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NATIONAL CONFAB

FG silent on chairman, secretary

Barely five days to the take-off of the proposed national conference on political reforms, President Olusegun Obasanjo is yet to decide on a credible choice to head the confab.

A full list of the conference delegates released by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Chief Ufot Ekaette, yesterday did not indicate government's choice of the chairman of the confab and

By Reuben Yunana and
Abdullahi Gultoma

also remained silent on the choice of secretary.

The government released a list of 48 out of 50 delegates allocated to it but remained silent on the key positions of chairman and secretary of the confab.

Sources at the presidency told *Daily Trust* yesterday that though government has not changed its mind on the choice of renowned catholic

priest, Reverend Matthew Kukah, as secretary of the political reform conference, it was no longer interested in the choice of Supreme Court judge, Justice Niki Tobi, who was earlier pencilled down to head the confab.

The usually reliable

source told *Daily Trust* that government is finding it extremely difficult to decide on the choice of a southern Muslim that would be acceptable to a cross-section of Nigerians to serve as chairman of the confab.

This, the source said, is

the result of the expected opposition from Nigerians on the choice of Niki Tobi, a christian southern minority and Kukah, a christian northern minority as chairman and secretary of the confab respectively.

However, our source said President Olusegun Obasanjo might announce the names of the conference chairman and secretary when he inaugurates the committee on Monday.

Contd. on Pg 2

Enahoro, Soyinka may attend

President Olusegun Obasanjo has named Chief Anthony Enahoro and Professor Wole Soyinka as his nominees to represent Edo and Ogun States respectively at the forthcoming national political reform conference.

Enahoro and Soyinka are leading a coalition of civil society groups opposed to the proposed conference

By Isa Sanusi, Senior
Correspondent (Senate)

organised by the federal government while insisting on having a sovereign national conference.

Professor Wole Soyinka and Chief Anthony Enahoro had earlier rejected President Obasanjo's proposed national dialogue and even planned to hold a parallel conference.

Also on Obasanjo's list is the former secretary of the catholic secretariat and member of Oputa Panel, Father Mathew Hassan Kukah and Chief Afe Babalola (SAN) who has been the president's counsel up to the end of the suit challenging his reelection in 2003.

Dr Bala Usman, a prolific historian and university don has been nominated by the president to represent Katsina state while the former minister of finance and one of the founders of the PDP, Malam Adamu Ciroma, is also on the president's list.

Senate leader in the
Contd. on Pg 2



President Olusegun Obasanjo going through a note after the presentation of product of Nigerian Software Development project held at the State House, Abuja Tuesday. Others are, the Chief of Staff, General Abdullahi Mohammed, Professor Julius Ihonbhare Special Adviser Policy Monitoring and Programme Implementation and others at the occasion..
Pix: Joe Oroye.

Obasanjo picks 93 delegates

Though the federal government earlier pronounced that it will nominate fifty delegates to the national conference, the list released yesterday indicated that it may have nominated well above that figure.

The list made available to *Daily Trust* showed that beside the 37 nominees whom the federal government des-

By AbdulAzeez Abdullahi,
Group News Editor

cribed as 'respectable elder statesmen,' it named representatives of retired military personnel and retired police and state security service (SSS) personnel as well.

Other nominations included three retired civil servants and two retired diplo-

mats. The retired military personnel had three representatives while retired police, SSS, diplomats and civil servants have two representatives bringing the number to 48 delegates.

In addition, the federal government may have also nominated representatives for traditional rulers from the six geo-political zones with the north central having HRH Alfred Torkula, the Tor Tiv as its representative. The north east and the north west had HRH Alhaji Usman Abubakar and HRH (Dr) Zaiyanu Abdullahi respectively.

Traditional rulers from the south east, south south and south west are represented by Igwe Alfred Achobe, King Edward Pepple

and Oba Olagbegi respectively, thus shooting the number of the governments delegation to 54.

The federal government may have also made nominations for six representatives of Nigeria youth organisations who were picked from each of the six geo-political zones and another six also for women groups from the corresponding number of geo-political zones which when added up, gives 68 nominations for the federal government.

Nominations, as indicated in the federal government's list, also showed representatives of the two dominant religions in the country. Six muslim leaders; one each from Zamfara,
Contd. on Pg 2

Kabiru Yusuf leads Daily Trust team for coverage

By Abdu Labaran,
Group Political Editor

The Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director of Media Trust Limited, Publishers of *Daily Trust* and *Weekly Trust* Newspapers, Malam Kabiru A. Yusuf is to lead the team of the company's reporters for the coverage of the forthcoming National Political Reform Conference.

Other members of the seven-man Media Trust team of reporters are Mr. Tunde Asaju of the Editorial Board, Abdu Labaran, the Group Political Editor and Mrs. Kemi Ogedengbe, the Judicial Editor. The rest are Habib I. Pindiga, Emmanuel Bello and Mr. Kennedy Egbonodje, the Chief Photographer.

According to the editor in chief, his decision to personally lead the coverage of

Contd. on Pg 2

Discrepancies in states' list

The federal government yesterday announced a list of delegates to the political reform conference with discrepancies in the states list.

In yesterday's list, the federal government also nominated two delegates from

states that have less population for reasons best known to it.

For instance, two delegates were nominated from states like Anambra, Benue, Bauchi, Edo, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina, Kogi and Ogun, while Kano and Lagos, the

most populated states in the federation got one delegate each.

The federal government's nominees to the conference are: Dr Uma Eleazu (Abia); Senator Mahmud Waziri (Adamawa); Chief Ndaeyo
Contd. on Pg 2

News

FG *Contd. from Pg 1*

The source told *Daily Trust* that though government has a long list of southern muslims it had pencilled down for the position, it was insisting on a candidate that was not a nominal muslim but a practicing muslim that would be acceptable to Nigerians.

President Obasanjo's confab has attracted opposition from the National Assembly whose two chambers had separately refused to pass a budget of N935 million presented by the president to fund the confab.

Fifty-seven members of the House of Representatives from the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the opposition All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD), have also filed a case at an Abuja high court,

challenging the legality of the confab.

The pro-National Conference organisation headed by pro-democracy activists like Chief Anthony Enahoro, Professor Wole Soyinka and Dr. Beko Ransome Kuti, have remained vocally opposed to President Obasanjo's talk shop.

The group has planned a parallel confab which is expected to kick off sometime in June.

Surprisingly however, Chief Anthony Enahoro and Professor Wole Soyinka are among the list of federal government's delegates released yesterday.

President Olusegun Obasanjo has insisted on going ahead with the conference and announced Monday that government has decided on an alternative source to fund the confab.

Enahoro *Contd. from Pg 1*

second republic, Dr Olusola Saraki, was nominated to represent Kwara state while the former national chairman of the PDP, Chief Barnabas Gemade represents Benue state on the president's list.

Two other former ministers in President Obasanjo's

cabinet that made it to the list are Alhaji Sule Lamido, Jigawa state, Dr Kema Chikwe, Imo state and Dr Haliru Bello Mohammed from Kebbi state.

Senator Mahmud Waziri, Chief Paul Unongo, Mrs Elizabeth Pam are also on the president's list.

Obasanjo *Contd. from Pg 1*

Bauchi, Ogun, Kwara, Enugu and Rivers states were picked. Another six were nominated to serve as christian leaders from the six geopolitical zones in the country, bringing the number of delegates apparently nominated by government to 80.

Five other persons were also nominated to represent Nigerians in the diaspora in addition to another three

representing physically challenged persons. Five more delegates which the government called "special cases" were nominated comprising, Mr Kanu Agabi, Professor Jerry Gana, Mr Fola Adeola, Alhaji Iro Dan Musa and Professor Joy Ogwu, bringing the number of federal government nominees to 93.

Discrepancies *Contd. from Pg 1*

Utah (Akwa Ibom); Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Chief Arthur Nwankwo (Anambra); Alhaji Sule Katagum, Ambassador Yahaya Mahmud (Bauchi); Mr Serena Dokubo (Bayelsa); Chief Barnabas Gemade, Chief Paul Unongo (Benue) and Dr Shettima Mustapha (Borno).

Others include; Chief M. T. Mbu (Cross River); Mrs Stella Omu (Delta); Mrs Mabel Aneke, (Ebonyi); Professor Christie Okogie, Chief Tony Enahoro (Edo); Chief Afe Babalola (SAN) (Ekiti); Chief P. C. Egbogu (Enugu); Alhaji Usman Faruk, Ambassador Yerima Abdullahi (Gombe); Dr Kema Chikwe (Imo) and Alhaji Sule Lamido (Jigawa).

Others are; Mrs Aisha Pamela Sadauki, Father Mathew Kukah (Kaduna); Dr Abdullahi Umar Ganduje (Kano); Senator Samaila Mamman, Dr Bala Usman (Katsina); Dr Bello Haliru Mohammed (Kebbi); Chief E. O. Otitoju, Professor J. Idachaba (Kogi) and Dr Olusola Saraki (Kwara).

Other nominees of the federal government are; Chief J. O. Williams (Lagos); Alhaji Aliyu Akwe Doma (Nasarawa); Senator Jibrin Salihu (Niger); Professor Wole Soyinka, Professor Bayo Adedeji (Ogun) and Professor Omotayo Olutoye

(Ondo).

The rest are; Mrs Tejumade Alakija (Osun); Dr Lekan Are (Oyo); Mrs Elizabeth Pam (Plateau); Dr Chukwemeka Nna Obi (Rivers); Alhaji Ahmed Mohammed Gusau (Sokoto), Mrs Saloma Jankada (Taraba); Alhaji Adamu Ciroma (Yobe); Dr Garba Nadama (Zamfara) and Mrs Esther Audu (FCT).

The federal government also nonminted what it referred to as "retired military, police and SSS personnel. Those who made it in the retired military personnel list are; Lt-Gen Joshua Dogo-nyaro (rtd) from Plateau state, Rear Admiral Hamzat Sani (rtd) from Kogi state and Air Commodore Emeka Omeruah (rtd) from Abia state.

Similarly, Mr Fidelis Oyakhilome (Edo); and Alhaji L. A. Akande (Oyo) were nominated as retired police personnel, while Chief Joshua Fumudoh (Delta) and Alhaji Sada Ihu (Katsina) were nominated as retired SSS personnel.

Also on the list are representatives of retired civil servants which include Mr Ason Bur, (Benue), Mrs F. Emmanuel (Lagos) as well as representatives of retired diplomats which included Ambassador Usman Yola (Kano) and Ambassador Dapo Fafowora (Osun).

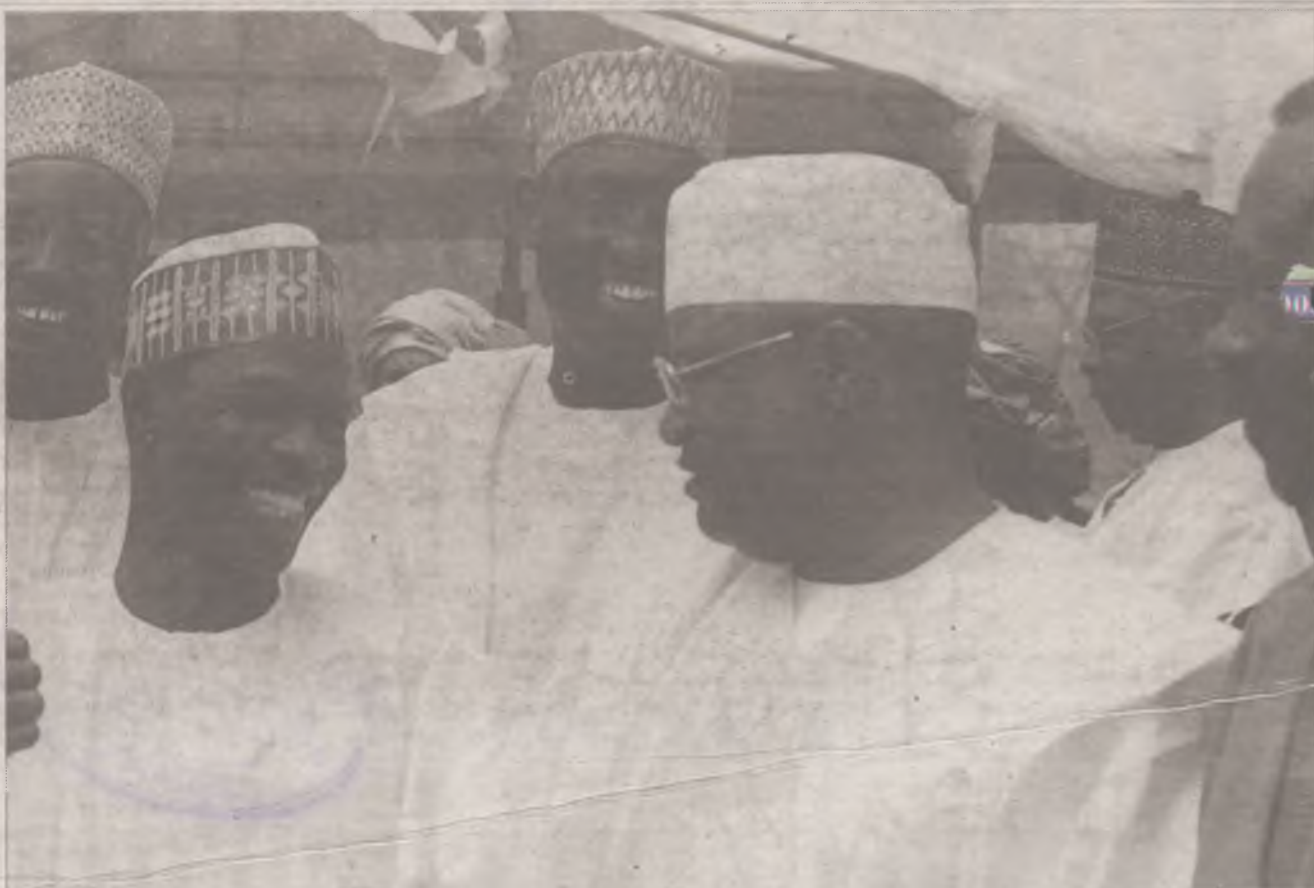
Kabiru *Contd. from Pg 1*

the conference is informed by its fundamental significance to the social, political and economic development of the nation.

He said an event of such significance deserved to be given all the coverage that it

can get.

He further said that Nigerians deserved to be informed in the best way possible about what is arguably one of the biggest events in the life of the current administration.



Former Military President, General Ibrahim Babangida discussing with the Minister of Water Resources, Alhaji Muktari Shagari and other officials during the foundation laying ceremony of the late General Murtala Mohammed's Centre for Ethics and Leadership held in Abuja ...Monday.
Pix: Joe Oroye.



Governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi (left) presenting a document to Mr Christopher Abashiya, during the presentation of Kaduna State Delegates to the National Political Reform Conference to the public in Kaduna ...recently.



The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Alhaji Nuhu Ribadu (middle), Deputy Chairman, House Committee on Media and Public Affairs, Hon Farouk Adamu Aliyu (left) and chairman Sub-Committee on Bank and Banking, Hon Lawal Garba during the EFCC management visit to National Assembly, Abuja ... yesterday.
Pix: Felix Onighinde.

National Confab... National Confab... National Confab...

Full list of confab delegates

RESPECTABLE ELDERSTATESMEN

Dr. Uma Eleazu Abia
 Senator Mahmud Waziri Adamawa
 Chief Ndaeyo Utah Akwa Ibom
 Chief Emeka Anyaoku Anambra
 Arthur Nwankwo Anambra
 Mhaji Sule Katagum Bauchi
 Amb. Mahmoud Yahaya Bauchi
 Mr. Serena Dokubo Bayelsa
 Chief Barnabas Gemade Benue
 Chief Paul Unongo Benue
 Dr. Shetiha Mustapha Borno
 Chief M.T. Mbu Cross River
 Mrs. Stella Omu Delta
 Chief (Mrs.) Mabel Aneke Ebonyi
 Prof. Christie Okogie Edo
 Chief Tony Enahoro Edo
 Chief Afe Babalola Ekiti
 Chief P.C. Egbogu Enugu
 Alhaji Usman Faruk Gombe
 Amb. Yerima Abdullahi Gombe
 Dr. Kema Chikwe Imo
 Alhaji Sule Lamido Jigawa
 Mrs. Aisha Pamela Sadauki Kaduna
 Father Matthew Kukah Kaduna
 Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje Kanô
 Senator Ismaila Mamman Katsina
 Dr. Bala Usman Katsina
 Dr. Haliru Bello Mohammed Kebbi
 Chief E.O. Otitoju Kogi
 Prof. J. Idachaba Kogi
 Dr. Olusola Saraki Kwara
 Chief J. O. Williams Lagos
 Alhaji Aliyu Akwe Doma Nasarawa
 Senator Jibrin Salihu Niger
 Prof. Wole Soyinka Ogun
 Prof. Bayo Adedeji Ogun
 Prof. (Mrs.) Omotayo Olutoye Ondo
 Mrs. Tejumade Alakija Osun
 Dr. Lekan Are Oyo
 Mrs. Elizabeth Pam Plateau
 Dr. Chukwuemeka Nnam Obi Rivers
 Alhaji Ahmed Mohammed Gusau Sokoto
 Mrs. Salome Jankada Taraba
 Alhaji Adamu Ciroma Yobe
 Dr. Garba Nadama Zamfara
 Mrs. Esther Audu FCT

3 No. Retired Military Personnel
 Lt. Gen. Joshua Dogonyaro (rtd) Plateau Army
 Rear Admiral Hamzat Sani (rtd) Kogi Navy
 Air Commodore Emeka Omeruah (rtd) Abia Airforce

2 No. Retired Police Personnel
 Fidelis Oyakhilome (AIG), (rtd) Edo
 Alhaji L.A. Akande (CP), (rtd) Oyo

2 No. Retired SSS Personnel
 Chief Joshua Fumudoh Delta
 Alhaji Sada Ilu Katsina

2 No. Retired Civil Servants
 Ason Bur Benue
 Mrs. F. Emanuel Lagos

2 No. Retired Diplomats
 Amb. Usman Yola Kano
 Amb. Dapo Fafowora Osun

State Representatives (6 Per State & 2 from FCT)
 Abia State
 Dr. Sam Eke
 Dr. J.C. Ogbonnaya
 Chief Vincent Brown
 Dr. Nnaukwu Ukoha
 Dr. John Austin Chikezie
 Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe (rtd)

ADAMAWA STATE
 Mallam Abdulkarim Albashir
 Prof. Musa Yakubu
 Barr. Boss Mustapha
 Dr. Aminu Gurin
 Mr. Vidon Jaule
 Sa'adu MaiYaki

AKWA-IBOM STATE
 Lady Barrister Ime Essien Udom
 Senator Emmanuel Ibok Essien
 Senator Akaninyene Ukpahan
 Her Excellency, Mrs. Helen Esuene
 Dr. Ekeng Anamdu

ANAMBRA STATE
 Chief (Dr.) Chukwuemeka Ezeife
 Barr. Zik Obi
 Chief Mike Ajegbo
 Engr. Chris Okoye

BAUCHI STATE
 Alhaji Mohammed Bello Kirfi, CON
 Alhaji Kaulaha Aliyu
 Ambassador Mohammed Adamu Jumba
 Dr. Ibrahim Yakubu Lame
 Amb. Mohammed Chadi Abubakar, OFR
 Barr. Habibu Aliyu

BAYELSA STATE
 Prof. Kimse Okoko
 Barr. Orono Douglas
 Chief Francis Doukpolo
 Dr. Amba Ambaowe

BENUE STATE
 Chief Senator Jack Willey-Gyado
 Lt. Gen. Victor Malu (rtd)
 Sir. George Korgba
 Barrister Fred Orti
 Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Ejigah (rtd)
 Chief Stephen Oto

BORNO STATE
 His Excellency Alhaji Mohammed Goni
 Alhaji Ibrahim Damcida
 Ambassador Baba Ahmed Jiddah
 Alhaji Mohammed Kagu Alibe, mni
 Professor Mohammed Nur Alkali
 Alhaji Mohammed Lawan Buba

CROSS RIVER STATE
 Rt. Hon. (Dr.) Joseph Wayas
 Chief (Dr.) Matthias Offboche
 Ntufam (Dr.) Sandy Onoh
 Dr. Otu Abam Ubi

Brig. Gen. Basse Asuquo
DELTA STATE
 Mr. Sylvester I. Moemeke
 Rear Admiral Mike Oriah
 Deacon Gamaliel O. Onosode
 Prof. Omafume Onoge
 Chief Edwin Kiagbodo Clark
 Prof. Itse Sagay

EBONYI STATE
 Elder Anyim Ude
 Elder (Dr.) Agom Eze
 Chief Martin Elechi
 Chief Chima Innocent Ugo
 Chief Polycarp Nwite
 Chief (Barr.) Agama Agama

EDO STATE
 Mr. A.O. Eghobamien, SAN
 Chief Sam Iredia
 Prof. R.A. Anao
 Chief C. Abebe
 Admiral Mike Akhigbe (rtd)
 Mr. Tunde Lakoju

EKITI STATE
 Chief S.K. Babalola
 Prof. Isola Olomola
 Barr. Dele Adesina
 Barr. Sole Akinyede
 Barr. Akin Omole
 Dr. (Mrs.) Ibidayo Alebiosu

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 HRH Igwe Samson C. Nnamani
 Rev. (Dr.) Hyde U. Onuaguluchi
 Chief (Mrs.) Christy Nkem Okoye
 Chief Bernard Anaezionwu Eze
 Chief Hon. Okey Fred Agu

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 Professor Idris Mohammed
 Alhaji Magaji Mu'azu
 Hon. Nuhu Poloma
 Alhaji Abubakar Aliyu Deba
 Alhaji Abubakar Muazu Hassan

IMO STATE
 Justice C. Oputa
 Barr. B. Nwakanma
 Chief E.C. Iwuanyanwu
 Dr. Douglas Acholonu
 Chief Ziggy Azuike
 Chief Chika Okafor

JIGAWA STATE
 H.R.H. Najib Hussaini Adamu, Emir of Kazaure
 Alhaji Sulaiman Baffa
 Alhaji Mohammed Bashari Gumel
 Hajia Fatima Maibornu
 Alhaji Aminu Ringim
 Alhaji Tijjani Inuwa Dutse

KADUNA STATE
 Dr. Umaru Dikko
 Alhaji Ja'afaru Makarfi
 Prof. Anjo Abdullahi
 Alhaji Abdulkadir Jibrin
 Dr. Christopher Shuaibu Abashiya
 Mr. Emmanuel Toro, (SAN)

KANO STATE
 Alhaji Magaji Danbatta
 Alhaji Sule Yahaya Hama
 Professor Auwalu H. Yadudu
 Alhaji Isiaku Umar Tofa
 Dr. Haruna Salihu
 Alhaji M. T. Waziri

KATSINA STATE
 Alhaji Garba Ja Abdulkadir
 Alhaji Saidu Barda
 Alhaji Ibrahim Ahmadu Coomassie
 Alhaji Kabir Sa'idu Daura
 Alhaji Tukur Mani
 Barrister Ibrahim Shehu Shema

KEBBI STATE
 Col. Bello Kalief (rtd)
 Alh. Isa Mohammed
 Senator Abubakar N. Abdullahi
 Professor Attahiru Jega
 Alhaji Abdullahi Ahman
 Dr. Sa'idu Muhammed Birnin Yauri

KOGI STATE
 Alhaji Abdullahi Ibrahim (SAN)
 Col. Ahmed Ali (rtd)
 Engr. Emmanuel Oluwalan (rtd)
 Dr. G.T.N. Ajakpo
 Engr. Ahmed Onogo
 Mr. Joseph Suleiman

KWARA STATE
 Alhaji Saidu Isa, MFR
 Alhaji Mahmood Ibrahim
 Prof. Albert F. Ogunzola, OFR
 Hon. Kola Shittu
 Alhaji Ayinla Folorunsho
 Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje

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 Senator Sikiru Shitta-Bey
 Mr. Olorunfunmi Bashorun
 Mrs. Tawa Williams

NASARAWA STATE
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 Mr. Dogara Igube
 Mr. James Kpason
 Alhaji Yakubu Zubairu Kwarra
 Group Captain Usman Jibrin (rtd)
 Mr. Tanimu Adabson

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 Prof. Shehu A. Jibrin Bida
 Alhaji Abubakar Magaji
 Barrister Umar Kawu
 Hon. Dahiru Awaisu Kuta
 Alhaji Isiyaku Musa Jikantoro

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 Dr. Tunji Otegbeye
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 Chief Ebenezer Babatope
 Dr. Olu Alabi
 Hon. Dosu Oladipo
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 Dr. Wale Oladipo

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 Barrister Bayo Shittu

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 Barr. Danjuma Maina
 Alhaji Yakubu Şambo
 Chief (Dr.) Solomon D. Lar
 Yahaya Kwande

RIVERS STATE
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 Chief Sampson Agbaru
 Chief Barinua M. Wifa
 Dr. Silas Eneyo
 Barrister Akeodi Sunday Oyaghiri
 Senator Dr. Tari Sekibo

SOKOTO STATE
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 Alhaji Bala Hassan
 Amb. Hamzat Ahmadu
 Alhaji Ahmed Achida
 Dr. M.Z. Umar
 Barr. Suleiman Usman

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 Rev. Sen. Lika Zanya
 Alhaji Ibrahim Abubakar
 Hon. Emmanuel Bovoa
 Hon. Yaku Agbaizo
 Mr. Johnny Atiku

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 Alhaji Aji Baitu Dapchi
 Alhaji Sidi Yakubu Karasuwa
 Col. Mohammed Audu (rtd)
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 Alhaji Abubakar Hussaini Moriki
 Mansur Khalifa Mallam Sani
 Malam Yahaya Abdul-Karim
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 Rev. William Okoye

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NORTH EAST
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NORTH WEST
 HRH (Dr.) Zayyanu Abdullahi, Emir of Yauri

SOUTH EAST
 Igwe Alfred Nnaemeka Achebe

SOUTH WEST
 HRM King Edward Pepple - Amayanabo of Bonny

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 Engr. (Dr.) Nur Yakubu

NORTH WEST
 Dr. Kabiru Isyaku

SOUTH EAST
 Professor Cletus N. Uwazurike

SOUTH SOUTH
 Professor Nimi Briggs

SOUTH WEST
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 Mazi Sam I. Oluabunwa, MON
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 Hajia Bilikisu Yusuf
 Mrs. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo
 Olori Yetunde Gbadebo.

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 Chief G.G. Giwa
 Chief Sam Bolarinde
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 Alhaji Bashir M. Borodo

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 Dr. Simeon Chukwuemeka Okolo
 Rear Admiral Murtala Nyako (rtd)
 Alhaji Mohammed Munir Ja'afaru, OFR, mni

Chief (Mrs.) Mary-Awhotu Iyasere

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PDP
 Nze Ozichukwu F. Chukwu - South East
 Chief Obinna Ogba - South East
 Barr. Venatius A. Ikem - South South
 Dr. S.O. Ogbemudia - South South
 Prof. Femi Otunbajo - South West
 Barr. Toy Olofintuyi - South West
 Mrs. Iyabode Pam - North Central
 Barr. Humphrey Abah - North Central
 Alhaji Farouk B. Farouk - North West
 Alhaji Yusuf Suleiman - North West
 Senator Maina Ma'aji Lawan - North East
 Alhaji Mohammed Waziri (rtd) - North East

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 Alhaji Sani Dahir El-Katuzu
 Hajia Halima Alfa
 Alhaji A. Bayero Bello

AD

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 Chief Chekwes Okorie
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 Mallam Shehu Sani - North West
 Mr. Idris Miliki Abdul - North Central
 Chief Bar. Mike A.A. Ozekhome - South South
 Barr. Mike Nkwocha - South East

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 Sokoto - Zamfara State
 Dr. Ibrahim Tahir - Talban Bauchi - Bauchi State
 Professor Ishaq Oloyede - Ogun State
 Justice Abdulkadir Orire (rtd) - Kwara State
 Sheik Adam Idoko - Enugu State
 Alhaji O.R.T. Okiri - Rivers State

Christian Leaders
 Dr. Haruna Mshelia - North East
 Dauda Ishaya - North West
 Barr. John Achimugu - North Central
 Mosignor John Aniagu - South East
 Bishop Peter Adebisi - South West
 Rev. Dr. Daniel Oko - South South

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 Com. Tony Nwoye
 Com. Mahmud Nasir

Nigeria Guild of Editors
 Mallam Halilu Baba Dantiye

Nigeria Union of Journalists
 Prince Smart Adeyemi

Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria
 Chief Ajibola Ogunzola
 Mr. Nduka Obaigbena

Physically Challenged People
 Danlami Umaru Basharu
 Miss Nike Akinbola
 Yinka Ibiidunni (Blind)

Nigerians in Diaspora (1 Each from Europe, America, Asia and Africa)
 Dr. Ola Kasim - Chairman, NIDO America
 Dr. Francis Ifejike Adike - Asia
 Dr. Olufemi Olojughba - NIDO Europe
 O. Luther King - Ghana
 Dr. Isa Odidi - Canada

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 Engr. Bello Suleiman
 Mallam Ibrahim Mai Sule
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 Senator Femi Okunronmu

Ohanaeze
 Professor J.O. Irukwu, SAN
 Senator Francis J. Ellah, OFR, KSGGF, FNIM

Middle Belt Forum
 Hon. Isaac Shaahu
 Mr. John Dara

Ijaw National Congress (INC)
 Chief F.J. Williams

IGBIMO AGBA YORUBA
 Major General R.A. Adebayo (rtd) OFR

SPECIAL CASES
 Mr. Kanu Agabi
 Professor Jerry Gana
 Mr. Fola Adeola
 Alhaji Iro Dan Musa
 Prof. Joy Ogwu

News

National Confab... National Confab... National Confab...

Justice Nasir advises delegates

The vice chairman of the 1995 constitutional conference and the then chairman. Constitutional Destiny Committee, Hon. Justice Mamman Nasir (Galadiman Katsina), has enjoined the delegates not to think of re-negotiating the existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity.

Presenting a paper at Katsina state's pre-conference seminar held at the state secretariat complex, the former president of the federal court of Appeal said all the delegates to the political reforms conference must first start with the belief in the existence of Nigeria as a federating unit.

Group berates appointment of Ogun delegates

From Kayode Ajobola, Correspondent (Abeokuta)

The national coordinator, Yewa Awori Youths Agenda Forum (YAYAF), Mr. Kayode Oni, has described the appointment of elderly politicians to represent Ogun state in the proposed national dialogue without recourse to the youths as a disservice.

Also, the chairman, YEWA Think Tank, Dr. S.A.J. Ibikunle has expressed disappointment over the National Assembly rejecting the national dialogue.

The two leaders, for spoke separately during the formal inauguration of YAYAF voluntary service scheme held at the Gateway Hotels, Sango-Otta, at the weekend.

The national coordinator of YAYAF, appealed to the leaders of thought in the state to rally supports for the 2005 population.

It would be recalled that only last week, Ogun state government released the names of those to represent the state at the proposed names include Nigerian Ambassador to great Britain, Prince Bola Ajibola, Dr. Ayọ Otegbola, Aremu Taiwo Alimi Retired Brig. Oluwole Rotimi, Dr. Tunji Otegbeye and Prof. Adebayo Adedeji.

Mr. Oni pleaded with Otumba Gbenga Daniel to create an addition local government from the Ogun West senatorial district so that the district could meet up with other senatorial districts in the state.

From Lawal Ibrahim, Katsina

He said it is wrong for anyone to think of a break up and that any attempt at such could end in a civil war, urging delegates to learn from the history of past leaders who organised various constitutional reforms conferences but at no time was the issue of re-negotiating the existence of Nigeria ever raised.

Justice Mamman Nasir out who participated in most of the constitutional reforms conference in the country pointed out that the weaknesses of conferences is that they are perceived as an extension of the duties of the executive arm of government or that of the president because all the recommendations are submitted to him to decide especially under the previous military regimes.

"Though this conference is a partial submission to the will and advocate of the supreme national conference, neither the advocates of SNS nor government could tell us the benefit to Nigeria which was not at onetime or the other raised, discussed and decided upon without undermining the credibility of the proposed reform conference", he lamented.

Middle Belt wants independence

The Middle Belt Forum (MBF), has declared that its delegates will use the proposed national dialogue to slug it out with the powers that be over its independence from the core north.

The organisation's national chairman, Hon. Isaac Sha'ahu, who made its position known in a chat with newsmen in Benue state, said MBF plans to use the talk shop to call for the recognition of the original regions, saying the regions would bring about true federation taking Nigeria for a ride. A return to regions such tendencies would reduce. The regions will articulate their positions and make progress," said Hon. Sha'ahu who declared MBF's position on the zone's fusion with the core north.

He said middle belt is not comfortable being recognised as north and said the zone will continue to fight for its rights until



Gov. Bukola Saraki signing the 2005 budget into law, while the speaker House of Assembly, Hon. Alhaji Bio Ibrahim and the clerk of the House, Alhaji Maye Abdulkadir watch with keen interest.

Why FG insists on National Confab-Atiku

Vice-president Atiku Abubakar says the federal government insisted on holding the national political reform confab because it believes that if the issues slated for the conference are seriously addressed, the challenges of national integration, nation-building, peace and stability would have been reasonable tackled.

Alhaji Atiku was speak-

From Rakiya A. Muhammed, Correspondent (Jos)

ing at the inauguration of the new set of participants, SEC 27 of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, (NIPSS), Kuru, Plateau state.

He lamented that the nation's recent times have been characterised by agitations for resource control, and tension, among others which he noted have combined to threaten national unity, peace and stability and impeded nation-building.

This situation he asserted, has been of serious concern to government as various groups do not seem to think that they have a stake in the Nigerian project.

The vice president who was represented by the Head

of Civil Service of the Federation, Alhaji Yayale Ahmed, said it was as a result of the given situation that government endorsed the idea of the national political reform conference which will politically address constitutional, electoral, political, judicial and civil service reforms, as well as consensus building and

reforms of the structure of governance.

Alhaji Atiku observed that though the array of issues do not represent the totality of Nigeria's problems yet if they are adequately addressed would ensure that the threats to national unity, peace and stability of the country are surmounted.

Northern Union out for unity of North -Dr. Saraki

Former Senate leader and one of the prominent architects of the newly formed Northern Union (NU), Dr. Abubakar Olusola Saraki, say at the union was out to ensure the Unity of the whole northern region.

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent, Ilorin

Fielding questions from newsmen at Tsonga, Edu local government area of Kwara state, Dr. Saraki said "who go to the national political reform conference."

He said with unity, "you can negotiate with others. I am talking to my people in the Northern region that we must unite because we are not united now. So whatever the north wants, it must conform with the peace and stability of Nigeria."

The Waziri Ilorin, said he was at Tsonga to allay the fears of the community about the Zimbabwean farmers project which he explained will transform the socio-economic existence of the people.

Dr. Saraki described the best government award on Dr. Bukola Saraki as the beginning of a long rugged journey and charged him to put more grease on his elbows.

Earlier, the Emir of Tsonga, Dr. Haliru Yahaya, had thanked the Kwara state government for the Zimbabwean farmers project sited in the town but appealed to the government to act fast and speed up to "deliver the deliverable goods quite quickly."

Confab not alternative to N/Assembly -commissioner

The Niger state commissioner for information, Alhaji Umar Ragada, has declared in Ilorin that the national political reform conference should not be misconstrued as an alternative assembly to usurp the functions of the National Assembly.

Speaking during a courtesy visit to the Kwara state Ogundeji, Alhaji Ragada said Niger state supports the idea of the conference and called on Nigerians to support President Obasanjo to ensure the success of the exercise.

According to him, "we in Niger state believe that the National Assembly has its own job and it is doing its job, hence we believe the national confab is not providing an alternative assembly at all because the kind of is-

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent, Ilorin

sues and recommendations that will emerge from the national confab would only serve-as inputs for certain amendments to the constitution."

The National Assembly, he added, should see the confab as an aggregation of inputs from the people of Niger state to enable them perform their duty properly, explaining that there was wisdom behind the nomination of the participants rather than being elected.

He said governor Bukola Saraki deserves the best government award conferred on him by *ThisDay* newspaper considering, what "I have seen on ground during my visit," and called for stonger ties between Niger and Kwara states.



President Obasanjo

News

Hajj: pilgrims airlift ends tomorrow

The airlift of pilgrims back to the country ends on Thursday February 17, 2005, the spokesman of the Directorate of Pilgrims Affairs (DPA), Alhaji Umar A.T. Bala, has said.

The spokesman told *Daily Trust* yesterday that the two air carriers have 11 flights to conclude their mandates.

According to him Sokoto, has extra four flights, Kaduna one, Katsina one, Kano four Minna one and Yola one, respectively.

NICON

privatisation to be completed this year

From Reuben Yunana, State House Correspondent

Vice President Atiku Abubakar has confirmed that the privatisation of NICON Insurance Corporation, which started in 2001 is to be completed before the end of this year.

Speaking at the inauguration of the technical board of the corporation, Atiku directed the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), to "open the data room by April with a view to completing the transactions not later than August this year."

He said the inauguration of the board, headed by the director general of the BPE, complete became imperative "in view of the protracted problems encountered in the privatisation of the agency."

Atiku said prospective core investors were identified in 2000, yet no progress was made in aggregating all the information necessary for preparing the information memorandum required for the commencement of due diligence by these investors.

The technical board is therefore required to provide a focal point and effectively drive the privatisation process in the corporation to ensure that the core investor sale is completed this year, he said.

The dissolution of the boards of federal government agencies he said, also affected NICON Insurance Corporation, adding: "The primary responsibility of the technical board is to ensure all the functions normally carried out by the board of the corporation is done in such a manner as to ensure that the privatisation programme is executed according to the work plan."

Other members of the board are, Mr. Nath Yaduma of the office of the vice president, Mr. Danladi Kifasi, Accountant-General's office, Mrs. Priscilla Soares, MD NICON Insurance and Mr. Paul Idomigie, General Consul of the secretariat of National Council on Privatisation.

Also yesterday, the vice president inaugurated two committees on the implementation of the open access regime on Petroleum and Products Marketing Company (PPMC).

Atiku described the occasion as "yet another milestone in the reforms of the downstream sector of the Nigerian oil and gas industry," adding that "the event marks the injection of private sector operators into the logistics among the NNPC."

From Jibrin Abubakar Reporter (Foreign Desk) and Abubakar Haruna Reporter (Woman Desk)

According to Bala, this year's hajj operation was smooth because the Saudi Arabian authority allocated a screening bay to Nigeria.

"Subsequently more screening bays were allocated to the country as other countries completed their airlift operations", he said.

Although the airlift operation was concluded within the period of 22 days, Umar Bala however avered that the exercise would have been completed much earlier if not for the bad weather experienced, as well as the closure of the Sudanese airspace to Nigerian flights.

Meanwhile, Nigerian pilgrims have attributed the delay in the airlift of pilgrims from the holyland to the shoddy arrangements by the government and the airline operators.

Some of the pilgrims who spoke on the Hausa service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), monitored in Abuja, yesterday, attributed their ordeals to lack of proper arrangements.

According to Alhaji Muntari Kwaru who had just arrived from Jidda, most of the problems began after the completion of the Hajj rituals.

Alhaji Muktar said "everything went smoothly but after we completed our rituals, there were lots of problems, ranging from lack of proper arrangement from the Holy land".

"I spent about seven days at Medina while many people spent three to four days in Jidda, I even thank God that I returned safely", he added.

Alhaji Muktar who said he witnessed some Nigerian pilgrims protesting against shortage of aircraft he also appealed to government to allow the state governments control Hajj operations in their various states

Senators oppose additional powers for EFCC

President Olusegun Obasanjo's amendment bill to the Advance Fee Fraud Act yesterday suffered a set back in the senate, as senators opposed the provision of more powers to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to check electronic fraud.

Obasanjo's bill, which was presented to the National Assembly last year, seeks to empower the commission to register internet service providers (ISPs), and prescribed a two-year jail term and N100,000 fine for default.

The legislation had scaled through the second reading and referred was to the committee on drugs narcotics and financial crimes, which presented its report to the senate yesterday.

Presenting the report, committee chairman, Senator Lawal Shuaibu (ANPP Zamfara), said his panel had recommend a wholesale adoption of the president's amendments.

But in the subsequent



The Adenuga daughters, Bella (left) and Oyin receiving the Chief Executive Officer of the year award on behalf of their father, Chief Mike Adenuga from Kwara state Governor, Dr. Bukola Saraki...recently

Niger moves to depose Emir of Borgu

An executive Bill has been sent to the Niger State House of Assembly to depose and appoint a new Emir of Borgu.

If the Bill which has now passed through the first reading (on Monday) succeeds, the Emir, Alhaji (Senator) Haliru Dantoro, the *Kitoro III* may soon be on his way out after spending just six months in office.

According to the Bill with reference number GHNS/5/105 dated February 11, 2003, titled: "Re: Bill for a law to provide for the Appointment and Deposition of Emir of Borgu," it states.

This law may be cited as the appointment and deposition (Appointment of Emir of Borgu), law, 2005 and shall come into operation on the 1st February, 2005.

The status of the Bill which also explained the constitution of the kingmakers of Borgu, stated that an electoral college system will guide the appointment of Borgu emirate and other emirs in the state.

"The electoral college shall through its chairman, notify the result of such an election to the governor within a week after the conclusion of the election.

"Any person so elected shall subject to the approval of the governor be deemed to be

From Kashim Sule, Correspondent (Minna)

chosen as the Emir of Borgu.

"Where the person selected by the electoral college as the Emir of Borgu is in the opinion of the governor, not suitable to be appointed as the emir, he may refuse to grant his approval to the appointment and instead, direct the electoral college to reconsider the matter and forward other nominations to him.

Presiding over the State House of Assembly on Monday, the deputy speaker, Honourable Haruna Labaran who stood in for the Speaker, Honourable Hassan Kekantoro who was away on overseas trip.

Honourable Jibrin A. Jibrin who introduced the Bill on the

floor of the House, said this would avoid squabbles in the choice of succession, as government wants to democratise the process of appointment of emirs.

It would be recalled that the Emir of Borgu, Alhaji (Senator) Haliru Dantoro, was appointed emir last September after a court battle that ended at the Supreme Court which verdict was in his favour.

Last Monday, just of a sudden, the state government announced that the coronation of the emir of Borgu has been postponed indefinitely.

The state House of Assembly resumes sitting tomorrow for the second reading of the bill.

KNSG receives N1.2bn from failed fertilizer contract

Kano state government has finally received N1.295bn recovered by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), from N3.95bn failed fertilizer contract award to Sino Afric.

The amount shows a balance N830m for the state government from fertilizer contract at the cost of N3.9bn.

The state commissioner of finance, Alhaji Musa Suleiman Shanono, who disclosed this at the ministry's monthly press briefing on receipts and disbursements of funds to government's ministries, parastatals and departments, observed that the recovered funds have boost the state

From Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent Kano

revenue base for the month of January this year.

The commissioner explained that the prompt intervention of the EFCC, has facilitate the recovery, just as he expressed optimism that the revenue balance will soon fall into the pocket of the government.

Alhaji Shanono noted that the government need to inform and enlighten the public on the utilization of their funds tow ensure prudent financial management of resources

Reps debate anti-corruption Bill amidst controversy

From Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter

The House of Representatives yesterday debated the Bill for an act to amend the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences amidst controversy and mandated the committee on Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), to appraise the Bill.

But members expressed disgust over the seemingly unsatisfactory conduct of the presiding officer, the deputy Speaker, Honourable Austin Opara, for his alleged partiality in administering the voting process to decide those in support of against the passage of the Bill.

Majority of the members voted against the Bill when the question on whether it should pass its second reading was thrown to the House, but the deputy Speaker favoured the Bill, an act which was later condemned by some members as "manipulative."

The Bill, which was moved for debate by Honourable Abdul Ningi, to amend the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) Act, was referred to the House committee on ICPC following its passage of the second reading.

adding that this, was the rationale behind the monthly press briefing.

This, he added, will go a long way tow foster mutual understanding and support of all and sundry in the state.

The commissioner, who debanked the insinuation that a lot of contractors are crying out over non payment of their liabilities, pointing that government had since its inception settled outstanding contract debts inherited from the past administration, so also for the new contracts it has awarded.

Education, panacea to fight against crime

The guest speaker at a public lecture on preventing and prosecuting crimes against humanity in the 21st century and a former justice of the constitutional court of South Africa, Justice (Dr.) Richard Goldstone, has said that the only way to put a stop to crimes against humanity is for the educational systems of countries to educate their citizens to understand their human rights and those of their fellow citizens.

Dr. Goldstone said this yesterday at a public lecture sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, chaired by Justice Emmanuel O. Ayoola and held at the Shehu Musa Yar'adua centre, Abuja.

He charged Africans in particular to lead by example by using her freedom from the colonial yoke to lead the way

By Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter

to racial and religious harmony on the continent in addition to using legal mechanisms to prevent horrendous crimes against humanity.

He noted that domestic crime rates in any country is directly in proportion to the efficiency of policing and the system of criminal justice, and that the more efficient policing and the criminal justice systems are, the lower crime rate will become in any country, hence tasking societies to apprehend and punish criminals accordingly.

He stressed the need for the people to perceive the laws guiding their conduct as just and moral, saying that this is an essential ingredient for the success of criminal justice in any country. "When leading nations embrace democracy and insist on the protection of fundamental human rights in

-Dr. Goldstone

their regions, the incidence of crimes against humanity will certainly diminish," he said.

In this regard, Dr. Goldstone said that the aspirations of the African Union are insufficient and suggested that leadership from Nigeria and other important African nations lead the continent towards a legacy with a universal jurisdiction for the most serious war crimes, establishment of international war crimes courts and judicial proceedings which will effectively record the history of massive crimes and stop fabricated denials of them.

"If some would-be criminals believe that they are likely to be arrested and brought before the international crime court (ICC), they might well think twice before becoming outlaws," of international criminal laws.

Soliloquy

WITH
A. B. Ahmed
dahmedia@canada.com

2007: Not very subtle battle lines

For even the least meticulous of observers, it is not a particularly big problem nowadays to identify and follow with considerable amusement the many pre-main-bout shadow-boxing matches going on between and among incumbent and aspiring presidents of our dear federal republic, in preparation for the presidential power struggle of 2007.

Starting out from a position of virtually zero political and electoral power, OBJ has had the great misfortune of making the Hobson's Choice between keeping his natural timidity and honest (if grossly earthy) humanity or jumping headlong into the filthy and unfamiliar murk of Nigerian politics in order to both earn his negotiated choice as president as well as to keep the party in power for the duration of his unhappy tenure. In the heat and

being now stripped of political power base, party support and subservience. He is just now learning to accept the fact of bare-faced rebellion from all directions, both within and outside the PDP.

Poor OBJ is now staring history in the eye, and not at all liking what he is seeing as his place in it.

PDP Chairman Audu Ogbah's cry from the heart which is still causing so much unbecoming reaction from OBJ and his blind loyalists is not really the tip of any iceberg or the vanguard of any organised treachery or rebellion. Believe me sincerely, it was just an alarm blown by an honest soul to alert Obasanjo to the fact that the president must act now, while he still has some vestiges of power and moral authority left, to do quick damage control on the reputations of both himself as a president in history as well as on the PDP.

sway, nor in Adamawa where Atiku calls the shots, nor in Gombe, nor in the core of the caliphate which he has already alienated by claiming not to know anything about power shift back to the North in 2007, nor anywhere else where *mutunci* and *kunya* are still highly valued human traits.

In Igboland, he has already burnt his bridges by the indecency in Anambra State. Greedily to the first two four-year terms of the South (1999-2007) and so misused it, for the benefit of no other identifiable. In his own base in the South West, he crudely *over-rigged* the 2003 presidential election in Ogun State (Olusegun Osoba, what are you waiting for? Won't you reclaim your stolen mandate?) and deploying presidential power to crush 'rebellion' in Owu. Really, the man has so misused power and opportunity in just five short years that the only viable option open to him after 2007 is to take internal self-exile with Tony Anenih somewhere

Opinion

Random rambling on Middle-Belt

By Nasir Dambatta

It has always been difficult, if not impossible, for most Nigerians to deny affinity - cultural or historical - to other Nigerians. The ligaments binding the diverse ethnic groups in the country by reason of history has made nonsense of the concept of Middle Belt for instance. Coined by politicians believed to promoting a tendency, the concept of Middle-Belt has been described by various scholars as a big misnomer.

Placing the twin concepts of Middle-Belt and geo-regional chauvinism in a historical context will only expose the myopia of many a Nigerian politician. Essentially, Nigerians in all parts of the federation have ties to one another either by way of migration or cross-cultural marriages. The nation's founding fathers were believed to be quite conscious of this chain of affinity, when they forged a common front against colonialism. They differed only in approach to the struggle but remained united by one goal - freedom for their fatherland.

For many compatriots, the present generations of Nigerian politicians are guilty of entrenching fragmentation in the body polity.

When the Middle-belt agitation started in the First Republic, the patriarch of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello Sardauna demystified it by promoting the philosophy of monolithic North - where the people's differences have been sources of strength. He gave prominent roles to the likes of Professor Ishaya Audu - a northern Christian minority, among several

others.

The Sardauna himself exemplify the fallacy of this denial of affinity in the North, for example, his father was from Sokoto and his mother was Bachama from present day Adamawa State. How could the Sardauna have disowned anybody from Adamawa for instance? So, Sardauna's famous Northernisation policy strengthened the rope tying the diverse ethnic and religious persuasions of the North at that time.

There are uncountable number of local examples that put a lie to the tendencies that deny the age-long philosophy of one North. Take the late Nigerian who propelled the programme of privatization of public enterprises for the first time in history: Hamza Zayyad-Zayyad is believed to be married to a Yoruba wife, just like Dr Datti Ahmad a former presidential aspirant from Kano State.

On the other rung of the ladder, could a prominent Nigerian like Alhaji Tanko Yakasai deny connection to Taraba State or Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim of Yobe denies strong ties to Borno State? Former President Babangida, is widely believed to be Gwari from Niger State. His closet neighbour, General Abdulsalami Abubakar though a Niger State indigene, has his roots in Kano State.

Brigadier General Buba Marwa has an Igbo wife, just like General Ibrahim Babangida who is married to Maryam Babangida from Delta State. Several other prominent Nigerians have affinity to other groups,

historically and culturally, beyond the barriers of ethnicity and geography. A simple example is the historical connection between South-East governors to the people of Benue State. This is not counting the number of traditional titles that scores of prominent Nigerians have bagged, either in the North or in the South.

Another interesting example is Ilorin, in Kwara State. The 1804 Jihad of Usman Danfodio spread to Ilorin. Consequently, you have Fulanis who also understand Yrouba very well. If not for the campaigns of some Fulani "supremacist" in the North, it would have been impossible to separate a Hausa-*nfan* from a Fulani man. That explains why the Jihad in Hausaland has dual impact: the Fulani's conquest was administrative while, on the other hand, the Hausas conquered Fulani's culturally. Such is the situation that today, you hardly see the Fulani man dressed in handmade sleeves and knee-length trousers but in kaftans and "zanna Bukar" caps. That also explains why you have Fulani that speak Hausa more fluently than their mother-tongue or "Fulanin gida" and "Fulanin jeji."

In a recent interview with the *Weekly Trust*, Kano State governor, Ibrahim Shekarau said in 2007, the North would vote for any Northerner "be he a devil". This kind of commitment was what the Sardauna promoted, to achieve monolithic North. It is perhaps for this reason that prominent Northerners tend to pitch tent with Vice-President Atiku Abubakar against 2007 presidency.

"All of which makes it even more amazing that with so much good quality assistance and advice readily available to him to draw upon while in office, poor OBJ is still where he is today."

pressure of making this unsavoury choice, there was not much time or inclination to think about history and his place in it, especially after the battle would have been won or lost and time would have leached away the passions and temptations which compelled him and all other actors in the conflict to make the decisions which they made, mostly sacrificing basic decency for heady exigencies.

Now that he has almost used up his second term, Chief Obasanjo is compelled to face the bitter fact that all his ephemeral power and influence as 'Mr. President and Commander-in-Chief sir!' are rapidly evaporating into thin air, in direct proportion to just how low his political profile is rapidly becoming,

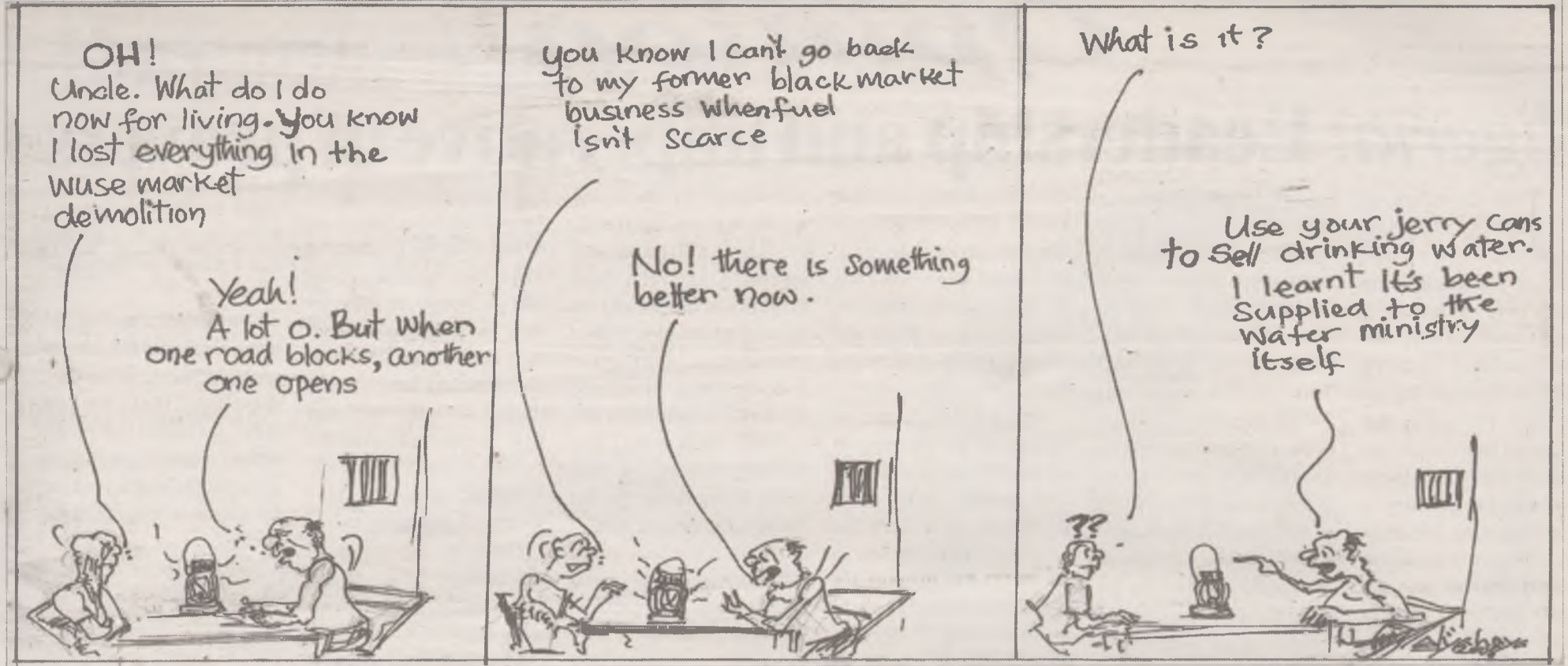
After the PDP national convention of this year (2005) and long before even the electoral battle of 2007, Obasanjo will know the real meaning of waning political profile.

OBJ is losing grip as matters now already stand, in virtually all of Northern Nigeria, thanks partly to his decidedly cool relationship with Vice President Atiku Abubakar and his odious attempt to renege on the very **power shift zoning formula** which took him to power from total political orphanage back in '99, as well as other acts in places like Anambra and Plateau. He is not welcome in Kwara, where Atiku has already laid firm and public claim to the loyalty of Bukola Saraki, nor in Niger State where IBB holds supreme

in the deep forests of Edo State. Which is not as terrible a choice as it sounds. After all, First Lady Stella to me to be the only member of the Obasanjo household to have grown enormously in stature and self-comportment from their tenure in Aso Rock, has just recently earned a well-deserved chieftaincy title for herself from the redoubtable Omon'oba N'edo Okuakp-olokpolo, Erediauwa the Second, Oba of Benin. So, between Anenih and Stella, OBJ should find a comfortable home-away-from-Ota in Edo State.

All of which makes it even more amazing that with so much good quality assistance and advice readily available to him to draw upon while in office, poor OBJ is still where he is today.

"When the Middle-belt agitation started in the First Republic, the patriarch of Northern Nigeria, Sardauna Ahmadu Bello demystified it by promoting the philosophy of monolithic North-making sure that the people's differences became their sources of strength."



YOUR LETTERS

Remembering Jika and Nas

Two years have passed, and the vacuum created by the death of Abubakar Jika, prolific writer and social critic, commentator, public relations practitioner, teacher and source of immense inspiration to many, has remained far from being filled. Rather, death seized another voice, of equal magnitude: Alhaji Wada Nas.

Far from mourning them, I seek to join many Nigerians in celebrating the lives they had lived and those of many whom they have touched in their quest for justice and a better society.

Like many, I have quietly reflected on, Nigeria in its perpetual struggles and what Malam would have (been writing) written. It was a cause Abubakar Jika stood for and held so passionately unto, that only death could have so painfully deprived.

Many things are really not the way they seem, and need

to be better understood when they are brought to the fore by people who will say them as they ought to be said, with courage and good intentions, like the courage expressed in Chief Audu Ogbeh's letter to Obasanjo, the climax of long held inner frustrations, which in any case reflected a truly crisis-ridden government at the center.

Reading Jika on how Ogbeh was 'tsunamied' after the 'last supper' would have made any readers day. It would have been a weekend's delight to have read his commentary on how Ogbeh did not resign "penniless" and how politicians boys on the presidency's pay roll paid for talking senses to dissenting opinion holders, have hailed Ogbeh's action as "the right thing to do at the

right time".

Native intelligence tells me that Abubakar Jika would have long predicted that Audu Ogbeh was merely a political seat-belt that Obasanjo could have well fared without in running the state, so long as he was sure of his accelerating pedals, speed gear and 'road safety'.

Besides, Ogbeh's predecessor had it the same way. The difference may only be the levels of dignity or otherwise involved. And depending on Mallam's calculation, the prediction would have been apt and timely enough, especially when the unresolved Anambra crises provided ready recipe for the impending disaster.

In Jika's diary, he would have carefully noted in pencil

that year 2005 holds promises of pay back for the ruling PDP, in the seed of discord it has sown in other political parties. He would have also written, in one of the dailies, that the rescue being embarked upon by the G-18/34 progressives may not necessarily bring president Obasanjo on his knees.

Still on 2005, Abubakar Jika, to my mind, would have reflected on the coming census exercise of Obasanjo's Nigeria. Jika would have advocated that as part of the questionnaires for data to be collected in the exercise, there should be a provision for the blood pressure levels of Nigerians (occasioned by uncertainties and hard realities, including in specific terms, questions like the number of meals a Nigerian eats a day, and whether he/she is sure of the next meal.

A true patriot of keen concern that he was, Abubakar Jika would have appraised Obasanjo's efforts at adventurously reforming Nigeria, even in its formlessness. He would have agreed that it is by no means an easy task. He would have underscored the frustrations that have further enveloped Mr. President's dilemma in the fight against graft that has only but won us more laurels on the other divide. Jika would have predicted a further promotion from our last bronze medal to gold, in 2005.

The bold intervention, in the Plateau crises which led to the imposition of a state of emergency would have received Jika's approbation; at least for the good intentions behind it. But beyond that, Mallam would, in his typical manner, have told President Obasanjo through his pen on pages of newspapers that such actions of good intention ought to have been the case in Anambra, where thugs have confessed to rigging elections. Like Professor Chinua Achebe, the silence, if not connivance of the presidency, would have amazed Jika. The moral

questions surrounding the landlords of Plateau and Anambra government houses would have received his attention. He would have understood EFCC's burden of bringing justice to Joshua Dariye, if not Joshua Dariye to justice. He would have also been reminiscing on what Dr. Abel Guobadia ought to have done long ago that he still has not done about Anambra and Ogun states' votes in the 2003 elections.

In very fair terms of honest assessment, Mallam would have asked many questions, even though they may not find answers. Many issues would have crossed his mind, and he would have marvelled at the courage of Professor Charles Soludo to have put the banks on a fast lane, and would have wondered how, for instance, Mujahid Asari Dikibo had managed to succeed in bringing Obasanjo to parley, against all 'protocol'.

Abubakar Jika would have saluted the guts of the NLC leadership in giving Obasanjo a run for his defiance, and 'congratulated' Madam due process for the hurried Federal Government/GIL Ajaokuta deal.

Beyond the annual ritual of laying wreath as methinks, Mallam would have argued that those who laid their lives for Nigeria do not deserve to be paid pension in arrears of over 7 months. He also would have used the opportunity of a TV or Radio programme to speak on behalf of medical doctors who have rested tools for this long.

In moments of casual gist with his students, he would have wondered why Obasanjo hates opposing views such as his, even in death, so much so as not registering public condolence on the demise of Wada Nas. For the living, he would have wondered why they must be out of

Obasanjo's way, as long (or soon) as they show that their views differ.

In his usual humour, he would have drawn his wife, Safiya's attention to the major headlines of today's newspaper, and joked about the implications of such developments in a country he so dearly loves, hold for his three daughters in an almost uncertain future.

He would have undoubtedly, expressed his optimism to his fellow scholars and friends that things will change for better someday, since good always triumphs over evil.

In the Writers' Collective Forum which he formed and convened, he would have thrown the challenge to the forum as he always does—anyone can effect change in his own way, depending on how much one is convinced about such change. He would have continued in his cause to change things. Adieu, Mallam.

Ahmed Balarabe Sa'id, The writers' collective, Garki, Abuja

Keep it up, Gov. Idris

When the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Ibrahim Idris of Kogi state, Pastor James Adedoyin said recently that the Press under the administration of Alhaji Idris had never had it so merry, he was simply being modest and reserved in pouring encomiums on his boss.

That was at the presentation ceremony of an 18-seater bus to the Government House Press crew, a 504 station wagon to the state chapter of NUJ, a 504 station wagon to Radio Kogi and a similar vehicle to the *Graphic* newspaper.

Governor Idris said during the presentation ceremony that it was part of his administration's commitment to make information dissemination easy for the fourth estate of the realm as well as entering the year 2005 on a clean slate.

Doubting Thomases mischievously dismissed him on the eve of the gubernatorial election as a carpenter that cannot deliver.

Today, Governor Idris has not only proved his critics wrong but has; converted his wealth of experience to the development of the state which was

reportedly declared broke on the eve of Prince Abubakar Audu's exit.

His level of performance in the areas of infrastructural developments, namely agriculture, sports, roads, education, health and virtually all sectors of human endeavour will not be easy to sweep under the carpet in the near future.

Unquenchable thirst for educational development made him to respond with supersonic speed, when hoodlums and miscreants masquerading as students razed down the federal polytechnic, Idah. The high-tech nature of destruction did not deter the governor from undertaking to re-equip the polytechnic with books and rebuilding the torched buildings. This is the same man who had earlier released the sum of N137 million as bursary to Kogi state students in addition to a donation of an 18-seater bus even though some unprogressive elements had tried to misappropriate the bursary funds.

Reports making the rounds have it that the sports-loving Governor has also resolved to throw his weight behind the

establishment of a female football club named— *the confluence Queens*.

Governor Idris's phenomenal love for sports may have underscored his donation of an 18-seater coaster bus to *Kogi United football club* of Lokoja. The team, to say, the least, is performing as expected. No wonder, he Idris is of the opinion that the establishment of *the confluence Queens Football club* will further place Kogi State on a better pedestal in the world of sports.

It may therefore be surprising and embarrassing to see cynical critics trying to run down Governor Idris, because in the words of the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, that any success will attract proportionate distraction.

God, whose integrity cannot be questioned, has decided to raise the governor from a very humble background to do a new thing in the lives of Kogites so that men and women can appreciate the need for quality and genuine service to the people.

It is my pleasure to call on the hardworking Governor Idris to continue the good works he has started in Kogi state.

Peter Jones, Victoria Island, Lagos

Let's not forget Tasu'a and Ashura

Kindly allow me space in your very popular newspaper to remind the Nigerian Muslim *Ummah* that the twin blessings of the 9th and 10th days of Muharram are around the corner.

The special non-obligatory fasts observed on these two days are highly recommended practices with bountiful blessings. Let us therefore take note that Thursday 18th February 2005 is *Tasu'a* (9th of Muharram) while Friday 19th is the *Ashura* (10th of Muharram). May it please Almighty God to enable us to observe these fasts.

Aminu Usman, Gyadi-Gyadi, Kano

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

Opinion

Nigeria: Leadership and imperative of prayers

By Hassan Hadeja

Until the advent of the present democracy, criticism of incumbent leaders have never been in torrent, pervasive, and curse-inclined. Surely, somehow, the suffering has also been, pervasive, that the masses have become so confused and wondering as to where this country is really headed for. This drew out venomous condemnation on the leader which our ever dutiful media never failed to convey, from the makers to the expected targeted audience.

A sober reflection of events of the last five years shows a people at conflict with the various socio-economic and political variables at play. From the usual cry of political marginalisation, a new lexicon in the far north, to unbridled quest for resource control by the people with the big hearts (I don't know what people of the groundnut pyramids are feeling now) to the agitation for sovereign national conference including what looks like a totally jaundiced, and of

course a non productive economy, nobody seems to enjoy peace. Whether as the lead or the leader. So it has been criticism all the way. Some of the criticisms bore uncomplimentary social anecdote. Others raise very serious moral questions. All these symptomise the condition of millions of minds who are hungry and millions of idle hands who are also the devil's workshops.

Whether our leaders have been upright or otherwise, it is another chapter entirely. Even then, it would be wrong to assert that all is well. So, the torrents of criticism may appear justified more so that we are in a democracy where the right to freedom of speech is more than guaranteed. And many critics who are destructive while others are constructive, have gone to town, all exercising their fundamental human rights.

No doubt about this, given the situation in the country where the blind chase for wealth is and widespread, criticism should be one of the check

and balance mechanisms in a polity where corruption is rife and service delivery at its lowest ebb. However, the fear is not the criticism, but how they are made and handled by the makers and the target.

Our leaders failed to deliver, is it engaging in negative criticism and curse that would make them change for the better? The question to ask therefore is do two wrongs make a right? I do not need to answer this question myself, for if I have to provide the answer it would be like telling a Geography teacher that the sun rises from the east in the morning and settles in west in the evening.

We should endeavour to appreciate the effect of destructive criticism from the simple dictum in the following phrase thus "if you point one accusing finger at someone, three others are directed back at you the accuser." So where are we? Certainly it is the path of self-destruction. I am sure the import of this simple analogy may have been lost, may be, momentarily on our minds, induced by certain

prevailing circumstances, when we undertake to criticise and curse our leaders negatively. Such circumstances could be failed electoral bids, state of joblessness, depression arising from shattered economic adventures, etc.

While it is usual and humanly instinctive to react to the wrong doings by our leaders, the danger in such outbursts is the boomerang effect it would have on our person when the reactions through criticism is seen through destructive tendencies against a target. It is even more destructive if the targeted receiver is a leader. What do we gain if we criticise our leaders simply for the sake of destroying them? To do that is to disobey God's order to mankind to justly guide the leader instead of destroying him through bad criticism and curse.

Before I am misunderstood, I never and would not hold brief for anybody who abuses public confidence entrusted to his care. Those who know me as the father to the Deputy Governor of Jigawa State would be inclined to say that maybe, now that my

son is in leadership position, I would be doing what I am doing. I know I would be in a difficult position in my call on people to pray for their leaders. However my only consolation lies in the fact that my heart never missed a beat nor did I ever had a second thought before I made this call. After all, why should I worry, if anybody raises eyebrow simply because I did the right thing? Today, I need nobody to tell me what is good or bad.

So, confidently, I will pass this gospel truth that as a people, we do have a moral responsibility in preserving our leaders through prayers in both mosques and churches. As Quran and Bible tell us, no prayers, good or bad, go unanswered. In other words if in the cause of criticising our leaders we invoke God's wrath on them by cursing them, the prayers would be answered in any form. And when God gets to answer our prayers the repercussion would normally be beyond human comprehension. Sometimes God's way of answering our prayers in condemning our leaders

could as well consume us. Even if to underline the fact that a people get their kind of leader.

Our leaders are what we make them. So if we want good leaders, it means, therefore that we on ourselves should imbibe the virtues of good people. And good people look up to God for guidance through their leaders.

The torrent of criticism of recent tend to portend total decay of the system, as if all leaders are bad. All leaders cannot be the same. They cannot all be bad. Some governors have given Nigerians ray of hope that, still we have leaders who can be trusted. These newbreed leaders have demonstrated justice, fair play, commitment to their people's welfare and very important too, they have been humble and respectful to elder statesmen.

Just like I have said, let us pray for our leaders no matter our faith, for in the long run it is in our interest we do so. A word is enough for the wise.

Alhaji Hassan Hadeja, is former Minister of State, Petroleum Resources.

A propos of Shekarau's war of vengeance

By Babangida A. Kundila

Malam Mohd Buba in his treatise on the above subject sought to remind Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau to drop vengeance at the expense of Kano State Tax payers. I am grateful to Buba and pray that his criticisms were objectively done.

As an observer, I wish to make my contribution on Kano politics from an entirely different perspective. Perhaps, my knowledge of Mallam Shekarau in the 1990's can influence my contention. I have equally expected Buba (as a Muslim) I believe, to do the same by buttressing his criticism with incontestable divine authorities (Qur'an and Hadith) on which platform Shekarau's regime was found. Surprisingly Buba ended up by quoting a free-thinker (Gorbachev) which clearly portrayed how deep he is indoctrinated. Throughout his write-up Buba failed to

point out to his readers through these incontestable authorities where Shekarau went wrong by constituting a commission of inquiry to investigate the activities of the immediate past administration of Kano State.

The fundamental philosophy of leadership in Islam states that leader is the one who provide his people with protection of their religion, protection of their lives and properties and; protection of their dignity.

In his maiden speech, Mallam Shekarau made it known that he will uphold these principles because he believed that one day he will be called upon to account for it.

To portray Kano State Commission of Inquiry to investigate the activities of the immediate past administration as an act of vengeance is at variance with principles of leadership in Islam. There was an

allegation of misappropriation of public wealth by the past administration of Kano State and since the present government was found on the platform of shari'a, it constituting such commission of inquiry is inevitable. To me, any criticism against constituting such commission is unfair. Ironically, in the western world where we imitate, public wealth is treated with utmost care and prudence. Some people see this objectively constituted commission of inquiry as an act of vengeance.

As far as people of Kano State are concerned, their government has done and is doing what it has pledged during electioneering campaign to recover their seemingly lost wealth.

Mallam Shekarau is sincere and I do not see vengeance as far as his relationship with Kwankwaso's administration is concerned. It will be recalled Obasanjo appointed

Mallam to lead a Federal Government Economic Advisory mission to Argentina, albeit he is from the opposition party. Kano State Government had already issued out a white paper on the findings of the Commission of inquiry and I beseech Mohammad Buba to find time and dissect it so that he can fish out grey areas where victimization or any act of vengeance are committed.

Mallam has been the only Chief Executive of the State from Independence to date that called for the abolishment of the controversial immunity section 308 of the Nigerian constitution that indirectly guarantees looting of Nigerians wealth by present set of leadership.

On the other criticisms raised by Mohammad Buba such as abandoning viable projects like Bold water initiative, Aminu Kano House in Abuja, I refer Mohammed Buba to Kano State Budget for 2005 fiscal year. I am confident he will

be convinced that the motive of the government is far from vengeance but about continuity from where the past administration stopped on the meaningful projects. Also those that are viable but wrongly pursued are "panel-beaten" and linked to the mainstream of socio-economic well being of Kano State citizens. Example is the replacement of Kwankwaso's Community Reorientation Center (CRC) with the present societal re-orientation crusade popularly known in Hausa as - *a daidaita sahu*.

On Buba's question on what does the ordinary citizen of Kano State stand to gain by the Shekarau's unrelenting pursuit of vengeance against Kwankwaso, the answer to is obvious. Kwankwaso and Co. are being assisted to pay now and at a very cheaper rate not, in the hereafter (where immunity does not prevail). Kano State

citizens on the other hand will have their wealth recovered and put in the right places to benefit them and their children and great grandchildren in the future. More importantly, it will serve as a deterrent to all those who see politics as an avenue to loot public monies and easily get away with it.

Finally, whether probe of misdeeds succeed or fails in Nigeria, Mallam Shekarau has lived up to his obligations by attempting without success to protect the wealth enshrined in doctrine of leadership in Islam. Furthermore, nobody will hold him responsible for not doing what he ought to do in this world, and will surely be forgiven by God Almighty for failing to succeed in his efforts to probe misdeeds because it is beyond his powers.

Babangida writes from Kundila, Zaria- Road, Kano.

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The Board of Directors, Management and staff of Nationwide Unity Transport Limited, wish to felicitate with His Royal Highness, Alhaji (Dr.) Shehu Idris, CFR, Emir of Zazzau and Chairman Kaduna State Council of Emirs/Chiefs on his 30th Anniversary on the throne.

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Lebanon: The murder of Rafiq al-Hariri



Moments earlier the Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri (centre) had stopped for a coffee outside the nearby parliament building before his assassination.

Destroyed vehicles litter the site of a massive bomb attack that tore through the motorcade of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in Beirut, Lebanon on Monday.

Leaders react to killing of al-Hariri

The world has reacted to the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq al-Hariri, which occurred Monday in Beirut. The Saudi cabinet sent "the kingdom's heartfelt condolences" and stressed its "total rejection of terrorist acts against innocents that seek to plant chaos and destruction".

Prince Talal bin Abd al-Aziz, half-brother of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, expressed doubt about the authenticity of an unknown group claiming responsibility for the massive bomb attack.

In a videotape broadcast by *Aljazeera*, a group calling itself al-Nusra wa al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Sham [Victory and Jihad in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria], claimed

responsibility for the attack. The group said it carried out the attack on al-Hariri's convoy "because of his relations with the Saudi authorities" but provided no proof of its claim.

"I don't believe that what was transmitted on television about this group is true," Prince Talal told *Aljazeera*. "What does Saudi Arabia have to do with this affair?"

He said he did not believe what had been ascribed to the group, saying he thought it was a cover for another group.

"Who? ... God knows. But it's a cover," said the prince, who chairs the Gulf and Arab World Programme.

"I ask our friends in the Lebanese authorities not to reject this reasonable

request," he said. "Our brothers in Lebanon must not throw accusations about. We must wait until the international community sets up an investigating committee to reveal the truth."

Syrian President Bashar al-Asad condemned the assassination as a "terrible criminal act," and voiced solidarity with "brotherly Lebanon in this dangerous situation".

He urged the Lebanese people "to reinforce their national unity and reject all those who aim to cause trouble and sow division among the people", the official Syrian news agency *SANA* said in Damascus.

Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom said that the attack proves that there are organizations and countries — such as Syria and Lebanon — that are aiming to undermine stability in the region and prevent the democratization of the Arab world.

Commemorating the late Lebanese politician, Javier Solana, European Union Foreign Policy Chief, said, "He was a man of peace, a great friend. He was a man who, after 20 years of war in Lebanon, managed to rebuild it."

Lebanese army 'on alert' after Beirut bombing

Lebanon's army has been put on high alert after former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was killed in an apparent assassination on Monday.

The car bomb in the centre of Beirut left at least nine others dead and caused widespread destruction.

An army statement said it had "ordered a general mobilisation of all army units, raised to the maximum its state of alert" to "safeguard stability".

The killing comes at a time of rising tension between Syria, Lebanon's political master, and members of the opposition, *BBC* correspondents said.

Lebanese opposition leaders have said they hold the Lebanese and Syrian governments responsible for the killing.

Angry mourners in Beirut tried to set fire to the local offices of the Syrian Baath party.

Lebanon's former colonial power, France, whose leader President Jacques Chirac had close ties with al-Hariri, called for an international inquiry into the blast.

The bomb exploded as the former prime minister's motorcade passed the derelict St Georges Hotel,

near the city's harbour, and is thought to have killed some members of the convoy.

Army patrols have been sent out in Beirut and checkpoints set up.

Among about 100 people wounded was at least one former minister who, along with al-Hariri, had just attended a session in parliament.

In a statement, Lebanon's army said its "fighting readiness was raised to the highest degree" in response to the bomb.

Al-Qaeda dismisses Islamist involvement

A statement attributed to al-Qaeda and posted on the Internet yesterday denied Islamists had killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, saying Lebanese, Syrian or Israeli intelligence were behind the attack.

The statement signed by a hitherto unknown group calling itself the Al-Qaeda Organisation in the Levant was posted on an Islamist Web site often used by al-Qaeda, a day after another unknown Islamist group said it was behind the huge Beirut blast that killed al-Hariri.

The authenticity of the statement could not be immediately verified.

"Blaming the Jihadist and Salafist groups for what happened in Beirut is a complete fabrication," the statement said. "The priorities of the Jihadist groups in the Levant are supporting our brethren in Iraq and Palestine, not blowing up cars."

"This is clearly an operation that was planned by a state intelligence agency ... and we blame either the Mossad, the Syrian regime or the Lebanese regime."

The Levant is the historical name for the region including today's Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories.

Al-Hariri, a billionaire

The United States denounced the "brutal attack" that killed Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and seized on the slaying to call on Syria to withdraw its 14,000 troops from Lebanon.

White House spokesman McClellan said he did not know who was responsible for the massive explosion that tore through al-Hariri's motorcade, killing nine other people and wounding 100 more in a busy seafront area of Beirut.

But "this murder today is a terrible reminder that the Lebanese people must be able to pursue their aspirations and determine their own political future free from violence and

US condemns al-Hariri's murder, warns Syria

intimidation and free from Syrian occupation," he said.

The assassination came at a time of high political tension in Lebanon and international pressure over Syria's dominance in its political affairs, just a few months before legislative elections are due to be held.

Al-Hariri resigned as prime minister last October after disputes with pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud.

Syria retains 14,000 troops in Lebanon from a deployment first launched in 1976. The attack was swiftly condemned by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as

a "terrible criminal act", the official news agency *SANA* said.

"The Syrian government and people stand alongside brotherly Lebanon in this dangerous situation and convey our sincerest condolences to the family of al-Hariri and the families of the other victims," *SANA* said.

"We condemn this brutal attack in the strongest possible terms. We extend our condolences to al-Hariri's family, and to his many friends and followers in Lebanon," said McClellan.

"Rafiq Hariri worked tirelessly to rebuild a free, independent and prosperous Lebanon following its civil war and foreign occupation," the spokesman said.

US officials had no immediate reaction to France's call for an international inquiry into who carried out the attack.

Washington and Paris, eager to set aside differences over Iraq and work together on other pressing international issues, have recently increased pressure on Syria to withdraw its forces from Lebanon.

During her recent trip to Europe, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and French President Jacques Chirac discussed efforts to get UN Security Council's action to push for such a withdrawal.

Washington slammed sanctions on Damascus last May, accusing it of sponsoring international terrorism and turning a blind eye to anti-American insurgents crossing the border into neighbouring Iraq.

US officials acknowledge that they have nothing new in the pipeline, even as they multiply warnings to Damascus not to support insurgents fighting US forces in Iraq and end its backing for Islamic militants who target Israel.

US President George W. Bush used his annual State of the Union speech early this month to criticise Syria, which he said "still allows its territory, and parts of Lebanon, to be used by terrorists who seek to destroy every chance of peace in the region."

Lebanese opposition calls for resignation of govt

While the government called for three days of mourning and a state funeral, Lebanese anti-Syrian opposition leaders demanded a three-day general strike, the resignation of the government and a Syrian troop withdrawal from Lebanon.

"We hold the Lebanese government and the Syrian government, the power behind it, responsible for the

crime," MP Basim Sabah said on Monday after an opposition meeting at al-Hariri's Beirut family home.

"We demand the resignation of the government, which has lost all legitimacy, and the formation of a caretaker government," said Sabah, flanked by Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and other opposition figures.

He said Syria should pull out its 14,000 troops from Lebanon before parliamentary elections due in a few months' time.

Lebanese and Syrian politicians have denounced the bomb blast in central Beirut that killed former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri.

Exiled Lebanese political leader and former Prime Minister Michel Aoun bluntly blamed Syria.

"They are responsible. It's they who control the security and intelligence services" in Beirut, he said.

Lebanon's pro-Syrian President Emile Lahud said his political foe had died a "martyr for a united Lebanon", ordering three days of mourning and a state funeral for al-Hariri.

who masterminded the rebuilding of Lebanon after a 1975-90 civil war, was killed on Monday, four months after he resigned as prime minister after disputes with Lebanon's main powerbroker Syria.

Hours after the attack, *Al Jazeera* television aired a video tape from an unknown Islamist group calling itself the Group for Advocacy and Holy War in the Levant which said it had killed Hariri because of his ties to Saudi Arabia.

Al-Hariri had close ties to the kingdom, Osama bin Laden's birthplace, which has been battling al-Qaeda for more than two years

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Odd World

Man blames tumour for bank robberies

An Italian shopkeeper with an incurable tumour confessed to committing 13 bank robberies in 18 months but said he did it to care for his family after his death, a police official said.

The 53-year-old man raked in a haul of 115,000 euros before being spotted by plainclothes police, police said.

The robber told investigators that he learned he had an incurable tumour in July 2003 and decided to shut his clothes shop because he did not have enough energy to run it. But he feared leaving his family in financial difficulties after his death.

Woman tears off ex-lover's organs with hand

A British woman who ripped off her ex-lover's testicle with her bare hands and then tried to swallow it was jailed for two and a half years.

Amanda Monti, 24, became enraged when 37-year-old Geoffrey Jones rejected her advances at the end of a party. She yanked off his left testicle before trying to swallow it, Liverpool Crown Court in northwest England was told.

Monti choked and spat the testicle out, before a friend handed it back to Jones with the words: "That's yours."

Monti was jailed after pleading guilty to wounding, with judge Charles James noting that the "very serious injury" was not even the result of self defence.

In a statement read to the court, Jones, a bodybuilder, said the attack had "ruined my life".

The incident happened following a party last May, shortly after Jones had ended the couple's relationship, prosecutors told the court.

At a friend's house, Jones rebuffed Monti's advances and she was forced outside following a struggle, only to smash a window and storm back in.

"Suddenly I found Amanda standing in front of me," the victim's statement said, saying the pair grappled on the ground, and after she ripped off his short trousers, he stood up.

"She was still on the ground and she grabbed my genitals and pulled hard. That caused my underpants to come off and I found I was completely naked and in excruciating pain," he said.

After trying to swallow the organ, she handed it to Jones's friend. Doctors were unable to re-attach it.

Suspect forgets wallet at scene, calls police

A robbery suspect was caught after leaving his wallet on the store counter - and then going to the police station to pick it up. Joseph Palmarello, 22, was jailed on a robbery charge, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported.

A few days after the Jan. 29 robbery, he walked into the police station in Euless, near Dallas, to pick up his wallet after a detective called to tell him someone had found it.

"Once we had the wallet, we called him to say it had been turned in to our lost and found," Det. Marco Valladares said. "We don't really have one."

The store clerk said the man took about \$200 from the cash drawer after attacking him with pepper spray.

Wild turkeys move to barbecue town

A wild turkey flock may be crazy for moving to this town, which claims it holds the world's largest turkey barbecue each summer. Wayne Short's back yard is a popular hangout for the turkeys. He said he thinks the big birds have been misinformed.

"When they find out we're having turkey barbecue instead of a barbecue for turkeys, they'll be gone like a shot," Short said.

The Turkey Barbecue and Summer Festival is held each June and attracts thousands of people to this town of about 285 people. Last year, organisers cooked 296 turkeys.

The turkeys showed up in October. They roost in the trees in Short's back yard every night and wander through the town during the day, he said.

Short spends a lot of time watching, taking pictures and shooting home movies of the birds. He's retired.

"If you watch them real close, they are artists at flying," he said.

Short said he's counted 28 turkeys.

"The toms are starting to strut and pretty soon they'll battle each other over the hens," Short said as he watched them through his kitchen window last week.

Short believes that three of the turkeys in the flock serve as lookouts and leaders.

Philippines vow crackdown on rebels

Two communist rebels have been killed and two others captured in a clash with Philippine soldiers in a province near Manila, as President Gloria Arroyo vowed to squash an al-Qaida linked rebel group.

Members of an air force combat unit ran into about 30 New People's Army (NPA) rebels, an armed unit of the Communist party, while patrolling near the town of Calatagan in Batangas province south of Manila, triggering the clash yesterday.

There were no casualties on the government side, but two armed men were killed and two others wounded and captured, military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Buenaventura Pascual said.

The Calatagan gun battle came a day after NPA rebels killed two airport policemen outside an airport in eastern Catanduanes province, and a day after the Philippines was rocked by a series of three bombs blamed on the al-Qaida linked Abu Sayyaf group.

In Monday's attack, the NPA rebels ambushed the policemen responding to the attack, killing a third officer and wounding seven others. A civilian was also killed in the crossfire. Monday's explosions in the capital Manila and on the Mindanao island claimed many

lives. Two more people died from wounded suffered in the explosions, bringing the number of people killed in the Valentine's Day bombings in three Philippine cities to 12, according to an updated police toll, which listed 136 people as wounded.

The number of those killed when a bomb rigged to a tricycle exploded outside a shopping mall in the southern city of General Santos on Monday has risen to five, police said.

In Davao City on the southern island of Mindanao, one person was killed when a bomb exploded in a bus terminal while in Manila's financial district, a bomb on a bus killed six people and wounded scores of others.

The Philippine government on Tuesday offered 500,000 pesos (\$9260) as a reward for any information leading to the arrest of members of the Abu Sayyaf group accused of being behind the bombings.

As security in the main installations across the country was stepped up, national police chief Edgardo Aglipay appealed to the public for calm as he announced the reward.

"We are offering 500,000 pesos for information that will lead to their arrest," Aglipay said.

After Monday's attacks, Arroyo vowed to wipe out the Abu Sayyaf group.

"More than ever, we must not pull back, but move forward to wipe out the remnants of the Abu Sayyaf," she said in a statement yesterday.

"The evil of terrorism has only one aim. It is to rule with absolute power and absolute force. The desperation of the enemy cannot be underestimated, even as it lies in the throes of defeat."

Security around airports, ports, bus terminals, shopping malls and foreign embassies was tightened amid fears that Monday night's bombing campaign may be part of a wider, coordinated effort by the group.

Iran mosque fire kills 59

At least 59 people have been killed by a fire that raged through a crowded mosque in the Iranian capital, Tehran.

Some 210 people were injured in the incident in the centre of the city, the head of Tehran's security forces said.

The reports said the blaze broke out as worshippers gathered in the Ark mosque near Tehran's main bazaar.

Relatives of the injured have been rushing from hospital to hospital trying to locate their loved ones. A TV appeal has been made for blood donors.

An investigation has been launched into the cause of the fire, which started as hundreds of people were attending evening prayers.

Initial reports have suggested the blaze could have been caused by a kerosene heater in the women section which ignited a woman's chador.

But state television said the cause was an electrical short circuit.

A tarpaulin cloth separating male and female sections of the mosque reportedly caught fire falling on top of the crowd, and the flames soon spread.

Terrified worshippers tried to escape the flames through the main exit, causing a stampede that led to many of the injuries.

"I saw some women throw themselves out of a second floor window - some died like that, others from smoke inhalation," said one of the guards at the mosque.

"My mother and two sisters were inside and I do not know what happened to them," a girl called Manizheh told the *Reuters* news agency.

She was among the many who flocked to the mosque to look for loved ones after the fire.

The mosque is one of the oldest in the capital. It can accommodate up to 4,000 worshippers.



President Gloria Arroyo

Chinese mine explosion leaves 203 dead

At least 203 miners have been killed after a gas blast at a coal mine in China, state news agency *Xinhua* said. The accident, in China's north-eastern city of Fuxin, is the most deadly reported mining disaster since the communist party took power in 1949.

It left a further 22 people injured, one seriously, and 13 trapped.

A *BBC* correspondent in Beijing said the disaster again underlines the government's inability to ensure safety in its overstretched mining industry.

Rescue operations began immediately after Monday's blast 242m (794 feet) underground at the Sunjiawan mine in Fuxin, Liaoning province.

"We have never seen such a big accident before," a local mining official told the *Reuters* news agency.

President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao called for local officials to take "all possible measures" to rescue trapped workers, state television reported.

An inquiry is under way into the cause of the accident.

Underground explosions are often blamed on a lack of ventilation equipment to remove gas that seeps from the coal bed. Fuxin, as one of China's oldest coal mining regions, could be a particularly risky place to work as miners must tunnel far underground to reach coal seams.

Workers reported feeling something shake the mine 10 minutes before the blast, *Xinhua* said, quoting Zhang Yanfu, vice general manager of Fuxin Coal.

Moments later, gas detectors lost their signals and one of the mine's main pits filled with smoke, it said.

A Fuxin resident said many of her neighbours worked for the mine.

"We are of course very shocked and feel very sad about it because people are still enjoying the Lunar New Year," she told state media.

Another local, doctor Zhao Yunfu, said: "I really can't believe it, I thought the mine had stopped production [for the holidays]."

China last year produced 35% of the world's coal but reported 80% of global deaths in colliery accidents. The industry cost the lives of 15 miners a day in the first nine months of 2004, according to the official figures.

Monday's blast was the deadliest since 166 miners were killed in a gas explosion at the Chenjiashan mine in Shaanxi province in November.

Following that accident, the State Council ordered an inquiry and newspaper editorials called for a more humane and balanced view of economic progress.

China has two kinds of mines: big, state-run operations, which are generally thought to be safer, and smaller private mines where the majority of deaths occur.

Iraqi shi'ah alliance meets to decide PM

Leaders of the shi'ah alliance that dominated Iraq's elections met yesterday in the religious town where their spiritual leaders are based to discuss their choice for a new prime minister, with the French-educated finance minister and a former London physician said to be the top candidates.

An aide to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the spiritual leader of Iraqi Shiites, said that "official and unofficial delegations arrived in Najaf and left without reaching any agreements."

The politicians representing parties that make up the United Iraqi Alliance, among others, would return today to continue talks, the aide said, on condition of anonymity.

"It is an issue we are discussing with various groups, not only the alliance," he added. The alliance was talking to other winning parties about the potential premier, drawing the Kurdish parties, which came in second, and a secular Shiite political coalition, which came in third, into the deliberations, he said.

In Sunday's results, the clergy-backed United Iraqi Alliance scooped 48 percent of the vote for the National

Assembly, the Kurdish alliance took 26 per cent and interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite who supported strong ties to Washington, won only 14 per cent. The Kurds have already said they want Jalal Talabani, a Sunni Kurd and leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, to be president. No other candidates have stepped forward.

The National Assembly's first task is to elect a president and two vice-presidents by a two-thirds majority. The three then choose a new prime minister subject to assembly approval.

The parties that make up the alliance include the Islamic Dawa Party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress.

Interim Vice-President Ibrahim al-Jaafari was the Dawa Party's choice, while SCIRI nominated Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the interim finance minister, said Humam Hamoudi, a spokesman for the United Iraqi Alliance.

Al-Jaafari, a physician, lived in London before serving on the now-disbanded Iraqi Governing Council. French-educated Abdul-Mahdi, the son of a respected Shiite cleric, was a leading SCIRI politician before becoming the interim finance minister.

Happy Birthday



We give Thanks
to God for
the Life of
Our Mum
At

95

Mrs. Emife Rachael Jemibewon

Date: *Saturday 19th February 2005.*

Venue: *On the grounds of General Jemibewon's Residence,
at Iyah-Gbedde, Ijumu Local Government Area, Kogi State.*

Time: *12 Noon.*

Children: *David M. Jemibewon Maj Gen (rtd)
Solomon K. Jemibewon
Idowu Jemibewon
Janet I. Owadokun (Mrs)*

For Grand Children: *Dele O. Jemibewon*

For Great Grand Children: *Funke Olugbemide*

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NARHCO Complex - Tin Can - Matori - Imel Camp - DNNPC Head Quarters - Warri - Newa - Ibadan - Port Harcourt II - Yenagoa - Akure - Uyo - Niger - Obosi - Asaba - Enugu - Gombe

Business Trust

Aviation

Today's flight schedule

Alberka Air	
Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	10:30
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45a.m.
	11:00
	13:15
	17:00
Mandagani - Abuja 06:50	
Abuja - Mand.	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 - CBQ	
	5:15p.m.
Kano - Abuja	
	1:15p.m.
Abuja - Kano	
	2:30p.m.
Kano - Lagos	
	3:45p.m.
Lagos - Kano	
	6:00p.m.
EAS Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15p.m.
	11:45a.m.
	5:45p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	10:15a.m.
	7:15p.m.
Lagos - Jos	11:45a.m.
Jos - Lagos	2:30pm.
Dasab Airlines	
Abuja - Lagos	8:30 a.m.
Lagos - PHC	10:30 a.m.
PHC - Lagos	12:30 a.m.
Lagos - Kano	2:30 p.m.
Kano - Lagos	4:30 p.m.
Lagos - Abuja	6:30pm.
ADC Airline	
Lagos - Abuja	7:15 a.m.
	12:45 p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	8:55 a.m.
Lagos - Calabar	11:15 a.m.
Calabar - Lagos	7:20 a.m.
P/H - Lagos	9:45 a.m.
Lagos-Sokoto	8:55am
Sokoto-Lagos	11:55am

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.



Alh. Kabir Usman Nagogo, Katsina Emir

Emir wants Katsina Airport alive for Hajj 2006

The Emir of Katsina, Alhaji Muhammad Kabir Usman, has appealed to the federal government to upgrade the Katsina Airport in order for it to take bigger and wide-bodied aircraft that can

From Shakirat AbdulMajeed, Correspondent (Lagos)

airlift pilgrims from the state to Saudi Arabia in the next Hajj exercise.

The Emir made the appeal on the heels of the promise made by the FAAN managing director, Engineer Muhammad Umar Gambo, during a courtesy visit on the Emir in Katsina, that plans were already in the pipeline to upgrade the airport so that pilgrims would be airlifted from there during Hajj 2006.

The Emir who lamented the suffering of Katsina state pilgrims who normally travelled to Kano state to be airlifted, noted that if the airport could be upgraded and bigger aircraft could land and take off from there, the suffering would be alleviated.

The Emir noted that all the facilities that would make the operations successful are in place adding that immigration and customs offices are already in the state.

Usman also appealed to the federal government to utilise the airport for cargo handling operation so as to enable it link

the three major tribes in the country.

According to him, if that could be done, it would not only boost commercial activities in the state, but would also help to improve the nation's economy generally.

In his response, FAAN managing director Engineer Muhammad Umar Gambo assured the emir that the pilgrims from Katsina state would soon have a sigh of

relief as the authority is working towards making airlifting of pilgrims in the state in the next hajj a reality.

He also promised the emir that from next year, bigger aircraft would begin to use the airport so that pilgrims would no longer travel to other states for the purpose of pilgrimage, adding that the state deserved a bigger airport not only for pilgrimage but also for economic development.

...as FAAN plans for nation's airports

In its bid to make airports across the country user friendly, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has concluded plans to give a face-lift to all the airports in the country and resuscitate or replace some of the broken down equipment for better and effective operations of the authority.

FAAN managing director, Engineer Muhammad Umar Gambo who made the pledge last week during an inspection of the Katsina Airport, disclosed that the Authority had already set up a committee to look into all the areas that need immediate rehabilitation.

He noted that as soon as the committee submits its report, the management would study it properly before embarking on its implementation.

Gambo however pointed out that the authority does not have enough revenue to fund the projects noting that most projects are funded through internally generated revenue. The FAAN boss however frowned at the state of Katsina Airport which does not have perimeter fence, a development which has exposed it to infiltration by both human beings and animals.

He however promised to ensure that the airport is fenced as well as remarking the runway and the threshold.

His words: "the government is gradually running away from funding project, the of this is that we have to generate our own revenue and sometimes we have leakages."

"We are toying with the idea of setting target for some of the airports I don't think we can do that for Katsina for now, but all these are ideas management is experimenting with. We want to make sure that we generate a lot of revenue so that we can execute our projects."

He also challenged the workers to give bright ideas to FAAN management while also imploring them to always look for a proper

channel of communication to move the authority forward and not a situation where some workers would by-pass their department heads and even the managing director and start writing protest letters to the minister or the secretary to the federal government.

Gambo however assured workers that his administration would invest substantially in human resources, while also promising that staff salaries would be paid as at when due.

"Staff training is uppermost in our mind but you must be patient with us, we are also addressing the issue of furniture allowance and all matters pertaining to welfare of staff. However, those that work very hard will no doubt reap their reward, while those who don't work hard will be sanctioned," he said.

The Katsina Airport manager, Malam Muhammad Zubairu stated that the airport was constructed by Katsina state government in an effort to provide infrastructure that would enhance the state's economic political and social development.

He added that the airport was handed over to the federal government in December 16, 1992.

According to him, two airlines were operating domestic routes, which originated from the airport, he added however that owing to poor patronage and lack of some vital technical requirements, the airlines stopped operating to the airport.

He hinted that the authority is making efforts to woo the airlines back to resume operations at the airport.

According to him, the airport has a runway of 3,600 metres long and 44 meters wide. The runway is equipped with category one precision approach lighting system, though it has no shoulders, no runway strip and inadequate drainage system which placed it at

NCAA to enforce N.5m illegal mast fine

The Nations Aviation Regulatory Authority, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has resolved to commence the enforcement of the N250,000 and N500,000 fines for illegal erection of mast and towers in the country.

NCAA, in a release signed by the media assistant to the authority's director general, Mr. Sam Adurogboye noted that the decision to impose sanctions on defaulters was informed by the persistent untoward conduct of the concerned firms saying that despite the authority's policies and its mission, not to regulate any operator out of existence. He disclosed that NCAA has concluded plans to sanction one of the defaulting communications firm, V-mobile telecommunications over an illegal erection of a tower at Escravos in Ugboluegin village, Delta State.

Adurogboye said the erection was located 310 metres away from the runway of the escravos airstrip in which over 200 flights are recorded daily in flagrant violation of Air Navigation Regulations (ANRs).

"The authority has therefore resolved to ensure that the structure is removed and V-Mobile made to bear the cost, since the firm refused to pull down the tower in spite of all appeals and entreaties made by NCAA to the firm." He said.

He hinted further that the firm

failed to turn up at a meeting organised by NCAA for all GSM and internet service providers in Lagos recently.

Adurogboye in the statement however explained that the authority has resolved to report V-Mobile to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and have its pending applications for aviation height clearance suspended as well as being made to pay a fine of N500,000 for violating safety regulations.

The authority also confirmed its earlier directive forbidden the use of mobile phones on board aircraft and redirected that anybody that flouts the directive would be handed over to the police for sanction.

Security operatives seal off NAHCO

Security operatives have sealed off the corporate headquarters of the Nigerian Aviation Handling Company (NAHCO) located at the International wing of Murtala Muhammad Airport, Lagos.

This is coming on the heels of suspension of NAHCO general manager, Chief Musa Agboneni and the Finance Manager over alleged financial impropriety.

The managing director of the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) Engineer

Muhammad Gambo Umar who is also the chairman of NAHCO's board announced their suspension in Abuja last week Wednesday.

However, the remises of the company was last Friday overtaken by FAAN security men who positioned themselves in strategic places, including the gates, apparently to forestall negative reactions from the workers.

Already, workers of the handling company expressed shock over the suspension of their general manager.

In a release jointly signed by Air Transport Services, Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSAN) and the Nigerian Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE) workers alleged that no cogent reason was advanced for such action.

"We wish to state emphatically that, neither the Minister of Aviation nor Engineer Umar has statutory rights to embark such for reaching actions without properly constituted board meeting. NAHCO is still a limited liability company governed by the Board made up of both the Nigerian and foreign shareholders. We know that even the foreign shareholders would not be willing to take hostile decisions that could disrupt normal activities in the organisation" stated the workers.

It would be recalled that FAAN holds 60% stake in NAHCO while four foreign airlines, including British Airways, Air France, Lufthansa

RCC denies report on Kano Airport equipment

The managing director of Reynolds Construction Company (RCC) Nig. Limited, Mr. Rony Paluch, has reacted to a media report which quoted the minister of Aviation, Alhaji Isa Yuguda saying that the company is withholding an advance payment of N88 million for the procurement of airport equipment.

According to Mr. Paluch, this allegation made against the company by the minister was not true. "we sincerely believe that the minister is being fed with wrong information by people whose motive still remains unclear," he said.

In a press release made available to Daily Trust, Mr. Paluch explained that his company's involvement with the Kano airport terminal building started in 2001 when a contract for the project was awarded to them.

By Anas A. Galadima, Reporter (Business)

December 2004" he explained, "we executed contract works in excess of N142 million. Out of this we were only paid N82 million. We had to rely on the balance of advance payment of N90 million with us, which was depleted in no time."

He added that at the moment, the company has an outstanding debt of more than N24 million to collect, apart from retention money.

As a result of this, he said, "the allegation that we are holding an advance payment in whatever guise is not only untrue but very painful."

Mr. Paluch further expressed appreciation of the ministers concern and gave his assurance that the company has no intention whatsoever to frustrate the project.

"Between July 2004 and

Business Trust

Group alerts on alleged concession of oil wells

A non-governmental organisation (NGO), *Community Watch* of Nigeria, says it has uncovered secret moves by top ranking officials to concede oil wells and platforms in Akwa Ibom state to Rivers state, and called for President Olusegun Obasanjo's intervention. The President of the organisation, Chief Samingo Etuk Akpan, who made the allegation at a press conference in Uyo, said that if the situation was not reversed, the youth in the affected areas would resist it "spiritually, physically, and legally".

While commending President Obasanjo for recommending Ambassador Sam Jude Edem to the Senate for confirmation as board chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Chief Etuk Akpan drew the President's attention to 'tricks and manipulations' allegedly intended to substitute the names of an Akwa Ibom State indigene as managing director of the commission. He described the appointment process as

From Edet Ekanem, *Stringer (Uyo)*

illegal and contrary to the provisions of the NDDC Act, arguing that after the exit of Chief Onyema Ugochukwu of Abia State and based on the alphabetical arrangements enshrined in the NDDC Act, Akwa Ibom State was entitled to produce the next board chairman of NDDC. "In implementing the NDDC Act, part I, section 4(a-1), Akwa Ibom is legally qualified to produce the next chairman of the board of NDDC. And also

in implementing part 4, section 12, sub-section (1) and part I, section 3, sub-section (1) of the NDDC Act, Akwa Ibom State is legally qualified for the position of executive director projects," he argued.

Akwa Ibom was moreover legally qualified to occupy the position of executive director in charge of projects by virtue of the quantum of its oil production, Chief Akpan further argued, being the second largest oil producing state in Nigeria.

Valentine's Day: M-tel donates N.5m for boy's heart cure

The management of M-tel has presented a cheque for N593,370.00 to the parents of Usman Aliyu, a fifteen year old boy with a hole in the heart, to cover the cost of a

By Anas A. Galadima, *Reporter (Business)*

surgical operation at the University of Nigeria Nsukka Teaching Hospital (UNTH), Enugu.

Presenting the cheque to the parents of the boy, the chief executive officer of the company, Edwin Moore Monife, said M-tel considered the assistance to Usman Aliyu as way of giving back to the society what M-tel had taken from it.

"While other people around the world will be spending millions of naira and dollars to buy cards or visit burger joints, love gardens and exotic flower shops, M-tel is rescuing a young Nigerian from the jaws of death," he said.

Responding to the

The wife of the former South African president, Mrs. Graca Machel Mandela, has commended Globacom network for being an indigenous GSM service provider with a world class service delivery. Speaking at the Globacom regional office Monday in Abuja, Mrs. Mandela expressed delight over the world class equipment deployed by the company, and stressed that there was huge potential to be tapped by Nigeria's economy, especially in the telecom industry.

She said with two million subscribers within a short period of existence, Globacom has the prospect to capture Nigeria's telecom market, adding that Nigeria with at least 120 million people

Mrs Mandela lauds Globacom's world-class facility

By Hamisu Muhammad *Reporter (Business)*

was still a dreamland for telecom investors. She urged Nigerians to learn from Globacom in providing opportunities in the economy.

Mrs. Mandela, who was in Nigeria to attend the Murtala Mohammad Foundation (MMF) annual lecture in Abuja, said it was high time Nigerians used the little opportunities at their disposal to improve the economy. "If Nigerians fail to do it, who else will do it for them?" she asked.

Conducting her round, the general manager, Sales of Globacom, Mr. Akinlolu Ayileka, said at the moment, Globacom was leading in providing third generation mobile phone services in the country, citing the recent launch of the fibre optic internet service in the country as evidence.

He said: "Our objective is to ensure that an average Nigerian affords mobile line, part of which we introduced one naira Sim card with N500 free air time."

According to him, Globacom has embarked upon several initiatives to make life better for Nigerians through poverty alleviation programs, and Niger-Delta Youth Empowerment Scheme.

Also speaking, the public relations manager, Globacom, Mr. Bofo Opetetan who was also a member of the organising committee of the MMF, said the foundation's vision was to let people know the legacy left behind by Gen. Murtala Mohammed.

He said Globacom had supported the event with the donation of N16 million, and materials worth N5 million, stressing that the company would continue to sponsor the event for at least 5 years.

V-Mobile connects Damaturu

From Isa Umar Gusau, *Correspondent (Damaturu)*

V-Mobile Nigeria has commenced telecommunication operations in Damaturu, the Yobe State capital, as part of the company's expansion programmes.

Confirming the take-off, the state's authorised dealer for Vee Networks, Alhaji Isah Ibrahim Issa, said through a statement made available to *Business Trust* that the V-Mobile services commenced last week. He said that people in Damaturu would henceforth enjoy services with "the lowest tariffs" and efficient services, and called on them to patronise the telecommunication company.

The dealer said that V-Mobile had the technical abilities to suit the demands of telecommunication customers, and promised that there would be hitch free services. He called on people to make careful choice before engaging in their demands for telecommunication services, with a view to making appropriate choice that would not turn out regrettable.

Alhaji Issa said he was optimistic that the expansion programme of V-Mobile would cut across all rural and urban areas in Nigeria to provide equitable telecommunication access to all people at affordable rates.



Cornelius Adebayo, *Communication Minister*

Ndukwe pledges better phone networks

The executive vice-chairman/CEO, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Ernest Ndukwe, recently said his new focus would be to consolidate telecoms sector reforms by providing infrastructure. He stated this following his reappointment for a second term as the head of the nation's telecom. Ndukwe, who spoke in an exclusive interview at the African Regional Preparatory Conference on the Information Society (WSIS) that opened in Accra, Ghana, said he hoped to build a national backbone across Nigeria to extend telecoms services to rural areas.

According to the *Technology Times News*, Ndukwe, who got another term to run the affairs of the NCC, hoped that when the Nigerian region was completed, it would offer a platform to extend the infrastructure into the West

African sub-region.

However, he has a slightly different perspective to the growing calls endorsed by the Communication Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) for the creation of a continental regulatory agency and other regulatory issues across Africa.

"Apart from CTO, many other organisations have been talking about that kind of thing and reason that WATRA was established as a sub-regional regulatory organisation that would have harmonisation of regulatory policies and regulatory environment for the sub-region," he said.

He commended CTO for initiating moves that led to the establishment of continental telecoms regulator like the West African Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (WATRA) and the Telecommunications Regulatory Association of Southern Africa (TRASA).



CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA TENDER NOTICE

NIGERIAN TREASURY BILLS

Notice is hereby given by the Central Bank of Nigeria that 91-day Federal Government of Nigeria Treasury Bills amounting to N45,000,000,000 will be issued by an auction-based system on Thursday, 24/02/2005.

Interested Authorised Dealers (Commercial/Merchant Banks, Designated Discount Houses and Brokers) are invited to submit tenders to reach the Issues Office, Central Bank of Nigeria, Lagos, not later than 1.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 22/02/2005.

Each tender must be in multiple of N1,000 subject to a minimum of N10,000 per tender. Authorised Dealers are allowed to submit multiple bids and quote multiple rates. A tender may be for own account of Authorised Dealers or made on behalf of interested members of the public, who are advised to apply to their banks or brokers for the bills.

Tenders for the Bills should be submitted on the prescribed printed forms in duplicate and in sealed envelopes clearly marked "TENDER FOR BILLS." The result of the tender will be announced before the close of business on Wednesday 23/02/2005. The Bank reserves the right to reject any tender in part or in full. Allotment letters will be issued to successful tenderers on Thursday, 24/02/2005. Payment in full for the amount of the accepted tenders must be made to the Central Bank of Nigeria not later than 1.30 p.m on the issue date 24/02/2005. This will normally be effected by direct debit to the accounts of the affected Authorised Dealers which should ensure that their accounts with the Bank are adequately funded for this purpose.

Issues Office
CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA
Tinubu Square
Lagos.

Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2005

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(N)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
CUTIX PLC	7	1.36	120,134	163,382.24
Sector Totals	7		120,134	163,382.24
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED				
OKITIPUPA OIL PALM PLC.	2	0.78	21,530	16,793.40
THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	17	16.01	601,000	9,736,903.79
PRESCO PLC.	7	12.00	25,010	298,146.80
Sector Totals	26		647,540	10,051,843.99
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC.	22	2.04	165,306	339,569.68
R. T. BRISCOE PLC.	2	6.86	1,365	9,239.80
Sector Totals	24		166,671	348,809.48
BANKING				
ACCESS BANK PLC	58	3.42	2,116,073	7,236,969.66
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC.	25	6.63	205,495	1,362,431.85
CHARTERED BANK PLC	3	3.90	9,500	37,050.00
COOPERATIVE BANK PLC.	3	1.92	81,552	156,579.84
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	620	23.00	2,937,639	67,619,237.30
FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	18	1.38	662,980	923,936.72
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC.	274	10.80	4,561,814	49,765,034.11
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	1	0.74	5,000	3,700.00
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC.	24	0.59	2,560,600	1,502,754.00
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	2	1.28	20,000	25,600.00
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC.	5	7.81	1,010	7,888.10
LION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	6	0.67	170,000	118,202.84
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC.	23	1.15	1,779,989	1,770,659.90
NAL BANK PLC.	3	2.80	9,348	26,174.40
OCEANIC BANK PLC	9	5.20	349,350	1,816,620.00
OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	72	1.65	19,061,225	33,435,113.95
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC	26	7.41	227,750	1,687,627.50
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	18	1.68	518,228	845,529.36
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC.	137	10.00	2,423,417	24,234,170.00
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC.	396	19.99	2,797,411	55,831,462.45
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	4	0.74	346,840	257,561.60
WEMA BANK PLC.	4	3.93	2,725	10,709.25
ZENITH BANK PLC	209	13.60	2,236,702	29,951,649.27
Sector Totals	1,940		42,884,648	278,626,662.10
BREWERIES				
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC.	221	100.00	2,184,467	219,492,197.12
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC.	561	37.51	2,102,670	78,088,362.99
Sector Totals	782		4,287,137	297,580,560.11
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC.	96	23.50	975,742	23,108,917.65
BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC.	3	4.15	15,649	64,846.00
CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	27	7.94	248,417	1,967,048.33
WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC.	32	11.13	91,398	1,032,737.98
Sector Totals	158		1,331,206	26,173,549.96
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC.	12	5.00	32,230	159,359.96
CAP PLC.	19	7.10	54,328	380,181.00
D. N. MEYER PLC.	6	5.09	7,628	38,826.52
IPWA PLC.	1	0.50	233	116.50
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC.	4	4.25	18,772	82,121.00
Sector Totals	42		113,191	660,604.98
CONGLOMERATES				
A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC.	4	1.15	140,561	160,639.54
C F A O NIGERIA PLC.	12	4.80	16,483	76,986.45
JOHN HOLT PLC.	3	0.81	1,610	1,242.50
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	183	16.22	640,777	10,299,871.05
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC.	83	13.60	286,997	3,903,669.17
U.A.C.NIGERIA PLC.	66	14.17	207,399	2,938,843.83
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC.	5	1.15	46,622	53,615.30
Sector Totals	356		1,340,449	17,434,867.84
CONSTRUCTION				
COSTAIN (W.A.) PLC.	2	0.98	2,236	2,191.28
G. CAPPA PLC.	2	2.23	5,000	10,737.50
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC.	3	14.50	15,500	223,500.00
Sector Totals	7		22,736	236,428.78
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	43	24.90	214,590	5,377,334.70
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	229	57.80	511,493	29,626,518.89
FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC.	34	16.61	72,651	1,206,733.11
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC.	89	53.57	134,629	7,182,149.93
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC.	75	146.52	102,028	15,053,614.13
NORTHERN NIGERIA FLOUR MILLS PLC.	2	15.78	9,169	144,686.82
Sector Totals	472		1,044,560	58,591,037.58
HEALTHCARE				
CHRISTLIEB PLC.	2	0.56	60,888	34,097.28
EKOCORP PLC.	4	0.70	165,000	115,500.00
EVANS MEDICAL PLC.	28	3.25	333,167	1,097,383.12
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	9	5.30	18,680	99,556.00
NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC.	31	3.22	209,367	692,715.98
PHARMA-DEKO PLC.	1	4.50	100	450.00
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	25	8.65	168,959	1,423,254.12
Sector Totals	100		956,161	3,462,956.50
HOTEL & TOURISM				
TOURIST COMPANY OF NIGERIA PLC	3	4.28	1,400	6,244.00
Sector Totals	3		1,400	6,244.00
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC.	7	0.95	83,200	80,268.00
B.O.C. GASES PLC.	11	2.89	58,768	168,083.92
VITAFOAM NIGERIA PLC.	31	3.20	431,194	1,381,957.28
VONO PRODUCTS PLC.	1	1.90	240	456.00
Sector Totals	50		573,402	1,630,765.20
INSURANCE				
AIICO INSURANCE PLC.	11	1.95	29,496	57,517.20
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC.	12	1.55	675,300	1,101,980.93
CRUSADER INSURANCE PLC.	1	1.16	6,000	6,960.00
LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	1	1.64	300	492.00
N.E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG.) PLC.	1	0.86	2,600	2,236.00
NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC.	7	3.20	68,616	204,392.08
PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC.	2	1.97	24,966	49,183.02
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC.	8	3.23	59,424	192,347.18
STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE	1	1.20	15,230	18,276.00
UNIC INSURANCE PLC.	11	1.17	205,093	242,485.46
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC.	5	2.63	46,000	120,750.97
Sector Totals	60		1,133,025	1,996,620.84
MANAGED FUNDS				
C & I LEASING PLC.	8	1.44	89,210	130,850.95
Sector Totals	8		89,210	130,850.95
PACKAGING				
NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC	4	1.52	14,664	22,289.28
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC.	6	4.28	46,437	197,365.86
POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC.	12	1.05	300,264	300,075.80
VAN LEER CONTAINERS (NIGERIA) PLC.	1	2.25	100	225.00
Sector Totals	23		361,465	519,955.94
PETROLEUM(MARKETING)				
AFROIL PLC.	8	0.82	96,733	79,801.06
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC.	137	62.20	880,989	54,817,797.76
ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC.	21	2.04	409,897	836,189.88
MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC.	47	180.01	43,604	7,862,936.97
CONOIL PLC.	106	122.50	62,121	7,490,107.48
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC.	40	160.20	96,703	15,812,986.96
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC	57	189.00	38,060	6,965,581.04
OANDO PLC.	192	96.00	244,004	23,560,458.40
Sector Totals	608		1,872,111	117,425,859.55
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
DAILY TIMES PLC.	2	0.63	8,453	5,325.39
LONGMAN NIGERIA PLC.	1	2.11	200	422.00
Sector Totals	3		8,653	5,747.39
REALESTATE				
UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC.	36	8.90	182,007	1,593,070.55
Sector Totals	36		182,007	1,593,070.55
TEXTILES				
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC.	1	2.66	2,000	5,320.00
Sector Totals	1		2,000	5,320.00

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
NB	2,102,670.00	78,088,362.99	561
ACCESSBANK	2,116,073.00	7,236,969.66	58
GUINNESS	2,184,467.00	219,492,197.12	221
ZENITHBANK	2,236,702.00	29,951,649.27	209
UBA	2,423,417.00	24,234,170.00	137
IMB	2,560,600.00	1,502,754.00	24
UBN	2,797,411.00	55,831,462.45	396
FIRSTBANK	2,937,639.00	67,619,237.30	620
GUARANTY	4,561,814.00	49,765,034.11	274
OWENABANK	19,061,225.00	33,435,113.95	72

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
TOTAL	183.00	189.00	+6.00
NOLCHEM	120.02	122.50	+2.48
TEXACO	159.50	160.20	+0.70
JBERGER	14.00	14.50	+0.50
PRESCO	11.68	12.00	+0.32
BERGER	4.79	5.00	+0.21
CFAO	4.60	4.80	+0.20
SKBEECHAM	8.46	8.65	+0.19
BCC	4.00	4.15	+0.15
NIGERINS	3.06	3.20	+0.14

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
AP	65.00	62.20	-2.80
UNIPETROL	97.60	96.00	-1.60
MOBIL	181.50	180.01	-1.49
NESTLE	148.00	146.52	-1.48
NB	38.81	37.51	-1.30
TUP	26.00	24.90	-1.10
OKOMUOIL	16.80	16.01	-0.79
ASHAKACEM	24.00	23.50	-0.50
GUARANTY	11.27	10.80	-0.47
PZ	14.00	13.60	-0.40

Oil price up as OPEC considers supply cut

Oil prices held firm above \$47 a barrel as signals from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cartel of a possible cut to production countered fears of a slowdown in second-quarter demand.

US oil prices ticked 16 cents higher to \$47.60 a barrel after ending 28 cents higher on Monday, staying within their \$45-\$50 range since early January. Brent crude edged up 7 cents at \$45.60 a barrel.

Prices were bolstered last week by International Energy Agency forecasts showing stronger demand growth and lower non-OPEC supply this year.

Expectations for higher crude oil stocks could keep any price gains in check after the US Energy Information Administration releases weekly petroleum supply data on Wednesday.

A Reuters forecast showed crude oil stocks likely rose last week for the first time in three weeks by a mild 1.1 million barrels, keeping a hefty surplus to a year ago.

OPEC's warning of a possible pre-emptive production cut ahead of the cartel's March 16 meeting has kept traders cautious, particularly with some producers pointing to a new, higher price floor of \$40 a barrel for US crude.

"OPEC keeps out there the potential for a production cut, which keeps the market well-supported," said John Brady at ABN AMRO in New York.

Venezuelan energy minister Rafael Ramirez said on Monday it was too early for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to decide whether it needed to adjust production levels at its next meeting.

OPEC's acting secretary-general, Adnan Shihab-Eldin has said the oil cartel might need to cut supply for the second quarter even if consumption stays robust, and would need a faster, bigger cut if demand were to fall sharply.

On the supply side, Iraq has resumed its northern oil exports after flows were halted by attacks since mid-December, industry sources said on Monday.

Dollar steadies after Monday's fall

The dollar held just above Monday's 10-day low against the euro and the Swiss franc on Tuesday as the market waited for capital flows data showing how the United States is funding its current account deficit.

The closely-watched figures due at 9 a.m. yesterday are a good measure of foreign appetite for U.S. assets and key indicator of foreign financing of the nation's gaping current account deficit.

Last month they showed an unexpectedly high \$81 billion November inflow, boosting the dollar.

Later this week, Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan gives a twice-yearly testimony to congressional committees and markets will be eager to hear if he repeats upbeat comments made in London this month about the outlook for the current account.

"People are focused on the inflows data and Greenspan," said Paul Mackel, currency analyst at ABN AMRO in London.

"Greenspan may very well have a different tone about the deficit. Last time he was on European soil and may have wanted to ease European fears (about the current account deficit leading to a weak dollar) but now he will be facing larger questions."

At 3:40 a.m. yesterday, the dollar traded unchanged on the day at

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for his well deserved honour- Doctor of Science (DSc)
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Alhaji (Dr) Ibrahim Saminu Turaki

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- Establishing the First purely Computer Training in Primary Schools

For these and many more, we Congratulate His Excellency.



George Kong
Director of Centre Management

**Long Live Turaki,
Long Live Jigawa State,
Long Live Nigeria.**

Signed:
George Kong
Director Institute Kazaure, Nigeria



INFORMATICS Holdings Limited, Singapore

AGRICULTURE

Fadama III: World Bank emphasises rural transportation

The country director of the World Bank, Mr. Hafez Ghanem has said that the bank is ready to give all necessary assistance towards the economic development of Nigeria particularly in relation to the opening up of rural areas.

Mr. Ghanem who made this known at the launching of the Fadama III in Bauchi recently told newsmen that the next phase of the Fadama programme should have the development of rural transportation as its major focus, adding that the present funding of rural development in Nigeria is not balanced and objective.

He stated that in the next few years efforts should be geared towards rectifying this imbalance, noting that the federal government reform programme and the management of the Nigerian economy in general was

quite impressive.

Furthermore, the positive change being experienced in Nigeria is bound to have an effect on the whole of the African continent, he said.

In his speech, the minister of agriculture and rural development, Malam Adamu Bello, expressed his delight and thanked the World Bank for the eventual take-off of Fadama III programme.

He suggested that the programme should be further expanded to cover the entire country after the initial six months assessment period.

He however, expressed his happiness and commended the African Development (ADB) for its proposal in rural transportation development, saying that could assist in reducing post harvest losses.



Cows on display at Mai'Adua market.

2005 budget: Obasanjo pledges 10% increase to agriculture

President Obasanjo has said that the agriculture sector will get better funding of about 10 per cent increase in the 2005 budgetary

Stories by Hassan Idris, Senior Reporter (Agriculture)

President Obasanjo made

this announcement at the 80th anniversary celebration of the National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI) in a message delivered by the former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), national chairman and the special adviser on agriculture, Chief Audu Ogbah in Vom, recently.

He said that the increase is a demonstration of his administration's political will to support the agriculture sector in Nigeria so that it will take its rightful place in the scheme of things.

He pointed out, this is also in support of the Common Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) at the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

On the funding issue, he however, explained further that the agriculture sector would continue to be improved until the target was achieved, stressing that agriculture sustainability and viability is imperative, even as it is the backbone of the national economic rebirth.

According to him, virile agricultural research system provided the improved agricultural production nation wide, noting that the sector was targeted for faster development.

Yobe govt earmarks N1.9bn for water resources

The Yobe State governor, Alhaji Bukar Abba Ibrahim has announced that the state government will spend the sum of N1.9 billion and the amount has been earmarked for capital expenditure of the water resources sub-sectors this year alone.

Governor Bukar made this announcement through a press statement signed and issue to *Daily Trust* by his special assistant on media and publicity, Alhaji Ibrahim Jirgi, in Abuja.

The statement said that government is to accord priority to the provision of abundant cheap and clean water for human, animal and even industrial uses this year.

The statement noted that feasibility studies and final design of Nyakire dam in Fune local government area of the state will be carried out soon by this administration while one ABEM 300c Terremeter and other equipment to ensure the development of water resources are to be purchased.

That is to compliment government efforts in this direction, adding that the construction of small dams, control gates, dyes, depression, ponds and other irrigational facilities in 34 different locations under Phase II in the state are also to be completed.

According to the statement, Bukar's administration had already under taken the construction

of 20 boreholes in various towns and villages in the state and will soon be commissioned, adding that 20 boreholes are to be drilled at various educational institutions across the state.

Furthermore, 31

constituency boreholes across the state are also expected to be commissioned in these first quarters of the year, already the sum of over N200 million has been released for these projects, the statement said.

The statement also quoted governor Bukar as saying that

contract for the construction of 13 over-head tanks at Dogon Kaka, Bindiga, Hausawa, Asibiti, Dazigau, Kawuri, Shekau, Kalallawa, Mangari, Sungum, Jigawa, Karaye and Yusufari are to be awarded soon, all to boost the water capacity of the state.

Fertiliser: FCT procures 25 tons for farmers

The special assistant to the President and the executive secretary of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) agriculture and rural development, Alhaji Waziri H. Ahmadu has said that plans are underway for the ministry of the federal capital territory (MFCT) to procure 25 metric tons of fertiliser for FCT farmers.

Alhaji Waziri made this announcement in an interview with *Daily Trust*, in his office in Abuja.

He explained that the fertiliser comprised 10 tons of Urea, 10 tonnes of NPK as well as 5 tonnes of DAP fertiliser products that are meant for 2005 farming season in the FCT.

He added that about 27 companies were selected to supply the fertiliser and their names will be published in some major newspapers in this country.

Through strategic planning, he said that the FCT is unfolding technical and managerial techniques to proffer solutions to the agricultural sector, noting that the MFCT is supporting the farmers with

excellent agricultural inputs to enable them tap the incredible potentials in agriculture.

He maintained that remarkable achievement were recorded in the areas of livestock, and in Paikon Koro a suburb in the FCT, there are cattle range and market developments for the benefits of farmers and the public at large.

He stressed that the FCT was poised to make significant progress in agricultural development in the areas of Gawo, Abaji and Nyanya, working in collaboration with donor agencies, adding that their focus is public satisfaction with food security.

He pointed out that Kado fish market was established and recreational fishing facilities were provided by the MFCT, adding that the FCT has a huge expanding market with incredible potentials to tap from the agricultural sector.

On the issue of reforming or making a rebirth of agricultural crops or products, he however, stressed that there is no need to engage in political farming, adding that in the FCT you can grow any type of crops

or plants which is produced in any part of the country.

He added that investors are welcome to produce anything in the FCT, for example pineapple can be produced and processed and sold in large quantity to meet the great demand, saying that a rebirth for cotton or groundnut in uncultivated in the FCT farming environment.

He said this is a great challenge to FCT residents and farmers, suggesting that they should produce any agricultural item and they will yield bumper harvest through mechanise farming which the FCT is supporting.



Waziri Ahmadu, Special Agric. Asst. to the President on FCT

Forum urge FG to develop agriculture for export

A group of scientists in Nigeria have identified the problems of agricultural science including other sustainable sciences that have been the stumbling blocks of national development, and they urged the federal to develop agricultural science for surplus produce export.

The group which organised the forum on the "Reform and Revitalisation of the National Sciences Technology and Innovation system" last week in Abuja said that Nigeria is facing the constraints of agricultural science and technology culture including awareness.

The forum however, suggested that the federal government should provide more enabling environment to develop agricultural science and technology which will serve as the alternative to oil export.

In her remark, a member of the international advisory board of the science and technology reform project, Prof. (Mrs.) Gambo. Abdullahi said that the rural dwellers that are mostly farmers have been neglected suggesting that there is a need to integrate them in science and technology development.

She added that there is a need to propagate science and technology in the rural communities through the media, therefore, the media has a great role to play in this regard.

She pointed out that the problem of infrastructural facilities such as irregular power supply in the rural areas constitute their set back in science and technology development, stressing that proper science and technology education and employment generation are among other solutions to the problem.

In the same vein, the former minister of science and technology, Chief Ebitimi E. Banigo said that science and technology should be at the forefront, over the years it is at the centre stage in the development efforts in this country.

Produce marketing not so bleak -- farmer

A farmer in the federal capital territory (FCT), Abuja has expressed satisfaction that their agricultural produce have been replashing due to marketing expansions, which is not so bleak.

He reflected on the exodus movement of the federal government officials to the FCT, saying that alone boosted their market of agricultural produce which was also growing rapidly.

In a chat with the farmer, over the weekend at Basson Jiwa, Malam Sani Gomna told *Daily Trust* that he produced and sold yam at the airport mini

market, adding that they always move to the Basson Jiwa on Wednesday and still his customers use to follow him to the Basson Jiwa on market days.

The varieties of yams he sells are Akuki, "dan acnacha", and pepa, as well as what other farmers and traders harvest from their farmlands to the growing stock, he said.

He explained that "we too see the natural blessings deep rooted in the countryside because we produce and sell yams, maize, corn and ground nuts and so on at Basson Jiwa on market days, other days we sell at the airport mini market.

SUNDAY TRIBUNE'S FALSE NEWS REPORT ON THE CONFERMENT OF CHIEFTAINCY TITLE ON HIS EXCELLENCY, ASIWAJU BOLA AHMED TINUBU, LAGOS STATE GOVERNOR BY THE NEW EMIR OF BORGU KINGDOM, ALHAJI HALIRU DANTORO KITORO



The attention of His Excellency, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu has been drawn to false allegations contained in a news report in the Sunday Tribune of February 13, 2005 titled "Tinubu, Ibori, Boni consolidate on New Party".

The report alleged that:

1. The conferment of chieftaincy title of JAGABAN BORGU on Asiwaju Tinubu is to be used by governors loyal to Vice President Atiku Abubakar who are working on a new party as a decoy to meet and review their plan for party formation.
2. The arrangements being made for the reception are meant to send "shockwave" to a former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida
3. The purpose of inviting dignitaries to the ceremony "is to register the heavy influence of Atiku in Niger State which is noted to be the stronghold of Babangida."

His Excellency, Asiwaju Tinubu wishes to assert that there is no iota of truth whatsoever in these allegations.

Asiwaju Tinubu and the new Emir of Borgu, Alhaji Haliru Dantoro Kitoro have been friends and associates since 1992 when both were elected into the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Alhaji Kitoro has been impressed by the creative, prudent and disciplined administration put in place in Lagos State by Asiwaju Tinubu since he was first elected in 1999 and has expressed his commendation for Asiwaju's pioneering innovations in public and private.

The bond forged between both distinguished senators has remained indissoluble over the past 13 years. Their friendship has blossomed richly. The royal gesture to a friend and nationalist by the Emir is a recognition of the true worth of Asiwaju Tinubu as an exemplary administrator.

It is therefore trite to read ignoble political meaning to a basically humane gesture apparently motivated by the need to develop trans-state and trans-ethnic relations in the noble tradition of pan-Nigerianism. One is surprised that a newspaper that has played significant roles in the history of

Nigeria could miss this crucial import of the royal gesture.

The report is a crude attempt to read political motives into the attendance of cultural events by governors. Is the Tribune insinuating that Nigeria has relapsed to the years of Abacha dictatorship when politicians and activists could not meet because of harassment? Certainly, as popularly elected representatives of the people, the governors do not need to hide behind any cultural event to meet and discuss any matter. They met recently at the NICON Hotel, Abuja to discuss the Tsunami relief fund. The Southern Governors will meet in Lagos soon to discuss common concerns. These instances should demonstrate that the allegation of using the chieftaincy event as a decoy is uncharitable, baseless and mischievous.

The insinuation that Asiwaju Tinubu would use the chieftaincy event to send shockwaves to the political machinery of the PDP, or any group or any individual in Niger State is simply childish. Asiwaju Tinubu attended the wedding of the daughter of former President Ibrahim Babangida last year. Did it lead to any shockwaves? Asiwaju Tinubu has attended many cultural events-installation of kings and emirs, weddings, funeral ceremonies and traditional festivals in all states of the federation without sending any shockwaves to anybody. Why must his visit to Borgu kingdom in Niger State to accept a royal gesture be misconstrued as part of struggle in which he is not involved.

This is noteworthy because Asiwaju Tinubu belongs in AD, the most principled, pristine and progressive party in Nigeria today. It is also crucial to note that he is the only governor flying the flag of the party.

We believe all the political aspirants in the PDP have enough resources to wage their political battles and Asiwaju Tinubu does not need to be distracted by PDP's internecine struggle for power.

APPEAL

From the foregoing, it is clear that the unfounded and mischievous insinuations may have been responsible for the reports indicating that the Government of Niger State intends to suspend the much deserved installation of Alhaji Kitoro as the Emir of Borgu.

Asiwaju Tinubu wishes to appeal that Alhaji Kitoro should not be denied the honour and grace of his installation purely on the altar of political blackmail and subterfuge regarding the governors' intention to attend the ceremony.

Asiwaju Tinubu would therefore wish to suspend the formal reception for the chieftaincy title of Jagaban Borgu bestowed on him last year so that the Emir of Borgu can be allowed to have his day and his due unperturbed, unmolested and unhindered.

Signed

DELE ALAKE

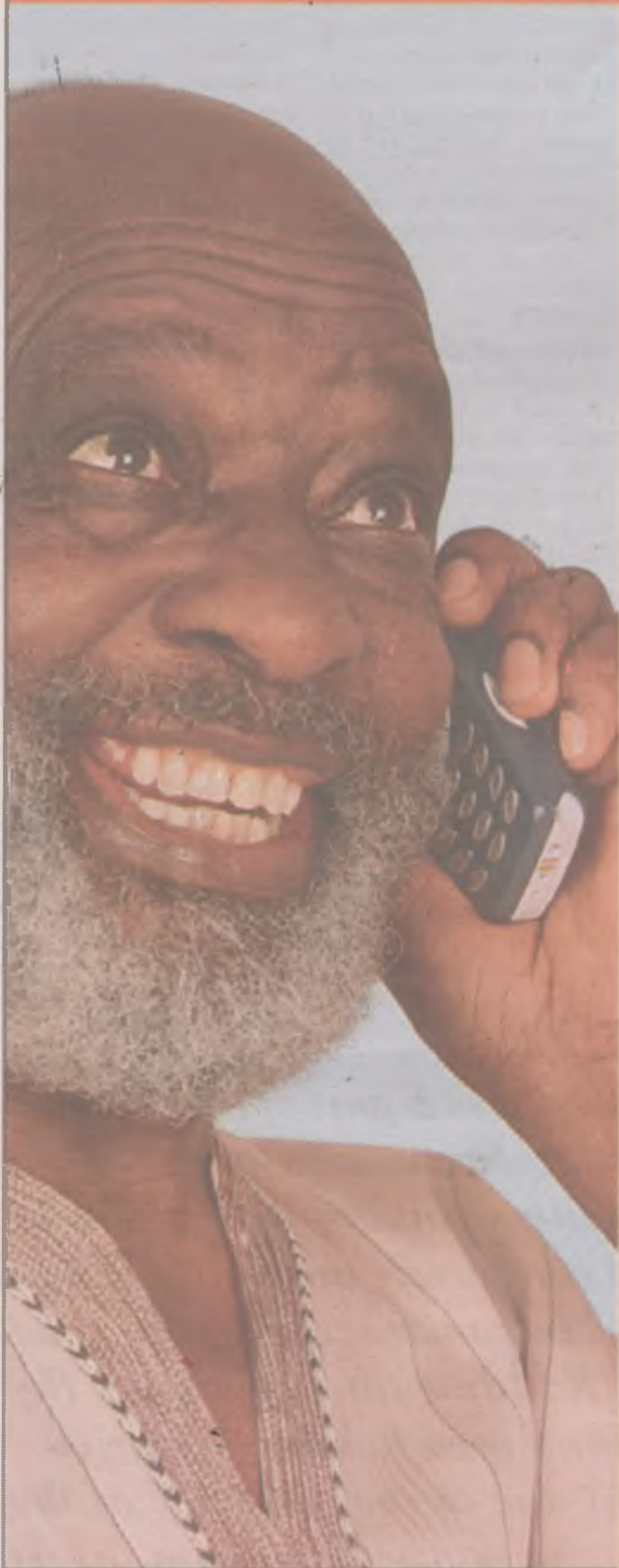
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PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

'Lack of funds stalls Kaduna bypass road project'

The federal executive council during its 34th meeting on the 11th of September 2002 approved the award of contract to Eskio Gullari Group of Companies to construct the Kaduna Eastern

By Nasir Imam, Property & Environment Editor

expectation by ensuring the grading completion of the road, constructed culverts and the payment of compensation to affected

of culverts has attained 70% of the total culverts required.

At the speed the contractors are handling the project, by June this year, the construction of culverts and bridges will be completed, and

The only product that cannot be controlled is petrol because of the regular price instability.

"In the area of relocation of electricity like NEPA poles, NITEL poles, if they are found along our alignment, we remove them and put them in the right of way. Another problem for the relocation of services is the catudic protection because our main alignment is crossing the oil pipe lines and we need to protect them from vandalisation. We have received approval from the NNPC to supervise the sub-contractor handling the catudic protection of the oil pipe lines to ensure specification of the job. The government cannot blame the contractor for not attaining more percentage on the job because adequate funds were not made available.

"The contractor has done approximately N5 billion worth of job, but we have only been able to pay N3 billion. So technically, we are owing him N2 billion for the already finished job on the project, and he has been mobilised for piling, which is capital intensive. Judging the level of mobilisation and every other job done put together, the contractor has attain 18% of the project completion."

Talking about the actualisation of the contract duration, the federal controller said he expected the government to complete the project in 2007, which is additional two years. But to achieve this, government has to put in adequate funds to complete the project and commission it to the credit of the present administration

that initiated the project. He said if the federal government released N8 billion in two years, then the project will be nearing completion, because that will go a long way in ensuring over 50 kilometres completion of the project.

On compensation, Ajibola explained that it was divided into two phases: for the first 25 kilometres, N94 million was proposed for structures and economic trees, and N40 million has been paid to the affected persons. Explaining further, he said if the 2005 allocation was received, the balance of the compensation would be paid. In addition, the compensation for kilometre 25 to the end of the project has been compiled which is the second phase of the compensation. In summary, N40 million has been paid out of a total sum of N94 million.

On the Federal Road Maintenance Agency, FERMA, the controller emphasised that over 554 kilometres of roads have been covered in Kaduna State under Operation 500 Roads that has given birth to the rehabilitation of more roads under Operation 1,000 Roads.

The roads are Kaduna-Abuja dual carriage way, Kaduna-Kano, Kaduna-Bimin Gwari, Kaduna-Kachia road, and many other federal roads in the state, though the state has over 1,225 kilometres of federal roads.

He said estate roads and federal institutions in the Operation 1,000 Roads had begun because the federal secretariat roads in Kaduna have been rehabilitated, arguing that FERMA is competing favourably with

contractors because they have acquired equipment to facilitate construction work against the hiring of equipment in the past that had caused a lot of delay and failure in the job.

"We were given N38 billion for the first 60 kilometre of Kaduna-Abuja dual carriage way, and we did the job very well because we procured new equipment that enhanced our performance with the availability of materials."

Engineer Ajibola identified the deplorable state of roads before the intervention of FERMA as the major challenge, arguing that the ability of the federal government to tackle the menace on federal highways is a demonstration of the present administration's commitment on the delivery of physical infrastructure.

Another construction is the weather situation that has to be monitored especially during the rainy season where materials already procured for laying of Asphalt could be destroyed by rain, that makes it difficult for road construction because the expenditure on materials and equipment is usually doubled.

He insisted that they are civil servants used to implement the policy of government, and cannot work against that, so whatever opinion members of the public may hold against the performance of FERMA and Nigeria roads may amount to unconstructive criticism because individuals and organisations have commended FERMA on operation 500 roads.



A view of the Kaduna Eastern by-pass road project delayed by lack of funds

bypass road at a contract sum of N16 billion (US\$1.15 billion). The notice of commencement for the contract was 24th November 2002 with a total duration of 36 months. However, after 23 months, 30% completion on the job has not been attained due to lack of funds.

Similar contracts worth billions of naira have been abandoned every where in the country because of government's unconcerned attitude towards public expenditure. What is worth doing is worth doing well. Government must learn how to fund projects adequately.

The down payment for the Kaduna Eastern bypass road is N4 billion, and after two years of project commencement, only N3 billion has been paid on a N16 billion project that is of much significance to the people of Kaduna State, since the bypass meant to decongest the city of Kaduna for those travelling across to Kano and other neighbouring states will not have to go through the city with the bypass is a two lane dual carriage way with a total length to 59 kilometres, five interchange and six kilometres of ramps, three river bridges, one railway overpass and 17 giant culverts for the purpose of road alignment.

Be that as it may, Eskio Gullari has performed up to

persons, including the construction of Gbagy Palace at the cost of N4 million for relocation. The federal government's position on road construction and rehabilitation is determined to improve our economic activity, but one wonders why this policy to deliver physical infrastructure is not backed up with funds.

The federal Controller of Works for Kaduna State, Engineer Olufemi Ajibola, stated that the Federal Ministry of Works, on behalf of the federal government, signed an agreement that the contractor, Eskio Gullari, will be given 25% of the contract sum which is N4 billion, and only N3 billion has been paid.

That means government has not finished paying the down payment, and after two years, the level of funding has not been adequate. If you have a N16 billion contract in three years, the minimum budgetary provision for each year should have been N5 billion. Unfortunately, government's level of funding on the job is slow.

He said the contractors had the capacity to handle the project, and emphasised that the first N2 billion released to the contractors was used to procure equipment, plants, establish a quarry, a functional pre-cast yard, building their capacity, and that is why the construction

begin concrete crash barriers that will be used to separate the two carriage ways.

"They have embarked on art works and as a controller, I have advised them to limit their construction activities to the first 16 kilometres of the section of the main alignment, from Kakau interchange to Kachia interchange before moving over to the second section of the road," he said.

The appropriation act of N1 billion paid in two instalments to the contractors last year was used to mobilise a piling contractor for piling activities to determine percentage of work at the initial stage that makes piling very significant. The controller of works explained that the Eastern bypass is part of the circular road planned for Kaduna to give way to traffic for travellers coming from Kano or Abuja to avoid completely the traffic jam in Kaduna town.

The construction of this road will open up Kaduna town because the Southern Kaduna area has been restricted to development due to the presence of the river, while the state government is embarking on three kilometre control development to define clearly the locations of businesses in the city.

Engineer Ajibola said that in any contract, there is an envisaged change in price of materials and other variables.

"The Eastern bypass is part of the circular road planned for Kaduna to give way to traffic for travellers coming from Kano or Abuja to avoid completely the traffic jam in Kaduna town. The construction of this road will open up Kaduna town because the Southern Kaduna area has been restricted to development due to the presence of the river, while the state government is embarking on three kilometre control development to define clearly the locations of businesses in the city."

PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

UDBN to construct student hostels for 25 varsities

The Urban Development Bank of Nigeria (UDBN) is to partner with the education sector to finance the construction of students hostels in twenty-five Nigerian universities across the country.

Managing director of the UDBN, Alh. Rabiu Suleiman Bichi, who spoke to newsmen in his office, lamented that 70 per cent of students in tertiary institutions in the country are not properly accommodated, hence the need to embark on such a

By Nasir Imam, Property & Environment Editor

project. Alhaji Bichi said the university hostels project is one of the objectives of UDBN which include the mobilisation of long-term funds for on-lending to states, local governments and the private sector for infrastructure projects.

UDBN, the managing director said, is to empower and strengthen the capacity of Nigerian local governments to raise additional revenue through

tenement rating to provide and maintain urban infrastructure for their residents.

Alhaji Rabiu Bichi who said that the vision of UDBN is to promote the development of efficient and cost effective urban infrastructure and services in Nigeria, added that already the bank is sourcing for a \$100 million loan from the African Development Bank (ADB).

He said that cities all over the world are noted for their positive contributions to national economic growth and development and are the engines of growth incubators of innovations and centres of social transformation.

Alhaji Bichi said that Nigerian urban centres are yet to play these positive roles due to their poor management as most essential urban infrastructure and services such as roads, electricity, waste management, pipe borne water, and health facilities are inadequate and unreliable.

UDBN, he said, was therefore established in 1992 to serve as a mechanism for sourcing and managing finance for urban development and to also improve the capacity of the urban local governments to generate additional funds to provide and maintain urban infrastructure and services on a self-sustaining basis.



One of the newly completed six (6) township roads embarked upon by Alh. Mohammad Lunjuma Goje (Sarkin Yakin Gombe) since he took over the mantle of leadership.

FG to alleviate accommodation problem of Africa Re

The federal government has pledged to assist in alleviating the accommodation problem of Africa Re, the African re-insurance organisation which has its headquarters in Lagos Nigeria.

The minister of housing and Urban Development, Chief Mrs. Mobolaji Osomo made the pledge yesterday in Abuja when she received Mr. Bakary Kamara, managing director of Africa Re in her office.

Mr. Bakary was in Abuja to thank the federal government for the assistance and co-operation which Africa Re had been getting from the government and people of Nigeria. In his address to the minister, Mr. Bakary revealed that Africa Re was created by the then organisation of African Unity (OAU) as a means of arresting the excessive capital flight from Africa resulting from domination of the re-insurance business by American and European reinsurance companies. He said that Africa Re shares risk with African insurance companies in the insurance business in Africa. In order to ensure effective co-ordination, Mr. Bahary revealed that his organisation has seven other regional offices apart from the Lagos head office.

The Africa Re boss particularly requested for alternative accommodation for staff of his organisation currently living in 1004 block of flats, one of the federal government landed properties that have been privatised.

In her reply, the minister of Housing Urban Development Mrs. Mobolaji

Osomo promised to assist Africa Re in sourcing alternative accommodation for senior staff of the organisation that might be affected in the privatisation exercise. She however informed the Africa Re boss that his organisation would have to pay for the alternative accommodation pending the completion of Africa Re's permanent office and residence at Lekki in 2007.

Property owners owe Plateau govt N99m

Owners of properties in Jos and Bukuru metropolis are owing the Plateau Government the sum of N99 million as ground rents.

The state commissioner for lands, survey and town planning, Chief James Barry, told newsmen last Thursday in Jos.

Chief Barry said that because of the huge amount owed, government had now been forced to find a way of recovering the money.



Gov. Joshua Dariye

The commissioner said he was baffled as to why Nigerians would not pay for services enjoyed.

He said that as a measure of recovering the debt, the government was appealing passionately to the debtors to pay up.

Barry noted that depending on the results of the appeal, the ministry would, as a last resort, drag defaulters to the state rent tribunal.

The commissioner said the ministry had set up machinery for the recovery of the debts

Council passes bye-law on cellophane disposal

The legislature in Aba South Local Government of Abia has passed a bye-law against the indiscriminate dumping of "pure water" sachets on the streets.

The leader of the council legislature, Chief Jonah Onwuchekwa, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Aba, Abia on Tuesday that the bye-law was part of the council's effort to rid the

PCBR c'ttee warns contractors against shoddy jobs

Mr Sani Gidado, Chairman, Presidential Committee on Barracks Rehabilitation (PCBR), has warned contractors handling government contracts against shoddy jobs.

Gidado gave the warning while inspecting the rehabilitation of the Adekunle Fajuyi cantonment and police barracks, Sango, in Ibadan, Oyo State.

"This committee will take severe disciplinary action against non-performing contractors," he said.

Gidado directed officials of Deans Nigeria Ltd, one of the contractors handling the barracks projects to report to Abuja for failing to resume on site.

Gidado warned that if the contractor failed to give satisfactory reasons for not returning to site its contract would be revoked.

He, however, expressed satisfaction with the work done by 11 other contractors at the site.

Gidado assured them that their mobilization fees would be paid to enable them complete the jobs on schedule.

He pointed out that after the payment of mobilisation

fees contractors should be able to complete their jobs before the end of March, the target date for the completion of the projects.

Earlier, the Zonal Co-ordinator of the projects, Mrs Esther Okougha, had told the inspection team that the contractors were handling the jobs with a high degree of seriousness.

"From all indications, most of the contractors will complete their rehabilitation work within the 12 weeks contract duration," she said.

According to her, some of the contractors have maintained very high standards in terms of quality of work.

The contractors promised to continue to put in their best, adding that they were determined to complete their jobs on schedule.

Some of the contractors, however, blamed the due process office for their financial constraints.

It will be recalled that President Olusegun Obasanjo had in 2000 constituted the committee to carry out rehabilitation work in all the barracks in the federation.

The rehabilitation of the Adekunle Fajuyi barracks

involves renovation of 14 blocks for the ranks of corporal and below.

Eight blocks for the rank and file are also being rehabilitated at the police barracks in Sango.

LG chairman warns against bush burning

The Chairman of Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Mr Joseph Ugwuoke, has warned the people, especially miscreants to desist from bush burning.

Ugwuoke gave this warning at the council secretariat, when he spoke with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)

The chairman said it was regrettable that over 14 fires, emanating from bush burning and faulty electrical appliances was recorded in the area between last year and now.

He warned that the council would decisively deal with anybody caught in the act of bush burning for any purpose whatsoever.

He called on the state government to come to the aid of the council by equipping the fire service station located in Nsukka.

He pointed out: "Many people have lost their lives and property, valued at millions of naira because of their carelessness in either engaging in bush burning or abusing the use of electrical appliances.

"But this time, enough is enough, we cannot continue to fold our hands and watch things go this way.

"I am, therefore, going to set up a committee that will enlighten people on the side effects of such actions and how to check them.

the streets" with cellophane as was presently the case, where packaged water consumers dispose of the sachets indiscriminately".

He explained that a first offender would be liable to a fine of N500 upon conviction by a mobile court that would soon be set up by the council.

He also said that a task force, comprising 20 persons from each of the 16 wards in the council, had been constituted to ensure strict enforcement of the bye-law, when assented to.

commercial city of filth.

According to Onwuchekwa, the bye-law, which is awaiting the chairman's assent, makes it mandatory for pure water hawkers in the area to provide a receptacle for the immediate collection of sachets from consumers.

He said the measure would help "to avoid, or at least, minimise the littering of

PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

Forum calls for dualisation of regional roads

The Middle-Belt Forum have appealed to federal government for the dualisation of Keffi-Jos, Akwanga-Enugu, Kaduna-Jos-Maiduguri/Yola, and Bauchi-Gombe-Jalingo roads to ease transportation and also reduce carnage on the highways.

A release from the forum, signed by the president of the forum, Hon. Yakubu Pam Gam, however expressed appreciation to the federal government on her 'Operation 500 and 1000'

By Ebenezer John Buoro
(Intern)

construction of road network nationwide and forth appealed for the inclusion of more roads in the Middle-Belt which serves as a link between the north and south.

Hon. Pam called for the establishment of Middle-Belt development commission to take care of the development of the region in areas of agriculture and the manufacturing sector. He lamented the non completion of Ajaokuta Steel Rolling

Complex which has been neglected by successive governments, and the arbitrary destruction of villages in the FCT without alternative settlement in the name of demolition of illegal structures which had rendered over three million citizens of the FCT homeless, thereby making life miserable for them.

Meanwhile, it was also agreed that all Middle-Belt citizens should steer clear of Audu Ogbeh's seat until his tenure elapses in November this year in order not to create a bad image for the zone, and pointed out that Ogbeh's exit must not be likened to those of Chief Solomon Lar and Chief Barnabas Gemade. He emphasised the need to nip the ugly trend in the bud permanently to avoid a recurrence.

The Middle-Belt Forum delegates expressed support for the national dialogue, but called on the federal government to put the necessary legislation in place before the take-off in order not to waste the country's hard earned resources, hoping that it would not be another 'Oputa Panel'.

FG allays fear on Ocean surge

The Minister for Works, Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe, has allayed the fears of the Lagos State government and the residents of Victoria Island over a possible ocean surge in the area this year. The minister, who disclosed this to reporters at the weekend in Lagos, said the president had already constituted a committee to fashion out the transformation of the waterfront to a tourist centre.

While disclosing that the government had approved a private/public partnership arrangement for the permanent development of the Bar Beach, he revealed that the president has approved undisclosed amount of money for the replenishment of the beach in the 2005 budget.

According to the minister, the sand filling and other activities necessary to curb the yearly ocean surge would be undertaken immediately when the National Assembly passed the budget.

He pointed out that the committee set up by the government has the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Femi Pedro, as the vice-chairman while the managing director of the firm that would win the contract would serve as the second vice-chairman.

He said all the eight companies that had earlier bid to develop the centre would have to re-apply in order to follow the due process.

Contrary to the recommendation of the ministry's committee, which suggested the development of the beach by a private firm, the minister said President Obasanjo insisted on a partnership between the private firm and the government.

According to him, the federal government would own 10 per cent share of the project; Lagos State, 10 per cent; while the private firm that won the contract would

By Olumide Bajulaiye
Correspondent (Lagos)

own 80 per cent.

The minister said he would formally present the memo on the project before the federal executive council on Wednesday.

He explained that the selection of the contractor would be by competitive bidding, as details of the contracts would be advertised in the media to enable both foreign and local firm to participate.

Mande inaugurates GCLME project

The Minister of Environment, Col. Bala Mande (rtd), recently inaugurated the national inter-ministerial committee on the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) project. Col. Mande noted that the motive behind the inauguration of the committee was derived from the national policy of the Ministry of Environment's priority of sustainable development that would enhance food security, poverty reduction and enhance the overall socio-economic growth and well-being of the ministry's coastal communities and the entire nation.

He recalled that in 1995, Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo initiated a pilot project on water pollution control and biodiversity conservation in the Gulf of Guinea in their bid to assess and address the deteriorating ecosystem health of their coastal and marine environment bordering their nations.

The large marine ecosystem in the Gulf of Guinea was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under the PDF-4 with

By Rabi Othman (Intern)

the UNDP as the implementing agency; UNIDO as the executing agency while UNEP is the cooperating agency.

At the July 1999 meeting held in Accra, the capital of Ghana, all the ministers of environment of the participating nations adopted the project as a veritable tool for regional integration.

In the Accra declaration, the ministers called for initiation of an expanded project to include all the sixteen countries situated within the natural limits of the GCLME, and the development of a strategic action programmes (SAP) for the project and also include a full Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA).

Mainly, the overall development goal of the GCLME project is to create regional management of framework for sustainable use of living and non-living resources in the GCLME region. The management of marine and the sustainable use of marine, costal and fresh water resources have been a major concern of the international community for a long time.

FCT NSE chairman loses father

The Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Abuja chapter, have announced the passing away of the father of its chairman, Engr. Umar Jibrin (MNSE).

A press release from the office of the FCT NSE, said Alhaji Gambo Jibrin, the Zarumi of Kontagora in Niger state, died on Sunday, February 13, 2005 at the age of 76.

Alhaji Gambo Jibrin left behind 23 children, many grant and great grand children.



FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY

Agriculture & Rural Development

MFCCT Secretariat, Kapital Road, Area 11, P. M. B. 24, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria

RE: INVITATION TO TENDER FOR PROCUREMENT OF FERTILIZER IN FCT 2005 CROPPING SEASON

Sequel to the opening of bids for procurement of fertilizer in the FCT on 7th February 2005, the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development wishes to notify the following Companies of their pre-qualification to tender for the procurement of fertilizer for the 2005 wet season. The list of the successful companies include:

1. TUNS INTERNATIONAL HOLDINGS LTD.
2. MASTERLINE INVESTMENT COMPANY LTD.
3. SAMBOOKA FERTILIZERS LTD.
4. DANGOTE FARMS LTD.
5. ROSEHILL GROUP LTD.
6. GOLDEN FERTILIZER COMPANY LTD.
7. AZUBIK INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES LTD.
8. ANGEL CHEMICAL COMPANY LTD.
9. COMPUSOLVE INTERNATIONAL LTD.
10. ARABLE CROPS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMPANY LTD.
11. FEDAK NIG. LTD.
12. BAUCHI STATE AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY COMPANY LTD.
13. AFCOTT NIG. PLC.
14. CANDEL COMPANY LTD.
15. SALCO LIMITED
16. AGROVET-SINCOPHARM LTD.
17. F.C.O LTD.
18. NNIL COMERCIAL COMPANY LTD.
19. INFRA PROP GLOBAL SERVICES LTD.
20. FERTILIZER & CHEMICALS LTD.
21. CAPITAL GENERICS LTD.
22. INTACEL NIG. LTD.
23. NAGARI FERTILIZER PROCESSING COMPANY LTD.
24. JOBSON NIGERIA LIMITED
25. KAYZ CONSORTIUM LIMITED.
26. BETA INNOVATION LIMITED
27. EMADEC INVESTMENT NIG. LTD.

2. The successful companies are requested to come to the Office of the Head of PRS in Room 312, Area 11, Garki Abuja to collect the documents upon the payment of a non refundable tender fees of **(N120,000.00)** from Wednesday 16th February 2005.

3. Completed sealed tenders documents are to be re-submitted to the ARD Secretariat on or before **Thursday 24th February 2005**. All the returned tenders are to be opened in the conference room of the Minister for FCT at 12 noon on the above stated date please.

NAOMI BUKAR
For: Head, PRS

THE SOUTH-SOUTH PEOPLES ASSEMBLY

COMMUNIQUE

Communique of the South-South Peoples Assembly at its 2nd General Assembly held in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state on Saturday February 5, 2005

Preambles

- (a) The south-South Peoples Assembly, SSPA, held its 2nd General Assembly at the Multi-purpose Hall, Yenagoa Sports Complex, Yenagoa, capital of Bayelsa State on Saturday February 5, 2005.
- (b) The meeting was conducted in two sessions. The business session and the General Assembly.
- (c) The meeting was attended by the Executive Governors of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States as well as Deputy governors of Bayelsa and Rivers States, the Executive Governors of Cross River and Edo States were represented by the Secretary to the State Government and Political Adviser, respectively. Other distinguished and Eminent persons at the meeting include the Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, some members of the Federal Executive Council from the South-south zone and notable political leaders across party lines.
- (d) Two key note address were presented on:
 - (i) "A South-South President: the quest for equity, Justice and Fairplay" by Professor B.I.C. Ijomah. (Ph.D)(North Western).
 - (ii) The National Political Reform conference: A South-South Perspective by O.C.J. Okocha (SAN)

After listening to the two papers presented and a wide range of contributions by Elders, delegates and other attendants and after full deliberations by the General Assembly the following resolutions were passed:

- (1) The Assembly affirms its belief in the continued corporate existence, unity and indivisibility of the Nigeria and the enthronement of equity, justice and equality, as the only realistic foundation and basis for the sustenance of such unity.
- (2) That the South-South zone should participate fully in the proposed National Political reforms conference, where the South-South position as enshrined in the Calabar Declaration would be further pursued.
- (3) A re-affirmation of and re-dedication to the letters and spirit of the Calabar Declaration, 2004 which calls for the following amongst others:
 - (a) A true federation in which fiscal federalism is fully implemented with equality for all federating units and a derivation principle of revenue sharing at the post independence level of not less than 50%.
 - (b) Rejection of the decision to cede Bakassi Local government Area to eh Camerouns without conducting a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the indigenes; and the rejection of any attempt to cede any part of the South-South zone to any other country or zone.
 - (c) Condemnation of the suite by some Governors challenging the abrogation of onshore/offshore dichotomy and immediate withdrawal of the suit by the Governors.
- (4) Re-affirmation of and irrevocable commitment to the pursuit of a South-South President for the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2007.

DATED THIS 5TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2005

HON. JUSTICE A.G. KARIBI-WHYTE, JSC (RTD), CON
CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE

HIGH CHIEF ALEOGHO DOKPESI (Ph.d)
(EZOMA OF WEPPA WANNOLAND)

Congratulations!



The Executive and entire members of Joint Northern Youth Association rejoices with **ARCHITECT AMINU ABUBAKAR DABO** on his recent conferment with the Vanguard for Democratic Orientation (VDO) Distinguished Service Merit Award.

This is indeed well deserved considering the role you have played in empowering the Nigerian Youth.

We have no doubt in our minds that this award will propel you to do more good things for the Nigerian youth. Continue the good work, we are solidly behind you.

Once again Congratulations and more grease to your elbow.

Signed:

Alhaji Abdul Ahmed Isiaq
National President.
Joint Northern Youth Association

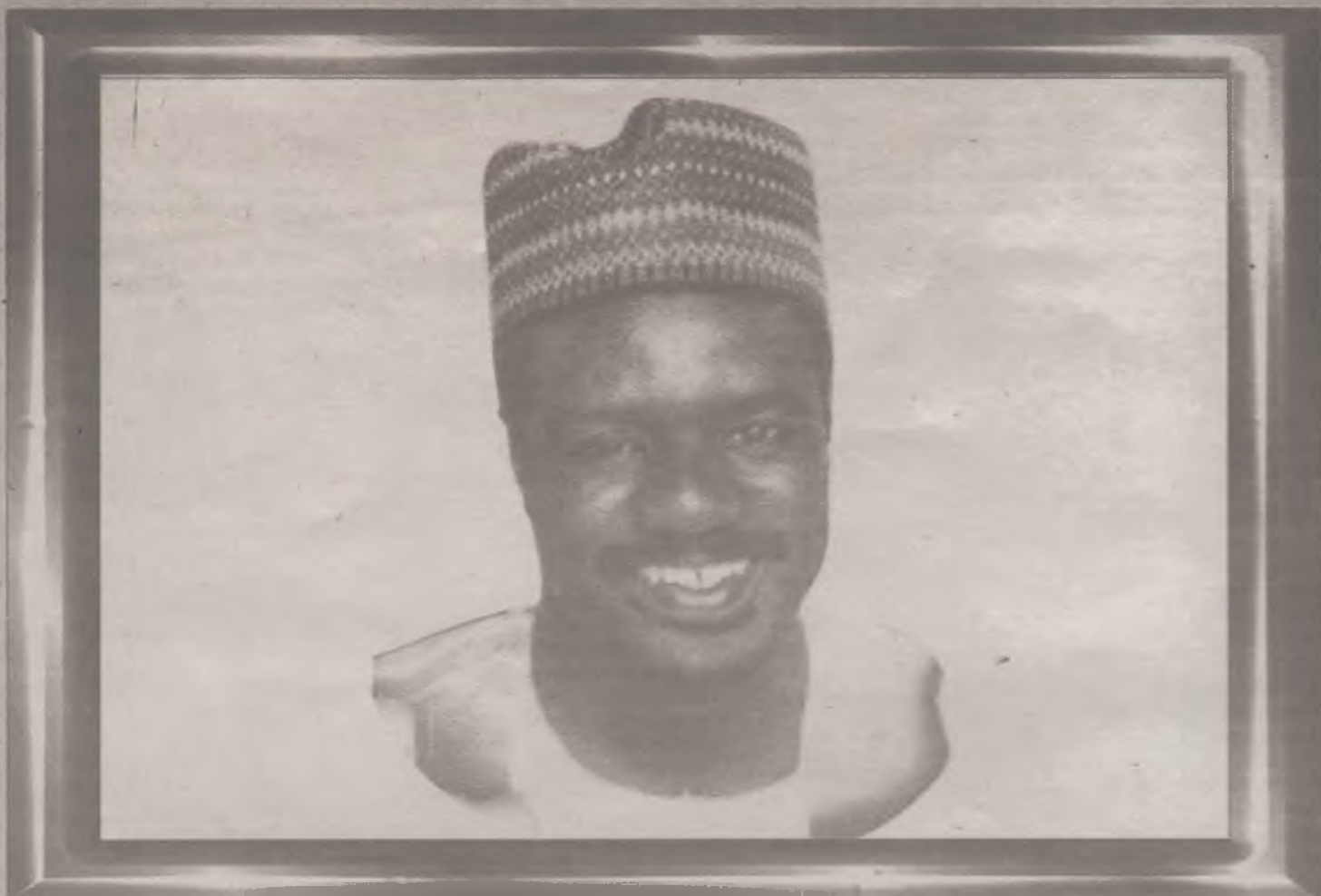


Joint Northern
Youth Association

No. 22 Ahmadu Bello Way, Adjacent to NNDC Building
2nd Floor, Suite 69, P. O. Box 10345, Kaduna - Nigeria.
Tel: 0803 7004081, 0802 9033566

Felicitations !!!

The Honourable Commissioner, and the entire staff of Jigawa State Ministry of Basic Education and Human Resources Development heartily congratulate His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Jigawa State, **Alhaji (Dr) Ibrahim Saminu Turaki** for a well deserved honour - Doctor of Science (DSc) by the University of Jos (UNIJOS).



The giant strides witnessed in the Basic Education Ministry in the State under your stewardship includes:-

- Establishing 320 Junior Secondary Schools in the State.
- Establishing Computer Secondary School for girls in Roni.
- Establishing three Junior Science Secondary Schools in the State.
- Pioneering the application of ICT in the Nation.
- Sponsorship of 150 students for Diploma and Degree programmes in Singapore, as well as,
- The Recruitment of more than 1,000 Teachers for the schools in the state.

For these and many more, we Congratulate His Excellency.



Alh. Lawan Inusa D/Zomo
HON. COMMISSIONER, MOBE.

ALLAH YA YI JAGORA
Long Live Turaki,
Long Live Jigawa State,
Long Live Nigeria.

Signed:

Honourable Commissioner
Permanent Secretary,



Babangida Hussaini (FRM)
PERM. SECRETARY, MOBE.



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ABUJA TRUST

Wuse New Market traders obey relocation order

As the ultimatum given to the traders at the Wuse New Market popularly known as Bakassi Market to relocate to Utako and Dei-Dei markets expires on Monday next week traders have intensified the dismantling and removing of



el-Rufai

By Maimuna Yusuf, Reporter (Abuja)

their shops, wares and other valuables ahead of time to avoid what happened to their colleagues at old Wuse Market.

From afar, it seemed business as usual especially for traders selling foodstuffs like tomatoes, vegetables and others. But on entering the main market, it was the opposite of its old self with many structures pulled down. From the market, almost all the official buildings outside the premises could be seen. However, none of the officials of the market was available to comment on the development, but there were reactions from some traders. One of them, Mallam Tsiyaku Sakwato, who sells vegetables and

fish, said, "I don't have any place to lay my head. The option I have is to go back to my village. I have been living inside this market for five years."

A sales girl, Nkiruka Okoli (female), has been arraigned before an Abuja Chief Magistrate sitting in Jabi for falsification of account. The First Information Report revealed that on February 29, 2004, one Emeng Udosen Etik (female) of Shop C, 32B, Emab Plaza, Wuse II, Abuja, came to Metro office, Maitama, to complain that while taking stock of the year,

sales clerk nabbed for falsifying account

By Ebenezer John Buoro

she discovered that items valued at N614, 000 were missing. Emeng accused Nkiruka, the sales clerk, of fraudulently and dishonestly falsifying the

accounts record in the sales book. Nkiruka was said to have confessed to falsifying the accounts book with the help of one Nkeme (female), a youth corps member. The case was adjourned to February 28, 2005 for hearing.

Three security guards docks for negligence

Three security guards, John Kigbo, Bitrus Mamman and Joseph Anjo, were arraigned before the Chief Magistrates' Court, Jabi, recently, for negligence of their duties. The First Information Report said that on February 28, 2004, one Usman of Plot 831, Usman Street, Maitama, reported that the accused carelessly

By Ebenezer John Burna

allowed an unknown thief to steal N200, 000 gold wrist-watches, electronics worth N300, 000, two NOKIA handsets, and two Samsung cell phones worth N115, 000 from his residence.

The accused were granted bail and the case adjourned to March 22, 2005.



A campaign group at a PDP gathering in Abuja ... recently

Parents want government to reduce school fees

Participants at a meeting of Parents, Teachers Association (PTA) of Government Day Secondary School, Wuse II, Abuja have called on the FCT minister to review fees in secondary schools in the territory.

The parents said during a PTA meeting last weekend that an increase of over hundred per cent at a time was ridiculous and unacceptable.

They said it was unrealistic for government to increase fees from about N4, 000 to N9, 000 per session in the predominantly civil service town of Abuja.

"Everyone knows that the legacy that any parent can give to their child is education and a situation whereby government keeps on increasing school fees, at all levels, thereby taking it out of the reach of parents, spelt doom for the future of our children" said one parent, who did not identify himself.

The PTA chairman, Malam Jubril Mohammed, reminded parents of their pledge to stock the school library, assist with grading the uneven school

compound as well as construct a borehole to provide potable water in the school.

His appeal sparked off heated arguments as to what government was going to do with the increased fees.

Meanwhile, the new principal of the school, Mrs. Chinwe Udegbumam, told parents of her plans to institute an interactive academic forum for parents and teachers to dialogue on

best ways of improving students' performance.

Udegbumam became principal following the mass transfer, which swept the former principal, now principal of Government Girls Dutse and 13 other teachers.

The meeting unanimously agreed to host the former staff to thank them for their efforts in building up the school from the scratch to the present standard.

Valentine Day: Students donate gifts to orphanage

The students of Government Science Technical College, Abuja, under the auspices of Junior Achievement of Nigeria (JAN), an NGO, has donated gift items to the less privileged at the Abuja Children's Home as part of the activities marking this year's Valentine's day. The JAN coordinator in the college, Mr. Mohammed Ibn Saheeb, said the aim of the visit was to touch the lives of the children and give them sense of belonging.

Receiving the gifts, one of the managers of the home, Mr.

By Salaudeen Osigi, Intern

Hadi Isah, thanked the students for their compassion for the less privileged. Speaking also during the presentation, a staff of the home, Mrs. Auta, disclosed that government as well as NGOs and public spirited individuals have been donating for the upkeep of the children at the home, adding that not all the children at the home were orphans as some of them were found under strange circumstances.

New NGO inaugurated in Abuja

A non-governmental organisation, International Noble Initiative Club (INI Club, Nigeria), has been inaugurated in Abuja. Speaking during the inaugural ceremony of the NGO, the president of the organisation, Odiba Knight, said the organisation 'aims to bring people of like minds together to discuss and engage in business in the areas of agriculture,

education, health, tourism, trade and investments.' He added that the organisation would also make efforts to contribute to the development of the country in areas connected to community development through volunteers and youth-engagement.

"Our goal is to contribute our little mites to the poverty eradication derive of the Federal Government of

Nigeria through the creation of employment opportunities for our youth, most of whom roam the streets without a future to look forward to," he said.

Mr. Knight likened the goals of INI Club to those of the government through the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), and other such organisations aimed at helping the poor.

FCT judges urged to shun unwanted litigation

The Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT),

By Benjamin Auta, Crime Reporter

Justice L.H. Gummi, has called for an end to the spate of unwarranted and irritating litigations in the FCT.

He made this remark during a three-day refresher course for magistrates, Area Court judges and registrars of the FCT judiciary yesterday in Abuja.

Justice Gummi said: "There has to be an end to the spate of unwarranted and irritating cases that the FCT judiciary has been subjected to in the recent past by the actions or inactions of some of the staff."

He said cases from Magistrate and Area Courts have been appealed against as a result of some manifest

and avoidable procedural errors by some presiding officers; saying it has had a negative effect on both judges and judiciary as a whole.

Justice Gummi urged the judges to avail themselves the opportunity of learning for "it is only when you understand a subject matter that you can rightly resolve the issue."

He also called on the registry staff to acquaint themselves with relevant laws and rules of procedure applicable to them daily work situations.

The chief judge further told the registrars that the integrity of the judicial system starts with them, hence the need for them to be courteous.



Mohammed Uwais, CJN

KANO TRUST

Winners receive N1m each from Globacom

Three people in Kano have gone home with N1 million each following the recent promotion sponsored by Globacom, a GSM provider in the country.

The winners, two men and a lady include Alhaji Al-Kassim Umar, Bala Alhaji Isyaka and Eugenia Ogoji, won a million naira each after reactivating their glo-times during the one

Responding after receiving the cheques, Alhaji Al-Kassim Umar, who is also a banker, pledged to use part of the money in building an Islammiyya school. Others all vowed to use the money in establishing business so that other people could benefit from it.

In his speech during the presentation of cheques to the winners, the general manager, corporate sales, Globacom, Mr. Menon, urged the winners to make a judicious use of the fund.

Responding on why Glo

Muslims urged to be brothers' keepers

By Ahmed Abubakar,
Correspondent (Kano)

Kano Muslim community has been called upon to continue being their brothers' keepers and unite so as to face the present world challenges.

The chairman, Kano State Shariah Commission, Sheikh Ibrahim Umar Kabo, described the present day hardship experienced by Muslims the world over as that of the time of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH) when he was forced to migrate from the Makkah to the city of Madina.

Sheik Umar Kabo, who in a speech to mark the beginning of a new Islamic calendar year held at the Sani Abacha Stadium, admonished the Muslim faithful to unite in order to consolidate their strength and think as one.

The chairman, who expressed dismay on the people's neglect of agricultural sector and commercial activities in the north, also commended the state government in its efforts to improve the health sector and the reinvention of the Islammiyya school system in the state.

In his speech at the occasion, the chairman of Islammiyya and Quranic schools, Alhaji Bala Khafid expressed dissatisfaction with the way elected politicians shun the electorate despite their pressing needs.

selected Kano for the presentation Mr. Menon said: "we chose to come to Kano to make the presentation because of the unique position the ancient city occupies in the scheme of things in Globacom particular and the entire country in general."

He further said in an effort to reduce the suffering of Nigerians by reducing the level of poverty in the country, Globacom has entered into strategic alliance with the National Poverty Eradication Programme to help provide tools to Nigerians who hitherto lived at the mercy of others. He added that many state governments have joined the scheme while others have shown interest and will soon join.

Meanwhile, the district head of Dala, Alhaji Aminu Ado Bayero, noted that the company has helped in boosting commercial activities as well as technology development in the state as such they are supporting them.

He then called on the winners to think and make better use of the money by establishing businesses for others to benefit from.



From l-r: Vice President Adiku Abubakar, former speaker, House of Reps, Alhaji Ghali Umar Na'Abba and Governor Ibrahim Shekarau of Kano during a condolence visit to the former speaker when he lost his father...recently.

Staff welfare paramount for development - BUK VC

By Aliyu S. Machika,
Correspondent (Kano)

the development of any organisation.

The vice-chancellor, who was speaking during the

meeting of the Committee of Bursars of Nigerian Universities in BUK, said he would like to see a situation where staff salaries are paid on the 25th of every month and pensioners

are paid their entitlements promptly and regularly.

Represented by the deputy vice chancellor (Admin), Dr. Ali Umar Dikko, the Ag. VC urged the committee to deliberate on issues bordering on staff welfare adding that the committee should take appropriate decisions and give correct advice to vice-chancellors.

He said that with the restoration of capital grants and the introduction of the direct teaching and laboratory cost (DTCL) financing the tremendous pressures that had been on the university would gradually be reduced.

He then called on the federal government to improve the fund of the DTLC so as to cover research in all areas of education.

In his welcome address, the bursar of Bayero University, Kano, Alhaji Abdu Gimba, said it was the responsibility of the committee to share ideas, identify problems and explore possible solutions to it.

Also in his remark the chairman of the committee, Alhaji J.A. Bankole, stated that the issue of poor remuneration of serving and retired bursars and registrars worries the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) which is assisting in discussing the proposal for better condition of service with the wages and salaries commission.

He also said that his committee would monitor the events at the salaries and wages commission to ensure that their requests got positive consideration.

Bunkure LG donates Qur'an to mosques, schools

By Mustapha Isah Kwaru,
Correspondent (Kano)

evolve ways with a view to mobilising Muslims to support and comply with the Islamic legal code, saying this could only be actualised when they study the holy book.

The council boss noted that the donation was impera-

tive for ensuring successful and hitch-free implementation of shariah, stating that plans are underway for accomplishing task committees on the legal code so that it would yield fruitful result.

Alhaji Kulluwa affirmed that the council has so far identified series of social ills that ought to be halted through sensitisation seminars.

The local government

chairman cautioned Muslims against disobedience to the principles and teachings of the Holy Qur'an warning that God has reserved serious punishment for the defaulters.

The district head of the council, Alhaji Shehu Abubakar, who also spoke at the briefing expressed delight over the success recorded by the shariah task force committee in sensitising Muslims against social vices.



Governor Shekarau presenting gift to a participant of Quranic recitation competition at Government House, Kano...recently.

EKO TRUST

LASG, LG chairmen may clash over revenue

Lagos State government and the 57 local government council chairmen are set to be at loggerhead, as the state government has threatened to deal with any council chairman that continue to extort money from the general public in the name of generating revenue.

Investigations by our correspondent revealed that there had been series of large scale and intensity of atrocities, extortion and harassment of motorists by local government traffic officers.

Worried by this development, the state government had earlier written to all the council chairmen to warn their traffic officials against such illegal act, which was not adhered to.

Disturbed by the alarming rate at which the harassment continued, the commissioner for Transportation, Muiz Banire, said only three local governments requested and obtained approval from the ministry for the operation of traffic officials under clearly stipulated conditions.

Banire disclosed that reports reaching the state government from members of the public indicate that there is large-scale extortion from motorists by council officials who had refused to desist from the earlier warning given to them.

His words; "reports reaching the state government from members of the public

indicate that they rather desist or heed the earlier warning, the scale and intensity of the atrocities, extortion and harassment of motorists by local government officers in particular is on a disturbing and embarrassing magnitude."

"It has become necessary for you to address your men in this regard with stern warning that any excesses committed henceforth shall be treated officially. It is necessary to state further that their atrocious activities are impugning on the integrity of the state government."

The commissioner added that they (chairmen) are requested to warn the concerned officials to desist from all illegal activities.

To this end, the commissioner directed all the council chairmen to disband their illegal traffic units and warn all the concerned officials to steer clear of the roads or face the full wrath of the law.

"For the avoidance of doubt, you may wish to know that the security agencies have been directed to arrest on the spot and prosecute any erring official," Banire threatened.

He however directed the chairman of Yaba local government to with immediate effect release and refund the sum of N10,000 paid by a petitioner, Professor I. O. Agbede whose car was seized from his wife.



From Left: Alhaji Akeem Kusamotu, Gani Adams and Chief Bode George at the Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) meeting held at the Airport Hotel, Ikeja...recently.

Pix: Oladipupo Odunewu.

Works controller denies approving Falomo under bridge motor park

The federal controller of works in Lagos State; Mr. Adedolapo Adeniji, has denied giving approval for use of Falomo under bridge as motor park to members of the National Union Road Transport Workers (NURTW).

Reacting to a letter purportedly written by the special implementation assistant (SIA) to the minister of Works, Mr. Wole Badmus, Adeniji said that the minister

By Olumide Bajulaiye, Correspondent (Lagos)

of Works, Mr. Seye Ogunlewe, through the controller gave no consent to use the area as motor park.

Adeniji in his letter to the committee on environment and security, Victoria Island and Ikoyi Residents Association, (VIIRA), with copies made to the state ministry of Transport stated that the SIA did not have the consent of the minister nor is it within his purview to issue such permits to any person or organisation.

"The SIA does not have the consent of the federal controller of works nor is it within his purview to issue such permits to any person, persons or organization, as there is a committee in place charged with the direct responsibility of managing the right of way of all federal roads across the country", Adeniji pointed out.



Adeseye Ogunlewe, Works Minister

The letter made available to our correspondent in Alausa further read "any permit, which does not originate from the committee, lacks any substance in its entirety".

The state ministry of Transport in its own reaction to the letter written by the commanding officer, Defence Headquarters, Ministry of Defense, Lagos and signed by A. A. Ogah requesting the ministry to release the vehicles impounded from the NURTW under the Falomo Bridge, said it would not release such vehicles.

The state commissioner for Transportation, Muiz Banire, in his letter said the purported letter approving the area as motor park could not have emanated from the Works ministry.

According to him, "Bureaucracy as I expected you to know would not allow a special implementation assistant, a political appointee to sign a letter for the federal controller of works, who is a senior civil servant."

"Apart from the legality or otherwise of the action of the Federal Ministry of Works, commonsense dictates that a garage cannot be located in a high brow residential area like Ikoyi without putting the lives of the residents under threat".

The GIWA project had earlier written to the commissioner on January 31, 2005 requesting the release of the six impounded vehicles by members of the Lagos State

Transport Management Authority for using Falomo under bridge as garage.

Seven jailed for illegally boarding ship

By Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

No fewer than seven suspects have been sentenced to one-month imprisonment each without an option of fine for unlawfully boarding a ship, M.V Ossa.

The judgment was handed down last week by Chief Magistrate (Mrs.) A.O. Soladoye after the seven accused persons pleaded guilty as charged to a one-count criminal charge.

The seven convicted persons are Jacob Aquite, 23, Amos James, 20, Emmanuel Tarah, 29 and Chijoke Edeh, 24.

Others include 19-year-old Agare Glee, Adebayo Akanbi, 34 and 25-year-old Emmanuel Chijoke.

According to the prosecution the accused persons on 15th January 2005 at about 0200 hours at SFM Jetty, Apapa Port in Apapa magisterial district unlawfully boarded M.V. Ossa vessel without permission contrary to section 501 of the criminal code Cap 13 Vol. II of 1973 laws of Lagos State.

In the plea for mercy, the convicts asked the court to tamper justice with mercy saying that it was the handwork of the devil.

First Islamic estate in Lagos for launch tomorrow

The first-ever Islamic estate in Lagos will be launched on Thursday, with the foundation laying ceremony of a multi-purpose modern central mosque.

Speaking to newsmen in Abuja, the president of the Lighthouse Building Society, Alhaji Shuaib Salis, said that the estate was located on the shores of Lekki beach in Lagos.

He said that the vision of an ideal Islamic estate was conceived by some Muslims who thought of living together after retirement with their families.

Salis said the initiative was not for commercial purpose, "that's why it took us three years to come this far as some brothers were initially reluctant to be part of the group because of some not too pleasant experiences in the past".

According to him, about 66 Muslim families have already subscribed, while all the necessary land laws have been fully complied with.

He said that the foundation laying ceremony of the mosque on Thursday will signal the commencement of building on the site in the first month of Islamic calendar Year (Muharram 1426A.H).

The mosque, he disclosed, will have Arabic and Islamic schools, multi purpose hall, Islamic resource centre, a primary and secondary school.

He added that the estate will be in two prototypes of five-bedroom duplex and three-bedroom bungalow and a two-bedroom for guest.

The president noted that the cost of each plot was very reasonable as it was four times lower to plots in the Lekki Ocean bay area. "That is the demonstration of

peoples' synergy of cooperation," he noted.

He said that formal letters of allocation will be given to all the allottees on Thursday with a proviso that all constructions on such sites must be completed within two years.

On other facilities at the estate Mr. Mahminudeen Akinlusi, explained that it also has business and recreation centres, gym and lawn tennis courts among others.

"This estate is the first of its kind in Lagos and it is a full community on its own where the fortunate few will build their homes while others will forever be eager to be part of," Akinlusi added.

To sustain the maintenance of the estate, Akinlusi said that the community will construct a block of 12 flats in which the proceeds will be used to run the estate.

THE ARTS

Rebuilding Our House

By Crispin Oduobuk,
Group Literary Editor

Our House, the play staged last Friday at The British Council, Abuja Centre, by the Jos Repertory Theatre, has the potential to become a major theatre vehicle for national and no small help in this regard is the flexible plot which allows the cast to offer resourceful interpretations of the Nigerian story since independence in modules which can easily be appreciated by all age groups.

Additionally, the hour-long play has significant high points where the audience either cheer or laugh as one. This indicates that there is enough of a universal appeal in the play to hold the interest of diverse groups. As dramatists and other enthusiasts of the arts know, plays with longevity both onstage and offstage tend to be the ones with which a large section of society, cutting through different strata, feel some empathy with either the characters or the story as a composite whole. Judging from the response it received at last Friday's outing, *Our House* strikes a meaningful cord with quite a good number of people.

It is also worthy to note that the five-member cast which performs multiple roles in multiple situations, without ever leaving the stage, allows the play to stay compact yet dynamic. The play's contemporariness, evoked through evolving linguistic alterations and redefinitions of the Nigerian urban landscape also offers it a lifeline to the young and socially savvy. Moreover, the often subtle but sometimes roaring humour combined with the timelessness of some aspects of *Our House* further increases the possibility of the play superseding its burgeoning popularity to become not only a lasting work of art but a worthwhile medium for conveying the message of reintegration and regeneration.

Yet, as with virtually all things of an artistic bend, *Our*

House has its flaws. Chief among them, in the opinion of this writer, is a weak opening which, although seemingly designed to draw from the time-honoured theatre tradition of a raconteur, sets an unnecessarily sombre tone for a play that has its fair share of thrills. One opening, along with the accompanying old-school-Greek-like pantomiming in the background be discarded for a more fitting in-the-thick-of-it opening.

In other words, beginning the story in the middle of things should enhance its appeal as there'll be no wondering what exactly the death-like characters in hooded black are trying to communicate. Chopping off the raconteur opening should also save some time, another area where *Our House* has major issues.

With its storyline and metaphorical concept, *Our House*, one would suggest, ought



The cast of *Our House* on stage: They are (not necessarily in order of appearance) Nancy Elohi Ocholi, Anne Ewarewah, Nelson Orah, Godwin Ogbaka and Emmanuel Degri.

not to drag beyond 30 minutes. It would be stretching it at 45 minutes but the present one hour is definitely unhelpful. To this end, some of the trivial parts in the play that do not advance the story significantly need to

be trimmed to tighten up the timing, an essential element, as it is well known, in theatre.

Finally, one would strongly suggest either a reworking of the bank executive pressures module that segues into the HIV/AIDS

segment or its removal. It is not that bank executives do not pressurise their workers to the point where some may engage in unethical or amoral conduct, it is that tying that in with the HIV/AIDS pandemic creates the

incorrect impression that the disease can only be contacted through immoral conduct, thereby subtly or indirectly endorsing stigmatisation of sufferers of the disease, clearly an unintended end result.

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*: Great theatre, about far from great lives

Following his death, interest in the plays of world renowned American playwright Arthur Miller is being rekindled by theatre companies around the world. None, possibly, may enjoy the resurgence of the work that launched the late Miller as a contemporary literary heavyweight, *Death of a Salesman*. *Salesman*, reputed to be one of the most staged plays in the world, has been produced virtually in every country. Here in Nigeria, the text of the play has often been compulsory reading for students of literature and theatre arts in many Nigerian universities. Many of these institutions have also mounted presentations of the play on their own. The following is the text of a review of a stage production of *Salesman* mounted last year in Edinburgh, UK—GLE

By Thelma Good

The invited director John Dove casts his production with actors of varying degrees of experience and background but

It's hard to pick particular actors out in such a well balanced cast but *Alex Hassell's* Happy and *Steven Duffy's* Biff let us see all the nuances of the youthful boys and the men they become. Happy is a skillful mover in the

"Miller's *Death of A Salesman* is a play which, if well presented, always quivers and resonates with relevance for audiences. It's possibly the most produced play since its inception fifty-five years ago; they say there's always at least one being staged in the world all the time."

they all bring fully realized characters to the Lyceum stage. First to catch my eye on opening night was *Paul Jesson's* weary beyond reason Willy Loman, the Salesman in whose mind much of the play takes form. He is close to collapse, and in one day and two nights of his life we range over his times as a salesman, a Dad and husband. Taking time to unfold the many shifts in the play where, to Willy the past calls and speaks to him as vividly as the present, the pace of the production lets us enter "Inside His Head", the original title of the play.

whole world of illusion Willy tried to give them both. Biff comes to the point where he knows who he really is and how he must find a different way to survive. *Duffy* really makes Biff's showdown scene with his father tell. Always trying to hold the family together, a tough task in a family that has never spoken the truth to each other, is Linda, played with a deep, meaningful restraint by *Joanna Tope*.

These central performances and those of the rest of the company ensure all the themes of the play, and its extraordinary structure, empower its impact. In this fearful, awesome package

the audience find the realities of life in the US of the late forties paralleled by our own lives in Britain now. Today parents too often try to set out their children-turning-into-adult lives, wrestle with the toughness of just being a little cog in a world that doesn't value you as an individual, all fanned and deluded by false dreams we frequently chase using more and more credit. Ironic laughter confirms our recognition of Willy and Linda, finally paying off their mortgage on a house, now overshadowed by a high-rise neighborhood and too big for just the two of them. Miller's indictment of the American



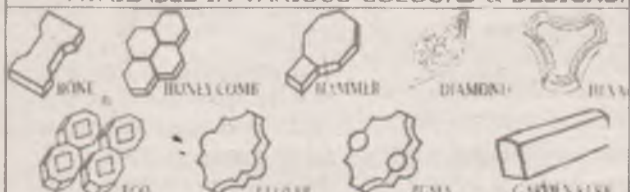
The late Arthur Miller at the height of his fame with his then wife, the movie superstar Marilyn Monroe

dream and families who refuse to be honest with themselves in Dove's production has us facing our own lives chastened. It's great theatre, about far from great lives.

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- P/H: Km 16, P/H - Aba Exp. Way, (Beside Crush Rock Ltd) Port-Harcourt, Tel: 612093, 612101
- BAUCHI: Jos Road, Between Zaranda Hotel & Inland Bank Headquarters, Tel: 077-545971
- ENUGU: Plot 23, Airport Road Opposite ANAMMCO, Enugu, Tel: 552366

THE ARTS THE ARTS THE ARTS

Running down Abuja, Nigeria and Nigerians

The prose in *Around and About Abuja* flows reasonably and logically. This, seemingly, is a thoroughly researched work. A lot of the information is very useful. However, it has some false or at best debatable information. And some of the suggestions, which may have been well-intentioned, come across as condescending at best or, at worse, insulting and outrageous.

As mentioned earlier, there's a lot of information that even permanent Abuja residents can benefit from. Locations of hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, embassies, relaxation spots, gyms, schools and others are provided in the book. There's also some brief general info regarding the country, her peoples, the culture, literature and other facets of life. And the provision of numbers to call in times of emergency on page 323 is especially welcome.

Sadly though, the book, perhaps not meant originally to reach a Nigerian audience, is devoted in many instances to the unseemly business of running down not only Abuja, but Nigeria and Nigerians in general. For instance, those who think that "our dear" Dora Akunyili, DG of NAFDAC, is actually a marvel should read this book and see how the authors measure her success, or, more accurately, the lack thereof. On page 259, under the title Fake Drugs, the book says that "Estimates of the amount of fake drugs on the market in Nigeria vary between 40-90%." Maybe so. But tellingly, on page 19, the book runs this list of drugs a prospective visitor should bring into Abuja: "Anti-malarial tablets, Intestinal antiseptics (Ercefurrl, Intetrix), Anti-diarrhoea tablets (Imodium), Anti-spasmodic (Spasfon, Buscopan), Skin antiseptics, Sterile dressings, Ointments and antibiotic eye-washes, Antibiotics, Antihistamine, Ibuprofen and or Paracetamol, Cold syrup for adults and children, Multivitamins, Sunscreen, Mosquito repellent, Contact lens solution, Hearing aid batteries." Pray, by the time a visitor brings in all these, what exactly would the person be looking for in a pharmacy in Abuja? And what about bringing in his own air to breathe while the visitor is at it?

Also, the Nigerian Medical Association should read this book for virtually all their medical doctors have in essence been categorised as little better than uncouth quacks. Under the heading Seeking Medical Advice on page 258, the book records that, "Doctors in Nigeria are not used to being questioned about the diagnosis they are making or their prescribed course of treatment. They may, in fact, become offended when you do so." There is the possibility that some doctors may be culprits in this regard. But to make that sweeping assertion beginning with the phrase "Doctors in Nigeria" is, to say the least, most uncharitable.

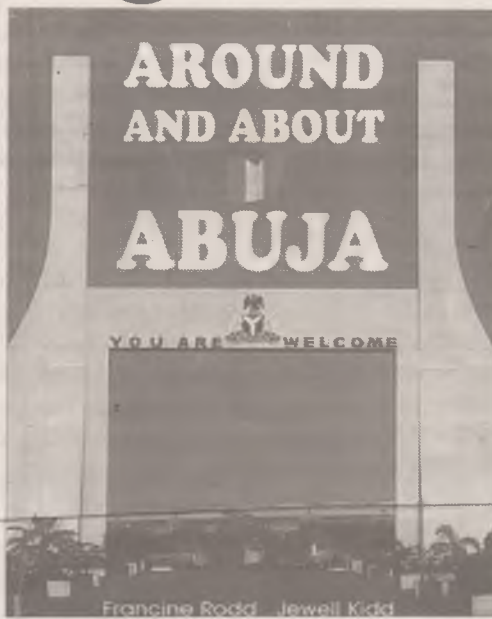
Book Title: Around and About Abuja
Authors: Francine Rodd, Jewell Kidd, Willie Cohen and Taniko Noda
Publisher: Spectrum Books Limited
Pages: 323
Reviewer: Susan Eneche

If you're a Nigerian and you've ever had cause to drive at night, according to the authors of *Around and About Abuja*, you're likely to be among "a lot of Nigerians" who are, in essence, irredeemably stupid. Not done with sweeping declarations, the authors write on pages 271 and 272 that one of the reasons why night driving should be minimised is because "Even when the headlights work, quite a lot of Nigerians do not use them because of a belief that they run down the battery or use more gas to operate." Telling, won't you agree?

One would suggest here that the book seems to have lost focus because going by the title, it would be assumed that this book should deal with the

geography of Abuja and how to get around the town with ease. Rather, it seems preoccupied with the safety and welfare of foreign visitors—presumably in the face of the monstrous dangers that await them in Abuja—forgetting that there are locals that come in from other states that are equally strangers to Abuja.

Subsequently, the writers have fallen into the old trap of bashing Nigeria by excessive criticism of the dangers of coming to the country. Going by the writers' description of Nigeria, one cannot help but ask why any sane foreigner would want to come to Abuja—or anywhere else in Nigeria for that matter—for tourism or holidaying, not to talk of settling down.



Cover of the book

Working from the false and patently unfair premise that nothing good can ever come out of Nigeria, the authors have not been fair to this great nation in many areas covered in their work. The research appears to have been done from a largely

biased perspective. One is tempted to read into this book that old conspiracy theory that the West merely wants to show up Nigeria as being incredibly unable to run its affairs in justify future r e - colonisation. It is telling that the authors of this book are Westerners. Does the plot thicken, or does it? One would strongly suggest that it is time for our own writers to tell our stories, not only that of Abuja, but of the nation as a whole. To further complicate matters, "our beloved"

honourable minister of the FCT, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai appends his signature to a glowing foreword that not only congratulates the authors "for doing a good job", but also recommends this book that has cast his city in such bad light to everybody. Even an executive summary could have alerted him of the uncomplimentary things about Abuja, Nigeria and Nigerians in this book. But, obviously, neither the minister nor his aides read this book before he signed the foreword. In conclusion, one is not suggesting that a book about Abuja should necessarily glorify the city or merely sing the praises of Nigerians. The issue, as shown by the excerpts above, is that unfair and untrue, or assertions that cannot be proved, are being passed off as facts. This is not only unjust, it is the hallmark of the craft of the hatchet man. Or women, as in this case. Abuja, our Abuja, Nigeria, and Nigerians deserve better than that.

Okonkwo Complex in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (II)

By Deji Toyé

Like Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (TFA), the life of Brother Eugene in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (Purple) is dominated by fears. Fear that he might raise children who would be deceived into heathenism or a diluted form of Catholicism. Fear that the children might not take full advantage of the opportunity they have in having a good father like him. And these fears often drive him beyond the limits of tolerable behaviour. Thus, while he encourages the official weekly confession, he nevertheless normally extracts his own penance from both wife and children for the least act or omission. The two most scarring instances we are made to encounter, smoothed down by the masterful reticence of the author, in the incidences that result in the miscarriage suffered by his wife and the deformed finger of one of the children, Jaja. The most dramatic however, is that in which, as punishment for walking, open-eyed, into the sin of living under the same roof with sick and dying Papa Nnukwu (Brother Eugene's father and thus their grandfather), while they are on a short vacation at Auntie Ifeoma's in Nsukka, the children are made to stand in the bathtub while Brother Eugene pours hot water on their feet.

The attitude of Brother Eugene can be contrasted to that of Auntie Ifeoma, his younger sister, who is a widowed lecturer in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Also a catholic, she has however managed to maintain a good relationship with their father, raising children who argue and laugh and love. The turning point for Kambili and Jaja is the above-mentioned vacation spent in Nsukka with Auntie Ifeoma and her precocious three children, Amaka, Obiora and Chima. The regularly visiting Father Amadi and Papa Nnukwu, spending his last days with his only accommodating

child, complete the sextet whose expressive interrelationship opens the eyes of the holidaying duo to the light of true family relationship where sharing (no matter how little, and there is always little), caring and accommodation is the order of the day. For Kambili, something happens to her when she overhears Amaka asking her mother, in reference to her cousins, "Are you sure they are not abnormal, mom?" Things are not bound to be the same again from this point onward. At the end of another visit, we encounter a Kambili with no bobble choking enough to restrain her from chanting Igbo choruses with Father Amadi on their return from one of their regular outings and confessing to him the secret amorous feeling which she has begun to nurse towards the friendly Father.

And of course, as is the cyclic nature of this peculiar *Complex*, the children, especially Jaja, begin to see less of a success in their father, especially in the department of fathering and family life (recall Nwoye in TFA). It is also after the above-mentioned visit that Jaja grows bold enough not to attend communion on, of all days, a Palm Sunday, and even bolder to answer back to his father upon inquiry, thus: "The wafer gives me bad breath... And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me." Brother Eugene will not countenance such sacrilege under his roof—referring to the 'host' as wafer and calling the touch of a priest nauseating! For want of any other thing easily handy, he takes his missal and flings it at Jaja. The missile misses the target but broke the glass *étagère*. This incident, much like the wife beating in the week of peace or the killing of Ikemefuna in TFA, marks a symbolic turning point in the story, from which time the elements, flora and fauna and general cause of events, all raced

inexorably towards the ultimate tragedy.

Thus, like Okonkwo, Brother Eugene's flaw seems to lie, not in espousing the more extreme virtues of his faith, but in not combining same, to a sufficient degree, with the restraining values of love, forgiveness, understanding and compromise. But he appears first and foremost the victim of the flaw, before anybody else, in the story. And in this regard, his would appear to make a better case for our sympathy than Okonkwo's predicament. For Okonkwo exists in a society which, though has come to honour him for the virtues which he exudes, never spares the rod whenever any of his more incongruous characters boil over. Thus, Okonkwo gets verbal upbraid on a number of occasions. An example is the censuring by a priest after he beats up his wife in the week of peace. On another occasion, to contain his apparent arrogance, he is reminded that those whose palm kernel has been cracked for them by the benevolent god should remember to be humble. This idiom, though not exactly apt in reference to Okonkwo, is nevertheless regarded as effective for the purpose. And to cap it all, even Okonkwo has to be expelled from the community for a whole seven years for committing an offence which is not intentional (the criminal jurisprudence of Umuofia certainly does not admit of the European duality of *actus reus*—guilty act, and *mens rea*—guilty mind). Obierika, Okonkwo's closest friend is also a restraining influence on him.

On the other hand, in *Purple*, one of the respects in which the Nigerian society has changed since the days of Okonkwo is that it has become less cohesive and organic. We encounter a society in which the post-colonial economic

structure has poisoned the communal pool of ethos and sunken in its stead, a borehole of anomie in the backyard of privilege. Indeed, it is the new society that sees its privileged as the benevolent god and constantly reminds itself to be humble. Thus, whether in Enugu or back in the village in Abba, Brother Eugene has achieved the new status of a benefactor against whom a case may not be made, at least to his face. In Enugu, the church can only be thankful to him for his financial contributions to the church. When a man is weekly subjected to such crass sycophancy as demonstrated in the following extract, he can be relied upon to progress steadily into the perdition that lies certainly at the tail-end of hubris. Hear Kambili's report of a familiar aspect of the Sunday sermon of Father Benedict:

"On some Sundays, the congregation listened closely even when Father Benedict talked about things everybody already knew, about Papa making the biggest donation to the Peter's Pence and St. Vincent de Paul. Or about Papa paying for the cartons of communion wine, for the new ovens at the convent where the Reverend Sisters baked the host, for the new wing to St. Agnes Hospital where Father Benedict gave extreme unction."

Back in Abba, an impoverished community—the Umunna, the Igwe and all—flock to Brother Eugene anytime he visits for the Christmas festivities to see whatever of his bounty could be grabbed. Hear Auntie Ifeoma complain to her brother's wife on one of their confidential discussions:

"You know that the members of our Umunna, in fact everybody in Abba, will tell Eugene only what he wants to hear. Do our people not have sense? Will you pinch the finger of the hand that feeds you?"

On another occasion, when the Igwe of Abba moved court to the impressive country home of Brother Eugene to pay him homage during the Christmas festivities, Amaka has to comment to Kambili as follows: "I thought the Igwe was supposed to stay at his palace and receive guests. I didn't know he visits people's homes... I guess that's because your father is a big man."

The nearest character in *Purple* to a restraining Obierika in TFA is Auntie Ifeoma who however is herself restrained, not wanting to be seen as 'licking her brother's buttocks.' The nearest anybody ever gets to addressing Brother Eugene's problem in this book is in the statement made by this woman thus: "Eugene has to stop doing God's job. God is big enough to do his own job." But sadly, this statement is not made to the man in question, but to his wife in one of the confidential sessions between the women. It is therefore the unhappy lot of Brother Eugene that there is no resounding voice as that of the flunkey in Roman times who would utter above the din as the General makes his triumphal entry, "Remember, General, you are mortal."

The Achebe evocations in *Purple* may have been widely agreed, after all Adichie made matters clear when she began her novel thus, "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion..." something which a commentator has called 'fictional politics'. But why would the character of Brother Eugene not measure up to that of Okonkwo, in terms of the level of understanding, if not sympathy, we should show to him? There are two possible answers to this, one due to what this writer regards as the fault in the classical criticism of TFA, the other being the perhaps, conscious departure which Adichie makes in *Purple*, from the mould of TFA.

News

Foundation condemns youth/ police clash in Numan

The Bachama Heritage Foundation (BHF) has condemned the violent clash between the police and restive youths in Numan, which allegedly led to the death of Mr. Eli Ezekiel and Kingsley Imburn on Monday February 7. Several others were said to be in critical condition as a result of gunshot injuries. The foundation called on the acting Inspector-General of Police to investigate the use of live ammunition by the police in dealing with the incident. In a statement in Jos, the foundation

Rakiya A. Muhammad,
Correspondent Jos

blamed the death of the two men on 'indiscriminate shooting' by the police. It recalled that the Adamawa State Police Commissioner, Alhaji Hafiz Ringim, had earlier instructed his men against the use of live bullets to disperse protesters.

Noting that the Numan community had also lost Miss Judith La'anguti in October last year following injuries inflicted by a soldier, the foundation asserted that "the people would no longer

fold their arms and watch security agents kill their children under the pretence of maintaining law and order." It called on the federal government to institute a panel of inquiry without further delay to look into the crisis in Numan, regretting that 'the situation is degenerating.' Such an inquiry would however be 'without prejudice to the ongoing legal suit on the matter.'

Protestors destroy NEPA office over power outage, outrageous bills

The incessant power outages and outrageous bills issued by the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) sparked off a violent protest by hundreds of youths who stormed the NEPA office in Makurdi at the weekend. The protesters, who described last month's billing as outrageous in the face of the persistent power outage, destroyed the authority's cash office at the south bank of River Benue, as well as an official vehicle. They said that last month's billing 'compelled them to go all out and teach the officials an unforgettable lesson.'

One protester, who gave his name as Mustapha Sanusi, said that in spite of the continuous power outages, NEPA bills reflected high consumption. 'We sleep in darkness while NEPA slams us with outrageous bills,' said Sanusi, who wondered why highbrow areas like the Kwararafa quarters should

From Hir Joseph,
Correspondent (Makurdi)

enjoy uninterrupted supply to the detriment of other areas. He vowed that 'we shall resist this economic sabotage by NEPA.'

Daily Trust observed that although the police had dispersed the protesters with tear-gas, several fittings were pulled out of the NEPA office and some vehicles parked at the premises were destroyed. Both NEPA officials and customers who came to pay their bills fled upon sighting the violent protesters.

The District Public Affairs Manager of NEPA, Mr. Uche Oranye, condemned the protesters for their violent acts and vowed to get them prosecuted. He explained that the incessant power outages and outrageous bills were not peculiar to Makurdi, as alleged by the protesters. He attributed the problem to 'the general national grid problem.'



Archbishop John O. Onaiyekan, President, Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria reading his address during a function in Abuja...recently

Controversy trailed the withdrawal of a suit filed by a businessman, Mr. Ojoi Ojoi, against the Inspector General of Police seeking to compel investigation into allegation of certificate forgery against Governor Donald Duke of Cross River state.

Shortly before Justice Steven Jonah Adah of the Federal High Court in Abuja struck out the case, a counsel to the plaintiff, Mr. Mac Johnson, had told the court that he was instructed by his client to withdraw the suit. Another lawyer from Amobi

Forgery: Controversy trails withdrawal of suit over Gov Duke

Nzulu's chambers, Mr. Odion Omovbude, who was not robbed, countered Mr. Mac Johnson's statement. Mr. Omovbude said that he had brought a letter from his principal counsel seeking for adjournment of the case. The judge refused to hear him out however since he was not robbed. The judge told Mr. Omovbude that if he was a lawyer, he should be properly dressed in court.

From Kemi Ogedengbe,
Judicial Editor

The judge later sought a re-confirmation of Mr. Mac Johnson's earlier statement that he had instruction to withdraw the case. Since counsel to the Inspector General of Police, Chief Wole Aina of the Federal Ministry of Justice, raised no objection to the withdrawal of the case, Justice Adah struck it out.



Some tokumbo tyres worth two (2) million naira being destroyed by the authorities of Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) in Abuja...recently

Court okays Bakassi hand over

A Federal High Court sitting in Abuja on Monday dismissed a suit filed by the people of Bakassi peninsula against the federal government over the

From Kemi Ogedengbe,
Judicial Editor

handing over of the peninsula to the Republic of Cameroon. Delivering judgment in the suit, Justice Binta

Murtala Nyako said that reliefs sought by the plaintiffs were more of political than legal remedies.

The plaintiffs had prayed the court for seven reliefs,

which include: a declaration that the proposed handing over by the federal government of Bakassi peninsula area of Cross River state to the Republic of Cameroon without amendment of the 1999 Constitution be null and void; a declaration that the adjustment of the boundary of Cross River state which encompasses Bakassi local government area cannot take place without an Act of the National Assembly for that purpose as stipulated by section 8 (2) of the 1999 Constitution; and an injunction restraining the federal government from handing over Bakassi peninsula to the Republic of Cameroon until due process to that effect has been followed under the relevant provisions of the constitution.

In the judgment, Justice Murtala Nyako said that non-joinder of the mixed commission was fatal to the plaintiff's suit. She added that the executives and the National Assembly should confer to find solutions to problems that might arise from the handing over.

Justice Murtala Nyako agreed with the plaintiffs that the handing over required constitutional amendment. She said that it was 'entirely the decision of the executives.'

Akwa Ibom to stage cultural festival soon

The Akwa Ibom state government is to stage the state cultural festival (Ak-Fest) soon in the state capital. The Commissioner for Information and Social Re-orientation, Mr. Parchy Umoh, who dropped the hint after the state Executive Council's meeting last week, added that the festival would be comprehensive and involve other states across the country. He stated that a date for the events is soon to be announced by the committee responsible for the event.

The commissioner further disclosed that the state government has decided to finally hand private schools back to their owners on or before July this year, and called on the staff of the affected schools who may wish to retire from government service to be employed by the private agencies that own their schools to do so without delay because plans for such disengagement were soon to be finalised.

From Edet Ekanem,
Correspondent (Uyo)

Mr. Umoh also said that the government had noted with dissatisfaction the inefficiency and unwholesome performance of the Ministry

of Education. He disclosed that the government has worked out plans to strengthen the ministry's inspectorate unit for more effective service to the people in view of the huge sums invested in the sectors.

Councillor killed in robbery attack

A councillor representing Daunaka/Bakin Kwari constituency of Ingawa local government area in Katsina state, Alhaji Ahmed Shehu, was last week killed by armed robbers operating along Ingawa-Tunas road. It was gathered by Daily Trust that Alhaji Shehu met his death in the late hours of Wednesday while returning to Daunaka village from Ingawa town.

According to a local source, the armed robbers had opened fire on the late councillor when he attempted to escape their ambush. The bullet that hit him also smashed his windscreen.

From Lawal Ibrahim,
Correspondent Katsina

The Chairman of Ingawa local government council, Alhaji Bala Sani Yaya, paid a condolence visit to the family of the deceased. He was accompanied by supervising councillors and heads of department. They prayed for Allah's protection for the family, as well as the entire people of the local government and the state at large.

The district heads of Yandoma and Ingawa were among the earlier callers to condole the family of the deceased. They likewise offered prayers for the repose of the soul of the deceased.

Inside Politics

Sherrif, Kumalia jostle for the soul of Borno ANPP

The widely speculated rift between Borno State Governor, Senator Ali Modu Sherrif and his one-time political associate and House of Representatives member from Maiduguri Metropolitan constituency, Barrister Mohammed Umara Kumalia may have started coming out in the open, with the two political heavyweights and their supporters engaged in a battle of wits against one another.

The contest seemed directed at the soul of the ruling All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) in Borno State, and eventually at the turn of events in both the party and the state, as the politics of 2007 fully gets underway.

It is now widely feared that unless elders of the party, both at the state and national levels, intervene to de-escalate the slowly but surely growing tension, supporters of the two politicians may ultimately engage in physical face-offs, as had happened in the run up to the 2003 electioneering campaign between the supporters of former Governor Kachallah, who later decamped to the Alliance for Democracy (AD) from the ANPP, and those of Senator Sherrif, when the current Borno State governor was Senator of the federal republic.

Sign that the rift between Sherrif and Kumalia is increasingly becoming public manifested at the end of last week, when the Maiduguri Metropolitan (MMC) branch of the ANPP addressed a press conference in Maiduguri on Thursday, where branch leaders of the party said they were 'invoking' the provision of the constitution of their party to begin the process of 'recalling' Kumalia from the House of Representatives because of what they described as his "utter disregard to the party and its structures."

In the press conference, which was co-addressed by the chairman, Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Alhaji Mohammed Imam and the ANPP MMC Secretary, Makinta Mallam Zarami, the MMC leadership of the party said Kumalia had also refused to honour 'five invitations' extended to him to appear before the party, that he had "reported to the security agencies a phantom plot to kill him by some elected leaders of the party in Borno State" and that he was doing all

By Abdullahi Bego, Regional Editor (North East)

these to service his "stillborn future electoral aspiration".

Both Zarami and Imam maintained, however, that their move was neither engineered nor underwritten by Governor Sherrif, to whom they are loyal, as a means of settling scores with Kumalia. "As an elected representative of the people of MMC constituency, Kumalia had done nothing to fulfil his campaign promises like other representatives from other parts of the state. MMC people have lost confidence in him because he has not brought to them any democracy dividends; he's never given even a cap to anybody. This is why the people want to recall him," they submitted.

Imam and Zarami also acknowledged that the process of recall may be a very long and tedious one but maintained that they are prepared to do whatever it takes to push it through.

Supporters of Kumalia, on the other hand, believed that the House of Representatives member was targeted by the Sherrif camp because he poses a potential threat to the governor's speculated ambition to do *Tazarrce* (a euphemism for continuing in office beyond one's first tenure) in 2007.

Addressing the press a day after the MMC branch of the ANPP disclosed that it was planning to recall him from the National Assembly, Barrister Kumalia said that he and his associates were targets of intimidation, asserting that "if anything happens to me or any of my close associates; it is from the Borno State Governor, Ali Modu Sherrif and no other."

According to Kumalia,

"Sources however told Daily Trust that seeds of the misunderstanding between Sherrif and Kumalia might have been sown in the process of deciding which position each of them was to contest for at the 2003 elections. Initially, Sherrif, according to sources, had wanted Kumalia to contest for governor against Mala Kachallah, who was standing for re-election under the platform of the alliance for Democracy (AD). However, as contacts were made with political allies and supporters on Kumalia's gubernatorial candidature, Sherrif was said to change his mind, deciding instead to contest as governor himself because allegedly there was a lot of public pressure on him to contest. Sources added that Kumalia quietly decided to forget about the gubernatorial seat issue, and later went ahead to refuse the offer made to him to stand for Senator from Borno Central Senatorial District, preparing instead to seek to return to the House of Representatives."



Gov. Ali Modu Sherrif

everything is going well between him and the Borno State governor prior to and up to the 2003 elections, during which they campaigned under the same party platform to emerge as governor and member of the House of Representatives respectively.

The House of Representatives member however, alleged that since assuming office as governor, Ali Modu Sherrif "had developed some cold feet towards me and had deliberately distanced himself away from me," adding that this attitude made him to also "keep a comfortable distance from him and kept to myself."

Kumalia also alleged that on three different occasions,

party thugs were sent to attack and jeer at him, although on all the occasions, he was able to learn of the plots and avoid them.

Whether or not these allegations are true, the relationship between the Borno State governor and Kumalia has taken a turn for the worse since when the two prepared for the last general elections, which saw the two of them emerged victorious in the various positions they contested for.

Since then, the two ANPP politicians were hardly seen together in public fora, and neither of them would make any reference to the other in political or public speeches.



Hon. Barrister Mohamed Umara Kumalia

It is not exactly clear what went wrong between Sherrif and Kumalia, after years of working together on the same political track.

Sources however told Daily Trust that seeds of the misunderstanding between Sherrif and Kumalia might have been sown in the process of deciding which position each of them was to contest for at the 2003 elections. Initially, Sherrif, according to sources, had wanted Kumalia to contest for governor against Mala Kachallah, who was standing for re-election under the platform of the alliance for Democracy (AD). However, as contacts were made with political allies

and supporters on Kumalia's gubernatorial candidature, Sherrif was said to change his mind, deciding instead to contest as governor himself because allegedly there was a lot of public pressure on him to contest.

Sources added that Kumalia quietly decided to forget about the gubernatorial seat issue, and later went ahead to refuse the offer made to him to stand for Senator from Borno Central Senatorial District, preparing instead to seek to return to the House of Representatives.

Although this seemed to pass off well and peacefully between Kumalia and Sherrif as the ANPP machine was being deployed to make those electoral successes that the party was able to make in the 2003 elections, sources said that it had to be one of the possible factors which underpinned the now sour relationship between the two Borno politicians.

Whether there would be any form of reconciliation between Kumalia and Sherrif remains an issue in the womb of future events. As things stand however, it appears that the dye is cast between the two of them and their supporters, and it remains to be seen how the entire political drama would play out in the run off to 2007 general elections or resolved before then.

SPORTS

UEFA Cup holders Valencia hope their stuttering domestic form proves a temporary blip as European competition resumes this week from the winter break.

The Spanish champions, whose chances of retaining their domestic crown faded after a weekend home defeat by Deportivo Coruna, host former European champions Steaua Bucharest in one of 16 first-leg ties in the last 32 today and tomorrow.

Under pressure coach Claudio Ranieri was given a vote of confidence by Valencia president Juan Bautista Soler on Monday saying the Italian's future at the club would not be discussed until the end of the season.

Valencia, installed as favourites to become the first side to win back-to-back UEFA Cups since Real Madrid in 1986, enter the competition as one of the eight third-placed teams to drop down from the Champions League.

Valencia have gone five league games without a win and will be without suspended Miguel Angel Angulo, who starts a seven-match ban for his sending off in a Champions League match in December. Midfielders David Albelda and Francisco Rufete are doubts after missing training on Monday with thigh strains.

After the bread and butter of the group stage, the return to the knockout rounds has produced a host of intriguing ties.

Nicolas Anelka is no stranger to scoring important goals in European matches and Fenerbahce will expect their new big-money recruit to fire them past Real Zaragoza, who along with Valencia, Sevilla, Villarreal and Athletic Bilbao represent a five-strong Spanish challenge for silverware.

The much-travelled French striker, who scored in both legs for Real Madrid in the semi-final of the 2000 Champions League, bagged his first goal for the Turkish league leaders at the weekend since his move from

Faltering Valencia begin UEFA Cup defence

Manchester City last month.

Schalke 04, the 1997 winners, will need to replicate their fine Bundesliga form to gain a first-leg advantage away at Shakhtar Donetsk, who beat Barcelona and Celtic at home in the Champions League group stage.

Donetsk have been active in the transfer market by signing Paraguayan international defender Pedro Juan Benites and four Brazilians this year, the latest being under-20 international Fernandinho who will join in the close season.

Donetsk could prove rusty with Ukraine's league season still in its winter break while Schalke, second in the Bundesliga and level on points with leaders Bayern Munich, have been boosted by Germany striker Gerald Asamoah's quick return from an injury sustained on international duty.

Italy's sole survivors Parma, twice winners in the 1990s, are embroiled in a fight to avoid relegation from Serie A, and may view the tie with VfB Stuttgart an unwanted distraction.

Four-times European champions Ajax Amsterdam host French club AJ Auxerre in the first leg while in another stand-out tie Sporting Lisbon, whose Alvalade stadium will host the final on May 18, take on Ruud Gullit's free-scoring Feyenoord.

The Rotterdamers warmed up by hitting seven goals for the second week running in the Dutch league at the

weekend.

CSKA Moscow's home leg with Benfica will be played in the southern Russian city of Krasnodar, near the Black Sea coast. CSKA were given permission to switch because Moscow's weather in February is too cold to guarantee a decent playing

surface.

German second division side Alemania Aachen, who play their UEFA home matches in nearby Cologne, surprisingly qualified from the group stage and take on Dutch title challengers AZ Alkmaar.

Aachen striker Erik Meijer

says being a small club has helped their progress in the competition.

"Perhaps our main advantage is that no one has ever heard of us and therefore takes us lightly.

"But it hasn't all been luck, we have played some great attacking football as well,"

Meijer, who had a spell at Liverpool in 1999, told the Observer newspaper.

Last season's semi-finalists Villarreal and Newcastle United travel for first leg matches. Spaniards Villarreal takes on Dynamo Kiev while Newcastle go to Dutch side Heerenveen.



Pablo Aimar, Valencia playmaker



Nicolas Anelka will lead Fenerbahce attack against Real Zaragoza

Stoudemire leads scorching Suns to topple Jazz

Amare Stoudemire poured in 42 points and Steve Nash added 19 and dished out 18 assists as the Phoenix Suns won a 136-128 shoot-out over the Utah Jazz on Monday, to reclaim top spot in the NBA standings.

Quentin Richardson added 22 to Phoenix's cause, as the

team's high-powered attack produced a season high points tally to register their fifth win in six games.

The victory improved their record to a league best 41-12, half a game ahead of the San Antonio Spurs.

The Jazz got double-figure efforts from six players to also record a season high total but

still lost for the third time in four games.

Raja Bell had 22 for Utah, who finished the game without their two top players Andrei Kirilenko and Carlos Boozer, both going down with ankle injuries.

In Philadelphia, Marc Jackson nailed a game-winning lay-up with one

second remaining to lift the 76ers to a 106-105 win over the New York Knicks.

The NBA's leading scorer, Allen Iverson also made a major contribution, following up his career-high 60 point performance on Saturday with a 38 point, 10 rebound effort to help the 76ers to their third successive triumph.

Jackson added 22 points. Stephon Marbury had 32 points and nine assists for the Knicks, who have won just twice in their last 10 games.

In Auburn Hills, Rasheed Wallace and Chauncey Billups each scored 17 points as the surging Detroit Pistons crushed the Milwaukee Bucks 107-83 to collect their eighth win in nine games.

The defending NBA champions got double figure efforts from six players including 16 points from Richard Hamilton and 11 points and 12 rebounds from Ben Wallace.

In Charlotte, Nick Van Exel hit a three-pointer at the buzzer to earn the Portland Trail Blazers a 80-77 victory over the Bobcats.

Joel Przybilla had a career-

high 19 points and 17 rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who also received 17 point efforts from Damon Stoudemire and Ruben Patterson to snap a three game losing run.

The Bobcats were again without rookie sensation and leading scorer Emeka Okafor, who sat out his second straight game with an ankle injury.

In New Orleans, the Hornets got double figure performances from six players and a pair of free throws from Dan Dickau with four seconds on the clock to post a 98-96 upset win over the Washington Wizards.

J.R. Smith led the Hornets with 18 points while Chris Andersen had 16 and Bostjan Nachbar added 15 as New Orleans improved to 11-41 to move out of the NBA basement, leaving the Atlanta Hawks with a league-worst 10-39 record.

Gilbert Arenas had a game-high 34 points for the Wizards but missed a game winning three-point attempt at the buzzer.

Coaching changes to blame for Kenya's slide

Former world cross country champion Paul Tergat has blamed the regular change in national coaches for Kenya relinquishing their domination of the sport to Ethiopia.

"We will keep losing our grip on the world cross country title if we keep changing coaches. It is not good for the runners because we need consistency in this area," Tergat told reporters on Tuesday.

Tergat was the men's long course world cross country champion from 1995 to 1999, and no Kenyan has won the

title since.

Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele has held the long and short course titles since 2002 and is the only man to win both events at the same championships. He also led Ethiopia to the long course team title in 2004, breaking Kenya's 18-year grip on the event.

"Many athletes who were selected (for the championships) want to train on their own outside the national team's residential training camp. That is a clear message to athletics chiefs that something is wrong with the coaching," said Tergat.

"I greatly benefited from the programmes at the camp...and I prefer that athletes remain in the camp. But the coaching system must be streamlined and changing coaches every year should stop," the marathon world record holder added.

Athletics Kenya scrapped head coach Mike Kosgei's position last month as part of a decentralisation of coaching. Kosgei, one of the country's most successful coaches, was offered a position in charge of cross country and distance running but rejected it.

A set of coaches led by Julius Kirwa is preparing the

- Tergat

Kenyan team for the world cross country championships in France on March 19 and 20.

World 5,000m champion Eliud Kipchoge has asked officials to allow him to train away from the national camp, which began on Monday.

Athletics Kenya chairman Isaiah Kiplagat said all athletes would stay at the camp in Kigari, 250km north east of Nairobi, and urged coaches to join their charges there if they wanted to continue with their programmes.

Sports

Secret of my success, by Siasia

Daily Trust: Coach, how do you feel winning the Africa Youth Championship (AYC) for Nigeria after 16 years of failed attempts?

Siasia: Well I feel very happy and I thank God for everything. You know it is a long time since we won the trophy last, that was why I asked the boys to go out and play like they never played before. And I thanked God that we were able to make history as we qualified for the World Youth Championship (WYC) in Holland. The U-17 team (Golden Eaglets) also qualified for the African Cadet championship in Gambia, it means Nigeria football at the junior level is improving fastly. It wasn't easy at all but I am glad that at the end of the day we pulled it off.

Daily Trust: When you were appointed as the head coach of the U-20 team, Nigerians were wondering if you will be able to measure up to expectation, especially against the backdrop of the poor performance of your national team colleagues, Stephen Keshi and Austin Eguavoen as junior national team coaches. How does it feel proving them wrong?

Siasia: Like I always say Keshi and Eguavoen did not fail because they did not pick their players themselves, the players were there before they come in, they have to work with what they met. I was opportuned to recruit my team myself, so because I went out to get the players myself, that was why I kind of succeeded. They never had the chance to do what I did, so when people say they failed I don't see it that way.

If Keshi and Austin were given free hand like I had they would not have failed. I am glad that it was not like that for me, these guys are good coaches so we have to encourage them to succeed, you can see what Keshi is doing now in Togo (as the chief coach of the Hawks of

Daily Trust: There was this allegation that NFA technical director, Kashimawo Laloko was encroaching on your duties how true was that?

Siasia: Well, Laloko did his bit. He said it in the media that he has to interfere as a coach and all that. He said what he want to say but when we are together he always tell them 'I have seen coaches but Samson Siasia is going to take this team to the next level'. Maybe he meant what he said I don't know, but anytime we are together he used to say a lot of good things. But all I wanted was to prove myself of which I did.

Samson Siasia broke a 16 years-old jinx when he led the Flying Eagles to win the Tessema Cup in Benin Republic last month. The former Eagles striker talks about his preparation, challenges and aspirations for the World Youth Championship. Which takes place in June in the Netherlands, in this interview with our Sports Reporter AbdulRaheem Aodu. Excerpts.

Daily Trust: World Youth Championship (WYC) is around the corner, when is preparation starting for the Flying Eagles and how do you think of bringing into the team either from the local league or from abroad?



Samson Siasia, flying Eagles coach

intend to prepare the team for the world tourney?

Siasia: Flying Eagles' preparation for the World Youth Championship will start from Abuja here at the end of this month (February) or first week of March.

The team will be here for about three or four weeks then we will move to America, from America we will head to France and then Germany from Germany we can drive straight to Holland since the distance is not much. I am trying to arrange friendly matches against American teams and some other countries too before coming to Europe.

arrangements are being made to play friendly games in Europe. We just want a lot of friendly ties to prepare the team for the WYC. We intend to play against some of the teams that have qualified for the World Cup in order to see how well the team will hold up against them.

Daily Trust: Does that mean there will be training camps in the US and Europe?

Siasia: Yes that is the point, that is the idea.

Daily Trust: Following the performance of the team at the AYC, are you satisfied with the performance or do you intend to overhaul the team in readiness for the World

Youth Championship (WYC)?

Siasia: To overhaul you mean to change the whole team?

Why would I change a

winning team that just made their nation and their people proud? Of course there would be some changes here and there but not a wholesale change. If I keep changing the team, how will I be able to build them into a unit? There must be continuity.

Daily Trust: Which aspect of the team satisfy you most and where do you noticed weaknesses during the AYC?

Siasia: If I am to rate the team, I would say I am satisfied with almost all the departments of the team, albeit, there are little things at the back, the defence. When Monday James was injured (during the African Youth Championship), Johnbull (Edeki) who came in for him did well but he made a lot of mistakes which we have to correct. There is a lot of room for improvement in the think these boys in the team. if they have good challenges for their shirts it will make them play better. Because these boys are good players, very good players, all they need is a little bit of challenge that would bring out the best in them.

Daily Trust: Coach, are there new players you are

thinking of bringing into the team either from the local league or from abroad?

Siasia: No, I don't know of any player that I would want to bring in now. Most of the time people suggest players, they come to the trials only to flop. Any time they want to bring players, I would prefer them do bring players that are good, players that would give these guys in camp a run for their money. Don't just bring players because you like them, recommend players that you know that are good, because I don't have their time. I want good players that would come and pick a jersey or at least give the other players strong competition for first team positions that is what I want I don't have time to start inviting just anybody to camp?

Daily Trust: The World Youth Championship is one of the trophies Nigeria is yet to win, how do you rate your chances of breaking this jinx?

Siasia: First of all, I would try to bring in these players to make some changes or corrections that we noticed in the AYC and see how strong my team is. I have to go step by step, preparation is the major key. If I have enough time to prepare and I prepare well I tell you we would go far. I don't know how far, but we would do well.

Daily Trust: How would you rate your team against opposition from other parts of the world?

Siasia: If I were to rate my team in the world I would say average for now because playing the junior World Cup and playing the African Youth Championship are two

different things. These boys are champions of Africa and from what they have done they have shown that they can succeed, playing five matches without losing and winning the African tourney, I think it is wonderful. Now, we have to prepare well to conquer the world. Right now we are average we don't have to push our luck. We have to go out there and to well, prepare well and play good friendly games before the World Cup.

Daily Trust: You were hosted by the president after your victory, how does it affect you and the players?

Siasia: I feel great. I'm glad that Mr. President gave a lot of support for sports in Nigeria especially football. He gave a lot of encouragements to the players. You know if somebody did well you have to encourage him to do better next time. So I'm very grateful for what he did and the way he feted the team. Sport is one of the easy ways to bring Nigerians together. Keep encouraging these boys and you will get the best out of them.

Daily Trust: What do you feel about Nigerians' reaction to your victory in Benin Republic?

Siasia: I feel good about it because lots of Nigerians actually supported me to go for this success. I think it shows how passionate Nigerians are about football. I just thank them for all their prayers and their support.

Daily Trust: Following your success with the Flying Eagles, do you think you can do as well as any foreign coach with the Super Eagles?

Siasia: When our sport authorities bring in foreign coaches, they give them all they need to succeed, let them give to the local coaches what

they gave to the foreign coaches houses, cars and all that and see how well Nigerian coaches will perform. There has been no talk about foreign coach for a while, let us leave it at that. But let them try our own coaches and give them the necessary support and see what they would come out with.

Daily Trust: After the Flying Eagles do you think you can handle the Super Eagles?

Siasia: I don't know about that, I don't want to talk about Super Eagles now I only want to focus on the Flying Eagles. When we reach the bridge we will know how to cross it.

Daily Trust: Was your team's preparation effected by the imbroglio between the NFA and the sports ministry?

Siasia: Sure. It affected us a lot but I don't want to look back, I want to look ahead. As far as the (sports) ministry is supporting the team and the FA is trying to work things together to ensure that Nigerian football moves ahead. What I would advice is that we all have to work together and make this country a better place for us all, not only in sport but in all facets of the country.

Daily Trust: Your last statement to Nigerians?

Siasia: I just want to say thank you to everyone that has contributed to this victory. Its our victory its not mine because it was achieved by Nigerian team not my team. Like I always say, we all played role in the success. So I am imploring all of us, we should not stop here we are going to work on so we still need your supports.

Daily Trust: Thank you Coach Siasia.

Siasia: It's my pleasure.

Change of Names

I, formerly EWULOMI KOFOWOLA (MRS), now AJULO KOFOWOLA ARAMIDE-(MRS). NCMM Abuja and UniAbuja to note.

I, formerly known as MUHAMMAD MUSTAPHA, now wish to be known as MUSTAPHA ABDULLAHI GOBIR. All former documents remain valid. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Public to note.

I, formerly called MISS JOY MADUOZOR, now wish to be called MRS. ESUT and the public to note.

I, formerly MASTER YUSUF SANI, now wish to be known as MASTER GIFT AKPOS YUSUF TOBY. All former documents remain valid. Zamani College Kaduna and public to note.

I, formerly called SHAIBU AJANA ABDULMALIK, now wish to be known and called SHAIBU ABDULMALIK ABDULLAHI. All documents remain valid. Ondo State University and Public to note.

Sports

NFL shifts grounds for Abuja clubs

Abuja-based clubs in the professional league can now heave a sigh of relief following the reversal of the earlier decision compelling them to play their home matches outside their locality.

Salihu Abubakar, the Executive Secretary of the NFL gave nod for the use of the Aguiyi Ironsi Cantonment pitch

**From Patrick Andrew,
Senior Sports Reporter**

after inspecting the pitch yesterday along with the FCT Director of Sports, Alhaji Sani Luhi Abdullahi.

The NFL inspection team had found the Old Parade Ground the venue hitherto used for matches, unworthy of the league this season.

Consequently the four clubs representing the FCT were distributed to Minna and Lafia for their matches.

The clubs NEPA, SEC, VON and Court of Appeal are now to trade tackles at the regimented venue pending when the ongoing facelift at the Old Parade Ground will be completed and ready for league matches.

The venue was among several others disqualified by the NFL inspection team for falling below standard expected of venues for pro-league matches.

The NFL wants all venues to be television friendly and has promised to pay something extra to teams whose venues are not only conducive for live broadcast of matches but attractive to fans.

Rojenny Stadium, Oba, Keffi Township Stadium, Jigawa and Ranch Bees stadia were found unworthy for use.

Meanwhile, the authorities of Adamasigba stadium and their Ilorin counterparts have been ordered to fine tune their facilities or have them banned.

Accordingly, the authorities of Ilorin, the home of Kwara United have 10 days to correct inadequacies found at the venue as must Ibadan whose problems had to do with spectators stand.

Yarima donates 38-seater bus to Zamfara United

Zamfara State Government has donated a 38-seater bus and a 504 station wagon to the Zamfara United Football Club.

Addressing players and officials of the state-owned outfit, the state governor Ahmed Sani, who handed over the keys to the two vehicles to the club chairman, who is also the Commissioner of Agriculture, Alhaji Mukhtar Anka, assured the team of his administration's readiness to give it all necessary support to lift the Premier League diadem.

The governor also said that he would review their allowances to make them put

**From Aminu Mohammed,
Regional Editor, Sokoto**

in their best, just as he gave a motorcycle each to the 35 players and officials as a mark of government's appreciation for their qualification to the Premier League.

Meanwhile, the Zamfara United defeated Sharks of Port Harcourt by a lone goal last Saturday in their Premier League debut. The very thrilling encounter, played at the Sardauna Memorial Stadium, Gusau, witnessed the attendance of the state governor, his deputy Alhaji Mahmud Aliyu Shinkafi; the Secretary to the State Government and commissioners.

Kwara govt reacts to ban on Ilorin stadium

The Kwara State government has said that efforts are being intensified to re-grass the Ilorin Sports Complex pitch, home of Kwara United Football Club, in compliance with the directives of the Nigerian Football League (NFL) Board.

Reacting to the ban on the usage of the Ilorin stadium for Premier League matches, Alhaji Zakari Mohammed, Special Assistant on Sports to Governor Bukola Saraki, blamed the on-going harmattan weather which "interrupts" power supply experienced in recent weeks.

"It is not intentional, the government is doing its best to renovate the stadium. The project will gulp N150 million," he said.

He also stated that the re-grassing of the pitch would have been done as N10 million was earmarked for the exercise but for the football league season, while the re-grassing requires twelve weeks to complete.

The Special Assistant added "what we are doing now is to make it habitable, it is not as bad as it is being painted by some media. Our match against Lobi would be played in Ilorin, I can assure."

**From Abdulrazaq Adebayo,
Correspondent in Ilorin**

He blamed the state of the stadium on long time neglect, saying that since it was constructed in 1977 there has been no re-grassing of the soccer pitch until now that the present administration has come to

its rescue.

Kwara United, who are currently top of the Premier League table along side Lobi Stars of Makurdi, may be forced to play their home games at Oshogbo or Ogbomoso pending the re-grassing of the pitch to meet required standard.

Tornadoes will fall

Niger Tornadoes of Minna have been told reaping a point in their next Premier League tie against Wikki Tourists in Bauchi this weekend.

Wikki Tourists chairman, Alhaji Abdullahi Danbaba told Trustsports yesterday that the team has corrected the glaring flaws noted during their 2-1 defeat by adding that the players are raring to go all out for the maximum points.

"Yes, we lost to Gombe last weekend, but the players' performance was satisfactory. We could have got a better result, probably a draw from the encounter, if not for one or two flaws

Wikki boss

**By Abdurraheem Aodu,
Sports Reporter**

which we are now working to improve ahead of our next match against Niger Tornadoes.

"We are preparing hard for the game. The players are beat Tornadoes and take the three points at stake.

"Tornadoes will not escape defeat at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium, In sha Allah, we will beat them," he said, noting that the team would use the week-two encounter to improve on their form and standing on the table.

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Founded in 1979 and chartered by Act. No. 76 of 1993

CALENDAR FOR 2005 SESSIONS OF THE MANDATORY CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (MCPD)

Pursuant to Rule 14 (10) of Association of National Accountants of Nigeria Rules 1995, approval has been granted for the Calendar of Mandatory Continuing Professional Development for 2005. To ensure effective coverage of all branches, the programme has been arranged for three sessions as follows:

GROUP I	DATE/VENUE
Eastern Zone Abia, Imo, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Bayelsa Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi States	March 21st-24th Awka
GROUP II	DATE/VENUE
Northern Zone Borno, Bauchi, Jigawa, Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe, Abuja Niger, Nassarawa, Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Taraba, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Zamfara and Sokoto States	August 22nd-25th Lokoja
GROUP III	DATE/VENUE
Western Zone Lagos, Edo, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi and Delta States Members who were unable to attend any of the above two sessions	December 5th-8th Benin City

FOR WHOM

It is compulsory for every member of the Association to attend this programme at least once a year. In other words, all members, whether practicing or non-practicing, must attend. There is no exemption. Certificate issued at the end of the course revalidates the membership of the Association. Members are free to attend any of the programme convenient to them. **ALREADY SANCTION IS BEING METED TO OFFENDING MEMBERS ACCORDING TO REGULATION.**

DURATION

Each session is planned to last for 4 days (Monday Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday).

COURSE FEE

Fifteen thousand Naira (=N=15,000) per participant. The fee is to cover course souvenir and lunch only. Payment in Draft should be made to the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria. Personal Cheques are not acceptable. **No Credit will be granted to any group.** Members should make arrangements to pay their fees and claim refund from their employers in due course.

RESOURCE PERSONS

Eminent resource persons have been invited to present papers at each session.

ACCOMMODATION

Members are to pay for their accommodation and feeding in any of the Hotels of their choice. List of some popular hotels at each of the venues can be obtained from the Secretariat.

VENUE

Three venues are being used for this year's MCPD. Members are free to attend any of three sessions convenient to them.

NOMINATION

All nomination with full payments in bank drafts should be made to the Association of National Accountants at least two weeks before the commencement of any session. Personal Cheques are not acceptable.

Extra invitation letters may be obtained from the Secretariat and the Nigerian College of Accountancy, Jos, Plateau State or from the Chairman of the State Branches of the Association.

Sir Peter C. Ibeke
SIR PETER C. IBEKE, B.Sc (Hons), FCMA, FIMC,
REGISTRAR/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

28th January 2005

Sports

WAFU UNITY CUP

Siasia worried over player's low turn-out

Flying Eagles head coach, Samson Siasia has complained to teams to release their players ahead of the West African Football Union (WAFU) Unity Cup, which is slated for this weekend.

Siasia said in a telephone conversation with *Trustsport* yesterday that only five players have reported to the Lagos camp of the team three days to the departure to Bamako, Mali.

"I'm in a dilemma, only

By AbdulRaheem Aodu,
Sports Reporter

five players have reported to camp four days after the deadline set for the players. I'm now at cross road and I don't know what to do. The clubs do not want to release their players and I can not play only five players in a tournament," he said.

The former Super Eagles striker said he has spoken with NFA chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima, and the acting FA scribe, Fanny

Amun about the situation but nothing has come out of it.

"I'm frustrated, I spoke with NFA chairman some days back he said he will come to Lagos to see the situation in camp but I am yet to see him. Fanny Amun also said he has despatched letters to the players' clubs, but what can I do with the five players.

"If not for the important opportunity of finctuning the team and the unity that the competition is expected to

foster among the West African teams, I would have called it off. Even Coach Christian Chukwu with whom I am supposed to work is yet to arrive camp and we are to depart on Friday for Bamako," the African Youth Championship (AYC) winning coach lamented.

Siasia added that he is only thinking of how he can make up a team for the competition now, saying that he is not thinking of winning the tourney.

IBF invites Daniel to world academy

National badminton champion, Grace Daniel Kabi has been selected by the International Badminton Federation (IBF) to attend a two months training programme in Saarbrücken training centre, Germany.

Grace, the African champion and African female number one will join other invited athletes to attend the training programme at the IBF World Academy between March 7 and May 6, this year.

The All African Games Women Singles champions, according to Nigerian Badminton Federation (NBF), are the first African woman to be given the honour of participating in the elite programme.

The IBF World Academy is a training programme reserved for promising youngsters and prodigious talents across the world, to have their skill and develop their talents in the racquet game.

FCT sports council deputy director sports development, Bwamba

Ayuba Kwali disclosed to *Trustsport* that the council is proud of athlete and would assist her to become a better athlete.

"We are proud of Grace and this new honour bestowed upon her is a thing of joy to the whole council. We would do everything to ensure that we assist her and other good athletes to develop and become better athletes," he said.

Meanwhile, FCT sports council has been requested by NBF to assist her secure visa as well as pick her return ticket bills.

"We just received a letter from NBF requesting that FCTSC picks the ticket bills as well as secure visa for her. We would do our best to ensure that her participation in the training programme is hitch free," Kwali added.

According to the FCT official other bills including feeding and accommodation will be taken care of by the international body. Grace is expected to join the world circuit after the training as well as the world rankings.

Abbey eyes the Premiership

Nigeria international George Abbey has found out that a year is a long time in football.

After polished performances in Nigeria's African Cup of Nations campaign twelve months ago, right-back Abbey waited for offers from Premiership clubs to come rolling in. None came.

The 26-year-old is trying to get his career back on track with English League One strugglers Port Vale after so nearly being left on the football scrap heap.

Abbey was at lowly Macclesfield when he shot to prominence alongside stars like Jay-Jay Okocha and Nwankwo Kanu as the Super Eagles claimed third spot in Tunisia last February.

On returning to his club he turned down a new deal, believing the next stop would be the English top-flight.

Offers came from abroad, all of which Abbey rejected not wanting to uproot his family.

"After five years at

Macclesfield I was not making any progress, so after the Cup of Nations I told the manager it was time I moved on to a bigger club," Abbey told BBC Sport.

"I had offers to go to Swiss side FC Basle and Russian clubs Dinamo and Spartak Moscow but none from the English Premiership or Championship when my contract ended last summer.

"Some people have told me they think that because I was at Macclesfield for so long English managers wondered 'If he's that good, why has he been at a lower division club for so long?'"

"Had I been playing abroad in a first division team, I believe English managers would have taken more notice of me."

With no offers, Abbey started this season without a club and trained with Stockport County to keep himself fit.

Despite this, Nigeria coach Christian Chukwu continued to select him for

the national side.

"It felt good to know that the coach of Nigeria still rated me even though I didn't have a club," he added.

Port Vale's chief scout, Ray Williams, knew Abbey from his Macclesfield days and on finding out he did not have a club, invited him to the club.

The manager, Martin Foyle, signed him until the end of the season.

"I want to help the team do well until the end of the season and repay the

manager's faith in me," Abbey continued.

"It has been a disappointing year but I have no regrets.

"When I speak to my team-mates in the national side like Jay-Jay and Joseph Yobo they are surprised that I am not in the Premiership or the Championship.

"Maybe I will have to move abroad in the summer to give myself a chance of getting noticed."

Basketball: Can Erinfolami transfrom Delta Force?

For years, Delta Force was the wiping team of the Premier Basketball League until last three seasons when the team was relegated from the elite league to Division One. Since then, the Delta state sponsored team has been looking for avenue to return to the Premier League and fortunately for the team, Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) has formally invited Delta Force to join the Premier League ahead of the 2004/05 season scheduled to begin soon.

"Yes, Delta (Force) has been asked to join the league. And in that regard a letter of invitation has been sent to the state. "They will be part of the Premier League for the coming season if they meet all conditions set for their entrance," NBBF scribe Chinedu Ezeala said.

Among the conditions, the team is to pay N200,000 registration fees, have a standard home ground for matches and be ready to play all games in the fixtures, especially as regards the road trip matches. After enduring years of agonising spell in the lower division, the Delta team wasted no time as they swung into action by paying the stipulated amount and meeting all other stipulations. Delta Force. Regular face in the Atlantic Conference will this time around tangle with Premier League defending champion, Ebon Comets of Akure, Lagos Islanders, Union Bank of Lagos, Customs of Lagos and Dodan Warriors of Lagos.

The new Delta Force will parade and are reinforced with new crop of players young, dynamic coach, Lateef Erinfolami. Though, the Premier League terrain may not be new to him as a coach having been a coach/Player with Ebon Comets before taking the Delta Force job.

"I will say it's a wonderful experience for me. It is now that I can clearly distinguished between coaching cum team management and being a player," he said. Born in Lagos in the late 60s, Erinfolami started his basketball career as teenager in Nigeria before leaving for Philadelphia, U.S.A where he featured in the NCAA. After a stint in the US, the 6'5 feet tall returned to the country in mid-eighties to join Leventis Buffalo and then moved to Ebon Comets basketball club of Akure. He left the country again for Lebanon between 1994 and 1997 where he had a brief stint before rejoin the Comets where he played until his retirement in 2001. He began his coaching career as coach/player with the Comets before pitching his tent with oil rich Delta Force basketball Club of Asaba where his wealth of experience on the basketball court has greatly help improve the level of the state's female team.

He signalled his arrival in the Nigeria basketball scene as a full fledge coach in 2003

during the Division One League in Kano where his inexperienced female team came second behind First Bank Basketball Club of Lagos creating several upsets in the competition. Erinfolami's landmark achievements in Kano were followed with a gold medal at the 14th National Sports Festival in Abuja last year.

Coach Erinfolami prowess was further proven when his girls defeated First Bank Basketball Club and Dolphins Basketball Clubs of Lagos at the recent Metro Basketball League in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

This feat got the recognition of NBBF who appointed him to assist Andrew Iskophie in handling the National U-18 girls. Eyes on the Hoop gathered that as part of effort to put the team in the mainstream of the new league, lot of experienced have poached across the country just as the state government has thrown its weight behind the team's campaign in the league.

With these set of players, the former Comets players is set to transform the oil rich state basketball team with

ego to take it beyond the local scene. One obstacle ahead Erinfolami is his former team, Ebon Comets. Asked on how match situation would look like when his team faces Comets.

"Honestly speaking, I have a lot of respect for the management of Comets basketball club especially the proprietor, Ayo Bakare. I will always give him his due respect anytime, any day because he is instrumental to lot of changes in my career. Look, I have played under him and I also started my coaching career under him. I did not know if I was an assistant coach with Comets before joining Delta Force because I operate as full fledge coach.

"What I can say is that, if Delta Force take on Comets, the better side would win. Aside being the reigning league champion, Comets are an experience and respected side, so beating them would not be an easy task, but we shall definitely give them a good fight for their money judging by the fact that I was once part of the team both as player and coach," Erinfolami said.

Ekezie rejoins Atlanta Hawks

Executive Vice President and General Manager of the Hawks, Billy Knight, announced recently that the Atlanta Hawks have signed Nigerian-born forward/center Obinna Ekezie for the remainder of the 2004-2005 NBA season.

Ekezie, who played 11 games in the National Basketball Development League (NBDL) for the Columbus Riverdragons, returns to the Hawks after missing the entire 2003-04 season due to a knee injury suffered in an October 16th exhibition game against the

Miami Heat. While with the Riverdragons, Ekezie averaged 12.6 points and 6.7 rebounds adding significantly to the team's front court presence.

Ekezie began his NBA career with the Vancouver Grizzlies and was a second-round pick in the 1999 NBA Draft. Prior to his entrance into the NBA, Ekezie competed with the Terrapins of the University of Maryland where he averaged 12.6 points and 6.7 rebounds.

Obinna Ekezie is being managed by Bill Duffy and

Ugo Udezue of BDA Sports Management, who also represents fellow Nigerian, Michael Olowokandi.



Ekezie



Kano Pillars basketball team dunking it out against the Niger Potters in the Northern Conference of the Nigerian Basketball League. The new basketball season is expected to commence in a few weeks time.

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DAILY TRUST

WEDNESDAY COLUMN

Wednesday, February 16, 2005

EDITORIAL

Purging a violent police culture

The Nigeria Police has been in the news with much drama. The forced exit of Tafa Balogun, the former highly visible Inspector General, under thick cumulus clouds of corrupt handling of funds meant for the Force, has been immediately accompanied by "new broom" language by his interim successor. Mr Ihidare's promises have focused on terminating human rights abuses which have become routine professional practice by the Police. The public has been aware of numerous gross abuses and a culture of impunity which is usually associated with the actions of occupation forces. It is alleged, for example, that arrested armed robbers have been herded into Black Marias; lied to that they were being returned to their villages, and shot on the back when ordered out in some forlorn bush.

The Abacha regime apparently had a blanket policy of executing all those accused of 419 crimes. A recent incident in Kubwa on the outskirts of Abuja, involved a Policeman shooting and killing somebody who was apparently competing with him for the sexual favours of a girlfriend and claiming that the victim was "resisting arrest". Critics assert that 80 per cent of cases of "armed robbers" never get charged to court because they invariably die in detention. A victim of a Police demand for twenty Naira, not as a bribe but as a tax for walking on a road in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State's capital, was told: "after all, we will kill you and get a promotion!". The list is by no means exhaustive.

The media and human rights NGOs have aided and abetted this culture of wanton violence and abuse of human rights by the Police. The media has, for example, routinely telecast gruesome pictures of dead bodies of victims of Police "shoot to kill" after alleged encounters with armed robbers. Since the dead do not present their own side of the story, the Police present these deaths as marks of great achievement by the Force. Those arrested and are still alive are shown with swollen faces obviously resulting from beatings when already under arrest. When an accomplice in a case involving examination cheating was arrested in a Lagos centre, television pictures showed the Police beating up the suspect as he was due to be shoved into a Police vehicle. On their part, NGOs seem to find it easier, and probably more lucrative, to accuse politicians of human rights abuses than highlighting and condemning a culture of routine violence by the Police. The Academic Staff Union of Universities, a body with voice that would draw attention, has also turned a blind eye to this grave problem, let alone to genocide in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo and elsewhere on the continent.

This newspaper believes that the challenge of purging the Police of a mindset of routinely violating the human rights of the public should not be left to a new broom at the top of the institution. While we commend and encourage the interim leader of the Force, it is time that all those with a stake in building a democratic culture in Nigeria and dredging out of public culture those brutalities of feudal, colonial, and military cultures which have followed, and often reinforced, each other. Believers in building a Police culture of providing courteous and humane service to the public should also come up with creative initiatives for rewarding good behaviour, service under severe weather (including torrential rains and heat), riot conditions, demonstrations and football matches; as well as those who lose their lives in the line of duty. Building a civilized culture must come from all tongues, hearts and minds.

The Me-Generation, language and politics

By Mohammed Haruna

Wole Soyinka has persistently called it a wasted generation. This description is, however, not only harsh, it is also somewhat inaccurate. A generation of those between 60 and 70 - give or take a couple of years - that has produced a Nobel Literature Laureate like himself and other literary giants like Chinua Achebe and Ken Saro Wiwa, not to mention other high achievers in many other fields of human endeavour like Chief Gani Fawehinmi in the defense of human rights, can hardly be dismissed as wasted. This is the generation after the one that led the fight for our independence, that is, the generation of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Sir Ahmadu Bello.

Rather than see them as a wasted generation, it is perhaps more accurate to see them as the selfish generation, or what the Americans could call the Me-Generation. Unlike the generation before it, this is the generation that has learnt to put the self before everything else. Consequently it has failed to provide the leadership necessary for building upon the sound foundation of nation-building laid by its predecessor.

I do not pretend to know the reason for this failure. One possibility was that the generation of Zik and Company were not effective teachers. Another possibility was the members of the Me-Generation were poor students. A third possibility, of course, was a combination of the two. Whatever the reason for the failure of members of this Me-Generation as leaders, today the consequences of their selfishness are there for every one to see. Since then subsequent generations have become better and better students of its value orientation, or more accurately, disorientation.

The reader may at this point be wondering why this somewhat philosophical(?) incursion into Nigeria's immediate past? There are at least two reasons. First, is the linguistic somersaults that Dim Chukwuemeka Ojukwu has lately been executing in his quarrel with Chief Chekwas Okorie, the National Chairman of the All Peoples Grand Alliance (APGA) over its leadership, and also in accepting his nomination as a member of the forthcoming National Dialogue.

Second, is the announcement by Dr. Sola Saraki, Senate Leader in the Second Republic and the undisputed godfather of Kwara State politics, Alhaji Lawal Kaita, the second elected governor of the old Kaduna State and a close confidant of Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, Wanteregh Paul Unongo, a former minister in the Second Republic, Brigadier-General Buba Marwa, former military governor of Borno and Lagos State and a presidential aspirant, and many others, that they have formed a new northern group, the Northern Union, to "serve as a vehicle for the advancement of the political interest of the north at all times and all levels". This is in juxtaposition to the Arewa Consultative Forum.

Ojukwu, Saraki, Kaita and Unongo, all of them, belong to the Me-Generation. As a group they have since become past-masters of political doublespeak and obfuscation. Never exactly famous for straight, as opposed to crude, talk, General Obasanjo who also belongs to this generation has, since becoming elected president in 1999, learnt to join this group in their mastery of doublespeak. Not that the earlier generation of politicians did not engage in the vice. Truth be told, politicians as a class are notorious for doublespeak and obfuscation. The difference, however, was that at least the earlier generation did solid work in at least developing and uniting their various regions if not the entire nation.

Doublespeak, as anyone familiar with the works of George Orwell knows very well, means the art of saying one thing but meaning the exact opposite. Orwell is famous for his satirical *Animal Farm* and *1984*.

Needless to say, doublespeak has very dangerous implications for the health of a nation, as the Americans have been discovering under that leadership of George W. Bush, himself a high priest of the religion of doublespeak. When he first came to power in 2000 it was on the promise that he was going to be a "compassionate conservative". Over four years on he has shown himself to be the most cruel American president to the middle and working class; not only has he shifted the tax burden of governance and social welfare from the rich to the middle class and the poor, he has been hell-bent on privatizing just about every service government renders to the under-privileged - from social security through public education to Medicare - something which our government seems too keen to copy in the guise of economic reform.

Abroad, Bush has since made it clear that his new cardinal objective is to spread democracy to all corners of the world - at gun point; a contradiction in terms if ever there was one.

It is this kind of doublespeak that the Me-Generation have all too often engaged in, which, in turn, is why our politics and socio-economics has always gone from bad to worse, regime after regime, decade after decade.

The latest episode of the Me-Generation's doublespeak involving Ojukwu, Saraki, et al, is, as I have said, what this piece is all about. Of this lot, the most fascinating case is Ojukwu's.

Back in 1989, he gave an interview to *The Guardian* in which he said, somewhat with pride, that he had a peculiar way with the English language. "I am not myself," he said, "an easy person to understand... I have a peculiar way of using the English language" (*The Guardian* August 8, 1989). He then proceeded to make himself difficult to understand. For example, he denounced what he called the "sectional elitism" of Nigerians but at the same time went on to preach the supremacy of the Igbo race. Again, he moralized about what he

described as the cancer of womanizing among the elite, but was once escorted to the launch of his book, *Because I was involved*, by Bianca Onoh, then merely his consort. Indeed he had eulogized her in the book. Last but by no means the least, he claimed that he mere y "postured secession" - whatever that means - but at the same time averred that "right to the last minute I continued believing we will win in spite of everything."

Sixteen years after this interview it appears that if the former rebel has not gotten worse in his practice of doublespeak, he certainly hasn't changed for the better. For, only last September he displayed the same mastery of the vice in the *Newswatch*. "I have," he told the newsmagazine (September 13, 2004) "a way I interpret language." He then proceeded to give the newsmagazine a sample of his way of interpreting language. "I have," he said, "never believed in Igbo presidency". However, almost in the same breath he went on to make it clear that "In the constitution of APGA, the presidential aspirant nominated by APGA will be Igbo." The All Peoples Grand Alliance is widely believed to be a predominantly Igbo party.

The latest example of Ojukwu's self-acknowledged peculiar way with English can be seen (or more accurately, read) on display in the *Sunday Independent* of February 6. In that edition, the paper interviewed both Ojukwu and Chief Chekwas Okorie on their dispute over the leadership of APGA. Okorie had told the world at a press conference that he felt "betrayed" by Ojukwu because the former rebel leader sided with a faction of APGA that is suspected to be under the influence of the presidency. Okorie had served Ojukwu loyally for decades.

Okorie, said Ojukwu in the interview, "says the word I didn't quite like and that is 'betrayal'. This is the problem in Nigeria, I mean the use of the English language; coming and speaking out ill-digested language". Apparently it did not occur to Ojukwu that taking sides with the faction of APGA that is against its official opposition to the ruling party while simultaneously claiming to remain the party's leader was like trying to walk on both sides of the street - a feat only those who are masters of doublespeak are capable of.

In the same interview, Ojukwu was angered by the newspaper's suggestion that he may decline an invitation to participate in the National Dialogue since he disagreed with the method of its convening. "I will" he said, "tell you my problem about dialogue. The little English I learnt in Oxford tells me that a dialogue is between two people or Obasanjo and I didn't feel that the answer to Nigeria's problem today is Obasanjo versus the rest of the country, no. I didn't like the dichotomy already implicit in the whole thing. What I am after is a round table where every Nigerian remotely has a say."

By this stand, asked the paper, did it not mean then that he would decline an invitation to participate in the National Dialogue?

"Again", retorted Ojukwu, "this is my quarrel with the Nigerian media. Show me one word in everything I have said that makes you feel I will not be attending if I am invited."

His objection to government's method of convening the National Dialogue may not necessarily mean that Ojukwu will decline an invitation to join it, but anyone with even an elementary understanding of language can see that it is logical. If, indeed, there is any problem with language in this case, it is with the way Ojukwu learnt his English at Oxford. For, if he had learnt it well, he would have known that dialogue is not about confrontation between two parties but is more about conversation between two or more parties. Dialogue, in other words, is not necessarily dichotomous.

At least this is how all my dictionaries, including the definitive Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (Unabridged) define dialogue. It is, says the dictionary, the "interchange and discussion of ideas, especially when open and frank, as in seeking mutual understanding or harmony". Another dictionary, *Hamlyn's Encyclopedic World Dictionary*, defines the word simply as "conversation between two or more persons." Obviously there was nothing wrong with the use of dialogue by government to describe the process of the conference.

Ojukwu is, of course, not alone in his systematic abuse of language to try and confuse the rest of us. This, clearly, was what those who recently broke rank with the Arewa Consultative Forum and announced the formation of the Northern Union also indulged in. According to Dr. Sola Saraki et al, they decided to form the NU because the ACF had consistently said it was not a political organization. Yet the NU chieftains knew that nothing could be further from the truth.

The ACF had never said it was apolitical. What it had always said was that it will not engage in partisan politics in as much as it will always defend the political, economic and social interests of the collective North. It always said it would eschew partisan politics because its members belonged to different political parties and so it could not afford to take sides in, for example, the choice of candidates for elective office if it was to remain united and viable.

For the NU chieftains to now turn around and accuse ACF of denouncing politics is clearly the classic case of making a straw man out of the ACF the easier to pull it down. This false accusation suggests a dubious motive behind NU's formation. One's suspicion is strengthened by the timing of its formation - a time the North needed to go to the National Dialogue with one voice - and the fact that none, I repeat, none of the NU's chieftains begin to come close to Chief S. B. Awoniyi, the Chairman of the AGF's National Working Committee, in his commitment and integrity in defending the North.

The men and women of the Me-Generation and those of us belonging to the subsequent generations who think we can use language to confuse people into entrusting us with power should always remember the saying about fooling some people sometime but never fooling all the people all the time. A hackneyed cliché it may be, but its profundity is not impaired for all its overuse.