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VOL. 10 NO. 45 FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 2005 DHUL HAJJ 11, 1425 A.H. N80

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NIGERIAN POSTAL SERVICE

At least 10 persons have been arrested by the police in connection with the clash between members of the OPC and the Ipakodo Muslim community in the Ikorodu local government area of Lagos state.

The command's deputy spokesman, Mr Adebayo Ademola, told the News

OPC/MUSLIMS CLASH Police arrest 10 suspects

From Zakariya Adaramola, Correspondent (Lagos) with agency reports

Agency of Nigeria (NAN), yesterday in Lagos that several places of worship were vandalized during the clash

at the weekend where three people were seriously injured, but that nobody died. "The Muslim community

was clearing the praying ground in preparation for the Eid-el-Kabir celebration near the community abattoir when the OPC accused them of destroying their shrine," Ademola said, adding that

this led to the fracas.

According to him, places destroyed included residential buildings, the palace of the paramount ruler of Ipakodo, some parts of the

Ipakodo central mosque, OPC's shrine as well as those of Ogun and Igunuku and the Moboke Wasowo mosque.

He said that those found to be involved in the clashes would be charged to court as soon as investigations were concluded.

In another development, *Contd. on Pg 2*

Hajj: Nigerian pilgrims fail to perform Arafat

More than 25 per cent of the 50,000-strong Nigerian pilgrims in Mecca were unable to perform this year's Arafat.

This was due to poor logistic arrangements put in place by the Nigerian hajj mission in the holy land.

A correspondent of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), observing the hajj

exercise, reports that the affected Nigerian pilgrims were seen roaming about trying to locate the temporary shades provided for them.

"The arrangement was poorly put in place. You can imagine pilgrims from Nigeria roaming about trying to locate their various stands."

"There is total confusion," said Alhaji Hussaini

Faruk, chairman of Sokoto north local government.

Faruk appealed to the Nigerian hajj mission to make early preparations against next year's hajj to avoid a repeat of the ugly incident.

"Standing on Arafat is a very important pillar of hajj. The hajj therefore cannot be said to have been fully performed without Arafat," Hussaini told NAN at Mount Arafat.

He urged the Nigerian au-

thority to ensure early and proper demarcation of Nigeria's stand at the Arafat during next year's hajj, so as to ease the problems encountered without Arafat.

Meanwhile, the NAN correspondent covering the hajj operation reports that most

Nigerian pilgrims were also not happy with the feeding arrangement at the Arafat.

It would be recalled that more than 3,000 pilgrims from Sokoto state were stranded at Muna due to poor transport arrangements.

We stand by

Ogbeh - Akume

Almost two weeks after the resignation of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), national chairman, Chief Audu Ogbeh, Governor George Akume of Benue State has declared that he and the people of the state would not give up until the chairman rescinded his decision.

Since Ogbeh threw in the towel penultimate Sunday following disagreements with President Olusegun Obasanjo, a clear division emerged among PDP state governors along supporters of the president and those backing his vice, Atiku Abubakar.

Abubakar was said to have allied the governors loyal to him to frustrate moves for Ogbeh's ouster. The chairman's sudden resignation was said to have taken them unawares, thus they had been pressurizing him to withdraw the resignation.

Speaking yesterday in Makurdi, when he played host to Idoma leaders on a New Year visit to the Government House, Akume said in spite of the odds, they would

From Hir Joseph, Correspondent (Makurdi)

continue to work towards nullifying Ogbeh's resignation.

The outgoing PDP chairman is of Idoma ethnic group of Benue state

Akume told newsmen at the end of the visit that: "No matter what happens, we are solidly behind Chief Audu Ogbeh to ensure he remains with our party".

One of the leaders of the Idoma delegation and chairman of Ogadibbo local government council, Chief Fabian Agada, also told journalists that pressure has been mounted on the state House of Assembly to impress on Akume to fight for Ogbeh's continuation as PDP national chairman.

Contd. on Pg 2

Reps fault INEC's new Electoral Bill

The House of Representatives standing committee on electoral matters has picked holes in the Electoral Act amendment bill submitted to the National Assembly by the Independent National Electoral Com-

mission (INEC). The committee said the new bill falls short of addressing the major election problems includ-

ing the period of disposing election litigations.

Chairman of the committee, Alhaji Hamisu Shira, who made this known while speaking to *Daily Trust* in Abuja, said the bill was faulty, but *Contd. on Pg 2*



President Olusegun Obasanjo (right) chatting with Speaker Aminu Masari when the latter paid a sallah visit on the former at State House, Abuja, yesterday. *Pix: Joe Oroye*

America 'll pursue freedom worldwide,' says Bush

George W. Bush stood in the presence of thousands yesterday with a pledge to seek "freedom in all the world" as the surest path to peace.

In a speech delivered be-

By Elkanah Chawai, Reporter (Foreign Affairs)

fore a vast throng of fellow Americans spilling away from the steps of the Capitol,

"In a world moving toward liberty, we are determined to show the meaning and promise of liberty," the nation's 43rd president said in his inaugural address after being sworn in by the Chief Justice, William Rehnquist.

"The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands," he said. "We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion. The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands," Bush said. "Our country has accepted obligations that are difficult to fulfill and would be dishonorable to abandon," said the president, who *Contd. on Pg 2*

News

UBA, STB sign MOU

Police

Contd. from Pg 1

apparently angered with the way both the Lagos State government and the police command relayed the clash that ensued Monday night between the Oodua Peoples congress (OPC) and the Ipakodo Muslim community in Lagos, some youths in the Alimosho local government area of the state, have accused the government and police command of downplaying the incident.

The youths, who had earlier vowed a reprisal attack on the (OPC) warned members of the group never to unleash terror on Muslims anywhere in Yoruba land again.

The spokesman for the youths, Mallam Hasah Ola Sallis, who spoke to *Daily Trust* yesterday, said they were surprised with the way the media reported the case.

He alleged that the state

government "shielded or bought over Lagos-based media houses" from covering and reporting the clash.

His words: "We want to warn all OPC members that the attack on Muslims in Ipakodo was an attack on all Muslims all over the world. They should in their own interest, desist from attacking any Muslim anywhere in Yorubaland again."

It would be recalled that several persons were feared killed on Monday following a violent clash that ensued between members of the OPC and Muslims in Ipakodo area of Lagos State. The clash, which started at about 6:00 pm had a mosque burnt as a result of alleged desecration of the Ed praying ground prepared by Muslims ahead of salah prayers.

Ogbeh

Contd. from Pg 1

Agada described the chairman's ouster as a wicked act on the whole nation, saying Ogbeh was still receiving accolades for writing the letter to Obasanjo.

He, however, said the Idoma community will organise a hero's welcome for the chairman should entrustees for his continuation in of-

ice fall.

"Therefore we have decided to give him a hero's welcome back home," Agada said.

The governor also spoke on the visit of the Idoma leaders, explaining that it was meant to seek solutions to some of the problems of the people of the state.

Reps

Contd. from Pg 1

that the lawmakers would take care of the loopholes before passing it into law.

He said it did not make sense that dozens of election cases are still before the tribunals almost two years after the declared winners have been sworn in.

Shira gave an example with the lawsuit between President Olusegun Obasanjo and the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), presidential candidate, retired General Muhammadu Buhari, which was recently taken to the Supreme Court after 18 months at the tribunal, saying the delay in determining the case would make nonsense of any justice that the aggrieved may eventually get.

The chairman suggested the insertion of a provision in the bill to ensure that all election cases are disposed before swearing in the winners.

In the alternative, Shira said, ample time should be given between elections and inauguration so that cases would be decided.

He spoke also on the decision by INEC to take over from political parties, the screening of candidates suggesting that security agencies like the State Security Service (SSS) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) be empowered to vet contestants to ensure the credibility candidates put forward to the electorates.

Commenting on the ceiling for campaign expenses placed by INEC, Shira said the provisions were impracticable in Nigeria.

Section 99 of the bill said the maximum election expenses to be incurred by a presidential candidate shall be N50 million, while that of a gubernatorial candidate shall be N20 million. Others are senatorial and House of Representatives election candidates, N8million and N5 million, respectively.

Shira said this would be "impracticable because nobody comes to declare how much he spent in his election. And its one thing to place a ceiling and another for contestants to declare what they spent. Organisations as obtained in other developed democracies can donate to a particular candidate in order to enhance his chances. There are other contributions that may not be necessarily declared by the candidate or may not even be known to the candidate. How do you assess that? How do you quantify that?" he asked.

He also said the section 14 of the bill, which empowers INEC to appoint its secretary should have been extended to cover the appointment of the members and chairman of the commission as well as the state resident electoral commissioners. This, he added, would make INEC truly independent.

On the provision of a separate fund for INEC as provided by section 5, Shira said this was among a number of issues in the bill that could not be fully addressed without amending the constitution.

The chairman, however, commended the commission for bringing the bill in time to

be the undisputed leading financial services company in Nigeria and indeed West Africa with over five million customers, a balance sheet size of about N400 billion, shareholders funds of about N40 billion and a branch network of about 400," he stressed.

At a joint press conference addressed by officials of both banks, Sofola said "a formal letter of request in respect of same (merger) has been delivered to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)".

"Other regulatory agencies are being carried along as the process unfolds in line with statutory requirements.

"Our objective in so doing is to create the largest and most dynamic banking services group that will act as a true catalyst for the transformation of our country and the sub-region," he explained.

According to Sofola, the new institution is designed to become a role model for African business and will epitomise the best of Nigeria and Africa, playing globally, but proudly Nigerian.

"The combined entity will

be enacted into law well ahead of 2007 polls.

INEC's bill was presented to the lawmakers late last year. The bill seeks to among others, consolidate four existing election laws, namely INEC establishment Act 17 of 1998, INEC (Amendment Act) 33 of 1998, Electoral Act 2002 and Electoral (Amendment Act) 2004.

America

Contd. from Pg 1

led the nation to war in Iraq in a first term marked by terrorist attacks on the United States.

"The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world."

Bush awoke before dawn in the White House, the nation's cold capital under security so tight that 100 square blocks were sealed off to traffic.

Bush's victory made him the 16th president in American history to win a second full term — a accomplishment denied his father, George H.W. Bush in 1992. In the process, he led Republicans to larger majorities in the House and Senate, and has outlined a conservative second-term domestic agenda that includes major changes in Social Security and taxes.

Vice President Dick Cheney took the oath for a second term moments before the president. House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert of Illinois swore him in.

Admire the celebration and high security, anti-Bush protesters staged a rally to voice out their opposition to his foreign policy and the war in Iraq.

denied rumours in some circles that one of the banks was acquiring the other, saying "it is a merger".

"This is a carefully well thought merger, not induced by the CBN's directive on consolidation as the two banks had been thinking of coming together for a couple of years," Etumelu emphasised.

He said that the two banks would decide on what name to adopt for the emerging institution in due course and "this will be based not on ego, but market reality".

The chairman of STB, Chief Ferdinand Alabara, was among top officials of the two banks who were present at the UBA headquarters building venue of the briefing.



Governor Bani Haruna of Adamawa State inspecting facilities at the Mubi Burnt bricks after its commissioning. Closely accompanying the governor is the general manager of the company, Alhaji Ibrahim Yussa'u.



Governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi of Kaduna State and his Katsina State counterpart Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua during the council of state meeting held at the state House Abuja, recently.



Governor Adamu Aliero of Kebbi State (right) with Governor Ibrahim Shekarau of Kano State at the opening ceremony of the 19th National Qur'anic recitation competition held in Birnin Kebbi recently.

Pic: Joe Oroye.

News

Lack of teachers threaten FGC, Sokoto

The Federal Government College, Sokoto, faces imminent collapse due to a shortage of teachers, says the principal, Alhaji Saad Abubakar.

Abubakar told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), in Sokoto that, "of the 114 teachers in the college, less than half are permanent staff."

"In fact, the staff shortage is so serious here that, we have 36 NYSC teachers, 26 part-timers, 10 PTA part-timers and some other temporary teachers."

"For those of us in the teaching profession, these are not people you can call upon anytime."

"It is particularly bad for a school with a population of about 3,000 students," Abubakar stressed.

He decried "a situation where most core subjects have no teachers", noting that "the English Language for which 14 teachers are required, has only six".

According to Abubakar: "The situation is worse for mathematics with four teachers against the required 14."

"Geography, chemistry, physics, biology and agriculture have only one qualified teacher each."

The principal told NAN that both music and shorthand have no teacher at all.

"We are in a very tight situation here," he stressed.

"Teachers are routinely transferred, but not replaced. The result is that a while the student population increases, the staff decreases steadily."

The continuous rise in student population has forced an overflow of students in classes, he said, noting that "there is an average of 86 students per class in the senior arms".

Wada Nas, dependable Nigerian -ANPP stalwart

Chiefman of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Alhaji Salisu Bashankai, has described the late minister of Special duties in the regime of late General Sani Abacha, Alhaji Wada Nas, as a dependable Nigerian.

Alhaji Bashankai who is the Southwest coordinator of the Hausa/Fulani for General Mohammedu Buhari (rd), presidential ambition in the 2003 elections said a special prayer will be offered in Sagamu, Ogun State tomorrow for the repose of the late minister's soul.

Alhaji Bashankai who is the Sarkin Fulani of Sagamu said this during an exclusive interview with the Daily Trust in his office, that late Nas motivated him to join the All Peoples Party (APP).

Onu faults processes of National Conference

The former executive Governor of Abia State, Dr. Ogburnaya Onu, has faulted the processes imbibed by the Federal Government in convening the proposed national political reform conference, also known as National Dialogue.

A press statement signed by Dr. Onu and made available to Daily Trust said that it is undemocratic for President Olusegun Obasanjo to appoint 50 nominees to the proposed conference, especially in a democratic government.

The policy, he said, will be published to enlighten Nigerians on government's security plans for the country.

The meeting, chaired by Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, also approved a memorandum from the ministry of works, for the maintenance of the Lagos shoreline.

Works Minister, Adeseye Ogunlewe, said the project was aimed at protecting the embankment along the Atlantic Ocean shoreline in Lagos from collapsing due to pressure.

Ogunlewe said that the steel embankment which ran from Ibeju to Victoria Island was eroding off due to silt and the salinity of sea water.

FG approves new defence policy

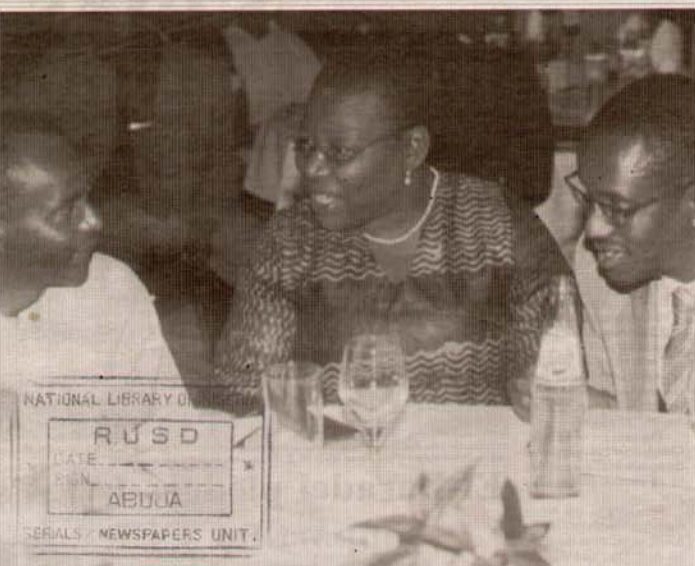
The federal government yesterday approved a new National Defence Policy to ensure better management of the country's military resources.

Briefing State House correspondents after the Federal Executive Council (FEC), meeting in Abuja, the Minister of State for Defence, Dr Roland Orisesejor, said the updated policy would strengthen the role of the military in civil situations.

Orisesejor said the policy seeks to make the military responsive to disasters and emergencies, among others.

He said that as from now civil engineering designs in the country would be made taking into consideration the role of the military in times of emergency.

The minister said the defence policy reform which had been in the making for long was also outcome of the work of a committee headed by late Gen. Joe Garba.



Discussing here are from (l) the ECT Minister, Malom Nasir Ahmed, (c) Babafemi Adebayo, (r) Oby Ezekwesili and chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Malam Nuhu Ribadu during the dinner held for media executives and State House Correspondents at the Rockview Hotel, Abuja Tuesday.

Obasanjo commends ECOWAS for resolving conflicts

President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday commended ECOWAS for its efforts to resolve conflict situations in the sub-region.

Obasanjo, who spoke as Africa Union chairperson, told the 28th Ordinary Summit of ECOWAS Heads of States and governments in Accra that the restoration of relative peace to most parts of the region has provided the respite for the regional body

All countries of the sub-region were in attendance while presidents and Heads of governments from Nigeria, Ghana, Benin Republic, Niger, Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire were present at the meeting

VP condoles LASG, families of accident victims

Vice President Atiku Abubakar has condoled the Lagos state government and the families of those who died in a multiple accident in the state on Wednesday.

The accident which occurred at the Maryland area of Lagos reportedly involved a petrol tanker and some commuter vehicles.

Abubakar, who was on his way to Yola for the Sallah holidays when he heard the sad news, expressed shock and sadness over the frequent loss of lives on Nigerian roads?

He said: "I have noted with sadness the increasing rate of accidents on our roads, in which many people have lost their lives in recent times."

"I recall that two luxury buses collided in Oyo State recently in which a number of people died. It is sad that we have to contend with this type of ghastly incidents."

"May God give the Lagos State government and the families of the victims the fortitude to bear the loss that has befallen them and the nation."

The vice president called on Nigerians to drive more carefully and obey all traffic signs on the roads to prevent such accidents.

Zanab Alimi Political Reporter (Reps)

He also faulted the proposed plan to make six representatives from each state as appointees of governors to the conference, adding that even the membership of the committee that prepared the conference guidelines were members of just one political party.

Describing the processes as myopic, Dr. Onu said that Nigerians should at this stage be concerned about how we can deepen the roots of a multi-party democracy to enable it to endure and flourish.

"We cannot achieve well rooted-democracy by appointing nominees to a crucial national conference where fundamental issues affecting our national life as a nation in a democracy will be discussed," he said.

Noting that the faulted processes raise a serious question about Nigeria's electoral process, Dr. Onu expressed belief that the electorate is denied the opportunity to elect candidates who will canvass solutions to national problems in accordance with their own view because electioneering campaigns in the country "are conducted in a way that candidates concentrate to discuss major issues."

Regional Agricultural Policy.



Vice President, Atiku Abubakar

NEWS

Benue LG by-election to hold Jan. 29

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), says it will conduct elections in Makurdi local government area on Jan. 29 to fill the vacant chairmanship position.

Its chairman, Mr James Audu-Ikwe, announced this in Makurdi during a meeting with representatives of the political parties.

"In conformity with the provisions of the Benue state electoral law, the commission has scheduled the election for Jan. 29," he added.

The election of Mr Pius Chango (PDP), as chairman of the council had been nullified by an election tribunal last year.

Speaking to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the ANPP secretary in the state, Mr Sam Aga, said that the commission did not give the mandatory 14-days notice required by law to enable his party prepare for the polls.

The AD publicity secretary, Mr Samuel Shanna, also complained that the commission did not give sufficient time for the parties to prepare.

The PDP chairman, Mr Alloysius Wuam, however, said they were prepared for the polls and that the party will field Chango, the former council chairman, as its candidate.

Bayero calls for assistance to Tsunami victims

The Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero, has called on the Muslim Ummah to assist the victims of the *Tsunami* disaster in Asia.

The Emir in his Sallah message delivered yesterday at Kofar-Kwaru, said victims of the disaster are in need of assistance of all kinds.

Alhaji Ado Bayero therefore called on Muslims to extend assistance to the victims because, according to him, Islam has established brotherhood among Muslims, adding that even though the assistance will not return to them what they have lost during the disaster, but it could alleviate their sufferings.

Dr. Ado Bayero who sympathised with the *Tsunami* victims, also prayed to the Almighty to forgive all Muslims who lost their lives during the disaster and prayed for the prevention future occurrences.

Alhaji Ado Bayero also called on Muslims to cooperate with officials of the National Population Commission (NPC), for the successful conduct of the forthcoming national census.

The acting chief Imam of Dalawa mosque, Shiekh Nuhu Musa Nuhu, in his



Vice president Atika Abubakar (right) the minister of State Foreign Affairs Abaji Abubakar Tanko in a round table discussion with the Indian minister of state foreign affairs Mr. E. Ahmed during his visit to Kenya recently.

El-Baradei pledges IAEA's support for CERT

The director general of the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Dr. Mohammed El-Baradei, has pledged the agency's support for Nigeria's centre for Energy Research and Training (CERT), Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria.

Speaking at the centre during a one-day working visit, the director general congratulated the centre for successfully acquiring Nigeria's first Nuclear

From Waziri Isa Gwantu (Stringer Zaria)

Research Reactor (NIRR-1), for purely peaceful applications, particularly in the field of agriculture, research and training, water resources and other people oriented services.

The United Nations nuclear chief who emphasised that the agency is committed to ensuring that countries with nuclear technology do not use it for purposes other than for peaceful applications, promised that the IAEA will continue to assist the Centre for Energy Research and Training in its efforts to come at par with other developed nations of the world.

He said from what he saw, the facilities at the centre has a lot of potentials to be used for the generation of power and other technological needs of the nation.

Dr. El-Baradei who emphasised the study of science based education in Africa, which he described as the bedrock of meaningful socio-economic development of any nation, called on the Nigerian government to continue to support the

centre in its drive to make Nigeria a developed nation technologically.

In his keynote address, the director general of the Energy Commission of Nigeria (ECN), Professor Abubakar M. Sambo, thanked the IAEA for providing technical assistance to Nigeria in several areas including human health, agriculture and animal husbandry, water resources, petroleum, science and technology etc.

Professor Sambo who described the IAEA as a partner in progress in Nigeria's effort to promote the applications of nuclear science and technology, congratulated El-Baradei for promoting world peace and the use of nuclear technology for the betterment of humanity in his eight year stewardship as DG of the IAEA.

In his address, the vice-chancellor of ABU, Professor Shehu Usman Abdullahi, expressed excitement over IAEA's commencement of implementation of two new technical corporation projects for the 2005-2006 biennial cycle at the CERT.

\$242 million scam: EFCC alleges bid to scuttle trial

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), trying three alleged 419 kingpins over \$242 million scam, Wednesday alleged a bid by one of the accused, Emmanuel Nwude, to scuttle the on-going trial on the ground of ill-health.

It would be recalled that on three occasions, the accused couldn't attend proceedings as he was flown to Abuja National Hospital for medical attention on alleged ailment he contracted in prison custody.

Counsel to the crimes commission, Rotimi Jacob (SAN), told an Ikaja high court that the bail application being sought by the accused through his counsel, Chris Uche (SAN), on health grounds is true.

He argued that the grounds does not constitute a special circumstance (as provided by the defence

By Mohammed Shosanya, Correspondent Lagos

counsel), even as the same health problem Nwude complained of is conspicuously written on his supporting statement of claim on his application, adding that the Abuja national hospital has not declined its competence to take care of the health needs of the accused.

But the accused counsel, Chris Uche (SAN), submitted that the condition of his client is worsening while praying the trial judge to use his discretion to entertain his request for bail.

While ruling on the application, the trial judge, Justice Joseph Oyewole, turned it down saying that it has no weight and has no locus to convince the court that the application is tenable in the light of the new circumstances.

Funds may stall census in Zamfara - Commissioner

The forthcoming census may fail in Zamfara State following the inability of the federal government to release funds for the exercise.

In a Hausa programme on Zamfara radio monitored in Gusau, the state's federal commissioner of the National Population Commission, Alhaji Tijani Yahaya Kaura, said since the establishment of the commission in the state, no single kobo has been released to the office.

According to him, lack of support from the federal government can easily lead to the total failure of the exercise.

The project, continued by the commissioner, was initiated by the government and that there was no reason whatsoever to allow its failure.

He disclosed also that recently, his office had

embarked on a sensitisation and demarcation tour to three local governments in the state, "but unfortunately these affected local governments, because of the interest they have in the exercise, they did all they could to finance all our activities in their respective local governments," he emphasised.

Alhaji Tijani therefore directed that all the necessary requirements must be provided for them to succeed in the discharge of the exercise.

The commissioner further explained that his office will continue to liaise with all relevant bodies across the state with a view to ensure the much needed understanding, particularly pertaining to the head count.

Kabo to start returning pilgrims January 26

Kabo air limited, one of the airlines assigned to airlift pilgrims Saudi Arabia has said it will start the airlift of pilgrims back to Nigeria by January, 26 2005.

This was disclosed by the managing director of the company, Captain Sa'idu Muhammed, during a press briefing in his office.

Captain Sa'idu told newsmen that already three of the company's 747 Boeing were stationed at Abdul-Aziz International airport for airlift of pilgrims back to Nigeria after the conclusion of the hajj.

The managing director who described 2005 hajj operations as successful, said Kabo Air has airlifted 38,772 pilgrims allocated to

the company leaving no single pilgrim stranded in Nigeria.

He explained that Kabo air airlifted all its pilgrims before the 15th of January, 2005 and successfully airlifted to the

holy land 2,700, 1700 and 900 pilgrims from the FCT, Jigawa and Oyo allocated to Kabo within the extension period of three days.

Captain Sa'idu further disclosed that Kabo left only

70 of its staff which he said would be taken to Saudi Arabia on Monday to perform their primary assignment.

He pointed out that apart from the three additional staff

allocated to Kabo, the company also airlifted over 700 pilgrims from Maiduguri where one flight also took off from as well as the FCT special flight for *Amirul-Hajj*, Alhaji Ibrahim Mantu.

Agric varsity sets up agro-allied industry

The vice chancellor, University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Prof. Isreal Adu has disclosed that a N50 million agro-allied industry to commercialise its research findings has been established by the authorities of the institution.

Prof. Adu who feted journalists in the state recently at this official

By Kayode Ajibola (Stringer Abeokuta)

residence in the GRA, area of Ibara Abeokuta, said the university's breakthrough in the areas of research has continued to receive support from industrialists.

It would be recalled that the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, emerged first at the recent National

Universities Commission (NUC), organised Research and Development (R&D) fair, held in Abuja.

It was the first NUC's research and development fair, in which UNAAB exhibited a total of 592 research projects while over 3,000 visitors, viewed the projects.

Professor Adu said the newly incorporated agro-

allied industry is doing well and assured that UNAAB will continue to make its breakthrough open to the industrial world.

According to him "since the end of the NUC (R&D), exhibition in which UNAAB came first industrialists have been coming to the institution to purchase and benefit from its research findings, projects and models.

Opinion

Nigeria: A call to cultural consciousness

A few years back, Chris Mammah, my very senior colleague sent me a special invitation. Since he was my former boss, I decided to honour it. The venue of our meeting was the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre. It was a few days to its official commissioning and as usual, members of the profession were given the rare privilege of seeing what others would, even on commissioning day not be able to see.

We had a wonderful tour of the complex and the architectural mastery of building giants, Julius Berger. But for me, the most interesting aspect of that tour, which I still cherish today, is the museum, which harbours the Yar'Adua memorabilia. It includes such mementos as the school uniform worn by the late general turned politician. It also included his uniforms, both as a cadet soldier and in various ranks. His diaries, with major entries were opened for all to see and are still there today for the curious eye. These national mementos have been preserved, says its curator for generations yet unborn—some of whom would be called upon by posterity to make a detailed study of this gangling, almost mystical personality whose political dexterity dwarfs his military prowess.

I was shocked to discover that a Muslim from the northernmost part of my country thought so much about tomorrow that he left records to help those who would be interested in history to hear his own side of the story. I say this consciously because some people have argued that Islam forbade the preservation of mementos. I am not versed in Islamic doctrine, but I think one of the greatest things that knocks out the bottom from this argument is the preservation not only of the Holy Quran but the records

of the acts of the Prophet of Islam (PBOH) as recorded in the Hadith.

It is also wonderful to note in Nigeria's cultural state of incomplete metamorphosis that the north, that bastion of Islam is the only part of Nigeria left today, which has preserved its cultural identity. Take a look at it from the mode of dressing of the young and the old. While in the Middle Belt and other parts of the south (except for the south-south in the era of resource control), national dresses have fizzled out for the pseudo-modernity of global fashion, the northern man takes pride in his kaftan, his *babanriga* and *hula*, the same way its girl and women have institutionalised the veil in its varied fashionable form without losing the battle for the preservation of decency.

What am I saying? I recently returned from a Yuletide visit home—home, for those who care to know, being that Okun part of Kogi State. Needless to say that indiscriminate felling of trees has made most parts of the hitherto luxuriant states of north central Nigeria almost bare and devoid of its rivers, ponds and streams, mementos of our childhood adventures, modernity is equally stripping the area, and perhaps all parts of Nigeria of its heritage.

A few years back, my community handed over the microphone to me as MC of its annual reunion day on the last Saturday of July. In the midst of the ceremony, usually held at the community primary school, I must have shocked some of our august guests when I attempted to jump the programme and raise some money for the restoration of the old classrooms.

When I returned a few weeks back, it was with tears and anger that I saw that the first blocks of classrooms, built by the community through

self-deprivation and serious financial hardship, has been stripped bare. Totally stripped of its corrugated iron roofing. The cement covering of the mud and red bricks are mercilessly caving in to the pounding of heavy rains leaving marks of red brushing over the remains of cement and paint.

My mind tried to reconstruct my childhood, days of waking up in the morning, chewing sticks, rushing to the pond to take water and taking expert care to wash my hands and legs, (especially my ankles) and then rubbing as much palmnut oil as would show the effort I'd made into cleanliness. Of standing on line with other village children and being inspected by stern-looking teachers supervised by an equally stern headmaster who is himself accountable to inspectors who sometimes breeze in without his knowledge. I tried to recall the school's geographical garden, with its stones whitewashed. I tried to recall the flower hedges which demarcated the entrance to the school and whose stones are equally whitewashed. I tried to recall the effort of the teachers who sent us to streams to fetch water and make sure that the flower hedges do not die even while the school was on vacation.

I tried to reconstruct those days but as I stared, all I could see was emptiness. The community, including old schoolmates passed me with casual greetings, totally unfazed with the destruction that has been done to a community's link with its educational past. All around the old village are modern buildings in their modern architectural pretence. But in the place where many a match had been played between the various teams, I saw a new improved blocks of classrooms, painted in deep green under and olive on top. It must look good to those who conceptualised it and must be a reminder that the only permanent thing in life is change—at least to some. To me, it is a

reminder that Nigeria is a destructive country with an intention to preserve its past, its culture or its ethos.

A day after this sad rumination, I also moved to the next village, situated some 12 kilometres from mine. I went to visit an old secondary school friend. As I drove towards his house, I noticed the same national disgrace. The primary school block that had been washed off by rain leaving the same patch as those of mine. He explained, as we drove by later how the community had battled without success to keep the old buildings and have had to accept the new one in exchange. The situation was no different in six or seven other villages I visited in the course of my passage. What a shame!

I recalled a similar visit to a small town *St. Foie la Grande* in the wine-rich region of Bordeaux in France about a decade ago. This community, like all other parts of France had preserved a building, which is almost 300 years old. According to its curator, not a single block could be removed or a patch made without authorisation from the local community and the French government at the national level. The buildings, like the others in the village have all become national heritage sites. Before I left my friend, I met a junior student who is now a medical doctor. He was building his own house and explained to me how he would need my assistance in getting media coverage for a free clinic he intended to build on his site.

This young man, who two decades ago only had a dream of perhaps just schooling and returning to his village is now a medical doctor. Who knows, he may become Nigeria's president tomorrow or my state governor. If that happens, it

would have been wonderful to have the school he attended, the classroom in which he sat, and perhaps the desk preserved for history. But no, he would, like me be able only to reconstruct it in his mind, or perhaps write it down for a good director to act out.

Only two decades after leaving school, Yar'Adua had more sense of history than my local government. He had more sense of history than my state government (in their succession) and he obviously had more sense of history than my country. I doubt if a museum has been built for the late Sir Ahmadu Bello, or the late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Yet most of those who call themselves northern politicians today graduated from his political school.

I wonder if anyone has built a local museum for Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the purveyor of free education. I wonder if anybody has built anything for Nnamdi Azikiwe. I wonder if the house that bore Olusegun Obasanjo in Ibojan is still standing. I wonder if my president can take any of his grandchild or great grandchild and show them any traditional mark of his childhood in his hometown.

Our lack of a sense of history is appalling. Our inability to preserve any heritage at all is disturbing. Two years ago, I chanced upon a visit to the British Museum of National History. I spent several hours with my wife touring the magnificent edifice and seeing how the British has used (to quote Fela) cunning to rob us of our national pride and heritage. The famous FESTAC mask is still in England with a court ruling (rather pathetically truly) that Nigeria lacked the means for its preservation even if it were returned. Our national icons were

described as icons of pagan worship, an attempt to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it by British marauders, but what are they to their present and past lackeys—NOTHING! I found that England has preserved much more of my own culture than my country every bothered to think about.

I found that my curious city children would have to go through the hazards of queuing for visas to London if they must be adept at their own culture. For the national icons I seek at home are preserved in the heart of London and my country is still making tripe of the little it still has.

It is perhaps not too late in a country with a vast land mass, to start designating buildings as national heritage. It is not too late to start preserving our inheritances. It is not too late to stop the degradation of our environment through indiscriminate tree felling which has seen our rivers dry, our streams sources of water disappear. We should start doing that now. Nigeria needs a Wangari Maathai, but before her, we need a national awakening to national consciousness. We cannot continue to ape modernity and throw away our heritage. We should, perhaps embrace the suit and tie and the sweater as warmth providers in hammattan, but we should not abandon the *babanriga* or *agbada*. The *gele* should not be for our women, fashion icons to be worn at catwalks or on Sunday mornings and abandoned the rest of the week. We have lost our languages to funny supremacy of the English language, must we lose ourselves thereby, completing this cycle of incomplete metamorphosis—black people in borrowed psyche, borrowed mentality and borrowed culture? I wait for my country and its less of culture. So should all.

Asaju is member of Trust editorial board.

Will National Assembly set Nigeria on fire?

This was two years ago. Nigeria had walked into the seemingly warm embrace of the civilized world almost one year after pretty Miss Agbani Darego etched the country's name in gold by winning the Miss World crown. With the Silverbird Group effectively driving the process, over 200 beauty queens, their minders and other stakeholders had gathered in the country to be part of the 2002 Miss World contest, the first time the country will play host to the world's most glamorous pageant since it started 53 years ago.

Expectation was high, the setting was eclectic, most Nigerians, at least so it seemed, were proud and happy. Democracy had indeed brought some dividends even if intangible. Suddenly there was a cataclysm. Between November 22 and 24, at least 100 people had died and more than 500 injured as riots spread across parts of the north.

The bloody riots broke out

after an article by a newspaper suggested that Prophet Muhammad "probably have chosen a wife from among" the beauty contestants.

The pageant itself had become the focus of controversy after some of the contestants threatened to boycott the event after a Sharia Court upheld the death by stoning of a woman convicted of adultery.

The article, which seemed to support the pageant in spite of Muslim opposition, was adjudged insulting by the Muslims some of who were particularly upset that the pageant coincided with the holy month of Ramadan.

Despite front-page apologies by the newspaper, the riots erupted and prompted retaliation by Christians who were the main targets. Churches, Mosques and the newspaper's offices in Kaduna were torched.

"I With all sense of

responsibility, sensitivity and respect for all Muslims, the staff, management, editors and board of *ThisDay* Newspapers apologize for the great editorial error in last Saturday's edition on Miss World Beauty Pageant. "We are sorry that the portrayal of the Holy Prophet Mohammed in a commentary written by one of our staff was not only unjustified, but utterly provocative," the apology said.

Nonetheless, the pageant, scheduled to hold on December 7, was relocated to London, "in the overall interests of Nigeria and the contestants," said Julia Morley, Miss World CEO. From Kaduna, epicenter of the mayhem has come another warning to the National Assembly with unwritten hints of another upheaval if certain sensibilities are not taken into consideration while deciding the fate of a bill before the legislature.

"President Olusegun Obasanjo recently forwarded a National Sports Lottery Bill, 2004 to the National Assembly. The bill seeks an act to establish sports lottery (gambling) in the

country. The bill in our view is a fair, because the President had already chosen and issued a licence to a company, the National Sports Lottery Limited (NSLLMC) to be the only operator in this area. This means that with the obvious executive interest in the matter, the National Assembly may just railroad the bill."

The petitioners, who identified themselves as Concerned Muslims with five signatories, said: Islam forbids gambling, whether clothed in sports wear or any other garb. While urging the National Assembly to throw out the bill, the petitioners noted that "it is a mark of insensitivity to the feelings of Muslims to contemplate such a law in the first instance. It shows the President does not care about the feelings of about 52 per cent of Nigerians who are Muslims. As a way out of the gathering storm, the group said the National

Assembly should discontinue further action on the bill since it lacks the constitutional power to legislate on lotteries. It also gave an edict which this writer believes both the National Assembly and Presidency should give careful thought.

Given Nigeria's federal structure, cultural and religious diversities, and most importantly, the power given to the states to legislate on lotteries, a bill at the national level would not just heat up the polity; it will engender a long-term hubris capable of stunting the country's political evolution.

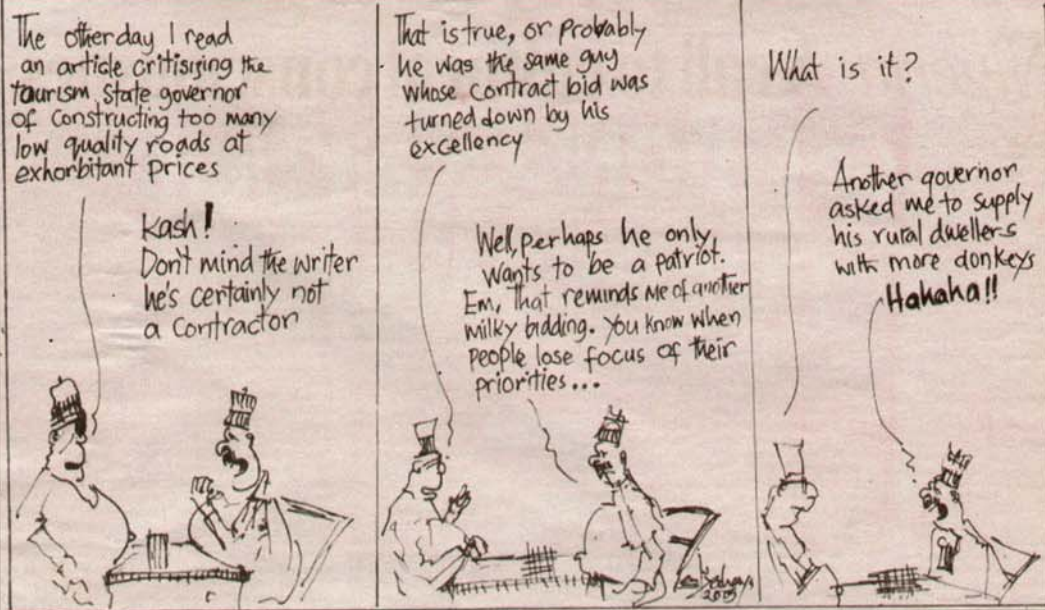
Excerpts from the bill before the National Assembly indicate that when passed into law, one company, NSL Lottery Management Company Limited, will emerge the sole lottery operator in the country. This, in essence, will be a monopoly and definitely runs counter to everything economic liberalization and

privatization represents.

At another level, if the constitution has given states the right to legislate on lotteries and the Federal Government quite aware of this goes ahead to present a bill that does not just apply only in the Federal Capital Territory but the entire country appears like a deliberate mischievous effort to create rancour and unnecessary confrontation with states.

Like the Concerned Muslims claimed in their petition, this course of action would further reinforce the impression that President Olusegun Obasanjo does not give a damn about the feelings and sensibilities of other people or groups. In view of Nigeria's vast and entrenched diversities, which unfortunately have not been a unifying factor, it would be a better option to leave the issue of lotteries to states certainly does not need another orgy of violence precipitated by an avoidable activity.

Uche is a Port Harcourt-based Economist.



YOUR LETTERS

Gombe Flood: Where is the money?

A flood disaster is by all definitions an emergency situation that requires emergency action. That's why in other parts of the world when such a misfortune befalls a nation, the whole machinery of state is swiftly deployed to help those affected to recover. Also, preventive measures are taken to forestall a recurrence or minimize the propensities of destruction. But four months after the flood disaster that defaced sections of Gombe metropolitan and some other areas in the state, it looks like the state government is not in a hurry to come to the aid of the flood victims, let alone think of erecting anti-flood mechanisms. While it's true that demands of this poverty-stricken society usually overstretch the public coffers, the Gombe state government couldn't have been financially handicapped to provide at least relief for the affected, because adequate donations had poured in. Immediately after the disaster in August, some states, companies, banks and individuals made huge contributions, apart from N150 million the government claimed to have set aside to resettle the affected people. However, facts available indicate that none of the victims of the incident has received a kobo from the state government till date. Those who lost their

houses are still to get help to rebuild them or to be resettled. Those who lost their property are still to get some measure of compensation from the government.

When the flood disaster struck, the picture was as grim as anybody could have painted it. Thousands of people were sacked from their homes and became refugees overnight, while property (including foodstuff) worth millions was ruined. One would have expected prompt response by providing shelter and food to those affected. But the commitment shown by the state officials left few in doubt that the government has something up its sleeve.

Besides announcing the N150 million 'first aid', the government acknowledged the receipt of another N75 million from various donors. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was also said to have independently supplied food and other items worth millions. This, too, was entrusted in the hands of the state government. However, all these have not been seen at the doorsteps of the flood victims.

Apart from the lethargy in coming to the aid of the victims, the sincerity of the government on the actual donations made is still in doubt. Though we hear of hefty donations announced daily on the state radio,

Governor Danjuma Goje declared only N75 million as the total assistance received. A closer look at the list of the donors, however, casts misgivings in our minds.

I can mentally recall that N5 million was received from each of Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Nasarawa and Akwa Ibom states, Taraba donated 10 million and Bauchi state gave N4 million. Also, each of the 11 local governments of the state was made to pay N1 million through a deduction at source from the local government joint account. Others are Ashaka Cement Company and Standard Trust Bank (N3 million each), minister of sport, Colonel Musa Mohammed, Senator Haruna Garba, Alhaji Faruk Bamusa and Alhaji Ali Kumo (N2 million each). People's Democratic Party (national) also donated N1.5 million. There are many others from individuals and organizations. If you sum up, the figures may not agree with these given by the governor. In any case, even if the donations stopped at N75 million as claimed, where is the money?

There are also stories of alleged diversion of materials supplied by NEMA, and truck loads of yam from the emir of Lafia. Although the state government has denied this, only a few sacks of maize and some tubers of yam were seen distributed to loyalists of the

government and PDP. Perhaps it will do much in clearing any suspicion from people's minds if the government tells the public where the trailer-loads of supplied items are.

I overheard Goje recently debunking the diversion stories, saying if he were to have richy fingers, he would rather help himself from the billions accruing to the state from the federation account. What he probably missed was that many people are yet to believe that these billions are coming because they can only see a few roads and a hospital project.

When the flood occurred, the government promptly set up a response committee, to which it claimed to have handed the N150 million. But the committee was said to have received only N15 million. If that is true, then where is the balance? The government recently announced that another committee would soon be set up to distribute the financial aid. Many people are worried that more than four months after the disaster, the government is still talking about setting up more bureaucratic tunnels. As this sluggishness goes on, thousands of the affected continue to live in great difficulty, without shelter and food. Families are still separated and some children yet to resume normal schools.

It is apparent that some people in government have been feeding fat on other people's misfortune. Indications to this effect were further confirmed recently, when the government announced the suspension from office of five government officials in the state, following their indictment in a racket that plundered the flood disaster till. While any move at purging the government of rotten eggs is welcome, the state must look further inwards, as the suspended five may not have been alone. They may have had collaborators and must have mismanaged only what was handed over to them. Thus, a number of questions will still hover around unanswered if the custodians of the millions generated do not render proper account of these monies.

It is sad that the government that should come to the rescue of its people is at the root of their pauperisation. It is more worrisome that a supposedly elected government will sleep soundly with both eyes closed, tamps straightened and snoring with the donations for its

unfortunate people under the pillow. Though I am fortunate not to have been directly affected by the flood, a number of my neighbours had their houses and foodstuff washed off. My heart bleeds for their plight. In fact a family that has been affected still manage one of my extra rooms and share with us the little *tuwo da miyan kuka* that my wife cooks. Many others had not been lucky to have a friend with an extra room, let alone one to feed on. They now wander like nomads.

I call on Governor Goje to summon enough courage to trace the whereabouts of these donations and release same to the victims of the flood disaster. By my calculation it sums up to about N210 million (N75m from collection and the balance N135m from the government's donation of N150m). I know it is difficult to part with money especially in these days when governors have become notorious for siphoning state funds abroad. I wish his Excellency God's guidance.

Mamuda A. Jauro
Checheniya quarters,
Gombe, Gombe State.

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

Opinion

Fight against HIV/AIDS, real or imaginary

Ever since the first case of HIV/AIDS was reported in Nigeria in 1983, the country and indeed the rest of the world, has been quite desirous on what effective measures to take in other to combat the human scourge that has decimated over 10 million of the world's population. And of this rather appalling number of deaths recorded as a result of the spread of the disease, more than one-third comes from the third world and countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

By the time the spread of HIV/AIDS reached an epidemic proportion in the late 1980s, nearly all countries of the world (with the exception of some few) have been recording a steady rise in the epidemic of up to 1.2% in all recorded health cases.

By A.K. Karka
is losing about 3 million annually to the disease.

However, elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa's Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu is calling for "tightening action to fight AIDS". Even as millions of people mark the World's AIDS day each year with parade and prayers, other countries of the world are making serious effort. For example, China aired its first officially backed TV advert for condoms last year, while the Vatican said fidelity, chastity and abstinence are the best ways to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in a pan-sexualist society.

The President of the Pontifical Council for health and pastoral care said

record levels and this, the report said would rise even further unless something is done urgently.

It is even sad to lament that the epidemic is maintaining a deadly grip on the countries of Africa and is even spreading with relentless speed. Currently, it is on record that Nigeria has one of the highest prevalent rate of HIV/AIDS in the world, with some states recording up to 5% cases in a year. And of the 5%, lost of 4 cases are women between the ages of 14 to 25 while men between the ages of 18 to 45 takes up the balance of all three cases recorded.

The cases of Mother To Child Transmission MTCT is also at its peak, with high prevalent rates of infection among adolescence mothers.

of the sixty countries, only few like Uganda and Tanzania in Africa have begun to record a low prevalent rate. But the case with Nigeria, and sadly so, still remains worrisome.

Acting upon this global initiative and the loud outcries form within family circles, Africa and indeed Nigeria is caught in the throes of a huge health crisis that is now threatening our modest achievements.

It now becomes necessary for Nigeria, in view of its huge size and population, to begin to look inward. And in spite of all the huge campaign mounted by government and the money expended so far, only few individuals are now willing to commit the time and resources to the fight.

One of such individuals is Owelle Anayo Rochas Okorocho.

On the 26th of November 2004, the Rochas Foundation a forefront NGO in Africa founded and funded by Owelle Rochas Okorocho, unveiled to Nigerians and indeed the world, a comprehensive package on the fight against HIV/AIDS.

This declaration from the Foundation's headquarters Unity House Abuja came as a welcomed relief to Nigerian who had become accustomed to some of its programs, which at the moment includes Education, Health, Economic Empowerment and Employment.

The Rochas Foundation finally joined the fight against HIV/AIDS five years after it declared its intention to do so. The five years in question however was devoted to series of researches, data collation, statistics and the designing of a sound program that will stand the test of time.

The Rochas Foundation during those five years was also looking at the question of adequate funding of a target period of ten years. After a successful research period, the Rochas Foundation opened up on its AIDS campaign with series of workshops and wide consultation with stake holders.

The idea was to look at areas it might have overlooked and forge closer working relationship with other NGOs and government agencies whose experience and adequacies in the field it has come to recognize.

The Rochas Foundation however was conscious of the failure of other NGOs, which is what informed its decision to trail cautiously. It is however note worthy to commend the cooperation the Rochas Foundation has

forged with other stakeholders and PLWHAs, which has helped provide the basis for the sound statistical data it will be relying on in the years ahead.

The mutual relationships the Rochas Foundation have forged with all interest groups have created instances where both have interacted with experts from the foundation's headquarters on individual and collective basis.

The Rochas Foundation involvement in the Public Health Sector is not new. For example the Foundation has over the years been working with some world renowned Pharmaceutical giants for the provision and improvement of the typhoid fever vaccine and has even donated large amount of doses to the Nigerian Army.

The Rochas Foundation has equally being active in the current fight against the polio epidemic and the battle to eradicate the infant killer disease. The Foundation with this vast background of experience in the Public Health Sector is therefore poised to provide unequalled and unmatched services in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

For these reasons and many more, the Foundation has enlisted the hands of Public Health Workers, Medical consultants, Psychotherapists and social counselors, in other to win this big fight against the monster disease.

To achieve its main objective, the Rochas Foundation is focusing on:

1. Stigmatization
2. Sexuality Education
3. Capacity Building
4. And the provision of Free Anti-Retroviral drugs.

The Foundation's program for the provision of Anti-Retroviral drug might turn out to be the best because it has gone into partnership with a drug manufacturing company to supply the drugs at highly subsidized rate.

Through its capacity building or skill acquisition scheme, the Rochas Foundation is to train no less than two hundred persons a year. This category of persons if identified would be trained as professionals in their chosen field without prejudice to their current health status.

The Rochas Foundation in its unique battle for the social restoration of People Living with HIV/AIDS is in away seeking to break the jinx associated with stigmatization, which it hopes will bring the PLWHAs back to reckoning.

Its sexuality campaign will focus on peer group influences, social and economic pressure as well as spiritual rejuvenation which

the Foundation said is going to be a main issue.

Recently a plan was approved for the construction and equipping of a Multi Functional Rehabilitation Center that will house, train and cater for special cases. First of its kind in Nigeria, the Center which is to be situated in Abuja is also to serve as a transit camp to those whose skills and potentials will be developed here annually.

Recognizing the need for a Center like that therefore creates a unique opportunity for those living with the virus not to give up on life but to live it to the fullest. Of optimum benefit to its resolve to join in the fight against HIV/AIDS is its statistical and data collation base which is amongst the best in the country.

Although it has a comparatively low output to the WHO standard, the Rochas Foundation has been of tremendous assistance to other NGOs within the country who have in turn benefited immensely from its databank. Coupled with that also is the resilience and handwork of skilled staff of the Foundation.

The target of the Rochas Foundation in the next 5 years is clear: To work toward the discovery of an efficient vaccine against the virus.

The President and Founder of the Rochas Foundation, Owelle Rochas Okorocho has for long been pre occupied with the growing world statistics on AIDS. Recognizing the challenges and difficulties this problem could pose for a growing population like Nigeria, he has like always, chosen to bring his wealth of resources into the fight in other to assist and help those already affected while trying to prevent further spread.

Although admitting how modest his effort could be, he is also lending a strong voice to the call for all to come out and fight this scourge. It is therefore worthy to try to draw a parallel with the Rochas Foundation in its new found role to champion the cause of humanity in Nigeria. For no doubt through this effort and commitment a lot of lives will be saved.

On the 26th of November, when all shall gather at the Unity house for the event, it is expected that Nigerians regardless of creed, social status or tongue will wine arid dine with People Living with HIV/AIDS as a unique demonstration of the renewed effort to defeat this human scourge for good.

Karka is Chief press secretary to presidential adviser on inter-party relations.

"The Rochas Foundation involvement in the Public Health Sector is not new. For example the Foundation has over the years been working with some world renowned Pharmaceutical giants for the provision and improvement of the typhoid fever vaccine and has even donated large amount of doses to the Nigerian Army"

In 1984 the WHO and the United Nations declared that HIV/AIDS is a world epidemic. And there began the age long battle against the biggest scourge mankind has ever seen.

Warning that the war against HIV/AIDS is being lost has cast a sobering background to the global effort to rush life saving Anti-Retroviral drugs to the affected the world over. The world, it seems, appear to be losing the fight against HIV/AIDS at the moment, thereby creating a worst case scenario for countries of Africa who neither have the resources to lead in groundbreaking researches or the resources to spear in combating the current spread.

But the time the World's AIDS day was celebrated last year, Zambia was recorded as the worst hit nation in the world. No doubt, therefore, that the world needs to redouble its effort if the fight is to become effective.

The war against HIV/AIDS has recorded more casualties than any human crisis in the history of mankind. Currently, the world

information campaign should not be based on policies that foster immoral and hedonistic lifestyle and behaviours favouring the spread of evil.

Last year, the World AIDS day came amidst news of a new 5.5 billion dollars emergency strategy to supply badly need drugs to fight a disease now affecting 40 million people all around the world. At least 6 million people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries of the world needs Anti-Retroviral treatment urgently to stay alive in health. But only between 300,000 and 400,000 people are getting the drugs.

The UN plans however, is to get ARV treatment for half the 6 million people by 2005. But this the world body cannot achieve without the collaborative effort of governments and individuals around the world.

And because eight thousand people die every day from the dreaded disease, the world is recognizing the moral imperative to act urgently.

The estimated releases by the UN last year, shows that death and new cases have reached unprecedented

The case in Nigeria is therefore very sobering and disturbing and so should immediately attract both individual and government efforts.

The lingering trauma of more than two and a half decades of fighting this dreaded human scourge has left its mark on all human indices and has even made the fight against the disease a global phenomenon and indeed a race against time.

It is feared that by 2010 if nothing is done urgently to curb the spread, more than one third of the productive population of Nigeria would have been lost. There is the need therefore for the country to begin to redress this urgent need with renewed commitment and vigor.

Following the universal declaration of the UN general assembly during its 55th session, a consensus was reached that countries of the world with high prevalent rate should declare a large chunk of their health budget to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The global body then followed up on this declaration with funding to more than sixty nations. And

Trust International

Mubarak's son qualified to replace father- PM

Gamal Mubarak, the son of Egypt's president, is qualified on his own to replace his father, but being related to the current leader could be an "obstacle" to ruling the Arab world's largest country, Egypt's prime minister said.

Ahmed Nazief also told *The Associated Press* that President Hosni Mubarak is expected to stand for a fifth six-year term in a presidential referendum scheduled for September.

Monday's comments from the Cabinet's highest-ranking official come amid speculation over whether President Mubarak, 76, will continue to lead his country or one day hand power to his 41-year-old business-savvy son, as many have suggested.

The president, who succeeded Anwar Sadat after his 1981 assassination by Islamic activists, has been the sole candidate in past referendums asking voters to say "yes" or "no" to his continued presidency. He has routinely won by landslide margins.

Gamal Mubarak could win in a similarly styled referendum. Both Mubaraks have played down the notion of presidential succession, but the rumours have intensified as Gamal Mubarak has quickly risen within his father's ruling National Democratic Party to head a powerful policy-making committee and promote a wide range of political, economic and social reforms.

Nazief, a business-minded technocrat with close ties to the president's son, praised the younger Mubarak's vision and expertise and said he was regarded highly by the country's younger generation.

Asked whether Gamal, who had worked in London as an investment banker, could one day be president, Nazief said at his office: "I don't see why not. I think that Gamal is an ambitious young Egyptian that is qualified."

But Nazief said being the president's son may work against Gamal Mubarak.

"Being the son of the president is really to him an obstacle that he has to get through," Nazief said. "If he runs for an office he will be seen as coming because of his father, rather than because of his own talent. I think he deserves more than that."

Nazief said he expected, and hoped, that Mubarak would be a candidate in the next presidential referendum.

About 100 activists, meanwhile, were blocked from holding a news conference to defend their opposition to a fifth term for Mubarak. Instead, they stood for an hour outside, chanting slogans and vowing to continue their campaign.



President Lansana Conte

Guinea's president survives coup plot

Shots fired at a convoy carrying Guinea's sailing President Lansana Conte were an assassination attempt, his security minister said.

"There was an attempt on the life of the head of state, but the assailants did not hit their target," Moussa Sampil told *Radio France International*.

Mr. Sampil said that the president was unhurt and that a number of people had been detained.

Security has been tightened around the presidential palace.

The incident happened a year after the president was sworn in for a third term, following his victory in controversial elections.

Details of the incident are still sketchy, but the

BBC's correspondent in Conakry said shots were fired as the convoy passed through a neighbourhood of the capital known as Enco 5 at around 3pm.

It is not known who fired the shots or whether they hit any of the vehicles in the president's convoy.

The president's bodyguards returned fire, and reports reveal that a member of the president's security team riding a motorcycle alongside the convoy was wounded.

Mr. Conte, 69, seized power in a coup in 1984.

He won a third term in elections in December 2003, after Guinea's constitution was changed to allow him to stand again.

Mr. Conte is a diabetic, and correspondents said doubts about the president's health have led to worries about a possible future power struggle.

There have been no reports on the incident on state-controlled television or media.

Members of the government were meeting on Wednesday afternoon in the presidential building, according to the Reuters.

Guinea, a mineral-rich country positioned between Sierra Leone and Liberia, has been viewed as generally stable in an otherwise turbulent region.

Spain forges ties with Morocco

King Juan Carlos of Spain has called for a fair final settlement of the Western Sahara dispute, in a speech to the Moroccan parliament in Rabat.

He said Spain wanted to see a "consensual, just and final" settlement for the former Spanish colony.

The Polisario Front has been fighting for independence since the territory was annexed by Morocco in 1975.

Since the Casablanca and Madrid bombings Morocco and Spain have stepped up their anti-terror co-operation.

The king said the anti-terror fight must "not be conducted in a blind or indiscriminate manner," but must conform to existing legal norms, the Spanish news agency *Efe* reported.

In a letter to King Juan Carlos, quoted by the French news agency *AFP*, the Polisario leader, Mohamed Abdelaziz, said Spain and Morocco shared responsibility for the "tragedy" afflicting the Saharawi people.

He urged Spain to play a positive role in promoting peace and justice in Arab North Africa.

Successive United Nations attempts to negotiate a settlement between Morocco and Polisario have remained stalled.

Moroccan-Spanish relations have thawed since a Socialist government was elected in Spain last March, to replace

Ivorian dispute 'bad for region' - ECOWAS

Ivory Coast's political rivals have been urged to trust each other, or risk destroying their country.

Ghana's President John Kufuor made the appeal at the start of the annual summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Ivory Coast has been divided in two since an uprising in September 2002.

Mr. Kufuor said the attitude of the various faction leaders in Ivory Coast was giving the whole region a bad image.

He also said that the July deadline for introducing a single currency, the eco, in five West African countries would not be met.

"It would seem that a more practical date will have to be set," he said.

Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and The Gambia have agreed to set up a single currency, which will eventually be merged with the CFA franc used by French-speaking West African nations.

The leaders of the 15-member ECOWAS bloc will also choose a new chairman from among the presidents of Benin, Niger and The Gambia.

Mr. Kufuor said Ivory Coast's government and various factions should "try to overcome their mutual suspicions to enable them to arrest the security situation which continues to seriously threaten to divide and destroy their nation".

Since the Ivorian air force broke a truce by attacking the rebels in November, South African President Thabo Mbeki, on behalf of the African Union (AU), has been trying to get a power-sharing government back on track. Before leaving for Accra, Mr. Gbagbo hinted that disarmament remained the key question.

Rebel forces refuse to disarm until laws on nationality and who can contest presidential elections are changed.

The West African leaders are also set to discuss a common agricultural policy, along the lines of the European Union and a regional power pool to supply cheap electricity.

Amnesty demands prosecution of war crimes in Sudan

The human rights watchdog Amnesty International said Tuesday that perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sudan should be brought to justice as a necessary step in securing a "lasting peace" in the country.

"Establishing individual criminal responsibility, truth and full reparations for the victims is crucial to create lasting peace in Sudan," Amnesty said in a report.

"If those suspected of grave abuses in the context of the north-south civil war are not brought to justice, it will also signal to them, and others, that they can continue to violate human rights in (western) Darfur or elsewhere, in total impunity," the report said.

Peace accords signed January 9 ending a 21-year war between Khartoum and southern rebels "do not provide for any mechanism to make those responsible for such crimes accountable and give justice to the millions of Sudanese victims," Amnesty said.

The accords ended Africa's longest conflict, which claimed at least 1.5 million lives and displaced four million people, but left conflict raging in the Darfur region, with a death toll of 70,000 since February 2003, while 1.5 million have been displaced.

Amnesty said that in Darfur, as in the north-south conflict, "no serious step has been taken to bring anyone to justice."

News

Eid-el-Kabir celebration in pictures



The Na'ibin Imam of Abuja, Alhaji Abdulalam Mohammed, leading the Muslims in prayers during the Eid-el-Kabir marked by Muslims yesterday. From right are, the Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Mohammed Uwais, the Speaker House of Reps, Alhaji Aminu Bello Ma'auri, the FCT Minister, Malam Nasir el-Raja'Y, Dr. Bello Halilu and the Defence Minister, Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso.



A cross section of the Muslims worshipping at the National praying ground Abuja yesterday. In the centre is the Turakin Fakka, Alhaji Idi Aminu.



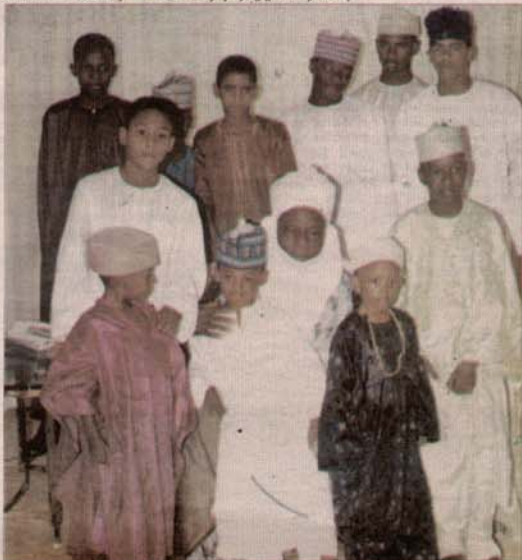
A cross section of Muslims sujud at the Abuja praying ground to mark the Eid-el-Kabir



Another cross section of VIP's at the Abuja praying ground...yesterday.



The Na'ibin Imam of Abuja, Abdulalam Mohammed slaughtering the ram to mark the Eid-el-Kabir after offering prayer at the praying ground in Abuja...yesterday.



President Obasanjo poses with some children who paid Sallah homage to him at the State House Abuja to mark the Eid-el-Kabir. Pic: Joe Onyic.

Trust International

Abu Ghraib: British soldiers face charges

A British court martial prosecuting three soldiers accused of abusing Iraqi civilians released new "shocking and appalling" photographs on Tuesday showing British troops forcing Iraqi detainees to simulate sex acts.

The newly released pictures are expected to damage the British military's reputation, as much as previous photographs, showing American soldiers abusing and torturing Iraqis at Abu Ghraib jail, hurt the United States' image worldwide.

Corporal Daniel Kenyon and Lance Corporals Darren Markin and Mark Cooley face battery for forcing people in their custody to simulate sex acts to prejudicing good military order.

Prosecutors say that those acts took place in a single day, May 15, 2003, at a storehouse near Basra, southern Iraq, used to stockpile food aid for Iraqis, and known as the "bread basket".

And to curb nightly looting, the compound's commander ordered the soldiers to capture the looters and make them "work hard" at the site, Lt. Col. Nick Clapham told the court.

That order in itself was illegal and breached the Geneva Conventions, Clapham added.

"Even though this order was an unlawful one, had these defendants done no more than what that order envisaged, they would not be facing these charges he said."

"These charges are a long way outside that order," Clapham said.

Some 22 photographs, released to the media by Judge Advocate Michael Hunter, now leading the court martial in Osnabrueck, western Germany, were taken by five soldiers as souvenirs.

Ukraine president to be sworn in

Liberal opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko will be sworn in as Ukrainian president on Sunday after weeks of political turmoil.

The date was set by Ukraine's parliament soon after the Supreme Court confirmed Mr Yushchenko's victory.

The court dismissed a final appeal by his defeated rival, former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, who is seen as closer to Russia.

He had challenged the result of the 26 December re-run of the election. Independent election observers said the re-run had been much fairer than the earlier rounds.

The re-run was held after Mr Yushchenko's supporters staged massive protests over the outcome of a November poll, alleging vote-rigging by Mr Yanukovich.

Viktor Yanukovich kept

"It cannot be said that those images depict something that is anything other than shocking and appalling," prosecutor Clapham told the court.

An Iraqi civilian appeared in one of the photos kneeling in front of a naked man and simulating oral sex. In another, an Iraqi prisoner appeared kneeling naked on another's lap.

Also in one picture, a British soldier appeared stomping on an Iraqi detainee lying on the ground.

While another picture showed a soldier punching a bound man.

General Sir Mike Jackson, the British army's top officer, said that the military could not comment directly on the new photographs during the trial.

Russia dismisses US criticism

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has dismissed concerns voiced by the United States about Russia's democratic development.

He was replying to remarks by Condoleezza Rice, the nominee for the post of US Secretary of State, about the state of democracy in Russia.

The head of Russian diplomacy said America should not be concerned by the policies of the Russian government.

The country's internal politics were Russia's own affair, he insisted.

Ms. Rice said during confirmation hearings at the US Senate that what she called "the concentration of power in the Kremlin to the detriment of other institutions in Russia" was "a real problem".

She added that in Russia "the path to democracy is uneven and its success is not yet assured".

Strike grounds life in France

French trade unions called five million civil servants out on strike yesterday in a third day of public sector protests over job cuts.

Stoppages over the past two days severely disrupted the rail services and cut France's power output by 10%.

The conservative government of the French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, insisted it will not back down from its programme of economic reforms.

Teachers were also set to strike over a planned new education law.

A number of schools are expected to close as a result of their action on Thursday.

Trade unions said that support for strike action on Wednesday was more widespread than on the first day, Tuesday.

Action by rail workers widely disrupted commuter



US secretary of state designee, Condoleezza Rice

NEWS PAPERS UNIT

She said the Bush Administration would "continue to make clear that the protection of democracy in Russia is vital to the future of US-Russian relations".

In reply, Mr. Lavrov said such comments were not new. Russia, he said, was ready to hear constructive criticism but did not share the same evaluations, and developments in Russia were all in line with the country's constitution.

He described Mrs Rice as a serious politician who he was sure would support the policy of strengthening relations with Russia.

Many observers believe there has been a downturn in relations between Russia and the United States, though.

The Bush Administration is worried by constitutional

Strike grounds life in France

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Odd World Surgeon forgets object in woman's uterus

A woman is suing a doctor who operated on her, accusing him of leaving a 4-inch metal instrument inside her uterus.

In her lawsuit, Lori Klinger, 35, said she experienced severe pain after Dr. Samuel Owusu performed a diagnostic laparoscopy on her in November 2002 to check for endometriosis, a condition where some of the uterus lining is found outside the uterus.

She said when she called Owusu later complaining of pain, he said it was normal and told her to take pain medication. "Dr. Klinger had called him and said this really hurts," said Klinger's lawyer, Jane Sebelin. "He just kept saying, 'Deal with it.'"

Two days later, she went to the bathroom and an instrument emerged from her vagina, the lawsuit said. Klinger said it was sharp on one end with a rubber bulb on the other. She said she took it to the doctor's office.

"We felt there was a lack of procedures in place, that they should be checking these things," said Sebelin. The lawsuit said Owusu did apologize.

Klinger is seeking \$350,000 for costs including negligence. Owusu referred questions to Bloomington-based Geisinger Medical Group when reached Wednesday. Alison Delate Everett, spokeswoman for Geisinger, declined to comment on the case, but said: "we have very stringent policies to ensure the safety of our patients."

This mistake happens at least once a year at hospitals that perform 8,000 to 18,000 surgeries a year, despite the regular use of checklists to account for instruments used during operations, said Ramona Conner of the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses.

Mistake leads to cremation of wrong corpse

An autopsy technician misread a number on a body tag, leaving one family without a body to memorialise and another with the wrong person's ashes scattered across the Atlantic Ocean.

As a result of the mistaken identification, the technician released the body of John Chappell, 36, instead of that of Judith Perez, 65, said Duval County Chief Medical Examiner Margarita Arraza.

"It was off by one digit. He released the wrong body to the funeral home, and obviously the funeral home never checked or looked at the body," she said. She said the technician is no longer employed by her office.

Perez's family had the body cremated and scattered the ashes in the ocean before the mistake was discovered when Chappell's relatives showed up to claim his body.

Chappell's brother in Jacksonville and sister in Mt. Morris, Mich., have notified the city of their intent to sue for negligence, said their attorney, Henry Gare.

"It is a very heartbreaking situation," Gare said Wednesday. Gare said the family had planned to scatter Chappell's ashes at his grandfather's grave in Michigan.

A woman who answered the telephone at Green Pine Funeral Home in Yulee and refused to give her name said Chappell's body was received in a bag identified as Perez's remains. Because the body was cremated, she said there was no reason to open the bag.

Arraza said she doesn't remember her office mixing up any bodies since she joined the office in 1989.

Surgeons remove toothbrush in man's stomach after 22 years

A Saudi medical team reportedly removed a toothbrush from the stomach of a man who had swallowed it 22 years ago.

According to the official SPA news agency, the toothbrush caused the 70-year-old patient no ill effects until a few days before he was operated on, said Dr Abdulrahman al-Zahrani, the head of the team at King Abdul Aziz Specialist Hospital in the western town of Taif. The operation was successful, Zahrani added.

Farmer uses snake guard for marijuana crops

South African police have arrested a farmer after they discovered a greenhouse full of marijuana plants guarded by a snake in a glass cage.

Paula Nothnagel said the 37-year-old farmer was caught when police discovered the dope, which was being farmed and dried in greenhouses on his farm near Magaliesburg, about 80 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg, the SPA news agency reported.

"There was a special room for drying the dagga," said Nothnagel, using the South African term for the drug. "The room had lines of ropes where the dagga was being hung. The one greenhouse with the fully matured dagga plants were guarded by an indigenous snake in a glass cage," she was quoted as saying.

The farmer will appear in a nearby magistrate's court Friday on charges of illegal possession of marijuana as well as keeping a snake without a permit.

The snake, the species of which was unknown, will be taken to the nearby Hartbeespoort Snake Park for safekeeping and rehabilitation before being released into the wild, Nothnagel said.

Trust International Israel, Palestine agree to security talks

Israel resumed contacts with the Palestinians but also gave the green light to a large-scale invasion of the Gaza Strip if new leader Mahmud Abbas fails to end attacks by militants.

Security officials from the two sides met at the Erez checkpoint between northern Gaza and Israel to try to coordinate a plan for stopping activists from firing Qassam rockets and mortars at southern Israel, army radio said.

"This is a security meeting at the level of field commanders for coordinating the security steps," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office said.

At a session of Sharon's security cabinet, ministers agreed earlier Wednesday to set up the meeting, which marked the end of a freeze imposed following a Palestinian suicide attack on January 13, army radio reported.

Abbas, meanwhile, was holding talks with leaders of the factions in Gaza where officials expressed optimism that he could persuade the likes of Hamas to agree to a halt to their campaign of anti-Israeli attacks.

"The government of Israel will not allow terror activities and the firing of rockets against Israeli communities and will take all necessary steps to prevent it," said a government statement issued after the security cabinet meeting.

"The government instructs the defence establishment to prepare as soon as possible the implementation of the alternatives that were approved by the security cabinet."

Chief of staff Moshe Yaalon had previously told commanders to prepare for a possible large-scale invasion.

The statement said a final go-ahead of any such operation would need the approval of Sharon and his leading ministers, including Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz.

Israel has previously warned that it would give Abbas only a limited amount of time to put a halt to attacks before taking matters into its own hands.

Palestinian foreign minister Nabil Shaath said Abbas would not leave Gaza until he had a deal in the bag with the activists on a ceasefire.

"The national dialogue will continue until there is a successful result," Shaath told reporters after talks with Abbas in Gaza City.

"Our brother Abu Mazen (Abbas) will remain in Gaza until we reach a national agreement which is implemented by everyone in the Palestinian Authority and all the factions... I hope we can reach this agreement as soon as possible."

After meeting with the Gaza-based leadership of

Hamas on Tuesday night, Abbas was due to hold talks late Wednesday with the heads of another armed faction, Islamic Jihad.

Hamas said Tuesday's two-hour meeting, which featured the movement's two top leaders in its Gaza stronghold, Mahmud Zahar and Ismail Haniya, took place in a "positive" atmosphere.

"We listened to Abu Mazen about the issue of the ceasefire and the movement informed him

that we will study this subject," Hamas spokesman Mushir al-Masri told AFP.

"The meeting was a positive one. We exchanged opinions and everyone was concerned that we reach an understanding to ensure the strength of our national unity."

A source who attended the meeting said that while a formal ceasefire may not be announced, he was hopeful that a "cooling down period" was on the cards.

However, more blood was spilled near Karni on Wednesday when two Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli troops after hurling a grenade at them.

Palestine, Iran react to Rice's appointment

Iranian and Palestinian officials have reacted differently to a Senate panel's approval of Condoleezza Rice as the new US secretary of state.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 16-2 to approve Rice as Colin Powell's successor on Wednesday, a decision closely watched by

officials in Tehran and Ram Allah.

Iranian radio immediately dismissed Rice's "outrages of tyranny" comment in which she accused the Islamic republic of oppressing its own people.

The Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran (VIR) said Washington had "offered nothing new" in its relations with Tehran.

"Echoing US President George Bush's 'axis of evil' comment, Rice merely reiterated the stance adopted by the American administration over the past three years," the station said.

"Rice expressed concern against Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, threatened to take Iran's case to the UN Security Council and repeated the baseless allegations concerning Iran's support for terrorism."

"Nevertheless... she could not offer any other alternative. This shows that America does not have many alternatives in order to force Iran to move within the particular framework that follows American policies and safeguards the interests of that country," said FRI analyst Aziz Allah Kheradmand.

The statement said that the Iran radio also said that the death of policy ideas was clear from Washington's decision "not to oppose the European initiative to maintain talks and constructive interaction with Iran."

"This is because America has no other tool at its disposal to deal with Iran," the report concluded.

However, Palestinian National Authority officials speaking on the Voice of Palestine on Wednesday broadly welcomed Rice's proposed appointment and described some of her responses to US Senate questions as "encouraging."

Reporting that Rice had said that there was an opportunity in the Middle East to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a National Authority spokesman told listeners he was confident "she wants to seize this opportunity".

Nabil Abu Rudayna added that the outgoing national security adviser's statements stressed the need for further US intervention and the adoption of measures on the ground to implement the peace roadmap and halt Israeli aggression.

US court clears Saudis from 9/11 lawsuits

A US federal court has dismissed proceedings under which the Saudi government was accused of providing logistical support to al-Qaeda.

New York District Court Judge Richard Casey ruled that the Saudi government, its defence minister and ambassador in London have immunity from litigation.

Following the 9/11 attacks, relatives of victims, private firms and insurers sued for multi-billion damages.

Many of them named Saudi Arabia as a defendant in civil lawsuits. Ruling in a number of such cases, Judge Casey said the Saudi government and its officials have immunity to claims that they provided financial and logistical support to Osama bin Laden's network.

The judge also dismissed claims against the Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation, the Saudi American Bank and the Arab Bank Plc.

Although the case against other Arabic banks, charities and companies, including the Saudi Bin Laden Group go forward, the ruling is a blow for the plaintiffs.

Justin Green, a lawyer representing more than 500 victims of the 11 September attacks, said the ruling would probably lead to the dismissal of other similar cases, but that an appeal was being considered.

The district court's ruling will come as little surprise to legal analysts here.

The Governing Board Nigerian National Merit Award



Nigerian National Merit Award Nigerian National Merit Award Year 2005

Call for Nominations

1. Nominations are invited for the Nigerian National Merit Award 2005.
2. The Nigerian National Merit Award, which is an Order of Dignity and distinct from the National Honours, was instituted to accord proper and due recognition for outstanding intellectual and academic attainments and contributions to general development of Nigeria and is conferred on the recipients by the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.
3. The objective of the award system is to stimulate and reward excellence in Science, Engineering, Technology, Medicine, Humanities, Arts and Culture and any other field of human endeavour.
4. The award is open to all citizens of Nigeria.
5. Any Nigerian citizen of outstanding merit can be nominated by one or more Nigerian citizens. Any person may be himself, where not sponsored by another person, apply to the Board for this purpose. Where two or more Nigerians are collaborating on any deserving undertaking, they can be similarly nominated for a joint award.
6. Nominations are valid only for the year of nomination.
7. In addition to its intrinsic value, the award carries a cash prize of seven hundred and fifty thousand naira (750,000.00) only, which is intended to assist recipient(s) in carrying out further work in his or her chosen field. The Laureate is also entitled to use the acronym NNOM after his/her name.
8. The Governing Board will be guided by the following criteria-

- (a) Selection will be made from a wide range of contemporary works, which are innovative, creative, essentially Nigerian in content and of national and international distinction.
 - (b) The candidate's achievement should be of benefit to the Nigerian Society in particular and humanity in general.
 - (c) The achievements may constitute a specific breakthrough in any field or may be of a cumulative nature.
 - (d) The award emphasises distinct merit and upright morality.
- * The procedure for nominations:
- (a) Nominations shall be made strictly on the prescribed format. Sponsors should also provide a brief information on themselves.
 - (b) Nominations and supporting documents shall be addressed to the:
The Secretary,
Governing Board,
Nigerian National Merit Award,
The Presidency,
3rd Floor, Merit House,
Agayé Ibeju Way, Maitama, Abuja

All supporting documents including the Nomination form should be sent in three (3) copies. Candidates with incomplete documents will not be considered.

- (c) The closing date for the receipt of nominations shall be 18th March, 2005.
- (d) Neither the Governing Board nor any of its Specialised Committees of Assessors will entertain or enter into any correspondence with candidates or their sponsors as to the processing or fate of any nomination.

The Secretary
Governing Board,
Nigerian National Merit Award,
The Presidency,
3rd Floor, Merit House,
Agayé Ibeju Way, Maitama, Abuja

NOMINATION FOR THE AWARD OF 2005 NIGERIAN NATIONAL ORDER OF MERIT FOR SCIENCE, HUMANITIES, MEDICINE AND ENGINEERING/ TECHNOLOGY

Nominations must reach the Secretary of the Nigerian National Merit Award Board before 18th March, 2005. Nominators must not make public the names of nominees.

Date Received

CANDIDATE Submit only one (Nomination per form)	SURNAME First Name Middle Name	
	Position or title Field of Endeavour	
	Current Address with Tel. No.	
THE NOMINATION IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWINGS: • DISCOVERY • INVENTION • INNOVATION OR • OTHER OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE		
GROUNDS FOR THE NOMINATION: (Detailed specification of grounds for nomination, curriculum vitae, bibliography and other relevant documents should be attached in triplicate)		
NOMINATOR	Signature:	Position or title:
	Name (Please print or type)	Date:
	Mailing Address: (Tel. No.)	Any other information:
CO-NOMINATOR	Signature:	Position or title:
	Name (Please Print or Type)	Date:
	Mailing Address:	Any other information:

Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE REPORT AS AT WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2005

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(S)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
CUTIX PLC	1	1.43	3,000	4,290.00
Sector Totals			3,000	4,290.00
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED				
LIVESTOCK FEEDS PLC	2	2.83	2,115	5,985.45
THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	2	14.71	6,600	100,788.00
PRESCO PLC	4	13.20	12,012	158,494.00
Sector Totals	8		20,727	250,777.45
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DEVELOP NIGERIA PLC	48	1.96	1,880,872	3,707,111.23
R. T. BRISCOE PLC	18	7.22	403,520	2,913,414.80
Sector Totals	66		2,284,392	6,120,526.03
BANKING				
CESS BANK PLC	10	3.42	62,592,718	214,067,095.56
AFRIABANK NIGERIA PLC	4	6.63	8,100	50,483.00
FIRST ATLANTIC BANK PLC	5	3.41	86,796	295,974.36
CHARTERED BANK PLC	8	3.90	221,000	861,000.00
CO-OPERATIVE BANK PLC	21	3.70	797,700	1,349,606.00
CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT BANK PLC	1	0.73	250	182.50
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	461	24.00	2,112,338	50,852,016.87
FIB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	15	1.40	244,694	345,074.34
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC	99	12.88 Y	1,994,139	25,684,210.32
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	5	6.90	160,000	1,104,000.00
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC	18	0.66	2,497,819	1,646,516.72
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC	20	1.07	1,813,000	1,938,076.75
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC	13	2.81	31,277	88,002.87
LEON BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	1	0.95 V	24	254.70
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC	6	1.00	1,390,000	1,489,000.00
NAL BANK PLC	43	1.00	72,000	72,000.00
OCEANIC BANK PLC	1	1.41	17,500	24,735.00
OMEDIA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC	1	0.39	13,844	5,407.52
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC	60	1.41	1,613,864	2,281,844.00
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC	18	0.65	69,783	45,619.64
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC	304	10.00	24,783,127	247,831,276.00
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC	20	0.79	3,574,340	2,838,245.40
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	8	3.00	778,679	2,336,511.00
UBA BANK PLC	20	3.93	1,042,188	4,095,798.84
THE BANK PLC	61	15.69	271,117	4,250,869.89
Sector Totals	1,620		109,279,607	489,819,854.19
BREWERIES				
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC	175	100.00	831,093	88,186,195.97
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC	484	39.50	1,207,750	15,986,995.51
Sector Totals	659		2,038,843	144,173,091.48
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC	19	24.00	816,483	14,834,711.65
CEMENT COMPANY OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	12	7.04	120,750	852,669.90
WEST AFRICAN PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC	31	11.98	123,694	1,460,553.34
Sector Totals	135		860,917	17,149,321.89
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC	12	3.45	56,902	195,422.10
CAP PLC	9	6.39	29,085	185,446.37
D. N. MEYER PLC	6	5.00	15,000	75,000.00
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC	11	3.61	43,829	161,448.69
Sector Totals	38		144,814	727,721.16
COMPUTER & OFFICE EQUIPMENT				
NCR (NIGERIA) PLC	2	1.44	5,366	7,727.04
Sector Totals	2		5,366	7,727.04
CONGLOMERATES				
A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC	10	1.04	166,301	173,791.29
C. F. & O. NIGERIA PLC	14	0.47	99,899	46,051.73
CHELLARAM PLC	6	1.71	12,168	20,807.28
J. O. O. PLC	3	1.00	10,000	10,000.00
JOHN HOLT PLC	1	1.00	741,801	13,915,194.17
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC	191	18.24	304,899	3,916,978.48
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC	62	12.90	724	2,155,060.00
S. O. A. NIGERIA PLC	5	1.25	289,187	4,097,779.79
U.A.C. NIGERIA PLC	38	14.17	176,200	2,096,619.99
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC	5	1.19	1,881,429	23,688,995.74
Sector Totals	355		4,112,323	78,351,435.96
CONSTRUCTION				
COYSTEIN (W.A.) PLC	1	0.92	615	577.50
Sector Totals	1		615	577.50
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY				
NIGERIAN WIRE AND CABLE PLC	3	0.82	42,800	34,440.00
Sector Totals	1		42,800	34,440.00
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
F. P. BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	47	25.60	210,449	5,337,607.75
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC	184	38.50	251,996	14,848,224.46
FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC	17	16.61	34,667	578,818.87
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	87	16.00	127,993	18,019,903.00
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC	109	149.00	202,036	30,194,239.84
NORTHERN NIGERIA FLOUR MILLS PLC	6	15.03	10,724	1,596,123.64
Sector Totals	457		1,432,324	78,351,435.96
HEALTHCARE				
NEVINS MEDICAL PLC	10	7.25	510,200	1,633,150.00
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC	10	5.91	53,318	307,729.06
SEAMEX INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC	4	2.84	3,929	11,132.80
PHARMA-TECO PLC	14	4.70	185,480	876,796.29
OLAXOMITHELINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	13	9.00	301,366	2,709,880.35
Sector Totals	76		1,054,234	5,528,658.56
HOTEL & TOURISM				
TOURIST COMPANY OF NIGERIA PLC	1	4.20	100,000	420,000.00
Sector Totals	1		100,000	420,000.00
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC	11	1.09	164,318	176,429.27
B.L.C. GASES PLC	6	3.06	65,387	497,221.17
VITAMON NIGERIA PLC	21	6.43	159,643	706,421.09
VISO PRODUCTS PLC	1	1.90	10,000	19,000.00
Sector Totals	48		499,348	1,599,071.53
INSURANCE				
ACEN INSURANCE COMPANY PLC	2	0.66	70,000	42,000.00
ALICO INSURANCE PLC	18	2.17	279,416	572,349.12
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC	15	1.36	480,014	651,786.20
CRUSAIDER INSURANCE PLC	4	0.76	95,323	72,456.10
LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	2	1.66	25,000	42,000.00
MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSURANCE PLC	1	0.93	19,500	18,335.00
N.E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG) PLC	3	0.78	47,187	37,261.91
PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC	9	1.07	200,000	194,000.00
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC	1	2.89	29,558	85,422.62
FIRST ASSURANCE PLC	1	0.84	500	420.00
UNIC INSURANCE PLC	6	1.12	25,585	28,349.04
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC	1	3.00	36,300	110,000.00
Sector Totals	73		1,318,963	2,077,211.69
MACHINERY(MARKETING)				
BLACWOOD HODGE (NIGERIA) PLC	3	0.66	368	253.92
Sector Totals	3		368	253.92
MANAGED FUNDS				
C & I LEASING PLC	11	1.68	217,290	373,694.80
Sector Totals	11		217,290	373,694.80
PACKAGING				
AYON CROWNCAPS & CONTAINERS PLC	6	0.81	42,875	34,566.75
NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC	3	1.17	1,770	2,144.60
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC	4	4.99	1,550	7,872.50
POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC	3	0.59	16,245	68,584.51
Sector Totals	16		162,240	112,938.16
PETROLEUM(MARKETING)				
AFRIEL PLC	26	0.97	530,074	521,474.48
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC	105	68.00	135,028	9,164,331.95
ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC	30	2.01	267,849	561,376.16
MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC	40	179.00	30,839	5,489,488.39
CONOIL PLC	83	128.31	119,775	15,486,676.22
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC	23	169.00	23,500	3,924,208.00
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC	48	179.50	60,279	10,825,995.36
OANDO PLC	204	104.00	397,269	40,775,238.95
Sector Totals	567		1,074,632	86,888,785.81
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
UNIVERSITY PRESS PLC	1	1.89	20,211	38,198.79
Sector Totals	1		20,211	38,198.79
REAL ESTATE				
LACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC	36	0.70	710,822	6,472,275.55
Sector Totals	36		710,822	6,472,275.55
TEXTILES				
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC	20	2.77	610,140	1,698,968.61
Sector Totals	20		610,140	1,698,968.61
Overall Totals	4,189		123,910,946	1,816,851,314.70

TOP 10 TRADES WEDNESDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
DUNLOP	1,680,672.00	3,207,111.23	48
INLANDBANK	1,813,000.00	1,858,076.73	29
GUARANTY	1,994,139.00	25,684,210.32	99
FIRSTBANK	2,112,338.00	50,852,016.87	61
IMB	2,497,819.00	1,590,516.72	38
NAL	3,472,077.00	7,522,409.40	43
UBN	3,576,340.00	73,888,245.40	399
ACHINBANK	16,729,751.00	15,725,967.82	2
UBA	24,783,127.00	247,831,270.00	304
ACCESSBANK	62,592,718.00	214,067,095.56	10

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LAST CLOSE	WEDNESDAY'S CLOSE	CHANGE
TOTAL	178.00	179.50	+1.50
AP	66.90	68.00	+1.10
MOBIL	178.00	179.00	+1.00
GUARANTY	12.27	12.88	+0.61
PRESCO	11.62	12.20	+0.58
WAPCO	11.41	11.98	+0.57
NBC	54.50	55.00	+0.50
CADBURY	58.00	58.50	+0.50
CFAO	6.17	6.47	+0.30
PZ	12.60	12.90	+0.30

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LAST CLOSE	WEDNESDAY'S CLOSE	CHANGE
NOLCHEM	131.97	129.51	-2.46
NNFM	15.82	15.03	-0.79
UBN	21.30	20.70	-0.60
ASHAKACEM	24.60	24.00	-0.60
NB	39.99	39.50	-0.49
LEVBROS	19.00	18.56	-0.44
UAC-PROP	9.00	8.70	-0.20
VITAFAM	4.64	4.43	-0.23
NIG-GERMAN	3.79	3.61	-0.18
ROYALEX	3.08	2.89	-0.15

Oil prices slide after US stock build

Oil prices slid yesterday after a bigger-than-expected rise in US fuel inventories soothed worries of a winter squeeze. US oil futures slumped 81 cents to \$46.74 a barrel, taking this week's losses to around \$1.30. The market had hit a seven-week high of \$49.50 on Tuesday. London Brent crude was down 82 cents at \$43.89. US commercial crude inventories rose last week by 3.4 million barrels, bringing supplies to about 8 percent above last year as refineries slowed for seasonal maintenance, the Energy Information Administration reported late on Wednesday. "Stocks were a bit of a surprise, they're not normally rising at this time of year," said David Thurlwell at Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Sydney. Winter heating oil tanks fell by 500,000 barrels but their deficit compared to a year ago narrowed to just 4 percent as the first half of the northern winter proved milder than usual. Worries of a winter crunch still linger as the US Northeast is in the midst of its most severe cold spell of the season, driving up demand as households fire up heating furnaces. Temperatures have been 18-24 degrees Fahrenheit below normal and will remain at least 14 F below normal through the weekend, forecasters Meteorlogia said yesterday.

Prices are up 8 percent since the start of the year, with only 10 days until Iraqi elections that traders fear could spur sabotage attacks.

Citigroup profit rises 12%, raises dividend

Citigroup Incorporated the world's largest financial services company, on Thursday said fourth-quarter profit rose 12 percent, helped by growth in its consumer and investment banking businesses. The New York-based company also increased its quarterly dividend by 10 percent. Net income rose to \$5.32 billion, or \$1.02 per share, from \$4.76 billion, or 91 cents per share, a year earlier. Analysts polled by Reuters estimates on average forecast profit of \$1.01 per share. Results included a \$244 million after-tax charge for the closing of Citigroup's private bank in Japan, and a \$131 million after-tax reserve for the expected settlement of a U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission investigation into transfer agent matters. Citigroup also said it released \$605 million pre-tax from its loan loss reserves. Revenue rose 9 percent to \$21.9 billion,

**COMMUNIQUE OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE, PLURALISM AND NATION-BUILDING,
ORGANIZED BY THE USMAN DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO 13th - 15th DECEMBER 2004**

PREAMBLE

The National Conference on Peaceful Co-Existence, Pluralism and Nation-Building under the Chairmanship of His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Maccido, MFR, was held at the Giginya Hotel Sokoto, from 13th to 15th December, 2004. Organized by the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto with funding and other support of the Sokoto State Government, the Conference was declared open by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Sokoto State, Alhaji (Dr.) Attahiru Dalhatu Bafarawa (*Garkuwan Sokoto*). The Opening Ceremony and the First Plenary Session were chaired by His Excellency, Former Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari, GCFR, (Turakin Sokoto).

Thirty three (33) papers were presented on the various themes of the Conference, which included the root causes of conflict; inter-ethnic relations; and the role of security, media, religious and traditional institutions in enhancing peaceful co-existence. In addition, the role of the literary arts in building bridges among peoples and cultures was also examined.

The Conference noted that political developments since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 demonstrate the myriad problems facing a people collectively attempting to fashion out an appropriate system of rule built on peace, justice and equity. Important strides have, no doubt, been made in Nigeria's attempt to forge unity amongst the various communities that constitute it. However, widening social and economic inequalities among regions, communities, and peoples; the less than optimal performance of government, evident in widespread corruption, personalization of public property, and exclusionary policies; high incidence of the use of force in responding to crises which often escalate conflicts; low speed in implementing, and sometimes outright non-implementation, of recommendations of commissions of inquiry, leading to recurrence of some of the conflicts; inadequate mobilization and involvement of civil society organizations in confidence building measures among communities; and a low level of security consciousness among both the general public and government, heightening mistrust within and between communities. These conditions have often resulted in frequent ethnic, religious and communal conflicts, leading to massive loss of lives, the destruction of property, internal displacement of people and socio-psychological trauma for victims.

The foregoing condition serves as a reminder that more serious work remains in our march towards nationhood. The conference noted that this march should proceed by frank and open discussions across divides, as a first step in building new and strengthening old bridges among the peoples that constitute our pluralistic nation. Ensuring peaceful-existence and forging a stronger nation, while at the same time retaining our diversity in a democratic Nigeria is the major challenge we collectively face.

Observations

In examining the roots of conflict and the barriers to peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, the conference observed that:

- (i) There has been a marked increase in violent conflicts, including criminal violence, since 1999. This is to be seen against the background of Nigeria's return to democracy, with heightened expectations of peace and development. Such conflicts include those in Benue (Zaki Biam and Kwande), Plateau (Jos and Shendam), Kaduna, Lagos (Ketu and Mile 12), Ogun (Shagamu) and Bayelsa; Political assassinations; increased incidence of criminal violence, and low intensity wars. These have further strained inter-ethnic relations, increased tension among communities and worsened the security situation throughout the country.
- (ii) Although the oppressive and divisive nature of colonial rule laid the foundation for most of Nigeria's contemporary conflicts, the cut-throat struggle for power and wealth, low level economic development, contradictory and ill-thought out policies, lack of robust multi-cultural policy, and insufficient attention to the collective integrative mechanisms and experiences of our people in the postcolonial period, have further expanded inequalities among regions and groups, often resulting into violent conflicts.
- (iii) Pervasive and persistent poverty as well as other forms of deprivations amidst widespread corruption and embezzlement of funds by public officers, have reinforced or created social exclusion.
- (iv) Definition of citizenship in narrow terms, seen as membership of a sub-national, rather than a national community has become a major source of violent conflicts. Such a notion of citizenship often distinguish between indigenes and non-indigenes, a dichotomy that is often reinforced by unfortunate actions of some highly placed government officials and opinion leaders.
- (v) The failure of government should count as one of the most worrying elements in the recurrence of conflicts in contemporary Nigeria. In many cases, government has not only failed to secure lives and property, it has also been withdrawing from the provision of services to the public. This has tended to reinforce ethnic and religious organizations. Moreover, the failure to implement, or the selective implementation of, the recommendations of Commissions of Inquiry or Judicial Panels, creates an impression that government is either unfair, or that some persons are above the law.
- (vi) Due to the prominence given to conflict in public discussion recently, insufficient attention has been given to the more positive aspects of interethnic relations. Conference observed that there has developed over time strong and good ties among our peoples and communities, and there is a need to harness and reinforce such ties in our efforts at nation-building.
- (vii) Civil society organizations need to be more involved formally in issues of public safety, community policing, peace building and peace-making efforts. This is particularly important in situations of emergent conflicts, as this will reduce the incidence of using force as a first-tier response by government.
- (viii) There is need for an early warning system that can detect conflicts fairly quickly, making prompt response possible before minor conflicts develop into major crises. It is the erosion of sound moral and religious values, rather than irreconcilable religious differences, that has led to incessant intra and inter-religious conflicts. Both members of Muslim and Christian communities should be taught the basic tenets of each of the two religions and the sanctity of personalities and institutions should be emphasized.

- (x) The media provides a platform for debate and dialogue on local and national issues, and is responsible for shaping opinions. This power should be used responsibly.
- (xi) Literature and artists help focus our people's attention on the contemporary challenges of nation-building. One such contribution has been the attempt to forge unity and understanding among and within our various cultural and religious divides, while at the same time encouraging and celebrating our diversity.
- (xii) Education has played a significant role in nation-building and in the promotion of peaceful co-existence.
- (xiii) Traditional rulers and institutions had played roles in ensuring the security of lives and property in their different domains. They also had contributed immensely to the effective and efficient administration of the country.
- (xiv) Conference observed that there has been a rise in armed robbery, vandalism of public property and political assassinations due to failure of the state to provide adequate and necessary security required. This is evidenced in the emergence of private communal security outfits.

Resolutions

On the basis of these observations, and desiring to promote peace between and within the various peoples and communities that constitute Nigeria, the conference resolved that:

- (i) Government should, as a matter of urgency, begin to more concretely address the various forms of inequalities and deprivations within and between regions and communities.
- (ii) Government and the political class should be more committed to the principles of justice, fairness and equity at all levels of governance. Active measures should be taken to encourage national and continental unity through relevant policies.
- (iii) Government should be proactive in pre-empting and preventing violent conflicts before they occur; when they occur, recommendations of commissions of inquiry should be implemented, perpetrators subjected to the laws of the land, and victims promptly and fully compensated.
- (iv) Government should, as a matter of urgency, protect and guarantee the citizenship rights of all Nigerians, irrespective of place of residence as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution. Towards this end, effective measures should be devised at all governmental level to discourage the indigene/ non-indigene dichotomy.
- (v) Active efforts should be taken to involve communities and civil organizations in peace-building and management. Towards this, communities should be involved in public security, and peace-making efforts.
- (vi) It is important to impart good moral values throughout our educational and religious institutions and through leadership by example.
- (vii) There is a need for religious tolerance and accommodation among the adherents of various religions in the country. Religious institutions, in collaboration with government, should produce policy guidelines that can effectively govern relations between Muslims and Christians, as well as between peoples of other faiths. Punishment should be prescribed for anyone who violates sanctity of religious institutions, scriptures, or reviles important religious personalities.
- (viii) Government should encourage the development of patriotism, respect for professional ethics and the rule of law as basis for media practice in Nigeria.
- (ix) Conference calls for a robust and dynamic multi-cultural policy that can deliberately encourage tolerance, accommodation, and peace among our various communities.
- (x) Traditional institutions should collaborate with other organizations to strengthen their roles in promoting peaceful co-existence. Such roles should address issues like interpersonal relations, community disputes (e.g. land and inheritance), public safety and security, as well as enhancing dialogue among and within our diverse communities.
- (xi) Government should as a matter of urgency address the crisis in the educational sector not only through adequate funding but also by developing an educational policy that will inculcate in citizens a national outlook that will encourage the forging of a united, strong and just nation.
- (xii) The security of Nigerians and our efforts towards peaceful co-existence should be addressed through the rule of law, restoration of confidence in leadership, democratic principles, free and fair elections, and the professionalization of security agencies (good service conditions, appropriate funding, and logistic support). A national database of crimes and criminals needs to be developed just as improvement in the gathering and handling of intelligence within the framework of conflict management in the country is imperative.
- (xiii) Conference calls for a regular organization of such dialogues and conferences as measures towards establishing peace and understanding between our various peoples.
- (xiv) Towards this, Conference calls for the creation in the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, of a National Centre for the Study and Promotion of Peace.

Conclusion

The conference expressed its appreciation to the organizers, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, and the government of Sokoto State for funding such an important, timely and vital forum in the search for peace, unity and justice in Nigeria. It also expressed its thanks to His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Maccido, MFR, their Highnesses, the Emirs of Gwandu, Argungu, Anka, Gusau and Kaura-Namoda. The conference also expressed its gratitude to the government and people of Sokoto State for the hospitality extended to the conference participants.

SIGNED

ALHAJI IDRIS KOKO
(*Madawakin Gwandu*)

Chairman, Communique Committee
SOKOTO-NIGERIA



Central Bank of Nigeria

Transition to Glory

The Board of Directors, Management and Staff of the
Central Bank of Nigeria share the grief and mourn with our
former Deputy Governor and a former Minister of Finance

Mallam Ismaila Usman

over the loss of his dear wife -

Mrs. Augusta Usman (nee Aleyideino)

who departed this world on **January 15th, 2005**

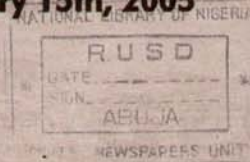


MRS. AUGUSTA USMAN

(Nee Aleyideino)

November, 1948 - January, 2005

Management
Central Bank of Nigeria



Funeral Arrangements

Funeral Service

Hekan Church
Katsina Road, Kaduna
Thursday, 20th January 2005
Time: 3.00 pm

Body leaves Airforce Base Mortuary
Kaduna for Numan, Adamawa State
Friday, 21st January 2005
Time: 6.00 am

Wake Keeping

No. 1 Aleyideino Road
Numan
Friday, 21st January 2005
Time: 4.p.m

Funeral Service

Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria
(LCCN) Cathedral
Numan
Saturday, 22nd January 2005
Time: 9.00 am

Interment

Christian Burial Ground
Numan, Adamawa State

Asalam Alaekum

My brodas and sistas this Eid-el-kabir



Veego... I feel U

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Recharge card Value	Validity Days
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₦1,000	17
₦2,000	27
₦5,000	67
₦20,000	367



PHOTO: [unreadable]



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THE HOME FRONT

Fragments

By Safiya I. Dantye, *Woman Editor*

Ram: Excitement of Eid-el-Kabir

To many people, Eid-el-fit is more exciting than Eid-el-Kabir, probably because it heralds the end of Ramadan and ushers a period of eating and drinking at day time. But then, the excitement of Eid-el-Kabir, especially to children is the ram that will be slaughtered on the salah, they get so carried away that they are always at the place where a ram or rams, as the case may be are tied, before salah day. If there is a cow, it will add excitement for the children in the area to converge in groups, watching the cow, as it is usually tied outside.

As such, men try as much as possible to buy ram for their family in order to make their children happy.

This is why men strive hard to buy a small ram people call *kash zaru*, literally meaning it is better than not to have at all. Even though the ram may not be much to look at, at least you have it and more so, your children will be happy.

It is very painful for children not to have a ram slaughtered in their house, and the more rams the merrier they become.

Well, since wishes are not necessarily deeds, especially children's, they have to do with what their fathers can provide.

"Islamically the meat is meant to be distributed to the needy or those that couldn't afford a ram. But one disturbing thing is that the meat is rather circulated among those that have slaughtered rams. For example, you'll send a slab of meat to your neighbour or relative and she will send the same size of slab of meat to you or added a small portion."

And if they cannot provide at all, as in many cases, they have to bear it even though they take it hard.

The civil servants in Kano state will have respite this year as the government would give them loan to buy ram. This kind and considerate gesture would give those that would not otherwise have bought a ram, the opportunity to do so.

Some people skeptically wondered about the fate of other people that are not civil servants, like are they not part of Kano state too? Such people would definitely appreciate the kind gesture extended to them too.

Indeed this is a food for thought for the government. In any case, women find Eid-el-Kabir tedious because of the hard work associated with slaughtering a ram, cutting, washing, cooking, frying, washing up etc.

Islamically the meat is meant to be distributed to the needy or those that couldn't afford a ram. But one disturbing thing is that the meat is rather circulated among those that have slaughtered rams. For example, you'll send a slab of meat to your neighbour or relative and she will send the same size of slab of meat to you or added a small portion.

Some women will even be offended that the person they sent a big slab of meat give them a smaller one. And this grudge is especially targeted to those that slaughter a cow. Rightly some of these people dole out small slabs of meat to neighbours, and horde most of it in deep freezer. Even poor neighbours to these people do not get reasonably big slabs of meat, let alone those that have slaughtered rams.

Of course there are exceptional cases where people give out to their relatives and the needy without expecting a 'return' of their meat, but the above is usually what happens.

Anyway, those that live in the city, for example in Kano, have women beggars and *almajirai* to contend with. So in a way they give out to the needy.

Those that spend the Eid-el-Kabir in Abuja hardly give out meat to either their relatives or to the needy. Most people are far from their home towns and some don't have the needy near them. So they have it all to themselves.

For children the excitement of the salah wane a lot after the slaughtering of the ram, as it is not the meat they care about, but the actual ram.

Apart from the religious injunction, Eid-el-Kabir presents an opportunity for people that do not usually have meat in their stew to eat meat to their fill. But people should be cautious about over indulgence so as not to be sick.

A non-government organization (NGO) called the International Republican Institute (IRI) is hosting a two-day workshop aimed at promoting the interests of the Muslim women in the country.

This was indicated in a press statement signed by the senior programme officer of the organisation Yomi Jacobs, and made available to Home Front in Abuja, yesterday.

The statement stated that the workshop which was scheduled for January 25 and 26, 2005 at the Abuja Nicon Hilton Hotel, would feature interactive session on advocacy fundraising, action planning, among others.

Based on the assessment conducted by the organization the statement added that the advocacy workshop was designed to further improve the advocacy skills

NGO organises Muslim advocacy workshop

By Abubakar Haruna, Reporter (Women Affairs)

of Muslim women organization that are working to promote the interests of the Muslim women in the country.

According to it, participants at the workshop would include representatives from Muslim sisters organization of Nigeria, Al-Ihsan women organization, Jama'atu Nasirul Islam (women wing), Al-Musabah Women Association, concerned Muslim Mothers Association and the Federation of Muslim Women

Association of Nigeria.

The statement further indicated that the IRI recognises the vital role which effective advocacy plays in encouraging citizenship participation in politics and societal development.

To that effect, the statement indicated that building the technical capacities of the muslim women organisations to identify and advocate issues affecting muslim women in Nigeria are strategic to promoting their participation in the political process.

According to the

statement, the international republican institute is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with the mandate to work with political parties towards developing a strong political party system in the country.

It also stated that IRI has been working in the country since 1998 and has executed programs on grassroots party development, promoting of women participation in politics, party poll agent training, and promoting issue-based political party agendas among others.

High rate of STIs among adolescents in Bauchi

A research study by a Bauchi-based Makaya Health and Mobilisation Agency, has identified a high rate of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) among girl hawkers in Bauchi.

The study also linked the problem to high rate of poverty among women.

It indicated that only 25 per cent of married women in the metropolis had visible means of livelihood, with 10 per cent engaged in either government or private sector jobs, while 15 per cent were self employed.

The findings, made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Bauchi, showed that the remaining 75 per cent were full time housewives.

To address the problem, the agency has established a mini soap factory in Bauchi, through a community based initiatives, aimed at providing employment, reducing crime and other vices.

Alhaji Amina Abubakar, the Project Director of the agency, told NAN in Bauchi, that it had also established a knitting centre to train young girls in order to discourage them from hawking.

Abubakar said the agency had in addition, opened a computer centre to train girls and provide them with means of livelihood.

He said the organisation had also initiated a revolving loan scheme to provide soft loans for women to start their own business.

Abubakar said a youth centre had been established in Bauchi to counsel youths on the dangers of HIV, drug abuse and other vices.



Pix shows Miss Suliyat Olabisi Abdulsalam during her graduation ceremony at Darul-Uloom arabic and Islamic School Gwagwa, Abuja... recently.

Agagu's wife urges women to embrace cassava farming

Wife of the Ondo State governor, Mrs Funke Agagu, has advised women to engage in massive agricultural production, especially cassava.

She gave the advice last week in Akure during the monthly Gbebiro Meeting on the theme, "Economic Self-Reliance: The Cassava Revolution Approach," with

women in the state.

She said there was no government in the world that could satisfy the aspirations of its entire people.

Funke pointed out that the topic of the Meeting was chosen to enlighten women on the opportunities derivable from cassava production.

She frowned at the

notion that Agriculture was for the poor, adding that to transform the people, our economy should first be transformed.

She told farming women that government had planned to establish two cassava processing factories in two senatorial districts and a cassava flour factory in the third Senatorial District.

THE HOME FRONT

Mrs Alamiyeseigha urges Bayelsa women to brace up for census

The wife of the Bayelsa state governor, Mrs. Margaret Alamiyeseigha has enjoined women groups in the state to enlighten and sensitize the women folk to take part in all aspects of the forthcoming national population census.

By Abubakar Haruna,
Reporter (Women Affairs)
with Agency report

Sheigha made the call in Yenagos while exchanging views with the leadership of various women groups within the week.

She told them to harmo-

nise strategies that would ensure the mass involvement of women in all aspects of the census.

She said that the enlightenment and sensitization programmes, which must kick off in earnest, should not be restricted to urban centres alone, but should be taken to

all areas of the state.

The wife of the governor was of the view that for a programme as important as the population census, no effort should be spared in ensuring the mass participation of people in the rural areas.

Mrs. Alamiyeseigha

further called on the groups to liaise with relevant federal and state government organs, including local government chairmen, to educate the rural populace on the relevance of the census.

Meanwhile, a cross-section of the women, representing more than ten women

groups, commended Alamiyeseigha for her words of encouragement and the importance she attached to women in the upcoming census.

They assured her of their preparedness to collaborate with her in the fulfillment of her effort to boost the status of women in Bayelsa.

Succour for Abuja commercial sex workers

Good evening sir, carry me now, I go do you fine." That is a common expression of prostitutes every night at the red-light districts of Abuja.

These commercial sex workers are found mostly at Wuse Zone 4, Mabushi, Garki 2 and other street corners in the capital city.

In spite of the growing number of NGOs that highlight the danger these young ladies are exposed to, they still throng Abuja in numbers, because they see prostitution as a lucrative business.

Not even the prevalence of HIV and AIDS seems to scare them away from the oldest profession.

Latest statistics show that HIV and AIDS prevalence rate in the country is about five per cent of the population.

That is to say that about seven million Nigerians are infected. In spite of these alarming figure these young women still carry on with the business of selling their bodies unabated not minding the risk they expose themselves to.

Dr Chinwe Effiong, Country Director of Africare, an International Charity Organisation with special concern for HIV and AIDS said that her two year research in Abuja revealed that there are three categories of commercial sex workers.

They include school dropouts, undergraduates and working class ladies.

She said that these "queens of the night" are desperate to be heard and were amazed that someone had noticed them, by asking them how they felt and what they wanted out of life.

Effiong said that these ladies wanted to be treated with respect on the job, while they made efforts to find another means of livelihood that is not fraught with the hazards and dangers they face in the course of sleeping with strange men.

She said that pathetic

Analysis by Ekemini Yemi-Ladejobi, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)

stories such as rape, incest, physical and mental abuse, were expressed by the ladies.

They also relived experiences about men who pay more to have sex without condoms.

In the course of interaction, Effiong said that one of the prostitutes confessed that she continued with the commercial activity even after she found out that she was HIV positive. Her reason was that she could not afford to lose her income.

Effiong said that the gory stories prompted her to ask: "Do you enjoy being a sex worker?" She said that the general answer showed that each of the ladies was ready to abandon commercial sex work, if a more dignifying and profitable job was available.

Based on those responses, Effiong said that she developed the "Women Initiative for Sex Education and Empowerment" (WISE) as a platform for campaigning against prostitution.

The project was launched recently in Abuja.

Among services being offered by WISE include education on reproductive health, treatment of sexually transmitted infections, vocational and business management education.

The whole idea is to enable ex-commercial sex workers make informed choices while they are equipped to become financially independent.

According to Effiong,

women have been unable to get decent education, purchase land, get gainful employment, or simply live a decent life that is free of violence.

"We have been looked at and called every name in the book: mistress, prostitute, shaw, karuwa, akwuna, skronyo, skele, domitila, agbile, akpara, amebo...name it we've been called it."

"Today we demand to be simply seen as women because we are the backbone of our economy," she added.

She said that Africare through the WISE project would continue to scratch the surface of the enormous problems of indifference and callousness toward women hoping that the scratch turns into a dent while the dent would one day make a difference.

In a swift reaction to the initiative, President Olusegun Obasanjo at the launch of WISE donated five hectares of land within Abuja for the purpose of building a multipurpose centre solely for capacity building of women.

"As a sign of my government's support we have donated five hectares of land within the FCT to Africare for the purpose of constructing a multipurpose center to build the capacity of women."

"To produce, package and market a wide range of goods and services and to create employment opportunities for thousands of women who will be recruited from all states of the



Chief Mrs. Amina Titi Abubakar wife of the vice president specially appreciates Abuja Sheraton Hotel & Towers in recognition of their tremendous support to "WOTCLEF" recently.

federation," Obasanjo said. He said that Africare's response to the needs of Nigerian women living in the FCT was an innovative response to very serious problem of disempowerment that the women faced on a daily basis.

"By directing our attention back to the root of the problem - poverty and lack of income generating skills - and by setting up a comprehensive programme that will address these problems, Africare has set a standard and established precedence for development," Obasanjo added.

Also at the launch, the National Secretary of

Federation of Moslem Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Dr Mairo Mandara, said that lots of Moslem women were involved in prostitution in the Northern part of the country. "From our findings a lot of Moslem women are involved in prostitution in the far north and they believe it is a way of life," Mairo said.

She added that women must ensure that they work and live within the confines of what Allah wants.

Mairo further painted a picture of a new form of prostitution where young girls are distributed at parties like hampers to government officials.

She cited a just concluded official gathering in one of the South-South states where young girls were brought to the officials in their hotel rooms.

She urged all Nigerians to join in the fight against prostitution by speaking out against it and advised those involved in it to desist from the practice for their own good.

"Every one of us will account for our deeds before the creator including those of us who will not speak out

against it."

According to Dr Hassan Lawal, the Minister of Employment Labour and Productivity, if the men are disciplined and keep to their spouses and resist "our animalistic instinct" by stopping patronising prostitutes then we will be reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Lawal, who also painted a picture of what could happen to the workforce of any nation ravaged by HIV and AIDS said: "If people do not discipline themselves and abstain from sexual escapades the consequences will impact negatively on the economy."

His counterpart in the Health Ministry, Eytayo Lambo, who also stressed the need for healthy lifestyle, revealed that Nigeria ranked the third country with the highest rate of HIV and AIDS. "Individuals should cultivate a healthy lifestyle because the quality of your health is a function of your action," Lambo said.

Let us hope that with the zeal and determination Effiong has brought to bear in the WISE project the adage: "Old Habit dies hard" will sooner or later "Die fast."

THE HOME FRONT

The making of a woman

Puberty is the term used to describe the changes in body, mind and emotions that both boys and girls undergo between the ages of 10 and 18 years. During puberty, the child is slowly transformed into a young adult. This article is restricted to puberty in girls.

The word puberty is derived from the Latin word "pubertas" which means adulthood. The main purpose of all the changes of puberty is to enable the individual to produce children and so perpetuate the human race. Girls are born with about one quarter of a million eggs in their ovaries. In childhood, these minute eggs lie dormant. As puberty approaches, the brain starts to send chemical messengers (called hormones) to the ovaries via the bloodstream, which trigger off the development of a few of these eggs. The maturing eggs produce other hormones, which cause all the bodily and psychological changes in puberty. Normally, the ovary will produce one mature egg every month (called ovulation), which is capable of being fertilized to become a baby.

Normal puberty

There is a wide range of ages in which the normal changes of puberty begin and there is no exact order for the development to unfold. Far from being reassuring this variability only seems to highlight to some girls their own sense of abnormality. The message of this article is that for the majority of girls, the sequence and timing of these changes are normal. The six important bodily changes that occur in puberty are: (Development of breasts (Growth of pubic hair (Growth of under arm hair (Growth of external sex organs (Growth in height (Menstruation.

Breasts

The breasts develop in stages. Nipples are the first things to grow, followed by the underlying breast. Breast buds begin anytime from 9 to 14 years usually around the age of 11 years. The full adult breast may take up to nine years to develop, but the average is four years. Breasts are sometimes tender and tingle as this process begins. One breast can be noticeably bigger than the other in 10 to 15

percent of girls, but this inequality usually disappears by about the age of 16 years.

Pubic hair

Pubic hairs often appear at about the time of the breast buds, but either may precede the other by up to a year. They gradually increase and, after about three years, have produced a fairly thick triangle of curly hair which extends from the junction of the lower groin with the inner thigh, downwards between the legs and covering the external sex organs and genitalia.

Underarm hair

A year or two after the growth of pubic hair, similar hairs appear in the underarm area. Thicker hairs may also appear on other parts of the body, such as the legs, lower arms, around the nipples and on the upper lip. The amount of this hair growth depends very much on hair colour and genetic make-up, being more obvious on dark-haired girls.

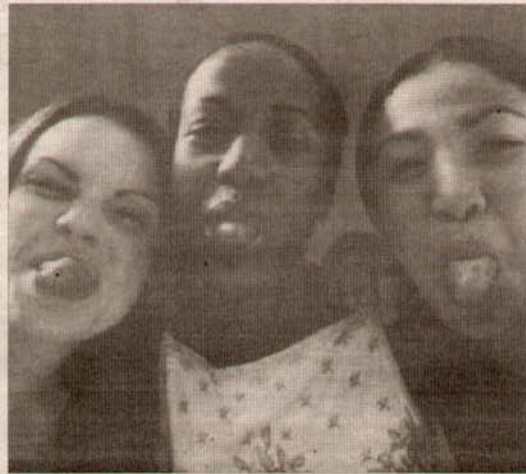
External sex organs (Genitalia)

Girl's genitalia are less obvious than boys. This gradually enlarges during puberty. The clitoris, which is the homologue of the penis in the male, is extremely sensitive and plays an important role in sexual arousal. As puberty progresses, the vagina and vulva become increasingly moist because of secretions through the vagina and from glands in the vulva and cervix (neck of the womb). These secretions provide a defence against infections and prepare the area for sexual activity.

Height, weight and shape

Children between the ages of 4 years and puberty tend to grow in height at a fairly constant rate of about 5cm per year. Somewhere around the age of ten and a half years, girls suddenly begin to grow at 6-12cm per year for about two years. This is called the growth spurt. Thereafter, growth rapidly falls off to only 1-2cm a year by the age of 15 years and, shortly after that, to almost nothing. This results from the effect of estrogen on the end plate of the femur causing fusion and thus growth ceases. During this time:

- * Hips widen to help future childbirth.



- * Waists slim as fat moves from the tummy to the hips and thighs

- * Buttocks become more prominent

- * Legs lengthen in proportion to the rest of the body.

- * The growth spurts include muscle

development and, as boys have their growth spurt two years later, this is a time for girls to assert their supremacy!

Early "sputters" tend to worry that they will be too tall, but in fact their growth stops earlier, so late "sputters" may have caught

up by the age of 16 years. Faces also alter, with the nose and jaw becoming more prominent and some deepening of the voice, although not as marked in girls as it is in boys.

Menstruation (Periods, Menses)

Starting to have periods

is probably the most important event of puberty for girls. It is certainly the most identifiable landmark of puberty and periods usually start anywhere between the ages of 10 and 16 years.

The average age these days is 13 years. The age of starting periods (menarche) depends to a small extent on race and genetics and to a much larger extent on body fat and nutrition. The menarche usually occurs about two and half years after the appearance of breast buds and pubic hair and as the growth spurt is slowing. The menarche tends to occur when the body weight is between 42 and 52kg and when roughly 17% of this weight is fat. Therefore very thin girls such as athletes, ballet dancers and malnourished girls tend to have a much later menarche. Periods usually last between 2 to 7 days and come an average every 28 days; although a range of 21 to 35 days is normal.

Culled from Quail-Health Magazine

How to preserve your meat at sallah

Sallah gives us chance to wear new cloth and eat special dishes, most especially meat. Most people tend to over indulge themselves on sallah, especially the Eid-el-kabir, they will eat too much meat, which lead to effects like diarrhoea, abdomen pain, vomiting, etc.

The Home Front interviewed medical doctors, who argued that eating too much meat does not lead to mentioned problems above but only when the meat is poorly cooked and poorly stored.

According to Dr. Bassey Eyo Nsa of Federal Staff Hospital, Apo Abuja, the problem associated with eating sallah meat could only be that of food poisoning, that is when the meat is poorly cooked or poorly stored. It is referred to as immediate effect of eating meat.

He added that food poisoning was very dangerous and could kill in twenty four hours. The ailments are fever, diarrhoea, vomiting, and abdominal pain, so prompt medical consultation is recommended. He also advised that people should avoid self medication by going to chemist to buy (flagyl) and because, you don't know the cause of your ailment.

He also highlighted that we have long term effects of meat which was as a result of taking too much meat such

By Aisha Umar, Reporter (Women Affairs)

as cholesterol which lead to heart attack. And gout which occurs at old age, when you have indulged in eating large quantity of meat at youthful stage, you will have problem of swollen fingers.

Dr. Bassey said taking care of hygiene starts from where you buy the ram, whether the animal is healthy or not. And it is the duty of the sanitary inspectors, public health inspectors, who should go round and make sure the animals are in good condition before people buy them.

"After killing the meat with religious injection, you use clean water, pipe water when washing it. You roast it to reduce the bacterial load in it, or boiling your meat is very important for at least 30 minute to be sure you have killed the bacteria in it. Eating half done meat is not good for our health," he said.

He added that you can as well fry it, some people choose to dry meat under the sun but after drying should store in a refrigerator. Even after frying your meat it could get spoilt when not properly stored. As an individual you should be able to identify a spoilt meat and avoid eating it.

Another medical doctor in Federal Staff Hospital Apo Abuja, Dr. Agbriogu Brian

said, meat should be used up in two days and should not be kept in a container.

He emphasised that fried meat was not good for children because it caused yellow jaundice and should be avoided. "There is no limit to the amount of meat you should take, it does not have harm as long as it is well cooked and well stored, it doesn't have harm, we only have minimum requirement."

There is a particular temperature beyond which organisms cannot survive, said Dr. Brian, adding that you should cook your meat for at least 30 minutes to kill the bacteria.

He however added that when you find yourself purging and vomiting you should take ORT at the start, and when it doesn't stop you see a doctor for proper treatment.



Mallam Bashir Shu'aba, head, accounts and administration, Fimal finance Service Limited, Abuja, with his wife Hassana at the occasion of their wedding... recently.

ABUJA TRUST

Legal loophole and acid bath victims

The various incidents of acid attack/bath in the country might be assuming a pandemic level as the stock in trade of every couple in the country is pointing, immediately after disagreement between them suffice it to say that the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), is witnessing its own share of its "tsunami" or "terrorist" attack on its citizenry.

Recently, one Jina Linus Ogbo, was bathed in acid by one Moses Ojin, whom reports said is critically lying in the hospital in Gwarimpa.

Another report in Daily Trust newspaper of January 10, 2005, said that a driver resident in Kado, Anthony Nowada was remanded in prison for allegedly pouring on the body of one Miss Ache, whom report said is engaged to him accusing her of having an affair with him, and others who reported have plagued the society and is beginning to shake the fabrics on which it is built upon.

Abuja Trust spoke to one Sunday, a battery charger in Wuse zone 6, who said that they buy the corrosive agent freely in the market. He cited Apo mechanic village and Garki zone 1, as places where this agents can be gotten.

He however said that those selling the product (acid) in the market always demand for some form of identification before it is sold to them.

Sunday however feigned ignorance about other uses of acid as he said that they don't sell even the diluted acid.

Another battery charger spoken to, Segun, said that they can only buy diluted acid from the dealers as most dealers, he said don't know where to get the corrosive one as even the dealers don't allow them what however they agreed on was that the dilute acid does not burn, claiming "it fit tear your clothes but it no fit burn you."

But a medical doctor disagreed with this view saying that acid whether diluted or not remains corrosive. The medical practitioners said causing bodily harm to somebody may mainly be borne out of anger and not necessarily mental ill health as some people suggest.

He also said most of the people that commit such act have a pre-meditated motive which making such actions to be criminal while saying that isolated cases might not be ruled out sometimes.

However the legal point of view remains vague as laws made against such heinous crime is left to the utmost discretion of the judge.

Section 248 of the penal code of Nigeria prescribed 3 year jail term for offenders or fine. According to a legal practitioner Bar. Esther Uzoma said "that section 248 of the penal code guard against such, as it is the main legislation that say that whoever cause bodily harm by using any substance will be punished for specified time.

Bar. Esther, also said that victims of such act have a strong case in court so the compensation of the victims is solely with the civil aspect of the matter as claims can be made for plastic surgery and other miscellaneous items to abate the sufferings of the victims because it is inhuman as it contravenes what is written in the constitution.

Bar. Esther further said that as a woman and the group that is most vulnerable, said that such action is provocative. It might be out of lack of confidence on the path of the man on how to run the love of the woman that is why they go to such extent.

Speaking in the same manner, a legal practitioner Alex N. N.

By Benjamin Auta
Crime Reporter

Williams, however disagreed on the fact that women are mostly the victims of such attack (acid bath) even though they are not the ones attacked only, since there are men that are also attacked by their wives or girl friends that is why it is not a gender issue.

He said that a lot of Nigerians have injected the psychiatric/psychology well being of each other as most Nigerians may need doctors or counsellor to talk a lot of matters over with.

He also said that the society needs focus and fulfilment. Bar. Alex said that imprisonment is not meant to punish but to correct somebody or make him/her remorseful of his/her action, therefore deprivation of one's right is to sit on one heart as a measure of correction so that the person change his attitude.

He also said that proliferation of such corrosive substance(s) is not borne out of the fact that there are no laws in the country saying that one can get this substance by just emptying their car batteries. He praised the bold steps being taken by the NAFDAC/DG Dora Akunyili in her effort to inject some sanity charging that only working on the minds of individuals can solve the problem while calling for a stiffer control of such substances in the open market.

Abuja Trust made efforts to speak to the Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON) official about the standardization of such substance but no official was on hand to react to the matter.

Also, Abuja Trust tried to speak to the public relations officer at the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration Control NAFDAC but he was not on sit to answer questions.



Jina Linus Ogbo, a victim of acid bath by one Moses Ojin, she is presently admitted at Gwarimpa hospital.

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KANO TRUST

Harmattan changes lifestyle of residents

It is generally believed that whenever harmattan period steps into our environment, it like is inviting a complete change in the life, mode of dressing, behaviour and most often affects the life of people at the very time and even beyond. To what seems to be like tradition, people don't feel bothered when having some kind of illness during harmattan as that is always happening in our environment.

In Kano, in the last two weeks or so, the weather has changed dramatically to a more dusty and cooler situation. This has led people to unavoidably start looking for clothes that can protect their body from the cold. There is a rising demand in trying to acquire such materials that can serve people's need. The sudden change in the weather to a chilly, icy and breezy condition has been described by many residents as unexpected because last year it was not as chilly as this year.

This has changed the dressing mode of the people to somewhat bizarre and sometimes outrageous dressing, especially among the *Achaba* riders who must go out into the cold to earn a living in the early hours when the cold is coolest. The dramatic change in this year's harmattan in Kano has also affected air traffic between Kano and other parts of the country including the Hajj operation. There was a time the airlift of pilgrims had to be aborted due to the hazy nature of the atmosphere in Kano. Local flights have been cancelled on many occasions that air passengers had to resort to road transportation.

The business community in Kano are also affected as business that usually commence in the early hours are delayed due to the weather because people tend to come out late from their homes. The markets that open at 7 am now sometimes open at nine while most government offices do not start business for the day until 10 am.

But even as other business are suffering setback due to the cold weather, those in the business of bend-down-boutiques or second hand clothing especially those selling sweaters and wool materials for the cold, are having a field day because of the high demand for such materials at this period. In a chat with some of the residents selling sweaters and caps and even hand socks especially those selling fairly used brought from abroad known as bend-down-boutique or second hand clothes or *Gwanjo* in Hausa, they said they have really sold out a lot of those

By Aliyu Saleh Machika,
Correspondent Kano

materials because of the rising demand over the last two weeks.

Night life has also been curtailed drastically as people seek refuge in the warmth of their homes earlier than usual. Sabon Gari, the hub of nightlife in Kano where people converge for partying till the wee hours of the night is sometimes deserted as early as 9 to 10 pm due to the cold weather.

Achaba riders who wrap-up themselves from head to toe looking like masquerades to make some money had to cut their hours of operation due to lack of passengers to carry. One of them interviewed said, "people are not staying up late at night like before. In Sabon Gari, we used to work till 2 am, 3 am carrying passengers, but this time by 10pm everybody will just go home. The weather is affecting our business." He complained.

Kano Trust also learnt that this dust is unlike during rainy season where the dust normally occurs when there is cloud and immediately rain started it will wash every thing including the virus brought from somewhere. This is also a season of spread of some group of disease especially airborne diseases because of the carelessness of some people on hygiene and sanitation. The fact is that there are many factors that are leading to such diseases in our society and which if all the necessary efforts and precautionary measures are taken can easily prevent such diseases from getting rid of people.

In an exclusive interview with one of the medical doctors at the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Kano, Dr. Ismaila Zubairu, he described the period as one which counts more cases that has to do with respiratory issues in humans. According to him, some of the common diseases mostly been reported to them includes catarrh. This catarrh if allowed to mature can cause bronchitis that affects the human lung and some times cause neck ache.

Some other related diseases according to *Kano Trust* investigation include staphylococcus, staphylococcus, bronchitis and trachibronchitis caused by bronchopneumonia virus, tuberculosis caused by mycobacterium tuberculosis, E. colic, gonda intestinal, asthma and many more. All these various diseases are spread faster during harmattan period due to the dust and speedy air blowing around our environment.

Besides, there is also the

issue of people selling various product and commodities which are essentially meant for final consumption such as fried fish, vegetables, sugar cakes, among others. Most of these food stuff are sold in the open air where dust and other possible contaminated particles have fallen on them. People who buy these foodstuffs eat it directly without washing or re-cooking it. This is the area the health authorities in Kano should intervene because prevention, they say is better than cure. People selling fried fish openly should be made to cover them with transparent

cellophane materials and people should be advised through radio and TV to desist from eating such food materials that are eaten directly without washing them first.

The Kano State Fire Service says Harmattan period is a very dangerous time as there is always increase in fire outbreak due to carelessness of some people in using fire for heating their homes. In a chat with the Executive Director of the Kano State Fire Service, Alhaji Umaru Muhammed Soron Dinki, he described the situation as being one when there are so many anticipation on the

increase of fire around the city and rural environs in the state.

But according to him, with the government support under the leadership of Malam Ibrahim Shekarau which has provided the service with enough equipment and financial support and the level of mobilisation embark upon by the service through the various media and other means, the rate of fire incidents has tremendously reduced.

To this end therefore, people especially women who are constantly using fire for different purposes should be more careful. They should make sure that after cooking

for example they quench the remaining of it. And when warming their rooms should not close all the doors and windows as that can easily make one to lose a respiratory ability. Marketers also should avoid leaving any electrical appliance in their shops on as that too can easily cause fire outbreak.

For either the fire service or any other agency that can help in tackling the outbreaks of fire in the society, it needs the support and cooperation of all the stakeholders. Therefore they should be ready to contribute their own quota so as to help save the lives and properties of the general public.

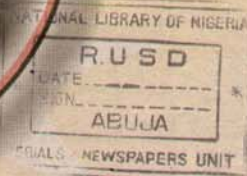


Second hand warm clothing business boom as harmattan bites harder in Kano.



Harsh weather force Okada riders to dress up from head to toe to protect themselves from the biting cold in Kano.

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EKO TRUST

How Lagosians celebrated Sallah

Slaughtering of Ram for celebrating Eid Kabir is dated back to the time of Prophet Ibrahim who had wanted to offer his son Ishmael as sacrifice to Allah in accordance with the promise he made to Allah after he has prayed to Allah to give him a child that will inherit him and who will serve Him further after his death.

After God had answered his prayer, Prophet Ibrahim revealed his revelation to his child who was loyal to him that he dreamed that he was slaughtering him while lying down and Ishmael submissively agreed with his father saying that he should obey what Allah commanded him to do.

Following the replacement of Ishmael with a ram, the tradition is what the Muslims all over the world now fulfill till date.

Observing the advent of Eid-el-Kabir Sallah one will be able to conclude that, the festival is a compensation from Allah to his faithful servants. Allah has commanded the sacrifice as much as one is able to buy the ram. But for many Muslims in Lagos State, killing of ram for Eid-el-Kabir celebration was an obligation so many of them might not be able to observe as directed by the Holy book.

The reasons is not far fetched as all the ram markets visited by *Eko Trust* in and around Lagos metropolis were virtually deserted by would be buyers as a result of high price tag on many of the ram. At Meiran market for instance, many Muslim were seen trying to see if they could

By **Olumide Bajulaiye,**
Correspondent (Lagos)

at least get something to observe the yearly festival, "my brother, I must tell you it is not easy, I have been in this market in the last one hour but I could not lay my hands on any of the ram," Mohammed said

When asked why he could not buy any of the rams, Mohammed lamented that the price tag on the entire ram were too exorbitant, "honestly the prices are too high for the common man to afford. The least ram you can get in this market goes for as high as N30,000. Where do I get such amount of money at this time of the year?"

Mallam Adamu Ismaila, a ram dealer all the way from Kaduna, blamed the high cost of the ram on the government, for high cost of transporting them to the Southern part of the country. According to Mallam Ismaila, the average cost of transporting one ram from Sokoto to Lagos goes for about N25,000 including cost of purchasing such ram. He explained that overhead cost had almost taken everything away adding that at the end of the day he would make little or nothing as his own gain. He disclosed that in the last three weeks that he had arrived the state with rams, he had not sold 20per cent of the ram.

"People have refused to buy, they complain that our price was too high. But it is not our fault. It is what we buy we will sell to the people. They ask government to reduce cost of transportation for

us so that we can have cheap market."

At the old toll gate around 7seven UP the story is the same if not worst as people only come and price and go without any prospect of buying ram for Sallah. Alhaji Yisa Sule head of the ram seller at

ing to Sule, some officials from the state secretariat come on daily basis to demand for N5,000 as levy charged by government to operate such market in the area. He said he had made several efforts to seek the authenticity of the receipts they

tronzize them are well to do people in the community. At the market the prices was not different from that of other areas already visited. The least ram one can get at the market goes for between N25,000 to N30,000, while the highest one can get is between

"I would not want to do what the Holy Qua'ran did not preach. According to the Holy book it is not compulsory that one should kill a ram when he knows that he could not afford it. Now I can not go and steal to satisfy other people."



Muslims buying rams barely 24 hours to Eid-el-Kabir at Brewery bus stop, Iganna in Lagos.

the tollgate lamented that they have lost almost all the ram to sickness as many people refused to buy them due to what they regard as high cost.

He lamented how government, (state) officials have been harassing them almost on daily basis to pay one form of levy or the other. Accord-

usually issued to them, "but our efforts have always been met with a rebuff by those at the secretariat Alausa."

A visit to mile 12 market in Ketu area of the state, pockets of sales were recorded by the dealers in that market, according to them most people that came to pa-

N60,000 to N70,000.

Some Muslims who spoke with our correspondent all lamented that they have to empty their savings before they would be able to meet with the yearly obligation of killing ram for celebrating Sallah.

Chief Babatunde Idris - Ahmed told our correspondent that every year he bought four rams for Eid-el-Kabir, according to him all the four rams are meant for his relations and other well-wishers who do not have the means to buy or even afford something to eat with their families, "but with the way things are going I doubt if I will be able to afford more than two for myself and immediate family and one for my aged parents."

But a visit to some of the market on Sallah day prices of the rams have considerably gone down, investigation by *Eko Trust* revealed that it was as a result that many of the dealers would not want to return them and at least they can still make some money by reducing the price.

Meanwhile Lagos State Governor, Bola Tinubu has called on all Muslims and other Nigerians to see the celebration as a sacrifice of their selfish interests for the collective good of the country. The festival, Tinubu said symbolized the necessity of personal sacrifice for the collective good of humanity "as it afford us another opportunity to reflect on our roles as individuals in promoting the collective good of the society of which we are a part."



Some of the rams purchased by the Lagos State government for the workers to celebrate the Sallah at Alausa secretariat. (Pic: Oluwapo Olanrewaju)

"I would not want to do what the Holy Qua'ran did not preach. According to the Holy book it is not compulsory that one should kill a ram when he knows that he could not afford it. Now I can not go and steal to satisfy other people."

News

Commandant warns students over exam. malpractices

The Commandant, Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC), Jaji, Air Vice Marshal (AVM) Samuel Akinyemi Odesola, has warned student officers of the college not to dabble into any act of examination malpractices and indiscipline.

AVM Odesola stated this yesterday in his address at the inauguration ceremony of members of junior course 59/2005 of the college at the officers mess Jaji, Kaduna.

According to him, any officer caught in the act of cheating will face the necessary disciplinary action in accordance with the powers granted the college by Armed Forces Act Cap A20 LFN 2004.

He disclosed that the college has withdrawn some students who were caught cheating in the previous courses, adding that they are currently facing a General Court

From Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent (Kaduna)

Martiall for offences courses be reviewed in order to be in line with what isrelating to examination malpractices.

He acknowledged that the tasks, challenges and responsibilities as members of the Armed Forces are becoming enormous and complex, which was as a result of the changes in the college curricula, saying that the objective of training in the college has been harmonised to meet the demands of joint and combined operations.

He also disclosed that the senior and the junior obtained in staff colleges of developed countries.

The commandant said that the review of the courses is to reflect jointness in training and have about 67 per cent staff duties content, which is also enriched with the inclusion of the estimated process alongside peace support package.

A total of 60 students are participating in the course 59/2005, with 34 from Nigerian Navy, 24 from the Nigerian Air Force and one student each from two allied countries, namely Niger and Togo.

Following the mayhem November last year and wanton destruction in Anambra State, leaders of thought under the aegis of Ohaneze Ndi-Igbo will gather at the Enugu-Ukwu Civil Centre tomorrow to review the resolutions taken on the crises.

According to the statement signed by the Administrative Officer, L.C. Onyekaaonu, the conference would dwell on the progress made so far in the implementation of the resolutions made by the Anambra leaders of thoughts late last year.

The leaders of thoughts had late last year issued a communiqué on the four days of terrorism on Anambra State that "the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Felix Ogbandu, be removed; that a judicial

Ohanaeze meets over Anambra crisis

From Beatrice Onuchakwu, Staff Reporter

com-mission of enquiry on the crime be set up by the state government, while the state House of Assembly should commence public hearing; that the federal government should commence the process of reconstruction of the destroyed property and the payment of compensation to those affected; that the PDP has become a curse on Anambra State and we hereby call on Anambra people to review their support for that party; and that all Anambra members of the state and National

Assemblies found to be involved in the criminal act must be recalled by their various communities."

Those who will attend the meeting include the traditional rulers (Igwes), the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); the Anambra State Market Amalgamation of Traders Association (ASMATA); Anambra State town Union; Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC); Umuada Igbo; student League of Anambra State Professionals (LAP); Nigeria Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW).

Wealthy people urged to assist the poor in Zamfara

From Salisu Zakari, Correspondent (Gusau)

Wealthy individuals in Zamfara State have been reminded of the need to assist the less privilege in the society for them to get the blessing of Allah.

The Zamfara State Acting Governor, Alhaji Mahmud Aliyu Shinkafi, made the call while addressing Muslims faithful who gathered at the Gusau central praying ground.

Alhaji Mahmud explained that it is only through such gesture that the less privilege and destitutes will feel a sense of belonging.


The acting governor reminded Muslims especially the rich, to ensure they give aims which is one of the five pillars of the religion of Islam.

According to him, God frowns at those who don't give out Zakkat, and such people will never record any success in their activities.

Alhaji Mahmud further advised the people to always live in peace with one another, as according to him, peace is one of the most needed ingredients of progress anywhere in the world.

"Nothing can be achieved without peace. No state or nation can progress or develop if peace is not maintained," he emphasised.

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Inside Politics

National Dialogue is unconstitutional — Senator Shu'aibu

Senator Lawal Shu'aibu is the new leader of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) caucus in the Senate. He took over from Senator Usman Al-Bishir who resigned late last year following threats of impeachment. In this interview with Daily Trust, Shu'aibu, who represents Zamfara North Senatorial District, said the national political reforms conference organised by the federal government is unconstitutional since the National Assembly is there to make laws for the country. He also spoke on the crisis rocking the ANPP and his road map to re-invigorating the Senate minority caucus.

Excerpts:
The federal government is in the process of convening a national political reforms conference. Many people have reservations about this confab. As the Senate minority leader, how do you see it?

I don't want to comment so much on something that is not constitutional. This is because the whole idea of constituting a conference when we have a constitution in place, I think, is illegal.

We have a National Assembly in place, and then you want to set up a committee that will now discuss the problems of Nigeria.

And then the nomination is nothing that has to do with elections, instead the government will be asked to nominate and the federal government, particularly the president, will also nominate in his personal capacity. It makes the whole thing very untidy.

I don't think the Nigerian Public will have faith in that conference, rather it is Mr. President's prerogative. Perhaps he just wants to get a group of

By Habeeb Idris Pindiga, Political reporter

people that will advise him on what to do, because they clearly stated that they will discuss what is seen as wrong in governance, particularly by the federal government. But it is not constitutional.

But is the outcome of the conference going to be binding on the government?

The issue of the outcome binding on the National Assembly or the Federal government does not arise. It's just something that the president wants to do. It's just like appointment of a special adviser. Whatever the adviser gives to Mr. President, I think it's for Mr. President to take it or not. This conference has nothing to do with Mr. President. He wants advice, because a lot of things are going wrong. Now he has woken up from his sleep. He wants people to advise him on what to do about these things going wrong. That's what I understand, because it has nothing to do with the system of governance in this country.

Since you said this conference is unconstitutional, are you as a lawmaker and defender of the constitution going to stop the president from this illegality?

When Mr. President constituted a body to advise him, we cannot stop him, even the senate president needs advice. If Mr. President wants it done for his own use, we cannot stop him. We shall look at the recommendation of the committee to know how it will affect this country. It is not a bad idea for us to pass a bill when it's presented to us. Of course

the procedure is unconstitutional. But the president has a right to set up a committee to advise him. We cannot stop that, because even the constitution allows Mr. President to appoint special advisers, to appoint any body that can advise him. But what we are against is to use public funds for something that has not been specified in the constitution. We are against that.

Has the National Assembly budgeted the funds that would be spent on the conference?

I really don't know where Mr. President will get the money for this dialogue. Particularly when I heard that the conference members are going to converge in Abuja, they are going to be accommodated and there are going to be sitting allowances. From what funds?

So are you going to query this extra-budgetary spending?

I must tell you that, there has been crisis in the party and the crisis somehow found its way to the Senate. But the whole crisis I must confess was more to do with personal interest of some members of the party, rather than what direction the party should take. I can't say there are warring factions. It is simply politics. But the important thing to know here is that the federal government found its hand and wanted to

somehow destabilise the party, probably to gain better grounds, taking cognisance to the acceptance of our party by the entire polity and looking at our party as the next potential party to take over from the ruling PDP.

Looking at also the manner of opposition in the Senate, I can say that the minority group has not been as vibrant as the public has expected. But opposition in a presidential system of government does not mean fight. We are not going to be there to fight, but we are going to be there to raise our voices for the purpose of correcting any anomaly. And to raise our voices probably to amplify the voices of the Nigerian public in respect of things that are going wrong, either within the National Assembly or in the government, or the manner in which policies are being implemented and also the manner in which our laws are being ignored. We are not an enforcement agency. But what we are expected to do is to raise our voices and make a lot of noise for the public to know we have done our work.

There is report of a number of ANPP big wigs leaving the party. For the records sir, will you decamp from ANPP?

Real politicians don't change parties. The party is a vehicle. And when you achieve your goal using that vehicle, I don't think it's honourable to dump the vehicle after you have achieved your goal. I have no sympathy whatsoever for the PDP, and I have no sympathy for what's going on in the PDP. But I am worried that the PDP problem may swallow the nation's democracy if we are not careful, because PDP is so big and there are people who may want to use it to spoil

democracy. So my advice to them is that they should put their house in order for democracy to move on.

People see the crisis in ANPP as being fuelled by some presidential hopefuls ahead of 2007. What do you think about this?

When you are talking about presidential candidacy, the only three people we hear of are (General Ibrahim) Babangida, (Vice President) Atiku and (General Buba) Marwa. It does not mean more are not coming out. Like Orji (Kalu, Abia governor), so many others will come out. So how can we know who is the best among them? Whoever is saying that it's because of certain presidential candidates some members of our party prefer this to the other, what if another aspirant comes up, particularly within our party? It's likely that some are coming out. I don't think this will hold any water. I think the main thing is agreed that some of the governors have their reasons of creating problems within the party, because of the preferred presidential aspirant. But who knows tomorrow? We are still in January 2005. So we have about two and a half years, and within this period, more aspirants, probably more credible, will come out. What you are now talking about are people who have once tasted power, or people who are currently in power. And what if a dark horse comes up? Somebody with credibility who has never been there before; somebody who can probably be seen as one who can deliver Nigerians. The situation may change. So I think it's also geared towards 2007, but 2007 is still a long way. Whoever is creating problems ahead of 2007 is being foolish because he may not know what is coming up tomorrow.



Senator Lawal Shu'aibu

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Inside Politics

National dialogue is ridiculous - Hon Wadada

President Obasanjo has initiated a process that will lead to a National Dialogue so as to diffuse the demands by some Nigerians for a sovereign national conference. As a lawmaker do you support this initiative, and do you see it as a way forward?

I do not in any way see it as a way forward because the National Assembly is in place as the elected representatives of the people. Any group within the country that feels aggrieved on account of marginalization for whatever reason has the National Assembly where they have elected representatives to channel any such grievances. In fact that is why Mr. President's script is to uphold the prestige and dignity of the office of the president so that they can uphold their oath of office and as a good citizen of this country. So I commend Governor Abdullahi Adamu for what he did and the mature manner he went about it.

The Northern Governors' Forum is not a secret forum and telling Obasanjo about it does not make Abdullahi Adamu a traitor. You are the coordinator of the association of the under-40s in the House of Representatives and for sometime it has remained dormant. Why? It has not been dormant. You see it is better to strike at the right time but the polity has been so overhated and we do not want our moves to be misinterpreted. But the association which is aimed at ensuring a power shift to the under-40s or the youths is alive and has been quietly pursuing this objective. It is the first time such an association is existing in the House and it is doing everything to ensure that Nigerians do not underestimate the capabilities of the youths in Nigeria.

You can see that all the prominent names in the Nigerian political stage reached their prime when they were youths. Such a chance should be available to the youths of today not when they become old and are less vibrant. I think that is the reason why the youths of this country should commend former President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida during whose time the youths were given the opportunity to prove their mettle. We are all the products of that era when the youths enjoyed the privileges and the opportunity to render service to their fatherland. This is what has led to myself and several of my colleagues to be able to become elected representatives of our people today.

So are you implying that your group's support for his (IBB's) presidential bid come 2007 will be automatic?

My support for him as an individual is automatic but as for that of the association of under-40s, which I coordinate, I can not say is automatic. The group did not come up as a support group for any presidential aspirant.

But as for me my reason for supporting IBB is because he has led this country before and he initiated a number of policies that impacted positively on the people of this country and still has some impact on them till today.

Boni Haruna is reading the script of his mentor, the vice-president Atiku Abubakar but he should have exercised a lot of maturity. I think the way the Adamawa governor went about it did not show any maturity. *What script will you say Governor Abdullahi Adamu is reading?*

Honourable Ahmed Aliyu Wadada (PDP) representing Keffi/Karu/Kokoma federal constituency, Nasarawa state, is chairman, House of Representatives committee on capital market and coordinates the activities of the association of under 40s in the House which many believe is a front for Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's 2007 presidential bid. He told our Kaduna Bureau Chief, Sani Babadoko that President Obasanjo's proposed National Dialogue was preposterous and usurps the responsibility of the National Assembly. Excerpts...

Naturally, there is no move that is not linked to a larger interest.

It is Obasanjo's script ...

Yes obviously everybody is supposed to read Obasanjo's script because he is the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Reading Obasanjo's script is to uphold the prestige and dignity of the office of the president so that they can uphold their oath of office and as a good citizen of this country. So I commend Governor Abdullahi Adamu for what he did and the mature manner he went about it.

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between 70 to 80 per cent of the crude proceeds and improve on our infrastructures because if you want a private-driven economy, as a government, you need to do everything possible to reduce the cost of investing in the economy.

You have to reduce the cost of capital and that of doing business in the economy. You see that today comparatively, services in Nigeria are still so expensive. Take the GSM you find that the reason why they say they charge high tariff and provide poor services is the lack of reliable infrastructures such as roads, water and electricity. Other industries require communications services which is still very unreliable so they have to invest in generators and even build roads and water supply outfits to be able to produce.

However, the president refused my counsel but at least we are satisfied that we made our position clear as far as the proceeds from the excess crude sales is concerned.

That was what IBB did with the 1991 first Gulf war oil windfall. Part of what was done with that money is still very much visible. Even this Apo Legislative Quarters was one of the projects executed with part of that money. So also are the International Conference Centre here in Abuja and many such projects in the states.

Recently you committee organized a workshop for stakeholders in the capital market. What was the purpose of the workshop?

The workshop was to serve as an end route to gathering of materials, ideas and knowledge to facilitate the review and amendment of the Investment and Securities Act which is the Bible or Koran of the capital market in Nigeria. It is the law governing the activities of the capital market in Nigeria.

Which specific areas in the Act do you consider as needing review?

There are no specific areas I can tell you at the moment. But the entire document needs to be reviewed to bring it in line with what is obtained in other parts of the world especially those aspects that will contribute towards the despoiting and growth of the capital market in Nigeria. If what is in the document now runs counter to what is obtaining globally then you will agree it should be changed to make it compatible with that of other emerging markets.

So for me to say that these are the areas will be preempting the technical committee set up at the end of the workshop for this purpose. What is fundamental is that we want to update that document



Honourable Ahmed Aliyu Wadada

to make it more contemporary and global.

Don't you think the failure of the ministry of finance and other agencies to attend the workshop has diminished its significance?

Definitely for us (the committee) the workshop was a success. As for the inability of the minister of finance and even the export promotion council to attend or send any representatives which are the arrowhead of our reforms I think it is very unfortunate especially for the minister who came in from the World Bank and should appreciate the significance of this workshop.

The Nigerian investment and promotion council goes round the world to market Nigerian for investment and the workshop was to serve as a channel for foreign investment by making our capital market laws compatible to those of other countries to make it easier for investment capital to enter Nigeria. Unfortunately, the council was not there. But we believe in project Nigeria and the committee will do all it can to make it possible for investment funds to come into Nigeria.

At the workshop you expressed concern that some banks were raising investment funds through the backdoor. What exactly do you mean?

Yes, banks in their efforts to meet up the N25 billion recapitalization, as directed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), go on the streets to individuals to source for funds in the name of private placement. Technically, this is not illegal, but it is retrogressive and misleading because as a citizen the financial position that these banks will give is not guaranteed and there is no other authority you as an individual can contact to validate this. These transactions where banks raise their share capital should be done through the capital market. This should serve as a guarantee to the investing public especially considering that the capital market sustained the banks during the last crises in the banking sector.

So what I am saying is that these banks should go and be listed in the stock exchange and be quoted on the capital market

where they care raise secured funds for investment.

Some people have made the point that the N25 billion CBN recapitalization directive is meant to cripple small banks in the northern states. Do you agree?

I do not want to sound myopic in my assessment. My position is that it is wrong to just wake up overnight and say every bank must recapitalize to the tune of N25 million, what is needed, in every given situation is the basic ingredients to sustain the banking system. It is not as if every country must follow the same route.

All the countries we try to copy did what was best for their own environment. So we should take our peculiar situation into consideration. Even in the United States of America (USA) banking licences are issued on regional basis. So what I see in this case is to categorise our banks into three, wide A, B and C category. A should be banks in the league of First Bank, UBA, and Union Bank which should be national banks. Their base should be around the N25 billion and specify the types of services they should render. In category B should be such banks like Habiba Nigeria Bank, Zenith, Standard Trust, Guarantee Trust etc which should be regional banks and their base should not be less than N10 billion and you specify their services. The last category C banks can be called state or community banks with a base of about N5 billion. This way there will be no loss of employment and this can be reviewed at regular intervals.

But to just wake up overnight and say all banks should recapitalize to a certain level is unprofessional and retrogressive to an ailing economy like ours. *What is the Abuja Securities and Commodity Exchange supposed to be doing and what is delaying its take off?*

The Abuja Securities and Commodity Exchange (ASCE) is a very well thought out initiative that is bound to revolutionise the financial and commodity market in Nigeria, Africa and globally.

What it is to do as far as commodities are concerned is to facilitate international trading of commodities through the market. Unlike a situation where a farmer is left to the whims and caprices of the foreign buyer who buys products in Nigeria at the local prices, the ASCE will give the local farmer international market for his products.

By this the country can earn more foreign exchange and the local farmer will have more value for his products and will be better empowered.

This is a very major step by the federal government and a steering committee for its take-off has been formed headed by the permanent secretary, ministry of commerce. We undertook trips to Singapore, Malaysia and India to study such similar markets in those countries. Our report has been submitted to the president for approval after which the exchange can take off.

For the record

Continued from yesterday

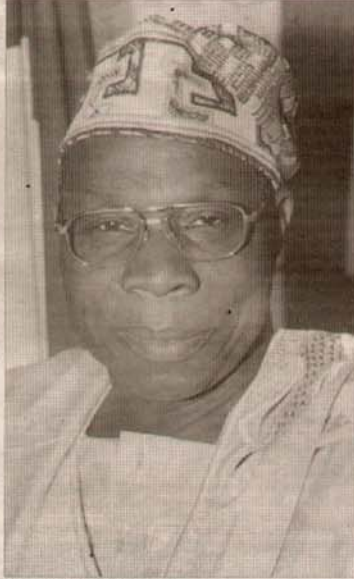
'Confidence in currency breeds confidence in economy'

Text of General Oluasegun Obasanjo's key note address delivered at a workshop on the state of the nation organised by Arewa House in February 1994.

There is need for a general re-examination of all aspects of our national life: education, health, agriculture, industrialisation, public administration; law and order and security, judiciary, etc., and what tier of government will be responsible and be involved, and for what ends, and with what means. If, therefore, there is going to be a conference, it must be a conference to examine each and all of these issues. A Constitutional Conference to keep all agitators quiet, no matter how much it is dressed up, cannot achieve the objective of a genuine National Conference designed to examine critically the political and other essential areas of our lives on which there must be a consensus for effective government action.

With the atomisation of Nigeria by means of state creation almost to the point of rendering the constituent units prostrate, I find the concept of zones as the basis of our Federation worth examining. At this stage of our development, we cannot abandon the federal system but perhaps the federating units should be zones rather than the existing states. Each zone should be large enough to be viable, and made up of local governments. We may be able to save some costs on administration for development. The time has also come when, as a mark of true federalism, revenue resources and responsibility of each constituent component should determine wages and salary scales of each constituent.

I hereby declare once again that I cannot and will never be a party to the breaking up of Nigeria. Let me also reiterate what I have said before: I have had to fight a war to keep Nigeria together; I cannot and win not fight another war to tear Nigeria apart. However, I still believe that a major issue to be settled at the Conference should be the issue of our living together - the corporate existence of Nigeria. We must settle this matter once and for all and do away with constant threats to our cor-



President Olusegun Obasanjo



General Ibrahim Babangida

porate existence. After we have agreed to live together, we can settle the issue of how we will live together. I am convinced that when we are confronted with the reality of a break-up, our leaders will prefer living together on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit to breaking up. If our leaders cannot appreciate the need and the necessity, people can and will give the final verdict. These issues should be dealt with once and for all and most democratically.

The forum for dealing with this matter, as I see it, is a National Conference. A Constitutional Conference can deal with a number of relevant issues, but it will remain somewhat limiting. We have not had a Constitutional Conference since independence, but since we have agreed that there is need for a conference, let us make it one that will deal comprehensively with the fundamental issues of Nigerian existence. What our situation demands is a National Conference by elected representatives of the people of Nigeria to discuss all major issues, subject to one condition that whatever is agreed must be referred to a national referendum. If we call for a genuine National Conference that will examine all aspects of our national life; it may last longer than one

year. The Line-table of the present military administration should, therefore, not be contingent on the result of the Conference, since the final outcome will go before a referendum.

At this point, let me report that on my way to Kaduna yesterday I was invited to Abuja. My discussion with the Head of State centred essentially on the National Constitutional Conference. My feeling, or should I say my deduction, is that most of the points I have raised in this address on the Conference are being seriously considered.

The economy requires a big dose of discipline, reduction of corruption from the highest to the lowest, motivation, commitment, rationalisation and reduction of waste. No plea to our creditors for compassion, concession and relief will be heeded until some correction is brought into our political and economic practice and management. We cannot maintain a high debt service ratio, divine in oil revenue, profligacy in spending continuous capital flight, and no foreign investment and then expect wonderful performance of the economy.

The currency is a major determinant and regulator of the economy. Confidence in the currency is to a large extent confidence in the economy. Today there is not

much confidence in Nigerian currency, the Naira. The implications are many and serious. For as long as corruption, indiscipline and waste continue, so long will the Naira remain weak and so long confidence be sapped from the Naira. The exchange rate, which' win be a function of the reality of the economy, may not necessarily obey a military command. After those at the top will have led the way by personal example, we can then seek to reduce the level of corruption by making a law which places the burden of proof of innocence in cases of corruption on the accused. Let rationalisation start with the civil service and let it continue into the parastatals and other institutions. I am persuaded that only a good political and economic order can produce a good social order.

Let us imbibe maintenance culture in the public sector and stop the craze for new projects while old ones are left derelict. As a sign of the beginning of sacrifice and a symbolic gesture in reducing waste, only the Head of State and his Deputy should travel first class at government expense. Everybody else should travel in business class or economy class.

Manipulation of the judiciary in a way that undermined its credibility, inde-

pendence and effectiveness is one of the greatest disservices of the last full military administration to the country. To destroy the judiciary is to enthrone anarchy. Independence of the judiciary must remain sacred. It is in the best interest of the people to ensure this, other there will be no honest and credible arbiter between citizens and between the citizens and the government, especially a government that is full of mischief. The judiciary also needs to save itself and enhance its worth by jealously guarding its independence.

This administration has taken a few faulty and faltering steps through a couple of inconsistencies and delays in giving its programmes and time-table, and of course its grand design in not dealing with the issue of corruption. These are correctable steps. Until the situation improves to the extent that our airports as our window on the world gives the image of order, integrity and honour and respect for visitors, no matter what else we do, may only get little foreign investment for our country. And we need investment on a substantial scale to turn our economy around.

Evil is not reformable, it must be removed. And that was what happened to the last full military administration. Although the present

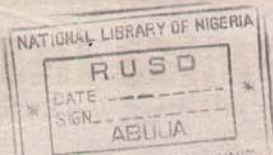
administration learned a lot from its teacher, it has not yet completely turned evil. But the trends and tendencies are obvious. It is the responsibility of all Nigerians to prevent another government from becoming completely evil. We can embark on the process of democracy today with the establishment of a non-military national government that has the ineditability and the moral strength to tackle the contending political, economic and social issues.

We must never be tired of demanding that any government should chasten itself and give us the foundation and the example to propel us forward. We must demand that any government should deal honestly with us and level with us. We must have the programme and the timetable of any government to be able to assess its performance. We must have accountability and transparency that we are not getting now. If any administration is tilting evil we should spare no efforts and, no sacrifice to remove it.

Nigeria has a responsibility to the whole of the Black race to put its house in order and show that the race is not doomed. We cannot afford, to fail because of our responsibility to ourselves, the rest of Africa, and the Black world. We owe it as a duty to future generations not to misuse our God-given resources for all Nigerians - past, present and future.

Once again, let me congratulate and commend Arewa House for its forbearance and concern in calling this Workshop. It is topical, it is timely it is relevant. I urge that the deliberations of this Workshop be fed into a National Forum, which would serve as a marketplace of ideas on the future of Nigeria. They may be other centres and organisations like Arewa House that will be for the way forward for our country. Let there be a confluence of activities, ideas and solutions. The actualisation of the promise and the hope of a united, peaceful and prosperous future is the collective responsibility of all Nigerians.

Concluded.



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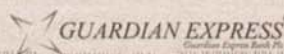
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SPORTS

Sebrle, Klüft set for European Indoor Championships

The Olympic Decathlon and Heptathlon champions, respectively Roman Sebrle, of the Czech Republic and Sweden's Caroline Klüft, will compete in Madrid 2005, the 28th European Indoor Championships (March 4-6 2005) after accepting an invitation from the European Athletic Association (EAA).

Luxemburgo laments Real exit from King's Cup

Real Madrid coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo admitted he was disappointed by his side's shock exit from the King's Cup at the hands of second division Valladolid. "Football is like this sometimes, we are all very sad but we have to pick ourselves up and get on with our job because the season goes on," the Brazilian told reporters after his side were dumped out of the Cup on the away goals rule Wednesday night. "I'm not happy about going out of any competition but the positive side is that the calendar is now a little less congested and we will have more time to prepare for our league and Champions League matches." After a goalless draw in the first leg, Real looked on course to book their place in the last eight when Michael Owen put them ahead midway through the second half. The visitors refused to fold and striker Xavi More grabbed the all-important away goal 12 minutes from time to put the second division side through to the next round. Like Luxemburgo, defender Roberto Carlos tried to take something positive from Real's premature exit from the competition. "We are all upset about going out but we are still in two competitions," said the Brazilian international. "We played badly in the first half but we improved in the second and we can play better than this. "I still believe we can win the league and get to the final of the Champions League."

Goalkeeper leads Eaglets against Angola

All looks set for Saturday's crucial African U-17 championship final round qualifying game between the Golden Eaglets and Angola with the Nigerians aiming to fit to do battle, come Saturday. "We promise to give Nigerians a good game and ultimately, a good result," he said. The members thus ally fears that they would now allow partisan interest to bedevil their consideration of cases that may involve their respective clubs even as the non-club owners representatives in the IMC vowed to checkmate them. Emmanuel Zira the Team Manager of Adamawa Limited said as men of integrity they would place the interest of the common weal over any parochial one. Besides, Zira argued that it would not anger well for the league if they as those to forge the blueprint and implement same allow selfish consideration to take premium in deliberations and decisions of matters that may arise. Similarly, Honourable Lamumba Adh, the proprietor of J.C. Raiders asserted that it would be impossible for any individual to impose decision on the IMC in view of the calibre of persons that constitute the committee. "Yes the fear of partisan interest is legitimate but as men of integrity we won't allow any single individual to champion selfish cause. "So the fear should not be entertained at all because our purpose will be to lay solid foundation for the take-off of the semi-autonomous league and how we go about implementing our blueprint will have much impact on the subsequent committee." Another member Amanze Uchebulam said the non-elected members of the committee would be on red alert to ensure that neither sectional interest, parochial pursuits nor imposition of personal ideas are allowed to rare its ugly head throughout the interim period. Ade Ojelkere equally observed that it would be difficult for the any club owner in the IMC to overwhelm the rest on selfish plank. We have already demonstrated our resolved to hold firmly to equity, integrity and fairness in the few meetings we have held so far."

Ferguson hails Exeter

Striker Alex Ferguson claimed Exeter's two monumental FA Cup performances against Manchester United could provide the impetus to get the west county club back into the Football League. Exeter lost their league status 18 months ago and almost went out of existence due to debts that at one stage spiralled over the £5million mark. Although the immediate threat of extinction has vanished the Grecians were still operating a hand-to-mouth existence until they landed the dream draw of a trip to Old Trafford. Alex Inglethorpe's men followed up their remarkable 0-0 draw in the first encounter by producing another outstanding display at St James' Park this evening. And though goals from Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney eventually eased United into the last 16, Ferguson admitted the hosts deserved all the credit. "These two games have been absolutely fantastic, not just for Exeter but for football as a whole," he said. "It was a big drop when they went out of the Football League and fell into the Conference but maybe these games can help lift them back up again."

Safety Shooters fourth best in Africa

Nigerian representatives in the just concluded African Cup Club Championship, the Safety Shooters have emerged as the fourth best handball club in the continent. The Federal Road Safety Commission Squad placed fourth out of the eight teams which participated at the 16-day tournament in Casablanca, Morocco. The Safety Shooters, who won the 2004 edition of the Malta Guinness National Division 1 Handball League to qualify for the continental

winter in Budapest. Each Combined Event in Madrid, Spain will have a participation of 15 athletes, with the EAA having invited the nine best qualified athletes according to the 2004 outdoor season ranking. They will also invite two athletes from Spain (one man and one woman) who will be selected by the Spanish federation. The other five men and five women will be selected according to the 2005 indoor season ranking. The only limitation is that only two athletes per country are eligible to participate. Here is the list of athletes who have so far confirmed their participation: Men - Heptathlon 2004 Mark - Athlete - Country 8893 Roman ebrle CZE 8343 Chiel Warmers NED 8317 Eki Nool EST 8287 Atilla Zivoczky HUN 8237 Laurent Hernu FRA 8214 Tamár Dvorák CZE 8102 Roland Schwarzl AUT 8084 Aleksandr Pogorelov RUS 8082 Eugène Martincau NED

Women-Pentathlon 2004 Mark - Athlete - Country 6953 Carolina Klüft SWI 6591 Svetlana Sokolova RUS 6424 Kelly Sotherton GBR 6387 Natalya Dobrynska UKR 6287 Sonja Keaselschläger GER 6279 Marie Collonville FRA 6235 Tatyana Gordeyeva RUS 6206 Karin Ruckstuhl NED 6203 Yuliya Akulenko UKR

Real are in second place in the Primera Liga, seven points behind arch-rivals Barcelona at the halfway stage in the season. They will meet Juventus in the last 16 of the Champions League next month. Valladolid coach Sergio Kresic denied that his side's victory over the nine-time European champions had come as a surprise. "You can't describe this as a miracle," said the Croatian boss. "We played a great game and never lost our nerve even after the Owen goal. This win will really lift our spirits for our upcoming games."

Representatives of club owners in the Interim Management Committee (IMC) have vowed to allow equity, probity and fairness to be the hall mark in their decisions on matters involving their respective clubs. The members thus ally fears that they would now allow partisan interest to bedevil their consideration of cases that may involve their respective clubs even as the non-club owners representatives in the IMC vowed to checkmate them. Emmanuel Zira the Team Manager of Adamawa Limited said as men of integrity they would place the interest of the common weal over any parochial one. Besides, Zira argued that it would not anger well for the league if they as those to forge the blueprint and implement same allow selfish consideration to take premium in deliberations and decisions of matters that may arise. Similarly, Honourable Lamumba Adh, the proprietor of J.C. Raiders asserted that it would be impossible for any individual to impose decision on the IMC in view of the calibre of persons that constitute the committee. "Yes the fear of partisan interest is legitimate but as men of integrity we won't allow any single individual to champion selfish cause. "So the fear should not be entertained at all because our purpose will be to lay solid foundation for the take-off of the semi-autonomous league and how we go about implementing our blueprint will have much impact on the subsequent committee." Another member Amanze Uchebulam said the non-elected members of the committee would be on red alert to ensure that neither sectional interest, parochial pursuits nor imposition of personal ideas are allowed to rare its ugly head throughout the interim period. Ade Ojelkere equally observed that it would be difficult for the any club owner in the IMC to overwhelm the rest on selfish plank. We have already demonstrated our resolved to hold firmly to equity, integrity and fairness in the few meetings we have held so far."

IMC allays fears of partisanship

By Patrick Andrew, Senior Sports Reporter

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Ibrahim Galadima, NFA boss

Roddick beats battling Rusedski

Jürgen Melzer. The American played near-perfect tennis in the opening set as he was barely challenged by his rival. But Rusedski broke in the eighth game of the second set, which he eventually won, before Roddick hit back again. The Briton had looked on

Safety Shooters fourth best in Africa

By AbdulRaheem Ade, Sports Reporter

tourney, lost narrowly to the Algerian side, MGA 26-28 in the opening match. A draw with MINUH of Cameroon was followed by victories over Inter of Congo and Angola. Angolan representatives, Petro Sport, to earn them the fourth place. Safety Shooters were also named the most disciplined and most entertaining team during the championship by the organisers, Confederation of African Handball Federation



Caroline Klüft - the 2004 Heptathlon Olympic champion

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Let me preface my encounter with my Obasanjo man with a diversion to Professor Sam Aluko. Professor Aluko is one of the very few Nigerian scholars who never adjusted his ideology just to fit into a particular regime. He has combined scholarship with being in government but without ever changing his position. He has always worked with governments in which he is not there just to earn salary but as an ideologue. That is absolutely remarkable in our climate. Beside that, his domestication of economic knowledge is such that he is able to link crucial variables like the nation-state, industrialization and national security in the most tension free manner anyone can think of. These two pedigrees make his voice a voice of rarity and of authenticity that should set one thinking.

Professor Aluko is a well-known critic of market forces in an economy that is operationalized by neighborhood reciprocity and mutual exchange of ingredients instead of integrated industrial production, autonomous consumption and credit cards. He is able to do this without impairing his friendship with President Obasanjo. But I never thought he could ever say that President Obasanjo means well for Nigeria.

That music is one I have heard so much from a lot of people including a foremost UN consultant of African origin who once said that Obasanjo had the necessary "mischief" of a leader. This is a point one would agree with if one read Bernard Odogwu's account of their rout by Obasanjo after taking over the Third Marine Commando during the Nigerian Civil War. It is not that I did not take these people seriously but that these are people who have not had a quarrel with the President nor are they of same mode of operation with Aluko. Hence the point of significance to Aluko saying that Obasanjo means well for Nigeria.

For, if Aluko says that OBJ means well for Nigeria, then scientifically, that must be so. But if on the other hand, this meaning well for the country is not translating into anything tangible and OBJ is almost turning into a cloak and dagger President in an attempt to turn Nigeria into his dream of it, then there is a major contradiction. Professor Aluko's lecture at the Media Trust Dialogue last Thursday was devoted to the economic ideology context of this contradiction. It was vintage Aluko, even better though not as daep as his performance in Bayero University, Kano in 1995. Aluko is right. The economic context is the most important context to look at in explaining our predicament. OBJ's adoption of an IMF/World Bank strategy is a problem in this regard, particularly that he has not always been an IMF/World Bank person. Of course, there is nothing wrong in changing position in the light of new realities but still, people who change positions from one extreme to another rarely fail to become fundamentalists of their new found conviction for the same reasons that they changed at all.

Now, OBJ's adoption of the IMF/World Bank strategy is the greatest threat to his meaning well for Nigeria because that strategy has never worked for any other country in the journey to industrial civilization. And that strategy is creating economic, political and social problems for the country as can be seen from the analysis of our political party culture below since the introduction of SAP. Instructively, the analyst is someone we can call an Obasanjo man. I have deliberately aligned him with Aluko in this piece to illustrate the connection between the internal degeneration in Nigeria with the foreign interest context and external pressures on democratization.

There must, therefore, be no failing to recognise that Aluko has given scientific status to the claim about OBJ meaning well for Nigeria thereby making the task more precise for us in terms of the problems of leadership crisis in Nigeria beyond the piece of idealism that the trouble with Nigeria is leadership.

We must also recognise the remarkable grace in Aluko still being in the frame of mind to isolate and publicly admit a positive aspect of someone who once called him senile. If President Obasanjo were someone whose hearts ever melt, he would take a white guinea fowl and share the pepper soup with the Prof as a wish of peace to a man of inestimable good will. The President would have been sending an unforgettable message.

Alhaji Sidi H. Ali is no Professor Aluko. But there is a major similarity between the two in terms of political education. He got his political education from Kwame Nkrumah's Youth League activism in addition to his Journalism training in the United States. It is fit totally fair to label him an Obasanjo man even though he seems associated with the regime. For example, he had something to do with a group of

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Friday, January 21, 2005

Encounter with Obasanjo man

By Adagbo Osoju

northern elders that confronted Gbali Na'abba with what they saw as a strategic error in the aborted impeachment of the President then. The strategic error as far as this group was concerned was the fact that the legislator who moved the motion, the one who seconded it, the one who announced it and the one who would have procedurally conveyed it to the Chief Justice of the Federation who would have constituted the panel are all northerners. That is beside the Speaker of the House of Representative then, also a northerner. Why would such coincidence occur and who would be convinced that it was coincidence, they argued. I don't know if that was the sole reason or just one of the reasons, which demobilized the impeachment move.

Thereafter, I came to know Sidi H. Ali as having sympathetic appreciation for President Obasanjo. I was not surprised when he seized me last Thursday at the Media Trust Dialogue at Sheraton Hotel for some tutorials and subtle 'reprimand'. But there was nothing we discussed that is unfit for publication because like other members of their clan

questions and some of them would lose their job the following day because they showed poor performance.

And in Tanganyika where Nyerere was the Prime Minister, he once discovered the party (Tanganyika African National Union-TANU) was skidding off. According to Ali, Nyerere resigned as Prime Minister and allowed his deputy by name Rashid Kawawa to take over. Nyerere then went over to the party Secretariat where he re-organized the party. The next convention of the party, he was elected the presidential candidate and subsequently president of the country. So, that is how important party is in politics, says Ali. Reminded that his examples were those of serious party traditions based on democratic centralism as in the case of the defunct Soviet Union and therefore incomparable to the PDP, Sidi says it is the poverty and greed here that makes party behaviour clumsy and that in many other countries, no one is given party position or elected on a party platform until he or she is at least 18 months in the party and has been tested.

Stretching his argument, Ali says the abject lack of ideological frame of reference is not restricted to party members but all others, including the military.

The legislature, for him, is even worse. The legislature is our problem both at the national and state levels, he said. "That is where we have our problems because it is back to the same old syndrome of corruption." His explanation for corruption is that the wrong people are elected. "The son of Mr. A or the son-in-law of Mr. B must always be elected. That is why it is difficult to have real, committed people. Once you lose those type of people, you have lost everything."

At the moment, he said he knows of only one person, a Local Government Council Chairman around Ibadan who did not buy his way through it all but was authentically prevailed upon by his own people to come and serve them after his military career. Other than this man who is in AD, he does not know any other who did not buy his or her way to be elected.

I told him that Nigerians did the same thing to OBJ and yet we are having problems to which he replied: I don't know that you did that to OBJ. I have my suspicion because people have been drafted. Shagari merely wanted to be a senator in 1978 but some people came about and said it had to be him. OBJ could have been the same. Because someone who was in prison and was suddenly presented as a presidential material, that was fast. I know we have some people who believe they can put you in office and feast on you."

So, is OBJ's psychology some element of resistance to such group of persons? Ali thinks it could be. But couldn't the president resist these people, whoever they are and yet satisfy Nigerians? And who are those in the cabals? Because T.Y. Danjuma has talked about cabal having seized the President. Ali answers this question with the comment that T.Y. Danjuma was one of the cabals. "He said if OBJ did not win, he would zoom off from the country. Was he displaced because his interest was not met or he loves the country too much?"

On 2007, Ali says that some people would have the greatest shock of their life because they will not achieve their expectations. Comparing 2007 to the situation depicted by a Hausa proverb, which says, "Emir ship looks so close but very far away," Ali says there are some people who are sure that, by the strength of their resources, they would get it. When they don't get it, they will be shocked." He says these sort of people were many and that 2007 would surely be very tough but that OBJ would not pursue a third term project.

As I raced back home from this encounter, the aspect about the impending shock for some people in 2007 worried me. Not that I have any candidate but in terms of the implications our underdevelopment have for national security.

A proper capitalist elite would never think of shocking any contestants for the major position of a country's president. An elite with roots in production will rather talk in terms of consensus because they would not want any threat or actual disruption that shocking anyone could engender to the environment of profit. The investor class would normally have calculated the issue at stake and endorsed a consensus candidate and begin to account the appointed with the mystique and packaging with other attributes, which would justify his selection for the high office. Difficult and complex negotiations it could be in certain circumstances but the party mandarins and caucus always get a negotiated accommodation. Here, we brew shock therapy for those we think should be excluded, generating all the rancor and acrimony that an otherwise productively busy class would not get into. But that is the political face of our economic crisis.

Osoju is a member of Daily Trust Editorial Board.



President Obasanjo

such as Aka Aka Bashorun, late S.G. Ikoku, late Sidi Ali Sirajo, etc, they know how to put even disagreeable things in perspective.

Sidi H. Ali says that the political instability in the country is a consequence of poverty of party tradition. The present crisis in the PDP, he said, started immediately in 1999 when the very people running the party started looking for ministerial appointments for themselves or for someone else. So, the party lost its direction because you now found a non-member of the PDP becoming the number three citizen-the President of the Senate. Ali said Ewerem was in the APP on which platform he contested gubernatorial position in his state but the next day, he had become the Senate President. So also Vincent Ogbulor who became a minister and then party Secretary after crossing from the APP as the ANPP was then called. "So, the party lost direction".

As far as Sidi Ali is concerned, this had nothing to do with Obasanjo insisting on Ewerem instead of a party ideologue such as the late Chuba Okadigbo as the Senate President. His argument is not quite straightforward here but he seems to say that there is nothing unusual about President Obasanjo trying to control the party. The argument runs like this: in the defunct Soviet Union, the President was the General Secretary of the party because the General Secretary was more powerful than the President. In the case of Ghana at that time, Nkrumah was the Chairman of the Central Committee of the party (Convention People's Party, CPP) as well as General Secretary of the party. The CC was more powerful than any other wing of government and from time to time, ministers were invited and people were allowed to ask them

Printed and published by Media Trust Nigeria Limited, Corporate Office No. 22, Lusak Street, Off Bisanu Street, Wuse Zone 6 Abuja. Tel: 09-5235787, 5235726, Fax: 09-5235725. New. dist number: 2721036. Lagos Office: News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) premises, National Theatre Complex, Igatun. Tel: 01-4707296, 861008. Kaduna Office: No. 6, Sallahusa Close, Off Kaitum Road, Ungwaru Sarki, G.R.A. Kaduna. Tel: 062-243916, Fax: 062-242496. e-mail: dailytrust@yahoo.co.uk, or letters@workbytrust.com. All correspondence to P.O. Box 6873, Wuse, Abuja. Editor: Is'haq Modibbo Krawu.