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Thursday Column:

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Mosque collapses, many feared dead

Many worshippers were feared dead yesterday in Mushin, a Lagos suburb, as a three-storey mosque identified as Danmola mosque collapsed as a result of heavy rain in Lagos.

The mosque, which is located at No. 41, Buari street in Mushin, collapsed about 2:00p.m. when Muslim faithfuls were getting set to say their afternoon prayers.

Eyewitnesses led *Daily Trust* in Lagos that people had not fully occupied the mosque

From Wisdom Patrick, Lagos

before it collapsed because worshippers were first only getting set to say their Zuhr (afternoon) prayers the mosque which was under construction when it collapsed was said to be in the fourth stage of completion.

Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations in Lagos, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo, confirmed the incident but said the police had not yet got sufficient information to know the number casual from the mishap.

He said a combined team of police and fire service personnel were struggling to rescue many worshippers who were trapped in the rubble of the collapsed Mosque.

The Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr Mike Okiro, also confirmed the incident but said he could not give details as he was yet to be briefed.

But a source at the area 'D' police command in Mushin close to the scene of the accident told *Daily Trust* that no fewer than 10 persons were feared dead.

According to him, the people who wanted to go and pray and those who were taking shelter because of the rain were affected.

"There is no way many people would not die," said the source.

At the time of filing this report, rescue operations were still going on. Equipment were being brought from Julius Berger

and other companies to raise the concrete slaps under which people were trapped. Help did not reach the trapped worshippers on time because of the heavy rain.



From Left: Director, Habib Nigeria Bank Ltd, Alhaji Abubakar Koko; Minister for Finance, Mallam Adamu Ciroma; Alhaji M.T. Usman and Chairman of the bank, Alhaji Kola Abiola, at the commissioning of the Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola House by Vice-President Atiku Abubakar in Abuja... yesterday
Pic: Kennedy Egbonodje

24 Nigerians to be extradited to US

The US has requested the extradition of 26 Nigerians wanted in the US for drug offences, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Drugs and Financial Matters, Dr. Ibrahim Lame has said.

Lame, who disclosed this when he received the US ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Howard Jetter, in his office in Abuja, said that two of the 26 Nigerians had already been extradited.

He told Jetter that the present administration in Ni-

geria was determined to rid the country of the menace of drugs because it was worried by the negative image the country had acquired.

Lame, however, noted that Nigeria was not a drug-producing nation but a transit point, adding that more Nigerians now use drugs.

He also said that Nigeria had acquired notoriety for 419, but noted that most of those involved were living outside the country.

Lame said the government was doing

everything possible to ensure that its crusade against such illegal activities by Nigerians was successful through sensitisation and

3 female police officers arrested over extortion

In line with recent vows by the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Musiliu Smith, to rid the force of bad eggs and restore its lost glory, three female police officers have been arrested over alleged official corruption and extortion.

The trio, an inspector, a corporal and a constable, were arrested by the police X-Squad which Mr. Smith set-up where they mounted an illegal road block, at Oyebanji junction, near Adeniji Adele central police station in Lagos.

Sources at the Zone II provost marshal's office, where the suspects were undergoing orderly room trial, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Lagos, that a substantial amount of squeezed currency notes was recovered from them. NAN learnt that before her arrest, the inspector had been in charge of traffic duty at the station.

It was also learnt that the trio had defied several warnings that they would be dismissed if they did not desist from extorting money from motorists.

Attempted coup foiled in Burundi

An attempted coup in Burundi appeared to have failed on Wednesday as the leaders of

rebellion started to LUX loyalist troops, EXTE ERALK to loyal TIFICAT an Colo AMBA abampema BANY REG 10 of the total

people involved in the attempted coup had so far given themselves up to pro-government troops surrounding the radio building.

"We have to wait until morning to know if this coup d'etat is over," Nzabampema said. "In my opinion it is over, but one has to wait until morning to know if the remainder of the mutineers have given themselves up."

By Kevin Ebele Adinnu, with agency reports

Announcing the attempted coup, the radio earlier said the government of President Pierre Buyoya had been overthrown by a group of soldiers led by a relatively unknown lieutenant.

"The government which is killing people is over an e government of Buyoya is over now," the radio said in a

contd. on pg. 2



Pierre Buyoya

DEREGULATION

FG meets NLC today

As the Federal Government schedules what appears to be a reconciliatory meeting with the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) over the deregulation of the down-stream sector of the petroleum industry, the Minister of Information and

By Suleiman Mohammed

National Orientation, Professor Jerry Gana, has advised labour to focus on the issues in contention rather than embarking on a campaign of calumny.

The Labour/Federal Government meeting which was

earlier botched is expected to hold at the state house with President Olusegun Obasanjo along side other top government officials.

But barely twenty four hours to the planned meeting, Information Minister, Professor Jerry Gana has de-

contd. on pg. 2

VP, govs. meet over economy

Disturbed by the dwindling state of the economy, the Federal Government and the 36 state governors are expected to meet today at the State House, Abuja.

By Suleiman Mohammed

Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting yesterday, Information and National Orientation Minister, Professor Jerry Gana, said the meeting would discuss the dwindling value of the naira, the planned deregulation of the petroleum sector and the privatisation programme.

The meeting, the second this year, will also afford the state executives the oppor-

tunity to brainstorm on the way forward as well as review their performance ahead of the May 29 second anniversary of the Obasanjo government.

Though Professor Jerry Gana could not offer details on the agenda of the meeting, *Daily Trust* learnt that other issues for deliberation include the on-going constitutional review, resource control and the security situation in the country.

NEWS

Another political association emerges

Former President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's ambition to occupy the presidential villa in 2003 through the ballot box is gathering momentum as his political associates under the banner of National Frontiers re-grouped in Abuja.

Although the association was not categorical in the choice of Babangida as its presidential candidate come 2003, investigations by *Daily Trust* revealed that the National Frontiers may fuse with the National Solidarity Association (NSA) to give Babangida an open ticket for the presidential slot.

The political association, which had Chief Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, former speaker of the House of Representatives in the Second Republic as its protom national chairman, said the National Frontiers is a nationwide political association arising from a desire and determination of all Nigerians to live together in peace and harmony in a just and prosperous society.

Determined to chart a new political course in which no individual or group will be oppressed or suppressed, Chief Ume-Ezeoke disclosed that the National Frontiers would "rekindle that which brought the North, South, East and West together as one entity, which would be

By Ibrahim Modibbo,
Political Editor

devoid of political and religious bitterness. We are determined to resuscitate a sense of direction in governance to the satisfaction of all and sundry."

The launching of the National Frontiers, which gathered many political heavy weights, retired military officers, politicians from all the zones of the country, according to its organisers intends to deviate from the practice of the present government where government is concentrating on selected projects and programmes that will satisfy a few privileged Nigerians instead of projects that "would bring succour in the area of employment of our teeming job-seekers, peasant farmers, students, artisans, labourers, civil servants, drivers, fishermen, carpenters, herdsmen and beggars."

Ume-Ezeoke said, "our association which hopes to get registration into a political party will rely on agriculture as a key to the nation's economic revival. The ordinary man would be given enough inputs to support and boost agricultural activities.

"We shall look at the problems of education and address them squarely by way of adequate funding,

enhanced welfare package for teachers and an improved learning environment for students. We shall also check the perpetual declining standards of living and societal restiveness with a view to also checking the decline in public morality," he said.

Among the influential political figures that attended the launching were; Alhaji Isa Mohammed, former national chairman of the defunct United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Alhaji Musa Musawa, member board of trustees of PDP, Alhaji Wada Nas, a former minister and Alhaji Asheik Jarma, former governor of Borno State.

Others included: Air Marshal Nsikak Eduak, former Chief of Air Staff; General Abdulkarim Adisa, Chief Kenny Martins, Chief Ayo Opadokun, Secretary-General of the Afenifere; Alhaji Suleiman Ahmed, former national chairman of the defunct Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), Alhaji Ali Sa'ad Birnin Kudu, former governor of Jigawa State; General Tanko Ayuba, Chief Paul Unongo, Alhaji Kabiru Gaya, former governor of Kano State, Major-General S.B. Said, Col. Yahaya Madaki, Col. Yohanna Mamman Dickson, all former governors, Mrs Maureen Talatu Lar, a woman leader

and Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan, a former minister.

Speaking at the occasion, Alhaji Musa Musawa, stated that the decision to form a new political association was based on the failure of the PDP to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the common man.

He said the PDP has lost focus and direction due to poverty of leadership and that Nigerians are tired of the party.



IBB

He said in Hausa: *PDP tana da ciwon kanjamau. "PDP is AIDS-infested."*

Alhaji Wada Nas, a minister in the Abacha government, said Nigerians are tired of the present "purposeless and visionless leadership," and need a change and that the change is the National Frontiers.

He said, "to dislodge Obasanjo today we need only two things and they are commitment and dedication to do that.

"If Obasanjo has anything to fear today in this country, it is the National Frontiers and, by the grace of God, a member of the National Frontiers would occupy Aso Rock in 2003," he said.

Alhaji Asheik Jarma, former governor of Borno State, said that the naira had been gradually killed by the Obasanjo regime.

civil war, had been replaced by a hitherto unknown group, the National Youth Patriotic Front.

"The National Youth Patriotic Front is created which is the supreme organisation which controls the country," the radio said. "This National Youth Patriotic Front is headed by Lieutenant Pasteur Ntarutimana."

There was no word on the ethnic affiliation of Ntarutimana, but analysts said he was almost certainly a member of the ethnic Tutsi minority with the support of the Tutsi-led army.

"The mystery is, who does Lieutenant Pasteur Ntarutimana represent?" said Alison des Forges, a senior consultant with Human Rights Watch by telephone from Brussels.

Burundi has a long history of coups, all of them led by soldiers from the ethnic Tutsi minority. The civil war began in 1993 when the country's first democratically elected president,

Submit yourself for investigation if you are innocent

—AD leader tells indicted Senators

By Reuben Yunana

As former Senate President, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo, and five other Senators indicted by the Idris Kuta report battle to forestall their prosecution for alleged corrupt practices, AD's deputy leader in the Senate has called on the group to prove their innocence.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* yesterday, the AD chieftain, Senator Afolabi Olabintan, wondered why Senators Okadigbo, Aluko and the others indicted by the report are afraid of facing the relevant federal agencies as recommended by the report of the harmonisation committee.

"If you are one of those indicted and you are sure you have no case to answer, why are you afraid of federal agencies coming to take over the investigations?" he queried.

He explained that since the indicted Senators were not happy with the decision of the two committees, they should submit themselves to the relevant agencies which are trained in the art of investigation, adding "they are not going to just pick you up and throw you into jail."

On the Senators' adoption of the harmonisation committee's report, the Senator said, the action was proof that the National Assembly is totally committed to the anti-corruption war, which it declared with the signing of the anti-corruption act.

According to him, "this crisis would be a good element in stabilising the Senate because many Senators

were not happy with the way we handled the Kuta report. They are now happy with the Senate's adoption of the report of the harmonisation committee," the AD deputy Senate leader said.

He revealed that the report of the harmonisation committee had been ready for "some time" but that the leadership of the Senate felt it should not be made public for the interest of peace and stability and also in the hope that the "former Senate President and his group," would turn a new leaf and embrace peace.

Meanwhile, hearing resumes today in an Abuja High Court as Senator Okadigbo and the five indicted Senators are praying the court to quash volume II of the Kuta report entitled, "findings, conclusions and recommendations."

They are also asking the court for an interim injunction restraining the Attorney-General of the Federation and the Inspector-General of Police from arresting or prosecuting them on account of the committees' reports.



Okadigbo

FG contd. from pg 1

report submitted by the NLC were accordingly produced and circulated with the consent of the labour leadership.

"Unless the NLC has again changed its own version of the report, the authentic report presented to me has been published as presented, completely unedited," he declared, saying government had no reason whatsoever, to deceive Nigerians on the matter.

"Since the commencement of this debate, neither the government nor myself have done anything to deceive the Nigerian public. We have no reason to do so since the aim of the public consultations is to discover the most effective solution to fuel supply and distribution problems," he further stated.

Similarly, Professor Gana yesterday warned petroleum marketers against the

publication of the products of the government.

He said the government should publish the list of petroleum products for public knowledge.

He said the government should publish on a regular basis so the public know who to hold responsible for diverting the products.

Already, government has sealed up about 30 filling stations for alleged diversion of the products, and warned that more unlicensed filling stations may be sealed.

Burundi contd. from pg 1

brief announcement. It said parliament had been suspended and the borders and airports closed.

But within hours officers loyal to Buyoya arrived at the station, surrounded the building and opened negotiations with the coup leaders inside to persuade them to surrender.

A senior officer warned that troops would attack unless those in the radio station gave up.

The city itself was quiet but tense, as fearful residents

hurried home to avoid any possible fighting.

Residents reported a brief outbreak of gunfire around the radio station shortly before its announcement.

Buyoya was out of the country attending a meeting with ethnic Hutu rebels in Libreville, Gabon. Burundi peace mediator Nelson Mandela said Buyoya had told him he was still in charge.

The radio station said Buyoya, the leader of the Tutsi-dominated government and a key figure in the country's seven-year-old

country's potentials to fight drugs cases should not be allowed to waste.

Earlier, Jetter had congratulated Nigeria for its certification by his country, but said government must not relent in its war against drugs so as not to suffer another decertification because, according to him, certification is a yearly exercise.

24 Nigerians contd. from pg 1

education on the negative effects such activities were having on the country's image.

"We have the greatest interaction with US and this has led to the certification of Nigeria," he said, adding that the US should try to understand the constraints facing the government in its efforts to rid the country of drugs.

Lame said that the

NEWS

IBB presidential campaign kicks off in Yola

Supporters of the presidential bid of former president Ibrahim Babangida have begun an intensive underground campaign in Adamawa, the home state of Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

Daily Trust learnt that the team of campaigners is a coalition of remnants of the crisis-ridden state branch of the All People's Party (APP) and other opponents of the vice president.

A former governor of the state, Alhaji Saleh Michika, who is a staunch IBB supporter, is leading the pack.

Daily Trust gathered that the ex-governor has already begun a house-to-house campaign for the former president under the aegis of the new political association, the National Solidarity Association (NSA).

He has for long been organising his former aides and supporters to work for the movement and is reportedly planning to turn his

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From Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, Yola

former campaign office into the state secretariat of the association. Daily Trust further learnt that the pro-IBB campaigners are also working hard to stage a big rally in Yola to be attended by their supporters from all the states of the North-East zone.

The campaigners are also busy distributing posters of the former president and membership cards, in which potential members will affix their photographs and append their signatures.

One of them, a youth activist in Marafa, told Daily Trust that they were targeting youths and women in their campaign and that they were recording some success in the state.

However, Daily Trust learnt that some members of the National Solidarity Association in the state are only concerned with building their political structures to advance their personal ambitions.

The association has many members who have either shown or are believed to have governorship ambition in the state.

Alhaji Michika himself, Alhaji Koiranga Jada, Dr. Bala Takaya and Alhaji Sadiq Haske have at one time or the other shown their interest for the governorship seat in the state while Alhaji Adamu Modibbo who is yet to make an open declaration is be-

lieved to be preparing his way into the race.



IBB

Police to establish police/student forum

By Ikenna Emeka Okpani

Ostensibly seeking to bridge their differences and reduce the constant violence between them, the Nigeria Police Force is to establish a police/student consultative forum in all states of the federation.

This indication was given yesterday by the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Musiliu Smith in Abuja while addressing student leaders from all over the federation at the first IGP-student's leaders summit held at the force headquarters.

The Inspector-General who decried what he called "mutual animosity and antagonism; mutual distrust and disdain" between students and the police, said he called the summit, "to remind students of the responsibilities attached to democracy."

"We need to begin to cul-

A fresh crisis is imminent in Sagamu, Ogun State as the Hausa community in the area is reported to be running out of patience with their Yoruba counterparts over the non-inclusion of the Hausas in the town's vigilante group.

This they said, has led to the arrest and molestation of their people by the vigilante group.

The Hausas are also angry over the non-arrival of relief materials promised them by the Federal Government after the ethnic clash in June 1999 in which many of the survivors lost their property.

Hausas worry over aftermath of Sagamu crisis

By Olumide Bajulaiye, Abeokuta

Expressing their grievances in an exclusive chat with Daily Trust in Abeokuta yesterday, the secretary of the Hausa community in the area, (Maga Takardar Sarkin Hausawa), Alhaji Mohammed Sani Aliyu said the small quantity of food stuff provided by government after the crisis as relief material was nothing compared to what they expected. Hear him; "so many people

are now homeless, what we want is compensation for the damages done to us during the crisis, but the government has neglected us."

He pointed out that victims of similar occurrences in Kano, Kaduna and Lagos States had received appropriate compensations, and wondered why the case of Sagamu was different.

Alhaji Aliyu noted that the demand for compensation was reinforced on a recent visit to president Obasanjo in the company of the state's deputy governor, and wondered why nothing had been done to assist them to rebuild their homes, and replace other property destroyed during the crisis.

"We are now calling on the Federal Government to please come and help us. President Obasanjo has promised us, the Senate Committee was here, they also promised, governor Osoba, Speaker of the House of Representatives, all promised, but two years after, nothing has happened," he lamented.

On the molestation of Hausas by the vigilante group, Alhaji Mohammed Aliyu called on the Akarigbo of Remoland, Oba Dr. Micheal Adinyi for the inclusion of the Hausas in the vigilante group, alleging that some of his tribesmen were being molested and arbitrarily arrested by the group.

He said the Hausas were excluded from the vigilante group after the crisis, and called for their reinstatement to avoid communication problems.

"If someone comes from Kano at night and cannot speak Yoruba, he would be arrested. Most of our people have been unjustly arrested," he complained.

logue. Students must learn to give and take. In consultation you cannot win all. You win some, you lose some. In consultation you do not dictate. You do not say this is what we want or nothing else. The Vice Chancellor must go."

Further reminded the students that justice was a three way traffic-justice for the complainant; justice for the accused, and justice for the society whose laws have been breached, saying students should not define justice along their lines.

Urging them to resist being used by those he called "fifth columnists, disgruntled lecturers and unstable politicians," he advised the students against acting on the spur of the moment.



Musiliu Smith, IGP

tivate a culture of peace, a culture of dialogue. Students must promote and sustain a culture of peace. They must break away from the vicious circle of cultism, violence and begin to see themselves as true leaders of tomorrow," he emphasised.

Warning the students that it was wrong for them to believe that the law exempt them by virtue of being students, he appealed to them to avoid reacting recklessly and lawlessly at the slightest provocation.

"Do not fight a course on which you do not have adequate information," he said. He cited a recent case in Lagos when students went on rampage on a false story that one of their students had been killed by the police. According to the IG, "it turned out that the reported victim was neither a student of UNILAG nor killed."

Mr. Smith identified confrontation as what brings students and the police on collision course saying the consultation and consolidation were better options.

According to him, "democracy expects that students must consult and dia-

CLO condemns OPC

From Samson Ojo, Lagos

The Civil Liberties Organization (C.L.O), has condemned the recent attacks on the Police by members of Oodua People's Congress (OPC).

In a press release made available to Daily Trust and signed by Ugochukwu Okezie, the organisation's head of campaign, the CLO called on leaders of the OPC to critically rethink their operations and strategies in line with the new democratic environment and adopt dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts rather than resorting to violence.

The CLO noted that the

helpless masses suffer loss of life and property whenever violence broke out between security agents and such groups as the OPC.

CLO, therefore urged the OPC to exercise restraint in its operation and called on the Police to desist from employing excessive force in dealing with civil organization and individuals.

The organization reiterated that it was wrong for the OPC members to take Laws into their hands by burning down 11 Police stations and killing Policemen.

It noted that for quite

some time now, members of the OPC and the Nigerian Police have been engaged in bloody encounters that have taken its toll on lives and property with no side taking responsibility for the resultant break down of law and order in the state.

The CLO therefore, called on the government to constitute a panel of inquiry into the immediate and remote causes of the incessant running battle between the OPC and men of the Nigeria Police Force in Lagos and bring to book culprits of the recurring battle between the OPC and the Nigeria Police

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NEWS

Police boss calls for review of mental laws

Dr. Ejiro Akpowowo, the Commissioner of Police in charge of police hospital in Ikoyi, Lagos, has urged the Federal Government to review the nation's mental laws to enable the police function effectively in dealing with cases of wandering destitutes.

Speaking on mental illness and human rights at a

community enlightenment campaign organised by the hospital and the Association of Friends of the hospital to mark this year's World Health Day, Akpowowo said that most of the laws inherited from the colonial era were obsolete.

"It is very disheartening that most of our obsolete mental laws inherited from the colonial era have not

been reviewed," he said.

He pointed out that it had hindered the police from removing vagrant psychotics/destitutes from the streets, even when they constituted a danger to the people and their environment.

He explained that the police ought to obtain permission from the court to remove such persons from

the streets, as doing otherwise would be violating their fundamental human rights.

The police boss noted that the problem was escalating because the government cared little for such persons, contrary to what obtained in developed countries where vagrant psychotics were catered for in psychiatric institutions and destitutes catered for in special homes.

He said that to resolve the problem of vagrant psychotics/destitutes in the country, there should be collaboration between the police and mental health institutions to fashion out strategic policies for the well being of destitutes.

Ejiro also stressed the need for an efficient national health insurance scheme with free health care for the mentally ill and an enabling environment for their rehabilitation.

This year's celebration with the global theme: "Stop Exclusion, Dare to Care", featured other lectures on "mental health and youth" by Dr. Omogun of the Education Foundation, University of Lagos, "mental Health and HIV/AIDS infection by Group Captain G.P.T. Yakassai.

High expectations as Oshiomhole meets Obasanjo today

Expectations are high in Abuja in anticipation of a visit to President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday by the NLC President, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole.

A correspondent of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the opposition of the Labour Congress to government's plan to deregulate the fuel distribution sector of the nation's economy, was at the root of the high expectations.

The Federal Government had said that it was working on the recommendations of a special committee it set up to find solutions to the

unending problem of fuel scarcity by accepting the deregulation option.

The NLC, on the other hand, argued that there were less-painful options to take on the issue, which would not lead to untoward hardship for the populace.

The deregulation controversy, which had raged since the beginning of the year, led the NLC to stage nationwide protest marches to press home its case.

As the controversy raged, President Obasanjo was quoted as telling a delegation of the PDP Youth Wing from the Southeast that petrol would not cost more than N40 a litre when government finally deregulated the sector.

Oshiomhole is also expected to discuss the issue of the 25 per cent increase in the salaries of civil servants with the president and the lingering delays in the payment of salaries.

When salaries were increased last year, Government and Labour agreed on another increase for this year, but Obasanjo had said that the agreement would be binding if the economy improved.



Adams Oshiomhole, NLC President.

NGOs raise hope for people living with HIV/AIDS

Nigerians living with the deadly HIV/AIDS now have the hope of living a meaningful life as two U.S.-based Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), on Tuesday in Lagos launched what they called "Operation Heart-to-Heart (Africa)".

"Operation Heart-to-Heart" anti-AIDS campaign involves counselling people to go for voluntary testing and the initiative will assist them in getting adequate treatment through a combination of high nutrition and chemotherapy," the facilitator of the project, Princess Jennifer Olanrewaju Lee, told a media briefing to formally launch the campaign in Lagos.

"Operation heart-to-heart" believes that with hearts touching hearts in love and in care, the victory won against small pox, tuberculosis, polio, and other diseases will be re-enacted against HIV/AIDS in Africa."

To achieve that, she said that the organisation would plant for the first time in Nigeria, a tree called Moringa, from Senegal, at the inauguration of the organisation's annual health fair/awareness campaign.

According to her, the Moringa tree, which grows to a height of about 15 feet in one year, contains high nutritional elements essential for building the body's immunity, adding that would flag off the tree planting

campaign in different parts of the country.

"The Moringa tree project, an initiative of the church world services, has helped many malnourished people in different parts of Senegal to get back to their feet" Olanrewaju Le said.

"The entire project is targeted at the masses who cannot afford hospital treatment. Poverty is the root of all diseases and if dealt with, people will be disease free.

The co-ordinator of the project named other partners involved in campaign as global initiative for AIDS Nutritional Therapy (GIANT) and Endurance and Love Organisation (ELO).

Abba-Gana canvasses support for FG

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Alhaji Mohammed Abba-Gana, has urged the people of Borno to support the Federal Government and work toward the unity of the country.

Abba-Gana made the call in Biu while speaking on behalf of three other personalities from Borno South Senatorial district honoured by the Biu Emirate Development Association (BEDA).

He cautioned against "all forms of divisive tendencies" and stressed the need to "join hands in building a virile and vibrant state where all have equal opportunities and a sense of belonging".

He commended BEDA for the reception and honour accorded them, assuring that they would do their best while their doors would always be open for meaningful suggestions and constructive criticisms.

Speaking earlier, the chairman of BEDA, Alhaji

Shettima Saleh said BEDA organised the reception to honour the illustrious sons of southern Borno Senatorial district and to show appreciation to the Borno and Federal Governments for giving the people hope and a sense of belonging in the present administration.

While noting that the reception was also meant to promote better understanding among the people of the senatorial district and the state in general, Saleh tasked those honoured to demonstrate a high sense of transparency, honesty and consistency in the discharge of their responsibilities.

In his speech, the Governor of Borno State, Alhaji Mala Kachala, who was the special guest of honour at the occasion, also tasked those honoured to make the state proud by living up to expectations in serving the nation.

Kachala gave an assurance of his

administration's commitment to serve all sections of the state without any discrimination.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that those honoured along with the Minister of the FCT, included Senator Abubakar Mahdi, representing Borno South Senatorial District and Ambassador Saidu Pindar, Nigeria's Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe



Mohammed Abba-Gana, FCT Minister.

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DAILY TRUST

EDITORIAL
Musical chairs in the Senate

On Tuesday, April 10, the Senate at a stormy sitting revived the Senator Idris Kuta panel report on contracts at the National Assembly between June 4, 1999 and July 17, 2000. In doing so, it adopted the report of the committee, headed by Senator Victor Oyoyo, that was appointed to harmonise the grey areas pointed out by Senators at their plenary session when the report was submitted in August last year.

The Oyoyo report confirmed the aspects of the Kuta panel report which indicted Senators Chuba Okadigbo, Gbenga Aluko, Rowland Owie, Abubakar Girei, Florence Ita-Giwa, Haruna Abubakar, Samaila Mamman, Ifeanyi Arurume and Muhammed Aruwa. In adopting the harmonization committee's report, the Senate also upheld the aspect which recommended that the indicted Senators be handed over to law enforcement agencies for prosecution while barring them from holding offices.

At the same sitting, the Senate voted to investigate the importation of adulterated petroleum products in 1997 and 1998, which reads: tenure of Haruna Abubakar at PPMC.

The Senate decision, as pointed out by the indicted Senators, was in disregard of an Abuja High Court order last August. The order restrained the Inspector-General of Police and the Attorney-General of the Federation from arresting the Senators or initiating any criminal prosecution on the basis of the Kuta panel report. Not surprisingly, after the adoption of the Oyoyo report, the indicted Senators hurried to the Inspector-General of Police and the Attorney-General urging them to intervene to "prevent a travesty of justice".

On the face of it, it is commendable the highest lawmaking body in the country, should seek to investigate allegations of corruption against its own. However, the under currents in the politics of Senate leadership showed that there was more to it than meets the eye. The Senate President, Anyim Pius Anyim, according to reports, got wind that a coup was in the offing against him a few days before he left on an official trip to Cuba. As the story goes, the group loyal to the former deputy Senate President, Senator Haruna Abubakar, was not satisfied with the leadership at the Senate. According to sources, Haruna was to have got his old job back if he facilitated Okadigbo's downfall by resigning as recommended in the Kuta report. But with the election of Senator Ibrahim Mantu as deputy Senate President, that gentleman's agreement was apparently breached. Hence his resolve to redress the betrayal. He allegedly found not a few helping hands from those in the Okadigbo group.

The Senate President, on receiving the information, apparently revived the Kuta panel report. Although last August a committee was empanelled to harmonise the Kuta report under Senator Danladi Bamaayi, he was hastily replaced with Senator Victor Oyoyo as it was believed Bamaayi is an Okadigbo man. According to sources, the Oyoyo panel did not hold a formal meeting. Of the seven members, only three knew what the committee did and that was reflected in the number of those who signed its report.

The tough stance taken by the Senate President against his opponents is believed to be because it became apparent to him that rival groups mistook the olive branch he was extending for a sign of weakness. Soon after, he had flying that within a short time (10 days) he had amassed enough wealth to buy a mansion in his Amagu hometown which allegedly cost between N15 and N40 million. But this was swiftly countered by an elaborate meet the press chat at Rockview Hotel last November.

After this first impeachment move failed, the anti-Anyim group changed tactics. Many started staying away from sittings deliberately suggesting to the press that Anyim's tenure was lacklustre which was responsible for lack of quorum. Anyim threatened to notify the constituencies of absentee Senators.

The first signs that the Senate President was up to some hard tackle was after the return of the Senate from the Calabar retreat. He reshuffled the committee memberships, promoting two members of the Okadigbo group, Abubakar Girei and Florence Ita-Giwa, to attack him pointing out that it was a breach of an agreement Anyim had with their group. While Anyim was on the Cuba trip, the group became more desperate and documents alleging that the Senate President was committing the same sins his predecessors were accused of were circulating. The handling of the purchase of brand new cars for Senate committees and certain expenditures by wives and aides of principal officers were the subjects of such documents. This must have prompted Anyim's resolve to disorganise his adversaries, a job for which the exhumation of the Kuta report was found handy.

Whatever the brinkmanship in the Senate, most Nigerians who elected the distinguished Senators into office in 1998 did not bargain for this type of musical chairs. The constant changes and rumours of changes at the upper legislative arm which some trace to the republican nature of the area to which the office is zoned has led not a few people into believing that the Senators are an unserious lot. This is certainly not the case, knowing the calibre of Nigerians in the upper house.

While expressing confidence in the ability of the Senate to squarely address the problems facing Nigerians, Daily Trust believes that this constant resort to impeachment, blackmail and unwholesome methods to gain or hold power will only lead to more dissipation of energies at the expense of the electorate. Similarly, we advise those fuelling the crisis from outside the Senate to realize that this cannot be in the overall interest of the very democracy for which they are the direct beneficiaries.

THURSDAY COLUMN
Lamentations for Gindiri

By Nick Dazang

Tragedy has a way of elevating the obscure and the backwater to the glare of limelight. Consider: Before death came and coldly snuffed out the lives of about thirty pupils at Government Secondary School, Bwalbwang in Gindiri, this village on the eastern fringes of Plateau State simply remained nondescript and forlorn.

In the wake of the Bwalbwang tragedy, however, Gindiri became a cynosure and a beehive of shuttlings. It was the subject of several gubernatorial visits; the subject of a presidential commiseration; the subject of a national outpouring of grief by Nigerians torn by the poignancy of the tragedy and the subject of tomes of feature articles and editorials mourning the passing on of these schoolgirls. And probably for the first time in its annals, Gindiri made it to the pages of *Time*, the flagship of the world's news magazines.

But to cast Gindiri in the mould of the nondescript is akin to erecting a monument to untruth and short-changing the village in the most pernicious fashion. For Gindiri once was – and is – the cradle of spirituality and knowledge. It was in Gindiri, in the 1920s, that the Christian missionaries of the Sudan United Mission and Sudan Interior Mission set up shop. From here they fanned out and proselytised soberly and sedately and not in the damn-shall-perish fashion of the latter-day Pentecostal zealots who set store, not by salvation through Christ, but prosperity. Apart from evangelism, the missionaries set up a chain of schools which were to provide intellectual nourishment and philosophical elevation for most elites in the Middle Belt area. The schools included: Demonstration Primary School; School for the Blind; Women Boarding School; Gindiri Teacher Training College, (TTC); Boys Secondary School, (BSS); Girls High School (GHS) and much later the College of Education Gindiri. Indeed, and in fact, the Government Secondary School, Bwalbwang was until the early 1980s when the Plateau state government took over its affairs, purely a community effort aimed at complementing the other schools hitherto set up by the missionaries, hence its symbolic name *Bwalbwang*. *Bwalbwang* is believed to be, in antiquity, the spiritual cradle of the *Pyem* people who inhabit Gindiri.

It is a measure of its status as an intellectual and spiritual wellspring that not a few prominent Nigerians have drunk from Gindiri's ennobling fountain. They include: Chief Solomon Lar, AVM Winston Aleiyideino, Major-General Iliya Bisalla, J. D. Gomwalk, Senator Ibrahim Mantu, Rear Admiral S. B. Atukum, Wilberforce Juta, Brigadier Samuel Chamah, Mrs. Grace Danjuma, Mrs. Julie Useni, Mrs. Rosaline Abashiya, Mrs. Valentina Dariye, Chief Benjamin Chaha, Jolly Tanko Yusuf, Captain Tahal, J. Y. Lot, Professor Dakum Shown, Professor S. G. Tyoden, Dr. Bitrus Gani, Dr. Emmanuel Miri, Ahmadi Damshakal, Governor Ahmed Mu'azu, S. D. Makama, Gideon Orkar, Ibrahim Bagobiri, Jonathan Ishaku, Senator Iliya Adu etc.

These diadems set store by excellence in walk Professor distinguished in their different classmate at the University the apocryphal legend – and classmate at the University Anya Amos was reported to have made an aggregate of six distinctions (of the first class or Ex-1 variety) in his school certificate examination and he was said to have promised afterwards that if any scholar matched his intellectual prowess, he would offer him/her an automatic scholarship. Of course, Gindiri could not have achieved its renown in academic matters without the yeomanry of its committed teachers who maintained its high standard over the years. They include: David Lot, Akila Machunga, Barnabas Dusu, Kaka Amma, Rake Baleri, Bise Dazang, T. K. Gagara, Yohanna Dang, Tafida Jwanchin, Stephen Gutip, S. T. Kallamu, Derek Joy, M. K. Hirse, Tommy Yale, Mrs. Sweatman etc.

Apart from the high discipline that obtained in Gindiri, everything about it was in the Ivy League: the standards were high and rigorous. As a result, they always did very well and competed with such well-regarded schools as Government College Keffi, Government Secondary School, Kuru, St. Joseph's, Vom and St. Louis, and St. John's in Jos. Because their teachers were always committed, they excelled in sports. And the mission compound, the area encompassing all the schools put together, was a picturesque and postcard delight: neat and well kept, its lawns were always well-trimmed its gardens manicured almost to perfection. As a consequence of all these, the schools in Gindiri were not only the first choice for most primary school pupils in the then Benue-Plateau, a visit thereafter, even for some of us who were born in the mission compound, was a delight and a pilgrimage of sorts.

After such a long time, and in the aftermath of the G.S.S. Bwalbwang tragedy, this writer took advantage of a friend's wedding in Gindiri to proceed on what I imagined was another pilgrimage and an opportunity to commiserate with some relatives who lost their wards in the inferno. This writer's shock started at the junction from Mangu leading to Gindiri. Bumping from one porthole to the next crater, the road was in quite a state. The bumpy ride continued thenceforth up to Gindiri. Mercifully, I thought excitedly, the wedding was taking place at Ungwan Mamman, smack opposite the mission

compound. Little did I know that the bumpy road was a prelude to a poignant day.

As soon as the marriage vows were exchanged, this writer sneaked into the mission compound. Instead of a lush and crew-cut lawn and manicured gardens oozing with effervescent air, the compound simply looked desolate and stale. It was like a scene out of a war-ravaged village during World War II: the houses were in a state of disrepair, wearing coats of paint that had seen better days. There were no gardens in sight. I stood there transfixed to the ground rueing at the idea of the pilgrimage in the first instance.

If the schools were in session, I would have attempted to interview one or two students. But on second thought, I felt an interview would have been even more revealing and therefore more painful. From the desolation of the mission compound and the wizened and wrinkled faces at the church, some of which were robust and full of life less than ten years ago, I could conjecture what was happening to the schools. Like the larger, desolate Nigerian community betrayed by its leaders, the mission compound has gone to the dogs and one is certain too that the high academic standards the schools here used to boast of must have plummeted to their depths.

Gindiri's and the mission compound's travails should not however give way to despair. Gindiri has produced its own share of Nigeria's *eminentes grise* – influential personages who have excelled in their own callings or professions and personages who have done well for themselves. This is therefore payback time: the time for Gindiri's many accomplished alumni to give back to it some of what they acquired in terms of ennobling values and knowledge. One acknowledges that some of its Old Boy/Girl chapters such as the (GOSA) in Lagos have always been forthcoming with token support for some of these schools. But the old boys/girls need to go beyond tokenism to something concrete and more enduring: hostels can be built or refurbished; textbooks and computers can be bought for the libraries; equipment can be bought or donated for the laboratories; school buses can be bought to take students on excursions; prizes can be sponsored for various subjects; sports facilities can be provided or fixed and the remuneration of poorly paid staff can be supplemented to motivate the teachers and shore up sagging standards.

Though this writer is not an alumnus of any of the schools in Gindiri, this village and its schools once stood for some uplifting values and the old boys/girls who benefited from these values most should make sure these do not pass them. Beside, as a former alumnus, Mrs. Valentina Dariye, invigorating these values and her husband, Chief Joshua Dariye, less endowed with the aspirations and the values ("For the light and truth") which Gindiri stands for. It is a measure of his compassion that in the aftermath of the inferno at G.S.S. Bwalbwang, he did not only pay repeated visits to condole the people, he laid the foundation for the building of a new and befitting female hostel for the school. He should reinforce this by fixing the Mangu-Gindiri road and if possible extend it to Kaduna.

At least that way I will be guaranteed my occasional pilgrimages.

LETTER OF THE DAY

Distinguished Senator Adamu Augie

Tuesday 27th of March 2001 will be a day that the Nigerian populace will always put into memory since the demise of a great Gentleman, Senator Adamu B. Augie *Wazirin Argungu*. Senator Augie is remembered by many for different reasons. To a lot of people he was just a Senator, while to others he was only a one time Deputy Governor of Kebbi State during Babangida's Administration. Still, to others he was the *Wazirin Argungu* that touched the lives of hundreds of people in and around Kebbi State. He will no doubt be remembered for his eminent role in the making of Kebbi State and his contribution to the state and Federal Government in general. During his tenure as the

Deputy Governor of Kebbi State, education was extended to all the nooks and corners of the state.

He was to be nominated to contest for the Governorship of Sokoto State before Kebbi State was carved out. That now confined him to the post of Deputy Governor which the people of Kebbi State gladly accepted.

The vacuum created by his death remains, but we are consoled that he had been taken by Allah to a better place. For sure his memory can never be erased from our minds. We are grateful to Allah for Waziri's life and the many achievements made a by him both in Senate and in Kebbi state.

Sabiru Bello, Birnin-Kebbi, Kebbi state.

Opinion

ASUU: Losing the public relations' battle (once) again

By Ahmed M. Salik

We are once more in a season of strike by university lecturers. Boycott of lectures by academic staff of universities has been the dominant feature of our educational system in the last fifteen or so years. The crisis is often preceded by the usual series of meetings by the national executive of the Academic Staff Union of Universities and notices to the Federal Government. Either because of improper communication or inadequate articulation of their complaints, the Nigerian public hardly ever rises to the defence of the ASUU. It is unlikely that the public, whose children bear the brunt of disruptions in the academic system would be indifferent on these matters. The perennial lack of support for ASUU's "struggles" is to be found more in at least the public's fatigue with the crisis if not total disagreement with ASUU's demands.

The National Universities Commission (N.U.C) has just published the details of ASUU's litany of demands. A perceptive reading of these demands if they are indeed accurate, would fully illuminate why the ASUU and various governments including the present democratic one, perpetually fail to reach a lasting agreement. It would also explain why ASUU fails to garner the support of other trade unions, even within the university system, nor from parents association etc. Question is why does ASUU fail to mobilize the support of other segments of society to

give teeth to its justifiable struggle to revamp our long-collapsed educational system? Is the problem with the message or with the messenger? Or is it with the manner of delivery? Is the tactic and the strategy of ASUU's struggle somehow flawed? Can and could ASUU have adopted a more effective tactic and or strategy? Why is it for instance that in over a decade and a half even though all the education ministers except perhaps one had been drawn from the academia such ministers failed to push through the case of their constituencies. From Jubril Aminu to M. T. Liman to Borishade the problem has defied solution as ASUU's demands seem unsatisfiable. If we blame the insensitivity of the military dictatorships of Babangida and Abacha to our educational system, could we in all fairness accuse the present democratic Obasanjo government of the same?

The perennial strike of ASUU in the last decade and a half bears an uncanny resemblance to the university student's "struggles" of the 1975. It is no mean coincidence that many of the undergraduates of those days are today prominent and active members of ASUU. They are now not students but senior lecturers and even professors, not members of student union exco but of a trade union called ASUU. Nonetheless their tactic has still revolves around "boycott of lectures". Granted now they proceed on a more mature approach of "negotiation", "Strike notices" etc. But in essence how fundamentally dif-

ferent is the realism/reasonableness of their demands as professors/senior lecturers compared to when they were undergraduates? Let me say from the on-set that I agree in toto with ASUU's assessment of the state of education in this country. I agree the universities are under-funded, academic freedom is curtailed and infrastructure are in decay or have collapsed. The decay and collapse in the educational sector, is real and therefore incontestable. However, there is decay and collapse in all sectors, healthcare, transportation, law enforcement etc. Therefore, where there are contending demands for available or dwindling resources, public policy has to tread carefully. No sector does or could have adequate allocations even in the most normal of circumstances. Suppose every union in the sector that is under funded, lacks autonomy or "freedom" goes on strike to press for its demands? What will be made of the economy and of the nation?

Still on the diagnosis of the nation's educational sector by ASUU, there appears something inherently self-serving about ASUU's position. ASUU's stand can be compared to that of a patient who visits a doctor to complain of certain symptoms. The patient, in his self-assuredness insists that he knows not only what the ailment is, but insists on a particular prescription which the doctor must scribble on paper so that the patient could take to the pharmacy and collect the necessary drugs at his own expense. The piper must not dictate to the doctor. The academics want their freedom but they also cherish government sub-ventions, prop-

erty development funds etc. This is plainly impracticable and unrealistic. They cannot eat their cake and have it!

It needs no soothsayer to see that a lasting solution lies in a meaningful compromise. This compromise would entail some of the following. One, because of the importance of education as the only means of upward social mobility, we cannot afford to throw it open to market forces such that only the highest bidders could acquire education. Some measure of government subsidy must therefore be maintained at all levels of our educational system. Our budgetary process should be geared towards the allocation of internationally prescribed percentages to the educational sector. At the same time, areas of wastages and unnecessary duplication should be avoided. For instance some elements of the much-maligned World Bank prescriptions should be selectively implemented. Production of graduates should be closely tied to the needs and absorptive capacities of the economy.

Either we change the focus of our university training to produce graduates that can be self-employed, or curtail the number of those that come out and because of over production or inadequate training can not be easily absorbed in the already over bloated public sector. Surely the suggestions could be further expanded. Whichever way, however, a final resolution is what is desired. It would be best achieved through a compromise and a "give and take" from both parties.

Ahmed M. Salik, is of the Reconstruction Economic (NERFUND), Abuja.

Obasanjo's war against poverty

By Sule Tanko

Poverty to me like to many others is more dangerous than Aids. It is, therefore, one monster that destroys not only its victim, but also his entire family, the state and even the country at large. In fact poverty possesses the capability of not only destabilizing but also destroying with time the global village if left unchecked and uncontrolled.

Realizing the dangers of such a monster, and what it is capable of doing towards negating the desired success of the socio-political cum economic and techno-industrial growth of a country like Nigeria, president Olusegun Obasanjo like his counterparts, the former Heads of State came up with a beautiful blue print of action.

The birth of the Poverty Alleviation Council programmes no doubt brings with it happiness and joy to the millions of Nigerians. The newly introduced council though not entirely an innovation nevertheless differs from most of the other poverty alleviation programmes; this time around it is a new outfit, for a new millennium, with new zeal, new ideas, and a renewed determination and sincerity of purpose for the betterment of Nigerians. For more effective control and improved services the head of state himself for the first time is the chairman of the Council, while ministers from ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Education, Health etc. are members.

For the dream to become a reality, Present Obasanjo presented last year to the honourable members a special budget proposal of 10 billion Naira with which to lubricate the smooth operations of the council, and with the subsequent approval, Nigerians are optimistic that the end of most of the unwanted societal problems including social conflagration, arson, vandalisation, robbery, kidnapping, brain-drain, caused largely by idleness and absence of job opportunities is at sight.

In order to make poverty Y2k compliant through deproliferation of poverty alleviation programmes, President Obasanjo set up in July 1999 an Eight-man panel under the chairmanship of Alhaji Ahmed Joda, a renowned industrialist of international repute. The panel was to streamline and rationalize poverty alleviation institutions and agencies in the country. After the exercise, when report of the committee reached the office of the Secretary to the Federal Government Chief Ufot Ekaete October 21, seven poverty alleviation programmes set up by former administration were pencilled down to go. Among those to be scrapped are Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Economic Reconstruction Fund NERFUND, the Nigeria Agricultural Land Development Authority NALDA and the Federal Agricultural Co-ordinating Unit (FACU), others include the Agricultural Projects Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (APMEU).

The panel also recommended an umbrella-body to coordinate the activities of several other poverty alleviation programmes that were lucky to escape Joda's dagger, which include National Directorate for Employment NDE, the People Bank of Nigeria PBN, the Nigeria Agricultural and Co-operative Bank NACB, and the Nigerian Agricultural

Among the poverty alleviation programmes recommended for scrapping is the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) under the pioneer Director-General and Chief Executive, Engineer Abdullahi Aliyu.

FEAP under the dynamic leadership of Engineer Aliyu was able to penetrate into the hinterlands of Nigeria changing for the better not only the economic bases of the cattle rearers, fisherman, palm wine tappers, large and small scale agriculturalists, shoemakers, barbers, bakers via cooperative societies, but also changed their life styles. Other beneficiaries include Adudu producers, Akushi producers, Kosai bakers, Carpenters, Plumbers, Butchers etc.

Therefore, for the new Poverty Alleviation Programme of the present administration to succeed and impact positively on the masses, it is imperative that Engineer Abdullahi Aliyu be allowed to serve as the Administrative head of the nascent outfit. This would enable him bring his administrative expertise to bear -for Dr. Aliyu has been an authority on poverty alleviation, having written so many books and presented numerous papers at local and International fora on same. In addition to being the chief executive of the erstwhile FEAP, the Engineer had served as the secretary of the committee that streamlined the poverty alleviation agencies.

That would amount to placing round peg on a round hole and consequently ensuring that the desired results would better be achieved. Nigerians will then bid bye to poverty and begin to cherish democracy more, and endear Chief Obasanjo to their minds. When the news reached the ears of Nigerians that at long last Engineer Aliyu was named as the permanent secretary of the nationally applauded Poverty Alleviation Programme, the whisper on the lips of most is that the long awaited medicine, for the dreaded ailment has been found.

Sule Tanko, wrote in from Jalingo, Taraba state.

We have to deregulate!

We are back at it again. Anyway we have not been out of it in the real sense not until we get hooked eventually. Arguments for and against it are being sharpened and recycled as the forces involve make a last ditch stand. What in hell are we harping about? The saint called subsidy? Oh, no! Some others would appreciate it as the devil hell bent on seeing the people suffer. The moral question of it seems to be the one holding ground now. Its politics and economics seemed to be on the decline but the dividend of it is obvious. What with 2003 on the burner. Aaah! We have never had it so rough, have we? Since the colossus called subsidy removal made its debut in the wake of deregulation in the 1980s, we have fought running battles with the regime whose understanding, of the question rest within a convoluted political and economic prism. In a nutshell, subsidy removal tallied with the de-emphasis of the notion of big government and the adoption of leaner

government and private sector initiative in the economy. The argument was and still is that government spend a lot of resources subsidising these ventures -resources that could be used well in providing infrastructures the evolving role of government in the new economics. So why do we expend so much to get so little, with the private sector both organised and unorganised subverting government intentions through sharp practices that profited them and other close neighbours? The way forward is to deregulate.

With the way the president embraces the gospel of deregulation, you would think that his short stay in government, had made him under-gone a massive philosophical re-orientation. Indeed he has. He is so convinced in his belief that only the removal of subsidy could stave the perennial oil crisis that he has since build up a lot of supporters. Unlike in the anti-corruption campaign, where, as he admitted in Kuru recently, he's a lone gunman. In this area he's bound

to meet a shocker. Indeed the president is so out of touch with target practice that all his aims have since missed and have been embarrassing to him politically.

Deregulation is an unstoppable movement in the global economy. So much is it a part of the global culture that there is a spiritual side to the business. Until recently there are quite a few number of churches and religious organisation catering for the needs and welfare of the people. But today the sector has witnessed a mass expansion that is unending, partly the product of the economic and political fallout of less government involvement in affairs. The sector has had such phenomenal growth that opposition to further consolidation of deregulation could be viewed as counterproductive to further expansion in the field. The silence and the mostly ambiguous position of this vital institution in the on-going debate is deafening. Indeed with such tacit support, deregulation is here to stay. What is in doubt, however, is the polemics in the service of

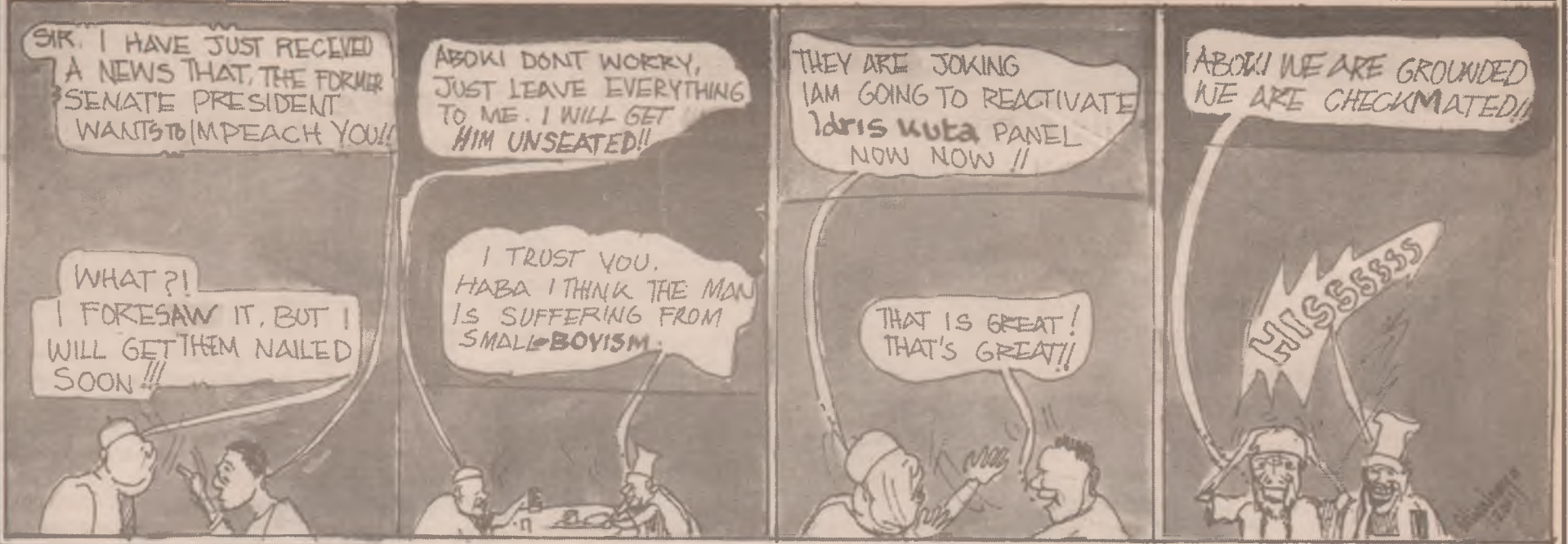
deregulating the most controversial of them oil.

National contingencies should be deployed into checking the aftermath of the increase in price of fuels, which is beyond local economics and politics, to planning for the fallouts of the removal. Like most things in this global economics, our role is to play along and somehow win some relief for the people rather than engaging in unnecessary public dissipation of energy, in a process that we have very little control over.

As I have stated elsewhere, we can only delay the removal for a while but we cannot avoid it. For in the end there will be no respite for the government, the opposition and indeed everyone else, until there is a "correct pricing of petroleum products in Nigeria". What would be most difficult to accept, after we have been thoroughly bashed into believing that only removal of subsidy will result in constant and un-interrupted supply of the product, is the existence of scarcity.

Adoyi Onoja, is of the Art Scope Inc, Jos.

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YOUR LETTERS

Fuel: deregulation or complication?

Why must every government hammers on deregulation of fuel as if it is the only source of revenue generation for the country? Have we not depended on exportation of cash crops as our major source of revenue generation? It would not be altogether wrong if government subsidizes the price of fuel to improve the quality of life of the citizens in the spirit of welfarism. Petrol is the life-wire of every aspect of our lives. Any increase in its price will mean increase in the cost of transportation, feeding, manufacturing, and above all, quality and standard of living. Those who are worse hit are those at the bottom as those at the top have the

necessary antidote to resist the biting effects of deregulation. Take a retrospective assessment of the political past of the country. Every government justifies deregulation and increase in prices of petroleum products on the bases of better pricing of petrol in International market, provision of essential infrastructures, creation of employment, regular supply for local consumption, improvement in the standard of living of the citizenry, among other reasons. However, instead of achieving these ordinarily lofty objectives, the scarcity of the commodity becomes more severe after the deregulation and life becomes expensive and worthless.

Some critics maintain

that the incessant scarcity of fuel could be artificially motivated to sell the idea of deregulation. Some others believe that there is laxity on the part of government agencies like the police, customs service and others who are in charge of checkmating corrupt dealing especially the hoarding of fuel and diverting of same across our boarders. Yet, some other ones strongly believe that even though government has instituted the anti-corruption law and is about to consolidate the activities of Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, bureaucratic bottlenecks and top level legislation regarding the distribution and marketing of petroleum products need to be reconsidered critically.

Advocates of a welfarist

state are of the view that a responsible government must always carry its people along especially on matters of fiscal policies and welfare. To this end, leaders are to imagine themselves in the position of the down trodden, the pedestrians, the have-nots, the retched or the poor, the beggars and school children, in fact, the orphans, widows and widowers who constitute the larger part of the Nigerian population. By so doing, policies would be made flexible to make life meaningful for the average Nigerians and the confidence already reposed in the government would be reconsolidated.

Hammeed Bello, Fou'ad Lababidi Islamic Academy, Zone 3, Wuse-Abuja.

Calling on ABU alumni association

I am using this medium not to express my misgivings to the present leadership of this great association but to make my contribution known to you.

The 21 Century is a momentous one and should be accorded that distinction. The threat of marginalisation and many social ills can be assuaged by a coming together of great minds.

No challenge we face can be greater than that of a registration drive to mobilize many teeming alumni to join and formally register in this association.

This can be taken further by improving the current provision of number of chapter offices, starting with the metropolis.

There are many strategies to improve on the philanthropy of this association which include providing research grants and scholarships to disadvantaged but brilliant students across the country who are not fortunate enough to sponsor themselves to school. To be able to augment the strong leadership capabilities of the present alumnus we must co-opt a very vibrant public relations team, which will be

able to achieve the laudable goals and objectives of fund raising to increase the financial resources of the association and opening of an office in the FCT.

The future of ABU alumni association lies in its members and the efforts of its leadership to spread the association's philanthropic gestures across the nation.

Right now it might be hard to see the effect of such subtle changes but it won't be long before the essence catches up with us and therefore rapidly transform the views and perspective of the larger society partly influenced by this same association.

Personally have always thought the fight to enlighten, influence and assuage this generations was not a waste of time, not out of principle, but for practical reasons. Like every young man I have discussed so many pressing issues like financial assistance, student loans, scholarships and research grants, libraries, etc. These are issues that endear the minds of the young and furthermore leave a lasting memory for generation to come.

Engr. S. Nazif, SCC Nig. Ltd, Abuja.

Karaduwa zone is marginalised

I want to use this medium to revisit the continue marginalisation of Funtua Zone popularly known as Karaduwa Zone in Katsina State, by the Umaru Musa-led government and Obasanjo's administration.

The people of Karaduwa Zone occupied about eleven (11) Local Governments areas in Katsina state with

about thirty (30) districts i.e from Matazu to Sabawa Local Governments. The people of this zone are agitating for the creation of more Emirate in the area but the law makers from the other two zones i.e Katsina and Daura are kicking against the issue. This is against the peace and development of the state.

Also, the Obasanjo ad-

ministration neglected the people of the zone in terms of his Ministerial and Ambassadorial appointments whereby all his appointments came from either Katsina or Daura zone, which is against the culture of National character distribution.

Therefore, we call upon the Senate leader, M.T Liman and his colleagues in the Na-

tional Assembly representing the zone to come out and explain their roles on this appointment issues as our representatives. Lastly, the continuing marginalisation of Karaduwa Zone will make P.D.P to loose its supporters.

Babangida Garba, P.O. Box 79, M/Fashi, KRD Zone, Katsina.

Let Sarduana's dream be fulfilled

Like Martin Luther King of America, our dear Sarduana, Sir Ahmadu Bello also had a dream. He had a dream of a united, strong and prosperous North.

However, this dream is yet to be realised as it has been continuously shattered by his successor. Northern elites have been subverting this dream for years due to selfish reasons. Those of them in positions of authority think only about themselves and family to the detriment of the ordinary masses of the area.

Due to their selfish reason, they cannot use their

position and influence to develop the North. All their investments are either abroad or in the south-west forgetting that the North is in dire need of development and investing in the area through the establishment of industries will bring about this development. Our teeming graduates will be sure of employment, our rural areas will enjoy good roads, water and electricity.

Therefore, to fulfil Sarduana's dream, our elites need to change their strategy. They need to come together to form a united front in order to bring about development to the area. They are the need

for political and economic emancipation of the entire North.

Special attention should be paid to education, more media houses should be established while existing ones be strengthened. Industries should be established to take care of our teeming school leavers and to ensure round transformation.

The entire North more than ever before should be made to unite despite religion, tribal and ethnic differences in order that Sarduana's dream be realised.

Mustapha Babagana, 13B, Sule Road, Angwan Sarki, Kaduna.

Senator Khairat is a role model for Muslim women

Senator Khairat Gwadabe's usual veiled appearance marks her out as a role model for every Muslim woman no matter her position in the society.

Senator Khairat remains undaunted and refused to be intimidated despite the fact that her veiled disposition has earned her a nickname, "Sharia Senator" from the enemies of Islam.

Christians due to ignorance always have negative perception on the use of veil as they always view any woman with veil as primitive. But the question is: why are catholic and deeper life sisters always in veil? Are they not Christian?

The use of veil, if they must know, is compulsory for every Muslim woman as such its use should not be seen as primitive and

anti-social by Christians. Hauwa Baba Ahmed suffered the same attack when she was with N.T.A but remained undaunted.

So I urge Senator Khairat to inspite the ridicule and nickname, keep dressing in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

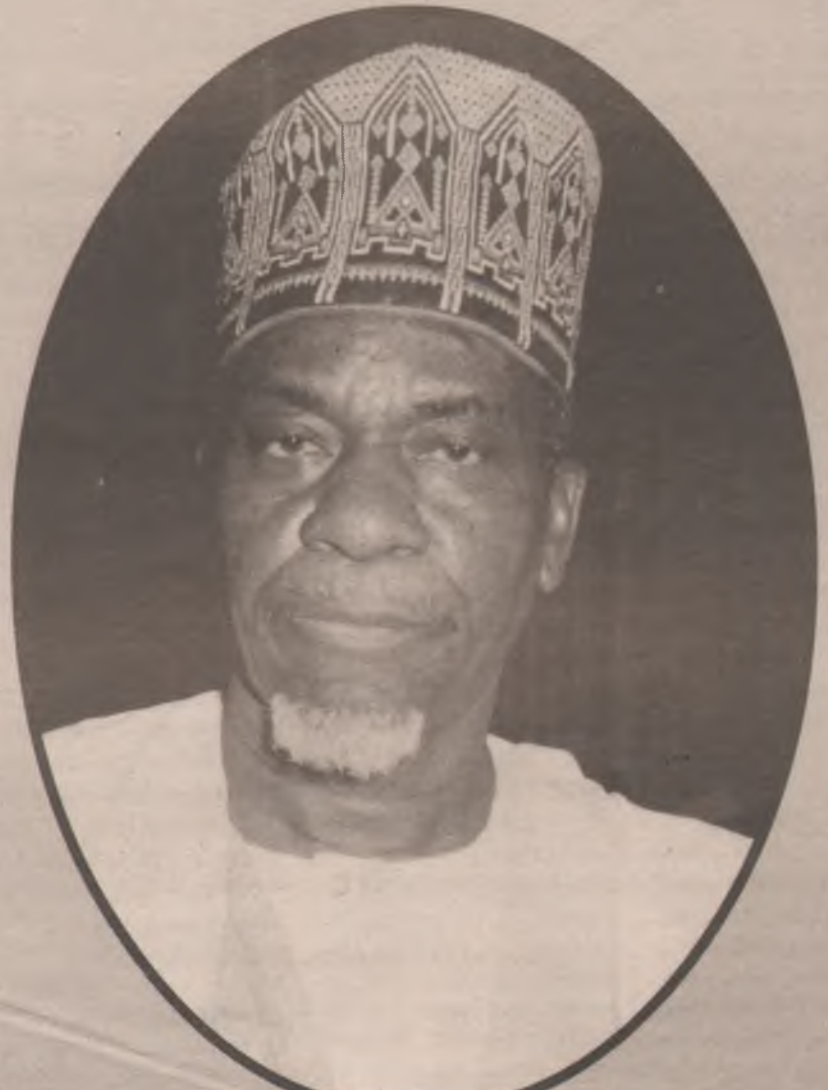
Murjanatu A. Sa'eed, Wadata Pharmacy, Jos.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

On behalf of Myself and the entire Staff of the Gombe State Ministry for Local Government and Community Development, we send our hearty Congratulations to a rare gem, gentleman and visionary leader on his 57th birthday.



His Excellency
ALH. ABUBAKAR HABU HASHIDU (Matawallen Dukku)
First Executive Governor, Gombe State



MALLAM JOAB KALLA
*Honourable Commissioner for Local Government
 and Community Development, Gombe State*

We wish you many happy and prosperous returns and are proud to associate ourselves with your laudable programmes and achievements.

*Long Live Governor Hashidu!
 Long Live Gombe State!!
 Long Live Federal Republic of Nigeria.!!!*

Signed:
MALLAM JOAB KALLA
Hon. Commissioner, Local Govt. and Community Development Gombe State

TRUST INTERNATIONAL

WORLD REPORT

US-China spy plane talks begin

Negotiators from the United States and China have begun talks in Beijing on the aftermath of the mid-air collision between an American spy plane and a Chinese fighter jet.

The holding of talks was part of the agreement under which the American crew were released last week after a diplomatic row that lasted 11 days.

Both sides appeared to be hardening their position ahead of talks that could influence long-term relations between the two countries.

China has so far given no indication that it is willing to return the plane and has made it clear it intends to push the US to end surveillance flights along the Chinese coast.

Beijing has also turned Wang Wei, the pilot who died as a result of the collision, into a national hero.

For its part, Washington is now openly blaming the Chinese pilot for the collision.

With its flight crew home, the main priority for the US side is now the return of its damaged spy plane.

With both sides so far apart, the chances of that happening any time soon do not look good.

On Tuesday, a US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the talks would largely focus on US demands for the return of its EP-3 surveillance aircraft.

"We want our airplane back... we're going to make that point. And we would expect a response," Mr Boucher said.

The plane was forced to make an emergency landing on Hainan Island following the 1 April incident over the South China Sea.

China has said it will not return the plane until an investigation into the incident



US Ambassador to China, Joseph Prueher, (L), shakes hands with a Chinese securityman as a US delegation leaves the embassy to the Chinese foreign ministry for talks yesterday. (AFP)

has been completed.

Beijing has also made it clear it wants an end to the American reconnaissance flights, which have been sus-

pending since the incident. But US officials said flights could resume as early as Thursday.

Each side still has a very different view of what happened in the mid-air collision.

On Tuesday, China reaffirmed its version that it was the US plane that caused the collision.

State prosecutors in the Philippines have

dropped a number of criminal charges against ousted president Joseph Estrada in order to focus on the main charge of economic plunder - punishable by death.

Ombudsman Aniano Desierto said on Tuesday that his office had filed a motion to withdraw five of eight charges, but added the case still had to be approved.

"The withdrawal was intended to allow the prosecu-

Genocide suspect pleads not guilty

Dragan Obrenovic, the man accused of carrying out the biggest atrocity of the Bosnian war pleaded not guilty to genocide before the UN war crimes court in The Hague yesterday.

Dragan Obrenovic was accused of being the acting commander of a Bosnian Serb brigade that killed over 5,000 men and boys at Srebrenica in 1995.

Mr Obrenovic appeared before the panel of UN judges nearly six years after the massacre at Srebrenica. The prosecutors alleged that troops under the command of Mr Obrenovic laid siege in July 1995 to the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia, an area declared a safe haven by the international community.

After forcing the Muslims to surrender, it is alleged that Obrenovic organised firing squads which summarily executed thousands of people.

It is also claimed that Obrenovic tried to cover up the evidence of the massacre by digging up many of the corpses and reburying the victims in secret mass graves.

Obrenovic's overall commander, General Radislav Krstic, is already on trial at The Hague.

Last month the prosecution played a tape in court of an intercepted telephone conversation in which General Krstic apparently told Obrenovic to carry out the war crime with the words "kill them all".

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China tries alleged bomber

The trial has begun in China of a man accused of causing the deaths of 108 people in a series of bombings last month.

According to state media, the man, Jin Ruchao, is accused of setting off explosions at five residential buildings in a northern Chinese city - prosecutors said his motive was revenge against family members who lived in the buildings.

The Chinese authorities have been badly shaken by the bombings, which hit the northern industrial city of Shijiazhuang in the early hours of 16 March.

The five blasts, within an hour of each other, struck residential complexes belonging to state-run factories.

Russian media empire crumbles

The remnants of the former media empire owned by Russian tycoon Vladimir Gusinsky have suffered another blow with the closure of the *Sevodnya* newspaper and the sacking of journalists at *Izvestia* magazine.

The moves came just days after Mr Gusinsky's *Media-Most* group lost control of the country's only independent national television channel, NTV.

Gazprom-Media - the gas company media subsidiary that took over NTV - joined forces with the *Sem Dnei* publishing company to take over *Sevodnya*, and the paper's chief editor Mikhail Berger was dismissed.

Sergei Parkhomenko, the editor of top news magazine *Izvestia*, which is published jointly with the US journal *Newsweek*, said he had been fired and all the editorial staff had been locked out of their offices.

Mr Berger has cried foul, saying *Sevodnya* is being punished for its persistent criticism of the Kremlin.

His liberal broadsheet has been critical of President Vladimir Putin and consistently highlighted the failings of the Russian military in Chechnya.

Indonesia clamps down on militia

Indonesian police have ordered thousands of militia supporters of President Abdurrahman Wahid to disband and to hand over their weapons immediately.

Thousands of fanatical supporters have signed up to join the so-called suicide squads in recent weeks. They have been receiving military-style training in camps in East Java

Eyewitnesses have reported seeing thousands of the president's most fanatical followers training to use traditional weapons such as ma-

chetes and swords.

The militants have vowed to fight to stop the embattled president - who is facing impeachment over corruption allegations - being forced out of office.

On Tuesday, national police chief Suroyo Bimantoro was quoted by Indonesian newspapers as ordering his men in East Java to end the militants' exercises.

He told the *Media Indonesia* newspaper: "Under Indonesian law, military training by civilians is illegal."

The main militia leader,

Wiro Sugiman told the BBC that their training was routine and only for self-defence.

However, he added that 50,000 people from across East Java had now signed up to his organisation, called the Front for the Defender of Truth, which was established last month.

All members have to pledge their willingness to die in support of President Wahid, and, according to Mr Sugiman, they will travel to the capital, Jakarta, next week, just before the next session of parliament begins.

India launches new rocket

India successfully launched its biggest satellite rocket yesterday after the maiden test launch was aborted last month by technical trouble, the state-run space agency said.

The launch propelled India into the ranks of a select club of countries able to fire big satellites deep into space and could also give the nuclear-capable nation the ability to test a range of military technologies.

The first attempt last month failed because of a faulty booster engine.

Eighteen days ago the Indian Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) was within seconds of lift-off when millions of television viewers saw flames lick up the side of the rocket.

Computers detected that one of its four strap-on booster engines was not producing enough thrust, and the rocket was automatically shut

down while still on the launch pad, averting any serious damage.

The booster has now been replaced. And the Indian Space Research Organisation is confident that all is in order for the second attempt at the Sriharikota range, in southern India.

... opposition disrupts parliament

India's opposition has disrupted parliament after the government rejected their demand to probe an arms bribery scandal.

The main opposition Congress party demanded that a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) be set up to investigate the scandal.

But the government maintained that such an inquiry was possible only after a debate in parliament.

The scandal broke when an Indian website secretly filmed senior officials apparently accepting bribes from undercover journalists.

Tuesday was the second

The aim of the GSLV project is to put a 1.5 tonne satellite into geosynchronous orbit - that means to make it go round the Earth at the same rate as the planet turns, so the satellite is always over the same point on the Earth's surface.

day of the crucial budget session of parliament which resumed after a four-week recess.

After a quiet start, tempers flared as the government and opposition traded charges on the floor of the lower house of parliament.

Congress Party MPs said they would not be satisfied until the government launched a parliamentary probe.

"The law must be applicable to all citizens and investigations must commence immediately. These are our minimum demands," said Congress deputy leader Madhavrao Scindia said.



Vitaly Gagarin, brother of Yuri Gagarin, the first man to travel to space, applauds at the 40th anniversary of Yuri's flight at the town of Gagarin (formerly Gzhatsk) recently. In the background is Yuri's statue. (AFP)

Star Int

First of all we will like to know what you met on the ground when you took over as the Executive Governor of Gombe State?

The first problem I met when I came in as governor of Gombe State, was that of security. When we came in, there were a lot of robberies going on. The Udawas (bandits) have almost prevented our farmers from planting crops in their farmlands. Those who grow vegetables were prevented and those who grow cotton could not harvest it because of their incessant attacks on farmers in the villages. Apart from ravaging the farmlands, these bandits also attack villages killing, maiming and raping women. About four villages were burnt by these bandits, that was the situation when we came in. And before we came in, we had made it as part of our campaign promises that we will, insha Allah, get rid of these bandits, so in 1999, as soon as we took over we made that our priority, and luckily enough we were able to solve that problem.

How did you go about solving that problem?

It was not easy. What I did was to hold a meeting with the Army Commanders, the GOC in Jos, the Brigade Commander in Bauchi who is in-charge of this state, and of course the joint patrol team. We all met and worked out a strategy on how to flush these bandits out of the state, and the operation was very successful. That was how we made Gombe a safe haven for citizens without the harassment of those bandits and armed robbers and kwantakwanta people.

Then there was also the problem of education. We met a situation where only 0.8 percent of our students pass the secondary school certificate examination and obtained the requirement to enrol into a university, and most of the students were receiving lectures under the trees because there were no classrooms, because roofs were blown off, windows broken, floors were cracked, and the teachers, don't even stay to teach the children because they were not paid. So that was the situation of education when we came in and that contributed to the poor performance of the students in their examination, this is in both primary and secondary schools.

The health sector was also in shambles when we came in. Our hospitals were dilapidated, unkempt and we even found that in one of the hospitals in Bajoga, birds were competing with patients in occupying the wards because the ceilings were rotten and perforated: We had to remove all the ceilings, patch all the holes, renovate the entire building, and there was no water and no electricity in the hospitals while patients were languishing without drugs. So what I did was to establish a committee under the Deputy Governor and made all commissioners members, so each commissioner, after deliberations and approval of the work to be done in the hospitals, will go back to his local government to ensure the work approved by the government is properly carried out in the hospital in his area. That enabled us to improve the standard of the hospital and the quality of medical services to the people in the rural areas.

Also I met a problem of the workers on my table when I assumed office. Arrears of salaries of teachers, arrears of allowances and fringe benefits of workers. But we were fortunate there, because the allocation from the federation accounts was increased that month because of the increase in the price of crude oil. But despite the odds, we were able to repair the schools, we paid the teachers arrears even before the federal government gave us money. We went ahead and borrowed money and paid the teachers, and in fact last year when all teachers were on strike nationwide, Gombe teachers did not go on strike, because all their demands have been met. We also retrained some of the teachers at Ahmadu Bello University and we entered into an agreement with them so that all teachers in secondary schools in Gombe State, were sent during the holidays for retraining at the institute. As we were renovating the schools, we were also renovating the teachers houses, because some of the teachers quarters have not been renovated for the last 15 years. So we have renovated over 50 percent of them. The Commissioner of Education has received over 500 letters from teachers thanking the government for improving their lots.

As for the civil servants we paid all the outstanding arrears to the point that we don't owe a kobo to any worker in Gombe State.

Sir, having invested heavily in education in the past two years of your administration, has there been any improvements in your students performance considering their dismal performance before you came in?

Yes, yes, by last year our students performance in the second-

'The political class are not pla

Governor Abubakar Habu Hashidu, the first Executive Governor of Gombe State, Benue River Basin Development Authority for over ten years, he was a Minister of Agriculture and later led the struggle for the creation of new Gombe State out of former Bauchi government areas during the governorship election, and he went further In this exclusive chat with Kano Bureau Chief, MUSA UMAR KAZAURE. Gov

and much more in Go

ary school examination rose to about 68 percent from 0.8 percent.

That is quite impressive.

Yes, we are very happy about it, and we also introduced more incentives to the schools such that the school that performed best in the nationally conducted secondary school examination will be given a prize, which we began this year. Also the best subject teacher will be given a prize. So we have gingered the teachers to work harder with these incentives. Unfortunately, our brothers in the opposition do not like to see these achievements to better the future of our children. They are always attacking us saying we have not done anything, but some of these achievements are not something you see or touch. They are abstract, like the payment of teachers, their training etc. Fortunately, those in the system, the stake holders in education like the PTA, the NUT and other organisations associated with educational development know what we have done and are still doing in the area of education.

For example, we have fenced all the girls school, and where they don't have a water system or toilets, we dig fresh latrines to improve hygiene, and we also increased the students feeding allowances by 100 percent to ensure adequate feeding for the students, because a hungry child cannot learn no matter how good the teacher. We also make it a point that any commissioner passing by any school should stop by and inspect the kitchen and the store to make sure the principals are feeding the students well. In addition we also increased the allowances of our students who are under the state scholarship to minimise their hardships while studying in their various tertiary institutions. These in short are some of the steps we took to improve the standard of education in Gombe State.

I also learnt that one of the major problems of the people of Gombe is that of pipe borne water. How far have you gone in tackling this problem?

What we did was, first I reorganised the water board and turned it into a water corporation and it is now directly under my office. There are only two or three states in the country that have done that, and under the new arrangement, we were able to reactivate all the boreholes, especially in Gombe, and where there are generators we made provision for diesel in case of power failure from NEPA. And in order to arrest any water problem under the new arrangement, we created a rapid response unit under the water corporation and bought them a new pick-up and a walkie-talkie, so that they can always communicate when there is a problem of water anywhere in the state. At a point, we had to provide police protection to the General Manager because the call Kuskus (Jerry can water sellers) threatened to attack him because they felt he was trying to stop them from business. They were used to fetching water at the pumping point thereby blocking the flow of water into the overhead tank for wider distribution, and the General Manager realised that and stopped it, so they were angry with him, but later we provided them with a water point, where they will get their water from a surface tank, and they will pay there. As a result, the water situation has improved dramatically in Gombe now. So these are some of the problems we met and the actions we took to improve the living standard of our people.

Let us go back to education again because you said it is one of your priority areas. I noticed that there is only one tertiary institution in Gombe State, that is the Federal College of Education. Do you have any plan to establish more tertiary institutions in the state especially with the improved performance of your students in secondary examinations?

Yes, we now have a bill before the state House of Assembly for the establishment of the State College of Education and it is going to be located at Dadin Kowa. We are converting a secondary school at Dadin Kowa to become the campus of the new college of education. We have also created the College of Islamic and legal studies, and the two bills are before the state House of Assembly for consideration, and we are hoping that both schools will take off this year. There is also a technical college we established at Akko, which we hope will be an off-shoot of our state polytechnic, although we are not rushing that because we have got the hint that the federal government may be establishing a polytechnic or a university here in Gombe.

So if that happens, we will decide what to establish on our own, but our plan for a polytechnic will go on, maybe we will site it somewhere else.

I know agriculture is the backbone of the economic activities of your people in Gombe State. What are they gaining from your wealth of experience in this sector because I know you were the Managing Director of the River Basin Development Authority and later Minister of Agriculture or Water Resources?

Well, I know from experience, if the farmers are to get a better yield from their crops, they need fertilizer. So we established a fertilizer processing plant here in Gombe. That has already been completed and it is already producing fertilizer to help our farmers who have difficulties in obtaining the commodity. What we did at the fertilizer plant was to ensure we have adequate raw materials.

We also had some tractors for farming that have broken down. We repaired them, about forty of them, and now they are in good condition for leasing to interested farmers. We are also buying hybrid seeds and re-selling them to farmers at a lower price. For farmers who cannot afford the tractors, we gave them loans and ox-drawn implements and we distributed them on a ward basis. For our farmers in the fadama areas, we bought and distributed irrigation pumps to assist them in their dry season farming because of the two large dams we have in the state.

Because of the large vegetables especially tomatoes that were grown in the sites of the two dams, Balanga dam and Dadin Kowa dam, there was this Manto Tomatoes factory that was established for the last 15 years to produce tomato paste and mango juice. In fact, I was one time chairman of that company. So, immediately we came in we decided to complete the project and reactivate the factory. Now the technical partners are coming to train our people on how to operate the machine. We have tested it and it worked well. When the President was here, he commissioned it. We all tasted the juice and saw the tomatoes paste that was produced in the factory, so that will help the farmers who are growing tomatoes and their tomatoes will not be wasted. It also processes mango into a juice, so the factory will definitely help our tomatoes and mango farmers in the state.

Gombe is a newly created state and I am sure the problem of housing for workers must be a real problem?

Ok, before I answer that question on housing let me also quickly inform you that there was this poultry unit of the Ministry of Agriculture which has been lying dormant for over ten years. We have reactivated it, and it now produces eggs and day old chickens. The essence is to encourage poultry among our people and provide an alternative source of protein to our people. Now about housing, we have started with a 50 unit housing estate of three bedrooms each which have reached an advanced



Gov. Abubakar Habu Hashidu of Gombe



Gov. Hashidu explaining a point



Gombe Fertiliser Company, one of the Abubakar Hashidu

BUSINESS DAY

Nigeria may withdraw from WTO

Nigeria may withdraw her membership of the World Trade Organisation, (WTO), if the balance of trade between Abuja and the industrialised countries of the world continue to tilt against her.

The country is contemplating severing her relations with the world trade body following revelations that the various multi-lateral agreements which incorporate the general agreement on Tariff and Trade were

* Law against dumping coming soon

By Osborne Adi Jnr.

rather favourable to the developed nations and highly at Nigeria's disadvantage.

For instance, it has been discovered that instead of pursuing the initial objectives of WTO which seek to raise the living standard, increasing the volume of real income of citizens of member-states and raising the level of production and trade in goods and services, the developed countries have

rather found Nigeria a suitable ground for dumping all sorts of foreign goods.

Consequently, the nation's economy continued to nose-dive, thus forcing the closure of local industries and widening the gap in international balance of trade between the country and the industrialised countries.

House Committee on Industries Chairman, Honourable Hamisu Shira, had last week hinted on the review of

the country's relationship with the global economic body in Abuja, saying the National Assembly's attention has been drawn to the negative economic effects of the continued membership of WTO.

Shira, who spoke at a forum organised by the Abuja branch of the Finance Correspondents Association of Nigeria, (FICAN) insisted that the review becomes imperative in order to encourage local industries to be more competitive in the areas of production and manufacture of goods or products.

He said it was in one quest to check this negative tendencies that the National Assembly will soon pass a legislation to check dumping of imported goods in the country.

According to him, with the promulgation of such a legislation, it will go a long way in addressing these perceived anomalies.

Na'abba calls for U.S investments in Africa

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Ghali Na'abba, has called on U.S. investors to invest in Africa to enable the continent to benefit more from America's technological expertise and entrepreneurial practices.

Speaking when a parliamentary delegation from the

U.S. led by its Speaker, Mr. Dennis Hastert, paid him a courtesy visit, Na'abba said that such investments would impact positively in strengthening democracy in Africa.

He thanked the U.S. congress for approving the African Growth and Opportunity Act and called for more positive steps to strengthen Africa's fledgling democracies and its economies.

"Every effort aimed at solving the debt problem which is stifling the growth of African economies would go a long way in delivering the dividends of democracy to the people," he said.

Na'abba added that democracy would mean nothing but pure semantics if the people did not experience tangible benefits to enable them to recognise the disadvantages of dictatorship.



Ghali Na'abba, Speaker, House of Reps.

FG receives knocks over naira's plunge

Governor Segun Osoba of Ogun has given the Federal Government knocks for the current low value of the naira against the world's major currencies, accusing it of causing a glut in the system.

tem," Osoba remarked, while answering questions from newsmen at the Murtala Muhammed Airport in Ikeja.

He said what the Federal Government should have done in 1999 and 2000 with regards to

ing to "push out in one go - that is the cause of the naira's problem".

Osoba cited road construction "here and there" as one of the areas in which the Federal Government had been off-loading money in the system because, "they want to impress the people before the 2003 election".

He noted that, if the Federal Government had begun gradually awarding contracts for the construction of roads from 1999 when it assumed power, the need for it to do so almost simultaneously now would not have arisen.

The Federal Government, the Governor suggested, could halt the uncontrolled slide of the naira through self-restraint in the manner in which it spent money.

many of the capital items, they did not do, adding that they were now rush-



President Obasanjo.

"The Federal Government is the one pushing so much money into the sys-



Gov. Segun Osoba of Ogun State.

Senator cautions against sales of public utilities

Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Privatisation, Senator Peter Adeyemo, (Oyo South), has again warned the Federal Government to pursue the privatisation of public utilities in the country with caution.

Senator Adeyemo who gave the warning in a chat with *Business Day* opined that it is very important for the government to undertake the privatisation of public utilities like the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and others with maximum caution so as to achieve the desired goal.

According to him, government should strive to make the organisations functional and effective so as to make them attractive, rather than selling them in their present conditions.

He further argued that as a prelude to the privatisation of the utilities, government

From Yinka Oladoyinbo, in Ibadan

should liberalise their services and make them attractive to potential investors, "the Federal Government should encourage states and private individuals to invest in public utilities as this will make NEPA, NITEL and others to be up and doing", he added.

Senator Adeyemo ex-



Nasir el-Rufai, DG, BPE

plained that government should create an enabling environment to make private

initiatives like Enron of Lagos to succeed, "private sector participation is a good development for our economy, government should open it to them, they should mobilise the private sector to participate fully," he said.

He however acknowledged that if the government fails to be cautious with the process it might be an avenue for money laundering, those who stole our money and destroyed our infrastructure could come around to buy them off," he maintained.

Adeyemo however said that his Committee and the entire members of the Senate would work with the Federal Government to make sure that the utilities are not hijacked by people with ill-gotten wealth that could turn around and work against the interest of the masses.

Exchange rates for World currencies against the US dollar as at April 16

	CURRENT	HIGH	LOW
Euro	0.884	0.8904	0.883
Japanese Yen	124.54	124.93	124.17
British Pound	1.4336	1.4377	1.432
Swiss Franc	1.72	1.7225	1.7108
Austrian Schilling	15.5589	15.5765	15.461
Belgian Franc	45.613	45.664	45.326
Danish Crown	8.395	8.3971	8.3845
Dutch Guilder	2.4918	2.4946	2.4761
Finnish Markka	6.7229	6.7305	6.6806
French Franc	7.417	7.4254	7.3703
German Mark	2.2115	2.214	2.1976
Greek Drachma	385.29	385.73	382.87
Irish Punt	1.1223	1.1301	1.1217
Italian Lire	2189.36	2191.84	2175.58
Norwegian Crown	9.1515	9.1768	9.0904
Portuguese Escudo	226.69	226.94	225.26
Spanish Peseta	188.13	188.35	186.95
Swedish Crown	10.204	10.223	10.15
Australian Dollar	0.5087	0.5088	0.506
Brazilian Real	2.183	2.188	2.158
Canadian Dollar	1.5638	1.5644	1.561
Hong Kong Dollar	7.991	7.7993	7.7995
Mexican Peso	9.35	9.336	9.305
Russian Rouble	28.849	28.87	28.855
Singapore Dollar	1.8113	1.8115	1.805
South African Rand	8.025	8.025	8.025

Ten banks with highest fraud cases

GROUP	1997		1998		1999	
	Amount Involved (N'M)	% Share	Amount Involved (N'M)	% Share	Amount Involved (N'M)	% Share
Total for 10 Banks	3,649.10	96.60	3,104.30	97.11	4,793.62	64.90
Total for All Banks	3,777.92	100.00	3,196.52	100.00	7,386.26	100.00

Source: Bank Returns (NDIC).

BUSINESS DAY

British Airways increases business on Nigeria-London route

British Airways (BA) has described the agreement reached between the United Kingdom and Nigerian Government at the Bilateral Air Service (BASA) talks held in London, as a positive step forward for Nigeria.

Under the new Bilateral Air Services Agreement, BA will continue to serve Nigeria with a daily service from Lagos to London and with three direct flight serv-

From Shakirat Abdulmajeed,
in Lagos

ices from Abuja to London. The BASA also grants dual designation on the Lagos-London route and increases frequencies between the two countries from ten to fourteen a week.

Commenting on the development, Alan Burnet, Area General Manager for Africa, said, "The agreement opens a positive, new chapter in Nigeria aviation. The

U.K.-Nigeria market has been underserved in the past and the boost to capacity this Air Service Agreement provides, is very welcome. Other European carriers have witnessed dramatic increases in frequencies to European destinations over the last five years, where as the UK has lagged behind.

"This agreement signals a desire by the Nigerian authorities to grow the market to the UK to help catch up

with huge demand. If given the opportunity, British Airways wants to join with Nigeria in playing a leading role in that growth and operate another under-served destinations such as Pot-Harcourt." He added.

Andy Stern, British Airways Area Manager for West Africa, added "The unique joint venture agreement with Nigeria Airways paved the way for a strong Nigeria presence on the Lagos-Lon-

don route. British Airways has been Nigeria's long-term ally and partner and I am confident that this relationship will grow from strength to strength over the next few years."

British Airways has played a leading role in Nigeria aviation over the last three years which include:

- The unique joint venture between British Airways and Nigeria Airways - an agreement inspired by British Airways enabled Nigeria Airways to generate over N70 million in revenue whilst British Airways provided and maintained the aircraft.

- In 1999, Speedwing, the management consultancy arm of British Airways worked closely with Nigeria Airways to explore ways of providing management expertise and strategic advice to the airline which include an 8 week long audit of the airline.

- British Airways supplied Nigeria Airways with two Boeing 737s free of charge for the Nigeria '99 under 21s World Football Championship. Staff from

both airlines worked alongside one another in the air and on the ground in providing transportation.

Through the UNICEF change for good programme, British Airways' passengers



Kema Chikwe, Aviation Minister have donated over \$300,000 to various sanitation, education and training projects in Lagos State. In addition British Airways supported a number of other community projects.

British Airways has proved to be a major investor in Nigeria, employing over 120 commercial, customer service and airport staff.



The Minister of Communications, Alhaji Mohammed Arzika (left) discussing with Mr. Ganiyu Olayinka Adebisi (right), Ag. MD NITEL during President Obasanjo's meeting with members of the National Council on Privatisation (NCP), at the State House, Abuja, on Tuesday, 17-04-2001.

FG raises Committee on intellectual Property Commission

By Osborne Adi, Jnr.

The Federal Government has constituted a committee to draw up the framework for the establishment of a Nigerian Intellectual Property Commission.

Commerce Minister, Engr. Mustafa Bello, who inaugurated the 12-member committee Tuesday in Abuja said the establishment of the Commission was imperative in view of the need to streamline the operation of the intellectual property system in the country by bringing all its organs under one umbrella.

He said the position of intellectual property in a developing country like Nigeria was desirable if inventors and innovators were to be encouraged and protected.

Currently, intellectual property in the country is being administered by two separate bodies. While the Nigerian Copyright Commission administered the copyright as a parastatal under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the industrial property aspect falls under

the federal Ministry of Commerce.

The terms of reference of the Committee include;

* To harmonise and



President Obasanjo.

streamline the functions of the industrial property and copyright;

* Work out the administrative structure of the proposed intellectual property commission;

* Harmonise and streamline all relevant intellectual property laws for effective and efficient administration of the intellectual property

system in the country, and;

* Consider the establishment and effective functioning of the intellectual property commission of Nigeria.

Members of the Committee are; Prof. Egerton E. Uvieghara - National Law Reform Commission - Chairman; Mr. A.K. Adebale - Federal Ministry of Justice - Member; Chief (Mrs.) B.T. Awoseyila - Federal Ministry of Culture & Tourism - member; Mr. K.W. Aniche - Nigerian Copyright Commission - member; Mrs. Malies Alen - International Association for the Protection of Industrial Property - member; Mr. A.F. Nwokedi - David Garrick & Co. - member; Mr. A.A. Gulak & Co. - member.

Others are; Mrs. O.A. Araba - National Office of Tech, Acquisition & Promotion - member; Mr. Olojede - Federal Ministry of Environment - member; Mr. Y.F. Agah - Federal Ministry of Commerce - member; Mallam s. aliyyu - Federal Ministry of Commerce - member; Mr. D. Taunu - Federal Ministry of Commerce - member and Mr. Ol Ajayi - Federal Ministry of Commerce - member.

Borno governor backs deregulation

From Abdullahi Bego,
in Maiduguri

Borno State Governor, Alhaji Mala Kachallah has given his backing to the proposed deregulation of the downstream oil sector, saying it has the potential to make petroleum products available throughout the country.

"In the light of the deplorable performance of the NNPC in the production and distribution of petroleum products in the country, there is no doubt whatsoever that the time has come to consider new strategies. The intended liberalisation aimed at minimising the role of governments in the operation of the downstream sector would promote vigorous competition, thereby ensuring massive availability of the products", Kachallah

said.

Speaking at a public enlightenment forum on the deregulation organised by the people of Borno State,



Gov. Kachalla of Borno State.

the office of the Special Assistant to the President on Petroleum Matters, Governor Kachallah observed that the people of Borno State have long since forgotten about petrol being bought at the official price of N22 per litre due to the activities of "some few unscrupulous, ruthless and vicious profiteers who take advantage of the insufficiency of the products to wreck havoc on innocent citizens."

However other respondents at the forum appeared apparently dissatisfied with the logic of liberalisation.

The Deputy Speaker of the Borno State House of Assembly, Alhaji Inuwa Kubo for instance, faulted the subsidy Nigerians are said to be enjoying from the oil industry. Kubo wondered whether Nigerians have benefited from any government subsidy at all, given the difficulties Nigerians have been going through for years.

The Deputy Speaker also queried why the government, "which had spent enormous sums of money in putting the refineries in good shape, could not efficiently manage the downstream oil sector.

But the Special Assistant to the President on Petroleum Matters, Engr. Funsho Kpolokun maintained that the sector brings a shortfall of three billion dollars "which means a shortfall in basic funding of other national development programmes."

Management institute admits Kaduna deputy governor

The Deputy Governor of Kaduna State, Engr. Stephen R. Shekari was formally admitted as a member of the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), Kaduna branch at the Institutes' Annual General Meeting held recently at General Hassan Usman Katsina House in Kaduna.

Also, the institute presented an award for "Excellence in Governance" to the Kaduna State Governor, Alhaji Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi. The Director-General of NIM witnessed the presentation, which was performed by Dr. Zakari Zaria,, Dr. Ben Nwaochei.

According to a statement

signed by Remi Ewelike, Public Relations Officer Kaduna branch of NIM and made available to *Business Day*, Mallam Mohammed Yusuf, Public Relations Adviser to Arewa House was elected as the new Chairman of Kaduna branch of NIM, while Mr. E. Ogbomo-Osifo and Mr. Dennis Emeka Ikenga were elected as Vice Chairman and General Secretary respectively.

Part of activities which preceded the AGM includes a public lecture on "Management Imperatives of Privatisation" delivered by P.M.E. Dike of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

BUSINESS DAY

ETF disburses N8.2bn to tertiary, primary institutions

The Education Trust Fund (ETF) has risen from the controversial reports of a recent disappearance of N40 million to announce the disbursement of over N8.2 billion to the three tiers of the nation's educational sector between 1999 and 2001.

The sectoral allocation breakdown shows that the 36 universities in the country shared over N1.076 billion while the sum of N1.095 was given to 60 Col-

By Osborne Adi Jnr
leges of Education.

According to the fund's quarterly report on disbursement, the Nigeria French Language village got N48.116 million, the National Examination Council (NECO) was allocated N126.358 million while the National Mathematical Centre had N30 million.

In the secondary school sector, about N658 million went to the 36 state Ministries of Education and the

FCT for the renovation of classrooms as well as the provision of instructional materials, just as federal unity schools and their technical education counterparts were allocated N75.60 million.

Primary education had the highest sectoral share of N3.12 billion, and the Universal Basic Education, (UBE) had N200 million for the production of exercise books for the take off of the programme.

Details of the report also indicated that 16 universities were given the highest share of N59,027,776.67 each; two others followed with N53,715,270.67 and N53,124,999.01 respectively, while 12 others had N41,319,443.68; while the last two were allocated N17,708,333.

All the federal and state polytechnics shared a total of N1,076,386,613.73 with 42 of them receiving N24,709,302.00 each for

completing their projects up to 100 per cent, while Federal Polytechnic, Kaura Namoda and Lagos State Polytechnic collected N21,299,418.33 and N17,296,511.40 respectively having attained 86 per cent and 70 per cent completion levels of their own projects.

Fifty-eight out of the 60

Colleges of Education collected N18,318,965.00 each for completing their shares of the projects living behind FCE Obudu, and COE Zuba in the FCT who had N16,945,043.08 and N16,120,689.64 for reaching 92 per cent and 88 per cent completion respectively.

East African countries to classify hotels

Hotel classification experts in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are preparing standard classification of hotels in the East African region beginning from this July, Tanzania's official *Daily News* newspaper reported.

Each country has formed a panel to propose guidelines for classifying hotels, Tanzanian Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Zakia Meghji was quoted as saying.

The idea to classify the hotels in the region was reached during a meeting of East African experts on the hotel industry last November, when terms of reference were made, including exchange of legal documents on laws guiding the hotel industry in their respective countries.

The minister said that the experts from the three

countries would meet in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, for a week from next Sunday to review the progress.

The experts will meet again in the Kenyan capital city of Mombassa next

month to agree on a uniform criteria for hotel classifications from one-star to five-star in the three countries, Meghji added.

A final meeting will be held in Tanzania in June to prepare a final docu-

ment for submission in July to the Secretary-General of the East African Community (EAC), which was officially re-established this January by the heads of state of the three countries.

EU steelmakers worry over possible US steel curbs

A European steel industry body voiced concern yesterday at pressure on the U.S. government to take what it called protectionist measures to limit steel imports.

President George W. Bush's administration has been looking at ways to help the U.S. steel industry recover from a financial crisis. One option under considera-

tion is a "Section 201" investigation, which could lead to restrictions on a broad range of steel product imports. The European Confederation of Iron and Steel Industries (EUROFER), which represents the European steel industry, said it was worried about "intense pressure being exerted by members of congress, parts of the domestic steel indus-

try and their unions on the U.S. administration to take protectionist measures to limit, even further, access to



George W. Bush, American President

the U.S. market".

"The general limitation of imports being requested would seriously restrict market supply in the U.S. and thus impact negatively on U.S. consumers," EUROFER said in a statement. "In addition, huge tonnages would be diverted, destabilising the world steel market as a whole," it added.

The European Union and the United States have clashed repeatedly over steel trade in recent months. Last December, the EU launched a WTO case against special U.S. import duties that have hit European steel producers.

UK oil refinery blast hurts two and hits market

U.S. oil firm, Conoco sought Tuesday to calm market jitters about supplies after an explosion ripped through its biggest European refinery, injuring two people and all but closing the plant down.

News of the blast at the refinery in Northern England helped boost Nymex crude oil futures early in



Tony Blair, British Prime Minister

Monday's New York trading, pushing up may crude as high as 28.9 dollars a barrel, up 65 cents on the day, traders said.

Police said the blast at the Killingholme refinery near Grimsby in Humberside was "a major incident" but were unable to say what had caused it. Witnesses spoke of an intense fire billowing vast plumes of black smoke.

Conoco, a major U.S. oil company, tried at the refinery, which processes some 230,000 barrels of crude oil and other feedstocks per day.

"We currently have sufficient supplies of petroleum products in storage to meet the immediate needs of our customers," said Conoco spokesman Matthew Lyons.

A Nymex floor trader said: "This market is extra sensitive to any refinery glitches, last week we had a spate of those, and the mar-

ket reacted swiftly to the Conoco blast, though it's in England."

An ambulance service spokesman said two people had been taken to hospital with minor injuries. "One of them was thought to be an employee and the other was someone who has a private residence near the refinery," he told Reuters.

A Conoco official told Reuters all but two of the units at the plant had been shut down and would remain closed until further notice.

The refinery produces a wide range of products including gasoline and refined petroleum gas as well as heating oil, diesel and aviation jet fuel.

Around 60 percent of its products are exported, with some heading to the United States, the world's largest consumer of energy.

Inflation in Zimbabwe could hit 70 percent by December

Inflation in Zimbabwe, which stood at 57 per cent in March is expected to hit the 70 percent mark by December, a local bank said in Harare.

In its quarterly bulletin, the African Banking Corporation said that the 2001 budget, presented last November, was expected to send positive sentiments and boost investor confidence, but the government had failed to disperse doubts about the government's commitment to its promises.

High inflation and foreign currency shortages persisted and the government's domestic debt continued to rise to alarming levels although monetary market interest rates had fallen to unusually low levels of less than 15 percent, according to the bank, which provides financial services to the private and public sectors in Central and Southern Africa.

"While high inflation continues to erode disposable incomes, the non-availability of foreign currency

has led to more business closures, further weakening the country's manufacturing base," the bank said.

The aim of the 2001 budget was to increase disposable income for low income earners and to provide incentives to the productive sector.

The bank warned that Zimbabwe's macro-economic and political environment continued to be characterised by uncertainty. The much-needed multi-lateral funding remained a distant dream and matters were worsened by the decision of Denmark and other European Union members countries to withhold project funding related to agriculture until an agreeable land reform programme had been put in place, it said.

The bank also called for the Zimbabwe government to use political will to solve these pressing problems ahead of the presidential elections in 2002.

Saudi imports hit 8% in 2000

Saudi Arabia's imports rose eight percent in 2000 to 113.5 billion riyals (\$30.3 billion), led by electrical equipment and food, the official Saudi Press Agency reported on Monday.

Quoting Planning Ministry statistics, the agency said the oil-rich kingdom's non-oil exports increased 14 percent in the year to 24.8 billion riyals, dominated by petrochemicals and plastics.

Electrical equipment made up 22 percent of imports, followed by foodstuff and vehicles with 18 percent each and chemicals with

has been trying to diversify its economy away from oil and encourage foreign investment and a bigger role for the private sector.

Last year, Riyadh offered



King Fahid, of Saudi Arabia trade financing of up to 85 percent and other facilities to boost non-oil exports, after exports dropped by seven percent to 21.8 billion riyals in 1999 (\$1=3.75 riyals).

Petrochemicals accounted for 49 percent of the exports, followed by plastics with 15 percent and minerals with eight percent, the agency said. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter,

Etsu Baro as the chief of Baro is referred to in the Nupe language, welcomed us warmly and shortly provided us with details of the founding of Baro and the early days of the community. He mentioned that the people of Baro were initially hunters and it seemed that the vast expanse of land had always been, and still is, an excel-

lent field for hunting. He added that the people of Baro first lived in a neighbouring forest. On one occasion he emphasized they had successfully speared an Elephant, which now collapsed around the spot where Baro is presently located. Many people flocked to the site of the collapsed Elephant, and began to cut

choice portions of the Elephant. Subsequently people felt that the area was conducive for the sustenance of a human population, and thus Baro began to expand. Etsu Baro added that it was not long before a market was established and located at the riverside. It seems that those early days, were uncertain and suspense laden



An abandoned building on the hill top



Part of the road on the hill top



A hunter guides us up the hill



Another stretch of the road on the hill-top

Baro: The first Nige

By Tadaferua Ujorha

days on account of the robbers who were on the prowl in the area. Thus when people arrived at the market they were always encouraged to carry their goods about with them. This is how it was then, and it seemed to be the only feasible method that would guarantee that a trader would not lose his or her goods.

Etsu Baro also recalled the time when the British first came to Baro, as he was told by his father. He said that the British came at about twilight, and they fired their guns thrice in the direction of Baro. This proceeding, naturally terrified the people of Baro. In a little while the British actually entered Baro and at this event there was consternation among the people, some of whom actually fled. This action was on account of the people's first encounter with Europeans who are a very fair people. He added that while being an inland Port, Baro has also served as a barracks for soldiers especially during the colonial period.

He drew our attention to

the colonial mansion and offices on top of the hill just behind the palace. This hill is the famous Empire Hill earlier referred to also and he spoke of the groves of the European which are located on top of the

hill and the railway tracks and old residences which we had already seen.

Later, he spoke about his skills in traditional medicine. Without mentioning the particular Herbs he said and that he can cure all types of malaria, and so many illnesses, which



More ruins on the hill top.

Feature



Grain store at Baro

Nigerian Inland Port (II)

dominant today. He said that he had been hunting right from when he was a child and informed us that in those days when he was young he could stay for many days in the bush hunting animals. However, he said that staying in the bush has its disadvantages especially if it is the rainy season, but he added that he used to

kill Antelopes, rabbits, the Hippopotamus among other animals.

Soon, we left to ascend the hill. We were accompanied by the chiefs son who is a hunter himself. After climbing for about some ten minutes, we came

upon the road upon the hill stop. The road stretched for quite a while, and there were clear signs that it had been cut out of the rock and this must have been a Herculean task in those days when technology was not as advanced as it is now. Soon we reached less rocky terrain, and a rather flat-landscape which expanded into the distance. After walking for about 20 minutes we got to a number of collapsed structures, which once formed part of the communications outfit on top of the hill. The high communications tower, akin to modern Nitel towers, still stands on top of the hill. Further on were some ruins that were made of mud, and these seemed to have been an annex of the communications outfit nearby. Soon we got to the residence which Lord Lugard once resided in as many of the locals opine. There was palpable evidence of neglect and carelessness. Grass had taken over the entire structure which had collapsed and parts of the original building sprawled on parts of the lawn. Clearly this

must have been an imposing and regal residence long ago. The wide rooms, and high ceiling, provide evidence of this. The flat land all around must have been powerful support to the towering residence. Nearby was a structure which our guide mentioned might have been the colonial offices or a church, but we couldn't agree

on the matter. However, the colossal waste of the historically remains was a painful feeling.

Soon we were taken to the edge of the embankment which was some one hundred metres from the residence. We looked down and saw Baro in the distance, with the waters of the Niger coursing by joyfully while numerous fishermen in boats went about

their tasks, ignorant of the silent watchers above.

It appeared to us that Baro, the old inland port seemed more beautiful when viewed from a height, than when encountered at close quarters. From above the waters had a green aspect while the trees by the river bank only yielded a variety of colour to the entire scene.

Concluded



Colonial mansion on the hill top.



Part of the palace at Baro



Pictures by Felix Onigbinde



Estu Nupe gesticulating

Feature

How Nigerian are Nigerian-made films?

Movies are one great art form of beauty and creativity. It is the portrayal of realities, the depiction of the endless script of life and living, adopted and acted by artists with much devotion and emotion, played to precision that you would not help but be affected and give in to empathy.

A movie is the art constructed by drawing from recurrent features of social life with a simple but moving theme weaved around a central meaning. It is the greatest pastime and leisure engagement, those in the industry (especially Hollywood brethren) have gained wide popularity and fame, forming the elite of celebrities and the absent family members of many households. All these trappings and privilege are simply borne out of what they make as movies and how they get about it -artistic professionalism. But the story in Nigeria is a different one. Here all that it takes is to beat the others (competitors) to the market, for a movie from conception to the screens does not take more than a couple of weeks. What a miracle compared to Hollywood standards!

Since the exploits of films like *Glamour girls*, *True confessions* and *Flesh & Blood* in the mid-90s, with their ensuing success and popularity, all Nigerian soap opera artists, producers and their crews are on the rush for gold in the new world of home videos (Nigerian films).

The Nigerian Film Industry is an up-coming and a fast growing one, especially with two or more new release every passing day. However, this phenomenal growth has nothing to do with artistic excellence, success or breakthrough, but rather a humdrum Journey, lack of professionalism (artistry) and a bad competition borne out of greedy expediency for profit maximization.

It is quite disheartening or rather disgusting a fact that our home made so-called 'movies' hardly have any local (home) identity, and you find that it is even lost in categorization due to the fact that a classic "Idumota film" is undistinguishable from a horror film or an explicit X-rated. At best it's a drama classical with lost characters, unconvincing plots and inexplicable conflicts. One will be equally perplexed whether the Hausa films are made in

Bombay, India or Kano, Nigeria with their on-screen-Nigerian-Indians, acting and singing story lines scripted way back in India.

Sometimes I feel so bad and insulted with these heaps of junk produced with the brand name "Nigerian".

By Mohammed Sheriff

Brendan Shehu led film Censors Board is using to licence these videos to flood the markets and whether any censor or content appraisal is carried out on these film clips before being released to the public.

being cheap copy cats of American films or the all that-can-be-a-movie-is-blood and witchcraft, which is definitely not "Nigerian". Enough of it, please!

Another problem with most of these films is that of the drama elements which

ible motivations, actions and interrelationships; Dialogue: its indispensable as it is an integral part of story development. Inner values and motivations are exposed by the uniqueness of dialogue; Plot: is a combination of all those events pieced together to

the final fate.

Achieving continuity is also a very important factor in making a screen success. It is a peculiar problem of most Nigerian films, here the various techniques of transition are either lacking or shoddy. The pace and pattern at which scenes, plots and subplots are blended is to a great extent necessary in carrying the audience along and gripping their attention. Therefore, the techniques employed in transitions must be treated with care and importance to ensure smoothness and style. This of course includes music and sound tracking which are crucial in smooth transition and achieving continuity as it portrays moods, supplements dialogue and creates sound effects.

To achieve continuity, expositions must be fully dramatised, actions has to be revealing of present and subsequent situations. As the cycles of progression of action revolves, emotional load should be increased and each idea introduced should be properly integrated with the dominant theme.

"For a better deal for their audience and progress in their chosen careers, the Nigerian artists (directors and producers inclusive) should as a matter of urgency try and emulate not Hollywood culture, but their techniques, technology and the committed zeal with which they make their films. And also the time and resources sunk in their productions to make it "perfect" should be lessened, its about time the Nigerian film industry is given a new lease of life as against what is mostly obtained now.

Jean Etsinger, an American scholar and journalist once said "Creativity without discipline is - to turn a phrase -like a fish without a bicycle. On the other hand, creativity with discipline is like a fish with a bicycle. Even if it stinks, people are going to be fascinated by it". So even if a typically 'Nigerian' film will stink, with creativity and discipline, we and of course others are going to be fascinated by it.

Hollywood watch out!

Sherrif is of the Department of Mass Communications, University of Maiduguri.



A scene in *Badakala*, a Home Video in Hausa

If it should be Nigerian, then there is an array of very rich cultures so vast and diverse that any story adapted from them will be a delight of any publisher or producer. There is no contention to the fact that Nigeria has some of the richest cultures and historical backgrounds in the whole wide world. I am always at lost why these films wont portray the cultural background of the wonderful people of this great country.

The content and context of these home made movies are full of witchcraft, voodoo and blood with a drop of licentious excesses at times (Hollywood import they claim) which is an insult on the Nigerian-people and an abuse of the art of movie-making. It makes me wonder what criteria the

For these films to be successful, the directors must relate the idea of the film to the background of the audience. This does not preclude the fact that unfamiliar experiences be made part of the film. Since people identify with what they know, then the unfamiliar must be kept within a reasonable limit so that it does not throw the audience off-balance. But throwing the audience off-balance is the bane of the Nigerian-made films.

The thing to do, and be done now, is for the Nigerian film industry to have an attitudinal change in turning round the fortunes of the industry. This is by shelving their so-called artistry, which is devoid of creativity, definitive conflict and smooth transition. They should construct their theme by drawing from the realities of typical Nigeria, rather than

are very essential in filming and how they are blended together, without which the film lacks direction or meaning. These are: Action: all of it must be relevant, necessary and meaningful, and contribute to the flow of events intended to be portrayed; Emotion: it is the aim to move feelings. The level at which you're able to evoke audience emotion will determine the success of the film; Empathy: identifying with the feelings of actors, making audience become emotionally attached with actors; Conflict: this is the collision of forces in the film. It is very essential as all films are built around it; Characterization: creating and revealing characters (actors) to audience, they move a story forward through cred-

make up a story. It shows the different interconnections among actions of the film.

After all these elements are clearly outlined and identified, the plot pattern must be made to conform with the standard structure. Film structure is of fundamental importance, not only in filmmaking but of course all theatrical arts. The simple structure of a film must consist of- Exposition, which is the introduction Rise, which is the graded development of conflict or the build-up; Clash, which is the maturation of conflict where all subplots merge to bring all forces together; Climax, which is the highest point of tension (clash and climax are naturally bound together); and Resolution, where conflict is resolved or clue is given to audience to speculate or decide



Bazobe Cultural Troupe performing at a recent function.

NEWS

Kano denies overspending

The Kano State government has refuted allegations of unnecessary expenditure in the execution of some projects in the state. Speaking at the formal launching of improved fertilizer, the Livestock Feeds and Truck Hiring at the Kano Agricultural Supply Company (KASCO), Kano depot yesterday, the governor of the state, Alhaji Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, made a veiled allusion to such allegations which he said, were intended to undermine his administration. He said it was only a rumour that government had

From Jamilah Musa, Kano

spent 500 million naira on the interlock road project and explained that only 20 million naira was spent. He added that workers who executed the job were not contracted by KASEPA as speculated but that it was done on a wage-labour basis. The governor said government was doing its best in the provision of social amenities for the people, and that government was aware of the high cost of foodstuff and pleaded with KASCO and farmers in the state to release grains for sale to the public

at affordable rates. The governor who promised that the problem of fertilizer would become a thing of the past, said that 200 trucks would be used for supplying fertilizer to farmers in the state. He commended KASCO for its effort in improving fertilizer, livestock feeds and truck hiring. In his own speech, the managing director of KASCO, Alhaji Ahmed Garba Bichi, expressed appreciation to government for turning the company around. He said that before the present administration came to power, the company was in a bad state.

Borno set to establish boarding primary schools

The Borno state government has set up a committee on the establishment of boarding primary schools in local government areas in the state. This arose from concerns by the state government over low enrolment in schools across the state. Governor Kachallah observed that there is general apathy towards education among parents and traditional institutions as a result of which "since the late 70's we have been sliding into the abysses, as we are almost the least in terms of educational achievements in the

federation". Speaking at a ceremony to inaugurate the committee whose members were drawn from the ministry of education, primary education board, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), governor Kachallah added that the state's disadvantaged position in the educational sector also reflected in decapitated school infrastructure which makes learning difficult. The establishment of boarding primary schools, the governor said, was to effect a change in the situation, which if left unchecked, would have

adverse consequences on the political and socio-economic development of the state. Governor Kachallah added that the boarding primary schools would not only allow the children of the less privileged access to qualitative and quantitative education but also encourage and improve school enrolment in the state. The committee is headed by the state commissioner of education, Barrister Charles Uba.

Threshing machines disappear in Dambatta

Authorities in the Dambatta Local Government Area of Kano State have set up a 13-man committee to investigate the disappearance of two threshing machines from the council. Reports say the machines, valued at half a million naira, were believed to have been stolen from the council by unknown persons in the past few days. Several attempts to trace them by council

officials, failed, prompting the setting up of the committee. Inaugurating the committee in Kano yesterday, the council's vice chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Ahmed, expressed displeasure at the disappearance of the machines, wondering how they could have disappeared without a trace. He described the development as the height of "selfishness and irresponsibility".



Dr. Haruna Usman Sanusi signing the register after being sworn in by President Olusegun Obasanjo as a federal permanent secretary... yesterday. Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje

Mining boss calls for enhanced investment in solid minerals

The managing director of the Nigerian Mining Corporation, Dr. Biodun Olorunfemi, has stressed the need for urgent development of the solid mineral sector, saying it is the most viable alternative for the diversification of the economy. Dr. Olorunfemi, who lamented the slow development of the sector, identified lack of government policy and framework on solid minerals and poor financing as problems militating against the sector. According to him, solid

minerals development is highly capital intensive and "the capacity to generate high investment for the solid mineral industry, especially as investible funds and potential investors can only be found outside the country". The Nigerian Mining Corporation boss explained that that was why the corporation decided to organize an exhibition themed "Nigerian Minerals Events (NIME) 2001" in London. The event which he said encompassed the investment drive and exhibitions as well



Godwin Kanu Agabi, Solid Minerals Minister as an education conference, would showcase to the world, what the Nigerian government has put in place in terms of policies, incentives and infrastructure.

The North has been challenged to establish more media houses in order to counter the negative reports by its southern counter part by reporting the true situation of the region.

The chairman, Shippers Council, North-West Zone and former Group Accountant of Dantata organisation, Alhaji Ahmed Rabiu gave the challenge at the launching of a book titled "Frictions" written by Achigiri-West, a correspondent with the *Financial Standard*. He stated that, the North should not blame the South over negative reporting of its zone; rather, they should blame themselves, as according to him, "the South is only trying to serve its people".

Ahmed Rabiu said the North should invest adequately in the media in order to educate and inform the nation and the world in general on the rich cultural, economic and political values of the region. He said that the North was inadequately reported because of the very few number of media houses in the region. "Weekly Trust is the only viable privately owned newspaper in the North which gives objective reporting", he observed.

Accountant challenges Northern states on media ownership

The former Group Accountant pointed out that the journalism profession was one of the best professions world wide, but that it was abused in Nigeria. "Some journalist go, astray, by misinforming people. "A journalist is a philosopher, and an adviser. His contributions to the society cannot be over-emphasized," he said. Ahmed Rabiu who was the chairman of the occasion, advised journalists to emulate Achigiri-West by writing books that would be of immense contribution to the development of the country. He recommended the book "Frictions" to readers, which he said, would educate, inform as well as entertain.

Senator Isa Kachako who was Special Guest at the occasion, cautioned journalists against sensational headlines that could plunge the country into crisis. He advised journalists to report positively about Nigeria, and make the country peaceful. Kachako who was recently elected the National Chairman, Peace and Reconciliation Committee, said he was at the occasion to reconcile

Nigerians for the peace and stability at the country. A total sum of N113,159.00 was realized at the launching.



Prof. Jerry Gana, Information Minister

LASG goes tough on unregistered vehicles

The Lagos state government has directed law enforcement agents to impound unregistered commercial vehicles in the state. The commissioner for transport, Mr. Muiz Banire who gave the directive, said security reports had indicted operators of unregistered commercial vehicles not bearing the officially recommended yellow and black colour.

Mr. Banire explained that such vehicles were largely being used for criminal activities, including armed robbery and kidnapping of passengers. The commissioner advised operators of unregistered commercial vehicles that are genuinely interested in public transportation business in the state to obtain route permits and get their vehicles painted in the official colours immediately. Mr. Banire also warned operators of shuttle buses in military barracks to restrict their operations to such places or get their buses impounded.

Council chairman complains of blackmail

Chairman, Biase Local Government Council in Cross River State, Mr. Gabriel Egari, has identified petition writing and sabotage as the bane of development in his council. Making this observation in an exclusive interview with *Daily Trust* yesterday, Mr. Egari said certain individuals had constituted themselves into a "clique of saboteurs", who want him to always dance to their tune. He explained that the activities of those people were detrimental to harmonious coexistence in Biase. According to the local government boss, the "youths

From Bassey Ita, Calabar

of Biase are tired of this "pull him down" practice championed by some persons. They want a change. They have very good certificates but prefer to idle away". He explained that he had tried his best to live up to the expectations of the people of the state, but that his detractors wanted him to put his monthly allocations on their table to share. "This I cannot do, because I have projects to execute in time with my campaign promises," he stressed. Despite the alleged attacks however, Mr. Egari

said he had achieved a lot after inheriting an empty treasury and a bloated workforce that "consumed a greater part of the council's monthly allocations". These, according to him, include a mass transit company, renovation of the council's secretariat, reconstruction of seven bridges in western Biase and the establishment of new health centres, among others. He disclosed that his government inherited 45 cases in contractual debts, adding that the debts were already settled through the courts even without the execution of the contracts.

NEWS

INEC prepares for Kebbi by-elections

Arrangements have been concluded by the Kebbi State Independent Electoral Commission to conduct a by-election in the Kebbi North Senatorial district and Danko/Wasagu constituency in the Kebbi State Assembly.

The State Electoral Commissioner, Alhaji Namadina Abdurahman who made the disclosure in an exclusive interview with *Daily Trust* in his office recently, explained that the commission had set aside May 5, 2001 for the by-election.

He said all the three political parties in the state had been adequately informed on the modalities of the by-

From Kabir Dogondaji,
Birnin Kebbi

elections into the two houses, adding that time had been set for the parties to nominate their candidates for the elections.

Namadina further maintained that section 76 (2) of the 1999 federal constitution has provided that a by-election be conducted in any situation where vacancy exist within one month.

The seats became vacant after the deaths of Senator Adamu Baba Augie who represented Kebbi North Senatorial district and of Alhaji Hassan Danko who represented Danko/Wasagu constituency in the state assembly.

The commissioner further said that the three political parties were given nomination forms and were also given adequate time to study rules and regulations as regards the election, "we have told them to be careful in their selection of candidates,



Gov. Aliero

because they are subjects to be screened by the commission and any candidate found wanting will definitely be disqualified," Namadina warned.

He also solicited for the cooperation of security operatives, political parties, the electorate and the press to assist the commission to ensure hitch free election. He added that his commission had logistics for the success of the election.

Fuel scarcity resurfaces in Lagos

After a few weeks respite, fuel scarcity returned to Lagos on Tuesday, as many filling stations in the state had no fuel in stock.

Motorists were seen queuing up for fuel in the few filling stations which had fuel.

In some of the filling stations visited, *Daily Trust* gathered that the fuel scarcity was caused by the Easter holidays as tankers were not able to load fuel during the period.

Many of the filling stations were said to have exhausted their fuel reserves during the holiday, resulting in the long queues of vehicles in a few stations.

As a solution to the persistent scarcity, a supervisor in National filling station on Ikorodu road, Mr. Tunde Adeola, suggested that the government should adopt any strategy to ensure constant availability of petrol even it is required an increase in the price of the product.

Motorists who spoke to *Daily Trust* also said the government should deregulate the oil sector if that would put an end to the unending fuel scarcity.



Gov. Tinubu

Boundary clashes: LG boss cries to FG

The chairman of Biase local government council in Cross River State, Mr. Gabriel Egari, has appealed to the Federal Government to prevail on the governments of Abia and Ebonyi States to call their people to order, saying that intermittent boundary clashes by communities in those states were a threat to democracy.

Mr. Egari told *Daily Trust* in an interview that his local government was in boundary disputes with Ohafia local government in Abia State and Afikpo North local government in Ebonyi State besides that of Ugep in Cross River State.

The chairman added that the clashes had claimed hundreds of lives, private houses and public property.

According to the chairman, intra and inter-state boundary skirmishes were taking a toll on the council finances with heavy spending on security and sustenance of the lives of the refugees.

He alleged that some people were bent on pushing the people Biase into extinction as according to him, "they use explosives to blow off houses. They attack mostly in the night and resort to guerrilla tactics in the daytime to waylay innocent farmers. Most of

From Bassey Ita, Calabar

the refugees are women because their husbands or brothers have been killed. There is the fear of returning home," Egari explained.

He revealed that though the council had long term goals to meet, it had rehabilitated the displaced persons of the war-torn areas, giving relief materials to the refugees as well as catering for the mobile police men deployed there by government to maintain peace.

It would be recalled that five years after the clash with her Ohafia neighbours in Abia State over boundary dispute, the people of Ikun in Biase local government area of Cross River State are still displaced as refugees surviving at the mercy of their host communities.



Gov. Donald Duke

Greater Karu Urban Planning and Development Authority (GKUPDA)

SALE OF BUSINESS PREMISES FORMS

The Greater Karu Urban Planning and Development Authority, a Parastatal of the Nasarawa State Government has established a Mechanic Village in the New Karu Area of Karu Local Government.

2. TARGET GROUP:

Individuals and Corporate Organisations whose business premises are affected by the construction of the Abuja-Keffi Road. Businesses to be considered for relocation and subsequent allocation of stalls are:-

- Motor Mechanics
- Motorcycle Mechanics
- Spare Parts Dealers
- Building Materials Dealers
- Cement Dealers
- Iron Rod Dealers
- Welders/Metal Fabricator Products
- Aluminum Product Dealers
- Timber Dealer

3. SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED:

- Water Supply (Bore Hole).
- Electricity Supply-NEPA (Stall Owners to settle bills).
- Restaurant Service: Erection and running of our Restaurants in the area by Private Entrepreneurs.
- Toilet and Bathrooms' facilities by interested parties to be provided.

4. METHOD OF APPLICATION

All interested applicants for:

- Stalls Allocation
- Running of Restaurants
- Running of Toilets and Baths

Should apply on a prescribed GKUPDA Application Form obtainable from the Executive Secretary at the Authority's Headquarters, located off Sani Abacha Road, NIMCO Office, Mararaba, Karu.

Application form will be released upon payment of a non-refundable fee of N1,000.00 (One Thousand Naira only) in certified Bank Draft made payable to the "Greater Karu Urban Planning and Development".

5. FEES PAYABLE:

All successful Allottees are to pay to the Authority yearly fees in advance effective from the date of allocation.

6. Proto-type Designs of Stall, Restaurants, Toilets and Baths will be released to successful Allottees.

7. CLOSING DATE:

No application will be received after 12:00 noon on Monday, April 30th, 2001.

NOTE PLEASE

GKUPDA does not have Agent and, only forms obtainable from the Executive Secretary would be valid for consideration.

SIGNED:
ARC. HALADU ABUBAKAR
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Interview

Sponsored

Playing the game fairly' - Gov. Hashidu

is a household name among the people of Gombe. He was General Manager, Upper Agriculture and Water Resources during former President Ibrahim Babangida's tenure in the State. His efforts and popularity earned him majority votes in 9 of the eleven local government areas to score over 40 percent of votes in the other two local government areas.

Governor Hashidu expands on sharia, education, roads, rural electrification, housing in Gombe State. Excerpts:



State
Wuro-Dole our border village with Bauchi State has been provided with electricity. I am sure by next year, wherever you enter Gombe State, from the North, East or West, you will see electricity in all the villages in this state, *insha'Allah*. We are working hard to improve the lot of our rural populace, in this year's budget we allocated 50 million naira to each ward for the provision of water, electricity and

There is this issue of Sharia implementation in Gombe State that has been widely publicised recently. What is the true position on Sharia implementation in Gombe State?

Actually even yesterday, the Supreme Council on Sharia implementation came to me and we met to discuss the issue. I told them that if they know how far we have gone on the issue of Sharia they would not have bothered to come, because very soon a draft bill will be presented to the state Assembly. So by the end of this month, *insha'allah*, the bill on Sharia implementation will be in the House of Assembly, and I asked for their cooperation because of the peculiar situation of Gombe State, because we are not hundred percent muslim like Sokoto, Zamfara and others. We even have people who have no religion. So apart from establishing shari'a courts, we will have to have customary courts for those people because they are also Gombe citizens, in addition to the existing conventional courts. In fact, my Deputy Governor is a lawyer and he is working on it. Now I think that portion on customary courts is what remains,

key industries established by Gov.

stage now. We have also constructed the legislatures quarters which was commissioned by the President when he visited Gombe. We have also approached Shelter Afrique to obtain loans to put up more houses and we have reached an advanced stage in our discussion with them on the loan.

Roads and electricity are vital to rural development, what efforts have your government made in this sectors?

Well for roads, we considered some of the most difficult areas, like in Shanga local government where you discover that between the headquarters and the next big town is only about 20 kilometers, but to get there you have to travel a distance of 60 kilometers because you have to travel from here, to Billiri, to Kaltungo, from Kaltungo then to Boh. So we are now working on Kaltungo to Boh, and from Boh to the junction, and we are tarring it now. We are also working on some rural roads, like the Gombe-Abba junction-Hashidu road which is currently under construction. We are rehabilitating some roads in the major towns of the state. The area where we have a major problem now is from here to Dassa and then from Dassa to Talasau. There is a bridge at Talasau, but we will go back and ensure we complete that work.

For rural electrification, we have completed sixty kilometres of rural electrification. From Hashidu which is my village, electricity has been connected to Lafia, Talle, Kwakon, Malala and

and as soon as that is completed, it will be presented to the House for consideration.

There was this allegation made against you that you ordered the shooting of some pro-sharia demonstrators in Gombe. What actually happened?

It is funny the way people make baseless accusations. The Friday that the incident happened I was not even in Gombe, I was in Abuja. I left Abuja that Friday around 1p.m, and I arrived Bauchi airport, I think, around 4p.m to 5p.m. So I even missed the Juma'at prayer, so I did not bother to go out. I actually arrived Gombe around 7p.m that Friday, but I was monitoring the situation all the way, I was being briefed by the Acting Police Commissioner on the situation because I am the Chief Security Officer of the State. I was told that a pro-sharia group have organised unauthorised demonstration against the visit of an Israeli Ambassador to Gombe State. Though the police did not give them permit to do so, they are still going ahead with it, and the police moved in to disperse them. The bottom line is that the Israeli Ambassador was actually invited by some Gombe citizens who either studied there, or went on courses there, so they formed a club called Shalom Club, where they gathered to discuss issues of mutual interest. Among them are Muslims, even the Vice Chairman who spoke on behalf of the group at the meeting was a born Muslim.

But have you not made any attempt to call this pro-Shari'a group to sit down and discuss the issue with a view to finding a common ground?

I did, I did. When they first started, he was the chairman of AD in Gombe State. In Gombe, that alliance between Falae and Shinkafi did not work, because AD went ahead to present their candidate for the governorship election. So I invited him and said look I am not against what you are doing, but let us discuss it maturely and know how to go about the implementation. So I asked him to go and come with five of the leaders of the group so that we can have a discussion. He said OK, but on the day we arranged to meet, he came with 40 and it was so rowdy. So I called him and said, but our agreement was to come with only five of the leaders. He said they represent the different groups, so I went ahead and addressed them. Then we arranged another meeting, and he promised to bring three people along with him, but he came with 17. Well that is better than the first. The third time I called them again for discussion, and this time he came with 5 people and they were given an opportunity before the entire members of the executive council to say their minds. That was the last meeting we had and since then they refused to attend any other meeting arrange. Instead they were raining abuses on the government, they became confrontational, and even in the mosque they were using abusive language.

Despite the brake-down in communication, was the government going on with its Shari'a implementation programme?

Yes, we appointed a Shari'a advisory committee and the groups were asked to nominate their members into the committee. They sent about ten names, and we selected four out of them to be members of the state Sharia Implementation Committee. So I also selected other knowledgeable people in law, Islamic education and scholars who could actually articulate a law of Sharia for the state. I didn't know that what they actually wanted was for me to hand over all the Sharia issues to them to execute, but I cannot do that. No state that is presently operating Sharia did that. The unfortunate thing is that these people who are clamouring for sharia leadership are not versatile in the religion itself. Yaya their leader is a classmate in primary school, I know his level, the publicity secretary is an employee of Federal Teachers College, the Secretary is a Surgeon and the other is a practicing lawyer. These are the people who want us to give them the responsibility of fashioning out a sharia law in Gombe State. But what we did was to include some

learned Islamic scholars into the committee. We also picked representatives of the major religious groups to be members so that justice is done, because Islam stands for justice and fairness. We also included a retired Area Court Judge who had been in the field since the time of Sardauna. They submitted their report under the chairmanship of the majority leader of the State House of Assembly who happens to be a lawyer and also an Islamic preacher in Gombe. We also appointed a committee of the Christians in the state to tell us what they want us to do under the sharia. Later I formed a committee of the Grand Khadi and the Khadis to look at the report and make recommendation. They did and stressed that there is need for reference books to be procured, I released money immediately to purchase those books. They are now there in the chamber, maybe you will go and see them after we finish here. They were purchased from Saudi Arabia. Then we sent for copies of the Sharia laws implemented in the other states, but we put emphasis on Kano because, Kano has a peculiar situation like ours with a large percentage of Christians living with them. Here in Gombe State, if you go to Zambuk, Billiri, Kaltungo and the rest, there is a large percentage of Christians. So we had to take them into consideration in whatever we do. We also appointed an inter-religion committee to educate the people of both religions on the sharia implementation and they were doing that very well. Then finally we had to take the non-religious people into consideration by constituting customary laws to take care of them. That is what we are doing now, and as soon as we finish that the bill will be presented to the House of Assembly. We did all this quietly without anybody pushing us, and without agitations from anybody, but these people are saying we are not interested in shari'a.

Did you tell the Supreme Council on Sharia all these achievements when they called on you yesterday?

Yes, the problem is that these people who are using sharia as a cover are actually politicians. The chairman is the AD chairman of the state, but he had decamped to PDP, the secretary of the group is a cousin to the man I defeated in the poll for the governorship seat of Gombe State, so you see the politics. Initially when they started the demand for sharia there were some respectable people among them, but later when they realised it has been turned into politics they left the group. I was happy yesterday when the leader of the Supreme Council on Sharia came, he saw that those respectable people are not among the agitators, so they visited them, and they were told that, it movement for shari'a in Gombe has been politicised. It is all political what they are doing, but we are committed to shari'a and I have told you how far we have gone in our plans.

Sir, what has been your greatest challenge in governing Gombe State since you assume office?

My greatest challenge, first is, the issue of religion. Gombe is a melting point on religious issues. There are more Islamic radicals in Gombe State than any other state because of our peoples zeal for Islamic education. The way they went about seeking the implementation of sharia was far more aggressive and radical than other states, and for us, we did not say we would not introduce it, but with the Kaduna experience, we had to be careful that we do things the right way. That is one challenge. The second challenge is that the political class did not play the game fairly, there should be a spirit of sportsmanship, in any event there must be a winner and a loser, and the loser is suppose to admit defeat and wait for another turn to contest. But the way and manner they went about their own defeat was unsportsmanlike. But the beauty of Gombe too is that our people are resourceful, they go to any part of the world to seek business and that has given me an inspiration. The bottom line however, is that I have the overwhelming support of my people in the grassroots because out of the eleven local government areas, I had majority of votes in 9, and in the remaining two, I had over 45 percent of the votes. The security situation I met too was a challenge but I thank God that I have been able to summon most of these challenges and I am looking into a brighter future for my people in Gombe State.

On a final note Sir, what legacy do you intend to leave behind for posterity in Gombe State?

I pray that by the time I finish, rural electrification must have covered 80 percent of our rural areas so that all our schools will have electricity, and I hope by the time I finish, every primary school will have a computer for training so that our children become computer literate because in this millennium, that will be the greatest legacy we can leave for our children. If they are computer literate, they can access the internet and know what is happening around them in the world, and they can compete favourably with other children around the world. My dream is to see that all children that are of school age are attending school and our quota in all the institutions of higher learning are filled, and then other things will follow.



Reference books for Sharia courts imported from Saudi Arabia by Gov. Abubakar Hashidu.

Focus

A look into UPE and UBE

An obvious militating factor in our quest for literacy in Nigeria is inadequate statistics. Throughout the federation, the ministries of education cannot boast of having correct data for five or six-year-olds, the official school age for public schools, who would be ready for primary one at any given time.

To be able to cater for such pupils via teachers' employment and provision of classrooms and teaching apparatus, the statistics is vital. A situation where 30,000 pupils are projected for, only to have a tripled figure means difficulties. Remember they are human being and not files that could be left on the floor. Indeed, Nigerian pupils sit on the floor to study and even under the trees. Thus, it is still education with tears.

All this, basically, was what went wrong with the Universal Primary Education (UPE) as was launched on September 6, 1976 by the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. When the Second Republic politicians came with their various manifestos in 1979, the whole idea of the 6-3-3-4 somersaulted.

As shown above, President Obasanjo was the one that launched the first national Policy on Education in 1976. Lucky enough, he is the incumbent elected executive president who also launched the

By Paul Ado Suberu

Universal Basic Education (UBE) on September 30, 1999 in Sokoto. That is to say, our education system has a date with the month of September. What is, however, lamentable is that almost two years in office the National Assembly is yet to pass into law the UBE bill sent to her by the presidency.

Launching the UPE in 1976 at Municipal Primary School, Okesuna in Lagos, General Obasanjo had said among others: "Every Nigerian child should record basic education as his natural heritage, a right and not a privilege. UPE is, therefore, the cornerstone in our determination to produce a literate and educated society which will accelerate the tempo of our socio-political, cultural and economic development".

This was what Obasanjo tagged "the dawn of a new era in the history of educational development in the country", which the Second Republic politicians dashed due to its politicisation. The 19 military governors of the Obasanjo's military era in its military fashion implemented the UPE programme in all the states. Books and other equipment were bought and distributed to primaries one to six pupils and forms one to five students. This was the error in the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 National Education Policy.

Envisaged science equipment, good as the intentions were, were ordered for and imported into the vagaries of inclement weather. They gradually rot away in the damn it and careless attitudes of the Second Republic politicians. The pupils/students were enmass madly rushed in and out of schools. At the end

history, every school-going age Nigerian desirous of education at six was in the school. He/she has to spend six years in primary school, three years in the junior secondary school. Here, he/she was expected to be gradually prepared in a progressive chart for either a vocational school or onward to senior secondary

the nation could proudly produce more of Phillip Emeagwalis. Our policy implementers failed the nation woefully. This is why the Nigerian Law School would today produce lawyers who cannot "express themselves in the English language".

Apart from the politicisation of the education policy, the preparation was faulty right from the start. The pioneers of the intakes in 1976/77 academic session in primary schools ought to have been the focus. The military as usual played to the gallery in the hue and cry for free education at all levels as if the nation still had 10 pupils looking for a placement for 40.

Thus, an estimated 2.5 million six-year-old Nigerian children who were expected for the first time to be in primary schools could have been the ideal figure to concentrate on. Rather, almost eight million pupils in primary schools were the target all over the federation. The recommended textbooks such as modern mathematics which were co-authored by Professor Grace Alele-Williams and others are today no more in use.

About 60,000 teachers in primary schools commenced the UPE scheme on Monday, September 6, 1976. An additional 163,000 teachers were to be trained hurriedly as is the case today with the UBE scheme. By 1990, however, the projection was that there would

be 13,251,695 pupils in 35,413 primary schools in Nigeria. However, the number of teachers required by 1982 to handle these pupils was projected at 280,000. The question is, what grade of teachers?

Before 1976, there were various classes and grades of teachers ranging from Grade III, Grade II and Grade I. Those with the National or Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) were basically teaching in secondary schools. Some are still to be found there. Presently, the policy is that NCE holders should man primary schools. Before 1976, there were 156 Teachers Training Colleges all over the federation turning out Grade II certificate holders. These colleges have since been abolished to the nation's education development peril.

Even then, in 1976 still, about 30 million pound was voted to construct schools in Lagos State alone. That money went down the drain. Most of the buildings were left uncompleted before the military handed over to the civilian administration in 1979. Till date, some of these buildings are still standing uncompleted. They dot the landscape of Lagos. Some missionaries who considered such as eyesores had to task their members to complete those located in their earlier envied controlled and run schools. There is one of such uncompleted buildings now used by Ahmadiyya Secondary School at Iwaya in the Lagos Mainland Local Government Council. This building is not fit for piggery.



President Obasanjo.

of their graduation in either primary or secondary education, they had nothing in their brain worthwhile.

What really went wrong? Many things! The policy was sound. That is, for the first time in the nation's educational

school, depending of course on his/her academic ability. This had been killed.

The hitherto clerical job-education orientation which the colonial masters bequeathed us was to be jettisoned for a child who would be able to use both his hands and brain in a scientific and techno-oriented education so

What you probably don't know about deregulation

It is perhaps, one of the 21st century's worst sad stories: Nigeria's oil industry, the sixth largest in the world, offering more threats to the country than opportunity. A model of inefficiency and corruption, the oil sector in Nigeria is first turning into an avenue for disaster.

Recently, however, initiative to bring about change has begun to mushroom: voices in the media and from the public are urging for fundamental reforms. And already the report of a government review on petroleum products supply and distribution is in circulation throughout the country. One of the most promising and ideal recommendations of the report, which is also the point of current debate in the country, is the question of deregulation in the downstream sector of the oil industry. This is aimed at liberalising the sector to move it towards a system of free-enterprise in order to attract investors. Allowing other private entrepreneurs to participate in the business is the only one sure way of dealing with the current abuse of monopoly and incompetence of the NNPC and of ensuring improved efficiency and productivity in the sector.

Over the years, the oil industry in Nigeria has been beset by outdated practices, bu-

By Umaru Hamman

reaucratic obesity, incompetence and rampant corruption. By deregulation, the government hopes to change all that, reverse the sad trend and put the sector's finances, staffing and administration structure on a sound and cost-effective footing.

The failure of the state-run oil company, the NNPC is a clear prove that government cannot run industry successfully. What government must do is create conducive atmosphere for private entrepreneurs to do it. We must, therefore, be wary of insisting that the government remain the sole operator of the oil industry hoping that it would work: it will not. Neither Nigerian nor any other government in the world has ever succeeded in running an enterprise exclusively because buying and selling of commodities is not the work of government. Governments that tried it all round the world have failed.

The whole idea of privatising the oil sector is to remove bottle necks and make it more efficient to create more jobs, new production techniques and new approaches to management and training. However, sceptics claim that

deregulation of the sector would amount to handing it over to privileged individuals thereby depriving the country of control over its national economic destiny. Others are concerned that tomorrow will always be worse than yesterday, entertaining the fear that the



L-R: Mallam Adamu Ciroma, Chief Philip Asiodu and Senator Jibril Martins Kuye, Minister Of Finance, Special Adviser to the President on Economics matters and Minister of State for Finance discussing during the Federal Executive Council meeting of 04-04-2001.

exercise is all about a hike in the prices of petroleum products. But all in all, no one seems to offer any viable alternative.

Nigerians have a bad reputation of panicking without reason and this is typically an evidence of that habit. To get things right in the long run, you

often have to have a hard time in the short term anyway. Nevertheless, studies indicate that deregulation has more positive rather than negative consequences; the balance of pros and cons seems quite favourable to the country. The attempt to deregulate is, therefore, a step in

the right direction. These events demonstrate once more that President Obasanjo remains an honest and dedicated leader who has better focus than his adversaries. He was and still is a man trying to improve the lives of the masses. Of course, people

are complaining, clamouring for better life etc. But economic anxiety no matter how widespread does not represent a lost of confidence. People still have confidence in the president.

Surely there is confusion in the affairs of the Nigerian oil industry and also there are

people that benefit out of the confusion. Those of them who fear losing their privileges as a result of the plan to deregulate that sector are handling the issue in a combative manner. However, despite his often rather romantic demagogues rhetorics, Adam Oshiomhole is

certainly not one of those people in reference here. As a man trying to do his own job, he simply hasn't got much choice, anyway. Nevertheless accusing fingers have been pointing at various other people including the government.

But the president has now exert the government by his attempt to hand over control of the entire sector to the people. Because that is what deregulation is all about: deregulating — dispensing responsibility to the people. Essentially, what the president seems to be saying is that: O.K. fellow Nigerians since you have been accusing everybody of involvement in the scandals of the NNPC, come on, take over the sector. Sadly, Nigerians seems scared of accepting the challenge.

We do know that the president is facing immense challenges and also has to contain with very cynical public opinion created by individuals who are opposed to his plans of reforming the economy. But please do not bother, Mr. President, Nigerians are on full alert and very conscious of your good intentions. The suffering masses are fully behind you in your reform plans. We know the bad guys very well. Certainly the batter to deregulate is therefore not going to the lost without a big fight.

Umaru Hamman-Joda, writes from Yola.

Arts & Entertainment

The Story of the New Nigerian Part XVII

The foreign Powers and the civil war

Yesterday, we read about the initial days of the Nigerian civil war and the activities of correspondents of the New Nigerian at the war front. In today's account the position of foreign powers on the civil war is briefly outlined, and the Federal Government creates more states.

Books

Other newsworthy reports included that of the death of Kagu Damboa, the Northern states representative of the Post Group of Newspapers which featured on September 28 and the one on the death of Baba Sulciman Chiroma of the Radio Television Kaduna reported on September 29. Both journalists died at the war front in heroic circumstances while trying to serve factual news to anxious audiences.

On the whole, the war aims of the *New Nigerian* were almost identical with those of the Federal Military Government: to mobilize against the rebels and crush the rebellion as quickly and as humanely as possible. This was in spite of the fact that the paper was still a regional parastatal of the Northern states and had every right to champion only Northern views. In retrospect, it seems that this national outlook endeared the paper to readers from all over the country. Ironically, its popularity brought it to the attention of the Federal Government and most probably led to its eventual takeover by the Federal Government long after the war.

The state creation exercise of May 27 gave rise to new demands on the attention and resources of the federal and state governments.

However, it also helped the war effort because Nigerians came under the authorities of their various states rather than the lumpen hegemony of the defunct regions. Thus, while structures were set up, and officers appointed to man ministries in the 12 new states, Military Governors effectively used the instruments of state at their disposal to ensure total mobilisation.

One prominent example of this was the story in the July 1 edition of the *New Nigerian* where the Military Governor of the South-Eastern state Major U. J. Usuene was quoted as calling on the state indigenes to rally round to fight "our common battle -the battle to free ourselves once and for all from the grip of our imperious neighbours." Elsewhere, the states were used for rapid mobilisation of Nigerians into the armed forces. For instance, on July 25, the *New Nigerian* reported that hundreds of able-bodied men embarked on a peaceful demonstration to protest their non-enlistment for the war.

However, while the rest of the country was thus busy, indigenes of the former Ibadan province were agitating for the creation of a Yoruba Central State (YCS). Even though

the call was supported by their Obas such as the Alafin of Oyo, Oba Oladigbolu Gbadegehin II, many other Yoruba communities such as the Iseyin and Lagos communities were against the move. The *New Nigerian* with characteristic balance gave equal column inches to the pro and anti-Yoruba Central State groups. But as the mood of the time will have it, those against the idea at the time were more numerous than those for it. A typical letter in the issue of July 6, in the public forum page of the paper and signed by S. A. Owolabi read: "The fact that this agitation erupted now is a further confirmation that the signatories to the petition who were once ministers in Ibadan have become piqued at their having been displaced en bloc by other members of Yoruba ethnic minority groups."

Similarly, when the Mid-West State was invaded by rebels who declared it "Independent Republic of Benin" as reported by the *New Nigerian* of September 21, Mid-Westerners in Lagos state held a meeting where they resolved that "the people of the Mid-West State are proud to be Nigerians and will forever remain so." Other positive uses to which the states were put included the regular contributions of money, food and materials by states "for the comfort of our troops." "These voluntary donations were made more competitive by the fact that each state wanted to out-do the others.

Thus, while consolidation of the new states continued apace, the exigencies of the times led to



Julius Nyerere

the weakening of agitation for the new states. The reason for this was not far fetched. According to the Deji of Akure, Oba Adesida, the agitation for YCS or any other state is "baseless, unwarranted and a disservice to the West and what should be paramount in our

mind is the return of normalcy and peace to the country." This quote was featured in the August 1 edition of the *New Nigerian*.

During this period, the Federal Government's diplomatic successes were as good as its successes in containing the Eastern rebellion. The country's official relations with other nations were as good as could be hoped for under the circumstances.

Many Nigerians saw the attitude of the US and Britain as less than helpful. However, in a report published on July 14, the *New Nigerian* quoted General Yakubu Gowon as saying "There seemed to be a strained relationship arising from misunderstanding. But if relations (with Western countries), were really strained, you would not find their embassies here today." Reacting to the same fears in the September 1 edition of the *New Nigerian*. The British High Commissioner to Nigeria argued that his country's diplomatic services in the three Eastern states should not be taken as a recognition of the so-called "Biafra". Earlier on July 14, the *New Nigerian* had quoted the OAU Secretary General, Diallo Telli, as telling Gowon, on a courtesy visit, that "although in many political issues, African heads of state are not always in agreement, but on the Nigerian crisis there is no single disagreement."

Meanwhile, countries like Germany, Italy, Iraq, Kenya, Niger, Ghana, Chad and Sierra Leone among others had individually expressed their solidarity with Nigeria's Federal Military Government and the cause of national unity. Indeed, as reported in the July 10 edition of the *New Nigerian*, African Statesmen such as Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Milton Obote of Uganda had demonstrated their concern for the Nigerian crisis by convening a special summit which reached the conclusion that the crisis was a "highly explosive situation with implications for the continent and the world but an internal affair."

Due to its relatively healthy economy, such acceptance was all that the Federal Military Government needed to push forward with the onslaught against the rebels who had sent their own envoys to the foreign powers to solicit external intervention. Thus, within this period, the foreign affairs objectives of the Federal Government had been almost accomplished in full. This was probably the motivation force behind the editorial of the *New Nigerian* of September 18 titled "Tribute to our

diplomacy."

This was the year

in which Nigeria entered the critical phase of the 30 months civil war. The major objectives of the Federal Military Government during the year included winning the war, maintaining national unity, ensuring the take off of the states, battling corruption and enhancing the economic and diplomatic status of Nigeria.

Opobo, Ikot Ekpene, Abakaliki, Afikpo, Yenogoa, etc were rapidly liberated. There were thousands of casualties from the rebel troops. This was apart from the over 500,000 displaced by the war and the 25,000 who joined these refugees each week.

The year marked the high-point of activities both for the Federal Military Government and the rebels. The latter not only became more destructive during the period but had become desperate to internationalise the internal strife. It was from this backdrop that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, for instance, was sent as rebel envoy to Senegal, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. It was remarkable that all of these countries, except Senegal, were to give Ojukwu's Biafra open support throughout the year 1968. Indeed, the campaign to internationalise the civil war became the greatest impediment to the federal government's efforts to quickly crush the "Biafran rebellion." Nigeria had the men and the materials to swiftly deal with the tiny rebellion yet the combined pressure being exerted by some misinformed governments, churches and humanitarian agencies were tilting victory in favour of Ojukwu, especially the propaganda war. On April 1, Gowon was quoted by the *New Nigerian* as saying: "I am rather disturbed by the activities of some Christian bodies which appear to have been misinformed. Through their one-sided



General Yakubu Gowon

activities, they are doing incalculable damage to the efforts to end the war."

Events in 1968 were to show the active involvement of the US, Germany and even Britain to some extent. These foreign powers had governments which were divided

between supporting the Federal Government and the rebels. This was probably why Britain pushed for a "peace" summit in September, more than a year after the war had begun and by which time the rebellion was driven to one-seventh of its original size; the Ibo heartland"! However, "It was remarkable that Gowon did not disdain the foreign dictated peace moves just because he was winning the war.

He issued the Federal Government's seven-point peace proposal and dispatched the Federal Commissioner for Information, Chief Anthony Enahoro, to the Commonwealth peace meeting in London.

Alas, the rebels betrayed their distaste for peaceful resolution of the war too quickly. As reported in the *New Nigerian* of May 6, rebels destroyed unprecedented number of buildings and oil-fields in Port Harcourt on the same day that the London peace talks were to take-off.

Then, true to form, Port Harcourt was captured by the federal forces and the *New Nigerian* reported the story with a banner headline covering two-thirds of the front-page. The period between the rebel destruction and the federal liberation was two weeks. A quick victory by all standards. Nevertheless, this did not stop the Federal Government from sending a 17-man delegation to the peace talks scheduled for Kampala by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) committee on the Nigerian crisis.

The single greatest personality whose support for the rebels ranked government was Pope Paul VI who deployed the entire Vatican and Catholic support for Ojukwu. This

was to generalise stiff denouncement by the government and most Nigerians as the (civil war was not a religious war. One typical declaration to that effect was the one made by the 55th Baptist convention in Benin and reported in the *New Nigerian* of May 8, Among people in and out of the armed forces Catholic agencies such as CARITAS came under heavy condemnation.

To be continued



Habib Nigeria Bank Limited
An affiliate of Habib Bank Limited, Pakistan

RC. 50750

Balance Sheet

as at 31 December, 2000

	2000 N'000	1999 N'000
ASSETS		
Cash and Short Term Funds	14,127,737	8,181,006
Investments	122,033	103,433
Loans and Advances	6,232,722	5,466,969
Other Assets	706,147	1,268,084
Fixed Assets	1,162,290	773,916
	22,350,929	15,793,408
LIABILITIES		
Deposits	16,313,097	12,156,294
Taxation Payable	185,416	255,155
Dividend Payable	188,941	188,940
Other Liabilities	3,865,203	1,793,983
	20,552,657	14,394,372
NET ASSETS	1,798,272	1,399,036
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Share Capital	755,763	629,803
Reserve for Bonus Issue	151,153	125,960
Reserve for SME	77,357	0
Statutory Reserves	795,132	641,886
Retained Earnings	18,867	1,387
SHAREHOLDERS' FUNDS	1,798,272	1,399,036

CONTINGENT LIABILITIES ACCEPTANCES, LETTER OF CREDIT, GUARANTEES AND OTHER OBLIGATIONS FOR ACCOUNTS OF CUSTOMERS [and customers' liabilities thereon]	2,682,179	3,606,155
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Profit and Loss Account

for the year ended 31 December, 2000

	2000 N'000	1999 N'000
TURNOVER	3,886,419	3,071,220
Profit Before Taxation	773,569	879,844
Taxation	(185,392)	(249,825)
Profit After Taxation	510,820	630,019
APPROPRIATIONS:		
Statutory Reserve	(153,246)	(189,006)
Transfer to SME Reserve	(77,357)	0
Dividend	(188,941)	(314,900)
Reserve for Bonus Issue of shares	(151,153)	(125,960)
Retained Profit for the Year	17,480	153

Abdul Fatai Akin Kekere-Ekun
Mr. Abdul Fatai Akin Kekere-Ekun

Managing Director/CEO

Shabbir A. Shaikh
Mr. Shabbir A. Shaikh

Deputy Managing Director



Report of the Joint Auditors

To The Shareholders of Habib Nigeria Bank Ltd.

In accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 1990, the Bank's Directors are responsible for the preparation of the Financial Statements. Our responsibility is to form an independent opinion, based on our audit, on those statements and to report our opinion to you.

BASIS OF OPINION

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted standards on auditing. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgement made by the Directors in the preparation of the financial statements and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Bank's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud, or other irregularity or error.

In forming our opinion, we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

In our opinion, proper books of accounts, which have been kept at the Head Office and at each of the branches, accord with generally accepted accounting principles and comply with the requirement of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 1990, and give a true and fair view of all transactions. We have examined the books at the Head Office and have received proper returns adequate for our audit, from branches not visited by us.

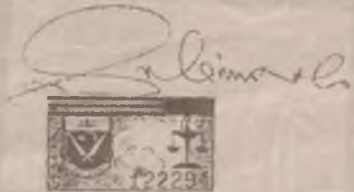
In our opinion, the assets have been properly valued and adequate provision made for losses and diminution in the value of such assets.

OPINION

In our opinion, to the best of our knowledge and based on representations received, the Financial Statements which are in agreement with the books, comply with all relevant Statements of Accounting Standards, the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 1990 and all relevant Central Bank of Nigeria circulars in such a form as to explain and give a true and fair view of the state of the Bank's financial affairs as at 31 December 2000 and of the Profit and Cashflow Statement for the year ended on that date.



CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS



CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

KADUNA - NIGERIA

19th March, 2001

DIRECTORS: Mallam Adamu Bello, FCIB -(Chairman), Mr. Zakir Mahmood (Pakistani)-(Vice Chairman), Mr. L. K. Abiola, Alhaji Murtala S. M. Yar'Adua, Mr. Sohail Malik (Pakistani), Alhaji Abubakar Koko, Mr. Khaleeq Kayani (Pakistani), Mr. Shabbir A. Shaikh (Pakistani)-(Deputy Managing Director), Mr. Akin Kekere-Ekun (Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer).

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT



Habib Nigeria Bank Limited
An affiliate of Habib Bank Limited, Pakistan



Mallam Adamu Bello, FCIB
Chairman

"BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHEEM"

Distinguished Shareholders, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am highly delighted to be here with you all in our new and impressive office complex in the federal capital territory, to present to you a brief report on the bank's activities, as well as the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December, 2000. You are all welcome!

THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The past year has seen a great deal of effort to stabilize the nascent democratic framework put in place under the current political dispensation. At home, much attention has been given to strengthening the rule of law, and creating an atmosphere conducive for social and economic development. Also, there has been a conscious effort to improve international relations and encourage foreign investment. Though some measure of success has been recorded, much more is required to achieve the tranquility that is so necessary for desired growth and development.

Increased uncertainties and a rather slow pace of growth characterized the economy in the year 2000. The year began with a much delayed budget approval which stalled a great deal of business activity during the first quarter. Growth in Real Gross Domestic Product during the year estimated at about 2.8% fell below the target of 3.0% while capacity utilization did not show any improvement above the 34% attained in 1999. The country's currency - the Naira, depreciated against major currencies of the world while persistent structural deficiencies in the system impaired output and growth.

One area of positive development however, was the reduced pressure on the

balance of payments mainly as a result of the favourable world price of crude oil. Furthermore, the effort of government in privatizing identified key sectors of the economy is progressing albeit gradually. The financial sector has recorded a number of changes targeted towards increased deregulation, efficiency and growth of the system. First among these is the renewed independence of the Central Bank of Nigeria with consequent increase in the level of professionalism enforced on both individuals and institutions in the financial sector.

However, the overall aim of containing aggregate monetary growth at optimal levels and sustaining exchange rate stability was hardly achieved in the year 2000. There was a marked reduction in the measures of CBN monetary control on the activities of banks as the Minimum Rediscount Rate, Cash Reserve Ratio and the Liquidity Ratio, were all considerably scaled down. However, during the year, the apex bank had to contend with the persistent problem of liquidity overhang in the system, which impaired improvement in the spread between deposit and lending rates with consequent high cost of funds for the business community.

During the year the CBN increased the paid up capital for new entrants into banking from Naira 500 million to 2 billion, while also encouraging the existing banks to increase their capital base to the same minimum level to support planned growth and enhance public confidence in the financial system.

The planned implementation of Universal Banking will create a level playing field that will increase the level of competition in the banking industry, enhance the synergy of the financial system as well as improve the range of services available to the customer.

OPERATING RESULTS

A review of performance indices showed the bank recorded impressive results in the year 2000 as indicated by the following:

TOTAL ASSETS

The Bank's total assets, which stood at N15.793 billion as at 31st December 1999 increased to N22.351 billion by 31st December 2000, showing an appreciable growth of 42% over the previous year's position.

DEPOSIT

As at 31st December 1999 the Bank's total Deposit was N12.156 billion. This position grew to N16.313 billion at the close of the year 2000 showing a marked improvement of 34%.

ADVANCES

Total advances stood at N6.233 billion by the close of the year 2000 as compared to N5.466 billion recorded in 1999. The growth recorded was a moderate 14.0% and same was guided by the need to ensure prudence and compliance with standards of the regulatory authorities.

PROVISION FOR LOAN LOSS AND OTHER ASSETS

The loan loss provision for the year showed a much lower increase over last year's position. The sum provided for in 1999 was N204.9 million and same grew by only 13% to N231.4 million at the close of the year 2000. This has occurred as a result of the fruitful effort made to ensure recovery of classified accounts and effective administration of existing facilities.

EARNINGS

The gross earnings of the Bank as at the end of December 1999, was N3.071 billion. When compared with the closing position of N3.886 billion in year 2000, gross earnings show an improvement of 27% over the previous year's position.

DIVIDEND AND BONUS/RIGHTS ISSUE

The total dividend payment for year 2000 is 25 kobo per share which sums up to N188.9 million. Also, a bonus issue of 1 share for every five shares held as at the end of the year 2000 has been recommended.

Furthermore, in order to reposition the Bank for the challenges ahead the Board intends to make a rights issue of N302,306,000 to the existing shareholders.

SHAREHOLDERS FUNDS

As at 31st December, 2000 total shareholders' funds stood at N1.798 billion against the figure of N1.399 billion recorded at the close of 1999. As in the previous year, the Bank has vigorously pursued the Policy of expansion and the acquisition of Information Technology as the major areas of investing shareholders' funds.

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BRANCH EXPANSION

In line with the Bank's policy of pursuing Branch Expansion to cover all existing state capitals where the Bank does not have a presence, one Branch was opened in Ado Ekiti during the year.

MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

Our bank has always attached a very high degree of significance to training of its staff. Year 2000 registered a peak performance in this area. Our bank's training school introduced entirely new courses in the field of Customer Service - Marketing/Selling and Negotiable/Banking Instruments, and an unprecedented number of 1,086 staff members of different cadres attended various in-house, in-plant and external courses. During the year the bank's training school also rendered its services to a number of other banks.

"The deregulation of the telecoms industry, and increased opening of the economy to foreign investment are most likely to improve fortunes during the year"

During the year the staff strength grew by additional 60 intakes increasing the 1999 total strength of 1079 by 2% to 1104.

On a sad note, it is with great sympathy that I announce the passing away of four staff members during the year. All of them, Nuhu Shehu, Musa Abdu, Lateef Badru and Abiola Adepoju died of natural causes. We pray the Almighty God to grant their various families the strength to bear the loss.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mallam Musa Bello and Mr Shaikat Tarin, Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively retired from the Board after many years of distinguished service. They were replaced by Mallam Adamu Bello and Mr Zakir Mahmood as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The year 2001 holds great prospects as the entire nation continues with efforts to stabilize the current polity and seek

economic growth. The continued privatization of major Government owned businesses, the deregulation of the telecoms industry, and increased opening of the economy to foreign investment are most likely to improve fortunes during the year. The increased deregulation and levelling of the playing field, of the financial sector by the CBN appears geared to ensure financial stability and improve the range and quality of services. Players in the financial sector especially banking institutions will be required to put up greater innovation and quality of service as both opportunities and competition open up in ever wider scope.

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As the results of the past year have shown, our bank continues to strategically position itself for continued improvement. During the year 2001 the bank will focus on providing state of the art technology in all the major branches and continue the branch expansion policy until the bank has representation in all the existing state capitals. In the year 2000, the system of operations was refocused to emphasize marketing activities and same will be pursued in the current year for an improved share of the market. Also the current focus on manpower training and development will be pursued to ensure premium quality in the front line services of the bank.

As the economy expands with increased opportunities for banks to partake in other service areas, we shall keep abreast of beneficial relationships with other players in the industry and strategic consortium investment to ensure optimal improvement in the Bank's bottom line.

APPRECIATION

On behalf of the entire bank I would like to acknowledge and thank our numerous and esteemed clients for their patronage. We are well aware of your great contribution towards our success and will continuously strive to achieve greater efficiency as a means of ensuring that we are always in a position to meet your ever-changing needs.

May I also express the Board's appreciation to all the staff of the bank for the hard work and dedication displayed throughout the year.

To my colleagues on the Board, I thank you all for your constant attention and assistance towards the progress of the bank in the past year, I thank you all for the beneficial working relationship we have had, and even while I am away on national assignments my prayers will be for you to have sure success in all your endeavours, but more importantly that you should administer this legacy as you always have - with utmost commitment to success.

May the Almighty Allah bless us all, Amen.

ADAMU BELLO FCIB
(DAN IYAN ADAMAWA)
Chairman

18 APR 2001

DAY OF HISTORY

19TH APRIL, 2001

THE EVENT

THE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY OF THE

Anambra State International Market, Oba



Guest of Honour

Atiku Abubakar, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Host

Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju, Governor of Anambra State

Supported by

Dr. Orji Uzo Kalu, Governor of Abia State; Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani, Governor of Enugu State; Chief Achike Udenwa, Governor of Imo State; and Dr. Sam Egwu, Governor of Ebony State.

Venue

Anambra State International Market Site, Oba

Time

10.00 am prompt.

Come and be eye witness to history!!



Vice President, Atiku Abubakar GCON



Dr Chinwoke Mbadinuju Governor Anambra State



ANAMBRA STATE GOVERNMENT
- Home for all

(In partnership with)



BUKHAM NIGERIA LIMITED
- The strength to build on



NEPA

NATIONAL ELECTRIC POWER AUTHORITY

PRESS RELEASE

NEPA Weekly Situation Report (2)

Last week our weekly situation report debuted in the Monday, 9th April, 2001 editions of the Comet and Daily Trust. And in line with our promise to present this report to our esteemed customers and Nigerians at large regularly we bring to you this second bulletin in the series.

However, in response to curious customers' enquiries over some 'uninspiring' figures in our generation profile we wish to make the following explanations. First, let us assure you that this is nothing to worry about. The 'uninspiring figures' only underscore current limitations informed by our programmed plant rehabilitation and maintenance works which are still going on at all our generating power stations, both thermal and hydro. What this means is that several generating units have been taken out for either rehabilitation or maintenance and will not be restored to the national grid until completion of works on them. The implications of this is that our power generation profile will continue to show low readings until the restoration of the units to full capacity. We have also recently had some setbacks with delays in the commissioning of some of these units due to failure of contractors and suppliers to meet deadlines.

In spite of these setbacks we remain confident that we will achieve the target generation level of 4000MW by the end of the year, if all the current outstanding rehabilitation works are completed and commissioned on schedule. We are all working very hard day and night to meet the high expectations of all Nigerians. We shall in subsequent situation reports bring you projected restoration schedule of actual plants rehabilitation and construction. Keep a date with us.

Our bulletin for week NO. 2:

1. PEAK DAILY GENERATION IN THE PREVIOUS WEEK

DAY	DATE	GEN (MW)
SUNDAY	01/04/2001	2161
MONDAY	02/04/2001	2167
TUESDAY	03/04/2001	2228
WEDNESDAY	04/04/2001	2070
THURSDAY	05/04/2001	1993
FRIDAY	06/04/2001	2068
SATURDAY	07/04/2001	1598.* System outage

2. PROJECT AVERAGE PEAK GENERATION IN THE CURRENT WEEK: 2100MW

3. PEAK WEEKLY GENERATION (ALL IN MW) FROM EACH POWER STATION IN THE PREVIOUS WEEK

STATION	MW
KAINJI	210
JEBBA	300
SHIRORO	350
AFAM	14
SAPELE	200
EGBIN	860
IJORA	10
DELTA	320
CALABAR	H/R (Hot Reserve)

4. PROJECT AVERAGE DAILY GENERATION FROM EACH POWER STATION IN THE CURRENT WEEK:

STATION	PROJECTED GENERATION (MW)
KAINJI	250
JEBBA	300
SHIRORO	220
AFAM	14
SAPELE	200
EGBIN (GS)	860
DELTA	210
IJORA	NIL
CALABAR	NIL
AVERAGE TOTAL	2054

5. AVERAGE ESTIMATED DAILY NATIONAL DEMAND FOR MONTH OF APRIL 3500MW

ENERGY SAVING

At times like these when we are experiencing limitations in our generations status we like to appeal to all our valued customers to cultivate the habit of saving energy by using electricity wisely.

YOU CAN DO SO, BY:

- Switching off all appliances not in use. For example, when you are not home remember to switch off your water heater, air conditioners, television sets or indeed all lights you do not need before dark.
- Switching off security lights.
- Switching off street lights during the day.
- Ensuring that when cooking with the electric cooker you use pots or pans that match the ring sizes.
- Using energy saving bulbs.

We thank our esteemed customers for their continued demonstration of understanding and patience.

LET US WORK TOGETHER FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF OUR COUNTRY.

Management



SPORTS



Lewis in big weight advantage

World heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis will hold a significant weight advantage when he fights American Hagim Rahman in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Based on results of an unofficial weigh-in on Tuesday, Lewis is set to weigh over nine kilograms (about one and half stone) more than he did for his last title fight against David Tua in November.

The British heavyweight tipped the scales at 122.2kg (around 19 stone) while Rahman weighed 112kg (17112 stone). The official weigh-in will be held on Friday.

Speaking at the pre-fight medical, which confirmed both boxers fit to fight, Lewis shrugged off concerns that he had arrived too late to adjust his body to Johannesburg's altitude, which is some 4,200 feet (1,360 metres) above sea level.

Rahman came to South Africa a month beforehand. "I came two weeks before (the fight) to acclimatise. I've been at this game a long time and I know what I need," said Lewis.

Lewis, a 1.96m (6ft 5in) former Olympic gold medalist, is the clear favourite to beat Rahman, a relatively unknown from Baltimore, Maryland.

But Rahman, who is relishing his role as underdog, promised he would give Lewis a rematch if he beats the champion.

"I believe the contract calls for a rematch. If he was so confident I don't know why he (Lewis) put that in there. But sure, I'd give him a rematch," said Rahman.

Rahman admitted he was not as big as Michael

Boxing

Grant and Polish-born Andrew Golota two fighters who Lewis has dispatched in two rounds and one round respectively.

He said that it was the size of his heart that was important.

"I believe that guys like Michael Grant and Andrew Go Iota just froze. They were afraid," said Rahman.

"They might be bigger than me in physical size but you can't see my heart. Believe me it's big, it's very big. I'm a fighter," he said.

Lewis said he was looking forward to showing former South African President Nelson Mandela his belts after the fight.

Mandela a keen boxing fan and former amateur boxer -- will not attend the bout but will meet Lewis the day after.

"I'm definitely going to meet him (Mandela) on Monday and show him all the belts," Lewis, who holds IBF, WBC and 180 world title belts, told reporters.

Rahman said he was confident he would be able to boast a set of his own belts after their bout.

"You do get to keep your be. Its when you're champion. I'll have my own set," Rahman retorted.



Lewis

Rios pulls out of Monte Carlo

Tennis

Chilean Marcelo Rios has withdrawn from the US\$2.95m ATP Masters Series event after suffering a hamstring injury.

Rios, the 1997 champion, made the decision to pull out shortly before his second round match against Spaniard Albert Costa.

He had earlier defeated Slovakia's Karol

Kucera in his opening game. The 25-year-old South American, a former world number one, has recently been plagued by injury.

Two years ago he had to retire from the final in Monte

Carlo against Brazil's Gustavo Kuerten with a thigh problem.

Costa will now play either British eighth seed Tim Henman or Argentine Gaston Gaudio in the third round.



Marcelo Rios

Beckenbauer calls for big changes at Bayern

Bayern Munich is ready to invest in several players to build a new, stronger team, club president Franz Beckenbauer said on Tuesday.

"We need to make radical changes for 2002," Beckenbauer told local television Bayerische Rundfunk on the eve of yesterday's Champions League quarter-final second leg against Manchester United at the Olympic Stadium.

"We have a few new players already and with several others it's looking pretty good."

Bayern have hardly changed their team over the last three years and commercial manager Uli Hoeness said it was time to spend money.

"We are ready to spend 100 million German marks (\$44.96 million) for the next season," Hoeness told the latest edition of weekly Der Spiegel. "But in the end if we spend only 40 it will be okay."

Hoeness has often criticised other leading European clubs for spending too much on players and has repeated that Bayern could happily live without a superstar.

"If we have to pay 50 million marks on one single player, he would have to be a real top man," he told Der Spiegel.

If Bayern were to spend that kind of money on one player, they would double the German record set by



Karl Heinz Rummenigge (left) and Franz Beckenbauer (middle), two former Bayern stars during a meeting with top official, Dr. Fritz Scherer. Beckenbauer wants radical changes in Bayern.

Borussia Dortmund, when they bought Czech playmaker Tomas Rosicky from Sparta Prague for 25 million marks during the winter break.

Bayern have so far announced only one signing for

next season -- Guinean defender Pablo Thiam from VfB Stuttgart. Beckenbauer said he saw no reason to panic after his side lost 3-1 at home to Schalke 04 on Saturday to drop off the lead in the Bundesliga.

"We might be knocked

out by Manchester United and finish sixth in the Bundesliga," he said.

"But even if that happened we wouldn't fall apart. We would stick together and try to do better next year."

Zola puts family first

Gianfranco Zola has revealed that his future as a Premier-ship footballer lies with his family.

Zola previously stated he wanted to leave Chelsea this summer and was only persuaded to stay when the club promised him he could leave at the end of the campaign.

At the age of 34, he seems to be looking for a final swansong in Italy, while he is also conscious that his children should grow up speaking Italian as their first language.

Chelsea managing director Colin Hutchinson has nevertheless revealed that the Blues will do what they can again to persuade Zola to stay put for a final season.

While the striker admits he will leave the final decision until this summer, it will be his wife and children who are consulted first.

"It's not only my decision. It's something that we have to decide as a family," said Zola after the 2-1 win against Middlesbrough.

"They have followed me for 13 years now and it's time for us to discuss together what to do,"

Even if Zola does make the heart-wrenching decision to leave the club where he is an idol, he insists that he will continue to follow their for-



Gianfranco Zola... wants to leave Stamford Bridge at the end of the season.

tunes. The win against Boro kept the "dream" of Europe alive but Zola knows they have let their fans down.

"We want to keep the dream of Europe alive so it's important to fight to the end," he said. "We can't afford to lose again this season."

"I don't think anyone is hoping to play in the InterToto Cup. It's a nightmare as you only have a couple of weeks off in the summer and there is already a long season in England."

He added: "Our support-

ers surely deserve something better than what we have achieved this year," he said.

"But we have already given them much satisfaction in the past and sometimes they have to understand that things just don't work out, it doesn't mean we're not doing our jobs."

"But we are going to try to work harder to give them everything they deserve."

"Will I be here next season? I don't know yet. But if I'm not involved in the team, I will be following the team. I will still be a Chelsea supporter."



Nigeria claim Commonwealth men's team title

Merothohun Monday survived six match points to power Nigeria to a 4-2 win over India in the final of the commonwealth table tennis championships on Tuesday.

Table Tennis

Monday beat Subramanian Raman 16-21 26-24 21-9 in his second singles match, handing the African team their first ever

team title in the event. The Nigerian was trailing 16-20 in the second game but fought back with a string of aggressive shots to win it. "I don't warm up easily," he said. "But I always have

the confidence that I'll win". The 23-year-old had earlier excelled himself in a doubles victory that helped Nigeria take a 3-1 lead. Monday and Toriola Segun scored an 18-21 21-17

AFN classics described as successful

Athletics

The second AFN/UNIC classics at the Nnamdi Azikiwe stadium Enugu, has been described as a success.

AFN's technical committee chairman, Mr. Moses Ogun, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) at the end of the two-day meet on Saturday in Enugu, that two national records were set in women's javelin and 1,500 metres.

He described the meet as a good beginning, adding that athletes overall performances might have been affected by the short notice for the meet.

He said the athletes protest against the removal of their leader by the AFN could also have affected their performance.

According to Ogun, with this tempo, we are sure to move up, and we expect a better performance from the athletes at the next championship billed for between May 4 and May 5 in Bauchi and the third led of the classics billed for Port Harcourt".

NAN reports that Alli Baba, the athletes president and national champion (Discuss Men), who led the athletes in protest against his five-year ban by the AFN over utterances against the body, withdrew from the event.



Ishaya Mark Aku, Sports Minister

21-13 win over Chetan Baboor and Raman, the defending doubles champions.

In the other finals, favourites Singapore claimed their third consecutive women's team title with a 4-1 victory over Malaysia.

Singapore's Jing Jun Hong, ranked 13 in the world and 69 places above her opponent, slumped to a surprise 14-21 23-21 22-24 defeat to Yao Lin Jing in the opening singles game.

But Chinese-born Li Jia Wei won the second singles to level the tie before Singapore completed a comfortable victory.

India's women team claimed third place by defeating New Zealand 4-3.

Singapore's men claimed third with a 4-1 victory over last year's winners England, who rested their top player Matthew Syed. Syed is chasing his third consecutive singles title in the championships.



Mercy Akide, Falcons goal poacher

No, I'll not resign, Yusuf tells Bonfrere

The sore relationships between technical adviser, Johannes Bonfrere and Nigerian football authorities took a new twist yesterday as the NFA Secretary General, Dr. Tijjani Yusuf responded sharply at the Dutchman's verbal spat. Yusuf, who was penulti-

mate day advised by Bonfrere to quit his position as the FA scribe, lambasted the Super Eagles handler's ignorance of the civil service procedures.

The FA scribe, who would not be taken aback by Bonfrere's resort to unnecessary verbal attack with his

employers, simply said he would not resign his appointment stressing that the Dutch tactician has no authority to remove him from office.

"I imagine an employee ordering his employer to resign. Anyway, I have my files with the civil service commission," Yusuf said in a tacit

mockery of Bonfrere's ignorance of civil service rules.

Yusuf's statement implies that Bonfrere could not influence any decision that may affect him.

Yusuf advised Bonfrere to concentrate on his job of qualifying Nigeria for the World Cup, instead of engaging in needless bantering of words.

Bonfrere's resignation excites Sport Ministry, NFA

Staff of the Sport Ministry and the NFA broke into unveiled and unmitigated celebration yesterday following Johannes Bonfrere's decision to quit the scene in July whether the Super Eagles qualifies for the World Cup 2002 or not.

The Super Eagles technical adviser had penultimate day announced his decision to ease out of his technical job after the Nigeria/Ghana clash in July.

Bonfrere, in announcing his intention to quit, cited among others FA's inept ad-

ministrative attitude and ministry's frustrating antics.

The Dutch tactician accused certain individuals in the Glass House of deliberately frustrating his efforts to qualify Nigeria for the World Cup.

He adduced the inexplicable delay in the refund of tickets to players causing distraction as another way by which the NFA has hindered his programmes.

According to Bonfrere, the delay in the payment of his salary and the unneces-



Bonfrere necessary confrontation are ploys to frustrate him out of the job.

However, staff of both organs instead of sympathizing with the Dutchman rather exhibited unhidden happiness in his declared intention to quit. They expressed the view that his resignation would be a good riddance of an "unwanted element."

Many would rather prefer Bonfrere resign immediately than continue to give Nigerians undue anxiety. A staff of the Sports Ministry, who pleaded for anonymity observed that Bonfrere's resignation would enable Nigeria to refocus and groom a new crop of Eagles who would give Nigeria effective representation.

An NFA staff, who had been seething over Bonfrere's continued dependence on a crop of tired legs in the face of abundant and willing legs, said the Dutchman's resignation would be an "independent day gift" to Nigeria.

"We have no need for Bonfrere. His resignation would be a good riddance of a bad rubbish. The country would indeed be better off without him. His exit allows for whoever replaces him to look inward. Bonfrere has unhidden disdain for the local league which should have been the pool from which to draw talented players," he said.

Protest mars U-19 tourney draw

The draw ceremony for the maiden National U-19 Female Championship was dogged by protests and controversy over the formula adopted by the NFA to seed some states.

The NFA had used state governments' financial investments in grassroots sports development as the major criteria for seeding. This yardstick favours Lagos, Edo and Delta states who are reputed to have spent heavily on grassroots sports development.

But the formula drew swipes from Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, FCT, Rivers and Bayelsa states which have some of the most renowned female soccer outfits with applaudable pedigrees.

Cross Rivers state idol, Pelican Stars were winners of the Challenge Cup and league in the past six years.

On the other hand, the FCT Queens have also made an impressive showing in both competitions. They are the current Challenge Cup holders.

But the NFA did not give consideration to the states' pedigrees in female soccer. This infuriated the states who strongly objected the seeding formula. Their protest though was verbal and does

Female Football

not represent threat to boycott the championship.

Speaking on behalf of the protesting states, the Akwa Ibom FA scribe, Mr. Okon Akpabio faulted the criteria stressing that it was a ploy to eliminate some states.

The former Calabar Rovers star noted that since the states did not have same priorities it was unfair for the NFA to base the seeding on grassroots sports investment.

Similarly, a member of the Female Football Interest Group (FFIA), Mr. Tony Opara also derided the seeding system, stressing that it was calculated to rubbish those states that had painstakingly invested in female football.

However, the head of female football department in the NFA, Mrs. Lizzy Onyenwenwa saw nothing wrong in the formula, arguing that rather than being unfair and detrimental, it would ginger states with minimum investments in grassroots sports development to put more fund in that area.

Meanwhile the 23 states, which have registered for the championship, have been

drawn into four groups. Group A, has Benue, Ekiti, Niger, Ogun, Oyo and Enugu, while group B, has Edo, Bayelsa, Cross River, Plateau, Akwa Ibom and Kwara states with Edo as the seeded side.

Group C, which is in Katsina Ala, has Delta state (seeded) Imo, Osun, Rivers, FCT and Anambra, while group D, has Abia, Nasarawa, Ondo, Kaduna and Lagos, which was seeded.

The championship begins on April 24.

Nigeria to test China might

Nigeria, China female soccer hostility will be rekindled next February when both teams trade tackles for supremacy in an epic international friendly encounter

Whereas, the Asian giants will seek to sustain their burgeoning status over the African champions, the later are hell bent on breaking a lingering jinx. Nigeria has always failed to clinch victory over China in a competitive match.

Tijjani Ahmed Yusuf, the

NFA Scribe, announced yesterday that Nigeria would seek revenge from the Chinese in the friendly duel.

Yusuf observed that the encounter would offer ample avenue for Nigeria to test her strength against China.

The Asian Soccer giant have won both the woman World Cup and the Olympic soccer medal.

The NFA, determined to present a crack squad to face the Chinese, has begun preparation to raise a formidable team that will confront

them.

Yusuf said, the bulk of the fresh legs are to be selected from the maiden U-19 national female soccer championship which kicks-off in Makurdi, Benue state on April 24.

The championship, Yusuf said, would offer the Super Falcons' technical crew the opportunity to pick players with the basic skills who would join some old members of the Falcons.

The Falcons who participated in the maiden Olympic

female soccer tournament in Sydney last year losing all their three games against Norway, China and USA are to begin campaigns for continental conquest soon.

The NFA Scribe, Dr. Yusuf noted intends to comb all nooks and crannies of the country for new players, stressing that the U-19 championship is part of their developmental programme and quest to further propel female soccer into wider dimension.

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NFA, Bonfrere in verbal spat: Bonfrere raps NFA, says he'll quit

Nigeria's Dutch coach Jo Bonfrere accused the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) on Tuesday of giving him no support in his bid to lead the team to the 2002 World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea.

By Ismaila Lere, with Agency Reports

group, play Sierra Leone in Freetown this weekend and need to win to brighten their chances of making a third consecutive World Cup appearance.

"Just look at us! Is this how to prepare for a major interna-

tional match?" Bonfrere asked reporters at the team's hotel camp in Lagos.

"No training bus, no training pitch, no kits. We went to training today in bush-taxis we hired on our own.

"I can't say when players will arrive at the camp because hotel

officials said the NFA instructed them to bar me from making phone calls to check with the players.

"I don't even know when we'll be flying out to Freetown and whether the game will be played on Saturday or Sunday. The players and myself are just kept in the dark."

He showed reporters a letter written and signed by NFA secretary general Tijani Yusuf ordering him to stop granting press interviews or 'face the music'.

"But I have replied him, saying: 'Let us enter in to a deal. If we lose to Sierra Leone I'll resign. But if we win, Mr Yusuf must quit his job as NFA secretary.'"

After Nigeria's team of foreign-based players drew 0-0 last month in Accra against a Ghana side composed of domestic club players, Bonfrere threatened to quit from his job if his team failed to beat Sierra Leone, who have lost all four qualifiers they have played so far.

"Even after qualifying Nigeria for the 2002 World Cup finals, I do not see myself going to the tournament as the coach because I've had enough of this rubbish," he said on Tuesday.

Bonfrere, whose two-year contract ends in December, has had several rows with his employers since 1999 when he was re-appointed for a second spell.

The Dutchman said that despite the "frustrations and obstacles" he remained undaunted.

"I think the important thing is that my players respect, trust me and are solidly behind me," he said. "And they know we're fighting together to get Nigeria to the 2002 World Cup finals."

Put up or shut up, NFA orders Bonfrere

The Nigerian Football Association (NFA) has ordered its Dutch-born coach Jo Bonfrere to concentrate on his work in order to ensure that Nigeria qualifies for the 2002 World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea.

"We have just sent him a letter to that effect ... to work more and talk less because we are already in a tight situation," NFA secretary general Tijani Yusuf said.

According to Yusuf, president Olusegun Obasanjo has directed the Sports Ministry and NFA to ensure Nigeria's third consecutive outing at the global soccer event by qualifying for the 2002 World Cup.

The verbal spat between coach Bonfrere and the NFA comes as Nigeria's Sports Minister Ishaya Mark Aku expressed his full confidence in foreign coaches.

He said that (local) Nigerian coaches were "incompetent" and the country would continue to rely on the services of foreign coaches.

"The indigenous coaches are not exposed and do not possess the professional competence ... so we must rely on foreign coaches until ours are better-developed," the minister said.

His comments are bound to stir up controversy among Nigerian soccer fans and pundits, who have constantly criticised the sports ministry's preference for foreign coaches.

The Dutchman is the 21st foreigner in the job.

He has been under fire from the NFA and soccer fans for hiring and firing his assistants, and preferring overseas-based players to home-based ones.

Bonfrere has also been criticised for not watching Nigerian league matches and frequently travelling abroad to monitor the performances of players.

Coach Bonfrere threatened to quit his Nigerian job if his team fails to beat Sierra Leone.

"Yes, I'll quit. Nigeria has no business being at the World Cup if we cannot beat Sierra Leone," he said.

Yusuf said the NFA order was also aimed at "checking the excesses" of Bonfrere after his criticism of the NFA in an interview he granted a local newspaper.

Bonfrere had told the April 7 edition of The Guardian on Sunday: "The NFA is a house of problems.

"They make things difficult because they are not organised," the paper quoted Bonfrere as saying.

"When you have a game to

play, it's always a problem with everything. As you're thinking of how to win your game, you're also thinking about administrative problems, getting balls," the story went on.

"It's a crazy situation," quoted the paper.

But Yusuf said: "I do not need to be exchanging words with him in public. But I just want to say that no coach has received the kind of support Bonfrere is getting from us."



Yusuf



Bonfrere



Doug Dunakey sinks a birdie putt on the sixth green during the first round of the WorldCom Classic... last Thursday



Argentine tennis player, Franco Squillari returns the ball to Spaniard Albert Martin in the second round of the Estoril Open... recently.

Professor Nomau's travails, written & illustrated by Bulama Mustapha

