

NEWS

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“Why Obasanjo enacted cassava bread policy”

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NATIONAL CONFAB

Senators query Wabara

A fresh crisis started brewing in the Senate yesterday as senators queried their leadership and particularly accused Senate President, Ado-Iphus Wabara, of double standards over the decision of the upper chamber to disassociate itself completely from the national political reform conference declared open by President Olusegun Obasanjo on Monday.

By Isa Sanusi, Political Reporter (Senate)

Daily Trust gathered that at the closed door session that lasted almost two hours, senators accused their leadership of tarnishing the image of the institution by conspicuous presence at the opening of the conference which the Senate had earlier declared as an unnecessary waste of time and resources.

Particularly, a source disclosed that northern senators expressed anger over Wabara's tacit endorsement

of the confab. Early yesterday senators expressed willingness to take up the issue, expressing disa-

appointment with what some described as the undermining of the senate's position on the national political reform conference by its leaders.

The Senate through its spokesman, Senator Tawar Umbi Wada, had two weeks ago rejected the national political reform conference

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...Platform for Obasanjo's self-succession - CNPP

Despite President Olusegun Obasanjo's denial of a hidden agenda in the national political reform conference, the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP), yesterday insisted that the forum was designed to provide a platform for the president to succeed himself in 2007.

By Habeeb I. Pindiga, Political reporter

taking a swipe at its critics, saying the confab was a genuine intention to move the nation forward.

But CNPP yesterday took stock of events that culminated in the conference, concluding that the stage was set for Obasanjo and state governors to amend the constitution through the back door to give them a third term.

Making the position of the group known to newsmen in Abuja yesterday, Chairman of CNPP, Alhaji Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, said the nation's democracy was descending into a one-man fascism as a result of the president's agenda to proscribise opposition parties, weakening the legislature and shackling the judiciary.

Obasanjo's intention in the conference, the opposition group said, was to review the constitution to "pave way for him to succeed himself with a rubber stamp National Assembly and greedy governors who also have a rubber stamp state assemblies. The coast is clear for a predetermined constitutional amendment."

Musa however vowed that his group will continue to fight, "this unholy assault, unwarranted contradictions, and distortions against the Nigerian state."

CNPP, he said, was not going to be party to the confab because it fell short of the basic conditions of sovereignty, referendum, election

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President Olusegun Obasanjo and the chairman of NPC, Chief Samaila Danko Makama, during the launching ceremony of National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development held at the Banquet Hall of the State House, Abuja ...yesterday. Pix: Joe Oroye.

Election tribunal ruling: Senator, Rep resign

Senator Emma Obiajulu Anosike who until yesterday represented Anambra North in the Senate, tendered a brief letter of resignation and immediately took leave from the Senate chamber while his colleagues took turns to shake his hand.

This came less than 24-hours after a court of appeal sitting in Enugu nullified his election and declared Mrs Joy Emordi as Senator-elect even though there are indications that both the Senate and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), are yet to be served with notice of the court's ruling.

Anosike's letter of resignation dated February 22, reads: "I humbly write to tender my letter of resignation from the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. My resignation is borne from the recent events surrounding the electoral process in my

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By Isa Sanusi & Zainab Alimi, Political Reporters

state (Anambra). I thank my colleagues for the support in the representation of my downtrodden people of Anambra North whom I have

represented in the National Assembly for upward of six years."

Victory for Mrs Emordi came after 20 months of legal tussle that climaxed with the ruling of the five-man tribu-

nal that declared Mrs Emordi the authentic winner of the April 12, 2003 National Assembly election.

Senator Anosike told journalists just after vacating

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New population policy seeks voluntary birth control

President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday launched a new national population policy that seeks to reduce the nation's population growth rate through what he called voluntary fertility regulation methods.

The president said the new policy when fully operational, is expected to achieve even distribution of population between urban and rural areas as well as improve the standard of living of Nigerians.

Speaking at the launching of the programme at the State House, President Obasanjo said it was designed to "improve the standard of living of

our people, promote maternal child and reproductive health, achieve a lower population growth rate through

voluntary fertility regulation methods compatible with the national policy and achieve even distribution of population between urban and rural ones."

Contd. on Pg 2

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N1000 note out August

From Bright Ewulu, Deputy Business Editor (Lagos)

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), disclosed yesterday that the proposed N1000 currency note will be out for public use as legal tender between July and August this year. This shows a shift in the planned release of the big currency denomination earlier scheduled to be out in May this year.

Director, banking supervision department of the CBN, Mr Ignatius O. Imala, who disclosed this to newsmen at the end of the 27th edition of the bankers committee meeting held in Lagos yesterday, also said that over 15 mega banks may emerge at the end of the ongoing consolidation in the nation's banking industry.

Mr Imala who was supported at the media briefing

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News

Senators *Contd. from Pg 1*

and insisted it will not appropriate money for it. However, a week later, southern senators emerged from a meeting declaring total support for the conference.

The Southern Senators Forum went a step further by establishing a committee of six senators to liaise with southern delegates to the conference on areas the senators felt should be touched at the conference.

The northern senators were unanimous in telling Wabara that "you are not

voted into this position by southern senators alone," the source said.

A section of senators at the poorly attended closed door session put strong warnings to Senator Wabara while some accused the leadership of the upper chamber of undermining the Northern Senators Forum.

Attempts by *Daily Trust* to get comments from some of the senators failed as many tried on phone switched off while some who commented pleaded not to be quoted.

Platform *Contd. from Pg 1*

of delegates, legal backing and freeland.

Condemning the president for taking the nation on a ride, Musa lashed at the confab for being "nothing but the action of a desperate, declining and illegitimate regime, headed by an overwhelmed and drowning man looking for any straw to hang on."

He insisted that nothing short of a no-holds-barred sovereign national conference could salvage the nation from its multifaceted woes.

"CNPP is of the view that Nigerians have the inalienable right to discuss any matter under the sun that will strengthen her corporate existence under a true, united, democratic Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"Our stand is the convocation of a sovereign national conference which shall be attended by elected, true representatives of the people to review the state of the nation and fashion out an acceptable constitution and the out come shall be subjected

to a national referendum," he said.

The Nigerian nation as constituted, CNPP said, is not working and needed urgent attention, adding that Obasanjo's political will to do this was doubtful and the delegates to the confab also lacked the capacity to lead an equitable, stable and prosperous country.

"A cursory glance at Olusegun Obasanjo's antecedents in the past five years casts a gloomy picture and doubts that the man can be trusted. If he cannot trust Nigerians, why should Nigerians trust him? A systematic review of the state of the nation on the fundamental issues of the economy, political, social and even cultural conditions shows that Nigeria under Obasanjo is fast acquiring the symptoms

of a failed state and the Nigerian democracy sliding into fascism. Poverty, hunger and disease have reached a level where more than one million children die before the age of five the highest mortality rate recorded in the history of Nigeria." Musa said.

Election *Contd. from Pg 1*

the senatorial seat that he took the decision of quitting to save the Senate from any trouble, saying as a democrat, he has nothing to do but to respect the verdict of the court.

Anosike's resignation letter was read on the floor of the Senate by Senate President, Adolphus Wabara, who concluded with the remark: "It takes a man to be a man."

The latest ruling of the Appeal Court Tribunal brings to two the number of senators from Anambra state who have lost their seats. Senator Ben Obi, a month ago replaced Ikechukwu Abana in the Senate after 19 months of legal battle.

Meanwhile, a Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), member of the House of Representatives representing Onitsha federal constituency of Anambra state, Hon Jessie Balonwu, yesterday formally bid farewell to her colleagues following the judgement of the Anambra state petition tribunal which declared her counterpart, Hon Golie Agbakoba, winner of the 2003 National Assembly elections.

Hon Agbakoba had gone to court of appeal to challenge the elections which declared Hon Balonwu winner in 2003 and emerged victorious on February 9, 2005 when the court ruled in his favour.

But Hon Balonwu took

the dignified bow out from the floor of the House yesterday when she read out a letter of farewell in which she congratulated Hon Agbakoba over his victory, an act which earned her a standing ovation.

She said that she believes that the outcome of the case was ordained by God in whom she firmly believes in and accepted her ouster from the House as an act of God.

While thanking the House leadership and her colleagues for their support and belief in her abilities, she said in her letter that she will fondly remember the quality times she spent in the House.

The members accorded her a standing ovation to acknowledge her courage and female members present escorted her out of the hall while most of the male members wished her good luck.



Dr. Abel Guobadia, INEC Chairman

A 25 year old man, Samaila Iiyasu, was allegedly shot dead on Monday by a police constable identified by an eyewitness as Bashir at Unguwan Mu'azu, a suburb of Kaduna metropolis.

The eyewitness, Malam Ibrahim Salisu Daura, who claimed to be a cousin to the deceased said the incident occurred at about 11.29 p.m. on the fateful day when the police officer shot his cousin because he allegedly refused to stop for questioning.

Daura also said he personally identified the police officer, whom he told not to shoot, but refused to heed his advise as he was said to be drunk.

Malam Ibrahim told *Daily Trust* that a similar incident occurred about 46 days before the present one when two of his friends were crushed to death by a trailer vehicle when they ran away from police arrest, which he described as unnecessary.

The youths of the area have issued a 24 hour ultimatum to the police and the state government to take appropriate action before they take the laws into their hands following what they term as incessant harassment by the police.

The deceased who was later buried at the Unguwan Mu'azu cemetery, according to Islamic rites, was said to have arrived from a trip shortly before he was shot dead.

Meanwhile, pandemonium broke out in mile three area of Port Harcourt when an argument between a task force member and a mobile police officer resulted in shooting, which allegedly led to the death of one Lucky, suspected to be a member of the task force.

The event jolted the residents of the area leading to a

Police kill two in Kaduna, Port Harcourt

From Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent (Kaduna) & Ikenna Emeka Okpani, Bureau Chief, Port Harcourt

peaceful demonstration with four fully loaded police vans trailing the demonstrators who marched through the major streets of Mile One and Three.

The demonstrators threatened that they were going to dump the corpse of the victim at the police headquarters in Port Harcourt but were prevented by the policemen who we learnt later took the corpse to the mortuary.

An eyewitness said the task force had arrested a commercial motorcyclist popularly called *Okada* when the said mobile policeman came

with a note from a senior police officer and released the motorcycle only for him to come back again to release another one on his own. The task force members refused, asking him to produce another written note to that effect. This angered the officer who started a very hot argument with the members leading to his pulling the trigger.

When *Daily Trust* called at the police headquarters, the public relations officer of the police in the state, Mrs. Ireju Barasua, said that the case was under investigations as the officer in que-

stion has been arrested. She identified the officer as Corporal Henry Ikeji, attached to police mobile squadron 33, Ekiti state who was on a special assignment to Rivers state.

She asked members of the public to remain calm as the case will be investigated and the officer duly made to face the law.

Meanwhile, the police in Rivers state has announced the promotion of 100 officers. Those promoted include 58 inspectors who are now assistant superintendents, 18 ASPs who are now DSPs, 11 DSPs who are now SPs, 5SPs who are now CSPs and one CSP promoted to assistant commissioner of police.

Police killing: Protesters block Akume, Ogbeh with coffins

From Hir Joseph, Correspondent (Makurdi)

Youths numbering over 500 yesterday confronted the Benue state governor and his guest, the outgoing national chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Audu Ogbeh with coffins at the Government House gate while protesting the alleged killing of a 19 year old lady, Miss Suleyo Hickya, by the police.

The incident occurred yesterday morning when youths in Makurdi received news about the alleged murder of the lady at about 11 p.m., the previous night.

The news broke by day break on a Radio Benue programme, "Final Bus Stop", when the police public relations officer (PPRO), Mr Jindu Adesanya confirmed that women of the command who were on night patrol shot the lady dead.

In a swift reaction, youths from the Wadata section of the city numbering over 500 besieged government house in the old GRA with coffins and photographs of the deceased.

The youths comprising students, unionists, Okada riders and commercial motorists carried coffins which they used to block the entrance to government house at a time the state governor and his guest, Chief Audu Ogbeh were returning to the government house.

Their motorcade was blocked for minutes before security operatives succeeded in dispersing the slogan-chanting protesters.

Although the governor's special assistant on crucial matters, Prince Simon Abuja

was there to appeal for calm the youths persisted.

However the State Security Service (SSS), operatives in the state placated them by assuring of justice in the matter.

Leader of the protesters, Mr Terwase Policap Agema, said they were not going to relent until the culprits were brought to book.



Governor George Akume

Population *Contd. from Pg 1*

The new policy was unlike that of the past which "limited a woman to just five children but remained silent on the number allotted to men."

"The elements of the new policy requires cross-sectoral, cross ministerial and integrated programmes meant to reach the demographic and health goals of the policy", Obasanjo added.

Obasanjo said the new policy also aims at preventing the causes and spread of HIV/AIDS and address the problems of internal migration and spatial distribution of population as in the Dakar/Ngor declarations and international conference on population and development programme of action of 1994.

"I urge all Nigerians, particularly the implementing agencies to set aside their political, religious and cultural differences and embrace the ideals of this policy and be fully committed to its successful implementation. A successful implementation of this policy will greatly contribute to repositioning our nation for stability, growth and sustained development," Obasanjo said.

According to him, the policy calls for the development of programmes that promote girl education, legal changes, availability of employment

alternatives for women, social security, acceptance, and use of family planning methods, healthy sexual behaviour, better health services to reduce infant and maternal mortality.

In an address at the occasion, chairman, National Population Commission, Chief Sama'ila Danko Makama, said the highest policy making body for the implementation of the new national population policy is the national council on population management which has President Obasanjo as chairman.

He said the decline in total fertility rate from six to four children per woman at the time the first population policy was launched to five to seven children per woman in 2003 demonstrate a modest achievement of the past population programmes.

"Although a declining fertility rate in population growth could be inferred from the declining fertility rate, it is obvious that the rate of population growth implied by the current level of total fertility can still cause the Nigerian population to double within a generation.

"It is widely acknowledged that rapid population growth is the root cause of poverty particularly in an economy with a large pool of unemployed and its concomitant evils," he said.

N1,000 note *Contd. from Pg 1*

by the executive vice chairman and chief executive officer of Intercontinental Bank Plc, Dr Erastus Akingbola and chief executive officer of Universal Trust Bank (UTB) Plc, Mr Kris Nwosu, further disclosed that Nigeria's foreign reserves peaked at \$19.8 billion by the end of last month.

The CBN chief announced that the foreign reserve position is a landmark, as it is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa and the highest since the inception of the Nigerian nation.

According to him, the bankers committee in tandem with the CBN, have altered the small and medium industries equity scheme (SMIES), stressing that the "industries" in its name is no longer obtainable and that it will no longer emphasise the real sector.

Also, Imala put the minimum total assets of companies that can benefit from the scheme at N500 million and that the maximum equity interest of banks in such companies should be 40 percent, adding, however, that banks can as well give loans to the companies concerned.

Further explaining some of the reasons for this decision, Akingbola said the turn around is to enable faster rate, disclosing that N9 bil-

lion has so far been disbursed by the 89 banks involved in the scheme.

Speaking further on the N1000 note, Mr Imala said that the shift was to enable the CBN bring in polymer notes and the paper note into circulation for Nigerians to test over a six-month period.

He said that the CBN is not only going ahead with new notes introduction, but is bound to embark on currency restructuring.

He revealed that the CBN will in the next two weeks, hold meetings with bigger banks in the country to fine tune ways that they can acquire weaker ones. He reiterated that the CBN is committed to giving some waivers to bigger banks to encourage them merge and acquire the weak ones.

According to him, the CBN is not ready to allow mega mergers in the system for now, as its idea is to ensure that the institutions are carried along in this phase one of the consolidation, saying that "it is only after this year that it would allow that in our environment."

He said this would however, be after an effective anti-trust law has been put in place by the apex bank to ensure that the consolidation process does not lead to the emergence of monopolies in the financial sector.

News

ABU, BUK lecturers begin warning strike today

Lecturers in the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria resolved to proceed on the proposed national warning strike scheduled to commence today in all federal and state universities in the country.

The resolution to embark on the national strike was contained in ABU ASUU special bulletin circulated in the university, a copy of which was made available to *Daily Trust*.

"All members of ASUU, ABU branch, are hereby urged to proceed on a three day warning strike, beginning from Wednesday 23rd February and ending on Saturday 26th February 2005,"

From Waziri Isa Gwantu, in Zaria & Yasha'u Adamu, in Kano

the statement stated, pleading that, "all ASUU members are hereby urged to comply by ensuring non-participation in all forms of academic and non academic work, including statutory and non statutory meetings."

Justifying reasons for embarking on the strike, the ABU ASUU Special Bulletin noted that the strike became necessary in view of federal government's refusal to fully implement the ASUU-FGN agreement of June 30, 2001.

The agreement which include the release of capital

grant (N66 billion), restoration Fund (N75.1 billion) Stabilisation fund (N18 billion) and shortfall in recurrent expenditure worth N9.6 billion, among other demands, to Nigerian universities, have been violated.

The Bayero University, Kano chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is to join the 3-day warning strike called by the national body of the union in protest against the federal government's refusal to review ASUU/FG June 20th, 2001 agreement.

A statement from the union signed by its chairman, Comrade Mahmoud M. Lawal and the secretary, Dr. M.H. Ali, disclosed that the federal government has taken some steps that will negatively affect the country's educational system.

The federal government's refusal to initiate the process of reviewing ASUU/FG 20th June, 2001 agreement in addition to its intention to commercialise student hostels in all Nigerian universities, are all policies of the World Bank and IMF which the federal government is trying to implement, they said.

The federal government, the lecturers added, is also planning to scrapping the Educational Tax Fund (ETF), a responsible body for supplementing the funds allocated to the education sector.

The BUK ASUU further described the federal government's failure to reconstitute the governing councils of universities as an act that is setting the Nigerian universities backwards.

Jaiz dispels investors fear

The long silence of the management of Jaiz International Plc, over the take-off of the Jaiz International Bank Plc, an Islamic Bank, have been broken, as the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Professor Charles Soludo pledges to grant approval in principle (AIP) for its commencement by March, 2005.

The managing director of the bank, Mallam Mustapha M. Bintube, disclosed this at an investor's forum held at Arewa House in Kaduna.

Mallam Bintube said that when the AIP is finally granted, it will give the bank, the opportunity to build a track record in order to give more foreign and local investor the confidence to be able to invest in the bank so that the bank will be able to meet the minimum capital requirement of the CBN.

He also said that the bank will embark on serious sensitisation of local investors on the importance of the bank and the need to invest in the bank.

He declared that the management of the bank will continue to push for early completion of verification in order to go to the market to source capital for the minimum capital base of N25 billion.

According to him, the management decided to convene the investors forum for brainstorming sessions to come out with a tactical plan from all shades of opinion of the stakeholders.

Mallam Bintube also disclosed that based on the recent plans by the CBN to reform the banking sector and make it more viable, a number of Foreign Direct Investors (FDIS) have also been contacted and the response was positive. The FDIS includes the Islamic Bank of Bangladesh (IBBL) that has shown concrete commitment, he said.

He added that a memorandum of understanding (MOU), has been signed with them to provide technical and management service with emphasis on skill development for the manpower that will manage the bank.

From Aliyu Haruna, Correspondent (Kaduna)

Mallam Bintube said that despite the recent categorisation of banks into mega, medium, small and specialised bank, Jaiz has decided to take the bull by the horns by going to the market to source N25 billion capital base for the bank.

Earlier in his remarks, the chairman, board of directors of the bank, Dr. Umar Mutallib, had expressed the determination of the bank to ensure a smooth take-off.

Dr. Mutallib said that the long silence from the management does not mean weakness, saying that the management has been trying to comply with all necessary regulations for the take-off of the bank.

Anenih, Okorocho differ on one party state

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), board of trustees chairman, Chief Tony Anenih and the special adviser to president Obasanjo on inter/intra party relations, Chief Rochas Okorocho, yesterday differed on the issue of one party state and the role of the opposition.

While Chief Anenih alluded to the predominance of the PDP in the current democratic dispensation, Okorocho said the worst thing that can happen to any country is to have a one party state.

Both Anenih and Okorocho spoke separately at the inauguration of the House of Representatives committee on inter/intra party relations which held yesterday at the National Assembly in Abuja.

Although the occasion was a gathering of diverse and several political parties, Chief Anenih, who was called to deliver a word of advice, assumed everybody to be a PDP member and, in a cacophonous voice, yelled the PDP slogan, which elicited spontaneous murmurings from the audience.

Anenih, who was accompanied by former governor of the defunct Bendel State, Chief Samuel Ogbemudia, also stated that this year is very important in the history of Nigeria because the ongoing national conference on political reforms will address

By Hammeed M. Bello, Senior Political Reporter

salient issues in the nation's polity, adding that the nation must be ready to correct the errors of the past. He also gave the Speaker, Aminu Bello Masari a pass mark for his leadership role in the House.

Chief Rochas Okorocho in his remarks, advocated for unity among political parties which he said is the panacea for unity in the country, because, according to him, a one party state is in all respects injurious to the nation's corporate existence.

We closed Abuja airport for security reasons - Yuguda tells senate

The minister of aviation, Mallam Isa Yuguda, yesterday told the senate committee on aviation that the VIP closure of especially the Nnamdi Azikwe International Airport, Abuja, is an obligation to protect the president, vice president and visiting leaders whose safety has serious national security implications.

The minister appeared before the committee investigating what the senate described as unhealthy closure of the Abuja airport during the last African Union Heads of Government's meeting in Abuja and told the senate also that, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terror-



Speaker House of Reps, Hon. Aminu Bello Masari (left), PDP chairman board of trustees, Chief Tony Anenih (middle) and leader House of Reps, Hon. Abdul Ningi during the inauguration of House committee on inter and intra party relations, held at the National Assembly complex, Abuja... yesterday.

Pix: Felix Onigbinde.

Why Obasanjo enacted cassava bread policy - Presidential aide

The policy of 10 per cent inclusion of cassava flour in bread and other confectionery enacted by the present administration is to generate market for cassava products and improve the lot of Nigerian farmers, the special assistant to the president on food security, Mrs. Oluwatoyin Adetunji, declared in Ibadan on Tuesday.

She made the clarification while addressing the opening of a sensitization and training workshop on high quality cassava flour production and demonstration of bread baking from cassava-wheat composite flour organized for local farmers and processors in the Oyo State capital.

According to the presidential aide, "the problem of the seasonal glut in the cassava market has been a source of worry to the federal government considering the potentials of the crop in both domestic and international markets and for a sin-

From Dele Ogunyemi, Correspondent (Ibadan)

gular reason of Nigeria being the largest producer of the crop in the world".

Nigeria produces 36 million tonnes of cassava per annum.

While stressing the need for all Nigerians, especially in the cassava-producing states of the South West, to tap from the benefits of the opportunity, the presidential assistant stressed that government's intervention will bring succour to all stakeholders in the long run.

Her words: "The policy is a window of opportunity for all Nigerians to tap, especially the people of Oyo State. With this singular policy, farmers will no longer experience the seasonal glut in the cassava market opportunities would be created for the unemployed while the huge import bill on wheat would be reduced drastically," he en-

thused.

The special assistant to the president however charged Nigerian farmers to strive to meet the estimated 200,000 metric tonnes of high quality cassava flour per annum demanded by the Nigerian Flour Millers Association to meet the challenges of the cassava bread policy.

In this regard, she enjoined participants at the workshop to be well acquainted of appropriate processing methods, available processing machines and equipment as well as supply chain management necessary to generate the desired synergy.

The National President of the Association of Master Bakers and Caterers of Nigeria, Chief Bayo Folarin, had earlier appealed to stakeholders to make the best of the government policy so as to help further reduce the cost of producing of bread in the overall interest of Nigerians.

NNPC, ChevronTexaco sign N146bn Agbami vessel contract

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), in conjunction with Chevron Texaco has signed a \$1.1 billion contract for the construction of the floating production storage and offloading (FPSO), vessel for Agbami field with Daewoo Shipping and Ma-

By Hamisu Muhammad, Reporter (Business)

rine Engineering Corporation (DSME) of South Korea.

The group managing director of the NNPC, Engineer Funsho Kupolokun, said at the signing ceremony that the Agbami field scheduled

to come on stream in 2008 has the capacity to produce over 250,000 barrels of oil per day.

He said the signing of the Agbami FPSO contract will pave way to achieve the nation's target of four million barrels of oil daily and 40 million barrel oil reserve by the year 2007.

The chairman and managing director ChevronTexaco Nigeria, Mr. Jay Pryor, who signed on behalf of the Agbami unit, said the ceremony is a milestone, in the development of the Agbami field.

He said the Agbami FPSO will emphasize Chevron-Texaco's core values in the area of safety, environment, transparency, local content development and community engagement.

Speaking at the event, the president, chief executive officer, DSME, Mr. S.L. Jung, who also signed the contract on behalf of his company, said his organisation is working closely with local communities in Nigeria to establish a fabrication plant in the country.

By Isa Sanusi, Political Reporter

ist attacks in the United States where aircrafts were used as weapon of mass destruction, the need to protect presidential aircraft became more imperative.

Mallam Isa Yuguda added that it is an international civil aviation requirement that civilian airports be closed for ten minutes before and after the arrival and departure of heads of states in cases where military airports are not available.

In such situations, the minister further said alternate airports were provided: Minna for Abuja, Ilorin for

News

National Confab...

Women group may organise protest confab

Women coalition groups in Lagos have threatened to organise a parallel national conference to fight marginalisation in the country.

This was announced by the leader of the group, Mrs Abiola Afolabi in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Hausa service, monitored in Abuja, yesterday.

Mrs Afolabi said that the planned national conference was flawed due to lack of appreciable number of women delegates to the conference.

She said, "we think that women are marginalised and section 42 of the Nigerian constitution which gives women their rights is violated. That is why in our position, we unite women to hold a conference before the end of March this year."

She added, "our plan is to initiate new strategies for women in line with the agenda of the political reform conference and come up with a single and unanimous agreement for the improvement of women in the

By Abubakar Haruna,
Reporter

country.

According to her, women are aware of everything that has been happening in the country, while in their position as mothers they know their problems more than anybody else.

The leader of the group who announced that men recognised as gender sensitive could be invited to the conference and argued that women were up to the task and capable of participating in the ongoing political reform conference.

She further stressed that there are many women who are matured enough to handle complex position in the country, citing example of the minister of finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who according to her, handles that position without any fear or favour.

Ten different women organisations in Lagos had earlier dragged President Olusegun Obasanjo before a Lagos high court over the low number of women repre-

National Confab...

action in Nigeria.

Specifically, the women are asking for a declaration that the appointment of 31 women out of 400 members of the national political reform conference is discriminatory, illegal and unconstitutional as it violates women's fundamental right to freedom from discrimination guaranteed by section 42 of the 1999 constitution and Article 3 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Right.

Shagari expresses support

The first civilian president of the federal republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, has expressed support for the national political conference, even as he also backs the current re-certification exercise embarked upon by the FCT minister, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai.

Alhaji Shehu Shagari expressed support for the conference at the Abuja Geographic Information System (AGIS) office, Wuse, Abuja, after he collected a copy of his new re-certificate of occupancy (C of O).

"I have always expressed my support for this kind of conference, not a sovereign national conference, but a conference like this which affords Nigerians the opportunity to talk to one another on their differences," Alhaji Shagari said.

By Nasir Imam, Property & Environment Editor

Shagari stated that the conference has provided for President Obasanjo an opportunity to explain his reason for organising the conference which is very convincing to all.

While expressing delight after receiving his new C of O, Alhaji Shagari said, "I feel satisfied that I have finally received my C of O without it being found to be fake. I commend the minister for the good job he is doing to bring back our plans to make Abuja our city of pride and I urge Nigerians to support him."

On his reaction over the high level of forgeries that have been discovered in the course of the exercise, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, described as "unfortunate," the

National Confab...

Conference'll examine our problems - Ezekwesili

By Ruby Rabi

Mrs Oby Ezekwesili has urged Nigerians to support and regard the political reform conference as an avenue to re-examine the development and set backs of the country.

Oby Ezekwesili who is the senior special assistant to the president and head of Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (Due Process), said the

conference will provide an opportunity where issues will be objectively and constructively digested.

Ezekwesili observed that economic reforms in any society can easily be achieved in a friendly, transparent and competitive political environment where eminent men and women will participate.

Ezekwesili who is also head of the due process unit, speaking at a public forum organised by the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria in paper titled: "Giving Voice to The Voiceless: The Impact of Due Process Policy on Indigent Members of the Nigerian Society," said the conference will deal with peculiar social problems especially as they affect indigent members of the society.

Speaking on the activities of the legal aid council, Ezekwesili said every state must create a conducive atmosphere for its citizens to pursue and realise their potentials.

According to her, "the state must be built strongly on the rule of law guided by the due process. This is because law, order and respect for due process are fundamental to the existence of a peaceful and orderly society without which a conducive environment for development would remain elusive."

Abba-Gana tasks civil society delegates

The special adviser to the president on relations with civil society, Engr. Muhammed Abba-Gana, has challenged delegates from the civil society organisations to the national conference on political reforms to work in the interest of the country.

Engr. Abba-Gana, who stated this Sunday in Abuja when the delegates paid him a courtesy visit in his office, pointed out that government places importance on the contributions of civil society organisations to national development, democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance in the country.

He said it is in this respect that government accorded civil society organisations the same status it accorded state governments by allotting six chances to it as it has done for state governments.

Engr. Abba-Gana further urged the delegates to attach importance to the conference by contributing meaningfully to the overall success of the conference which is aimed at transforming the political and socio-economic status of the country.

"As delegates representing civil society organisations in the country, realise that you are also delegates to the generality of Nigerians and as such, you all are supposed to act in the best interest of Nigerian populace and in the furtherance of unity, national security and the federal republic of the Nigeria," the special adviser to the president maintained.

The representatives of civil society organisations drawn from the six geo-political zones comprise, Prof. Audu Idris, Malam Shehu Sani, Mr. Idris Miliki Abdul, Barr. Mike A. A., Chief (Mrs) Bisi Ogunleye and

By Sunday Ejike Benjamin

Barr. Mike Nkwogha.

Responding on-behalf of the delegates, Prof. Audu who is the zonal coordinator of the Post Abortion Care Network (PACNET), West Africa, said they accepted to work in the conference to be part of history

in the development of the country.

He assured that as representatives of civil society organisations in Nigeria, they will act in the best interest of Nigerians as patriotic citizens and commended the government for giving them the opportunity to serve.

It's coup against NASS- Historian

A renowned history scholar at the University of Maiduguri, Dr. Garba Ibrahim has described the political reform due to formally commence next week, as "a coup" against the National Assembly, which he said needs to be supported. Dr Ibrahim, provost, College of Education, Azare, in an exclusive interview with *Daily Trust* explained that legislators at both the state and federal levels have failed the nation and have no business complaining that the national political reform conference is to usurp their powers and functions.

According to him, the national dialogue could not have arisen if the legislators had performed to expectations, regretting that the National Assembly only talks when "there is a bill from the president or her has blocked this or that of their money, or if some hot-headed minister calls them idiots, then they will start making noise, that they will impeach this or impeach that". According to him, Nigeria has constitutional problems in the administration of local governments and elections which the National Assembly has shied away from and rather pursuing different interests saying "if this conference does not hold, it would show the National Assembly that there are a large

From Tashikalmah Hallah,
Correspondent (Bauchi)

segment of Nigerians, from all parts that are feeling that they're supposed to do this or that but they have failed".

"And if that one can ginger them to work for this country, then there is no need for national dialogue. But at least we have succeeded in venting our anger on them".

Also, he said that there is a serious communication gap between the legislators and the electorates and wondered, "is it that these people do not come to their constituency and hear what the people are worried about or what is the problems are" "I am not saying that we must have it or is the right thing to do and as you said, it is not provided for in the constitution. But we need an alternative. If someone said it is a coup, I strongly agree. It is like a coup. Yes, when the institution that is supposed to do the work is not doing it and somebody takes up the power, it's like a coup".

"But why should we have a coup? Why should they not stand up to do their work?" he queried, adding that the conference should have the courage to dust up the 1996 constitutional conference organised by late General Sani Abacha's regime and have its content examined.

Shehu Shagari @ 80



Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari

Nigeria's former President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari will by the special grace of God mark his 80th birthday anniversary on Friday, February 25, 2005.

This is a moment of joy for the elder statesman who has meritoriously served the nation with utmost humility and sincerity.

To commemorate the landmark event, Media Trust Limited, the publishers of *Daily and Weekly Trust* will publish a special publication Of tributes to this venerable leader and gentleman.

We invite individuals, organisations, business political associates, governments and people of Nigeria to send felicitations and goodwill messages to this man of honour.

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Management

News

BPE paid N3.4 bn to privatized coys workers

The Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) has so far paid over 3,360,879 liabilities to workers in companies that have been privatized, the BPE Director General, Dr. Julius J. Bala, has disclosed.

He said at the BPE annual public lecture series on labour in Collaboration with the Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies (MINILS) held in Kaduna yesterday, that the amount is made up of salary arrears of N1,262,954,298, terminal benefits N1,937,295,301 and pension liabilities of N659,630,171.

Dr. Bala who was speaking on the implications of the privatization programme on

—Dr. Bala

From Sani Babadoko, Bureau Chief Kaduna

Nigerian workers said the BPE was engaging the labour because they constituted the veritable stakeholder group in the privatization programme. "Not only because of the general implications of possible retrenchment, but also because they stand to benefit most by improvements in efficiency envisaged by the programme."

He said BPE's labour policy was fair, affordable, efficient and transparent adding that the policy has emphasized a fair treatment of workers by laying emphasis on voluntary job separations.

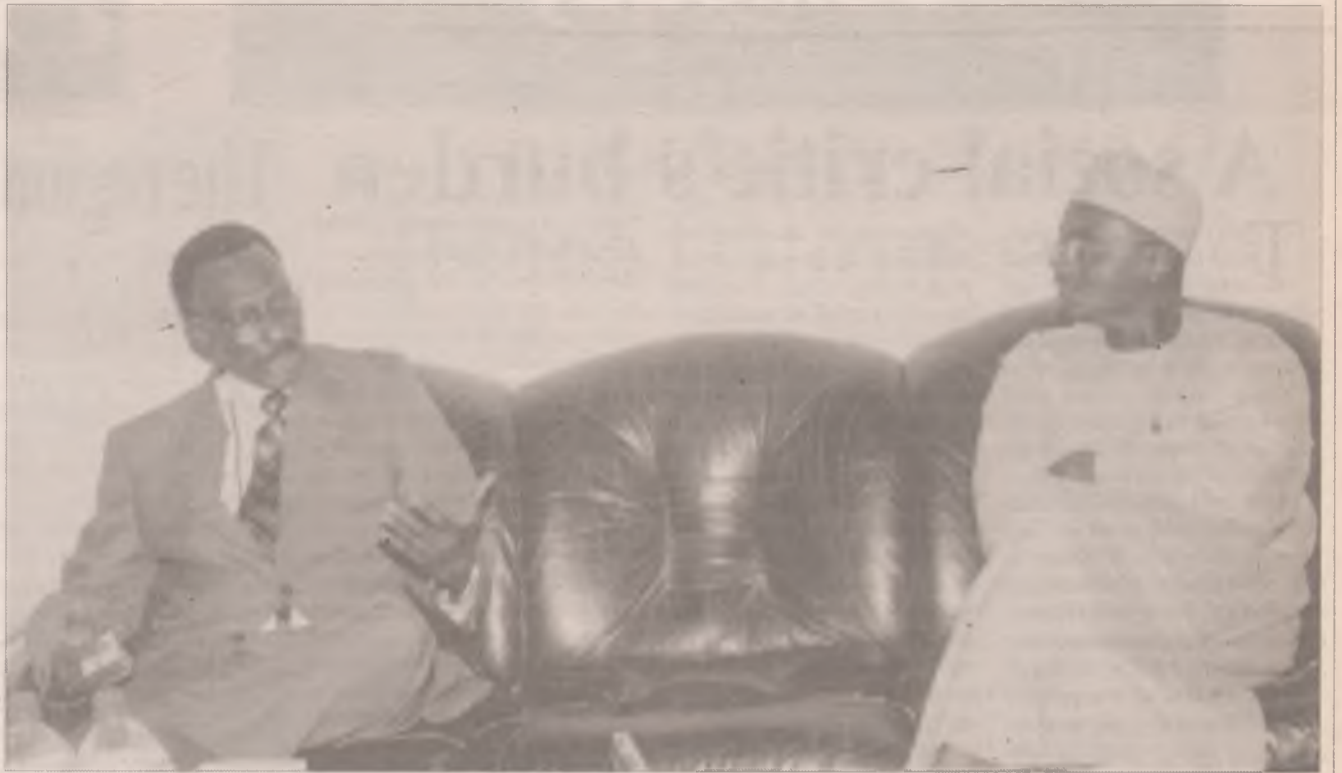
Dr. Bala said the policy was affordable in that it was based on the collective agreements negotiated by trade unions and not imposed from outside.

He said the policy's efficiency stemmed from the fact that it bans job separation that is unwanted by the core investor and minimizing government's interests in companies after divestiture.

The BPE boss said the transparency in the policy was that the compensation formula is the same in all enterprises depending on the specifics of the collective bargaining agreement in force.

"It must be stated that while BPE labour policy takes direct and immediate needs of workers, the reform and privatization program rightly focuses on the big picture, that is, the impact on the economy as a whole and ultimately the greatest good for the greatest number of Nigerians."

Chief host of the occasion, governor Ahmed Mohammed Makarfi, who was represented by his deputy, Engr. Stephen Shekari, said the Kaduna state government will take care of workers interest in companies earmarked for privatization in the state.



The Information officer, US Embassy, Dr. Rudolph E. Stewart (l) stressing some points while the Editor-in-Chief of Media Trust, Malam Kabir A. Yusuf (r) listens during the former's courtesy visit to Media Trust Headquarters in Abuja ...yesterday

I won't retrench workers -Gov Daniel

Kayode Ajibola, Stringer Abeokuta

For the up tenth time, Ogun State Governor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel has re-assured civil servants in the state that his government will not retrenched even as he disclosed that N2billion will be expended on water scheme project for the people of the State.

Otunba Daniel gave the assurance over the weekend during the village square meeting introduced by his government in Ijebu-Igbo the headquarters of Ijebu North Local Government Area of the state.

He charged civil servants in the state to justify what they earn as salaries by putting in their best.

"I want to assure you that our government is not ready to retrenched anybody, but I urge you to satisfy your conscience by ensuring that you give out your best" he stated.

While responding to issue of scarcity of water in Ijebu North Local Government Area, Otunba Daniel disclosed that N2billion was earned marked in the 2005 Federal Government budget to the State for water scheme project, assured that when the money is released his government will spend it for provision of water in all parts of the State.

Otunba Daniel ordered that water tanks should be bought and installed at Ijebu-Igbo, Ago-Iwoye and Atipori etc and water should be fetched into them for the people to fetch.

Otunba Daniel said this is temporary measure also disclosed that his government had already commenced work on drilling of deep wells in all 236 wards of the State.

He ordered the Ministry of Special Duties, the ministry in charge of the drilling of deep wells to expedite action on it and ensure its completion by December, this year.

Ibru: Counsel apologises to court over walk out action

walk out action

Counsel to all the five accused persons facing alleged murder charges before an Ikeja high court over an attempt on the life of *The Guardian* publisher, Mr. Alex Ibru, yesterday apologised to the court following the "walk out" protest staged by their clients on Monday.

The accused persons which includes Major Hamza Al-Mustapha, former Chief of Army Staff, General Ishaya Bamaïyi, former Commissioner of Police, Lagos and Oyo states, James Danbaba, OC, Presidential escort, Abuja, Rabo Lawal and former military administrator of Zamfara state, Colonel Jibrin Bala Yakubu, walked out of the courtroom on the grounds that the trial judge, Justice Kayode Oyewole, was biased having jettisoned their applications without being

From Mohammed Shosanya, Correspondent (Lagos)

heard as well as refusing to stay the proceedings of the on-going trial before him pending the determination of the civil suit at an Abuja federal high court.

Dissatisfied with the development, the trial judge bemoaned the actions of the accused and ruled that they be barred from the courtroom until they are ready to maintain proper decorum.

When the matter was called yesterday, none of the accused was physically present in the courtroom as per the judges' instructions but were nevertheless represented by their counsels.

Barrister Olalekan Ojo who put up appearance for Al-Mustapha told the court that in view of the order barring him from court, his client has since informed him

to desist from appearing for him until the order is reversed.

He, however, apologised on behalf of Al-Mustapha, saying that the action is regretted as he stand for the integrity and dignity of the court, he would not welcome anything that will desecrate the sanctity of the judiciary.

Also, Abdul-Fatai Alao Thomas, who represented Rabo Lawal and Jubrin Bala Yakubu, as well as H. Ganjua who represented General Ishaya Bamaïyi, tendered apology before the court while expressing readiness to continue with the trial.

Although Ikebule Uchenna, counsel to James Danbaba equally apologised to the court, he however asked the permission to

consult his client to know if he would still continue with the case or back-out completely.

In her submission, the state counsel, Mrs. Ogungbesan, decried the action of the accused person and expressed readiness to proceed against all odds in the trial of the case while also urging all the defence counsels to cooperate in this regard to ensure speedy trial.

Ruling, the presiding judge, Justice Kayode Oyewole, accepted the apologies of the counsels and endorsed that they be brought to court on the next adjourned date fixed Thursday, to know whether they are ready to comport themselves during trial.

C'ttee chairman seeks supports for Petroleum Act amendment Bill

The chairman of the House Committee on Petroleum, Hon. Cairo Ojuogbo yesterday called for support for the proposed bill seeking amendments to the petroleum Act, saying that the amendments seek to address the common problems of crude theft and unjust treatment of local staff by oil companies in the country.

In his address at a public hearing on the Petroleum Act organised by the House committee on petroleum, Hon. Ojuogbo said that

From Zainab Alimi, Political Reporter

section 89 of the constitution supports the proposed amendments to the petroleum Act.

"We intend to incorporate correct positions in the Act which will help move our nation forward especially in relation to the defects in the oil and gas industry," he said.

He said that while the committee was not unmindful of the difficulties which the bill for amendments may pose to investors when passed into law, the committee owed it a duty

to Nigerians to bring the oil and gas sector to order in line with realities in the field.

"The bill for instance is seeking for the amendment of paragraph 3 (b) to schedule 4 of the Petroleum Act to include that 25% of equity crude obtained by oil companies is refined locally in our refineries. This will improve our local crude industry among other benefits," he explained.

Declaring the three-day public hearing open, Hon. Aminu Bello Masari charged stakeholders in the industry to make commendable inputs to the event to enable the country build better relationships with her operational partners.

Kwara hosts international seminar on Islamic literature

The Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies held its first international seminar on Islamic literature with a call on the federal government to give Arabic language equal recognition as accorded French.

Speaking at the seminar which was designed to put the college on the international map as a citadel of learning with resources that could be considered globally, the Provost, Dr. Badamosi Lanre Yusuf, said the federal government needed experts dearly, considering its importance even in the intelligence world.

He explained that the major objective of the seminar which drew Islamic and Arabic scholars from five countries including Egypt and Libya, was to network the Arabic legacies

From Abdul-Razaq Adebayo, Correspondent (Ilorin)

that abound in the Ilorin community.

"It is no exaggeration to say that Ilorin city has more private Arabic and Islamic institutions than any other city in Nigeria and has produced two giant scholars of Arabic studies who have won international awards," Dr. Yusuf declared.



Gov. Bukola Saraki

Soliloquy

WITH
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Opinion

A social critic's burden

This is by way of nostalgia and reminiscence. Once upon a very long time ago (that is to say around 1985), a very high ranking official of the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO) which was the predecessor to the present State Security Service (SSS) suddenly invited me to see him in Lagos for a friendly chat-cum-informal-discussion, away from my own safe Kaduna base. Although he sounded all nice and friendly and reassuring, I still took recourse to my long experience in unwilling association and friendly chats with members of the security establishment and upgraded the contents of my standby travel bag to the level of an indefinite stay in one of their guest rooms (a euphemism for their cells, of course), either at 15 Awolowo Road or at the Intercentre-Interrogation Centre - both of them in Ikoji.

As a frequent 'customer' of the NSO in those days, I very much knew that *sabo da kaza ba ya hana yanka* (familiarity with a fowl does not prevent its summary slaughter without prior warning), and that the more full of goodwill such sudden invitations to 'come for a friendly chat in Lagos' sounded, the more suddenly they could metamorphose into an indefinite stay with them as their unwilling guest. Those were in the halcyon days of the Buhari-Idiagbon dictatorship, you must recollect.

When I flew into Lagos to keep the dreaded appointment though, it was to be welcomed by a very gracious and smiling host [he was Director General of the NSO at that time, that is how high up in the hierarchy this my charming shark of a host was], and I foolishly began to relax in spite of the screams of caution from my inner self not to be deceived by any smiles or tears of this particular specie of crocodile. After the warm welcome, my host took me to his office and as soon as the door closed he turned upon me with genuine puzzlement and pain written all over his face.

"A. B." he began "will you kindly explain to me in total confidence why you take such bizarre pleasure in frequently criticising our administration, even though we have shown you so much personal respect and tolerance?"

At this point, his voice thickened in frustration and rising fury as he continued: "See, we all know that you are the editor of one of the newspapers in the only 100 per cent federal government owned newspaper house in this country. What gives you the guts to continuously defy us and frustrate us and use the paper as if it is your personal property, freely criticising the federal government as you like, and at any given moment?"

Seeing that he was getting alarmingly close to having an apoplexy now that he had me physically in his claws, I prudently used the pause after his last question as an opportunity to put discretion firmly before valour and interrupted in the most unctuous and remorseful voice you can ever imagine me mustering up. For to tell the truth, I did not particularly look forward with much pleasure to the prospect

of becoming his unwilling and indefinite official guest at that point in time. In fact, if he could but see my mind, he would have roared with satisfaction and pleasure at the quaking fear he would have found running riot therein, behind my facade of sulking innocence and feigned pain at always being picked upon for incessant gritting and admonition. This would not be the first or even the tenth time that this same host of mine would haul me in, for one or the other of his deputies to lecture me on the wisdom of being nice and level-headed and supportive of the government for a change.

In a deliberately quavering voice I began my self-defense. Precisely because it was known to be the only 100 per cent federal (military) government owned newspaper in Nigeria, I argued passionately, the expectation of the world was that the New Nigerian Newspapers (NNN) should be nothing much more than a mouthpiece and unabashed megaphone of its owner, especially when that owner happened to be an authoritarian or dictatorial one. [I tactfully did not mention that even the so-called ownership was based on naked expropriation by military fiat, with neither negotiations preceding the forced transfer of ownership between the Northern States which established the newspaper house and the soldiers who seized it, nor any compensation being paid for the goods transferred. Nor did I think it prudent under the circumstances to add "like your own present regime" to my reference to ownership being currently in the hands of an authoritarian or dictatorial junta. Believe me, I always put discretion before valour on such delicate occasions!]

I then proceeded to explain to him that if a newspaper house found itself in the difficult situation in which the NNN found itself at that point of historical development, its only hope of retaining its professional integrity as well as its credibility and authority was to toe a line of absolute adherence to truth, neutrality and total commitment to the welfare of the people as the very bottom line of its own existence and the base upon which its power rested. I argued that pursuing such a policy was what had already won the NNN the fearsome reputation of not only the nation's most authoritative newspaper but also the one with the most powerful and most influential editorial comments, bar none.

As for the matter of frequent criticism of its own owner, I reminded the NSO boss that this was the principal thing which distinguished the NNN from all other newspaper houses and made the people to marvel so much at where we got our editorial nerve/courage, independence and integrity from. For whereas papers in the *Tribune* group never criticised the Awolowo family, and other newspaper groups never criticised their paymasters, the NNN stood unique in the freedom and frequency with which it took sides with public welfare against government excesses on almost all occasions.

I then told him quite plainly that if out of 365 days in a year we took sides with the truth and our reading public, we could not fail to influence the people on the two or three days out of 365 in a year when we would speak out very strongly in defense of the government of the day, in order to save it from disaster. Was that not a fair enough return to government for its patience and tolerance of us in the 362 or 363 days of the year when we routinely criticised it in order to maintain our own institutional fairness, power and integrity, I asked.

Finally, as to the matter of my own personal stubbornness and imperviousness to repeated warnings from the authorities to be more cooperative and approving of government policies whether they be good or bad, I appealed to him to recollect that I was what I was because of my genetic inheritance from the newspaper house into which I had the misfortune of being born. I was born and raised in a newspaper house in which adherence to truth and honour and integrity were the house motto and the irresistible beacons to the good and honest professional life, and where freedom of thought and the right to express honest thought freely and strongly were the *sine qua non* of a worthy life, both professional and personal. How else could I live, except as a product of the proud home in which I was born and nurtured professionally?

I asked him to remember that mine was not the last word in the NNN, which could approve or kill any or all of the published pieces which irked different succeeding governments so much. There were and always have been other supervisory and superior officers of the newspaper house who could have called me to order if they did not honestly approve of what I was doing and writing. That they did not do so, even when I began to receive frequent admonitions from the NSO (which I reported promptly back at home after every invitation to Lagos for a chat), did this not indicate to somebody, anybody, that I was performing my duty satisfactorily in the assessment of those who picked me right from school, adopted me and turned me from a potentially good economist into a proud and very happy journalist?

Well, I got off the hook after that particular impassioned chat with my NSO friends, and returned to Kaduna to sleep at home later that same day. But two months or so later, I was back in Lagos for another chat with my perpetual customers, this time around about a piece in the satirical column *Maigani* which my paper carried every Sunday. Only, that I wasn't so lucky this time around. No amount of sweet talk or specious moralising could get me off the hook because they wouldn't even let me explain myself, nor did they even tell me what my current offence was supposed to be. From police stations in Kaduna and Ilorin to 15 Awolowo Road to the InterCentre and finally to Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison, I did not taste freedom again until General Ibrahim Babangida forcibly toppled that regime and ordered the release of all detained journalists, in August 1985.

O, the sweet travails and delightful burdens of a journalist and social critic in the Nigeria of those days. There is nothing to match it for fun and excitement in this world, I tell you verily...!

The regions and political confab

By Yusuf I. Gamawa

Controversy seemed to have been dotting the decision by president Obasanjo to convene a National dialogue, mostly referred to as the political reforms Conference recently. While many others see the conference as a waste of time, others see the conference as a right step in the right direction. Most of the antagonists of the conference argue that since there is a National Assembly in place, they do not agree to the composition of the nominated delegates, and the National Assembly itself refused to approve the funds needed for the dialogue.

It said that it is irresponsible for the government to ignore them and call other delegates to deliberate on the problems of the nation, which they consider as a clear indication of distrust between the legislature and the executive. Other antagonists of the conference are equally worried about the agenda of the conference. They do not seem to agree that the conference is about political reforms and instead they suspect some ulterior motive on the part of the President.

As to the issue of representation and nomination of delegates ignoring the fact that there is a National Assembly in place, shouldn't be a problem and if the honorable members feel that the President does not trust them, they should know and in fact be made to understand that it is not just the President, but that there are other Nigerians too that share that distrust, because most of these members' did not win the elections and even if they really won they do not care about their constituencies.

What is to be considered is what is in the best interest of the Nation and not what some people think is right or what others think is wrong. This is not to say that everyone is satisfied with the list of the nominated delegates but of course we can't expect everyone to be part of it and it is certain that most of those nominated are people of character that can actually be relied upon and not some bunch of unserious politicians who only know the politics of Ghana must go. Another advantage of the nomination process is that there is room for the delegates to rub minds with other genuine opinion

leaders from their various constituencies and for them to feel that responsibility, as people specifically chosen to champion a particular cause, unlike the elected representatives who always boast and in fact feel proud that it was their finances that got them elected and as such do not consider or respect the opinion of their people. So who amongst these two groups is likely to be a better representative?

Of course most of us do not share the opinion of those who think the dialogue is going to be a waste of time. It is exactly what Prof. Gambari said; that any opportunity to dialogue between the various people of this nation must be taken seriously. This is due to the sample fact that even between associates there is that need of dialogue talk less of a Nation of more than 300 tribes and of a diverse religious background.

The only major issue of concern on the conference is its agenda. While majority of these groups seem to be championing an ethnic agenda, the confab must raise its aims higher than that. There are those who want the North out of the Nigerian equation for no reason other than its political genius, their claims have not be substantiated. They perceive the North as a parasite in the system, because it does not produce oil and also partly because they have been made to believe that part of the reasons why the British amalgamated the Northern Protectorate and that of the South in 1914, was because there wasn't enough revenue in the north and that the south generated more revenue enough to run both Nigeria, forgetting that administrative convenience was amongst such reasons.

And even if it was true, it should be noted that after the Amalgamation and prior to the discovery of oil in the Niger Area the North contributed immensely to the colonial economy much more than the South, and even if the British made this assumption, it must have been made at a time when the British themselves had not fully explored the potentials of the North, it was a time when the groundnut pyramids have not been formed, the cotton production not at its peak. But as at the time these two areas were discovered and developed the north competed on one to one basis with its southern counterparts whose major

commodities as at then were cocoa and kola nut. And as such it will be wrong for people from the South to continue to believe and act on a assumption that was made since 1914 and continue to see the north as a liability. But one of the factors that ensured the continued lingering of such an assumption was the discovery of oil in the Niger area coupled with the regional system of government of the first republic which emphasized regionalism above Nationalism.

The difference between the various regions sometimes were being exaggerated and more often based on propaganda. It was based on these exaggeration and propaganda that some people from the South believed in the amalgamation assumption of the British.

It is true that there are certain areas in which the north is lagging behind - like education, but this itself does not in anyway mean dependence on the South and it can be explained in the manner in which colonial conquest took place, it first started from the South and it was years later that the British decided to explore the hinterland and as such their earlier presence in the South was responsible for the difference in the development of education between the North and South. But in terms of development, the north grew considerably more than many parts of the South, considering the time in which development came to the North.

Today if we are to make a statistics of the level of growth between the North and South and at the same time consider the time in which they all started, it will be seen that the North has done considerably well, in that the difference will be very slight, and even then it will not be in terms of infrastructure, but may be human trained resources. Historically therefore, the relationship between the North and South has been symbiotic even before the advent of colonial rule and these can be traced from the history of the economic activities in the West African sub-region and not even within Nigeria.

There has been continuous movement of goods and services between the two regions right from pre-colonial times and up to the present in terms of trade and other services, and therefore no region had depended on the other, but what can be said is that it



YOUR LETTERS

Confab: Cautioning Gani, Soyinka and Enahoro

In initiating and convening a National Dialogue, the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo is providing Nigerians once more with an opportunity, at the government's material expense, of interacting, expressing, aggregating and harmonising their sundry aspirations, and channeling them into a common national objective.

It is imperative therefore that Nigerians of every class, generation, gender or occupation maximise the singular opportunity offered by this great national intercourse to fashion a way forward for the present and future generations of our people.

No matter the sentiments of habitual cynics, it is a fact of historical records that such "National Conferences" have not come and gone without their manifest benefits to Nigerians, individually and collectively.

A recent case in point is the 1994/95 Constitutional Conference, which was convened by the military regime of late General Sani Abacha. It is on record that this conference attracted

noted Nigerian patriots and nationalists as Dr. Ekwueme, General Yar'adua, Chief Emeka Ojukwu, who at the time could not be described as political acolytes of the Abacha regime.

It is also history that this conference made far-reaching strides in the direction of resolving fundamental questions of our national existence. With its six-zonal formulation, the majority-minority syndrome in our national politics was significantly resolved.

Also with that conference came the rotation of office principle, which today has doused sectarian passions irreversibly. There is also the derivation principle that was ingrained in our revenue-sharing formula, which gave due benefits to sections of the country from where revenue-generating resources are derived.

During the pre-independence colonial times, it was the Constitutional Conferences convened and presided over by the colonial masters that became the very agencies for the ending of colonial rule.

Even in this Obasanjo era, the Oputa Panel hearings,

something akin to a national conference of sorts, gave Nigerians the opportunity as never before of expressing their grievances publicly against office holders, as well as against private citizens and organisations.

Gani Fawehinmi's submissions in respect of the Dele Giwa affair and Professor Soyinka's case against a private organisation, Conscience Publishers are matters of historical records.

The terminology used in describing the conference is irrelevant. Whether the term "sovereign" is attached or not, it is a fact that the conference together with other pre-existing national institutions, including the legislature and judiciary, together

make up sovereign Nigeria.

The allegation that the conference is President Obasanjo's decoy for self-perpetuation is without substance, since the very same conference can be fully utilised to form a formidable opposition to such a move, if it rears its head. President Obasanjo is a known constitutionalist who would not subvert the constitution he has sworn to defend.

Our social critics and activists must be developmental and constructive in their criticisms. Therefore, they must be able to appreciate the positive potentialities and propensities in any government, and amplify these in the interest of future generations.

It is expected that President

Obasanjo's sincerity of purpose should attract the collaboration and support of conscientious and consistent patriots and nationalists as Chiefs Gani Fawehinmi and Enahoro.

A social critic cannot assume a divine prerogative over the people he purports to represent or whose interests he is ostensibly promoting. It is in the course of interaction and intercourse with the people that their aspirations can be fully apprehended, and a confluence of minds and aspirations affected, and the ideals of the critic and activist actualised.

If they absent themselves from this National Dialogue, how will their case be advanced? It would be a destiny postponed and denied, how

would they come to terms with the outcome of a conference that they willfully absented from. A Yoruba adage surmises that "you cannot query the sharing formula for what you refused to partake in the sharing."

Their failure to be part of this all-embracing national assemblage confirms overwhelmingly that these self-acclaimed critics have admitted that they have nothing else to offer to the nation. Therefore, they are advised to now shut up their mouths permanently and for all time.

Chief Abiola Ogundokun, (Member, 1977 Constituent Assembly; Member, 1995 Constitutional Conference; Member, 1996 Constitutional Review Panel), Lagos.

Soyinka and the national conference

In the affairs of man as in the affairs of nations, there is a time man controls events and there is a time man is controlled by events. By agreeing to convene the national conference, Nigeria is dangerously moving towards a state where events control man, with the

resultant descent to anarchy. The conference will be an event where sentiments will reign, emotion, instead of logical and rational discourse will rule.

Talking about Professor Soyinka and the confab, it would have been irresponsible

of government if it had allowed him to partake. Here is an absentee citizen who believes that Nigeria should simply be aping America. The America that has refused the emergence of a black man as president. Yet, our 'freedom fighter' has not called for the convocation of a sovereign national conference or balkanization of America if a black man is not elected the next American president. Meanwhile, any time he pops in, he gets busy preaching regionalism in Nigeria where the people, by disposition, are accommodating, generous and peaceful.

State policy should also not be anchored on the ranting of an inferiority complex-driven Medical Doctor, a bigot, masquerading as a human rights activist, on the false assumption

that he represents popular opinion. The popular script, well rehearsed and parroted by the advocates of a national conference, with many references to the Ife/Modakeke and Uguleri/Umuleri conflicts as evidence of our irreconcilable differences, does not reflect the state of the nation and is not a representative opinion of the Nigerian people either. Nigerians are reconciled and interacting peacefully. Although there are flashes of violent disputes occasionally, it is known by all that these disagreements are orchestrated by well-known satanic agents roaming the land freely and aided by an inept government in power.

Jibir Abubakar, Jos Road, Bauchi.

Re: Kure's turn to give account

One Makun Aliyu Lapai's recent article challenging the content of Abubakar Gimba's book titled "Letter to Muslim Fundamentalists" has raised questions.

Gimba's book clearly generalised issues as they are supposed to be, with a view to educating the public and at the same time, draw the attention of whom ever it may concern. The aim of course is to rescue those who ignorantly may be practicing or intend to get involved in deeds that are distasteful in the sight of Allah and injurious to mankind. Those personalities or groups who

have been making frantic effort to tarnish the gospel truth of Islam and Islamic doctrines inclusive.

Makun's account limited Kure's performance to such areas that left out industrialisation, shelter and genuine agricultural support which are part of the key areas that have direct bearing on the masses. Why the mute, is question number one.

Niger is not the only state in the federation whose promise for the implementation of Shari'ah legal system is still dragging foot, yet his write up portrayal of Governor Kure-led administration as the only

guilty in that direction. How come, is the No.2 question.

As a well lettered person going by his claim which I have no slightest doubt about, Makun should have applied sense of maturity which goes side by side with intellectuality. Makun failure to find out from Gimba and his other colleagues whom he claimed to have for reasons known to them decided to release their literature works fresh into the new year, their reasons for so doing, coupled with his choice of words in the write-up goes to confirm that he still belongs to the kindergarten class.

The truth is that the message

of Abubakar Gimba's book, "Letter to the Muslim Fundamentalists" is far beyond the kind of local politics Lapai is linking it with.

Perhaps Makun Aliyu Lapai would agree with me that intellectuality is like a house, a fine house for that matter, but then, maturity serves as the roofing which if not provided renders the structure inhabitable, thus remain a mere block and of no use.

Nevertheless, I wish Makun Lapai prosperous defence service and a happy new year too.
Isah B. Ndamaka, Ayuba Yusuf Road, Minna.

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

Opinion

National confab and the misgivings

By Shehu Musa

For reasons of my deep misgivings and suspicion about the true motive behind the much orchestrated reforms to the 1999 constitution which as we are all witnesses to being observed more in breach than in systematic and spirited compliance, I have opened this paper with prayers to the Almighty Allah who is the only person who can and will Insha Allah deliver us Nigerian citizens from any machinations and adverse hidden agenda of the proposed conference.

Given our experience in the democratic process since 1999, I make bold to assert that the nation seems to be off its course considering the policies the ruling party promised to pursue; poverty alleviation, universal basic education, basic health

programme, anti corruption, electricity power supply, resource control etc. there can not therefore be reasonable argument to justify the piecemeal reforms before stock taking of government's performance in the spirit and letter of the 1999 constitution. Knowledge of the extent of deviation of practice from the constitution will assist in no small measure to determine the need to reform the existing structure or procedures. The continuous monitoring or stock taking of performance of the government is the responsibility of the stakeholders in general but the National Assembly in particular. So as the reforms agenda seem to have been initiated without consultation

with National Assembly, one wonders what shoddy job the assembly members are likely to embark on when they are confronted with a fait accompli which supposedly culminates deliberations by "representatives" of stakeholders at the proposed conference. I don't think that steps so far to organise the conference and its agenda is morally justifiable even as the legal basis is being challenged in court.

Be that as it may, we know that like a military order characteristic of the present administrations modus operandi, the conference will proceed against advice to do otherwise or in another form. But as Dr Martin Luther King, Jr stated, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter". It will be

disservice to the nation and indeed the stakeholders for Nigerian of my age and public service experience to begin to end my life by keeping mute on the ongoing government programme of the proposed programme even though I can not see light at the end of tunnel on its course. As a matter of fact, stripped of the tantalizing jargon of "reform", I see the exercise as continuing effort to transit from military to civil rule especially as the initiator is clearly more military than civil in his approach to governance.

We in Niger State should take stock of government's performance of the promises we were given for the improvement of Nigerlites quality of life particularly in the core areas afore mentioned. Without

belabouring the point, it is my submission for Niger State stakeholders that there is hardly anything to write home about Federal Governments performance in these areas. As a matter of fact we found ourselves helpless victims of flood caused by the hydroelectricity dams supplying power to the entire country. The strategy for achieving governments objectives failed awfully despite as we are told billions of naira sunk into the project. Perhaps it might benefit Nigerlites and indeed the Nation more than otherwise if the N1 Billion odd to be sunk into this talk shop is used to improve NEP A services.

I had the privilege to deliver the University of Ibadan millennium lecture in August 2000 entitled "The

Nigerian Elastic Transition to Democratic Rule, have we finally made it?" a copy of which is attached to this paper for easy reference. The subjects discussed in the lecture more than cover the agenda proposed by President Obasanjo in his letter read to Niger State stakeholders at the Monday meeting, thus: "matters arising" from stewardship of the government since 1999 should find a place in the "reforms" agenda. The Niger State stakeholders may therefore resolve that its delegates may propose inclusion of the stock taking as it affects the plight of the people to probably provide dependable road map to "reforms" which will benefit the communities and society at large. *To be continued*

National dialogue and national security

Continued from yesterday

By Adagbo Onoja

This recklessness has reduced the typical African state to one of mere juridical existence, one that absolutely serves no purpose in terms of the state as guarantor of good life by equilibrating between contending forces in the society through a combination of the stick and the carrot. African states, courtesy of SAP, only have the sticks (police, prisons, army and NTA to tell lies) but no carrots, a reality, which made people to revolt against it, leading to state collapse. The most horrendous of these have been Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda.

The anomic that occurred particularly in these countries happened basically because the products of egalitarian policies of the 1970s such as free education that were about to be absorbed into the system were suddenly blocked from opportunities like gainful employment. Dazed, they joined in urban movements for the reconfiguration of the state. These assumed ethnic terms all over, led by warlords commanding ethnic guerillas. Clapham has observed "by the 1990s, insurgent warfare had led to the ousting of incumbent regimes in several African states and the installation of successors which owed their origins to insurgency"

In Sierra Leone, for example, there is a consensus now that central to the recent war there "is the role of alienated youth, especially alienated lumpen youth in the urban and rural areas, for whom combat appears to be a viable survival alternative in a country with high level of urban unemployment, where the economy is dominated by a precious mineral sector in long-term decline". In this context, state collapse has

been the greatest instigator of conflicts in Africa and state collapse is itself instigated directly by the IMF and the World Bank on behalf of their sponsors.

This is the nature and character of national security crisis all over Africa to which there are now experts of all sorts in conflict management sadly looking at these conflicts merely from identity/ethnic analysis. This is in spite of the categorical analysis by the UN on the political economy of conflicts in African.

The national Dialogue in Nigeria should, therefore, go beyond the idea of political reform in an abstract sense and, instead, begin with an interrogation of the interaction of Globalization with the Nigerian economy in the present epoch. They will discover more explanations for some of the so-called ethnic riots in Mile Two or Jos or in the Niger Delta in this interrogation than in the dry rhetoric of Charles Soludo or Ngozi-Iweala.

In this regard, the delegates may wish to take note of the leading African perspective of Globalization as the phase of globalised movement of capital which would be truly unhindered by the West's need to compromise or camouflage its real interests in order to win and retain allies in Africa, Asia and Latin America as was the case during the Cold War. Now, the West, led by the US, is establishing its unfettered hegemony over the rest of the world. The objective is to utilize the end of the cold war and of the obvious ideological struggles between NATO and the WARSAW PACT to universalize particularistic values of private property, liberal democracy and institutions of governance that

were products of specific history and culture of the West.

This African understanding of Globalization is confirmed in the western ownership built into the definition of democracy in the post Cold War when western empire intellectuals and seers say that it is the universalisation of the final form of human government as a result of "a total exhaustion of viable, systematic alternatives to western liberalism". This makes others mere borrowers and copiers. They had also said that "the world after the Cold War is one of civilisational determinism in which Africa is only a candidate civilization, not a full-fledged civilization; That, by reason of poverty and the violence of their politics, African states could not move in a democratic direction; and that it amounted to political blindness to have expected democracy to prevail in Africa. Yet these are the people insisting on democracy in Africa today.

So, it must be only those African governments finding it difficult to rise above personal/regime survival that would have problems telling western imperialists to go to hell with democracy that must only be underlined by SAP or NEEDS without thinking of the national security implications in the African economic context.

It is only such regimes that cannot tell the forces poaching on their sovereignty what the Asian nationalists told Kenichi Ohmae, the Japanese business thinker who wondered if anyone still needed the nation-state with money flowing round the world beyond the reach of governments in the aftermath of the Cold War. He was promptly told that there could be no replacement for the Nation-state even if only

'to nurture a capitalism that cares for those whom development leaves behind'. You can always trust Asian nationalism in these matters.

In a way then, national security in contemporary Africa can be reduced to the brave warrior who would reply the Kenichi Ohmae of Africa the way the Asians have done as quoted above.

This is where Thabo Mbeki's selection by *The Economist* is instructive. For the magazine is saying that the man has the philosophical, historical, ideological, racial and strategic consciousness about these things. He is a product of solid stream of consciousness that will stand him in any stead. He is educated (not necessarily in certificate sense, as crucial as that is in the African leadership crisis), ideologically trained, Guerilla warfare trained and combat experience thereto, Diplomatic experience and above all, product of radical party political culture. He is someone who can run a functional dependent capitalist system even if he had not inherited a sophisticated economy like South Africa's.

I have a personal reason to be particularly interested in the views of the magazine since reached the same conclusion two clear weeks before them on the same Mbeki. In fact, *The Economist* used almost the same words in depicting Mbeki as I did. For example, the *Economist* started by saying that "...Thabo Mbeki is undoubtedly Africa's most powerful politician South Africa makes up a third of sub-Saharan Africa's total GDP and is also a big source of capital for the whole continent The South African Reserve Bank estimates that South African firms invested \$1.2 billion in the rest of Africa in 1996, which rose to \$4 billion a year by

2001... Between 1994 and 2004, South African trade with the rest of Africa grew by more than 300 per cent; between 1994 and 2003, exports to the rest of Africa rose from 8.6 billion rand a year to 38.8 billion (\$5.1 billion). Because of that economic weight, and because he has no rivals, Mbeki is increasingly presenting himself as Africa's ambassador to the world".

In my "Theses on Obasanjo" (*Daily Trust*, January 11, 2005, back page), I wrote as follows "President Mbeki or any President of South Africa for now is many times more powerful than President Obasanjo. This is because the South African economy is not only one of the ten biggest emerging markets in the world, it accounts for about 40 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's total GDP, controlling about 60 per cent of U.S. trade with Africa and has the most powerful forte in intra-African investment. These statistics might be obsolete now. By implication, the President of South Africa has a better negotiating advantage in the international system than a President of Nigeria who is not organized."

One trend common to both analyses is the notion that the basis of Mbeki's power is South Africa's economic weight. The lesson is that industrialization is co-terminus with national security in that a productive economy resolves so many of the issues at the heart of national security-legitimacy of the state built on redistributive justice and the corresponding patriotism of the citizens. In this way, national security and defence is not a matter for only those under arms. Once no groups of citizens have any reasons to challenge the integrative claims of the state, national security is half guaranteed.

The problem today in Africa is that a bulk of the leaders have swallowed or been forced to swallow the neo-liberal approach to industrialization in terms of Foreign Direct Investment, FDI. Which means they will never get industrialized. Which also means they will hardly be secure because their citizens will be willfully nasty to each other and to state power. Once again, no Police or military, no matter how patriotic, can maintain law and order in the *COMING ANARCHY* on the basis of which Robert Kaplan advocated Europe's return to re-colonize Africa 'in the face of scarcity, crime, over population, tribalism and diseases'.

It all shows why the delegates need to take very seriously the now self-evident truth that African countries that did not industrialize during the Cold War, as the Asians did, are in real danger of delinking from modernity and dissolving into a huge anomie. Particularly in the light of the kernel of the "New World Order" understood by George Bush the father in 1991 and George Bush the son since 2000 regarding acceptable and unacceptable regimes in the post Cold War. The unacceptable ones are "Islamic fundamentalist", "hyper-nationalist", military and revolutionary regimes, regimes more likely to supervise industrial transformation in the pace that the Asians did with the exception of African military regimes. The way forward for Nigeria should be a critique of SAP/NEEDS from the point of view of national security.

Onoja is member, Trust editorial board

Trust International

Togo's parliament reverses constitution changes



Faure Gnassingbe, Togolese "President"

Togo's National Assembly has voted to reverse constitutional changes that allowed President Gnassingbe Eyadema's son to take power when his father died.

The army's installation of Faure Gnassingbe caused an outcry and West African leaders imposed sanctions.

The BBC's correspondent in Togo said the move could offer Mr Faure a dignified way to step aside.

However, the Togolese MPs stopped short of asking Mr Faure to step down and his future as president remains unclear.

After the decision, an MP told the BBC, as he chuckled, that he did not know what Mr. Faure would do.

Opening the parliamentary session, the deputy speaker had said it was only a fool who never changed his mind. The MP introducing the bill said the measure would ensure national serenity in Togo and restore international confidence.

Mr Faure originally said he would serve his father's full term until 2008.

He later promised to hold presidential elections within months. But this was rejected as insufficient by the regional grouping, ECOWAS, when it met on Saturday.

The group imposed sanctions, including a travel ban on Togolese leaders and an arms embargo.

The African Union backed the ECOWAS stance.

The European Union urged Togo to restore constitutional

order and the United States announced it would end all military assistance.

"We are reviewing all aspects of our relationship," state department spokesman Richard Boucher said.

Under the original constitution - which was amended to legitimise Mr Faure's installation - the parliamentary speaker should hold the presidency pending the election. He remains overseas.

The authorities say Mr Faure was installed to prevent a dangerous power vacuum.

The opposition wants the new leader to step down immediately.

Togolese Foreign Minister Kokou Tozoun told Reuters news agency: "Can we be without a president for 60 days?"

He added: "We prefer to have sanctions and be in peace and stability rather than descending towards civil war."

On Saturday, opponents and supporters of the new leader held rival demonstrations. Both passed off peacefully. A week earlier, at least three people were killed when police opened fire during a protest.

The opposition wants Mr Faure to stand down immediately.

One of the main opposition parties has accused France - the former colonial power - of failing to use its influence to resolve the crisis.

African peer review mechanism commences in Nigeria

By Jibrin Abubakar, Reporter (Foreign Desk)

A Country Support Mission, from the continental secretariat of the African Peer Review Mechanism, will visit Nigeria shortly, to interact with stakeholders and ascertain the preparedness of Nigeria for the processes of the mechanism.

This development was conveyed by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Chief Ufot Ekaete yesterday, when he addressed the inaugural meeting of the National Steering Committee.

He said the committee will be in Nigeria to create a broad-based understanding of the APRM process and assess the institutional and organisational arrangements established for the take-off of the process in Nigeria.

Chief Ekaete enjoined the steering committee to commence efforts that will ensure that the visit of the Country Support Mission (CSM), is successful in clarifying the entire APR process. In particular, he urged the committee to embark on an aggressive sensitization campaign, to enlighten the Nigerian public about the APR process.

He stressed that the sensitisation process must commence before the Country Support Mission visits Nigeria.

The African Peer Review Mechanism is a self-assessment mechanism, subscribed to by African countries to ensure policy conformity with the objectives of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The four thematic areas of the review process focus are political, economic and corporate governance and socio-economic development.

Mugabe blasts Britain

Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe launched a fresh attack on British Prime Minister Tony Blair and hitting out at his sacked information minister Jonathan Moyo.

Mugabe, 81, also described the relationship between the main opposition the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and former colonial ruler Britain as "treasonous", in a 90-minute interview on state television.

"That's the worst betrayal there can ever be, its treasonous, condemnable. You can't eat with the enemy," he said late Sunday.

"You can never ever convince an Englishman that you are equal to him, never, never. He is always superior, it doesn't matter what circumstances, it doesn't matter what education, it doesn't matter what power, you are always inferior."

Without mentioning him by name, Mugabe inferred that Moyo, whom he fired from the information ministry at the weekend, was overly ambitious for trying to "arbitrarily" uproot the old guard in the ruling ZANU-PF and government.

Asked what he would do if he was to meet Blair, Mugabe said he would accuse him of being a liar.

"I would tell him that he, Tony Blair, is a liar, straightforwardly, that on Zimbabwe he has lied, on Iraq he has lied.

"At least those are the two principal lies, there are other small insignificant lies he has told I wouldn't know."

Mugabe accused Blair of falsely claiming that Zimbabwe is undemocratic, lacks transparency and the rule of law.

Meanwhile, European Union foreign ministers have renewed sanctions against Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe for another year.

Ceasefire expires in north Uganda

Ugandan government ministers are meeting in the town of Gulu to assess the impact of a ceasefire on the country's fragile peace process.

A limited 18-day ceasefire with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels was granted by President Yoweri Museveni.

But as it expires in northern Uganda, there are calls for more attention to be focused on ending 19 years of war.

The LRA has no clear political agenda, but it has terrorised civilians and abducted tens of thousands of children.

During the last three months, efforts to bring about peace

talks have made progress, with rebels and government ministers meeting face to face for the first time. However, this has not yet produced a total ceasefire.

The fragility of the peace process was increased last week when the LRA's chief negotiator, Brig Sam Kolo, surrendered.

It is expected that the International Criminal Court based in The Hague will soon issue arrest warrants for senior LRA commanders despite the concerns that this could further hamper efforts to negotiate an

end to the war. There are calls from the international community for more attention to be focused on the peace process in order to end the 19-year conflict.

The International Crisis Group has called on the Ugandan government to extend the ceasefire.

It describes the peace process as the most promising way to end the war which it says still has the potential to run a long and deadly course.

Meanwhile, the Ugandan military says three civilians were killed by LRA rebels on Monday, close to the town of Gulu.

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Signed
Haruna M. Makusidi
Secretary

RESNOVA

Egyptians stage anti-Mubarak protest

Several hundred Egyptians protested in central Cairo on Monday in the largest street demonstration since the launch last year of a campaign against continued rule by the Mubarak family.

Liberals, leftists and Islamists chanted: "Enough, shame, have mercy" and "Down, down with Hosni Mubarak" in a public square outside the gates of Cairo University, as tens of thousands of mostly bemused commuters drove past.

Many of them carried yellow flags or stickers saying "Enough" - the slogan of an informal movement dedicated to stopping Mubarak from obtaining a fifth six-year term in office or arranging for his son Gamal to take over the presidency.

Thousands of riot police armed with batons and shields surrounded the protesters and prevented some people from joining the crowd, but they did not attempt to disperse them.

The two and a half hour protest was the fourth in a series organized by two pro-democracy movements since December as Egypt goes into a year of presidential and parliamentary elections.

The demonstrators also called for the release of opposition leader Ayman Nour, who was stripped of his parliamentary immunity last month and detained for 45 days pending investigations into accusations that his party submitted forged documents when it applied for recognition last year.

Nour's Ghad (Tomorrow) Party has dismissed the accusations as having been fabricated for political reasons. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last week the United States has "very strong concerns" about the detention of Nour.

ADVERTORIAL

TO THE PRESIDENT,

**PROTEST LETTER AGAINST THE DROPPING OF THE
NOMINATION OF DR. ALEXANDER KEBANG, THE ONLY
NOMINEE FROM THE NGAS NATIONAL OF PLATEAU STATE,
TO THE NATIONAL POLITICAL REFORM CONFERENCE**

We the undersigned, representing the various organs of the Ngas nation, the largest ethnic group in Plateau State, wish to draw attention to the unjust, undemocratic and unfair removal of the only nominated Ngas representative to the national political reform conference and the inconsistent patterns of marginalization of our people from national life.

For your information the Ngas people are indigenous of Pankshin and Kanke Local Governments of Plateau State as well as Bagoro and T/Balewa in Bauchi State. A larger number is in the Diaspora and found in settlements in Shendam, Kanam, Langtang North and South, Quan Pan, Mikamg, Wase and other LGAs in Plateau State. They are also settled in parts of Nassarawa, Taraba, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi (other than Bagoro and T/Balewa) and Kaduna States.

For quite a long time now, the Ngas nation, at home and the Diaspora, has watched with considerable apprehension the unrelenting campaign of marginalization waged against it by certain forces within the polity. The latest in a long line of such outrages is the inexplicable manner the name of an Ngas elder, Dr. Alexander Kebang, whose earlier nomination by the same Government as one of the six nominees to the National Dialogue was unceremoniously substituted in the final list released by the Federal Government.

We find it curious that although the Ngas is the largest ethnic group in Plateau State, none of the 10 delegates from the state whose nomination was published in the final list is a Ngas man or woman. We are aware that of the major weakness of the conference was the absence of a logical and democratic basis for representation but we never imagined that the process was designed to humiliate and insult the sensibilities of some ethnic nationalities. We had thought that the conveners of this conference would attempt to forge a semblance of equitable representation by ensuring that as many interests as possible are given as voice.

In a situation in which some ethnic groups are given more than the representation while others are completely left out is a travesty of justice.

The public has been led to believe that the national dialogue is aimed at fashioning our reformation of the political system but already we are beginning to wonder what the true agenda is. What good can come out of a reformation that has injustice and inequity as its foundations?

The dictum that in a democracy that majority should have its way while the minority should have its say, is true everywhere but in Plateau State. As it applies to the majority ethnic groups in the country, anyone who can read would have noticed the preponderance of the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo at the conference. We do not begrudge these groups their dominant position.

However, we do not understand why the yardstick is applied in reverse when it comes to Ngas people who constitute a clear majority in their own State!

According to the *Gazetteer of the Plateau Province (Nigeria)* compiled in 1932 and published by the Jos Native Administration in 1934, the population of the Ngas was clearly highest among all the ethnic groups domiciled on the Plateau (with jema'a Federation inclusive). This is the most authentic population census ever in Nigeria and conducted by the colonialists who were insulated from the ethnic and religious sentiments that have dogged the exercise since then

For reason of space we will publish only the top fifteen, as they appear in the order of numerical superiority:

1.	Angas (Ngas)	55,242
2.	Biom (Berom)	43,464
3.	Yergam (Taroh)	30,283
4.	Burum (Bogghom)	22,301
5.	Sura (Mwaghavul)	20,107
6.	Dimmuk (Doemak)	13,603
7.	Ankwe ((Goemai)	13,507
8.	Kwolla	13,417
9.	Montol (Tehl)	13,386
10.	Ron	13,120
11.	Jarawa	12,326
12.	Irigwe	12,059
13.	Rukuba	10,967
14.	Mirriam	10,917
15.	Chip (Mbishop)	10,127

This is how the groups stood as far back as 1932. Since they all live in a more or less contiguous environment, with more or less similar cultures and none is known to have been singularly devastated by an epidemic, it is assumed that progression has continued at equal pace. Those who want to rewrite history and invent their own population figures benefit from the on-going conspiracy to expunge questions about ethnicity and religious from our national head-counts. It is the same conspiracy that has distorted and continues to foist injustice on the Ngas people.

Or how could anybody justify the following composition of delegates for Plateau State.

- 1) Berom Delegates
 - i. Mrs. Iyode Pam (PDP north central)
 - ii. Senator John Wash Pam (State)
 - iii. Air Comm. Jonah Jang (State)
 - iv. Elizabeth Pam (Presidency) contest on PDP.
 - v. Mr. Adekunle Dogonyaro (RTD) (Presidency) Vision 2007 chair (State)
- out that the or platform for IBB presidency is the (NECA) (Presidency) remains the winning party.

- ii. Ambassador Yahaya kwande (State)
- 4) Mwaghavul Delegate – Barr. Danjuma Maina (State)
- 5) Jahr Delegate - Alhaji Yakubu Gambo (State)

When it was announced that each state was to send six delegates, the assumption was that their selection would be on the basis of the senatorial district. Since each state has three senatorial districts it boils down to selecting two from each. In the absence of any equitable criteria for the selection this appeared to be a reasonable mechanism. As the Plateau Central Senatorial further has two Federal Constituencies, all equable applications of this selective process would see one nominee selected from each of the Federal constituencies.

Since the Kanam-Kanke-Pankshin Federal Constituency already has a Kanam man as the Member of the House of Representatives, which eventually will deliberate on the Report of the Conference, fair play demanded that a delegate to the conference should come from either Kanke or Pankshin. That is why we hailed the initial nomination of Nde Alexander Kebang from Pankshin. The removal of his name from the final list was therefore as unfair as it was provocative. The people of this constituency have built bridges of fellowship with one another and a spirit of give and take in electing their leaders over years. The replacement of a Ngas man with a Jhar man is clearly intended to generate bad blood.

Whatever their agenda is, they will fail again as they had in the past. Our people will fight for justice and they will resist the divide and rule ploy of political fortune-seekers. It has been their trait to ride roughshod over the right of our people. That is why since the advent of democratic rule in 1999 the Ngas nation has been sidelined in spite of the enormous political goodwill these politicians have always enjoyed among our people.

Since 1999 our people have not enjoyed any appointment or amenity from the Federal government. The highest appointment given to an Ngas person during the first term of Mr. President was a membership of the Governing council, of a polytechnic. In contrast, other smaller ethnic groups in the state have enjoyed such portfolios as ministers, ambassadors, chairmanship of grade "A" federal parastatals, chief executive of companies and parastatals, etc. not once, not twice, but even thrice. All this injustice to a people who not only have the population but also the education and experience. Not only did the Ngas produce the first university graduate from the middle belt region but also have a surfeit of Ph. Ds and other skilled manpower. The replaced Dr. Alexander Kebang is an accomplished engineer and a Ph.D. holder.

The Ngas people have earned the respect and admiration of other Nigerians by their selfless service in preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. At the most critical period of her history, they not only provided the nation with the leadership but also the fighting forces to keep Nigeria one, General Yakubu Gowon served as Nigeria's wartime Head of State and after the Civil War the declared there was "no victor, no vanquished" setting the foundation of a peaceful, united, stable and prosperous nation. This policy has gone into history books as the most humane post-war programme ever since President Abraham Lincoln ended the American civil war. In so doing Gowon merely followed the Ngas tradition of humane conduct and care for fellow human beings.

Another Ngas man, the late Joseph Dechi Gomwalk, the governor of the then Benue Plateau State, also exhibited this exemplary leadership style contemporaneously. Gomwalk is regarded as the founding father of modern Plateau State. A man of unequal vision and energy, he is not only credited with establishment of the basic infrastructure of the state, but he also imbued the Plateau people with a sense of self-determination within the Federation.

These are not people to be treated with such degree of levity; the President out to seek immediate ways to address this injustice. With all its imperfection we have hope the conference would provide our people with a platform to address our marginalization. Sadly even this has been denied us. However, we wish to make it abundantly clear that enough is enough. We shall no longer tolerate being rubbished in a country for which we have made so much sacrifice.

We can only believe this conference is without a hidden agenda if your government begin to address the marginalization of our people. Let Dr. Kebang, along with other Ngas sons and daughters, take their rightful position in our country.

**Long Live the Ngas Naion!
Long Live Plateau State!!
Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!!!**

SIGNED

NDE JUSTICE I. S. GOFWEN
Chairman, Ngas Elders' Forum

NDE ARCH. SIM LONGSONG
National President, Ngas Dev. Association

MR. ILIYA G. LAR
National President, Ngas Youth Movement

HON. MASCHACH CHINDABA
MEMBER, PLATEAU STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

HON. GAMBO MBILAMUT
Member, Plateau State House of Assembly

Trust International

Asia

Avalanche claims 146 in Kashmir

More than 146 people are dead and 300 people were missing in Kashmir as avalanches over the weekend swept away hundreds of homes in the heaviest snowfall in two decades, officials said yesterday.

Rescuers found more bodies, including those of

children and old people in villages smashed by walls of snow in the worst-hit southern part of Kashmir.

Many other villages remained inaccessible because of the weather, said the state chief minister Mufti Mohammad Syed.

"The government is trying its best to reduce the miseries of people who are in grip of the worst-ever natural disaster in recent memory," he said in a statement.

Officials expect the death toll to rise as rescuers reach remote villages.

Indian military helicopters

dropped food packets on Tuesday to soldiers and civilians stranded on a snowbound mountain highway which connects the Kashmir Valley with the rest of India.

Some 300 people, mostly soldiers, were inside the 2.5 km long Jawahar tunnel on the highway where they had taken shelter from heavy snowfall and avalanches late last week.

Fresh vegetables were flown to Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar where residents have complained of shortages of cooking gas, vegetables and milk.

US embassy gets new information officer

The United States embassy in Abuja has appointed a new information officer in the person of Dr. Rudolph Stewart.

Dr. Stewart, before his recent appointment was a public research officer in sub-Saharan Africa based in Washington.

During a familiarisation visit to *Daily Trust* head office in Abuja, he said the embassy would like to forge stronger ties with *Daily Trust*, saying the newspaper is unique and balance.

By Jibrin Abubakar, Reporter (Foreign desk)

He said the embassy will like to use the opportunity of the good relations to enlighten Nigerians about the US foreign policy.

In his response, Media Trust, Editor-in-Chief, Malam Kabiru Yusuf said the Media Trust is the only private National Newspaper from Abuja and hopes to grow an endure.

"We believe in democracy and the unity of Nigeria" he said.

Speaking on the editorial policy of the paper, the

Editor-in-Chief said Media Trust pursues a liberal editorial policy.



Dr. Rudolph E. Stewart

N/Korea gives conditions for talks

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has told a visiting Chinese envoy that his country will return to six-party nuclear talks if the conditions are right and the US shows sincerity.

The official KCNA news agency said on yesterday that Kim told Wang Jiarui, head of the Chinese Communist Party's international liaison department, that the North had never opposed the talks and is committed to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

"We will go to the negotiating table anytime if there are mature conditions for the six-party talks thanks to the concerted efforts of the parties concerned in the future," KCNA quoted Kim as saying.

He expressed hope that the US would show "trustworthy sincerity and move", KCNA said.

Pyongyang explicitly declared for the first time on 10 February that it possessed nuclear weapons and pulled out of the six-party talks, attended by the two Koreas, China, Russia, the US and Japan.

The six parties had previously met for three rounds of talks aimed at ending Pyongyang's nuclear programme in return for aid and security guarantees, but a planned fourth round never materialised.

North Korea has said recent statements by US President George Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice labelling it as one of "the outposts of tyranny" proved Washington's hostility and its designs to overthrow its government.



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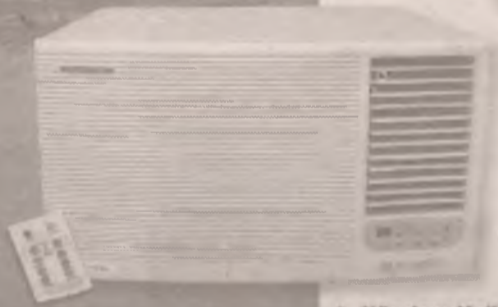
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Activities marking the
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of Intercity Bank Plc.
Held on the 10th February,
2005 in Kastina state.



The Executive Governor of Kastina State, Alh. Umaru Musa Yar'adua making his remarks at the Pre - AGM Dinner at the conference hall of Kastina State secretariat.



The Executive Governor, Chairman and a Director of Intercity Bank Plc., at the Pre - AGM Dinner.



Some of the bank's staff pose for a snapshot at the Pre - AGM Dinner.



Chairman of the Board, Alh. Falalu Bello making his speech at the Annual General Meeting.



A cross section of the Directors at the 15th Annual General Meeting.



Company secretary, Alh. Saidu Jallo reading the notice of meeting.



Cross section of share holders at the AGM.



Sitting at the front row are some members of the Management team.



Share holders during a voting session.



Chairman Alh. Falalu Bello and the MD Alh. Lamis S. Dikko at the AGM.



Management Staff during the AGM (from left, Mr. Ilori and Syed Asad Ali).



Cross section of the Press at the AGM.



The Chairman addressing the press after the AGM.



Cross section of the Directors.



Directors during a courtesy visit to the Emir of Kastina; His Royal Highness, Alh. (Dr.) Muhammad Kabir Usman.



Koroso Dancers performing during the Pre - AGM.

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Abuja, Abuja CBD, Abu, Asokunda, Azikiwe Road (PH), Apapa, Apapa Wharf, ATBU, Azare, Bauchi, Benin, Bridgehead, Birnin-Kebbi, Bujuru, Bwari, Calabar, Damaturu, Dutse, Gusu, Gombe, Ibrahim Taiwo (Kano), Ilesha, Ikorodu, Ibadan, Jos, Kaduna, Kaduna South, Kala Kiri, Kiri Kiri, Lagos, Lafia, Maiduguri, Murtala Mohammed Way (Kano), Monday Market (Maiduguri), Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Opebi, Owerri, Oshana, Potiskum, Rumuomai (PH), Sabon Gari, TinCan Island, Uyo, Victoria Island, Warri.

Business Trust

Finance

Today's flight schedule

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

Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.

Chartered Bank to merge with 2 others

The managing director of Chartered Bank Plc, Mr. Moses Adedoyin has disclosed that his bank has plans to merge with two other banks, after his bank's 2.4 billion ordinary shares which opened on Monday, February 21, 2005.

Adedoyin who revealed this in an interview with *Business Trust* in Lagos did not, however, name the two banks, but said that because

Stories from Bright Ewulu, Deputy Business Editor (Lagos)

of the complex nature of mergers and acquisitions (M&As) banks share core values with Chartered Bank Plc.

He said because of the nascent nature of M&As in the Nigerian business environment, the consolidation securities is bound to have some hiccups as a result, but added that

when the environment learns more about the process it will become part of the system.

The Chartered Bank boss was however optimistic that the banking industry will deliver on expected outcome as regards to the recapitalisation deadline, saying that as far as he was concerned the industry is on its way to achieving about 95 per cent success.

Said he: "Infact I can

assure you that we are already adjusting. And as per that deadline, I believe that Nigerian banks are on the way to achieving 95 per cent success out of 100 per cent."

On the bank's offer, Adedoyin stated that the share price of the offer is very competitive and that it was deliberate as the bank want it at a rate that is affordable to potential local and foreign investors.

He stressed that the offer is very attractive as the bank has always been investors friendly, and is bound to derive a lot of values for the potential shareholders.

He noted in clear terms that his management team is aware of the fact that investors have their sight on value and that the funds they are seeking from the capital market would be efficiently applied to the benefits of shareholders.

Ten Nigerian banks were the most active stocks for January 2005 on the floor of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), even as the exchange recorded a turnover of 1.57 billion shares worth N14.70 billion in 69,356

10 banks dominate January transactions in NSE

deals.

The turnover record was lower than the 2.29 billion shares valued at N16.31 billion exchanged in December 2004 in 77,557

deals.

The top ten banks stated above include UBA Plc (210.9m), First Atlantic Bank Plc (137.47 million), Universal Trust Bank Plc (99.45 million),

NAL Bank Plc (86.40 million), EIB Bank Plc (81.50 million).

Others include IMB Bank Plc (76.79 million), Chartered Bank Plc (75.24 million), Union Bank Nigeria Plc (68.13 million), Access Bank Plc (65.87 million) and Gulf Bank Plc (48.60 million).

It should be recalled that the turnover for January include 4.1 million units of 1st Cross River State Floating Rate Redeemable Ranch Development Bond with N351.81 million and 1.5 million units of federal government Revenue Bond 2006 valued at N1.5 billion.

UBA Plc emerged the

most active stock in the period, the banking sub-sector accounted for 81.56 per cent of the months total turnover value.

Also, the market capitalisation of listed securities closed, the period at N2.05 trillion, a decrease by 2.84 per cent from N2.11 trillion recorded at the end of December.

According to the exchange, Nigerian Breweries Plc remains the most capitalised stock for the period in review with a market cap of N264.68 billion. Guinness Nigeria Plc came second with N125.07 billion.

'Private banking most profitable in Nigeria'

In spite of the growing popularity of retail and consumer banking in the financial sector, the principal manager research and development, Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Mr. Charles Ughela said that private banking is still the most profitable in Nigeria.

Ughela, who stated this in a seminar paper presented in Benin and made available to *Business Trust* in Lagos, said facts on ground show that 80 per cent of earnings of banks come from 20 per cent of their customer base said he: "In general, about 20 per cent of customers usually account for around 80 per cent of a company's earnings."

"To put it succinctly, private banking as a profitable service avenue. Little wonder many banks have

embraced it in Nigeria," he said.

Despite the above position, the CIBN Chief posited that its difficult, however to launch such a service or product, even as it's also challenging to sustain it in the market place.

According to him "private banking is not an event, it is a process of fulfilling both the needs and wants of customers, and meeting the expectations of the bank management and promoters.

"If the operators constantly address the inherent challenges, private banking may well be the mark of difference between one bank and the others," he stressed.

Nevertheless, it an obvious fact that many Nigerian banks are currently moving away from more private banking to a more

Frontier Funds nets N26.6m profit

The Frontier funds have declared a net profit of N26.6 million in the 2004 financial year. The fund has NAL Bank Plc as manager and First Trustees Nigeria Ltd as the trustee.

The chairman, Ayoola Otudeko in the Annual Report and Accounts, stressed that he was overwhelmed by the fact that the fund broke even in less than four months of its operation.

He disclosed, during the annual general meeting held in Lagos that the initial floatation cost which was about 7.34 per cent of the offer proceeds were effectively recovered just within four months, saying that its post offer price of N92.66 closed at 103.48 as at June 30, 2004.

This, he posited in the event graced by NAL CEO, Ben Akabueze, represents a return of 11 per cent although it fell below the 22 per cent return by the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) in the period in review.

Going further, he stated that "the manager, in

consultation with the trustees, has proposed that the fund should distribute an amount of N3.50 per unit, payable to unit holders registered in the fund's book as at close of business on January 28, 2005.

On the funds investment modalities, he said that as at 2004 June, the fund had 72 per cent of its assets invested in quoted equities and 28 per cent in money market securities.

Looking into the future, he declared that the fund intends to aim at growth sectors of the economy in order to tap into the opportunities offered by the ongoing economic reform process of the government.

He revealed plans by the fund to issue units of the fund in whole and fractions to enhance flexibility in subscription handling.

On the initial public offer held last year, he disclosed that additional subscriptions of 232,870 units were received post offer, while another 60,700 units were redeemed within the period ended June 30, 2004.



CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA TENDER NOTICE

NIGERIAN TREASURY BILLS

Notice is hereby given by the Central Bank of Nigeria that 91-day Federal Government of Nigeria Treasury Bills amounting to N40,054,534,000 will be issued by an auction-based system on Thursday, 03/03/2005.

Interested Authorised Dealers (Commercial/Merchant Banks, Designated Discount Houses and Brokers) are invited to submit tenders to reach the Issues Office, Central Bank of Nigeria, Lagos, not later than 1.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 01/03/2005.

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

Tenders for the Bills should be submitted on the prescribed printed forms in duplicate and in sealed envelopes clearly marked "TENDER FOR BILLS." The result of the tender will be announced before the close of business on Wednesday 02/03/2005. The Bank reserves the right to reject any tender in part or in full.

Allotment letters will be issued to successful tenderers on Thursday, 03/03/2005. Payment in full for the amount of the accepted tenders must be made to the Central Bank of Nigeria not later than 1.30 p.m. on the issue date 03/03/2005. This will normally be effected by direct debit to the accounts of the affected Authorised Dealers which should ensure that their accounts with the Bank are adequately funded for this purpose.

Issues Office
CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA
Tinubu Square
Lagos.

Business Trust

Maritime

River Niger dredging contract: EFCC recovers N660m from banks

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has recovered N600 million from four banks that stood as guarantors to six contractors handling the lower River Niger dredging contract.

The contract which was handled by the erstwhile Petroleum Trust (special) Fund was awarded to the six contractors at a total sum of N8.5 billion in 1998 and an advance sum of N2 billion was paid for the commencement of the project.

Specifically, Westminster Dredging and Marine Limited (LOT 1) was awarded contract of N1.5 billion and got an advance payment of N420 million, both Nigerian Dredging and Marine Limited (LOT 2) and Ham Dredging (Nigeria) Limited (LOT 3) were awarded contract of N660 million and N699 million and got N176 million and N171 million respectively.

The others are Julius Berger (Nigeria) Plc awarded contract of N1.1 billion got advance payment of N289 million, Tayaso Dredging and Construction Limited (LOT 5A) N2.6 billion got advance of N400 million and Giorgio Dredging Nigeria Limited (LOT 5B) awarded contract of N1.8 billion got N575 million.

Unfortunately, however, the contract did not commence up till 1999 when President Olusegun Obasanjo approved the transfer of these projects under the erstwhile PTF to the relevant ministries and parastatals following the winding up of the fund in October 2000.

The lower River Niger Dredging contract having the national Inland Waterways Authority NIWA as its beneficiary was then transferred to the authority.

All efforts to move the project forward failed as the common claim by the bankers/guarantors was that they had disbursed the advance sums to the contractors irrespective of the fact that the actual contract had commenced or not, as stipulated in the terms contained in the various guarantee instruments.

They further claimed that their clients/contractors had mobilised to site following PTF's directives to do so at an agreed sum for idle time spent on the site.

On the strength of this gloomy atmosphere, the contract

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

was revoked with a presidential directive for the recovery of all sums guaranteed by the various banks.

It was gathered that some of the contractors had actually mobilised to site and thereby incurred some expenses which justified considerable deductibles from the advance payment made in each case but some never mobilised at all.

Series of letters were written to the banks but only a number of unfavourable response were received hence the matter was transferred to the EFCC as the attitude of the banks and companies does not depict appreciation of federal government's efforts.

According to an impeccable source, all the purported payments to the contractors by the banks should have only been made upon receipt by the banks of certificate of performance from PTF or NIWA.

The source added that all payments released by the banks to the contractors for procurement purposes or idle time claims, were not within the purview of the government contemplation.

Some of the bankers/guarantors include Merchant Banking Corporation (Nigeria) Limited Ikoyi Lagos, Guaranty Trust Bank Plc, Victoria Island Lagos, FSB International Bank Plc, Ikoyi Lagos and Standard Trust Bank Limited Wuse II, Cadastral Zone A8, FCT, Abuja.

The claim or recovery sought now is in the sum of N2,034 billion plus all accrued interest from the time deposit was made

to date.

Consequently, federal government has directed the intervention of both the Central Bank of Nigeria CBN and the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation of the federal ministry of finance in the matter.

Japaul floats maritime stock soon

Maritime Stock will soon be available to the general public to buy as Japaul Oil and Maritime Services Plc Thursday in Lagos held its completion board meeting in a bid to raise N1.320 billion.

The completion board meeting is a prelude to the opening of initial public offer of N2.20 kobo per share for sale to the general public from 28th February 2005.

Japaul is the first maritime company to be listed on the Stock Exchange Market and operate presently in the oil and gas sector. Their services include oil field marine services, building, leasing, selling and maintaining marine vessels.

According to Mr Paul Jegede, MD/CEO of the company, the purpose of the offer is to enable the company build adequate capacity to profitably explore the business opportunities in the Nigerian Maritime industry offered by the recently promulgated cabotage law and local content policy in the oil and gas industry.

The application for the offer which is for a minimum of 500 ordinary shares and in multiples of 100 ordinary shares thereafter must be paid in full on application.

The financial performance of the company shows a clear

No fewer than seventy-eight bullet-proof patrol boats estimated to cost about \$65 million acquired by the federal government is being expected to arrive the country soon.

According to an impeccable source, the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has been allocated six patrol boats, the Nigeria Army (NA) twenty-five boats, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) 30 boats, the Nigerian Navy

FG acquires 78 patrol boats for \$65m

(NN), fifteen boats and the National Inland Waterways Authority NIWA 12 bullet proof-patrol boats.

The patrol boats are to be engaged to effectively secure Nigeria 8,000 kilometres waterways from the menace of smugglers and pipeline vandals.

The boats are meant for logistic support for the security agencies to combat illegal oil

bunkering, smuggling pipeline vandalism and piracy particularly in the restive Niger-Delta area where the nation loses billions of naira to these illegal activities.

The approval to get the patrol boats was given by President Olusegun Obasanjo sometime around March last year. There are however, some disparities in terms of specialisation of the patrol boats to be acquired. The boats are expected in the country any moment from now.

According to sources, the 78 patrol boats would cost the government a total sum of \$65 million which has already been paid to the suppliers.

A break down of how the \$65 million was sourced revealed that the NNPC contributed \$50 million, the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) \$10 million and the National Maritime Authority (NMA) \$5 million altogether \$65 million.

Specifically, the sum of \$6.384 million was earmarked for NCS to get 6 patrol boats; NN \$9.675 million for 15 boats, NA has \$25 million for 25 patrol boats, the NPF got \$8.75 million for 12 bullet-proof patrol boats.

business will not disappear tomorrow, they are always there 'we want to build a business that will span over many generation with enviable results that will command world attention.

"We are not doing guess work, we know where we are going and we know how to get there. The amount we are raising now is sufficient for the next level of growth we want to achieve.

"the investor that will put in his money now will be very lucky because the wealth we shall be creating for the shareholders in the next three years will be amazing because of the huge returns we shall be tuning in," Mr Jegede said.

Shippers council boss stresses need for commission

Chief executive, Nigeria Shippers Council, Captain Adamu Audu Biu has reiterated the need for a National Shipper's Commission in order to ensure compliance to set standards in the industry.

Captain Biu who was speaking at an interactive forum with stakeholders, in Jos, noted that "we don't have power to sanction anybody, we cannot force anybody to comply with any laid down rules."

He said if the Shippers commission is established, it would give the council muscle, and it would in turn be able to protect players in the industry.

Speaking on the Jos Island container port, he stated that before the end of this year, it should take off.

He said they are in the process of submitting it to the federal executive council and wait for government. Captain Biu noted as enormous, the impact of the port would have on the state and nation, pledging that

From Rakiya Muhammed Correspondent (Jos)

they would try their best to make sure it takes off in not too distant future.

The shippers council chief executive had before the executive session paid a courtesy call on the Plateau Governor, Chief Joshua Dariye and commended the state government for its effort towards ensuring the take off of the dry inland container port and the assistance of the Jos zonal office of the shippers council.

Chief Dariye while responding, said the state government has released N10 million as compensation to land owners in readiness for the take off of the Jos container port at Heipang near jos, Plateau State.

The governor who was represented by his deputy, Chief Michael Bot-mang, stressed the determination of the present administration in the state to provide the necessary backing for the take off of the port in Jos.

Rep assures of Calabar port dredging

The Calabar seaport will be dredged this year to accommodate bigger vessels, Chairman House of Representative committee on marine operation, Hon. Emeka Ihedioha has disclosed.

Speaking during a visit to the Calabar port complex the house committee on marine, Hon. Ihedioha stated that the decision to do the dredging came on the heels of the inclusion in this year's appropriation bill submitted to the federal executive council for assent.

He stated that when dredged,

From Bassey Ita, Correspondent (Uyo)

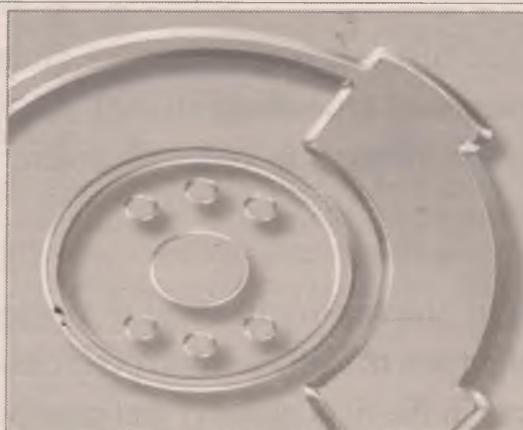
the Port will make way for ocean going vessels.

Hon Ihedioha also disclosed that arrangements have been concluded to handover all Ports in the country to private concerns.

The handover, according to the lawmaker, is to allow for efficiency and effectiveness in the management of the ports saying that government will only provide the enabling environment for the economy to thrive.

The committee was on a tour of formation within its purview.

C



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Business Trust

International

Blair commission commits £6m to poverty eradication

The six million pounds set aside by United Kingdom, through Blair commission for Africa would be committed to poverty alleviation efforts in the continent.

This revelation was made by the commissioner of the commission, Mr. Fola Adeola in Lagos when it was hosted by the institute of directors, Nigeria.

According to Adeola, the commission made up of 17 persons, nine Africans and eight non-Africans will expend the above sum on security, health and trade.

Speaking last week however, the president of IOD, Benedicta Molokwu said there is need to ensure that there are no negative strings attached in the whole effort.

Adeola had told his hosts that the commission is pres-



Tony Blair

World airlines spend \$1.6bn on missing baggage

World airlines spend as much as \$1.6 billion a year on mishandled baggage, a company that provides computer-tracking technology to the industry said yesterday.

The main factors causing a bag to fail to arrive with its owner at the intended destination are growing passenger numbers and tighter security, said SITA Inc., a Geneva-based company owned by the air transport industry.

"Keeping track of the billions of pieces of baggage transported around the world annually has become a major challenge," the company said.

SITA estimates that it costs the industry an average of \$87.50 when a bag fails to show up on time. Even though the percentage of mishandled bags is only 0.7 percent, the total cost mounts quickly.

"Disgruntled passengers, important security concerns and the high cost of inefficient baggage handling are critical issues," said Catherine Mayer, SITA's vice president of airport services.

The company said widely used luggage labels that are imprinted with bar codes have done much to improve baggage management, but "statistics show that stricter security screening procedures in many countries are prompting a new rise in the number of mishandled bags."

From Bright Ewulu, Deputy Business Editor (Lagos)

ently reaching out to civil society and groups in Africa in order to obtain their inputs in the report it hopes to send back to London before the next G-8 meeting.

He said that since the economic situation in Africa is that in which Africans consume what they do not produce and produce what they

do not consume, non-reciprocal trade concession for African countries may be needed.

In her remarks, Molokwu canvassed the need to support Nigeria's small and medium industries given the fact that they are the engine room of the economy, the need to transform its agricultural and health sectors, and improve Africa's tax system.

Oil prices rise to \$50

Oil prices climbed more than a dollar to near \$50 a barrel yesterday, bolstered by a late bout of cold winter weather in Europe and the United States and a sharp decline in the dollar versus other currencies.

US crude oil jumped \$1.22 cents to \$49.57 a barrel, the highest level since Jan. 27. NYMEX April futures rose by \$1.21 cents to \$50.22 a barrel.

Prices are up sharply from last year's average \$41.48 a barrel, but off the contract's peak of \$55.67 in October.

Brent crude traded in London gained 95 cents to \$47.68 a barrel after rising 39 cents on Monday, when the US market was shut for a holiday.

"It's because of the cold weather and (because) Brent closed up yesterday," said John Brady at Abn Amro in New York.

Cold weather on both sides of the Atlantic has helped stir late-winter demand for heat-

ing oil, giving fresh uplift to prices since US inventories of the fuel are still quite low.

Europe is set to be colder than normal next week while the US Northeast is just emerging from an unseasonably chilly weekend, weather data shows.

Support also came from a further sharp decline in the dollar, which fell to a five-week low against the euro and eased against the yen (click on).

"The dollar moved sharply overnight and oil is following it. If the dollar continues to weaken oil will be obviously higher," said Chris Furness, senior market strategist at forecast.

"We do see the dollar continuing to weaken. So oil could be back to above \$50 (a barrel) within a couple of weeks even without any major moves," he added.

Weather conditions in both Europe and the United States are expected to moderate soon, which would prompt the market to refocus on stockpiles of US crude and gasoline, currently running 7-9 percent above last year's levels.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is keeping a close watch on global stockpiles to ensure that an overly large build does not send prices spiralling lower when demand eases after the northern winter.

Saudi oil minister, Ali al-Naimi said on Monday world oil stockpiles should not build too fast in the second quarter as this would bring down oil prices.

"The commercial inventories are today at 51 days and this is a good level according to oil market fundamentals, and we do not expect inventories to build up beyond 52 days in the second quarter as this would directly affect oil prices," Naimi said in comments carried on the state news agency SPA.

OPEC has said it would consider inventories in industrialized nations at 56 days of forward demand cover as excessive and would trigger discussion of supply cuts. The producer group meets on March 16 in Iran.

OPEC's monthly oil market report last week projected that if supply stayed at current levels it would exceed demand by up to 1.4 million barrels per day during the second quarter this year.

A cartel source said on Monday that OPEC would consider this level of stockbuild within the normal range.

NATIONAL AUDIT OF SKILLS & COMPETENCIES



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ADVERTORIAL

AUDIT OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY: COLLECTION OF DATA FROM THE FIELD

PREAMBLE

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF), in collaboration with the Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association (NECA), has commenced the earlier advertised Audit of Current and Future Skills and Competency. Requirements in the Nigerian economy. The aim of the Audit is to identify the core Skills and Competencies that will be required now and in the future in industry and commerce in particular, and the economy in general, for the attention of the stakeholders.

We are now commencing the field stage of the exercise, which will include the following:

- * Visit by enumerators to public and private Sector organizations;
- * Call for Memoranda from selected Professional Bodies;
- * Commissioning of Concept Papers.

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

A team of enumerators under the supervision of zonal coordinators spread within the six (6) Geopolitical Zones, will be administering and retrieving the questionnaires. In addition, the six (6) Zonal Coordinators under the supervision of the National Coordinator will be conducting interviews with selected stakeholders.

We, therefore, wish to use this medium to solicit for the utmost cooperation of recipients of Questionnaires, Concepts paper and Memoranda writers in order to ensure the success of this exercise.

We can only reduce unemployment and promote employability if the right sets of skills and competencies are identified and produced in the right quantity and quality.

Join us to develop the nation!

Announcer

ITF-NECA

Business Trust

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2005

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(N)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED				
THE OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	21	16.77	106,879	1,801,061.60
PRESCO PLC.	21	11.46	65,784	793,220.73
Sector Totals	42		172,663	2,594,282.33
AIRLINES				
AVIATION DEVELOPMENT COMPANY PLC.	2	1.00	7,100	7,100.00
Sector Totals	2		7,100	7,100.00
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC.	26	2.00	291,177	581,188.86
R. T. BRISCOAE PLC.	4	6.52	2,566	16,330.32
Sector Totals	30		293,743	597,519.18
BANKING				
ACCESS BANK PLC	13	3.42	628,415	2,149,179.30
AERIBANK NIGERIA PLC.	18	6.63	199,505	1,322,718.15
CHARTERED BANK PLC	1	3.90	6,153	23,996.70
COOPERATIVE BANK PLC.	5	1.92	245,780	471,897.60
EIB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	1	2.26	80,000	180,800.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	507	23.78	1,369,659	31,912,816.48
FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	30	1.40	1,064,285	1,478,439.28
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC.	262	10.50	4,124,200	42,567,007.22
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC	8	0.62	267,700	165,974.00
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC.	28	0.55	2,176,174	1,238,945.19
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	15	1.33	1,915,966	2,548,234.78
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC.	4	7.81	12,550	98,015.50
LIBERTY MERCHANT BANK	2	0.80	11,000	8,760.00
LION BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	11	0.68	240,498	163,538.64
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC.	5	1.21	62,270	74,649.50
NAL BANK PLC.	18	2.80	129,950	363,860.00
OCEANIC BANK PLC	6	4.25	57,889	246,028.25
OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	28	1.68	761,323	1,231,322.12
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC	15	7.41	158,826	1,176,900.66
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	2	1.62	401,748	650,831.76
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC.	29	10.00	244,916	2,449,160.00
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC.	334	19.77	1,235,199	24,589,607.18
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	12	0.76	672,720	507,448.98
WEMA BANK PLC.	4	3.93	174,730	686,688.90
ZENITH BANK PLC	218	13.52	3,144,572	42,380,453.94
Sector Totals	1,576		19,386,028	158,687,274.13
BREWERIES				
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC.	186	99.79	1,627,889	159,987,482.99
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC.	440	38.50	1,071,196	41,418,499.48
Sector Totals	626		2,699,085	201,405,982.47
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHAKA CEMENT PLC.	69	23.50	441,774	10,336,132.05
CEMENT COM. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	11	7.80	44,807	338,261.42
WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC.	43	10.50	252,593	2,686,899.72
Sector Totals	123		739,174	13,361,293.19
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
BERGER PAINTS PLC.	21	4.75	210,292	1,002,148.00
CAP PLC.	3	7.00	3,720	26,040.00
D. N. MEYER PLC.	5	5.00	6,834	34,170.00
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC.	10	4.20	26,794	111,545.10
Sector Totals	39		247,640	1,173,903.10
CONGLOMERATES				
A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC.	4	1.00	131,444	129,526.24
C F A O NIGERIA PLC.	11	5.60	39,476	219,853.40
JOHN HOLT PLC.	3	0.80	79,128	66,161.44
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	138	15.80	1,109,341	17,683,636.20
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC.	75	12.90	926,236	12,005,812.46
U.A.C.NIGERIA PLC.	59	14.17	478,272	6,777,114.24
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC.	8	1.16	26,031	29,694.41
Sector Totals	298		2,789,928	36,911,798.39
CONSTRUCTION				
G. CAPPA PLC.	1	2.23	2,500	5,575.00
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC.	1	14.51	3,850	55,863.50
Sector Totals	2		6,350	61,438.50
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY				
NIGERIAN WIRE AND CABLE PLC.	8	0.84	50,000	42,920.00
Sector Totals	8		50,000	42,920.00
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
7-UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC	26	24.50	21,053	510,137.07
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	144	56.50	205,606	11,656,881.26
FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC.	27	16.61	116,751	1,939,234.11
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC.	52	54.00	104,787	5,654,528.85
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC.	63	144.96	104,821	15,175,576.58
Sector Totals	312		553,018	34,936,357.87
HEALTHCARE				
EKOCORP PLC.	6	0.64	147,857	94,628.48
EVANS MEDICAL PLC.	11	3.33	96,990	308,412.44
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	4	5.05	96,839	489,396.95
MORISON INDUSTRIES PLC.	1	1.08	2,000	2,160.00
NEIMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC.	18	3.47	156,302	524,411.81
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC	19	8.90	58,212	511,988.00
Sector Totals	59		558,200	1,930,997.68
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC.	2	0.94	70,000	65,800.00
B.O.C. GASES PLC.	6	2.84	36,323	99,769.25
VITAFOAM NIGERIA PLC.	22	3.12	195,128	600,614.26
Sector Totals	30		301,451	766,183.51
INSURANCE				
ACEN INSURANCE COMPANY PLC	1	0.60	15,000	9,000.00
AIICO INSURANCE PLC.	4	2.01	54,350	109,243.50
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC.	10	1.40	135,100	189,140.00
CRUSADER INSURANCE PLC.	1	1.11	22,400	24,864.00
LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC	2	1.51	26,000	39,260.00
N.E.M. INSURANCE CO. (NIG.) PLC.	2	0.76	26,600	20,280.00
NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC.	16	2.88	137,600	394,356.24
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC.	9	3.45	14,362	49,298.90
STANDARD ALLIANCE INSURANCE	2	0.96	25,000	24,000.00
UNIC INSURANCE PLC.	3	0.93	60,500	56,265.00
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC.	4	2.84	56,000	156,240.00
Sector Totals	54		572,912	1,071,947.64
MANAGED FUNDS				
C & I LEASING PLC.	13	1.40	389,250	552,715.00
Sector Totals	13		389,250	552,715.00
PACKAGING				
NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC	11	1.66	107,506	178,460.44
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC.	3	3.87	35,200	136,264.00
Sector Totals	14		142,706	314,724.44
PETROLEUM(MARKETING)				
AFROIL PLC.	3	0.78	11,500	8,970.00
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC.	126	63.40	302,674	19,264,115.32
ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC.	15	2.04*	692,500	1,412,700.00
MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC.	44	183.00	54,600	9,907,304.16
CONOIL PLC.	86	118.99	56,371	6,706,030.95
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC.	18	160.00	8,710	1,386,024.98
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC	35	184.00	30,660	5,602,673.48
OANDO PLC.	153	93.50	155,597	14,736,405.82
Sector Totals	480		1,312,612	59,024,224.71
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
LONGMAN NIGERIA PLC.	3	2.11	5,000	10,200.00
Sector Totals	3		5,000	10,200.00
REAL ESTATE				
UACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC.	38	8.75	191,706	1,695,799.47
Sector Totals	38		191,706	1,695,799.47
TEXTILES				
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC.	22	2.28	143,071	307,571.48
Sector Totals	22		143,071	307,571.48
Overall Totals	3,771		30,561,637	515,451,233.00

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
FSB	1,064,285.00	1,478,439.28	30
NB	1,071,196.00	41,418,499.48	440
LEVBROS	1,109,341.00	17,683,636.20	138
UBN	1,235,199.00	24,589,607.18	334
FIRSTBANK	1,369,659.00	31,912,816.48	507
GUINNESS	1,627,889.00	159,987,482.99	186
INLANDBANK	1,915,966.00	2,548,234.78	15
IMB	2,176,174.00	1,238,945.19	28
ZENITHBANK	3,144,572.00	42,380,453.94	218
GUARANTY	4,124,200.00	42,567,007.22	262

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
MOBIL	180.06	183.00	+2.94
NESTLE	142.03	144.96	+2.93
TOTAL	181.20	184.00	+2.80
FIRSTBANK	23.20	23.78	+0.58
ASHAKACEM	23.05	23.50	+0.45
SKBEECHAM	8.50	8.90	+0.40
CCNN	7.45	7.80	+0.35
7UP	24.15	24.50	+0.35
NBC	53.70	54.00	+0.30
OKOMUOIL	16.50	16.77	+0.27

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAY'SCLOSE	CHANGE
UNIPETROL	96.50	93.50	-3.00
NOLCHEM	120.21	118.99	-1.22
AP	64.20	63.40	-0.80
PRESCO	12.00	11.46	-0.54
PZ	13.40	12.90	-0.50
CADBURY	57.00	56.50	-0.50
LEVBROS	16.20	15.80	-0.40
NB	38.85	38.50	-0.35
OCEANIC	4.47	4.25	-0.22
DELTGLAS	4.07	3.87	-0.20

Economists forecast better future for US

The world's biggest economy is poised to "motor ahead" during 2005 and largely ride out some likely "potholes" presented by twin deficits, but fresh interest rate hikes loom on the road ahead, a panel of top US business economists thinks.

US gross domestic product (GDP) total economic output was forecast to grow 3.6 percent in 2005, albeit at a slower pace than the 4.4 percent expansion notched up in 2004, said a National Association of Business Economists (NABE) panel.

"Our forecasters expect the economy to motor ahead at a solid pace, despite potential potholes presented by our twin deficits," said Carl Tannenbaum, chairman of the NABE Outlook Survey and chief economist at LaSalle Bank in Chicago.

"While the fiscal and trade issues that face the country could have a significant impact in the long run, they do not appear to be hindering our short-term economic performance," Tannenbaum observed.

The panel of 37 top business economists expects the US budget deficit to fall to 386 billion dollars in fiscal year 2005 compared to 2004's projected 412 billion.

On the trade front, "a further deterioration" is expected and imports are seen exceeding exports "by a record-breaking 615 billion in 2005."

Rising interest rates, geopolitical uncertainty and "corporate caution" were cited as "hindrances" that could affect the country's economic engine.

The panel expects the Federal Reserve to raise its key federal funds rate the main rate used for interbank loans to 3.5 percent by year-end 2005 from its current pegging of 2.5 percent.

The expected fresh rate hikes are seen applying a slight brake to home sales.

"Housing starts are expected to decline from 2004's sizzling 1.9 million level to a still respectable 1.8 million in 2005," the top economists predicted.

Dollar drops to one-month low against Euro

The dollar hit a one-month low against the euro on reports that the South Korean central bank the Euro surged to 1.3185 dollars from 1.3060 late on Monday in New York, after breaching the symbolic 1.31 dollar level.

The dollar slid to 104.07 yen from 105.50 on Monday.

The US currency "has weakened substantially overnight with the euro trading at its highest level since January 13" ahead of a US consumer confidence report for February, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi analyst Derek Halpenny said.

The dollar was under pressure as the South Korean central bank said Monday it wanted to switch more of its reserves to non-dollar holdings to increase the rate of return on investments.

"The news that apparently triggered the dollar selling is ... that the central bank stated in parliament that it would diversify some of its 200.2 billion dollars' worth of reserves into higher yielding securities and other currencies," Halpenny said.

The central bank comments might have only referred to "ongoing diversification to maintain the balance between dollar and non-dollar holdings," he added.

The South Korean won currency jumped to the highest point against the greenback since November 1997 Tuesday and closed at 1,006.10 to the dollar, up from Monday's close of 1,023.30.

Thin trading due to the US holiday on Monday provided dollar bears with an opportunity to push the currency lower, analysts



NATIONAL PENSION COMMISSION

PLOT 2774, SHEHU SHAGARI WAY
MAITAMA DISTRICT
PMB 5170 WUSE, ABUJA

INVITATION TO A CONSULTATIVE FORUM WITH PROSPECTIVE CLOSED PENSION FUND ADMINISTRATORS

The National Pension Commission (Commission) preparatory to issuance of licences will consult on operational guidelines with all employers seeking to manage own pension funds as Closed Pension Fund Administrators. The Pension Reform Act 2004 in sections 39 and 40 provides for any employer seeking to manage its pension funds and assets of N500,000,000:00 and above to apply to the Commission for a licence after having met some other requirements to operate as a Closed Pension Fund Administrator.

In this regard, the Commission invites all prospective Closed Pension Fund Administrators to participate in a consultative forum to be held as follows:

Date : 9th March 2005
Venue: Shehu Musa Yar' Adua Centre
One Memorial Drive, Abuja
Time : 10.00 AM

Participating Organisations are kindly requested to send two persons to the Forum.

For further enquiries please contact:

Director General
National Pension Commission
09-6720091, 6720092, 4133363
www.pencom.gov.ng

PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

Saving the environment from man or vice versa

In the scholarly years of Plato and Aristotle as well as founding philosophers and researchers, the environment was a new discovery, a mystery to be unravelled. Explorers that these men were and inquisitive as they might have looked to their times, they plunged into identifying what the environment was as a whole entity.

They went ahead, through the works of their followed scholars to empirically classify it into classes and sub-classes, constitutes and sub-constitutes, units and sub-units, as the knowledge of their time permitted.

The atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere were identified as the principal constituents of the environment.

In their quest, they delivered into the various havocs happening around them, never seeing any as an accident, retain things that can be understood and unravelled. Based on this, assessment and an understanding of some workings of the various constituents of the environment was achieved.

Their funding: 'Environmental determination' that the environment determines its usage and man's activities.

After then came the 18th and 19th century scholars who continued their assessments of the environmental activities, using as a foundation, the funding of the pioneers: such as Archimedes, Socrates, etc. Their work is geared towards subduing this 'monster' presented by "those archaic" men of old.

Thus, making the environment yield to the workings and manoeuvring of man in satisfying his wants and needs. Seeing as possibility, man's manipulation of the environment in such a way as to determine its activities rather than the environment determining/dictating its use by man and man's activities; hence the theory/era of environmental possibilism. Subsequently came the era of environmental sustainability. A theory synonymous with sustainable development. This came on due to the series of effects that arose from 'possibilism' wherein, some retains of man's activities within the

By Oni, Kofoworola A.J.

environment had begun to take a toll on it, even at an alarming rate, such as global warming, specie execution as well as flooding and bio-degradation, amongst others. This period therefore was dedicated to managing what is left of the environment, while still manipulating.

Through these phases, one thing remained a point or is it an entity of reckon: The environment, someone may ask, 'what is the reasons for all of this brief incursion into history? It wont take much time before we get there.

In the earlier scholarly days, man (or do I say the researchers) acknowledged the environment and its constituent units as force with which to reckon; as a result of which studies and researches (no matter how we might see them, crude, archaic or naive) were conducted to enhance their knowledge of dealing with the environment for efficient and good benefit to man.

This brought about the discovery of environmental 'devils' or disasters (as science coins them) such as cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, landslides, avalanches, storms, tidal waves and of course the old but just being noised Tsunami, amongst others. And, with them came the respect and fear for their power and force.

In those centuries, though the forces and terror of the environmental activities could not be apprehended, yet, it was appreciated and



Road construction work progressing on the Kuje satellite town development scheme in Kuje area council, Abuja.

comprehended.

The next set of scholars went to work on how these hazards work, what damage they could cause and even how to measure some of them, e.g. the richer and Religion scale was invented to measure the extent of an earthquakes then came those whose school of thought was on how to fight some of these disasters and subdue them. Out of this subduing came excessive manipulation resulting into the need for sustainable development which is a battle being fought by quite a number of bodies and agencies under various names and guises.

We hear of earthquake in one region or the other, the oceans wash-up beyond the shores and get to swallow up

whole villages and settlements, rain falls and dig up trenches and valleys out from the solid ground (soil), whole areas get flooded when the rains are at peak, and a host of other hydrological influences.

To cap these is the December 26, 2004 Tsunami, which wrecked out havoc on not less than six Asian countries. Whole towns, villages, settlement, as well as lives and properties were washed out to sea. A destruction rated as the highest in history.

These are only a few, yet the average environmentalist has since long discarded the theory "environmental determination."

If we open wide our eyes. We will get to acknowledge

again what those wise scholars of old started and begin to work on that theory of theirs.

Yes, we might look for some other name for it, so long as it still boils down to the same intricacy.

The environment is real, its forces are ever at work, we see them, experience them and even discuss them, yet in what light do we review them (it).

Is it still as an entity that can be harnessed and so everything that prevents us from achieving or continuing with the harness?

We need to go back to the very foundation of the learning process, so as to use it as a basis to our own benefit and not detriment.

There is need to view and see the environment and its

dynamics for what it is "A force" that dictates and moves what, when and where it wills."

We need to pay all attention to man being the major player in most of the environmental hazards happening around us.

We need to develop a fear for the very word environment, especially when it has to do with water, in order to develop the strength with which to fight it.

"An enemy whose strength of squashing, you don't appreciate, you never may know or start to develop how to quell or subdue."

In February this year, it was reported that a deep along the Benin express way, just next to a school. The fear is not just the fully of the deep but rather, of the coming rains which will further etch into the fully; why? Because these people know how ferocious it could be, such that it could lead to a probable non-existence of the two landmarks.

Also, the December Tsunami disaster is such that the world is now so scared of the force and fierceness of the oceans and walls of water that can rise from it to the scale of destruction.

There have been other minor issues of distractive extent like the Lagos bar beach annual flooding.

Seeing all these, do we need more to acknowledge and begin to view for, what it is "environmental determination" and begin to search for solution, in this light!

Oni, Kofoworola A.J.
mailto:mailtonia4@yahoo.com.



L-R: Senator Mohammed Abba Aji, Senator John Danboyi with Senator Abubakar Sodangi during the commissioning of NSITF commercial housing estate in Karu, Abuja...recently. Pix: Kennedy Egbonodje.

40 people killed in Indonesian garbage slide

At least 40 people have been killed and 109 others still missing after mountains of garbage collapsed on two villages on Monday, according to reports.

The accident occurred at Leuwigajah dump in South Cimahi of West Java province.

The garbage slide took place at 2 a.m. when people were still asleep and flattened 68 houses in Cilimus Hamlet in East Batujajar of Bandung regency as well as two houses in Leuwigajah of Cimahi.

As of today, more than 200 people have been evacuated from the area,

which covers some 22 hectares.

This is the sixth accident since the garbage dump opened in 1992.



Col. Mande rtd., Environment Minister.



MAGIC TIMES

M - NET BRINGS YOU THE BEST ENTERTAINMENT IN 2005



Bad Boys 1 and Bad Boys 2

8 February, 21:30 CAT (Bad Boys 1) • 13 February, 20:00 CAT (Bad Boys 2)

Watch two of the best in comedy as they share one stage. Double the fun and double the action. The Bad Boys extravaganza brings you both explosive movies from two guys who are bad in the best sense — Will Smith and Martin Lawrence.



Eye

Fridays, 10:00 CAT

For some, winning a Grammy just isn't enough. Eye stars as Shelly Williams, a fashion designer who's looking for love. Luckily, single, ex-model Rita and happily-married Janie are there to help her get all her heart desires.



Lost

Starts 12 March, 10:00 CAT

M-Net brings you a show with the biggest production budget of any TV series produced in the US. 48 passengers survive a plane crash. But will they survive an island with a dangerous beast and other mysteries? Lost may yet prove a winner in the Golden Globes where it's been nominated for best drama.

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Shanghai Knights

27 February, 20:00 CAT

Fresh from the huge success of *The Tuxedo*, M-Net's most-watched movie of last year, Jackie Chan returns in *Shanghai Knights*. He teams up with Owen Wilson in the follow-up to *Shanghai Noon*. See them trade punches and punch-lines in this side-splitting comedy caper.



Hollywood Homicide

25 February, 20:00 CAT

A cop partnership between perennial screen idol, Harrison Ford, and new heartthrob, Josh Hartnett, produces some interesting results. Both LAPD detectives moonlight in other jobs - Ford is an estate agent in his spare time and Hartnett an aspiring actor. Somehow they find the time to solve the murder of a rap star. Arresting entertainment, only on M-Net.

Yesterday

23 February, 20:00 CAT

An Official Entry for Best Foreign Film at the Oscars, this original M-Net production is a milestone in African filmmaking. The tale, told in isiZulu with English subtitles, centres around *Yesterday*, an HIV positive mother who wants to live long enough to see her daughter go to school. *Yesterday* - an uplifting film for Africa today.



25th Hour

2 February, 20:00 CAT

It was high time for another big hit from Spike Lee. Edward Norton stars in this hard-hitting drama about a likeable drug dealer who's come to the end of the line. What will he do on his final day before he must turn himself in? There'll be more than a few surprises before the time runs out on this one.



Bruce Almighty

Sunday, 6 February, 20:00 CAT

Jim Carey's working miracles again in a divine comedy in which his character tries his hand at being God and finds it's not as easy as he thought. Some say he's the Lord of Comedy. We say Amen.



Grammy Awards

14 February, 20:30 CAT

It's almost time to pay tribute to the best sounds on the planet at the 47th annual Grammy Awards. Last year Beyonce, Outkast, Luther Vandross and Justin Timberlake took top honours. This year, make sure you've got your eyes (and ears) glued to M-Net. Always a feast of live performances, extravagant outfits and outrageous outbursts, the Grammys has often produced some great on-stage duets, like Prince and Beyonce. Of course, the greatest collaboration of the year could be you and M-Net.



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PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

SPDC completes N43 m per unit Stallion Terraces

A luxurious estate, the Stallion Terraces, constructed by an indigenous building contractor, Messr Syntax Nig. Ltd is currently being offered for sale to the public at N43.2 million per unit.

A press release from Stallion Property and

By Nasir Imam, Property & Environment Editor

Development Company (SPDC) a subsidiary of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), owners of the estate, said that Stallion Terraces is made up of 12 units of 3 bedroom, 1 boys quarters room executive

terrace houses.

Located on Danube close off IBB way Maitama, opposite the NPA senior staff quarters and very close to the BPE office in Maitama, the Stallion Terrace is about 2 kilometres from NICON Hilton Hotel and approximately 10 minutes from the central business districts of Wuse, Garki and Asokoro.

The statement said that each of the houses comes with 3 bedrooms which are all en-suite and one boys quarter

room with two living rooms made up of the main living room on the ground floor and the family living room on the first floor.

Stallion Terraces, the press release said, comes with state-of-the-art facilities like swimming pool, overhead and underground tanks, boreholes well landscape and paved environment, standby generator, connection to public mains, security services, telephone and intercom, satellite TV installation and full air

conditioning.

The facility management of the estate after sale, SPDC said, will be handled by SPDC to ensure that the quality standards of the property are maintained as is obtainable in stallion house, stallion Estate and stallion court which SPDC developed and is currently managing.

Facilities provided in the Stallion Terrace include swimming pool, split air-conditioner electricity and water supply, landscaping, security and refuse disposal.

Obasanjo commissions Mararaba housing estate

By Godwin Tyonanga, (Stringer)

President Olusegun Obasanjo, on Monday, commissioned 146 mixed residential units of the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) commercial housing estate at Mararaba-Guraku in Nassarawa State.

The project was embarked upon by the NSITF in May 2003, after obtaining due approval from the federal executive council (FEC) with the motive of eventually, selling it to the public on commercial basis.

Daily Trust learnt that the idea behind the project was driven by the need to provide cheaper and affordable housing accommodation to the public as close to the federal capital city (FCC). It was also intended to pilot the commencement of NSITF's active involvement in mass housing developments across the country.

The project comprises an estate of 146 no residential units made up of 13 no blocks of 104 no residential units made up of 13 no blocks of 104 no 2-bed room flats and 7No. blocks of 42 No. 3-bedroom, flats. It further comprises a multi-purpose block, a clinic/estate office block and full complement of dedicated transformers in addition to surface/overhead water reservoirs all laid down with a plot area measuring approximately 2-4 hectares. Optimum parking spaces have been provided for each cluster of the residential blocks. It was awarded to and, completed by Messrs Sageto limited at a total cost of N788,398,886.84.

With the commissioning of the estate by President Obasanjo, it is the expectation of pundits that greater Karu area of Nasarawa state, which is said to have vast potentials and opportunities would cope with the unprecedented growth in population and the attendant pressure on infrastructural facilities in the area.

It will be recalled that governor Abdullahi Adamu of Nasarawa State, commissioned the greater Karu Area masterplan to complement Abuja, the FCT as a "Green Zone" and take off some of the pressures on infrastructure, land and help decongest the city.

In this wise, the Greater Karu area planning and development authority (KAPDA) said, it is set to fast track development in the region through a series of initiatives in conformity with the master plan.

Public affairs officer, KAPDA Dahiru M. Ibrahim said the strategy adopted by KAPDA is the public private partnership (PPP). This strategy according to him entails that the government and private sector will share in the cost of building infrastructures such as roads.

FG receives quotation on Eleme junction flyover

The honourable minister of works, Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe has said quotations have been received on the flyover at the Eleme junction and the 7-kilometer Eleme to Onne Ocean terminal road dualisation adding that the project has gone for due process certification.

This information was contained in a statement made available to Daily Trust recently.

Senator Ogunlewe lamented that N1 billion provided for the project in 2005 budget is a major setback pointing out that at least about 25% of the total project cost must be available for due process certificate to be issued.

"The ministry would have to vire the money to another project in the area, otherwise it might have to wait till around 2007, except if the other stakeholders, including the free zone authority are willing and able to partner with the ministry in sharing up what is available to enable the project commence this year," the minister said.

While senator Adeseye was explaining the envisaged delay he disclosed that the federal government's

commitment in the on-going project in Rivers and indeed the entire south-south was substantial huge, and due process required that they all be completed before any new one could be started.

Among the on-going project listed by the minister of works are: N23 billion Bodo-Bonny road in Rivers State, the Itigidi bridge in Cross River State, the East-West highway linking Warri-Patani-Port-Harcourt road, Yenegwe-Kolo-Nembe-Brass road in Bayelsa State.

Senator Ogunlewe stated that all the aforementioned projects are complementary which must be completed to provide the much needed linkage and integration that are required to achieve the rapid economic growth and reduce poverty not only in the zone but also the entire country at large.



A view of the Stallion Terrace estate, recently completed by Stallion Property Dev. Co Ltd.

Ogunlewe tasks private sector on South-South infrastructure

The minister of works, Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe has called on the Private Sector operating in the South geopolitical zone to show greater involvement in developing the infrastructures required to

By Ebenezer John Buoro, (Intern)

realise the potentials of the area to the benefit of the people and the entire country. He added that this effort will complement the enormous investment in on-going road

projects by the federal government in the area.

Senator Ogunlewe made this declaration on Monday while receiving a 6-man delegation of the management of the oil and Gas free zone authority led by its managing director and Chief executive officer. Dr. Noble Abe in his office.

Dr. Noble in his address to the minister and senior management staff disclosed that he was encouraged to come to the ministry to table the request of providing flyover at the Eleme through Aba road to Port-Harcourt junction, and the extension of the dualisation of the Onne to the Ocean terminal road and bridge to link the terminal located on the mainland to Kpokri Island based on his achievement within a short period.

Earlier Dr. Abe said it has become necessary for the oil and gas free zone authority to make an appeal to the federal government to consider providing the identified infrastructure as a way of alleviating the logistics bottlenecks currently being experienced.

He pointed out that this will make investing in the sector appealing to new investors whom Mr. President has done so much to attract into the country. The oil and gas free zone authority, has the statutory responsibility of promoting investment in oil and gas industries, Dr. Abe said.

In response senator Ogunlewe said he is familiar with the area, the road and the bridge being proposed. The minister added that his ministry was already working on the process of executing them.

"I recall that immediately I assumed duty here, I wrote a letter to the then MD of the free zone inviting him and his companies operating in the zone-about 96 of them to a meeting. We wrote another one. We have written three now, inviting them to a meeting...we wanted a sort of public-private partnership arrangement for us to be able to sit down and address the problems. We could provide some money. Since then, we've been providing N1 billion, N2 billion but it is a N16 billion project. We have advertised it and have set-up a technical committee from our side," senator Ogunlewe declared.

Absence of walkways causes death in Lagos -BICL boss

The managing director of a Lagos-based facilities management firm, Engr. Afolabi Adedeji has revealed that near absence of pedestrian walkways on most Lagos roads is responsible for the increasing rate of death resulting from hit and run incident in the metropolis.

Revealing this in an exclusive interview with property trust in Lagos last week, Engr. Adedeji lamented that over the last decade near absence of walkways has had negative implications for tenants and visitors of Lagos metropolis.

The BICL MD said this had been keeping some

From Zakariyya Adaramola, Correspondent (Lagos)

residents, especially aged, perpetually indoor against their wish.

His words: "the near absence of pedestrian walkways on Lagos roads, especially on the Island, is endangering the lives of people here. It has increased the rate of death as a result of hit and run incident in the metropolis. This singular act has been keeping elderly people indoors against their way. They fear that they might get knocked down by reckless hit and run drivers if ventured out."

The MD, who said as

pathetic as the deficiency is, governments at various levels seem not to see it as such.

He called on governments to urgently tackle it along with the larger issues of urban Traffic, transportation and parking in the metropolis.

"Our administrators, policy makers and political office holders should move beyond voodoo and mumbo jumbo approaches and should be encouraged to conscientiously adopt scientific and proven engineering methods towards implementing long lasting solutions to our urban traffic, transportation and parking problems, not just in Lagos State but throughout Nigeria.

AGRIC NEWS

UN consultant gives panacea for food insecurity

The attainment of national food security, poverty alleviation and improved livelihoods for Nigerians will be achieved without further delay through community based participatory cultural extension services, a United Nation (UN) consultants on Agricultural Extension, Dr. Tunji Arokoyo declared in Ibadan recently.

From Dele Ogunyemi, Freelancer (Ibadan)

declaration in a keynote address at the 18th annual South-West Research Extension System Farmers-Input Linkage System (REFILS) workshop held at the Institute of Agriculture Research and Training IAR&T, more planting in the Ofe state capital.

In the address entitled Effective Extension Delivery and Food Security-its implications the UN expert lamented that Nigeria with its vast economic and natural environment is currently finding it difficult to adequately feed its nationals and provide affections for their needs.

His words, "it is an irony indeed that Nigeria, a vast agricultural country endowed with substantial natural resources which include 68 million hectares of arable land, fresh water resources covering about 12 million hectares, 960 kilometers of coastline and an ecological diversity.

This he said, enable the

IITA wages war against cassava disease

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has waged war against the cassava mosaic disease (CMD), which is spreading across East Africa and is currently threatening production of cassava in Nigeria.

Dr Peter Hartmann, the Director-General of the Ibadan-based International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), announced this at a workshop on integrated cassava project (ICP), last week, in Abakaliki.

In order to check the scourge, he however stressed that the IITA came up with an ICP, made up of the CMD project and the cassava enterprises development project.

The director-general, represented by Dr F.O. Ogbe, the Zonal Manager for the South-East CMD projects, stated that Ebonyi was one of the 12 states participating in the project.

He said, "each participating state is expected to pay N76.2 million as counterpart funds, adding that," the recent federal government policy on 10 per cent cassava content for bread will definitely boost the implementation of the ICP".

The new market in cassava flour will "catalyze cassava production and industrialisation of the sector, and thereby create jobs," he said.

country to produce a wide variety of crops and livestock, forestry and fisheries products should find itself in the group of low-income food deficit countries in Africa."

The UN expert blame Nigerians problem of food deficit on policy incosistent low-level technology input poor and irregular funding of National Agricultural Research and Extension System (NARES), a poorly developed agricultural and rural infrastructures, which severally limit an already weak marketing system and low-level private sector participation.

In addition, the weak research-extension-farmers inputs linkage system (REFILS) compounded by the deficiencies in the research organisation and management is also a major contributory factor, he said.

To change the negative trends, Dr. Arokoyo advocated a community-based participatory agricultural extension services (COM-PAES), "which is demand-driven" as an effective extension services delivery for Nigeria.

According to him, this is the approach currently being promoted by both the National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS), the National Fadama II Project, and the IFAD-supported Community Based Agricultural and Rural Development Project (CBARDP).

Governor of Lagos state, Ahmed Bola Tinubu who was represented at the occasion by his commission for Agriculture, Chief Kayode Olusanya commended the initiative of the organizers of the workshop saying "it could not have come at a better time".

NAPEP trains 300 farmers on cassava, fruit processing

Over 300 farmers from the South-West geopolitical zone have been trained by the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) on cassava processing into flour for bread making and fruit juice processing and manufacturing.

Also, mushroom production and processing were part of training covered at the 5-day practical workshop for farmers and youth in Abeokuta.

In a statement signed and issued to Agric News by the press secretary to the national coordinator, Adegboro E. Modupe, said that the NAPEP'S national coordinator, Dr. Magnus L. Kpakol, stated that the objectives of the training workshop included, enabling the beneficiaries of the



The National coordinator of NAPEP Dr. Madnus Kpakol flanked by Chief Mrs. Maria Sokeno the special adviser to the governor on the Ogun State Employment Generation Programme (OGEGEP) who is representing the Ogun state Governor at the five-day workshop in Abeokuta

FG targets .6m tonnes of cocoa by 2008

The federal government (FG) has uncovered plans to triple cocoa production over the next three years with the launch of an ambitious development programme.

The Minister Agriculture, Adamu Bello said the scheme was aimed to boost production from an expected 180,000 tonnes this year to 600,000 tonnes by 2008, and the government will pump N154million (\$1.1m; £591,000) approximately into subsidies for farming chemicals and seedlings.

He announced this at the launch of the programme on National Cocoa Rebirth Programme in the south-western city of Ibadan, explaining that an additional aim of the project is to encourage the processing of cocoa in the country and lift local consumption.

He added that Nigeria is currently the world's fourth-largest cocoa producer, yet in decline, Cocoa was the main export product in Nigeria during the 1960s.

But with the coming of oil,

Stories by Hassan Idris, Senior Reporter (Agriculture)

the government began to pay less attention to the cocoa sector and production began to fall from a peak of about 400,000 tonnes a year in 1970.

He also announced that N91million of the funding available had been earmarked for establishing cocoa plant nurseries, adding that the country could be looking to emulate rival Ghana, which produced a bumper crop last year.

However, some farmers are sceptical about the proposals, "people who are not farming will hijack the subsidy," said Joshua Osagie, a cocoa farmer from

Edo state told newsmen, adding that "the farmers in the village never see any assistance."

At the same time as Nigeria announced its new initiative, Ghana - the world's second largest cocoa exporter - announced revenues from the industry had broken new records.

The country saw more than \$1.2bn-worth of the beans exported during 2003-04.

Analysts said high tech-production techniques and crop spraying introduced by the government led to the huge crop, pushing production closer to levels seen in the 1960s when the country was the world's leading cocoa grower.

Agric ministry organises fish farming workshop

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) has organised a five-day training workshop on "Home stead Fish Farming for Retiring and Servicing Civil Servants."

In a statement signed and issued to Daily Trust by the press secretary to the ministry of state, Mr. James A. Oduadu said that the workshop which was held in Abuja was organised by the fisheries department of the FMARD, recently.

The statement added that the workshop seek to refocus retiring civil servants to look forward to a more engaging and fulfilling life in retirement through fish farming.

The statement said, that the ministry's permanent secretary, Mr. Olusegun Ogunka who was represented by a director in the ministry, Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed said that the workshop was also organised to remove the gloom with which most retiring civil servants look to their future due to lack of adequate preparation for retirement.

He said serving servants were also involved in the training workshop in line with president Obasanjo's appeal to all Nigerians including the civil servants to get involved in one form of food production or another the statement said.

He charged the participants to take full advantage of the training, and set up modest fish farms.

ABUJA TRUST

Heat wave hits Abuja, environs

An intense heat wave has engulfed Abuja and its environs, causing discomfort to residents.

The heat wave, which set in last week, has forced most residents to sleep outdoors, to escape the prevailing weather situation.

Since the heat wave began the temperature in Abuja oscillates between 38 to 40 degrees Celsius in recent times, with resultant discomfort to residents.

"The weather is really terrible. In fact, I have not been comfortable in the past few days. It is very hot everywhere in the territory," an Abuja resident, Mrs Iyabo Bahatunde told the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)*.

She said that the weather had compelled her family members to always stay outdoor in order to cope with the heat, which she described as "bad and disturbing".

Most residents noted that the present erratic power supply in the city and its suburb had further compounded the situation.

"To make matters worse, there is no constant light to enable us to deal with the heat. So we have to adopt various strategies to bring respite to ourselves," another resident, Musa Garba said.

"You have to take bath several times a day to feel comfortable or else you will not have a sweet day," Mr Akpan Ekanem, who lives in Lugbe, one of the satellite towns in the FCT, said.

NAN reports that sellers of packaged water, popularly

known as "pure water" have been recording high sales due to the extremely hot weather. The same goes for repairers of refrigerators and air conditioners, who are heavily being patronised.

The director-general of the Nigerian Metrological Agency (NIMET), Mr Liwhu Akeh, has attributed the heat wave to the obstruction of free flow of air by surrounding hills and rocky outcrops.

Commenting on the harsh weather, Akeh said: "Abuja's geographical location is a heat zone and the hills there do not help matters as they take the heat and reflect them on the city and its environs."

He said that because of a lack of free movement of air entrapped between the hills, the heat could not be repelled.

The weather chief told *NAN* that FCT was the hottest zone in the country. "Ordinarily, one would have expected the far north to be hotter, but the reverse is the case.

"Abuja is also a heat source and because of too much radiation from the hills, both direct radiation and reflection, generally affect the weather condition," he added.

Akeh also attributed the scorching heat and dry weather condition in some parts of the country to the general global climatic change.

He, however, expressed the hope that in the next few weeks, things would change as the rains were expected arrive to provide relief to the people.

Traders besiege FCDA over market accreditation

Thousands of traders yesterday besieged the premises of Development Control Department of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) trying to get accreditation for the allocation of stalls at the planned Dei-Dei Model Market.

The traders who converged at the premises in the early hours of the day were seen holding documents and busy discussing formalities related to the allocation of the stalls.

One of the traders, Mallam Adamu Mohamed, told *Abuja Trust* that the exercise earlier began at the Old Parade Ground in Garki, Abuja where some officials of the department were said to be selling the forms to the traders.

Another trader who simply identified himself as Uche, said that the stalls or spaces that will be issued to

them might not be adequate as more people kept converging at the accreditation centre "even those that are not traders."

He added that the officials of the department earlier carried out a census of the traders and arrived at a figure of 12,000 traders. According to him there is at present an upsurge of "fake" traders who are capitalising on the lapses of the exercise.

As at the time of this report many traders were seen leaving the premises of the department claiming that they have been directed to move back to the Old Parade Ground in Garki where the accreditation will continue.

Efforts by *Abuja Trust* to speak to officials on the matter failed as it was claimed that nobody was on ground to speak on the matter.

By Benjamin Auta,
Crime Reporter



Co-ordinating executive secretary, FCDA, Engr. Mohammed Sani Alhassan, centre, examining a document while inspecting road projects constructed by the Satellite Town Development Agency (STDA) in Kuje area council. To his left is the STDA administrator, Engr. Buhari Dikko.

Woman charged for allegedly duping Plateau of N10m

One Josephine Williams, of Plot No.696 Ubiaya Crescent, Garki, Abuja, was today arraigned for allegedly duping the Plateau State government of the sum of N10 million.

Williams appeared before an Abuja Chief Magistrates' Court on a 4-count charge of criminal conspiracy, attempt to commit an offence, cheating and impersonation.

The accused was said to have conspired with others now at large and forged Corporate Affairs Commission's registration forms in the name of "Gede International".

The prosecuting police officer, DSP. Ibrahim Bako, told Magistrate Othman Musa that the accused impersonated as the representative of "Gede Foundation" an NGO, founded by the wife of the Vice President, Mrs. Jamila Atiku Abubakar.

Bako said the accused presented themselves as agents of the organisation to Gov. Joshua Dariye and officials of the state government,

soliciting for assistance.

The prosecution alleged that they forwarded a letter purportedly signed by Mrs Atiku, requesting for financial assistance for the said Gede foundation.

He added that on presentation of the letter, the governor approved the sum of N10 million for the organisation, which the accused allegedly received on behalf of Mrs. Atiku."

According to him, the case was reported by one Mr. John Dara'a, a protocol officer to Dariye on February 1, this year.

He said the accused's action caused wrongful loss to the government of Plateau state and wrongful gain to themselves, adding that it contravened the penal code.

The accused pleaded not guilty to the charges, while the defence counsel, Mr. Anthony Agbonlahor, applied for bail.

In his plea, Agbonlahor assured the court that the

accused would neither impede investigation nor abscond.

He told the court that his client had been languishing in detention for three weeks, contrary to the provisions of the constitution, and urged the

court to grant his application.

The prosecution, however, opposed the bail on the ground that the matter was still being investigated.

The trial magistrate, Musa ordered the accused to be remanded in prison custody and adjourned the case to February 28, for ruling on the bail application.

DNCR staff docked for obstructing presidential convoy

A 44-year-old staff of the Department of National Civic Registration (DNCR), Mr. Marcus Akinola, has been arraigned before an Abuja chief magistrate sitting in Jabi, on a two-count charge of obstructing presidential convoy and dangerous driving.

The accused, who is a driver with the DNCR was said to have committed the offences along airport road, Lugbe a suburb of the FCT with while driving a bus with registration number FG 539 A14.

The prosecution said the offences are contrary to section 39 (1). The prosecution also alleged that Mr. Marcus failed to stop when he was or-

By Ebenezer John Buoro,
Intern

dered by the police to do so, hence committing the offences.

Mr. Marcus' counsel prayed the court to grant him bail pointing out that his client has spent two weeks already in detention that he will not jump bail, as he is a civil servant and a government employee.

Mr. Akinola denied the allegation levelled against him and he was asked by the magistrate not to drive any government vehicle until the case is concluded.

The magistrate granted him bail and adjourned the case to April 4, 2005.

Hike of plate number prices blamed on joint task force

The deputy corps marshal (DCM) of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) Engineer Yemi Agoro, has attributed the high prices of vehicle plate numbers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and other big cities in the country to activities of the joint task force set up for revenue mobilisation.

He said the production of motor vehicle plate number costs the FRSC N2, 500 while that of motorcycle costs N2,

By Benjamin Auta,
Crime Reporter

000. Engineer Agoro revealed this while fielding questions from newsmen on the activities of the commission at the commission's 17-year anniversary on Monday.

He said: "Production cost for motor vehicle plate number is N2, 500 and motorcycle is N2, 000 but joint

task forces in states and their own as it is their source of revenue."

Confirmed reports have it that plate numbers are sold in some states between the rates of N15, 000 to N25, 000 thereby making it difficult for motorists to acquire genuine plate numbers.

Engineer Agoro further said that the merger of the commission earlier with the police forced them through too much bureaucracy as the

commission's autonomy was taken away.

He said the commission will continue its policy of manpower development to boost morale.

He said that other disciplinary measures have been introduced to guard against motorists using handsets and refusal to wear seat belts as offenders will be fined N5, 000 for each offender.

KANO TRUST

Janguza Barracks worst in Nigeria – Commanding officer

The commanding officer (CO), 5 Battalion of the Nigerian Army, Kano, Lt.-Col. Muhammed Bukar, has described Janguza Barracks as the worst in the country.

Bukar, who was worried over the state of dilapidation in the barracks, made this known at the weekend in Kano, when the Presidential Committee on Barracks Rehabilitation (PCBR) visited the barracks to inspect ongoing projects.

He said that the barracks, which was built with mud blocks, had no single existing structure except the rehabilitated officers' mess where he was accommodated.

Bukar said that the high level of dilapidation had forced the soldiers and their families to defecate in the bush because the toilets were blocked.

He explained that officers, soldiers and their families were living in serious hardship as married soldiers share apartments in the remaining manageable blocks.

The commanding officer, who thanked President Olusegun Obasanjo for the ongoing barracks rehabilitation programme, noted that the Janguza Barracks requires more attention, especially in the areas of water supply, drainage and roads.

He said residents of the barracks had to go to a nearby stream to fetch water on a daily basis "which is not hygienic enough".

He called on the committee to drill boreholes in the barracks to alleviate the sufferings of the residents.

Earlier, the committee's chairman, Alhaji Sani Gidado, had told the CO, that they were in the barracks to inspect the ongoing construction and rehabilitation of some blocks to ensure that contractors complied with the bill of quantity.

He urged the barracks leadership to ensure adequate supervision of the project and gave the assurance that the committee would look into other problems facing the barracks.

Some of the PCBR projects in the barracks in-

cluded the construction of battalion headquarters, construction of two blocks of 10-family Constable and Below

Quarters (CBQ) and the completion of two others.

Others were the construction of the battalion medical

centre and rehabilitation of three blocks for Senior Non-Commissioned Officers' quarters (SNCO).

Tsunami funds c'ttee pledges fair play

The Kano State fund raising committee for the victims of the Tsunami disaster had pledged to employ justice, transparency and fair play in the course of its activities, the committee's chairman, Alhaji Ahmad

By Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent (Kano)

Aminu, made the promise when the members paid a courtesy visit to the emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero. He said that the high calibre of the members that constituted the fund raising committee gave a clear sign that open door policy and dedication would be the principal guideline of its affairs.

The committee chairman told the emir that they were at his palace to observe that the rationale behind setting up the committee was to mobilise and motivate people to assist the Tsunami victims as done in other countries.

He maintained that members of the committee were drawn from print and electronic media so as to get sufficient publicity for people's positive response. He however enjoined Imams to enlighten the people on the importance of donating to the victims, saying this would be actualised through sermon.

Speaking earlier, the emir stressed the need for people to contribute to disaster vic-

tims whose lives were engulfed by plight and predicaments.

The royal father applauded government for setting up the committee, just as he advised the committee to imbibe the spirit of accountability and hard work to achieve the set goals.

Villagers build house for environment activist

The people of Makoda, a desert community in Kano, have built a house for environmental crusader, Chief Newton Jibunoh.

The *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* reports that Jibunoh, founder of Fight Against Desert Encroachment (FADE), a non-governmental organisation (NGO), is championing the establishment of a tree belt in the community to help fight desertification.

Addressing newsmen last weekend in Makoda, the environmentalist said that the villagers had said the house would replace the tent, which he normally used during his fortnightly visits to the area to tend the trees.

"As a building engineer, I very much appreciate the structure because it was not only built with local materials but in line with local architecture," he said.

NAN further reports that FADE is providing a N3-million water scheme, which would be functional at the end of this month toward sustaining the tree belt project in Makoda.

Jibunoh said that the scheme was being financed with part of the money donated to the NGO by the Kano state government and the 46 local governments in the state.

He said that the project included a borehole, a 25,000-litre over-head tank, a 15,000-litre underground tank and a reticulation network.

Jibunoh commended Gov. Ibrahim Shekarau, his deputy, Alhaji Mogaji Abdullahi, the emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero and the entire people of Kano for their "wonderful support for the scheme."



The National president of ABU's alumni association, Alhaji Abubakar Gimba, presenting a document to Kano State governor, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau after a courtesy call to Government House, Kano...recently.

KNSG to rid Kano of mosquitoes

Following series of complaints by the residents of Kano on the incessant attack by mosquitoes, the state government has decided to commence the spraying of insecticides in order to have a control on the parasites in the state.

The special adviser to the governor on sanitation and immunisation, Alhaji Awwalu Kademi, revealed that the decision was taken after complaints by the people.

Awwalu Kademi said that the state government is ready to commence the spraying of some parts of the state before the end of this month, while adequate machinery is well placed to ensure the success of exercise.

He also said that while the exercise is hoped to last, vehicles, chemicals and trained personnel were properly placed to ensure the smooth running of the exercise and total eradication of mosquitoes in the state.

Meanwhile other environmental sanitation measures were taken in refuse disposal, drainage clearing in some parts of the metropolitan areas in order to achieve the desired effect in controlling the parasite.

Hospital partners with LG on health problems

Sheik Muhammad Jidda Hospital in Kano State has agreed to partner with Gwale local government council in handling health related problems in the area. Disclosing this to *Kano Trust*, the chairman of the council, Alhaji Sani Jibrin Kofar Naisa, said that due to serious outcry for health related problems in the area the council has decided to liaise with a reputable hospital that would be able to render its services to the people.

Kofar Naisa also said that Sheik Jidda Hospital was decided after consultations with other hospitals in the state on terms of agreement to which the hospital would shoulder the responsibilities of taking care of patients' ailments on credit bases.

He revealed that most of these cases required surgical operations and people could not afford the expenses involved in carrying out such operations. He said ever since he came in as chairman of the council, the council has been footing ailing patients' bills from the hospital. And added that the ar-

By Ahmed Abubakar, Correspondent (Kano)

angement was made between the hospital and the council, and patients from Gwale area had since been benefiting from various forms of treatments from the hospital.

Adding that in some instance where ailments cannot be treated in the hospital, they are further referred to other specialists hospitals

like Dala Orthopaedic Hospital for bone related ailments, Murtala Mohammed and Aminu Kano Hospitals respectively.

The chairman further explained that the council's gesture was a way of indicating its scale of preference in providing health assistance to deserving people in the area, while assuring that the exercise would be a continuous one.

Corruption: NEPA reads riot act to staff

The Kano zonal headquarters of the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) has asked its staff to desist from corrupt practices or face the wrath of the law. The chairman of the zone's anti-corruption and transparency committee of the authority, Engr. I.R. Obi, gave the warning during the launch of 'Complaints Boxes' where both customers and staff are expected to lodge their grievances for onward action.

He declared that NEPA would not hesitate to sack offenders adding however, that this was the rationale

By Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent (Kano)

behind introducing the complaints boxes. Engr. Obi said the strategy would also satisfy the needs of the customers, dispel insinuations that NEPA management are aiding and abetting corruption. And was optimistic that it would yield a fruitful result to the management's crusade for implementation of good policies.

The chairman said that two boxes were unveiled, saying they would be stationed at Sabon Gari, undertaker unit and Nassarawa business centre.



Bala Maude, Environment Minister

EKO TRUST

NEPA averts protest over electricity blackout in Aujara

The National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) has averted a planned violent protest by youths of Ajara community in Badagry over the continued blackout in the area.

The community has been without electricity supply since December 2003 when the

2.5-kva transformer providing the area with power got damaged.

The *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* reports that a similar protest was held on Nov. 12, 2004 when youths from the area placed fetish objects at the entrance of NEPA'S office in Badagry that sparked off a fracas with youths of a neighbourhood in Badagry that lasted two days with properties worth several thousands of naira destroyed.

A competent source told *NAN* in Badagry that the quick response of NEPA'S undertaking manager, Mr. Y. B. Hamzat, who summoned a meeting with the community and youth leaders from the area on Wednesday to explain reasons for the continued delay in providing light to the area, doused the tension.

"The meeting availed the NEPA officials the opportunity to explain the reason why since the provision of a new 15 MVA transformer by the authority in December 2004 people were still in blackout," the source said.

Hamzat, the source said, disclosed to the community

activate the transformer.

The undertaking manager assured the people that the transformer will soon be activated and implored them to prevail on the youths to be patient as efforts were being made to alleviate their hardship.

Many residents of Ajara have had to relocate to Badagry and other areas, just as many businesses such as tailors, video club owners and pepper grinders have been affected adversely by the long period of blackout, *NAN* reports.

Present at the meeting were the Bale of Ajara-Topa, Chief Amosu Owolabani, Chief Pot Balogun, a community leader and Mr. Seni Pot-Balogun, a youth leader and Mr. G. Makpokpomi, NEPA Marketing Manager.



Pix Caption: People of Tekunle in Lekki local government area of Lagos State, standing on top of canoes to welcome Governor Tinubu during his visit to the village...recently. Pix: NAN

FG budgets N10bn for highway expansion in Lagos

By Olumide Bajulaiye, Correspondent, Lagos

With a N10 billion vote, the federal government has set for itself a two-year deadline for the expansion into three lanes of all federal roads linking Lagos with neighbouring states including Nigeria's West African neighbour, Republic of Benin.

The federal government is also planning to link Lagos, Nigeria's commercial nerve centre to Senegal through Sierra Leone, Lagos to Niger Republic and Lagos to

Works minister, Adeseye Ogunlewe, who made the disclosure during an inspection tour of on-going road projects in Lagos and Ogun states listed the roads to be expanded to include Lagos - Abeokuta Expressway; Lagos-Ibadan Expressway; and Lagos-Badagry Expressway.

Ogunlewe also spoke of a plan to dualise the ever-busy Lagos-Sagamu Expressway

Explaining the motive behind the expansion, Ogunlewe noted that some of the listed routes had become narrow and unable to cope with the volume of traffic.

His words: "We have the development goal, which had been specified, by the United Nations and part of our own responsibility is to ensure that traffic moves very fast on our roads."

"The existing carriage way of Lagos-Ibadan is undulating. It is not smooth,

on proper design. Definitely, this is realisable within the lifespan of this administration".

Lagos promotes 49 civil servants

No fewer than 20 directors in the Lagos State public service including Governor Bola Tinubu's chief press secretary, Mr. Segun Ayobolu, have been elevated to various positions of permanent secretary, general

Hunponu -Wusu Modupe (Local Government Service Commission); Mrs. Risi Akiyode (Cabinet Office); Ajanaku A.M. (Deputy Governor's Office); Mrs. Bello-Aromire C.A (Home Affairs and Culture); Hassan M.M (Auditor General, Local

ICP orders raids on illegal

IGP orders raids on illegal roadblocks along Seme, Mile II

Worried by the rising number of illegal roadblocks from Seme border to Mile II in Lagos, the Acting Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, has directed that constant raids be carried out to dismantle them.

Speaking during a familiarisation tour of police Zone II command at the weekend, Ehindero expressed disappointment with his men for hampering the smooth implementation of bilateral trade agreements between Nigeria and its ECOWAS neighbours.

"Foreigners who come into our country to invest must not be chased away or harassed," Ehindero told the

joint border patrol team (JBP). Similarly, to curb the rising rate of trans-border crime, Ehindero ordered the immediate return of the JBP team to the zonal command instead of taking orders from and reporting to the operations department in Abuja.

Under the new arrangement, the assistant inspector-general (AIG) of police in charge of each zone will now take charge of operations under his zone.

Ehindero said unlike before, there would be decentralisation as supervision and order would not always emanate from Abuja.

Ehindero also urged his men to keep the spirit of

community policing, which his predecessor, Mr. Tafa Balogun, began.

He said some resource persons had been consulted to make an input into the programme for more result-oriented community policing.



Sunday Ehindero, IGP

proper resurfacing of the appointment and massive and Pensions)

that the Works ministry would disburse N107 billion in this fiscal year to provide new roads and maintain existing road network.

Disclosing that negotiations between the federal government and the World Bank were still being discussed, Ogunlewe confirmed that the ADB was trying to fund the provision of the Trans Saharan routes.

He said, "African Development Bank is trying to assist us on our international routes. We want to link Lagos to Sierra Leone, from there to Senegal; we want to link Lagos to Niger Republic. We want to link Lagos to Cameroun from there to Maputo.

"These ones are international routes and ADB is trying to assist us on that. However, the ADB is insisting

amongst the elevated officers are Gbenga Ashafa (Lands Bureau) Bamgbose Martins (Rural Development) Olukoya F.O. (Parastatal Monitoring Office); Mrs. S.f. Jaji (Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation); Mrs. Oguntuwashe F.M Economic (Planning and Budget) and Rotimi Pedro (Science and Technology).

Ajose, 17 permanent secretaries swapped positions while 12 others retained their positions in their former offices.

The HOS was however silent on the fate of permanent secretaries in the offices where the newly promoted directors are to assume duties this Friday even as additional permanent secretary positions were created in government ministries, agencies and parastatals.

Others include Mrs.

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THE ARTS

Biafra Phillip Effiong's book out

By Crispin Oduobuk,
Group Literary Editor

A book detailing the events of the Nigerian civil war, authored by the late Obong Phillip Effiong, Biafra's Chief of General Staff during the war, has been released in the United States of America. The book, *Nigeria and Biafra: My Story*, published by US-based publishers Sungai Corporation, is a 414-page autobiography with an introduction by Professor Toyin Falola of the University of Texas, USA.

Besides recounting the events leading up to the war, and giving his account of the war itself, the late Obong Effiong who passed away after completing the book, also dealt with his role in the Biafran surrender. The book which has twenty chapters also reportedly carries a recommendation by former military president General Ibrahim Babangida.

Nigeria and Biafra: My Story is expected to be launched in Nigeria in Abuja and Lagos either in late March or early April 2005.

It will be recalled that the late Obong Effiong passed away just 12 days to 78th birthday on the 6th of November 2003.

Amnesty 'adopts' Hotel Rwanda

On Monday the 21st of February 2005, the human rights group, Amnesty International hosted the UK premiere of the widely-acclaimed and Oscar-nominated film *Hotel Rwanda* in London. Amnesty used the occasion to extol the virtues of the film and its makers.

Based on a true story, *Hotel Rwanda* tells the story of real life Rwandan hero Paul Rusesabagina who saved more than 1200 lives in the face of appalling danger and at great personal risk to himself and his family.

Amnesty International UK Director Kate Allen said, "Hotel Rwanda is an important and timely film. It is a poignant and powerful story of one man and his family set against the backdrop of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, which claimed the lives of over 800,000 people and created a refugee crisis affecting more than three million others.



A scene from the film *Hotel Rwanda* which is based on a true story of the Rwandan genocide.



Emmanuel Jal

Emmanuel Jal, who fought in the south of Sudan 12 years ago - having been trained to use a gun at the age of eight - hit number one in the Kenyan charts earlier this month.

Now he is following up that success with a new album - launched this weekend in the capital Nairobi - entitled *Gua*.

"It's a sort of prayer for peace in my motherland," Jal told BBC World Service's Outlook programme.

"As Paul Rusesabagina proved, one man can save many lives and change the course of history. The filmmakers involved in *Hotel Rwanda* wanted to tell this story.

"As an organisation that has been defending and promoting human rights for over four decades, Amnesty International believes that this kind of socially relevant filmmaking is not only entertaining, but has the potential to educate and mobilise audiences.

"We commend Terry George, A. Kitman Ho, Don Cheadle, Sophie Okonedo, and everyone involved in this cinematic achievement. We

"There has been war, so it's talking about if there was peace in my land, it would be so good everyone would come back home, there would be no tribalism, no racism, no girls being forced to marry, no child soldiers."

Healing music

Jal is originally from southern Sudan, where he was trained to fight for the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the civil war that raged for many years before the recent peace agreement.

He survived frontline action after a dramatic and traumatic escape from the rebels' ranks, finally making it to Nairobi, where he currently lives.

He first started making rap songs shortly after he arrived, in his late teens - having no knowledge of music at all.

"I found that music helped with healing my soul, and all the trauma that I've gone through," he said.

also applaud MGM/UA and Entertainment Films for distributing such an important film."

Amnesty International has recently reported on the legacy of the genocide in Rwanda, and in particular the continuing suffering of women who were raped. The UN estimates that between 250,000 and 500,000 rapes were committed during the genocide.

These were often extremely violent and included

gang rape, sexual torture and mutilation. Of those who survived, seven in ten are now living with HIV/AIDS, and many of those are stigmatised and discriminated against.

Kate Allen concluded, "The only way the international community can prove it is serious about preventing further human rights atrocities like Rwanda is by ensuring that perpetrators of human rights violations, wherever they take place, are brought to justice."

Excerpts from amnesty.org.uk

His music often features lyrics detailing experiences as a child soldier.

Jal was among thousands of young people collected by the SPLA in 1987. Their parents were told they were to be sent to schools in Ethiopia.

"When we reached Ethiopia, we actually went to school - but only for a while," Jal said.

"Then we were trained how to use guns."

Jal was first trained to use gun at age of eight, and sent to the front line three years later.

"I remember clearly how people used to die; how the tanks used to crush people, how the helicopters used to come and chase us," he recalled.

But in his fourth year as a child soldier, he escaped.

"I had a desire to study... as a young person you get convinced by whatever idea comes into your mind," he said.

But in his fourth year as a child soldier, he escaped.

"I had a desire to study... as a young person you get convinced by whatever idea comes into your mind," he said.

But in his fourth year as a child soldier, he escaped.

Excerpts from amnesty.org.uk

"We decided, with some friends, to do it - and we escaped."

The friends thought their journey would take one month - in fact it took three months to complete just half of it, because of minefields and ambushes in enemy territory.

Helping others

The group ate dry maize to survive. Jal said many died on the journey.

"There was no water for them to drink," he explained.

"Other friends, soldiers told me what other soldiers did was put their guns at the head of their fellow soldiers to force them to urinate in a cup so they would drink.

"But none of them survived who did that.

"When we saw many skeletons and skulls, it was a sign that we were all going to die - there was no water there.

"Other soldiers would just shoot themselves and die. So I prayed to God, if he existed, to provide water for us - and it rained during the dry season."

Jal is now planning to put his earnings from his musical career towards raising funds for other child soldiers, to allow them to have an education.

He also hopes to help some of the worst-off in Kenya, his adopted home.

"Kenya has been nice to me, and there are many others suffering, like the street children," he added.

"So I must admit I would also like to supply somewhere for them."

Courtesy bbc.co.uk

Titi Abubakar, Dangote launch *The Impossible President*

By Kana Ndidiamaka and
Emekahara Nkechi Hope, Interns

The wife of the vice president and initiator of the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) Her Excellency Chief Mrs Titi Atiku Abubakar has urged young writers, especially women, who may want to join politics at a later date to remain committed to the art of writing.

Chief Mrs Abubakar made this charge during the launch of *The Impossible President*, a book by Seyi Sandra Dauda.

The book which was reviewed by the Abuja bureau chief of *Guardian* newspapers, Martins Oloja, centres on a young Nigeria woman who was raised under military system and culture but grew up to dare the impossible in a society where men have tried but failed woefully.

Chief launcher of the occasion, Alhaji Aliko Dangote of the Dangote Group, who was represented by Umaru Inusa Umaru, launched the book with the sum of N1, 000,000.00 for a copy.

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, gave the sum of N50, 000 for five copies while Her Excellency Hajiya Asma'u Makarfi, the wife of the governor of Kaduna State, also launched the book with the sum of N50, 000 though for ten copies.

Meanwhile, Chief Mrs Abubakar also bought ten copies for an undisclosed sum of money. The wife of the Osun State Governor also gave an undisclosed amount.



Her Excellency Chief Mrs Titi Atiku Abubakar

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talk the talk

THE ARTS THE ARTS THE ARTS

Obote ranted at me for 30 minutes—Robin White

He came in quietly, unsung, unheard. He would have gone back the same way, but his popularity gave him away because before his retirement, Robin White had been at the BBC broadcasting to Africa for 35 years.

Recently, Robin White was in Abuja as an instructor during a one-week course on programme production and radio skills organised by the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) in conjunction with the Voice of Nigeria (VON).

There was a world of difference between Robin the bold interviewer and Robin the trainer. The trainer was patient, humble and ready to listen. He was quite indulgent of the participants, which comprised neophytes as well as highly experienced broadcasters.

Beginning with the definition of news, the course covered such issues as censorship, financial constraints, broadcast writing, programme making, presentation, interviewing and discussion. But by far the liveliest and incisive topic was coping with a big breaking story which the instructor tagged "thinking on your feet". Robin used a mock programme with the participants tasked to think on their feet.

Assuming a station is transmitting smoothly and its National Assembly correspondent calls to say there is breaking news. He is put on the air and suddenly announces that the President is lying dead before him after being shut three times in the head while he was addressing a joint session of the National Assembly. He adds that the hall is deserted and he is standing very close to the President's body.

Overwhelmed by the weight of the news the presenter betrays incoherence in her questions for the reporter. After the interview, the Information Minister calls to lambaste the station (on air) for announcing such "piffle" without first clearing with him, even though he was not at the venue of the incident. To further compound matters for the station, the angry Minister says the President is not dead. He threatens the station and hangs up.

The now more focused anchor goes back to the National Assembly correspondent who stands by what he reported earlier. The station manages to get the President's doctor on the line who says that the President is not dead and he was actually shot in the thigh and not the head.

Suddenly, from nowhere, a Col. Musa calls to say, "My boys carried out the shooting because we are taking over the government." The confusion was then cleared a bit by the Vice President who announced that the President actually died five minutes earlier following bullet wounds from the shooting incident. The station also interviews the Army Chief who dismisses Col. Musa as a "nonentity" and the police boss who calls for calm.

To succeed in handling such a big story, Robin said you must keep going by contacting the right people, asking the right questions, working as a team and standing by your reporter.

Interviewing was another topic which brought out the best in Robin White who said in his 35 years at the BBC he

By Jimoh Saleh

conducted an average of two interviews a day. Of those tens of thousands of interviews, Robin said there are a few memorable ones like the one with Charles Taylor. Another was "with Obote who ranted at me for half an hour." The most important thing to Robin is not interviewing leaders but getting on air the voices of ordinary people with interesting things to say.

Despite its gruelling subject matter, Adam Hochschild's study of colonial atrocities in the Belgian Congo of the late-19th century, *King Leopold's Ghost*, won praise and prizes. It was a story of official connivance at slavery and genocide, relieved by the presence of remarkable people who campaigned against it, notably Roger Casement and Edmund Morel. Now, in *Bury the Chains*, Mr Hochschild turns to an earlier and broader crusade for social justice, the movement to end the slave trade in the British empire. He spares us nothing of the awfulness of the Atlantic traffic and the cruelties that awaited slaves in the sugar plantations of the West Indies. But, as before, the book's true focus is the courage and moral clarity of the anti-slave campaigners. It is not an enjoyable read, but it is stirring and unforgettable.

Why an ancient practice, condemned neither by the New Testament nor by Christian tradition, was recognised as unacceptable by growing numbers of men and women in the second half of the 18th century has long puzzled historians. Mr Hochschild avoids big-picture answers and concentrates on the extraordinary characters involved.

His mainly British cast is a large one. It includes John Newton, a slave captain who found God, rejected the trade and wrote, among many others, the hymn "Amazing Grace"; Granville Sharp, a musician and sponsor of lawsuits to free slaves in England; Olaudah Equiano, a freed slave and author of an autobiography that became the "Uncle Tom's Cabin" of the movement; Thomas Clarkson, an Oxford prize-winning Latinist and deacon of the Church of England who rode the country preaching abolition; and William Wilberforce, the tiny, evangelical member of parliament with a booming voice who piloted a slave-trade abolition bill through the House of Commons in 1807-08.

The objects of their concern were by no means all helpless victims. Slave rebellions rocked the West Indies throughout the 1790s and beyond. After the French abandoned Santo Domingo to the British in 1793, the army's attempt to put down Toussaint L'Ouverture's slave revolt cost more soldiers than it lost in the American war of independence. At Westminster, even MPs who approved of slavery questioned its expense.

Mr Hochschild has a chilling explanation for why British abolitionists concentrated on the slave trade. Unlike in the United States, where the slave population grew by natural



Robin White

I asked Robin if he was ever offered a bribe to kill or colour a story. A prompt "no" was his answer. He added that he would have refused even if he were offered.

A further probe came from another participant who asked if his hotel bills were being settled by governments any time he was in Africa. Again, Robin said no. He however said he wouldn't mind accepting a modest handcraft or a piece of artwork without strings attached.

He also narrated a story, which he regretted: "We were once invited by the Ghanaian government who were looking for good publicity for their union government which was a one party system. They wined and dined us. I wish I hadn't gone."

He said while they were there, some violent people came and harassed them and when he was leaving the next morning a government official said "Why Robin? The food was poisonous? Your bedroom was not good?"

In retirement, Robin can finally afford to have a family and start a life. "I only got married last year to the woman I have been leaving with for 35 years," he said. Now back in London in the company of his "new" wife and Holly, his only 21-year-old daughter, I am sure Robin is missing many of those things he enjoyed in Abuja. "Battered fish on the table; plunger in hand in, put it in your mouth, spit out the bones; it is fantastic!"

Salah is with VON, Abuja.

Slavery: Cruellest trade

How a minority of abolitionists won over the majority

increase, it would have fast vanished in British possessions but for "imports". The sugar fields and refineries of the West Indies were so harsh that slaves died young and many female slaves were too weak to bear children. End the trade, the abolitionists reasoned, and slavery itself would die.

They were right about the tactic, wrong about timing. It was not until 1833 that slavery was finally outlawed in the British empire, although that was 30 years before the United States and more than 50 before the Spanish colonies. Abolitionists were needed to the end.

It once was fashionable to explain the ending of slavery as an economic consequence, and to treat changing attitudes as secondary. Slavery, it was argued, was ceasing to be profitable.

With industrialisation, investors in slave ships and plantations had better places to put their money. Reformers, in effect, were pushing at an open door. Even if the dates worked better—and there was money in slavery well into the 19th century—mechanical stories of this kind

would explain at best lack of resistance, not anti-slavery pressure.

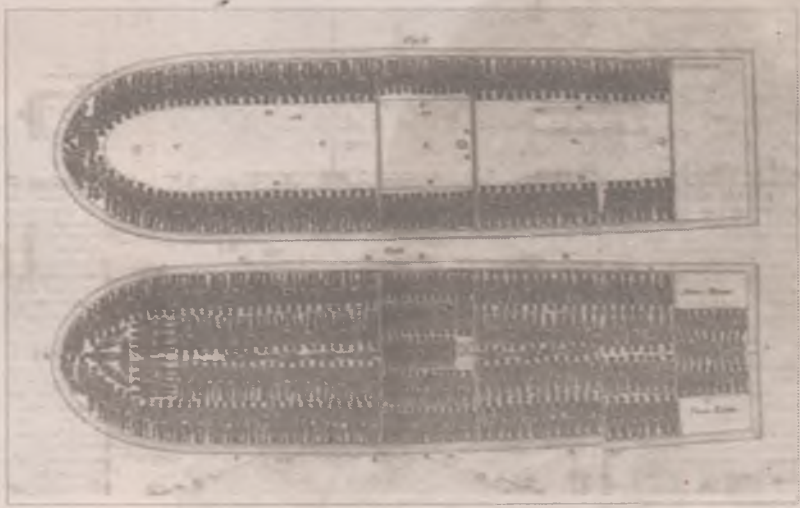
Opponents of the slave trade agitated not only for new laws. They badgered courts to look at old law in fresh light. *Though the Heavens May Fall* by Steven Wise, an American lawyer concerned with animal and human rights, neatly complements Mr Hochschild's book. It gives a detailed account of legal challenges to slavery in Britain (but not the colonies), which culminated in the Somerset trial in 1772. James Somerset was a slave who had absconded while in England and whose master went to court to repossess him. The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, ruled in Somerset's favour, denying the master's claims on the ground that in England, by established legal

principle, everyone was free. Though Mansfield, somewhat contradictorily, sought to deny wider scope to his ruling, Granville Sharp and other abolitionists hailed it as the test case they had wanted. Masters of some 15,000 slaves in Britain seemed to agree: unsure of their owners' rights, many made slaves sign lifelong "apprenticeships".

Both authors remind us how a committed minority can persuade a majority to see what

at first they cannot or do not want to see. In one of many vivid passages, Mr Hochschild describes a simple but electrifying piece of evidence that Clarkson placed before an enquiry into the slave trade by the Privy Council in 1788. It was a diagram of a slave ship, the *Brookes*, showing slaves tightly packed and chained in rows. For many people, this was perhaps the first time that the reality of the slave trade had impinged upon them: with their own eyes, they could see its cruelty.

Culled from The Economist



A drawing depicting Africans chained down in a slave ship

Okonkwo Complex in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus (III)

By Deji Toyé

tones contribute little or nothing. The most eloquent social commentary made in this book, so far as this writer can see, is, as noted earlier, on how the modern society helps to make monsters of its privileged.

The above point having been made, it must however be stressed that it does not derogate from the tragic dimensions of the story. Those who pin the tragedy of Okonkwo on the status of the hero in his community seem to be lashing back to the classical conceptions of tragedy. It was Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, and his Roman disciple, Horace, that told us that the failings of the commoner can only be a subject of our common ridicule, that is comedy, while the foibles of the nobility are of such magnitude as to draw pathos from the rest of the community who, in turn, are drawn into its tragic consequences like a communal ritual. A more egalitarian view of tragedy which was foreshadowed by European theatre in the 16th to 17th century (from the Spanish Lope de Vega to Shakespeare) has fully emerged by the time Arthur Miller wrote the modern classic *The Death of the Salesman*. Tragedy today, is not the

playground of the king, but of man struggling against innate flaw exacerbated by the social environment. It has been a faulty approach in the criticism of *TFA* to locate the tragedy within the matrix of the social status of Okonkwo, with convenient reference to the theme of culture contact/conflict. It is this sort of criticism that was going to be extended to Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, but which the playwright confessed he never conceived, himself stressing the threnodic essence of the story.

The tragic dimensions of the Okonkwo character can only be truly located in his struggles against his myriad fears and it is in this regard that Brother Eugene emerges in *Purple* as a kindred spirit, or co-victim of a kindred spirit, with Okonkwo.

Yet, it must be admitted that, while Okonkwo emerged in *TFA* as a tragic hero, Brother Eugene remains in *Purple*, a tragic character but certainly not a hero. This is the consequence of the departure which Adichie's story makes from the Achebe story. *TFA* is the story of Okonkwo and his travails, told from a universal point of view,

but wrapped around his development from a disadvantaged station in life to a privileged status and then to destruction—a quintessential tragic hero. Indeed, it is said that the German version of the book is published under the title *Okonkwo*. In *Purple*, Adichie, perhaps in an artistic enactment of the Okonkwo instinct (and reminiscent of the Harry Garuba statement quoted in the opening paragraph of this series of articles), treads a different path, telling the story of Kambili, told from her point of view, capturing the development of a young victim of a fatherly oppression from bondage to liberation. Indeed a blurb comment refers to it as a 'coming of age' story. More importantly, because of the space which is also given to other characters in the story—Aunty Ifeoma, Jaja and Papa Nnukwu, for example (these being more developed characters than say, Obierika, Nwoye and Unoka in *TFA*)—we encounter a Brother Eugene against whom is ranged an array of characters who demand their own share of sympathy as well.

In conclusion, the point being made is that, it is not in the quality of their characters, but in the magnitude of artistic space allocated to them in their respective stories that the difference in the tragedy of Okonkwo and Brother Eugene can be located. (Concluded)

Toyé is a Lagos-based lawyer and writer.



ALL NIGERIA PEOPLES PARTY (ANPP)

TARABA STATE BRANCH

Hamma Ruwa Way Jalingo

SOME HARD FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TARABA

We, the members of All Nigerian Peoples Party ANPP, Taraba State have followed with keen interest the astonishing and incredible news in Thisday of Wednesday December, 15 2004 where His Excellency, Rev. Jolly Nyame was quoted as saying that "it is only those who have skeletons in" their cupboards that will be afraid of the proposed withdrawal of immunity from Governor's whilst we the ANPP do not wish to be drawn into the details of this publication, we as concerned opposition party are constrained to remark that it is unbelievable for a governor who is a man of God with the noble title Reverend to have publicly joked with integrity.

We members of the All Nigerian Peoples' Party would have disregarded this erroneous claim made by His Excellency, Rev. Jolly Nyame, but for the interest it could generate is equally capable of being misunderstood by Tarabians and the general public.

In as much as we are not in a hurry to probe the archives of history, certain things that happened during the first, second and third regimes of Rev Nyame we shall in no unmistakable terms affirm without fear or favour that even the blind, the most unintelligent, the dumbest and the ill informed knows that Taraba is the most backward state in the federation lacking virtually all social amenities and other democratic dividends.

We, the ANPP noted with dismay that since the present administration came to power five years ago, nothing can be said to have changed in the area of provision of social amenities such as water, healthcare, roads, education, agriculture and rural transformation.

We, the ANPP have equally watched with dismay how Rev. Jolly Nyame is single-handedly managing the affairs of the state with total disregard of the support of his cabinet members. In fact the state has been turned into a domestic affair with one man presiding over one man government without commitment and clue in order to move the state forward.

Considering the state huge potential in both human and natural resources, for any meaningful development to be achieved there must be a corresponding manpower. Unfortunately this administration has no regards for the right calibre of people, thus it has succeeded in substituting intelligent Tarabians who suppose to have contributed positively to the development of this state with mediocre, incompetence and selfishness.

We, members of the ANPP have equally observed that democracy has no meaning in Taraba State. This is true because the Rev Jolly Nyame one man Government has used all available political (machinery) to silence any criticism or strong opposition. This he has succeeded in moulding and shaping the Taraba State House of Assembly to suit his personal style of administration. As at the time of going to press, the state House of Assembly has witnessed live speakers in live years all through impeachment process. As at now instead of the Honourable members to check the undue influences and excesses of the Governor, the reverse is the case as it could be seen in the removal of speakers.

In view of the forgoing and as concerned citizen of Taraba State, we members of ANPP wish to re-examine further the moral or integrity issue raised in order to determine the authenticity of His Excellency Rev. Jolly Nyame's statement. Thus we state as follows:

ZERO FOREIGN INVESTMENT DRIVE FACTS

It is a fact that in spite of the various foreign trips embarked upon by His Excellency, Rev. Jolly Nyame to woo foreign investors, no single investor has invested in the state. It is also a fact that the huge amount of money spent on these trips would have been sunk into the revitalization of abandoned Tomato factory, Lau and Baissa limber company Ltd Baissa. Such huge sum of money equally would have been put into other social sectors which would have direct impact on the lives of majority Tarabians. We, members of the ANPP hereby expressed our displeasure on the way and manner taxpayers' money is being used on wasteful foreign leisure trips without any positive results just because of some individual selfish and parochial interest.

THE SCAPE GOAT SYNDROME

It is a fact that some selected few in this Government are being made scape goats for offences allegedly committed or even not directly committed. This diversionary tactics being carried out by the Government is aimed at creating fake transparency impression. Granted that the offences have been committed, but the way and manner the issue is being handled without proper judiciary commission of enquiry cannot be overstated. In this regard, we, members, of the ANPP hereby decry the alarming failure of this government particularly in the area of due process and accountability.

WATER SUPPLY

It is a fact that Jalingo the state capital which is surrounded by river and streams from all directions has no water treatment plant. It is also a fact that Jalingo township has the highest number of water vendors more than anywhere else in the federation. It is a fact too that 90% of the population in Jalingo metropolis depends on water hawkers whose source of water is through the Mayo Gwai river as against few old boreholes at Magami. The vexed issue as well as an eye sore is that where these water vendors are getting their water, mounted high is the portrait of Rev. Jolly Nyame. However, we, members of the ANPP noted with dismay the huge amount of money were spent on water supply without any corresponding drop to that effect.

ROAD DEVELOPMENT

Apart from the 5 kilometres Jalingo KpantiNapu by pass road which was awarded since the inception of this administration, no any visible road project is being embarked upon by this Government. In fact the delay in non completion of the only road project is a deliberate financial drain pipe tactics created to syphon our meager resources. It would be recalled

counterpart funding for the completion of Mararaba-Jen-Karim Lamido road project nothing has been seen of the road. And in order to justify more insults on the people of Karim Lamido the Nyame's administration contracted a one man white man contractor who all alone mobilized to site but was eventually trapped between Jen-Banbuka and has since vacated the area for lack of seriousness on the part of Government. We are also aware of a contract deal awarded for the construction and rehabilitation of existing Jalingo township roads. Accordingly, payment has been made without any corresponding job done. All these projects are yet to see the light of the day.

MISPLACEMENT OF PRIORITIES

It is a fact that the Jalingo township stadium contract was awarded in 1992 by the Rev. Jolly Nyame's administration, but was abandoned as a result of military intervention. Immediately the Jolly Nyame's administration came in this project was earmarked and has since gulped some whooping billions of naira. Granted that the amount spent is justifiable, but of what importance is this stadium to the people of Taraba considering the fact that the sport council itself is underfunded and lack modern training facilities. Afolahan square which was named by Rev. Jolly Nyame would have carter for any type of sporting activities.

We, members of the ANPP view this stadium project as another misplacement of priority and is deliberately created to syphon our dwindling meager resources. It is also a fact that contract for Taraba Television Corporation was awarded in 1992 by Rev. Jolly Nyame at the cost of 83 million naira. The initial contract sum has been duly paid and all equipment delivered with the exception of two transmitter components. Investigation revealed that with the coming of the present administration a whooping sum of money has so far been spent.

Granted that the money spent represents the provision of wider coverage of the entire state, but of what benefit is television to the over 80% of our rural dwellers who have no electricity nor can afford TV sets. This too is another misplacement of priority by the Nyame's administration, considering the fact that apart from Jalingo the state capital and three other LGAs namely Zing, Wukari and Takum all the remaining are not connected to the National Grid.

THE PURCHASE OF 2 NOS. 15 SEATER AIRCRAFT

It is a fact that the purpose of Government establishing commercial venture of any kind, apart from the profit margin is to create employment opportunity for its unemployed citizens. This is not so in Taraba where Rev Jolly Nyame unilaterally without the executive decision approved the purchase of two 15 seaters aircraft at the cost of 5 billion naira. Even though payment has been made through executive ratification but without due process. The aviation commercial venture embarked upon by the Nyame administration has not improve the revenue base of the state Government. Contrary to our expectations, 30 million naira in addition is being spent monthly as maintenance and salaries of expatriates staff. More worry some is the fact that far from the poor revenue being generated and which does not commensurate with even the maintenance of the aircraft no single indigene of Taraba State has been offered appointment as flight attendance. "The peoples choice" indeed.

THE MILE SIX HOUSING ESTATE

We, members of the ANPP equally have observed with displeasure the 3 billion naira loan granted the state Government by a commercial bank for the construction of 500 housing units at mile six along Jalingo-Yola road. We further noted with dismay that the loan attracted very high interest and is payable in 30 months. Besides, the contract is being executed by non indigenous contractors. who in comparison are not better than our indigenous contractors. The irony is that the non indigenous contractors came with their own labourers and artisans thereby depriving the less privileged Tarabian of democratic dividends. More worry some is the fact that the design is not in conformity with our culture and beliefs since we believe in extended family. By our assessment, a unit cost of each of these tiny little-boys quarters-like two bedroom houses is put at over 5 million naira. The thorny issue is that Taraba state is likely to inherit a hugged debt more than it could bargain for.

EXECUTIVE MEETING

We, members of the ANPP noted with displeasure how government policy formulation and decision making are being taken unilaterally by one man. It is a fact that in 2004, the Taraba State Executive met only 5 times contrary to the 52 weeks earmarked for this meeting. The lack of planning and EXCO meeting has constituted an emergency on the part of this administration where contracts are being awarded without Finance and general Purpose Committee (F&GPC) no executive conclusion but ratification and without DUE PROCESS

CONCLUSION

Having come this far in positioning some of our observation and have also analysed the current bothering issues, we, members of the ANPP believe that Taraba State would be better off under the credible alternative, the All Nigerian Peoples Party as the year 2007 elections approaches. And for posterity sake, let it be cleared that Rev. Jolly Nyame's performance in office in the last five years has brought nothing to the people of Tarba. This is just the begging.

Signed

Muhammed Sani Nyaro
Chairman

Alh. Sani Abdullahi Tullu
Secretary

News

FIRS collects N1.2 trillion in 2004

The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), says they collected N1,193,000,000 in 2004 as against the N800 billion target that was set, reflecting an excess of about N394 billion.

The chairman, FIRS, Miss Ifueko Omoigui, who disclosed this at the enlarged management meeting of the service yesterday

From Anas A. Galadima, Reporter (Business)

in Abuja, said this reflects an excess of 40 percent over the initial target.

The performance "would have been better but for the huge arrears owed by government institutions in withholding taxes to the tune of more than N30 billion," according to her.

She, however, noted that serious efforts are being made to recover the tax debts.

"The FIRS performed in the collection of petroleum profit tax and Value Added Tax (VAT) while its showing was not as bright in other non-oil taxes," she said.

She complained that the myriads of duty waivers granted last year reduced the amount of VAT collected on imports.

The chairman added that, "the FIRS tax reform programme is at an advanced stage of execution. While awaiting changes that will require legislative approval, FIRS has gone ahead with the administrative reforms."

IBB's campaign kicks off in South-West

Abdul-Azeez Suleiman, News Editor (Weekly in Ibadan)

A huge campaign team mobilising support for former President Ibrahim Badamasi's presidential ambition last Saturday stormed Lagos and Ibadan cities.

More than 2,000 youths dressed in IBB T-shirts and caps accompanied the train which rallied around Lagos and Ibadan towns before finally arriving Mapo hall, Ibadan, where its leaders addressed a large crowd.

The campaign organised by the Vision 2007 Group and supported by Alhaji Danladi Auyo, chairman of the Bureau de Change operators of Nigeria, also had representatives from various groups from the 36 states of the federation.

Addressing the rally, Alhaji Nma Kolo, chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Minna, Niger State, who led the Niger state delegation, said he was overwhelmed by the huge turnout to receive them.

Alhaji Kolo, who is famed for issuing IBB a party membership card with a symbolic number, 007, said he was speaking on behalf of IBB, adding that the rally has put to shame insinuations that the former General would not be accepted in the South-West for his perceived role in the annulment of the June 12 elections.

In his address, Alhaji Danladi Auyo, who led the entire Northern delegation and sponsored the rally, disclosed that the campaign kits would keep flying around the country until it lands at Aso Rock presidential villa in 2007.

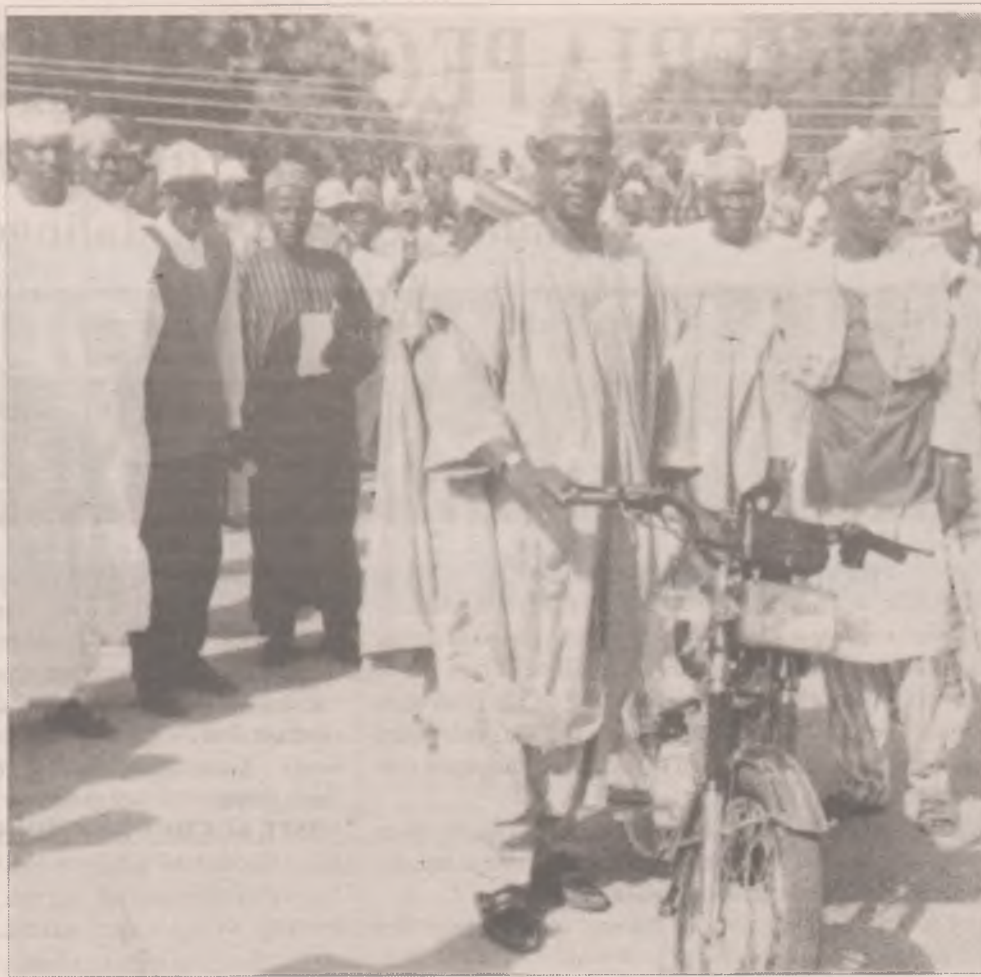
He said that only IBB with his immense experience and genius could provide the much-needed turn around for the nation.

Speaking on June 12, Danladi Auyo said that the Yoruba nation is the better for it.

"The South-West and the Yoruba has become the major beneficiary of June 12 with one of their own having been supported to the presidency for eight years now," he said.

In his address, national chairman of the Vision 2007 Group assured the South-West that IBB will definitely contest on the platform of the PDP.

Mr. Adekunle Makama, the Vision 2007 chairman pointed out that the only viable platform for IBB to run for the presidency is the PDP which remains the winning party.



A beneficiary of the Borno State Poverty Alleviation Programme displaying a motorcycle presented to him by the state's Ministry for Poverty Alleviation & Youth Empowerment... recently.

Attorney-General wants improved welfare for magistrates

The Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Chief Akinlolu Oluyinmi (SAN), yesterday said that the condition of service of magistrates and other legal officers in the judiciary should be improved to enhance professional integrity.

Speaking at the Supreme Court special session in honour of retiring Justice Othman Mohammed, the minister said that the condition of service for magistrates and other lower levels must be looked into since the first contact of the average citizen with the judicial system is through them.

According to him, since subordinate courts often handle the great majority of cases, "it is necessary to encourage them to set high standards of personal integrity and professional competence which can earn respect for the entire judicial system."

Besides, he said the growing population of awaiting trial inmates in prisons could be drastically reduced if magistrates and other judges of the lower bench are trained and empowered to look critically into the so-called "holding charge preferred against accused persons."

The justice minister said, "it seems to me that one of the strong lessons that could be learnt from the achievement of today's distinguished guest of honour is that any magistrate who demonstrates the necessary qualities of character and competence can make it to any level in the legal profession."

In his valedictory speech, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Lawal Uwais, said that Justice Mohammed attained 70 years on February 20, 2005, while his retirement took effect from Monday, February 21, 2005.

By Kemi Ogedengbe, Judicial Editor

According to him, Justice Mohammed has been in the public service for 51 years, out of which 39 years have been spent in dedicated and meritorious service as a judicial officer, while he spent 12 years in the supreme court.

Also in his speech, the president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Chief Bayo Ojo (SAN), canvassed that the retirement age of Supreme Court justices should be increased from 70 years to 80 years.

Responding, retiring Justice Mohammed said that

allegations of corruption against some eminent judges should be investigated while the reckless mischief makers making the allegations should be arrested for prosecution.

He said, "This is an alarming development particularly as the mischief makers preferred to remain faceless and refused to accept the challenge given to them by the Chief Justice to come out in the open and prove their allegations."

"Are we to sit down and watch people writing and publishing injurious falsehood against us? Are we to watch when our good reputations which we have built over the

years are being damaged by faceless people?"

According to him, since the action of the faceless people is a criminal offence, the police must endeavour to identify and arrest the culprits for eventual prosecution before the court."

He thanked Justice Mamman Nasir who was instrumental to his elevation to the apex court, Justice Uwais, Justice Mustapha Akanbi, among others for their wonderful cooperation and comradeship to him while at the apex court and the court of appeal.

Horse eating case: Witness affirms defendant's guilt

A principal witness in the horse eating saga in the Bauchi State has told an upper Shari'a court that he did not see the accuse Alkasim Rabi [28], slaughtering or eating horse meat, but was told by some residents that the accuse had slaughtered a horse and has been distributing the meat to his neighbours and accolades.

Mallam Abubakar Aliyu, 35, principal witness and the ward of Ganjuwa ward in the Bauchi metropolis that about two weeks ago some people came to his house with police to lodge a complain that the accuse had slaughtered a horse in his compound and has been distributing the meat, which he said they claim was surreal.

According to him, he [Aliyu] alongside the police and the complainants went to the accused house and confronted him with the allegations, which he said the accuse [Alkasim] did not deny.

As he explained "I asked him why did he do that, and

From Tashi Kalmah Hallah, Correspondent (Bauchi)

my lord he answered that 'I bought this horse with some of my friends. But about a week ago it fell into a culvert, and it got wounded, then I went to the mammy market at the barracks to see whether I can get somebody to buy, but I couldn't. I, also in the company of my friends went to Yelwa [a Bauchi suburb], to find a buyer, but to no avail. Now on studying the Qur'an, particularly relying on Tafsir Jallalaini, Tafsir Gumi and bulugul maram, I slaughtered the horse, because it is not haram."

On hearing his explanations he said, he referred the matter to the Police and the police took the matter to the Sharia Commission. However, he maintained that he was not aware whether the action of the accused has caused disaffection within the Muslim community, and insisted that he had not seen the accuse either slaughtering

the horse or eating the meat.

The testimony of Abubakar Aliyu has generated a lot of anxiety within Bauchi as the court premises was filled with people who were at the court to catch a glimpse at Alkasim and his associates who have become a cult like figure and the continued trial.

Also, Aliyu is one of the four witnesses arranged to testify in the court by the police as stipulated in the Shari'a Law.

Alkasim and two others were arraigned before the Upper Shari'a court one last Monday on a one count charge of causing disaffection among the community which is contrary to sections 150 and 365 of the Shari'a penal code 2001.

He was granted bail on the same day; and when the case came up for hearing yesterday, it was adjourned to Monday 28 of February, to enable the Prosecution bring some of the witnesses, after the first witness' testimony.

Accident rate down by 67% — Hananiya

By Benjamin Auta, Crime Reporter

The Corps Marshal and Chief Executive of the Federal-Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Major-General Haladu A. Hananiya, has attributed the 67 percent decrease in fatal accidents in the country to the operational activities and public education strategies of the commission.

He made this remarks at a press conference in Abuja to the 17th year anniversary of the FRSC.

General Hananiya who was represented by the Deputy Corps Marshal, Engineer Yemi Agoro, said that various schemes introduced by the commission had laudable impacts on the reduction of road traffic accidents.

He said before the merger of the commission with the police force, the FRSC had put in place various successful schemes to reduce accidents.

He cited the revision of the highway code, the national uniform licensing scheme, public education and law enforcement scheme, among others.

General Hananiya said that the commission has made significant achievements in the establishment of 12 zonal commands, 37 sector commands and 59 unit commands in the federation.

He further stated that the commission has acquired barracks in Kaduna state, Jos and Abuja in addition to permanent offices.

Police arrest vigilante leader in Gombe

From Mohammed Abubakar, Stringer (Gombe)

The Gombe state police command has arrested the leader of a vigilante group known as "Gombe State Peace Keeping and Stability Group," Alhaji Lamido Sada and 56 of his men for operating a parallel police force in the state.

Police Commissioner, Alhaji Atiku Yusuf Kafur, told journalists that the group imposed fines, tortured and imprisoned its victims independent of the police, using all crude means of extracting information.

He said the command learnt of these atrocities following several complaints lodged at different police posts in the state.

The commissioner said investigations revealed that Sada's men, while claiming to rid society of crime, were actually the ones robbing people on major highways wearing police uniform.

He explained that the police were not against any vigilante group but that it must operate in collaboration with the police.

Paraded before journalists at the command were eight persons whom the police rescued from Sada's detention cells having scars from beatings they sustained in the hands of the so-called vigilante group.

News



The Grand son of late Premier of Northern Region the Sardaunan of Sokoto Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Magajin Garin Sotoko Alhaji Ahmed Danbaba exchanging greetings with the permanent secretary FCT Chief Deji Omotade during the launching ceremony of National Policy on population for sustainable development held at the Banquet hall of the State House Abuja, yesterday. Pix: Joe Oroye

Ekiti earmarks N55m for Assembly complex

In order to provide conducive environment to enable lawmakers perform their duties effectively, the Ekiti State government has earmarked N55 million for the construction of a new House of Assembly complex and Speaker's official residence. Disclosing this at a press conference in Ado-Ekiti to give detailed analysis of the year 2005 budget, the state's Commissioner for Finance, Mr. Toyin Ojo, described legislature as an important arm of government that should be equipped sufficiently and adequately.

According to the commissioner, another N12 million has been set apart in this year's budget for various capital projects in the House of Assembly which include the procurement of office equipment, editing suit for the communication unit and installation of intercom to ease communication in the Assembly complex.

Mr. Ojo who disclosed further that the state government has also budgeted for the purchase of gowns and wigs for the Speaker and the clerk of the House to further enhance the status of the Assembly, said a whopping sum of N128 million has equally been set apart for constituency projects for

From Femi Oladipo, Stinger Ado-Ekiti

honourable members.

He expressed the determination of the present administration to ensure improved welfare condition for all government workers and has been demonstrating it though prompt and regular payment of workers' salary, regular promotion, and pay-

ment of inherited leave bonuses and other welfare package.

He explained that in this fiscal year, a sum of N10 million has been approved for the constructive of a block of three classrooms in the permanent site of the staff development centre. And that government will provide N60 million for the civil service housing loans.

Motorcyclist in dilemma over knocked down boy

A commercial motorcyclist in Port Harcourt, Mr Innocent Wilfred, is in a dilemma over the custody of an underage boy who survived a road accident. Wilfred, 29, had knocked down the boy on the busy Olu Obasanjo road in Port Harcourt three weeks ago and rushed the victim to a nearby clinic where he was revived.

In a statement to the police, Wilfred, who hails from Nyokiru in the Khana council area of Rivers, said his ordeal started when the victim, simply referred to as Silas, could not give his parents' contact address.

"I decided to report the incident to the nearby Olu Obasanjo Police Station

where I was advised to keep him in my house and continued treating his facial injuries and later report back to them," he said.

"The police directed that I take the boy to NTA for a public announcement."

The motorcyclist lamented that he had spent a lot in feeding the boy while he could not do his business for the past three weeks.

Meanwhile, the command has started a search for the parents or guardians of the boy.

The command's spokeswoman, Mrs Ireju Barasua, told News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the case was pathetic and could discourage good Nigerians from helping accident victims.

Plateau: Kanam rejects new traditional ruler

Ethno-religious differences have reared its head again in Plateau State as the Bogghom people in Kanam local government of the state had rejected the creation of a new chiefdom and the appointment of a new traditional ruler for them with a second class status. They preferred rather to remain with the present emirate system under the present emir of Kanam.

Kanam was one of the flash points of the recent ethno-religious crises in the state.

In a statement signed by six of their leaders and made available to *Daily Trust*, the concerned Bogghom citizens of Kanam local government area condemned the proposed creation of a chiefdom out of the present Kanam emirate, and the proposed appointment of Pankwal Bogghom, (the Chief of Bogghom) for the new chiefdom.

"There is no reason or basis for the creation of another chiefdom within the present Kanam emirate," the statement pointed out. Adding that they considered it as a deliberate act to provoke the entire Bogghom nation to take arms against them.

They emphasised that their allegiance was with the emir of Kanam who although is a muslim, and a Bogghom by tribe, saying that "there is no basis to even contemplate the creation of Bogghom chiefdom without involving the full participation of the people concerned. They cited examples in other parts of the country where eventhough they were not Hausa speaking people, but their rulers go by the title of 'Emir'.

From Jibril Dauda, Correspondent (Jos)

Kebbi State, Emir of Dass in Bauchi state, and the emirs of Agaie, Borgu, Minna and Lapai in Niger State, among others.

They therefore, described the appointment of the new as "uncalled for, ill

motivated, malicious and mischievous, and calculated to destroy the hard earned peace."

Worse still, they alleged that the new chief (name withheld) is a Taroh man from Gazum in Langtang North local government area, even as they flayed the state government for disregarding several memoranda on the matter to redress the situation.

Motorcycle loans: Yobe NUT seeks payment subsidy

The Yobe State chapter of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) has appealed to the Yobe state government to reduce the unit process of motorcycles distributed as loans to teachers, saying that the N90,000.00 being charged was not the case for other workers in the state. Speaking at the weekend in Damaturu, Yobe State capital, the state's NUT chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Isa, said "we are therefore pleading with His Excellency to consider subsidising the unit prices of the motorcycles as enjoyed by other categories of workers in the state."

The NUT chairman noted that teachers in the state were currently being charged the total sum of ninety thousand naira on each motorcycles with the money paid back in 18 months, while N5,000.00 was being deducted on monthly basis.

"Also recently, His Excellency authorised the procurement of five thousand units of motorcycles for sale to all teachers of both primary and secondary schools at the cost of N50,000.00 with the repayment of five thousand naira monthly, to cover a period of 18 months", Alhaji Isa disclosed.

From Isa Umar Gusau, Damaturu

witnessed an increase of schools from 1999 to date, with secondary schools increasing from 39 to 55, while primary schools had increased from 640 to 890.

He also noted that enrolment figure into both primary and secondary schools have risen by over 20 per cent, with secondary schools in the state having 71,650 students, over the figure of 35,000 in 1999.

For the primary schools, Alhaji Isa said that pupils have increased from 414,000 in 1999 to 699,494 being the current figure in Yobe State.

The state's NUT chairman also disclosed that "science and technical teachers were being given special allowances, while those teaching in harsh ecological areas are also enjoying hard or hazard allowances.



DFID: Joint wetlands livelihood project

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the UK government's department responsible for promoting development and reducing poverty through sustainable economic growth, better education, better health services, and better management of natural resources. Its Joint Wetlands Livelihood (JWL) project in Nigeria is looking to recruit a suitably qualified person to join its team combating poverty in one of the major wetlands regions in the north of the country. The successful candidate is to support the office administrator in the day-to-day administration of the Hadejia field office, Jigawa State. He or she will operate from a computerised field office in Hadejia, and will need to travel occasionally.

Minimum Qualification & Experience

1. HND in secretarial administration, business administration, accounting, or other social sciences.
2. Computer literacy, with basic working knowledge of Microsoft Office tools, particularly Word and Excel.
3. Five (5) years cognate experience and excellent references.

Competences

1. Integrity, responsibility, accountability, and commitment.
2. A team player with a pleasant personality, who gets on very well with people.
3. Ability to deal discretely with confidential matters.
4. Strong command of spoken and written English.
5. Fluency in Hausa (essential).
6. Concern for the welfare of the poor in Nigeria, and for the development of Nigeria as a whole.
7. Must be prepared to relocate to Hadejia

Remuneration

An attractive remuneration package to be negotiated according to the candidate's qualification and experience.

Selection Procedure

DFID/JWL is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications regardless of gender, ethnic origin religion, or political persuasion. Preference will however be given to candidates hailing from the project region.

Closing date for receipt of application is 2 weeks from the date of this advert.

To apply, please send your CV, a supporting letter, photocopies of credentials, and the names of three referees, one of whom must be a previous employer, to:

The Project Manager
DFID-JWL Project
Opposite Deputy Gov's official residence,
Yadi GRA, PMB 7098,
Dutse, Jigawa State
Application by e-mail to: jdawson@dfid.gov.uk

Inside Politics

'Strengthening the structures of democratic governance in Nigeria'

Continued from yesterday

Being a text of an address by His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR at the inauguration of the National Political Reform Conference.

Pluralism is the order of the day and globalisation, technology, modernization, and the politics of accommodation dictate that we must reject those ideas and arguments that seek to divide us and establish the interests of ethnic entrepreneurs as the sole interests of the people.

I am not unaware of the demands of some Nigerians for a so-called sovereign national conference. The sovereignty of any nation rests with the people. The people of Nigeria, since 1999 have twice elected representatives and leaders at the Local, State, and Federal levels. Each State in the Federation is represented at the Federal level; the Nigerian State is not collapsing or exhausted, and our territorial and national integrity is fully intact and guaranteed. We must not confuse what took place in a few African States where state structures had collapsed completely, were thoroughly compromised or totally lacked legitimacy with what our people need here today. And, as we all know, the convening of a sovereign national conference did not ensure democracy in those countries that had it.

As far as Nigeria is concerned, since 1999, the people have not withdrawn the mandate and transfer of their God-given sovereign rights from their representatives that were duly elected. In this wise, let me state clearly, for the avoidance of doubt, what this conference is and what it is not.

The purpose of this conference is to discuss and reach consensus on any aspect of governance arrangement for reinforcing the unity, cohesion, stability, security, progress, development and performance of the Nigerian Federation.

The purpose is to enhance rather than diminish the present and the future for every Nigerian.

Some people have suggested that a self-determination clause should be included in our constitution. The idea, they canvass, is that such a clause will make all the component parts of Nigeria to work together to strengthen the unity and cohesion of the country.

The clause may be invoked by any part that feels aggrieved even though such an action will still require the consent and agreement of other Nigerians through a referendum. I do not share this idea.

I believe that this line of reasoning is emanating from the same idea of "if you want peace, prepare for war." I have always believed that whatever you want is what you

prepare for. It is best to avoid self-fulfilling prophecy, in such a situation. It is best to always work for peace and harmony and love.

What we want in Nigeria is unity, cohesion, equity, togetherness and collective commitment to our progress and to the Nigeria Project. We want to move forward, look forward, think about the past to help the present and the future and work for a stronger and more united Nigeria. It is unhelpful to devote time and energy to unrealistic, even unpatriotic strategies for precipitating crises, conflicts, deadlock and disintegration. In a democracy, there must be checks and balances and there must be effective watchdogs.

One issue we have to resolve is who watches the watchdog effectively, transparently with whistle blowing at the levels of the legislature, executive, judiciary and the fourth estate of the realm.

Whatever we want is what we shall work for and that is what God will grant us.

We want a united, stable, secure, equitable, progressive, prosperous and great country and we should all be irretrievably committed to it.

The National Political Reform Conference is NOT designed to dismember or disintegrate Nigeria.

It is not established to encourage mud slinging; not to organize protest or subterranean political activities that would be detrimental to effective discussions. Rather, the conference is about designing the most appropriate and relevant institutional mechanisms for managing our diversity and difference.

This conference is not about opposition politics but it is about Nigeria today and tomorrow, for Nigerians of today and of tomorrow. This conference is not a tribunal, a court or an arbitration panel.

The conference is not a substitute for the executive or the legislature. Rather, this is a democratic path to consider all that is necessary to assist the constitutionally established legitimate structures of government—the executive, judiciary and legislature—to grow, become more dynamic, more accountable and more capable of delivering service to the populace.

This conference is not established to pull down, but to build; it is a gathering to uplift, enhance and strengthen, nurture and cultivate the best, most enduring, most ideal and lasting values that are central to our national growth, development and progress. This conference is not an oppor-



President Olusegun Obasanjo

tunity to insist on absolutes, one way or nothing. Rather, it is designed to consolidate, solidify, and give more life to how we conceive, organise, structure and practice politics in our country on the basis of enduring principles.

Let us not waste this opportunity in casting aspersions, raising diverting and distracting issues, engaging in meaningless and fruitless debates, trying to denigrate what has been done, playing to the gallery or trying to divide our people on grounds of many identities that we should actually cherish. Our diversity is part of our strength and our uniqueness.

Nigeria by any means is not a perfect assemblage of people, institutions or groups, but I believe that God does not make mistakes. God brought Nigeria into being and those of us that He put in this geographical territory will be going against what God has ordained if we do anything to diminish or erode what God has put together. The task of every Nigerian is to sustain what God has created by ensuring justice, equity, equal opportunity, participation and inclusion.

God is righteous, just, kind, loving, caring, compassionate and merciful. We, His children by common grace, must exhibit these attributes which are innate in us.

I have always talked about "Project Nigeria"; a project involves a plan, design, purpose, objective and an object that will satisfy those who conceive of the project in the first instance. Nigeria has become, and we must continue to make Nigeria a Project of beauty that will give all Nigerians joy forever. This is also why we have brought in representatives from all

shades of opinions, ideas, ideologies, identities and perspectives that can contribute to the continuous and tireless making of this Project.

The Conference will have three months to carry out the exercise. The Background Paper that was prepared by the Committee on Background Paper for Political Reform chaired by the Governor of Kaduna State will be available. In addition to the Background Paper, the Conference will have at its disposal the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as we have practiced it up to this moment; the Report of the All Party Committee on the Review of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Draft Amended Constitution emanating from it; the Draft Electoral Bill which was submitted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) based on its own direct experience of running elections for two different terms at the three tiers of government; and the current socio-economic reform document, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the Oputa Panel Report. The Committee is encouraged to engage in comparative studies without ignoring the realities and specificities as well as the historical experiences of Nigeria. It is my hope that the Conference will feel free to invite any individual or group that may not be represented at this conference but has submission or presentation to make.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, let me advise that because of time constraint and because of our long experience in the Nigerian constitution making process

as well as our keen understanding of the political processes, we consider that there may not be any need to look outward for what we already have at home. In other words, this is not the time to travel around the world. We have NGOs, researchers, academics and experts that can assist with information, ideas and materials.

Most of the nations of the world have their constitutions on the Internet today and millions of useful documents can be easily accessed on the web.

Finally, Fellow Compatriots, I believe that certain issues must by now be accepted as minimum issues that must be regarded as given. These are issues that have resulted from decades of political engagements and contestations, dialogues, conflict and negotiation, networking, and confrontation with the stark realities that unite us as a people. These are issues that are central to the oneness of Nigeria and that are core to our stability, security, peace, growth and developmental processes.

They include: the oneness of Nigeria; federalism and federal system of government; presidentialism; multi-religiosity; federal character; popular participation; the fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy; and Separation of Powers.

The Conference is free to strengthen, update, and refine these in their recommendations; nothing should be done to undermine our national integrity and sovereignty or weaken our national cohesion. These areas constitute the bedrock of our unity, identity, and political praxis.

The Conference may choose to show unique foresight and be insightful about African unity, cooperation, integration and development as evinced in the African Union and NEPAD.

As for the members of the Conference, I congratulate you all for being part of this great opportunity to serve the nation. All Nigerians, indeed the world, are watching you. Do not allow yourselves to be distracted or exposed to conducts that would destroy your hard earned reputation and compromise the objectives of this initiative.

Do not allow your souls and thoughts to be contaminated by negative ideas and do not allow your honesty and integrity to be compromised by extraneous and inimical influences and temptations. Be steadfast, patriotic, hardworking and focused on your goals at all times.

The caliber of members of this Conference both by selection and nomination is very impressive going by age, experience and, hopefully

maturity and wisdom. Understandably, some people have wondered as to why such caliber of persons have shown such keen interest in, and commitment to the Conference. Believing that most of you are desirous of making meaningful, constructive, purposeful, and integrative contributions to the continued unity, growth, development, and democratic desires of Nigeria without necessarily seeking elective office, I have no apprehension. I want to put my trust and faith in your ability to always think of Nigeria, remember our Creator always, and put the interest of all Nigerians above any other interest. In fact, I have commendation for this collection of men and women. If however, anyone among you or some of you, particularly the elders is or are here to be obstructive, negative, reactionary and counter-productive, you may by so doing put a very sad epitaph on your tombstone. It is my hope and prayer that this will not be the case.

I want to thank Almighty God for once again giving us this unique opportunity to work together for our collective future. I thank the Nigerian people for their continuing robust belief in the boundless possibilities and opportunities that abound in Nigeria. I thank the friends of Nigeria who repose confidence in us and are ready to help us on our path. I thank you all for understanding that the decay and dislocation of the past require tough choices that will guarantee a stable, peaceful, harmonious and prosperous future for every Nigerian.

Let us work together, eschew bitterness, abandon opportunism, commit to fair play and equity; promote inclusion and tolerance and use this opportunity to bring out the best in us to consolidate our democracy, right the wrongs in our system and live together in peace, harmony and prosperity giving hope to every Nigerian.

I hope that at the end of this exercise, new friendships would have been fostered, enduring relationships manifested, and a renewed commitment to tolerance, inclusion, and Nigerian unity engendered to make our dear country stronger.

I am proud of being a Nigerian and more so at this time in our history. I have one objective for Nigeria and I implore all Nigerians and friends of Nigeria to join me in achieving that objective, and that is, to make our dear country the best in every endeavour and a shining example to the rest of the world. When God is with us, and we think, work, plan, and act together, no goal can be beyond our reach as a people.

Concluded

Inside Politics

Obasanjo intervenes in Borno PDP crisis

President Olusegun Obasanjo has waded into the long running and acrimonious internal crisis within the Borno State chapter of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), by bringing together its various and competing factions in an unprecedented reconciliation meeting.

The meeting took place at the Maiduguri International Hotel, and was attended by all senior members of the PDP in Borno State, including all those who had contested in the party's two primary elections which took place before the 2003 gubernatorial elections. These include Kashim Ibrahim Imam, Baba Gana Bafurra, Mohammed Wakil, Gambo Lawan and Maina Ma'aji Lawan.

Daily Trust learnt authoritatively that the meeting was convened as a result of the President's personal and growing concern over the effects of the feud on both party unity and its future electoral fortune in Borno State.

President Obasanjo, who was represented at the meeting by the Chairman of the PDP Board of Trustees Chief Tony Anenih, had appealed to the disputing factions of the PDP in the state to bury the hatchet, advising that their primary goal should be the success of the party, as different political forces in the State begin to strategise for the 2007 elections.

The President was also said to have made it clear that the PDP cannot afford to lose Borno State again during the next general elections in 2007, as it did during the last one in 2003, explaining that the internal misunderstanding within the party was at the heart of its poor showing at the elections.

Daily Trust learnt that the Maiduguri Reconciliation Meeting was held under a very frank atmosphere, with the President's representative, Chief Tony Anenih playing the party's peace maker and ombudsman, to ensure that the bitter past was painted over with a more hopeful and united future.

Sources also told Daily Trust that the meeting also reviewed the political situation in Borno, where all the participants resolved to work closely and in tandem, as a means of wresting power away from the ruling All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) come 2007.

However, the meeting, according to sources, did not discuss about who will be the PDP's flag bearer in the forthcoming elections. "That's not the issue for now. Our concern is to bury our differences, close our ranks and work together as one big family. Other things come later", said one of Daily Trust sources.

The Borno PDP, before and since the last general elections, had been embroiled in a stiff, sometimes even bitter, internal wrangling which saw the party lose out in the 2003 elections. The party did not only lose the gubernatorial election, it also lost two out of the three senatorial districts in Borno to the rival ANPP, as well as all but one local government chairmanship positions.

Although it had its underpinning in party loyalty at the 'higher level', the Borno PDP crisis effectively begun to unfold as the party was working to get a strong flag bearer who was to represent it in the last elections. Although in the first primary election that was held, it was Kashim Imam who won, some of the other contestants, notably Ma'aji Lawan and Gambo Lawan refused to concede victory.

By Abdullahi Bego, Regional Editor (North East)

The duo reportedly went to the PDP National Headquarters in Abuja to complain about the results of the elections and prayed the party to organise fresh ones 'to ensure equity and justice'.

The PDP National Secretariat obliged, and Iro Dan Musa, then the party's National Vice Chairman (North West) was sent to organise and hold fresh primaries.

Curiously, while the winner of the last primary election, Kashim Imam was available and ready to re-contest, the others who complained about the outcome of the first primaries refused to participate or even show their faces at the PDP State Secretariat where the primaries were being held. It was only Baba Gana Bafurra who re-contested against Kashim Imam;

but it was clear that an understanding was reached between Bafurra and Imam where Bafurra's supporters among the delegates to the second primaries were asked to support Kashim Imam. Imam therefore won the second primaries with a clear margin.

While this was going on, the Lawans were reportedly receiving the support of the Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who himself was at that time locked in a 'cold war' with President Obasanjo, who the Lawans of the Borno PDP saw as the strength behind Kashim Imam's political machinery.

Borno PDP thus became factionalised along Atiku and Obasanjo camps, whether or not such a bifurcation, in the end, reflected the reality on ground.

So stiff was the rivalry between these two camps that during the last general elections, those who lost out to

Kashim Imam at the primaries were accused of undertaking 'anti-party activities', to scuttle the chance of Imam from winning the elections. Whether or not this was true, there is no gainsaying that the split affected party loyalty at the grassroots level and divided party ranks, in a manner that impacted negatively on the fortunes of the PDP in Borno State during the last elections.

The split also cost the party the only ministerial slot given Borno by President Obasanjo, when he was due to appoint ministers for his second term.

Daily Trust learnt at the time, that the two camps within the party failed to agree among themselves on a candidate to field, and after waiting in vain to have them reconcile their differences, President Obasanjo reportedly lost his patience and asked Borno elder statesman Shettima Ali Monguno, a former federal minister to nominate an

'independent and apolitical' person to fill Borno's ministerial slot.

This, according to sources, was how the current minister of state for education, Binta Ibrahim Musa, a former permanent secretary at the Borno State ministry of education, got nominated and eventually appointed as Borno's representative in President Obasanjo's cabinet.

Since then, there were 'flash' attempts at reconciliation within Borno PDP as major stakeholders come to grips with either the political fortuitousness of their rivalry or its over all impact on the their party and political image. Various meetings reportedly took place in Saudi Arabia, Yola and Abuja with all or some of the faction members attending. But none of these meetings finally buried the ghost that had exorcised unity from within the ranks of Borno PDP.

Now that President Obasanjo had finally and directly intervened, and signs indicate that hitherto disputing factions are not as intransigent as they used to be, it is hoped that the PDP in Borno State would be able to climb out of the abyss of crisis and misunderstanding which had dogged its progress.

Following the Maiduguri Reconciliation Meeting, competent sources also told Daily Trust that the Borno PDP leadership along with its caucus members as well as other senior party men are to meet in Abuja during the week, after which they may still meet with President Obasanjo 'to thank him for his intervention and to discuss ways of forging ahead'.

Having failed in previous attempts to allow cooler heads prevail, it remains to be seen how this latest attempt at trouble shooting would help restore sanity and normality into the PDP in Borno State.

2007: Sokoto philanthropist denies guber ambition

Chairman/Managing Director of Adiya Investments Nigeria Ltd, Alhaji (Dr.) Abdullahi Sarkin Gobir Adiya has debunked rumours of his alleged gubernatorial ambition saying he has no intention to contest for the gubernatorial seat of the state in 2007.

Addressing a press conference in Sokoto Monday, the philanthropist dismissed the rumour as baseless accusing his detractors as being behind the false rumours of his alleged political ambitions.

"Honestly speaking I am not interested in politics as will not be part of any political party and therefore I do not harbour the ambition to contest any political officer," he said.

Alhaji (Dr.) Adiya explained further that the groups campaigning for Adiya 2007 were doing so on their own accord without his consent insisting that he has never given his consent to such campaign.

Dr. Adiya, who is a member of the Sokoto Caliphate stressed further that his philanthropic

From Abdulfatah Abdulsalami, Correspondent, Sokoto activities in the state, the neighbouring states and Nigeria in general was not for political reason but for altruistic purposes.

"I am not doing my philanthropic activities to deceive people so that they can vote me as their Governor, Senator, etc. I am doing it for the sake of Allah and the hereafter", he declared.

The Sarkin Gobir Adiya called on all those campaigning for his speculated candidature to in their own interest stop it because, according to him, it is simply a waste of time and money as he is not interested.

Calling on all stakeholders in the state to support the government in its efforts to transform Sokoto state, he commended the state government under the Bafarawa leadership for efforts in the area of provision of infrastructural facilities and development of Islamic and western forms education on as well.



(R-L) Governor Adamu Aliero of Kebbi state, Senator Farouk Bello and Justice Salihu Belgore at a public function recently

Confab: Opportunity to address our problems -Abashe

Nigerian especially delegates to the National Conference, have been urged to support it in order to resolve our differences.

This was contained in a statement signed by Zakariah

Abashe, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Secretary, Kakau ward in Chikun Local government council, Kaduna state at the weekend.

Abashe said the conference should be taken serious since it would afford Nigerians opportunity to resolve the problems bedeviling the country urging that rather than go against it Nigerians should praise president Obasanjo for giving us a chance to discuss our problems as a nation.

The PDP scribe berates those who have earlier gone to court because of the conference

saying, "nothing good would have come out of such litigations."

While thanking the president and organisers of the conference for a job well done urged that youths from all segments of the country should be included in the confab.

He reminded the organisers that the youths are the leaders of tomorrow and as such should be well represented in the parley.

Abashe remarked that unless Nigeria eschewed tribalism, we cannot make great progress as a nation adding that we must see ourselves as United States of Nigeria just like the Americans see themselves before we can progress socially, economically and even spiritually.

Nigerians in UK canvass support for IBB

The United Kingdom (UK) chapter of the Nigeria Project, an association of Nigerians in Diaspora, has explained that its mission to Nigeria is to mobilise support for former military president, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida (rtd) ahead of 2007.

The group has been on a tour of major cities in Nigeria to drum up support for the presidential aspiration of IBB, and according to the chairman of the group, Mr. Bimbo Roberts, it is necessary for the group to make its mission clear to avoid insinuations in some quarters that it was undecided on who to support.

"IBB has knowledge, wisdom and information all put together and these are qualities needed to move Nigeria forward. Some leaders may have one or two of these but IBB has all of them put together", he stated.

Part of the efforts put together by the group, MR. Roberts stated include the establishment of the group at the grassroots levels in Nigeria so that the people living in the rural areas would be adequately mobilised for the project.

He asserted so far, the idea of IBB as president in 2007

By Hameed M. Bello, Senior Political Reporter

has come to be accepted by virtually every Nigerian that the group has met, adding that with time the whole country would be mobilised for the project.

General Tunde Toyun (rtd) who was present at the briefing confirmed that the UK chapter was part and parcel of the Nigeria project and by their visit demonstrated zeal and patriotism to rub off positively on those of them within the country, adding that the Nigerian project is encouraging Nigeria in the Diaspora to feel free and contest for all elective positions in the country.

Former minister of information, Chief Alex Akinyele, who urged the group to carry on in the spirit they are currently exhibiting said IBB had remained the most acceptable candidate in Nigeria as even the southwest has forgiven him over June 12

"In the south-west people have forgiven IBB and they are already waiting for him because of the thing he has done for them," he stated.

The group, which was represented by about 35 of its officials, was received by Alhaji Abdulmalik Salawu who is the coordinator of the Nigeria Project in the North Central Zone.

Rep advises Ohaneze on confab

A member of the House of Representatives representing Isiada North and South federal constituency of Abia State, Chief Dannian Ozurumba has appealed to the leadership of Ohaneze Ndi Igbo to put its house in order before going to the national conference so as to speak with one voice.

Chief Ozurumba who made the call while addressing newsmen in Abuja, said that Ohaneze need to urgently address the high rate of marginalisation in the zone before presenting the zone's maginalisation problem at the conference to avoid being divided in their positions. "How can Ohaneze champion a course of marginalisation at the centre when the home is riddled with cries of marginalisation?" he questioned.

He said that a look at the list

By Zainab Alimi, Political reporter

of delegates at the confab from Abia state shows the old Bendel division which has eight LGSS having nine slots while the old Aba division with nine LGAs has only two slots in the persons of Mr. Vincent Brown and Dr. John Austin Chikezie.

"It is also interesting to note that while the federal government allotted two delegates per senatorial district, the Abia list got only one delegate to Abia South senatorial zone despite the fact that old Bendel and old Aba divisions make up the two political blocs making up Abia state."

Expressing fear that if the cry of marginalisation in the south-east is not adequately addressed before the conference, its

position may be divided against marginalisation of the zone., Chief Ozurumba also expressed concern that since the creation of East-Central states, in particular Abia state, no Ngwa or Ukwa man has been accorded the opportunity to serve as a governor either by appointment or election.

He noted that aside from the people of Ngwa and Ukwa who make up the old Aba division in Abia state, other groups like the Mbaise and Okigwe ethnic nationalities in Imo state also have cases of marginalisation, and unless Ohaneze resolved to speak with one voice on the issues troubling the zone no long-lasting solution will emerge to the problems.

"It is said that he who wants equity should go with clean hands.

SPORTS

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Confident United bank on Van Nistelrooy return

Manchester United are banking on the return of striker Ruud van Nistelrooy to give them the edge in Wednesday's heavyweight Champions League match against AC Milan at Old Trafford. While the Italian champions must cope without their top forward Andriy Shevchenko, Van Nistelrooy has recovered from injury and will bid to improve his astonishing record of 36 goals in 37 Champions League matches for the English side.

"You see his record in Europe, it's the best," United

manager Alex Ferguson said before the first knockout round first-leg match. "He's a different animal in Europe."



Van Nistelrooy scored eight goals in five Champions League games this season before being sidelined for three months with



an Achilles injury.

"We'd have loved him to have games under his belt but we don't have any concern. We may put him in cold but if he plays in Europe you know he'll score," Ferguson said.

Van Nistelrooy is likely to start alongside England's Wayne Rooney who has carried his side's attack recently with Louis Saha and Alan Smith also on the injured list.

Rooney claimed a hat-trick on his United debut against Fenerbahce in September and has already scored 13 goals for his new club.

Ferguson's men are in terrific form, racking up their eighth victory in nine matches in an FA Cup fifth-round tie at Everton on Saturday, and Milan are also confident after clawing back Juventus's lead at the top of Serie A.

Serginho's late winner against Cagliari on Saturday lifted the Milan side above their Turin rivals on goal difference.

The absence of European Footballer of the Year Shevchenko reduces coach Carlo Ancelotti's attacking options but he still has quality to call on, with Dane Jon Dahl Tomasson likely to partner Argentine Hernan Crespo in front of Brazilian Kaka.

Milan's midfield fulcrum Andrea Pirlo is fit again after suffering a knee injury playing for Italy and defender Alessandro Nesta has recovered from flu.

The Italy international is expected to start in central defence alongside Dutchman Jaap Stam who makes his first return to Old Trafford since leaving United in controversial circumstances in 2001.

If United have a slight edge

on current form, the history books favour the Italians.

Six-times European champions to United's two, Milan have won both previous clashes between the sides in the continent's top club competition.

The Italians knocked United out in the 1958 semi-finals, shortly after the English club's Busby Babes were all but wiped out in the Munich air crash, and Milan ended the Old Trafford side's defence of the trophy at the semi-final stage in 1969.

Probable teams:

Manchester United: 13-Roy Carroll; 2-Gary Neville; 5-Rio Ferdinand; 27-Mikael Silvestre; 4-Gabriel Heinze; 7-Cristiano Ronaldo; 16-Roy Keane; 18-Paul Scholes; 11-Ryan Giggs; 8-Wayne Rooney; 10-Ruud van Nistelrooy.

AC Milan: 1-Dida; 2-Cafu; 13-Alessandro Nesta; 31-Jaap Stam; 3-Paolo Maldini; 8-Gennaro Gattuso; 21-Andrea Pirlo; 20-Clarence Seedorf; 22-Kaka; 15-Jon Dahl Tomasson; 11-Hernan Crespo.

Referee: Manuel Mejuto Gonzalez (Spain)

Mourinho nurses Chelsea to the Nou Camp

Facing the first mini-crisis of his Chelsea career, Jose Mourinho will field an injury-hit team in tonight's Champions League game against Barcelona where he learned his coaching trade.

The 42-year-old Portuguese, who worked at the Nou Camp under Bobby Robson and Louis van Gaal, won the Champions League with Porto last season and until last weekend few would have betted against his lifting it again in Istanbul in May.

The Premier League leaders have been hit by a spate of injuries, however, while Frank Rijkaard's Barcelona, seven points clear in Spain, look slick, inventive and confident ahead of the first knockout stage first leg match.

The London side lost inspirational Dutch winger Arjen Robben to a broken foot a fortnight ago and Ivorian striker Dider Drogba to a high strain.

On Sunday Mourinho's woes were compounded by the loss of left wing back Wayne Bridge with a broken ankle and the possible absence of forward Damien Duff and defender William Gallas.

All three were injured during Chelsea's 1-0 defeat by Newcastle United in the FA Cup fifth round, only their third

defeat in any competition this season and one which came at a psychologically damaging moment.

In one of the biggest weeks of their history, Chelsea follow the Barcelona game with the League Cup final against Liverpool on Sunday. For all owner Roman Abramovich's lavish spending on his multinational team, Chelsea suddenly look depleted.

"I'm not the sort of person to cry about injuries," said Mourinho, dubbed arrogant and confident in equal measure, by English commentators since he arrived last June.

Serb Mateja Kezman, who has lost his scoring touch since arriving from PSV Eindhoven last July, and Icelander Eidur Gudjohnsen are likely to fill the forward gaps with Glen Johnson playing at left back if Frenchman Gallas fails to recover.

After a mid-season wobble with defeats against Villarreal and Atletico Madrid, Barcelona's confidence has flooded back following victories over Real Zaragoza and Real Mallorca.

Unlike Mourinho against Newcastle, Rijkaard fielded his full-strength side for the 2-0 win over Mallorca.

Centre back Carles Puyol, playmaker Xavi and mercurial

Ronaldinho picked up minor knocks although none of them should have problems making Wednesday's match.

Rijkaard's only serious doubt is centre back Oleguer Presas who missed the Mallorca game because of a pelvic injury.

While World Player of the Year Ronaldinho and his recently crowned African counterpart Samuel Eto'o have monopolised attention for much of the season, midfielder Deco grabbed the headlines this weekend for his neatly taken double.

The Portugal international, a key element of Mourinho's triumphant Porto side last season, is cautiously optimistic about Barcelona's prospects.

"I don't think there is any clear favourite," he says. "They might have the edge over us as a unit but we have individual players that are more capable of turning the game."

"We can't afford to lose concentration for a minute. Mourinho is a very good coach and he will have prepared for this game very carefully and will know everything about the way we play but I think we've got the individual talent to win the tie."

Probable teams:
Barcelona: 1-Victor Valdes; 2-Juliano Belletti; 5-Carles Puyol; 4-Rafael Marquez; 12-

Porto expect cautious approach from Inter

Suspension-hit holders Porto expect to face a packed Inter Milan defence in the first leg of their Champions League knockout round tie tonight.

"It will be a very difficult game," Porto coach Jose Couceiro told Sport TV.

"From what I've seen the Italian team is counting on resolving the tie in the second leg. (They're) coming to Porto to play cautious defence and not concede any goals, aiming for a draw."

Inter Milan midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron suggested otherwise.

"It won't be an easy match but we are going there to win and to try and have as few problems as possible for the second leg," the Argentine said.

Porto were in danger of not making the knockout phase but their 2-1 win over Chelsea in December ensured they squeezed through. The victory against former manager Jose Mourinho's team was one of the few highlights of their European

campaign.

Tonight, they will be without suspended captain Jorge Costa in defence and Brazilian playmaker Diego. In addition Brazilians Ibson, Leo Lima and Leandro are ineligible.

After a poor start Porto are level with Benfica at the top of the Portuguese league with 41 points from 22 matches.

"We started the league campaign really badly but...if we beat Inter then we'll send a message out to say we have what it takes to do it again," Porto's South African striker Benni McCarthy told Reuters.

Inter coach Roberto Mancini is expected to ask 20-year-old Nigerian striker Obafemi Martins to partner Brazilian Adriano in the attack. Veron should start on the right of midfield.

Martins' pace is likely to give him the advantage over Christian Vieri, who will probably start on the bench.

Italian Marco Materazzi will probably be preferred to Serb Sinisa Mihajlovic in the centre

of defence alongside Colombian Ivan Cordoba.

Mancini made a surprise decision in leaving Uruguayan forward Alvaro Recoba and Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids out of his travelling party.

Probable teams:
Porto: 99-Vitor Baia; 22-Georgios Seitaridis; 3-Pedro Emanuel; 5-Ricardo Costa; 8-Nuno Valente; 17-Jose Bosingwa; 18-Maniche Ribeiro; 6-Costinha; 9-Luis Fabiano; 10-Ricardo Quaresma; 77-Benni McCarthy.

Inter Milan: 1-Francesco Toldo; 4-Javier Zanetti; 2-Ivan Cordoba; 23-Marco Materazzi; 16-Giuseppe Favalli; 14-Juan Sebastian Veron; 6-Cristiano Zanetti; 19-Esteban Cambiasso; 25-Dejan Stankovic; 10-Adriano; 30-Obafemi Martins.

Referee: Graham Poll (England)



Manchester United boss, Alex Ferguson will be banking on the return of striker Ruud Van Nistelrooy (pictured) to give them the edge in the Champions League clash against AC Milan at Old Trafford ...tonight

Sports

Els misses Accenture Match Play

Ernie Els has been confirmed as the only one of golf's top 64 players to miss the Accenture Match Play at La Costa, San Diego.

The world number one's absence boosts defending champion Tiger Woods' chances of regaining top spot from Vijay Singh.

First reserve Shingo Katayama comes in for Els and will play top seed Singh in Wednesday's first round.

Fifteen Europeans are taking part, including 2000 winner Darren Clarke but Colin Montgomerie missed out.

Clarke plays fellow Ulsterman Graeme McDowell. The other all-European clash is Spain's Sergio Garcia against Germany's Alex Cejka.

Scotland's Montgomerie currently stands 62nd in the world, but was outside the top 64 last week when the line-up was determined.

The 29-year-old Woods, who would probably need to win to go back top of the world rankings, has dominated this event since it began six

years ago, winning in 2003 and 2004 and finishing runner-up in 2000.

He will carry a 12-match unbeaten run into Wednesday's first-round tie with Nick Price of Zimbabwe.

"Any time you play match play it is really tough on your mind," said the resurgent world number two, who has three wins in his last five worldwide starts.

"It's just an emotional rollercoaster you go through each and every match.

"It's just fun going

head-to-head against somebody and always has been. Just look at them eyeball-to-eyeball and say, 'let's go'.

"The great thing about coming back and defending is that you know you've done it before.

"But [in matchplay] anyone can beat anybody at any given time."

World number four Phil Mickelson struggled in matchplay in the Ryder Cup last September but posted back-to-back wins at the Phoenix Open and Pebble Beach Pro-Am earlier this month.

Paul McGinley is the only other member of Europe's Ryder Cup team not taking part at the prestigious event, which is the first of four World Golf Championship tournaments.

There was still lots of standing water on the fairways on Monday night following some torrential downpours.

With further wet weather forecast the start might have to be put back.

All matches are over 18 holes except the 36-hole final on Sunday. The winner takes home \$1.3m (£685,000).



Els will miss the Accenture Match Play.

Woods eyes return to top spot

A possible return to the top of the rankings will provide added incentive for Tiger Woods when he defends his title at this week's World Golf Championships (WGC) Match Play event.

With the exception of number three Ernie Els of South Africa, 64 of the 65 top-ranked players will travel to the La Costa Resort and Spa in rainy southern California hoping to stop Woods going back to number one in the world.

That is a daunting task given the 29-year-old American's early-season form and complete mastery of the match play format.

A fearless competitor who thrives on head-to-head competition, Woods has dominated this event since it began six years ago, claiming back-to-back wins in 2003 and 2004 and finishing runner-up in 2000.

He has a sparkling 20-3 record in the tournament and will carry a 12-match unbeaten run into Wednesday's first-round tussle with Nick Price

of Zimbabwe.

"Any time you play match play it is really tough on your mind," said world number two Woods. "It's just an emotional rollercoaster you go through each and every match.

"It's just fun going head-to-head against somebody and always has been. Just look them eyeball-to-eyeball and say, 'let's go'."

For the first time, Woods will arrive in Carlsbad not seeded number one but will fully expect to leave with the title of the world's best player he surrendered to Vijay Singh last season.

As the top four seeds, Singh, Woods, Phil Mickelson and Retief Goosen will be placed in different groups, with the elite 64-player field divided into four sections.

Singh, already a winner this season at the Sony Open in Hawaii, will take on Japan's Shingo Katayama in his opening match.

The knockout format leaves open the possibility of a mouth-watering final showdown on Sunday between Woods and Singh.

"The great thing about coming back and defending is that you know you've done it before," said Woods. "But anyone can beat

anybody at any given time.

"That's one of the things we all understand about match play. You're dealing with the top 64 players in the world, anybody can beat anybody."

The eight-times major winner speaks from experience.

In 2002, Australian Peter O'Malley scored the biggest upset in the tournament's history when he knocked out Woods in the opening round.

Woods, however, has given no indication of a pending collapse. A swing overhaul now complete, he has three wins in his last five worldwide starts.

The American had a

chance to reclaim top spot from Singh at the Nissan Open but his chances were washed away when the rain-hit event was shortened to 36 holes on Monday.

Australia's Adam Scott, who claimed the Nissan title in a playoff with American Chad Campbell, also has solid match play credentials and will rank among the contenders having lost in the semi-finals of the 2003 event to Woods.

But the player to beat could well be Mickelson after he posted back-to-back wins at the Phoenix Open and Pebble Beach Pro-Am earlier this month.

Agassi into second round in Dubai

Fourth seed Andre Agassi beat Radek Stepanek 6-4 7-5 in the first round of the Dubai Tennis Championships.

The 34-year-old, moving well despite a hip problem which needed an injection, served well and won 80% of his first serve and 76% of his second.

But the American could not break the Czech Stepanek until the final game of the first set and in the second he had to fight back

after losing his serve.

Agassi, making his first appearance at the event, received a standing ovation.

He said: "I have had a few great days here in Dubai. I have waited a long time to be here, and I must apologise for being so late."

Other first-day winners included Spaniards Juan Carlos Ferrero and Tommy Robredo, Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia and Germany's Rainer Schuettler.

Ferrero, the 2001 champion, overcame Florian Mayer of Germany 6-3 6-4 while Robredo had to fight hard to beat Olivier Rochus of Belgium 7-6 (7-5) 7-6 (7-5).

Hrbaty crushed Omar Bahrouzayan of the United Arab Emirates 6-0 6-4 while Schuettler beat Younes Al Aynaoui of Morocco 6-0 6-1.

Ferrero could now meet top seed Roger Federer - who faces qualifier Ivo Minar on Tuesday - in the second round.

British rivals Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski will face each other in the opening round on Tuesday.

Davis Cup woe for Philippoussis

Australia passed over out-of-form Mark Philippoussis when they announced their squad for the Davis Cup tie against Austria on grass in Sydney.

Philippoussis' tennis career has been in free-fall with his ranking now plummeting to a lowly 201.

He was due to make a comeback from a groin injury in the ATP tournament in Scottsdale, Arizona, this week.

Team coach Wally Masur said: "He wants to be part of the Davis Cup but form and fitness are a concern."

To replace the 'Scud',

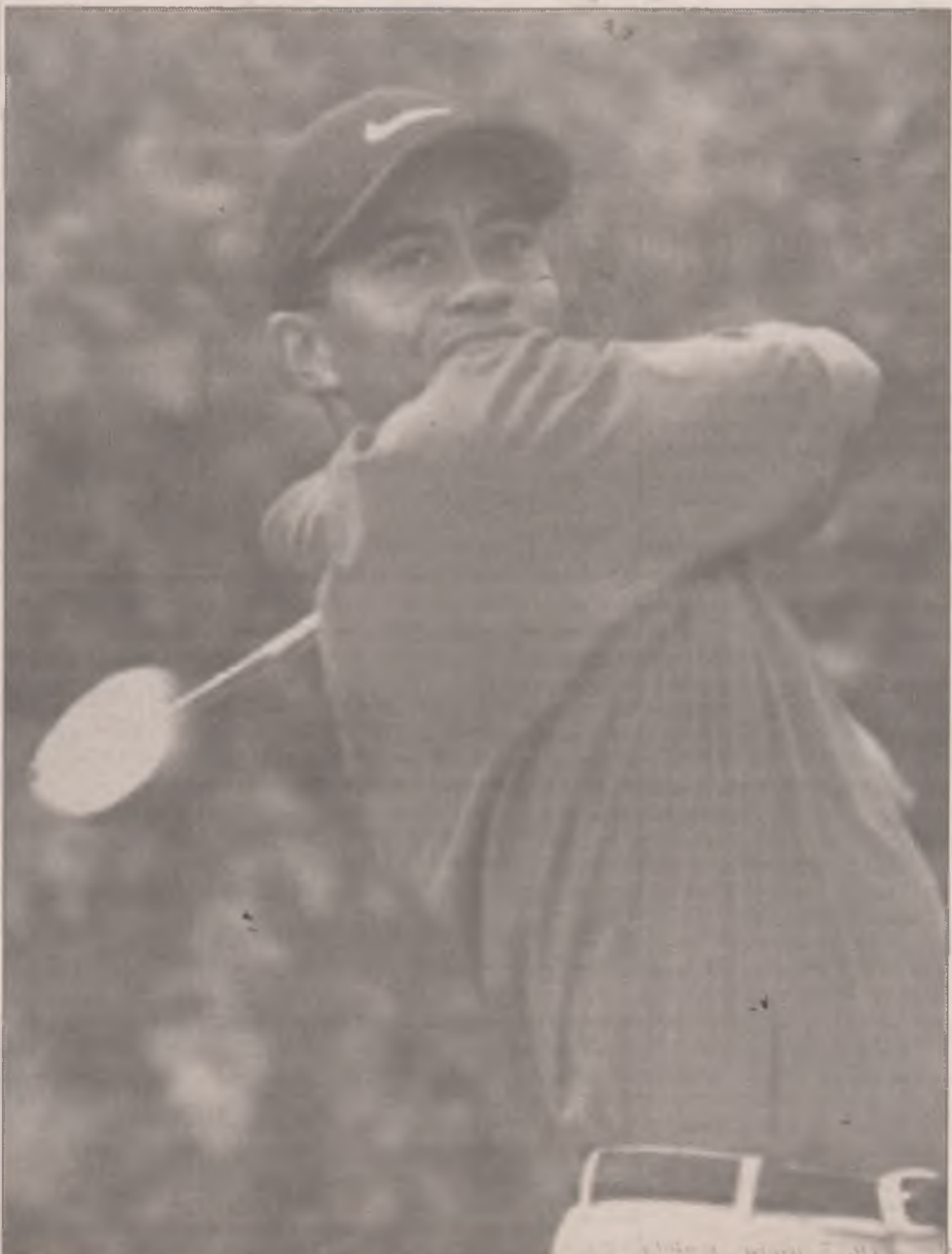
Australian captain John Fitzgerald has called on Scott Draper, who is currently juggling his time between professional golf and tennis.

Masur went on: "We will welcome Philippoussis back into the team with open arms but at the moment it's a case of him working on his fitness and improving his ranking."

Draper will vie with Wayne Arthurs for the second singles' spot behind world No.2 Lleyton Hewitt.

The fourth member of the Australian squad is doubles specialist Todd Woodbridge.

The first round of matches is on 4 March.



Tiger Woods may return to the top of world golf the ranking if he defends his title at World Golf Championship (WGC) Match Play event this weekend.

Sports

PREMIER LEAGUE

Zamfara Utd. dare Enyimba

Nigeria better than Ghana
- Osim

Newly promoted Zamfara United have said they will not be intimidated going into their rescheduled Premier League clash in Aba against African champions Enyimba on Wednesday.

The Premier League new entrants who made a bright start to their campaign with an opening day 1-0 win against the Shuaibu Amodu-tutored Sharks believe they will not be

overwhelmed by the former league champions' records as they also have big ambitions.

"They (Enyimba) are African champions no doubt, but we are not going to Aba to wash their shirts. We are going there to justify our being in the Premier League," club chief coach Loveday Omoruyi told KICK OFF in Gusau.

"We are a young side though, but we can't be pushed around. My boys are motivated

and determined to succeed and will surely give a good account of themselves," he added.

Striker Kingsley Ikechukwu Ezebili, who terrorised the Sharks defence penultimate Sunday before a 25th minute injury forced him

out of the game, said he is looking forward to the match with high hopes. "Enyimba or no Enyimba, it's eleven against eleven and we believe we'll return to Gusau with at least a point," he said. "It's a match we are well prepared for and we

are not scared or anything like that because they are players like us." The 19-year-old player, who had a short spell with Plateau United last season, is even looking beyond securing a point in the match.

"A lot of us even want to use the match to sell ourselves and get better offers, so Enyimba will not find it easy", he said.

Enyimba are hosting the Zamfara United at the Enyimba International Stadium Wednesday in a rescheduled week two tie.

UEFA Champions League Results

Bayern Munich	3	Arsenal	1
Liverpool	3	Bayer Leverkusen	1
PSV eindhoven	1	Monaco	0
Real Madrid	1	Juventus	0

Amokachi disappoints Lafia fans

Thousands of fans who thronged the Lafia Township Stadium to watch their idol, Daniel Amokachi display his ball artistry live in his club colours were disappointed as he was not even dressed for the encounter.

The stadium, venue of the week two Premier League clash between Nassarawa United and visiting NPA F.C of Lagos, was filled to capacity as soccer fans trooped in from Nassarawa, Akwanga, Jos, Abuja and Makurdi to watch the ex-Super Eagles' striker displayed the skills which has endeared him to many fans across Africa.

Amokachi, who was cynosure of all eyes as he led his players onto and out of the pitch, disclosed to

By AbdulRaheem Aodu,
Sports reporter

Trustsports after the match that he did not feature in the crucial encounter, the first Premier League match to be staged in Lafia, because he was not physically fit.

The former international star, who revel in his role as assistant coach as he dished out instructions to the players from the bench, however, promised that he will play in subsequent matches once his fitness level has improved.

"I didn't dress for the match because I was not fit enough. I was working with the players throughout the week so that we can have a good home debut, so I did not have time to train on my own. I would play in subsequent matches when I have been able to train adequately on my own and I am fitter," he said.

Though, he was missing on the pitch, he was always on the sideline to pass out instructions to the players.



Nassarawa United's Sam Ajeh will be looking forward to a memorable season as the Premier League new entrants picked their first full points in the top flight at the weekend.

Nassarawa's Eseluka targets league goleador

Nassarawa United skipper, Andrew Eseluka says he is targeting the Premier League highest goal scorer award for 2005.

Eseluka told Trustsports in Lafia after the week two league game that he intends to win the award at the end of the season to prove that a midfielder with eyes for goals can still lead the goalscoring chart.

Eseluka, the scorer of the goal that earned Nassarawa its first Premier League victory, said he is happy to lead his team to victory in their home debut.

He also added that his 31st minute strike was an appetiser as many more brilliant goals would be coming from him as the season progresses.

"It is a joyful thing to score such an important goal especially in the front of our home fans, I feel happy, I feel great for the victory. This goal is just the beginning, it is an appetiser of what to expect from me this season, as I intend to end the season as the top scorer.

"I also feel happy to have led the team to victory on my first time as captain, the glory belongs to God. There was nobody to take over the captainship band, as our skipper is nursing a knee injury, so I stepped up to lead the team and am happy I did," he said.

Insurance celebrate end of jinx

Insurance celebrated their Premier League victory over visiting Gabros International of Nnewi at home over the weekend as they sang and danced their way into the dressing room.

Coach Godwin Uwua, who led the victory party, told KICK OFF: "I am happy, more than happy with our victory because this team have always given us headache in the league.

"Last season they were the first team to hold us to a draw here. We were leading 2-0 and they came back to level up. I am happy we stopped them this time around."

He further told KICK OFF why this victory means so much to his team: "I joined Insurance in 2000, but when I left the following year, in one of our matches, Gabros even beat us. I have to thank God that the jinx has been broken."

Insurance gifted forward Nasiru Hussaini, who scored his side's winning goal, described their victory as "a good result for us, especially in our first match of the league for the new season".

However, Gabros coach Kafaru Alabi was disappointed his team lost. "I am new to the team and from what we all saw of this team,

they will grow. I do not want to say anything about the officiating, but on how well my boys are playing.

"The scoreline would have been different if my boys had utilized the chances that came their way."

Scorer of Gabros only goal, Egwuatu Collins,

equally regretted their loss at the Ogbe Stadium.

"Last season, I scored the equaliser for Gabros in our match against Insurance here at Ogbe and I thank my God for giving me the chance and the goal in this game," he said.

Results Premier League

Pillars	2	Berger	1
Insurance	2	Gabros	1
Wikki	1	Tornadoes	0
Rangers	0	Gombe Utd	0
Nationale	1	Dolphin	0
Nassarawa	1	NPA	0
Sharks	1	3SC	1
Gateway	0	Lobi Stars	0
El-Kanemi	1	Kwara Utd	1

Division One

BON	2	Court of Appeal	0
Adamawa Utd	1	Buffalo	1
Raiders	1	Kogi Utd	0
Kaduna Utd	3	VON	0
NEPA	1	Yobe Stars	0
SEC	1	Ranch Bees	0
Jigawa Stars	2	Jets	0
JUTH	0	Plateau Utd	1
Crown	1	Globe Stars	0
Bayelsa	2	Delta Utd	0
Sunshine	2	Bendel Utd	0
Ila Orogun	1	Ebedei	0
Akwa Utd	0	Oceanic Boys	0
Ebonyi Angels	2	First Bank	0
Cal. Rovers	1	OUK	1
Unikn Bank	1	Bussdor	1

Today's matches

Enymba	Vs	Zamfara Utd
Insurance	Vs	Dolphin

VACANCY

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Sports

Ogunjobi: FIFA grants document stolen from Glass House

A break down of FIFA grants to the NFA for two years amounting to \$3.4 million forwarded to the three-man panel investigating allegations of financial impropriety against the Taiwo Ogunjobi NFA-led management suddenly developed wings and vanished into thin air.

The development compelled the panel to seek for one week extension using the death of Col. Joro Yabisa as an excuse while it sought for further explanation from FIFA.

Trustsports scooped that members of the panel had sought confirmation from FIFA on the total amount of grants the world football ruling organ extended to Nigeria since January 2002 uptill last December when the Ogunjobi-led management was indicted and relieved of

By Patrick Andrew, Senior Sports Reporter

its responsibility on January 3.

FIFA promptly responded by consigning the statement amounting to \$3.4 million for the required period. The fax statement was received as acknowledged by one Mrs. Idowu.

However, Trustsports learnt that Ogunjobi was alleged have held a meeting later that night with some of

his staff where he instructed them to cancel any document that may have been requested for by the panel whether from CAF, FIFA, corporate bodies or individuals provided such materials are faxed to the office.

Unaware of this development, the panel sought to know whether FIFA had responded but the staff of the Secretary-General's Office denied receipt of the statement

compelling the chairman of the panel to put a call through to FIFA, which responded that one Mrs. Idowu received the fax.

Consequently, fresh request for the statement was made and FIFA obliged by refaxing the document even as the citing secretary-general, Mr. Fanny Amun immediately redeployed Mrs. Idowu, who had earlier been implicated in the CAF nomination forms blunder, to the public relations unit. She

had denied ever receiving the fax from FIFA.

Besides, all the locks into the secretary-general's office were changed to prevent Ogunjobi from sneaking in as usual for any purpose.

Meanwhile, the three-man panel is to submit its report today after five weeks of receiving submissions, statements and interviewing the parties concerned as well

as the having an audience with the Sports Minister, Musa Mohammed.

NFA board chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima said penultimate day that the report would be treated with despatch in view of the magnitude of the matter in question. He said an emergency board meeting would be held on March 2 to deliberate on the report.

NFL gives Globacom 7 days ultimatum

Premier League sponsors, Globacom, have until next Wednesday to decide whether they would retain the sponsorship of the league or have the contract abruptly terminated by the Implementation Committee of the Nigeria Football League (NFL).

NFL chairman, Chief Oyuki Obaseki, said club proprietors have given the committee licence to enter into fresh contracts with organisations currently having contractual dealings with the league.

The chairman expressed disgust with the value of the existing contract with Globacom stressing that the monetary value fall short of expectations and is therefore unacceptable to the proprietors.

Though he said the NFL has not approached Globacom for discussions, Obaseki insisted Globacom should have contacted them on the sponsorship since the league now enjoys semi-autonomy from the NFA, which had entered into the sponsorship deal on behalf of the league, about two seasons ago.

"I don't think it will be responsible for the NFL to go to Globacom rather they should have contacted us in respect of the contract since the league is no longer under

the NFA but a semi-autonomous body.

"Besides, the NFA may have negotiated for N10 because they are in government but this is not adequate for us because we have expenses to make. For instance, the NFA negotiated for N50 million for 50 clubs while Enyimba alone negotiated for N100 million for one year with the same Globacom.

"No, if they don't come to us for review of the value, then I will go on air to look for sponsors. If by this time next week they don't come forward to discussion with us, I will place advertisement on papers for sponsors to come forward and express interest.

"Again if they insist or want to deal with the NFA fine, I am NFL. The NFA cannot source for money for us because their organisation is spurious. Club owners have mandated us not to accept peanut. We will fight it until we get what we want as well as advance the progress of the league."

Obaseki said the NFL now spends N6 million weekly to organise the league noting that N4.3 million is spent to pay for the indemnities of match officials. "They NFA did not bear this cost so did not have to negotiate for an appreciable value for the league," he said adding that the situation was different now.

On telecast of the league, he said the NFL has received an injunction from MINAJ but observed that the alleged existing contract was with the NFA not the NFL. "We have told them to come forward to negotiate with us if they are interested. This, after they must have sorted out themselves with the NFA."

Though he urged organisations currently having contract with the league to perform in harmony with the terms of contract, he warned that the NFL would not hesitate to the call-off any unfavourable deal.



Australia opener Matthew Hayden returned to his majestic best with a superb century as the world champions trounced New Zealand by 106 runs in the second one-day international...yesterday.

3SC striker dreams

League Shield

Having nicked four out of a maximum of six points from their first two Premiership matches, Shooting Stars' 2.5 million naira signing, Ladi Gasper is confident the team can go all the way to lift the title this season.

He told KICK OFF that the secret of their brilliant start was their early preparation.

"It is always good to start well and then maintain the tempo, because it could be more tasking coming from behind after a poor start," he said. "We took our pre-season preparations seriously, and that's the reason we have made a good start.

"We are confident we can sustain this form because we have the materials; the team is well balanced, and the understanding we have struck can only get better."

The power-playing forward, who had a stint with the Super Eagles in 2000, points out that he, joined Shooting Stars with the aim of winning a trophy with the Ibadan club. "I had two fantastic seasons with Lobi Stars, but the Shooting Stars' offer was good. The officials also proved they were ambitious, so I would do my best to land a major trophy here this year."

"The Premiership is our priority and Enyimba are next on the line. Beating them will set us up perfectly for the rest of the first round.

"We aim to get one or two away victories soon, and that will make the difference. We have also proved that 3SC will be very difficult to beat this season, and have what it takes to go all the way to the title," he gushed.

Club proprietors to face sanction for misconduct

Club proprietors and any member of the NFL board found to have harassed and intimidated match officials would be sanctioned for misconduct by the NFL board.

Chairman of the Implementation Management Committee of the league, Chief Oyuki Obaseki said reports of harassment and intimidation of referees were disturbing and does not speak well of the new approach and focus the NFL plans for the league.

"Club owners have resolved to organise a league whose standard will meet that of Europe. It is, therefore, disturbing to hear of reports of harassment of referees by club representatives and even members of the NFL. We will sanction any board member, who wants to exert undue influence or club official, who intimidates referees because we cannot afford misconduct or any such element that will

discredit the league."

Obaseki said members of the NFL board were willing to stake their integrity on the quality of the league they have planned for the season stressing that it would not be business as usual.

The chairman assured that incidences of harassment of officials would attract severe punitive measures that would ensure a deterrent from such officials.

"We recalled that Rangers had to resume play against Gabros two weeks ago after 40 minutes of protest because we sounded it loud and clear that unnecessary boycott attracts N500,000, forfeiture of three points and goals. So Rangers had to return to play for five minutes that was left."

Obaseki then assured referees to stamp their feet and keep strictly to the laws as no body, no matter the assumed influence, would intimidate them without being brought to book.

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Wednesday, February 23, 2005

EDITORIAL

Nigeria and the Security Council seat

The mid-term summit of the African Union has come and gone. Nigeria, the host repeated history when it agreed to host its sister nations for the conference. It is the first time that such a mid-term conference has been held since the birth of the AU. But for Nigeria, it was history repeating itself. Barely two decades ago, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, then military president broke the tradition of holding every meeting of the defunct Organisation of African Unity, OAU in Addis Ababa. It was Babangida that hosted the first-ever meeting of the OAU outside Addis in Abuja, ironically at the then newly built International Conference Centre. Above all things, Babangida was eager to show the world that Abuja, then a fledgling capital had the capacity not only to survive, but to act as a proper centre for international conferences. He scored his point!

The recently concluded mid-term summit of African heads of states and government has more than that at the core of its inaugural session. For one, it was breaking away from the culture of any one single nation, no matter its wealth, monopolising the hosting of summits. If travelling as they say is the best education, then the rulers and governors of Africa would learn a thing or two about what to do or what not to do in their travels as they continue to make policies aimed at building up the continent.

But beyond the hosting, Nigeria had smart ideas for the last meeting. Core on the agenda was the reforms in the United Nations, UN which paved the way for two seats for Africa at an enlarged Security Council. From the moment the idea of the expansion of the Security Council was mooted, three nations - Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa have been touted to be strong candidates. It was almost a *fait accompli* that other member-nations felt that these three concentric nations have the capacity to represent Africa on the Security Council and to do it well. But diplomatically, none of the suspected candidate countries, except Nigeria openly campaigned for the seat.

While nothing was wrong with Nigeria leading in the campaign, we believe that the manner in which the campaign was done is crude and ludicrous. As a top African nation, Nigeria ought to have found a diplomatic way of checking whether its competitors would be campaigning at the summit and on what grounds. As it turned out, none of the other nations did. This did not, however, douse the palpable tension generated in the inner chambers of the International Conference Centre on the first day of the meeting. And so, in a tactical move aimed at dousing tension, other leaders agreed that if care was not taken, the quest for a seat on the Security Council could tear their newly, built continental empire apart. They have therefore set up a 15-nation committee to fashion out among other things, who gets the ticket to represent Africa; for how long; under what modality and with what agenda.

Gleanings from the conference say that other member-nations are conscious of the enormous power of some of the contending countries and that they want a guarantee that whoever represents the continent does so with a consensus that is over and above national or sectional interest.

The idea of having an African Union is for the continent, irrespective of its colour or creed to speak as one continent. No single nation is more African than the continent itself. Nature has drawn the map of Africa and endowed it with beauty in its diversity which, not even 400 years of slavery or apartheid has succeeded in destroying.

As a frontline state, Nigeria, has played significant roles in fortifying the continent and has spoken for it with strong voice in the past. Along with other African leaders, Nigeria formed and midwived the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD and indeed several other socio-economic blueprints. It is for this reason that the crude remarks of an official of government should be of serious importance to the country. It is not unusual to find some of President Obasanjo's supporters talking in manners which show that they speak first and think later. It has become a national malaise, the butt of jokes. But such uncharitable and unconscionable remarks should not be extended into the vocabulary of international diplomacy. We therefore call on the President to sanction the official who described other contender-nations as not entirely African and to warn other officials of his administration as well as his supporters that what they do on the domestic front should not be extended to the international front.

Uncharitable statement such as was credited to this official is capable of costing Nigeria more than a Security Council seat. It is capable of denting the image of continental big brother which President Obasanjo is trying to sustain for the country. In its quest to get a seat on the Security Council, Nigeria should see itself as, *primus inter pares*, or first among equals, not a nation that is more African than any other in spite of its past role, its present position or any other attributes real or imagined. Whether or not it gets a seat on the proposed enlarged Security Council should be a consensus of other African nations, who, it must be said have given Nigeria more than its domestic critics think it is worth. Nigeria must not lose the respect it has earned from the continent and the international community through the uncharitable remark of some uncouth speakers seeking either to curry government favour or to retain their political jobs.

National Conference: The price of bad faith

By Mohammed Haruna

There seems to be a widespread misconception that President Obasanjo's decision to organise the National Conference this year was a u-turn. Nothing could be more misconceived. Obasanjo had never said he was against a national conference, not even one that was sovereign - at least not before he became president in May 1999. On the contrary, he had advocated a national conference, even a sovereign one - depending on how you define sovereignty - as long ago as February 1994 when he gave the keynote speech at a national workshop organised by Arewa House, Kaduna, on Nigeria: The State of the Nation and the Way Forward. "A constitutional conference to keep all agitators quiet, no matter how much it is dressed up," he said on that occasion, "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."

A constitutional conference, he also said, "will be limiting... What our situation demands is a National Conference by elected representatives of the people to discuss all the major issues, subject to one condition that whatever is agreed must be referred to a national referendum."

A close reading of these remarks shows at least two things. It shows first, that for him there was a difference between a constitutional conference and a national conference. What that difference was he did not spell out, except to suggest that the latter was more encompassing than the former. That he still believes in this distinction 11 years on, is clear from the official title he chose to give the conference which he opened last Monday, i.e. the National Political Reforms Conference.

However, whatever distinction the man thinks there is between a national conference and a constitutional conference, the end product will still be a new constitution. Ultimately, therefore, the difference between the two is like the difference between half a dozen of one and six of the other. In other words, the president may quibble about terminologies, but his ultimate objective clearly is to create a new power equation in the country after his own image as a born-again Christian and his substance as an autocrat, and then cast that equation in stone. This much is obvious from the sectarian and sectional lopsidedness of his nominees to the conference and his preference for selection instead of election in its composition.

The second obvious thing from the president's semantics about the national conference is that he is a democrat of convenience not of principle. He may have voluntarily disengaged from power nearly 26 years ago as military head of state, but this was not before he had shown that he believed his regime and himself were infallible. As Chief F.R.A. Williams, the Chairman of the 1977 Constitution Drafting Committee, has said on several occasions, the amendments Obasanjo's military administration made to the 1979 constitution - 17 of them in all - were made against strong objections of the leadership of the 1978 Constituent Assembly. This leadership had suggested that any amendment be debated by the CA, as mainly an assembly of elected representatives of the people.

However, once he stepped down from power, the same Obasanjo who exercised military veto over the collective wisdom of his CA back in 1979, became a vociferous advocate of the sovereignty of the people, especially during the period in the late 1980s when he wanted to be the Secretary General of the United Nations. It was obviously in line with his new advocacy that he said in his Arewa House speech 15 years after leaving office that the outcome of any national conference must be subjected to a national referendum. However, no sooner did he become Nigeria's elected president in May 1999, that he appeared to have relapsed into his old autocratic ways. Since then the man appears to believe that as president he is the ultimate expression of the peoples' sovereignty, and no one, not even the people, have the right to second-guess any of his decisions.

Three months hence when the National Conference would have concluded its business any doubts that he believes in his own infallibility will be confirmed or erased by whether or not he heeds his own advice to the Arewa House workshop.

For now it is safe to say that the man appears not to have learnt any lessons from either his experience in midwifing the 1979 constitution or from his knowledge of the failure of attempts at constitution making by all his military predecessors and successors, bar General Abdulsalami Abubakar who kept his word and handed over power in May 1999.

The biggest lesson of those failures was of course that they all got their comeuppance for acting in bad faith. Probably the worst case was the first attempt by Major General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi. In the heat of the crisis of the first military intervention in January 1966, Ironsi set up a Constitutional Study Group the following month under Chief Williams. However it was soon obvious that the man had pretty well made up his mind, or had it made up for him by his self-seeking fellow Igbo advisers, that he had no use for democracy or devolution: even before the Williams panel could settle down to work, Ironsi enacted the unification Decree 34 in May, 1966 which changed Nigeria from a federation into a unitary state. As we all know that was to prove his Nemesis.

General Gowon, who took over from him in the counter-coup of July 1966, also acted with no less bad faith. He set up the Ad Hoc Conference on Constitutional Proposals in September 1966, essentially to resolve the crisis of confidence that had emerged between the Igbo East and the rest of the country. The conference ended in a fiasco after its last meeting in Aburi, Ghana, amidst accusations and counter-accusations of bad faith. The fiasco eventually ended in a three-year civil war from 1967 after which Gowon promised to end military rule in October 1976. Four years after the war, however, Gowon, who had done little or nothing to implement his six-year transition programme, changed his mind about leaving in 1976. He was consequently ousted in July 1975.

Brigadier Murtala Mohammed who succeeded Gowon, promised a four-year, five-item transition programme and demonstrated good faith by wasting no time in implementing the programme. However, he was assassinated in February 1976 in an attempted coup. Obasanjo, who reluctantly took over, kept the faith and handed over power in October 1979. Even then his handling of the programme was not without its own share of indiscretions. The big one, as we have mentioned above, was his exercise of veto over the decisions of his Constituent Assembly. Another was the same insensitivity he has demonstrated in his personal nominations into the on-going national conference. Then as now he showed sectarian bias for his religion. He also showed his sexist bias, not to mention apparent contempt for youth. Twenty eight years ago when he created the Constitution Drafting Committee of 50 members, which was reduced by one after Chief Obafemi Awolowo declined his nomination because he said he was not consulted, only 18 were Muslims. Then, unlike now, women and youth representations were nil.

Not only did Obasanjo not avoid his indiscretions of 28 years ago, he appears not have learnt any lessons from the relative good faith with which he implemented the Murtala/Obasanjo transition programme. Back then his planning of the constitutional conference was detailed and meticulous and the implementation, thorough and precise. More importantly, back then he had no agenda to succeed himself nor any agenda to avenge a perceived, or more accurately misperceived, wrong by a whole section of the country. Now such agenda is widely suspected, if not glaringly obvious.

Which is most unfortunate and sad, if not tragic. As one of the leading critics of the transition programmes of the military regimes that came after him, he knows that, except for that of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, they all came a cropper essentially because their heads wanted to succeed themselves. As a leading critic of these regimes and a beneficiary of the relative good faith of his own regime, he should know more than any other Nigerian that no Nigerian leader had ever acted in bad faith and escaped disgrace before or after office. He should also know that such bad faith has been the principal reason why Nigeria has sunk deeper and deeper into political