

DAILY TRUST

Trust Is A Burden

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Thursday Column

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and democracy**
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**Deregulation is
dangerous!**

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Britain resolves to retrieve Nigeria's looted funds

The British government is now ready to assist Nigeria in the recovery of its looted funds stashed in British banks, Nigeria's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Prince Bola Ajibola, has said.

The British government action follows intensive pressure from its parliamentarians who are said to be "deeply disturbed and worried" about the loot.

Also, he said Britain's change of mind was because Nigeria has complied with Britain's demand for certificates and other relevant papers.

Speaking at a luncheon he hosted for selected media representatives in London during the week, the High Commissioner said that Britain had expressed its preparedness to freeze the accounts in which such funds had been stashed if Nigeria could provide certain information.

He explained that Britain had demanded for certificates and copies of a questionnaire forwarded to the lawyer representing the Nigerian government.

Ajibola stated that some members of the British parliament were "deeply disturbed and worried," about the issue of the looted money, stressing the MPs eagerness to assist Nigeria in resolving its economic problems.

He disclosed that a total of 13 billion pounds of the stolen money had been confirmed to be deposited in 42 accounts in 25 London banks out of which 15 were yet to tighten their anti-laundering controls.

The High Commissioner stressed that the action expected to be taken by the British government would sent a clear signal to the looters on its emerging stance on looted funds, while the perpetrators would be discouraged from stealing public money.

He emphasised that without the cooperation of Britain, it would be very difficult

contd. on pg 2

Senate investigates fuel importation

The Senate yesterday resolved to probe the mass importation of petroleum products into the country from 1995 to date.

Passing a motion to this effect yesterday, the upper house resolved to set up an ad-hoc committee to unravel those behind the importation

NASS wades into FG, ASUU stand-off

The National Assembly has moved to end the face off between the Federal Government and university lecturers, which has resulted in the current industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

Members of the joint committees on education of both the Senate and the House of Representatives rose from a meeting with representatives of ASUU,

Naira devalued 4.5%

The Nigerian Central Bank said yesterday it had devalued the Naira currency to 115.7 against the US dollar from 110.7 at the beginning of the week and analysts predicted the downward adjustment would continue after the 4.5 per cent fall.

The Central Bank made its second adjustment this week during trading on Tuesday when massive demand for foreign exchange continued to surge on its interbank foreign market (IFEM), bringing the week's total to 254 million dollars after two days.

On Monday, the value was lowered to 112.7 against the dollar from 110.7 on Friday.

"Bank's demand for hard currency at the IFEM in the last two days totalled 254 million dollars, 69 million dollars above the average of 185 million dollars weekly projection for the market," Central Bank spokesman, Tony Ede told newsmen in Abuja yesterday.

Banks and industry analysts attributed the huge forex demand to a sudden release of N158 billion in central government revenue allocations to state governments and corporations last Friday.

But they added that the root cause of the Naira's problem was a major shift of policy which allowed state governments and corporations to bank with commercial banks rather than with the Central Bank. This had led to periodic liquidity problems the Central Bank had difficulty controlling.

Ken Orji, head of treasury at NBM bank, said the gap between the official rate of N115.7 to the dollar and the black market rate of 135 naira to the dollar has caused a resurgence of round tripping, where speculators buy foreign currency at the lower official market rate and then sell on the black market for a profit.

"The problem with the naira is mainly that of speculations

contd. on pg 2

By Reuben Yunana

of adulterated pipeline products into the country within the period.

The motion was sponsored by Senator Arthur Nzeribe, who said the importation of the product was a clear case of economic sabotage.

By Reuben Yunana

Federal Ministry of Education and the National Universities Commission yesterday with a call on ASUU to suspend its ongoing strike.

The meeting had in attendance, chairman, Senate Committee on Education, Senator Alex Kadiri, his counterpart in the House of Representatives, Dr. Shehu Garba Matazu, a Federal Government negotiating

Moving his motion for the probe, Nzeribe invoked Senate rule 103 and sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 constitution.

Arguing for the speedy passage of the motion, Nzeribe said "some time within the period aforementioned, the country was de-

team led by Professor Ayo Banjo and Alhaji Sule

contd. on pg 2

liberately and systematically, with fraudulent and murderous design inundated with adulterated petroleum products which apart from posing health hazards, caused a lot of physical damage to the economy."

Describing the act as an economic sabotage, the Senator stressed that it had resulted in the loss of many lives through kerosene explosions and accidents.

According to him, the

matter was more urgent now as the Federal Government appears determined to deregulate the downstream sector of the petroleum industry which needs stringent guidelines for the liberalised market.

The findings of the ad-hoc committee, Nzeribe pointed out, "should be of immense importance in formulating such guidelines whose major objective will be to ensure that all imported

contd. on pg 2



L-R: President Olusegun Obasanjo, Alhaji Sule Lamido, Minister of Foreign Affairs and President Tanja Momadou of Niger Republic at the Extra-Ordinary Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in Abuja... yesterday
Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

ECOWAS moves to enforce sanctions on Liberia

Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) rose from

By Suleiman Mohammed

an extra-ordinary meeting yesterday and resolved to enforce the UN sanctions on Liberia.

FG restructures Calabar export zone

As parts of efforts to attract foreign investors into the country, the Federal Government has approved the restructuring of the Calabar Export Processing Zone to an Export Free Trade Zone.

Briefing State House correspondents at the end of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting yesterday, Minister of Transport, Chief Ojo

By Suleiman Mohammed

Maduekwe said the measure includes the upgrading of the Calabar airport and sea port as well as provisions of necessary infrastructure to provide a conducive environment for investors.

He said a technical committee comprising the ministries of Commerce, Aviation, Finance, Transport, Works, Power and Steel

contd. on pg 2

Consequently, the organisation set up a six-number committee to implement the sanctions on Liberia.

The move according to ECOWAS sources is to contain the frequent crisis among countries in Mono River region.

The ECOWAS mediation and Security Council Mission on Liberia comprising Mali, Togo and ECOWAS executive secretariat will depart for Liberia on April 18, 2001, to work in close collaboration with the United Nations team on the crisis in that region.

contd. on pg 2

NEWS

North gets first private FM station

The first private radio station in the northern part of the country has emerged in Kaduna.

The station, an FM wave band with the air identification of *Jakada* Radio, is owned by Safir Communications Ltd.

Daily Trust gathered that the station is equipped with ten kilowatts solid state transmitters, the first of its type in Nigeria. It was also gathered that it would be the first radio station in Africa to start web-casting.

The transmitters, it was further gathered, have digital signal processor and direct digital synthesis (DDS). The transmitters also have

From Dare Oyewole,
Kaduna

compact disk (CD) quality technology with high signal to noise ratio.

Conducting *Daily Trust* round the radio station in Kaduna yesterday, a television broadcasting veteran, Ambassador Yusuf Mamman said apart from the radio station, there are also plans to add a cable television and a weekly news magazine called *Jakada* and a Hausa weekly newspaper, *Jakadia*.

"We call it Africa's first FM owned and run by professionals," Mamman said assuring that the station would be on air early next

month.

The former national chairman of Alliance for Democracy (AD) said the station would cover about eight states of the federation. These include Kaduna, Niger, Plateau, Kano, Katsina, Nasarawa and Zamfara States as well as FCT.

According to him, the second phase of the project would commence operation before the end of the year and that it would be beamed to serve the people of the north-eastern part of the country.

"Our motive is to carry the people of the north in particular, and the country in

Council to authorise and assist the deployment of ECOMOG forces along the borders inline with the mandate given to the ECOWAS authority.

Naira

contd. from pg 1

and round tripping by some people who are taking advantage of the wide gap that exist between the exchange rate at the official and export proceed markets," Orji said.

He said the Central Bank was trying to close the wide gap between the exchange in the two markets to discourage rent seeking activities in the economy by speculators.

Bankers said the exchange rate at the export proceed market, where banks buy other exporters, dropped to N125 to a dollar yesterday from N120 to one US dollar two days earlier.

provisions in the supplementary budget to take care of the requirement in implementing the agreement when signed.

On its part, the ASUU leaders have returned to brief their members on the developments.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* yesterday, chairman Senate Committee on Education, Senator Alex Kadiri said there was need for ASUU to shift ground as the financial implication of their demands was too staggering.

NASS contd. from pg 1

case at the Industrial Arbitration Panel (IAP) with immediate effect to pave way for purposeful negotiation.

The legislators also pledged to re-examine the letters earlier sent to the Vice Chancellors in respect of salaries and allowances of academic staff as a result of the strike action with a view to withdrawing the circular.

They called on President Olusegun Obasanjo and the National Assembly to make adequate budgetary

Senate contd. from pg 1

Senator John Nwanunu however, proposed an extension of the period to cover 1995 to date instead of 1999 to 1998 as proposed by Nzeribe.

Senate subsequently passed the motion unanymously as amended.

Senate President Pius

ECOWAS contd. from pg 1

However, in order to facilitate the process of encouraging dialogue, the summit directed the Liberian president, Charles Taylor who was at the meeting, to immediately recall the Guinean and Sierra Leonean envoys he earlier expelled from Monrovia.

A communiqué issued at the end of the mini-summit attended by the presidents of eight West African countries as well as the Deputy Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and UN Special Representative, the ECOWAS leaders expressed concern at the increasing tension, and use of armed groups in the Liberia-Sierra Leonean and Guinean borders.

The ECOWAS leaders

also set up a mediation committee comprising Nigeria, Mali and Togo to encourage the process of fresh dialogue "as a means of rebuilding trust between the Heads of States of countries in the Mano River region."

The summit also appealed to the international community to provide assistance to the region, and called on member states to consolidate peace and strengthen democracy, combat irregular armed groups, control light weapons, solve the problem of refugees and past conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.

While re-affirming plans to send ECOMOG troops along the three borders, the summit further called on the United Nations Security

Katagum, the Minister of Education, his permanent secretary and ASUU members led by their president, Dr. Dipo Fashina.

Brokering the reconciliation, the National Assembly called on ASUU to "suspend the strike action in the interest of the students, parents and education generally within Nigeria."

In making the plea, the National Assembly team promised to prevail on the Federal Ministry of Education to withdraw its

pipeline products comply with industrial technical and safety standards."

He said since Nigerians would pay more for petroleum products, it is the duty of legislators to protect the interest of consumers adequately.

general into the modern information society," he said adding that the station would go in the best FM tradition of entertainment, education and enlightenment. He said it would give advertis-

ers best value for their money.

Ambassador Yusuf commended the General Abdulsalami Abubakar administration for granting him licences which, he said, he

applied for ten years ago.

Daily Trust reliably gathered that other members of the board include Col. Sani Bello (chairman) and the immediate past director general of FRCN, Alhaji Ahmed Abdulrahman Michika.

China releases air crew as US apologises

The United States ended an 11-day crisis with China yesterday by saying it was "very sorry" a Chinese pilot died in collision with its spy plane and "very sorry" the U.S. plane landed in China without permission.

But despite not accepting responsibility for the incident as China had insisted, the US "double sorry" won a promise that the spy plane's 24 crew detained on China's Hainan island since the collision would be freed.

The apparent end to the diplomatic crisis came following a letter by US Ambassador Joseph Prueher to Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan yesterday.

Diplomats from both sides had agonised for days over the exact wording of the letter to make it mutually acceptable.

"Both President Bush and Secretary of State Powell have expressed their sincere regret over your missing pilot and aircraft," the letter

read. "Please convey to the Chinese people and to the family of pilot Wang Wei that we are very sorry for their loss. We are sorry the entering of China's airspace and the landing did not have verbal clearance," it added.

Prueher said later that Tang had given his assurance the US air crew would be able to leave China promptly.

"As the US government has already said 'very sorry' to the Chinese people, the Chinese government has, out of humanitarian considerations, decided to allow the crew members to leave China after completing the necessary procedures," the official Xinhua news agency quoted Tang as telling Prueher.

US President George W. Bush reinforced the letter expressing sorrow for the death of fighter pilot Wang Wei, who parachuted into the South China Sea and is presumed dead.

"I know the American

people join me in expressing sorrow for the loss of the Chinese pilot. Our prayers are with his wife and child," he told reporters at the White House.

Prueher declined to say when the US crew could leave, but the 21 men and three women aboard the crippled EP-3 spy plane when it made an emergency landing on Hainan were expected to be flown out today.

US officials said a chartered passenger plane would fly from Guam to Hainan and take the US crew back to the Pacific Island, from where they would head to Hawaii for debriefing.

The US "very sorry" fell short of China's insistent demands that Washington apologise for the mid-air collision, which the United States refused to do, saying its plane was not responsible for the accident.

But they will allow the Chinese government to convince an angry public that Washington had indeed done so.

Britain contd. from pg 1

for Nigeria to stamp out stealing and money laundering by public officials, as according to him, most of the culprits had landed property in Britain and regarded the country as their second home.

He solicited for the assistance of other nations in Nigeria fight against corruption, Ajibola saying that Nigeria's current crusade against corruption should not be left in the hands of the

country alone. He stressed that external support and co-operation, especially from multi-national corporations, were required to achieve the desires goal.

FG contd. from pg 1

of \$2.3 million.

The minister also announced that a contract for the third phase dualisation of Ogbomoso-Ilorin road has been approved at N12.7 billion, and awarded to Rice Nigeria Limited while the Okigwe-Afikpo road rehabilitation was awarded to Julius Berger Nigeria Plc at N6.7 bil-

lion.

The meeting also approved the payment of N20 million compensation of Mersrs D.U. Hawana Limited for the wrongful termination of contract and forceful eviction from the Murtala Mohamed Airport, Lagos, by the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) in 1998.

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MOHAMMED ABDULLAHI (Apanza)

NEWS

Nigeria calls for end to visa restriction

Nigeria yesterday urged Kenya to consider the lifting of Visa restriction against her citizens in a new spirit of the African Union recently adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Togo.

Nigeria's High Commissioner to Kenya, Mr. Fidelis Tapgun, who was at the State House, Abuja to intimate President Obasanjo on the situation in that country, told journalists that it was unreasonable to continue with the visa policy on Nigeria at the dawn of the integration of the continent.

Kenya slammed visa restriction on Nigeria, Cameroon, Pakistan and Yemen in 1998 in what was seen as an offensive against their nationals' predominant role in Kenyan economy.

The restriction was recently lifted in the case of Pakistan while Nigeria, Yemen and Cameroon are yet to be considered.

Ambassador Fidelis Tapgun said there was no concrete reason for the restriction adding that "they are afraid that Nigerians will take over their economy".

According to him, the High Commissioner has initi-

By Suleiman Muhammed

ated diplomatic moves to effect the lifting of the restriction. Mr. Tapgun pointed out that regime was going through wide-ranging consultations on the matter, saying that was the only way to re-invent inter-state trade between the two countries.

Kenya is currently the world's largest exporter of tea while Nigeria sells petroleum to the East African Country.

The High Commissioner also urged the Kenyan government to sign the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) being the outcome of several agreements reached between the countries in their meeting of May 2000.

Both countries in the meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, discussed wide-ranging bilateral trade issues that are expected to help in promoting export between them.

FRSC plans accident-free Easter

By Austine Odo

The Federal Road Safety Corps has said it had arranged a nationwide special patrol between Friday April 13 and Sunday April 22 to ensure an accident-free Easter period.

According to the corps' Acting Deputy Director, Public Education Department, Mr. Jonas Agwu (AAC), who made this known to *Daily Trust* in Abuja yesterday, the special patrol will get logistics support from the Federal Highway Patrol and cover day and night with strict enforcement of road traffic regulations as applicable to all vehicles.

Mr. Agwu disclosed that emphasis would be on worn-out tyres, over loading, over

speeding, offensive emission, dangerous driving and overtaking, defective light, driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, tinted and broken windscreen.

In addition, the director said accidented and rickety vehicles would not be allowed on the highway while drivers who convey fuel in jerry cans and broken-down vehicle owners who fail to display reflective caution signs would be prosecuted.

"The special patrol which aims at ensuring hitch-free celebrations, free flow of traffic and adequate rescue assistance, will be combined with intensive public enlightenment campaigns in

Stella Obasanjo visits husband's prison

The wife of the President, Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, has visited the former cell of her husband in Yola prison as part of her two-day official visit to the state.

Accompanied by the wives of some state governors, including her host, Mrs. Zainab Boni Haruna, the First Lady inspected the former abode of her husband.

As she entered the cell, Mrs. Obasanjo asked prison officials whether a new inmate had been put in the cell after the release of General

Form Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, Yola

Obasanjo in 1998.

When the officials responded in the negative, the



Mrs. Stella Obasanjo

First Lady jokingly asked them to name it after her husband.

They all laughed before they escorted her to Obasanjo's former bathroom, which is very close to the cell. Mrs. Obasanjo was a regular visitor to the Yola prison between 1995 and 1998 when her husband was jailed by

General Abacha.

Inside the cell, there was a small bed and a chair, all of which were reportedly the same that were used by General Obasanjo during his stay there.

Mrs. Obasanjo also visited the female inmates' ward in the prison where she was welcomed with singing, drumming and dancing by the inmates.

She prayed for them and enjoined them to be of good behaviour so that they could regain their freedom and return to normal life.

The First Lady had earlier paid a visit to the the Lamidon Adamawa, Dr. Aliyu Mustapha, where she solicited his support for women's cause.

She also commissioned a secretariat of the Rural Empowerment Acceleration Programme (REAP), introduced by Mrs. Zainab Haruna; and served as the special guest of honour at the launching of the programme.

Taraba Gov. runs to presidency for help

Worried about the worsening political situation in his state, Governor Jolly Nyame of Taraba state has taken his case to the Presidency, soliciting for support.

Daily Trust gathered that the governor led a delegation of his aides and supporters to Aso Rock where they met Vice-President Atiku Abubakar over the political situation in the state.

The move came barely a week after the detention of some supporters of opposition groups in the state following the distribution of anti-government pamphlets in the state capital, Jalingo.

The pamphlet, entitled "PDP in Taraba State: Betterment or Betrayal?" and distributed at the fund-raising ceremony of the party by some youths, castigated both Nyame's government and past leaders in the state.

Daily Trust gathered that the growing opposition against his government and growing speculations that the governor had shifted his allegiance from the Vice President's camp to the camp of former President Babangida prompted him to seek audience with the Vice President to clear the matter.

Sources told *Daily Trust* that he went through Alhaji Ahmed Joda, the chairman of the National Communication Commission, who arranged a meeting with the Vice President.

Governor Nyame,

From Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, Yola

accompanied by his aides and supporters, went to the Aso Rock where he surprisingly found that one of his opponents, a former governor of the defunct Gongola state, Alh. Abubakar Barde, who is now an elder statesman in Taraba state, was also seeking an audience with the Vice President.

Daily Trust learnt that the meeting became an enlarged one in which the political situation in the state was discussed extensively by both Nyame's group and Barde with the Vice President mainly listening to them.

Governor Nyame's group told Atiku Abubakar that contrary to speculations, their loyalty to him was unflinching.

They alleged that it was just some people who were trying to create mistrust where none existed.

But former governor Barde had earlier told the Vice President that there would not have been any political problem in Taraba state, had governor Nyame abided by the series of agreements he had reached with other politicians in the state.

He pointed out that the governor violated both the pre-election agreement, known as "Barde House Accord," and the agreements reached last year in the Vice President's house in Abuja between governor Nyame

and some of his opponents.

Incidentally, it was the Vice President who mediated last year's crisis between the governor and the state House of Assembly when the members attempted to impeach the governor.

During the mediation exercise in which both governor Nyame and Barde were in attendance, the two sides



Gov. Nyame

agreed to settle their disputes and live peacefully on the condition that among others, the state government would favour no member.

The non-compliance of the agreements had allegedly contributed to the renewed dispute between the governor and his opponents.

However, *Daily Trust* learnt that the latest meeting with the Vice President may help in dousing tension between the opposing groups.

Not long after the meeting, governor Nyame also led a delegation of the people of Karim Lamido, the home base of one of his opponents, Minister of State for Internal Affairs.



The chairman, Senate Committee on Power and Steel, Senator Fred Brume (r), and Senator Udoma Udo Udoma (l), listen to a presentation by Senator Nuhu Aliyu at a meeting of the committee in Abuja... Tuesday.

Pix: Felix Onigbinde

Kano lawmakers threaten deputy governor

From Musa Umar Kazaure, Kano

The Kano State House of Assembly has given the office of the deputy-governor seven days to start implementing the state's local government law 2000 or face the wrath of the lawmakers.

The House posited that the non-implementation of the law was responsible for the recklessness of local government councils in the state. The law, which was passed by the House in November 2000, and signed by the governor, has been in the

deputy-governor's office since then without being implemented.

The law also gives powers to the House and the chief executive to suspend any local government chairman and official charged with corrupt practices, and also investigate any allegations against such official.

Presenting the motion before the House, a member representing Minjibir constituency, Ibrahim Muhammed,

who is also the chairman, local government and chieftaincy affairs, said the refusal of the deputy-governor to implement the law amounted to contempt of the House.

Commenting on the motion, the Deputy Speaker, Alhaji Ya'u Abdullahi, said the delay in the implementation of the law made it difficult for the House to effectively control the excesses of the deputy governor and abuses by local government councils.

NEWS

FG votes N12.6bn for four steel companies

The federal government has approved about 12.6 billion naira to reactivate four ailing steel rolling companies in the country.

The Minister of State for Power and Steel, Alhaji Mohammed Danjuma Goje, disclosed this on Tuesday in Katsina while flagging off the Katsina Steel Rolling Company resumption of its production which stopped about three years ago.

Resumption of production is the first step in Federal Government's plan to resuscitate all the inland rolling mills in the country this year.

Giving the breakdown of the amount, the minister said the reactivation of the Delta Steel Company (DSC) which will be done through a tripartite agreement involving the federal government, Voist Alphine of Austria and Osaka Steel of Nigeria, is to cost about N12 billion, while the Katsina Steel Rolling Company, Jos and Oshogbo will get N200 million each for the reactivation exercise.

Goje stated that it is in recognition of this that the present administration decided to prioritise the steel sector as a result of which an inter-ministerial committee was set up in August 1999 to assess the current status of the steel sector to the national economy and to fashion out an agenda for the way forward.

He said that the government has since implemented the recommendation of the committee and that the measures have yielded positive results. The measures, he said, include the successful resumption of production at the Katsina Steel Rolling plant.

From Abdul Labaran and Emmanuel Ande

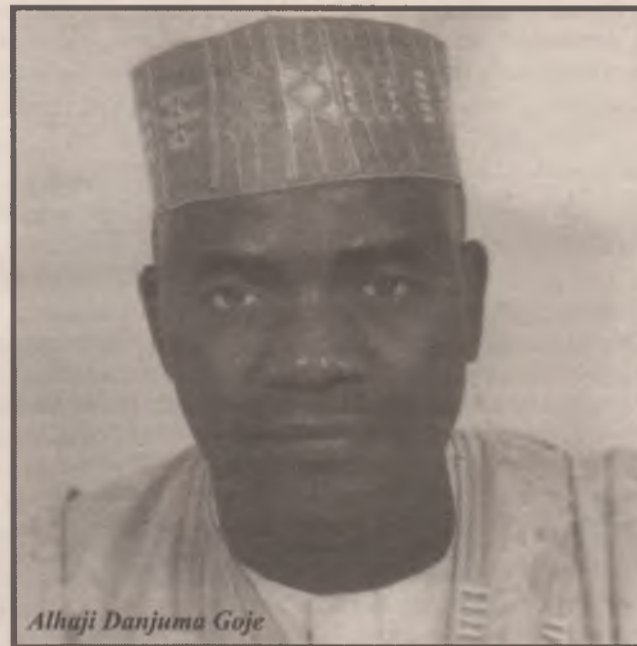
The minister described the Katsina Steel Rolling Company as a symbol of hope for the north and a pride to the nation. He urged Nigerians "to take up the challenge of setting up small scale industries that would utilise the output of the company" thereby contribute to the poverty alleviation programme of the government.

He pointed out that the involvement of the organised private sector through a conversion agreement for the supply of billets to the rolling mills, is to save the millions of dollars government would have provided as working capital.

The minister stated that the reactivation of Katsina Steel Rolling Company would be carried out in two stages with the first using local spare parts and the second using imported offshore spare parts. He added that the resumption of

production of the company signified the successful completion of the first stage of the rehabilitation exercise.

Speaking at the occasion, the General Manager of the KSRC, Engineer Sanusi Garba, disclosed that with the completion of about 20 percent of the plant rehabilitation programme, the rolling



Alhaji Danjuma Goje

mill would now be producing on the average, steel worth N150 million monthly, adding that more spare parts worth N150 million would be acquired later this year to update the electrical installations of the plant.

The General Manager pointed out that the KSRC had the potential for a N6 billion annual turnover at only 50 percent capacity utilisation, adding that the company's potential as a stimulator of economic growth cannot be over-estimated.

178 die of measles in Sokoto

From Kabir Dogondaji, Sokoto

One hundred and seventy-eight people have been confirmed by the medical director of the Sokoto State Ministry of Health, Dr. Abubakar Maishanu, to have lost their lives to measles since the beginning of this year.

Disclosing this in an exclusive interview with *Daily Trust* in Sokoto, Dr. Maishanu explained that the figure was collated from all the 23 local government areas of the state. He also disclosed that 44 cases of cerebrospinal meningitis

(CSM) were reported within the same period which resulted in the death of seven of the victims.

The medical director said his ministry had planned an extensive media and house-to-house campaign to enlighten people on ways of combating the two diseases.

According to Dr. Maishanu, 5.8 million naira had already been earmarked for the enlightenment campaign and the procurement of drugs and vaccines as an interim

measure in a collaborative effort between the state and local government areas.

He pointed out that the state government had donated 2.4 million naira while local governments had made good their own commitment of 3.6 million naira.

North West APP chieftain dies

The national vice-chairman of the All People's Party (APP) representing North West, Alhaji Saidu Argungu, is dead.

Aged 53, Alhaji Saidu died on Tuesday at the Usman Danfodio University Teaching Hospital Sokoto, after a protracted illness.

Speaking at the funeral prayer in Argungu, the Kebbi State governor, Alhaji Muhammadu Adamu Aliero, described the deceased as an honest and eloquent contributor to the development of the state.

Aliero further prayed to Almighty Allah to grant him an eternal life and his family the fortitude to bear the loss.

The late Alhaji Saidu is survived by two wives, 10 children and many grandchildren. He has since been buried according to Islamic rites.

Why we handed over

—Akhigbe

By Henry Omu

Former Chief of General Staff (CGS), Vice Admiral Mike Akhigbe, has revealed that the desire for the nation to be made a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council was the major reason for the handing over of power to civilians by Gen. Abdulasami Abubakar's regime.

Akhigbe, who was number two to General Abubakar, spoke on Monday at a public hearing on cabotage laws, or shipping laws, held by the House of Representatives Committee on Transport.

He said member states of the UN had insisted that for Nigeria to be a permanent member of the security council, it must first democratise.

Said Akhigbe: "the reason we handed over power to civilians was because, Nigeria wasn't going to be made a permanent member of the United Nations security council."

Commenting on the woes of the country since independence, vice admiral Akhigbe (rtd) accused past civilian governments and military regimes of lack of focus, coordination and poor policy integration.

The nation, he added, lacked any real focus in such critical sectors of the economy as technology acquisition and development, aviation, telecommunications, maritime, oil and gas, and that because of this policy defect, the nation lost

enormous revenue that should otherwise have accrued to it.

According to him, "past governments never had focus and we didn't integrate our policies and as a result, we have continued to lose revenue.

"Monies stolen, if any, by past leaders were too small compared to revenue losses, owing to uncoordinated policies," Akhigbe said.

He therefore warned that, the country will continue to remain poor and underdeveloped, "unless it tightens avenues for revenue losses," suggesting however that, for Nigeria to escape this fate, it must integrate all its policies to achieve a stated objective.

Moreover, Akhigbe advised that the country must identify areas of national interest and pursue them vigorously, even as he explained why the Gen. Abubakar regime decided to award mobile telephone licenses and marginal oil fields to Nigerians.

"Our idea of the Global System for Mobile Telecommunication (GSM) was to allow Nigerians be on the driver's seat and operate with foreign technical partners.

"We must have focus. Who is lifting our crude oil and what is the input to our national economy?" he asked.

Muslim youths flay government influence on Hajj

By Austine Odo

The National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations, (NACOMYO) has criticised the Federal Government for flight arrangement lapses in this year's Hajj operations.

In a communiqué issued at the end of their council meeting in Gusau, Zamfara State on Sunday, the council blamed federal authorities for not giving Hajj ad-hoc committees the free hand to executive their assignment effectively.

"The interference of government departments such as the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs on matters relating to air carriers, housing and transport arrangements for pilgrims in the holy land must stop. The Presidency and Foreign Affairs Ministry should limit their activities on Hajj to purely diplomatic issues,"

the communiqué said.

The body noted with concern the failure of government to put in place proper operational arrangements for the hajj despite all efforts aimed at restoring sanity in the exercise. It called on government to stop indigenous airliners from participating in hajj operations for the next ten years, "so that the long-awaited comfort of our pilgrims could be guaranteed."

NACOMYO however commended the National Committee on Hajj 2001 for steps taken to reduce the hardship faced by pilgrims in spite of what they called "unnecessary bureaucratic problems and undue interference" in its assignments.



Minister of State Power of Steel, Alhaji Mohammed Danjuma Goje flagging off Resumption of Production at the Katsina Steel Rolling Mill at Katsina... Tuesday

DAILY TRUST
EDITORIAL

What is our environmental worth?

A tragic drama unfolded recently in Germany when the government called out the security forces to ensure that a controversial cargo of nuclear wastes reached a storage site situated at Gorleben. Protesters lined the route of the cargo, which went by rail. Some protesters chained themselves to the railway tracks. Nuclear wastes are often sent abroad for reprocessing, but the contract requires Germany to receive the waste. Hundreds of protesters came out in reaction to the threat posed by nuclear waste, and this turned out to be a dramatic illustration of patriotism in its pure form, patriotism fired by passion and courage.

Environmental issues are just as important here in Africa as they are in Germany and Europe as a whole. The activities of oil companies have disordered the flora and fauna of the Niger Delta and instituted the spectre of gloom, neglect and wanton exploitation. Where fishermen and fishing once flourished, today we have poisoned waters and vanishing marine life. The Niger Delta has also recently seen outbreaks of violence and resistance which, to a degree, parallel the activities of the patriots of Dannenberg and Gorleben.

The protesters at Dannenberg and Gorleben made a statement in defence of the environment and the health of man, while also serving as beacon to communities facing a similar predicament under a cold leadership on any part of the globe.

In Nigeria, this incident brings to mind our criminal neglect of the environment. In 1988, tonnes of toxic waste were dumped at Koko in Delta state and this made us realize that even though we do not have nuclear facilities, we can easily become a dumping ground for such toxic materials. There is the lingering fear that there may be several 'Kokos' in Nigeria today, and we really need to look into this matter.

Recently President Obasanjo confirmed what many Nigerians knew long ago: that Nigeria's past military rulers and their civilian collaborators diverted over N720 million from the Ecological Fund allocated to them into other fancy projects that provided easy money for officials to steal. This would help to provide insight into the official neglect of our environment, which has become a national tragedy. A concern or regard for the environment is immediately an indication of man at peace with himself and the environment, and the heights he has attained in inner development. Sadly, whenever such an examination is made of our community, the decoded message is not flattering. But the truth is: a dirty community cannot develop or sharpen the qualities of higher beings.

In Nigeria, we need to reactivate all our structures which have to do with the environment and provide them with a proper focus and a sincere commitment to environmental issues.

The mining gullies in Plateau and other states, as a result of many years of mining solid minerals, remain an environmental eye sore. The same goes for the environmental devastation in the hydro-power producing areas of Niger, Kogi, Kwara and Kebbi states. The yearly release of water from dams behind Kainji, Shiroro and Jebba dams is an environmental problem that needs to be confronted headlong.

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has been set up to confront the problems in the Niger Delta. The National Assembly should also urgently look into the establishment of the Solid Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (SOMPADEC) and the Hydro-Power Producing Areas Development Commission (HYPPADEC).

A defence of one's soil often turns out to be a powerful illustration of patriotism, and the action of the protesters at Dannenberg and Gorleben provides us with another definition of patriotism, one which wells out of the depths of a soul. One that has a non-material foundation, and which, of course, is dyed in the finest hue of courage and resilience.

THURSDAY COLUMN

The three parties and democracy

By Nick Dazang

President Olusegun Obasanjo, master of the bully pulpit, was his vintage self at the recently held Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) convention. But this time, instead of finding recourse in his propensity to hector and intimidate, he preferred to pontificate and to rail at the PDP and its hierarchy. "Our party", he told a stunned gathering of PDP bigwigs, "lacks cohesion, we have no order or tradition to speak of, and our rank and file seems devoid of simple decency and respect which are hallmark values of the African society..."

"In reality", he further remarked, "we are no more than a dynamic amalgam of interest groups. And what has held us together, if anything at all, is that our party is in power and there is a strong expectation of patronage."

At first blush, one is tempted to dismiss the president's almost savage indictment as arrogant and the effusions of an ingrate who used the PDP as a ladder to climb to power only to jettison it in a fit of hubris. He cannot, in all honesty, exonerate himself from the PDP's sundry failings. In fact, in some instances, he invented the PDP's woes. Consider the facts: During the last convention of the PDP some two years ago, most PDP supporters rooted for Chief Sunday Awoniyi. An unbending man of principle and imbued with a lofty vision, Nigerians saw in Awoniyi, not only a man who could bring integrity to the PDP, but one who could whip the President into line and curtail some of his unsavoury and abrasive tendencies. Instead of going for Awoniyi, an experienced bureaucrat and organizer of men, the President preferred a pliable Chief Barnabas Gemade whose pedigree as an organizer is doubtful and whose integrity is suspect. Chief Gemade was one of the gentlemen who canvassed for the elongation of Abacha's reign of terror. As if this were not appalling enough, the President sat through the elections during the last PDP convention which witnessed one of the most unabashed and unblushing gerrymandering in recent times.

By the time the convention was over, the fates of the Obasanjo regime and the PDP were sealed - more or less. Here was a president who rode to power on the crest of anti-corruption and vowed to set considerable store by such a crusade. Yet here was the same president superintending over one of the most shambolic elections in our annals and in favour of his preferred candidate. It can be said from the foregoing that right from the outset, President Obasanjo had shot himself in the foot and acutely undermined the integrity of his administration. It is inconceivable that a leader who parades a gang of miscreants can muster the moral courage to check the excesses of brigands out there. Neither can members of a party suffused with leaders bereft of integrity suddenly comport themselves with decency and uprightness. Besides, how do we talk of a tradition with regard to a party that is barely three years old?

On closer examination, however, some of the ringing indictments issued by the president were the PDP's just desserts. The PDP is verily a melange of strange and contending interests which in normal circumstances could not have indwelled or co-habited. The consequence of their cohabitation, and under a ham-handed and inept manager, obsessed with extending his tenure in the manner of his master, Abacha, to four years, instead of two, is that these varied interests work at cross purposes, they undermine themselves and they set their sights on filthy lucre and patronage.

Secondly, when one examines the pedigree of the PDP itself, its limitations are writ large: the three parties and especially the PDP were hastily put together to edge out the military. Beyond this, the PDP did not articulate any further uplifting vision. Compounding this is that its fortunes were stunted by an executive riven with squabbles and which as a result was incapable of articulating a vision beyond the one thought out at its founding. It only stands to reason that at a point, this amalgam of interests will implode and that the vision of the party will attenuate or weaken.

It is a measure of the PDP's stunted vision and the sordid pass it has come to that Alhaji Umar Ghali Na'Abba, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, in a seminal and thought-provoking paper entitled: "The State of the Party," delivered at the PDP's recent convention, was no less damning in his indictment of the PDP. Said he: "Nigerians voted for the PDP not solely for the purpose of chasing away the military and nothing else. Nigerians thought that the PDP could transform their lives for the better in view of the calibre of its membership. In spite of the fact that members of the PDP in government are doing their possible best, on the

aggregate, the party is a big disappointment to the nation. If I may be allowed to ask, what is the PDP's agenda for women? For workers? For our professionals? For the police? For the military? For the civil servants? For the unemployed? For the teeming masses in our towns and villages? In short, what is the party's agenda on the state of our infrastructure and how much effort did the party make to actualise this in the three appropriation bills passed by the National Assembly?" Alhaji Na'Abba proceeded to itemise the sins of the PDP as the "marginalisation of groups and individuals who at one time or the other appeared to have independent minds on issues; devising means and ways through which to frustrate some of the founding fathers of the party; stifling voices of dissent or contrary opinion; and the desire to perpetuate itself in office."

If Alhaji Na'Abba spoke in almost the same damning tone as the president in regard of the PDP, the two other parties, All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) cannot be said to be paragons either. And were a list of their peccadilloes to be drawn up, they surely will equal, if not surpass, that of the PDP. Perhaps what is redeeming about the PDP - inept as its leadership is - is that it is capable of introspection and self-criticism. But the fact that all the parties are similarly hobbled and afflicted does not augur well for our democracy. For apart from articulating and aggregating interests, the parties are supposed to be the intellectual powerhouses of the government, always proffering viable and alternative ideas and focusing the government on them. The party is supposed to be vibrant and vigorous in checkmating the excesses of those in government in concert with other democratic institutions such as the legislature, the media, the judiciary, the intellectuals, the professionals etc. The advent of dictatorship has always been presaged by the absence or collapse of democratic institutions.

The most viable thing to do is for the PDP, particularly, to view the President's and the Speaker's indictments as challenges and to rise stoutly to them. The three parties should try to do some serious soul-searching and re-invent themselves. They should put in place leaderships that possess vision and integrity. And they should re-articulate their platforms and manifestoes beyond the present regime.

In spite of my admonition, I still have misgivings if the parties, as currently constituted, are capable of revival: If their leaders are not corrupt and are seeking to perpetuate themselves in a most undemocratic manner, some are simply petty and impervious to ideas. Perhaps the thing to do is to allow the several tendencies that indwell in the PDP for instance, to liberate themselves and form new parties in concert with their ideological beliefs. A veritable political party, after all, is made up of persons who share the same aspirations and whose ships, as the Sicilian parlance goes, sail in the same direction. Let there be more parties.

LETTER OF THE DAY

Dear Mr. President

With all due respect, Sir, I wish to call on you to help common Nigerians. The fuel situation down here in Lagos, miles away from the cosy confines of Aso Rock, is such that it is difficult for me to sound nice but I would try to be polite in this piece. Like a father, I hope you will understand. I do not like the thickening air of trouble in the country and I'm hoping that you would read this and do something really quick.

I am awfully shocked at all the average Nigerian has had to bear these past months in the name of fuel scarcity and the related deregulation 'politricks'. I am deeply hurt by the rather arrogant, sly and conde-

scending manner with which your advisers and ministers are going about deceiving people in the name of deregulation. People who have been called to serve our common interest have turned villains.

It baffles me that local production is less than N12.20 but your administration would rather import petroleum products than have our local refineries working at full capacity.

May I ask, sir, whose interest is being served? Are those bent on ruining the average Nigerian keeping information and data from you? If so, don't you have independent means of getting beyond the army of advisers and ministers bent on deceiving you?

Duyi Will-West, Lagos

Opinion

N.Y.S.C: So far, how far?

By Kadi Malah Kirawa

After the devastating 30-month civil war, the then fledgling government of General Yakubu Gowon (rtd) set for itself the tasks of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation; otherwise referred to as the 3Rs. For these purposes, many programmes came into being in order to restore sanity, confidence and trust amongst the warring sections. It was in a bid to achieve these laudable aims that the National Youth Service Corps (N.Y.S.C.) scheme, alongside other programmes, came into being.

Charged with the responsibility of inculcating togetherness, unity, selfless service as well as to emphasize the spirit of oneness and brother-hood of all Nigerians irrespective of cultural or social background into the minds of the Nigerian youths, the programme has done creditably in all its ramifications. Little wonder, therefore, that it has stood the test of time as is about one of the few programmes that have not undergone any x-ray.

So when on take-off, the government released millions of naira to it as its take-off grant, many thought it was yet another bonanza for a privileged few or just another elephant project that would allow the tax payers' money go down the drain and at the end die off without achieving its aims. But what a misconception! So far, how far has the scheme fared in the scheme of things?

Over the years, rather than die-off because of bureaucratic redtapeism associated with governance, the scheme has forged ahead so much so that it has been embraced, accepted and identified by all; as many youths have seen places that hitherto they never saw, mingled with people they probably only read about, adopted a culture they never heard of and stayed in communities that were entirely different and new. By this, unity has been fostered thereby nullifying negative stories that loomed about different communities, tribes or cultures and thus allow members break prejudices and come to appreciate the similarities and differences in cultures. By stretching a hand across the Niger, a lot of friends have been made, inter-marriages have taken place and new homes found.

The activities of the scheme over the years cannot, however, be over-emphasised. There is no denying the fact that it has been a bold experiment from all indications because it has remained resolved and the momentum has been accelerating while it forges ahead, the odds notwithstanding. Despite these laudable achievements, the programme has come under a lot of criticisms right from the on-set. While many thought it to be money-consuming and time-wasting venture, a few more believed it has out-lived its stay and should, therefore, be scrapped. Some more argued that since we are not at war, what is there to reconcile or reconstruct let alone post poor, unfortunate youths to waste away in new environments much to their discomfort?

"The programme should be scrapped because it is a waste of time, labour and resources" wrote a corps member in his comments about the programme. Another opined that the duration is long, and should, therefore, be reduced to six months to save money and time. However, another disagreed completely. Hear him "most of those calling for the scrapping or abrogation of the scheme are to me, self-centred, lazy, and just trying to run away from reality. The programme is very laudable in all respects as everyone can bear me witness with the number of corps members being turned out for the programme every year."

However, another one is of the view that the number of corps members has to be high because of lack of job and the monthly allowance the scheme gives, which is just about enough for feeding or otherwise, is better than having nothing at all or just lazing about.

A glimpse through the yearly reports submitted by most corps members during the years showed that the majority called for its scrapping -or reduction in the duration (period). Others, however, suggested that it be made optional rather than mandatory as they don't gain anything except to waste away their labour and time. "The time one wastes in a remote area that lacks potable water, good roads or electricity in the name of serving the nation, could have been used looking for employment even if it were not available, or better still go back to school. And the money paid corps members could be channelled into the provision of some basic amenities that are lacking in most of our rural and semi-urban areas," suggested another.

While many are calling for either its reduction in years, or entire scrapping, some have been singing its praise all through. A corps member from Osun state who served in the north, said: "before I came to the north, I never knew there were other language(s) apart from Hausa or other religions aside Islam". Another one from Lagos state observed that "all the stories I have heard that it never rained in some parts of the north or that the people are hostile, were but blatant lies".

Mr. Ado from Maiduguri also said he had learnt to be tolerant, accommodating, independent and above all, a good cook. In their various comments about the scheme, they all called for the proper funding of the scheme and, if possible, increase the duration from its present one year to one and half years.

Reducing the age limit is indeed a welcome development as only a few will fall into that age bracket and this will no doubt make the scheme more attractive, value-oriented and easily-managed. It could be recalled that recently some parts of the country had warned their wards not to part-take in the service or not to accept any posting to some states of the federation. But the call was never heeded as corps members could be seen in virtually all the "perceived trouble" areas having a wonderful service year. What does this signify? It signifies ONE NATION, ONE DESTINY, BROTHERLI-NESS, UNITY AND FAITH, NO SENTIMENTALITY.

It also signifies TOLERANCE, UNDERSTANDING AND ABOVE ALL, TOGETHERNESS. Were these not part of the aims of the scheme? Why wish them away? Let not the dark days creep back into our minds. We have come a long way as brothers and sisters. We have crossed quite a number of turbulent waters, jumped troubled hurdles and trod thorny roads all in a bid to get to the promised land. The journey has indeed, been tough and rough, but with determination, dedication and prayers we will make. So let us not let this fine legacy be wished away.

Kadi Malah Kirawa, is of PMB 381, Abuja.

Teenage pregnancy: A menace of the time

By Aiyejoto Joseph

Nobody would dispute the fact that teenage pregnancy is one of the most significant social problems of the day. It does not leave anybody out, as it has affected the females, so also has it not neglected the males. Neither has its effects exempt the families of both the boys and the girls involved. The proportion of its effects may however differ on the two sides.

One of the causes of teenage pregnancy in recent time is the one posited by Bryan E. Robinson in his book titled: *Teenage Fathers*. According to him, "Out-of-wedlock pregnancy no longer carries the shame and humiliation it did during the 1960s because of more liberalized social attitudes towards sex and premarital pregnancy.... Also, the youth of today are constantly bombarded with sexuality through advertisement, music, motion pictures and television. The American media (and the general films produced in the world) tell adolescents that sex is romantic, exciting and titillating, without ever showing the real-life consequences of spontaneous and irresponsible sexual behaviour".

Here lies the problem. Many teenagers seem blissfully unaware of the consequences of illicit sex. Some of them pretend not to know that a girl could get pregnant the first time of having intercourse. Some will tell you they cannot get pregnant because they do it once a week.

Some boys see sexual intercourse as a sign of manliness. They look at themselves as heroes when they have not only one but two or more girl friends. To such boys sex is an important symbol of civilisation. On the other hand, many of the girls offer sex as a gift in their bargaining for the attention of a young man. In some towns or villages, boys who have not fathered a baby or two and

girls who have not given birth to a baby or two would be looked down upon and scorned. Such would be regarded as conservatives.

The situation becomes more horrible when one consider the fact that some people who are supposed to be saddled with the responsibility of eradicating this cancer-worm from our society have turned out to become apostles of immorality. Such men are always in the vanguard of going after teenage girls, using the teenage boys as their go-between.

Observation reveals that at least one third of the teenage girls had become pregnant, not through teenage boy friends, but through men old enough to be their father or worst still, their grandfather.

Some of the unwed-teen mothers are victims of financial intimidation. Some of the so-called money men and some of those in position of authority use their position to impose themselves on most of these teenage girls with promises of money, promotion, admission into higher institution, employment and so on. All these mostly turned out to be fictitious and untrue.

Let a note of warning be sound here, that if they don't desist from such unwholesome acts, posterity will not forgive them. It is painful because the situation, as prevalent as it has been, reveals how sick and deprived our modern society has become.

Another short but controversial reason for the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy is the level of poverty in our society. But the question is: were people not poor in those days when boys and girls keep their virginity until they get married? As such, let us just agree that lack of moral discipline has contributed more than any other reason to the upsurge of teenage pregnancy in our society. Moral standard

is at its lowest ebb. Religion does not guaranty moral discipline for people anymore.

The society has indeed failed in its responsibility to salvage the situation. Mother and daughter compete for one man because of money. Son and father compete for one girl because of beauty and position. The onslaught has continued because fathers and mothers are no longer interested in living together. Parents no longer have any affection for each other. Each is looking outside instead of within for fulfilment. The book, *Fatherless America* asserts that: "the escalating risk of childhood sexual abuse in our society stems primarily from the growing absence of married fathers and the growing presence of step-fathers, boy friends and other unrelated or transient males."

The consequences of teenage pregnancy are not far-fetched. They can neither be over-emphasized nor over-beaten as we can see the fruits and manifestations around us. Apart from cutting short the lives of many, it has dampened the aspirations of so many people caught up in such web. Though the effects may be in diverse form and one may feel its burden more than the other, those who have experienced it will certainly testify to how each partaker has shared of the consequences.

It is an established fact that most teenage boys who father children rarely take long-term, even short-term responsibility for their off-spring. Apart from this, only few teenagers have either the emotional maturity or experience to handle the demands of parenthood. Many do not have the education or employment skills needed to earn a living. As a result, besides being expelled or dropped out of school, most of them simply abandon their educational pursuit or career.

Psychological and emotional torments are integral

parts of the aftermath of teenage pregnancy. Children of such affairs are exposed to a plethora of physical and emotional risks. Particularly distressing is the fact that the legacy of such affairs is often passed on from generation to generation in a continuing cycle of pain and misery. The off-springs experience low self-esteem, depression, delinquent behaviour and persistent anger.

To contemplate abortion at the pregnancy stage would worsen the situation as it does not only violates God's law and requires a young woman to shut the door of her tender compassion upon the tiny life developing within her, but also endangers the life of the girl. If she even survive an abortion, the memory would linger on and any part of the body may be damaged.

Nevertheless, there is hope. Teenagers and the society in general must learn from the mistake of the past. Something more than high-sounding talk and theoretical campaign against teenage pregnancy through public enlightenment is needed if people are to be motivated to make such changes as mentioned earlier. That is, changes in their thinking, their attitude, their behaviour and their morals. There should be a revival and restoration of high moral discipline in our society. The society should be made to fear God. The culprit, the abettors and the perpetrators should be educated on the dangers it portends. Our elders should show good examples, parents should rise up to their responsibilities and the parents-children bond should be restored.

With our unwavering collective courage, the menace will be curbed.

Aiyejoto Joseph, is with the Daily Trust office, Abuja.

Deregulation is not the answer for now

By Umar Jibril

Considering the present political and economic dynamics of Nigeria, I feel this is a wrong time to deregulate the oil sector: with epileptic state of electricity, water supply, the depression of the Naira (from 98 to a dollar to current 123 to a dollar).

The esteemed President's logic of comparing the prices of coca-cola and spring water to our oil as a pointer to degree of cheapness misses the value and reality of socio-economic configuration.

The simple fact is, while most Nigerians (this writer inclusive) will spend months without taking these products, or at worst they hardly feature in the list of their menu, what I want to arrive at is that the increase in the price of petroleum affects everybody and everything in Nigeria the same cannot be said of coca-cola or spring water (elitist products)!

Also agreed on the scale of value, petroleum is of great importance, but it affects everybody when it is scarce; farmers need to transport their products from one

destination to another, students need to travel to and from their schools, other citizens need to visit relations, attend weddings and child naming far and near... the list is endless and in all the examples, the price of oil will be reflected in the sufferings the citizens will go through.

Secondly, unless this is another dividend of democracy it is so undemocratic at the moment to regulate the oil sector and is not near to what is a panacea of the perennial fuel crisis in Nigeria.

Thirdly, the motivation for deregulation which in the perception of our esteemed leader, Obasanjo and of course the perception of the 'manufacturers of consent' such as professor Jerry Gana, the ever vocal minister of information will bring "benefits" when the subsidy which is "misused" and "abused" is removed for a time. But this seems to me like chasing shadows since it is just symptomatic of the kernel conundrum (the real problem) which is perpetuated by the rich and power-

ful which the president and his "legitimation orators" are quite aware of; it will rather amount to cutting corners to apply a dose of another "poison" to the already sick Nigerian masses with this draconian policy which was hatched and inspired elsewhere.

To my mind, in consonance with the realities of Nigeria, the answers to fuel crisis in Nigeria are simple to even the foreigner who stays for a week in Nigeria and had a course to travel by road. The answer(s) will be obvious from these suggestions:-

*The Federal government should as a matter of serious concern empower and supervise PPMC in the monitoring, lifting and delivery of petroleum products in Nigeria.

*Government should as a deliberate policy check the smuggling of petroleum products and punish offenders.

*Filling stations should be monitored so that they should not be "mere fronts", also this will help in checking continuous diversion of the product by the high and

'mighty' as Obaseki had a cause to remark in February.

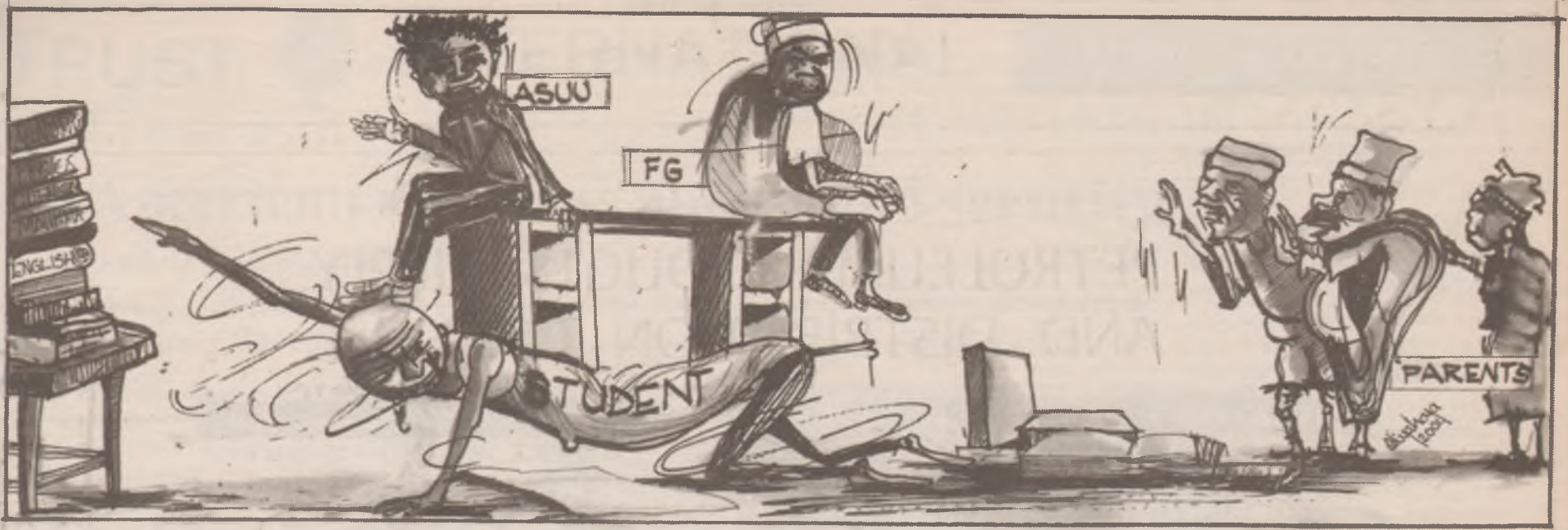
*Government should man, maintain and make functional our refineries. Our 22 depots should be supplied with commodity on time, and a machinery should be set in motion to check cases of 'abuse' and or 'misuse'.

*Finally, the "fuel mafia" should fear God-their creator and comply and co-operate with the government in the name of humanity, fairness, and democracy (some of them may likely be democrats in real life!)

Deregulation as argued in this contribution is not the best answer for now no matter its beauty as economic policy. The simple and fundamental answers are: empowering PPMC, checking smuggling, manning filling stations, giving constant supply of the product to the depots, and "fuel-mafia" to fear God and see the plight of the nation and desist from their ways. This, to me is the alternative to deregulation.

Umar Jibril, is of the Dept. of English, University of Jos.

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YOUR LETTERS

The primate in murky waters

Nigeria is really an interesting country, for people that don't know, all they need do is to read newspapers and magazines. For those that everyday hardship has made to retreat to the farthest corners of indignity, they need not worry about their diminished hope but take solace in the fact that, someday very soon, God will intervene. Thus, when Priests speak, many people regard their utterances as the much awaited message from God to rescue them from the clutches of poverty.

So it was recently when Primate Mbang, President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) openly endorsed President Obasanjo for a second term for 2003 presidential elections by vowing to personally lead Obasanjo's campaign. As usual, many of his flock may have thought that Primate Mbang revealed a divine message because according to him, Obasanjo has performed very well. Right or wrong, the fact is that the ac-

claimed man of God has spoken. However, the popular opinion on the street is that Primate Mbang shouldn't have spoken on such a highly controversial issue, except he wants to ascribe Nigerians to the biblical Israelites that cried to God for a leader and got Saul in return. For a highly respected man of God to delve into the murky waters of politics is to say the least inarticulate. Primate Mbang has no

business engaging in politics the way and manner he did, besides, Priests are not political syncophants but at best political commentators. So when a Priest comes out to endorse a President that many people rate his performance as grossly below expectation, it calls to question the moral uprightness of such a man of God. Presently, the economic and social situations in Nigeria are nothing to write home about. Except if Mbang wants

Nigerians to believe that he feels differently about the Obasanjo administration's performance. The indices of abject poverty, insecurity of lives and property, rising inflation are all too visible for any discerning mind to classify the administration as performing well. Most Nigerians know that the only thing Obasanjo has done with full concentration is the probe of the Abachas against the very fact that he has closed his eyes and ears

to the atrocities committed by General Babangida, the man who Nigerians believe conducted the most corrupt regime. It is good Primate Mbang has spoken, but it is very bad that he was not very sincere. I strongly feel the Primate needs to be more articulate in order not to draw unnecessary ridicule and opprobrium to his flock and himself in particular. *Dr. Obijiofor Uchenna Roland, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo state.*

Fuel crisis and deregulation

The occurrence of fuel crisis has taken a solid position in the everyday existence of our great nation. Regimes from General Babangida to date have had this gargantuan problem but it seems all of them paid lip-service to solving it. From all logical conclusions, the scarcity of petroleum products during this Period of our nascent democracy has brought greater hardship to Nigerians because the average Nigerian's purchasing power has greatly been affected by the biting inflation caused by the policies of the Obasanjo administration. It is surprising that the Obasanjo-led government

with its posturing as an anti corruption crusader has not been able to use its financial might and security apparatus to check the problems of fuel scarcity. Indeed, what this shows is that the present administration lacks the political and moral will to address issues of great importance. For a democratic government to allow this chaotic situation to escalate to the extent of creating room for the acceptance of deregulation of petroleum products as a ready solution is very disheartening. Many questions are cropping up regarding the relationship between the availability of petroleum products and deregulation. The popular suspicion on -

the streets is that deregulation will not guarantee availability of fuel, therefore, any increase in the price of petroleum products in whatever form or language it comes; will add to the impoverished status of the common man. At times I get amused at the various reasons the government of Obasanjo has dished out for its abysmal performance especially on this vital issue of fuel scarcity. Initially, President Obasanjo attributed the fuel crises to the Gen. Abacha's regime, but now it's over twenty months his administration came to power, yet, things have only changed in the negative. Thus, bringing about further deterioration to

the oil sector. If one wants to be realistic, one must agree with the views of Adams Oshiomole NLC president, when he opined that the problem we have is more of distribution than availability and this is because of the corrupt nature of a large majority of Nigerians and most importantly, the ineptitude of the government of the day. Government cannot claim ignorance of any other solution to fuel crisis except increase in the pump price of fuel. It's high time the key players of the Obasanjo's regime stopped playing on the intelligence of those on whose mandate they rose to power. *Bakare Saliu, Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited, Eket, Akwa Ibom State.*

Customs officers are being killed silently!

I decided to make our protracted sufferings public to alert their excellencies, the president and his Vice, the honourable finance minister and the Honourable members of the National Assembly, on the absolute and gross neglect which the Officers and Men of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) are silently subjected to. The NCS is a federal department entrusted with some responsibilities. Among which is the suppression of smuggling of items and economic documents into or out of the country, the assessment and collection of customs duties on dutiable imports and exports. It also ensures conformity with the laid down rules and regulations in the setting up of factories. It further ensures payment of excise duties on locally manufactured excisable products and also ensures compliance with government rules and regulations in many international trade and businesses pertaining import and export within its jurisdiction. The NCS is second to the oil sector in revenue generation to the Federation. The Customs Service

goes as far as complementing the security agencies efforts in terms of checking illegal importations of arms and ammunition. Since the inception of the present regime and assumption of Customs affairs by Alh. Aliyu Mustapha, the Customs for reasons yet to be made known to us have not been paid their monthly salaries as and when due. They are mostly paid in the second, third or even fourth week of a succeeding month. Most of us are family men and women in addition to some dependants from extended families. I on behalf of my colleagues therefore, appeal to the authorities concerned including the federal information ministry and the media houses to urgently come to our aid before things go out of hand. We want the government of the federation to investigate the activities of the Customs Comptroller-General, his Deputies and assistants, particularly those that are in charge of Accounts and F.A.T.S - Finance, Administration and Technical Services. *Saddam Bwallah, Nigeria Customs Service, Customs-House, Maiduguri.*

How Macedonia got the EU's nod

The international media were agog recently with news that the European Union has given a thumbs-up to Macedonia and was organizing a special security package for the country, in addition to granting Macedonia full membership of the E.U. It is not surprising that this came soon after the latter's unwarranted aggression against Ethnic Albanian Muslims in Tetovo. It was a typical case of media complicity when footage of a film supposedly taken of a few militant Albanian rebels was repeatedly

shown on these foreign media, a few days before the commencement of the aggression. While no one can say for sure that the few seemingly armed soldiers creeping in groups of twos and threes were really Ethnic Albanians moving into Macedonia to launch attacks on behalf of their minority brothers living there, the accompanying report insisted it was just that. Even the Macedonian authorities didn't seem too keen to do much at first. But then repeated warnings of a possible guerilla attack finally got the better of them and they

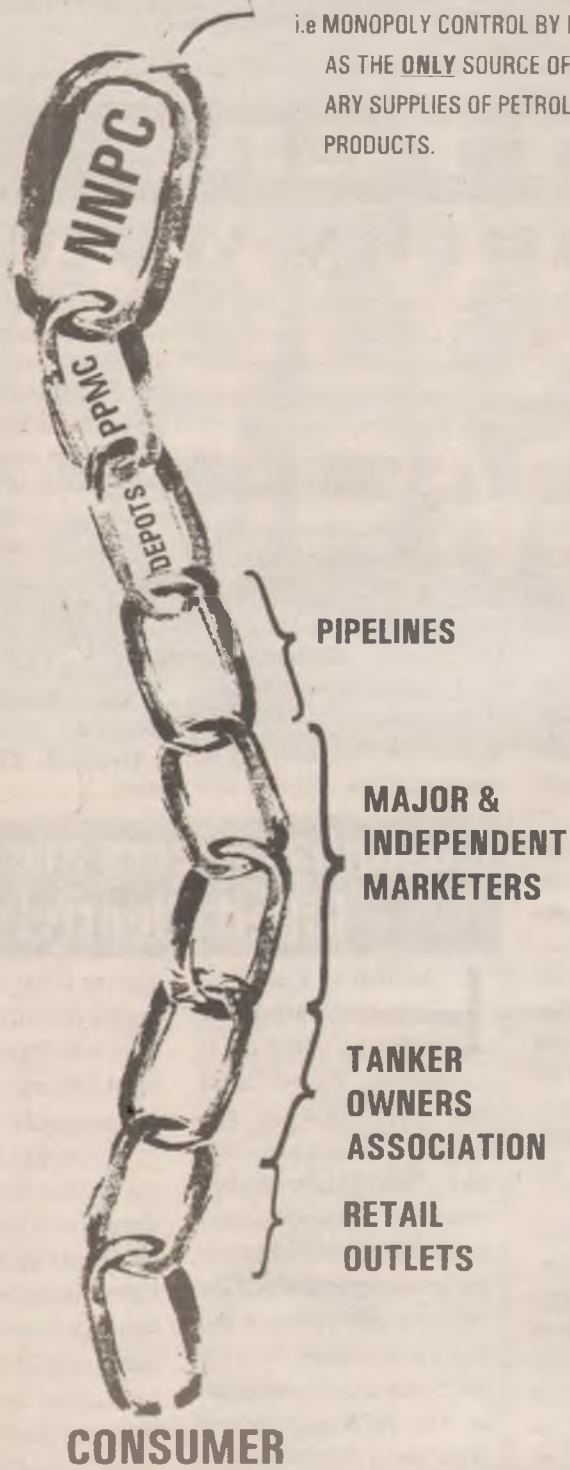
launched such firepower offensive that one would think that they were fighting a whole country rather than the reported 300 rebels. As usual, the attack was extended to the civilian population and defenceless hijab-wearing women were shown fleeing to safety. Not unexpectedly, another civilian attack was launched inside Kosovo itself. All this is not a surprise to whoever has witnessed the Serbian aggression in Bosnia and most recently in Kosovo. There is really a determined effort by the E.U. not to allow the rise of a Muslim

country in Europe. Towards this end, any seemingly strong Muslim community has to be finished at the earliest opportunity, hence the lates show in Tetovo. While I pray for all those killed in Tetovo and also pray for renewed faith for survivors, I hasten to tell the E.U. that the Holy Quran says "They plan and Allah plans, and the best of planners is Allah". This is why they are battling the "foot and mouth" today and will battle something else tomorrow. Allah's promise must come to pass. *Fatima Abdullahi, U/Dosa, Kaduna.*

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL

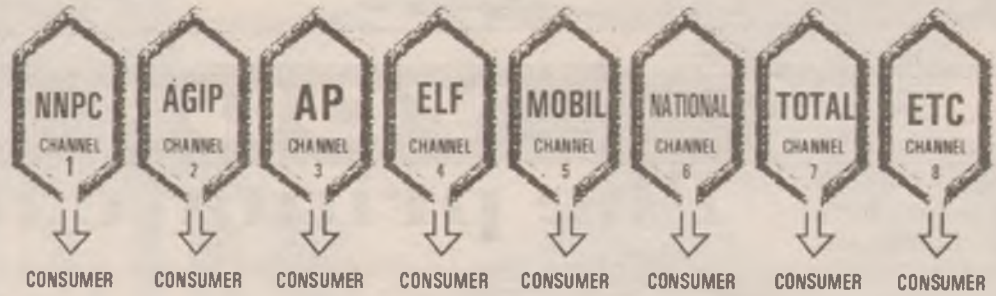
SITUATION 1 - Regulated

WHERE WE ARE:
i.e MONOPOLY CONTROL BY NNPC
AS THE **ONLY** SOURCE OF PRIMARY SUPPLIES OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS.



SITUATION 2 - Deregulated

WHERE WE HOPE TO BE:



AVAILABILITY PLUS FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Break the Chain Of Monopoly

Situation 2

A DEREGULATED MARKET means breaking the present monopoly to allow other competent suppliers to refine or import products, instead of only NNPC. Essentially deregulation means market liberalization; that is opening the market to other investors. Many channels of supply will clearly ensure adequate supply in every part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Competition among such competent suppliers will stabilize prices, guarantee regular supplies and make the consumer king with freedom of choice. This is the essence of deregulation.

Don't Enslave Yourself...

Situation 1

In this monopolistic chain, NNPC remains the only source of original supply of products. Other links in the distribution chain are totally dependent on NNPC, both for refined and imported products. Since there is no alternative source of supply, any player in this controlled market can hold the entire nation to ransom; sometimes it may be the marketers, tanker owners, tanker drivers, the supply depots. This chain of supply is so rigid and unstable that any small mistake by any player in the chain causes nationwide disruption.

Surely, Nigeria is too robust and too huge a market to be served by NNPC alone. It makes a lot of sense to allow other players who have the capacity to also supply this market through setting up refineries and importation of products. This is the true essence of deregulation, i.e opening up the market to more suppliers, so that the consumer can be king.



PUBLICITY COMMITTEE ON PETROLEUM PRODUCTS SUPPLY & DISTRIBUTION

TRUST INTERNATIONAL

Foreign & Diplomatic

Sino-American relations and global security

The past two weeks have seen the United States and China firing verbal war heads over the collision of a U.S. spy plane with a Chinese fighter jet. Foreign desk editor, Kevin Ebele Adinnu, re-examines the relations between the two countries vis-a-vis global security.

The collision, on April 1, of a U.S. spy plane with a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea has once again brought to a boiling point the simmering relations between the United States and China.

Through hot, verbal exchanges, the two countries remind the world of the war of words between the former Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev and President John Kennedy of the U.S. during the Cuba missile crisis of 1962.

One cannot help but simulate the tension and global insecurity that ensnared the world throughout the cold war era.

In the latest row, U.S. and China have pushed hardline positions with little prospect of either side blinking. China has consistently demanded an apology from the United States for violating the principle of "free over-flight", entering its territorial space without approval and being responsible for the collision.

The United States, however, rejected Beijing's claim and requested that China release the 24-man crew of its Navy surveillance plane, EP-3. The commander of the U.S. Pacific military forces went further and accused China of playing "bumper cars in the air."

President George W. Bush, apart from expressing regret over the incident, has refused to apologise to Beijing.

This face-off is yet another indication of the sudden, and unexpected, changes in the global strategic equation since the entry of President Bush into the White House.

Following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the arch-rival of the U.S. in the cold war era, President Bill Clinton in 1992 embarked on a new strategic initiative towards Eastern Europe, which he christened "partnership for peace". This new initiative, apart from hastening the disintegration of the Eastern-bloc's Warsaw pact, paved way for the absorption of the former Warsaw Pact countries like Poland and Hungary into the NATO alliance.

The new strategic concept, "Partnership for Peace" enabled the U.S. to preside without much rancour, over the balkanisation of its ideological arch-enemy and, made NATO, a cold war alliance, relevant in a Post-cold war world.

There is no doubting the fact that president Clinton, using NATO and his strategic doctrine, maintained the cohesion of the West in spite of the disagreement that arose with the NATO's bombing raid of Kosovo.

However, on assumption of office, President Bush announced plans to build



U.S. Defence Attache, Brigadier-General Neal Sealock (l) backs Chen si, Director General of Chinese Foreign Affairs office at Hainan Province after a joint press conference. (Reuters)

a missile defence system—a nuclear umbrella—to protect U.S. from the so-called rogue states.

Ever since, NATO countries like France have become as strident as Russia and china in criticising the plan. Russia and China see the policy as the beginning of another arms race characteristic of the Cold War era.

Ever since, alliances have been shifting

visit of President Khatami of Iran to Moscow and the latter's agreement to arm Iran is case in point.

Russia has already flaunted its technological ability by successfully bringing out of orbit its Mir space station without assistance from the United States, an indication that it is ready to engage the new leadership in the White House.

tion of 1949, considers as a renegade province.

In 1979, the U.S. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act reaffirming commitment to Taiwan and pledging to maintain arms sale to the Island. Ever since, mutual suspicion bordering on security has characterised Sino-U.S. relations, in spite

of high visits to each other's country by their leaders.

This suspicion peaked with the U.S. sale of 150 F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan, in September 1992.

The United States in 1989 imposed sanctions on Beijing after the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy demonstration which China's People's Liberation Army crushed.

The relations between the two countries fared better under Clinton who in 1993 launched a policy of "Strategic Partnership with China" and in 1994 dropped the policy of linking China's annual Most Favoured Nation status to human rights.

However, when two U.S. aircraft-carriers surfaced off Taiwan coasts to check Chinese missile tests and war games calculated to stop Taiwan from declaring its independence following its 1996

Presidential elections, the amity between them dipped again.

Diplomatic ties between them plummeted in 1999 after NATO had bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese journalists.

No single event like that incident rallied the Chinese behind their government despite an apology from NATO. It was at this instance that Beijing suspended talks

with the U.S. vis-à-vis the world Trade Organisation (WTO).

President George Bush on assumption of office substituted his policy of "strategic competition" with China for Clinton's "strategic partnership" and kicked off the competition by issuing, on February 26, a critical report condemning Beijing's human rights record as well as criticising China at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

Before the latest row over the U.S. spy plane China, had on March 23, warned U.S. against selling high tech weapons to Taiwan, saying that it could provoke war.

The present face-off is generally rolling the earth to the precipice of dizzying fear and insecurity, which pervaded the Cold War era.

Although national pride is at stake, United States and China should spare the world nightmarish cold war memories that are seemingly on the verge of becoming real once again. Even Nikita Khrushchev in 1962 had to swallow national pride and save the world from nuclear annihilation.

The current hardening of positions should be tempered. The expression of regret by the United States over the incident is welcome but more certainly needs to be done for global security.

N.B: U.S. apologised to China yesterday.



Chinese President Jiang Zemin. (AP)



U.S. President George Bush (Reuters)

as seen in the increasing cooperation between China and Russia. Russia has been making conscious efforts to repair the relations with her former allies. The recent

"The present face-off is generally rolling the earth to the precipice of dizzying fear and insecurity, which pervaded the cold war era. Although national pride is at stake, United States and China should spare the world of nightmarish cold war memories that are seemingly on the verge of becoming real once again."

TRUST INTERNATIONAL

AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST

Briefly

Kenians face starvation

More than four million people in Kenya are facing starvation from years of drought, according to a joint statement by more than 40 aid agencies.

They said the international community had responded inadequately to a series of appeals for food, and urged government and donors to support the Kenyan government and the United Nations World Food Programme.

The aid agencies said that despite recent rain in some parts of the country, food shortages in Kenya's north and east remained acute and supplies could run out later this month in some areas.

They said Kenyan farmers have never recovered from a series of crop failures.

Hundreds of thousands of livestock have died, depriving rural communities of their only sources of livelihood.

The agencies said donors had responded well to similar appeals last year and urged them not to fall victim to aid fatigue.

Very few pledges have been made so far to a February appeal for \$89m by the Kenyan Government and the UN World Food Programme, the statement said.

"This has been the worst drought that Kenya has faced in living memory," Emma Naylor, humanitarian programme coordinator for Oxfam Great Britain said.

Lusophone Summit

President dos Santos of Angola has opened a summit of Portuguese-speaking African countries with an appeal to improve ways of preventing conflicts.

Mr dos Santos said a regional and international effort was needed to safeguard peace, security and sovereignty. He added that Angola would hold general elections once the country's long-running civil war had ended.

Heads of state from all five Lusophone countries are attending the meeting in the Angolan capital, Luanda -- the first time they've come together for nearly ten years.

During the summit, the leaders of Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome are expected to approve a mechanism for holding such meetings more regularly.

Mauritania arrests opposition leader

The opposition Popular Front party in Mauritania has condemned the arrest of its leader, Mohamed Lemine Ch'bihould Cheikh Melanine, calling it arbitrary and unjustified.

In a statement, the party said the move added to what it described as the sad record of human rights violations by the country's autocratic rulers.

Mr Melanine, who was runner-up in the 1997 presidential election, was arrested in the capital Nouakchott on Sunday.

Police said he was being questioned over allegations of inciting violence. In another development, the Mauritanian authorities said they were recognising six new political parties, bringing to nearly thirty the number registered since a multi-party system was introduced almost a decade ago.



President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who sacked his entire cabinet April 4, gestures while holding an earphone during a news conference at the United Nations European headquarters in Geneva March 30. (Reuters)

South Africa approves artificial blood

South Africa has become the first country in the world to approve a product which can be used as an alternative to human blood in transfusions.

Its manufacturers say it eliminates the risk of patients being treated with contaminated blood which may contain disease carrying agents such as the HIV virus.

The product, Hemopure, was developed by a US-based biotechnology company, Biopure, and it is made from cow's haemoglobin.

It acts like red blood cells, carrying oxygen to the body's tissues and can be used with patients of any blood type.

However, some researchers have raised fears that any medical product made from animals presents a risk of introducing new diseases to people.

And some believe that cow-based artificial blood should not be used on humans until BSE - mad cow disease - has been eradicated.

Carl Rausch, CEO of Biopure, said that South Africa's Medicines Control Council had approved the use of Hemopure to treat acute anemia in surgery patients.

Side effects include slightly increased risk of stomach pain, weakness, hypertension, jaundice and nausea.

But its problems are no greater than those associated with regular blood transfusions, Biopure officials said.

Additionally donor blood must be refrigerated and can only be stored for 42 days, while Hemopure can be stored at room temperature and last for two years.

Dr. Luc Noel, coordinator for blood transfusion safety at the World

Health Organisation in Geneva, said Hemopure could be an important substitute for blood transfusions in developing countries with shortages of safe blood, provided the product was reasonably priced.

He also cautioned that its use should be closely monitored to detect side effects.

"If there is any alternative that is safer than the potential risks of transfusions, then it should be used," he said.

Dr Richard Friedland, CEO of Netcare, the health care company that jointly holds the license to the product in South Africa, declined to say how much the product would sell for.

However, he said developing countries would pay

less than wealthy countries.

Hemopure is the first blood substitute approved for use in humans.

Biopure has already received approval in the United States and Europe for a different blood substitute for dogs.

Rabbi calls for annihilation of Arabs

The spiritual leader of Israel's ultra-orthodox Shas party, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, has provoked outrage with a sermon calling for the annihilation of Arabs.

"It is forbidden to be merciful to them. You must send missiles to them and annihilate them. They are evil and damnable," he was quoted as saying in a sermon delivered

on Monday to mark the Jewish festival of Passover.

Rabbi Yosef is one of the most powerful religious figures in Israel. He is known for his outspoken comments and has in the past referred to the Arabs as "vipers".

As founder and spiritual leader of the political party Shas, Rabbi Yosef is held in

almost saintly regard by hundreds of thousands of Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin.

The Palestinian Authority has condemned the sermon as racist and is calling on international organisations to treat the rabbi as a war criminal.

Rabbi Yosef said in his sermon that enemies have tried to hurt the Jewish people from the time of the exodus from Egypt to this day.

"The Lord shall return the Arabs' deeds on their own heads, waste their seed and exterminate them, devastate them and vanish them from this world," he said.

Shas spokesman, Yitzhaq Suderi, defended the rabbi, saying his remarks referred only to "Arab murderers and terrorists" and not the Arab people as a whole.

Palestinian cabinet minister Hassan Asfur urged international civil institutions and human rights organisations to consider Rabbi Yosef a war criminal in future.

The utterances were "a clear call for murder and a political and intellectual terrorism that will lead to military terrorism", he said in remarks reported on Palestinian radio.

He added that no punishment would come from Israel "because its political culture and action are in line with [the rabbi's] racist statements".

Nigeria joins ISESCO

Nigeria on Tuesday became the 46th member of the Rabat-based Islamic Organisation for Education, Sciences and Culture (ISESCO).

Nigeria's ambassador to Morocco, Abdullah Chawni,

signed the membership document at a ceremony witnessed by the organisation's director general, Abdelaziz Ben Othmane Al-Twajiri.

According to 1996 statistics, at least 55 million of Nigeria's 115 million people were Muslims.

Malawi stops by-election

A by-election in Malawi has been cancelled following political clashes that left one person dead.

The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) announced an indefinite postponement of the by-election in the Blantyre Rural East constituency.

The commission's press officer Fergus Lipenga said that all seven commissioners were unanimous that going ahead with the by-election would be unreasonable because the violence could affect the fairness of the polls.

"A life has been lost here, life is serious business. We

can't allow the by-elections to go ahead regardless," he said.

Tension was high in the run-up to the key poll because both the ruling party and the main opposition are desperate to restore confidence amongst the electorate at large.

The MEC is awaiting a report from the police on what actually happened to spark the unprecedented violence that led to the death of a ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) supporter.

Mr Lipenga said the commission has also agreed to suspend campaigning in the constituency to allow tempers to cool following the weekend's clashes.

Israeli tanks attack refugee camp

Israeli tanks and bulldozers have entered a Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip and destroyed a number of buildings.

It is the first such operation since the Palestinian uprising began six months ago.

Witnesses said the tanks fired shells and machine-guns as they advanced into the Khan Yunis camp.

This sparked fierce fighting, in which at least 20 Palestinians were wounded, and casts doubt on US efforts to convene a meeting of Israeli and Palestinian security officials.

The Israeli army said the operation was launched to remove a sand embankment which was used by Palestinian gunmen to shoot at nearby Jewish settlements.

Palestinians responded to the attack by firing mortars on a Jewish settlement.

The Israeli action, on Tuesday night, was opposed by hundreds of armed Palestinian civilians and security forces, witnesses said.

Khan Yunis has been the scene of some of the most intense fighting in more than six months of Palestinian uprising.

Loudspeakers in the camp had called for every resident who had a weapon to take it up and defend himself.

The camp's power was cut, cloaking the clashes in nearly total darkness.

Earlier, a Palestinian official had said senior Israeli and Palestinian security officials would meet to try to bring an end to six months of violence in the West Bank and Gaza.

The latest violence has cast doubt on whether the new round of security talks would go ahead.

As part of a separate attempt to revive peace talks, Labour member of the Israeli parliament and former peace negotiator, Yossi Beilin, was expected to meet Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat yesterday, according to Israeli radio.

The latest fighting follows Tuesday's Israeli rocket attack on the Palestinian naval and military intelligence bases in Beit Lahia, south of Nisanit.

A Palestinian military doctor was killed and at least 17 other people were injured.

About a dozen others were injured in a tank shell attack on a military intelligence base in Deir el-Balah.

The Israeli army said the attack on the Palestinian military intelligence base was in retaliation for three mortar bombs fired at a Jewish settlement in Gaza earlier on Tuesday.

TRUST INTERNATIONAL

World Report

Bin Laden's 'message' causes confusion

A statement allegedly issued by Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, who is wanted on terrorism charges in the United States, has caused confusion in Pakistan.

Delegates at an Islamic conference in Pakistan said a message from bin Laden, calling on the Muslim world to support the Taliban, was read out to them.

But the organisers of the rally denied this, saying the Saudi dissident had not been invited to attend the meeting, which is being held in Peshawar near the Afghan border.

"There are only rumours about Osama... but there has been no message from him," a conference spokesman, Mohammad Rahim Haqqani, told Reuters.

The only message received from Afghanistan, they said, was one from Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.

The recorded statement said to be from the Saudi dissident was played to tens of thousands of Muslims who had gathered for the rally near Peshawar.

In it, bin Laden apparently told them that Afghanistan was the only country in the world with a real Islamic system, and that all Muslims should show loyalty to the Afghan Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.

He is also said to have urged the gathering to influence young people to go to Afghanistan for military training.

The Taliban have been sheltering bin Laden in defiance of demands by the US for his extradition to face charges in connection with bomb attacks on US embassies in East Africa.

Meanwhile, the military government of Pakistan denied showing favouritism towards Islamic groups by allowing the huge three-day

gathering, despite a ban on rallies.

A government spokesman said it was a purely religious gathering and these were permitted.

During the conference, Mullah Omar attacked the United Nations as a Western tool and urged resistance from a united Muslim front, state radio reported.

China to free US air crew

China has said it will release the US air crew on humanitarian grounds, Chinese state media has report yesterday.

A statement read on television and radio said the Americans would be released as soon as "appropriate travel procedures were completed".

On Tuesday, both sides in the spy plane dispute appeared to be edging towards resolution of the dispute.

US State Department officials said that in a draft document offered to Beijing, the US expresses regret for landing on Chinese soil without permission. The letter also regrets the loss of the Chinese pilot who collided with the US plane.

Meanwhile, China's state-run media began reporting comments made by US Secretary of State Colin Powell three days ago, in which he expresses sorrow for last week's collision of a US spy plane and a Chinese fighter.

The media reporting, correspondents said, was preparing public opinion for an announcement that a deal to

return the crew of the US spy plane had been reached.

The two sides had been locked in a diplomatic deadlock for more than 10 days, with Washington refusing to meet Beijing demands for an apology.

The 24 crew members and the US surveillance plane are being held on the Chinese island of Hainan.

On Tuesday, Chinese President Jiang Zemin expressed confidence that an agreement could be reached with the US to end the dispute.

"I trust in the ability of both countries to resolve this issue," said Jiang, who is on a six-nation tour of Latin America.

US officials have refused to apologise outright be-

"The infidel world is not letting Muslims form a government of their own choice," he was quoted as saying in a message to the conference.

"They want to resist Jihad [holy war] and destroy the Islamic system," he said. "Therefore, under the present critical situation, Muslim unity is needed."

Organisers of the conference pledged their support for Taliban and blamed Western conspiracies for discord among Muslims.

cause they do not believe the collision was their fault. The US also maintains that the accident occurred in international airspace.

Correspondents said the precise wording, and the extent of regret, offered by the US in writing was crucial because Chinese leaders needed something to show the public, whose sense of outrage over the incident has been heightened by anti-US rhetoric in state media.

They also said Chinese officials appeared to be preparing to announce the death of the missing airman, Wang Wei.

The announcement of the pilot's death and the abandonment of a massive search for him is being seen as a vital part of bringing this

Powell tours Europe

The American Secretary of State, Colin Powell, arrived Paris yesterday at the start of a three-day European tour, expected to focus on the Balkans.

Mr Powell will meet French leaders before holding talks with the six-nation Contact Group on the region. The meeting with the for-

eign ministers of Russia, Britain, France, Italy and Germany is likely to be dominated by the recent outbreak of ethnic violence in Macedonia. They will also discuss the situation in Kosovo and Yugoslavia after the arrest of the former president, Slobodan Milosevic. The BBC's Washington correspondent says Mr Powell has worked hard to convince America's European allies that Washington does not intend to withdraw from the Balkans.

But he says recent tensions in the region have put US policy toward the region again under scrutiny. Mr Powell is due to travel to Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina later in the week.

dispute towards a conclusion.

State media have lionized the pilot, Wang Wei, as a patriot who crashed defending his country. More than 1,000 military and civilian vessels have joined the search for him.

Canada nabs 36 stowaways

Canadian officials have apprehended 36 illegal immigrants hidden in shipping containers after it arrived in Vancouver.

The stowaways were found in two shipping containers aboard a ship from China.

Canadian immigration officials say the 30 men and six women are in good health.

The migrants spent 15 days inside the pitch-dark, sealed metal containers on the stormy waters of the north Pacific Ocean.

They are continuing to search the ship, which has more than 300 containers on board.

Illegal immigrants are found only rarely in Canada's main Pacific ports and the migrants arrested in Vancouver

were probably destined for the United States.

Police and immigration officials boarded the container ship *Pretty River* as soon as it arrived in the port of Vancouver.

The ship's captain had already sent out an alert saying he believed he had suspicious cargo on board.

The Canadian police officer who boarded the ship said the conditions inside the containers were appalling.

Nevertheless, a preliminary check showed the stowaways to be in good health.

In fact it is unlikely that these migrants intended to come ashore in Canada at all.

The containers in which they were hidden were destined for California, the *Pretty River's* next port of call.

German nuclear cargo reaches border

Three shipments of German nuclear waste have reached the border with France despite anti-nuclear campaigners' efforts to stop the transports.

At least 40 protesters were taken into custody after clashes with police near the Philippsburg nuclear power station, and police detained 14 activists in Bavaria.

Campaigners from the environmental group Greenpeace chained themselves to railway tracks in several places, trying to prevent spent radioactive fuel rods from being shipped to France for reprocessing.

Tuesday's shipments were the first to be sent from German nuclear plants to France in three years, since a decision in 1998 to suspend such shipments following the discovery of high radiation levels during the handling of waste containers.

Last month, a train bringing nuclear waste back from the same plant in France was delayed by up to 24 hours as protesters chained themselves to the rails.

Anticipated protests at the Biblis power plant in Hessen never materialised, while in Philippsburg a ban on demonstrations on the

railway line and at the plant itself led to 40 activists being held.

A number chained themselves to a train carrying fuel rods in the station of Wuerzburg.

The latest protest actions come two weeks after thousands of protesters held up six containers of nuclear waste which were being returned from France following reprocessing.

Protesters had hoped to repeat their earlier success, when it took 30,000 police officers across Germany to clear a path for the shipment.

Policing them cost more than \$50m, and embarrassed the governing Red-Green coalition which is committed to ending nuclear power within 30 years.

Environmentalists say this is not fast enough, and have vowed to continue their protests until reprocessing abroad is halted.

The nuclear fuel rods began their journey in three German states - Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg and Hessen.

The president of the police in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Erwin Hetger, had warned that he would not tolerate sit-down protests on the line.

Italy threatens to close Vatican Radio

Italy has again threatened to shut down Vatican Radio if it fails to reduce levels of electro-magnetic radiation from its transmitters within the next week.

The threat came despite a Vatican offer to cut some of its transmissions after Easter.

Italian Environment Minister Willer Bordon said the offer was "absolutely insufficient".

The minister has accused Vatican Radio of exceeding Italian laws on radiation and of being a health hazard.

Mr Bordon told a news conference in Rome that he wanted a timetable from the radio station illustrating when it would abide by the government's regulations for electromagnetic emissions.

"We have negotiated until the last [moment] to avoid taking measures we don't want to take," he said.

...at Italian law to ted but we also

don't want to prevent the voice of the Pope from reaching all parts of the world."

Last month, Mr Bordon threatened to cut off all electricity to the radio's transmission centre on Rome's outskirts.

Residents have claimed that the radio's transmitters have led to a higher incidence of leukaemia in the area.

Vatican Radio spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the government had raised "unjustified alarm" and rejected allegations that the Vatican did not care about the health of local residents.

On Monday the station, which broadcasts the Pope's speeches and events to the world in some 40 languages, said it would reduce half of its medium-wave transmissions, after tests ordered by the environment ministry confirmed that the transmissions violated Italian standards.



Frank Wittebrood (l) and Peter Lemke, kissing after Amsterdam Mayor, Job Cohen, officially married the gay couple on April 1. (Reuters)



PUBLIC NOTICE

CALLING ALL FAAN PENSIONERS

The Management of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) is streamlining the payment of pension to its retired staff, to ensure that only those who are eligible receive their pensions and also do so promptly. Consequently, the Authority is embarking on an audit of its pensioners all over the country between April 17th and May 25th, 2001, to ascertain the exact number of pensioners, their present addresses and so on.

As part of this measure, no pension allocation will be released to any airport for the month of March 2001. All pensioners will be paid by a crossed cheque issued from the Headquarters.

Senior officers from Headquarters will issue these cheques directly to pensioners at the different airports on the various dates indicated on the timetable below, using files collected from the Personnel Department.

To ensure that the exercise is successful, Management requires pensioners to submit the following documents to the paying officials:

- i. Letter of engagement while in active service
- ii. Letter of retirement
- iii. Pensioners' Identity Card
- iv. Bank Passbook or evidence of Current Account (Re-Bank A/C No
- v. January 2001 pay slip
- vi. 4 No passport photographs
- vii. They will also be required to fill and complete Pensioners' Information Card to be countersigned by the paying officer from the Headquarters.

The timetable for the exercise is as follows.

S/N	DATE	AIRPORT
1	17 th -19 th April	Headquarters, MMA
2.	17 th -19 th April	Ilorin
3	17 th -19 th April	Maiduguri
4.	17 th -19 th April	Yola
5.	17 th -19 th April	Sokoto
6.	17 th -19 th April	Ibadan
7.	18 th -20 th April	Kaduna/Zaria
8.	18 th -20 th April	Akure
9.	23 rd -25 th April	Abuja
10.	23 rd -26 th April	Kano/Katsina
11.	23 rd -26 th April	Port Harcourt
12.	25 th -27 th April	Enugu/Makurdi
13.	25 th -27 th April	Minna
14.	25 th -27 th April	Benin
15.	25 th -27 th April	Calabar
16.	23 rd -25 th May	Jos

Pensioners are advised to go to the airport nearest to them for this exercise as non-compliance may result in the stoppage of their pensions.

BUSINESS DAY



Chief S.O. Bakare, Chairman, Metropolitan Bank, Mr. Muyiwa Bakare, MD of the Bank and chief Godwin N. Anyichie, Director during the Board member of the Bank' curtesy call on President Olusegun Obasanjo at the State House, Abuja. Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

Braithwaite laments nation's economic woes

Dr. Tunji Braithwaite, the leader of the unregistered Democratic Advance Movement (DAM), has observed that the nation's inefficient infrastructure was worsening the country's economic woes.

Braithwaite, who spoke at a news conference in Lagos said that the nation's current democratic experience was also not encouraging enough in-flow of in-

vestment.

"It is so sad and frustrating that in Nigeria's dishonest democracy, no person, institution or group of persons bears the responsibility for the improvement and orderly conduct of business of the people," he stated.

The politician said that "the economic milieu is as uncharted as it is chaotic", adding, "without efficient telecommunications, modern road network, adequate

infrastructure, electricity and energy to turn the wheel of industry, how will the country modernize and how can it do anything at all in an age when technology is economy?"

Braithwaite urged Nigerians support devolution of power, husbandry of almost infinite and bottomless resources of Nigeria can be realized for rapid development". He said that "the present weak national currency (the naira) is a curse to our people as well as to industrial growth," adding, "but this will be addressed immediately by devolution of power".

"There will be spontaneous agro-industrial activities in food production, export produce and manufacturing throughout all zones for greater revenue earnings which will trickle down every nook and cranny of this vast land and business climate will be made conducive for external capital flow into our truly free economy".

"International financial institutions like IMF, World Bank, Paris Club etc will be convinced and satisfied with our economic planning to the extent that their policies will benefit Nigeria in no small measure," Briathwaite said.

We cannot be stampeded over commodity exchange - SEC

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has reiterated its stand on the modalities for establishing commodity exchange in the country, insisting that it will not be stampeded into registering any organization that does not meet the required criteria to establish the exchange.

The Chairman of First African Commodity and Futures Exchange (FACOMEX) Ltd., Mr. Vitalis Nwaneri has recently petitioned the Presidency over what he described as

By Ahmed Shekarau

this position through a statement issued by its head of corporate affairs, Iliyasu Dhacko.

Okereke said at the first quarterly forum of the Finance Correspondents Association of Nigeria (FICAN), in Abuja, that a new law has been introduced to allow for registration of firms as commodity exchanges.

He said "there is no doubt that Nigeria stands to derive a lot of benefits from the commodity market, but we don't want to be guided by such sentiments to register an organisation that does not

meet the requisite criteria".

He emphasised that SEC is "ever-ready" to register FACOMEX or any other organization that fulfills the requirement in order to ensure that the organisation does not fold-up along the line. He said Abuja Stock Exchange was given a provisional licence because it met the criteria.

Meanwhile, FACOMEX had in its petition to the Presidency, alleged that it will lose about N70 million if SEC denies it registration as a commodity exchange market. The firm's chairman

explained further that what FACOMEX needed, "rather than SEC's total rejection" of its projections was a "provisional licence" that would consolidate local investors' commitment to its project.

He noted that his company already had the support of 15 investors, mostly banks in the commodities exchange, stressing that FACOMEX is ready to invest another N500 million as operating capital into the venture but needed the support and evaluation of SEC, the apex regulatory body

in the market.

According to Nwaneri, the absence of a commodity exchange would make it difficult for the nation to maximise the benefits of "globalisation," which he said "thrived on banks, the capital market and the commodity exchange."

FACOMEX had signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) to use the facilities of the automated trading system and the Central Securities and Clearing System (CSCS) for trading in commodities and futures.



Malam Adamu Ciroma

SEC's "brazen rejection" to its application to float what would have been Nigeria's first commodity exchange.

SEC's deputy director and head of Mergers & Takeover, Mr. Chris Okereke however reiterated the Commission's stand on the issue, stressing that "FACOMEX does not meet the requirement to be registered by SEC". The Commission had earlier stated

Environment Ministry to promote small and medium industries

The Minister of Environment, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa'id, has said that the ministry will harness resources for the promotion of small and medium scale enterprises.

He said such a move was necessary because great potentials existed in the country for local and foreign earnings in environment-related business.

In an address in Abuja at the on-going 3rd NIGERSTALG Trade and Tourism Fair, the minister, represented by the permanent secretary in the ministry, Mr. D.B. Usman said

however that such resources must be harnessed in such a manner that would not compromise environmental integrity.

He promised that the ministry would co-operate with industries to provide technical support and ensure that the harnessing of those environmental resources were sustained. He further said that there were new opportunities for investment in the sector which encouraged the use of by-products of agricultural and urban waste, for the production of organic fertilizers, and urged investors not to hesitate to take advantage of the opportunities.

The Minister of Transport, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, has charged the chairmen of the boards of parastatals under his ministry and their chief executives to resist the temptation of changing rules to suit them.

Speaking in Abuja, during the inauguration of the "crisis free committee" constituted by the ministry to ensure a healthy relationship at the workplace, Maduekwe said the problem of Nigeria was that rules were treated with contempt.

"Unless we allow rules to operate, no matter how inconvenient, we will never make progress." On the importance of the "crisis free committee," the minister stressed the need for dialogue to understand each other's point of view better, saying that if tensions were not resolved amicably, everybody would be the loser.

The present administration, he said, represents "the last chance to return Nigeria to Nigerians," adding "we have been put here by God to re-invent and re-organise Nigeria and move on".

"No sacrifice will be too much in the effort at re-engineering the system: We

Ministry of Transport constitutes "crises free committee"

must be players or actors ready to commit class suicide even in the face of being unpopular," Maduekwe said.

In his inaugural speech, the Minister of State for

that the ministry was blazing the trail again, having been the first to establish a transparency monitoring unit.

He said that crisis management had become an integral part of modern day management, adding that the committee would provide "an opportunity to share our varied perspectives of the problems of the transport sector and proffer solutions".

The terms of reference of the committee includes ensuring a crisis free working environment and good relationship in the activities of the ministry and its parastatals and that crisis situations are looked into with a view to resolving them.



Ojo Maduekwe

Transport, Alhaji Isa Yuguda, who is the chairman of the committee, said

NNPC postpones workshop on local content

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has postponed indefinitely, its national workshop on "local content" scheduled to hold from the 18th to 19th of April, 2001.

A statement issued by the group manager, public affairs of the corporation said

a new date will be announced soon for the workshop being organised by the National Petroleum Investment and Management Services (NAPIMS), a division of the NNPC.

The NNPC said it regrets any inconvenience the postponement may cause the prospective participants and resource persons to the workshop.

Insured banks' capital shortfall

Banks	Number Of Banks		Adjusted Shareholders' Fund (N'M)		Capital Requirements (N'M)	
	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
Merchant Banks	38	33	20,398.2	27,326.9	2,182.6	Nil
Commercial Banks	51	57	41,208.3	77,224.1	15,972.1	Nil
Industry	89	90	61,606.5	99,951.0	18,154.7	Nil

Source: Bank Returns (NDIC).

BUSINESS DAY

Nigerian Stock Dealings (NSE)

Gainers/Losers as at 10/04/2001

Gainers

COMPANY	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE
TEXACO	66.70	68.01	1.31
LEVBROS	21.11	21.80	0.69
FLOURMILL	12.20	12.80	0.60
DNMEYER	11.36	1.92	0.56
AGIP	25.00	25.50	0.50
PZ	12.00	12.40	0.40
IGL	6.01	6.31	0.30
7UP	4.93	5.17	0.24
UNIONDICON	16.80	17.00	0.20
LONGMAN	6.40	6.60	0.20
GUARANTY	5.77	5.96	0.19
GUINNESS	35.65	35.84	0.19
UPL	4.05	4.20	0.15
TIB	2.85	2.99	0.14
FIRSTBANK	28.20	28.30	0.10
SBEECHAM	2.85	2.91	0.06
NIWICABLE	2.25	2.30	0.05
COOPDEV	1.29	1.34	0.05
LASACO	0.94	0.98	0.04
CUTIX	2.70	2.72	0.02
CHELLARAM	0.81	0.83	0.02
AVONCROWN	1.28	1.30	0.02
BLACKWOOD	0.78	0.80	0.02
AIICO	3.00	3.01	0.01
OWENABANK	2.01	2.02	0.01

Losers

COMPANY	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE
MOBIL	63.00	50.50	2.50
TOTAL	67.10	65.50	1.60
UBN	36.19	35.04	1.16
DELTGLAS	7.90	7.65	0.36
UBA	14.25	14.06	0.19
UNTL	3.15	3.00	0.15
UAC-PROP	2.66	2.53	0.13
WEMABANK	2.09	1.99	0.10
NCR	1.97	1.88	0.09
AFRIBANK	7.80	7.72	0.08
MANNYBANK	1.79	1.72	0.07
SAVANNA	1.25	1.20	0.06
AFPINT	1.10	1.05	0.05
DUNLOP	4.00	3.95	0.05
NBC	17.45	17.40	0.05
UTC	0.94	0.90	0.04
ACCESSBANK	1.10	1.06	0.04
CADBURY	30.10	30.07	0.03

Summary of Transactions

	OPENING	CLOSING	%AGE CHANGE
MKT. CAP	560,766,590,903.37	551,070,621,327.66	0.06
INDEX	9,315.64	9,320.96	0.06

DEALS	VOLUME	VALUE	No. OF COMPANIES
1.8.8	11,040,478	110,010,133.96	101

Source: NSE, Abuja Area Office.

NIPC to establish zonal offices

By Ahmed Shakarau

Chairman of the Nigerian Investments Promotion Commission (NIPC), Chief Kola Daisi, has said that the commission is working out modalities for the establishment of offices in the six geo-political zones of the country to sensitise and encourage local producers to produce export-oriented goods.

The chairman who presented a paper titled: "Maximising investment opportunities in Nigeria: The role of NIPC," at the first quarterly forum of the Abuja chapter of Finance Correspondents Association of Nigeria (FICAN) in Abuja, said establishment of the offices is necessitated by the need to widen investment opportunities and to attract foreign investment inflow into the country.

Daisi, who was repre-

sented by NIPC's Director of Finance and Administration, Alhaji Lawan Gana Lantewa, noted that one of the hindrances to the NIPC's efficacy is its inability



to regulate. "NIPC is not a regulatory agency", he noted, saying that it only advises and recommends certain amendments to policies

that are obstacles to hitch-free investment inflow into Nigeria.

He disclosed that the commission has compiled a comprehensive list of certain laws and policies which poses obstacles to investment inflow into the country, stressing that after ratification by the NIPC council, the proposed list will be sent to the Federal Executive Council for approval and onward presentation to the National Assembly for review and amendment.

The NIPC boss explained that the signing of agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOU) between the Nigerian government and foreign firms has further enhanced the international investors' confidence in the present administration's commitment to providing an enabling environment for investments in the country.

... registers 77 new companies

The Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) says it has so far registered 77 new companies with a corresponding foreign equity capital of more than N2 billion as at February.

The chairman and chief executive of the commission, Chief Kola Daisi, who did not provide sectoral details of such investment portfolios, said the prospective investors were registered "within a limited possible time".

Speaking at the first forum of the Finance Correspondents Association of Nigeria (FICAN), in Abuja, Daisi said that the two-year-old commission had adequately streamlined the registration and other approvals of enterprises with foreign equity involvement.

He said that it was a priority for the commission to expand its activities and base in the country through the establishment of zonal offices in the six geo-political zones and in Lagos.

The chairman, who was

represented by the commission's director of finance and administration, Alhaji Lawan Lantewa, said that the zonal offices would highlight the potentials of each zone.

Daisi said that a database would be set up in each of the zones for the inventory of resources and credible business enterprises in the areas. This will promote the match-making programme for investors in the zones with other investors from within and outside the country," he said.

N110.01m worth of shares traded in 1,608 deals at NSE

A total of 11.04 million shares worth N110.01 million were exchanged on Tuesday, April 10, 2001 in 1,608 deals on the floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange with 101 companies participating according to information from the Abuja trading floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

There were no transactions in the Industrial Loans Preference Stocks sector and the Federal Government development stocks sector.

Price movement: All share index closes at 9,320.95

The Nigerian Stock Exchange All-share index closed at 9,320.95 an increase of 0.06 per cent. The index opened at 9,315.64, while the market capitalisation closed at

N551.07 billion, an increase of 0.06 per cent it opened at N550.75 billion.

The trading took a new turn on the floor, with the bears in the lead, a total of 18 companies losing and 25 gaining in their share prices.

Gains were recorded in the banking, food/beverages and tobacco, chemicals and paints, healthcare, packaging, industrial/domestic products, printing and publishing, engineering technology, commercial services, breweries, insurance, petroleum marketing and the conglomerates sub-sectors today.

Texaco led the price gainers, as it appreciated by 131 kobo to close the day at N68.01 per share, followed by Leverbros Nigeria Plc. which appreciated by 69 kobo to close at N21.80 per share.

Other price gainers include Flourmill (60 kobo); DN Mayer (36 kobo); Agip (50 kobo); PZ (40 kobo); IGL (30 kobo); 7UP (24 kobo); Union Dicon and Longman (20 kobo apiece); GTB and Guinness (19 kobo apiece); UPL (15 kobo); TTB (14 kobo); First Bank (10 kobo); Smithline Beecham (5 kobo); Nigercable and Coop Bank (5 kobo); LASACO (4 kobo); Cutix and Chellaram, Aromcrown and Blackwood (2 kobo apiece); AIICO and Owenabank (1 kobo apiece).

Losses were recorded in the petroleum marketing, conglomerates, packaging, real estate, food beverages and tobacco, automobile and tyre, textile, banking and computer and office equipment sub sectors.

Mobil led the price losers, crashing by 250 kobo to close at N60.50 per share, followed closely by Total, which lost 160 kobo to close at N65.50 per share.

BUSINESS DAY

German airline to operate domestic flight from Minna airport

A German-based air courier, Dasab Air line, has agreed to commence domestic flight operations from the hitherto abandoned Minna Airport as soon as the upgrading of landing facilities at the airport were completed.

The Federal Government recently awarded contract for the standardization of landing facilities at the Minna Airport, in a move to fix the Airport on domestic air schedules for improved economic activities in the Niger State capital.

The airline had already submitted a flight schedule proposal to the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) for approval in its

Speaking on the development, the Special Adviser to the Niger State governor on federal establishments, Alhaji Usman Kagara, commended the federal government for responding to the several voices of the Niger people.

He said the people had called for improved facilities at the airport to allow it work, noting that the efforts made by the governor, Alhaji Abdulkadir Kure, to see the airport work had started yielding positive results.

He pointed out that the development would boost socio-economic activities and ease the transportation problems faced by the people of the state.

The plan by the five Anglophone ECOWAS countries and Guinea to form a monetary union and issue a common currency by January 2003 has been commended by IMF and ECOWAS officials as a positive economic development.

The union would help to combat inflation and stabilize exchange rates in its member states of Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia and French-speaking Guinea, officials were quoted as saying in the current edition of the IMF publication, "Finance and Development".

Mr. R.D. Ashante, head of the money and payments division of ECOWAS, said in the publication that the monetary union should produce "a more stable environment for business".

"With the risk of macro-economic environment for business, union's members would be free to focus on

IMF, ECOWAS back Six-Nation Single Currency

growing their economies," Ashante said.

He said that the financial stability would also help to reduce the risk of capital flight and make the countries more attractive to foreign investors.

"By facilitating trade and other payment transactions, a currency union will help



President Olusegun Obasanjo.

create a single market for ECOWAS," the IMF publication quoted him as saying, adding: "Foreign exchange savings will accrue from the use of a single currency in international transactions."

Ashante expressed the hope that the planned common convertible would eliminate the use of third currencies in trade and other business transactions within ECOWAS. A senior advisor in the IMF's research department, Paul Masson, was also quoted in the interview as saying: "Increased co-operation among the countries clearly would enhance the region's influence on the world economy."

"But whether, and the extent to which the proposed monetary union will actually deliver these favourable out-

comes, is an important and difficult questions," Masson said.

He noted that the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) of French-speaking ECOWAS countries was still producing modest trade volumes with the members.

Masson, however, pointed out that countries that already had tight trade links would benefit more from a monetary union because cost of transactions would be reduced and exchange rate fluctuations eliminated.

The six countries had pledged to adopt a common currency by January 2003 and to work towards merging their planned monetary union with WAEMU by January 2004.



Gov. Abdulkadir Kure of Niger State.

readiness to commence operations before the end of the year.

According to the proposal, the airline would fly Minna-Abuja-Lagos every other day once the approval was granted.

Anglo-America, Oppenheimer family offer \$16.7bn for De-Beers

Diamond giant, De Beers, on Tuesday strongly urged shareholders to accept a \$16.7 billion takeover bid for the firm from a group led by mining powerhouse, Anglo-America Plc and the fabulously wealthy Oppenheimer family.

De Beers chairman, Nicky Oppenheimer, told shareholders to seize the opportunity at a meeting scheduled for May 4 to accept the consortium's \$40.92 - a share offer, which would make the world famous diamond firm a private concern.

"This is an extremely attractive offer. It gives certainty and immediate value

and it is the best option, offering full and fair value," Oppenheimer told reporters by telephone.

Shares in De Beers rose



Thabo Mbeki, South African President, as much as 2.23 percent to 320 rand before falling back

to 317 rand in late trade. Anglo-American share were up 2.99 percent in London at 41.40 pounds.

DB Investments (DBI), which has tabled a formal offer for De Beers, is owned 45 percent by Anglo, 45 percent by the Oppenheimer family and 10 percent by the Debswana diamond joint venture in Botswana.

DBI said the offer to shareholders would end a series of grossholdings between Anglo-America and De Beers and delivered "a significant premium to the historic value of De Beers".

The crossholding is not liked by the investment community as it puts a brake on share growth in both firms.

De Beers said it would delist from the Johannesburg bourse on May 18 if shareholders approved the deal.

Oppenheimer said the DBI offer in its current form valued De Beers diamond business excluding dividends at \$7.9 billion and that a simple unbundling of its 35.4 percent in Anglo rather than a full buy-out was not an attractive option because of South African tax considerations.

Both DBI and De Beers said the offer should be taken up and warned of a sharply lower De Beers share price if the deal was rejected at the May 4 meeting.

DBI said that the offer for the diamond business was at a 75 percent premium to the implied value of the diamond business as of January 31, 2001. De Beers Managing Director, Gary Ralfe warned of a 15 percent fall in diamond sales this year because of a slow down in US economy.

European Telecoms market chalks up

European markets chalked up one-month highs on Tuesday as Wall Street stocks galloped ahead, bolstering renewed hopes that the worst day be over for technology and telecoms stocks.

One brokerage recommended investors jump back into telecoms and another suggested markets had bottomed, fuelling hopes of a broad-based recovery after a year-long market meltdown.

Deutsche Telekom, France Telecom and Alcatel all gained more than eight percent, pushing the large-cap DJ Euro Stoxx 50 up 2.25 percent to its highest point since March 12.

However, dealers said

volumes were light, with players reluctant to take too bold a stance ahead of results from mobile phone giant, Motorola, due after U.S. bourses close.

At 1639 GMT the pan-European FTSE Eurotop 300 was up 2.4 percent, while Nasdaq was ahead by 5.1 percent. The Dow Jones industrial average rose by 1.9 percent to break back through the key 10,000 point-level for the first time since March 20.

Credit Suisse First Boston raised its weighting in European telecoms to "neutral" from "underweight," while reducing its recommended exposure to banks and insurers, which had been among the top performers in

2000. BNP Paribas recommended clients taken an overweight position in equities, turning more bullish on stocks for the first time in one year.

British telecoms equipment maker Marconi joined in the fun, scaring ten percent after it stood by profit forecasts despite a U.S. slowdown. The stock had been hit hard on Monday amid rumours Marconi would warn on profits.

"U.S. clients are telling us they are wanting to come back into the telecoms sector again as they are heavily underweight and not happy with that as the market seems to be at a bottom," said a specialist equity salesman at West LB in Duesseldorf.

Prices surge on U.S. gasoline

Oil prices surged higher on Tuesday, bolstered by strong gasoline markets amid concerns over tight supplies ahead of the summer driving season in the United States.

London Brent crude by mid-afternoon trade was up from 92 cents to \$26.20 a barrel. U.S. light rose from 90 cents to \$28.17.

Dealers said they were anticipating a seventh straight week of declines in U.S. gasoline inventories when the American Petroleum Institute (API) issues U.S. fuels stocks data after the close business on Tuesday.

They said investment funds which are short oil futures on the New York Mercantile Exchange were buying back contracts, helping push prices higher.

"U.S. gasoline is getting incredibly tight and the funds are short. They could easily push the market higher again," said a London futures dealer.

Latest data from the U.S.

Commodity Futures Trading Commission, released last Friday, showed speculators with the largest NYMEX crude short positions - a bet that prices will fall - in three years.

"Gasoline provided the main support for the market yesterday with traders already positioning themselves for a bullish API report tonight," said Lawrence Eagles of GNI research.

Eagles said the report would need to show a three percent jump in refinery utilization from a forecast one percent to allay fears of a gasoline supply crunch.



George Bush, American President.

Banks acquired by Central Bank

S/N	Commercial Banks	Paid-Up Share Capital (N'M)
1.	African Continental Bank Plc	60.00
2.	First African Trust Bank	56.50
3.	New Nigeria Bank Plc	50.60
4.	Premier Commercial Bank Plc	100.00
	Sub-Total	267.10
	Merchant Banks	
5.	Nationwide Merchant Bank	47.50
	Sub-Total	47.50

Source: NDIC.

Products F

Korean products on



The ongoing Nigerian States and Local Governments Trade and Tourism Fair (Nigerstal) has attracted a potpourri of products from not only the 36 states of the federation, but also foreign countries like Argentina, Germany, North and South Korea, as well as African Countries

By Ahmed Shekarau
such as Ghana, Benin Republic, Cameroun and Niger Republic. The Fair, which begun on March 31, 2001 at the Old Parade Ground, Area 10, Garki-Abuja, was officially flagged-off by the Federal Capital Territory Minister, Alhaji Mohammed Abba-Gana. The

Minister who expressed his satisfaction with the wide range of products on display at various stands at the Fair, was particularly attracted to some of the magnificent products on display from a South Korean firm. Abba Gana paid premium to a particular product produced in a village in the Kampo region of South Korea. This product is a peculiar type of staircase rail known as dsp (Designed Stainless-steel Products), made out of high quantity of carbon oxide, as well as a synergy of etching silver pipe, titanium gold pipe and titanium gold sheet.



The FCT Minister who was impressed with the quality of dsp urged Nigerians to not only adopt the product for construction of their houses, but also challenged them to manufacture similar products in this country "to make them cheap and affordable to the commonman."

In a chat with *Daily Trust* at the end of the Minister's inspection of goods on display at the Fair, Mr. Lawal Suleiman, Marketing Officer of Fibre Glass International Nigeria

Ltd, the sole distributor of dsp in Nigeria argued that "there is a sharp difference between this product (dsp) manufactured by Dae Jin Metal Corporation of South Korea and all other staircase rails imported into

Fibre Glass International (Nig.) Limited

in conjunction with

Dae Jin Metal Corporation, South Korea

introduces a new concept into the world of staircase rails.

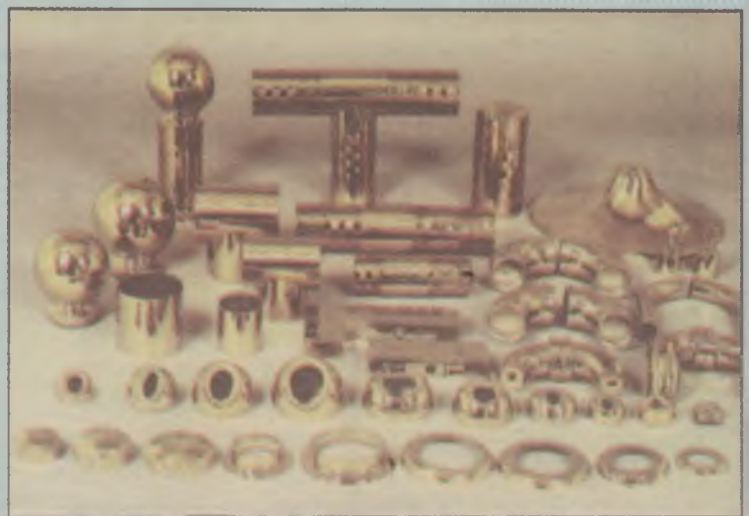
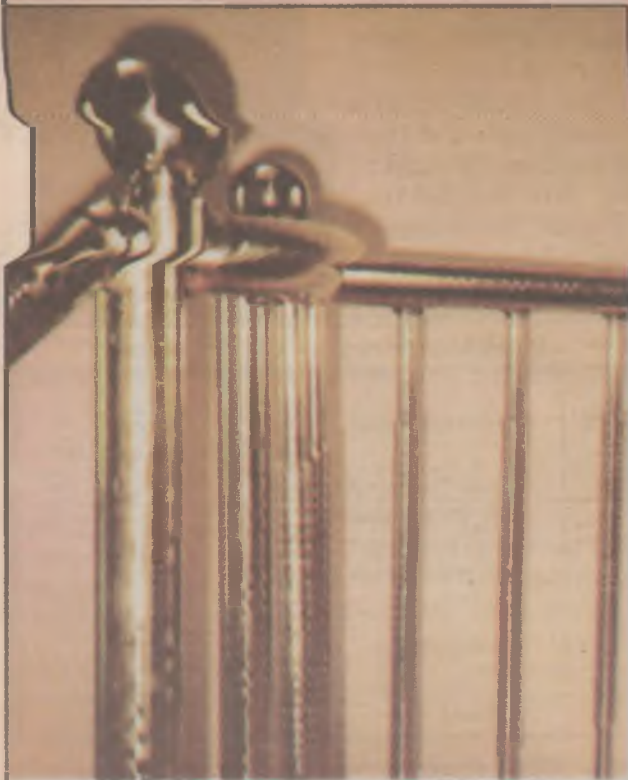
dsp- Etching Silver Pipe

Titanium Gold Pipe and Titanium Gold sheet staircase rails.

The latest technology in staircase rails designed for modern building, capable of withstanding rugged usage in extended family households and made up of beautiful colours and shining glasses that adore your compound. A metre of dsp, inclusive of all accessories of the rail is sold for N49,166.60k. Fibre Glass International which is currently displaying at the Nigerstal Fair at the Old Parade Ground, Area 10 Garki-Abuja,

however offers you a discount of 25% for each metre from now to April 30,2001.

For further information, contact us at: **Suite C23, Kenaz Plaza, along Kashim Ibrahim Way, Wuse II, Abuja.**



Feature (Sponsored)

Handrail display at Nigerstal



by Dae Jin, as well as the technology employed in the titanium gold sheets and etching silver pipe, "which process enhances the scratch resistance of the products and the fastening of the colours," he explained

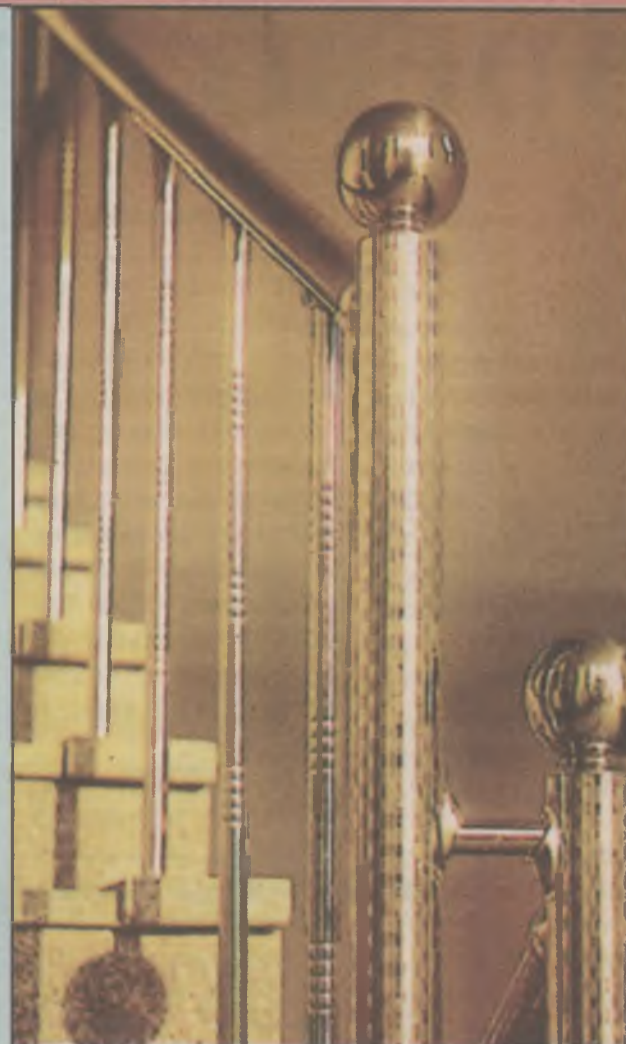
further. He maintained that the dsp is a barrage of high quality products that are exported to most parts of United States of America, Canada, and several other countries like Hong Kong, Dubai, China etc.

Dsp, according to Fibre Glass International's Marketing Officer, is a very durable handrail product that would last "as long as the building," and would not lose its aesthetics values or strength.

He noted that provisions are made for inscriptions of names of interested companies or personalities, as well as unique features that may be so required by any corporate organization or individual.

Suleiman stated that "because we receive this product directly from the manufacturing firm in Seoul in South Korea, we are offering a 25% discount from the introductory price of N49,166.60k per metre, inclusive of all the accessories of the rail. He said however that the 25% discount will only last till the end of Nigerstal Fair, which is April 30,2001. Suleiman pointed out that: "We have introduced the discount because this is the first time we are introducing this Korean product into the market."

On the number of metres that would be enough to be mounted



on a house, the the pole ranges from Marketing Officer six to eight metres noted that "depending that would be



on the nature of a required for a one-staircase, the length of storey building."



Nigeria." Fibre Glasses Ltd., is the sole agency employed by Dae Jin to market the product in Nigeria.

The major differences, according to Suleiman, lies in the high quality of steel used



Feature

Spectrum comes to Abuja

Spectrum Books, have established their presence in Abuja. They did so in a rather informal man-ner quite contrary to expectations. The organizers tagged the occasion a 'sundowner'. Far from being a technical term exclusive to the publishing industry, it referred to occasions organized late in the evening when the sun is about to set which explains why this particular event was to commence at 6.00 p.m.

The occasion was an exclusively private affair, and access to the venue was strictly on invitation. The handful of guests that attended were obviously friends and business associates of the company's Managing Director, Chief Joop Berkhout, who disclosed in his short speech that he was actually inspired to open an office in the capital city by Dr. Ismail Tsiga of the Educational Resource Centre of the FCDA. Chief Berkhout also informed guests that there is a need to give to the people of the capital city valuable books which have hitherto not been available. The Dutchman, who it was learnt is a Yoruba chief and a naturalized Nigerian citizen from Katsina State, also said it was pertinent for any serious-minded organization to be represented in the capital city.

The high point of the occasion was the introduction of Mr Kevin Ward to guests. Mr. Ward is the Field Manager, Africa and Middle East operations, of Blackwell Safari of the Netherlands, a publishing company working in partnership with Spectrum. The Spectrum boss also used the occasion to inform the gathering about the company's latest project which is the ongoing publication of Hajia Hajo Sani's book: *Women and National Development: A Way Forward*. The author, a one-time Minister for Women Affairs, said the

By Abdulazeez Abdullahi

book focuses on the significance of the roles women play in national development and that it 'examines the contributions made by women in Nigeria both as individuals and groups towards their economic, political and social emancipation'. The book is scheduled for launch on the 10th of May this year at the Sheraton Hotel, Abuja.

In a talk before the occasion, Mr. Simon Okopi, a sales representative with Spectrum, debunked the opinion held in some quarters about a decline in the reading habits of Nigerians, arguing that the publishing industry has achieved a certain level of growth which can, to some degree, be attributed to the patro-

nage of Nigerians. He pointed out also that a significant number of new publishing houses have sprung up in recent years.

He saw this as a sign that their services are still felt to be in demand by the public. Perhaps the most worrying accusation

facing the industry is the persistent claim by writers that writing is not a profitable venture, not much comes their way in terms of royalties. To many writers taking writing as a career is very unwise. To this, Mr. Okopi responded that some writers have a share of the blame because they often prefer to engage the services of what he called 'mushroom' publishers instead of reputable ones who have the wherewithal and expertise to effectively market and distribute books after publication.

Spectrum Books is working with Time-Life, a subsidiary of AOL/Time Warner to publish the twenty-first century encyclopaedia of science, technology and nature in volumes covering sub-disciplines such as ecology, animal behaviour,

computer age, etc.

Spectrum books has its head office at Ibadan with branches in Benin, Kaduna, Lagos, Owerri and, of course, the latest addition in Abuja. The company's publications cut across a wide range of topics such as, agriculture, medicine, music, fine arts and culture, engineering and technology, history, etc. Some of the titles on display at the occasion include Soyinka's *The Beatification of Area Boy*, Reverend Kukah's *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, and *Principles and Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria* by Adebayo Adedeji.

Abdulazeez Abdullahi is a staff of Daily Trust.



Hajia Hajo Sani, the author of *Women and National Development: A way forward*

Tribute to a dynamic amazon

By Haruna Penni

When the young Hajo was tucked away for twenty years as a classroom teacher at Dutse girls high school somewhere in FCT along the now famous Clinton Broadway, little did she know that one day she would be opportune to leave indelible footprint on the sands of time. Because it was shortly after that, providence smiled on her as the enviable task of charting a way forward for women participation in national development was thrust upon her.

She is today best remembered as the former Honourable Minister of Women Affairs who internationalised the Nigerian women agenda at various global fora which include presentation and defence of Nigeria during the country's ratification of UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) at New York in July 1996, African Women and Economic Development at the Economic Commission for Africa Conference at Ethiopia in May 1998, the Status of Women in Nigeria at the UN Commission on Women Conference in January 1998 at New York.

And now half a decade outside the privileged pre-

dicts of the women seat of power, what is she up to as she is not known to be a one to rest on her oars? Moreover, as she has known no other life outside education and women administrative callings. It can now however be confidently revealed that the silence of the indefatigable amazon is with good intention. She has been on the drawing board trying the art of writing for the Nobel Prize even where Laureates say nobody writes for literary accolades. It just came.

Hajo comes up with a big bang on Thursday 10th May 2001 by 10.00 a.m prompt at the Ladi Kwali Hall, Abuja Sheraton & Towers to present and launch her debut work titled *Women and National Development - A way forward*, a 400-page work that should just about earn her a doctorate degree in women studies. The book is printed by Spectrum Ltd who is also coordinating the launching.

It is reassuring so far that arising from this singular effort, Hajo is already harvesting presidential handshakes and kudos from the female Babangidas to the Abachas and the Abubakars. It is instructive to note here that the Nigerian socialite hopes for

the day that would witness the rapprochement between Nigerian First Ladies and their darling husbands whom she had great respect and admiration for.

The new Northern voice on the issue of women and national development in the traditional Islamic North who fought the vexed issue of women tokenism in public service by empowering them through networking and mainstreaming, has with her new work brought a ministerial insight into policy formulation on the women development agenda as perceived by various scholars on the subject.

A friend to both the low and high of the society, Hajo has endeavoured in her characteristic simplicity to draw attention to the plight of the oppressed rural women while at same time marking out for recognition the pioneering roles of historical amazons in seventy four portraits lavishly illustrated in the women bibliographical work. They are: Queen Amina, Queen Kambassa, Chief Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Nana Asmau and Enotan. Others include former first ladies and women with achievement without rank as well as those with official positions. Although, *Women and National Development*

is her first published work, she has some serious scholarly manuscripts on *Marriage in Hausaland*, *Mate Selection Among Secondary School Students*, *Effective Leadership Management*.

Hajo now forty-one plus was born with the sun in Capricorn at Kagara in Niger State. A native of Adamawa, she now lives an active communal life with her only son after the traumatic experience of losing two loved ones - her daughter and husband. Though for her interest in the promotion of a humane and egalitarian society, which she has now chosen to promote, she is adequately compensated as she bagged various distinguished awards prizes as dynamic educationist and as staunch supporter of youth development.

The young Hajo had her primary school education in Kaduna and Ankpa in Kogi state where she also pursued her secondary school education at Ochaja graduating in 1976. She was at University of Maiduguri for her Bachelor's Education degree in English, which she rounded up in 1981. She was also at the University of Jos in 1991 for the Masters in Education Degree in Guidance and Counselling with the support of her late husband Dr. Mohammed Sani.

She is a member of several professional bodies like All Nigerian Conference of Principal of Secondary Schools (ANCCOPS), Counselling Association of Nigeria (CAN); Forum for Africa Women Educationalist (FAWE) and National Parents - Teachers Association. The former Honourable Minister is currently Secretary-General of West Africa Women Association (WAWA) and a Trustee of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Abuja branch.

The former minister was also privileged to have served on the Council Committee on Harmonised National Policy on Education, National Council of Nigerian Vision, and Committee on National Curricular for Junior Secondary School. She has attended several international conferences, courses and workshop at home and abroad including First African First Ladies Peace Mission in Abuja, United Nations Convention on Women, workshop on Security Management at ASCON, Badagry etc.

Her areas of interest in life span reading, writing, sports, interaction and philanthropism.

Penni is Secretary/Registrar Association of Nigerian Authors, Abuja Branch.

NEWS

Argungu blames late Mail delivery on poor town planning

The Post Master General of the Federation, Alhaji Abubakar Musa Argungu, has said that lack of proper town planning by planning authorities in Nigeria is inhibiting the performance of the Nigerian Postal Service.

Alhaji Argungu said this in Ibadan during a courtesy visit to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Press Centre, in Ibadan.

The Post Master General stated that NIPOST had not been able to perform its functions effectively because of lack of orderliness in the numbering of houses in most cities in Nigeria.

He also said some Nigerians had not been helpful to NIPOST because their letters were often wrongly addressed thereby making it difficult for letters to be delivered at the appropriate time.

He further revealed that problem of house numbering in Nigeria is not limited to old cities in the country, saying that even the Federal Capital Territory which is the newest city in the country is also beset by this problem.

From Yinka Oladoyinbo, Ibadan

Alhaji Argungu acknowledged that the services Postal Service NIPOST is rendering cannot yet be said to be the best, adding that they fell below world standards.

"We have not been able to claim 100% of success, but I think we have up to 80% and we are trying to achieve the rest 20%," Alhaji Argungu

stated.

Earlier, while welcoming Alhaji Argungu and his team, the Oyo State NUJ Chairman, Alhaji Soladoye Adewole, noted that NIPOST in recent times had improved its services. He therefore charged the Federal Government to provide the organisation with the right incentives for it to perform better.



L-R Chief Tony Anenih, Minister of Works and Housing, Alhaji Musa Gwadabe, Minister of Labour and Productivity and Alhaji Danjuma Goje, Minister of State Power and Steel, at the extra-ordinary summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in Abuja... yesterday. Pic: Kennedy Egbonodje.

The Zamfara State Government has distributed 15,000 bicycles to the people of the state as soft loans under its poverty alleviation programme.

Distributing the bicycles to the beneficiaries, the state's acting Governor, Alhaji Mahmud Aliyu Shinkafi, said the move was in fulfilment of the administration's effort towards the provision of better transportation for the people.

Alhaji Shinkafi also explained that a few months after the inception of the

Zamfara distributes 15,000 bicycles to indigenes

From Salisu Zakari Maradun, Gusau

administration, about 150 buses were purchased at the cost of N500m by the government and distributed as loan among the individuals with a view to alleviating poverty.

According to the acting governor, equipment and

working materials worth N10m were also given to members of Association of Small Scale Industrialists.

Others who benefited from the programme include Zamfara Textile Workers, Union, Donkey Rider Association, Women Herbalists and the Association of Automobile Technicians.

Nasarawa gov. unhappy with FG over state of Keffi college

From Ma'ashin Ibn Ma'ashin, Lafia

Nasarawa State Government has taken the Federal Government to task over the poor condition of the Federal Government College, Keffi.

The State Governor, Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu has challenged the Federal Government to effectively run the school or return it to the State Government and reduce the hardship that students are experiencing in the college.

Governor Adamu who paid a visit to the school during his tour of Keffi Local Government Area recently, observed that the school's infrastructure such as classrooms, dining hall, hostels, laboratories, staff quarters and other facilities in the school were collapsing for lack of maintenance.

While addressing staff and students of the school,

the Governor said that out of the 52 academic staff of the school, only 10 had accommodation.

"I am very very disappointed. All other Federal Government Colleges are well maintained by the Federal Government. Before the school was handed over to the Federal Government, virtually all the facilities were in place. But since then the infrastructure has been abandoned to decay. We, in the first place, did not beg the Federal Government to take over this school. Every state of this federation is entitled to a Federal Government College, so it is our right to have a Federal Government College of this kind established here. But if the Federal Government is not ready to run it, it should declare it and then we shall run it for her," the governor said.

He threatened to write to the President on the issue.

He however directed that broken down facilities in the school required for learning be repaired immediately by the state government.

Nigeria on path to greatness - Obasanjo

President Olusegun Obasanjo in Ilorin, rekindled hope of Nigerians with assurance that Nigeria today stands on the threshold of greatness.

In his address at the National Convention of the Obasanjo Leadership Forum held at Circular Hotel, the President said the misfortunes of the past have provided "opportunities and impetus to rebuild a glorious future for us and for our children."

Speaking through his special assistant on political matters, Dr. Bolade Osinowo, President Obasanjo noted that "this is a national responsibility challenging the attention and commitment of every Nigerian."

He observed that the vision of the founders of the Nigerian nation had not been fully realised, saying the nation was still in the process of being made.

President Obasanjo who said this should not be a cause of disappointment, explained that "rather we should all accept the challenge of actively participating in the process of determining the character and destiny of our motherland."

The President said the Kuru declaration recently

From Abdul Laro, Ilorin

adopted by ministers and other top functionaries in the executive arm of government was a compendium of strategies for realising the vision of a great nation.

In his remark, General Abdulkarim Adisa said the problems of Nigeria were surmountable, emphasising that "we need them to be able to move forward and do well."

He described the 1999 general elections as a rehearsal and hoped that by 2003, Nigerians would have more qualified people coming out for election.

General Adisa charged Nigerians to support Obasanjo's government for an enduring democracy, adding that "we should count ourselves lucky for having

him as a leader."

The governor who was represented by the commissioner for special duties,

Alhaji Razaq Lawal, charged the body to avoid partisan assessment of government policies and programmes.

FG to dredge Oguta lake

By Austine Odo

The Minister of Transport, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, has reaffirmed government's commitment on the dredging of the Oguta Lake in Imo State which he said is part of Federal Government's plan to provide material democratic dividends to the people of the South-East.

The Minister made the pledge when responding to a request made by the Imo State Privatisation and Investment Bureau, led by Dr. I. I. Anyadiegwu, to construct a bridge to link the Oguta Lake with two other lakes in the South-East Zone. Dr. Anyadiegwu stressed that it would be the achievement of a long desire to make Oguta a major transport hub that would connect the whole of the South-East with other parts of the country and compel them to resume trade ties with the zone.

A statement from the minister's office yesterday quoted him as saying that once the government created the basic infrastructure, it

had to carry on. He however wondered why the South-East Zone is the lowest in the purchase of shares under the present privatisation programme, adding that if this was not checked, it would amount to another level of marginalisation. He, however, encouraged the people of the South-East to participate fully in the scheme.

Muslim organisation vows to fight oppression

Aliyu M. Sulaiman, Kano

The Muslim Brothers Organisation has reaffirmed its commitment to the dislodgement of all forms of oppression and the establishment of the divine Sharia in the country.

This was contained in release from the group, which was made available to Daily Trust in Kano yesterday.

The group which staged a peaceful demonstration led by Mohamed Turi last Friday in Kano, stated that the demonstration was to mark "Ashura" a day of mourning for Muslims all over the world on the death of Imam Hussein (RA), the grand son of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

He stated that "Ashura"

is observed on the tenth day of Muharram each year and this year was the 61st after Hijira of Prophet Muhammad (PBUM).

He recalled that Imam Hussein (RA) was brutally killed along with about seventy of his relatives and companions by the force of the Umayyad group Yazid, the son the son of Mu'awiyya.

Muhammed Turi that Yazid murdered Imam Hussein because of fear that Imam Hussein might rally a force to end his tyrannical rule.

Turi further said that, Imam Hussein (RA) was asked to swear allegiance to

Yazid but he refused the offer and preferred martyrdom, thereby giving them an everlasting lesson in sacrifice for the sake of protecting the truth. "This was one of the most important lessons of Ashura", he noted.



Obasanjo



Sultan Maccido

NEWS

Benue NUT calls for reconstitution of boards

The Benue State chapter of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) has called for the reconstitution of boards of educational parastatals which were dissolved more than a year ago.

The teachers have also asked government to consider their members and other bodies that are stakeholders in the educational sector to serve in the boards.

These demands were part of a 15-point communiqué issued at the end of the chapter's two-day second quadrennial delegates conference held in Vandekiya last week.

The communiqué, which observed with regret, the dissolution of the boards, including those of SPEB and the Local Government Education Authorities, however applauded the cordial working relationship between the union and government education agencies in the state.

A release from the Chief Press Secretary to the Benue State Governor, Mr Tahar Argezua, which was made available to *Daily Trust*, said the NUT commended government for educational development in the state.

According to the release, the delegates resolved that the state wing of the NUT should prevail on the national executive council of the union to explore all possible avenues to make the Federal Government establish a pension board for primary school teachers, saying this is the only way of alleviating the suffering of retired teachers who are currently ne-

By Austine Odo

glected by government.

They requested the State Government to set up a machinery to cater for primary school teachers on pension matters pending when the Federal Government initiates positive action in this regard.

The conference in-session viewed retirement as a normal exercise, especially on the grounds of ill health and old age, but regretted the premature retirement of

teachers without prior notice as such teachers often only know of their retirement by the removal of their names from payment vouchers.

The delegates, after viewing experience as vital to effective productivity, resolved that government should extend the retirement age of teachers to at least 60 years while those to be retired should be given adequate notice to enable them prepare adequately for life after retirement.

FG pledges to revive steel industry

The Federal Government has resolved to revive the ailing steel industry with a view to developing and sustaining the basic stage for technological development of the country.

Minister of State for Power and Steel, Alhaji Danjuma Goje, disclosed this in Katsina while on a courtesy call on Governor Umar Yar'adua. The minister said the President knew the importance attached to the steel sector as a catalyst for industrial development.

This he said, prompted him to declare his intention to revive the ailing sector with all the vigour required.

With the flag-off of the Katsina rolling mill, the minister added, the people of Katsina and in indeed, other Nigerians stand to benefit immensely from the Federal Government's initiative to improve the standard of living of the people.

Very soon, he stressed, government will extend such

gesture to other facets of economic activities of the nation.

"Katsina is the first steel rolling mill to be opened and today, it is the first to be re-opened after a long period of closure", he explained.

Responding, Governor Umar "Yar'adua thanked President Obasanjo for his resolve to make the steel sector vibrant."

Governor Yar'adua re-

The Kano State Government has introduced a policy to ensure that every secondary school leaver attains an appreciable level of proficiency in Qur'anic recitation by the end of his secondary education as part of efforts to encourage parents to send their children to school and discourage begging among children of school age.

The Kano State Commissioner for Education, Alhaji Usman Alhaji, who announced this at the Commencement of the State Summit on Education in Kano, said he felt disturbed by the presence of children of

Kano govt makes Qur'anic education compulsory in secondary schools

From Musa Umar Kazaure, Kano

school age at official government functions in rural areas.

He stated that the effort of the state government in the last two years on education would change the situation for the better.

Alhaji Usman explained that the education summit, which is the first of its kind in the state, was aimed at designing an educational blueprint for Kano State. He said the Summit comprised three components which he identified as the presentation of paper by educationists, scholars and experts, discussion segments, and a syndicated group which is to take closely at the various aspects discussed during the summit with a view to harmonising ideas into an articulated blueprint.

The state governor, Alhaji Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, told the gathering that his government had renovated over 6,000 primary school classrooms and increased the enrolment figure from 248,000 pupils to over half a million in the two years of his administration.



Gov. Kwankwaso

Cross River govt to merge institutions of higher learning

The merger of all the state government owned tertiary institutions of learning in Cross River, proposed at the inception of Governor Donald Duke's administration is in the offing.

Governor Donald Duke revealed this in Calabar while receiving reports of the Special Committee on Merger of Tertiary Institutions of Learning and that of the Book Writing and Review headed by Prof. Kevin Etta and Ivara Esu respectively.

The governor stated that in a few months, the state government would implement merger plans of the state's tertiary institutions of learning to create a sense of belonging among the indi-

genes of the state.

He apologised for the unsteady funding of the committees after their inauguration.

Speaking earlier, the chairman of the committee of merger for tertiary institutions of learning Prof. Kevin Etta acknowledged the burning enthusiasm of the governor, his deputy and the commissioner for education to revamp the standard of education in the state.

The professor who was the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calabar until early last year, said it would require N880 million to build the university and campuses, stressing that N85 million would be needed for take off.

Also speaking, the chairman, committee of Book Writing and Review, Prof. Ivara Esu stated that despite the financial shortcomings of the committee, it had developed a table of contents for writing of 65 text books on 20 subjects in post primary schools.

Responding, the governor said that the idea of having books written and reviewed came as a result of inadequate book materials in the market for students, which he said, had culminated in the borrowing of books by students.

Duke however indicted the state newspaper corporation for being unable to produce exercise books for various schools in the state.

From Hassan Karofi, Katsina

mind the minister to understand the importance of the Katsina Steel Rolling Mill to the people of the state, hence their eagerness and happiness with its re-opening.

"I want you to know that this company is seen as a symbol of hope for the growth of our state" he said.

He called on the people of the state to use the opportunity to establish smaller industries that would use the products of the company for the betterment of the people.

Benue gets committee for Obasanjo's visit

The Benue State Governor, Mr George Akume, has inaugurated a 28-member committee to ensure a hitch-free visit to the state by President Olusegun Obasanjo slated for May 3 and 4, 2001.

Mr Akume while inaugurating the committee headed by a one time military administrator of the state, Brigadier General John Atom Kpera, warned that the committee would be held responsible for any failure during the presidential visit.

The President's visit to

From Mike Elaigwu, Makurdi

the state was however seen as long over due as the state was said to have given him many votes in the presidential election.

Some projects expected to be commissioned by the president include the Otukpo water works, faculty of Health Science, Benue State University, Gbajimba general Hospital, federal secretariat, the 132 KVA Aliade-to-Makurdi electricity line, the Okpokwu local government secretariat, among others.

Crosslines to get more vehicles

In an effort to generate more revenue, the management of the Cross Lines Limited, the mass transit company of the Cross River State government, has said that it has concluded plans to acquire more vehicles on its fleet and resume its long distance routes.

The General Manager of the company, Chief Wilfred Eko, who disclosed this to *Daily Trust* in his office recently, said the vehicles that would be acquired would ply the Calabar-Lagos, Abuja, Onitsha, Kaduna, Kano and Jos routes which he said were lucrative.

Commenting on the recent retrenchment in which 73 of its staff were laid off, the

From Bassey Ita, Calabar

company boss promised to recall them on improvement of the fortunes of the outfit in the near future.

He hinted that the exercise was to re-engineer the company and make it more viable, recalling that the criteria for the exercise included old age, bad records, and redundancy.

Chief Eko also debunked the allegation that the management of the company went to Lagos in recent times on a shopping spree, arguing that the trip was rather aimed at enabling them find out the cost of new buses and hold discussions with an insurance outfit in the interest of Cross Lines.



President Alpha Konare of Mali and Chairman, ECOWAS (right) with Mr. Lansana Kouyate, Executive Secretary, ECOWAS (left) at the Extra-ordinary summit of ECOWAS Head of State and Government in Abuja, yesterday. Pix: Kennedy Eghonodje.

INSIDE POLITICS

Senator Stella Omu (PDP Delta South) is the Senate Chief Whip, an outspoken politician, she is one among the three women members of the upper house. In this interview with National Assembly Correspondent REUBEN YUNANA, Senator Omu speaks on controversial issues like resource control, deregulation and the Obasanjo presidency.

Deregulation is dangerous - Omu

By Reuben Yunana

According to her, the President does not get the best advice from his Attorney-General who is an AD member.

EXCERPTS:-

Why is there a discordant tone from the Niger-Delta even though your party is in power. Are you not satisfied with the performance of the executive?

We are running a democratic government where everybody is free to say what he wants to say. And when you are talking about democratic system of government you are talking about the rule of law, separation of power, compromise, justice, fairness; when you look at it from the point of rule of law, the constitution vests the control of resources in the hands of the federal government. And so, before anything is done about that, the law should be amended before we can talk about the states controlling their resources. That is why some senators are saying that it is a constitutional issue. Yes it is true it is a constitutional issue but when you want peace, that is where compromise comes in. Why are the people of the Niger-Delta today talking of resource control? If today, there are bridges over water in the Niger-Delta area as against bridges over land in the areas where the oil is not produced, people would not complain. If the people in the Niger-Delta are having a fair share of the national cake, they would not complain.

Are they not getting a fair share then?

What you find today is that federal appointments are not

given to people from the Niger-Delta area. Take for example all the big oil companies, the federal boards, they are all chaired by people from other parts of the country, leaving out people from the Niger-Delta.

My Senatorial District for example, Delta South, the number one producer of oil in the country, does not have a son as chairman of any of the federal boards. These are the things that spur people to talk about resource control.

We in the Niger-Delta want to be our brother's keeper but because of this, should we be cheated? We should be given a piece of the cake that is what we are asking. The politics of taking everything from the people and giving them nothing in return is the driving force to this issue of resource control. We want to be part of the big oil companies. We want to be like the Mike Adenugas... So that when political parties are being formed and people are contributing, we want our own big men to contribute also.

But you find out that people from other areas are given opportunity to lift oil but people from this area where the oil is produced are not given the opportunity and when the time comes for donation, because we do not have, we bring our widow's mite which are not recognised, but those who have made billions from lifting oil bring out millions as donation and are recognised. So, when we talk of resource control to our Nigerian brothers and sisters, we are not saying we want everything for ourselves. We are saying let us also touch the oil. Take for example people are now talking about marginal fields. By the time you know it, people from other parts of the

country would be given these fields to the exclusion of people from these areas.

This is what we mean when

it. At least 75 percent will get it right.

Did Senate take a position on the issue of resource con-



Stella Omu

we talk about resource control. The people from this area are not organised because they don't have the money but these marginal fields are being given out. If we don't start making noise now nothing will come to us, we have to complain.

Why this noise over oil when the country is blessed with other resources?

Precisely. Nigeria is too rich for everybody to concentrate on oil alone. And the country is so big that it is difficult to manage from all the corners. If they cut it into manageable portions we would not have the problem we are having now like the problem of petrol and refineries that we are having now. Give every state the opportunity to manage their affairs, at the end of the day not every state will mismanage

control at the Calabar retreat?

We had a committee on the constitution. It is a constitutional issue. The committee handling it will come out with its own findings on the issue

There is a provision in the constitution regarding the payment of 13 percent derivation, is it being implemented?

If you will recall some years back, derivation used to be there in the time of cocoa, groundnuts, it used to be 15 percent before and now 13 percent as contained in section 152 of the constitution. Nothing less than 13 percent. But today that 13 percent was not paid from the beginning of this government and then there is this issue of onshore and offshore whereas section 162 of the constitution is clear and unambiguous. Pay

derivation of not less than 13 percent. Even this onshore and offshore they are talking about, by 1992 when OMPADEC came up it was abrogated. It was Yar'Adua, of blessed memory, who canvassed that issue. This was because Yar'Adua wanted the peace and unity of this country.

And again for God's sake 13 percent out of 100, why are we bothered over it? If that will bring peace to this country what is the problem? We want peace, we want a united and great Nigeria. When there was crisis in my area in the early days of this government the president visited my area which was engulfed in crisis, we know how we have been managing the people there.

It is unfortunate that people from other parts of the country talk about federal character but when it comes to the pollution in the Niger-Delta nobody cares. People there are dying every second because of the effects of inhaling carbon monoxide through the years. It is not being shared across the country, children are dying, in fact we don't know what the long-term effects would be on the people of the area. Houses, roads are being corroded. All the people are saying is give us good roads, electricity, good drinking water, hospitals, because we are dying as a result of exposure to the effects of oil exploration and refineries.

Considering your stand on resource control, are the people of the Niger-Delta after the improvement of their conditions or are they after the dismemberment of the country like MOSOB and MASSOB?

No, No, No! I said it in my presentation. We love this country and the progress of this country. But we don't want to be cheated. If you are not able to manage the cake properly

then let us manage it ourselves and give you tax so that Nigeria would benefit more from that cake that is in our land. When we manage it, we are prepared to pay tax and you might even benefit more than is the case now. When we manage it you will get more money from the tax and more profit than what is happening today. That is all we are saying. That is all we are saying. We want a better Nigeria. We want to manage Nigeria productively so it does not collapse.

But people from other part of the country are worried that nobody talked about resource control when the country's economy was being sustained by groundnuts, cotton, cocoa, rubber...

When we talk of resource control, we are talking about the unity of this country. The management of our resources at the centre is very poor and people are not feeling the effect, so competition is no longer there because everybody depends on oil. Nobody wants to think of other sources of wealth. What happens today if the oil finishes?

If the federal government implements the 13 percent derivation as you demand, would you be satisfied?

If government implements it, then we would say we are moving! We would ensure proper implementation of projects, projects monitoring and then make further pleas because the constitution says "not less than 13 percent" we shall then move to 50 percent and then keep on pleading with the restive youth of the Niger-Delta to drop their arms because government is sincere.

PDP controls the government both at the centre and in the Niger-Delta. Why is Obasanjo reluctant to pay the 13 percent derivation?

As I said, Obasanjo is one man, he has many advisers and here is the rule of law. In the constitution, power is vested in the federal government. If there is going to be a change, and where it affects land use, that area is a no go area. This is a PDP government and I know that the PDP is sympathetic to the cause of the people on the 13 percent derivation but the Attorney-General is not a PDP man. He is an AD man. So he knows why he is advising the government the other way round. But I know that the PDP is for us and Mr. President it is sympathetic to our cause. But when you have an adviser who is unfortunately an AD man, what do you expect.

Why is the president bent on deregulating the oil sector even though the National Assembly appears vehemently opposed to it?

In a situation where people are still hungry, in a situation where you have not found an alternative it is dangerous to talk about deregulation. I might be good but for now people are crying, I don't think this is the right time to deregulate. He is a listening father who wants the unity of this country. He will take the best option.

The federal government has taken the 36 state governments to court over the derivation issue. What is your advice?

My advice has always been that the issue should be withdrawn from court and solved politically. That is also the stand of the PDP.

I have confidence in APP... but - Saraki

National leader of the All People's Party (APP), Dr. Olusola Saraki fielded questions from newsmen in Ilorin last Friday. He spoke on issues affecting his party at both state and national levels. Excerpts:

Why are you in Ilorin soon?

Some leaders in the town and our rulers, including Imams in the state, said they wanted to come and see me in Lagos, they were sent to me by the governor to come and beg me that whatever he might have done wrong, I should forgive him. Then I said they should not come, I mean I can't allow my state traditional rulers to come to Lagos. I'm one of their subjects. So, I decided to come and meet them. So I am here for peace and to reconcile my people.

What is your position on the caretaker committee?

Such a committee is not in existence in Kwara State, Kwara state has no caretaker. As far as I am concerned in Kwara State, the APP is intact, the members of the executive were elected in a congress, and no individual wherever he is, can dissolve our executive here, except we hold a congress. As much as people love me here, I dare not as a person say I dissolve the executive.

From Abdu Laro, in Ilorin

it is undemocratic and unjust. As far as I am concerned, there is a chairman, elected in a congress, just like governor Lawal was nominated in a congress, so he (Professor Ogunshola) remains our chairman, and nobody from anywhere can come and tell us he is not our chairman. When the distime comes, we will go to congress and have a new executive.

Why did you tender an apology at the Jigawa meeting?

It is not true, there was nothing like that at the NEC meeting in Jigawa. Kwara was never, never discussed. Though the chairman said there was crisis and said I should go and resolve it. But the only thing that happened was that the governor said he had a quarrel with the chairman and behind me, he went and remove him. I put the governor there, I also put the chairman there, and if there is any problem between the two of them, I expect the governor to tell me, this is what the chairman has done. And secondly, the governor cannot run the party and run the government for us, he must face the government and we face the party. It is the party that nominated him, we voted for

him, so he cannot run the party. He should face his government, while we face the party, anything beside this, I won't allow it. He is our governor, we still support him because he is trying his best.

The time has not come when I will tell the story of what they did to me in this state. When God is behind me, why do I bother myself. Before the meeting in Jigawa, I had phone calls from Ilorin that I am going to be dismissed from the party. I said in APP, I am one of the founders, so we will all see what I have done to warrant anybody suspending or dismissing me from the party. Then we got to Jigawa, the governors, senators and some honourables were holding meetings, they didn't invite some of us. To me it is very, very strange.

What do you have to say about allegations against you by the APP National Chairman?

The APP National Chairman claims that: I want to remove him, I went to discuss about AD/APP. He also defended himself on some allegations levelled against him. Then he said what do I have to say? I said I've never done anything to warrant my wanting to remove him. On my alleged working for Atiku, I said, me Olusola Saraki, working for Atiku? I told him to remember that there was the deci-

sion that we should rally round the people for support towards the next elections and this is what I was doing. That there should be realignment and they said, you didn't discuss this with us, that, that was what you were doing and I said I am very sorry, please forgive me.

There is crisis in Olusola Saraki's political family, what is the way forward?

No. The APP chairman has no power to dissolve our exco and we are not accepting it. I have told the governor, you can't run the government and run the party for us, when the time comes, we choose new executive.

Two, the main cause of the crisis was that the governor said we should allow him pick whoever he wishes as party chairman.

To me, APP has missed the road, and one of the disheartening things that happened was that there was a by-election in Enugu, and APP could not field a candidate. Haba! Haba! It is a very, very bad sign, a very, very bad sign. APP? A seat that we won and by legal manoeuvres, we lost it. It was dissolved and a new election was organised. When we couldn't field a candidate. It shows you the type of leadership we have in APP, so in other

words, things are not going on well in APP. I am a man of history, I learn from history, I don't want to repeat history, I make history. APP has missed the way and something must be done very, very quickly, otherwise I don't know what can happen to it. Otherwise how can you have a by-election in a post that we held for over one year and yet when the time of by-election comes, we didn't field a candidate. Take it that something is wrong somewhere.

Do you still have confidence in the party?

Yes, but there is a problem and we pray to God to intervene. So, we will wait for another congress, but for Governor Lawal to say that he doesn't want Ogunshola and went behind to ask some people to dissolve the cabinet, I won't take it at all. He cannot run his government and come here to run the party for me.

Any regret over developments in Kwara politics?

I didn't expect all these, but I thank God I am capable of dealing with it, with the support of the people the party will overcome these problems.

FOCUS

Safety matches production plant

There are different types of matches including those which ignite when rubbed and struck against any surface. Safety matches are, especially made to ignite only when rubbed against a specially prepared surface usually provided on the sides of the matchbox.

Safety matches are a household commodity. It is used by all classes of people as a reliable fire source. Thus, safety matches are widely consumed in households, schools, churches, hotels, hospital, camps, laboratories, research centres and so forth. In fact, it has become a daily need.

As far as matches consumption is concerned, there is no demarcation between the rich and the poor. Both children and adults use matches daily. Smokers have match boxes in their pockets at all times, apart from a few who use lighters.

With a population of over 100 million people, the demand for safety matches is very high whilst the supply is on the low side. The supply gap is normally bridged by large-scale importation of matches from China, India, Korea, Indonesia and other Asian countries.

Since we have only few producers in Nigeria, there is a great investment opportunity in matches production for both the local and export markets.

This project will, therefore, increase our Gross National Product (GNP), create employment opportunities and rake in substantial amount of foreign exchange -all to the advantage of the investors and the nation.

Machinery and equipment required for this project include the hot plates or trays, dipping leveller, mixing tank, cutters, trimmer, folder, racks, weighing scale and miscellaneous tools. The required raw materials include water, zinc oxide starch, gum arabic, ferric oxide, milled glass, manganese dioxide, sulphur, paraffin wax and

By Rickson Agubas

some of these materials are imported, all required raw materials are readily available in most chemical shops scattered in our urban centres such as Lagos, Ibadan, Aba, Onitsha, Kano, Port Harcourt and Kaduna.

Production process involves splint paraffin, head coating, mixing compositions, box cutting, trimming and folding, weighing and packaging. Full details of the process flow, packaging methods, manpower requirements, management and marketing, etc. will be embodied in a comprehensive and bankable feasibility report for genuine prospective investors.

The plant may be located in any part of the country with adequate facilities, including accommodation, electricity and transport. Urban and semi-

PROJECT COST ESTIMATE

	A	B	C
Pre-investments	50	80	120
Space Rent (variable)	60	60	80
Plant & Machinery	350	650	3,500
Fixtures & Fittings	50	60	120
Installations & Engineering	60	100	150
Project Vehicle (F.U)	-	350	450
Capital Utilities (F.U)	-	100	150
Working Capital (S.U)	100	150	300
Contingency margin	67	155	485
Total Investment	737	1,705	5,355

urban centres are specially favoured, though rural areas may also be considered.

There are three main

production options available to the investor. Option A involves the use of manual machines with up to 25 factory workers

while Option B involves the use of motorised semi-automated machines with considerably less manpower. Option C is the

fully automated plant.

The options mentioned above are in the table together with their cost implications. Thus, the investor has to make his own choice depending on the envisaged scale of operation and financial logistics.

Project cost estimates

Daily output with Option A is about 20 dozen boxes while Option B and C range between 50 and 200 dozens respectively. Annual production output, therefore, depends on the chosen production option.

With a ready and vibrant export market, an impressive turnover and high returns on investment will be recorded.

All plants have short pay-back periods and positive NPVs. This project will be completed for interested investors within twelve weeks if this writer is consulted.

“Safety matches are a household commodity. It is used by all classes of people as a reliable fire source. Thus, safety matches are widely consumed in households, schools, churches, hotels, hospital, camps, laboratories, research centres and so forth. In fact, it has become a daily need.”

Laundry soap production

This profile is on the processing of oils into laundry soap with locally sourced raw materials. Even though synthetic detergents have invaded our local markets of late, many households now prefer quality laundry soap in order to pre-serve the colour, texture, and quality of their costly clothing materials for a long time.

Moreover, the process of laundry soap manufacturing is simpler than those of toilet soaps and detergents. The project is also viable on a small scale.

The basic raw materials required include vegetable oils which may be

By Rickson Agubas

obtained from palm kernel, palm oil, soya bean, groundnut, coconut and cotton seed. Tallow, which may be obtained from meat processing factories also serve as raw materials for soap manufacture. For this project, however, the use of palm kernel oil is recommended, though other oils may be used as a substitute.

There are three major relatively simple methods of manufacturing ordinary laundry soap. These include the cold, semi-boiled and fully-boiled processes. This write-up is based on the semi-boiled

process of soap production.

Machinery and equipment required for this project include the soap mixer/boiler, soap frames, soap slabbing machine, bar tablet cutting machine, caustic measuring tanks, and hydrometer. The plant may be located in any accessible part of the country with good marketing outlets.

Production process involves the mixing of appropriate quantities of oils with sodium hydroxide (caustic soda). The reaction which occurs is termed saponification which is the splitting up of esters of the fats and oils into their component parts (fatty acids and glycerol). The fatty acid combine with the sodium content of the caustic soda to yield a new product. This is the popular laundry soap we use today. Glycerol can also be retrieved and sold to other industries thereby making higher profits, especially if the fully boiled process is adopted.

This project may employ about 8 persons for

start-up. A rented building with enough space for production equipment, stores and offices may be adequate. If this option is taken, the capital layout becomes minimal. All the necessary details as regards locational factors, plant layout, production processes, flow chart, organisation and management, manpower requirements and so forth will be embodied in comprehensive feasibility report for interested investors.

Good marketing strategies should be adopted. Major distributors, who are expected to pay for their consignment in advance, should be offered attractive rebates. Target market includes both our local markets and the export market, especially within the ECOWAS sub-region.

The envisaged plant has a capacity for 50 cartons of laundry soap per eight-hour shift. Operating on 75 per cent capacity on a single shift for 250 days per annum, a total of 9,375 cartons will be produced. If we make an al-

lowance of 5 percent for wastages and public relations, then a minimum of 8,906 cartons will be packaged and sold at an advertisement price of N2,400.00 each.

This yields a turnover of N21.4 million from which we deduct our raw materials input of N 16.2 million and our annual operating costs of N1.6 million leaving a profit before tax of about N3 .6 million. The beauty of this project is that it does not depend on electric power for operations.

This project may be scaled up or down to suit an investor's pocket. Its special advantages include low capital cost, short pay back period, local raw materials, local production machinery, ready and vibrant market as well as very good returns on investment.

A project of N800,000.00 which yields a first year profit before tax of N3 million is simply excellent. Prospective investors will be assisted for proper planning and project packaging.

“The process of laundry soap manufacturing is simpler than those of toilet soaps and detergents. The project is also viable on a small scale.”

FOCUS

Making millions from low-cost fish farming

Since the past few months, this consultant has received a lot of letters and enquiries from individuals, co-operative groups and corporate bodies nation-wide, requesting for cost estimate and other information regarding some of our low-cost fish farming systems. Many of these enquiries eventually became firm orders.

In this issue, I have deemed it wise to provide every necessary information these readers require on low-cost still water pond farming that generate millions of naira in less than a year.

Traditional pond farming system is familiar to some of us, particularly those from the riverine areas. This still water pond farming system has only been improved scientifically by Aquaculture Systems Technologies, Lagos, especially through their modern Progressive Transfer of Stock (PTS) technique. Unlike concrete ponds and tanks, traditional still water earthen pond farming has many drawbacks. Location is almost always remote and must be near a water body, such as a river or stream. Earthen pond management requires an experienced hand who, in addition, must know how to handle pond bottom sludge, infiltration, water and soil contamination problems and many others when they occur.

All these involve rigorous pond maintenance, in addition to stock insecurity from theft and predation. Although the cost of constructing an earthen pond is far cheaper than that of a concrete pond of comparable size, but the maintenance costs are far higher. With concrete ponds, one can site fish farms of any size on any type of soil in any environment. No lime treatment or long periods of pond bottom drying between harvest and restocking, as is the case with earthen ponds. Yet it has a life span of 15 to 20 years.

The only problem with concrete ponds and tanks is that they are relatively expensive. Check the costs of cement, sand and gravel. Forget about the pipes, they are cheap. No need for aerators unless you want to go for high-density stocking and large volume production. If you know you can afford these materials, then

By Sharon Anochie

contact this consultant for a special design that would suit your site -whether in your farm estate or in your



The River Niger at Baro Baro is a famous fishing village in Niger State.

compound. You only pay the implementation fee. You will also be assisted to purchase the fingerlings -fast growing strains. Under a special arrangement, we can breed the fingerlings for you right in your farm by setting up a small hatchery and transferring the technology to you -so you can be a fingerlings producer as well.

Concrete ponds and tanks are relatively expensive, yes, but they are one-shot investment, like investing in guns. Just close your eyes and build it. It will last for 20 years, and when you are tired of making money in a monotonous way and want to watch over your other investments, you can leave the operation to your children or a relation to whom you owe a favour.

Water for the tank pond:

Your concrete fish pond/tank farming systems can be designed according to the facilities available. Some

prospective investors have informed us that they had neither electricity nor borehole facilities on their proposed sites, and asked

recirculation systems for a more intensive large volume production. For those who have access to a regular power supply or generator

to cars, clothes and houses. You just state how you want your farm to look like, where the water supply will come from, facility architect-

adding a given quantity of sea salt to freshwater. The main attraction was the tilapia production unit which was a long two-storey building (formerly an ordinary undecked warehouse). The ground floor served as the water treatment unit containing the mechanical and biological filtration systems. The first floor contained 20 grow-out fish tanks, whilst the second (last) floor was the hatchery.

From the first floor, polluted (waste) water from the 20 grow-out tanks flow down under gravity to the mechanical and biological filters on the ground floor where the wastes are filtered out and the water purified before it is pumped up to the fingerlings nursery tanks in the hatchery on the second floor. From the second floor hatchery, the water flows down by gravity into the 20 grow-out tanks on the first floor, and down again to the ground-level filters where the water is scrubbed clean and sent up again. The cycles continued until harvest, no water change.

You could imagine how the water circulated in the building from top to bottom and up again continually-like blood circulation in humans. From outside, the wooden board building looked like a college dormitory, but it produced 120 tonnes of genetically improved tilapia a year that financed the operations of the estate's farm holdings.

It was the wild dream of the estate owner, Manuel Vargas, a hotels and tourism investor, to attract tourists to his wonderland -and thousands of tourists did flood in every year to gawk at his marvels.

The point is that clients are encouraged to state what they want and how they want their farms to look like. There are no laid down rules for farm designs, only the principle is the same.

Some people have uncompleted storey buildings lying idle and derelict for years, we offer them the opportunity of converting them to productive fish breeding facilities, temporarily or permanently, that would generate millions of naira in a year, depending on the capacity or size. The time to start is now.

For any enquiries or further information, contact the Editor of this newspaper

whether supplying borehole water to the farm by tanker truck would be all right. The answer is YES! One can conveniently run his farm with trucked-in water for the first production cycle of 6 months, then he could dig his own borehole facility from a fraction of his production revenue.

Electricity supply:

Many people in the rural communities desire our highly successful MICRO-FARM system but are constrained by lack of electric power supply in their localities. These folks can start with big round tanks of 10 or 12 metres diameter or small concrete ponds of about 20 metres diameter, and produce their fish under still water extensive system. After one year, they should have made enough money to buy generators or connect the public line from afar. Then they can convert their ponds and tanks to

but favour concrete ponds or tanks, we can install the new Flo-Bull or Aeropulse aspirator aerators to supply oxygen for high density stocking of fish and for faster growth as well.

Feeds for your fish:

As specialists in warm water fish nutrition and feeds technology, the consultancy service will include the provision of technical advice, training and support in quality feed formulation, compounding and feeding strategies for optimum growth performance -free of charge to clients

Choosing your farm design:

Giving us challenges is what we expect from clients -by letting us build your farm according to your plan or design specifications. Custom-made farms are a common feature in Europe, Asia and North America. Customisation is not limited

Pictures by Felix Onigbinde
ture, landscape, pond profile. Anything you fancy with environmental declaration. Your conceived idea could be the solution to an established problem.

For example, the idea of the popular MICRO-FARM recirculating system was spawned by a young and visionary agribusiness entrepreneur, Ephraim Ogazi, from Imo state, in November 1998. He wanted something unique and we gave it to him, and a novel technology was born.

The first fish farm that I worked in during my internship training in Manila, Philippines, was qualified to be one of the wonders of the 20th century. It was a tourist fish farm containing all the freshwater and marine ornamental fish species in the Asia-Pacific. Although the estate drew its water from the River Fasig, the marine fish section used artificial seawater made by

"The first fish farm that I worked in during my internship training in Manila, Philippines, was qualified to be one of the wonders of the 20th century. It was a tourist fish farm containing all the freshwater and marine ornamental fish species in the Asia-Pacific. Although the estate drew its water from the River Fasig, the marine fish section used artificial seawater made by adding a given quantity of sea salt to freshwater."

Arts & Entertainment

South African Music awards

A new era is dawning in South African music as South Africa's young blood lead the nominations list of the Standard Bank South African Music Awards. Leading the nominations list with four nominations is respected musician Jabu Khanyile, who with Bayete is nominated for: Best Duo or Group, Best Adult Contemporary Album and Best African Pop Album and with Siphosithole for Best Producer for Bambata's album 1906. With three nominations each, including Bets Newcomer, are both TK for her album TKO (Best Female Artist and Best RandB Album) and Bambata for their album 1906 (Best Zulu Music and Best Adult Contemporary Album: African). Joining the top nominees list is keyboard virtuoso Paul Hanmer for his album Playola, which sees him nominated in the three categories: Best Male Artist, Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Best Producer (with Peter Pearlson). "We are tremendously happy with the look of the nominations list," explains Duma ka Ndlovu, chairman of the SAMA committee. "Having such a strong presence of newcomers can only be a good sign for South African music. It is also good to see these new names supported by long-standing industry favourites such as the ever-popular Miriam Makeba and Sibongile Khumalo." To go with her recent Grammy nomination Miriam Makeba has earned herself two Sama nominations for Best Adult Contemporary Album: African and Best Female Artist for her album Homeland.

Joining Mama Africa in the hotly contested Best Female Artist category are Lebo (another newcomer and also nominated for Best Dance Album and Best Dance Single), Linda Kekana, TK and Sibongile Khumalo. Hoping to continue their unbeaten streak and wishing to extend their record to seven (one for every year the awards have been running) straight wins in the Best Mbhqanga category are Soul Brothers for their album Intombi Yami. While hoping to pick up their second consecutive Sama in the Best Rock Category are Springbok Nude Girls with their hard-edged album Relaxzor. Competing with them are Wonderboom, debutants Saron Gas, and Tree with their highly acclaimed album 63. The nominees for the Standard Bank South African Music Awards were chosen after a strictly controlled judging process involving 180 judges drawn from media, retail and other sectors. A total of 564 albums were judged

in the 39 categories. "Special attention is paid to this part of the awards process," explains Duma ka Ndlovu. "With

is ensuring we obtain qualified and un-biased judges who can critique the music in a fair and knowledgeable way."

tion and exhibition centre under one roof, and provides purpose-built conference, exhibition and special events facilities.

Lifetime achievement awards went to: Letta Mbulu Phi This is all official Sama blurb: A new era is dawning in South African music as South Africa's young blood lead the nominations list of the Standard Bank South African Music Awards. Leading the nominations list with four nominations is respected musician Jabu Khanyile, who with Bayete is nominated for: Best Duo or Group, Best Adult Contemporary Album and Best African Pop Album and with Siphosithole for Best Producer for Bambata's album 1906. With three nominations each, including Bets Newcomer, are both TK for her album TKO (Best Female Artist and Best R&B Album) and Bambata for their album 1906 (Best Zulu Music and Best Adult Contemporary Album: African). Joining the top nominees list is keyboard virtuoso Paul Hanmer for his album Playola, which sees him nominated in the three categories: Best Male Artist, Best Contemporary Jazz Album and Best Producer (with Peter Pearlson).



Mondoza, middle, winner of Best Kwaito album and Best song of the year with Brenda Fassie who won Best selling South African release on the right.



Miriam Makeba (absent in Mozambique doing charitable work) won Best Female Artist and Best Adult Contemporary Album. Her granddaughter, also a singer, Zenzi Lee (right) received the awards on Makeba's behalf.

such a large quantity of albums being released each year, the Sama committee must ensure that each album meets the required qualification and was released in the required time-frame. The next most important process

The finals of the Standard Bank South African Music Awards will be a star-studded and glamorous affair to be held at the Sandton Convention Centre on April 5. The Sandton Convention Centre is South Africa's largest conven-

tion and exhibition centre under one roof, and provides purpose-built conference, exhibition and special events facilities.



Some dried plants at a flower exhibition



Some musicians in performance

Arts & Entertainment

The Story of the New Nigerian Part XIV

'A very clever chap'

In the last account Mallam Adamu Ciroma becomes editor of the New Nigerian. In this account we read assessments of his abilities by his colleagues. Slowly, the country moves along the road to war.

It was fortuitous that as a member of the civil service, I was familiar with government methods and procedures and I was accepted by the people in government in Kaduna -late General Hassan Usman Katsina (the Governor), Alhaji Ali Akilu (the Secretary to the Northern Nigerian Government), etc. I was part of them and committed like them to the cause of unity of the country. At the Federal level I was known to the leading lights of those days: Abdulazeez Atta, Ayida, Asiodu, Ime Ebong etc."

But there were moments of tension. Such is the nature of Government/Press relationship -a love/hate relationship!

Writing 30 years later on the issue of appointing a substantive editor for the *New Nigerian*. Mr. Charles Sharp has this to say:

I was the first to agree with the Military Governor that the very presence at the helm, of an expatriate had, uniquely, saved the paper's beacon on several occasions, but as events evolved it became imperative that a Nigerian had to assume editorial control; that editorials had to flow from the pen of someone who could make judgments from a subjective point of view. Objectivity had its place, of course, and had played an important part in helping to establish the paper's influence and reputation, but changes could not be delayed much longer. I was beginning to think we would never find the right man when someone said, I think it was Ahmed Joda, that the right man had come along. He was right. His name was Adamu Ciroma.

John Smith, a close friend and former colonial servant who had stayed on after independence and rendered, invaluable help to the North in various ways, was also a keen *New Nigerian* supporter. He knew Adamu well and "told me: "A very clever chap, but a man with a mind of his own. One of the few who never toadied to the Premier, whom he had a knack of upsetting. Has a tendency to wear European style clothes, which was one of the things that upset the old man. Packed off to the Mambilla Plateau when he failed to toe the line. Spent a period in France to brush up his French. I think you may well come to the conclusion he was worth waiting for."

I always found John Smith's judgment sound; It was on this occasion. As I hope I have made clear, I recognised that the paper had reached a period where strict objectivity, laced with the mildest draught of Northern bias and a generous dash of nationalism, no longer provided sufficient impetus to drive it forward.

Books

My hands-on approach was becoming outmoded. Besides, Nigeria was no longer a place for a Brit in such a position.

In short, Adamu was the right person, in the right place, at the right time. Once I had worked with him I began to cherish the hope that one day, far from leading the *New Nigerian* to glory, he would assume the highest position in the land.

Mr. Sharp has also confirmed that Adamu Ciroma's appointment was made without his knowledge "I could never understand why. I was pleading for a substantive Editor to be appointed, but not just a figurehead.

"That he arrived without warning was unfortunate, because I would have preferred to have prepared more for his arrival. As it was there was no option but for the "deep end" treatment. I don't apologise though. He learnt well and at lightning speed, and although there were occasions when we did not see eye-to-eye we respected one another and together prepared the way for better things to come. I always remember his definition of Nigerian independence: 'The freedom to make our own mistakes'. Amen to that".

It is relevant to conclude this discussion with an excerpt from my interview with Alhaji Magaji Dambatta, the Chief Information officer of the North. As seen above, he played a prominent role in the establishment of the *New Nigerian*: He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the

company from 1966 to 1968
Q. I understand you were approached to become the first editor of the *New Nigerian*: but you were not keen, preferring your civil service job. Is this correct? If, so why? If not what was the source of the rumour?

A. Yes it is correct. I was approached. Mr. Sharp was becoming over burdened. In addition to the administration he had to find the money to run the paper, and to edit it. Rasak Aremu was not up to the scratch. Above all he has to do the reporters' job. Mr. Sharp

was not a good administrator, or a good editor. But he has a nose for the news. So there was



Mr. Charles Sharp

I did not accept the offer not because I preferred the civil service job. But I did not think that the job of editor was compatible at that time. I did not believe I would be allowed to edit the paper in my own light. I would have compromised my conscience. Here we are talking about the tense period before the May riots or before the July coup. By the time Adamu Ciroma, and later Mamman Daura and you also came over to the *New Nigerian* the FMG had been taken over by people sympathetic to the cause of the North and the mandate of the paper to promote and protect the interest of the North.

But in February and March, 1966 Adamu Ciroma could not have carried out this mandate. He would have mortgaged his conscience. Ironsi's government was becoming more vindictive and oppressive. He was surrounded by some narrow minded Igbo advisers. The *New Nigerian* was seen by the FMG as a thorn in the flesh, until the Federal Government was taken over by Yakubu Gowon and his men.

As far as Ironsi and his Igbo advisers were concerned the Nigerian was an evil -"Kan maciji, dole a kashe shi." The *New Nigerian* was the head of snake. In order to have peace the snake must be killed. In other words the *New Nigerian* must be closed down or be

taken over by the Federal Government.

Mr. Sharp was not amused by Magaji Dambatta's comment. "My ego was hardly flattered by Magaji Dambatta's opinion of my ability as a newspaperman. Poor manager, poor editor, poor Magaji. He made the right choice when he refused to even contemplate accepting the editorship. It was a hot seat and no doubt his backside would have been scorched. Instead he had a splendid career in choice diplomatic roles on both sides of the Atlantic..."

From the end of July 1966 until the end of November 1966 no progress was made in the resolution of Nigeria's crisis. The exodus of the Igbos to the East continued unabated for most of the time. Colonel Ojukwu became more intransigent in rejecting Gowon as the Head of the Federal Government and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The Eastern delegation refused to return to the conference table and there was stalemate in the country. The East under Ojukwu was politically drifting apart from the rest of the country. Suddenly -but apparently after careful deliberation -on 30th November the Head of Federal Government, Colonel Yakubu Gowon, took the bull by the horns. In a radio broadcast he



General Yakubu Gowon

his intention to use arms, if necessary, in order to prevent any part of the country from breaking away from Nigeria. While ruling out confederation he gave an indication of his decision to create more states in the country -"not less than eight and not more than fourteen". He also put an end to the debate on whether federal soldiers of Northern origin stationed in Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ikeja -the coup makers of

July -would be moved out of Yoruba land. No. They would stay in Lagos and the West. He also announced a programme to deal with five main issues: re-organisation and re-integration of the Nigerian Army; resettlement and rehabilitation programme of displaced persons, preparation of the second development plan; fight against corruption in public office and preparation of a new constitution for the country. Contents of this address remained Gowon's guide throughout the war.

The *New Nigerian* welcomed the address. It believed the programme could "bring the present stalemate to an end."

"We need no longer dissipate our energies chasing the mirage of confederalism or any other type of political association. We expect that all true Nigerians will breathe a sigh of relief that the country could now focus its attention towards finding a workable federal constitution" *New Nigerian* 1 December, 1966.

Publication of the *New Nigerian* for 1967 flagged off with its issue number 308 of January 2. In its front page comment titled "A year of hope and dedication," it said: "In our debut message on January 1, 1966 we looked forward to a new year in which the challenges of our time would walk hand in hand with hope. We expressed hope that trust and mutual respect would displace suspicion and hatred, that a genuine desire for national unity would help break down the old barriers of tribalism and discrimination. So much for our hopes for 1966." It added: "We now begin a new year in which distrust and hatred remain more firmly planted than ever in the rich soil of our country. Are we justified in holding out hopes that 1967 will bring us better things?"

"If we base our hopes on the evidence available at the moment, there is little real indication of a change of heart among some of those who have it in their power to make peace and national unity a reality in the land."

But while it was quite sober and thought provoking in its editorials, the *New Nigerian* also sought to present a most optimistic future through its news projection. The front page stories of the one year anniversary edition, for example, were most hopeful.

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Crime & Punishment

House of Reps member docked over N113 million

Chairman of the Power and Steel Committee of the House of Representatives, Mr. Nnamdi Ezeani, has been docked before a Kaduna High Court over alleged criminal charge of conspiracy, breach of trust, misappropriation and theft involving 113 million naira.

Also charged along was his younger brother, Mr. Best Ezeani.

They were said to have defrauded Mennoil Petroleum and Petrochemical Company Ltd., Kaduna when Nnamdi Ezeani was the managing director.

From Dare Oyewole, Kaduna

The offences were said to have been committed between 1996 and 1997 at Km 16, Kachia Road, Kaduna.

Part of the charges against them included defrauding the company of 100 million naira misappropriating the sum of 13 million naira and carting away of company's assets like air conditioners, storage tanks and pipes. All the offences were allegedly committed between 1996 and 1997 and are punishable



Speaker Ghali Na'Abba

under sections 97, 312 and 287 respectively of the penal code.

The accused persons separately pleaded not guilty to the charges.

At the commencement of their trial during the week, a Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP), Mr. Jibril Yakubu who testified for the prosecution said he was assigned to investigate the matter upon receipt of complaints from one Brigadier General Garba Muhammed (rtd).

Led in evidence by Mr. Dari Bayero, a senior state counsel, Mr. Yakubu told the court that he started investigating the case on September 2 1997 when Brigadier-General Garba A. Muhammed, chairman of Mennoil Company wrote a complaint against Nnamdi Ezeani.

Part of Gen. Garba's complaint read: "The biggest fraudulent transactions were perpetrated at Afribank, Kachia Road branch, Kaduna. If Mr. Ezeani succeeds in getting away with these criminal acts, I stand to suffer tremendous losses in terms of personal prestige, assets and investments.

"Furthermore, Mr. Ezeani will proceed to take his seat as an Honourable Member of our House of Representatives where he will remain a danger to the development and progress of our great country," he wrote in his letter.

Gen. Garba, therefore, appealed to the AIG and his able investigators to expedite their investigations so that "these criminals can be prosecuted in accordance with the law."

Justice James Abiriyi has adjourned further hearing in the case to May 8, 2001.

Police arrest lecturer for illegal sale of arms

A lecturer with the Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Zakari Abubakar and three others have been arrested by the Borno State police command for illegal manufacture, possession and sale of firearms.

In a chat with newsmen in Maiduguri, the Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Uba Bala Ringim, said reports of robbery incidents within Maiduguri metropolis had forced the police to increase surveillance which led to the arrest of six suspected robbers and firearms manufacturers.

Alhaji Uba Ringim cited three recent robbery incidents in Jajeri, University of Maiduguri and Kano Motor Park in which a total of 180,000 naira was lost

saying, "the police have caught the robbers and are still on the trail of those who supplied firearms to them."

Speaking about the Ramat Polytechnic lecturer, the police commissioner said an arrested robber had confessed to having obtained a gun from the lecturer. He said following the confession, the lecturer's house was searched and two pistols, 19 rounds of ammunition and items used for the manufacture of firearms were found.

Speaking to newsmen, however, the lecturer, Mr. Zakari Abubakar, who said he studied technology at the

Abdullahi Bego, Maiduguri

University of Western Colorado, USA, denied being involved in any syndicated firearms manufacture.

Mr. Abubakar acknowledged having fabricated only one pistol, but said he did it to protect himself and family from possible attack by robbers, "because these days, whatever little you have is pried upon by others".

The lecturer pleaded for clemency even before he was charged to court for the manufacture of the gun, insisting he had never been privy to criminal activities

Adamawa: five security men held for murder

Five security personnel serving in the anti-robbery team in Adamawa State have been detained in the state capital for alleged involvement in the murder of a businessman in the state.

The five are being detained in Jimeta Prison, Yola, on the orders of a judicial commission set up by the state government to investigate the murder of the Michika-based businessman, Alhaji Umaru Hamman Aji.

The chairman of the commission, Justice Istifanus Thomas, said at the submission of his report to Governor Boni Haruna in Yola that "the commission took this decision because the five evidently had a case of murder to answer".

The seven-member commission was set up last year following the murder of Alhaji Aji in controversial circumstances, leading to widespread allegations that some members of the joint military/police anti-robbery team, known as "Operation Flush" were involved in the murder.

His family took the case to the governor who set up the commission to investigate the case and recommend appropriate measures.

After several months of detailed investigations, Justice Thomas said, the commission produced three volumes of reports, containing their findings, recommendations and records of their proceedings.

From Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, Yola

He further disclosed that the commission took oral evidence from 43 witnesses, admitted 24 exhibits and received four memoranda at Yola and Michika towns.

Receiving the report, Governor Haruna pledged to act on it and send copies to both President Obasanjo and the country's service chiefs with a view to ensuring that "justice is done."

He said that Nigeria was becoming increasingly a lawless country because of the atrocities of certain elements whose responsibility was to protect the lives and property of the people.

Citing the recent incident in Kogi State where three police officers were convicted of murder, Governor Haruna stressed the need for urgent action to redress the situation whereby security operatives are turning their weapons on innocent people..



Gov. Boni Haruna

Medical doctor arraigned for murder

A medical doctor, Dr. Nkadi Okocha, standing trial for the murder of a Benin-based legal practitioner, Alfred Okonjo, has been refused bail by a Benin High Court.

In her ruling on the application for bail filed by counsel to the accused, Barrister Osagie Obayuwana, Justice Ikpomwen said the applicant, who is standing trial along with 17 other accused persons, in the case did not merit bail.

She recalled the difficulties her court had in re-arresting the applicant when he jumped bail earlier.

Shehu Abubakar in Benin City

Justice Ikpomwen, in arriving at her ruling, agreed with counsel to the respondent, Barrister Otomewo that in view of the applicant's antecedents (he broke jail last year), it would not be in the interest of justice to grant him bail.

Justice Ikpomwen also recalled the incident when Dr. Okocha, while in detention at a Benin prison, made personal arrangements with the prison authorities without the consent of her court to flee prison and seek medical

attention at the Military Hospital, Benin, from where he escaped to Lagos.

Earlier, in a 22-paragraph affidavit, counsel to the applicant, Barrister Obayuwana had prayed the court to grant bail to his client on grounds of deteriorating health and unjust arraignment, as he (Dr. Okocha) was merely the personal physician of Obi Izediuno, the first accused person in the case.

Meanwhile, the court has fixed May 20, 2001 for ruling in an application for bail in respect of Chief Izediuno, the first accused.

Police parade eight robbery suspects, recover 15 vehicles

The Ogun State police command yesterday paraded eight armed robbery suspects alongside 15 recovered stolen vehicles.

Parading the suspects at the state headquarters, Elewera, in Abeokuta, the state's Commissioner of Police, Mr. Udom U. Ekpoudom, said that the arrests were made possible, "due to the command's strategy of constantly reviewing its anti-crime operations."

His word: "This exercise was with a view to putting the activities of miscreants in the state to check and partly because of the immense support from the good people of the state."

Also paraded were two

Olumide Bajulaiye in Abeokuta

traffickers in counterfeit dollars and three secret cult members.

The arrested cult members: John Olusola Alabi, Taiwo Olawale and Oludotun Ebenezer Adeseun all HND II students of Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, were arrested at the Moshood Abiola Polytechnic Abeokuta while on a retaliatory mission. Items found on them included a U.T.C. knife, one cartridge and charms.

Addressing newsmen, the state's police boss disclosed that two armed robbers were shot dead at Ijebu-Ode while attempting to rob a supermarket belonging to one



Mr. Musiliu Smith, Police IG

Charity Ononiwu. According to Mr. Ekpoudom, a four-man gang of armed robbers had stormed the business premises of Charity and ordered all the customers to lie down, but unfortunately for the robbers, one Inspector Ishola Olaiya was among the people ordered to lie down.

"As the robbers were about dispossessing their victims of their possessions, the Inspector quickly brought out his pistol, sprang to his feet and shot at two of the robbers who died instantly, while two others escaped in a snatched Mazda 323 together with a woman driver."

The car was later abandoned while other suspects were arrested at various points in the state.

Police commissioner decries mopol attack on musician

Ogun State Police Commissioner, Mr. Udo U. Ekpoudom, has described as "barbaric" the gun attack on a popular Fuji musician, Chief Ayuba, by a mobile police corporal, Francis Jegede.

Addressing newsmen in his Elewera office, Abeokuta, the police boss expressed sadness over the attack saying: "No good policeman or officer would be happy at what

happened last Saturday". According to him, the police were not only paid to protect lives and property, but also trained on how and when to use firearms.

Explaining the reasons behind the shooting, Ekpoudom said "the young Fuji musician applied and got police permit for his performance and some policemen were given to him from the state police area command to ensure that the play

went on successfully. "At the end of the show around 5.00 a.m., he was to go back to his hotel room. As they were about moving out of the cultural centre, four mobile policemen accosted them and demanded to be settled."

He explained further that investigations conducted showed that some of the musician's boys had made alternative arrangements with the mobile policemen, without

knowing that Chief Ayuba had obtained policemen officially. According to the police commissioner, Chief Ayuba gave them some money but one of the mobile policemen felt the money was not enough and as Ayuba made to move, he fired at him.

"I want to inform you that the policeman had no reason to fire at all. Since he had no reason to fire, he has been punished accordingly. Immediately the

case was lodged, he was arrested, detained at guard room, charged and dismissed, and is at present remanded in custody pending the determination of the case by a civil court," he said.

He also added that the three other mopols were disciplined accordingly and would not be promoted in the next one year as their cases were "noted in the major entry."

Abuja News

Goje explains government's ban on generators

Minister of State for Power and Steel, Danjuzo Goje, today said that government's decision to regulate the importation of power generating plants was part of efforts to check sabotage against NEPA installations.

Goje told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja that government was not stopping any one from importing the plants but was merely interested in "knowing the importers involved in case of any trouble".

The minister, who said it was only in Nigeria that people stole electric cables, decried the current situation where NEPA staff were usually blamed for such vandalism.

"States have their rural electrification boards with qualified personnel, and so do the operators of the generating plants, but only NEPA staff are fingered in every cable theft and we want to know what part owners of these sets also play in these crimes," he declared.

Goje expressed dismay that NEPA's efforts at a stable power supply had suffered in the hands of vandals and vowed that government would deal with any one found to be involved.

NAN reports that the federal government last month began the regulation of the importation of generating sets, a development that attracted a barrage of flak from Nigerians, with some claiming that the power house was scared of losing its monopoly having already lost public confidence.

Abba-Gana admits distortion of FCT master plan

The Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Engineer Mohammed Abba-Gana, has admitted that the FCT master plan has been distorted.

He disclosed this in Abuja, at the launching of the global campaign on urban governance in Nigeria.

Abba-Gana stated that in building the city, unexpected problems had arisen here and there and the master plan had been distorted.

The minister said that his

By Emmanuel Ande

ministry was determined to correct the distortions and restore the city to the standard envisaged by the founding fathers.

He maintained that the current situation in Abuja, where there were far more people in surrounding squatter and satellite settlements than in the city itself was not the best.

The minister further disclosed that the rapid growth of these settlements is not only tending to overwhelm the city but also create numerous environmental problems at the city outskirts.

He pointed out that his administration's focus included the opening up of new districts through joint ventures with private sector developers for accelerated development, adding that this would decongest the city



Abba-Gana centre.

Abba-Gana also stated that his administration has embarked upon a tree-planting programme which is designed to enhance the scenic beauty of Abuja.

The National Centre for Women Development (NCWD) has begun an assessment survey to enable it harness the existing policies and practices as well as advocate for change on the rights of women and children in the country.

In an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja, the acting director of the centre, Alhaji Usman Jidda-Shuwa, said, "the purpose is to provide a framework for an integrated baseline and benchmark for future impact analysis of programmes and research efforts that address women and children's rights."

He disclosed that, "during the recently concluded UNICEF common country assessment and situation analysis on women and children, there was no comprehensive database of statistics and vital indicators on

Women Centre begins assesment survey

women issues in the country."

He explained that though universities, research institutes, development agencies, NGOs and individuals had undertaken diverse researches addressing issues on women and children's rights, findings from the efforts were largely unpublished, uncirculated and undocumented.

NAN reports that the objective of the survey includes the production of a comprehensive document that would contain location and profile of disadvantaged children and women. Others include the establishment of the framework for data-compilation and monitoring process on the future evaluation of the data for reporting Con-



Aisha Ismail

vention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), NCWD and other international instruments.

NAN also reports that the survey, to be carried out in five phases, is in conjunction with UNICEF.

NEPA retirees misled over gratuity - official

NEPA on Wednesday dismissed recent claims that it was sitting on N4.5 billion meant for its retirees' gratuity and declared that the retirees were being misled.

A top official of the authority, who preferred anonymity, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja that the Presidency had not remitted such money and challenged the retirees to produce documents to support their claims.

Spokesman for the retirees, Femi Afolabi, said two weeks ago that NEPA last October received N4.5 billion from the Presidency to settle the gratuity of 4,000

of them, who lost their jobs in last year's rationalization.

Afolabi further claimed that NEPA's six-member board had lodged the money in a fixed deposit account, stressing that N300 million "dirty pecuniary gain" was expected from that deal at maturity in April.

But the NEPA top official, who expressed sympathy with the retirees, swore that there was no time the Presidency paid such amount to any NEPA account.

"In whose fixed account will you hide that kind of money?" the source queried: "There is no way such amount could be tucked away in any corner," he



Segun Agagu

stated.

The source explained that NEPA carried out the rationalization only after informing the Presidency of the financial implications, and extracting a promise that NEPA would be given the money to pay.

"But the Presidency reneged on this agreement after the exercise, and this has since pitched the retirees against NEPA management," he asserted.

He said that several visits to the Presidency on the issue had yielded no fruits, while the retirees had turned deaf ears to all NEPA's explanations on the true situation.

"I sympathise with the retirees but honestly, they are being misled," the source said, adding that all civil servants would retire and certainly would not want to suffer that way.

The source said that NEPA management was shocked that the retirees could believe NEPA could be that callous, but promised that NEPA would not relent in the efforts to ensure the money was paid to them as soon as practicable.

Court orders businessman remanded for dishonesty

An Abuja Upper Area Court has ordered a businessman, Chukwudi Okafor, to be remanded in prison custody for alleged dishonesty.

The court heard that Okafor dishonestly collected N270,000 from two traders at the old Wuse market for a project, but allegedly converted the money to his personal use.

Prosecution said the complainants, Messrs. Joseph Agu and Augustine Emereonwu, had reported to the Life Camp police station in 1998 that the accused dishonestly collected the money from them for the purpose of executing a project at Gwarimpa, but converted the money to his own use.

The court was further told that the accused, who had previously jumped bail, was arrested on April 9, at the Gwarimpa project site, after he had tried to escape by jumping from a four-storey building, where he was squatting with his friend.

The accused, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The prosecution objected to his application for bail saying that he might tamper with police investigations.

Further hearing in the case was adjourned to May 11.



Political Counsellor in the Canadian High Commission, Mr. John M.C. Meish (centre), stressing a point at the Systems Tech Toner Cartridge Manufacturers Abuja branch. With him are the managing director, Kola Majekodunmi.

Pix Felix Onigbinde.



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16.	00937126EI	GARKA SIMON DEGRI	GOMBE
17.	00958410CJ	BAKOJI BALA	GOMBE
18.	00960433HI	YUSHUA DAUDA ABDULLAHI	JIGAWA
19.	00957424BF	MOHAMMED A. UMAR	JIGAWA
20.	00960874BI	YAHAYA MUSA	KADUNA
21.	00908878BJ	DODO LAZARUS AGUE	KADUNA
22.	00959603GB	UMARU IBRAHIM KUTAMA	KANO
23.	00988363GA	SARKI ABDULKADIR	KANO
24.	00957845FF	YAHAYA NUHU	KATSINA
25.	00928047BC	ATTAH SUNDAY	KOGI
26.	00908833GF	OBAJE MUSA MOHAMMED	KOGI
27.	00923236JG	ZUBAIRU KUDIRAT USMAN	KWARA
28.	00960103CA	ANYU STEPHEN BULUS	NASARAWA
29.	00960234JD	DANJUMA MOHAMMED RABIU	ZAMFARA
30.	00964653HB	ZIKHONDZI HARUNA	ADAMAWA
31.	00908725GC	DUNIYA MARY B.	KADUNA
32.	00959187CG	MURTALA MU'AZU ZAHRADEEN	KANO
33.	00973402EJ	MUSA RISIKAT MUBU	KOGI
34.	00931198JA	IJIJI AMINU SALAWU	KOGI

200 LEVEL DRAFTING TECHNOLOGY			
S/NO	JAMB NO	NAMES	STATE
1.	00937345CC	TUKA ISA CLEMENT	GOMBE
2.	00973439DH	JOHN JOSEPH	KADUNA
3.	00987187BJ	MOHAMMED ISAH ALIYU	KANO
4.	00929998BJ	ANGBABA YCHANNA OGABI	NASARAWA
5.	00908817DG	ANTHONY STEPHEN MAGAJI	KADUNA
6.	00974213ED	ABDU ABUBAKAR	KANO
7.	00957544EJ	SULEIMAN MAMAN DEE AHMAD	KATSINA
8.	00929903CE	TYAV ANONGU STEPHEN	NASARAWA
9.	00958115HC	JIMANG AYUBA WILLIAMS	PLATEAU
10.	00925530CC	GOMA TIMOTHY GOZUK	PLATEAU

200 LEVEL ELECTRICAL/ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY			
S/NO	JAMB NO	NAME	STATE
1.	00937127EA	AKUMA THIMOTY TERWASE	BENUE
2.	00938797DI	ALI KACHALLA	BORNO
3.	00938713IC	ADAMU SHUAIBU	BORNO
4.	00938761EC	MUSTAPHA BABAGANA	BORNO
5.	00937235ED	BAKO HARUNA	GOMBE
6.	00937209GE	SHITTU UMAR ABUBAKAR	GOMBE
7.	00990995JF	JOSIAH SHUNON MOUDE	KADUNA
8.	00959300HB	SANI IDRIS GWARZO	KANO
9.	00932592CE	MUKHTAR NASIRU	KANO
10.	00914806JC	ABUBAKAR IDRIS AMINU	KATSINA
11.	00930078CH	AHMED ABDULAZEEZ	KATSINA
12.	00931225BG	ALI HELEN IYEH	KOGI
13.	00921522DH	CLAWOYIN A. TOKUNBO	KWARA
14.	009556068IA	SAMSON PAM	PLATEAU
15.	00964290DI	FIKA BABA ISA	YOBE
16.	00964125CA	AKPAN EMMANUEL EYO	AKWA IBOM
17.	00929118FI	OKPODUDU PATRICK WO	BAYELSA
18.	00931631EJ	THOMAS GEORGE EUGENE	ADAMAWA

2000 LEVEL TECHNOLOGY WOODWORK TECHNOLOGY			
S/NO	JAMB NO.	NAMES	STATE
1.	00987726GE	OJO JOHN ABAH	BENUE
2.	00960432IG	ABDULLAHI Y. BORO MAINA	BORNO
3.	00964220AA	ADAMU IBRAHIM	BORNO
4.	00959168CB	GWARZO LAWAN SANI	KANO
5.	00958704GB	ABDULLAHI ILIYASU ADAMU	PLATEAU
6.	00974090HI	FUANTER ATHANASIOUS ZEMNAAM	PLATEAU
7.	00930106EC	LAWAL FATIMA TUNRAYO	KWARA
8.	00964789AH	TIMGA BITRUS DANLADI	PLATEAU
9.	00936341DD	YOHANNA JOSHUA MAINA	YOBE
10.	00964096BD	USMAN FATSUMA	YOBE
11.	00958317DD	HAMISU ABDULKARIM	GOMBE
12.	00930572GG	SHUAIBU AWWAL	KADUNA
13.	00960165JC	TAGWAI CHRISTIAN	KADUNA
14.	00972502FH	SULE AMINU AKU	KOGI
15.	00908774BE	MOHAMMED ISA ABDULLAHI	PLATEAU

GARBAI BAKORI
REGISTRAR



SPORTS



Egypt prepare bid for 2010 World Cup

Africa's internal campaign to find which country hosts the 2010 World Cup has got off to a flying start with serious indications from Egypt that the country will bid to host the event.

On Monday, Egypt's Youth Minister Dr Ali El-Din Hilal told a group of Egyptian Football Association executives in Cairo that the government would do everything to support the World Cup bid.

The EFA delegation held a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with the minister where they discussed plans by the EFA to present a complete report of recommendations to the government later this month.

Egypt's preparation comes as South Africa - who, narrowly and controversially, lost the bid for the 2006 World Cup to Germany - also prepare to launch their campaign later this month for the 2010 World Cup.

Since Fifa recently announced plans to introduce a rotation system for the tournament, beginning with Africa, there has been some excitement in Egypt for the event.

The media, especially, have been lobbying the EFA, urging them to present proposals to the Egyptian government.

At the EFA headquarters in Cairo, Egypt's first and only woman on the FA executive, Dr Sahar El-Hawary, told the BBC that Egypt would be a strong and serious candidate for hosting the

2010 World Cup.

"We should have more than one African country bidding. This doesn't mean that we're against each other. No!" she said.

"We wish for the best and the best must win. This is sport and in the field of sport, competition is needed to raise standards," she argued.

She added that Egypt could do more than just organise the event very well.

"We're number for football, all 60 million of us," Dr Hawary added.

"We've hosted a World Cup (the 1997 World Under-17 Championship) and other major continental events and they were huge successes from our

experience," she recalled.

"Our spectators were great. It was full attendance everywhere, in every stadium and every city, even where Egypt were not playing," Dr Hawary continued.

The EFA's assistant-secretary General Amr Wahby also told the BBC that Egypt has a lot of factors in her favour.

"We have the infrastructure, which consists of hotels, communication, (political) stability, and security," he said.

"All Egyptians would like to invite everyone to their country - the land of civilisation, the land of the Pharaohs - to enjoy this great country," he added.

"One of the biggest stadia in Africa, Cairo stadium can hold

up to 110,000 spectators ... I tell you, we're in the middle of the world (geographically.) We are located in the middle of two continents," he continued.

Commenting on South Africa as the leading African contender Mr Wahby said: "We welcome all competitors. At the end of the day, we're African brothers."

He added that Cairo's famed overcrowding will not be a problem.

"We have a crowded city and we cannot deny that but this is still a great city. You can go out at 3 o'clock in the morning and no-one will stop you, no one will harm you and you'll be very happy - try this in other countries."

James dismisses Barca rumours

Aston Villa goalkeeper David James has rubbished talk of a move to Spanish giants Barcelona.

Coach of the Primera Liga outfit, Llorenç Serra Ferrer, is also said to be interested in Real Oviedo's shotstopper Esteban and Juventus' Edwin van der Saar.

The former Liverpool star, who is taking Spanish lessons, hinted in a Sunday newspaper recently that he would consider a move abroad to rid himself of his "Calamity James" tag.

But James has since said that he wishes to pledge his

future to Villa after having signed a new three-and-a-half year contract.

"I am happy at Aston Villa. I have just signed a long contract and can see the club going places," he said.

"The fact I am learning another language is completely coincidental - it always raises a smile with my mate Steve McManaman when I give him a call in Madrid."

James added that learning Spanish will help Villa's Argentinian £9.5m record signing, Juan Pablo Angel,

settle in.

"We are in the 21st century and if you can't learn another language by now then something must be seriously wrong," said James.

"I improved on the recent England trip because I managed to have a lot of 'half' conversations with McManaman.

"Everybody laughs at me a bit in the dressing room because they don't understand a word of it but I believe we should all learn Spanish to help Juan settle in. If it helps him out, then great."

African stars lit Europe with goals

Shakhtar Donetsk, the Ukraine side who have invested so heavily in African talent, saw their faith pay off in a critical 2-1 victory over big rivals Dynamo Kiev.

Goals from Nigeria's Julius Aghahowa and Senegal's Alassane N'Diaye sent Donetsk a point clear and gives them hope of ending Kiev's run of eight straight victories ever since the Ukrainian clubs formed their own modern day league.

Aghahowa's arrival for the second half of the season, to join compatriot Isaac Okoronkwo, could prove the difference.

Galatasaray paid the price for their midweek Champions League exertions in beating Real Madrid 3-2 as they slumped 4-2 in Turkey to

Yozgatspor, for whom Ghanaian pair Yaw Preko and Kwame Ayew scored two each.

They have both scored ten this season and the victory removed any lingering relegation fears for their side.

Fenerbahçe could not extend their advantage at the top over Galatasaray as they lost 2-1 to Denizlispor despite taking an early lead through a fifth of the season for Ghana defender Sam Johnson.

Egyptian Ahmed El Sakka quickly levelled, and Mali's Fernand Coulibaly grabbed the first half winner, his 11th this season.

Ghana's Emmanuel Tetteh fired the winner as Rizespor beat third-placed Gaziantepspor 2-1, while compatriots Augustine Ahinful and Ohene Kennedy

helped surging Ankaragucu strengthen their fifth place in a 3-1 win at Adanaspor.

South Africa's John Moshoeu completed a remarkable weekend of 11 goals by Africans in Turkey by netting for Bursaspor in their 5-2 away hammering of bottom club Siirt Jet Pa.

Sierra Leone's Mohammed Kallon so nearly gave Vicenza a huge boost to their hopes of escaping relegation by scoring at Inter Milan in Italy, but a massively-deflected injury-time free-kick by Alvaro Recoba earned the home side a 1-1 draw.

Morocco's Adil Ramzi scored his second of the season, but a hugely vital one to give PSV a 1-0 win at arch-rivals Ajax and virtually secure the league title in Holland.

Gambia's Edrissa Sonko grabbed his first of the season, on loan from Anderlecht, to help Roda win 3-1 at Groningen.

In France, Strasbourg had Morocco's Gharib Amzine and Cameroon's Pierre Njanka both sent off late on, but still beat Toulouse 1-0 to swap places at the bottom.

Senegal's El-Hadji Diouf scored twice to inflict a rare home defeat on Bastia as Lens won 3-1 to remove any relegation worries.

Sedan kept up their challenge for a European spot, helped by an eighth of the season for Cameroon's Pius Ndiefi as they drew 2-2 at home to Guingamp to stay fifth.

A 12th of the season for DR Congo's Shabani Nonda could not prevent Monaco going down

to a 2-1 defeat at title challengers Lyon.

Egyptian teenager Ahmed Hossam continued his great recent form by netting in Ghent's 2-1 victory over Genk to keep them fourth in Belgium.

A first of the season for Moroccan defender Nouredine Naybet was only a late consolation as Deportivo Coruna lost 2-1 at Real Zaragoza in Spain, removing any realistic chance of catching leaders Real Madrid, now eight points ahead.

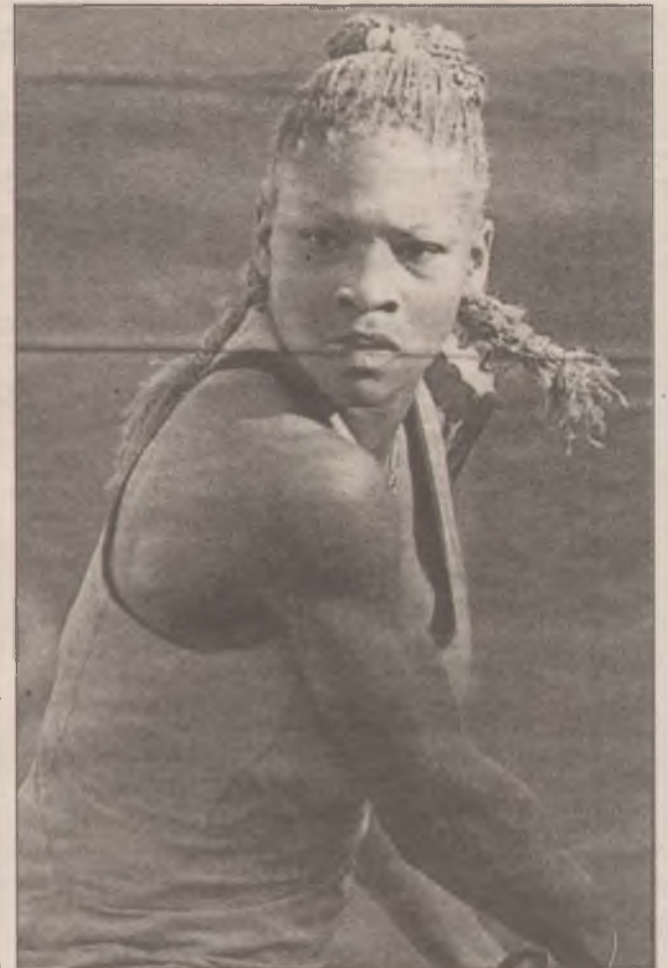
In England, Nigerian Ade Akinbiyi's eighth of the season could not stop Leicester's fifth defeat in a row, this time 3-1 at home to Coventry.

Jean-Michel Tchouga of Cameroon grabbed his 13th goal to help fourth-placed Basle beat Sion 2-1 in Switzerland's title pool.

Ghana's Charles Amoah claimed his second goal in Austria and 14th this season overall to help Sturm Graz win 3-0 at Bregenz.

In Portugal, Egypt midfielder Abdelsatar Sabry was on target to help Benfica beat Maritimo 3-0 while Senegal's Fary Faye scored but could not prevent Beira Mar losing 2-1 at high-flying Sporting Lisbon.

Orosco Anonam drew level with Nigerian compatriot Chris Oretan, also based in Malta, as leading African scorers in Europe as his 22nd of the season came in Sliema's 4-1 thumping of Floriana.



Serena Williams struggles to come to terms with the hostility of America's tennis which threatens to demean everything she and her sister Venus have achieved.

Man Utd edge closer to title

Manchester United could wrap up their seventh Premiership title in nine years over the Easter weekend.

They beat Charlton 2-1 at Old Trafford on Tuesday to leave themselves needing six points to clinch yet another championship.

Man Utd boss Sir Alex Ferguson hailed Ole Gunnar Solskjaer after he came off the bench to score the winner in the 82nd minute.

Ferguson purred: "He must be the best substitute ever.

"Very few players can do that and have the temperament to come in on the heat of the game and be so cool about things.

"He's had three strikes at goal and you expect every one to hit the net.

"He's as good as that and professional too."

It took United until the stroke of half-time to score through Andy Cole and they needed a late winner from Solskjaer to secure the points.

Charlton gave United a fright in between when Mark Fish pulled Alan Curbishley's side level, but in the end the Londoners could hardly complain about the final score.

Just before kick-off, Eric Cantona was crowned Manchester United's greatest ever.

Cantona was voted United's best-ever player ahead of George Best, Denis Law and Sir Bobby Charlton by readers of the club's official magazine.

United went straight on the attack but the Addicks, who had lost just one of their last 11 league games, weathered the early storm.

The recalled Dwight Yorke wasted a great headed chance from a Gary Neville cross before Mikael Silvestre directed another Neville ball just over the

bar.

Yorke did better with a drive, which took a deflection before Sasa Illic touched it past the post.

Scott Parker almost shocked United when he went close to breaking the deadlock just before the half-hour.

Shaun Bartlett fed the midfielder and, spotting Fabien Barthez off his line, he tried to chip him from 25 yards out only for his effort to come off the crossbar.

Back came United and they had a penalty appeal turned down when Cole's shot clearly hit Fish on the hand during a goalmouth scramble.

United's opening goal was extremely fortunate and referee Mark Halsey must be attributed with an assist for Cole's 45th-minute effort.

Yorke fed Cole who cut inside and when he was tackled by Fish, the ball rebounded off the heel of Halsey back to the striker and he dispatched his 13th goal of the season.

Giggs should have doubled United's advantage soon after the interval when his shot from four yards was cleared off the line by Fish.

Keane was then denied a goal when his drive from just outside the area came off the inside of the post.

Charlton brought on Mark Kinsella and John Robinson for Jensen and Graham Stuart - and the changes inspired a 63rd minute equaliser.

Neville failed to deal with Jonatan Johansson's cross into the box and Fish was on hand to slam in the loose ball from close range.

With 13 minutes left, United introduced Teddy Sheringham and Solskjaer - and it soon paid off.



Monaco's Shobani Nonda, one of the top African stars in Europe



Agali makes N425m move to Schalke

Nigeria international striker Victor Agali has signed for title-chasing Schalke for N425 million from Bundesliga rivals Hansa Rostock.

The 22-year-old will switch clubs on July 1 after signing a two-year contract, and will have high hopes of playing in the Champions League.

Schalke, who were early season leaders, have battled back after a slump and are only a point behind leaders Bayern Munich.

Agali is in his third season at Rostock, and has become something of a cult figure after helping the former East German club defy the odds and stay in the top flight, something they look like doing again.

Although never a prolific scorer, managing 17 goals in 63 games for Rostock, Agali has a knack of contributing vital efforts and also plenty of chances for his strike partners.

After missing much of the early domestic season due to going on Olympic duty, Agali has come back after the winter break to form



Schalke bound... Victor Agali embraces Oliseh

a formidable partnership with Togo's Bachirou Salou as four wins in five games virtually secured safety.

Agali was called up by Nigeria after his Olympic form and managed three goals in his first two games, though he will miss the April 21 World Cup qualifier in Sierra Leone due to injury.

Schalke coach Huub Stevens said: "Victor is a great header of the ball and extremely quick for a man of his size. He will give us a lot more attacking options."

General manager Rudi Assauer added: "There's hardly a defender in the Bundesliga who enjoys playing against Victor. His

arrival will strengthen our squad and give us more options."

A delighted Agali said: "At Schalke I will have the opportunity of getting a few games in Europe. And the Arena AufSchalke is fantastic - it will be great to play in front of 60,000 fans."

Despite consistently under-performing since last winning the league in 1958, Schalke remained well-supported and have come back to prominence since a shock UEFA Cup win in 1997 when they beat Inter Milan.

The Blues will be Agali's fourth club in Europe after moving from FC NITEL Lagos at home to a brief spell at Marseille, then on to Toulon before joining Rostock.

Zamfara Utd, Kano Pillars in war of words

Promotion contenders in the lower pro-league division, Kano Pillars and Zamfara United have overwhelmed themselves with words over the likely victor of Saturday's crucial league match in Kano.

Whereas fourth placed Zamfara Utd believes tradition favours them to beat Kano Pillars in front of their fans, the host contended it is an impossible dream which will not go beyond mere empty speech.

Alhaji Shehu Garba Gusau, the Zamfara United team manager told Trustsports that beating Pillars was a forgone conclusion.

"We have always had an edge over Pillars and we can't fail to do so especially now that the result will be a factor in deciding between us who wins the promotion ticket to the first division next season.

"In fact, my players have staked their April salaries on the match. They want the management to withhold their salaries should they fail to lick the Pillars in Kano," Alhaji Garba Gusau said sounding confident.

But Kano Pillars boss would not hear that. Alhaji Kabiru Baita was at a loss as how a team which has been comfortably leading the pack for some 17 weeks should fail to a toddler like Zamfara United and in Kano of all places.

"Zamfara United are only ambitious which is good any way. But it would be stretching that ambition too far if they could come to Kano to beat Pillars. No, it is impossible not after leading comfortably for some 17 weeks without being threatened by any club".

NFA, Sports Ministry boil over Bonfrere contract

The hazy dust over Johannes Bonfrere's controversial contract by Nigeria as technical adviser of Nigerian teams is yet to settle.

The latest development, *Trustsports* learnt, is that subdued hiccups have generated overt agitation, as Sports Minister, Ishaya Mark Aku is said to have declared more than casual interest in the draft men who drew the contract terms.

Mark Aku, we learnt was unimpressed with the enabling contractual agreement which tilted heavily in favour of Dutchman Johannes Bonfrere. The minister, we gathered has expressed profound disenchantment with the totality of the contract and has subsequently sought to know the major contributors to the draft.

Aku had, according to impeccable sources invited the chieftains of the Sports Ministry and the NFA to explain what led to such contractual agreement which greatly disfavours Nigeria.

Albeit the Ministry's head of legal department, Mrs. Barbas Molokwu had earlier exonerated herself from blame on the contract, Aku is said to have expressed displeasure with the quality of legal advice rendered to the ministry.

By Patrick Andrew

Besides, he was said to have berated the NFA for putting a lamb duck argument that it had no input in the contract draft. The NFA board had earlier this year taken the contract to shreds openly asserting that it was calculated to enslave Nigeria.

The board had also squarely put the blame on the door steps of former Sports Minister, Damishi Sango for allowing such contract.

The Sports Minister who summoned the chieftains of the NFA and the ministry to discuss these and other matters has not hidden his intention to have the contract reviewed. The review accordingly, would extricate Nigeria from the excruciating cob web she is currently in as well as clip Bonfrere's wings.

Sources confided in *Trustsports* that the minister exhaustively analysed the contract before officers of the ministry with a view to educating them on the need to properly scrutinise any contractual terms before committing the country to it.

Bonfrere's contract which was in phases was first to take Nigeria to the semi-final stage of the Nations Cup as precondition for renewal for the World Cup qualification.

Oneya knocks referees

The NFA has expressed disgust with Nigerian referees for their poor performances in spite of conscious efforts to create enabling environ-

ment for them to function. NFA boss, Brig.-Gen. Dominic Oneya (rtd) said at the opening ceremony of the NFA-CAF Referees Instructors Workshop which began

in Kaduna last Monday. Dominic Oneya disclosed that the more than 4,000 referees in the country have largely performed below expectation, a development that has necessitated a retraining programme for them.

Oneya, who was unsparing in his diatribe on the referees, said the workshop was designed to train retired referees who would in turn train others in the field.

Oneya said that football was dynamic hence required equally dynamic personalities to officiate the game.

"Nigeria has presently over 4,000 football referees and the standard level of training has varied because of limited numbers of qualified trainers available to us. This course will help you acquire much knowledge".

He challenged the 40 retired referees who are undertaking the course to endeavour to transfer such acquired knowledge to their professional siblings so that officiating in the Nigerian league would experience a new lease of life.

He also said that quality performance would inevitably see Nigerian referees in the centre of many more FIFA graded matches.



Rising star... Alfred Koripamo from Bayelsa state returns a serve from Olusola Adebisi of Oyo state at the World TB Day tournament in Kaduna... recently. Pix Joe Oroye.

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Obasanjo slams Kanu, Okocha, others

President Olusegun Obasanjo lamented the attitude of Nigerian foreign-based professional footballers for their lack of interest and commitment to the country's quest for 2002 World Cup qualification.

President Obasanjo who decried the unpatriotic and non-challant attitude of most Nigerian professional footballers, noted that the overwhelmingly lopsided government attention on foot-

By Suleiman Mohammed

ball would be re-assessed. Speaking when the members of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NDC) paid him a visit at the state house on Monday, President Obasanjo directed the Sports Ministry to set up a five-member panel, to include a woman, to take a comprehensive look at the problem facing sports in the country.

He said government was posed to look at sports

generally with a view to addressing all the problems, especially inadequate funding and facilities, lack of incentives and low morale.

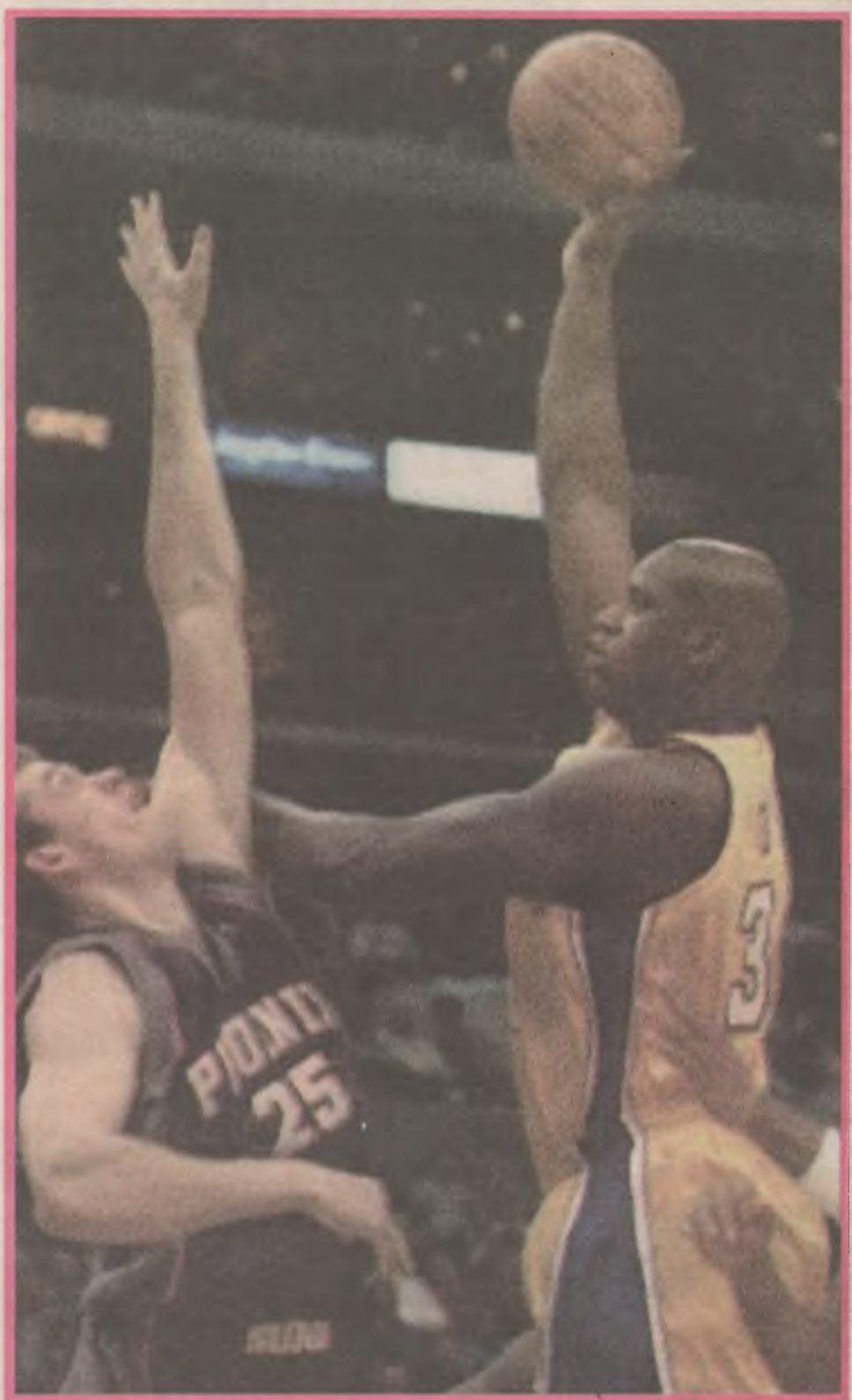
President Obasanjo who described himself as an avid supporter of young sportsmen and women, advised professional footballers to invest in their motherland.

In response to observation raised by the NOC that Nigeria has no dope control laboratory, President Obasanjo promised that one would be established before the All-African Games in 2003, as according to him failure to do so, would have a negative impact on the country's determination to successfully host the games.

On poor representation of Nigerian nationals in continental and global sporting bodies, the president pledged government's desire to redress the situation. He also expressed optimism that when the Abuja National Stadium was completed, most problems of facilities would be solved. The NOC delegation was led by Maj.-Gen. Adamu Dyeri (rtd).

The Nigerian Olympic Committee who were at the state house to brief the president on their activities also used the occasion to decorate the president as Grand Patron of the committee.

Similarly, the NOC chairman, General Dyeri (rtd) presented the president with a copy of the new Olympic charter.



Los Angeles Lakers Shaquille O'Neal (centre) shoots between the Phoenix Suns Jake Tsakalidis (left) and Shawn Marion (right) in the first quarter during their NBA match-up April 10 at the Staples Centre in Los Angeles. Pix. Reuters

Kanu asks to miss World Cup qualifier

Nigeria coach Jo Bonfrere is still considering a request from Arsenal to release striker Nwankwo Kanu from next week's World Cup qualifier against Sierra Leone, the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) confirmed.

"We received a fax message from Arsenal on Monday requesting that Kanu be allowed to play in their Champions League match against Valencia next week," NFA press officer Austin Mgbolu said.

Mgbolu added that Dutch-born Bonfrere had been informed of the Arsenal request and "he is still considering it."

Arsenal, 2-1 winners at Highbury, go to the Mestalla Stadium for the quarter-final second leg next Tuesday, which is four days before the Super Eagles' date in Freetown.

Fifa rules say countries can demand their players turn up for international duty five days before a match.

Kanu has been named in an 18-man strong squad for the match which Nigeria must win to keep pace with Group B leaders Liberia and Sudan, who are both two points ahead on nine from four games.

The likely compromise is that Kanu could fly out after the match in Spain, a similar agreement to that which Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger expects to be struck with Cameroon over midfielder Lauren.

Foreign-based squad Arsenal and the NFA were involved in a bitter row last year over Kanu's release for the football tournament at the Olympic Games, and have had other disagreements.

The needs of both teams have been increased by injuries

to other strikers - Dennis Bergkamp for Arsenal and Schalke-bound Victor Agali for Nigeria, which makes Kanu likely to start both matches..

Mgbolu said: "Agali has informed us his injury will take three weeks to heal, so he's out of the Freetown match."

Striker John Otaka, with Egyptian club Ismailia, has been named to replace Agali. Otaka had also been called up for the abortive friendly with Libya, which was due to have been played earlier this month.

Last month Bonfrere threatened to give up the Nigerian post if his team failed to beat Sierra Leone, saying: "There are no two ways about it, I'll quit. Nigeria has no business in the World Cup if we cannot beat Sierra Leone."

He is taking no chances with the team selection, which is full of foreign-based professionals, even at a critical stage of the European season.



Any hope for revival? Real Madrid celebrate their Champions League triumph last May. They face hard fighting Galatasaray in a make or break tie in Madrid... on Wednesday

APOLOGY

Dear readers,
 Professor Noma's travails, the cartoon for this page will continue on Monday, April 16, 2001