



STAR FEATURE

Motor park life:
Passenger is king

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Workers in the civil service under the aegis of the Joint National Public Service Negotiating Council (JNPSNC), have cautioned the federal government against planned retrenchment of 74,000 workers in the civil service.

The workers said they have had enough from the federal government and

Workers protest planned sack of 74,000

● **It's "Right sizing" not sack – says Bode George**

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma, Labour Reporter (Abuja) and Dele Ogunyemi, Stringer (Ibadan)

would resist any attempt to right-size, down-size or retrench workers in the civil

service. A bulletin issued by JNPSNC in Abuja yesterday, said the present estimated 160,000 workforce in the federal civil service cannot be too much for the federal govern-

ment to sustain. "The civil service personnel cost is about 17 per cent of total public sector budget. In an underdeveloped country like Nigeria, both public and private sectors must cre-

ate and sustain jobs. Why embarking on massive premature retirement when it has been difficult to pay pensioners regularly?

"Is it not possible to use civil servants optimally by stopping the use of consultants and contracting out jobs

for which there exists enough work force? Government is elected not to inflict or increase hardship and fear of the future in the civil service," the workers said.

According to the workers, the cost of the planned retrenchment exercise is uneconomical and wasteful apart from its negative so

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NATIONAL CONFAB

Tobi stops debate on 3rd term for Obasanjo

But for the intervention of its chairman, Justice Niki Tobi, the national political reform conference would have yesterday delved into the rumoured third term ambition of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Tobi shouted down a delegate, Chief Ziggy Azuike who brought up the issue and asked him to restrict himself

By Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political Reporter

to making comments on the president's inaugural address which was the subject of discussion.

At the resumed debate on the speech, Azuike, who is on the Imo state delegation to the confab, said a vital miss-

ing aspect in the address was the speculated third term plot.

He said he had expected that since there was so much talk of such a plan and since so many people consider the

convocation of the confab as a ploy to ensure the president remains in office beyond 2007, Obasanjo should have addressed the issue in his speech.

But even before the delegate reached the end of his sentence, Tobi interrupted, saying the man had no right to talk that way.

Azuike said: "The presi-

dent should have assured us that he has no third term ambition as is being speculated. He must assure us that he is

Contd. on Pg 2

Prison fire claims 140 in Dominican Republic

At least 140 inmates have been killed after a prison riot led to a fire in the Dominican Republic, officials said.

They said clashes between rival gangs in the prison in the eastern town of Higüey began late on Sunday night.

The fighting was broken up by guards but later, many prisoners began rioting and started the fire.

Army helicopters were ferrying the wounded to hospital in the capital, Santo Domingo, national prison chief, Juan Ramon de la Cruz Martinez said.

The blaze spread rapidly as inmates set fire to their bedding just after midnight, officials said.

Firefighters were unable to bring the fire under control and had to call for reinforcements from the neighbouring states.

"Most of the prisoners we're seeing are dead or badly wounded," Nestor Vera, chief of the firefighters of Higüey, said.

"Up to now we've pulled out 58 bodies but we know

that there are many more because they're piled up on top of each other," Mr. Vera added.

It would be recalled that in September 2002, 28 prisoners died in a fire started during a riot at a jail in the Dominican Republic.

The prisoners started the fire by burning mattresses and sheets.

Most of the victims are thought to have died from smoke inhalation.

At least 20 more prisoners were seriously injured.

A BBC correspondent in the country's capital, Santo Domingo, says like prisons in the Dominican Republic as in much of Latin America - are

Contd. on Pg 2



The Chairman of the National Political Reform Conference, Justice Niki Tobi, second left, being assisted by other members of the confab to cut the confab cake during the sitting of the National Political Reform Conference in Abuja... yesterday. Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

Reps order IGP to refund N2.3bn to NHF

● **Why we defaulted – Ehindero**

The House of Representatives Committee on Housing and Urban Development has ordered the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, to

By Hammeed M. Bello, Senior Political Reporter

within one month, refund over N2.3 billion National Housing Fund (NHF), deducted by the

police but not remitted to the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN).

Mr. Ehindero admitted that the police violated the rules by not making the remittance but apologised to the investigative panel, even as he indicted the FMBN for aiding the violations.

The police, army and other defaulters of the NHF were summoned yesterday by the Housing and Urban Development committee to a

public hearing to investigate all defaulters of the housing project and to take measures to recover monies misdirected or misappropriated.

The committee chairman, Hon. Osita Izuanuso, while relaying the stand of the panel, said it discovered that the police had deducted N2.3 billion from its officers and men for the NHF and refused to remit it to the FMBN which is the legal recipient of the deductions.

Izuanuso also suggested that the money might have

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Irene Chigbue is new BPE DG

By Anas A. Galadima, Reporter (Business)

Public Enterprises (BPE), with effect from yesterday.

A two-paragraph statement signed by the Secretary

to the Government of the Federation, Chief Uffot Ekaette, said yesterday that she takes over from Julius Bala.

The statement said

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News

Workers *Contd. from Pg 1*

cial implications.

The workers appealed to well-meaning Nigerians to prevail on the federal government to halt the planned retrenchment of workers in the civil service in order to avert a nationwide strike action.

Some members of the JNPSNC told *Daily Trust* in Abuja shortly after an all-inclusive meeting of trade unions made up of the council that they will embark on a nationwide strike as a last resort to halt the planned retrenchment exercise.

According to them, the federal government is not willing to reconsider its decision on the retrenchment of civil servants and that the labour movement will fight government to a stand still on the issue.

The unions that make up of the Joint National Public Service Negotiating Council are: Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN), Agriculture and Allied Workers Union of Nigeria (AAWUN), Nigeria Civil Service Union (NCSU) and Amalgamated Unions of Public Corporation, Civil Service Technical and Recreational Service Employees (AUPCTRE).

Others include; Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria (MHWUW), National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives (NANNM), Nigeria Union of Civil Service Secretariat and Stenographic Workers (NUCSTSAS) and the National Union of Printing, Publishing and Paper Products Workers (NUPPROW).

However, the decision by the present administration to send packing 74,000 employ-

ees from the federal civil service any moment from now has been stoutly defended by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), National Vice Chairman for the South West, Chief Bode George, who described the government's proposed action as 'right sizing' of the civil service and not the sack of workers.

Chief George who spoke at the "Hotspot Forum" of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Oyo State council in Ibadan over the weekend, even stated that the government's action 'is a good decision' since, according to him, "the excess baggage will be given something else to do"

The PDP leader disclosed that government has already put in place an arrangement where the victims could access either the agricultural, industrial or mortgage banks for financial loans "with reasonable interest rates" to commence small or medium scale investments of their choice.

He explained that government was forced to adopt the measure in view of "the enormous monthly wage bill" as a result of the over-bloated staff strength in the federal civil service.

According to Chief George, with the reality of the time, the curriculum has to change and government cannot continue to employ perpetually.

Chief George faulted the raging criticisms against the various policies of the federal government saying "President Obasanjo is not playing God."

Tobi *Contd. from Pg 1*

not a referee in his own match. In his speech he has not sufficiently convinced us of his impartiality...."

At this point, Tobi cut in, warning the delegate to mind his language. "Watch your words. You have no right to speak that way. Restrain your language", the chairman cautioned.

But Azuike insisted that considering the weight of allegations that the confab would be used to water the ground for Obasanjo's third term ambition, "we need assurances. The president should assure us. People are asking, is what we are doing not a jamboree? We need to be assured that we are not here for a jamboree."

Although Tobi did not issue another warning, Azuike discontinued talk on the subject and took on the president's speech. This appeared to have rested the third term plan talk as it did not feature again for the remaining part of yesterday's session.

Other issues that dominated yesterday's proceedings included resource control, epileptic power supply,

accountability in governance, self determination, prohibitive cost of governance and concerns about the fate of the confab's report.

Delegates also re-echoed the position of their colleagues who spoke last week that the unity of Nigeria was non-negotiable.

A number of them similarly spoke about the need for an unrestricted debate and referendum on the confab's recommendations.

Mrs. Joy Nzelu faulted government's economic figures, saying they were yet to translate into wealth across board for Nigerians.

She canvassed a self determination clause in the constitution, adding, however, that this did not in any way stand for secession.

On his part, Barrister Ibrahim Shema (Katsina), said the real problems of Nigeria were the evils of ethnicity, religious disharmony, corruption, ignorance, poverty and lack of sincerity of purpose.

He criticised advocates of a balkanised Nigeria, saying they were agents of retrogression trying to pull the nation backwards.



L-R: PDP South South delegate, Dr. Samuel Ogbemudia, ANPP delegate, Chief Don Obot Etiebet and Lt. General J.T. Useni also ANPP delegate chatting during the sitting of the National Political Reform Conference in Abuja... yesterday.

Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

been misappropriated by the police and ordered the IGP to source for the money and remit it because it is a violation of Act 3 of 1992 which established the NHF and prescribed the guidelines.

Responding, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, while apologising to the committee, said the prevailing distress of banks then and their unpredictable nature forced the police to boycott the FMBN.

This is in addition to the inability of the FMBN to provide the police with adequate registration forms, Ehindero said, adding that in 1994, the police had the workforce of 240,000 but the FMBN only supplied it with 40,000 forms.

He said the FMBN also failed to account for the N24.1 million already paid to it by

Shema called on delegates to champion causes that would move the nation forward, adding that personal ambition should be put at bay for common good.

On his part, Dr. Hassan Adamu, representing the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), called for a review of industrial policy to address the collapse of industries and curb unemployment.

Admiral Murtala Nyako of the Nigeria Chambers of Commerce, Industry Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) advised that economic reforms rather than political reforms were what the nation badly needed and suggested heavy agricultural subsidies to Nigerian farmers, citing example of an American university that helped farmers to the tune of \$14 billion daily.

A diaspora delegate, Dr. Francis Adike, canvassed for absentee voting so that Nigerians abroad would have opportunity to participate in elections.

In her contribution, Mrs. Tawa Williams (Lagos), demanded apology from politicians for aiding the military to plunge the nation into mess.

Reps *Contd. from Pg 1*

the police in some states before the resort to the police community banks. He gave the breakdown of the money remitted by the state branches of the police to the FMBN as including Benue (N3.6 million); Ogun (N3.2 million) and Oyo (N2.4 million) which totalled N9.1 million.

He said regarding the order to pay the N2.3 billion within a month to FMBN, that the money is intact and will be remitted appropriately. According to him, between 1994 to February, 2005, the police deducted N1.1 billion from its officers and men for the NHF which it lodged in the police community bank, in addition to the N1.2 billion interest it yielded, which totalled N2.3 billion.

He said that part of the problems that the police had was a comprehensive computerisation of its personnel, and adding that about 35 percent of the police personnel are not quartered to which he said they were committed to address.

He said the police will henceforth, comply with all

the provisions of the law in the remittance of all NHF deductions.

The Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Martins Luther Agwai, who was represented by Maj. Gen S.A. Omwuama, noted that the army is in the process of establishing its own mortgage institution, adding that the army has so far contributed N1.1 billion and has assessed 50 percent of the money.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Mrs. Mobolaji Osomo, disclosed that the ministry is preparing a Bill to sanitise the NHF policy and that the issue of land use Act of 1978 will soon be addressed with some amendments to provide for checks.

In his remarks, the Speaker, Aminu Bello Masari, noted that over 70 percent of Nigerians are living in temporary houses, suggesting that the NHF Act must be reviewed and that the committee must expose and hold all violators of the NHF accountable.

The public hearing continues today and the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and other commercial banks accused of violating the NHF were among those to appear.



Sunday Ehindero, IGP

PRISON *Contd. from Pg 1*
overcrowded and poorly managed.

He says inmates are often found in possession of arms, drugs and mobile phones.

One report said the prison at La Vega, about 70 miles (110 kilometres), north-west of Santo Domingo, was built to hold 300 inmates, but houses many more.

Irene *Contd. from Pg 1*

Chigbue was before now, a director in the department of transport and aviation in the BPE.

This has put paid to speculations that the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU), Oby Ezekwesili, may have been asked to take over from Bala.

Mrs. Chigbue is one of the oldest serving staff of the agency and has been with the BPE before the appointment of Malam Nasir Ahmed el-Rufai, as its director general in 1999.

She was one of the most senior deputy directors that were viewed as likely succes-

Obasanjo wants 40% rise in non-oil revenue

By Reuben Yunnana,
State House Correspondent

President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday ordered the Joint Tax Board (JTB), to raise revenue accruable from non-oil products from the present 20 percent to 60 percent.

He expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation where revenue accruing to the federation account from oil and gas remained at 81 percent while revenue from other sectors was just about 20 percent.

This, the president said, contradicted government's policy of diversifying the economy.

Obasanjo, who spoke while receiving members of the board at the State House, scored state governments low in efforts to evolve methods to identify local revenue sources.

State governments, he noted, depended wholly on monthly allocations from the federation account.

Many states, he said, earned less than 1/3 of their revenue from locally generated revenue, adding that the Tax Board must as a matter of urgency, develop what he called a more dynamic and innovative revenue mobilisation method.

Obasanjo noted that concerted efforts to expand the economy were already paying off and directed JTB to reassess tax administration so that those earning jumbo pay would be made to pay more tax.

"Paying taxes makes all of us responsible and gives us the right to demand how government is spending our tax payer's money," the president explained.

He urged state tax boards to increase their searchlight so that both taxable individuals and corporate bodies pay tax promptly.

Speaking on the request for the independence of state tax boards, Obasanjo directed Vice President Atiku Abubakar to raise the matter at the next National Economic Council (NEC), at which he is chairman.

sors to el-Rufai before the presidency appointed Julius Bala, then a director of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) to head the bureau.

It would be recalled that *ThisDay* newspaper had reported on Sunday that the president may have relieved Dr. Julius Bala of his appointment as director general of the bureau.

At the time of filing this report, no reason has been given for Dr. Bala's sack. However, *ThisDay* newspaper, in its report, had said that Bala was fired "as a result of his tardiness in the implementation of some aspects of the privatization policy."

NEWS

I will mobilise funds for national mosque

—Obasanjo

President Olusegun Obasanjo, Tuesday in Abuja, reiterated determination to sensitise all Nigerians to mobilise funds for the rehabilitation of the national mosque at the State House, the president stressed that "the brotherhood of Nigerians cuts across religious and ethnic boundaries."

He noted that "if we can make a success of our religious pluralism, we will have a lesson to teach the world, adding that not many countries in the world have been successful in this respect."

President Obasanjo said that the appeal fund is one occasion for all Nigerians to demonstrate that they are together in spite of religious differences.

Those in attendance at the meeting included the vice president, the governors of Nassarawa and Kogi states the deputy governors of Katsina and Kaduna states and the secretary to the Oyo state government.



Governor Abdullahi Adamu of Nasarawa state, (right) and his Kogi state counterparts, Alhaji Idris Ibrahim costering during the meeting of the National Mosque rehabilitation committee held at the state House Abuja ...recently

Presidency re-presents due process bill to Reps

The Senior Special Assistant to the president and head, budget monitoring and price intelligence unit otherwise known as due process, Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, says the unit has re-presented the public procurement Bill to the House of Representatives for passage into law.

Mrs. Ezekwesili said yesterday while answering questions from newsmen in Abuja that the failure to pass

By Hamisu Mohammed
Reporter (Business)

the Bill at the first attempt by the House was largely due to the misunderstanding of the contents of the Bill.

According to her, most of the members didn't take time to go through the Bill. They assumed the Bill contained some bureaucratic procedures and thereby failed to pass it for the second reading.

Her words: "Some members called me saying that some of their colleagues did not understand the contents of the procurement Bill. That is why they are against it."

Daily Trust learnt that the Bill was rejected by the House as a result of some bureaucratic procedures contained there in. But already, the upper house has passed the Bill and set up a committee for some legislative procedures.

The 57-page bill made available to Daily Trust seeks

the establishment of the National Council on Public Procurement; The Bureau of Public Procurement as the regulatory authority responsible for the monitoring and oversight of public procurements.

The Bill also requires that body should act to harmonise existing government policies and practices by the regulating, setting standards, developing the legal framework and professional capacity for public procurement in Nigeria and other related purposes.

Women, children in child trafficking drama protest

Some women and children allegedly accused of child trafficking have protested the accusation, claiming they were victims of armed robbery attack.

The women, still in detention at Amukoko police station, Lagos, told correspondents of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), that contrary to media and police reports, they were not child traffickers but traders from Mokwa in Niger State.

They claimed that they were attacked on their way to Lagos before they were rescued by a driver.

They said they were not arrested at any check-point but near their residence in Amukoko as they were disembarking from the truck.

NAN counted about 50 of them with the women, outnumbering the children. Many of the mothers are still nursing their children.

Narrating their ordeal, Fatima Ibrahim, who said she was a trader and was arrested with seven children, including the four she claimed to be hers, told NAN that after taking off in two hired vehicles in Mokwa, the group was attacked at midnight somewhere before Ilorin in Kwara state.

A truck driver came to their rescue and after some

persuasions, agreed to take them to their residence called Tapa Community in Amukoko, she said.

The driver was also being detained along with them, she said.

She claimed she trades in groundnuts and 'Donkwa', a derivative of groundnut, which she claimed, were confiscated by the police.

A pregnant lady, Aisha Isa, detained with two children whom she claimed to be hers, said her husband who came to secure the release of the children, aged two and four, has been detained along with the group.

The detained children wailed and bellowed from the shed where they had been kept for three days. They became aggressive as they hurled sand at onlookers who had turned the scene to a beehive of activities.

Most of the women and children, who looked unkempt, said they had not had their bath since their detention, while food supply had been coming from relations.

The police refused to make any comments but said they were making arrangements to transfer the detainees to the state's Criminal Investigation Department at Panti in Yaba.

US warship not on Nigerian waters

—Ambassador

The United States ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell, has denied speculations that a US warship is currently on Nigerian waters at the Gulf of Guinea.

According to him, a US military ship did pass through the Gulf of Guinea sometimes last year but that it was part of a worldwide surveillance and it has no specific reference to the Gulf of Guinea.

The ambassador who made this revelation at a press conference organised after the opening ceremony of the ongoing international seminar on Energy and Security in Africa, said the vessel was hundreds of miles away from the Nigerian coast and it passed through and was not stationed there.

The ambassador further revealed that the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGO) is amongst other things, aimed at helping African countries diversify their economy, to reduce dependence on oil as a way of reducing insecurity.

Also responding to questions from journalists, General Carlton W. Fulford (rtd), of the United States said

By Anas A. Galadima,
Reporter Business

the issue in the energy sector is very important.

He said oil companies have expressed their sincerity to hear from Nigerian citizens about what can be done to create security and stability.

According to him, poverty could partly be responsible for the insecurity in the Niger Delta region, but poverty cannot be eradicated in the midst of insecurity.

Security, he said, has to be in place before the necessary socio-economic development can take place which will in turn help reduce poverty.

PDP: Ogbeh hands over to Ali today

By Hameed M. Bello senior
political reporter

Former national chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), chief Audu Ogbeh will today formally hand over to his successor, Col Ali Ahmadu Ali (rtd).

Ali emerged the PDP chairman at the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the party which held in Abuja on March 2, and according to an aide of

Ogbeh who confirmed the official handover today, the former chairman will handover all paraphernalia of office to his successor

Ogbeh had in a letter of March 4, congratulated Ali and prayed God to give him the wisdom, courage and the necessary steadfastness to run the party.

Appeal court president reconstitutes panel to

hear cases

The president of the court of appeal yesterday reconstituted a new panel to hear some important appeal cases before the court and those for interpretation of particular law.

The new panel drawn from the various divisions of the court of Appeal include

By Kemi Ogedengbe

Justice R.O Rowland as the presiding justice, Justice O.O. Adekeye, Justice Amina Adamu Augie, Justice S.S. Alagoa and Justice T. Abdullahi.

The panel began sitting yesterday at the Abuja court of Appeal while all major cases were fixed for hearing.

It was gathered that the new panel was reconstituted following a letter written by

Mr. Goodnews Agbi and Authority Alabi who are the appellants in an appeal filed against governor James Ibori of Delta state over the exconvict case.

An Abuja high court judge, Justice Hussein Mukhtar had in his judgement held that Chief Ibori was not sufficiently identified as the same person who was convicted in 1995.

The plaintiffs in the case however appealed against the

judgement whose they also wrote a letter asking for a new panel to hear the case.

The letter read thus: "Our attention has been drawn to a petition dated December 7, 2004 address to Mr. President wherein diverse allegations bordering on the negative role of judiciary officers in respect of this matter were highlighted."

The new panel reconstituted will today begin hearing in the Ibori ex-convict case.

Police confirm 8 dead in border clash

From Hassan A. Karofi
Correspondent Dutse

the 300 year old Maruta market.

According to the commissioner for security services in Jigawa state, Bala Safiyanu Jahun, the recent causative agent that lead to the hostilities began as a result of a long term hatred between the two communities.

He said six of the dead were killed instantly after the raid carried out by the communities against each other; while additional two people died in the hospital.

The commissioner also revealed that policemen have been deployed to the area to maintained law and order.

While describing the escalation of violence in the area as unfortunate, the security services commissioner announced that over 200 houses were burnt as thousands now take refuge in either neighbouring communities or in the open.

Alhaji Safiyanu announced that relief materials will soon be taken to the affected communities as most of the displaced now live without food, shelter or water.

He called on local authorities to expedite action in order to prevent a break out of diseases due to the poor conditions the people are now.

Daily Trust learnt that already, the Bauchi State deputy governor has paid a visit to the area while his Jigawa state counterpart will lead a delegation to the on Tuesday.

The clash between these communities began early last year after a police raid led to the dead of fulani cattle dealers who thereafter relocated to a neighbouring village of Gurmin and deserted the over 300 years market.

Since then, the two communities have fought each other leading to loss of lives and property in the area.

NEWS

National confab...National confab...National confab

Abacha's confab more democratic than Obasanjo's —Justice Commissioner

The Plateau state attorney-general and commissioner for Justice, Barrister Clement Dakas, has noted that the constitutional conference convened by the military government of the late Sani Abacha was more democratic than President Obasanjo's National Political Reform Conference.

According to him, Nigeria requires more than a political reform. He stressed the need for a national rebirth as there are 'endemic' socio-economic problems bedeviling the nation that needed to be addressed, and decried the selection method of the members of the confab.

"The 1994 conference had a level of election; some of the delegates were elected and it was a military government," he said. He recalled that though the government of Abacha selected several delegates, several others were elected, arguing that 'if that can take place during a military regime, is it now that we

From Rakiya A. Muhammad, Correspondent, Jos

are in a democratic government that selection would be vogue?"

"Among all the confer-

ences at the national level that we have had, even dating back to the constituent assembly, this is the only time to my knowledge that all the delegates are selected," he added.

Obasanjo can't source money from nation's accounts —Dr. Adeyemi

The chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Accounts, Dr. Oluwale Adeyemi, has said that it would be illegal should President Olusegun Obasanjo source funds for the National Political Reform Conference from the nation's consolidated revenue account.

Dr. Adeyemi, who was briefing newsmen Friday, said that "the president cannot source money to fund the confab from the consolidated revenue account. He cannot tinker with a kobo in the account without approval from the National Assembly. If he does, there will be consequences," he said.

Adeyemi, who is also a

By Zainab Alimi, Political reporter

member of the Appropriation Committee, disclosed that 65% of the yearly budgets of Nigeria constitutes a complete waste of government's

Gombe sets up c'ttee to collate memoranda

The Gombe state government has set up a seventeen member committee to collate memoranda from indigenes of the state for contributions to its delegates at the National Political Reform Conference.

Announcing the setting up of the committee at an interactive session for members representing the state at the confab and other personalities, Governor Muhammad Danjuma Goje said this would give members of the public the opportunity to contribute to the conference.

The governor, who presided over the session, pledged his government's support to the committee in particular, and the delegates in general for the overall success of the conference. He called on members of the public willing to contribute to the confab to submit their memoranda to the committee on or

Royal father lauds constitutional role for institution

The traditional ruler of the Ekpe Kingdom in Ahoada town of Rivers state, Eze Benlugbe of Ekpe Kingdom, Eze Robinson O. Robinson, has stressed the need for traditional institutions to be given a constitutional role as is being canvassed at the conference.

The traditional ruler, who said the traditional institutions have always been there since pre-colonial days, said it was high time the institution was given the needed recognition.

"We are Nigerians; we should have a place. The traditional institution has been there before the colonial masters. There is no reason why we cannot play a role in the democratic system. We have a duty; we are Nigerians. If other institutions are allowed to play a role, then we should be allowed. Our role should be at the local government level; and at an advisory level at both state and federal," he said.

He regretted that most constitutional conferences had always come out with nothing, noting that our problem was not the constitution but administration.

Rising from its congress of Ogoni people held last Saturday, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) has said that it believes that a national conference whose consensus is subject only to ratification by the people through a referendum holds the best hope of providing a framework for resolving national problems.

Although MOSOP had

MOSOP seeks referendum for outcome

From Ikenna Emeka Okpani, Bureau Chief, (Port Harcourt)

earlier asked for a boycott of the conference, it said it decided to support the national

dialogue in the hope that will provide a road map for the desired national conference and that the outcome of the conference will be implemented by the appropriate authorities.

"The Ogonis as well as other minority groups are completely dissatisfied with the composition of the delegates. It confirms the beliefs of the Ogoni people that the minorities have no place in Nigeria.

"Whereas the major ethnic groups that have ruled Nigeria are officially represented by their socio-cultural organisations, the minorities are not so represented. Who speaks for the Ogoni, the Itsekiri, the Urhobo, the Kataf, the Annang, the Efic, the Bachama and the Isan?" a statement signed by Moses Damgbor, acting secretary general of MOSOP queried.

The statement said MOSOP would mobilise communities in its area to participate in both the national confab and the forthcoming PRONACO confab.

install telecommunication systems within the force, and allotted about N164 million for the agreement, and not the contract itself.

"That budget drove me nuts. These are the kind of items that we see in the budget. When the police were summoned to defend the budget, they had nothing to say. This absurdity is not limited to the police only," he said.

He said that a number of parastatals have powers in their laws to make money and spend it according to their will, and this has made them unscrupulous with spending without accountability.

He therefore recommended that the House start to review the laws which give allowance for reckless spending so that the issue of corruption, which according to him, exists at all levels of government and individual level, can be adequately addressed.

From Mohammed Abubakar, Correspondent, Gombe

before the 19th of this month.

The committee is headed by the secretary to the state government, Alhaji Bala Magaji, while Dr. Sani Jauro of the Special Service Department of the governor's office serves as the secretary.

Other members include Dr. Abubakar Mu'azu of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Maiduguri and Abubakar Sule Bage, the principal personal secretary to the state governor.

FOCUS ON FURNITURE AND INTERIOR DECORATING COMPANIES IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's furnishing and decorating companies are bracing up to the challenges of the industry by producing and selling of high quality and durable materials that are of global standard.

Going by the high quality products of the operators of this sector of the economy, there is the need to publicise their activities in order to tap the potentials of the market to the maximum.

To appraise the contributions of the stakeholders in the industry, Media Trust Limited, the publishers of Daily/Weekly Trust newspapers, will publish a special focus on the manufacturers and suppliers of durable and high-grade furniture and furnishing items.

The date of publication is Wednesday, March 23, 2005, while deadline for submission of materials, the company's profile and artworks is three days to the publication date.

For participation and further enquiries, please contact the Special Projects Department on the following numbers:

080-32916731, 080-37038663, 080-42145839 or

09-6720346, 5235787 exts. 124 & 117

Vox pop from Gombe

From Mohammed Abubakar, Correspondent (Gombe)

As the National Political Reform Conference enters its third week this Monday, Daily Trust in Gombe state went to town to seek the opinions of Nigerians on the performance of the conference so far. Excerpts:

Waziri Sale, 35, civil servant: So far so good. I believe the delegates are familiarising themselves with the task of the confab. I believe they are going to perform well.

Doma Isari, 62, car dealer: It is good. May they have all the blessings they need. The north is well represented; we only wish the conference well.

Wada Abubakar Sadiq, 40, politician/businessman: I don't believe that the conference is going to achieve anything - they are just going to talk and talk and end up getting more derided, especially between those who are pro-government and those who see things differently. What I want the conference to do is to convince Nigerians that there is no hidden agenda, and even if the president has one, they should be objective. The delegates should know that anything they do that goes contrary to the interest of Nigerians would be in vain.

Sa'idu Abubakar Baba, 38, civil servant: To my mind, the conference is not meant to discuss problems facing Nigerians. It is to discuss issues that are of no relevance to the masses of this country. All the issues they have discussed so far are to satisfy their interests and that of the government, but not the common man. The poor are worried over scarcity of water, fertiliser, stable electricity and other social amenities. The administration of Obasanjo, at the inception in 1999, promised to ensure stable power supply, but 6 years afterwards, all are just still-born.

This conference cannot solve Nigeria's problems because even without this conference, we know our problems. We know that in Ogun and Ondo states, power plants were constructed at the cost of over N8 billion, but nothing has been done about power supply in the north.

Our delegates may not discuss this because it is not what took them to the conference.

Sa'adatu Ibrahim, 50, trader: The performance of the delegates is okay. It is a good thing that Nigerians from all works of life are invited to share their views on national issues. It is good for Nigerians to have the opportunity to talk with one voice. It is good to iron things out.

Mohammed Audi, 40, farmer: If there is honesty in the conference; if they are going to do the right thing, I want them to scrap all the political parties we have now. Let them suggest for the creation of new political parties that will not be more than five. I want them to advise that elections in this country start from the councillorship level to the president. If this is not done, we cannot be said to be democratic. Anything short of this is deceit and a waste of public funds.

Usman Adamu.Uske, 41, Trader: I am satisfied with the performance of the conference. I just want the president and the National Assembly to respect whatever resolutions might have come from the conference; we should remember that the delegates are members of the society who distinguished themselves in their fields of endeavour.

Hauwa'u Abubakar, 20, housewife: I don't know anything. If it means better life for Nigerians, I am in support of the conference and I wish it well.

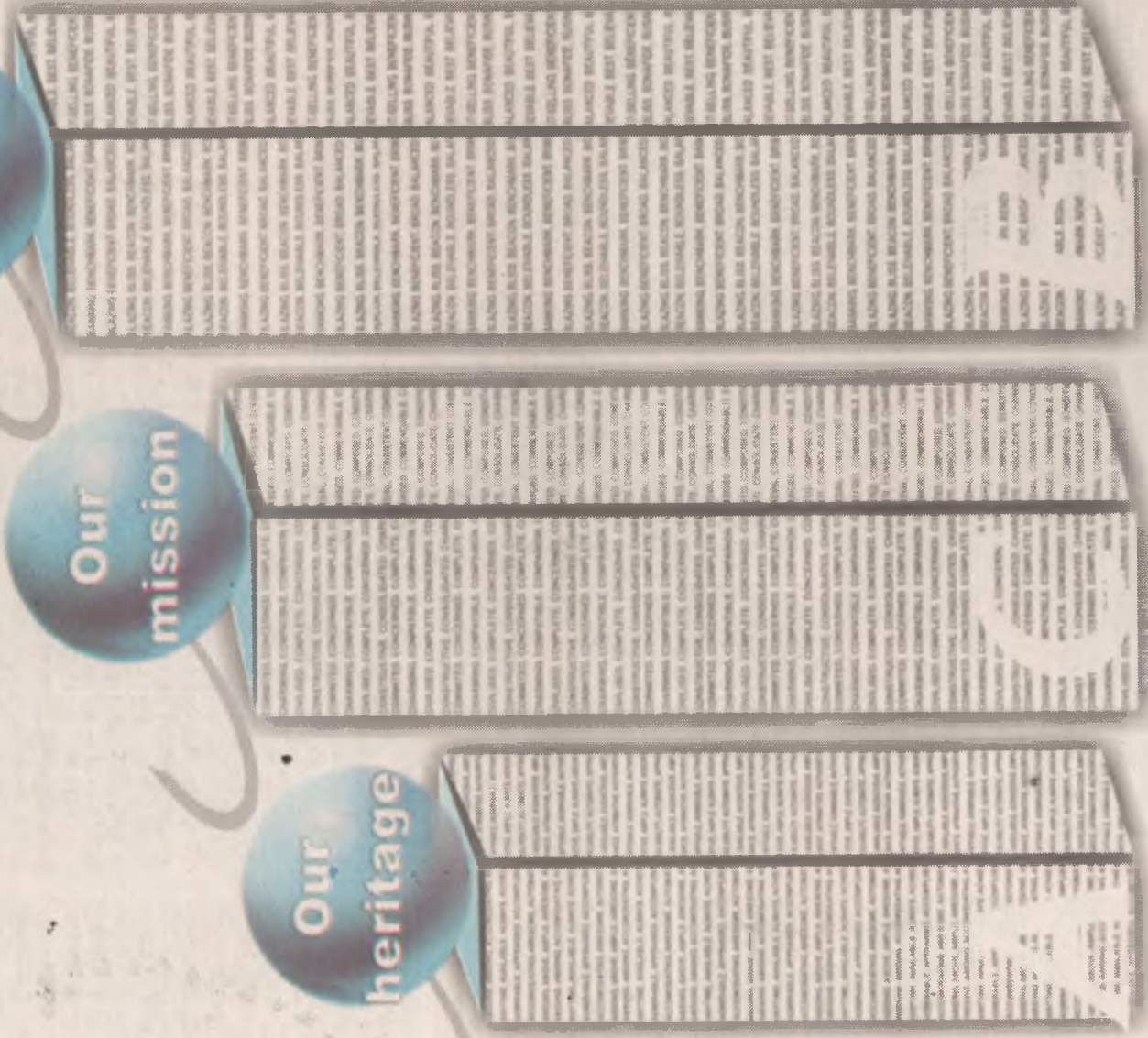
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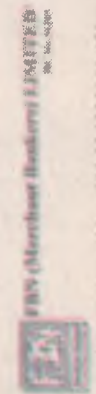
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Opinion

Ja'iz: Keeping hope alive

By Isa Muhammad Inuwa

Recapitalisation is the current trend that haunts Nigeria's banking industry the way dreaded computer virus "the Millennium Bug" rattled computer software mongers towards the close of twentieth century, precisely, year 2000 and even more than that. The new banking policy introduced by Central Bank of Nigeria came in a form of a fiat, issued to banks to consolidate their capital bases to the tune of a minimum 25 billion Naira to be raised by each bank before 31st of December 2005.

Apart from the fact that minimum capital requirement fixed by CBN seems too stupendous for majority of the banks that had been meddling with quite meager capital bases, the banks also consider time space allowed within which to meet the requirement as too short. The order is also seen to have come at bad time. Given the current economic condition, the prevailing atmosphere

of inflation and diminishing general savings and investments, even the so-

the CBN governor was doing the bid of Mr. President who was envied by South Africa's capital edge in banking and wished similar fortune for Nigeria.

What ever the case may be, it is observed that recapitalization trend was introduced without due

consideration of cultural, cum environmental peculiarity within which Nigerian Banks operate. Worst still, the Central Bank and other authorities seem not only bent on their intention to implement the policy, but also ready to cage any bank official that opposes the measures, as wrath had already visited such bank officials.

Ja'iz Bank is a budding bank just freshly in the process of its take off but faced with the formidable snags of "recapitalization". Since about two years after public sales of take-off shares of the proposed bank, this policy has held the nestling bank in the neck and still unable to obtain license to start operation.

operations. Another poser for Ja'iz subscribers is to liaise with legislative arm of government with a view to chip in new laws and regulations facilitating ways in the imposed recapitalisation policy.

However, the third major alternative is to evolve gigantic campaign for new subscribers, this time around in a bigger style and bidding huger amounts of capital to big time investors in order to conveniently beat the stipulated benchmark. Ja'iz Bank subscribers are never daunted. One important thing about Ja'iz Bank is that it would be interest-free throughout its operations, almost unprecedented in the history of banking in Nigeria. So it would definitely command great attention and draw curious investors to its tent.

The concept of "Ja'iz" meaning "Halaal" is drawn from similar banking experience in Bangladesh which had equally faced even more grievous daunting challenges at the moment of its take off, but ultimately weathered the storms. Hence spurring comments by Dr. Lateef Adegbité charged investors to look beyond mere material

"At the Annual General Meeting of the proposed bank on February 20th in Kano, principal proprietors complained bitterly over lingering delay to secure operation licence, even in addition to their modest request to meet the required capital ceiling the start of operations. With its 2 billion naira already pooled up by subscribers which is quite an appreciable amount in contrast to other old (established) banks whose capital mainly stands at merely 1 billion naira or even less, principal stakeholders of Ja'iz bank vowed to mobilize more funds"

called first generation banks possess more solid capital bases find it difficult to meet requirements of the recapitalisation policy.

Some press analysis of the trend indicated that banks based in northern Nigeria are most likely to collapse under this gigantic capital demand than those in the southern part of the country.

While the Central Bank governor, Professor Charles Soludo might have passed the rule of recapitalization in good faith in order to mobilize capital consolidation in the banking sector and thereby boost investment in the sector to further ginger up the general economy, yet the move has caused general panic and different interpretations as to the entire motive behind it. While some opinion lines claimed that Chief Soludo borrowed the idea from Malaysian experience of rapid capital mobilization for their "bank Negara" others pointed

At the Annual General Meeting of the proposed bank on February 20th in Kano, principal proprietors complained bitterly over lingering delay to secure operation licence, even in addition to their modest request to meet the required capital ceiling the start of operations. With its 2 billion naira already pooled up by subscribers which is quite an appreciable amount in contrast to other old (established) banks whose capital mainly stands at merely 1 billion naira or even less, principal stakeholders of Ja'iz bank vowed to mobilize more fund to be able to fulfill recapitalization requirements given enough time and leverage.

First and foremost, Ja'iz bankers opted to resort to legal arguments with a view to find their way out of the quagmire within the available legal provisions and dictates of banking

dividend accruable but also see it a sense of moral sacrifice towards establishing and sustaining an interest free-bank. As experience has shown, the banking system by Ja'iz does not restrict clientele to any particular group people or religious followers, its peculiar nature and mode of generating profit in a much liberal and fair way calls for all categories and cream of subscribers to pool up resources jointly towards realizing a much dignified banking transaction, profit making and sharing system as spearheaded by the bank.

As we all await for the final decision and action of the Central Bank of Nigeria in its recapitalisation policy we say more grease to Ja'iz elbows in its battle of legitimacy towards coming of age in Nigeria's banking terrains.

Inuwa is a Correspondent to Radio Deutsche Welle and can be reached at:

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A vote for debt forgiveness

By Moses Kolade

Minister of Finance, Dr Mrs Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, had done well for clarifying issues relating to Nigeria's debt burden in her article in *Thisday*, February 28, 2005. For the first time, I saw an analogy made public, and in simple English, devoid of economic and financial jargon, over the vexed issue of our foreign debt. Contrary to previous approaches the write-up showed that managing the economy may be a matter of logic, and not rocket science after all.

From the article, she was able to justify the need to press for debt forgiveness, if not for anything else, you only get what you ask for. Nobody will write off a penny, even if deserved, except an issue is made about it. Even if there is an error in computation or an interest overcharge, such figures will be deemed correct if all we do is continue to pay and service the debt. So let's ask for a debt write-off so that all the pros and cons will be considered in arriving at a reasonable figure. If Nigerians are dishonest like everybody thinks, we should not combine with that awful attribute, stupidity.

Some questions were however thrown up by my understanding of the issues as presented by Madam. Firstly, is Nigeria's oil production quota still about 2.2million barrels per day? If that is still so, then can we assume that in the past few years Nigeria has enjoyed an average excess of \$15 to the barrel, in other words \$33million per day or about \$10billion per annum to be conservative. If the country nets \$10billion per annum in excess crude then why is \$3billion for debt servicing an issue? Is it not then a matter of priority? It is understandable though that Nigeria's net oil revenue last year is \$25billion. At an average of \$40 per barrel and with production at 2million bpd for about 300 days, the figure probably jives. But our budget on oil revenue for that year would have been around \$17billion. So an excess of \$8billion should be enough for a number of things and a debt service of \$3billion should not give us tantrums I maintain. Again, if \$3billion represents the interest on our outstanding debt of \$34billion, the interest rate is almost 10% per annum. Do we not hear that interest rates in the advanced countries are below 3%? Why are our debtors so extreme in their penalties? Can anything be done to reduce the interest rates?

Other matters that arose include but are not limited to the fact that it is confusing to state that Nigeria's oil revenue is spread among 130million people. More than half of the country or 65million do not benefit directly from its oil revenue. How are the myriads of Fulani herdsmen

concerned or affected directly, or even the farmers in our numerous villages down south, who have been neglected by successive governments over the decades? These group of people have had to make an art out of surviving strictly on their own through subsistence. The effect of our huge oil revenue is hardly noticeable on them. Suffice to say that rather than spread the revenue thinly across the population, what has been happening is a situation where the majority loses the little they have to the rich few who benefit billions from the nation's oil revenue. That is what creates the impression that Nigeria is at once 'stinkingly' rich just as it is a 'dirt' poor banana republic.

This brings up the issue of sharing excess crude to State Governors. In the year 2004, the Federal Government stated many times the fact that it is keeping the windfall on crude oil for the rainy day, another way of admitting that it does not have any ideas or plans for the money. It tarried for so long and gave state governors the opportunity to start haggling it for the money. The same state governors who stand condemned by Interpol. The same state governors who cannot account for any pro-poor project with all the billions of Naira monthly allocations they have so far received. And so the money may be shared if it has not already. And the cycle of transferring funds into their personal accounts abroad begins all over again. Cry, our beloved Nigeria! Is it not possible for the Federal Government to offend the state governors for once, in favour of the poor and oppressed? Is it not possible to convince the governors of the need to undertake a much-needed project that will assuage the suffering of the masses? Or are we all being slaughtered on the altar of political expediency, after all most state governors are from the ruling party?

In the only attempt to quote figures, the Minister reeled out some rates on the key performance indices on the economy. The only problem with that is that our information gathering and statistical accuracy is still questionable. And that is a big issue which knocks the bottom out of any analysis. The figures may thus be best ignored. It's worse that every year, the CBN, Federal Office of Statistics and the Ministry of Finance parade different figures with regard to these economic monitors.

In the matter of reforms, and the insistence of our creditors that we continue to tighten our belts, it is obvious that it is a noose that is tightening around the necks of the less privileged in the society. The Paris Club do not understand our people and the circumstances of our

coexistence, therefore they posit in error. The reforms are not holistic in nature and they ignore important social factors, the most important, which is the fact that Nigeria is not really one nation but up to 3000 nations. Therefore as the guys at the center try or pretend to be putting resources together to salvage the nation, others are working pretty hard to ensure it doesn't stick. Among the people who govern also, most are there for their personal gains and do not have a limit on the brigandage they can commit. It may be difficult to blame some looters of the commonwealth because if they don't loot, their people from their villages will label them as fools.

In essence, the reforms should have been introduced and pursued after a national truth conference in which an agreement will be reached on how to conduct the Nigerian business going forward. Not a conference with many no-go-areas, because if a group do not agree on the rules guiding their existence, then each person will work at cross purposes and therefore frustrate the collective goal. If Nigeria continues to allow the majority of its people keep grievances, then its aim of attaining economic prosperity is only a pipedream. The attitude till date has been to bury our heads in the sand and to consider specific aspects of our existence in isolation of the others. Economic prosperity cannot be achieved without all the other aspects of life falling in line, just as no single state in the country can lay claim to development while the others are laggards.

If my arithmetic is correct, by the Minister's figures, Nigeria can pay off its debts in 3 years. If we concede most of our external reserves of \$19billion we'll be more than halfway through. Yes, it may temporarily affect exchange rates, but that's not the only factor that does. While I am of the opinion that we should have an home grown economic strategy which will take our peculiarities into account, I support our quest for a write-off of the debts even if in part. My only worry is whether the Paris Club people really want us to repay since debts have arguably become a neo-colonial instrument of dictation, repression and oppression. But the status quo is foolhardy as the world at large will be better off with a prosperous Nigeria. Over 30million Nigerians live outside their country today. They can only be convinced to stop putting the economies of other countries under pressure if things are okay here. In me, Nigeria has one convert in favour of debt forgiveness, at least partly.

Kolade writes from Plot 671/4, Yauri Close, Garki II, Abuja and can be reached at, (topsyfash@yahoo.com)



YOUR LETTERS

Let's have more human owls please!

This is not a rejoinder to Jabiru Bilyaminu's otherwise well-written piece on "human owls" with all the factual errors contained in it, in recent edition of *Daily Trust*. In it Bilyaminu berated Adamu Adamu, the man famous for his "crusade to have truth triumph over falsehood, frank and honest dealing over deceitful window dressing: It is also not an attempt to defend Mallam Adamu, because he is quite capable of defending himself whenever he sees the need to do so. Adamu Adamu is never flippant as all those who know him can testify. He cannot be drawn into wasteful argumentation by paid agents who cause more damage to those they wish to protect through unbridled overzealousness. But to put some records straight for those who have not read the write-up Bilyaminu is angry about, there was no where in the article in which Adamu Adamu sought "to bring down" anybody as Bilyaminu alleged. Adamu was only concerned about "inflation of contract costs" which even Bilyaminu himself did not deny. He only tried to downplay the concern, depicting it as "diversionary and misleading". I believe a lot of people in Nigeria who are worried about corruption will be quick to point at 'contract cost inflation' as part of corruption that must be wiped out, in gover-

ment circles especially, for us to have a clean society that can be trusted. Is it not baffling for Bilyaminu to, in one breadth, admit presence of "contract cost inflation" in a government and then expect people to take him serious when next he asserts absence of love of "pecuniary profits" in the hearts of officials running that government? Likewise if Bilyaminu does not suggest that "leaders should not be criticized where they are wrong", I wonder why he condemns those attempting to point at leaders' wrong steps as those that are "pathologically addicted to publicity." I do not know the yardstick Bilyaminu used to arrive at the conclusion that "Adamu Adamu was trying to wriggle out of obscurity which he fears badly, that's why he courts controversy by looking for someone to attack in his column." Obviously most people who knew Adamu Adamu came to know him through his profession-journalism which gives him unquantifiable publicity, most of it unsolicited. He has been in the profession for a long time that hardly anybody remembers he was once an accountant in one of the parastatals of Bauchi State government where he served honestly and diligently and left a beautiful unstained record. Moreover, as journalist who acts as the eyes and

ears of the society it is quite in order to be a cynic at the risk of being branded "a human owl" or anything worse. It is far better than to be a sycophant who uses his pen for pecuniary benefits that are fleetingly ephemeral. Journalists, as their profession requires the world over, are supposed to be skeptical and refuse to accept things on their face value. They should always try to watch and observe closely, happenings hidden in the dark rather than to make such crude or unguarded utterance when already sworn-in to perform a very serious national assignment. Buhari and Idiagbon were military men and not elected representatives and so cannot be used to justify a clear lopsidedness in the NPRC. It is also clear now that this Government is out to settle perceived grudges on all that Buhari and co represent. To also say that a complaint against religious imbalance is 'nonsense' and 'irresponsible', shows that those who appointed the likes of Kukah are more irresponsible and the outcome of the NPRC may also be nonsensical! Finally, Kukah should know that as Muslims, we profess that every human being is born a Muslim unless one chooses another faith. That is why in Islam, you don't have to be baptized. I thought learned Rev. Kukah can proceed in doing the bidding of his born-again paymaster, who engineered the most lopsided confab in the history of this nation. But the two of them should not forget that Allah is the best Planner!

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Is Rev. Kukah now arrogant?

I would like to refer to the interview granted by Rev. Fr. Mathew Hassan Kukah to the *Weekly Trust* of 26th March 4, 2005. Rev. Kukah, the Secretary to the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) has in the said interview, failed right from the onset to live above the expectations that as a clergyman, he can eschew overzealousness and allay our misgivings, especially over a delicate and controversial issue like the ongoing NPRC. He said: "All this talk of Christian and Muslims concerning the Confab, for me, it is a bit of irresponsible. Frankly so, too. I don't care because people are behaving as if the rest of us are stupid. We've been in this country when General Buhari and Idiagbon were running this country." He also added: "Nobody was born a christian or Muslim. We are in Nigeria. For me all this talk about Christians and Muslims is absolute nonsense." For a start, it is unbecoming of Rev. Kukah

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Nigeria and transparency international

To keen and dispassionate observers of the happenings in the country, transparency international is anything but disappointing and shocking. What manner of ranking befits a country whose nationals at the apex hierarchy reportedly own 110 billion U.S dollars in foreign banks, 95 percent of which is believed to be sleaze and looted funds? A country where the leading lights of its apex decision-making were

accused of demanding bribes and the accusations were more or less swept under the carpet cannot be declared as transparent. The case of Joshua Chibi Dariye as declared by EFCC is still fresh in the mind of every Nigerian and remains not only disappointing but embarrassing to the

integrity of our nation. But if the EFCC is sincere then Dariye has to be brought to book to account his alleged misdeed. This will promote justice and fairplay which should no be compromised in the name of constitutional immunity. Justice has no other name. Sanusi Ladan, P.O.Box 63, Dutsinma, Katsina State.

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

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Opinion

Odili's silent revolution on roads

By Owens David

The signing of an N11.8Bn ambitious contract to attempt a 34km road link from Ogoni through Opobo Island to Andoni town and the N3.6 Billion contract to rehabilitate eight strategic roads in the state have at last caused such a stir that has forced observers to take a closer look at the road revolution which the present administration in Rivers State may have pursued without much fanfare since 1999. Analysts have been forced to recall the seeming take-off of the road magic in the new Rivers State despite the tragedy of the Niger Delta terrain.

At about November in 1999, the crowd at Emenike junction in Diobu along Ikwerre Road in the Garden City, Port Harcourt oozed with abundant happiness. The adjoining Okija Street which broke into D-Line, shone brightly with ribbons of various colours. Residents of Okija Street, including spare parts dealers and the Hausa community sang and danced along the street in groups.

This marked the opening ceremony of the rebuilt Okija Street, the first road to be commissioned by the brand new but democratically elected civilian administration led by rising star of Niger Delta politics and medical expert, Sir (Dr) Peter Odili. The governor announced that he built the road with pelvic inter-locking stones at the cost of N39m.

Those who knew the state of decay of that all-important road would understand the exceeding excitement of the residents of that part of the state capital. It was simply a no-go area and traders on that route simply lost hope as no one dared drive in to purchase items. Yet, this is a road that evacuated huge traffic off the jammed Ikwerre Road.

The significance and strategic importance of that feat

have remained the character of all road projects so far undertaken by Governor Odili since he rode into power from his PAMO Clinic on Aba Road in May 1999. Each road project successfully completed has caused maximum applause due to its mega-relevance to sections of the riverine state.

The next segment to jump for joy after Odili's bulldozers and earth-movers did their magic was Ogbuga in Ogbunabali community in the state capital where residents hitherto swam home after each day's businesses. Now, development in that part of the state capital has been fast-forwarded as buildings and shops dot both sides of Ogbuga Road.

The GRA Phase II was a long distance from Ikwerre Road but the construction of Abacha Road has connected the two cavities, easing communication and transportation. So also is the Graceland Road in that same part of the state capital. Or, who would forget the critical relevance of the Stadium Road that now makes it easy for all to connect Elekahia community and the famous Trans-Amadi industrial layout from Aba Road. These are outside numerous other roads in the state capital maintained at about N200m every month on retainership with a major construction company in Nigeria. The result of the retainership is that where one sees an ugly pothole this week, the next time, it would heal.

For some years, following heavy influx of people into the Garden City as most other towns in the country fell to ethno-religious violence, the major road into Port Harcourt, Aba Road, became a nightmare due to traffic chaos. Many cried, and raised woes. Governor Odili installed the multi-million traffic lights but

the situation deteriorated. He rushed in more traffic wardens, yet, Festus Odimegwu of Nigeria Breweries (NBL), on a visit to the Garden City for a public lecturer, was enraged enough to cast aspersions at the Brick House. His sufferings on the road to the Obi Wali Integrated Cultural Centre must have forced him to urge Governor Odili to "find solutions to this chaos in order to save businesses in the oil and gas capital of Africa".

Odili must have picked up the challenge, as he moved against the intractable problems of the Port Harcourt International Road, the road that gave international visitors and the likes of Odimegwu nightmares. He commissioned a research which revealed that the soil on which that federal road was constructed was faulty. Solution? Excavate the entire soil up to six feet deep and replace with approved soil surface, before anything would be done on it. At a cost of N4Bn, the governor dared the road project. Today, the road is smooth and easily motorable while another contract is on to take it to Rumuokoro. To make the road journey from the airport a short-work, a new road has been created to flush into the busy Aba Road at the Airforce Base and a fly-over is being built to take it over Aba Road into Elekahia through the Stadium Road. This will spare many motorists from Lagos, Warri and Bayelsa through the East-West road the traffic chaos of Ikwerre Road axis.

Many have not forgotten the relief brought about by the construction of the East-West Road to Bori camp. Of great significance in recent months, however, is the combination of two key road projects and bridges along Elenwo axis. The new LNG to Nkpolu via Abuloma-Amadi Ama- Azubia to Woji experiment has helped out

the garrison junction traffic problems, while Trans-Amadi-Oginigba-Woji-Elenwo link road has made it easier to skip the formerly compulsory Aba Road way out of the state capital especially for those motoring to the Eleme, Onne, Ogoni, Uyo and Calabar route. Little wonder Chinedu Egbo, an accountant with one of the fast-track oil service companies in the state capital, joined those commending the new roads when she said "I thank God for this road. I no longer dread coming to do bank runs at Trans-Amadi".

This is the same opinion most Kalabari indigenes express on a regular basis each time they have to travel to the creeks on road instead of by boat. Together with the federal government, the state government has ensured that the zone once accessible only by water is now visited by road on long bridge affairs that act as tourist wonders. And by this feat, many towns that had never seen a road before are to be connected.

For years, debates had raged on whether or not it was possible (and cost effective) to line a road across the waters to link such Islands as King Jaja's Opobo, the elephant Island of Andoni, and Bonny Kingdom closer to the sea. While the public debated and analysts speculated, Governor Odili discreetly commissioned experts to study the possibility of such a road. Last week in Port Harcourt, the governor unveiled the result and said 'yes, it is possible'. To follow up, a huge contract of almost N12bn was entered into with a reputable contractor that the governor said had been investigated for capability and experience. In 36 months, the deputy governor, Gabriel Toby, and other descendants of the legendary King Jaja of Opobo would drive home in their vehicles for the first

time in history, away with boat journeys.

Governor, Odili has even gone a step further to vow never to hand it over to anyone else to complete. He has even ordered the contractors to mobilize on both sides of the road, despite admitting that such a method was more expensive. His determination to conclude his road revolution seems to grow steadily as his time to move ahead from Brick House draws nearer. Perhaps, should the federal government come to his aid, the people of the state may drive to Bonny Island in our lifetime.

Outside the jumbo road projects, many other very important roads have been built across swamps, and to many parts of the state in the upland zone. Road construction has indeed been intensified. Construction work on 109 roads in the 23 local council areas have been intensified including completion of work on Agboncha-Oyibo road (Eleme Local Government Area) and rehabilitation of Omagwa-Isookpo-Elele road.

Yet, completion or commencement of work on 79 specific roads in the state capital and some key towns has been embarked upon since the governor's second term to make them passable. Constructing roads in the region comes with huge costs due not only to swamps but many bridges that must be built.

At conclusion of some road projects in the pipeline or still under construction include the flyovers proposed on Aba Road, the Iloabuchi-Eagle Island road, Trans-Kalabari ring road, Ada George road, and the much-needed Greater Port Harcourt Ring Road expected to flank the state capital by the right from East West road, a new Rivers

State would be born. It would be a riverine state with easy road transportation.

Experts already have a bird-eye view of the new Rivers State with its grand road network, the creeks having been conquered by road. The one-city status will disappear as many towns such as Eleme, Ahoada, Okrika, Buguma, Degema, Bukuma, Bonny, Opobo, Omuma, Okehi, etc, would become satellites of the Garden City, taking away valuable residential population off the state capital. This is no doubt complemented by the aggressive housing policy of the government which has seen the construction of over 4000 houses around the state, and the creation of estates such as the Igbo-Etche and Iriebe experiments in conjunction with the Onne housing project inherited from the federal government.

The urban renewal programme leading to the towers at Aggrey Road and in some other parts of the town as well as the new rainbow estate under private developers scheme have hit the bull's eye in creating new houses that will accommodate those that will need the new roads. The equally ambitious independent power grid and the three gas turbine station gulping over N37Bn will send electricity to give life to these new satellite towns too.

In African contemporary mythology, it is a test of wisdom to present a gift of a road and a cow to a child. The one that chooses a cow will one day exhaust his beef stock but the wise one will pick a road, knowing it will not only lead him to prosperity but will be passed from generation to generation. And Odili has chosen a road!

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Zamfara governor and 2007 Presidency

By Abdullahi Tsafe

The story of Governor Amed Sani of Zamfara State reminds one of the great Hebrew Prophet Moses, whose fame and respect has steadily grown through ages. It is on record that Moses flourished in the thirteenth century (B.C.). Since Ramses II generally thought to be the pharaoh, who died in 1237 B.C. during Moses lifetime, there were a fair number of Hebrews who disagreed with his policies but within five centuries was revered by the Jewish people. By 500 AD, his fame and reputation had spread along throughout Europe and a century later he became an admired figure throughout the Moslem world.

Today, some thirty-two centuries after he lived, Moses is honoured by Jews, Christians and Moslems alike, such that he is probably even better known today than he was in the past, courtesy of modern communications.

Similarly, Governor Sani of Zamfara State has admirable qualities of his own, and like all successful politicians, his populist programmes continue to be source of joy to the common-man in the state.

These have so far facilitated the socio-political and economic transformation, while his mission to improve the state and its people in the last six years in the office as governor has already paid off.

These outstanding qualities have endeared him, not only to the people of the state but represents a systematic and sustained crusade in parts of the country, which is aimed at cushioning the hardship of the people. These are through concrete developmental programmes and reforms that touch the lives of individuals and communities in the state and beyond.

Just like when a fair number of Hebrews disagreed with Moses policies, the ideals and reforms introduced by Ahmad Sani in Zamfara State has proven most cynics wrong considering the adoption of same reform measure in other parts of the country as well as its re-enforcement in parts of the globe.

Looking back today, the average Nigerian from Zamfara State will be proud to identify himself with the state. Thanks

to the Governor for the introduction of Islamic legal system in the state. This singular effort has no doubt stamped the state on the political map of not only this country but also the whole world so much that the mention of Zamfara or the Governor does not require one to stretch his memory.

Yarima has not limited himself to championing the cause of sharia legal system alone; he had indeed, more than anything set an enviable record through a pursuit of masses oriented projects such as the Poverty Alleviation Programme and other laudable projects that the government was able to transform the life of its citizens to an enviable position.

From the onset, Yarima did realize the need to drastically reduce the poverty level and improve economic activities and thus established the Zamfara State Poverty Alleviation Agency (ZAPA). He charged the agency to provide the poor in every part of the state, with the means of creating wealth for themselves by stimulating their entrepreneurship. The idea of private entrepreneurship was viewed as a solution to poverty

reduction and this step has energized the communities into more productive economic endeavours.

The state government has equally fared well in the works and transport sector. Government purchased and distributed new buses on loan to deserving beneficiaries, and contracts for the rehabilitation and beautification of the various township roads.

Zamfara State has equally performed better in the area of farming, agriculture, which is the backbone of state's economy enjoys budgetary provisions with the primary objective of achieving increased crop production through improved agricultural services. Some of the projects undertaken include the procurement and distribution of fertilizer, rehabilitation of hotels, classes, laboratories, access road and drainage at the college of agriculture in Bakura, rehabilitation of poultry production unit in the state capital, repair of the damaged lake Natu, distribution of tractors with accessories and the establishment of a fertiliser blending plant in Gusau.

Other projects undertaken

under the ZADP are the training of farmers on animal or traction activities, extension services as well as the drilling of tube wells.

The state government had equally fared better in other sectors of the economy, also worthy of mention here are the progress made in the areas of commerce and industry, healthcare delivery, manufacturing and commercial sub sector and the educational sector.

As things are, development package known as ZASIDEP was recently conceived by the state government to develop some key sectors of the state economy with the objective of laying a foundation for a sustainable integrated development framework.

ZASIDEP otherwise known as "Yarima Vision 2007," is expected to gulp billion of naira between now and 2007 which is to touch on key sectors namely, agriculture, education, healthcare, water supply and sanitation, small and medium scale enterprises, rural roads and rural electrification.

All of these efforts are geared towards making Zamfara State, an eldorado of some sort and it

has endeared the governor to the people of the State. And by extension, he intends to carry along these ideals as he sets out for the 2007 visioning projects, manifesting some of those traits that earned him, wide admiration and reputation of the Great Hebrew prophet, whose policies were initially condemned but was later accepted and his reputation spread like wild fire across the globe for very many centuries.

The transformation of Zamfara State by Governor Ahmad, no doubt endeared him to the heart of very many Nigerians, Moslems, Christians and traditionalists inclusive and with such encouraging words and respects accorded Yarima, by no other person than the highly respected former President Shehu Shagari himself who described both the governor and his project Vision 2007 as a "straight forward, firms in action as well as in faith, very resolute and dynamic" the sky is the beginning for the people's Governor.

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Trust International

Foreign & Diplomatic

The growing currency for Hijab argument

Until the Appeal Court decision that granted her prayer to wear a befitting Islamic dress to school, nothing was known about Shabina Begum. The orphan's ordeal began in September 2002 when she informed the authorities of her school, Denbigh High School in Luton, that she intended wearing a full-length *jilbab*. Although over three quarters of the pupils are Muslims, the authorities felt Miss Begum's decision was too extreme to be permitted. And she was rather given the choices to either abide by the rule that stipulates wearing a trouser suit with covering jerkin (*shalwar kameez*) or finding herself some other school. This thus ensured her systematic exclusion from school. Summarising her travail in a sentence, Lord Justice Brooke of the Appeal Court observed in his ruling that Shabina Begum had been denied the right to manifest her religion. Rather than considering that she had any rights recognised by English law, the 'comply or get lost' options were thrown at her. Lord Justice Brooke explained Denbigh High School's approach to the issue in the following words: "Instead, it started from the premise that its uniform policy was there to be obeyed: if the claimant did not like it, she could go to a different school."

Denbigh High School is by every standard a Muslim-friendly school, but it has based its understanding of the religion on certain practices, popular among some Muslims, rather than the basic provisions in the Qur'an. While it considered its current dress code as passing Islamic test, the truth, as some scholars observe, is that it only satisfies the Pakistani/Indian dress style. And by arriving at this conclusion, faulty as it were, the authorities have monumentally failed to take into cognisance the diverse cultural backgrounds of the over one and a half million British Muslims. Instead of seeking to re-enforce prejudice or as it seemed, as a fallout of the September 11 attacks on the US, they should have properly looked into the young woman's request. This, as the sixteen-year-old noted, was not a decision that had its origin from within, but one that was influenced by external forces and had embedded in it prejudice, informed by the post Septem-

By Musa Aliyu, in London

ber 11 world, where everything Islamic is an obvious target of attack. "...It was a consequence of an atmos-

policy could not be encouraged, also said it did not mean schools could not do so "if the pupil flatly refuses to wear the appropriate school uniform." The implication was that her exclusion from

religious freedom had been breached and that the school's failure to reach a settlement had also breached her right to education.

In response the authorities of Denbigh High School

Yvonne Spencer (Miss Begum's lawyer) went to the Appeal Court, where they hoped the *jilbab* would be made an "optional extra". And only last week the ruling came in their favour.

there's nothing wrong with the school having a uniform policy, it still took years for them to realise that in doing so others' rights, especially in such multi-cultural setting, must be transparently respected.

What this victory means for those from minority backgrounds, racial or cultural, is that the court remains a reliable arbiter of the last resort, particularly in developed societies. Shabina Begum may have been the icon of this fight, but she may not be a direct beneficiary of the outcome. She has indicated her readiness to continue her education in the school that absorbed her after Denbigh High School threw out, and as Lord Justice Brookes said, Miss Begum no longer wanted damages. But much more importantly, this will force schools to reassess the way they enforce their uniform policies. In this respect the Luton Borough Council has pledged to develop guidance on school uniform and advise schools' governing bodies to review their policy, putting into consideration the religious and cultural needs of pupils.

Beyond Shabina Begum and the legal tussle, it's pertinent for those seeking to liberate Muslim women from male domination to realise that the *hijab* or *jilbab* doesn't in any way constitute rights abuse. Rather than being forced to wear it, Muslim women across Europe are increasingly asking to be allowed to dress properly as Muslims. If the likes of the Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, MEP Caroline Lucas, Fiona McTaggart MP, and George Galloway MP etc are lending support to such moves, then the argument for *hijab* transcends fundamentalism.



Shabina Begum

phere that has been created by western societies post 9/11, an atmosphere in which Islam has been made a target of vilification in the name of the war on terror," said Shabina Begum after the ruling.

Her victory, which she dedicates to Muslims seeking to preserve their identity and values, did not come on a plate of gold. She had to go leave Denbigh High School for another school while the court action continued. And at a point the case was thrown out on the grounds that her human rights had not been infringed on. The High Court judge, Mr Justice Bennett said, while dismissing the application, the limitations placed on what she could wear was proportionate to the aim. The uniform policy, he noted, was aimed at the proper running of a multi-cultural, multi-faith secular school. But secular as the school claimed to be, it's Muslim majority status and in fact by adopting a particular Islamic dress associated with a particular culture among some Muslims and not necessarily generally acceptable to all Muslims contradict this secularity or the multi-faith argument. The court, although agreeing that exclusion for pupils who breached uniform

school, apart from not infringing on her right to education, became a necessary measure to compel her to abide by the dress code. The decision, a temporary victory for the school, only spurred her to continue the fight. Although the High Court refused her permission to appeal the ruling, her lawyer proceeded to the appellate court, anchoring their argument on the basis that it rose "issues of general importance over the question of dress in multi-cultural schools."

Perhaps the statement by an official of the Muslim Council of Britain Dr Abdul Bari that the court's decision, landmark as it were, was "very worrying and objectionable" also encouraged them. Abdul Bari was to further argue that given the diverse nature of the Muslim community, the interpretation and understanding of the faith and its practice had to reflect this diversity. "Within this broad spectrum," he said, "those that believe and choose to wear the *jilbab* and consider it to be part of their faith requirement for modest attire should be respected."

Shabina Begum's argument was two-pronged: that by forcing her to accept an interpretation of Islamic dress laid down by the school her



British Muslim schoolgirl Shabina Begum, 16, leaves The Royal Court of Justice in London, Wednesday March 2, 2005, after a panel of three judges in the Court of Appeal ruled that her human rights were violated by her school's ban on her wearing the *jilbab*, a long, flowing gown covering all of her body except her hands and face.

had posited that the dress code, far from being imposed, was adopted only after wide consultations with the Department For Education and Skills, parents, pupils, schools and Islamic scholars. The general verdict had been neither an outright condemnation of the *shalwar kameez* nor the specific approval of *jilbab*. Fearing that a stricter dress style could cause divisions among students, they favoured the former. Regarding Miss Begum's exclusion from school, the authorities said they had tried reaching a compromise but it came to nothing.

Insisting that her client entirely disagreed with this,

What are the specific and general implications of the Appeal Court's decision?

Despite the argument by some pundits that it will create fresh problems regarding the enforcement of rules in schools, it came at a time when British Muslims are alleging prejudice and the government is hoping to allay their fears. More importantly, the decision is a lesson for the school, which admitted that it lost on certain "small, technical breach of Human Rights Act." Small as they see it, the reality is that they would be seen to have attempted institutionalising prejudice. Even as they feel consoled by the Judges' acceptance that

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Trust International

Africa

'One million need urgent food aid in Mali'

More than one million people in regions of Mali badly hit last year by a disastrous combination of locusts and poor rain will need food aid in 2005, officials said Friday.

Crops and cattle in 101 districts have suffered, leaving food stocks dangerously low, according to a food security evaluation mission conducted by the government's early warning department (SAP).

"101 districts, particularly Mopti, Tombouctou and Gao, recorded a strong drop in cereal production and revenues during the year, and may experience an early and more difficult-than-usual lean period," Mamy Coulibaly, who heads SAP's technical department, told IRIN from Bamako on Friday.

The Mopti district, east of Bamako, straddles the delta of the Niger River and is the rice growing centre of the country.

The river which helps feed largely arid Mali also runs through the other two regions, the country's largest district Tombouctou, in the northwest, and eastern Gao. All three regions are nomadic or semi-nomadic.

Oxfam, the UK-based NGO, said food security early February in western Gao had deteriorated since October, when swarms of locusts and

erratic rains harmed millet and sorghum crops as well as pastures.

"In villages in the north of Bourem (450 km northwest of Bamako, in Gao region), we found hundreds of carcasses in outlying nomadic areas, and people were thinner, and distressed, and wanting to leave", said Helene Berton, Oxfam's coordinator for West Africa.

"There was also overcrowding of cattle in the areas around the Niger river", Berton, who took part in the mission, told IRIN in the Senegalese capital Dakar.

She added that Oxfam's three local partners in that region estimated that close to 100,000 people would be in need of food aid within two months.

The dry season starting in March would further weaken people there as both food stocks and fodder for animals had run out and could not be replenished until September, she said.

Pablo Recalde, from the World Food Programme's (WFP) Mali office, said the situation was far worse than expected and that a southbound exodus was under way.

"Along the 15th parallel the situation is worrying, cattle are dying, millet and sorghum

prices are skyrocketing, herds are already going south, increasing the pressure on pasture."

"A relatively long-term exodus is also taking place".

Relief organisations are working with the Malian government to provide food aid. WFP has launched an emergency operation to give 12,000 tons of food to the most vulnerable people and provide food for work for others. Oxfam plans to hand out rations to 2,100 families in the Gao region for two months.

But both organisations said it was difficult raising funds for food aid for Africa in the wake of the tsunami which ravaged South-East Asia in December, channelling many international resources to the region.



South African President Thabo Mbeki

President Mbeki, Swazi king to meet

South African President Thabo Mbeki has invited King Mswati for their first formal talks since Mbeki took power in 1999 and Swaziland's opposition is pressing Pretoria to encourage the monarch to embrace democracy.

Swaziland's opposition accuses Mbeki of doing little to use South Africa's economic power over its tiny neighbour to prod the king towards greater democracy.

Political parties are banned in the landlocked former British colony which is ruled by sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarchy.

"Because Swaziland is utterly dependant on South Africa, Pretoria can exert pressure for democratisation any time they choose. We hope he displays a political will to press the king into modern times," said a senior official of the Swaziland Chamber of Commerce and Industry. A Swazi foreign ministry official told Reuters the meeting would probably take place at the end of the month.

Mbeki has not paid a state visit to Swaziland. South Africa provides 80 per cent of the kingdom's imported goods and services and absorbs 60 per cent of Swazi exports, according to Swaziland Treasury data.

Mswati, 36, has a dozen wives and fiancées, some chosen from the traditional annual "reed dance" of thousands of bare-breasted maidens and his lavish spending on cars and luxury homes has come under domestic and international criticism. Most of his roughly 1 million subjects live in poverty and must contend with food shortages and the world's highest per capita rate of HIV/AIDS.

'EU fails to find plan to end Darfur killings'

The European Union has failed to find a firm action plan that could help prevent killings in the Darfur region of Sudan.

As German deputy foreign minister Kerstin Muller sees it, the suffering continues because the Sudanese government and the rebels in Darfur are unwilling to search for a political solution, and because the international community lacks the

determination to end the conflict.

Germany wants the EU to impose sanctions against key players in the conflict. That will include freezing their financial assets and restricting their travel. But EU members remain divided over this proposal. Some countries such as Sweden, Ireland, the Netherlands and Austria support this approach, but others like France and Britain want sanctions only if approved by the United Nations Security Council.

A third group of countries, mainly Italy, Spain and Poland do not want to see sanctions of any kind.

Ulrich Delius, Africa expert with the German non-governmental organization Society for Threatened Peoples said that "hindering some Sudanese politicians from entering the EU may be a nice gesture, but the only efficient tool is an oil embargo." The Sudanese government will not take the demands of the international community seriously if it faced no powerful threat, he said.

As politicians quarrel about sanctions, human rights and humanitarian organisations are calling for a robust force to stop the violence.

UN chief emergency relief coordinator Jan Egeland said at a press briefing last month that "the world believes that we keep people alive and then they don't have to take political and security action. This is wrong and that's why we are really tired of being that kind of substitute for political and security action."

The number of people affected by the conflict is growing every day, he pointed out. Many aid workers in Darfur too have been abducted and killed. Several relief organisations have already withdrawn from Sudan.

Jan Pronk, UN special representative for Sudan told a panel discussion in Berlin last week that peace negotiations must be delinked

from the security situation on the ground. Negotiations were being paralyzed by the violence, he said.

A mission from the African Union (AU) at present monitors a ceasefire agreement with no more than 1,800 soldiers in an area as big as France - a little more than ten percent of the number of police officers in Berlin.

"There should be a robust third force as a buffer," Pronk said. At least 8,000 soldiers are needed, he said. "And that means the AU should do it this month; if not, others will have to put their people where their mouth is." He was referring to European countries and the United States who have been criticising the Sudanese government.

Muller said this was not feasible. "For me it is hardly imaginable to tell the AU right from the beginning that they cannot do it, if they are talking about a test case in which they try to solve their own conflicts."

Lotte Leicht, director of the Brussels office of Human Rights Watch, argued at the panel discussion that the AU had failed to protect the people in Darfur. The AU should accept help from the EU, she said. "I have never seen that 25 foreign ministers are almost down on their knees, begging the AU to take more help from the EU."

More than 50,000 people have died since the crisis in Darfur began early 2003. The violence has driven more than 1.5 million people to refugee camps. At least another 200,000 fled to neighbouring Chad.

Pronk said that the Sudanese army and the Janjaweed militia it had backed had stopped open cooperation. But they remain linked, he said. "And the result is (ethnic) cleansing, and that has to stop."

Moroccans protest over war prisoners

Tens of thousands of Moroccans have joined a demonstration in the capital, Rabat, calling for the release of prisoners of war held in Algeria.

"Shout my brother, shout," chanted the demonstrators, "for this injustice will not be tolerated."

Some walked holding up black and white photos of their husbands or fathers.

They are among more than 400 Moroccan soldiers being held by the Polisario Front, backed by Algeria.

They were captured during the war for control of Western Sahara after Spain pulled out of the desert territory in 1975.

They are the longest serving prisoners of war in the world.

But Hassan Anrani, who was released by the Polisario after 24 years, said the demonstration is not just about the prisoners.

"This demonstration has double objectives," he said.

"First, to press international opinions to make an impression on the Polisario and Algeria to liberate all the others," he added.

"The second objective is to make it international opinion that the Sahara was Moroccan and is still Moroccan and remains Moroccan."

But after 30 years of Moroccan control, international opinion is still divided. The United Nations views Western Sahara as a disputed territory.

Several members of the African Union recognise its

independence.

And after almost three decades of wrangling between Morocco and Algeria over the issue, Western Sahara remains the single biggest obstacle to North African co-operation

Mozambique PM attacks Blair's Commission for Africa

Mozambique's prime minister said she does not think Tony Blair's Commission for Africa will be able to meet the concerns of individual African nations.

Speaking to the BBC, said the commission, due to publish its action plan next week, could not take a "one size fits all" approach to Africa.

Africa is the world's poorest continent, with half of all Africans living in absolute poverty.

Mozambique could be seen as a test case for the commission.

The country has enjoyed economic success over the last 10 years and, on a visit to the country in January, Chancellor Gordon Brown said Britain would cancel Mozambique's total debt to the UK of £80m (\$154m).

But Prime Minister Luisa

Diogo said her country has special conditions that still have to be addressed by the international community.

"Our concern is that it is not easy to have one recommendation for all the countries in Africa," she told the BBC.

"And I believe the report from the Commission for Africa will be a little bit general, because it's not easy to accommodate in one report like that all the concerns and the specifications of each country."

In particular, the prime minister is concerned about one of Mozambique's most important sectors - the sugar industry.

She said there needs to be specific treatment on the issue of tariff barriers and access to markets.

At present, Mozambique is only able to export limited amounts of sugar to the European Union.

Togolese top politician returns home

Togo's former parliamentary speaker, who had been in line to lead the country before the military named its own man last month, returned home and met with Togo officials trying to ease a political crisis triggered by the takeover.

The former speaker, Fambare Natchaba, had been constitutionally designated to fill the presidency after the death of strongman Gnassingbe Eyadema, but was in Benin when Eyadema died February 5. The military named Eyadema's son as the new leader.

Natchaba flew in to the capital, Lome, on Saturday on a plane arranged by Benin's President Mathieu Kerekou, Togo's ministry of information said.

The ministry said Natchaba immediately went into meetings with interim President Bonfoh Abass, the former deputy speaker who was named Togo's latest leader on February 27 after the dictator's son bowed to international pressure to step

Trust International

World Report

Criminal gangs use Islam to intimidate victims in London

Teenage criminal gangs in south London are calling themselves the Muslim Boys and claiming to espouse Islam in an attempt to gain street credibility and trade on false perceptions about links to terrorists.

The gangs, who specialise in robbing local drug dealers, are alleged to have forced some members to convert at gunpoint and to pray before going out to commit crimes.

Community leaders are worried about escalating violence and the number of young with access to high-calibre guns.

But Metropolitan police chiefs and Muslim leaders said the youths have no genuine Islamic affiliations, nor any associations with al-Qaida linked groups.

Police chiefs said most belong to existing gangs inspired by black American ghetto culture and are using the Muslim tag because they think it is a new way to strike fear in the community. They also believe it will get them better treatment and nicer food in prison.

Muslim Boys is the name

used by between 50 and 100 members of several gangs in neighbourhoods around Brixton, Peckham, Lambeth, and Streatham, in south London. Most are in their late teens or early 20s and belong to gangs such as Peelden, the Stockwell Crew, the SMS (South Man Syndicate) and PDC (Poverty Driven Children).

Toaha Qureshi, who chairs the Lambeth Muslim Forum and runs a multicultural youth project in Stockwell, south London, was aware of local gangs "camouflaging themselves in the banner of Islam" and feared they would try to infiltrate mosques to corrupt young Muslims. He said people wishing to convert to Islam should be questioned about their motivation and undergo rigorous tests. Criminals should not be tolerated.

"Since 9/11 Muslims are under tremendous pressure. Young people are disaffected and it is up to the statutory agencies and community leaders to divert them into worthwhile employment and projects," he said.



Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani

Iraqi Christians nominate Ayatollah for Nobel Prize

Members of the Iraqi Chaldean community in El Cajon City, San Diego, who belong to one of Iraq's tiny Christian minorities, launched an online petition nominating Iraq's Shiite Muslim cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize.

More than 6,000 people from all over the world signed the petition, voicing their support to the Shiite cleric.

Mr. Al Sistani "gave Muslims all around the globe a good example how to follow peaceful ways to resolve complex social (and) political challenges that face them, condemning terror and emphasizing... rule of law," the petition said.

Al-Sistani, is the most influential Shiite cleric in Iraq. He also stands as the symbol of Shiite authority in the country.

"We are Chaldeans, but we are part of Iraq," Hanna Kalabat, one of the petition writers told reporters on Sunday.

Israeli bank 'in laundering scam'

Police have arrested 22 people working at one of Israel's biggest commercial banks over suspected money-laundering.

The Bank Hapoalim employees are thought to have been involved in an operation worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Police chief Amichai Shai said the affair was one of the largest in Israeli history and involved funds from several other countries.

Investigators said employees helped customers move money without reporting the transfers.

"It appears they helped customers transfer funds without reporting it as required by law. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars," Mr Shai said at a press conference.

"We support everyone who serves the country regardless of his religion or ethnicity... I am born a human being, and my loyalty is to humanity."

"After the occupation started, problems surfaced between Shiites and Sunnis and between Shiites themselves, but we had a wise man, Mr. Sistani, who prevented bloodshed and ridged us of the evil of civil war this is the main reason behind the nomination," Kalabat said.

Al-Sistani formed the main Shiite United Iraqi Alliance that emerged with a majority in the January vote.

Iraq's Shiites make up 60 percent of the country's population.

Al Sistani is widely regarded as a spiritual figure who guides Shiites from his home in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, south of the Iraqi capital. He also runs an internet site that answers religious questions in three languages: English, Arabic and Persian.

Al Sistani's role in

Guerrilla attacks claim 16 Iraq

Guerrillas launched a series of attacks with bombs and gunfire in Iraq yesterday, killing 16 people and wounding dozens as the country took its first major step toward forming a government whose most crucial task will be dealing with the insurgency.

Most of yesterday's fatalities occurred in Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, where insurgents launched a series of apparently coordinated attacks that killed seven soldiers and five police, said Tariq Ibrahim, a medic at Baqouba's main hospital. He said at least 26 people were wounded, including one civilian caught in the crossfire.

The assaults included a car bomb, three roadside bombs and small arms attacks three checkpoints, one of them just south of Baqouba in Muradiyah, said police Col. Mudhafar al-Jubbori.

Insurgents also fired a mortar around near the blue-domed governor's office, causing no casualties, a spokesman for the U.S. 42nd Infantry Division, Maj. Richard Goldenberg. He said Iraqi police came under small arms fire shortly afterward on a highway south of the city.

In Baghdad, gunmen killed two police and wounded a third in a drive-by shooting in the eastern slum of Sadr City, said Dr. Abdul Jabar Solan, director of a hospital where the casualties were brought.

Two civilians were also killed when a roadside bomb targeting a joint U.S.-Iraqi military convoy exploded in the southeastern New Baghdad suburb. The explosion missed the convoy, damaging two passing cars and wounding four people, including two girls, said 1st Lt. Ali Hussein Hamdani.

The violence came a day after politicians set March 16 for the opening of the country's first democratically elected parliament in modern history as a deal hardened Sunday to name Jalal Tala-bani, a leader of the minority Kurds, to the presidency. The day marks the anniversary of the 1988 Saddam-ordered chemical attack on the northern Kurdish town of Halabja, which killed 5,000 people.

The more powerful prime minister's job will go to Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a deeply conservative Shiite who leads the Islamic Dawa party. His nomination, which the Kurds have agreed to, has been endorsed by the most powerful Shiite cleric in Iraq Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

Indian police kill ten suspected Maoist rebels

Police in the southern India state of Andhra Pradesh said they have killed ten suspected Maoist guerrillas.

It is the most violent clash since the rebels withdrew from peace talks with the state government in January.

The police said two senior Maoist leaders were among those killed in the clashes in Nizamabad district.

The rebels have been fighting since 1980 for the creation of a communist state. Violence has escalated in recent months following the collapse of talks.

The Nizamabad police chief N Madhusudhan Reddy told the BBC that clashes took place near Manala after the police asked the rebels to surrender.

Rebel leaders Ramesh - also known as Venkata Swamy - and Babanna were among those who were killed in the gun battle, the police said.

The police said six rebels managed to escape from the battle, and a search operation had begun.

Three AK-47 assault rifles, three other rifles and two shotguns were recovered from the scene of the clash, the police said.

Violence in Andhra Pradesh has intensified since the peace process between Maoist rebels and the state government broke down in January.

Last week suspected rebels killed eight people in a village in Kurnool district south of the state capital, Hyderabad.

Syrian, Lebanese leaders discuss pullback

The presidents of Syria and Lebanon opened talks yesterday on Syrian troop withdrawal from Lebanon, setting in motion the process of implementing Damascus's decision to bring home its 14,000 troops from the neighbouring country.

The meeting comes amid intense US-led international pressure on Syria to withdraw its army from Lebanon and to stop interfering in its smaller neighbor's affairs.

Lebanon's defense

minister on Sunday said a withdrawal of troops would begin after the summit. But in the mountains east of the Lebanese capital of Beirut, there was no sign of Syrian soldiers preparing to leave their positions at midday yesterday. Soldiers near the mountain resort of Aley, an area slated to be vacated by the Syrians eastward, went about their daily routine. Several walked back and forth in front of a position, waving at a car to keep moving as it drove closer.

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BORNO STATE GOVERNMENT

*Felicitating
with
Mr. President*

**As the President and
Commander-in-Chief
of the Armed Forces,
Chief Olusegun
Obasanjo turns 68,
the government and
people of Borno
State rejoice with
him and wish him
many more years of
good health and
service to the nation.**

**May God continue to
guide you and give
you good health,
Mr. President.**



His Excellency,
Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR
President Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria



Senator (Dr.) Ali Modu Sheriff
Executive Governor, Borno State

SIGNED

Senator (Dr.) Ali Modu Sheriff
Executive Governor, Borno State

Business Trust

Finance

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air	
Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	10:30
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45a.m.
	11:00
	13:15
	17:00
Maiduguri - Abuja	06:50
Abuja - Maid.	17:00
Lagos - Yola	1:00 p.m.
Abuja - Yola	14:30
Yola - Abuja	15:30
Yola - Lagos	4:00 p.m.
Chanchangi Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15a.m.
	11:00a.m.
	12:10p.m.
	4:45p.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	8:30a.m.
P/H - Lagos	9:00a.m.
	4:30p.m.
Abuja - Kaduna	2:30p.m.
Kaduna - Abuja	1:30p.m.
IRS Airlines	
CBQ - Abuja	8.00 a.m.
Abuja - Lagos	9:45a.m.
Lagos - Kaduna	9:30a.m.
Kano - Lagos	7:30p.m.
Lagos - Kano	11:15a.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	11:00a.m.
Lagos - Abu/MM	2:30p.m.
Abuja - MM	1:45p.m.
MM - Abuja	3:45p.m.
Abuja - Cal	5:15p.m.
Kano - Abuja	1:15p.m.
Abuja - Kano	2:30p.m.
Kano - Lagos	3:45p.m.
Lagos - Kano	6:00p.m.
EAS Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15p.m.
	11:45a.m.
	5:45p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	10:15a.m.
	7:15p.m.
Lagos - Jos	11:45a.m.
Jos - Lagos	2:30pm.
Dasab Airlines	
Auja-Lagos	8:30a.m.
Lagos-PHC	10:30a.m.
PHC-Lagos	12:30a.m.
Lagos-Kano	2:30p.m.
Kano-Lagos	4:30p.m.
Lagos-Abuja	6:30pm.
ADC Airline	
Lagos-Abuja	7:15a.m.
	12:45p.m.
Abuja-Lagos	8:55a.m.
Lagos-Calabar	11:15a.m.
Calabar-Lagos	7:20a.m.
P/H-Lagos	9:45a.m.

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

CBN withdraws N101bn from economy

Stories from Bright Ewulu,
Deputy Business Editor

The government securities auctions seems to be booming as the central bank of Nigeria (CBN) last week removed N101billion from the economy through that source.

According to available figures N56.9billion of the total sum withdrawn through the primary market auction (PMA) while N43.8billion was achieved through the daily open market operation (OMO) auction.

In all, the total sum of N102billion was repaid to investors of the two departments of the market for securities that fell due. The PMA investors got N53.95billion whereas the OMO investors had N47.68billion.

The rates for the OMO Auction on Monday and Wednesday last week, were the same range of bid rates

which stood at 11.2500 to 11.2500 per cent issues rates 11.2500 to 11.2500 per cent and time yield of 11.3727 per cent respectively. The rates on Thursday were 11 to 11.2500 per cent, 11 to 11.2500 per cent and 11.3727 per cents.

Thursday rates were range of bid rates 11.1000 to 11.2500 per cent, issues rates 11.1000 to 11.2500 per cent and Thursday time yield 11.3727 per cent while Friday had bid rates 10.5000 to 11.2500 per cent, issue rates 10.5000 to 10.7500 per cent and time yield 10.8619 percent. The treasury bond sold in the OMO auction throughout the period in review had 35 days tenor.

PMA with 182 days tenor recorded N11.82billion in sales while the 91 days tenor segments achieved 45.05billion. Also the

investors repayment as in the 91 days segment as repay-ment to investors indicated nil in the 182 days segment.

The bid rates in the 182 days segment stood at 11.9000 to 12.6000 per cent, issues rates 11.9000 to 12.6000 per cent and time yield 13.444 per cent the 91 days department had bid rates of 11.1500 to 12 per cent, issue rates 11.1000 to 11.2500 per cent and time yield 11.547 per cent.

Afribank beats CBN's due diligence, raises N11bn

Afribank Nigeria Plc's 2.5 billion share offer which was concluded last November has been approved by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), making the bank the first to beat the due diligence process in the industry.

Sofar, non of the banks that raised funds from the capital market in a bid to meet CBN capitalization requirements has received the apex bank's approval in that regard.

According to the bank's head of corporate affairs, Mr. Lanre Alabi, the bank raised about N17billion in the offer and is currently looking beyond the N25billion capital which it has met.

He disclosed that the bank has begun discussions with

nine banks that are its merger and acquisition targets, saying that the "management of the bank has promised that it is resolutely committed to justifying the confidence of about 130,000 shareholders and other stakeholders by always securing expectations."

On the 2.5billion shares offer, the statement said that a total of 53,486 applications for 4,502,660,329 ordinary shares of the bank were received in connection with the offer, showing overwhelming investors confidence in it.

"After regulatory authorities verification applications for 2,468,157 ordinary shares valued at N16.8billion was approved. The underwriters will take up the unsubscribed balance totalling 31,842,900 ordinary shares", it stated.

Oceanic Bank invests N1.02bn in SME's

Oceanic Bank Plc said it has so far invested a total sum of N1.02 billion in the Small and Medium Industries Equity Investors Scheme (SMIEIS), and that the investments was in 16 projects for the year 2004 as compared to N696million invested in 10 projects the previous year.

The chairman of the bank, Olotogun Micheal C.O. Ibru who stated this at its annual general meeting (AGM) held at Golden Gate Restaurant, Ikoyi Lagos said the bank made a profit after tax of N3.3billion as against N2.8billion recorded in 2003.

He stated in the annual account for the year ended September 31, 2004, that its

earnings rose to N13.9billion from N11.1billion in the preceding year, adding that its profit before tax stood at N3.4billion.

"The turbulent industry landscape notwithstanding, I am happy to report that 2003/2004 was a good year for our bank. Our bank closed the year with an off balance sheet of N105.4billion representing an increase of 26per cent over N85.5 billion posted in the previous year.

He expressed joy that the banks recent offer has enabled hit to meet the N25billion capital base man-dated by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) but added that the future is bound to be more comparative in the banking industry.

Access Bank's 3bn offer over subscribed

Access Bank Plc has seemingly followed the traditions of over subscription by some banks since the consolidation process began, by achieving 131.84 per cent subscription in its recent 3billion offer.

The bank which revealed this in a statement over the weekend said, having achieved its aims as regards

the offer, its is about to move on to the execution of the next phase of activities towards its consolidation agenda.

Although, the bank did not declare in clear terms the amount raised during the offer its is clear that it was able to raise over N11billion, which should put its shareholders funds at around N14billion.



First Executive Director Transaction Banking (Lagos and West), Mrs. Christy Okoye and Lagos State Commissioner of Finance Mr. Bayo Adewusi, during the Bank's business call on the Lagos State Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu at Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos.

NSE still bearish, index drops by 4.12%

The Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) last week remained bearish as market Index crash by 4.12 per cent while, a turnover of 239.0 million shares worth N2.39 billion in 18,718 deals was recorded in contrast to a total of 229.2 million shares valued at N2.56 billion exchanged previous week in 19,022 deals. This included a total of 100 units of FGN's 26th Floating Rate Bond 2008 worth no 1million.

The all share index closed Friday at 21,158.96 while the market capitalization closed at N1.720million.

There were no transactions in the state government bonds and industrial loans/preference stocks sectors.

The banking subsector was the most active during the week (measured by turnover volume), with 145.8 million shares worth N1.09 billion exchanged by investors in 8,371 deals. Volume in the banking subsector was driven in part

by activity in the shares of Access Bank Plc and Zenith Bank Plc. Trading on the shares of the two banks accounted for 52.5 million shares, representing 36per cent of the subsector's turnover.

The insurance subsector followed on the week's activity chart with a turnover of 53.6 million shares valued

at N57.0 million in 235 deals. Previous week, the banking subsector led on the activity chart and was followed by the conglomerates subsector.

Texaco (Nig) Plc led the week's gainers' chart with a gain of N5.00 to close at N156.00 per share Julius Berger Nig Plc followed with N0.58 to close at N15.55 per share.

Manny Bank plans N8bn public offer

Manny Bank Plc will soon embark on a public offer in a bid to raise N8billion to shore up its capital base, the Managing Director, Mr. Chike Ohiagu has disclosed.

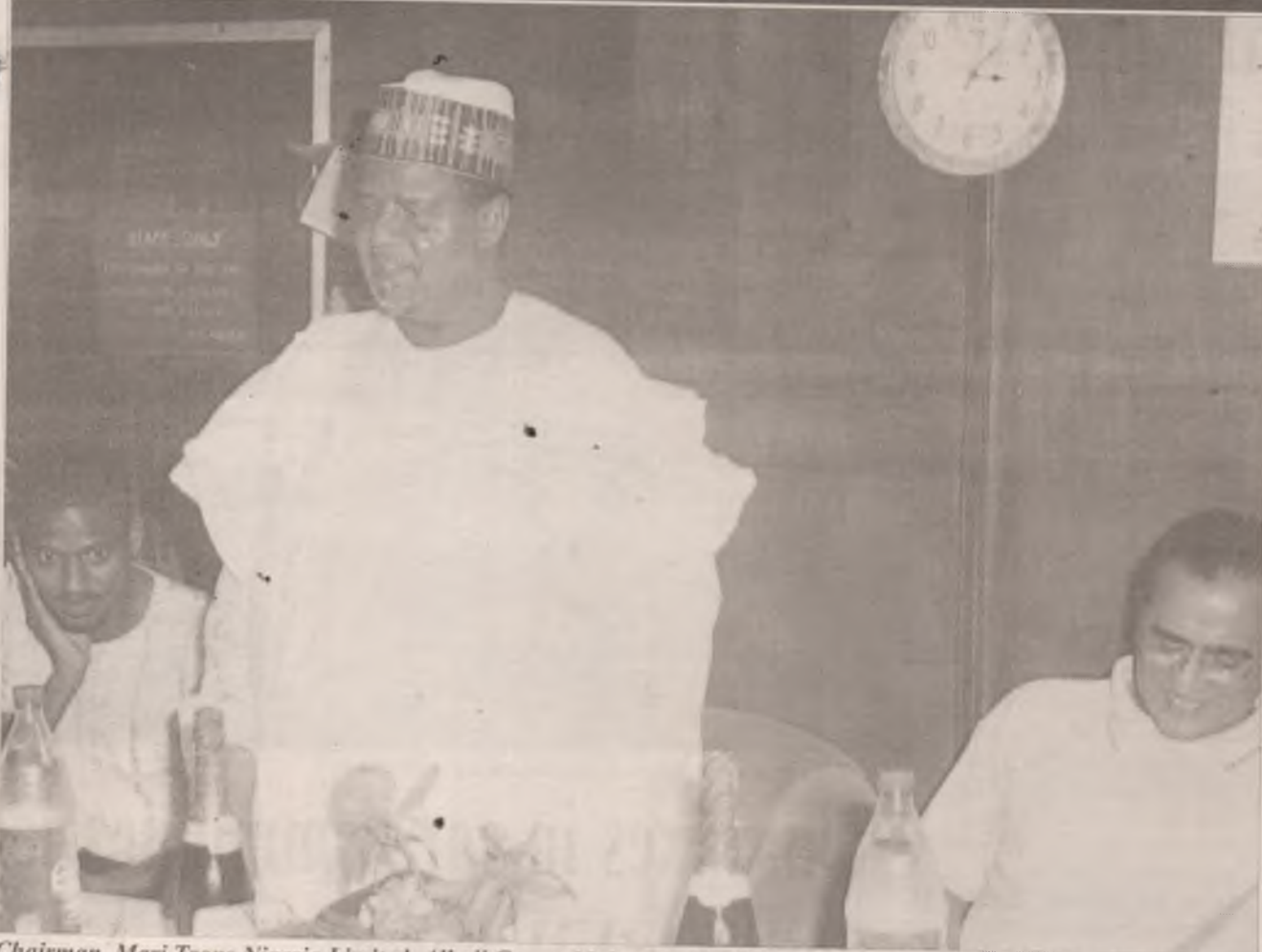
The bank said in a statement made available to *Business Trust* in Lagos that Mr. Ohiagu, who revealed this during a courtesy call on Oba (Dr) Adedapo Tejuosho in Abeokuta, Ogun state, said the move would enhance overall strategy of all the banks involved in the

proposed Astrabank Plc. He said the offer which is expected to break in the next one month will see the bank hold around seven investors fora and 27 road shows nation wide, saying that the essence is to mobilize more Nigerians to invest in the bank.

Oba Tejuosho in reply, expressed joy on the successes so far recorded by Manny Bank, stressing that invested in the bank during its initial public offer because of its focus on the manufacturing sector.

Business Trust

Maritime



Chairman, Mari Trans Nigeria Limited, Alhaji Grema Mohammed (middle) speaking during an award night of the firm. With him are, Mr Shahid Saleem, the executive director of the company (right) and the deputy group managing director, Mohammed Grema (I) in Lagos.

Grema urges recognition for local shipping coys

The federal government has been urged to encourage local shipping companies in import/export business in the country.

Speaking at an award night, the chairman, Mari Trans Nigeria Limited, a shipping coy, Alhaji Grema Mohammed expressed confidence that proper implementation of the Cabotage law would give room for local firms to actively participate in cargo business.

He said Mari Trans Company, like many of its counterparts in the country, is capable of handling all categories of cargo business, "so it is wrong to centre everything on multi-national firms," he added.

Mari Trans Nigeria Limited, established in 1992 provides services to industrial and printing firms in clearing and forwarding. It also involves in airfreight, ship management, chartering and insurance among other related businesses.

Speaking on the award night, he said the ceremony was in recognition of the hard

From Suleiman Mohammed, Associate Editor (South)

work demonstrated by the recipients who put in 10 years in service of the company.

The executive director of the company, Mr Shahid Saleem told *Business Trust* that the award became imperative in order to boost the morale of staff, and encourage them to be more productive.

He also spoke on the state of the local shipping agents, and urged the federal government to provide an enabling law to encourage local firms in the shipping business.

He said Mari Trans Nigeria Limited has an assemblage of seasoned and experienced staff in cargo business, comprising of Pakistani experts and Danish personnels.

Those that received the 10 year long service award are, Mr C. I. Ukaegbu (Shipping Manager), Alhaji Abdulrahman (Operations Manager), Mr Lagunju Dipe (Assistant Operations Manager), and Mr Maxwell Nwachukwu, the Operations Supervisor.

Companies invest \$400m in CFTZ

Companies operating in the Calabar Free Trade Zone (CFTZ) have made a total capital investment of 400 million dollars since the inception of the trade zone in 2001.

The managing director, Nigeria, Export Processing Zones Authority (NEPZA), Mr Sina Agboluaje, disclosed this at a forum with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja.

Agboluaje put their annual turnover at N280 million, representing over 70 per cent of their total investment.

"If in four years their cumulative output is over 70 per cent of their investment, I think it's a great achievement if you use GDP growth analysis to evaluate their performance," he said.

He said that the zone generates income for the Authority, the federal government and the companies themselves.

According to him, the federal government realised increased revenue of N300

million in 2004 as against N280 million in 2003, all of which was paid into the federation account.

He said that the zone was not generating enough income as it should due to inadequate funding.

Drawing an analogy with a growing baby, he said: "We are a baby that was weaned but not fed properly; we didn't have enough vitamin required."

"We're crawling but we will eventually catch up with age and begin to walk and get to a point where we will be self-sustaining as was envisaged," he said.

The managing director disclosed that the federal government invested about N4 billion to develop the zone but said that less than 2 per cent of that amount is given back to the organisation.

He said under a normal situation the Authority should have been getting about 10 per cent of that amount to keep the system going and ensure proper maintenance culture.

FG, JOMALIC to implement seafarers blueprint

The Presidential Implementation Committee on Maritime Safety and Security (PICOMSS) and the Joint Maritime Labour Industrial Council (JOMALIC) have agreed to implement the Seafarers Identity Document (SID).

Executive Chairman of JOMALIC, Alhaji Ahmed Tijjani Ramalan disclosed this in Port-Harcourt at the commissioning of the ultra modern maritime labour pool and training complex.

It would be recalled that in its bid to promote security and welfare of seafarers, the new international maritime security regime under the ship and port facility security (ISPS) adopted the conven-

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

tion No. 185 of 2003.

The convention came into force for ratification status on the 10th February, 2005, and Nigeria has ratified and domesticated this convention.

Similarly, the federal government has designated the JOMALIC as the implementation authority in Nigeria as well as the focal point in the implementation of the SID convention No 185 of 2003 in Nigeria to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

To this end, JOMALIC has solicited for the co-

operation and support of ship workers, seafarers, employers agents in Nigeria in this regard.

The council has said that it is mandatory for all Nigerian and foreign seafarers operations in Nigerian waters to possess the SID without which they cannot work on

board any vessel operating within the Nigerian waters.

The council has also designed a programme of training and retraining of tally clerks in order to make them move efficient disciplined and better motivated to produce reliable and independent tallies of cargo discharged.

Belgian envoy wants stronger ties with Nigeria

The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Nigeria, His Excellency, Mr Dirk Van Eeckhout has assured of greater co-operation between his country and Nigeria, particularly on maritime and consular matters.

He made these remarks during a courtesy visit to the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) corporate headquarters in Lagos recently.

The ambassador who was received by the Executive Director, Marine and Operations, Mr Felix Ovbude said he was in the NPA to further consolidate the flourishing relationship between Belgium, the Port of Antwerp and the authority.

He said the delays experienced by NPA officials in the processing of visas was unacceptable and blamed the difficulties on lack of knowledge of the workings of most organisations making the requests.

Mr Eeckhout advised NPA to emulate the port of Antwerp which is noted for its efficiency and produ-

NPA pays N2m each to contractors

The management of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) has approved the immediate payment of contracts awarded between January 1 2001 and October 14 2003 which are below two N2 million and cleared by ministerial contract review committee.

A statement signed by Mr Amechi Oraka for the executive director, finance said, the commencement of the payments for the contract is in compliance with an earlier directive by the managing director, Chief Adebayo Sarumi last December.

The statement directs all

the headships of the authority's zones and ports to ensure that such cheques are prepared and released to their beneficiaries as soon as possible.

"You are to immediately get the cheques prepared, signed and released at the same time and not in bits," the statement added.

The directive further said any location, which is unable to, fund its own payment on this subject, should request immediate funding for the headquarters and appealed to all locations to ensure an immediate hitch free compliance.

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Business Trust

Motoring

Citroen C6: A comfortable freeway cruiser

The Lexus will face a new competitor in the shape of the Citroen C6, a new top-of-the-line car from the French manufacturer. Citroen has been without a luxury sedan for some time, but in the year that marks the fiftieth anniversary of the introduction of the legendary DS series, the company is about to unveil a car that follows the pattern set by its illustrious forebear.

The C6 lacks the radical elements of styling and engineering that marked the DS, but it promises to be a worthy successor as a smooth and comfortable freeway cruiser. Powered by new V-6 engines, a 3.0-liter gasoline unit providing 215 hp and a 208-hp 2.7-liter diesel, both linked to six-speed gearboxes, the car features a new active suspension design with variable dampers. Comfortable cruising is high on the designers' list of priorities for the C6, and the interior is meant to make the occupants feel at home - Citroen describes the ambience, which is influenced by modern furniture design, as "a rolling living room." One feature that isn't from the past is the provision of a head-up display for the driver.

By Hamisu Muhammad,
Reporter (Business)

Exterior styling has the family style of other Citroens

introduced since the company took the line of returning to its roots and providing cars for individualist. There's a hint of the DS in the car's smooth lines and the lack of a trunk as a prominent feature of the overall design.

DaimlerChrysler CEO says no more mergers

DaimlerChrysler AG Chief Executive Juergen Schrempp, who led the automaker through a series of high-profile mergers in the last seven years, says the company must now focus on increasing profits instead of finding new partners.

"We have what we need," Schrempp told The Wall Street Journal in an interview on the newspaper's Web site Thursday. "The name of the game now is operational excellence. The group is structured as it will be in the long term."

Schrempp, 60, who was interviewed at the Geneva Auto Show, oversaw the 1998 merger of Daimler-Benz AG and Chrysler Corp., which created the world's fifth-largest automaker. He defended that deal, even though DaimlerChrysler's market value has fallen 40 percent since the merger and is far from fulfilling

Schrempp's 1998 prediction that it would become the world's most profitable automaker.

Schrempp said DaimlerChrysler is a model of how to integrate "two proud divisions." Chrysler turned around in 2004, when it reported \$1.88 billion in operating profit after a \$637 million loss in 2003. The German-American company's commercial vehicle division also rebounded from losses to a 64 percent rise in operating profit in 2004.

Still, the company is not without problems. Quality troubles and a weak dollar have hurt Mercedes, the company's crown jewel, which saw operating profit fall 97 percent in the last quarter of 2004. Mercedes' Smart division, which sold about 140,000 cars last year, also has a "profit problem," Schrempp said.



Citroen C6 makes its appearance at Geneva auto show.

Nokia fixes in-car communication solution to VW Passat

The new Volkswagen Passat will come equipped with the PREMIUM handset integration product from Nokia Automotive, harnessing Bluetooth wireless technology. This makes Volkswagen the first automaker to offer its customers a factory-fitted automotive communication solution that supports the Bluetooth SIM Access Profile. The handset integration product provides compatibility with a wide range of mobile phones from various manufacturers. A mobile phone holder is also offered as an option for users who wish to charge their phone in the car.

The user enjoys all the benefits of a car phone with external GSM antenna, excellent audio quality in hands-free mode, and comfortable operation tailored to the needs of the driver. Many applications can be conveniently controlled via an external alphanumeric keyboard, the multifunctional steering wheel or voice dial. At the same time, the PREMIUM handset integration product provides yet another advantage of hands-free systems - the ability to access personal contact data stored in the mobile phone using Bluetooth wireless technology.

Via the Bluetooth SIM Access Profile, the PREMIUM handset integration product can access the SIM card of the compatible mobile phone and log onto the GSM network. As soon as the user gets out of the car or presses a certain button on his mobile phone, the receiving mode is deactivated and the mobile phone automatically logs back onto the mobile network.

Optimally integrated into

the vehicle environment, this solution includes key functions such as radio mute and downloading of phonebook entries from compatible mobile phones via Bluetooth wireless technology, as well as additional basic functions such as voice dial, taking and ending calls, and redial.

"For the first time, an automaker is offering a

communication solution using the Bluetooth SIM Access Profile that is factory-fitted in the vehicle. This represents an important engineering achievement: we have taken a further step toward universality in the domain of factory-installed, integrated communication solutions: Users looking for wide-ranging compatibility with a variety of mobile phones have a choice between an aftermarket solution or a factory-fitted system," says Marcus Stahl, General Manager.

Pagani Zonda "F" debuts at Geneva show

Bespoke manufacturer Pagani has diversified its extravagant 'Zonda' series by producing a high-performance "F" version. In the middle of the two-seater is a 602 bhp, 7.3 litre V12 AMG motor that will catapult the car from zero to 200 km/h in less than 10 seconds. The model will be premiered at Geneva in March.

Like its predecessor, the Zonda "S" coupé and

roadster, the car carries the same AMG-tuned engine but this time modifications mean an extra 47 bhp, at a peak of 6,150 rpm. Maximum torque of 760 Nm at 4,000 rpm is transferred to the rear wheels via a 6-speed gearbox. The low weight of 1,230 kgs, combined with the improved power means 0 - 100 km/h is achieved in only 3.6 seconds and the car will run effortlessly on to a top speed of 345 km/h! Braking is

similarly potent, aided as it is, by ceramic brakes 380 mm (front), 355 mm (rear).

Visually the Zonda "F" is little changed from its brothers, just a new one-piece tail spoiler and new engine parts on show under the rear hood.

As far as prices are concerned, the small manufacturer is keeping quiet. Prospective customers for their cars are unlikely to ask the price anyway.



Pagani Zonda F

GM chooses Opel to build mid-size cars

General Motors, the world's biggest car maker, said it had chosen its German unit Opel over Swedish subsidiary Saab to make its mid-size cars in future in return for big concessions from the German workforce in terms of pay and working hours.

"GM has decided to build specific Opel and Saab models, based on a common platform, at (Opel's main site) Ruesselsheim from 2008," GM Europe announced in a statement.

Following an "intensive" analysis of both the Ruesselsheim site just outside Frankfurt and Saab's Trollhaettan plant outside Goeteborg in Sweden, GM Europe found the German plant was 200 million euros (260 million dollars) more cost-effective than the Swedish factory.

The in-depth analysis examined each factory in terms of output capacity, investment, labour costs, efficiency, flexibility, logistics and currency.

And while both sites had come up with convincing arguments, "at the end of the day, it was Ruesselsheim that had the slight advantage," GM Europe chairman Fritz Henderson said.

Saab chief Peter Augustsson said there was no bad feeling between the rival

plants. "It's not about Sweden or Germany. It's about western Europe versus Asia," he said.

Following GM's announcement last October of drastic cost-cutting measures and thousands of job cuts to turn around its loss-making European operations, Ruesselsheim and Trollhaettan were forced to compete against each other to build GM's new mid-size cars in Europe, including Opel's Vectra model and Saab's 9.3. The mid-size models are aimed as rivals to BMW's 3-series and Mercedes's C-Class.

In order to win the race and hold on to their jobs, Opel workers were prepared to make big concessions, including a wage freeze until 2010, a reduction in their annual Christmas bonuses and more flexible working hours of between 30 and 40 hours a week, depending on demand.

In return, management had pledged not to implement any compulsory redundancies or shut down any European factories until 2010.

Ruesselsheim would build the Opel Vectra and Saab 9.3 models from 2007. With annual output at 293,000 cars, the plant would be able to operate at a high level of capacity.

Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2005

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(N)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED				
THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	7	16.20	103,198	1,673,939.02
RESKO PLC	3	9.89	7,500	74,175.00
Sector Totals	10		110,698	1,748,114.02
AIRLINES				
AVIATION DEVELOPMENT COMPANY PLC	1	1.00	1,736,950	1,736,950.00
Sector Totals	1		1,736,950	1,736,950.00
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC	10	1.85	155,851	288,424.35
R. T. BRISCOAE PLC	2	5.32	17,500	93,100.00
Sector Totals	12		173,351	381,524.35
BANKING				
ACB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	2	0.94	1,007,000	946,580.00
ACCESS BANK PLC	18	3.42	1,297,500	4,437,450.00
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC	19	6.63	214,691	1,423,401.33
CHARTERED BANK PLC	1	3.90	5,000	19,500.00
COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT BANK PLC	2	0.70	11,000	7,700.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	428	23.00	1,031,542	23,721,688.13
FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	32	1.20	330,929	389,718.01
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC	228	9.00	2,059,398	19,119,099.13
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	9	0.48	640,000	307,200.00
HALLMARK BANK PLC	1	1.77	8,135	14,398.95
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC	20	0.57	933,784	529,911.04
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC	8	1.32	335,000	405,840.00
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC	27	7.81	94,263	736,194.03
LION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	1	0.59	15,000	8,850.00
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC	21	1.18	3,650,380	4,289,001.00
NAL BANK PLC	2	2.80	500	1,400.00
OCEANIC BANK PLC	50	5.18	8,821,420	44,946,242.52
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC	7	7.41	29,600	219,336.00
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	17	1.53	666,032	1,000,567.48
TRADE BANK PLC	3	1.35	7,006	9,458.10
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC	19	10.00	75,307	753,070.00
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC	422	19.00	3,651,974	69,645,506.54
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	8	0.66	260,000	171,600.00
WEMA BANK PLC	7	3.93	19,848,641	78,005,159.13
ZENITH BANK PLC	226	13.85	4,354,106	60,150,174.07
Sector Totals	1,578		49,348,208	311,259,045.46
BREWERIES				
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC	196	80.00	661,161	52,891,557.79
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC	407	35.06	1,191,066	41,648,805.13
Sector Totals	603		1,852,227	94,540,362.92
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC	101	23.00	1,188,005	27,204,353.55
BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC	4	4.15	53,398	221,601.70
CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	4	6.85	64,018	438,822.40
WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC	42	9.99	239,177	2,390,419.08
Sector Totals	151		1,544,598	30,255,196.73
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC	14	4.40	35,027	151,737.99
CAP PLC	1	7.00	1,250	8,750.00
D. N. MEYER PLC	15	4.80	30,715	147,632.00
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC	4	3.80	5,200	19,760.00
Sector Totals	34		72,192	327,879.99
CONGLOMERATES				
A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC	14	0.98	129,467	125,968.25
C F A O NIGERIA PLC	3	4.35	4,439	18,889.65
CHELLARAMS PLC	1	1.71	2,967	5,073.57
JOHN HOLT PLC	4	0.73	20,000	14,600.00
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC	133	15.01	499,194	7,389,994.43
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC	81	10.30	977,663	10,122,129.37
U.A.C. NIGERIA PLC	72	14.17	269,736	3,822,159.12
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC	5	1.06	300,000	318,000.00
Sector Totals	313		2,203,466	21,816,814.39
CONSTRUCTION				
COSTAIN (W.A.) PLC	7	1.02	41,300	42,126.00
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC	4	15.55	3,300	51,315.00
Sector Totals	11		44,600	93,441.00
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY				
NIGERIAN WIRE AND CABLE PLC	5	0.76	15,000	11,400.00
Sector Totals	5		15,000	11,400.00
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	17	22.94	95,196	2,133,010.44
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC	133	50.51	242,948	12,228,901.19
FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC	36	16.61	47,672	791,831.92
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	52	52.01	47,150	2,415,479.83
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC	58	143.01	68,206	9,633,843.48
NORTHERN NIGERIA FLOUR MILLS PLC	1	15.78	1,000	15,780.00
Sector Totals	297		502,172	27,218,846.86
HEALTHCARE				
EKOCORP PLC	5	0.69	31,112	21,467.28
EVANS MEDICAL PLC	9	2.85	89,000	254,350.00
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC	2	5.10	15,000	76,500.00
NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC	2	2.99	4,800	13,960.00
PHARMA-DEKO PLC	3	4.09	35,000	143,150.00
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	21	8.26	62,607	517,610.78
Sector Totals	42		237,519	1,027,038.06
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC	3	0.96	38,700	36,504.00
B.O.C. GASES PLC	5	2.80	57,384	160,675.20
VITAFAM NIGERIA PLC	19	2.98	193,638	570,402.08
VONO PRODUCTS PLC	2	1.90	65,228	123,933.20
Sector Totals	29		354,950	891,514.48
INSURANCE				
AICO INSURANCE PLC	13	1.61	112,250	183,207.50
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC	5	1.40	41,800	58,044.00
LAW UNION AND ROCK INSURANCE PLC	6	1.20	38,100	45,665.00
N.E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG.) PLC	1	0.76	1,339	1,017.64
NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC	7	3.00	28,700	84,250.00
PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC	2	1.97	675	1,329.75
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC	7	2.99	53,486	156,732.83
STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE	1	0.70	10,000	7,000.00
UNIC INSURANCE PLC	7	0.92	138,531	127,448.52
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY PLC	9	2.55	88,598	225,143.57
Sector Totals	58		513,479	889,838.81
MANAGED FUNDS				
C & I LEASING PLC	4	1.38	66,324	91,961.36
Sector Totals	4		66,324	91,961.36
PACKAGING				
NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC	3	1.66	8,800	14,608.00
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC	5	3.87	50,800	196,596.00
Sector Totals	8		59,600	211,204.00
PETROLEUM(MARKETING)				
AFROIL PLC	2	0.75	19,734	14,932.50
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC	107	53.01	2,623,153	138,804,558.55
ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC	6	2.04	105,400	215,016.00
MOBIL OIL NIGERIA-PLC	37	164.00	16,874	2,722,326.50
CONOIL PLC	75	104.55	68,415	6,950,548.56
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC	37	157.10	28,376	4,406,324.40
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC	43	173.00	19,328	3,352,582.43
OANDO PLC	132	88.50	145,724	12,802,492.37
Sector Totals	439		3,027,004	169,268,781.31
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
LONGMAN NIGERIA PLC	3	2.10	50,000	105,000.00
Sector Totals	3		50,000	105,000.00
REAL ESTATE				
UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC	16	7.83	71,010	549,231.00
Sector Totals	16		71,010	549,231.00
TEXTILES				
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC	2	2.10	3,026	6,354.60
Sector Totals	2		3,026	6,354.60

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
NB	1,191,066.00	41,648,805.13	407
ACCESSBANK	1,297,500.00	4,437,450.00	18
ADC	1,736,950.00	1,736,950.00	1
GUARANTY	2,059,398.00	19,119,099.13	228
AP	2,623,153.00	138,804,558.55	107
MANNYBANK	3,650,380.00	4,289,001.00	21
UBN	3,651,974.00	69,645,506.54	422
ZENITHBANK	4,354,106.00	60,150,174.07	226
OCEANIC	8,821,420.00	44,946,242.52	50
WEMABANK	19,848,641.00	78,005,159.13	7

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
NESTLE	136.20	143.01	+6.81
MOBIL	158.50	164.00	+5.50
TOTAL	168.00	173.00	+5.00
NOLCHEM	99.81	104.55	+4.74
NBC	50.50	52.01	+1.51
TEXACO	156.00	157.10	+1.10
TUP	21.85	22.94	+1.09
LEVBROS	14.30	15.01	+0.71
UNIPETROL	88.00	88.50	+0.50
NB	34.65	35.06	+0.41

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
OKOMUOIL	16.99	16.20	-0.79
PZ	10.69	10.30	-0.39
CAP	7.35	7.00	-0.35
RTBRISCOE	5.60	5.32	-0.28
PHARMDEKO	4.30	4.09	-0.21
ZENITHBANK	13.96	13.85	-0.11
GUARANTY	9.10	9.00	-0.10
HALLBANK	1.86	1.77	-0.09
DUNLOP	1.94	1.85	-0.09
UTC	1.11	1.06	-0.05

Shareholders laud share price of ACB

Shareholders have commended the board and management of ACB International Bank Plc for its offer price, describing it as capable of democratising the pricing of the bank's initial public offer.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that most of the shareholders, who spoke at the bank's investors forum, held in Lagos at the weekend, said that 80k per 50k share was the company's contribution toward long term empowerment of the citizens.

The president of "Aka Ikenga", a socio-cultural organisation, Chief Chris Asoluka, described the low selling price of ACB shares "as an innovative vision that will mobilise Nigerians toward effective participation in the capital market".

"At 80k per share, what ACB has done is to make every Nigerian participate in the offer. This offer cannot be beaten by any other because of the history and legacy behind it," Asoluka said.

He said that his organisation would market the ACB share and also participate actively in the ongoing offer.

Dr Herbert Orji, pledged the support of his stock broking firm, Summa Guaranty Ltd to the success of the offer.

Mrs Funsho Williams, a customer of the bank, also lauded ACB's service delivery, adding that her interest to invest in the bank followed its unique customer relations.

Another shareholder, Madam Juliet Akano, described ACB offer as a rare chance for wise investors to put their money in the nation's best financial institutions.

"ACB International is the place to be. The shares are cheap and affordable to Nigerians of all classes. As shareholders, we have no regrets investing in ACB," she said.

Commending shareholders for keeping faith with the bank, the Managing Director, Mr John Udeka, assured investors of a fast, profitable return on their investments.

He said that the management was aware of the challenges in the market, but was poised to making investors proud and reap the fruit of their investments within a short time.

"For us at ACB, what most bankers complain about, we see as a jolly good ride because we know the goodwill that the ACB franchise invokes," he said.

Low equity prices dominated trading last week

The activities on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) last week came under intense pressure with the secondary market controlling about 85 per cent of the investable funds, compared with 15 per cent now channelled to the primary market.

Judging by the success level of banks that had concluded their public offers, most stockbrokers attributed investors high interest in the secondary market to low pricing of the offers and availability of the shares.

To some stockbrokers, the positive side of the ongoing consolidation programme, has been limited to the shares of banks on offer as most investors, especially new investors have limited their participation to the secondary market to the detriment of the primary market.

At the end of the transactions for the week ended March 4, the cumulative average price of the 207 listed equities fell by 4.12 per cent.

The market capitalisation also dipped by N64 billion to close at N1.719 trillion compared with the opening capitalisation of N1.783 trillion achieved on Feb 28.

The NSE all-share index also crashed by 794.60 points to close at 21,158.90 points, down from the opening index of 21,953.50 points.

Mobil Oil led the price losers chart in the week under review, shedding N20.83 to close at N158.50 per share.

Investors in Conoil also lost N17.69 to close at N99.81 per share while Guinness share price depreciated by N14.99 to close at

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

'Minister, NASS 'll be casualties of labour bill'

The Yobe State chairman of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) Comrade Mohammed M. Bukhar has declared that both the minister of Labour and members of the National Assembly would constitute casualties when the labour Bill is passed into law.

Comrade Bukhar made the declaration while addressing affiliates of the NLC in Damaturu yesterday.

According to the NLC chairman, not only would the labour bill affect the welfare of Nigerian workers, even the minister of labour and legislators at the both the Senate and House of Representatives would fall victims, saying that both parties, including the minister were only being used and would "surely" be dumped in future.

Comrade Bukhar added that when the time was right, Nigerian workers would hold the "adders" (Labour

From Isa Umar Gusau, Correspondent, Damaturu (Minister, NASS) responsible for their actions.

"Comrades, at the appropriate time, we shall all call them to account for their roles not only for the labour bill but also for general issue of human endeavour" the Yobe he threatened.

The NLC Chairman lambasted political leaders in the country, saying that "most politicians view politics as an investment and for them, the real issue is wealth accumulation, protection and enhanced social prestige such as chieftaincy titles, opulent birthday parties and female friends" rather than ensuring good governance in Nigeria.

Comrade Bukhar also noted that policies embarked upon by the Obasanjo led government were forced by international institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, with the policies resulting into worse situations and pauperised citizens.



Labour leaders singing solidarity songs at a conference in Abuja... recently

Labour leader threatens secession over former NULGE boss

A former president of the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) in Ogun State, Comrade Gias Nuji Osoba has condemned the purported impeachment

From Samsom Ojo, Correspondent Lagos

of the NULGE national president, Dr. Deji Akinwalere and called for the secession of the South-west from the union if the alleged injustice against Dr. Akinwalere is not rectified.

Comrade Osoba made the declaration at the weekend in Lagos, while disclosing his intention to vie for the NULGE national president in the fourth coming delegates conference on March 31. He affirmed that the purported impeachment of the NULGE national president, Dr. Deji Akinwalere was fraught with unconstitutionality and maintained that Dr. Akinwalere is still regarded as the national president of NULGE.

He added; "more so that, it was claimed that an Akure High Court has granted injunction in that regard and that new national officers are not recognised".

...as court restrains Akinwalere

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma, Labour Reporter

A federal High Court sitting in Bwari, Abuja has restrained the embattled former president of Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), Comrade Deji Akinwalere, from parading himself as president of the union.

It would be recalled that comrade Akinwalere was expelled from NULGE by the national Secretariat of the Union for alleged anti-union activities.

Six dues paying members of NULGE branches in the Federal Capital Territory Court are alleging what they referred to as "malicious bad publicity in the print media."

The plaintiffs claimed that the activities of the defendant was as the result of opposition from members of the union to his desperate moves to be retained as president of the union for another four years.

Comrade Osoba said that if Dr. Akinwalere must step down as the national president the master minder of the crises, Alhaji A.A. Salam too must quit the union" he said.

He called on all South-west states to act in unity and collectively reject the cheating and insult that are being poured on them by very few individuals in the union.

Comrade Osoba while advocating that the forth coming national delegates conference be held in the south west zone in line with the existing rotational order upon which previous elections were held insisted that the south west deserves to have four national posts out of the existing twelve as this was the practice long time."

The former Ogun State NULGE boss said that "if the status-quo could not be achieved, the coming national delegates conference would be prevented from holding via a court order.

TUC condemns use of consultants for due process

From Samson Ojo, Lagos

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) of Nigeria has condemned the use of consultants engaged by the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Units (BMPIU) in the presidency in place of the public servants expected to do the due process job.

TUC in a press statement made available to *Labour Trust* tagged: "TUC decries use of consultants for due process" signed by its acting secretary-general, Comrade Don Uhumangho, viewed the over N252 million already spent by the Budget Monitoring Office as payment to the consultants on an average of over N7 million per month as wasteful and negates the principle of due process itself.

The text of the TUC statement read in part; "the congress calls on Mr. President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to prevail on the senior special assistance on Budget Monitoring and Implementation, Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili to put a stop to the use of external bodies known as consultants to execute the due process job in the ministries and parastatals."

According to the statement it is unfair to render public servants trained for the job redundant when the whole essence of the due process job is to cut excessive budgetary expenses.

While threatening to resist any attempt by the BMPIU to render the civil servants who are supposed to do the job useless, TUCN called on the federal government to train and retrain the public servants, if need be in the new techniques in the due process review and certification.

Civil servants get transportation boost

The service-wide transport scheme for civil servants in the Federal Capital Territory has achieved a boost with the injection of eight more buses.

The commissioning of the eight 32-seater buses last week marked the second phase of the transport scheme started three years ago with

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

twelve 34-seater Toyota coaster buses with the objective of alleviating the transportation problem of civil servants within the FCT.

According to Comrade O.O. Olaitan, the transport manager service-wide, the

scheme has inspite of difficulties succeeded in providing transport service to the army of civil servants in Abuja one important aspect he said, is that the scheme is 100 percent self sustained on the income generated.

"We are grateful to God Almighty who has blessed the scheme with dedicated and highly professional staff whose contributions have led us to the enviable position we have achieved today," he said.

Ambassador T.D. Hart who represented the Head of Civil Service at the commissioning said "we shall keep striving to improve on the quality of the scheme both in kind and operations because it will remain a reference point for all similar schemes in some ministries until such a time that the office of the head of civil service in fully equipped in logistics and resources to ensure full responsibility for transportation needs for all public servants service-wide as provided in the monetisation policy in SGF's circular 19.5.4/c.1/11/371 of June 27 2003."

Olaitan pointed out that the scheme which is run by the supervisory and management committees for administrative convenience benefited 300,490 civil servants in 2004, adding that on his appointment in 2002, he ensured that the impression that government business is nobody's business was corrected.

He promised that with the appreciable increase of the buses in the fleet more routes would be covered to contribute to the service delivery programme of government.

Police nab suspended NUBIFIE treasurer

The suspended national treasurer of the National Union of Banks Insurance and Financial Institutions Employees (NUBIFIE) Mr. Jamaes Ile has been arrested by the police for an alleged financial misdeed.

The arrest of Mr. Ile, according to a press statement made available to *Labour Trust* signed by the acting national president, Comrade Lawal A. Alobi was sequel to the complaints of alleged misappropriation of funds and sales of Union's shares in First Bank Plc by him and the Union's immediate former national president, Comrade Babayola Mohammed.

The three-page statement disclosed that the two former officials of the union will soon be dragged before the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

He said that the suspended former president of the Union, Mr. Baboyole also would soon be arrested, as according to the NUBIFIE acting president, Comrade Alobi, the process to that effect has almost been completed.

However, the NUBIFIE acting president, Comrade Alobi debunked the report in a national newspaper (not Labour Trust) that the Union Bank Plc, where the suspended leader (former treasurer) is presently working and the United Bank for Africa Plc have pulled out of the Union.

The text of the statement read in part; "the truth of the matter is that UBA domestic committee would want to see that all those people involved in the misappropriation of funds and sales of Union's share in First Bank Plc including Mr. James Ile be prosecuted before the release of their check off dues"

Comrade Alobi stated that the union is satisfied with the position of UBA domestic committee, but frowned at the decision of the Union Bank principal manager industrial relations for unilaterally stopping the remittance of check off dues to the national secretariat of the Union and vowed to embark in picketing of the premises of the union if within two weeks it does not release the workers check off due to the Union.

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

NARTO wants PPPRA scrapped

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

Following what it described as the culpability of the Petroleum Products Pricing and Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) in increases of petroleum products prices, the National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) has called for the scrapping of the agency.

In its stead, the association wants the federal government to establish a viable agency which would be more sensitive to the dynamics of petroleum products prices and at the same time be responsive to the demands of all stakeholders and the masses.

According to the national operations coordinator of the NARTO, Alhaji Lawal Isa, who stated this in Abuja last week, the PPPRA instead of sincerely regulating the prices of petroleum products, has been privy to some recent

price increases.

Alhaji Isa who spoke to newsmen on the recent hike in diesel price by N12:00 per litre, said the hike was prompted by the PPPRA which he alleged, advised the NNPC to effect it.

He described as hypocritical, PPPRA's submission that it was ignorant of the price

increase, saying such denial depicts lack of transparency and honesty.

Alhaji Isa also said appointments in the PPPRA were devoid of the principle of federal character as most of its employees are from a particular ethnic group in the country.

"We want the federal government to scrap the PPPRA and replace it with a more responsible

organisation which would ensure a level paying ground for all operators in the downstream sector of the petroleum industry. Besides, appointments in the PPPRA is not done with the principle of federal character," he said.

According to Alhaji Isa, NARTO is ready to prove with concrete evidence, PPPRA's involvement in the current rise in diesel price. He therefore challenged the agency to deny it.



President Olusegun Obasanjo and Comrade Adams Oshiomhole at a May-day rally in Lagos: Are they reconciled in surrender to the persistent fuel price crises?

ITF embarks on skills audit

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) is auditing skills and competencies available in the country to develop a reliable and current database.

According to the February edition of "I.T.F News" made available to newsmen in Abuja, the ITF is collaborating with the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA) on the project.

The ITF Director-General, Prof Olu Akerejola, was quoted as saying that the absence of reliable data on skills and competencies, had created "a legion of problems, which have culminated in the unemployment and underemployment in the economy".

He said that the audit would be a "foundation for the periodic review of national curriculum to continually respond to the needs of the market and an insight into the labour market requirements which will provide a guide for choice of career".

The objectives of the audit are expected to be achieved through interactive sessions between the ITF, NECA and other stakeholders which include government institutions and agencies among others.

ABU SSANU distributes cars to members

The Ahmadu Bello University branch of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) has introduced a car loan scheme on hire purchase arrangement for interested members.

Speaking at the second phase of the distribution ceremony of the cars, chairman of the Union, Comrade Samuel Kolade Joel said "while 138 members of the Union drove home cars of different models in the first phase of the scheme in the year 2004, 22 more members are going to benefit from the scheme today".

Comrade Joel also disclosed that the scheme which was introduced as part of the intervention efforts of ABU SSANU during his stewardship as chairman of the second most influential union in the University has also successfully purchased and disbursed 197 motor cycles and 48 Computers to members.

The chairman who boasted of having achieved within the short span of five years what his predecessors put together could not achieve since the establishment of the premier University, however declined suggestion by the Union's national president for an extension of an additional

From Waziri Isa Gwantu (stringer) Zaria

tenure.

In their comments, both the vice chancellor and the SSANU national President commended the leadership of the Union for its foresight, wisdom and commitment to better the lots of its members, especially in areas, where both government and the institution could not due to

one factor or the other

They however advised beneficiaries of the cars, computers and the motor cycles and other members of the Union to complement efforts of the union in its resolve to address issues that border on their welfare, which is naturally expected to have a direct impact on the University in particular and the society in general.

...as ASUU elects exco

The Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria branch of the Academic staff union of universities (ASUU) has elected new executives to steer affairs of the union for the next two years, with Dr. Mu'azu Maiwada emerging as chairman.

The position of chairman contested for by one time secretary of the union, Dr. Mohammed Kabir Aliyu and Dr. Mu'azu Maiwada was the only one out of the seven positions contested for.

Besides the position of chairman, contestants of other positions such as secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, assistant secretary, auditor and welfare officer were elected unopposed.

Engineer Y.D. Amartey, ODY Malachr, Dr. Rabi'u Nasiru, Patrick Lumumba, Haruna Jibrin, Ibrahim Shehu (Dallatu) were elected secretary, financial secretary,

treasurer, assistant secretary, auditor and eelfare officer respectively.

The new ASUU chairman thanked God Almighty for the victory which he regards as a trust He (God) has bestowed on him and which he promised to work to prove..

PENGASSAN, NUPENG reject sack in Shell, NNPC

Workers in the oil and gas industry under the aegis of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) have rejected the recent staff reduction in Shell and Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation for allegedly adopting methods which undermine the existing collective agreement in the sector.

The rejection was contained in a communiqué issued at the end of the joint national executive council meeting of NUPENG/PENGASSAN held in Calabar on February 26, 2005.

In the two-page communiqué made available to *Labour Trust*, the workers disclosed that any redundancy plans should be carried out within the scope of the agreement to avoid drawing the wrath.

The communiqué signed by the officials of the two Unions, Comrade Brown Ogbeifun, and Comrade M.M. Fadakinje also vowed to check the spate of unwholesome labour activities in the industry.

Commenting on privatisation and deregulation

in the Industry, the joint national executive council of NUPENG/PENGASSAN stated that the joint NEC in session observed with dismay, the haphazard manner in which the downstream sector of the oil and gas industry is being deregulated and privatised which has resulted in instability of petroleum products prices and massive job losses.

The oil workers expressed concern with the abuse of expatriate quota in the industry despite the repeated objections to the practice, and warned that a further abuse would be met with maximum resistance.

The workers in the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting called on all its members to be prepared for a showdown against any employer in the industry whilst calling on the federal government, NNPC, DPR and managements in the industry to urgently address all the aforementioned issues within the next twenty one working days, effective from March 2, 2005, as failure to do so will compel NUPENGASSAN to carry out series of actions to effect desired changes.

'Unemployment is Nigeria's greatest crisis'

The high level of unemployment in the country and how to keep the excess personnel in Nigeria employed has been identified as the greatest crisis facing the nation.

The managing director, Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority (NEPZA) Mr Sina Agboluaje, who made this assertion at a forum with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja, said the situation would continue for a long time if not adequately addressed.

"I think that our greatest problem in Nigeria today is

how to keep people employed; what we have in abundance in addition to our natural resources is personnel and manpower.

"This has been the greatest crisis for this nation and will be in the long run if serious action is not taken," Agboluaje said.

He stressed the need to use the free tradezones in Nigeria to address the unemployment situation, saying that the objectives and goals of the free zones across the world differ even though they bear the same name.

He observed that in some countries withinsufficient manpower, workers were imported to work on their free zones.

"Nigeria, which has excess personnel, emphasis should be placed on using the free zones to create employment," the NEPZA boss said.

"We have a peculiar advantage in this country that in virtually any industry, including IT industries, we have available manpower unlike in some other countries of the world which need to import personnel," he added.

Fund advocates transformation of SIWES

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) has advocated the transformation of the Supervised Industrial Work Experience (SIWES) into work integrated learning for a more productive workforce.

To this end, it has stressed the need for a strong cooperation among institutions, industries, students and the community towards a more result-oriented tertiary education.

The "I.T.F News" February edition, quoted the fund's Director-General, Prof. Olu Akerejola, as saying this at

meeting which attracted representatives from the National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) among other stakeholders.

Represented by the director, training and development, Mr J. K. Bello, Akerejola said the meeting was sequel to his visit to South African Technikon, which revealed a strong cooperation among institutions, industries, students and the community.

He explained that because of

the current explosion in knowledge, there was the need for appropriate channeling to assist graduates to be readily employable.

Noting that elements of cooperative education already existed in SIWES, speakers at the meeting said that the tasks of all stakeholders in SIWES needed to be clearly defined.

To sensitise Nigerians on the need for cooperative education, the meeting agreed to organise a national workshop for the organised private sector, tertiary institutions and other relevant stakeholders and individuals.



Mini-buses in a long row searching for passengers



Okada operators and wheelbarrows

Motor park life: Pass

They beheld the seven-sitter Peugeot 505 as it turned from the main road about 100 meters away, advancing at the controllable speed necessary for the final brake. They got set to sprint forth towards it, moving slowly at first. As the driver applied the final brake at the usual high throttle that announces the safe arrival of a commercial vehicle at the end of a long distance journey in Nigeria, they surged forth towards it with the expected sprint, with their wheelbarrows clashing and producing the sickening metallic sound that is a normal feature of life at Nigerian markets and motor parks.

As they surrounded the vehicle and frantically drained toward the boot, each struggling to get there first, two of the five passengers had already alighted and the boot had been opened by the driver to discharge their luggage. One of the two most grown up of the six urchins felt he got to a hefty bag belonging to one of the two passengers, a lady, first. He stooped to lift it into his wheelbarrow. The other commuter had only a small polythene bag containing his God-knows-what, which he probably either thrust on his laps or sat astride throughout the journey. So, as he alighted he frenziedly beckoned at a commercial motorcycle operator. "Wuse II", he commanded tersely, explaining before the operator, could ask precisely where, "just near Mr. Bigs". They haggled a while over the fare. They agreed on an amount. They sped away.

"I got here first," a younger urchin complained insolently, as he also reached for the bag. "If you touch the bag you will regret learning to push

wheelbarrow". He ignored the warning and stooped for it. A hard push sent him down with a thud. The lady had since pulled her bag away from them and had it hoisted on a commercial motorcycle which sped towards wherever she commanded the operator to go. The other four urchins merely cheered the two combatants as they sluggishly pushed their empty wheelbarrows back to their rows by the gate where they would continue to wait for arriving vehicles, leaving the younger to learn the lesson that if he wanted to continue earning a living by pushing wheelbarrows he should restrain getting to a luggage before an elder, especially when not many vehicles discharge the luggage wheelbarrows would be paid to carry. Nobody, not even passers-by, interfered to save the younger. It is motor park life.

The vehicle, which arrived from Kano that Tuesday afternoon, had since nosed into the park, snaked into the available narrow parking space and discharged the other three passengers, who, either for more convenience or for reasons they knew best, preferred to be driven right into the park before alighting.

Although Jabi motor park, also known as Utako motor park, the largest in the federal capital territory, is not notorious for crimes, unruly behaviours by union operations and other people earning their livelihood there seem a daily routine, the activities taking place, the rules or attitudes guiding or determining the activities and the various structures there, combine to shape the

Motor parks in Nigeria have an interesting life of their own. Uthman Abubakar Senior Reporter (Features) recently strolled into some of the motor parks in the federal capital territory and observed how passenger behaviour, passenger sitting arrangements and preferences, passenger relations and assistances, touting, ticketing and manifest systems, hawking and begging, security and order, eateries and numerous other hotchpotch of activities in the parks all over the country mould an interesting life there.

interesting life common to all motor parks in Nigeria.

It is located at Utako district of the territory, practically serving travelers to most of the states of the federation. It normally accommodates well over 200 commercial vehicles. Thirteen branches of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) run its affairs. About 40

restaurants and other eateries feed travelers there. Numerous commercial motorcycle operators, wheelbarrow pushers and other load carriers, mechanics and other artisans, hawkers, beggars and many more earn their daily bread there.

Whether he or she is in a hurry or not, a passenger assumes the air of a king or

queen in most motor parks in the country, partly because his money, which he or she pays as transport fare, gives him or her the right to do so, and partly because he is treated as such by the vehicle owners, drivers and the Nigeria Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) operatives whose responsibility it is to receive, guide and load passengers into

the vehicles as they enter the park, even if the passenger does not allow his or her possession of money to inflate him or her with the kingly or queenly air. Most drivers and union workers these days are so irritated by the excessive exhibition of the kingly or queenly attitude by passengers that many of them bluff "ungentlemanly passengers outright at the slightest provocation. They will tell a "rude" passenger that if he or she can not be a gentleman or lady he or she should go and buy his or her own vehicle. Often, a row ensues which, in most cases however, ends with the passenger still boarding the vehicle causing it. The fact remains: the passenger is king or queen.

"Passengers have the right to behave the way they do because they have their money, which we are all waiting for, without it we will all not be here," Ejileye Isiaka Ademola and Alhaji Rafiu Abiola, long distance taxi drivers acknowledged in Jabi motor park. They also lamented the impatience of many passengers who, these days seem in such a haste that they prefer boarding "kabu-kabu" vehicles elsewhere along the road or in places other than motor parks. They warned "there is a big risk boarding a vehicle outside the motor park because its driver may not be sufficiently qualified, he may not have mastered the road he will ply or he may be an armed robber, and in the event of an accident or robbery the union will have no help to render the affected passengers and will not assume any responsibility." Alhaji Abiola even added, "I, for instance



Vehicles and people competing for space at the park



Barrow pushers jostling for patronage



Hawkers cajoling passengers for patronage of their wares

On sitting arrangement in the vehicle, Offor said boastfully: "I pay my money and I, therefore, have the right to choose where to sit in the vehicle. If any rude driver shouts at me or tells me to go and buy my own I wait for another vehicle."

Many passengers, drivers and union workers see hawkers as constituting nuisance by pushing their wares into the vehicle as if to compel the passengers to buy. But the hawkers say they have to do so to stay in business.

Peter Ahonye hawks bread. "If you don't push it inside you don't make good sales because some passengers may have little interest and pushing what you are hawking on them may increase their interest so that they will want to buy. Even if passengers shout at you or drive you away don't go away, don't even worry because it is your business and if you go away you may not make enough sales, and don't be surprised that the same passenger may review his needs and call you to buy."

According to Haruna Usman, who sells wrist watches, "we thank God for our business in the motor park. There is no place where we can trade successfully other than the park, although no place is allocated to us." He shared views with Ahonye: "we push our wares on passengers inside the vehicle to arouse more interest in those with little interest to buy, and we don't worry even if passengers are irritated or drive us away, we don't go away." He said they don't experience cases of theft in Jabi motor park.

Mamman Na'aishatu is an aged one-legged beggar. He does not believe he is a nuisance to passengers, and he does not worry if they do not give him alms or drive him away. "I believe you have to be patient in whatever you do. If you are driven away from here you move to another place where you can get the alms, but no union worker disturbs us." Na'aishatu said the quantity of alms he collects depends on situations. "It all depends. Sometimes you collect much more alms in the motor park because of the arrival of guests and travelers who sometimes call you to give you even if you don't beg them, but sometimes it becomes so hard that it is better outside the park."

Utako motor park is surrounded within and outside by about 40 restaurants and other makes of public eateries. Most passengers, however, see them as unhygienic places. They believe that if one must eat in many a motor park restaurant one should not look at where the plates are washed or how the food itself is prepared. If he or she does so, he or she may lose his or her appetite.

A lot more interesting activities mix and mingle to shape an interesting motor park life.

Passenger is king

know the number of potholes and their location from here to Ibadan, a kabu-kabu driver will not know them."

In Utako motor park vehicles do not carry over-load of passengers to however short the distance they are traveling in breach of the union's permit. For instance, a 14-sitter Toyota Hiace bus carries 15 persons comprising 14 passengers, four on each of the three rows of seats at the back and two in front, and the driver. The 15 persons do not include the conductor, who normally sits on the engine cover after full load. A seven-sitter Peugeot 505 or 504 taxi is permitted to carry eight persons comprising seven passengers, three at the back seat, three at the center and one in front, and the driver. However, some of such vehicles from the far northern states, especially Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina, sometimes come with one more passenger at the center

to add up to nine persons. The differentials in the number of passengers are strictly a matter of the permit given by the union branches of the respective states. The explanation usually given for the addition of one or two passengers by most drivers is: "fuel price has increased, it is hard for us these days."

However, according to Ademola, a Peugeot seven-sitter driver plying the Abuja-Lagos route, "sincerely, no driver enjoys driving his vehicle being over-loaded with passengers." He gave the difference on this arrangement between the northern and southern states, saying that in the southwest, especially Lagos and Ibadan, passengers prefer paying more than the fixed fare than allowing the driver to over-load. They will always tell the driver that they are conscious of their comfort and health. He said, in contrast to this arrangement, in the

north, many passengers prefer paying less than the fixed fare for the vehicle to be over-loaded so long as it saves them some money.

As is the case in most motor parks in the country, there is often a problem in the sitting arrangement of passengers in the vehicle. Most passengers have preference on sitting positions and, if allowed, they will always sit on their preferred positions. Often, passengers are seen arguing over particular sitting positions to the chagrin of the drivers and union workers. Most passengers do not want to sit at the back seats because of insufficient space and poor ventilation. Generally, the back seat is a stigma.

"We are always disappointed and helpless in such situations, we can not dictate to the passenger where he or she must sit. Passenger is king," Ademola admitted, saying, "we can only advise

and appeal for understanding and concession so that we can restore order for the vehicle to move on time. For instance, insufficient ventilation is the reason passengers don't want to sit at the back. It is not easy to sit there." Some passengers prefer waiting for the next loading vehicle to sit on their choice position than be compelled to sit on any other position in the vehicle loading first even if their boarding the first vehicle will fill it and facilitate immediate movement. If the argument over sitting arrangement gets hot, irritated union workers sometimes even bluff obstinate passengers.

To reduce touts and the nuisance they constitute to passengers and drivers jobless drivers have been employed as park assistances by the Abuja NURTW to receive and seat passengers in vehicles and, sometimes, even to collect the fare.

The ticketing and manifest systems constitute another interesting feature. The tickets issued to the passengers after paying the transport fare and the manifest have the same use. "The manifest has many advantages," Ademola offered, explaining, "If you board a vehicle you give proper name and address, next of kin and phone number, including, if possible, your handset number, to enable us know who to contact in the event of any accident involving you or even death. Whoever refuses to give correct particulars in the manifest does not understand its usefulness and that is unfortunate."

In the past, when passengers were paying for it, drivers and union workers found it difficult persuading them to fill the manifest. That



Union officials at the park

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

Textile workers want industry consolidation * lose \$3bn to factory closures

The National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGWN) has called for the consolidation of industries in the country in the same way as there is banks consolidation even as it says the industry has lost \$3 billion to factory closures.

In a message released from the Union which was made available to *Labour Trust* in Abuja recently, NUTGWN said Nigeria needs a shock therapy to address the issue of industry to consolidate the sector with defined targets in respect of capacity utilisation, capacity adequacy and labour absorption.

According to the Union, there should be a two-year time frame for industrial revival just as a two year time frame was fixed for banks recapitalisation.

NUTGWN called for the strengthening of the Bank of Industry to save collapsed companies such as the Kaduna Textiles Limited, Nortex Limited, Fintex Limited, Supertex Limited, Zamfara Textiles Limited and Enpee Limited among others.

The Union decried the mass closure of factories which it said meant complete wastage of irreplaceable installed manufacturing investment estimated at \$3 billion in the textile sector.

"This unsavoury development scares foreign investment in the sense that every closed factory serves as disincentive to potential investors," the Union said.

It pointed out that given the unique nature of the textile industry which uses a high percentage of locally

By Austine Odo, Senior Labour Reporter

produced raw materials, mass factory closures wastefully deny the country the value-chain of economic activities and the attendant decent and sustainable jobs.

NUTGWN argued that factory closures take Nigeria away from the targeted

Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) of poverty reduction. It observed that in sharp contrast to Nigeria, which it described as a haven of factory closures and job losses, within the last two years, Lesotho, a Southern African country of 1.9 million population recorded a rise in the 20,000 people employed

in the textile and clothing sector to more than 50,000.

"For a population of 1.9 million, Lesotho is near full employment on account of the textile sub sector employment, while Nigeria suffers mountain unemployment and gross under-employment in the wake of factory closures," the Union lamented.



Governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi of Kaduna State (left), with NLC chairman Kaduna chapter, Mr. Jonathan Musa, at the micro credit loan scheme for Kaduna State civil servants in Kaduna...recently.

NUBIFIE to picket Union Bank over check-off dues

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma, Labour Reporter

The National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions Employees (NUBIFIE) says it will picket the Union Bank Plc for failing to remit its members' check-off dues to the secretariat of the union.

According to the acting

president of the Union, Comrade Lawal A. Ahobi, it is unconstitutional for any management or member to withhold the check-off dues meant for the national secretariat.

Comrade Ahobi said in a statement that a report by

one of the national dailies (not *Daily Trust*) that United Bank for Africa (UBA) and Union Bank Plc have pulled out of the union was not true.

According to the statement, the two banks are part and parcel of NUBIFIE and that their staff are dues paying members of the union.

The leadership of the National Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions Employees he said, has been reading frivolous publications in the newspapers castigating the union, giving wrong impression to our members.

NUJ petitions FAAN over assault

The Adamawa State council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has petitioned the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) and placed an indefinite blackout on coverage of its activities for assaulting journalists at the Yola airport.

A statement signed by the chairman of the council, Mr Solomon Kusanjar, in Yola at the weekend said the airport security men, acting on instructions of the airport manager, Mr Christopher Bature, assaulted some journalists.

It explained that the journalists were at the airport to cover the crash-landing of an ADC airline in February.

The statement added that the incident did not only cause injury to the NUJ members, but also damaged the integrity of the press and attempted to obstruct their access to information.

The union wants FAAN to tender an unreserved apology to those assaulted as well as the management of the media houses they represent and the NUJ.

It said the apology would serve as a measure toward a peaceful resolution of the face-off.

Some journalists who had gone to cover the crash-

landing of the aircraft were molested by the airport security personnel who said they were acting on the directives of the airport manager.

The Lagos-Yola ADC aircraft crash-landed on Feb. 24 when two of its tyres burst simultaneously as it was about to land, but no casualties were recorded.

ALGON boss flays confab composition

Became State chairman of the Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Comrade Abba-Moro has picked holes in the composition of the ongoing national confab, noting that the third tier of government is not adequately represented.

Moro who spoke with *Labour Trust* in Abuja, argued that the greater proportion of the problems in the polity emanates from the rural areas hence the need for the conference to have started with the

preponderance of rural persons in attendance.

The ALGON boss said that delegates from the local level would have basically discussed about what is affecting the system and the ordinary person on the street.

"Asking ex-generals to go and proffer solutions at the confab, they will proffer solutions to themselves," Moro said.

Having compared the country's third tier of government with those of advanced democracies like

CFTU stresses need for poverty reduction

Congress of Free Trade Unions of Nigeria (CFTU) has

stressed the need for government to take a second look at its economic frame-work as encapsulated in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) to meet the goal of poverty reduction, wealth creation, employment generation and value orientation.

Delegates at the Congress (CFTU) conference held at Otta in Ogun State recently who gave the advice also felt that the same programme that is talking of economic empowerment is at the same

time "right sizing" which means retrenchment in the public service. According to the delegates, this is double standard.

The delegates also took a swipe at the government's programme of deregulation of the downstream oil sector, which is import dependent. It therefore called on government to among other things, repair the existing refineries without further delay, get the major marketers to build new refineries within a reasonable time and also allocate crude specially to bridge the cost of whatever is being done.

International Body receives motion on Nigerian Textile industry

The International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) has received three motions from NUTGWN on the protection of the Nigerian textile industry.

The motions which were submitted to ITGLWF at its 9th world congress in Turkey included those on the protection of Nigerian Industries, women's participation in T/V Activities and forced reform of trade unions in Nigeria.

In one of its motions to the congress, it was noted that the union is disturbed by the growing decline of textile industries which has led to mass retrenchment and job losses and drew particular attention to the high incidence of closures and relocation in the textile sector as well as the imminent collapse of several other mills.

The Union, among other worries also noted that the problem of textile industry in Nigeria was heightened when Nigeria became a signatory of World Trade Organisation agreement.

Represented at the programme by the president of the Union, Comrade Reginald Agulana, the acting general secretary, Comrade Issa Aremu and senior deputy general secretary, Comrade Umaru Mubammad, the union requested that the ITGLWF pressure multinationals in Nigeria to adopt and implement ILO core labour standards.

At the elections to the presidium, Manfred of IG Metall from Germany was elected unopposed as president, the ex-President, Peter Booth of IGWU United Kingdom was elected as one of the vice presidents.

The NUTGWN also won two slots at the executive committee. Comrades Adams Oshiomhole and Issa Aremu were nominated to represent Nigeria in the executive committee.

With the position of the Union as executive committee member, it has more say in the affairs of the federation.

SACTWU embarks on reforms

The South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU) has taken steps aimed at strengthening the union to make it function more efficiently.

As contained in its report to the national congress held recently, SACTWU informed that these steps were largely based on the detailed programme of action that was adopted by the previous congress.

The report which took an overview of the organisation, also highlighted on selection of the secretariat, disclosing the steps which have been taken to improve the Union's membership size and outcomes of those steps. It also looked at membership growth, rival unions and the leather sector. The report also outlined the various mobilisation campaigns which the Union has been involved in over 36 months and this covers strikes, the closed shop ballots and member activities.

Also contained in the report are outlines of the work of all the national coordinating committee meetings held since the last congress.

YOUR HEALTH

Resident doctors apprehensive over MFCT dissolution

Resident doctors in the employment of the Ministry of Federal Capital Territory (MFCT) have become apprehensive as they were thrown into dilemma over their jobs following the dissolution of the ministry by the federal government.

"It is like all doctors working in the defunct MFCT owned hospitals have lost their jobs," declared the national president of the National Association of Resident Doctor (NARD) Dr. Jerry Oguzie in Abuja.

Dr. Oguzie told news agency of Nigeria that, prior to the dissolution that "a form was circulated to all MFCT and Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) staff to indicate which of the two they would prefer as their em-

ployer."

NARD's national president pointed out that members of the association indicated preference for the MFCT not knowing that the days of the ministry were numbered.

In his words: "we were blackmailed as nobody told us what the form was meant for, and the implication of choosing either of the two employers."

Dr. Oguzie who works at one of the affected general hospitals under the defunct MFCT said resident doctors, by the development have been "boxed into a corner."

He added that, "apart from the dilemma, the development could pave way for FCDA, authorities to deny doctors the opportunity of enjoying the 22 percent increase in basic salary."

Committee counsels PLWA on vengeance

People Living With AIDS (PLWA) have been advised to live a good life instead of trying to transmit the infection to other people. Dr Hussein Labo, the Chairman on Aids Committee, Ministry of Internal Affairs, gave the advice in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

"We hear that some people after discovering their positive status, would decide, either as way of revenge or trying to find consolation to stigma, to spread it to others to join them in the condition," he said.

"My advice to such people is that they should avoid such

inhuman act because it will not only speed up the spread of the pandemic, but can also compound their own case," he said.

Labo, who is also the Assistant Comptroller-General of Prisons (welfare services) stressed that it was best for people not to seek revenge.

He said, such people should seek to live a good life that will prolong their life, in spite of the infection.

This he said could be done by eating well and improving their personal hygiene to prevent opportunistic infections from taking advantage of the condition.



Prof. Eyiwayo Lambo, Health Minister



(L-R) Dr. Ade Tinubu, a Nigerian US based surgeon, Dr Adeniran Onipede Cardio Thorack surgeon and Dr (Mrs) Awotunde Shoremi, at a briefing on the success of the operations carried out in LASUTH, Ikeja...recently.

Pix: Oladipupo Odunewu

Bed wetting: 9-year old girl asks for fistula repair

The just concluded two weeks campaign on Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) did not end without a drama going by the request of a bed wetting nine-year old that her problem be solved.

Lucy Idoko an official of UNFPA said at a press conference on the First "Fistula Fortnight" which ran from Feb. 21 to March 6, that the girl thought that her problem was same with VVF.

Idoko said that the girl who came in company of her father, stood out as an example of the extent which advocacy to end VVF has gone.

Although the name of the girl and her state were not disclosed, Idoko said that the girl received proper medical counseling which disclosed that the situation was not strange and that she would get over it with time.

On the two weeks campaign, she said that 545 women with VVF and related problems were operated at four centres in Kebbi, Katsina, Kano and Sokoto.

A breakdown of the figure showed that at Sokoto centre, 180 women were operated, 156 in Kano, 114 Katsina and 95 in Bimin Kebbi.

Explaining further, one of the Surgeons, Dr. Kees Waaldyk, a Chief Consultant VVF Surgeon, said that the number of patients attended to depended on facilities available and proximity.

He however observed that

a critical issue that needed to be tackled was that of follow-ups, especially ensuring regular attention to such persons during future pregnancies.

According to him, for such women to avoid recurrence, they must deliver their babies through Cesarian section, while regular medical attention was necessary before delivery.

Waaldyk, who had been involved in VVF operations for over 20 years said that 22,000 women had gone through the operation in the last 21 years in Nigeria.

Another surgeon, Prof. Oladosu Ojebede, of the University College Hospital, Ibadan, said that there was need for the second phase of the programme as a lot of vic-

tims were left unattended to by the time the two weeks campaign was over.

According to him, 56 women were not operated at the Kebbi centre, saying that there was need to make the programme a continuous one so that others could benefit. Ojebede said that the most pathetic case was a woman who had suffered VVF for 37 years.

Dr. Said Ahmed, who led the team in Kano, said VVF starts from the home where decisions concerning the medication of pregnant women are taken by people who ordinarily do not know what pregnant women go through.

He called for awareness and advocacy programme to

enlighten people on what VVF was all about and how to avoid it, as part of efforts to reduce the incidence.

Ahmed called for legislation on age of marriage to stop the trend of little girls being given away at very tender age. VVF is a preventable childbirth injury that occurs when a woman endures prolonged obstructed labour without medical intervention.

Studies indicate that as many as 800,000 Nigerian women are living with the health problem with another 20,000 new cases developing each year. The studies also show that the problem is more severe in Nigeria's Northern states and that often, the woman is left with chronic ailment.

Training: 30,000 pupils learn HIV/AIDS basic skill

By Benjamin Auta, Crime Reporter

The president, Community Life Advancement Project (CLAP), Dr. Remi Obinatu has said that the organisation is providing basic knowledge on child rights, family health and HIV/AIDS prevention to over 30,000 upper primary school pupils in 200 selected schools from the six geo-political zones of the country.

Dr. Obinatu made this remark during the launching of the 2005 action plan / calendar of the organisation recently in Abuja.

He said CLAP will train

3000 peer health educators and 600 supervisors adding that it has also resolved to strengthen health and HIV/AIDS clubs in 300 primary schools.

Dr. Obinatu, said that the youth leadership development project of CLAP will train 5000 youths in senior secondary schools and 5000 youths in tertiary institutions from six states on leadership skills for development and HIV/AIDS response.

He further mentioned that antiretroviral drugs to HIV infected pregnant women and their infants and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission are all aimed at preventing transmission.

He also said that the organisation will continue its monthly walk against HIV/AIDS apart from the completion of its life advancement centre which has been built lintel level.

He called for material and financial supports from well meaning Nigerians so that the projects earmarked will be completed.

YOUR HEALTH

1.11 million children immunised in Niger

More than 1.11 million children in Niger State have been immunised in the first round of the National Immunisation Day. The state Manager of the National Programme on Immunisation, Alhaji Mohammed Kudu, who disclosed this to newsmen in Minna, described the

exercise as "very impressive".

Alh. Kudu said with a target of about 1.16 million eligible children, an impressive record of 95 per cent coverage had been achieved at the end of the four-day exercise.

He attributed the success of the exercise to the awareness campaign and mobilisation carried out before the start of the immunisation. Alh. Kudu said because of government's commitment to the success of the programme, political office holders and

traditional rulers were involved in the exercise.

He said their involvement in the exercise was aimed at eliminating polio and ensuring the wellbeing of the children.

The NPI manager noted that there were few cases of vaccine rejection, citing as example Mariga Local Government Area where one Malam Wakala refused to allow his children to be immunised. "This case has been reported to the governor and he has promised to intervene

personally," the manager explained, adding that Wakala had been invited by the governor.

He expressed optimism that the 17 cases of wild polio virus identified in the state would be completely controlled in due course, going by the impressive coverage in the first round of the immunisation exercise.

NAN learnt from the NPI office in Minna that mop-up immunisation was carried out in some areas, particularly those identified as high-risk areas, to boost the coverage.

AIDS may kill 80million Africans by 2025 - UN

The United Nations (UN) has said that more than 80 million Africans might die from AIDS by 2025. In its report "AIDS in Africa," the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) said HIV infections could rise to 90 million, or more than 10 per cent of Africa's population, if efforts are not intensified to fight the pandemic.

UNAIDS said more than 25 million Africans have already been infected with HIV, the virus that leads to AIDS, adding that about 200 billion U.S. dollars was needed to save 16 million people from death and 43 million people from becoming infected.

The UN agency said there would be three potential scenarios for Africa in the next 20 years depending on the international community's contribution to the fight against the disease.

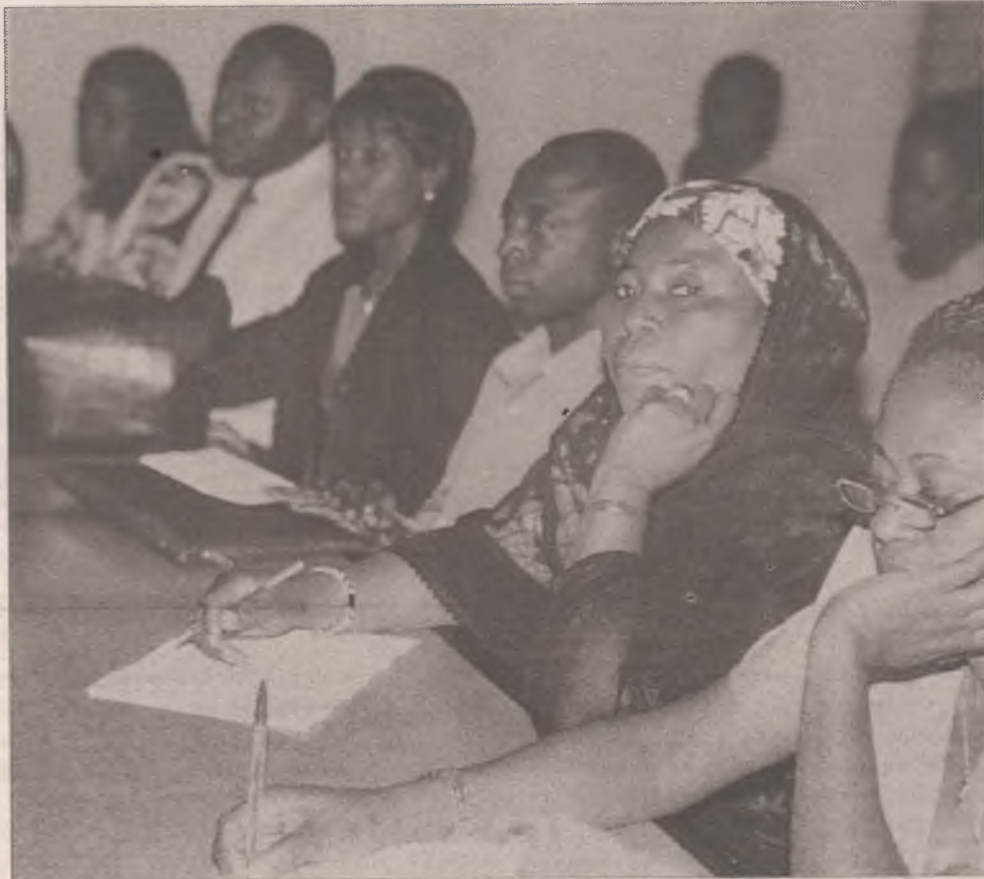
The three scenarios include a best-case situation, a middle-case and a doomsday scenario.

UNAIDS said the pandemic had already had a devastating impact on Africa and that life expectancy in Africa's nine countries had dropped to below 40 as a result of the disease.

There are 11 million orphans, while 6,500 people are dying each day. In 2004, 3.1 million people were newly infected, it said.



President Olusegun Obasanjo, AU Chairman



A cross section of the participants during the journalists roundtable news briefing and analysis of the new malaria treatment policy by health workers, activists and health policy analyst held in Abuja...recently Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje

Ojowu stresses importance of ICPD PoA

The inter-ministerial committee on International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) programme of action (PoA) inaugurated recently, comprise of strategies and targets designed to meet Nigerians reproductive health needs, the economic adviser to the president and the chief executive of the national planning commission, Professor Ode Ojowu has said.

Prof. Ojowu, while inaugurating the committee recently in Abuja said the programme of action was put in place to among other things achieve universal access to reproductive health/family planning, reduce infant and under five mortality rates, reduce maternal mortality, reduce HIV/AIDS pandemic and to also increase life expectancy in the country.

Implementation of the ICPD programme of action in Nigeria, he noted was conceived to operate within the framework of the national

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin,
Health Reporter

population programme (NPP) with specific implementation roles assigned to several government agencies and non governmental organisations working in the field of population and reproductive health.

The economic adviser to the president listed some of the achievements of the ICPD programme of action to include poverty alleviation with growth in economics, provision of reproductive health services and family planning, adequate attention to sexual and reproductive health education for adolescents, increased efforts in HIV/AIDS prevention, control and fostering a global consensus on caring for AIDS patients and safeguarding their rights and interest and the effective reduction in maternal and infant mortality rates.

The ICPD programme of action is saddled with the responsibility of analysing the

underlying causes of the gaps between the current country situation and the ICPD projection for 2015 and to identify actions, plans and programmes to bridge the gap between prevailing situation in each sector and the projection for 2015.

The committee, he said will also prepare and advise government on the needs and challenges of the ICPD PoA that need to be addressed, monitor and evaluate the sectoral implementation of the ICPD and prepare the country's strategic plan to meet the ICPD PoA.

It will also identify the potential that Nigeria could offer, share and exchange with other member countries and also identify the potentials in other member countries that the country could benefit from. It is also expected to enter into partnership with civil society and organised private sector through joint programme implementation.



ANAEMIA

This simply means a condition in which the circulating red blood cells are deficient in number or the total haemoglobin content of the blood is low. Deficiency of iron in the blood is also responsible for anaemia. Anaemia could occur as a result of any of the following:

- Excessive loss of blood due to accidents.
- Iron/vitamins deficiency in diet.
- Prolonged menstrual flow.
- Haemorrhoids.
- Excessive red blood destruction (Haemolytic anaemia).
- Diseases of the kidney, liver, bone marrow, etc.

Symptoms

Weakness, vertigo, headache, tinnitus, spots before the eyes, easy fatigue, drowsiness, irritability, loss of libido. In some anaemia, jaundice and splenomegaly occur. It is very important to diagnose and find out the cause.

Treatment

A well balanced diet should be eaten as much as possible, especially foods rich in iron. Iron-rich foods include fish, eggs, whole grain, peas, dark green vegetables - watercress, spinach, Ugwu (pumpkin leaves). Eat plenty of salad and fruits since iron is more easily absorbed in the presence of vitamin C. Avoid drinking tea and coffee at or soon after main meals since both can impair iron absorption.

Carrot/beet/spinach juice/celery are very rich in iron. Beetroot has long been considered and used as food for the blood, due to its mineral content. Add beetroot to salads and drink a glass of freshly pressed juice daily.

Mushrooms are readily available everywhere. They strengthen the blood and beautify the skin.

Other blood purifiers include dandelion, hyssop, vervain (Panle-Yoruba). Honey, especially in its raw form, i.e. with the honeycomb is beneficial in restoring strength and energy. It also provides other valuable minerals in the body. Borage is also a very good heart tonic and blood purifier because of its calcium and potassium content.

The mango bark and sorghum stem are very rich in iron. They are beneficial when taken as tea; one teaspoon of dried herb to one cup of tea is taken three times daily. The juice of fresh Ugwu (pumpkin leaves) taken as 12 glass twice daily for 4 days helps to restore the blood. A root stem decoction of apricot is also given to children for anaemia.

Tomato/nettle juice, a blood purifier acts as blood tonic. The nettle tea that is rich in iron, potassium and silicon is vital for healthy circulation. Exercise should be encouraged to enhance the body's intake of iron.

PEPTIC ULCER

Ulcer occurs in the stomach as well as the first part of the small intestine and duodenum (duodenal ulcer). Severe gastritis (gastric ulcer) is another symptom of ulcer that produces the same effect. There is usually a sharp localised pain at the base of the sternum. Causes could be due to excess acidity and invasion of the stomach wall by a bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* causing increased acid secretion. Stress, irregular eating and stomach wall irritation may, precipitate ulcer. It is important to diagnose the cause of the ulcer.

Treatment

Generally, foods rich in Vitamins A, E, and C which soothe stomach ulcers should be eaten such as wheat, green peppers, tomatoes, green vegetables, cucumbers, garlic, and carrots. Vitamin E is found in lettuce, parsley, potatoes, lemons and pumpkin seeds. Raw juices from carrot and cucumber should be taken generously to soothe the stomach, 1 cup of juice, 2-3 times daily. Take cucumber juice immediately after juicing. Oatmeal and okro are two remedies that protect the sensitive duodenal surface and soothes the stomach and intestine. Freshly prepared juice of cabbage should be taken as 1 teacup 2 - 3 times daily.

Herbal teas that are found to be especially beneficial include fenugreek, lemon balm, chamomile, catnip, comfrey, dandelion, papaya, peppermint, valerian and chickweed. For extra benefits, use two or more in combination, such as pawpaw and mint. Large quantities of papaya (pawpaw) pulp eaten soothes ulcer and internal bleeding.

Aloe vera aids in pain relief and speeds healing. Take 4 ounces of Aloe vera juice or gel daily. Honey also has a demulcent and soothing effect. Take 2 tablespoonfuls 3 - 4 times daily. Cayenne, 1/2 teaspoon in a teacup of hot water heals ulcers.

If symptoms are severe, eat foods such as avocados, bananas, potatoes, and yams. All these have soothing effects.

A simple recipe for ulcer

- 1 teacup of milk
- 1 teacup of warm honey
- 1 tablespoonful of powdered dried banana skin.

Mix the above together and take 2 tablespoonfuls three times daily for two months.

For rapid relief from pain, drink a large glass of water. This dilutes the stomach acids and flushes them out through the stomach. Avoid fried foods, tea, salt, strong spices, and drink water with a bit of lemon

juice added. Keep the colon clean.

Note

If there is severe pain or blood stained stools, seek medical help.

Hajiya Zainab Sheriff writes from Zee's Herbal Pharmacy, Suite 12, Angels Plaza, Garki II, Abuja.

E-mail:-zeeherbal@zwallot.com

YOUR HEALTH

Presence of fake, adulterated products worries FG

The minister of Health, Prof. Eytayo Lambo, has expressed the worries of the federal government over the presence of fake and adulterated products in Nigeria markets.

Prof. Lambo, while speaking at the national

This man needs help

Mr. Saheed Aderibigbe, 27, was full of life and hope until he was struck down by kidney failure in January 2004. The disease, according to experts, cannot be cured until after a transplant which requires millions of naira.

Mr. Aderibigbe, who is now finding it tough at the male medical ward of the National Hospital, Abuja, told *Daily Trust* that his father, Mr. Sufian Aderibigbe, has agreed to donate one of his kidneys to him. The transplant requires nothing less than N1.5 million in Kano, while N4.5 million will be needed to carry out the transplant at Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) and one of the hospitals in India.

At the moment, Saheed has been on a weekly dialysis at the National Hospital which cost him N20,000. This bill, he told *Daily Trust*, had drained the pockets of his aged parents and sympathisers.

The illness which struck him down over a year ago has taken him to many hospitals for medication without any remedy. He said he has been admitted three times at the National Hospital, Abuja, at various times.

According to Saheed who spoke to *Daily Trust* in pains from his hospital bed, the illness has affected the upkeep of his family as the rest members of the family depended on him for survival. As at March 2, 2005, about four litres of water were drained out of his stomach as he cannot urinate nor pass out faeces.

It is in this view that Saheed and his family solicit the assistance of well-meaning Nigerians to enable him undergo the kidney transplant in order for him to be useful to his family and the society.

Saheed therefore begs Nigerians touched by his condition to please render him financial assistance to enable him pay the bill for the transplant. All cash donation to ameliorate his suffering, he said, should be paid into his Area 3, Garki, Abuja Union Bank, savings account number 6637676-6637700.

Stories by Sunday Ejike Benjamin Health Reporter

award ceremony for the 2005 winners of NAFDAC's consumer safety club annual secondary schools' competition held recently in Abuja, called for the exposure of those who manufacture, distribute, and sell fake and sub-standard

drugs and other regulated products.

According to the health minister, government is determined to improve the health status of Nigerians, just as he pointed out that government is making available anti-retroviral drugs at minimum cost to give hope to those living with HIV in the country.

He also said his ministry believes in ensuring the future of Nigerian children as evidenced by health policies and programmes mapped out by the government to ensure the survival of children and the protection of their rights.

While congratulating the national, zonal and state winners of the competition on

their outstanding performances, Prof. Lambo urged them to assist NAFDAC in eradicating fake and sub-standard products from circulation, and to strive to become men and women of integrity.

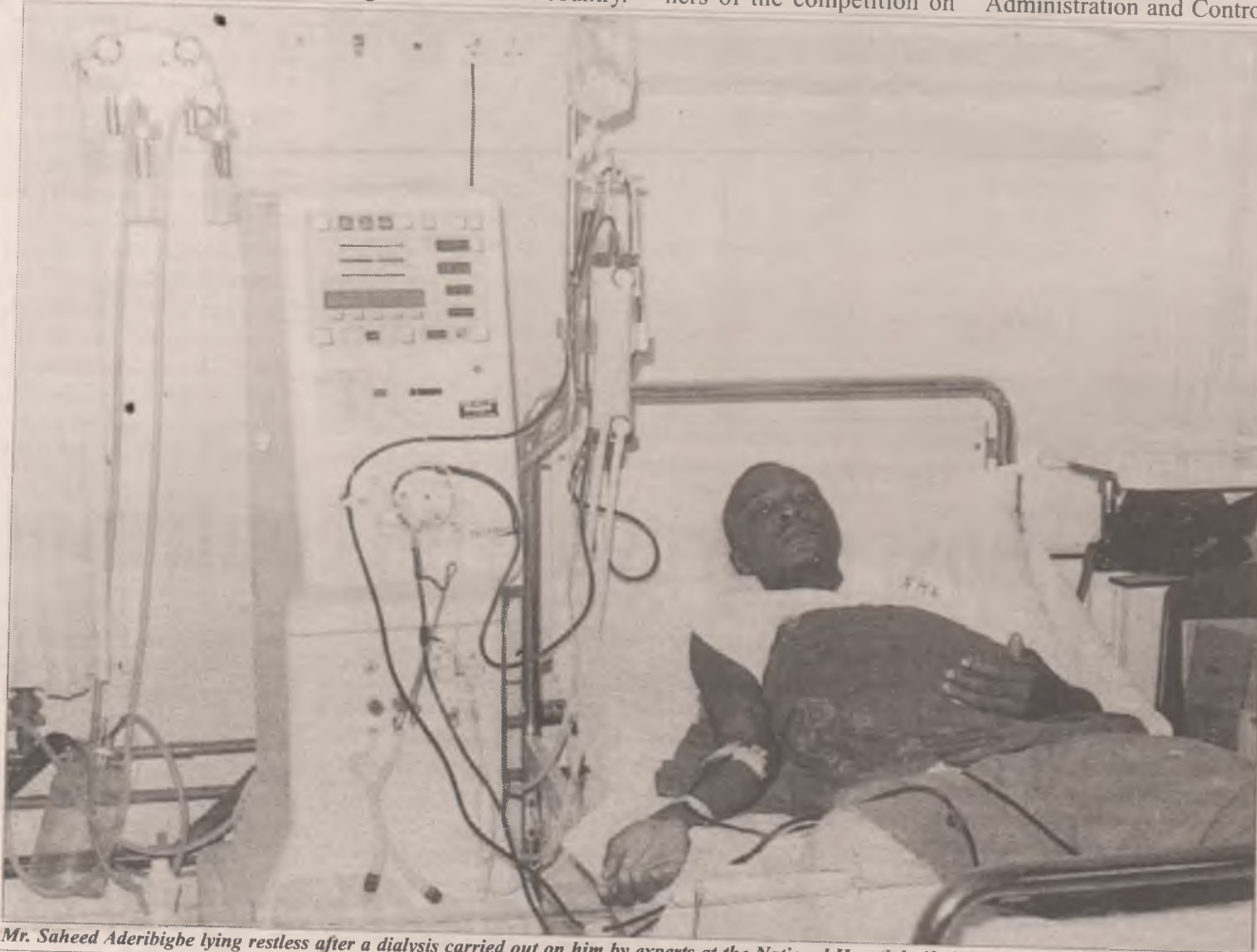
Earlier in his address, the director-general, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control,

NAFDAC, Dr. Dora Akunyili, said the rationale behind the establishment of NAFDAC Consumer Safety Club (NCSC) in secondary schools was to train the young ones as vanguards for consumer protection in respect of foods, drugs, cosmetics and regulated products within a platform for sustainable relationship with the agency.

She said the agency which was established by decree No 15 of 1993 to control and regulate the manufacture, importation, exportation, distribution, advertisement, sale and use of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, chemicals, packaged water and other drinks, was poised to ensure that only the right quality of drugs, food and other regulated products are used in the country.

As a way of achieving these goals, Dr. Akunyili said the key strategy is through public enlightenment campaign, adding that it is the strategy that led to the creation of the NAFDAC Consumer Safety Club as a forum to educate the youths on the ill-effects of fake products and promotion of quality; and at the same time to empower young ones to disseminate information on NAFDAC's regulatory activities.

"Eradication of fake products cannot be achieved by NAFDAC alone, it requires all hands to be on deck for us to effectively safeguard the health of the nation," she pointed out.



Mr. Saheed Aderibigbe lying restless after a dialysis carried out on him by experts at the National Hospital, Abuja

Lack of policy document on PHC undermines policies - *communiqué*

The national stakeholders' consultative meeting on primary health care in Nigeria has observed that the absence of policy document on primary health care (PHC) has undermined the emergence of an appropriate structure for facilitating the implementation of primary health care programme in the country.

According to a communiqué at the end of the meeting and contained in the quarterly news magazine of primary health care, the national stakeholders' consultative meeting noted that the absence of an effective coordinating framework has paved ways for developmental partners to operate without checks in the country.

"There is, as of now, no national health act that spells out the responsibilities of all the tiers of government and cadres of health workers at the PHC level," the publication explained.

The meeting also observed that there is proliferation of vertical programmes that derive legitimacy from

PHC level, noting also that resource for primary health care programme are not only in-adequate but are also not fully mobilised.

It however recommended the development of a single primary health care policy document as well as a common comprehensive strategic plan for PHC.

The proposed national health act, the meeting pointed out, should contain a clear definition of the responsibilities of the various tiers of government and all cadres of health workers at the PHC level, adding also that the National Primary Health care Development Agency (NPHCDA) should be vested with oversight functions over all PHC components.

The communiqué, according to the publication, also advocated the establishment of state primary health care board and local government PHC authority like the state primary education board and local government education authorities. It also called for the implementation of the national essential minimum

primary health care package that includes the provision of immunisation in primary health care.

Zamfara attributes low HIV/AIDS prevalence to sharia

The low prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Zamfara state has been attributed to the implementation of sharia legal system in the state.

The state commissioner for Health, Dr. Mohammed Bello Buzu who disclosed this to *Daily Trust*, also added that sharia legal system which prohibits fornication and adultery also spells out the punishments for these acts, noting that the full implementation of sharia law in the state contributes immensely to the campaign against HIV/AIDS in the state.

He said with sharia in full force in the state, commercial sex business is banned, pointing out that prostitution, even if practised in the state, is not openly done as it is in other state of the country. Dr. Buzu further note that the state government, through the state

Ministry of Health, has been carrying out campaign against the scourge through local radio stations in the state, in addition to preaching against the pandemic by Imams in various mosques across the state.

Dr. Buzu, who reiterated the Zamfara state government's commitment towards improving its health sector, pointed out that about N46 million worth of drugs have so far been distributed to health institutions in the state. He said N102 million has been earmarked for the purchase of drugs and distribution to primary, secondary and tertiary health institutions, in the state.

The commissioner also averred that women and children in the state get free health care delivery at women and children hospitals spread across the state. Women and children, he noted are given medical attention free of

charge from the point of admission to discharge.

He maintained that the state government has directed local government chairmen to buy and distribute N1 million worth of drugs in the drug revolving scheme put in place by the government to ensure steady availability of drugs in all the hospitals in the state.

According to Dr. Buzu, Zamfara state government has committed about N300 million to the renovation and equipping of hospitals in the 14 local government areas of the state, stressing that the essence of this is to improve the standard of health care delivery in the state.

According to him, only 50% of the total cost of the drugs is what the state government will realise, pointing out that the state government is making progress in ensuring adequate health care delivery services in the state.

ABUJA TRUST

MFCT dissolution throws doctors into dilemma

The dissolution of the Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory (MFCT) has thrown resident doctors there into a dilemma over their jobs, according to a spokesman.

Dr. Jerry Oguzie, president of the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), complained at the weekend in Abuja that "it is like all doctors working in the defunct MFCT-owned hospitals have lost their jobs."

Oguzie said that last month, prior to the dissolution, "a form was circulated to all MFCT and Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) staff, to indicate which of the two they would prefer as their employer."

According to him, "all NARD members indicated preference for the MFCT, not knowing that the days of the ministry were numbered. "We were blackmailed, as nobody told us what the form was meant for, and the implications of choosing either of the two employers."

Oguzie, who works at one of the affected general hospitals in Wuse, also said: "We have been boxed into a corner."

"Apart from the dilemma, the development could pave way for FCDA authorities to deny the doctors the opportunity of enjoying the 22 per cent increase in basic salary," he added.

Anti-crime officer says achievement is to FCT police boss

The officer in charge of operations, FCT Police Command, deputy commissioner of police, Mr. Danjuma Ibrahim, said he dedicates whatever achievement the command has attained operationally to the FCT police commissioner, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo.

Mr. Danjuma who described the police commissioner as a round peg in a round hole also said the FCT police boss is a motivator in crime fighting.

Mr. Danjuma Ibrahim, who stated this when he was decorated with the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) by Vice President Atiku Abubakar in Aso Rock, is described as a police officer whose anti-robbery exploits have curbed the spate of robbery operations in the FCT and neighbouring states.



Two Okada riders at Garki, Area one motor park exchange blows...recently. Pix: Felix Onigbnde

CAC boss charged with contempt

An Abuja Federal High Court has ordered the registrar-general of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Alhaji Ahmed Al-Mustapha, to appear before it on March 21 for contempt.

Al-Mustapha is to show cause why he should not be committed for contempt for disobeying an order of the court.

The court had on November 5; last year by "Writ of Subpoena *Duces Tecum*" ordered the registrar-general of the commission to produce some documents before it.

The documents included a certified true copy (CTC) of the extract of the commission's registry dispatch register for October 29, 2004 and a CTC of Certificate of an Up stamped

Deed of floating debenture of a private company, ITEX Limited.

The Deed, dated July 11, 2002, was allegedly issued in favour of Inland Bank Plc.

The documents were needed to assist the court in deciding a suit before it involving a controversial loan granted to ITEX Ltd by Inland bank Plc.

In the substantive suit before the court, ITEX Ltd alleged that the bank forged the commission's Deed in respect of more than N281 million overdraft it secured from the bank between 2002 and 2004.

Counsel to the company, Dr. Olumide Ayeni, said that the document was forged by the bank to facilitate unlawful seizure of his client's property.

Ayeni also contended that they had repaid in full the loan with interest, adding that the bank applied spurious interest rate on the facilities

contrary to the directives of the Central Bank of Nigeria.

"The bank debited the plaintiff's account with a cumulative amount of more than N393 million between February and March last year as repayment of the loan with interest" he said.

Counsel to the bank, Mr. Yakubu Maikasuwa, however, said that the plaintiff was still indebted to his client to the tune of more than N236 million.

Maikasuwa also argued that his client directed him to implement the Up stamped Deed of floating debenture on the loan against the plaintiff.

He contended that the



Uwais, CJN

FCT to develop efficient social welfare policy

The executive secretary, Social Development Secretariat, Ms Bolanle Onagoruwa, has reiterated the commitment of the Federal Capital Territory administration in initiating and executing social welfare policies that would better the lot of all and sundry. She disclosed this during an interactive forum with the special adviser to the president on Human Trafficking and Child

Labour, Mrs. Dayo Akinmoyo.

To achieve this goal, Ms Onagoruwa said the FCT's micro-credit scheme would be energised to empower vulnerable members of the society, adding that the youth and child division of the secretariat is embarking on an advocacy visit to area councils in the FCT to educate them on the menace of street hawking.

NTIC honours best mathematics pupils

The Nigerian Turkish International College (NTIC) has rewarded the best mathematics pupils for their brilliant performances at the final stage of the 2nd annual primary school mathematical competition held in Abuja recently.

In the award ceremony, the managing director of the NTIC, Mr. Hassan Huseyin Aygun, said that the advancement of mathematics has brought tremendous development to the country.

The director-general of the National Mathematical Centre, Prof. Samuel Ale, in a message to the occasion, commended the initiative of the NTIC in encouraging mathematics education among primary school pupils, adding that the subject is the

By Salaudeen Ozigi

foundation of sciences. "My first publication when I became a professor," according to him, "was: *Maths: The Beautiful Queen not Loved*."

Also, the PTA chairman of the college, Arch. Chukwudi Eze, in his speech entitled: "Empowering Excellence", charged members of the PTA of the college to support the school management in projects that would be of benefit to their children to excel in mathematics.

Highlights of the ceremony were the play presented to the proprietors of Stella Maris Nursery and Primary School, Oluwawu Nursery and Primary School, and Geo Gratias Nursery and Primary School for sponsoring their pupils to the competition.

Cash prizes were also awarded to the best 10 pupils. The recipients were Chidum Okoye of Fountain Primary School, Lagos, who came first; Olowo Akinlabi of May Day Primary School, Lagos; and Dishan Ahuja. They received N150,000.00, N100,000.00 and N50,000.00 respectively, while N50,000 was given to their respective teachers.

Theft of iron rods: Police sack three

The Police Force Headquarters at the weekend announced the dismissal of three mobile policemen guarding the National Ecumenical Centre in Abuja, for the alleged theft of iron rods.

Parading the suspects along with 10 civilian fellow conspirators, the acting Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, said they would be prosecuted for their acts.

He gave the names of the policemen as Corporal Amos Katuka, with force No. 210322, Police Constable Joseph Sani, with force No. 231030 and Constable Yahaya

Aminu, with force No. 229607.

Ehindero described the incident as a shame and said the force would continue exposing such policemen.

"It is disgraceful. Why should a policeman steal people's property, somebody whose responsibility is to protect lives and property?" Ehindero queried.

In his remarks, the deputy Inspector-General of Police (Administration and Finance), Mr. Bello Labaran, noted that "in spite of the ongoing house cleansing, it is embarrassing that the force still has thieves within it."

In his confession, one of the civilian accomplices, Tochukwu Okafor, said that "each of the policemen collected N20,000 and they were waiting for a balance of N190,000 as proceeds from the deal."

According to him, "the incident took place on February 27, 2005 at midnight. "Three trucks had already been loaded with the iron rods when a police patrol team from Wuse division blocked the main entrance of the church and arrested us." According to him, the iron rods were to be taken to Calabar, where they were to be disposed of.

KANO TRUST

Nassarawa LG to settle 2002/2003 workers leave grants

Members of staff of Nassarawa local government area of Kano State will soon receive their outstanding 2002 and 2003 leave grants and other liabilities owed by the local council.

Chairman of the council, Alhaji Nasiru Yusuf Gawuna who disclosed this while distributing school materials to some students of the area who got admission into secondary schools said present administration is working harder to settle all outstanding payments left behind by the previous administration.

Alhaji Nasiru Gawuna called on teachers who are

By Yuska'u Adamu Ibrahim, Correspondent, Kano

also among the employed workers to intensify actions towards producing brilliant leaders of tomorrow. He said teachers have a great role to play in the development of the educational sector.

Speaking also at the occasion, member of the state House of Assembly representing Nassarawa constituency, Alhaji Sani Ibrahim Baban-Kowa, urged parents and guardians to adopt the habit of visiting their children's school particularly during school hours to assess their performances.

Alhaji Sani Baban-Kowa disclosed that as part of his contributions towards the upliftment of education in the area, he planned to build of junior government girl's secondary school in Tudun-Murtala and Hotoran area of the local council.



The Hadejia - Nguru Road that was flooded by waters from the Wetland irrigation scheme. Pix: Musa Kazaure

Irrigation water washes away Hadejia-Nguru road

By Musa Umar Kazaure, Regional Editor, Kano

Economic and social activities between Hadejia in Jigawa and Nguru in Yobe State have been severed for the past ten months following the washing away of the only major road linking communities in both areas by irrigation waters from the Hadejia-Nguru wetland. Our correspondent who just returned from a tour of the area reports that apart from transportation business between Hadejia and Nguru that has been seriously affected, activities like cattle trading, fishing trade as well as potash trade that Nguru was known for has been severely affected.

One of the cattle traders in Nguru, Manu Alhaji Meli, said they had to take the longer route through Gashua-Damaturu-potiskum to get cattle to southern markets thereby increasing cost of the animals at their final destination.

The other alternative, he said, is to get help from Fulani cattle rearers to cross the water logged road into Jigawa side of the road while a new cattle market is now being established as annex to the one in Nguru Yobe State.

He stated that the road was a major link for traders from Yobe and Borno states to Hadejia, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna and other southern states. He also regretted that despite the new market being located in Jigawa near Birniwa, revenue officials from Nguru in Yobe still pursue them to collect N200 per trailer loaded with cows.

He added that about 30 trailers of cattle leave the new cattle market at mangachi every Wednesday for various destinations. Manu Alhaji Meli stated that they preferred using the market at Nguru because it is extra cost to each cow that crosses the-logged Nguru Hadejia road.

Kano NDLEA arrests 23 drug suspects in 2004

By Jamilah Nuhu Musa, Correspondent, Kano

Kano NDLEA arrested 23 suspects with a total of 143.579kg of assorted drugs in 2004, the state commander, Mallam Sokoto, has said.

Mallam Sokoto who was addressing newsmen in the state on the activities of the agency during 2004 said that of this number, six have been convicted and are serving various jail terms for trafficking *carnabis-sativa*, heroine and cocaine.

He disclosed that the traffickers devised a new mode of concealment through the use of private vehicles as against the former mode of using luxurious buses.

Malami Sokoto said that

the arrests were effected through law enforcement agents and confidential sources. He added that between January 2004 to date, 15 drug users or addicts were rehabilitated.

The rehabilitation process, he said, involved counselling and assistance for their social re-integration into the society.

Malami Sokoto also disclosed that the agency had proposed an addict employment generation scheme to government in the year under review to reintegrate drug users while

local governments are to pay about 2.1 million. He said the ministry of education is to be involved in the scheme.

On the last unfortunate

incident, which befell NDLEA officials who met their death in Jigawa State, the state commander said that NDLEA has harmonised its operations

and are in constant touch with other security agencies to forestall re-occurrence any time there was an operation to be embarked upon.

Kano Emir tasks traders on community health project

Following the setting up of a community health support committee by Kano State government, the emir of Kano, Alhaji (Dr.) Ado Bayero, has written to well-meaning individuals in the state asking them to take part in the programme.

The head of the committee and former commissioner of Health, Hajiya Zahra Sabo Nanono, who disclosed this said that the emir had signed over one thousand letters to the people.

Hajiya Zahra Sabo Nanono while presenting some of the letters addressed to members of Kantin Kwari Market Association to them on behalf of the emir said that the emir who is patron of the committee is committed to the revival of the health sector in Kano State.

She stated that Alhaji (Dr) Ado Bayero has therefore urged the traders to respond positively and to view their commitment as sacrifice.

The former commissioner for health explained that hundreds of villages

medical facilities and other related amenities have been mapped out for the attention of the Kantin Kwari traders. She noted that such villages have over five thousand inhabitants but lacked medical and necessary facilities to improve their welfare.

Responding the chairman, Kantin Kwari Market Association, Alhaji Dan Bature Abdulazeez, said that members of the association were pleased with the emir's involvement and that they were going to support the

initiative for the benefit of the people of Kano State.

Meanwhile the clarion call seemed to have been heeded as one of the traders; Alhaji Tanko Gambaga has donated a piece of land in Kadawa area of Garun Malam for the building of a hospital. He however lambasted government for starting meaningful projects and thereafter abandoning them stating that government had contributed the deplorable condition of localities in the state.

... indigenes receives honours

Three engineers who contributed in the construction of the CTV local outside broadcast van transmitter in Kano have received awards.

Presenting the awards, Governor Ibrahim Shekarau described the engineers as people who have shown commitment and dedication and who recorded wonderful performance in their various responsibilities.

The engineers Jaafar Y. Wudil, Usman Saidu and Garba Maccido were further tasked to continue to their duties so that they will

By Aliyu S. Machika, Correspondent, Kano

in their profession.

Also the state commissioner for information, Alhaji Garba Yusuf Abubakar, told the governor that the engineers constructed the local transmitter at the cost of N2 million against the actual cost of N22 million if given as contract.

He further said the transmitter was used for recording and broadcasting Hajj exercise especially when Saudi Arabian authority

NIPOST assures BUK of better quality service

By Ahmed Abubakar, Correspondent, Kano

Bayero University, Kano has been assured to expect better services in terms of revenue enhancement, quality services, training and manpower development that will be of immense benefit to members of the public.

Nigeria Postal Service (NIPOST), area postal manager, Kano territory, Mr. James Mshelia, said very soon NIPOST will be a financially independent and self-sustaining organisation as result of innovations and improvement within the NIPOST.

Mr. Mshelia who was recently on a courtesy visit to the acting vice chancellor of Bayero University, Kano, Professor Danjuma Maiwada, commended the

date in payment and clearing of its post office mailbags.

In view of the numerous correspondences B.U.K. has across the globe he called on the University to extend the Special Delivery Service System (SDS), enjoyed by the school library to other arms of the school.

He also said that they post office situated at the permanent site of the campus requires cluster boxes that will enable members of staff to get individual mail boxes while also proposing to the V.C. for the postal agency at the site to be upgrade to a full pledged post office considering the large

Chief Whip, House of Representatives, Hon. (Dr.) Abubakar Bawa Bwari who bagged a doctorate degree from City University, Los Angeles and the Officer in the Order of Leopold (Belgium's highest award to a foreigner) was hosted to a dinner by the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Ghali Umar Na'abba in Abuja recently. Here are some Photographs of the event.



From Left, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, former Senate President Anyim Pius Anyim and the Celebrant; Hon. (Dr.) Abubakar Bawa Bwari.



Former Speaker, Hon. Ghali Na'abba and Gen. Ibrahim Babangida



From Left, Hon. Abdullahi Gumel, Hon. Ejiga, Hon. (Dr.) Abubakar Bawa Bwari and Alh. Halidu Maishanu.



From left, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly, Alh. Nasir Ibrahim Arab, Hon. Bala Na'Allah, Clerk National Assembly, Salim Ibrahim, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida and Deputy Speaker Austin Opara.



From Left, Hon. Ita Enang, Hon. Musa Elayo, Senator Yari Gandi.



The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Aminu Bello Masari in a warm handshake with Gen. Ibrahim Babangida at the occasion.



From Left, Former Speaker Hon. Salisu Buhari, Gen. Halilu Akilu and Former Deputy Speaker Hon. Chibudum Nwuche.



From left, Deputy House Leader, Hon. Gilbert Nnaji, House Leader, Hon. Abdullahi Ningi, ANPP Leader, Hon (Dr.) Ahmed Salik and Gen. Ibrahim Babangida at the occasion.



Former Senate President, Anyim Pius Anyim, Hon. (Dr.) Abubakar Bawa Bwari and Deputy Speaker Hon. Austin Opara.



From Right, Hon. Elem Francis and Hon. Birminas Yilkes



Gen. Babangida shaking hands with Chairman Committee on Finance, Hon. Farouk Lawal while the Chief Whip, Hon. A.B. Bwari (centre) looks on.



From Left, Hon. Emeka Nwajiuba, Hon. Ita Enang and Hon. Elayo.

News

National Confab...

National Confab...

National Confab...



Prof. Isola Olomola, Ekiti State delegate (left), and Chief Ajibola Ogunsola, Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria (NPAN) delegate (right), discussing during the sitting of the National Political Reform Conference, held in Abuja recently.
Pix: Kennedy Egbonedje

Elite responsible for Nigeria's woes – Dara

Stories by Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political reporter

One of the leaders of the Middle Belt Forum (MBF) at the National Political Reform Conference, Mr. John Dara has attributed the nation's retarded development to leadership failure by the elite.

"Our elite are not committed to nation building; they are only interested in getting undue advantage for themselves and their small groups (their tribal and religious groups). Our debilitating religious and tribal conflicts are orchestrated by the elites who are desperate for advantage and control. Conflicts destroy the little we built and weaken our capacity to build and rebuild." Dara said yesterday while commenting on President Olusegun Obasanjo's

inaugural speech.

The delegate decried "large, expensive, unproductive and corrupt" governments operated at the three levels, and urged the confab to devise means of checking this.

He said Nigeria was built on a foundation of lies and injustice, saying the confab must unearth the truth.

"We have all been lying about our population. We share positions and resources and create constituencies based on falsehood. We practice pseudo-democracy based on fake voters list and rigged elections. We sabotage National Identity Card project because it may

expose our lies. We don't want accurate census with full information about gender, age, faith and tribe because we want to sustain our lies.

"You cannot build a modern and efficient nation without reliable statistics. Falsehood breeds distrust, and distrust breeds conflict. The Middle Belt Forum wants this conference to tell the truth and remove our false foundation. Righteousness exalts a nation." He said.

Resource control advocates heckled at confab

Delegates advocating resource control for oil communities were yesterday at the on going National Political Reform Conference shouted down by their colleagues in the chamber.

For two minutes the hall was raucous as delegates yell at Prof. Itse Sagay (Delta), who accused other sections of the country of greed in wanting to have share of oil proceeds when they did not share the proceeds of their groundnut and cocoa with the Niger Delta communities.

Other pro-resource control speakers yesterday were Joseph Wayas (Cross River), Lionel Jonathan-Omo (Bayelsa), Amba Ambaowei (Bayelsa) and Chief Edwin Clark (Delta).

Sagay, while making case for the oil communities to be in control of petroleum products, lamented that all sections of the country have an inordinate desire

for the oil wealth, leaving the producers high and dry.

He said in the past all parts of Nigeria controlled what they produced until oil was discovered.

Sagay said "every section produced, sold and pocketed their groundnuts, their cocoa, and their cotton", but that the federal government controls oil and gas resources.

He was at this point cut short by delegates who booed him with chants of "no!" and murmurs.

But Sagay continued trying to make his point. "Yes, you produced your groundnut, you sold it! Yes, you sold your cocoa!" His persistence was droned in continued "no!" chants by his colleagues.

Ambaowei, who spoke immediately after Sagay, pleaded that the confab considers the plight of the

Niger Delta people, who he said were asking for resource control for the entire country and not for them alone.

Wayas also said there were misunderstandings on the issue, explaining that the communities were merely asking for more derivation to address the devastation in the areas. "We call on delegates to understand our plight." He said.

Jonathan-Omo talked about equity in resource distribution, adding that it was lack of this that led to calls for power shift to the Southsouth.

He spoke also about the Land Use Act, which he said was stifling industrial growth and urged that it be repealed.

Clark chastised antagonists of resource control, alluding that they are people who would benefit by the status quo. He said the issue must be taken care of.

Tit bits

With Habeeb I. Pindiga

Thanks, Mr. President

Despite their conflicting interests and backgrounds, all delegates who spoke so far during the debate on the president's speech said one thing in common: "Thank you Mr. President." For what? Well, they said for organising a talk shop to discuss Nigeria's problems. What probably the 'distinguished' delegates forgot to add was "We also thank you Mr. President for making each of us N20, 000 richer daily, for giving us one free lunch and two free tea breaks daily and the opportunity to collect one free Glo Mobile line and one free LG flip handset, plus the unknown amount as allowances from our state governors. Of course the (not Ghana-must-go, conference) bags".

Tobi as a teacher

Besides being chairman of the confab, Justice Niki Tobi has volunteered to be a teacher of sorts to delegates. One of the political party leaders was lamenting the noise made over certain issues. The delegate, one of the ex-this ex-that at the confab, ended his sentence with "labah labah labah!" and nobody cared to correct him. But when he said it again, an apparently didactic Tobi chipped in and said "blah blah blah!" A good teacher, you may say.

Interesting statistics

One prominent feature in speeches delivered by women at the confab, expectedly, is the issue of gender inequality. Listen to these telling figures by Dr. Eyantu Ifenne: Though women constitute the largest portion of Nigeria's population, yet two-thirds of poverty-stricken Nigerians are women; only one woman heads a state delegation at the confab; only ten women are appointed to the confab.

Tea break, no prayer break

On each day the confab is in session 'distinguished' delegates take three breaks. One is for tea at 11.00am, the second is for lunch between 1 and 3pm and the third one for moer tea (this is not a regular one as it didn't hold yesterday) comes sometime around 3.30pm. But no time is set aside for Muslim participants to say their prayers. Understandably they can use the lunch break for Zuhr prayers. But for Asr, around 3.30pm on days when no second tea break is taken, the chamber becomes a bit emptied as the Muslim delegates go out one after the other to say their prayers. Meanwhile the session goes on. And they say this prayer in the corridors, no mosque around.

Plateau delegate wants SOMPADEC, HYPPADEC established

A member of the Plateau state delegation, Alhaji Yakubu Sambo has called for the establishment of a Solid Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (SoMPADEC) and Hydro-electric Power Producing Areas Development Commission (HYPPADEC) in the interest of fairness to communities in the areas.

Sambo said yesterday in Abuja that since oil producing areas have a commission taking care of them; it would only be fair for solid mineral and power producing areas to be equally catered for.

He said Plateau state had suffered devastation due to minerals exploitation.

Sambo also urged for increased funding for the Universal Basic Education (UBE) from two percent to five percent of the federal consolidated revenue fund.

According to him, the nation was in dire need of development and that

without first boosting education, it would go nowhere.

"If we are to develop, we must fund education adequately." He said.

Confab gets website

From Monday next week events at the National Political Reform Conference could be accessed on the internet.

A website has been designed for the confab with a domain name thus: www.nprc.ng.org, and it will be ready for launch next week, IT Advisor to the confab, Dr. Baba Adamu said yesterday.

He demonstrated via a wall screen to delegates how the site would look like and the information to be posted.

Adamu said the

website has online chat and list of all delegates with their photographs and curriculum vitae.

He said also that it would have the history of Nigeria and position papers of delegations posted.

Meanwhile conference secretary, Mathew Kukah said the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) has begun live broadcast of the confab yesterday and this would continue throughout. But the coverage would start at 3.00 pm daily, he said.



Mr. Dogara Igube, Nasarawa State delegate (left), discussing with Dr. Sunday Onor, River State delegate (right), during the sitting of the National Political Reform Conference in Abuja yesterday.
Pix: Kennedy Egbonedje

EKO TRUST

Tinubu urges OPS to resist proposed VAT hike

Gov Bola Tinubu of Lagos has urged the organised private sector to resist attempts by the federal government to increase the Value Added Tax (VAT).

The federal government is proposing that VAT should be raised from 5 per cent to 10 per cent.

Receiving members of the Lagos State branch of MAN in his office, Tinubu said that rather than seek a cancellation of the sales tax, the organised private sector should protest the proposed increase in VAT.

He said that VAT should ordinarily be collected by states and utilised in relation to the consumption habits of the people.

Reacting to complaints of the sales tax by his guests since, according to them, they were also paying VAT, Tinubu said that the "sales tax has come to stay".

Tinubu, however, said that a committee should be set up, comprising MAN members and government officials to look into other areas of complaints about double taxation which the

MAN leaders also brought before him.

He promised to waive some levies which some state agencies were imposing on the companies so as to encourage them.

Earlier, Mr Sam Ohuabunwa, chairman of Ikeja branch of MAN, said that the manufacturers were adversely affected by multiple taxes from government agencies and local governments.

Apart from the sales tax, he said that council officials collected several rates from them, while under the new waste disposal services of the state through its Private Sector Participation (PSP) programme, they were paying about N200,000 monthly as against N15,000 they paid before.

He also complained of excessive fees the manufacturers were paying to the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LAS-EPA) and called on Tinubu to assist them.

Ohuabunwa said that the high rates, coupled with the extortion from the area boys, was discouraging many of their members.

UNILAG reopens March 29

The University of Lagos (UNILAG) will resume academic activities on March 29, two months after its closure following a violent student protest.

Announcing the date yesterday when the minister of Education, Prof. Fabian Osuji, paid him a courtesy visit, the vice-chancellor of UNILAG, Prof. Oye Ibidapo-Obe, said all full-time students would pay a N10,000 re-registration fee on resumption.

Ibidapo-Obe also said all the students would attend lectures from home until the end of the second semester. And that adequate security measures had been put in place on campus to monitor the movement of the students, he said.

The vice-chancellor expressed regret at the destruction of property by the students, stressing that the protest was unwarranted.

Ibidapo-Obe had earlier disclosed that a number of arrests had been made in connection with the demonstration and promised that the perpetrators would be brought to book.

In his remarks, Osuji said the National Universities Commission would arrange for a loan for the university to assist it in rebuilding the damaged property. He said the loan would be arranged when adequate property assessment of the damage had been made.

It could be recalled that the students on Jan. 19 burnt down the official residence of the vice-chancellor and the dean of students' affairs in protest over the death of the speaker of the Students' Union Government, Mr. Olaloluwa Akosile.

They had alleged that the speaker died after answering a telephone call from the authorities.



(R-L) Pat Bassey, director, First Atlantic bank, Rev. Olu Odejimi of Nigerian Stock Exchange and retired Col. Ayegbeni Peters, director, First Atlantic bank at the Bank's "facts behind the figures" at NSE, Lagos...recently
Pic: Oladipolu Odunewu

Impeachment: AD saves Lagos speaker

By Olamide Bajulaiye,
Correspondent (Lagos)

A timely intervention by top members of the Alliance for Democracy in Lagos state have doused a crisis that could have led to the impeachment of the speaker of the state House of Assembly, Mr. Jokotola Pelumi over financial impropriety to the sum of about N100 million.

Investigations by our correspondent revealed that financial impropriety laid at the doorstep of the speaker has caused contention and divisions in the House of Assembly, pitching members into different camps.

Sources who spoke with our correspondent on condition of anonymity alleged that unknown to principal officers in the

House, the speaker had for several months deducted monies paid as grant from the office of the Lagos state governor, meant for lawmakers.

The financial misappropriation of the speaker was recently discovered when some principal officers visited the governor, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu on issues related to the grant that it was discovered that there was disparity in the figure paid by the state and the one received in the House.

It was gathered that this was not the only instance of financial impropriety, its believed that the speaker may have siphoned several millions of naira according

to our investigations and some of us have resolved that we can not work with him under the circumstances.

Further investigation revealed that the speaker with other members of the House Committee on House Services siphoned money meant for the lawmakers during the last Yuletide, giving non members peanuts.

By last Wednesday, about 32 members of the House had endorsed impeachment moves pitched against the speaker who they alleged had siphoned about N60 million, but members of the House on Friday said some members may have soft peddled owing to reconciliatory moves made by top members of the AD in the state and some members of the state executive.

Leaders of AD in the state met Wednesday evening with principal officers of the House, urging them not to sole the name of the party and reconcile no matter the grouse.

Another case of financial impropriety brought against the speaker is in respect of deductions made from an allocation made to the House of Assembly from a consulting firm in charge of tax collection in the state.

According to our source, Alpha Beta issues about N5 million to the House

through the House Committee on Finance chairman, Mr. Korede Kolapo-Osunanya, but that only N3 million was recorded for collection for several months.

Some members of the House of Assembly on Friday who spoke with our correspondent denied that there were issues causing divisions in the House.

In a press conference organised by the House Committee on Information on Friday, the chairman, Mr. Tunde Oyewo, denied that there was divisions among lawmakers or that there exists two camps headed by the speaker and another principal officer.

"There is no plan to impeach the speaker of the state House of Assembly, or to remove principal officers in the state House of Assembly, we have had health debates, clauses and disagreements on bills but none of the stories being peddled is true".

"This story is not true, it is just exercising freedom of expression. There is no division whatsoever between the ranks", he said.

He said that the House had since reconvened from recess and had resumed sittings. According to him, legislative activities did not consist only of sessions, saying that about 75 per cent of legislative activities is at the committee level.

Lagos Muslim group loses leader

The Sarafat-ul-Islam Society of Nigeria (SISON), Lagos state branch, has announced the death of its chief missioner, Alhaji Abdul Rafiu Arekemose Mustafa. He was 60 years old.

Late Alhaji Mustafa died on February 17th, 2005 and has since been buried according to Islamic rites.

A statement signed by the society's national president, Alhaji R. K. Oladoja, and the general secretary, Alhaji Abdul Azeez Oladimeji, described the deceased as a faithful Muslim who devoted his life to services of humanity and God.

Late Alhaji Rafiu Mustafa was born in 1945 to the family of Mustafa Arekemose in Oyo town of Oyo state. He had his primary and secondary school education in Oyo and attended Morcass Arabic School, Agege - Lagos (1962-63).

He was appointed chief missioner of the society in 1984, a position he held



A man allegedly caught during an attempt to steal cell phone at the 9th summit of Southern Gov. at

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News

Obasanjo assures Kogi of foreign investments

President Olusegun Obasanjo has assured the people of Kogi state of the readiness of some foreign investors to explore and exploit the abundant mineral resources in the state for industrial growth.

President Obasanjo was speaking through his adviser on political affairs, Professor Jerry Gana, at the public presentation of a book "The Life and Times of a Visionary Traditional Ruler; Alhaji Ibrahim Atta of Ebiraland from 1884-1994," which took place at the auditorium of the Federal College of Education, Okene.

President Obasanjo urged the people of the state to be friendly with foreign investors when they eventually arrived the state to encourage them to feet at home and to develop the mineral resources.

Eulogising the late Alhaji Ibrahim Atta for his leadership qualities, President Obasanjo called on the present day rulers to give greater attention to the education of children especially at primary and secondary school levels to promote development.

He urged the people to emulate the sterling qualities of the late Alhaji Ibrahim Atta. "As parents, we must not abdicate our primary responsibility of character moulding of the children to make them men and women of integrity," he added.

In his address, the guest speaker at the occasion, Sen-

From Ahmed Tahir Ajobe, Lokaja

ator Jibril Aminu, observed that the late Alhaji Ibrahim Atta had produced and trained enough manpower to run the leadership machinery of a medium sized country and therefore called for the naming of a university after him to immortalise his name.

He remarked, "if there is anyone in Kogi state, indeed in Nigeria who deserves to have his name immortalised by naming a university institution after him, it is Atta Ibrahim."

Senator Jibril Aminu also observed that apart from being a religions man, the late

Ibrahim Atta was a successful merchant with nationalistic and intellectual leadership qualities. He added, "his nationalism earned him an abdication from the throne that he so richly deserved and which he used to build the nation with such a lasting effect. The break gave him not only the much deserved rest, but the opportunity to organise his intellectual property to enable students and intellectually endowed authors like Professor Albert Ozigi to write this biography which we are happily gathered here to launch today."

In his address, the author of the book, Professor Albert

Ozigi, said he wrote the biography because he believes that the late Alhaji Ibrahim Atta was by any standard, a great historical figure "who did a lot for Ebira community in his life time".

He can rightly be regarded as the architect and builder of modern Ebira society, right from a primitive and backward state he met in 1917 to a modern and progressive one he left in 1996."

The vice chancellor of the University of Abuja, Professor Nuhu Yaqub, who reviewed the 43 page biography, recommended it for readers within and outside the country.

Arms recovery: Two rocket launchers handed over

The arms recovered so far the by Rivers State government in the federal governments bid to retrieve illegal fire arms in the country are two rocket launchers.

Briefing the press yesterday in his office in Port Harcourt, the commissioner of information, Mr Magnus Abe, said there was need for adequate policing of the sea borders as such ammunitions could only get into the country through the sea.

The commissioner alleged that vessels and badges come in and leave the sea borders from different points in the state without being noticed.

According to him, bunkerers can invest any

From Ikenna Emeka Okpani, Bureau Chief, Port Harcourt

amount of money to bring in weapons that will sustain their activities and these they do through the sea borders which does not have adequate security.

He said the marine police unit was nothing to write home about and called for it to be overhauled and equipped to meet the challenges of the present time.

Mr. Abe also requested that the airforce should come in the surveillance of the sea borders using helicopters and aircrafts.

On the spate of communal clashes in the state, the commissioner urged communities to develop inbuilt mecha-

nisms of conflict resolution instead of taking to arms.

He called on the John Kramer community which has been engulfed in communal conflict to lay down their arms. Unconfirmed reports says over five people have been killed while police said they are still investigating and have moved into the area to control the situation.

Although the commissioner said the government has not received any report on casualties, he dismissed insinuations that the government did not move in on time before the escalation of the violence.

On the purported extortion of money from different communities in the state by unscrupulous elements for the purpose of census, the commissioner said the National Population Commission has taken steps to address the issue and are meeting with local government councils.

Although he said there have been no official report of extortion, he said government will however ensure that such does not occur and has provided NPC with vehicles and boats to aid the commission in the census exercise.

Makarfi Vs Senate: GOVAN accuses Senate of myopia

The National Vanguard for Good Governance (GOVAN), has says that the national political reform conference was a self-inflicted response to the annoying disinterest by the National Assembly to affairs that affect the well-being of Nigerians.

Addressing a press conference in Kaduna yesterday, GOVAN coordinator, Dr Dary Dogara, said the anger of the Senate toward the Kaduna State governor was a transferred aggression by the lawmaker who have a grudge against President Obasanjo for transferring the limelight from the National Assembly to the conference.

"Going by the venom poured on Governor Makarfi by the Senate, it would appear that the august body is still sulking, and has an axe to grind with Mr President on the national political reform conference. The context of their diatribe shows traces of transferred aggression.

Dr Dogara said Makarfi did not say anything new when he said confab came about as a result of the ineffectiveness of the National Assembly and even then they should have ratified the report and discussed it in an executive session but they decided to lambast the governor in public.

From Sani Babadoko, Bureau Chief (Kaduna)

"Such views are a mere re-echo of what a significant population of the Nigeria people think of their legislature especially at the federal level. Nigerians therefore welcome the NPRC as a self-inflicted response to the annoying disinterest by the National Assembly to affairs that affect their well-being.

"What has happened to the constitution review committee which was empanelled about two years ago and on which Senator Mantu sits as chairman", Dr Dogara queried."

He said the senators alleged that Makarfi did the entire NPRC job without consulting any of his colleagues but reminded them that the report was presented to the National Council of state which included all the state governors, who accepted it without a single amendment.

"Now we are told that the Senate has blacklisted governor Makarfi. How possible is that, except they are playing to the gallery? Since he is the elected representative of the people of Kaduna State, have they also boycotted its institutions?"

"In their narrow opinion, they believe that whatever

crises Nigeria faces today is the personal problem of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, since he is president. In their naivety, they think that if Nigeria were to break up today, it is only the president who will bite the dust. As usual, they would heap all the blames on him and jump ship".



Chief Ason Bur, elderstatesman and National Confab delegate from Benue State.

Workers decry sale of FG houses

By Abdullahi M. Gulloma, Labour reporter

Last week, the federal government announced intention to sell houses built by its ministries, agencies and departments located in different parts of the country.

The government also disclosed that it would raise an estimated N300 billion from the sale of the 30,000 houses across the country. In this *vox populi* conducted by *Daily Trust*, some civil servants are of the view that the move was to impoverish workers. Excerpts:

Emmanuel I. Igiri, chairman, Nigeria Civil Service Union, FCT: The opinion of trade union on government's decision to sell its houses is that the policy is not addressing the problem of workers because there is no money to buy these houses at current market prices.

Civil servants who acquired government's quarters has been paying through their rent subsidy. The amount so far paid as rent should form part of the payment if government is sincere in its decision to sell these houses.

There is also the issue of the National Housing Fund (NHF). Workers have contributed to the fund. This amount should be refunded to form part of the payment for the houses. Again, the policy of owner-occupier should be encouraged as many state governments are doing to their workers.

Comrade Fajana Godwin, secretary, AUPCTRE: Well! In the first place, we had expected that government would have retained the buildings to serve as government quarters, rented out at a very fair and affordable rates to workers like it used to be before the introduction of rent subsidy.

If the insistence of the present administration's policy is to sell-out the quarters, priority should go to those who had maintained the quarters through which has been regularly deducted from their personal resources which they had used to keep the buildings habitable without any contribution from government by way of maintenance over the period.

The price tag on the buildings is a clear indication that government intends to sell the buildings to those who can afford the rates being announced.

Mr S. O. Bolawale, general secretary of NANNM: The decision of the federal government to sell its houses is a good thing. However, the prices of the buildings should be reduced to affordable levels to enable workers purchase them. This is the only way to make the policy work effectively.

Mr Waheed Sikimi, HOD, Public Service AAWUN: There is no need for the government to dispose these houses. The federal government should maintain the houses as quarters for civil servants. But if the government insists on selling the buildings, the houses should be affordable to civil servants.

The amount the government is mentioning is very outrageous, to say the least. Civil servants are poor people and the amount they are charging is far above the income of civil servants.

Mrs Debora Mathew, Abuja: I look at the decision as way to settle certain individuals in government because I don't think the houses are affordable to civil servants.

Abubakar Yusuf, Abuja: The whole idea is a slap on our face. Why should government sell its houses at this material time?

I think somebody somewhere is trying to invest his ill-gotten money in the country and that is why the government is coming up with this policy of selling its houses.

Hajiya Rabi Adamu Musa, A... I think the idea of selling these houses is good. But the problem is who will buy the houses? Is it the poor civil servants or the well to do in the society?

If the houses are going to be given out to poor civil servants then it is a good development. But if the reverse is the case, then the whole thing would be rubbish.

Gabriel Amos, Abuja: Government must not sell its assets. These buildings serve as one of the major things civil servants are enjoying as a way of saying "thank you" for their services to the nation.

So, if government decides to sell these houses, where do they expect the civil servants to fall back to?" I think government must halt this process.

Ayo Olorunfemi, FCT secretary of ASCSN: The idea of selling houses to Nigerians is a welcome development. But the area we identified is the price tag. In an atmosphere where it is hard for a civil servant to save up to N100,000 in year where will he get N500,000 being the 10 percent down payment for a 3-bed room flat?

Government should sell this houses on owner occupier basis to its civil servants considering the fact that most of them have paid up to the cost of these houses through outright deduction of rent allowances from their salaries.

Alternatively, the contract sum of these houses should be identified and let the houses be sold at their rate.

News

Immigration officers plan strike over deployment

The recent re-deployment of more than 700 officers by the Comptroller-General of Immigration Services, Mr. Chukwurah Joseph Udeh, may throw the service into an unprecedented strike unless the federal government intervenes.

The planned strike action was contained in a petition to the president and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission over the redeployment which they want EFCC to investigate.

The said missing N500 million, which disappeared in an unusual circumstance. According to the petition jointly signed by 10 officers of various ranks was meant for the service.

In the petition, they alleged vendetta, favouritism and insensitivity in the redeployment exercise, even as they claimed that adequate time was not given to those officers affected to move their families.

"Majority of us received half of January salary. We are yet to receive the one for February and there is no adequate preparation for the transferred officers as regard where to stay, how to accommodate their family members not even transportation arrangement were made," they said.

The officers faulted the argument of Udeh that many of those involved had stayed in a particularly position for up to 10 years, noting that the new CGIS was the Assistant Comptroller General ACG, finance and procurement for 10 years.

From Olumide Bajulaiye
Correspondent (Lagos)

"Transfer or redeployment are normal exercises and nobody is disputing that. But there is a clear case of personal vendetta in the whole exercise. Why is it that men and married women are mostly affected? They asked.

Justifying the allegation of favouritism, the officer claimed that those from the same state with the CGIS were posted to nearby Rivers state "whereas many of us who had served in the north for five - six years were

posted to the same states where we served last."

They called on the presidency and EFCC to investigate the missing N500 million Immigration money, which they said was meant for the welfare of the men and officers of the service

The money according to them got missing "in an unusual circumstance."

"Except the presidency and EFCC waded into this matter, the sleazy affairs in the Immigration will get to a point that will be an embarrassment to the presidency and the entire nation."

Improve lot of host communities, Obasanjo tells oil coys

President Olusegun Obasanjo has charged companies in the oil and gas sector of the economy to partner with the government to improve the lot of the Niger Delta Communities.

President Obasanjo, who was represented by the Minister of State for defence, Dr. Rowland Orisejiofor, made the call at the opening ceremony of the on-going International Seminar on Energy and Security in Africa.

According to him, failure of the oil companies to partner with the government in this regard has been highly

By Anas A. Galadima,
Reporter (Business)

responsible for the violence and insecurity prevalent in the oil producing communities.

He said despite the fact that the Gulf of Guinea accounts for 15 percent of all oil imports in the US and 7 percent in the European Union, Africa still remains the region with the world's most brutal conflicts.

He identified youth restiveness and kidnapping of oil workers as some of the security challenges facing the government in the Niger Delta region.

Food poisoning: Kwara police parade Ilorin woman

Police in Kwara state have arrested a woman, Mrs. Victoria Scinda, alleged to be the prime suspect of a food poisoning saga which claimed five lives of a household in Ilorin last month.

At a press conference in Ilorin yesterday, deputy commissioner of police, Mr. E. S. Olusegun said the police have obtained enough evidence to prosecute her.

According to the police boss, on February 2, this year, Femi reported at Ganmo Police Station that his wife Janeth Egun Owoeye of Iyana

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo
Correspondent (Ilorin)

Alagbedfe Area in Ilorin, three of his children and a neighbour's daughter developed symptoms of poisoning after a meal of Amala (yam flour). Three of the children died that fateful day while their mother and Ayo, who were placed on admission at University Teaching Hospital Ilorin, died later.

The police also paraded a dismissed police man, Usman Kehinde of Agbeyangi area, said to be the brain behind most

of the robbery incidents along Ilorin-Oke Oyi axis.

A search conducted in his house by the police led to the discovery of two locally made pistols cut to size, mobile police uniforms and blank statement of results sheets report stolen from Agbeyangi Commercial Secondary School.

Two other cultists, Oladimejo Garba and Alfa Abdulganiyu Kalibi, were also arrested by the police and allegedly confessed to have belonged to a group that killed one Isiaka Ayila at Eleko yang area Ilorin.



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, ABUJA INVITATION FOR BIDS

COUNTRY: Nigeria
PROJECT: National Capacity Needs Self-Assessment for Environmental Management (NCSA)
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF GOODS: Computer Systems: Other Office Equipments & Internet Services.
CREDIT NO.: TF53427-UNI.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has received a grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (The World Bank) for the National Capacity Needs Self-Assessment for Environmental Management (NCSA) and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this grant to payment under the contract for Procurement of Computer Systems, other Office Equipment and Internet Services.

The Federal Ministry of Environment now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the supply of the underlisted items:

LOT	ITEMS	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
A	1	Computer s	10
	2	Printers	2
	3	Scanner	1
	4	Stabilizers	10
	5	UPS	10
	6	Extension Cables	10
B	1	Internet Services	12- 15 outlets with 4 Remote linkage to Laptops

Bidders may bid for any one or more lots and discounts offered for the award of combined lots will be considered in bid evaluation.

Bidding will be conducted through the National Competitive Bidding Procedure specified in the World Bank's Procurement Guidelines and it is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines. In addition, bid(s) must be accompanied by the following:

- Company Profile;
- verifiable evidence of experience in similar project;
- certificate of registration with the Federal Ministry of Environment;
- evidence of company registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission;
- Tax clearance for the last three(3) years; and
- Evidence of financial capability in form of:
 - Bid security of at least 3% of bid price or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency; and
 - Turnover of at least =N= 2.0m in the last three(3) years.

Bid documents and further information are obtainable from the Office of the Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, Environment House (Former FEPA BUILDING), Airport Road, Central Area District, Abuja between the hours of 9.00am - 4.00pm (Mondays - Fridays).

A complete set of bidding document in English Language may be purchased by interested bidders on submission of a written application to the address given above upon payment of a non-refundable fee of =N= 10,000.00 payable to "GEF-NCSA PROJECT" in Bank draft.

SUBMISSION OF BID:

Copies of completed bids must be put together in separate binders in sealed envelopes, marked at the right hand corner "BID for GEF-NCSA GOODS" and delivered at the address stated below on or before Wednesday, 16th of March, 2005 at 12 Noon (local time):

The Director,
Planning, Research and Statistics Department
Federal Ministry of Environment
Environment House (Former FEPA BUILDING),
Airport Road, Central Area District,
Abuja.
Attention: Project Manager GEF-NCSA.

Late submission will be rejected and bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who may choose to attend at the address, date and time stated below:

Venue: DPRS OFFICE,
Planning, Research and Statistics Department
Federal Ministry of Environment
Environment House (Former FEPA BUILDING),
Airport Road, Central Area District,
Abuja.

Date: Wednesday, 16th of March, 2005

Time: 12.15 pm (Local Time)

(Signed)
S. O. Adegunde
Permanent Secretary
for: Honourable Minister



Former NPAN President, Mallam Ismaila Isa discussing with Chief Bisi Olatinlo during



KOGI STATE GOVERNMENT

Happy Birthday, Mr. President



CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, GCFR, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

On behalf of the government and people of Kogi State, I, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, Executive Governor, heartily rejoice with His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, on his 68th birthday.

We join you and your family to thank God for His continued mercies and goodness over your life.

Your outstanding contributions to the development of our beloved country, the African continent and your eminent role in the search for world peace have shown clearly that you are a special gift to this generation.

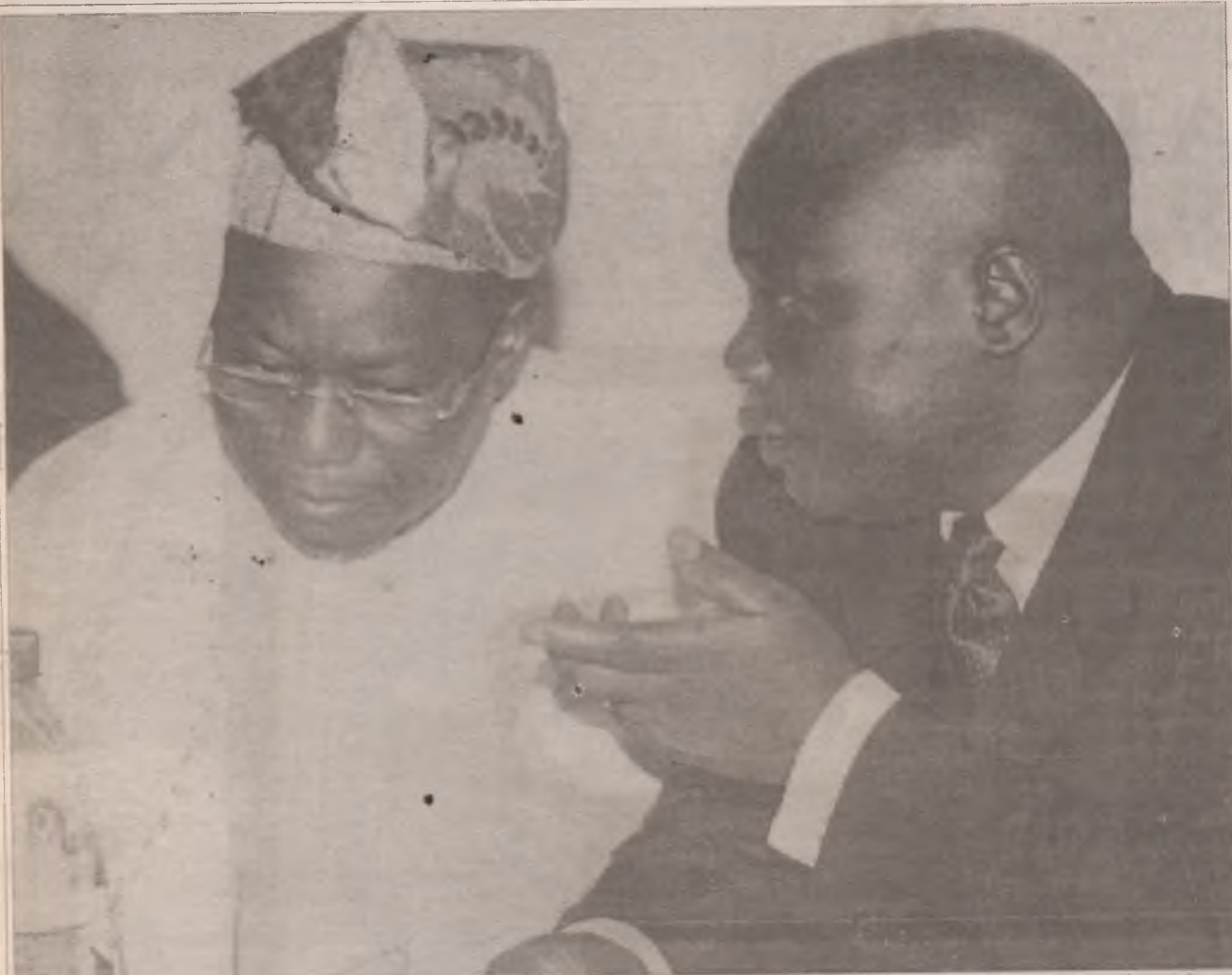
We wish you more years of good health, peace and God's unfailing guidance to enable you continue your meritorious services to the nation and humanity.



SIGNED
His Excellency,
Alhaji Ibrahim Idris
Executive Governor, Kogi State

His Excellency,
Alhaji Ibrahim Idris
Executive Governor, Kogi State

News



Member, House Committee on Communication, Hon. Tolorunjuwon Faniyi (right) and Hon. Adegoke Adeniran during the public hearing on NITEL/M-TEL management contract award to Pentascope, held at the National Assembly complex, Abuja...recently. Pix: Felix Onigbinde.

BLPAW urges women to work together

By Safiya I. Dantiye, Women's Editor

Nigerian women have come far in the last 30 years and therefore have cause to celebrate. This observation was contained in a statement by the Better Life Programme for the African (Rural) Women (BLPAW) in commemoration of the Women's International Day on March 8, 2005.

The statement however pointed out that a lot still needed to be done to achieve real equity and justice for women. 'We must therefore not rest on our oars but should continue to forge ahead in all spheres of human endeavour.' 'Women should continue to work together because there is strength in numbers,' it added.

According to the

statement, BLPAW apart from enhancing women's self-esteem and self-respect has helped to open up the rural areas for maximum participation of women in productive development and inculcate them with new skills in agriculture, as well as maternal and childcare. The statement maintained that women were enjoying increased income through better quality production, ownership of cottage industries, and access to micro loan schemes. It emphasised that with the recent expansion of the Better Life Programme to embrace other parts of Africa, the organisation was poised to strive for even greater heights. It urged all women to continue to play their traditional role of home keepers as good mothers and wives. 'As we celebrate 30 years of the International Women's Day, we enjoy you to see the woman as a partner rather than a subordinate - a partner that incidentally constitutes a large proportion of your society. If she is empowered, the home is empowered, and the society is empowered,' the statement concluded.

Observance of a special day for women was first marked in the United States of America as National Women's Day in 1909. Over the years, the UN has convened four global conferences to enable women from every part of the world to confer, network, and review the progress so far made in their struggle for empowerment, equity, peace, and development.

Governor Adamu locks out commissioner, officials

Governor Adamu of Nasarawa state yesterday ordered that a commissioner in his

cabinet, as well as top state government officials and journalists were locked out of a public function in Lafia

for arriving late. The governor reportedly said that he had decided to put an end to the habitual late

attendance of functions by officials of the state. Many of those locked out by security operatives

expressed surprise.

Governor Adamu emphasised the essence of timeliness while opening a one-day sensitisation and training workshop organised by the Nasarawa state government in collaboration with the Office of the Special Assistant to the President on Food Security. He said that his administration accorded agriculture priority in order to turn the state's economy around and achieve food security.

The governor further disclosed that his government had disbursed N53 million under its Women and Youth Empowerment Scheme for the implementation of various agricultural projects.

Sanga LG N101m secretariat project takes off

Work has begun on the permanent site of the N101 million Sanga local government council's secretariat in

Kaduna state. The project contractor, Mr. B.K. Moses, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday that the job would be

completed within nine months. He promised to execute it according to specification to justify the confidence reposed in him,

and added that the decision to embark on the project was noble.

Commencement of work on the project has allayed the people's fear that the present council would not achieve anything before the end of its tenure.

In his comments, the councils' chairman, Mr Danladi Bello, expressed satisfaction with the take-off of the project, saying that it had opened a new chapter in the life of the council. Bello reassured the people of Sanga of his commitment to satisfying their yearnings and aspirations.

Dariye signs into law, 2005 Appropriation Bill

Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau state has signed into law, the 2005 Appropriation Bill of over N29 billion and the Plateau state University Bill.

Chief Dariye while signing the bills into law yesterday expressed willingness of the government to ensure budget discipline and adherence to the major policy guidelines contained therein.

"Our determination is to ensure that the 2005 budget serves as the Trojan horse that would pave the state's economy to stability, buoyancy and greatness."

On the university, he asserted government's intention to establish a 21st century institution of international repute that would place great premium on moral, leadership building and exploration of knowledge and truth. He expressed hope that the university would complement the efforts of other universities in the country and ensure

From Rakiya Muhammad, Correspondent (Jos)

excellence in service and human resources development.

And described education as the only tool for combating ignorance, poverty and disease, noting that the Plateau state University

which is science based was a deliberate effort to provide functional education to the citizens for self-empowerment and self-reliant.

Governor Dariye, who urged the local government councils in the state and interest groups to continue to support the project, described the two bills signed into law as a reflection of the core elements of state policy.

Council seeks legal standing for Sharia

The National Council of Ulama, Katsina state branch, wants the ongoing National Political



Governor Yar'Adua

Reform Conference 'to entrench the Sharia legal system in Nigeria.' This demand was contained in a statement signed by the council's secretary, Alhaji Aminu Danbaba, at the end of its meeting in Katsina yesterday.

The council's statement tasked the six conference delegates from Katsina state 'to join hands with other delegates and representatives of other states to achieve the objective.' It implored all Muslims 'to support the

Katsina Islamic University project and ensure its successful take-off.'

Noting that the proposed university had already been registered by the National Universities Commission (NUC), the statement concluded that it was 'left for the Muslim community to actualise its planned take-off in October this year.'

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as MISS HANNAH USMAN, now wish to be known as MRS. HANNAH U. JA'AFAR. All former documents remain valid. Public please take note.

Public Notice

Railway Officers Wives Association

The general public is hereby notified that the above named Association in Lagos is hereby applying for registration under the part "C" of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 1990.

The Trustees Are:-

1. Alhaja Fatima Abubakar
2. Mrs. Patricia Ilukwe
3. Mrs. Patricia Ifeogwa Onyebao
4. Mazi Jetson Chibaisi Nwankwo.

Any objection(s) to the registration should be forwarded within 28 days of this notice to the Registrar General Corporate Affairs Commission Area II Garki Abuja.

Signed: Barrister Lekan Alaka
Legal Adviser.

Inside Politics



Member House of Representatives, Hon. Lawal Garba (m) and some members of his constituency lay foundation of a primary school at Sandamu local govt, Katsina state during his tour of the area ... recently

Borno PDP names reconciliation committee

Following the intervention of President Olusegun Obasanjo in the protracted crisis within the Borno State Chapter of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the party has set up a 'Reconciliation Actualization and Advisory Committee' which will work to ensure that the spirit of the reconciliation is kept alive, and that the party regains its lost strength in Borno State.

The Committee is to be headed by Kashim Ibrahim Imam, the PDP's flag bearer during the 2003 gubernatorial election while Engr. Mohammed Abba Gana, Special Adviser to the President on Relations with Civil Society, is to serve as his deputy.

Members of the Committee include three representatives from each of the three Senatorial Districts in Borno State, the State Party Chairman, Alhaji

Abdullahi Bego, Regional Editor (North East)

Ibrahim Abba Gubio and the State Party Secretary, who would serve as Secretary to the Committee.

The representatives from the Senatorial Districts include Major S.D Ngadda, Hajiya Inna Chiroma and Senator Abubakar Mahdi for Borno South. From Borno Central District, the members include Waziri Kyari Mohammed, Arch. Ibrahim Bunu and Dr. Shettima Mustapha. Members from Borno North include Senator Sanusi Daggash, Senator Maina Ma'aji Lawan and Alhaji Gambo Lawan.

Chairman of the PDP in Borno State, Alhaji Ibrahim Abba Gubio told *Daily Trust* that the Committee would ensure that all aggrieved parties put the past behind them and adopt a 'forgive-and-forget' attitude.

Gubio added that in the spirit of reconciliation, the Committee members would also tour all the three Senatorial Districts in Borno State to meet with party supporters to assure them that the party in the State is now 'one big, united family'.

It would be recalled that the PDP in Borno State was embroiled in crisis which largely arose out of the

primary elections conducted before the last gubernatorial election. Various reconciliation moves to address the problems within the party failed until President Obasanjo intervened through the Chairman of the PDP Board of Trustees, Chief Tony Anenih, who met in Maiduguri with all the senior members of the party, including members of the two major factions to the crisis.

The meeting succeeded in having the factions antagonistic to one another sheath their swords, while getting them to pledge to work together for the benefit and progress of the party.

2007: Former NPA boss

pledges to industrialise Kebbi

A former managing director of Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA) and Kebbi

State is gubernatorial hopeful in 2007, Alhaji Bello Ibrahim Gwandu has reiterated his commitment towards industrializing the young state.

Fielding questions from newsmen at his residence in Birnin-Kebbi, he said industrializing the state became imperative considering the fact that the Kebbi is left behind in terms of industrialization and commerce, lamenting that the situation has been responsible for underdevelopment of the state since creation about fourteen (14) years ago.

Alhaji Bello further pledged that he would use his resources, exposure, influence and past experience to uplift the state to enable it compete with its contemporaries.

He however, noted that Adamu Aliero's tenure has provided even development that has direct bearing on the lives of the citizenry. He really has tremendously changed the young state especially in the areas of education, Health, Agriculture, road network, rural water supply to

From Kabir Dogon Daji, Birnin-Kebbi

mentioned but a few." He said.

Alhaji Bello Ibrahim, revealed that though he

was not a card carrying members of any existing political parties, he will soon be registered. He however did not disclose the party of his choice.

Rep wants FCT c'ttee leadership changed

A member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Sidi Ali has called on the leadership of the House to urgently reform the Committee on Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to make it more focused in addressing problems of the territory.

Hon. Ali, who represents Abuja South and is a member of the FCT Committee, said the leadership of the committee as is currently constituted, lack the competence and intellectualism to discharge the onerous task of the committee.

He said the committee leadership had failed to address major issues that affect indigenes of the territories and the development of the Area Councils, and that, according to him, has made the committee fail short of expectations.

"The committee on FCT requires a very strong, solid, matured and seasoned lawyer to lead it because it is time now to make use of brains in providing or making bills that will address the yearnings and aspirations of the people in the FCT," Ali said.

He decried the current situation in which the committee, owing to poor leadership, has not lived up to expectation, saying because the bulk of the work we have before us requires that we put in place bills and if you don't have a leader that will lead you to that, there is no way you can succeed and you don't expect the leadership of the national assembly to come down to

By Harneed M. Bello, Senior Political Reporter

lead a committee on FCT."

He said the executive had played its part by scrapping

the ministry of FCT adding that the National Assembly, which acts as state Assembly for the Area Councils needs to sit up to complement the executive

YSA launched in Ekiti State

The Yerima Solidarity Association (YSA), championing the presidential ambition of the governor of Zamfara state, Alhaji Yerima Sani Ahmed has been launched in the Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state capital.

At a meeting held at one of the popular hotels in Ado-Ekiti over the weekend, the president of the Association, Mallam Ashiru Moahmed said the group had toured all the South West States and was highly accepted.

Mallam Mohammed eulogized Governor Ahmed and commended him for his achievements in Zamfara state which has endeared him to the heart of people in his state and across Nigeria.

He mentioned particularly the achievements recorded by the governor in the areas of education, health, agriculture, housing, road and rural development which has transformed the state in the past few years of the installation of his administration

He also commended the governor for establishing the ministry of religious affairs in the state to supervise various religious sects and ensure religious harmony, adding that both Christians

From Femi Oladipo, Ado-Ekiti

and Muslims have been sent on pilgrimage to Mecca and Jerusalem since the governor assumed office in 1999.

Mohammed said the programme of the governor for Nigerians if elected as president in 2007 will include full employment opportunity, free educational all levels, free health chance, integrated rural development and poverty alleviation, adding that the governor is not a tribalist but a God fearing man who will not disappoint Nigerians.

Abuja court cautions APGA factions

An Abuja High Court has warned parties in the All Progressives Grand Alliance suit to desist from making media statements on issues before the Court and advised them to seek clearance from their lawyers before making any statements to the press to ensure same does not relate to the subject matter before the Court.

Hon. Justice Hussein Baba Yusuf of High Court II, Kubwa, Abuja, gave the warning following a complaint by Chief Chris

Uche (SAN) Lawyer for APGA and Chief Chekwas

Okorie over an advertisement placed by former National Treasurer of the Party, Chief Victor Umeh and former National Secretary, Alhaji Sani Abdullahi Shinkafi in a another Sunday paper of March 6, 2005 and a two-page interview Chief Umeh granted to another Sunday paper, Sunday of 27 February, 2005.

Chief Uche, said the media statements were highly contemptuous and

prejudicial to the issues before the Court and prayed the Court to restrain the defendants from making further statements that would prejudice the issues before the Court until the case is determined.

Patrick N. Ikweto, SAN, lawyer for the Chief Victor Umeh-led faction, argued that the letter to the Manny Bank which was advertised in the Sunday Vanguard of March 6, 2005 was not part of the issue before the Court.

Hon. Justice Yusuf however, advised that both

parties should stop media statements on issues before the Court until the motion before the Court is heard. The motion has to be adjourned to March 16, 2005 as Mr. Ikweto served the APGA's Lawyer Chief Chris Uche with counter affidavit and statement of defence in Court this morning in March. 2005.

APGA, Chief Chekwas Okorie, Dr. Hassan Bello, Barrister Maxi Okwu, had filed a suit against Chief Victor Umeh-led faction claiming several reliefs including:

Inside Politics

National Dialogue Won't Be Business as Usual - Alibe

Alhaji Mohammed Kagu Alibe, an educationist and former Managing Director of the Nigerian Newsprint Manufacturing Company Limited (NNMC), Oku-Iboku is a delegate to the National Political Reform Dialogue from Borno state. In this interview with our Regional Editor (North East) Abdullahi Bego, Alhaji Alibe argues that the Dialogue would help rather than undermine the National Assembly. Underlining the fact that 'we have been avoiding this issue of sitting down to talk' for too long, the Borno delegate maintained that the Dialogue, as organized, would bring much-needed society-wide reforms, and that it won't be business as usual, all things being equal, among others. Excerpts

How do you think that political reforms can be brought about by a gathering of people nominated rather than elected by the people?

The National Dialogue issue came about because the dividends of democracy are not being enjoyed as much as they should, among other factors. So there is need for some dialogue to bring about reforms into the polity in order to benefit much from democracy.

Going by various nomenclatures, this dialogue has been the issue that some people especially in the Southern part of the country have been canvassing for. Can the President's decision to organize it now be considered as pandering to those interests?

"We shall argue strongly that resource control should be exercised at the detriment of other people living in other parts of the country. For instance, we in Borno, due cognizance has not been taken into our own problems here in Borno such as the problems of deforestation, desertification etc. These are issues that have to be addressed nationally because the resources of the state cannot do it. If the environmental problems of the Niger Delta are addressed through the agency of the NDDC, then there is no reason not to address our ecological problem of desertification because we are all parts of Nigeria. We shall canvass for support for the resumption of oil in the Lake Chad Basin and the exploitation of other useful but untapped mineral resources that we have in the state."

Well, I think what those people wanted was a sovereign national conference and there is no way we can have a sovereign conference since we have democratic structures and the constitution in place...

Talking about democratic structures, members of the National Assembly have remained unwilling to give the Dialogue their support, seeing it, as it were, as a form of usurpation of their powers. Don't you think the Dialogue infringes their rights and duties as elected representatives of the people?

No, I don't think it infringes their rights or legislative duties. I think the Dialogue will essentially focus on those areas that the legislators have either not worked on or refused to work on.

While the legislators are also supposed to legislate for the good of the people, a good number of them have been wasting time working on oversight functions. So, I do not think we shall infringe their duties but we shall focus on areas neglected by them.

Don't you think that the Dialogue may be another opportunity for the elite to meet to wine and dine, as it were, considering that in the past, many such attempts were made to bring about reforms, only for the government to shove aside the recommendations?

This will be different because everybody's attention would be focused on it. The discussions and recommendations would be open and wide. Once we have consensus on the issues, it won't be



Alhaji Mohammed Kagu Alibe

another talk shop or waste of time.

Considering the tenor of political debate in Nigeria and the diversity of interests, do you think a Dialogue such as the one you will be attending will be an elixir that can address the many concerns in the country?

Well, at least, we would move forward. We have been avoiding this issue of sitting down to talk.

We have had some constitutional conferences which have brought about some changes like the issue

of federal character, zoning etc. I believe something good would also come out of this one; and this may probably entail amending the constitution so that Nigerians can continue to live together happily.

Do you the Dialogue can also address the problems of political crises and communal violence that have characterised much of the period of the return to democratic governance in the country?

I am positive about the Dialogue being capable of addressing those problems. Dialogue is everywhere the best means to bring about profound changes that can and do affect the lives of people positively.

Let's talk about the thrust of the Dialogue itself. What are some of the issues, the so-called reform agenda that shall dominate their thinking and attention?

The reform agenda include reforming the political party structure in the country, the electoral system, the judiciary, relationship between tiers of government and civil society, etc.

Some people are of the opinion that the success of any reforms is contingent on the readiness of those in the position of executive authority to implement recommendations conscientiously arrived at. In the past, government did not seem particularly willing to work with recommendations especially those given by a panel or

committee etc. So, it all boils down to government's attitude to the matter. Now, how can you strike a balance between proffering ideas that the government, which set up the Dialogue, wants and ideas that approximate the general requirements of the Nigerian people?

My own view is that the judiciary and the electoral system, for example, should be independent of the executive in terms of their funding. Once they are free from executive control, they would be able to function well. The second area is the issue of appointments. We need to look at that too so that INEC officials are appointed independently and are made to be responsible to the National Assembly....Once we have an independent judiciary and an independent electoral system, I believe most of our political problems would be solved.

In addition to those political reform areas, there are other issues that equally continue to engage the attention of Nigerians, such as the issue of resource control, immunity for those in executive positions of authority such as governors and the president, state police etc. Generally what views would you advance with to these issues?

We shall argue strongly that resource control should be exercised at the detriment of other people living in other parts of the country. For instance, we in Borno, due cog-

nizance has not been taken into our own problems here in Borno such as the problems of deforestation, desertification etc. These are issues that have to be addressed nationally because the resources of the state cannot do it. If the environmental problems of the Niger Delta are addressed through the agency of the NDDC, then there is no reason not to address our ecological problem of desertification because we are all parts of Nigeria.

We shall canvass for support for the resumption of oil in the Lake Chad Basin and the exploitation of other useful but untapped mineral resources that we have in the state.

Since you are nominees of the Borno state government to the Dialogue, how would you carry along the views of the people of the state? Do you intend to consult with them before going for the Dialogue?

The state government along with all six of us nominated will have a mini-conference here in Borno so as to harmonise our position....We will go round the state to sample the opinions of our people, to find out what their interests and needs are, etc. We shall tour all the three senatorial districts to meet with the people and then cap it with a mini-conference here in Maiduguri so that we present at the National Dialogue a harmonized position of our government and people.

SPORTS

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Milan, Barca, Bayern out to break English hearts

A week of misery lies in store for English football if AC Milan, Barcelona and Bayern Munich have their way in this week's Champions League first knockout round.

The high hopes of Manchester United, big-spending Chelsea and champions Arsenal were all dented by first-leg defeats a fortnight ago, leaving only Liverpool

to take a 3-1 lead to Germany's Bayer Leverkusen.

Milan's defence kept United striker Wayne Rooney and substitute Ruud van Nistelrooy firmly under wraps in a 1-0 victory at Old Trafford, while Barcelona ran out 2-1 winners over 10-man Chelsea at the Nou Camp.

Arsenal lost 3-1 to Bayern at the Olympic Sta-

dium, their faint hopes left clinging to a late away goal after a poor defensive performance against the Bundesliga leaders.

Seven quarter-final spots hang in the balance on Tuesday and Wednesday, with one seemingly reserved for Olympique Lyon after their 3-0 away win over Werder Bremen.

Real Madrid's pursuit of

a 10th European crown continues at the Delle Alpi stadium in Turin, where the Spaniards' 1-0 first-leg lead faces a demanding test from Juventus.

Last season's runners-up Monaco are in the same boat as Juventus, trailing 1-0 after their game at PSV Eindhoven and needing to turn the tie around at the Stade Louis II.

Inter Milan's second leg against holders Porto will be played on March 15 because the San Siro stadium they share with Milan is being used by their neighbours on Tuesday.

United goalkeeper Roy Carroll.

Milan's defence, superbly led by skipper Paolo Maldini and Alessandro Nesta, was rock solid and their attack could be strengthened by the return from injury of European Footballer of the Year Andriy Shevchenko and Filippo Inzaghi.

Six years after a famous United semi-final victory at Juventus paved the way to their 1999 Champions League title, Rooney and Van Nistelrooy know what is expected of them.

Striker Didier Drogba misses out after being red-carded in Barcelona, while Samuel Eto'o and Ronaldinho should provide a challenge for the tightest defence in English soccer.

Arsenal's suspect defence will almost certainly have to keep a clean sheet if they are to stand a chance of using the same rule to qualify with a 2-0 win at Highbury.

Leverkusen must pull off the same feat at the BayArena if they are to go through, with an already difficult task being made harder by the return from suspension of Liverpool's inspirational captain Steven Gerrard.

In Turin, France striker David Trezeguet should be back for Juventus and could feature in a three-man attack with Alessandro Del Piero and Zlatan Ibrahimovic.



Manchester United striker Louis Saha has been ruled out of his team's Champions League clash with AC Milan

Ancelotti alert to United's threat

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti needs no reminder that Manchester United, Tuesday's opponents in the Champions League, are capable of winning against the odds in Italy.

Six years ago Ancelotti was coach of the Juventus side who earned a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford only to lose the second leg of their semi-final 3-2 at the Delle Alpi stadium.

Milan went one better than Juventus in the first leg of their knockout round match last month, winning 1-0 in Manchester, but Ancelotti is taking nothing for granted ahead of Tuesday's second leg. "I remember extremely well what happened last time...we know the job is only half done," he said at Old Trafford.

United manager Alex Ferguson says victory over Milan would be an even greater achievement than the upset at the Delle Alpi.

"Turin was the greatest performance of my time here, easily," he said. "To win on Tuesday would be above that. Milan's experience at the back is the thing."

Caution and cool defending are likely to be Milan's watchwords at the San Siro. Ancelotti's team know a draw would be enough to see them through although the coach insists that will not mean a negative approach.

"We don't want to simply defend because that can end badly," he said. "Rather we want to play as we did in Manchester."

The Italian champions are on a run of excellent results which underline the tightness of their defence.

After two defeats in a shaky January, Milan have won their last seven games — four of them 1-0. On Saturday they beat Atalanta 2-1 courtesy of a final second winner from midfielder Andrea Pirlo.

Injuries and the need to rest players ahead of Tuesday meant Ancelotti shuffled his pack. Striker Filippo Inzaghi and former United defender Jaap Stam made their returns from injury and could play some role in Tuesday's game.

Inzaghi is set to start on the bench, a boost for Ancelotti who is likely to be without Ukrainian Andriy Shevchenko after suffering a fractured cheekbone last month.

Milan will have to wait for

a fitness check on Georgia left back Kakha Kaladze. If he misses out then Giuseppe Pancaro is on stand-by.

United were frustrated by 10-man Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park on Saturday and will need to find greater penetration if they are to trouble Milan.

Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy, who made his return from injury in the first leg, is still short of full match fitness and so Wayne Rooney will probably be given the nod to start in attack against Maldini and Alessandro Nesta.

Keeper Roy Carroll, whose error handed Hernan Crespo the chance for Milan's goal at Old Trafford, has been dropped in favour of American Tim Howard.

Rooney's pace and the threat on the right flank of Cristiano Ronaldo could trouble Milan's ageing back

Mourinho, Rijkaard square up at Stamford Bridge

Jose Mourinho and Frank Rijkaard send heavy weights Chelsea and Barcelona into round two of their Champions League bout on Tuesday with the spotlight as much on the outspoken managers as their talented teams.

The two clubs are runaway leaders of the Premier League and Primera Liga. Both were boosted by weekend wins which extended their leads to eight points.

In Europe, Barcelona lead the London side 2-1 after the

first leg of their knockout round tie in Catalonia which was marked by ill-feeling and controversy.

Mourinho, a former Barcelona assistant, and his club could face sanctions after UEFA began disciplinary proceedings for their late arrival for the second half and failing to attend the mandatory post-match news conference.

Tempers flared at halftime when the Chelsea bench objected to Rijkaard having words with referee Anders Frisk. Chelsea blamed the incident for their refusal to allow players to comment after the game.

On the pitch, Chelsea's anger was compounded by the harsh sending-off of striker Didier Drogba early in the second half after a clumsy collision with goalkeeper Victor Valdez.

With more space for Ronaldinho and Deco, a former Mourinho protege at Porto, Barcelona then scored twice through substitute Maxi Lopez and African Footballer of the Year Samuel Eto'o.

Eto'o also scored in Barcelona's 1-0 win over Osasuna but fans are concerned about Ronaldinho's form after he gave another low-key performance on Saturday.

"You always want to score more goals but the attitude we showed was the most important thing," Rijkaard said.

"You can't compare this game to the one against Chelsea, though. That one will be completely different."

Mexico midfielder Rafael Marquez, who went off at halftime on Saturday, will not play in the Chelsea game due to a muscle strain but French winger Ludovic Giuly, who has missed two games with a bruised back, has been included in the squad.

Chelsea are hoping inspirational winger Arjen Robben, out for five weeks with a broken foot, may be fit to play some part in the game.

His presence would add width and attacking impetus to a side who will be missing the suspended Drogba and who need a 1-0 win to go through on the away goals rule.

Mourinho said captain John Terry, midfielder Claude Makelele and winger Damien Duff had picked up knocks in the 3-1 league win over Norwich City on Saturday but should be fit.

"In Barcelona the team who played better won," Mourinho told Portuguese sports daily Record. "But you must remember they managed it against only 10 men which leads me to believe they would not have won 11 against 11."

Probable teams:

Chelsea: 1-Petr Cech; 20-Paul Ferreira, 6-Ricardo Carvalho, 26-John Terry, 13-William Gallas; 30-Tiago, 4-Claude Makelele, 8-Frank Lampard; 10-Joe Cole, 22-Eidur Gudjohnsen, 11-Damien Duff

Barcelona: 1-Victor Valdes; 2-Juliano Belletti, 5-Carles Puyol, 23-Oleguer Presas, 12-Giovanni van Bronckhorst or 16-Silvinho; 6-Xavi, 14-Gerard or 22-Demetrio Albertini, 20-Deco; 24-Andres Iniesta, 10-Ronaldinho, 9-Samuel Eto'o

Referee: Pierluigi Collina (Italy).

Lyon must regain poise against Werder

Over the moon after their 3-0 win in Bremen two weeks ago, Olympique Lyon have crashed to earth in the past week and need to regain their poise ahead of Tuesday's Champions League game against Werder Bremen.

Statistics strongly favour the French champions and league leaders in the knockout round second leg tie - no team have come back from a 0-3 home defeat to qualify for the next round of the European Cup.

Lyon seemed serene a

week ago, having lost only three games since the season's start, one in the Champions League against Manchester United and two against Lille in domestic competition.

Since then, however, their momentum has been checked by a shock elimination from the French Cup by second division Clermont and a 1-0 defeat at Caen on Friday.

A hectic schedule of seven games in 23 days has taken its toll in terms of injuries as Lyon lost defenders Claudio Cacapa and Anthony

Reveillere as well as captain and striker Sidney Govou.

Govou will be back for Tuesday's game but Reveillere is certainly out. A last minute decision will be made on Cacapa and the Lyon camp is clearly nervous.

"We worked so hard in the first leg that our one and only goal is to confirm our victory in the second," said striker Florent Malouda.

"We're only at the half-way mark and they're quite capable of scoring four goals away."

Werder Bremen's five-

match winning run in the Bundesliga came to an end when they were beaten 1-0 by Bayern Munich on Saturday, a result that leaves them seven points off the pace.

Just as in the first leg at home to Lyon, it was their forwards who let them down, with Miroslav Klose and Nelson Valdez failing to take the chances that came their way.

"We've lost a crucial game and we're down because of it," said Valerian Ismael. "We have to be sharper in these big games."

Sports

Henry warns Bayern to expect fired-up Arsenal

Thierry Henry has told Bayern Munich to expect a confident Arsenal side when the teams meet in the second-leg of their Champions League battle.

English title holders Arsenal trail 3-1 after a first leg defeat at the German giants' Olympic Stadium and France striker Henry admitted the odds were stacked against his team reaching the quarter-finals.

But he said the Gunners would be drawing inspiration from last season's remarkable Champions League fight back wins achieved by Monaco and Deportivo La Coruna who both made it through to the last four from seemingly hopeless situations.

Monaco trailed 4-2 after their first leg at Real Madrid but still went through, while Deportivo won 4-0 at home after initially losing 4-1 at AC Milan.

And Henry said: "When Monaco lost 4-2 at Madrid, everyone was saying that Real were already through and the same when Milan

won 4-1 against La Coruna.

"But things can happen. We need to put passion in the game to make it happen for us but I'm sure the fans will be up for it.

"You just never know. Even if Bayern score early, the game is not finished. Milan have defenders like Paolo Maldini and Alessandro Nesta but they still lost 4-0 after winning the first leg 4-1.

"Normally you would say that could never happen to them as they have experience, but it happened.

"Maybe we saw the wrong Arsenal in the first leg, but hopefully we can see the good Arsenal this time.

"Everyone knows we can play well, pass the ball well and go forward well, but we need to be out there as a unit and make sure that we defend well first of all," added Henry, who scored all three goals in Saturday's 3-0 defeat of Premiership strugglers Ports-

mouth.

That result left Arsenal third in the table, 10 points behind leaders and London rivals Chelsea.

But while no one questions the Gunners' ability to score goals, doubts remain about their defence and if they concede just one goal on Wednesday even their attack may be hard-pressed to score the three that would then be required to level the tie.

Arsenal will once again be without injured England centre-back Sol Campbell for Wednesday's match and he is set to be joined on the sidelines by Pascal Cygan, the Frenchman suffering with a thigh problem.

"You can't have a bad night in the Champions League as you pay straight away," Henry admitted. "We did it once but we still have the opportunity to change it on Wednesday. I hope they can have a bad one this time."

Woods returns as world number one

Tiger Woods reclaimed his place as world number one after beating Phil Mickelson by one shot to win the Ford Championship title in Florida.

Woods trailed Mickelson by two strokes going into the final round in Miami but carded a 66 to end on 24-under-par.

Mickelson was still one up at the turn but Woods fired an eagle at the 12th and a birdie at the 17th to take the lead.

Woods had held top spot for a record 264 straight weeks before losing the honour to Vijay Singh last September.

Singh, who was number one for 26 weeks, fired a final-round 68 to end on 19 under with Zach Johnson.

Master champion Mickelson did not roll over for his playing partner, and

his back-to-back birdies at the 13th and 14th brought the two rivals level.

Both players carded their only bogeys of the day at the 16th, before Woods took control with a brilliant 28-foot birdie putt at the 17th.

There was yet more drama at the last as Mickelson's superb chip - a shot that could have forced a play-off - lipped out of the hole.

Woods held his nerve to stroke in a six-foot putt for a thrilling win.

The victory was Woods' second tournament win of the season after his January triumph at the Buick Invitational.

"The whole day, we were going at each other," said Woods.

"It was fun to be a part of that.

"I just felt like I had to keep making birdies - pars just weren't going to get it done.

"Starting out the day, Phil had all the pressure on him. He's got a two-shot lead and he's been playing well all year, everyone was kind of looking at him to go out and win the tournament.

"But he was going to have to play really well and I went out there and played really well myself."

Woods earned \$990,000 (£515,000) and a sports car for the win, but promised to give the car to caddie Steve Williams after he recovered from injuries sustained in a car accident.

Mickelson, who has lost every time he has gone up against Woods in a final round, was annoyed he let the tournament slip.

"I really thought I was going to win, I could have won, I should have won. I just hope I have another shot soon.

"I loved the competition - I'm just a little ticked at myself that I didn't win.

"I loved the fact he was playing his best. I wanted the chance to beat him at his best, I'm just disappointed I didn't do it.

"This was probably the best thing that could happen to me heading to the majors because I felt like I was playing better than everybody and just knew I was going to win today.

"When I didn't it was a great slap in the face because I'm going to work my tail off to salvage a couple of more shots."

Man. Utd to miss Saha, Neville for Milan clash

Manchester United will travel to Milan in the Champions League without Gary Neville and Louis Saha.

Neville's absence with an ankle injury means Wes Brown is likely to start at right-back, with Mikael Silvestre and Rio Ferdinand in central defence.

United will have to end AC Milan's nine-match unbeaten home record against English clubs in Europe to progress after losing the first leg 1-0 at home.

Rossoneri striker Andriy Shevchenko is sidelined with

a fractured cheekbone.

The Ukrainian has had to sit out both legs of the tie after facial surgery and Jon Dahl Tomasson may get the nod to partner Hernan Crespo in attack.

The pair started up front together in the 2-1 weekend victory over Atalanta, a result that kept the club top of Serie A courtesy of Andrea Pirlo's injury-time winner.

And the home defence should be boosted by the return of United old boy Jaap Stam, who pulled out of the Old Trafford match after injuring himself in the warm-up.

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Signed

Umar Baffa

Sports

Flying Eagles skipper warns Brazil

Captain of the Flying Eagles, Promise Isaac has warned defending champions Brazil not to errate Nigeria at the World Youth Championship kicking off in the Netherlands in June.

He told KICK OFF that the four-time WYC winners will be writing the Flying Eagles off at their own peril, even though the South Americans have beaten Nige-

ria on three previous occasions at the WYC.

"Look, as far as I am concerned, the Brazilians are humans just like us and there's nothing special about them. I am confident in the fact that we have a strong squad that will prevail over them. Our strategy will be to take each game as it comes, and to reach the semi-finals at least.

Isaac, who is presently

pursuing various offers from unnamed European clubs, stressed that the Flying Eagles are capable of excelling at the World Youth Championship despite missing out of the fiesta since 1999.

"Our defeat by Mali at the WAFU Cup has opened our eyes to a lot of things, though we have to admit that the short period of camping

and unavailability of our regulars cost us aplenty. But the WYC is a different stage entirely, and we are banking on our strength and determination to make hay," he said.

Sunday's draws in Kerkrade pitted Nigeria against Korea Republic, Switzerland and old foes Brazil in Group F. All the group's matches will be played in the city of Emmen.

CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

We respect Hearts - Abdullahi

Dolphin FC coach Musa Abdullahi started out with five defenders in a perplexingly defensive 5-3-2 formation in the 4-0 humiliation of Accra Hearts of Oak and the coach told KICK OFF that it was due to 'respect' for the Ghanaian club and scouting reports obtained since the draw was made.

"Hearts are older than us in this competition. They are also very experienced. We respect them a lot and we did not want to take anything for granted. We watched them play the Confederations Cup final against Asantef Kotoko. We also watched them against Enyimba and we saw that they had very good midfield players so our plan was to deny them space in the midfield and catch them with fast counter-attacks."

In the first half, the plan worked only as far as the last third, as the two strikers, Jacob Aiktionbare and Endurance Idahor failed to take advantage of the many begging opportunities that fell their way despite the Herculean efforts of Kelechi Osunwa, who had been dropped into the 'hole' behind the front two.

With the arrival of Victor Ezeji for Aiktionbare in the second half, the beauty of Musa's plan bloomed and three goals were just reward for outstanding enterprise.

It really should have been double that. But Efosa Eguakun hit the crossbar, Victor Babayaro had a pile-driver desperately cleared off the line, Kelechi Osunwa had a good goal ruled out and Victor Ezeji had one mishit header saved and a chip

come off the bar.

Musa explains: "Any formation is as good as the play-

ers on the pitch. Victor is a very outstanding player, and he reads the game very well.

As soon as he came in, the game changed and that is why we rate him so highly."

Hearts protest against Dolphin FC

Accra Hearts of Oak are hoping to have Nigeria's Dolphin FC thrown out of the Caf Champions League by Caf after they played the first leg of their second round tie in Port Harcourt under protest.

The Ghanaian representatives claim that Dolphin striker Endurance Idahor was

not eligible to play the match because his license arrived late. The Ghanaians have filed a formal protest to Caf and told KICK OFF they expect to have the tie awarded to them despite losing 4-0.

But their claims were laughed off by NFA official Bola Oyeyode who told KICK

OFF that the player's documentation was in order.

"His license did not arrive from Caf on time, that is why it was not laminated like the others," he told KICK OFF.

"But we have a letter from Caf which gives us permission to go ahead and use the player. So they don't have a case."

Wikki fight back to win

Henry Akile's second half brace gave Wikki Tourists the goals that nailed visiting Shooting Stars at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium as the hosts came from behind to claim a 2-1 victory.

The Oluyole Warriors had sent jitters down the spines

of the hosts when Abiodun Folorunsho punished Wikki for a defensive blunder after keeper Cornelius Gopar could not hold a back pass from Yakubu Abubakar, but instead put the ball to touch for a corner kick. The resultant kick from Waheed Bello found Folorunsho who hit

the roof of the net with a powerful header that put the visitors ahead in the 37th minute.

Wikki fought back gallantly and in the process, skipper Yakubu Yankari collided with Stars' Chijioko Ojiako as the duo were stretched off with cuts on their forehead, but later came back to resume

play.

Coach Bitrus Bewarang brought in Abdul Haruna for injured Yankari and the change was the turning point for the hosts who took over from the complacent visitors.

The consistent forays into Stars half yielded dividends as Henry scored from close range during a goalmouth melee to equalize for his side in the 64th minute.

Undaunted the home team continued the search for more goals and Henry was at hand to score the winner when he beautifully connected Richard Salami's low cross in the 86th minute to cheer the scanty crowd.

Elated Wikki coach, Bitrus Bewarang blamed the drab match especially in the first half to the visitors delay tactics.

"Shooting Stars defensive and delay tactics were responsible for the match not being impressive and this is not good for the game. As for my boys, they still need more time to understand each other and when we get that understanding we will be unbeatable," he told KICK OFF.

However, Godfrey Ewu of 3SC blamed his club's loss to defensive blunders. "At a stage the defence became jittery and the goals we conceded were goalkeeping errors. As for Wikki, their determination and efforts saw them through," he complained.

Nasarawa halt Pillars

The unbeaten run of Kano Pillars in the Premier League was halted as Nasarawa United won 2-1 at the Lafia Township Stadium on Sunday.

Playing with a thirst for victory, Nassarawa approached the game on the offensive from the onset but met a resistance in the Pillars defence ably marshaled by skipper Lukman Sirajo, who provided adequate coverage for Joel Theophilus in goal.

However, it was not long before the home team recorded the opening goal when Pillars keeper helplessly watched as the ball rolled into his net in the seventh minute

after misjudging Andrew Eseluka's feeble shot outside the box.

Pillars were undaunted and took the fight to the hosts causing them to make several blunders one of which resulted in the equalizer as Abubakar Ibrahim fired from close range in the 22nd minute to draw the visitors level.

Nasarawa skipper Andrew Eseluka put the icing on the cake for his team recording a brace in the 70th minute as he lashed on a rebounded shot from Sani Ahmed who's shot bounced off the upright for the captain to score the winner.

Daniel Amokachi told KICK OFF after the game that the visitors were no push over, but his boys were able to live up to the billings.

"Pillars are a team you have to watch when you play them and one of the strong teams in the country.

"They came here for the pre-season and beat us at home, but today our players were able to subdue them and claim all the three points," Amokachi said.

Coach Ufere Nwankwo gave kudos to Nasarawa, saying, "they deserve the victory as they were able to show that they are determined to stay put in the elite division."

Enyimba in good start

Prince Olomu's goal helped give Enyimba a 1-1 draw against Tanzania's Simba and keep the defending champions on course for an unprecedented third consecutive African title.

Enyimba dominated the first period and were de-

servedly ahead when Olomu was put through by Yusuf Mohammed and had no trouble beating goalkeeper Juma Kaseja three minutes before half-time.

Simba coach Trott Moloto made three changes at the start of the second period to contain the high-flying Nigerians and the move paid divi-

dends halfway through the half. Alex Nduka rising to connect a cross from Haruna Moshi to draw the Tanzanian champions level.

Despite the setback, Moloto is refusing to hang his head. "I am sure we can beat them in the return leg. If you have a good team you

can win anywhere."

Enyimba chairman Felix Anyansi Agwu was disappointed with the result. "We should have won this game. We didnt come here looking for a draw. But Simba played well and all credit to them. Like I have always said our target is to win the Cup for a third time. That has not changed."



Tiger Woods holds the winner's trophy after defeating Phil Mickelson at the Ford Championship at Doral in Miami, Florida, USA. The big guns of world golf were firing once again over the weekend as Woods returned to the top of the rankings and Ernie Els claimed his first victory of the year.

NFL meets on Ranchers Bees boss

By Abdulrahman Aanu, Sports Reporter

The Nigeria Football League (NFL) board will meet tomorrow to discuss among other things the shameful conduct of one of its members.

The board meeting, which is slated for Beverly Hill Hotels in Abeja has top on its agenda, Trustsports gathered, the assault on Kaduna FA chairman Alhaji Shehu Adamu by Abdulazeez Mohammed.

Mohammed, the chairman of the NFL security committee and Ranchers Bees team manager, reportedly rained blows on the FA chairman following his team's loss to Kaduna United in a local derby last Saturday.

The meeting, to be chaired by Chief Oyiuki Obareki, will also discuss its statute as amended by the NFA board.

"The NFL board will meet on Wednesday to discuss the new statute approved by the NFA board, and the return of the appeal and referee's committees to the NFA.

"However, top on the agenda is the conduct of one of the board members, Abdulazeez Mohammed who was alleged to have assaulted the Kaduna FA chairman last Saturday during a league match in Kaduna. The board will look at the case and decide on the matter during the meeting," the source told Trustsports yesterday.

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TUESDAY COLUMN

Tuesday, March 8, 2005

EDITORIAL

Obasanjo Vs ASUU again?

There is something incomprehensible in the relationship between the Obasanjo regime and the academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU. That is how a regime, which seeks to build legitimacy on transparency, Due Process and anti-corruption, cannot work with an organization like ASUU, which has proven to be the most singular personification of these values in the entire history of Nigeria. An organization like ASUU, which no regime in Nigeria—military, civilian or in-between, has been able to bribe into submission, should, by normal standard of reasoning, be a natural ally or collaborator of this regime. The fact that this is not the case is the strongest pointer to the fact that transparency and anti-corruption is no more than political gamesmanship for Mister President. This cannot but be the case given that ASUU proved its commitment to these values before the people of Nigeria long before Obasanjo came to make them the corner stones of public policy. They proved it when they, both at the level of the leadership and the congresses, snubbed all bribes, temptations, co-optations and other irresistible morsels placed before them and took on the government of the day in 1995 and WON. And it has been like that ever since it was formed in the early eighties.

President Obasanjo knows this since he was one of the Good Offices influences on the then head of state, Ibrahim Babangida who later confessed admiration for ASUU. What has happened to the same Obasanjo that, back in power, his relationship with ASUU has been so stormy? So much so that the President, at a certain meeting, verbally assaulted the immediate past President of the union, Dr. Dipo Fashina, an epitome of authenticity, sacrifice and commitment to fatherland, thereby breaking the cardinal bond that exists between Presidents and their leading academics, the world over, including the ones they don't agree with, ideologically.

Now, the academics have commenced warning strikes preparatory to a major one. And what are the issues? The major one there is still the issue of government refusing to re-negotiate the 2001 agreement with the union as provided for therein. Given ASUU's belief that it is only by the re-negotiation of the agreement that it can be improved upon with particular reference to the two key issues of democratization of the university system and relatively adequate funding of same, the refusal of government is, for the union worth going on strike.

Tragically though the Nigerian parents barely know how to break this down. This shows in the fact that their reaction to the strike threat is that it would keep their children and wards at home for as long as it lasts. Not for them the issue of the merits of the grounds of the strike. Not for them the link between these demands of the union and the intellectual, moral, environmental and physical conditions of the universities, making them perhaps the only parents anywhere in the world that would tolerate what are called universities in Nigeria today. Those who really appreciate that what we parade as universities are not universities in terms of a training ground aimed at humanizing the individual have responded by sending their children and wards to Europe, North America and Southern Africa. Another layer who cannot afford the financial resources for these places have opted for Ghana which is the other only viable of the English speaking West African countries. This is the tragedy in this matter in that ASUU which has arisen in place to fight the battle which the Nigerian parents should be fighting is not even understood by these parents as shown by the dismal lack of solidarity that should be coming for the union from the parents.

The Minister of Education who should have provided the buffer between a President too far gone in the gymnastics of World Bank pressures on the university system in Nigeria is evidently not even as ideological as the President as to be an effective moderating influence as some previous ministers of Education. And so, for a long time now, the universities have been without Governing Councils. This certainly cannot for any patriotic reasons but more in line with the power-for-profit syndrome.

In this context, except the intervention of God, neither from the parents' side nor the Minister for Education nor the President does the country expect deliverance in this matter, not even the reported agreement to negotiate, given the attitude of this regime to such.. Although it should be clear to any government that comes and says that the children of poor Nigerians should not go to universities but stop at primary and technical schools as directed by the World Bank would have problems on its hands. This is because university education is the most secure mode of manufacturing modern human beings from children of African peasants. And no amount of money spent on running functional universities is too much. Worth bearing in mind also is that the impending ASUU strike will coincide with that of the members of the Nigerian Medical Association.

Nuhu Ribadu Vs General Babangida

By Ujudud Shariff
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Looking at last week's media reports on the comments attributed to Nuhu Ribadu, the EFCC helmsman, on General Ibrahim Babangida at faraway South Africa has certainly made an interesting case study of the relationship between context and content, between form, shape and content as well as between perception and reality. The controversy and anxiety the alleged comments have generated have also gives some of us an insight into what to really expect in the race to the 2007 elections.

The lead story of the *Financial Standard* newspaper published in Lagos set the ball rolling with its screaming headline that "EFCC RULES OUT BABANGIDA" in the 2007 presidential race. Nuhu Ribadu was said to have informed a gathering largely of Nigerians that though EFCC investigations have not found Babangida guilty of any money laundering or financial crimes throughout the world, they would not allow him to rule Nigeria again. That was on Monday February 28th. The following day, Tuesday, March 1st, the *Daily Trust* reproduced this report changing only the headline to "EFCC Investigates IBB". By the next day, Wednesday, March 2nd, several newspapers led with the same story from the *Daily Trust* with only *ThisDay* newspaper quoting some reactions directly from Nuhu Ribadu who tried to clarify the story by stating that he was quoted out of context. He did not exactly say what he was said to have said and the manner it was stated. By Thursday, *The Sun* came out with the same report with its usual bold front-page banner headline that "Ribadu Rules Out Babangida". While the papers were struggling to out do each other in packaging and presentation of the story, expectedly, IBB supporters swung into action condemning Ribadu's alleged statements. From the National Assembly, the Chief Whip in the House of Representatives, Abubakar Bawa Bwari, an IBB strongman shot the first salvo. Other missiles were fired from all the nooks and corners of the country not only at Ribadu but also at Vice President Atiku Abubakar and President Obasanjo. These condemnations and hostile reactions from the Babangida camp ranged from the outrageous, ridiculous to the sublime were not limited to newspapers alone but also to radio and probably television broadcasts.

The ripples caused by the Ribadu's alleged statements are certainly far reaching with echoes not only heard right at the inner chambers of the presidential villa but also at the two chambers of the National Assembly. The report not only caused anxiety but really even panic as some suddenly saw darkness at noon. The story was certainly the story of the week as everywhere across the nation with pundits and everywhere discussing the prospects and likely consequences of the statements. As already mentioned, the media were agog with the story and its aftermath including a presidential query to Ribadu and fears that his job might be on the line. Speculations were also made on Ribadu's likely motives against General Babangida and what that portends for the nation. I was also thrilled by the number of theories propounded by different people to explain the situation especially on Ribadu's motives. To date, the most popular theory is the Adamawa Connection Theory that interpreted Ribadu's statement as a strategic move by the Vice President Atiku Abubakar camp to squeeze out IBB from the 2007 race. Thus, because both the Vice President and Ribadu are from Adamawa State, it follows that they must have conspired to scuttle IBB's ambitions. The logic of this theory is that the Vice President stands to gain from any political misfortune of IBB especially if he were to be banned from contesting the 2007 presidential elections. This explains the roping in of the vice president into the matter especially in those paid advertorials already rearing their heads in several newspapers. The fireworks have already begun and one would certainly expect rejoinders from the vice president's loyalists.

The second theory that excites me is the Buhari Connection theory. This theory argued that it was General Muhammadu Buhari, the ANPP flag-bearer in the 2003 presidential elections that was behind the whole drama so as to get IBB out of the 2007 race and have the upper edge. Ribadu was said to be secretly working for Buhari through his brother-in-law, Dr. Mahmud Tukur, who is a Buhari-associate. The third theory is the Obasanjo theory that explains that it is the President Obasanjo himself that is behind it all. Aware of this alleged grand conspiracy against IBB, Ribadu merely spilled out the

beans. Ribadu was therefore merely re-echoing HIS Master's Voice. The advocates of this theory rationalized that there appears to be a pattern emanating from the presidency by senior government officials. They cited a similar outburst by Femi Fani-Kayode, Obasanjo's Special Assistant on Public Affairs when reacting to Colonel Abubakar Umar's open letter to Obasanjo couple of months ago. He stated at the end of his ranting at that time that IBB would never be allowed to rule Nigeria again! (Please do not ask me by whom).

But with all the brouhaha, let us wait for a moment and ask the question on whether or not Ribadu has made those remarks attributed to him. According to his interview with *This Day* already mentioned, he categorically stated he was quoted out of context in that particular news report. His explanation was simply that what the *Financial Standard* did was to aggregate the answers he gave while answering the five questions asked at the end of his lecture. The first question came from a journalist who wanted to know what the EFCC was doing about Babangida's alleged monumental wealth all over the world. In his response, Ribadu stated, the EFCC has not found any evidence of wrong doing by IBB in its investigations as nowhere in the world did it find his name in any bank account or property. The next question was on the reforms of federal government that Ribadu talked about and how that would be sustained after 2007. Ribadu responded by describing the changes happening in Nigeria and the world over and how Nigerians would hardly elect corrupt and discredited people to pilot their affairs. This was how he answered all the subsequent questions generally and not specifically attributed them to IBB. But the reporter from the *Financial Standard* simply attributed the answers all to IBB instead of narrating how the statements came about. If that were done, obviously, the story would have been different. In contrast, the reporter of the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* that was also in the lecture hall captured and reported what "actually" transpired and the report was published of the *Vanguard* of Wednesday, March 3rd with the headline: "IBB is Clean...says EFCC".

So from the foregoing, Ribadu is right to state that *Financial Standard* and the papers that relied on it in their reports quoted him out of context. Thus, if the newspapers had used the *NAN* report as did by the *Vanguard* newspaper, there might have been jubilations from IBB supporters of the reported EFCC clearance that in spite of all that has been said about IBB and that twelve years after "stepping aside" from government no evidence of financial wrong doing could be traced to him. To my mind, this is worthy of celebration as a clean bill of health. But because the content was quoted out of context, Ribadu has to take all the bashing rather than accolades.

Be that as it may, what is clear from all the storm and fury that this controversy has generated is that IBB is still an enigma and a strong force in the nation's politics. He is becoming the Awolowo of our times that head or tail, the myth is there and the larger-than-life image is blooming. It does not matter whether you like him or not. The vibrations and anxiety that was generated throughout last week is incredible. The presidency was certainly jolted and some would say embarrassed for several reasons. But what I found most puzzling was the earthquake in the National Assembly where several senators and members of House of Representatives took positions and drew their daggers ready for blood. And from the hills and valleys across the nation Nigerians reacted in various manners and ways. While IBB still remains the lion in Nigeria's politics, Atiku Abubakar has emerged as the tiger. Atiku Abubakar, a hitherto unknown political entity in the nation's politics has within five years emerged as a force to be reckoned with. Thus, do that all the political mathematics revolves around the two gladiators and any one that underestimated the other is at his own peril. On the other hand, Nuhu Ribadu has also succeeded in less than two years to make a name for himself to such an extent that whenever he sneezes, several people catch cold! I was pleasantly surprised listening to the Freedom Radio in Kano where a leader of a group that called itself "Association of Self-Exiles from Jigawa State Resident in Kano City" were appealing to Ribadu, the "caterpillar" to come and liberate Jigawa State from years of maladministration, oppression and squandamania. Different strokes, you would say, for different folks.