his and secure.

There he goes to encounter the Ka'abah towards which he prays; he runs between Safah and Marwah; he stands at Arafat; he goes through Muzdalifah and stays days at Mina, which, for him, is a battlefield—and the enemy this time is Satan himself. That is why the preparation is so elaborate. And that is why the prize—the benefit to be derived—is so great.

Part of the benefit of Hajj is that at the end, the pilgrim comes to the realization that the vast panorama of the world is an everyday re-enactment of Safah and Marwah—an arena of struggle, in which Muslims are not supposed to laze in the shade or seek to graze in its pastures. They are to engage themselves in a perpetual struggle and permanent *stray* in order to get their share of the world.

It is part of the benefit of Hajj that Muslims come to the realization that the world is not an arena for the pursuit of unattained desires—carnal debauchery, primitive accumulation or the pursuit after power for its own sake. The Hajj teaches that desire for these is in reality a burden; and these are the best people only because they have learned to shed it.

It is part of the benefit of Hajj that Muslims identify and disavow the enemies of man who oppress and hinder mankind from the worship of the one true God. When they do that they become true soldiers of faith in the uniform of *Islam*. They have sacrificed desire and shed all the adornments and distortions devised by ego and class to achieve the symbolic unity of mankind.

This dissolution of differences results in an all-embracing oneness—a unity of believers, united in appearance, united in deprivation, united in resolve and united in the worship of the God who is One—the multitude celebrating the praises of God, hymning to His Glory, pledging to be helpers to true *Tauhid*, accepting to be defenders of freedom and morality, being exemplars of mercy to the world, and witnesses to justice and fair dealing even against those dearest to them.

Attired as they are in white, they pour onto Arafat and stream away to Muzdalifah on their way to Mina where they are mandated to stay three days to engage in devotion to the Glory of God, to discuss the fate and plight of Muslims and other oppressed peoples, and to plan for the future of their world. It is a world witnessing the struggle between Good and Evil.

As they prepare to go into battle with the Satan—in them, with them and away from them—Muslims stealthily leave Arafat at night approaches, pick their weapons at Muzdalifah, and stone the enemies of God in the broad light of day.

This is one of the most important benefits they are expected to gain from the great assembly. It is indeed a great pity that this great ocean of believers departs the Holy Land without discussing the biggest of the problems facing them, because the so-called custodians of the two Holy Places will not allow a criticism of the United States of America and Israel, when indeed all the problems of Muslims, and perhaps of all mankind, are caused by these two countries. It is in the nature of Zionism that it will not tolerate the re-emergence of the *Tauhid* that dissolves borders and bonds believers together. It knows that it is true pulsating *Tauhid* alone—not the empty, formulaic Salafist rendering of it—that can give true independence to Muslims.

Such is the Hajj—a difficult undertaking; a difficult journey followed by not so easy-to-understand rites—right at the centre of the being of the *Ummah*. Every year more than two million Muslims perform its rites, while two billion believers yearn to

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Friday, January 14, 2005

Pilgrimage to the House of God

By Adamu Adamu

While no one expects the Hajj to be easy, that that does not by any means mean that it has to be such a hell for Nigerian Muslims every year. But the truth is that every community among the Muslims of the world is able to conduct this very important pillar of the religion in a hitch-free manner except in Nigeria.

Even here, however, it has not always been such a gargantuan problem. While the number of pilgrims going on the Hajj during the First Republic was quite low compared to the current numbers, to say nothing of the record numbers of the early 1980s, it was not just because the numbers were small that things went smoothly.

Arrangements for the pilgrimage were then in private hands, and the government of the Northern and Western Regions provided consular support. For most pilgrims in the North then, the trip was still the long trek, with many a stop [zango] en-route. The handful who could afford to ply the route in vehicles or fly it by plane patronized private tour guides like Alhaji Mahmud Dantata's WAPA [West African Pilgrims Agency].

The first Pilgrim Welfare Board in Nigeria was established by Chief Obafemi Awolowo's government in the Western Region and it catered for pilgrims from that zone. Later in 1975, the government of General Yakubu Gowon established the National Pilgrims Welfare Board under Alhaji Marmon Baza, from whom the late Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumti took over. By the early 1980s Nigeria was leading the world in the number of pilgrims going on Hajj.

In 1981, 150,000 Nigerians made the pilgrimage to Mecca making Nigeria the country with the highest number of pilgrims in the world. In a move dictated by economic conditions and which proved unpopular, the regime of Major General Muhammad Buhari cut the number of Nigerians going on Hajj. In 1989, the government of General Ibrahim Babangida replaced the National Pilgrims Board with a National Pilgrims Commission. The numbers began to climb again.

The sheer logistics of handling these record numbers combined with the toll of several years of a nonchalant and lackadaisical attitude of the carriers that catered for all pilgrims, and the abuse of procedure and disrespect for schedules and guidelines led to a chaotic situation in airlifting the pilgrims to the Holy Land and evacuating them back home. Though the numbers have now gone down, many of these abuses are still with us.

There are still pilgrims who will seek to jump the queue; they wish to go last and they must return first. And because to them that will violate the baggage limit. And there are many who are lawful during the Hajj season, they think that this somehow exempts them from having to comply with guidelines and regulations on baggage allowance. At all events, they must make profit even if it is at the expense of pilgrim comfort and convenience. Today, an even more intractable problem is the issue of the sponsorship of hundreds of people by the state and Federal governments in the name of welfare officers, priests, or cronies.

It is in the midst of all this that the Hajj is conducted. This year the airlift began on December 28, 2004 and was to end tomorrow, January 15, 2005 when the authorities in Saudi Arabia were expected to close the kingdom's Jeddah's King Abdul Aziz International Airport to Hajj traffic. And with only a day to go, more than 30,000 intending pilgrims have not been airlifted. According to Alhaji Abubakar Tanko, minister of state for foreign affairs, Nigeria has already requested for a three-day extension against the airport closure.

Nigeria has the distinction of being the country with the highest number of such requests. And it has been consistent, failing to request extension only on very few occasions since the chaos of airlift began several years ago. But why is it that, after more than 40 years of the creation of pilgrims boards and the provision of government support, Muslims have been unable to consistently conduct a hitch-free Hajj exercise? Why this endemic inability?

The problem this year appeared to have been caused by the shoddy arrangements made by IRS [Iyayaku Rabiu & Sons] Airlines, one of the carriers chosen to airlift 20,000 pilgrims. As normal practice, all carriers chosen by the National Committee on Hajj, NCH, needed to be fully screened and certified OK by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, NCAA, before they began airlifting pilgrims.

The airlift began on December 28, and IRS was expected to have brought its planes for the checks before hand. When it eventually presented its plane, it was found not to have undergone the required check. The carrier carried out a "B" check on the airlift instead of the mandatory "C" check. The minister of aviation himself accused the airline of failing to meet the Air Operations Certificate Maintenance requirement. Last year IRS had its operating license revoked when it destroyed the Instrument Landing System equipment at Kaduna International Airport at take off during that year's Hajj airlift.

Despite what might appear to have been a case of reckless endangerment, IRS was given another chance to present a set-

vicable, airworthy aircraft. For two weeks it failed to do so; and the NCAA stood its ground and refused to clear the air unworkable plane.

Perhaps the NCAA should have been publicly commended for refusing to succumb to pressure and blackmail that we did have endangered the lives of pilgrims. With the memory of Hold Trade Airline Hajj explosion still fresh in the minds of people, the National Committee on Hajj should have acted with greater firmness.

Obviously the least NCH should have done was not to have sat down waiting for IRS to comply with NCAA directives while the Saudi Presidency Civil Aviation Authority has indicated that the airlift must end by January 15. After the carrier failed to produce airworthy planes that posed no threat to lives of pilgrims, NCH should have revoked the contract immediately and blacklisted the airline for Hajj.

Another more serious and better placed airline should have been engaged; or, better still, Kabo Air, which is already mobilized, should have been requested to provide additional planes to fill the slots IRS couldn't fill. If that had been done we wouldn't have had 30,000 stranded pilgrims today. But while this would have solved the IRS hiccup it still wouldn't have solved the issue of the perennial chaos of Hajj operations.

The problem of Hajj, which has been long-standing, is in essence the result of late arrangements. Many countries will start making their arrangements immediately after this Hajj. In other words, Hajj officials from many countries will negotiate and in some cases even pay the rent or deposit for choice accommodation in the proximity of the Haramain, both Mecca and Medina. This arrangement will be considered before they return home. The same will have been done for transportation and feeding.

But Nigerian officials will not begin any arrangement until matters are already getting late and when all good accommodations have been taken. While this may be deliberate in order to facilitate sharp practices, there is also the basic problem that since everything else is also late, there is probably no money for Nigerian officials to pay rent or pay for anything in advance.

And bank at home there are even greater and more inexplicable delays. For instance, while there is nothing to stop the government announcing Hajj fares for next year, Hajj even now, this will not be done until next year, when time will have begun to run out. Foreign exchange will not be procured or it will be centralized to a few favoured banks. Passports and all relevant travel papers will not be procured on time; and without passport there is no question of getting a visa—and the circle of delay and tragedy begins and it affects every aspect of the operation.

When it comes to the selection of a carrier, instead of going for a long-term contract with the well-known reputable carriers, officials insist on fresh negotiations every year. There is nothing in this to suggest the interest of pilgrims is being served. Rather the desire appears to be collection of bribe from new and old carriers while decision is being made. Otherwise Kabo Air and several other available foreign air carriers could have been contracted for this. And the airlift will not have had to suffer these unfortunate, shameful and preventable hiccups.

Yet everything, from travel papers to reputable carriers, can be made available and on time; but if the wrong people are handling matters, Hajj exercise may still be far from successful. A lot therefore depends upon the personnel of the National Committee on Hajj.

While for the past five years, Professor Abubakar Gwashi, chairman of the NCH, had demonstrated that he was not amenable to the type of major frauds that had characterized operations before him, the same could not be said for all members of the committee; and it is clear that he probably spends a disproportionate amount of his time watching over some of them. This is not the way a Hajj committee should be staffed.

Clearly, the basic qualities that should be required for all nominees to the committee must include the ability to resist corruption, having ample competence and, most important of all, the possession of a result-oriented attitude.

Still, however, much will depend on the weather. While there is still little that science can do about hurricane haze, there is a lot that can be done to beat the curfew that it imposes on Hajj operations. No doubt, the haze this year has been severe but with the unpredictable nature of the weather there is the possibility that it can even be severer in years to come. The NCH should prepare for contingencies whereby it may prove necessary for all take-offs or landings in Enugu, Lagos, Port Harcourt and Ilorin airports. Instead of waiting for the haze to clear, the NCH should learn to divert flights to haze-free southern airports and provide land transport to convey pilgrims home.

All these, of course, are mere palliatives, temporary solutions to problems that must be tackled head-on sooner or later. And the only permanent solution in sight is the establishment of a permanent National Hajj Commission. And a bill to create such a commission has been ready for the last two years, but it is said that it is being deliberately delayed by the president for reasons best known to him. In the circumstance, it is safe to say that the problems faced by the Hajj are not about to end; they will only multiply.