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**No Nigerian
missed Arafat
—Official**

By Abdullahi Bego,
in Mecca

Nigerian pilgrims have denied certain reports which indicated that only about 20 percent Nigerians who came for the 2005 Hajj were able to stand at Arafat.

In various encounters with *Daily Trust*, the pilgrims said that all of them were at Arafat from midday to evening, leaving the previous night been at Mina in preparation for the Arafat.

Daily Trust reports that the pilgrims were at Arafat, nearly eight kilometres from Mina, from where they returned to Muzdalifa in the evening to pass the night in time for the stoning of the devil the following day.

Most of the pilgrims were surprised at the news that they were not at Arafat, saying that since standing at Arafat is one of the important pillars of Hajj, there was no way they could have refused to go to Arafat or otherwise allowed any factor to stand between them and that important obligation of the Hajj exercise.

Kabo and IRS airlines involved in the airlift of pilgrims from Nigeria for this year's Hajj, have been ordered to increase the number of aircrafts they would make available for taking the pilgrims back home from the Holy Land.

The order was given to the two airlines during a meeting with Nigerian government officials in Jeddah. The *Amirul Hajj* and deputy senate president Alhaji Ibrahim Maito, attended the meeting along with the Nigerian ambassador to Saudi Arabia, the minister of state for foreign affairs Alhaji Tanko, as well as the acting chairman of the Department of Pilgrims Affairs (DPA), Alhaji Sadiq Muhammad.

Daily Trust learnt that the order was given to the two airlines to save the image of Nigeria from the embarrassment of not flying its pilgrims back home in good time at the end of the Hajj exercise. The order was also given, according to

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FG facilitated Dariye's arrest — London Police

“How we arrested him”

Fresh revelations emerged yesterday suggesting that the federal government may have facilitated the arrest and prosecution of Plateau state governor, Chief Joshua Dariye.

A document by the London Metropolitan Police in possession of *Daily Trust* shows that the Attorney-General of the federation, Chief Akinlolu Olujimi (SAN) might have waived the immunity enjoyed by

From Sani Babashola, Bureau Chief, Kaduna & Hammed M. Bello, Senior Political Reporter

Governor Dariye to pave way for his arrest by the London Metropolitan Police. The document, dated Nov. 15, 2004, written by the Metropolitan Police crimes signed by David Norman, Detective Chief Inspector, Head of Proactive Economic Crimes and addressed to one. Mr. Adesakin of Vincent Doherty and Co. Solicitors, 1 Park Road, London, believed

to be Dariye's lawyers, said among others that: "The Attorney-General of the Federation has also confirmed that he has waived, without any reservations, any immunity from arrest and prosecution that your clients may claim to have."

There is however appar-

ently no section of the Nigerian constitution that gives the Attorney-General such powers to waive the immunity of a serving governor, an action perceived to be a violation of the constitution.

Governor Dariye at the time of arrest, was said to be carrying a diplomatic passport which further consolidated his immunity and the Metropolitan Police document while making observa-

tions on the political situations in Nigeria, on Dariye, the investigation by the UK said, "the central issue you raised concerning this is your client's right to diplomatic status in the UK and his immunity from legal proceedings in this country."

Although the Attorney General could not be reached for comments, but if the illegality of the action is determined, the arrest of Dariye

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**Reps in session over
petition to Speaker**

Controversy emerged yesterday in the House of Representatives over alleged unpaid allowances and other money matters which forced the House into a closed door session which lasted over an hour.

Although no official position was given after the closed door session, inside sources disclosed that the House was able to identify sources of the irregularities in the payment of members' allowances and has set appropriate machinery in motion to facilitate speedy payment.

Members are said to be entitled to constituency allowance, wardrobe and recess allowances all of which have not been paid since inception of the House, and that the only thing they have been getting was their salaries along with that of their aides.



Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari

By Hammed M. Bello,
Senior Political Reporter

Arrears of the said allowances are said to have run into N1.5 billion as each member is owed about N4 million.

According to a source at the meeting, the fault of the irregularities in the payment of the allowances was traced to the management of the National Assembly headed by the clerk, Alhaji Ibrahim Salim.

Alhaji Salim, who was said to be present at the closed door session, was also alleged to have accepted responsibility for the litches but has begun efforts to get the errors corrected and the allowances paid.

The House was forced into the session yesterday following a letter by Hon. Bashir Nadabo to the

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DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Masari chides agencies over non-appearance at hearing

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, yesterday castigated some government officials over their failure to honour invitations to a public hearing on the proposed Bill for an Act to establish the Erosion and Flood Control Commission.

Alhaji Masari expressed



Men of the Federal Fire Service who arrived late at the scene struggling to put out the fire which gutted Oundo Petrol Filling Station Zone 1, Garki, Abuja — yesterday. Pic: Kennedy Egbonofe.

Iraq: 36 US marines die in helicopter crash

Nine killed in Los Angeles trains collision

A U.S. military transport helicopter crashed in bad weather in Iraq's western desert yesterday, killing 36 people, all believed

By Elkanah Chawal, Foreign Reporter with agency report

to be Marines, while insurgents killed five other American troops in the worst day for U.S. forces since the Iraq war began.

Resistance waging a campaign to derail Sunday's election carried out at least six car bombings and a flurry of other attacks on schools to be used as polling stations, political party offices and Kurdish sites, killing or wounding more than two dozen people.

A Bush administration official said the cause of Wednesday's crash was not immediately known but that there was bad weather at the

time. The CH-53 Sea Stallion was carrying personnel from the 1st Marine Division when it went down about 1:20 a.m. near the town of Rutbah, about 220 miles west of Baghdad, while conducting security operations, the military said in a statement.

A search and rescue team has reached the site and an investigation into what caused the crash was underway.

The administration official said yesterday that all 31 people killed in the crash were believed to be U.S. Marines, the most American service members to die in a single incident in Iraq. It was also the deadliest day for U.S.

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NEWS

FG Contd. from Pg 1

could be a breach of the constitution, as no law exists giving the Attorney General powers to waive the immunity of a serving governor.

Reacting yesterday, a member of the House of Representatives, Hon. John Longhor, said the Metropolitan Police was cowed into action by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), adding that the action might adversely affect relations between Nigeria and Britain.

According to Longhor, the action of the Metropolitan Police violates international conventions on the right and privileges of political and public office holders.

Meanwhile, detective Constable, Peter Clark of the London Metropolitan Police has told the federal high court sitting in Kaduna, how his men arrested Governor Joshua Dariye in a London hotel in September last year on suspicions of money laundering.

He said on the first day of his testimony yesterday that six banks were involved in transferring millions of pounds into a Barclays Bank account in London belonging to one Joshua Chibi Dariye from an account belonging to Ebenezer Retnam Ventures at the All States Trust Bank, Wuse, Abuja.

He listed some of the banks as Diamond, Standard Trust Bank, African Bank of Nigeria (AfrinBank) and Lion Bank.

Armed with a chart of the transactions as which was admitted as exhibit 10, Mr Clark recalled how monies amounting to \$980,000 (about N1.9 billion), was transferred into the account in about 12 transactions of a period of 18 months.

He described how at about 8.30 p.m. (local time) on September 2, last year, he arrested Dariye at Maria Hotel, George Street, London along with his personal assistant, one Miss Christabel Mary Bentu, in another room with the sums of \$43,000 and \$50,000 respectively.

He said in January last year, the Metropolitan Police were involved in a large scale credit card scam. He said this led to the recovery of several items and bank accounts at 127 Tutton House on Portland Street London including a Barclays Bank statement in respect of Mr Joshua Chibi Dariye with sums in excess of \$920,000.

He said further investigations by him at the Barclays Bank, London, confirmed that the account was a genuine one which led to his securing a Crown court production order served on Barclays Bank.

Detective Clark said this led to the discovery of large credit in the account of Ebenezer Retnam Ventures in All States Trust Bank into Joshua Chibi Dariye's account at Barclays Bank, London. He said the chart has over 12 transactions from the All States Trust Bank account to Barclays between January and December 2000, involving over \$980,000.

He said on 7/1/2000 over \$28,000 was transferred; 15/4/2000 about \$98,000; 2/10/

2000, \$29,000; 2/10/2000 \$57,000; 2/10/2000 \$404,000; 19/10/2000 \$33,620; 31/10/2000 \$28,000; 28/12/2000 \$50,000; 10/1/2001 \$40,047; 14/9/2000 \$156,667; 14/9/2000 \$42,000 and 28/12/2000 \$5,900.

Detective Clark said with these evidence, his supervising officer, Detective Sergeant Robert (Bob) Ingsam, gave him the order to arrest Joshua Chibi Dariye for money laundering which he effected on September 2, last year at the Maria Hotel.

He said the Proceeds of Crime Act 2000 allows the arrest and seizure of such monies and property adding that under the law, only a bank can count the monies recovered from Chief Dariye and his companion. What they had to do at the point of arrest was to seal the money until the court decides whether to admit it as exhibit and order a bank to count the seizure.

Dr Alex Izinyon (SAN) one of the defence lawyers who had applied in vain for a stay of proceedings because of a pending appeal on an earlier ruling at the appeal court said he needed sometime to study the documents before cross-examining the witness.

However another defence counsel, Mr Bayo Ojo (SAN), took up the British detective as follows:

Question: How many banks are involved in the transactions?
DC Clark: About six or seven.

Question: Can you name them?
Answer: Diamond, Standard Trust, African Bank of Nigeria (AfrinBank) and Lions Bank those are the ones I can remember now.

Question: What do you understand by a venture?
Answer: It is an operational company.

Question: Do you agree that as an operational company it will have cause to transfer money abroad from time to time?
Answer: Yes.

Question: You do not have any evidence that the transactions were illegal?
Answer: We have evidence that the transfers were made.

Question: This your sources? Were only in the UK?
Answer: Yes.

Question: The (Proceeds of Crime) Act 2002, is for Britain not Nigeria.
Answer: Yes.

Question: You have not done any investigation in Nigeria?
Answer: No.

With the application by most of the defence counsel for time to study the prosecution's witness evidence, the presiding judge, Justice Abdullahi Liman, adjourned to February 1, 2005, for continuation.

Justice Liman had earlier overruled the objection by lead defence counsel, Professor Ben Nwabueze (SAN) which challenged some sections of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Establishment Act 2004 and the federal government's competence to monitor how states spend their allocations.

Describing the act as unacceptable, Alhaji Masari said "the executive side of the government who were invited, but turned down the invitations according to reports, owe it to the tax payers to participate in this public hearing."

He said that participating in the hearing does not mean being in agreement with the contents of the Bill, hence "nobody, especially them, have the right to decline the invitation of the National Assembly. This is an opportunity for them to come and express their views. It should be looked at beyond the selfish interests of ministry officials."

He however vowed that the absence of the invited stakeholders will not deter the House from doing whatever is necessary to pass the Bill into law, while adding that "something will definitely be done about the unacceptable behaviour."

Chairman of the House Committee on Environment, Hon. Emeka Atuma, in his address said that the committee wanted as much input as possible on the Bill, titled "Bill for an act to establish the erosion and floods control commission and to vest it with the responsibility for the control and management

of erosion and floods and for the utilisation of the sums received from the federation account and for connected purposes."

Addressing that the Bill is long overdue considering the tens of thousands of active erosion sites all over the country, Hon Atuma said that the erosion and flood control commission would carry out extensive survey of the extent of flood and erosion in the country as well as formulate policies and guidelines for their control and management.

Other functions of the commission will also include among others, provision of emergency relief and settlement of people in flood disaster areas, ensure sound and efficient management of resources available to it from the federation account and provide solutions to the problems of flooding in beach or coastlines in the country.

Speakers at the hearing while supporting the passage of the Bill, however called for more representation on the committee and warned that the commission when set up, should be a parastatal of the ministry of environment such that it can effectively "implement

Reps Contd. from Pg 1

Speaker, Aminu Bello Masari, in which he queried the sum of N200,000 deposited in each member's account for which he sought explanation. The money, Nadabo said he was told was excess money to the credit of the House.

Nadabo, representing Funtua/Dandume federal constituency of Katsina State, alleged that N2 billion was in excess because of certain allowances that have not been paid, including wardrobe, recess and constituency allowances.

On the constituency allowances, Nadabo's letter to the speaker read in part: "I am reminding the Honorable Speaker that when President Obasanjo presented his 2004 budget, he promised to carry out constituency projects but to our dismay, even though contracts for boreholes and motorized boreholes have been awarded rather belatedly,

most members find it difficult to even locate the addresses of contractors who are to handle the jobs.

Reacting on phone, the chairman of the committee on media and public affairs, Hon. Abike Dabiri, said it was a case of misinformation because the leadership had engaged every interest in the House on sharing of allowances and budget.

She said the Speaker had directed the clerk and the House services committee to look into the complaints of the unpaid allowances and to give him a clear report for immediate action by today.

Also, the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), whip Hon. Usman Balkore, said there was misinformation because all political parties and caucuses had agreed to a formula for managing the House budget, adding that the formula has not been breached.

Arafat Contd. from Pg 1

done everything possible to make the stay of Nigerian pilgrims in the holy land a pleasant experience "even though by its very nature, Hajj is a difficult exercise."

He said that drugs worth over N30 million were procured by the government and distributed to various clinics and facilities used by the pilgrims to attend to their health problems. He also said that 107 doctors and other medical personnel were deployed from Nigeria to attend to the pilgrims.

Commenting on the number of Nigerian pilgrim who died during the Hajj, the DPA chairman said that seven persons have been confirmed dead but added that he will hold a meeting with the medical mission to ascertain if this number has changed, especially following the Mecca flood of last Saturday which reportedly led to the death of a number of pilgrims from various parts of the world.

Masari Contd. from Pg 1

federal government's efforts to tackle problems of erosion and floods.

Other suggestions include the decentralisation of the commission to enable full participation of the states and local governments as well as relevant non-governmental organisations and that other areas such as solid waste management and desertification should also be addressed by the said commission.

Those who contributed to the hearing include H. A. Ogunbambi of Lagos State Ministry of Environment, Alhaji Ashiru Azeez Adelman of Oyo State, Hon. P. S. Ochijele of Benue State and Alhaji Ibrahim Ado Kurawa of Kano State.

Also yesterday, the Senate urged the federal government to initiate measures to safeguard the nation's coastal and disaster-prone areas to forestall possible Tsunamis, as Senators agreed to contribute \$50,000 to the victims of last month's tidal waves.

These were part of the resolutions adopted by the Senate yesterday through a motion moved by Senator Victor Ndoma-Egba (PDP Cross River Central), on the devastation caused by the tsunami in Asia.

The Senate also urged the federal government to come up with strategies to reduce population drift to Lagos and other cities, control ocean surge and reduce land reclamation.

Other resolution adopted includes sending a Senate delegation to commiserate with embassies of the affected countries in Nigeria and called for more donations to the victims.

Moving the motion which was co-sponsored by Senators Effiong Bob and Bassey Ewa-Henshaw, Ndoma-Egba said the devastation caused

Iraq Contd. from Pg 1

forces since the March 2003 invasion.

Bush expressed condolences for the deaths. "The story today is going to be very discouraging to the American people. I understand that. It is the long-term objective that is vital — that is to spread freedom," he told reporters.

He said "a lot of Iraqis" were expected to participate in the elections. "Clearly, there are some who are intimidated," Bush said. "I urge people to vote. I urge people to defy these terrorists."

In Iraq's Anbar province, four U.S. Marines were killed in fighting, the military said in a statement.

The statement gave no further details, but WABC reporter, Jim Dolan, who was embedded with the troops who were attacked, said the deaths came when insurgents ambushed a Marine convoy leaving the town of Haditha, west of Baghdad, hitting a vehicle with a rocket-propelled grenade.

With the four Marines and the soldier's deaths, at least 1,377 members of the U.S. military have died in Iraq, according to an Associated Press count.

Meanwhile, two Metrolink commuter trains derailed early yesterday, killing at least nine people and injuring hundreds of others as morning commuters were sent tumbling down the aisles, authorities said.

Fire-fighters picked thro-

ugh twisted wreckage scattered across the tracks and carried injured passengers from the trains to a treatment centre set up in a nearby parking lot. Nine people had died and hundreds were injured, up to 30 critically, Los Angeles Fire Capt. Rex Villalobos said.

One commuter train was heading from Los Angeles' Union Station to Burbank and the other was bound from Union Station to Moorpark, Metrolink spokesman, Denise Tyrrell said.

"We rumbled and we just started to twist," Metrolink passenger, Nelson Gozynaeta, told KABC-TV. "We're shell-shocked right now."

In a light rain, fire fighters climbed ladders into windows of a battered train tipped onto its side, though it was unclear if there were any people trapped inside.

Nearly 300 fire fighters were at the scene in the suburb north of Los Angeles and 35 ambulances were taking injured passengers to hospitals, officials said.

Dazed passengers, some limping, gathered at tables in a nearby store, while the injured sprawled on colour-coded mats in the parking lot for those with severe injuries, green for those less seriously harmed.

One Metrolink car was sent twisting backward by the force of the crash, which occurred after 6 a.m. A small fire erupted and smoke could be seen wafting from the wreckage.

by the tsunami was chilling and that there was need to contribute to efforts to address the aftermath of the tidal waves.

According to him, the death toll had hit 220,000 as at the time of moving the motion, and that the disaster has created the largest population of orphans in recent history.

He said though it was a general belief that Tsunamis may not occur in Nigeria, "experts have warned that Nigeria's western boundary with Cameroon was an active volcanic region with fracture zone stretching through Rochambe (western), Chain (western black, Charat) and Cameroon fracture zone (eastern boundary of Nigeria)."

Ndoma-Egba called on the Senate to seek measures that would fortify Nigeria from possible marine disasters.

In their contributions, Senators Nicholas Yahya (Kogi East) and Ewa-Henshaw, passed a non-confidence vote of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), saying its disaster preparedness was inadequate.

Senator Daisy Danjuma drew attention to an alarm raised two years ago by some environmental journals that a certain cascading rock may end up in the ocean, with a possible effect of submerging the entire West African and Eastern American coastal areas.

On his part Senator James Manager urged the senators to make financial contributions to signify their concern.

This was, however, opposed by minority leader, Senator Lawal Shuaibu, who contended that since the federal government, which the Senate was part of, has contributed to the tsunami relief efforts, there was no need for the upper chamber to set aside funds for the same purpose.



PDP seeks court's liberty for Oyinlola panel

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), yesterday initiate process to vacate the order of an Abuja high court restraining members of the Olagunsoye Oyinlola committee on Anambra state crisis.

The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), had secured an injunction against the panel from sitting which the committee ignored. The APGA however, filed a process to initiate committal proceedings for contempt of court order on Tuesday.

However, PDP through its council, Mr. James Obiabor, filed a motion on notice, asking the court to discharge the order of interlocutory injunction restraining the defendants from doing anything that would meddle

Kemi Ogedengbe, Judicial Editor

in the Anambra State governorship election.

He said that the notion was predicated on the facts that the defendants were not served with any process or processes prior to the making of the order, adding that there was misrepresentation of facts before the court, saying that the person purportedly served by the court one Kola Adeyemo who fraudulently misrepresented himself to be a personal assistant (PA) to a particular national officer is neither a personal assistant to any national officer nor a staff of the Peoples Democratic Party.

In an affidavit in support of the motion and sworn to by one Mathias John, he averred that there was no one with the name Kola Adeyemo as personal assistant to any of the national officers.

The defendant attached the list of personal assistants to national officers to the affidavit. The case has been fixed for February 8, 2005.

2007: Pro-IBB groups harmonise

From Nasir Imam, property & environment editor

A pro-IBB group, the Nigerian Project, has said that it has completed arrangements to consolidate all groups canvassing the emergence of retired General Ibrahim Babangida as Presidential candidate for 2007, under one umbrella.

Chairman of the Nigerian group, Chief (Senator) Victor Odili, and also chairman of the South-South zone of the group, led chairman from other geo-political zones which include Chief Akinyele, Col. Lawan Gwadabe (rtd), chief John Shagaya, A.V. Gomba, and chief Reagan Ufomba, to addressing a press conference.

Chief Odili said that all interest groups campaigning for the return of IBB have been directed to harmonise into one body latest 2nd of February and that so far most groups have embraced it.

He said that with each state having 12-15 of such IBB groups, and nor members cutting across party lines, the easiest way not to overheat the polity is to come under one umbrella.

Commenting, former governor of Niger State, Col. Lawal Gwadabe, (rtd) who is the chairman of the North west zone of the group said that the mission of the group for now is to educate all pro-IBB groups to have a focus and to ensure it in bi-partisan.

He said that all members of the group should stop jostling for position, as in the case in Delta and Edo state, and advised everybody to calm down as all members of the group are one.

Gov. Idris wants NBC to reduce licence fees

Kogi state governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, has appealed to the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), for a downward review of the licence renewal fee placed on broadcast organisations across the country.

Governor Idris, who made the appeal while declaring open the board meeting of the NBC yesterday in Lokoja, said the downward review of license fees placed on broadcast organisations has become necessary in view of the differentials faced by the organisation in meeting this obligation, noting that the high cost of hampering the media organisations from discharging their constitutional roles of informing, entertaining and educating the masses.

Governor Idris also appealed to the NBC to ensure the availability of broadcast equipment and spare parts at reduced cost.



A cross section of delegates during the opening ceremony of Forum of Accountants-General and Auditors General in West Africa held in Abuja, yesterday
Pix: Kennedy Egbonodie

BPE opens bids for ports concession

The Bureau for Public Enterprises (BPE) yesterday opened the technical bids for ports concession, just as First Stock Brokers Limited emerged the preferred bidder

By Anas A. Galadima, Reporter (Business)

for the sale of Nigerian Paper Mills (NPM), property located in Lagos.

Speaking during the occasion in Abuja yesterday, the director general of the BPE, Dr. Julius Bala, said "this marks the initial process to hand over the ports to the private sector."

According to him, the next three weeks will be the evaluation period during which these bids will be properly considered.

A total of 26 companies submitted both technical and financial bids for the possession of the container terminal, terminal 'C' and terminal 'D' of the Apapa Ports, Lagos.

The evaluating of the technical bids, according Dr. Bala, will be observed by the BPE, NPA and the ministry of transport while CPCS Transcom International, Canada, will serve as technical advisers.

Upon the completion of the technical bid evaluation in three weeks, the financial bids of the successful companies would then be opened.

Speaking during the occasion, the managing director of the NPA, Chief

Adebayo Sarunmi, said "we are quite happy that we were able to work within the timetable set for this process"

He alleged the fears of labour unions saying that the government is addressing issues raised by the unions.

On the other hand, First Stockbrokers emerged as the preferred bidder for the sale of the Nigerian Paper Mills (NPM) property located in Victoria Island Lagos by offering N274,555,550 as against the N272,900,00 offered by NUBIAN Nigeria

Limited, which emerged the reserved bidder.

Initially, during the first round of financial bid, First Stock Brokers had offered to pay N65 million while

NUBIAN Nigeria Limited offered an initial bid price of N45 million.

The chairman of the technical committee of the National Council on Privatisation (NCP), Mr. Akin Kekere-Ekum, had described their initial offers as "unacceptable" because they were very low compared to the value of the property at stake.

Gov. Duke challenges high court over joinder

Cross River state governor, Mr. Donald Duke, has appealed against the ruling of a federal high court sitting in Abuja, which refused to join him in a suit filed by a businessman, Mr. Ojoi-Ojoi, challenging his credentials.

The governor's counsel, Mr. Wole Olanipekun (SAN), who filed the appeal, said that since the suit was challenging the certificates of the governor, he ought to be joined as a party to it.

Justice Steven Jonah Adah, had last week ruled against the governor in an application for joinder filed against him by the businessman, who is claiming that the governor forged some of his certificates.

The plaintiff had filed the court process against the Inspector General of Police, seeking for an order of Mandamus to compel the police to investigate Duke over certificate forgery while the court ruled that, joining the governor was not necessary at that stage of the suit, since the case filed was between the plaintiff and the Inspector General of Police.

But, Duke in his notice of Appeal, stated that the lower court misdirected in law in its refusal to grant the application of the applicant to be joined as a co-defendant in the suit.

He stated that the entire court action by the plaintiff concerns an allegation of forgery made against him, saying that he would be the victim of any ruling or judgement given by the lower court in favour of the plaintiff.

He stated that the trial judge misdirected himself in law by holding that the cause of action in the matter before him does, not immediately concern the applicant.

UBE budgets N25bn for 2005

- Exec. Secretary

As part of the government's commitment to provide free education to all Nigerians, the Universal Basic Education (UBE), said it is anticipating a budget of over N25 Billion for 2005.

The executive secretary of the UBE, Alhaji Gidado Tahir who made this revelation when he paid a courtesy call on the special adviser to the president on Integration with Civil Society, Engr. Muhammad Abba-Gana, said that such

increase in budgetary spending is a clear indication that government is serious about providing basic education to its citizens.

Alhaji Gidado Tahir said that one of the factors that may hinder the achievement of the 2015 target for the provision of basic education for all is having the people expected to benefit to become part and parcel of the process.

He said that government can come up with a number of policies and could commit huge sums of money towards the policy but if the people are not properly to derive benefits it would not yield the desired result.

Responding, Special Adviser to the president on integration with civil society, Engr. Mohammed Abba-Gana, said that government attaches a lot of importance

to the provision of basic and functional education.

Alhaji Abba-Gana said that the most important responsibility of any nation is human resources and that nothing else desired could be act cheaply.

The special adviser said that donor agencies like the World Bank, IMF, and UNDP use civil society organisations in their various countries to channel the much needed assistance.

News

RELEASE OF SALARY ARREARS:

Jigawa workers accuse NLC of sabotage

Frustrated by inability to secure their January salaries leading to a bleak sallah celebration by families of the workers, civil servants in the state have accused the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), of sabotage and insensitivity to the plight of their comrades.

According to several workers interviewed, the

Niger prepares for national confab

From Kashim Sule, Stringer (Mina)

It is now set in Niger State for the convening of a pre-national conference meeting next week Monday to enable Nigerites participate in the proposed national dialogue.

Explaining the arrangements to journalists in Mina yesterday when all the traditional rulers in the state paid a sallah visit to the state governor, Engr. Abdulkadir Kure said the pre-conference meeting was necessary for those who will represent the state so that they can understand what issues to canvass on the state's behalf.

According to him, if all stakeholders that will represent the state are briefed before the conference, they will effectively make their presence felt when discussions begin.

The governor who outlined the guidelines for the national dialogue, warned that the federal government has also directed that no participant at the dialogue is allowed to discuss the sovereignty of the country, as this has been settled long ago.

Governor Kure said that the traditional rulers have been provided a platform at the dialogue to discuss issues that will unite the country like other interest groups too.

Speaking on the demarcation of boundaries for the purpose of enumeration, he urged the council chairmen to cooperate with the boundary commission for a healthy census exercise, saying that the state remains the only unit in the country since 1976 that has not been demarcated.

Earlier, the chairman of the Niger state traditional rulers council, His Royal Highness, Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar, had told the governor that traditional rulers in the state have appealed to the federal government through the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, to assist the Tsunami victims.

From Hassan A. Karofi, Correspondent (Dutse)

inability of labour to successfully pursue the release of the January salaries has put most of the workers in difficult situation especially as the eid-el-kabir celebration requires huge expenses.

A civil servant who preferred anonymity informed *Daily Trust* that while other states paid salaries, labour in Jigawa state could not do anything to ensure the release of salaries to their members.

Daily Trust gathered that directives have been given by the state government for the payment of the January salaries.

Further investigations revealed that cheques were released by the treasury department for the payment

of the salaries but due to cash crunch in banks the salaries could not be paid as directed by the government.

Reacting to the allegation of sabotage and inaction by labour, chairman of the congress, Comrade Muhammad Jibrin Gumel, told newsmen that the

allegation was not only baseless but uncalled for. He said NLC endured that all cheques for payment were signed by those responsible before they left for the pilgrimage and were sent to the banks for payment and accused banks for the inability of salaries to be paid as directed by government.

Comrade Muhammad also advised government to always prepare adequately in such situations so as to prevent recurrence of the unfortunate incident.

FG grants bitumen exploration licence to Ogun

The federal government has granted Ogun State license to explore bitumen, the state governor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, has said.

The governor stated this on Tuesday at the opening of the second economic summit of the state, held at Gateway hotel, Abeokuta.

He disclosed that the licence granted about two weeks ago, will afford the state the opportunity to explore its bitumen reserves which accounted for about 70 per cent of the total deposit of solid minerals in the country.

"We are aware that we have bitumen in commercial quantity in Edo and Ondo states but Ogun has the largest deposit, which is about 70 per cent of what we have in the whole country," Daniel said.

The governor further

disclosed that the state government now require experts to facilitate the take-off of the Gateway Bitumen Company.

He explained that the company will be a private sector driven initiative, with the state controlling five per cent shares.

The large concentration of bitumen in the state, he said, is also a strong indication that oil could equally be found in commercial quantity and assured that his administration will put the necessary machinery in place to exploit the potential of an oil producing state status for Ogun and he highlighted various investment opportunities in the state, especially in the agricultural sector where the state government has declared a "cassava revolution" to boost its production.

PENGASSAN wants palliative c'ttee's report implemented

The national president of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), Dr. Louis Brown Ogbefun, has called on the federal government to demonstrate its willingness to cater for the welfare of



Senator Ibrahim Mantu

From Samsun Ojo,

Nigerians by implementing the recommendations of the Senator Ibrahim Mantu led palliative committee to cushion the effects of the hike in the prices of petroleum products.

The PENGASSAN national president told *Daily Trust* in an interview in his office, that the committee which is expected to wind up in the next two weeks has made some recommendations to government on how to improve the lots of Nigerians.

Nevertheless, he disclosed that whether the recommendations are implemented is another "ball game" entirely as the decision to implement the



L-R: Alhaji Shehu Saleiman Dawladiman Sokoto, permanent secretary, establishment and pensions office, Mr. D. Wamisoja and another member of the newly inaugurated committee on the review and revision of civil service rules, procedures and regulations during the ceremony held at the state House, Abuja...recently. Pic: Joe Oroye.

World Bank commits \$1.2bn for projects in Nigeria

The World Bank has committed \$1.2 billion for projects in Nigeria said the Country Director of the financial institution, Dr. Hafis Ghannam.

Fielding questions from newsmen after a courtesy call on governor Bukola Saraki at government house, Ilorin and the, Dr. Ghannam said the money will be spent on human development, health, education and fight HIV/AIDS and poverty.

He said the provision of infrastructures, rural development and transport will also receive attention explaining that assistance from the World Bank was usually based on needs and requests of governments and organisations.

Earlier while receiving the country director who commended the SEEDS document of the state government which he said was in line with the objective of the World Bank, governor

From Abdulrazaq Adedoyin, Correspondent, Ilorin

Saraki sought the assistance of the world body in education, water, agriculture, power and roads.

He also observed the impact of poor data collection on development efforts and urged the World Bank to come to the state's rescue.

Governor Saraki also

observed the enormous challenges in the country and stressed the need for the World Bank and government to work together for a its impact, to be felt adding that, for the war on poverty to be effective, there was need to improve of infrastructures, pointing out that the World Bank should also review its approach in terms of assistance to state governments.

UNIMAID to fish out students with fake certificates

The University of Maiduguri has introduced plans to verify students certificates during the 2004/2005 session, so as to fish out students with fake certificates in the university.

This was contained in a statement signed by the university's registrar, Dr. Lawan Bukar Alhaji made available to *Daily Trust*.

"We wish to use this medium to inform our students that there will be certificate verification during the 2004/2005 session. Students are advised to come with the originals of all their certifications not statements of results," the statement declared.

The university urged the students to use the ongoing vacation to visit their former schools to collect their certificates before Friday, February 18, 2005, by which date the 2004/2005 session will commence.

The statement also called on students to use the verification to familiarise themselves with computer systems, as the school has introduced the use of computer in registration during which payment of

From Isa Umar, Correspondent (Maiduguri)

fees and other charges "will all be computer based."

The statement further stated that there will be no increase in the fees charged students, because the charges last session would be maintained.

However, the statement declared that "registration for the first and second semester will be done at once, and there will be no install mental payment of charges," saying that parents and students shall visit www.unimaid.org to have information regarding the fees charged by the institution as to prepaid during the registration.



Prof. Fabian Ovuji, education minister

News

FG urged to flush out more Baloguns

By Abdu Labaran, group political editor

The sack of erstwhile Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun, has continued to elicit reactions a call on the federal government to flush out more of Balogun's type from the police.

The deputy national welfare secretary of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Alhaji Muhammad Murtala, who made the call in an interview with *Daily Trust*, said the ousting of the former police boss was "good riddance to bad rubbish," describing Balogun as "the worst I.G. Nigeria has had so far."

"It is nemesis for all the evils he has perpetrated as I.G. that has finally caught up with him and no sensible person should shed tears for him. It is good riddance to bad rubbish."

Africa set to eradicate Tsetse fly

The African Union (AU), is to receive 71.9 million dollars to fight tsetse fly menace in the continent, its Permanent Representative Committee (PRC), has announced.

The PRC which completed a two-day session preparatory to the union's Jan. 30-31, general assembly meeting in Abuja, described the disease as one menace that must be "urgently tackled."

It said that all countries in the continent are affected by the tsetse fly transmitted diseases, especially *Trypanosomiasis*.

Recommendations from the meeting revealed at a news briefing by AU spokesman, Desmond Orjiako showed that African Development Bank (ADB) would provide the money.

According to him, 67 million dollars of the amount will be soft loan while 4.9 million is a grant to finance the implementation of the tsetse fly eradication programme in six countries.

He named the countries to include Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali and Uganda.

The PRC, however, acknowledged awareness of the disease among African nations and lauded local initiatives aimed to check the disease which causes sleeping sickness.

The meeting also discussed food security observing that the situation was "very precarious" in many countries especially those affected by civil strife, drought and famine.

Other countries prone to hunger, according to Orjiako, are those with displaced persons, crop failure and locust invasions.

The PRC dwelt on remedies against hunger especially in the promotion of strategic food reserves in member states and recommended the establishment of an African food security committee under the aegis of the AU commission.

him. It is good riddance to bad rubbish. "I am sure I am speaking the minds of many Nigerians if I say that Nigerians including his fellow police comrades have never had it so bad in terms of crime control or lack of it as it was during the tenure of Balogun. It is no wonder that even the police people are happy to see him go," stated the ANPP Chief.

He accused the sacked police boss of giving the Nigeria police a bad image during his three year tenure, saying that the partisan part played by the police during the 2003 general elections and "Balogun's corrupt tendencies" have done an irreparable damage not only to the image of the police but of the entire country. "The whole world knows that it was Tafa Balogun that used the police to subvert the collective will of the Nigerian electorate by giving the PDP government to rig its way to power in 2003," and urged government to ensure

the prosecution of the former police I.G. Police boss to serve as deterrent to others and advised that no efforts should be spared to ensure that "every kobo he has embezzled is retrieved from him."

According to him, government's fight against corruption will only yield desired results when there are no scared cows, no *nolle prosequi* and no let up in the resolve to stamp out the menace.

He particularly urged the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), necessary support to enable it face its task even more frontally commending the Nuhu Ribadu led commission for doing a good job by exposing the former inspector general's corrupt deals.

Alhaji Murtala however called on the acting I.G., Mr. Sunday Ehindero, to put a stop to the extortion on commercial motor drivers by members of the Highway patrol as well as address the problems of junior police officers.

Leprosy: Kaduna State meets WHO target

The Kaduna state government has successfully met WHO's target eliminate as a public health problem.

The Kaduna state tuberculosis and leprosy control officer, Mrs Emmy Van Der Grinten, who visited the state governor, Ahmed Makarfi, on Monday said: "leprosy is eliminated as a public health problem if the prevalence is below 1/10,000."

Leprosy, he said, has been on the decline in the past years, stating that 10 years

Leprosy: Kaduna State meets WHO target

ago, the state control programme diagnosed 1,000 leprosy patients annually.

She said her organisation will embark on community education exercises, radio and television messages across the state to sensitise people on leprosy control methods.

"The government will screen all patients with skin

problems and prolonged cough," he said.

Responding, Makarfi said he has approved the release of the state's counterpart funding for the TB and leprosy programme in the state and thanked the Netherlands and other donor agencies for investing heavily in the control and treatment of the disease in the country.

NPC begins demarcation of communities in Jigawa

As preparation peaks ahead the 2005 national census, the National Population Commission (NPC), has begun demarcation of communities in Jigawa State.

Investigations at the NPC headquarters in Dutse reveals that already, working facilities and staff have arrived and are framing for the

By Hassan A. Karofi, Correspondent (Dutse)

exercise which will take months to complete.

Daily Trust reliably gathered that over 215 adhoc staff have been recruited for the exercise as communities, traditional rulers and politicians have intensified campaigns in order to mobilise people to participate in the exercise.

According to officials of the commission, four local governments including Dutse, Garam, Buji and BirninKudu will form the first councils to be demarcated by the commission.

Alhaji Muhammad

Sada, the director of the commission, told newsmen that the exercise is to an acceptable and reliable national census that will assist in the development of the nation adding that the demarcation exercise is designed to outline enumeration areas in each of the 27 councils of the state, pointing out that the exercise will map out strategies for the provision of a hitch free census. Meanwhile 69 teams of demarcation workers have been trained and sent to the four local governments made up of 215 staff for easy and effective demarcation exercise.

Head teachers want pension board

The conference of primary school head teachers, Ekiti state chapter, has called for the setting up of a primary school teachers' pensions board in the state.

In an address, presented to the state governor, Mr Ayo Fayose, on Tuesday, the chairman of conference, Mr Eddy Olayisade, said retired primary school teachers were not being treated well at the local government pensions board.

Olayisade noted that although the state government has been paying the pensions of retired teachers promptly, "he should look into the issue of gratuity, as many have died out of frustrations and other

unavoidable circumstances."

He noted a remarkable improvement in the welfare of public servants in the state and called for a review of housing loan, car loans and the enhancement of teachers' welfare.

The chairman of the head teachers called on the state government to pay the gratuity of primary school teachers who retired from the state service between 1994 and now while also appealing to the state government to review the running cost given to public schools in the state, noting that the last administration was giving out running cost on the basis of N200 per pupil, which was later increased to N500 before the expiration of its tenure.

Nigeria will export maize to Libya soon

The minister of agriculture, Mallam Adamu Bello, says Nigeria has the capacity to produce maize and export to Libya.

Mallam Bello affirmed this in a statement issued to *Daily Trust* by the head of press and public relations, Mr. Toye Ajakaiye.

The minister said discussions have reached advanced stage in the bid to supply maize to flour mills in Libya.

He mentioned government's preparation to assist the World Food Programme (WFP) to have a

base in Nigeria and also assist to have all food items needed for its programmes in the west and central African sub-region.

He responded to the appeal for donation by releasing a large quantity of grains from the strategic grains reserve to the WFP and political out that the various initiatives by government in the agricultural sector were not only to achieve national self-sufficiency in food production but also reach out to markets especially in Africa.



L-R: The representative of UNFPA, Nigeria Mr. Nnamgwan Eson chairman of the occasion, Editor-in-Chief, news agency of Nigeria (SAN), Mr. Shibu Abaj and Assistant representative of UNFPA, Nigeria, Dr. Lucy Idoko during media briefing an FSTULA held in Abuja yesterday.

Ban on part time law studies is to maintain standards - Uwais

The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Mohammed Uwais, says the ban on part-time law programme is to maintain standard in the churning out of lawyers.

Uwais said this in Abuja on Tuesday when he received a delegation of the London-based law institute (TLI), led by Dr Tunde Ogogewo.

TLI is a higher education project pioneered by a group of prominent African professionals in the UK.

The institute is concerned with the poor state of education in the continent and plans to establish a branch in Abuja for the training of lawyers.

Uwais said that "part time law studies takes time and we felt that it was not good enough for the country as students spend more years trying to get a degree."

He said that he was glad to hear that the institute would take off this year.

The chief justice, who is a member of the advisory

board, expressed hope that the institute's decision to hold discussions with government organisations involved in legal training would facilitate its effective take off.

"I don't expect any problems, but if there are, I am prepared to chip in a word or two on behalf of the institute," he promised.

Earlier, a member of the advisory board of the institute, Prof. U.U. Uche, who is also chairman, Heritage Oil and Gas (Nig) Ltd, had said that the project mooted two years ago was captivating.

Uche, who helped to establish the Kenya law school when he was a lecturer at the University of London, also described the project as timely.

"For a country like ours looking for ways to brighten dark sectors, the law institute will go a long way to achieve the objective," he said.

Uche also said that the successful take off of the

institute will demonstrate that the country's bright students abroad have decided to impart knowledge they acquired to fellow citizens back home.

Also speaking, Mr Abubakar Mohammed (SAN), who is co-ordinating the institute's programme in Nigeria, had said that the quality of legal education in the country was "quite disturbing."

"Therefore, all efforts to raise standards should be encouraged but we need a lot of support to get over the hurdles," he said.

According to a document made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the mission of the institute is to transform legal education in Nigeria.

"We are committed to the development of practitioners, whose grounding in and mastery of law equips them to contribute meaningfully to the profession and transformation of society," he said.

Idang Abi on Thursday

idangabili@yahoo.com

Opinion

NARD strike: Nigeria's silent tsunami

Mercifully, the strike embarked upon by the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) came to an end last Sunday as dramatically as it started some seven weeks ago.

Like a triumphant war commander who received instrument of surrender from his foolish and recalcitrant opponent, I noticed that the President of NARD, Dr. Jerry Oguzie while counting the cost of the war, heaped all the blame for the rather high casualty figure on his subdued opponent.

In the course of announcing the suspension of the strike, Dr. Oguzie told a nation that appears to be unshockable by anything, that about 37,000 Nigerians died nation-wide as a result of this strike.

Why did Oguzie give us this death toll? It is obviously to castigate the government for its unreasonable foolishness in allowing the strike to start to all and that when it started, it did not do much to bring it to an end speedily. That is clearly the point. But are he and his fellow doctors right?

For if the government was foolish, should doctors who are trained to save life appear so callous, so unfeeling towards ordinary Nigerians? When the statistician of death had counted up to 5,000 dead in the first week, how did Dr. Oguzie and his fellow resident doctors feel? They wanted to press on, using the statistics perhaps as a bargaining chip?

It was the late Dele Giwa who once said that we Nigerians are unshockable. Things that cause uproar in certain decent places hardly move us here. Every day, I agree with the reality of Dele Giwa's accurate observation.

Perhaps because we are so big and so rich, no amount of casualty figure or stealing of public funds ever appears to shock us. Which is why I doubt very much if in the next few days and weeks our mass media and the general Nigerian public will take up the issue of why 37,000 Nigerians had to die. In our usual Nigerian manner, we will shrug off the matter and continue or just lament about it in the quiet of our homes.

Thirty seven thousand of God's children had to die. Who and who are to bear the blame for this wickedness? Why were the doctors not paid their legitimate salaries and allowances? When as it happened, the doctors were justifiably aggrieved and they embarked on the strike and they discovered, by their own account, that so many innocent lives were being lost, why did they not suspend the action, seeing that they had sufficiently and eloquently made their point, at least with the high death toll?

Who will our God hold responsible for the death of

37,000 of his children? Is he going to blame only the government and allow the doctors to go free or will he punish them both?

Will this incident not reopen the debate about the wrongness of workers offering essential services embarking on strike? But if they are not to go on strike, what then should they do to get their entitlement if government is so obdurate?

I do not know how other Nigerians feel but as one who believes so much in the sanctity of human life, I feel so angry about the 37,000 Nigerians that are reported to have died in the course of a needless contest between a government and a section of its workers.

Brother, 37,000 human beings are no peanuts. When the world was enveloped in grief by the initial report of the South East Asia Tsunami disaster, the causality figure was said to be about 50,000. It therefore means that while we joined the world in expressing the grief over that disaster, we had in our own country a silent tsunami and we did not even know it!

As far as my noble soul can see this matter, it is one which requires a war crimes tribunal to be instituted to look into it. The world does not need to wait for one ethnic group to cleanse up another before it expresses outrage when thousands of lives are lost in any country as a result of acts of omission or commission by anybody, be it some elements in government or a few privileged individuals.

Dr. Oguzie meant his ghastly testimony as a castigation of government's unreasonableness but to me, it is also a severe self-indictment. No one should be allowed to even remotely gloat over any casualty, no matter the rightness of his anger. If he meant it as a lamentation, his cry sounds hypocritical.

What is more, as if the 37,000 Nigerian lives lost were not enough, Dr. Oguzie, the victorious war commander, did not appear satisfied with the capitulation of his foes, he ordered for a mopping up operation in other theatres of the war where total surrender has not yet been achieved. He ordered the continuation of the strike action in health centres that are yet to be paid the 22 percent increment in basic salary since 2001.

How can a man who through self-confession has admitted that 37,000 souls have perished, asked that they action which led to those deaths be continued? Has the point not been made with the number of those who have already died? What more point are Oguzie and his NARD seeking to make? Why have we become so callous?

Now that Oguzie and his doctors have been given their entitlements even for the seven weeks that they

did not work for, what will they do about the thousands of innocent Nigerians that died? Are these lives to be regarded as an unfortunate sacrifice for the doctors to achieve their goals?

I personally think that it is not right for us Nigerians, especially the media, to persist in the logic that we must identify at all times with the party that looks like it will undergo. Which explains why when there is a conflict between the government and individual or groups of individuals, we invariably vote against the government, no matter how complex and complicated the issue in contention may be.

This deeply ingrained underdog syndrome among us is partly responsible for why workers offering essential services never think twice before they embark on usually devastating strikes against government. The cost of their guaranteed victory is usually higher than what they eventually get in terms of the harm they do to the polity and to even themselves.

ASUU, doctors, nurses and lately the police, know that they will have the sympathy of public whenever they go on strike and so they sometimes never even go through due process before they start their troubles and when the action is causing so much harm, they do not have the good sense to suspend it in time.

When will we have labour leaders who will have the good sense to know when to order a halt to a strike action that is wreaking too much havoc? God is going to judge all of us very harshly if we do not do away with our readiness to see government as a good scapegoat for all the things wrong with our society. If the so-called government is irresponsible, is it justified for individuals who fully understand the consequences of certain actions, to be irresponsible also?

Doctors and nurses know full well that if they go on strike, countless number of people will die yet they proceed on the action. On whom will the charge of murder or genocide be pinned? Certainly, if government gets a share of the blame, they can not escape the charge of being accomplices.

For me, the death of 37,000 Nigerians during that strike is genocide by another name and it should be punished as such. Dr. Oguzie, his doctors and certain officials of government who failed to act their roles, should be made to face charges of genocide.

If 37,000 citizens of a country like Sao Tome and Principe had died that would be nearly a quarter of the population. A huge uproar would certainly have greeted such a death. Is it because we are so big that we have not started shouting over this needless tragedy? God, exonerate me from this high crime if you judge our country for it because I have always lamented the shedding of innocent blood of your children.

Is immunity a licence to steal?

By Victor E. Dike

The unending immensity controversy seems to remind us that the laws in every society determine the affairs in the nation. Nigeria has myriad of Constitutions, probe panels and commissions, yet corruption has continued to pervade the society. Because the laws are not effective in tackling the teething sociopolitical and economic problems in Nigeria, the epidemic reached its crescendo in 2004. If one may judge from the magnitude of fraud engendered by the immunity clause in Section 308 of the 1999 Constitution 2005 may not be any different, if positive changes are not made in the system.

Thus lack of effective laws and control systems have been Nigeria's Achilles Heel, despite the bundle and flashy credentials possessed by those who crafted the 1999 constitution. The immunity provision that grants the insatiably greedy politicians the license to steal with impunity is one of the hiccups in the document. But is the democratic immunity a licence to steal? As Plato noted, "How can a society be saved, or be strong, except it be led by its wisest men [and women]?"

It appears Nigeria does not want to implement what it has learned from her past experiences. The military looted Nigeria through the barrel of the gun but the politicians through the backdoor of democratic immunity are now looting the nation. One wonders why the 1999 constitution was crafted like a cobweb very weak for the big politicians committing grand thefts, but strong enough to catch the poor and powerless involved in petty thefts.

Where is Nigeria going? When will Nigeria arrive at her destination? Hardly a day passes without news of bribery and corruption swirling about in the administration that vowed to give the treasury looters a good fight.

Given the frauds swirling in these organizations it appears the ICPC, EFCC, the INEC, Judiciary and the Police have joined the looting race. As *Songs of Sorrow* would cry out: "the tree on which we lean has fallen!" The lukewarm attitudes of those enforcing the laws are responding to the magnitude of frauds at the echelon of the ruling party.

Chief Olusegun Ohasanjo and Chief Auda Ogbeh (the chairman of PDP) have

finally accepted that Chris Uba and Chris Ngige rigged the 2003 elections in Anambra (it is alleged that the riggings were nationwide) - elections that were supervised by the Police and INEC and certified by the Judiciary. During their recent war of words Mr. President acknowledged that all is not well with Nigeria and that Chris Uba and Chris Ngige are actually political rouses. As many newspapers including *Vanguard* of December 13, 2004 reported OBJ said "Their case [Chris Uba and Chris Ngige] was like the case of two armed robbers that conspired to loot a house and after the loot, one decided to do the other in".

The recent court verdict that nullified the 2003 presidential elections in Ogun State seems to have confirmed that the elections were fraudulent. The *Vanguard* of December 21, 2004 reported "...all allegations in Ogun State were criminal in nature. They ranged from violence, fingerprinting, official intimidation, bias and falsification of results." This gave the INEC the opportunity to pad the result in favor of the ruling party and refused to produce the presidential result in court when it was subpoenaed to do so.

Worse still, the Congress has been dismissing fraud charges brought against its members without proper investigation; and some of the investigations were only for newstreet cameras. If the government itself is in chaos and absurdity, and if it rules without obeying the laws of the land, how could it persuade the people to obey the laws? As a maxim says, 'to convince a man [woman] you must appeal to his [her] self-interest his [her] desire and his [her] will.' As Plato intoned, like man [and woman], like State; governments vary as the characters of the men [and women] vary. States are made out of the human natures which are in them. The State is what it is because its citizens are what they are. Therefore, we need not expect to have better states until we have better men [and women]. This is the crux of the matter with Nigeria and it carries ominous implications for the nation's political future! If the Supreme Court in Ukraine could cancel the presidential elections in the nation because of fraud, why not in Nigeria where fraudulent manipulation of the 2003 elections were rampant?

The administration, therefore, faces fundamental

questions about its sincerity fighting corruption and bringing stability to Nigeria. It has continued to send out contradictory signals by supporting Chris Uba (who has now confessed participating in the massive election fraud in Anambra) and at the time claiming to be fighting corruption.

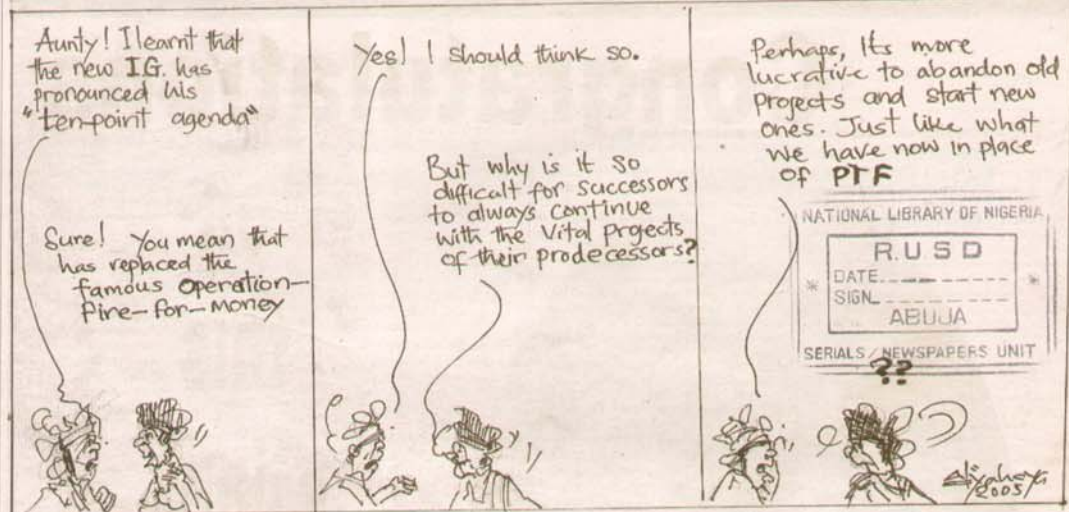
It has been proved beyond reasonable doubt that all is not well with Nigeria and the problems facing the society today emanate from rampant bribery and corruption caused by lack of political will to enforce the laws of the land. And it appears the Section 308 of the 1999 Constitution, which protects the President, Vice President, Governors and their Deputies from criminal prosecution, has made the matter worse.

Nigeria has been made barren by bribery and corruption for so long that it needs new and better political medicine to become fertile again. For transparency and good governance and for the economic reform efforts to work all elected political office holders (from the president down) should be subjected to the laws like every other citizen in the land.

More importantly, they should render proper account of their stewardship and be prosecuted if, and when, found wanting. This should begin with expunging Section 308 from the 1999 Constitution; and the incompetent and greedy political contractors pretending to be working for the welfare of the nation should be recalled to their villages where they really belong. If we want to witness the last sustained period of 'politics as usual' in the society political reforms should precede the current economic reforms because the political life in Nigeria encourages fraud, embezzlement, extortion, favoritism, and nepotism.

Thus without appropriate social policies and good institutions and without the society developing a political culture that works on principles. Without transparency and good governance and without the people enjoying the benefits of reliable courts, and without expunging the political immunity provision from the Constitution, economic growth and prosperity will continue to elude the nation. Nigeria's love affair with incompetence and rascality, contradictions, frauds and chaos should die with 2004. All good things, however, start with smart choices.

Victor E. Dike, is chairman of Center for Social Justice and Human Development (CSJHD) in Sacramento, California.



YOUR LETTERS

Poverty and a president's voodoo economics

The major contributor to Nigeria's industrial decline was the state of the economy. For example, examination of the economic performance within the last ten years reveals a miserable story. The real output GDP in 1993 was N100.84 billion which was 12 percent less than the real output of N90.36 billion recorded in 1990 reflecting a high inflation in the economy. The growth rate of real output fell consistently between 1990 and 1993, such that the 1993 rate was only about one-third of the 1990 rate. Consequently the index of manufacturing output declined from 178.1 per cent in 1991 to 162.2 percent in 1993, using 1985 as the base year.

According to the Central Bank survey of almost 600 manufacturing establishments in Nigeria, manufacturing capacity utilization also declined from about 39.0 per cent during 1990-1992 to about 36.2 per cent in 1993 and 32 percent at the end of the first half of 1994. The situation has not improved but deteriorated.

In spite of the government non-action backed efforts which are more of propagandish than

effective, the structure of the economy remained virtually unchanged. Agriculture was the largest contributor to the total output, then accounting for about 38 percent of the GDP. Crude Petroleum activity accounted annually for about 80 percent of the federal government collectable revenue and about 90 percent of Nigeria's export earnings but it contributed only about 13 per cent of the total output of the economy.

Manufacturing however, remained stagnant at less than 9 per cent of the GDP for the years 1990-1993, even though it was expected that it should be the vehicle for the general modernization of the economy. The status of the country's health sector is not quite different from that of our industrial development. According 1991 census, Nigeria has a population of about 88.5 million. Although the annual population growth was put at 3.0 per cent, life expectancy was widely held to be 47 years for male and 49 years for female.

In 1991 the World Bank ranked Nigeria as the 13th poorest country in the world, and we have since then improved

negatively on that position. The poverty situation was accentuated by illiteracy and ignorance as only 49.44 per cent of adults in Nigeria (15 years and above) were literate. The percentage of children (6-11 years) enrolment in school was 63.48.

The morbidity and mortality rates further indicate the poverty level of the population. According to the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) report of 1989, the rural sector accounts for about 80 percent of the country. This is where poverty is most prevalent with all its multi-faceted deprivations, characterized by lack of purchasing power, exposure to risks, insufficient access to social and economic services and limited opportunities for income generation (World Bank, 1996). Of the rural population, it is estimated that only 35 percent has access to portable water, even when water is life! The situation is still crying for attention.

The state of the health sector becomes more worrisome when the statistics of medical infrastructures and personnel are weighed against the population. And with regards to hospital

equipment, Nigeria depends on imports for about 90 percent of supplies. The availability of these has been rendered precarious because of foreign exchange difficulties and the overall economic down-turn. Consequently, there was pervasive shortage of drugs and equipment and other basic essentials.

The earlier President Obasanjo faces the reality of the situation the better because majority of the populace are presently living in real abject poverty. Playing with statistics depending on the one that suits the government on the state-of our economy will not augur well for our national development. It is the right time to face, the reality of our present situation and the fact is "more than 70 percent of Nigerians are presently living in abject poverty".

And there is an important and significant lesson to learn from Abacha's regime on this issue. Previous regimes before Abacha's took, rather seriously, economic advice from industrial countries of the west and the international financial institutions namely, the World Bank and the international Monetary Fund. Similarly Abdulsalam Abubakar continued this trend which was swallowed hook, line and sinker by Obasanjo's administration.

Probably the most important contribution of the Abacha regime to economic policy formulation, which ought to be embraced by subsequent administration, is a critically skeptical attitude to advice from other countries and international institutions. The regime believed that economic policy should be formulated only after conflicting view points have been presented at the highest level of decision making which should lead to a consensus.

This philosophical stance was undoubtedly responsible for the resistance of the administration to suggestions calling for further drastic

evaluations of the naira exchange rate, immediate privatization of key parastatals and further downsizing of the public sector. This policy of Guided Deregulation, Guided Privatization and Pragmatism really helped the regime and comparatively, we know whose policies are better now.

The regime (Abacha's) was not rigidly tied to any ideological position. When rigid regulation of exchange rates and interest rates failed in 1994, the administration found no difficulty in adopting guided deregulation. It was well disposed to listen to all shades of opinions on any policy issue, and after consideration of the merits of each school of thought, took decisions that were appropriate in view of the circumstances of the economy then. Its pragmatic world view made the regime well disposed to seek new friends in the East, the Arab World and Eastern Europe when faced with sanctions imposed against Nigeria by the European Union, the United States, Canada and the Commonwealth.

Abacha Administration sought to practicalise its

economic principles by means of strategies it considered appropriate and sustainable. Such strategies took into consideration the environment within which the Nigerian economy operated, past experience of the country with regard to economic policy implementation and the need to stabilize the economy before seeking to generate growth in production and employment opportunities.

But contrary is the case with the present administration, which has been proffering palliative solutions to problems that deserve serious and patriotic attention.

President Obasanjo's government must continue to battle against poverty whether "abject" or not. Government must continue to battle against hunger and provide good shelter, portable water, functional education; good health care delivery and employment opportunities. Until then, we cannot say we are on the road to economic recovery and better quality of life.

*Gbemiga Bamidele
National Secretariat Nigeria
Union of Journalists Abuja.*

Keep it up Hon. Wakili

Since the inception of the present democracy, I have been plagued by a somewhat dark pessimism especially when officeholders begin to reel out their achievements. But, all of life is not made of pessimism. And certain people have a way of proving us wrong. Such a one is in the person of Honourable Balarabe Wakili of Nassarawa Federal Constituency, Kano State who is doing something close to an economic re-engineering of his area.

I would have been still locked up in my negative perception until I travelled home recently for Sallah festival. I began to hear of the representative's efforts. Discussing one such progress

with me, a friend told me of how his cousin is now schooling in a federal university courtesy of the over 60 scholarship awarded by Mallam Balarabe.

Apart from this, he has also distributed educational facilities in schools in the area. Specifically he provided the much needed furniture, and other learning enhancing gadgets to schools. A close associate of his once told me that Hon. Wakili is devoted to this project, hoping to invest more in this direction before his tenure is over.

Attacking the perennial problem of water shortage in the constituency, Hon. Wakili provided motorised boreholes from which water can be sourced without much hassles. I was amazed at this aspect of

development because this one area that even the Federal Capital Territory is having some difficulty. "Water is life" is a motto the representative has internalised.

In addressing grassroots development, the law maker joined forces with the chairman of the local government to provide transformers which have been transforming the life of the people. Rural electricity which is fast becoming a veritable aspect of development is an area dear to the heart of Hon. Wakili. He has sworn, I am informed to make his constituency the pride of the state. From all indications he is committed to that goal.

*Abdul-Rauf Musa
Ungwar Doso, Kaduna State.*

Gov. Shekarau's c'ttee of judicial witch-hunting

Please allow me a space in your newspaper to comment on the judicial committee on inquiry set up by Kano State government that has checked the administration of Ungogo local government recently and sacked the council chairman.

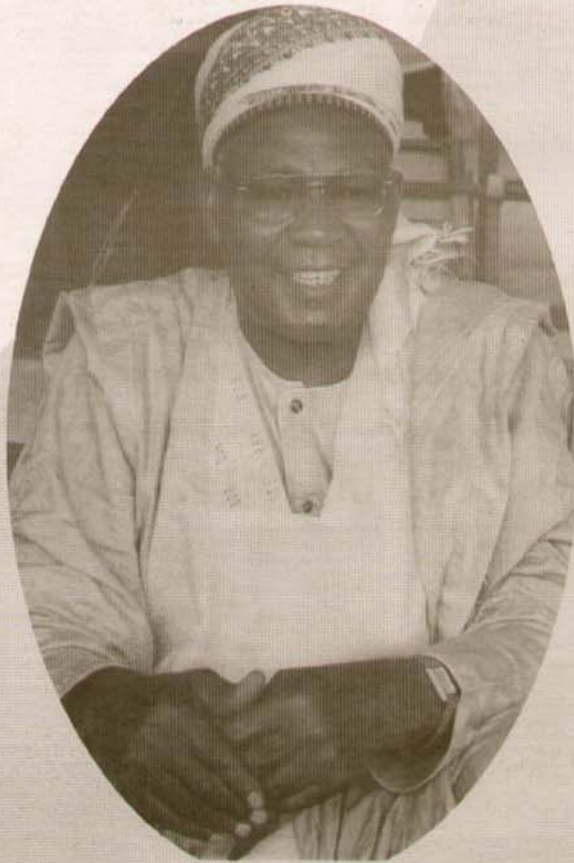
If not the politics of witch-hunting, the committee should stretch its work to the various local governments of the state.

for the purpose of accountability and good governance. Hence maladministration, mismanagement and misappropriation of the public funds should not be seen as limited to Ungogo local government. Falalu is not the only vicious among the council chairmen or is it the matter of who has political godfather and who has not?

*Arc Kabiru Batu Indaba,
Wudil Local Government, Kano State.*

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

Congratulations



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Installation

Turaki Alhaji Inuwa Ali

**Hakimin Cikin Garin Jos
(Gundumar Dilimi)**

*Words cannot describe our joy and happiness
for you on this occasion when the Plateau State
Government recognises your contributions to
the progress and development of your community
and services to humanity.*

*We share in your joy and pray that Allah continue
To guide you in the years ahead*

We are proud of you

Khalifa Alhaji Uba Nakande
Ibrahim Dasuki Salihu Nakande
Mansir Salihu Nakande
Ibrahim Salihu Nakande
Habibu Salihu Nakande
Nasiru Salihu Nakande

On behalf of

Saliyu Nakande Foundation

News

Opposition parties petition Turaki over diversion of Hajj seats

Opposition parties in Jigawa state have petitioned Governor Ibrahim Turaki over diversion of the 16 seats allocated to it by the state government during the just concluded 2005 Hajj pilgrimage.

Addressing newsmen in Dutse, chairman of the National Conscience Party NCP, Alhaji Inuwa Yahaya Sakwaya, representing the sixteen political parties in the state revealed that all the 16 Hajj seats given to the parties were later sold to interested people at N170,000 and N180,000 by some of the members of the state hajj committee.

He said the political

parties will write to intimate the governor about the diversion which he described as unfortunate, disgrace to the government and quite insensitive.

Daily Trust gathered that of the 1000 pilgrims sponsored by the government 122 were left stranded at the Aminu Kano airport including the state amirul hajj and leader of the delegation Alhaji Mujittafa Mallam and some members of some senior government officials and traditional rulers in the state for lack of visa, but according to the NCP chairman, unknown to those stranded their seats were

sold by some officials of the hajj committee.

Alhaji Inuwa further explained that evidence of the racket and those involved will be sent to the governor including those people who bought the seats from the fraudulent officials.

The entire hajj operation has been marred by irregularities, fraudulent diversion, and outright sales of already allocated seats by people trusted with the successful running of the pilgrimage. We believe the governor must investigate this insensitive behaviour of officials he trusted; queried Inuwa.

Unijos vows to trackdown Bala Ahmed's killers

Two months after the assassination of Bala Ahmed, a lecturer with the faculty of pharmaceutical sciences, University of Jos, the institution authorities have asserted that they would not relent in efforts to track-down the killers of the late don.

Bala Ahmed was last seen Sunday November 14, 2004 and nobody could account for where he was until Tuesday the 16th of November, that is two days later when his body was found and news filtered that he was abducted and subsequently killed by unknown assassins.

The Chief security officer of the university, Mr. Boniface Gid, had during that period the event

occurred narrated how he got an anonymous call from an unknown person that Bala Ahmed was one of the four lecturers on their hit list and that they (the assassins) had already abducted and murdered Bala Ahmed.

Fielding questions from journalists in Jos yesterday, vice-chancellor of the University, Professor Monday Mangywat said the search for the killers is still on.

He said legal processes are on to get the GSM service providers to fish out the owner of the GSM line

that the assailants used on making anonymous calls over the incident.

According to the vice-chancellor, once they are able to get the owner of the line, concrete investigation could commence.

Professor Mangywat said they did not take the incident lightly "it is a sad development, we can't leave the matter hanging for the collective safety of all us."

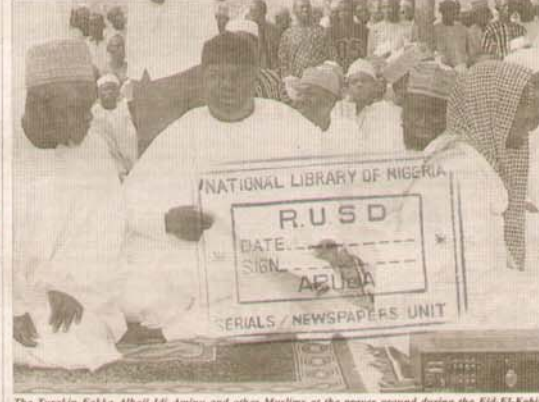
Bauchi govt told not to remit workers dues to NCSU

The Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN) has called on the registrar of Trade Union to prevail on the Bauchi state government to desist from remitting the check-off dues deducted from senior officers in the state to the Nigeria Civil Service Union.

ASCSN in a lesson addressed to the registrar of Trade Union's, tagged "massive fraud in the deduction of remittance of union dues by the Bauchi state government's expressed displeasure that despite the judgement of the national Industrial Court (NIC) delivered on 27 June 1995 which categorically stated that ASCSN is entitled to Unionise, Civil Servants on grade level 07 and above

including those of them in the personnel assistant cadre (formerly executive officer) except those who are typist nurses and midwives' the Bauchi state government was still claiming ignorance of the labour law."

The text of the ASCSN four page letter to the registrar of trade unions and signed by its secretary-general, Solomon A. Onaghinon, reads in part; regrettably, despite all these the Bauchi state government continues to pay union dues deducted from all senior civil servants, in the state (including members of the Branch executive committee of the association of senior civil servants of Nigeria) to the Nigeria Civil Service



The Turakis Fakka Alhaji Idi Aminu and other Muslims at the prayer ground during the Eid-El-Kabir celebration in Abuja recently. **PHOTO: JOE OROYE**

Poverty cant be eradicated in Africa by 2015 -NEPAD Business Forum

Even as a three-day international business forum aimed at eradicating poverty in Africa takes off tomorrow in presidential Villa, Abuja, the promoter of the forum, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Business Group, has expressed doubt if poverty could be eradicated in the continent by 2015.

Expressing the doubt in Lagos at an interactive session with journalists, the NEPAD Business Forum chairman, Mr. Goodie Ibru, said the 2015 target set by the United Nation (UN) to eradicate poverty in the world can not be achieved in Africa because poverty had eaten deep into the continent.

He said many African leaders had in one way or the other worsened the poverty level of their citizenry through embezzling of public funds meant for developmental works.

"We at NEPAD Business Forum know that poverty can't be eradicated in Africa

Wade of Senegal, as well as leading operator of the organised private sector.

by 2015 set by the UN. We doubt it because unlike in other parts of the world, corruption of public officials had worsened the poverty level of Africans. The forth coming forum is just to find a way to reduce it not to eradicate," said Ibru.

He revealed that the forum would bring about good governance and prudent management of public funds. "The forum is designed to address the current challenges facing the private and public sector in Africa. It would bring about good governance in the continent," said the NEPAD Business forum chairman.

It would be recalled that the three-day international business forum, which kicks off from 27th to 29th January, is expected to bring together notable African presidents like Olusegun Obasanjo, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and Abdoulaye

Fayose kicks-off interactive forum

The interactive session initiated by Ekiti state Governor, Mr. Ayo Fayose, to keep indigenes living outside the state abreast with the developmental efforts of his administration took place in Akure, the capital of Ondo state on Monday.

The governor had held similar sessions with indigenes of the state living in New-York, Port-Harcourt, Abuja and Ibadan during which concerted efforts were made to let people see that state is witnessing a new dawn in terms of rapid growth and development.

Speaking at the forum, Chief Falae who was the former presidential candidate under the AD/APP alliance in 1999 said leaders of existing political parties in the country should come together and form new structure that can meet the expectations of people in

Mr. Udeh was an assistant Comptroller-General of Immigration in charge of works and logistics before his present appointment as the comptroller-general of immigration.

He joined the Nigeria Immigration Service in 1978 as an Assistant Superintendent of Immigration after his National Youth Service, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology (second class upper division) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1977.

Mr. Udeh succeeds Lady Uzoamaka Nwizu who passed away some six months ago.

Born on the 29th of June 1950 in Zaria, Kaduna state, Mr. Udeh is from Ezi, Aniocha north of Delta state.

He joined the Nigeria Immigration Service in 1978 as an Assistant Superintendent of Immigration after his National Youth Service, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology (second class upper division) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1977.

Mr. Udeh was an assistant Comptroller-General of Immigration in charge of works and logistics before his present appointment as the comptroller-general of immigration.

Also speaking at the occasion, the vice chancellor of FUTA, Professor Peter Adeniyi, who is an indigene of Ekiti state commended Mr. Fayose for his modest achievements in the areas of road construction and improvement in education.

Another contributor to the forum, Professor Sam Aluko, who is the chairman of the defunct National Economic Intelligence Commission urged the governor to encourage all the local governments in the state to have development plans.

Highlighting the programmes of his government, Mr. Fayose said his administration has made remarkable impact in the area of roads rehabilitation and construction, saying apart from the commencement of the dualisation of major road.

Cleric urges Muslims to assist tsunami victims

Acknowledged Islamic scholars, Sheikh Jafara Mahmud, has called on Nigerian Muslims to render humanitarian assistance and prayers of survival to victims of the tsunami disaster in different parts of the world.

Sheikh Mahmud made the call at a religious gathering in Maiduguri, Borno state capital, attended by hundreds of Muslims.

According to the scholar, those affected were in a state of need as the disaster had made them homeless and totally dependant and as such needed urgent assistance.

Sheikh Jafar Mahmud called on Muslims to be prayerful and ensure purity in their spiritual well being through abstinence from the exhibit of conducts not

acceptable by God with reference to Islamic religion.

The scholar said that disaster arising from earthquake and other related natural calamities were signs that the world would soon come to an end, saying that the prophet (SAW) had itemised such disasters as part of signs signalling closeness to the day of judgement.

Sheikh Mahmud lamented that some individuals had used tourist areas such as beaches for funny characters which are sinful and elicit provocation on the part of God.

The scholar said it was unfortunate that when calamities befall people, even innocent ones became affected as a result of the magnitude of the disaster.

Trust International

Ten Libyans to face trial over Bulgarians

Ten Libyans accused of torturing Bulgarian nurses on death row into giving false statements will face trial, a judge has said.

The five nurses and a Palestinian doctor were sentenced to death by a Libyan court last year for infecting more than 400 children with HIV.

They are now appealing against that verdict. The accused Libyans, who deny the charges, have not been detained.

The nine policemen and a doctor were ordered to another hearing in March.

It comes a day after the death of a seven-year-old boy, who was amongst the infected children.

The six medics blamed the HIV outbreak at a children's hospital in Benghazi on poor hygiene.

After the hearing, one of the accused policemen told journalists there had been no need to use force because of the wealth of evidence available to convict the nurses.

Students hold African envoy hostage in Moscow

Moscow-based students from the African state of Guinea Bissau are holding their country's ambassador hostage in a dispute over unpaid students grants.

Russian television showed footage of up to 100 students in the embassy, who said they would continue their protest until all debts owed to them were paid.

They said the 200-odd Guinea Bissau students in Russia had not received their \$60-a-month stipends for a year.

Diplomat Rogerio Herbert said the students' demands had been passed on.

The Soviet authorities invited large numbers of Third World students to study free in the USSR, as a means of winning influence abroad.

Numbers have declined, but many overseas students still come to Russia to study. However, some complain of severe financial problems.

Moscow police received reports at 12.30 local time that a group of young people forced their way into the ambassador's apartment, which also serves as an embassy.

Embassy staff refused offers of help from the police, Russian media reported. It was not clear what the hostage-takers intended to do if their demands were not met, although some reports said they were on hunger-strike.

"The ambassador is our hostage, he isn't going anywhere. We will shut all the doors and the diplomatic service will not work until we recover our debt," a student named as Silvio Bravo told the TV.



President Olusegun Obasanjo and President John Kuffour discussing after the 28th ordinary summit of ECOWAS heads of states and government in Ghana...recently.

Darfur crisis easing off — WHO

A humanitarian crisis in Sudan's Darfur region, once called the world's worst, appears to have eased, with the death toll from disease dropping, a senior World Health Organization (WHO) official said Tuesday.

Egypt admits secret nuclear research

Egypt acknowledged on Tuesday it failed to tell the U.N. nuclear watchdog about some of its research, after Western diplomats said the agency was investigating an Egyptian laboratory designed to process plutonium.

Plutonium can be used in nuclear weapons. The official Middle East News Agency (MENA), quoting an unnamed Egyptian official, repeated the government's position that its nuclear program was peaceful.

It said Egypt was "completely committed to its agreements" with the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

It added: "The difference in interpreting some aspects of the safeguards agreement... led to a failure to inform the IAEA about some experiments and research activities which were undertaken and which are allowed to be undertaken."

"This issue is being dealt with to settle it through complete cooperation and transparency between Egypt and the IAEA, and Egypt is showing good intentions in dealing with the agency in this regard," MENA said.

Western diplomats said on Friday that inspectors from the IAEA were in Egypt to inspect a laboratory designed to reprocess plutonium.

They said the IAEA sent the inspectors after learning

was needed, there were indications the numbers dying from hunger and infectious diseases among the western Sudan region's more than 1.5 million refugees had fallen significantly, WHO crisis Chief David Nabarro said.

"The kinds of information that I am receiving on water supply,

sanitation, food access and health services... would mean that the death rates are likely to have reduced," he told journalists.

"We have almost certainly gone down to within the threshold limit for a humanitarian crisis," Nabarro added.

The U.N. health agency had not been able to carry out a fresh study of mortality rates within the various refugee camps inside Darfur, largely because the continuing insecurity made it difficult for its international staffers to move about, the official said.

But it had probably dropped to below half the 10,000 a month that the WHO estimated in October when it calculated that some 70,000 had succumbed to

disease and malnutrition since March.

"We have not had the kind of dysentery, diarrhoea and hepatitis outbreaks during October, November and December that we had in July, August and September," Nabarro said.

Khartoum admits arming some militias to fight the rebels, but denies any links to the Janjaweed militias, who are accused of widespread abuses including mass killings and rapes.

Information Minister C William Allen said the curfew would remain in force "until otherwise ordered".

Burundi set for constitutional referendum

Burundi's National Independent Electoral Commission announced a new date on Tuesday for the constitutional referendum, a key step to in the country's transition to democracy.

The referendum is to be held on 28 February, Commission Chairman Paul Ngarambe announced in Bujumbura in separate meetings with civic society and political parties.

The plebiscite was initially set for October 2004, and then postponed to 26 November and then again to 22 December. In December, it was delayed yet again, but with no new date being set until now.

Ngarambe said one of the reasons the commission had to delay the ballot was that voter lists had not been completed. In the last two weeks the lists were put on public display, although many voters voiced complaints. Some names were omitted from the lists. Others on lists in one province appeared on the lists in another province. Ngarambe said the commission would seek to make all necessary corrections.

A new date for the general elections could still not be fixed, Ngarambe said. Local elections had been set for February followed by legislative elections in March and presidential polls in April.

"Legal and financial problems still need to be settled," he said.

The commission has received electoral equipment from South Africa, but it has only secured US \$12 million of the \$22 million it needs to hold all the polls, Ngarambe said.

"That is just enough to organise the referendum," he added.

The current transitional government needs to agree on an electoral code and a communal law before elections can proceed.

Members of some political parties are openly questioning the commission's independence from the government and say they remain skeptical that the referendum will take place on 28 February. They suspect members of the government may be seeking to delay the referendum so they can make amendments to the constitution, including one that would allow the current head of state, Domitien Ndayizeye, to run for president.

UN reinforces troops in Liberia

Extra United Nations peacekeepers have been sent to southeastern Liberia following violent protests over alleged ritual killings, the UN said.

The extra troops will enforce an overnight curfew in Maryland county.

Over the weekend, a police station was attacked by people who said that the police had released suspected killers.

The authorities would not confirm any ritual killings but the area is notorious for using human genital organs to make magic charms.

More than 14,000 UN troops are in Liberia, to help the country recover from 14 years of civil war.

The Commander of the UN military force, Nigerian General Joseph Owonibi told the BBC that dozens of Ethiopian troops stationed in nearby Grand Gedeh county have been deployed in Maryland county to beef up the strength of Senegalese forces there.

He said the weekend violence had "attracted the involvement of former combatants" roaming the region, and said police were investigating the claims of ritual killings.

Gen Owonibi said some of the people who were alleged to have been killed for ritual purposes had later reappeared.

Information Minister C William Allen said the curfew would remain in force "until otherwise ordered".

In the past, a large number of senior officials from Maryland were executed by hanging after they were tried and found guilty of complicity in ritual murders.

Human parts such as genital organs are believed to be used to obtain supernatural powers, especially by aspiring politicians.

Victims are often found in the run-up to elections, such as the general elections due in October to choose a replacement for the current power-sharing government.



President Mubarak of Egypt



UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan

Trust International Palestinians, Israelis resume talks

Israeli and Palestinian officials have met in Jerusalem amid what appear to be rapidly improving relations between the two sides.

Top Israeli adviser Dov Weisglass held talks with Palestinian negotiators minister Saeb Erekat, officials said.

The meeting followed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's decision to lift a freeze on diplomatic contacts.

Yesterday's talks are seen as paving the way for a summit between Mr. Sharon and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Ties were frozen after six Israelis were killed in an attack in the Gaza Strip earlier this month.

According to Palestinian officials, an agreement has been reached to deploy Palestinian security forces in the southern Gaza Strip within 24 hours in an effort to reduce attacks on Israel.

Palestinian security forces in Gaza yesterday prevented resistance fighters from firing mortar shells into

southern Israel. A Palestinian security source said security men confiscated the weapons following a heated argument with the fighters late on Tuesday.

"Members of the security forces in northern Gaza stopped a militant group from firing three mortar shells into Israel," he said.

Israel is also reported to have agreed to stop the targeted killing of Palestinian militants.

In another incident yesterday, a three-year-old girl died in the Gaza Strip after Israeli troops opened fire, Palestinian doctors said.

The Israeli army was unable to confirm the report, but said troops had opened fire in retaliation for a rocket attack on southern Israel by militants.

The rockets - the first to be fired into Israel for eight days - caused no casualties. There has been a marked

drop in violence since Palestinian security forces were deployed along the Gaza-Israel border last week.

The BBC's correspondent in Jerusalem said the meeting between Mr. Weisglass and Mr. Erekat was the latest stage in the rapidly improving relations between Israel and the Palestinians.

The two men are thought to have discussed a possible summit between Mr. Sharon and Mr. Abbas, but no date has been announced for such a meeting.

At the same time, Israel

has said it will not carry out targeted killings of Palestinian militants in areas where Palestinian police can assure security, according to reports.

Israeli security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, told news agencies that the Palestinians had been informed of the change in policy.

On Tuesday, Hamas issued a statement saying it was considering a temporary truce.

But Hamas leader Kha-led Meshal told the Associated

Press news agency the group would respond to any new attacks by Israel. Palestinian leader

Mahmoud Abbas told his security chiefs yesterday to get ready for assuming control of four West Bank cities within 10 days, participants said.

Two commanders initially said that Israel had agreed to the handover. However, one of the participants later said Abbas told them to expect an Israeli withdrawal from these cities within 10

days. The cities are Ramallah, Tulkarem, Qalqilya and Jericho.

A senior Israeli official said the handover has not yet been discussed, noting that Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz is abroad. However, Mofaz said in radio interviews over the weekend that Israel was ready to hand over security control in West Bank cities as soon as Palestinian security forces were ready to assume responsibility there.

Flooding kills 29 in Saudi Arabia

Heavy rain and flash floods have killed 29 people in Saudi Arabia's western city of Medina, according to reports.

The storm, which disrupted the last day of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, is believed to have been the worst to hit the desert kingdom in some 20 years.

Regional governor Prince Muqrin bin Abdul Aziz said another 17 people were injured, *al-Madina* newspaper reported.

The governor said the storm had caused enormous damage to roads, electricity and communications networks.

But he said the floods had not affected the thousands of pilgrims who came to Medina after completing the Hajj in Mecca and Mina at the weekend.

According to the Arab News paper, more than 400 buses left Mecca for Medina, taking pilgrims to visit the Prophet Muhammad's mosque and tomb in Islam's second-most sacred city.



Iraq police inspect a suspicious car parked near a school in Baghdad, yesterday. Resistance staged attacks against U.S. forces, schools to be used as polling stations and political party offices, as they pressed a bloody campaign to undermine Iraq's weekend elections.

Fighters strike Iraq election targets

Fighters have attacked the offices of three political parties northeast of Baghdad and released a video apparently showing three seized election workers.

Police in Baghdad, a mixed Shia and Sunni town 65km north of Baghdad, said one policeman was killed and at least eight people wounded when armed men opened fire on the local offices of three parties contesting on Sunday's polls.

In the northern city of Mosul, a video filmed by fighters showed three Iraqi men who had apparently been taken captive. They said they worked for Iraq's electoral commission in the city.

In the video, a masked fighter carrying a pistol read out a statement as another one crouched with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher on his shoulder.

"We are mujahidin in the province of Ninawa. What they call elections have no basis in the Islamic religion and that's why we will hit all election centres," the statement said.

Several groups in Iraq, including fighters loyal to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have

declared war on Sunday's elections, vowing to attack polling stations and to kill those who dare to vote.

The government has announced extraordinary security measures to try to protect the polls, including closing Baghdad airport and land borders over the election period, extending night curfews in cities and banning cars from roads on election day.

In an unverified audio tape, al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian with a \$25 million US bounty on his head, said the election was a plot by Washington and Iraqi Shia allies against Sunni Arabs, who were dominant during Saddam Hussein's rule but now fear being marginalised.

Iraq's Shia strongly support the elections. A list of candidates dominated by Shia and drawn up with the endorsement of Iraq's most revered Shia cleric, Grand Ayat Allah Ali al-Sistani, is expected to win the most votes, cementing the newfound political power of the Shia.

Syria, Russia restore ties

Both Russia and Syria have pledged to restore Soviet-era ties between the countries as well as strike an accord on Damascus' debts to Moscow and future military cooperation.

The agreement on military cooperation between the countries comes despite Israel's apparent success in delaying the sale of Russian weapons to Damascus.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad signed the declaration with his Russian counterpart while on a state visit to Moscow.

In the statement, both Moscow and Damascus agreed to "pursue traditional

cooperation in the military-technical sphere in keeping with their mutual interests and international obligations," the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Earlier Bashar had stated that Syria had the right to acquire weapons to protect itself against Israeli air attack.

"These are defensive weapons, air defence, to prevent aircraft from entering our airspace," Assad said, when asked to comment on the reported contract for portable Igla anti-aircraft missiles over which both Israel and the U.S. had strongly protested against.

Iran promises retaliation if attacked

Iran will retaliate to any attack against the Islamic Republic by Israel or the US, a top Revolutionary Guards commander said.

Brigadier-General Muhammad Ali Jafari told the *Shargh* newspaper on Wednesday that Tehran "will counter any stupid action by Israel and its master with firmness and in an astonishing way".

The commander of the Revolutionary Guards' ground forces said Iran now had the capacity to defeat any invader within months.

"We pushed the Baathist enemy from our country within one and a half years," he said, referring to the opening campaigns of the 1980-88 war with Iraq.

"With the experience and skills from that war and in the case of any invasion, the invaders will be defeated in less than one and a half months," Jafari said.

US officials have in recent days hardened their tone against the Islamic republic, which US President George Bush had earlier lumped into an "axis of evil" with Iraq and North Korea.

Last Monday, Bush said he could not rule out using force if Tehran failed to rein

in its nuclear plans, and US Vice-President Dick Cheney said Iran was "right at the top of the list" of global trouble spots.

Cheney also warned that Israel might launch a pre-emptive strike on its own to shut down Iran's nuclear programme.

But Iranian Intelligence Minister Ali Yunusi responded to both Bush and Cheney's remarks in a broadcast on Iran's Channel two.

"This is a psychological war that they have started in order to influence the talks on the nuclear issue.

"They think that this way they can force us to make the concessions they want. Otherwise, they do not have the ability to carry out their military threat," he told *Aljazeera.net*.

When asked if he believed claims made by US journalist Seymour Hersh that US commandos were operating inside Iran, Yunusi rejected the idea.

"We would love American commandos to enter Iran ... because they are chicks. Our eagles will catch them in no time. The Americans are stupid, but not as stupid as that."

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Britain to free Guantanamo detainees

Four Britons just released from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, will be freed unless new evidence is uncovered against them, because information collected at the U.S. military facility isn't admissible in British courts, the head of London's police force said in an interview published yesterday.

Moazzam Begg, Feroz Abbasi, Martin Mubanga and Richard Belmar were freed by the United States and flown to Britain on Tuesday, where police arrested them under a provision of the Terrorism Act dealing with "involvement in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism," London's Metropolitan Police said.

Their release followed months of sensitive negotiations between Washington and London to address US security concerns.

A lawyer representing Abbasi and Mubanga said anti-terror police hadn't yet questioned the men and urged them not to.

US authorities said they are suspected of having links to al-Qaida or Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime. Britain also announced yesterday it will scrap post-Sept. 11 emergency laws to jail foreigners without trial and replace them with sweeping new powers to put terrorism suspects of any nationality under house arrest.

The announcement also

allows for a complete overhaul of security policy after the country's highest court ruled that draconian emergency powers violate basic rights.

"The threat is real and I believe the steps I am announcing today will make us better able to meet this threat," Home Secretary Charles Clarke told parliament.

He said 11 foreign terrorism suspects held under the old powers would remain jailed until the new measures were in place. Some could be deported to other countries if Britain can negotiate guarantees they would not be killed or tortured.

Under the new powers, the government would be able to forbid terrorism suspects from meeting certain people, impose curfews or electronic

tagging on them or confine them to house arrest.

Unlike the previous measures, which were based on immigration law and applied only to foreigners, the new measures could be used against British nationals.

The government would not have to prove that suspects had committed a crime, and violating the orders would itself be a criminal offence.

Britain declared a state of emergency after the Sept. 11 2001 attacks on the United States and said the threat from al Qaeda justified suspending the right to a fair trial guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.

But the country's highest court ruled last month that the power to jail foreigners

without charge was illegal and ordered parliament to come up with new legislation to replace it.

Seventeen foreigners have been held under the powers, dubbed "Britain's Guantanamo", and 11 are still jailed.

The plans for new powers to restrict the activities of terrorism suspects may have played a role in persuading Washington to send the Guantanamo prisoners home.

Their return resolves a diplomatic headache for Prime Minister Tony Blair ahead of an election expected in May.

But the fact that they have now been arrested on arrival has caused tension with Britain's community of 1.6 million Muslims. Police have two weeks to charge or free the four.

Earthquakes hit Ecuador's Coast

Dozens of earthquakes have hit Ecuador over the past week, sparking alarm in fishing villages and prompting a top geophysicist Tuesday to dismiss the chances of a major tremor or tsunami.

While no damage or injuries were reported in the 80, mainly small, quakes that have been felt in the country's Pacific region, concern has shot through several coastal communities.

After a magnitude-6 quake rattled houses Monday night, television news broadcast scenes of people sleep-

ing in public parks and streets with others fleeing to higher ground.

"We're here out of fear," said Juan Lopez, disheveled and visibly frightened as he stood on a street in Salango, a fishing village of about 3,000 inhabitants, 200 miles southwest of the capital, Quito.

"They say (a tsunami) won't occur, but you can't trust the authorities because only God knows what's going to happen," Lopez told channel 10 television early Tuesday. "Everything is in the Lord's hands."

Hugo Yepce, director of the nation's Geophysics Institute, told radio Centro that the quakes don't signal an impending giant quake or devastating tsunami.

"There is fundamental concern related to tsunamis because of what happened in Asia," Yepce said, referring to the Dec. 26, 9.0 tremor off Indonesia's Sumatra island that spawned the killer waves.

However, Yepce said that he could not rule out that more earthquakes "equal to or stronger than those that have been registered" might still strike.

ODD WORLD

Man robs bank with beer bottle

A man robbed a bank armed with a broken beer bottle, then stole a car and caused at least five accidents Tuesday as he was chased toward Atlanta along Interstate 85, Gwinnett County Police said.

Bobby Tyrone Hill, 45, was arrested without resistance by police from Gwinnett and other agencies and was taken to the Gwinnett County Detention Center. Charges were pending.

Three people were taken to hospitals with non-life threatening injuries from the accidents.

Police said the suspect went into the Bank of America branch in Norcross, demanded money and broke a beer bottle he held in his hand. A teller gave him an undisclosed amount of cash, some of which he dropped on the floor as he went into the parking lot and carjacked a pickup truck from Mary Burton, 52, of Livingston, Texas, police said.

Initial investigation indicated that Hill was under the influence of an unknown substance.

Fire fighters go on suspension over lewd conduct

Four Sacramento, California fire fighters who admitted to having sex while on duty have been suspended pending an investigation, a spokesman for the city's fire department said on Tuesday.

The three men, including a captain, admitted to having sex with a fourth firefighter, a woman, while on duty. Superiors put all four on administrative leave on Monday, marking the second recent sex scandal to hit the sleepy state capital's fire department.

"The four individuals have admitted to having sex in the firehouse," said Captain Niko King, a spokesman for the department. "They even conspired to keep it secret by putting one person on watch so they wouldn't get caught."

The firefighters face disciplinary action ranging from time off without pay to dismissal, said King, noting officials took quick action as rumors of on-duty sex circulated through the department.

The probe follows an investigation after city firefighters attended a local porn-star costume ball last July. The department began that probe, its largest internal investigation ever, after a woman who does not work for the department said she had been sexually assaulted by a firefighter in a department fire truck.



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Business Trust

Finance

Today's flight schedule

Albarka Air	
Lagos - Abuja	07:20
	10:30
	15:15
	13:00
Abuja - Lagos	8:45 a.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 - Abuja	4:00 p.m.
Chanchangi Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:10 p.m.
	4:45 p.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	8:30 a.m.
P/H - Lagos	9:00 a.m.
	4:30 p.m.
Abuja - Kaduna	2:30 p.m.
Kaduna - Abuja	1:30 p.m.
IRS Airlines	
CBQ - Abuja	8:00 a.m.
Abuja - Lagos	9:45 a.m.
Lagos - Kaduna	9:30 a.m.
Kano - Lagos	7:30 p.m.
Lagos - Kano	11:15 a.m.
Kaduna - Lagos	11:00 a.m.
Lagos - Abu/MM	2:30 p.m.
Abuja - MM	1:45 p.m.
MM - Abuja	3:45 p.m.
Abuja - CBQ	5:15 p.m.
Kano - Abuja	1:15 p.m.
Abuja - Kano	2:30 p.m.
Kano - Lagos	3:45 p.m.
Lagos - Kano	6:00 p.m.
EAS Airlines	
Lagos - Abuja	8:15 p.m.
	11:45 a.m.
	5:45 p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	10:15 a.m.
	7:15 p.m.
Lagos - Jos	11:45 a.m.
Jos - Lagos	2:30 p.m.
Dasab Airlines	
Anja - Lagos	8:30 a.m.
Lagos - PHC	10:30 a.m.
PHC - Lagos	12:30 a.m.
Lagos - Kano	2:30 p.m.
Kano - Lagos	4:30 p.m.
Lagos - Abuja	6:30 p.m.
ADC Airline	
Lagos - Abuja	7:15 a.m.
	12:45 p.m.
Abuja - Lagos	8:55 a.m.
Lagos - Calabar	11:15 a.m.
Calabar - Lagos	7:20 a.m.
	9:45 a.m.
Most airlines operate the same flight schedule on week days.	

We can't meet N1 trillion debt payment this year -DMO

The need for creditor nations to forgive Nigeria's debt has once again come to the fore as the Debt Management Office (DMO) has declared that the nation lacks the capacity to meet the \$7,758.50 million (N1.2 trillion) debt service expected of her in 2005.

Also, the nation's debt managers have vehemently denied western media reports that Nigeria has failed to pay an estimated \$30 million on restructured commercial debt.

However, efforts to get some measure of relief may be coming the country's way as the bilateral debt rescheduling agreements, which Nigeria has signed with all the 15 members of

By Ahmed I. Shekarau, Group Business Editor

the Paris Club has given her some form of relief. Acting director general of DMO, Dr. Abraham Nwankwo who spoke with a delegation of Finance Correspondents in his office stated that, "the amount due in 2005 is \$3,241.88 million; expected arrears as at 31/12/2004 is \$4,516.62 million but that expected appropriation for debt service in 2005 is \$1,700.00 million".

The acting DMO boss expressed the hope that the country would soon obtain substantial debt relief from her creditors and cited the collaboration between the DMO and the World Bank, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom and the UNDP to come up with an independent technical study-based report on debt sustainability in favour of debt relief.

As a result of collaboration, the Nigerian government he explained will take advantage of the traditional goodwill extended to the country by Britain to solicit for debt relief giving the fact that Britain will be producing the chairman of the G8 industrialized countries and European Union this year. Nwankwo also denied western media reports that Nigeria defaulted in October 2004 to pay \$30 million due

from commercial debt. He described the reports as unfounded stressing that "no Fiscal Agent has accused the country of any such default".

The arrangement to convert part of the country's commercial debt into par bonds he said was made in 1992 where it was agreed that "should oil prices rise beyond a certain ceiling, the Federal Government would then pay a percentage of the excess to its creditors".

The warrants he said formed part of the London Club debt restructuring arrangement aimed at improving the attractiveness

of the deal to investors in exchange for below-market rates on the restructured bonds.

He said that following the increase in the price of oil beyond that level, Fiscal Agents wrote the government last year, demanding payment but that this must follow due process. So far what the government has done he pointed out is to acknowledge receipt of the demand but no further demand had been made by any fiscal agent for the payment as should be the case.

Nwankwo also added that there has been constant flow of communication between

the agents and DMO thus eliminating any issue of default. He explained that the federal government he said takes the issue of honoring its debt obligations seriously and as such has to be meticulous. In addition, Dr. Nwankwo disclosed that Special Projects Unit has been established at the DMO to attend to the country's unsecured (domestic) debt as well as the cross debts of public enterprises slated for privatisation.

Currently the federal government he said, is owing local contractors about N1.4 trillion.

World Bank calls for Africa aid

World Bank regional vice president, Gobin Nankani said that financial help to Africa has remained flat, despite pledges by donors to increase it.

Aid flow to Africa reached 16 billion euros (\$20.7 billion; £11.1 billion) in 2002, but dropped to 15 billion euros in 2003.

Mr. Nankani said that 2005 is an opportunity to reverse this trend in international aid.

He added that financial assistance should match the progress African countries had made in recent years in terms of governance.

"We have done an analysis in the World Bank

which suggests that an immediate increase of 60 per cent on current levels will be easily absorbed and productively used by the better-performing countries of Africa."

The BBC said Mr. Nankani spoke at the end of a two-day African partnership meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, attended by African government officials and the international donor community.

Getting rid of agricultural subsidies is key. He added that the World Bank welcomed the UK initiative to increase debt relief and give more aid to African countries.

Mr. Nankani also called for a new global trade agreement to enable Africa to benefit from trade.

He pointed out that rich nations spend \$1bn a day in agricultural subsidies.

Tariffs on Africa's processed exports need to fall, he said.

"For example, the tariff on roasted coffee is nine

times the tariff on raw coffee beans. With that kind of bias, it is very difficult to help African trade," added Mr. Nankani.

More than 315 million Africans live on less than \$1 a day.

Finance ministry refers corruption cases to EFCC

From Anis A. Gashim, Reporter (Business)

The recently created anti-corruption unit of the federal ministry finance has handed over cases of corruption to the minister, Dr. Nyeso Okonjo-Iweala, who hinted that the ministry may refer them to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for further investigation.

The minister of finance, who disclosed this on Monday said that in November last year, the unit received 33 petitions from members of the public.

Out of this figure, 23 were e-mails while the 10 others were phone calls made to inform the anti-corruption unit of the ministry on cases of corruption.

Dr. Okonjo-Iweala however declined to reveal the nature of the cases and those involved stressing that the unit wants to be "very scrupulous and meticulous" in handling the cases.

Of the 33 cases reported, two were said to have come from the ministry of finance while others came from other agencies and parastatals outside the ministry.

The minister noted that in a month or two, about two of the cases would have been completely investigated by the EFCC.

While responding to questions from pressmen about the government's ability to meet up with the payment of salaries and pensions in recent times, the minister said the federal government inherited a lot of problems which led to shortfalls in expenditures.

According to her, the government, in an attempt to understand the extent of the problem so as to be able to settle the backlog, has once again discovered the incidence of ghost workers in the civil service.



Nyeso Okonjo-Iweala, finance minister

Minister urges stakeholders to explore export opportunities

Stakeholders in Kano have been advised to take advantage of the investment/export friendly policies of government in order to build a viable manufacturing base capable of producing abundant quality products that would be competitive in the international market.

The minister of commerce, Ambassador A.D. Idris Waziri made the call at the national stakeholders consultative seminar organised by Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) in conjunction with Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC), London which opened in Kano with theme: National Export Strategy.

Ambassador Idris Waziri said Nigerian stakeholders had to ensure effective participation in trade negotiations to enhance market opportunities in the multinational trading system as well as regional and bilateral arrangement.

Waziri called on stakeholders to promote regional integration and cooperation through effective utilisation of information technology in electronic commerce.

The minister said the

From Ahmed Abubakar, Correspondent (Kano)

time has come for Nigeria to critically examine the crude ways of exporting its raw agricultural and mineral produce and come up with a credible time-table of phasing out the practice.

He said "the nation is so well endowed with abundant natural resources to the extent that we have no reason whatsoever of being poor," stressing that, "it is rather unfortunate that up to now we are exporting our agricultural and mineral products raw."

He added that, "for every raw commodity exported, be it cocoa, rubber or oil we are not only earning a pittance out of it, but we are also exporting the vitally needed jobs abroad."

Meanwhile, the special guest at the occasion, who is the governor of Kano state, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau who was represented by the commissioner of land and survey, Alhaji Ibrahim Garba called on people to imbibe the culture of export and produce for both domestic and international markets.

Governor Shekarau said since Nigeria cannot live in isolation, Nigerians must produce abundantly to sell

and earn foreign exchange for procurement of other goods and services that we cannot comparatively produce at home.

SMEs dev centres to take off March

Plans for the take off of the six business development centres (BDCs) across the nation to facilitate the growth of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the country have been concluded.

Director general of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Mrs. Modupe Adelaja made this known recently while presenting the overall achievements of the agency to the nation's development partners, donor agencies and other non-governmental organisations in Abuja.

She said, "six BDCs would functionally be ready before March ending. A total of 18 BDCs are targeted by December 2005."

The BDCs are expected to provide model business planning skills, monitoring professional services and serve as legal and taxation advisory to the SMEs.

By Hamid Muhammad, Reporter (Business)

"These centres would also be demonstration model to private sector service producers as well as technical and marketing advisory," said Adelaja.

She said already, SMEDAN has concluded networking with state governments to secure office space for the BDCs, and that feasibility studies for the establishment of six industrial parks are being commissioned.

However, collaboration channels opened with some state governments to establish regional industrial centres (RICs) are on, she said, adding that, interfacing with other institutions for the actualisation of the proposed SME credit guarantee scheme would soon be concluded.

Adelaja explains that the agency has also opened collaborative discussions with Bank of Industry and the African Development Foundation (ADF) on micro and small medium enterprises financing projects.

Business Trust

Maritime

Fire razes Customs

warehouse, burns 148 vehicles

About 148 seized vehicles of various brands detained by the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) at the NCS mechanic workshop, Ikeja, Lagos were over the weekend to totally destroyed by fire.

Briefing newsmen on Monday in Lagos, the Comptroller-General (CG) of Customs, Mr. Jacob Gyang Buba said that the colossal loss being witnessed could have been disposed off through the

JOMALIC resolves MWUN, firm's industrial disputes

The Joint Maritime Labour Industrial Council (JOMALIC) has waded into the industrial disputes between Gulf Manning Services Limited and Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) over the modalities and procedure for the recruitment and placement of Nigerian Seafarers onboard vessels.

In its bid to ensure harmonious industrial peace at the nation's Seaports, JOMALIC held a meeting between parties involved in the disputes at the Boardroom of the corporate headquarters, chaired by the executive chairman, Alhaji Ahmed Tijjani Ramalan.

The executive chairman disclosed that he called for the meeting with the view to apprehending the disputes between the Crewing/Manning Agent and the Union with regards to procedures for recruitment, Crewing/Manning of Nigerian Seafarers.

JOMALIC commenced operation in June 2000, under the appellation of Joint Dock Labour Industrial Council JODLIC established by the repealed Decree 37 of 1999.

The National Assembly repealed Decree 37 of 1999 and transformed it into the Nigerian Maritime Labour Act 2003, which now established the JOMALIC.

He stressed further that they have already had constructive discussions with MWUN, and some of their colleagues. He added that apart from understanding the relevance of JOMALIC in Nigeria, they have also asked the crewing/manning agents to ensure that the seafarers being employed are duly registered.

Responding on behalf of MWUN, Comrade P.O. Ovat expressed appreciation for JOMALIC's concern and quick response to resolve the issues.

Ovat said that the Union will work closely with JOMALIC and the Crewing/Manning Agents to ensure that only Seafarers who are registered with JOMALIC are employed.

normal process of public auction.

A break down of the figure shows that 135 out of the 148 vehicles were actual used by smugglers as means of conveying contraband goods such as Turkeys.

These categories of vehicles were confiscated along with the contraband goods which they carried hence the 135 vehicles were already condemned although in few cases, there are court cases still pending.

The remaining vehicles that were destroyed by fire were Tokunbo cars. All the vehicles were seized by the then Comptroller General's (CG's) special squad a few years ago.

The 148 vehicles include Trailers, buses, trucks and cars of different brands which were intercepted by the NCS anti-smuggling unit under Zone A comprising the South-West.

According to eye witness account, the fire incident started at about 3 pm on Friday (Sallah day) from the back of the NCS Mechanic Workshop which was not adequately fenced.

Business Trust gathered that barely one week ago, Alhaji Musa Daura, Comptroller, F.O.U., Zone A who had noticed that the grass were tall contacted labourers to clear the area.

The fire which started from a refuse dump spread quickly with the aid of the harmattan breeze and consumed the 148 vehicles.

Customs officers on duty said they attempted to put out the fire but they were over-powered before they called for help. However, men of the Fire Brigade who were contacted did not arrive the scene on time.

Hazy bottled water debuts in Ilorin

Hazy water, Ilorin, launched its bottled water to mark its fourth anniversary of entering the Nigerian market.

Speaking at the ceremony, Managing Director of the Company, Hajia Maimunat Oloriegbe who described the event as unique said the company could boast of well designed factories, in line with NAFDAC specifications and best manufacturing practices in Ilorin and Abuja.

The product according to her "is purified, ozo-



L-R: Director general of the National Maritime Authority (NMA), Mr. Ferdinand Agu in a chat with Chief L.E.A. Aimiwun, president and chairman of Council, Nigerian Institute of Management during the Institute's award ceremony held in Lagos.....recently

Publisher cautions FG on ports concession

Considering the importance of the maritime industry in the country as the second largest revenue earner after Petroleum and probably the highest employer of labour, the publisher of *Maritime Forum* Newspaper, Mr. Tunde Ojudun has cautioned the federal government to tread with caution its ports concessioning programme.

Mr. Ojudun in a chat with maritime journalists in Lagos said that over one million Nigerians directly or indirectly earn their living from the Maritime industry.

Besides, he said that the petroleum and the maritime industries are interwoven to the extent that one cannot talk of operations in both down and upstream sub-sectors without the support of the maritime industry.

For these reasons, he advised the federal government to go about the concessioning plan with care so that Nigeria will not lose out in her own game.

The publisher reasoned that concessioning does not mean

Stories from Adelanwa Bamgboye, correspondent (Lagos)

loss of sovereignty over the industry. Rather it is meant to increase efficiency and enhance productivity, which the so called Nigerian factor in a public enterprise does not guarantee.

Mr. Ojudun stressed that it is the duty of the government to protect Nigerian workers in the post port concession period so that they are not treated like dogs in their own land.

He said that it is now more than ever before that the labour needs to be organized and well trained so

that concessionaires do not rip them off or discard them for less qualified non-Nigerians who may be engaged in order to perpetrate capital flight.

He therefore said that the Joint Maritime Labour Industrial Council (JOMALIC) will be much needed to coordinate and regularly train the workforce which will not give the concessionaires the opportunity to source labour outside Nigeria save for areas where experts are required.

Mr. Ojudun also advised the FG to set up an independent committee to

monitor the concessioning programme as being carried out by the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE).

According to him, the duties of the committee will be to monitor processes of concession, listen to complaints from workers and indigenous stakeholders, assess the complaints and advise government accordingly.

The publisher said that his piece of advice, if taken, will ensure that workers are respected and well remunerated in the post-ports concession period, while there will be a level playing ground for all stakeholders.

Cabotage, NEEDS of maritime industry

The director general of the National Maritime Authority (NMA), Mr. Ferdinand Agu has described the Cabotage regime as the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) for the nation's Maritime industry.

Mr. Ferdinand Agu gave his explanation during an interactive session with members of the Nigerian Trawlers Owners Association NITOA, which took place at the NMA headquarters in Lagos last week.

According to him, the ultimate goal of Cabotage is to alleviate poverty, which tallies with the ultimate goal of the NEEDS strategy.

He described Cabotage as part of government's efforts towards institutionalizing reforms and improving on local content in the nation's oil and gas sector of the economy.

Speaking further, he told the indigenous trawler

owners of the readiness of NMA to inter-face with them as stakeholders in order to ensure that the ultimate goals of Cabotage, within the frame work of global best practice is achieved.

President of NITOA, Engr. Sam Azebeokhai commended NMA's management for providing an avenue to dialogue on cabotage implementation as it affects all stakeholders.

He expressed the notion of the Trawler owners that the cabotage policy as formulated seem to give more attention to the oil and gas industry while it makes a sparing mention of the fishing industry.

Azebeokhai emphasised that "we NITOA can be described as factories on the sea" which is not

exactly like transportation per se as focused by cabotage.

While expatiating, Engr. Azebeokhai explained that NITOA has over 300,000 employees with over half a million people directly or indirectly benefiting from the fishing industry.

In his response, NMA Director of cabotage at the action of NITOA members who sought dialogue to ensure that they fit smoothly into the process of the cabotage implementation.

He added that such a gesture will go a long way in cementing Maritime stakeholder-relationship for the betterment of the industry.

By A. O. Olatunji

Business Trust

Investors bid for FG bonds

The long term investment instrument of the federal government, the FGN 25th floating rate bond, last week at the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) became active after almost one year of dormancy.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that investors, contrary to the dormancy that often characterise the bonds and industrial loans/preference sector of the exchange, bought 1.5 million units of the federal government bond worth N1.5 billion.

Investors' interest in the bond sector impacted positively

on the turnover of the market that opened for only three days following the *Ed-El-Kabir* holidays.

Although there were no transactions in the state government bonds, investors in the period under review bought 310 million shares worth N4 billion executed in 11,572 deals compared with 424.6 million shares valued at N3.29 billion in 19,922 deals in the previous week.

As usual, the banking sub-sector remained the toast of investors with 266 million shares valued at N1.5 billion traded in 4,491 deals.

A further analysis of activities in the banking sub-

sector showed that the banking sub-sector was driven in volume by investors' interest in Access Bank Plc and UBA Plc which accounted for 121.7 million shares or 45.7 per cent of the sub-sector's turnover.

The Conglomerates sub-sector followed with 6.3 million shares valued at N90.8 million traded in 1,027 deals.

On the individual equity performance in the week under review, Conoil led the price gainers' chart, chalking up N2.11 to close at N129.51 per share.

African Petroleum (AP) gained N1.85 to close at N68

per share while Cadbury share price appreciated by N1.50 to close at N58.50.

Conversely, Guinness led the price losers' chart, shedding N4 to close at N106

per share.

The share price of Total dipped by N2.50 to close at N179.50 while Oando lost N1 to close at N104 per share.

NAN also reports that the mixed transactions saw the all-share index rose by 0.39

per cent to close at 23,722.89 points compared with the opening index of 23,628.23 points.

The market capitalisation also grew by N7 billion to close at N1.916 trillion compared with N1.909 trillion achieved on January 17.

...Scramble for Cross Rivers bonds

The first Cross River state government bond on Monday became the first state government bond to attract investors' attention in the New Year at the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE).

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that investors interest in the government bonds came on the heels of last week rush for federal government bonds.

At the close of transactions, Monday, an investor bought 4.10 million units of the first Cross River state government bond worth N351.81 million in one deal.

On the equities sector, investors' interest remains high in the banking sub-sector with 28.46 million shares worth N265 million in 1,524 deals.

A further breakdown showed that UBA, savoring the favorable disposition of investors following their

planned merger with Standard Trust Bank (STB), accounted for the bulk of transactions in the banking sub-sector with 8.33 million shares valued at N83.25 million traded in 173 deals.

The Conglomerates sub-sector followed with 2.39 million shares valued at N22.04 million executed in 377 deals while the Breweries sub-sector accounted for N100.89 million stakes in 575 deals.

Okunolu led the price gainers chart, chalking up 73k to close at N15.44 per share.

Guaranty Trust Bank share price also appreciated by 64k to close at N13.52 while First Bank gained 47k to close at N24.47 per share.

On the other hand, Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC) led the price losers, shedding 2.70 to close at N52.30 per share.

Oando lost N2 to close at N102 per share while African

Petroleum (AP) share price dipped by N1 to close at N67.

The cumulative average price of the 207 listed companies fell by 0.13 points.

NAN also reports that the opening losses of most blue chip equities saw the market capitalisation dropped from N1.916 trillion to N1.914 trillion.

The NSE all-share index fell by 33.10 points to close at 23,689.79 points, down from opening index of 23,722.89 points.

Obasanjo charges accountants on ethical standards

President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday charged accountants-general and auditors-general to maintain high ethical standards in the conduct of their professional activities. This he said is necessary to enhance the success of his administration's reform programmes.

Speaking at the first forum of accountants-general and auditors-general in West Africa held at Nicon Hilton Abuja, Obasanjo said if the two professions would succeed in achieving their set objective, other professional bodies from different sectors would emulate them and move the economy forward.

Obasanjo who was represented by his special adviser on budget matters and the director general, Budget office Mr. Augusto Olabode said as a result of the high level corruption in the public sector, people have lost confidence in the accounting profession, stressing that his administration will do its best to get to the zero level in the crusade against corruption in the country.

"One of the greatest challenges facing us is the public expenditure burden" said Obasanjo.

He urged the accountants-general and auditors-general in the region to involve computerization process in their financial reporting and accounting policy in order to drive the benefits of the modern technology and accurate data gathering.

He said federal government has embarked on comprehensive reforms in the economy and promised all the necessary support required in the sector.

Speaking also at the occasion, the minister of finance Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iwela, who was also represented by the chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) Mrs. Ifeko Omoigui said the forum will assist and make the public sector more effective and

By Hamisu Muhammad, Reporter (Business)

efficient in service delivery.

"One critical area which will enhance service delivery is the use of fair and transparent accounting and financial information for the sustenance of development strategies and results in our sub-region".

"Without any doubt, the first step in fighting corruption in its entire ramifications is to improve our accounting and financial recording and reporting system, especially in the public sector".

"Therefore, the process of accounting and financial

reporting in the public sector must be geared toward improving service delivery, enhancing transparency and accountability, fiscal responsibility and performance", said Okonjo-Iwela.

She urged the participants to use the opportunity provided by the forum to rub minds on several areas of their professional interest.

The Chief host of the occasion and Accountant General of the Federation Mr. J.K. Naiyeju said the reform in the accounting profession in the public sector are creating the private environment, reorientation and focus to enable the accountants perform their duties as required.

Re-capitalisation: First Interstate Bank to raise N16bn

In a bid to increase its shareholders' funds to ensure compliance with the minimum capitalisation requirements for Nigerian banks as directed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) the First Interstate Bank Plc Tuesday in Lagos, held a completion board meeting to raise over N16 billion.

The meeting which was held at First Interstate Bank (FIB) Plc Kingsway building complex Lagos agreed on rights issues of 4, 021, 360, 380 ordinary shares of 50 kobo shares for every one ordinary share held as at 30th November 2004 at 70 kobo per share.

It was also agreed that private placement of 13,967,959, 430 ordinary shares of 50 kobo each at N1.00 per share would be issued.

The net proceeds of the right issue estimated at N2,697,543, 164.00 in addition to the net proceeds of the private placement estimated at N13,385,368, 532.00 will result in total estimated proceeds of N16,082,911, 690.00 after deducting the combined cost of the two issues estimated at N700 million.

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

The other which is by way of rights to existing shareholders payable in full on acceptance opens 1st February 2005, and closes 10th March 2005.

Also appointed are the joint issuing houses on Intestate Securities Limited and Megnum Trust Bank Plc.

In a chat with *Daily Trust* after the completion board meeting, Prof. Akin Mabogunje Chairman FIB explained that the money to be raised would be employed in the areas where the bank has strength.

This according to him include housing as well as oil and gas and maybe a few other things where the money would be used effectively.

He disclosed that FIB has been discussing with other bank to see the possibility of a merger before the year runs out but he did not mention the names of the banks.

"Discussions are going on with quite a number of like minded banks because in banking you do worry about the culture of your banks as banks are different culture", Prof. Akin Mabogunje said.



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Business Trust

THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE

REPORT AS AT WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2005

1ST-TIER SECURITIES

COMPANY NAME	NO OF DEALS	QUOTATION(N)	QUANTITY TRADED	VALUE OF SHARES
AGRICULTURE/AGRO-ALLIED				
OKITIPIPA OIL PALM PLC.	2	0.75	2,600	1,995.00
THE OKOMO OIL PALM COMPANY PLC	26	16.90	124,135	2,033,637.97
PRESCO PLC.	3	11.45	21,200	249,087.00
Sector Totals	36		147,995	2,283,719.97
AIRLINES				
AVIATION DEVELOPMENT COMPANY PLC.	1	1.00	20,000	20,000.00
Sector Totals	1		20,000	20,000.00
AUTOMOBILE & TYRE				
DUNLOP NIGERIA PLC.	40	1.98	431,715	854,765.74
R. T. BRISCOE PLC.	16	7.22	11,014	79,521.08
Sector Totals	56		442,729	934,286.82
BANKING				
ACCESS BANK PLC.	6	3.42	98,225	336,109.50
AFRIBANK NIGERIA PLC.	26	6.63	163,213	1,082,102.19
FIRST ATLANTIC BANK PLC	2	3.41	787	2,683.67
CHARTERED BANK PLC.	2	3.00	453,000	1,359,000.00
COOPERATIVE BANK PLC.	31	1.92	16,686,023	31,946,444.77
COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT BANK PLC.	2	0.71	12,500	9,125.00
EIB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	2	2.26	40,000,700	90,401,582.00
FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	556	23.80	1,974,443	47,080,831.05
FSB INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	2	1.35	189,372	259,153.23
GUARANTY TRUST BANK PLC.	375	12.20	3,227,073	40,345,159.27
GULF BANK OF NIGERIA PLC.	4	0.78	530,000	413,400.00
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANT BANK PLC.	13	9.66	1,019,842	9,833,626.23
INLAND BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	15	1.22	924,950	1,071,562.10
INTERCONTINENTAL BANK PLC.	6	7.81	216,950	1,694,378.50
MANUFACTURERS BANK NIGERIA PLC.	1	1.63	1,147,200	1,873,086.00
NAL BANK PLC.	118	2.35	14,024,648	35,132,964.13
OCEANIC BANK PLC.	6	6.30	63,200	948,848.51
OMEGA BANK (NIGERIA) PLC.	7	1.21	23,287,610	28,178,004.10
STANDARD TRUST BANK PLC.	14	7.41	278,568	2,064,188.88
TRANS INTERNATIONAL BANK PLC.	1	1.49	1,000	1,490.00
UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA PLC.	129	10.00	3,060,811	30,608,110.00
UNION BANK NIGERIA PLC.	413	20.00	2,492,669	50,262,560.98
UNIVERSAL TRUST BANK PLC	18	1.45	917,416	9,284,564.83
WEMA BANK PLC.	25	3.93	301,135	1,183,460.50
ZENITH BANK PLC.	39	15.69	375,740.50	5,891,740.50
Sector Totals	1,903		113,791,569	375,668,551.56
BREWERIES				
CHAMPION BREWERIES PLC.	1	4.45	1,200	5,340.00
GUINNESS NIGERIA PLC.	166	100.98	260,566	26,556,933.67
NIGERIAN BREWERIES PLC.	439	37.50	60,520	2,270,546.00
Sector Totals	606		1,471,212	89,633,047.47
BUILDING MATERIALS				
ASHASA CEMENT PLC.	55	23.99	236,231	5,644,954.81
BENUE CEMENT COMPANY PLC.	4	4.31	15,050	67,875.50
CEMENT CO. OF NORTHERN NIG. PLC	26	7.29	704,236	5,077,160.65
WEST AFR. PORTLAND CEMENT CO. PLC.	7	11.40	325,108	3,717,336.90
Sector Totals	112		1,280,625	14,507,527.86
CHEMICAL & PAINTS				
AFRICAN PAINTS (NIGERIA) PLC.	1	0.48	6,000	2,880.00
BERGER PAINTS PLC.	23	5.56	142,245	783,459.40
CAP PLC.	16	6.70	27,079	181,429.30
D. N. MEYER PLC.	2	4.77	59,960	286,630.00
NIGERIA-GERMAN CHEMICALS PLC.	13	3.75	954,987	3,584,848.51
Sector Totals	55		492,251	2,283,283.21
COMPUTER & OFFICE EQUIPMENT				
N.R. (NIGERIA) PLC.	4	1.37	18,100	25,112.00
TRUPPLE GEE AND COMPANY PLC.	1	0.91	20,959	19,072.69
Sector Totals	5		39,059	44,184.69
CONGLOMERATES				
A. G. LEVENTIS NIGERIA PLC.	7	1.05	168,536	179,449.00
A. O. NIGERIA PLC.	6	6.18	200,927.94	1,241,734.94
JOHN HOLT PLC.	6	1.05	20,640	21,690.00
UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC.	165	16.98	951,905	16,218,574.58
P. Z. INDUSTRIES PLC.	91	16.51	60,920	1,013,166.98
S. C. O. NIGERIA PLC.	7	1.19	7,934	9,466.46
U.A.C. NIGERIA PLC.	67	14.17	329,153	4,097,598.01
U.T.C. NIGERIA PLC.	6	1.18	82,120	96,901.60
Sector Totals	366		2,156,055	28,942,674.57
CONSTRUCTION				
COSTAIN (N.A.) PLC.	4	0.95	39,707	37,721.65
JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC.	7	14.44	48,917	55,194.45
Sector Totals	11		88,624	92,916.10
ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY				
NIGERIA WIRE AND CABLE PLC.	6	0.79	17,300	13,697.00
Sector Totals	6		17,300	13,697.00
FOOD/BEVERAGES & TOBACCO				
1UP BOTTLING COMPANY PLC.	39	25.25	71,533	1,796,999.50
CADBURY NIGERIA PLC.	175	56.03	300,699	17,106,317.90
FLOUR MILLS NIGERIA PLC.	16	16.61	166,123	2,746,527.23
NIGERIA BOTTLING COMPANY PLC.	90	52.00	391,514	20,495,259.38
NESTLE FOODS NIGERIA PLC.	101	144.60	174,155	24,915,098.04
NORTHERN NIGERIA FLOUR MILLS PLC.	435	15.03	1,018,000	15,291,000.00
Sector Totals	435		1,026,844	65,780,070.05
HEALTHCARE				
AROSELDEHYDE LABS. PLC.	1	0.62	3,000	4,960.00
EVANS MEDICAL PLC.	38	3.35	818,083	2,805,243.80
MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC.	6	6.00	60,920	369,730.80
NEUMETH INTERNATIONAL PHARM. PLC.	16	3.00	161,882	496,351.00
PHARMA-DEKO PLC.	1	4.70	2,699	12,685.30
GLAXOSMITHKLINE CONSUMER NIG. PLC.	49	8.28	62,428	3,611,033.21
Sector Totals	118		1,473,092	7,331,023.33
INDUSTRIAL/DOMESTIC PRODUCTS				
NIGERIA ENAMELWARE COMPANY PLC.	2	3.40	5,000	17,000.00
FIRST ALUMINIUM NIGERIA PLC.	14	1.01	347,000	351,470.00
B.O.C. GASES PLC.	19	2.96	9,900	29,130.68
NIGERIAN YEAST & ALCOHOLIC MANU. PLC.	1	2.32	25,997	60,313.04
VITAFORM NIGERIA PLC.	17	3.80	168,188	642,914.40
Sector Totals	37		577,093	1,331,237.12
INSURANCE				
BAICO INSURANCE PLC.	4	2.15	174,285	374,712.75
BAICO INSURANCE PLC.	2	0.85	6,697	5,692.45
CORNERSTONE INSURANCE CO. PLC.	3	1.29	400,000	516,000.00
CRUSADER INSURANCE PLC.	1	0.82	2,044	1,774.45
LAW UNION AND ROCK INSURANCE PLC.	5	1.47	150,000	220,500.00
LINKAGE ASSURANCE PLC.	6	1.95	47,000	92,100.00
NIGER INSURANCE CO. PLC.	2	4.03	5,500	23,715.00
PRESTIGE ASSURANCE PLC.	1	1.97	92,285	181,801.45
ROYAL EXCHANGE ASSURANCE PLC.	3	3.33	26,028	87,708.80
UNIC INSURANCE PLC.	4	1.02	109,910	112,058.20
WEST AFRICAN PROV. INS. COY. PLC.	8	2.66	62,428	167,214.40
Sector Totals	50		1,052,599	1,134,927.65
MACHINERY/MARKETING				
BLACKWOOD HODGE (NIGERIA) PLC.	10	0.69	136	93.84
Sector Totals	10		136	93.84
MANAGED FUNDS				
C & I LEASING PLC.	8	1.52	98,000	150,900.00
Sector Totals	8		98,000	150,900.00
PACKAGING				
AVON CROWNCAPS & CONTAINERS PLC.	6	0.93	27,200	25,476.00
NAMPAK NIGERIA PLC.	2	1.22	10,000	12,200.00
BETA GLASS COMPANY PLC.	6	1.31	138,900	182,000.00
POLY PRODUCTS (NIGERIA) PLC.	6	0.65	33,000	21,450.00
WEST AFRICAN GLASS INDUSTRIES PLC.	17	0.54	231,665	125,199.30
Sector Totals	47		439,765	214,290.32
PETROLEUM/MARKETING				
AFRIOL PLC.	1	0.93	101,475	21,176.10
AFRICAN PETROLEUM PLC.	133	66.90	33,388,023.75	33,388,023.75
ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC.	11	2.05	87,012	118,432.08
MOBIL OIL NIGERIA PLC.	78	178.00	14,283.29	13,707,811.29
CONOIL PLC.	78	128.00	83,619	10,787,129.50
TEXACO (NIGERIA) PLC.	36	166.00	82,538	13,571,796.00
TOTAL NIGERIA PLC.	38	154.00	36,989	6,480,007.79
QANDO PLC.	212	98.49	340,257	33,434,969.11
Sector Totals	573		1,159,854	110,964,088.62
PRINTING & PUBLISHING				
LONGMAN NIGERIA PLC.	4	2.22	6,320	14,030.40
Sector Totals	4		6,320	14,030.40
REAL ESTATE				
LACN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PLC.	64	9.00	1,052,783	9,567,925.65
Sector Totals	64		1,052,783	9,567,925.65
TEXTILES				
AFRENT NIGERIA PLC.	4	0.51	10,000	4,967.50
UNITED NIGERIA TEXTILES PLC.	6	2.90	122,300	357,292.00
Sector Totals	10		132,300	362,259.50
Overall Totals	4,479		127,179,271	702,758,436.68

TOP 10 TRADES YESTERDAY

SYMBOL	VOLUME	VALUE	TRADES
IMB	1,932,842.00	1,223,056.25	33
FIRSTBANK	1,974,445.00	47,080,831.05	556
MANNYBANK	2,147,200.00	2,167,986.00	18
UBN	2,492,869.00	50,262,560.98	413
CECN	3,060,811.00	30,608,110.00	129
GUARANTY	3,227,073.00	40,345,159.27	375
NAL	14,024,648.00	35,132,964.13	118
COOPHANK	16,686,023.00	31,946,444.77	31
OWENABANK	23,287,610.00	28,178,004.10	7
EKOBANK	40,000,700.00	90,401,582.00	2

TOP 10 GAINERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAYSCLOSE	CHANGE
MOBIL	177.00	178.00	+1.00
OKOMUOIL	16.20	16.90	+0.70
PZ	13.30	13.88	+0.58
UNIPETROL	98.00	98.49	+0.49
AP	66.45	66.90	+0.45
TEXACO	165.60	166.00	+0.40
CCN	6.97	7.29	+0.32
BERGER	5.30	5.59	+0.29
BCC	4.30	4.51	+0.21
ROYALEX	3.18	3.33	+0.15

TOP 10 LOSERS

SYMBOL	LASTCLOSE	YESTERDAYSCLOSE	CHANGE
GUINNESS	105.00	100.98	-4.02
NOLCHEM	130.00	128.00	-2.00
CADBURY	58.00	56.03	-1.97
LEVIROS	17.64	16.98	-0.66
GUARANTY	12.93	12.29	-0.64
WAPCO	12.00	11.40	-0.60
PRESCO	11.99	11.45	-0.54
UBN	20.40	20.00	-0.40
SKBEECHAM	8.96	8.58	-0.38
CFAO	6.50	6.18	-0.32

NSE closed on a negative note

Activities at the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) yesterday closed negatively as investors await clearer information on the results of the banking sub-sector ongoing consolidation.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) quote some dealers as attributing the huge equity price depreciation to the paucity of information on the banks that signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) towards possible merger.

According to them, the breakdown on the merger discussions between Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB) Plc. and Inland Bank Plc. created fresh concerns for investors who are now highly cautious.

At the end of transactions today, the cumulative average price of 207 companies fell by 0.8 per cent compared with an overall loss of 1.5 per cent recorded on Tuesday.

The market capitalisation on the account of dismal performance of most blue chip stocks dipped by N

Business Trust

Energy

Daukoru dismisses alleged disagreements on JDZ

The Presidential adviser on petroleum and energy, Dr Edmund Daukoru, has dismissed allegations of disagreement in the Nigeria-Sao Tome Joint Development Zone (JDZ) over award of license. Rumours doing the rounds has it that disagreement between Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe and some companies that participated in the last bidding round in the JDZ have stalled the award of license there.

"There cannot be disagreement when a process of dialogue is on-going between the JDA and the oil companies," he said in a chat with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja.

He said a complex process such as the award of oil license needed a meaningful dialogue between parties. Daukoru said that four parameters needed to be considered in the operation of an oil concession.

He listed the factors to include signature bonus, local content, and technical competence and work programme. According to him, huge signature bonus alone would not attract award since the value of the blocks may not be captured. The presidential aide said Exxon-Mobil has already been asked to exercise its 25 per cent pre-emptive rights on any two of the blocks.

"That process is on-going and I am hoping by the end of this week we will be in a position to look at the aggregate scores," he said. He expressed optimism that Exxon-Mobil would respond before the end of this week.

Daukoru said after taking all the four major factors into account final results would be announced any time from now.

NAN recalls that the

JDA had in December placed five blocks on offer, for which 26 companies submitted bids.

Five American companies including Anardako, ECI and ERHC, have experience of offshore deep waters having explored hydrocarbon resources in other parts of the world. ERHC in particular, has entered into partnership with Pioneer Energy, Noble

Energy Resources and Devon energy, all reputable upstream development organisations. (NAN)

Zambia gets \$5m ADB facility for power project

The African Development Bank (ADB) has given Zambia 500,000 US dollars to facilitate the commission of the Zambia-Kenya-Tanzania power inter-connector project.

Zambia's energy and water development minister, George Mpombo said in a statement that additional 300,000 dollars from the South African Development Bank would support assessment study of the venture to link the three countries.

Mpombo said a team of the World Bank experts would be in the country soon to assess the progress of the project.

"This year's programmes on the project include, the selection of an investor, formation of the company

and mobilization of funds to ensure the construction of the powerline," he said.

The venture, a key project under the New

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), would allow Zambia to export its electricity surplus to neighbouring countries.

The first phase of the project is expected to start in 2005 and be operational in 2007, at a cost of 358 million dollars.

The project would involve three components, the construction of a 697 km 330 kv transmission line from Zambia to Tanzania and the reinforcement of Tanzania transmission system to enable it transfer power to Kenya.

The third component is the construction of a 260 km transmission line between Arusha (Tanzania) and Nairobi (Kenya).



The Economist magazine recently held a two-day business roundtable with members of the Economic Team of the Nigerian government in Abuja. Picture shows M. Pascal Dazie, chairman, MTN Nigeria (l) and Malam Mohammed Hayatu-Deen, chairman, Nigeria Economic Summit Group at the forum.

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- Ray Power FM, Lagos on Wednesdays 04:30pm & repeated Saturdays 12:30pm
- Kaduna Radio (KSMC) on Wednesdays 09:00pm & repeated Thursdays 03:30pm
- Bauchi Radio Corporation on Thursdays 06:30pm
- Freedom FM, Kano on Thursdays 09:00pm & repeated following Tuesdays 03:00pm
- Cool FM, Lagos on Saturdays 06:00am
- Ray Power, Kano on Saturdays 07:30am & repeated following Wednesdays 11:00am
- Ray Power, Port Harcourt on Saturdays 11:00am
- Living Spring, Osun State on Saturdays 01:00pm
- Crystal FM, Niger State on Sundays 10:30am
- Voice of Delta, Delta State on Sundays 03:30pm
- Star FM, Lagos on Sundays 04:30pm
- Radio Kwana on Sundays 06:30pm
- Jeremi FM, Warri on Sundays 07:30pm
- BBC World Service (West African Stream) on Sundays 04:32pm & repeated following Saturdays 08:32pm

story story... is part of the Voices Project, a BBC World Service Trust initiative in partnership with DFID Nigeria.

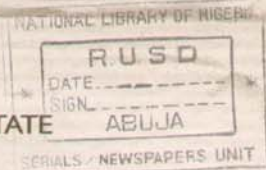
**Our people una do well oo!
Dis new year go better!**

from
THE VOICES TEAM



THE Nigerian STOCK EXCHANGE

NSE BIG JUMP ... BENIN CITY, HERE WE ARE



THE GOVERNMENT OF EDO STATE
AND
THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE
ANNOUNCE

**THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NIGERIAN STOCK EXCHANGE,
BENIN BRANCH,
(Electronic On-Line / Real Time Dealings)**

Special Guest of Honour
His Excellency
ATIKU ABUBAKAR, GCON
Vice President,
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Venue: Edo State Library Complex,
Warri/Sapele Road, Benin City.

Date: Thursday, January 27, 2005

Time: 11:00a.m prompt.

Chief Hosts

CHIEF LUCKY IGBINEDION
Executive Governor
Edo State.

DR. MRS. NDI OKEREKE-ONYIUKE, OON
Director - General /Chief Executive Officer
The Nigerian Stock Exchange

Partnership in Wealth creation.

Inside the frozen world of

While the world rapidly welds into a global community this 21st century with peoples and nations mixing and mingling with each other for better understanding and appreciation of their diverse cultures and attitudes according to – emerging imperatives, small Karkarku community in Katsina State chooses to remain aloof, Lawal Ibrahim reports

The advent of colonialism in the area now known as Nigeria is widely believed to have over the last century eroded significant portions of the Islamic culture, norms and values established by the 19th century Sokoto Caliphate founded in 1804, by Shehu Usmanu Dan Fodio. The adoption of the panel code in 1968 by the regional government of Northern Nigeria, the area which constituted the major part of the defunct caliphate, dealt a decisive blow on the Islamic legal system that formed the necessary foundation for those cultures, norms and values, and, therefore, rendered the entire Muslims Northern Nigeria vulnerable to what is regarded as interpolation by the western mode of civilisation.

However, a community has been discovered in Katsina state which is stiffly resisted those forces of cultural pollution, clinging tightly to the traditional pre-colonial past, most notably in the ritual aspects of worship, social intercourse and submission to law and order.

A predominant Fulani community, Karkarku is situated about 80km back east of Katsina town. It is under Daura Emirate. Its history is traced back to 1810, during the reign of then emir of Daura, Isiyaku Daura-Daura whose son, Abubakar Saddi, first migrated to Karkarku village because of his deep religious pi-

ety in protest to his father's advice to desist from the habit of using his swagger stick to chase away drummers, and or disrupt any public occasions he perceived to be unislamic in town.

The name of "Magjiya" remains the title of the district head of Karkarku village. It is the title of the senior wife of the Emir up to this day.

The Magjiya then was the mother of Abubakar Saddi, who insisted on taking his mother's title after refusing to take a title in Daura, following the demise of his father, Isiyaku Daura Daura.

Administratively in Karkarku community, the chief Imam remains the supreme commander and adjudicator on all disputes of whatever nature and it is binding on every member of the community to abide by his adjudication on risk being by elders, since there is no court of law in the village of over 5000 inhabitants. Every issue is resolved through compromise and consensus before the chief Imam.

The only language of communication within the community must always be the Fulani, just as no member of the community could ever risk being spotted with a stick of cigarette, which the society regard as a strong abomination.

The community does not as well accept a celebration of whatever type let alone drumming, dancing or playing taped music of any kind. In fact not

even the widely accepted Islamic celebrations of maulud, eid-fitr or eid-kabit. The community only gathered in the mosque to say their prayers and depart silently, instead of staging open celebrations, just as they meet to solemnise marriages in the mosque with both the bride and the bride groom meeting.

Right from the beginning the process does not allow them to court without an on-

looker after an express permission of their parents who might have entered into an agreement which is not expected to last for too long.

Generally the people of Karkarku do allow their beautiful daughters to marry outside the community. The reason is not far fetched. According to the reigning district head of Karkarku village, Alhaji Ado Magjiya, who said they hate to marry their daughters and see them walking on the street. If they have to do so, it must be under a thorough investigation because a stranger is not welcome to live among them in order to guard the community against any

cultural pollution.

In Karkarku, no matter how long you stay as a visitor, you cannot see a young lady on the street, neither can you see married women. Only on rare occasion can you spot an under aged girl on errand, and even at that she must wear the hajib.

According to Magajiya Ado, it is the modern system of education that necessitates them to now allow ladies to go out for schooling within the area, but said it's mandatory on them to cover their faces with hijab. There is usually a link door between houses for communication among married women and families. Before

such link doors are opened there must be an established close affinity which barred inter-marriages between the neighbouring families. It is the tradition of the community to announce waiver of condolence to married women in order to avoid breaching purdah.

The community's respect for women in purdah is so profound that no one is allowed to ride a horse in the town to avoid sighting their women or girls in the households. The only excuse for women to be seen outside is serious ailment, which is treated in a nearby health centre they have communally built and



Islamiyya school session.



Karkarku Central Mosque now modernised through communal effort with the assistance of Kano-based businessmen and native of the area, Alhaji Sani Babari.



Main transformer built organised by the community.

FEATURE

Thursday, January 27, 2005

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of Karkarku

ened equipped in the place of a view- ing centre built by the local government.

Politicians on electioneer- ing campaigns are usually ad- vised to drop any woman in their entourage at the out- skirts. Such campaigns are usually held in their only cen- tral mosque premises serving as the assembly square for any kind of meeting, rally or gath- ering in the village.

Karkarku community has distinguished itself in Katsina state in terms of community development projects, 75-80% of all the infrastructures, rang- ing from the pioneer primary school (Magajiya primary school) to now non-madric pri- mary school, blocks of Islamiyya School, electricity and water supply projects were initiated and executed through communal efforts.

Similarly its central mosque has undergone three different re-designing and renovation through the same efforts apart from a two and half kilometre rural feeder road tarred and constructed solely by the community.

According to Manzo K. Ibrahim, a pioneer headmaster of the two primary school in Karkarku and now a principal in government day secondary school Sandamu, the community executes such projects through Karkarku Development Association which registers all the able bodied adults for the purpose as every salary earner is to contribute his one month salary to be paid within a prescribed time duration, while other people such as farmers and traders are levied variously whenever there is a project to be executed.

Spasmodically, local government renders a token as-

sistance but usually after the projects have reached 70-80% completion stage in terms of resource accumulation and practical execution. The headmaster said, unless the project requires technical or any other professional advice every able-bodied man in the village is pleased to offer his energy for its execution.

The community, according to the village head, harbours immense distrust in government and its activities. According to him, interaction with government involves a lot of writtings and most times unfulfilled promises that contravene their tradition. He said government found it difficult to sell its programme like immunisation, just as there was a fierce battle before they could accept western education in the first place. In fact Magajiya did not hesitate to say "frankly speaking we do not pay taxes because we do not operate any commercial activity like trading in the area."

Former Chairman of Sandamu local government, Yaro Mamman, also of Fulani extraction, acknowledged their deep Islamic background and attributed their community epoch making to a general orientation of Fulani communi- ties. Admitting their uniqueness, he, however, dismissed as baseless the community's resistance in terms of government policy implementation and enforcement by the local government.

Ahaji Lawal Garba, a member representing the entire constituency in the national assembly, admits, "More than any other place in this constituency, they are the people who have cultivated and dem- onstrated a spirit of self help.

Very hardworking and forward looking to changes that will better the lot of their people. They are united in their approach to achievement of common purpose, for this they are able to achieve a lot for themselves."

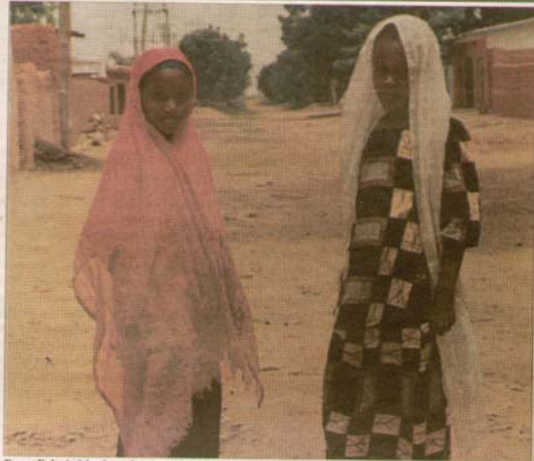
They are for long known to have excelled in Qur'anic education, producing a large number of area courts judges, including the first grand Khadi of Katsina state, late Muhammed Usman, a renowned business magnate, the Sa'in Daura Alhaji Ahmadu Karkarku, and present chairman of Commercial Tropical bank.

Although a larger number of Karkarku indigenes have acquired western education up to the tertiary level, and worked in various public institutions, which exposes them to other communities, people and diverse attitudes. However, the Fulani tradition and culture, once in Karkarku vil- lage must be observed and maintained by all.

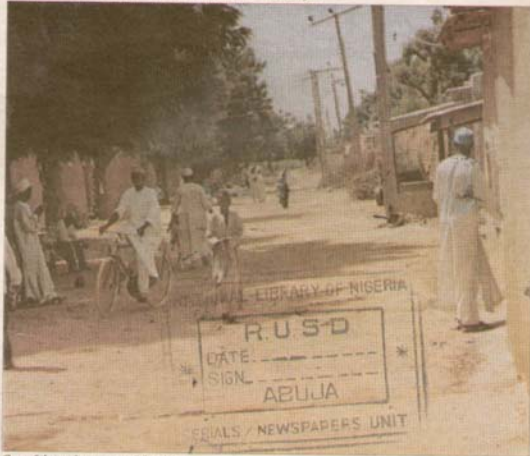
Among the people who ruled the area over the years are Magajiya Abubakar Suddi who reigned for only 10 years, Magajiya Liman Hella, 40 years, Magajiya Abba, 35 years, Magajiya Shubado (I) 24 years and Magajiya Baban Taro who reigns for only two years.

Others are Magajiya Gide, who reigned for 6 years, Magajiya Kato, 2 years, Magajiya Amady, 14 years and Magajiya Shubado (II) who reigned for 4 years.

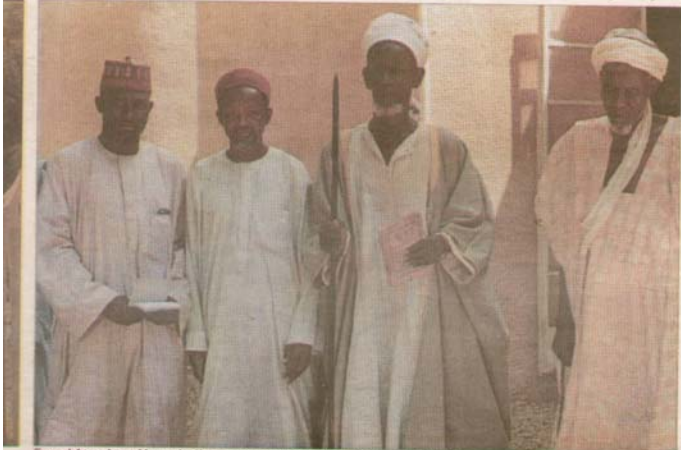
The highest reigning Magajiya is the father of the reigning Magajiya, Magajiya Isah, who reigned for 56 years before his son took over eleven years ago to date.



Young Fulani girls along the street wearing their traditional hijab



One of the major streets of the village



From right, assistant Liman, the Usman, a pioneer headmaster and Media Trust reporter.



A central town drainage built through communal effort

Science & Education

A/Ibom gets digital centre

Science and Technology Minister, Prof. Turner Isoun, has commissioned the Akwa Ibom Digital Opportunities Centre (VADOC), by noting the government's broad

range of investments in science and technology.

He said other science projects similarly commissioned were the research and development laboratory, pilot plant for grease manufac-

ture and an indigenous automatic voltage regulator.

At the commissioning ceremony, Gov. Victor Attah said his government had already spent enormous resources on science and tech-

nology development.

Government commitment to the progress of science and technology was reflected in the establishment of a science and technology park and the University of Science and Technology, he said.

Attah announced that his government would this year send 200 graduates to Canada for a two-year IT programme. VADOC would be the veritable IT manpower prerequisite for the progress of the digital revolution in Akwa Ibom in particular and Nigeria in general, he stressed.

Attah congratulated the minister "on the successful launch of an earth observation micro-satellite in 2003, and the multi-sectorial economic application of ensuing satellite data".



Science and Technology Minister, Professor Turner Isoun

Uwais justifies ban on part-time law studies

The Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Mohammed Uwais, says the ban on part-time law programme is aimed at maintaining standards in the production of lawyers in the country.

Uwais made the clarification in Abuja on Tuesday when he received a delegation of the London-based Law Institute (TLI) led by Dr Tunde Ogogewo. TLI is a higher education project pioneered by a group of prominent African professionals in UK.

The institute is concerned with the poor state of education on the continent and plans to establish a branch in Abuja for the training of lawyers.

Uwais said that "part time law studies takes time and we felt that it was not good enough for the country as students spend more years trying to get a degree". He said that he was glad to hear that the institute would take off this year.

The chief justice, who is a member of the advisory board, expressed the hope that the institute's decision to hold discussions with government organisations involved in legal training would facilitate its effective take off.

"I don't expect any problem, but if there is, I am prepared to chip in a word or two on behalf of the institute," he said.

Earlier, a member of the advisory board of the institute, Prof. U.U. Uche, who is also chairman, Heritage Oil and Gas (Nig) Ltd, had said that he found the project which was mooted two years ago, captivating.

Uche, who helped to establish the Kenya law school,

when he was a lecturer at the University of London also described TLI project as timely.

"For a country like ours looking for ways to brighten dark sectors, the law institute would go a long way in achieving the objective," he said.

Uche also said that the successful take off of the institute would demonstrate to the world that the country's bright students abroad had decided to impart the knowledge they acquired to their fellow citizens back home.

Also speaking, Mr Abubakar Mohammed (SAN) who is co-ordinating the institute's programme in Nigeria, had said that the quality of legal education in the country was "quite disturbing".

"Therefore, all efforts to

raise standards should be encouraged but we need a lot of support to get over the hurdles," he said.

According to a document made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the mission of the institute is to transform legal education in Nigeria.

"We are committed to the development of practitioners, whose grounding in and mastery of law equips them to contribute meaningfully to the profession and transformation of society," he said.

Countdown to global catastrophe

By Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor, The Independent

A fresh international report on climate change sweeping across the globe have severely earned that the condition may reach a point of no return in the next 10 years, leading to droughts,

agricultural failures and water shortage.

The countdown to climate-change catastrophe is spelt out by a task force of senior politicians, business leaders and academics from around the world - and it is remarkably brief. In as little as 10 years, or even less, their report indicates, the point of no return with global warming may have been reached.

The report, Meeting The Climate Challenge, is aimed at policymakers in every country, from national leaders down. It has been timed to coincide with Tony Blair's promised efforts to advance climate change policy in 2005 as chairman of both the G8 group of rich countries and the European Union.

And it breaks new ground by putting a figure - for the first time in such a high-level document - on the danger point of global warming, that is, the temperature rise beyond which the world would be irretrievably committed to disastrous changes. These could include widespread agricultural failure, water shortages and major droughts, increased disease, sea-level rise and the death of forests - with the added possibility of abrupt catastrophic events such as "runaway" global warming, the melting of the Greenland ice sheet, or the switching-off of the Gulf Stream.

The report says this point will be two degrees centigrade above the average world temperature prevailing in 1750 before the industrial revolution, when human activities - mainly the production of waste gases such as carbon

dioxide (CO₂), which retain the sun's heat in the atmosphere - first started to affect the climate. But it points out that global average temperature has already risen by 0.8 degrees since then, with more rises already in the pipeline - so the world has little more than a single degree of temperature latitude before the crucial point is reached.

More ominously still, it assesses the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere after which the two-degree rise will become inevitable, and says it will be 400 parts per million by volume (ppm) of CO₂.

The current level is 379ppm, and rising by more than 2ppm annually - so it is likely that the vital 400ppm threshold will be crossed in just 10 years' time, or even less (although the two-degree temperature rise might take longer to come into effect).

"There is an ecological timebomb ticking away," said Stephen Byers, the former transport secretary, who co-chaired the task force that produced the report with the US Republican senator Olympia Snowe. It was assembled by the Institute for Public Policy Research in the UK, the Centre for American Progress in the US, and The Australia Institute. The group's chief scientific adviser is Dr Rakendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The report urges all the G8 countries to agree to generate a quarter of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025, and to double their research spending on low-carbon energy technologies by 2010. It also calls on the G8 to form a climate group with leading developing na-

tions such as India and China, which have big and growing CO₂ emissions.

"What this underscores is that it's what we invest in now and in the next 20 years that will deliver a stable climate, not what we do in the middle of the century or later," said Tom Burke, a former government adviser on green issues who now advises business.

The report starkly spells out the likely consequences of exceeding the threshold. "Beyond the 2 degrees C level, the risks to human societies and ecosystems grow significantly," it says.

"It is likely, for example, that average-temperature increases larger than this will entail substantial agricultural losses, greatly increased numbers of people at risk of water shortages, and widespread adverse health impacts. [They] could also impair the world's coral reefs and cause irreversible damage to important terrestrial ecosystems, including the Amazon rainforest."

It goes on: "Above the 2 degrees level, the risks of abrupt, accelerated, or runaway climate change also increase. The possibilities include reaching climatic tipping points leading, for example, to the loss of the West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets (which, between them, could raise sea level more than 10 metres over the space of a few centuries), the shutdown of the thermohaline ocean circulation (and, with it, the Gulf Stream), and the transformation of the planet's forests and soils from a net sink of carbon to a net source of carbon."

Called from Science Tech Daily Review.

Indefinite strike paralyses Lagos Poly

Activities at the Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH) have been paralysed following an indefinite strike embarked upon by the staffers of the institution.

The strike, which began on Monday, was called by academic and non-academic staff unions to protest the school authority's failure to put in place tight security within and around the school campuses. They are also kicking against management's refusal to pay the approved new salary structure.

Consequently, the 2004/2005 first semester examination of the school slated to start on Monday had been put on hold. The strike came four days ahead of the institution's 13th convocation ceremony scheduled for its

Ikorodu permanent campus.

According to Mr. Kofo Olayinka, Chairman, ASUP, LASPOTECH chapter, the unions were protesting non-implementation of the revised Harmonised Tertiary Institutions Salary Structure (HATISS) "which other schools have been enjoying since October 2003."

Olayinka said the workers were also protesting the refusal of management to implement a comprehensive security arrangement jointly agreed upon to stem "daily attack of staff and students by hoodlums who unleashed terror with guns, axes, cutlasses and other dangerous weapons".

A lecturer at the institution was attacked last April and inflicted with machete cuts by some unidentified hoodlums in one of the campuses.

Head teachers want pension board

The conference of primary school head teachers, Ekiti State chapter, has called on the state government to set up a primary school teachers' pension board in the state. In an address, presented to the state governor, Mr Ayo Fayose, at a meeting on Tuesday, the Chairman of conference, Mr Eddy Olayisade, said retired primary school teachers were not treated well at the Local Government Pension Board.

Olayisade noted that although the state government had been paying the pensions of retired teachers promptly, "he should look into the issue of gratuity, as many have died out of frustration and other unavoidable circumstances".

He noted a remarkable improvement in the welfare of public servants in the state and called for a review of housing loan, car loans and the enhancement of teachers' welfare.

The chairman of the head teachers called on the state government to pay the gratuity of primary school teachers, who retired from the state service between 1994 and now.

He appealed to the state government to review the running cost given to public schools in the state, noting that the last administration was giving out running cost on the basis of N200 per pupil, which was later increased to N500 before the expiration of its tenure.



Citizens' Forum For Constitutional Reform (C.F.C.R.)

SECRETARIAT: 2, OLABODE CLOSE, ILUPEJU ESTATE, LAGOS. P. O. BOX 15700, IKEJA, LAGOS
Tel/Fax: +234-1-4934420, 8043221, 4930289. e-mail: cfr@cdnig.org

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ABUJA
NEWSPAPERS UNIT

"National Political Reform Conference: A Dangerous Road to Self-Succession?"

by the Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR)

The Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR) is hereby addressing the recent announcement by President Olusegun Obasanjo, and subsequently by some Governors, coming out of a National Council of State Meeting, to the effect that the country will soon hold a National Political Conference. The position of the CFCR is that the proposed national dialogue, narrowly focused on political reform issues and largely dictated by the executive, is not only a diversion from fundamental national issues, but also appears to be a grand design by the executive to succeed itself and subvert the democratic yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians.

It is the considered view of CFCR that what the President has proposed is essentially flawed considering the following:

1. The proposed Conference faces the problems of legitimacy and legality because it is largely a product of the initiative of the President and Governors using the platform of the Council of States, an advisory body, rather than emanating from the legislature following the normal legislative process of passing a bill.
2. The timetable of the National Conference is unrealistic and politically dangerous, as it gives no space for pre-conference dialogue and other feedback activities that would enhance deliberations and participation.
3. It would appear that from the very beginning the outcome of the proposed conference is pre-determined as restrictions already imposed on issues of national unity and federalism would mean that Nigerians cannot openly discuss these two fundamental challenges of the polity.
4. Finally, there is no provision in the announcement on the National Conference for a referendum at the end of the process, which gives the impression that the President could use his enormous influence to pressure the National Assembly into incorporating induced resolutions into the Constitution.

Although it is commendable that a decision has been taken about convening a Conference, considering the plethora of agitation and popular clamour for it, including token representations offered to civil society groups, the conception and philosophy are flawed and should therefore be rejected by Nigerians and all those who genuinely believe in a national dialogue as a solution to Nigeria's festering political and social crises. As it is presently conceived, the Conference reflects the dominant interests of the executive branch of government. For instance, the vast majority of participants are going to be nominated or appointed by the President and Governors. It is obvious that the six representatives from each state are going to be determined by the Governors, while the President will nominate 50 persons. That the Conference will be subject to the control of the President is further demonstrated by his announced powers, which include possible extension of the duration of the Conference beyond the three-month duration. Worse still, in the deliberations, issues of national unity and federalism are "no go areas" and, therefore, cannot be debated at the conference.

The speed with which the Executives - the President and Governors, who are late converts to the idea of a National Conference are now moving suggests that the primary objective of the President and Governors is to sidetrack the fundamental issues of governance in this country and manipulate the Conference to debate such issues as terms of office and the structure of government through which they can achieve the long suspected ambition of perpetuating themselves in power.

CFCR considers a National Conference as an occasion for the Nigerian People to collectively take decisions on critical issues affecting the polity. We therefore propose the way forward on the National Conference as follows:

1. What the Nigerian people want and have consistently demanded is a genuine National Conference that will discuss all aspects of the Nigerian polity as opposed to a narrowly defined National Political Reform Conference.
2. The timetable needs to be reviewed to provide for a pre-Conference mapping exercise, which would enable organisations and groups to hold an internal dialogue. This would ensure that they: (i) Prioritise the thematic issues to be addressed at the National Conference, (ii) Discuss the identified issues and take "bargaining positions" which will be presented as group positions, and (iii) Elect their representatives to the National Conference. This kind of internal dialogue would enable each group to prepare a negotiating platform, and create an atmosphere at the start of the conference that would make it clear that the only road to success and progress is through dialogue and negotiations.
3. In order to enhance the legitimacy of the National Conference, it should be convened through a bill that is passed into law by the National Assembly. The National Conference Act should provide for the establishment of a Constitutional Review Commission, the membership of which should include representatives of the following: the Government, Civil Society Organisations, Labour/Trade Unions, the Organised Private Sector, Professional Associations, Students Groups, Ethnic Nationalities, Women's Groups, Youth Groups, Groups of Persons with Disabilities, Religious Leaders, Traditional Rulers, the Military and Paramilitary Establishments.
4. Furthermore, the Act should allow the Government to appoint only its own representatives to the Commission, and its members should appoint the Principal Officers of the body. While working on the modalities for the convocation of the National Conference, the Commission shall also collate the views of the people of Nigeria on the issues that would be discussed at the Conference to guarantee inclusiveness and participation.
5. In addition, the report of the Commission will, thereafter, be debated at the National Conference of elected representatives and representatives of special interest groups, and the proceedings will lead to the production of a draft Constitution. The draft constitution will then be subjected to a referendum. For this reason, the proposed Bill ought to provide that once the referendum is successful, the National Assembly is duty-bound to pass it into law.

It is for these reasons and the imperative of moving the democratic project forward through the convocation of a genuine national conference that the CFCR calls on all Nigerians and lovers of democracy to reject this manipulative strategy. As presently conceived, the only possible outcome is that the President and Governors will achieve their narrow political ambition and calculation to remain in power beyond 2007 regardless of the implication of this for democracy, peaceful coexistence and development of Nigeria.

DR JIBRIN IBRAHIM - *Convener*

CHIEF PINI JASON - *Member*

DR SAM EGWU - *Deputy Convener*

JOHN IKUBAJE - *Secretary*



FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY Agriculture & Rural Development

MFCT Secretariat, Kapiyal Road, Area 11, P. M. B. 24, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all allottees/owners of the underlisted abandoned shops at the FCT Fish Market, Kado that they are requested to show up at their various sites within two weeks from the date of this publication to complete their shops. Failure to show up within this period will result to automatic revocation of such allocations.

They are further informed that once work has started, they are expected to complete and commence business by the end of February, otherwise, such allocations stand revoked at the expiration of such period.

The lists of the affected shops are as follows:

List of Abandoned sites at FCT Fish Market Kado

1. LS 127	31. WH 12A	61. LS 208
2. LS 128	32. WH 126	62. LS 209
3. LS 131	33. LS126	63. LS 210
4. LS 132	34. LS 114	64. LS 193
5. LS 133	35. LS 17	65. LS 197
6. LS 134	36. LS 120	66. LS 244
7. LS 135	37. LS 123	67. LS 48
8. LS 145	38. LS 124	68. LS 44
9. LS 146	39. Restaurant 2	69. LS 43
10. WH/CR 25	40. LS 102	70. LS 42
11. LS 107	41. LS 100	71. LS 41
12. LS 111	42. LS 97	72. LS 196
13. LS 112	43. LS 106	73. LS 184
14. CR 18/19	44. LS 88	74. LS 187
15. LS 162	45. LS 91	75. LS 230
16. LS 163	46. LS 81	76. LS191
17. LS 164	47. LS 80	77. LS 195
18. LS 165	48. LS 79	78. LS 194
19. LS 160	49. LS 72	79. LS 175
20. LS 158	50. LS 230	80. LS 199
21. LS 155	51. LS191	81. LS 188
22. CR 15	52. LS 195	82. LS 171
23. WH 11	53. LS 194	83. LS 202
24. WH 9	54. LS 175	84. LS 204
25. WH 8	55. LS 199	85. LS 205
26. WH 7	56. LS 188	86. LS 208
27. WH 6	57. LS 171	87. LS 209
28. WH 4	58. LS 202	88. LS 210
29. WH 3	59. LS 204	89. LS 192
30. WH 1	60. LS 205	90. LS 197
		91. LS 244

MOHAMMED SALASI IDRIS

T A to the Executive Secretary

For: the Executive Secretary, ARD



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Plot 1261 Adoola Hopewell Street,
Victoria Island,
F.A.R. 12023, Lagos, Nigeria.
Tel: 01-4707432; 01-4618287;
01-460783/01-412354;
01-410778
Tel/Fax: 01-4618287
E-mail: nbajyo@nba.org
Website: www.nigerianbar.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

All Legal Practitioners in Nigeria enrolled as Solicitors and Advocates of the Supreme Court of Nigeria are hereby notified as follows:

I. In accordance with the Legal Notice dated 19th March, 2002, issued under the hand of the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, and duly published in the Official Gazette of the Federal Government of Nigeria, Practising Fees payable annually by Legal Practitioners (whether or not in Private Legal Practice and inclusive of all Legal Practitioners working in Banks, Insurance Companies, Private and Public Institutions) are as follows:

	N
(a) Senior Advocates of Nigeria and Honourable Benchers	20,000.00
(b) Legal Practitioners of 15 years or more standing post-call	10,000.00
(c) Legal Practitioners of 10 years or more standing, but less than 15 years post-call	7,500.00
(d) Legal Practitioners of 5 years or more standing but less than 10 years post-call	4,000.00
(e) Legal Practitioners of less than 5 years standing post-call	2,000.00

II. All Legal Practitioners in Nigeria, irrespective of where they work, required paying their Practising Fees at either the Supreme Court of Nigeria in Abuja or the Court of Appeal, Igbosere Road, Lagos, on or before **Thursday, 31st March, 2005**. The names of those who have paid their Practising Fees will be published in National Newspapers by the first week of April 2005, and made available to all courts in Nigeria and the general public. To guide them in their relationship with lawyers.

III. All Legal Practitioners are reminded that failure to pay their Practising Fees by 31st March 2005 constitutes an act of Professional Misconduct and will result in the loss of rights and privileges including the right of audience in any court in Nigeria.

IV. **THE LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ROLL AND ENROLLMENT NUMBERS:** A computerized database of legal practitioners enrolled to practice in Nigeria, from 1887 to 2004, has been produced by the Supreme Court of Nigeria. A unique enrollment number has been assigned to every legal practitioner. The list will be made available in the Branches for viewing from 1st to 31st March 2005. Members are requested to forward omissions or incorrect entries in the database to their Branch and National officers. The production of an accurate up-to-date and timely database of all legal practitioners will precede the production and effective implementation of the Stamp and Seal Project.

V. **STAMP AND SEAL PROJECT:** The NBA has commenced a Stamp and Seal policy, which requires that lawyers affix their numbered Seal and Stamp on every document endorsed by or emanating from them. The Seals and stamps are obtainable from the national secretariat and through the branches, at the cost of Seven Thousand, Five Hundred Naira (N7,500.00) only. Legal practitioners are advised to complete the application form and obtain their stamps and seal now, ahead of the time its use would be compulsory in accordance with practice directions to be issued by the Heads of the various courts. Delivery of the Seals would begin in April 2005 at the end of the verification of the numbered Roll of Legal practitioners now in progress.

SIGNED:

CHIEF BAYO OJO, SAN
PRESIDENT

HON. NIMI WALSON-JACK, ESQ
GENERAL SECRETARY

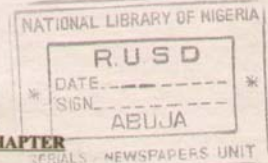


NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Plot 1261 Adoola Hopewell Street,
Victoria Island,
F.A.R. 12023, Lagos, Nigeria.
Tel: 01-4707432; 01-4618287;
01-410783/01-412354;
01-410778
Tel/Fax: 01-4618287
E-mail: nbajyo@nba.org
Website: www.nigerianbar.com

17th January 2005.

His Excellency
Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR
President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces
Federal Republic of Nigeria
The Presidency
Aso Rock
Abuja
Federal Republic of Nigeria.



Dear Mr. President,

CLOSING THE ANAMBRA CHAPTER

On behalf of the membership and National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) we bring you compliments and best wishes of the season.

We have been directed by the National Executive Committee of the NBA to communicate to Mr. President the concerns and fears of the NBA about the lingering crisis in Anambra State which has spilled over from 2003 through 2004 to 2005.

At the meeting of NEC held in Yenogoa on Thursday, 25th and Friday, 26th November 2004, members of NEC received with alarm the news of what is now termed the Anambra State crisis in which sponsored armed thugs invaded the state, burnt public buildings and terrorized law abiding citizens. These armed thugs and their pay masters have since 2003 constituted themselves into agents of disorder.

The NBA considers the events in Anambra State as a direct affront on the principles of the rule of law. The emergence and existence of a person or group of persons who admit to using wealth, whether real or ill gotten, to subvert the electoral process, and commit criminal acts, to mention but a few, is only possible in an under developing society.

The destruction of the institutions of democracy and public service, especially the Court of Justice is an affront on the rule of law and independence of the judiciary. The message is that we have individuals who do not recognise the authority of the law and have constituted themselves into the law.

The media has been awash with reports and publications of a statement by Mr. Chris Uba admitting the commission of electoral offences.

Mr. Chris Uba should be arrested, his involvement in the elections investigated, and prosecuted for his confessed role in the elections.

The constant harassment of Governor Chris Ngige by agents bent on destabilizing our nascent democracy must stop.

The NBA requests Mr. President to bring the situation of insecurity in Anambra State to an end.

We thank Mr. President for reading this letter, and look forward to the situation in Anambra State being normalized soon.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

CHIEF BAYO OJO, SAN
PRESIDENT

HON. NIMI WALSON-JACK
GENERAL SECRETARY

ABUJA TRUST



From L-R: Wife of Bwari area council area council chairman, Lamin Bwari; Executive Secretary, Social Development Secretariat, Mr. Balande Onagorawa; Bwari area council chairman, Isah Dura Bwari and Director, Community Life Project, Nigeri Iwori, during the opening ceremony of community life project...recently.

Fire guts Oando filling station

Oando fuel station located along Obasanjo Way in Wuse Zone 1, Abuja, was yesterday gutted by fire, which erupted from a petrol tanker.

The cause of the fire outbreak was not made known as at the time of going to press, but it was speculated by eyewitnesses at the scene of the incident that it may have occurred while off-loading fuel.

Our reporter who got to the scene of the incident however observed that the fire must have begun at the base of the tanker.

Although there were no human casualties, a motorcycle belonging to the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) got burnt beyond repair as the rider abandoned it for his dear life when the tanker exploded. Also, two

By Godwin Tyonogo, Reporter Abuja

As at press time, the fire was raging on with the fire fighters not giving up. Thousands of Abuja residents, including artisans, traders and okada riders, abandoned their work places to catch a glimpse of the incident.

Both officials of the Federal Fire Service and the filling station operators reserved comments on the event, but onlookers heaped blames on government concerning its safety policy.

Hoodlums also used the incident to pick pocket and steal people's handsets.

Enumeration of properties along Karmo-Idu commences

The FCDA has commenced the long awaited enumeration of buildings and other properties along Karmo and Idu axis just as the Chiefs of Jiwa and Karma sued the residents to cooperate with the enumerators.

Some FCDA Directors, Development Control, Urban & Regional Planning, Parks and Recreation, Resettlement and Abuja

Environmental Protection Board were at the Slace of the Chief of Jiwa - to intimate him of the exercise.

Development Control Department Director, Jummai Kwanashie in her statement intimated the traditional ruler that Government was desirous of solving the lingering resettlement issue of the residents of Idu, Karmo, Gwagwa, Jiwa and others within that axis.

She stated that the impending demolition of structures especially those along the road corridor must be carried out as the contract for the road had been awarded by Government and that each day the commencement of the contract is delayed, FCDA pays more.

The Director Urban & Regional Planning, Engineer Augustine C. Ike in his contribution called on the residents not to take laws into their hand as the Government was doing everything possible to get them relocated.

He expressed satisfaction over the level of cooperation the

Authority had received from the chief of Jiwa as regards his uncooperative attitude to illegal developers just as he warned illegal developers from usurping government land for their private use.

The chief of Jiwa in his response said his people were very happy that they were being treated like fellow Nigerians.

He said that since he assumed the position as the chief of Jiwa, he had always warned his people not to be part of any illegal land deals with anybody as it was only the Government that had the

right of plot allocation. Addressing the people of Karma later at the chief of Karma's residence, the chief of Jiwa said that FCDA was out "to do both good and bad; bad in the sense that their properties are going to be pulled down and good in the sense that alternatives allocation is going to be provided for them.

Residents appeal to FCT minister over acute water shortage

The acute water scarcity that hit the Gwagwalada Area Council of the FCT some months ago has persisted, with residents calling for the intervention of the FCT Minister, Nasri el-Rufai.

Some of the residents told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Gwagwalada yesterday that the water situation in the area had worsened.

The residents noted that taps were no longer flowing in the entire area council.

They called on the FCT minister to come to their aid by drilling boreholes in certain locations in the council.

The residents further said that the Gwagwalada water treatment plant that was abandoned be re-activated in order to ensure steady supply of water.

Mrs Rose Adama, a housewife, said the task of cleaning the house had now become a difficult task due to the non-availability of water to carry out household chores.

Adama noted that children were now trekking long distances before getting water with all the attendant risks.

Another resident, Mr Olusola Oni, a civil servant, said that providing water for the family was now "sating deep into the pockets of residents".

Oni said on the average, families spend between N300 and N500 daily to buy the

Area council to train, retrain staff for better performance

The Chairman of the Gwagwalada Area Council, Alhaji Zakari Angulu, has expressed his commitment to the training and retraining of council staff for better performance.

Angulu, who spoke at the end of a two-week secretarial management and computer application workshop for staff of the council, said that the council would continue to train its staff for enhanced performance.

He said that due to the ever-changing work situations, there was a constant need to train staff to make them efficient.

He said the council would set aside adequate resources for the training and re-training of staff for higher performance.

He urged staff of the council to strive to improve on themselves by acquiring skills and education that would help them perform better in their various positions.

He said the advice became necessary as the council could not afford to train every staff at the same time due to the high cost of training.

Angulu urged participants at the workshop to ensure their training reflected in the manner they carried out their duties.

"You should reflect the skills and knowledge acquired during the workshop in your conduct and work," he added.

The Coordinator of the

workshop, Mr Godfrey Garba, appealed to the council to provide the participants with computers to ensure that they practised the knowledge acquired at the workshop.

Garba said that without computers to practise, the aim of the workshop would have been defeated.

NAN reports that 60 staffers of the council participated in the workshop.

El-Rufai pledges assistance to patriotic Nigerians abroad

FCT Minister Nasri El-Rufai says the government is ready to assist Nigerians in the diaspora who are interested in contributing their quota to the development of the country.

El-Rufai made the pledge when he received a delegation of the London-based "Law Institute", on Monday.

The institute, which is being manned by Nigerians, plan to establish a branch in Abuja to provide law programme at both first degree, post-graduate, and diploma levels.

El-Rufai said the country needed more lawyers to provide adequate and prompt services to the people.

"The institute will help to produce world class graduates that can take on cases from abroad to earn foreign exchange for the country," he said.

Answering a question from journalists, the minister dismissed speculation that the country already produces enough lawyers.

"It is not true that the country produces enough lawyers. The truth is there may be a shortage of good lawyers.

"Some Nigerians in the diaspora had decided to give our children some of what they have got without the children having to go abroad," El-Rufai said.

He said that instead of sending "our children abroad

to get quality education at great expense, we should support our brothers who are interested in providing such service to Nigerians here".

The minister said that the ministry would provide the institute a piece of land along airport road because, "it is our second chance of having a university".

Earlier, Dr. Tunde Odewomo, senior lecturer in law, Kings College, University of London, had said that the institute was aimed at giving Nigerians the opportunity to acquire excellent education.

He said that the entire project would cost eight million dollars, including provision of books and development of a library, adding that it would be a joint undertaking between the private and public sectors.

Dismissing speculation on a glut in the production of lawyers, Odewomo said that out of 76,000 Nigerians who wanted to read law last year, the existing universities could only admit 2,700.

"There is a frustrating demand for law education in the country but the Nigerian university system cannot cope with the demand," he said.

Odewomo commended the FCT minister for his commitment to the programme and promised to provide scholarship for some of the students, adding that the students would be issued with the University of London L.L.B. degrees.

Odewomo said that the institute would source its non-academic staff and secular teachers locally while the UK-based Nigerians would form the backbone of lecturers.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) gathered that students would be charged three thousand pounds per annum.

Other members of the delegation were Dr Fidelis Oditah (SAN), Mr A.B. Mahmud (SAN), Prof. Chidi Odiakalu, Prof. U.U. Uche and Prof. Oba Nsugbe, (QC).

Former legislator loses only son to armed robbers

A former member of the House of Representatives, Dr Mike Ogar, has lost his only son to the men of the underworld.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the incident took place at about 7.30 p.m. in Ogar's Gwarimpa residence during the Sallah break.

NAN reports that the victim was a 25-year-old graduate of one of the medical schools in the

country. The deceased had driven out with his sisters to shop, but on getting back, they met the robbers who were threatening to shoot his parents.

NAN learnt that the former legislator, who lost his mother recently was making arrangements to go home for the burial, when his son was killed.

When contacted, police sources at the FCT command said they were yet to get a report on the incident.

KANO TRUST



Kano Deputy governor Magaji Abdulkadir, Chief Newton Jibnah, and Sarkin Shanan Kazare Alhaji Abdulkadir at the Amayasa annual festival...recently.

USAID injects \$15m for MISTOWA project

In its efforts towards boosting the economic integration of West African countries, the West African Regional Programme (WARP) of USAID has injected the sum of 15 million dollars for the full implementation of its new programme market information systems and traders' organisations in West Africa (MISTOWA).

Speaking at a workshop organised by the IFDC, Kano office held at Royal Tropical Hotel, the coordinator MISTOWA project, Kano, Ahmed Sabi'u Auwal said the project which will be implemented by IFDC and

will last for 4 years starting from 2004.

Alhaji Sabi'u who was addressing participants at the workshop said it has been agreed to start with a limited number of commodities and countries in the first phase of the programme.

He said so far, the commodities selected included maize, rice, cassava, cattle tomato, onion, cashew, and fertiliser in Benin, Burkina faso, Ghana, Mali Nigeria and Senegal during the initial project period (2004-2006).

The coordinator disclosed further that four additional countries, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Niger and Togo as well as commodities such as fish, mangoes, Sesame, red meat and cowpea will be added as experience is gained.

He pointed out that the project was aimed at improving the flow of market information between countries involved and responds to the information needs of

beneficiaries. He added that MISTOWA has focused on market information system and services with a view to providing transparent environment for the beneficiaries and explained that the project will work in four key areas in increasing efficiency of regional market information system and service (MIS), improving capacities of regional traders' organisations (TO) and producers Organisations (PO), improving the West African Trade Environment and Increasing efficiency of MIS and capacities of PQS and TOS in Nigeria.

Alhaji Sabi'u therefore called on the stakeholders to put heads together to success of the project as the programme is meant for them and for the nation as a whole.

He advised them to complement the USAID gesture by committing themselves to the success of the programme.

Fire engulfs Kwari market, destroy N4m properties

Properties worth about 4 million naira have been destroyed by a mysterious fire allegedly caused by a fanatic at Kanti-Kwari market, Kano.

The inferno which razed 21 shops in the market, Saturday night was said to have been caused by a madman who used firewood to worm his body due to serious harmattan.

By Yuska'u Adamu Ibrahim, Correspondent (Kano)

Kano Trust learnt that most of the properties destroyed by the fire are women and children textile materials, shoes, GSM handsets, bags, refrigerators, and soft drinks among others.

Even though no life was lost in the incidence, the fire destroyed valuables worth

3.8million naira before it was put under control by the men of the state fire service who were said to have taken prompt action on the disaster.

A section of the victims who spoke to Kano Trust expressed shock over the incidence and prayed to the Almighty God to prevent future occurrences of such unfortunate disaster not only in Kwari market but in all the markets in the state.

Malam Sale Audu a GSM accessories seller told Kano Trust that he lost almost all his properties as the fire destroyed his shade which he said contained properties worth over 100 thousand naira.

He disclosed that they considered the fire outbreak as the will of God and pray to Almighty Allah to reward them abundantly.

Another victim, Alhaji Nura Bello called on both the state government and the market traders association to come to the aid of the victims with assistance to enable them come back to their normal businesses.

Alhaji Bello who commended the sympathisers who contributed in putting the fire under control also appealed to wealthy individuals in the state to assist the victims of the incident.

Speaking to newsmen on the incidence the secretary general of the market traders association, Alhaji Balarabe Adaji who confirmed the incidence sympathised with victims of the fire disaster.

The secretary general who disclosed that the incidence was the second in two months said the association is now working tirelessly to put on measures to prevent future occurrence

NGO wants traditional rulers involved in security affairs

Federal government has been advised to give room for the participation of traditional institutions on issues centred on improving security in the country hence they are the principal tools for crime control and management.

The vice-president of a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Royal Rights Protection Association of Nigeria (RORPAN) Alhaji Sidi Abba Sheriff who made the call observed that crimes cannot be completely eradicated without the full participation of traditional rulers.

He frowned at the incessant security lapses that engulf various parts of the country which he said ranges from armed robbery political thuggery ethnic and religious violence among others.

Alhaji Sheriff expressed dismay on the ill treatment meted on traditional rulers on security affairs, lamenting that they are only being contacted on the heels of violence eruption which gives a clear signal that they are regarded as "fire fighters."

According to him, the National Assembly should enact a law that will be mandatory for the three tiers

By Mustapha Isah Kwaru, Correspondent (Kano)

of government to invite royal fathers whenever security meeting is to be organised saying they are closer to the people and could easily fish out the culprits.

In his words, "let me make it clear that federal government's crusade for a crime-free society would only be actualised if traditional rulers become part and parcel of the issue, because you will find out that when a crime is committed neither the police or any security personnel will be able to fish out perpetrators, but a village head is able to do that, because of their closeness to the people."

The RORPAN vice president, however charged Muslims to regard the recently celebrated Sallah festival as an avenue for the revamp of their cordial relationship with various ethnic and religious groups in the country even as he applauded president Olusegun Obasanjo for wearing the dress of traditional rulers, while receiving government functionaries on a Sallah homage.

Kano Trust rub minds with vendors, distributors

Kano Trust, an extension of Media Trust publishers of Weekly and Daily Trust newspapers thrilled Kano based vendors and distributors to a sumptuous party where both parties rub minds on issues bedevilling the progress of Media Trust papers.

Kano Trust had earlier agreed to organise the get together with intent to rubbed minds and see how both parties could assist each other in ways to "move newspaper business in Kano and by extension, other station forward."

In his address the bureau chief of the Kano Trust office, Mallam Musa Umar Kazare described newspaper vendors as agents that are responsible for conveying newspaper as a product to the final consumer.

Musa Umar Kazare said it is the effort of the never tiring vendors to reach newspaper audience come rain come shine that assures the survival of any newspaper without fear of intimidation.

He however called on both the vendors and distributors in the state to put heads together with the Media Trust management in tackling problems that are imminent to the progress of the paper so as to arrive at a common goal of moving Media Trust papers forward.

He explained that the gathering was a collective decision of Kano Media

By Ahmed Abobakar, Correspondent (Kano)

Trust staff in showing appreciation to efforts done in promoting and selling of the paper and also use the opportunity in airing grievances if there is any with the purpose of improving on the existing relationship.

On his part, the chairman vendor's association, Kano branch, Mallam Yakubu Yahaya said Trust has destabilised other newspapers especially in the northern part of the country. He called on Trust management to ensure that the newspaper reaches them as early as possible saying that is one major problem associated with the un-sold product.

Yahaya expressed dismay with vendors that hide Trust papers with intent of sabotaging its sales because they were not given incentive like they were given by other newspapers.

In the same vein the representative of the chairman of newspaper distributors, called on Trust Newspapers to produce surplus copies of the papers especially when there is a good story that will attract attention so as to avoid shortages which will disappoint customers who will eventually turn to other newspapers.

Discussing how to tackle problems that usually prevent the successful sale of trust papers, a vendor complained that marginalisation,

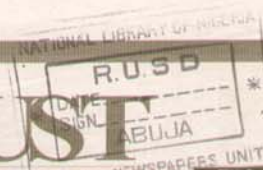
segregation and politics in the distribution of the newspapers to vendors by distributors hampers its progress while another gave instances where Trust newspaper is being used in selling other newspaper by way of denying a customer the choice of buying only Trust newspaper without joining with another one.

Commenting at the occasion Dutch Welle reporter, Musa Mohammed Inuwa called on vendors to promote Trust newspapers, by displaying it always at the front for prospective customers to see and read the headlines that usually provoke the interest of readers.

He said news are irrelevant and useless if the papers that convey them are not sold. He however called on Trust management to consider the hazard involved in vendor work and provide them with sweaters, rain-coats and rain-boots so as to enhance better work performance.

While responding to issues raised especially on lateness of the paper to its various destinations, the Bureau Chief of Kano Trust office, Mallam Musa Umar Kazare assured that very soon that will be a thing of the past as the Trust Management had procured machines capable of printing its own newspapers unlike when it use to depend on outside production before the papers could get to its audience.

EKO TRUST



We're not in a hurry to re-open UNILAG

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Prof. Oye Ibidapo-Obe, says the authorities are not in a hurry to re-open the university.

"The Senate is not even thinking about that now. The students will not come back until the perpetrators of the mayhem are brought to book," Ibidapo-Obe told newsmen in Lagos on Monday.

The school was shut on Jan. 19 following a violent demonstration by students to protest the death of the Speaker of the Students Union Representative Council, Mr Olaoluwa Akosile.

Akosile, a final year law student was said to have died shortly after he answered a telephone call allegedly from the Vice-Chancellor.

"I never called anybody. It is not in our place as a university to start replying to that non-sense", he said in response to the students' allegation.

Ibidapo-Obe described the student's action as an "unprovoked terrorist attack" on the institution, pointing out that there was no disagreement between the students and the university authorities before the protest to warrant the attack.

Among properties set ablaze during the protest were the vice-chancellor's lodge, eight different brands of vehicles and the official residence of the Dean of Students Affairs.

The Vice-Chancellor described the late student leader as an intelligent mind, saying his death was a loss to both

the university and the entire country.

He said a four-man committee had been set up to investigate the violent demonstration, adding that the committee headed by Prof Aloy Ejiofor, submitted its preliminary report on Monday and

would continue the investigation.

Ibidapo-Obe said that the university already had a list of suspects believed to be brains behind the crisis, adding that some arrests had been made.

Also speaking, the Dean

of students Affairs, Dr. Dele Olokundejo, debunked allegation that some students were injured when policemen were called in to quell the uprising.

He tasked the media to dig and find out the truth of the whole matter.

Tinubu advises clerics on politics

Gov. Bola Tinubu of Lagos State has said that continued criticism of political leaders by religious leaders would help to strengthen the country's democracy.

Tinubu was speaking in Lagos, at the public presentation of a book entitled "St. Paul's Church Breadfruit 1952-1999: From a Slave Depot to a Living Church."

"Such criticisms pose a challenge to political leaders to do better," he pointed out. Tinubu added: "If they (religious) leaders cannot speak on behalf of those that are suffering and the ills of our society then our political leaders will continue to play god to the oppressed."

He said it was only through this courageous commitment that Nigerians were enjoying the current democracy.

"Therefore, for the commitment to humanity and for the good of our society, they should speak out loud because where we have gone wrong we have gone wrong and without such criticisms we might not know," Tinubu further said.

The governor said the state government would continue to support the Church and Lagosians to make life more meaningful for the people.

Dr Peter Odili, the Rivers governor, who was the chief launcher, urged religious leaders to always pray for political leaders, stressing that was the only way the country could move forward.

"Nigerians should learn to take every problem to God instead of trying to solve them by themselves by attacking their leaders," he said.

Odili also said Nigerians should always see themselves as one no matter the domination they belonged to.

"The time has come for us to appreciate that there is only one God. Whatever domination you find yourself is not what matters but how one perceives the world of God and put it to use to improve the nation," he said.

Earlier, Mr Alex Ibru, publisher of the Guardian Newspapers and Chairman of the occasion, said the Church had contributed to the history and growth of the Nigerian society.

"In reading the story of St. Paul's Church, Breadfruit, we came upon the story of missionary activities in Nigeria, the growth of Christianity in Lagos; dissension and successions within the Church and the special relationship between it and the city of Lagos," he said.

Ibru noted that the Church, which had grown from a living Church into a Mother Church for other Churches, was a product of a long struggle and process by both the clergy and the laity.

LASG receives FG's mandate to CBN

Lagos State Government has said that it had received a mandate from the federal government, asking the CBN to credit the accounts of the old 20 local governments in the state with various amounts.

The amount, totalling about N18 billion, constitute the arrears of allocations to the local governments, which had been seized since March, last year.

Briefing newsmen in Ikeja, Mr Dele Alake, the state Commissioner for Information and Strategy, and his finance counterpart, Dr Ismaila Adegwusi, described the mode of payment by the federal government as illegal.

According to Alake, the mandate given to the CBN to credit the accounts contained

a proviso that the state government must make known the names of the chairmen of the 20 local governments before the disbursement.

Alake said the proviso was illegal and unconstitutional, and an attempt to hoodwink the Supreme Court into believing that it had complied with the judgment to release the fund.

He said that in essence, the federal government did not obey the declaration of the Supreme Court and was only trying to play smart before Jan. 27, when the case between them would resume at the Supreme Court.

Adegwusi also said the new twist was merely an attempt to circumvent the supreme judgment and impose new conditions, which were illegal.



Sympathisers giving helping hands at the scene of an accident between a Mazda car and a trailer at Obafemi Awolowo way, Ikeja last Tuesday. Pic: Oladipupo Odunseru.

5000 pupils to participate in maths competition

No fewer than 5000 pupils from public and private primary schools are to participate in the second annual Nigerian-Turkish International Colleges Mathematics Competition with a cash prize of N150,000.

The competition which is open to pupils in primary five and six are in two stages with the first centres across the

country on February 5.

According to the Principal of the Lagos branch of the Nigerian-Turkish International College, Mr. Murali Ozelcik, the centres for the competition's first stage are in Lagos, Abuja, Rivers, Kano, Sokoto, Borno, Bauchi, Kaduna and Plateau.

Ozelcik informed that the best three participants from each centres would advance to the final stage billed for Abuja on February 19, adding that the first ten winners would be duly rewarded.

For instance, he said that the second placed participant would take home N100,000, third place would get N75,000, fourth position N50,000, fifth position N40,000 while those between the sixth and tenth position would earn N20,000 reward each.

Also the mathematics teachers of participating pupils form the first to the fifth position are to get N50,000 reward each for their efforts.

He said the organizers have expanded the scope of the competition as against its maiden edition which was restricted to participants in Lagos.

The extension of the event nationwide was to enable the various states parade their best pupils in the core subject even as Ozelcik explained that the aim was to strengthen

bi-lateral relations between Turkey and Nigeria.

According to him, the competition would promote interaction and exchange of ideas amongst people of both countries and on the long run encourage business relationship.

Explaining the choice of mathematics for the competition, Ozelcik noted that it remained a core subject for science related courses as well as social sciences.

He however spoke of future plans to expand the frontiers of the competition to English Language and other science courses.

The competition which is open to pupils in public schools free of charge and those in private schools at an enrolment fee of N200 per participants has been endorsed by both the federal and state ministries of Education.



Prof. Fabian Osoji, Education Minister

Tinubu loses special adviser

Through its Information and Strategy Commissioner, Dele Alake, the Lagos State Government has announced the demise of one of its cabinet member, Dapo Bode-THOMAS.

Bode-Thomas, 51 and special Adviser on Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs to Governor Bola Tinubu died early Monday morning after a brief illness.

In a statement, Allake said the death of the Adviser was shocking to his boss, Governor Tinubu, adding that Bode-Thomas was described by the governor "as astute politician and public administrator who served the state with dedication and admirable zeal."

The deceased served as secretary to the Lagos Chapter of the Alliance for Democracy between 1998 and 2000 before joining the electoral board of the party where he was subsequently nominated as a Special Adviser in May 2003.

Married with children, Bode-Thomas attended Ibadan Grammar School, between 1959 and 1962 and attended the University of Liverpool in United Kingdom where he obtained a first degree in Economics in 1970.

His working career included the G. B. Ollivant as manager between 1970 and

1972 and later served as managing director of Meno International Limited.

Bode-Thomas who served as a councillor in the Lagos Mainland Local Government Area and as a Lawmaker in the State House of Assembly on the ticket of the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria in the second Republic.

...donates 129 Saudi Riyals to each Lagos pilgrim

Lagos state Gov. Ahmed Bola Tinubu today donated 129 Saudi Riyals, about 35 dollars to each pilgrim from the state.

About 2,000 pilgrims from the state performed this year's pilgrimage in the Holy Land.

The state Amirul Hajj, Alhaji Ibrahim, Balogun told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) today in Makkah that the gesture was aimed at assisting the state pilgrims.

The breakdown showed that 80 Riyals was for Ibran dress, 10 Riyals for food and

37 Riyals for home preparation.

He added that Tinubu had also given 10 dollars to each of the pilgrims from other states from the South West and Edo.

Balogun said the first batch of 500 pilgrims from the state would depart Jeddah on Wednesday aboard Kabo air.

He said that other batches would follow between Thursday and Saturday. He warned pilgrims not to exceed 40kg as directed by the authorities.

Brief

Announcement

Members of the sub-committee on launching of the presidential committee on the rehabilitation of the national Mosque, Abuja, are hereby invited to the meeting of the sub-committee today by 10:30 am at the State House, Abuja.

SON

Standards Organisation of Nigeria is set to reward and celebrate made-in-Nigeria products that have consistently met the Nigeria Industrial Standards (NIS) criteria over the years at the annual Nigeria Quality Week activities.

In a statement from the Director General, Dr. John Akanya, activities lined-up for the week will commence with the opening of a 3-day exhibition and sales of NIS award winning products in diamond, gold, silver and bronze categories at the Main Bowl, Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS) Complex, Lagos on Tuesday, February 8, 2005.

It stated further that the presentation of NIS award certificates would be performed on Thursday February 10, 2005 by Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, at the Muson Centre, Onikan, followed by a tour of the Quality Products Fair and Exhibition at Tafawa Balewa Square Complex.

Gov. Kalu

The Abia State Governor, Chief Orji Uzor Kalu, was among the dignitaries and world leaders that attended the inauguration of the United States President, George Bush, for a second term in office last week.

The governor, an aide said, was the only Nigerian elected public office holder invited to the occasion which saw President Bush making a renewed vow to restore freedom worldwide.

The Abia helmsmen, the aide said, was invited because of his close business ties with the Bush family.

Tsonga community pledges support for Zimbabwean farmers

The people of Shonga in Edu local government area of Kwara State have pledged their unalloyed support for the Commercial Farming Project sited in their area by the state government.

In a letter to the state governor, Dr. Bukola Saraki, on behalf of the community, the Emir of Shonga, Dr. Haliru Yahaya, expressed his people's enthusiasm over the opportunity to partner with government and the foreign farmers to uplift the social and economic status of the area in particular, and the state in general.

Anambra citizens under the umbrella of Idemili Action Movement (IAM) yesterday decried what they termed excruciating hardship weighing heavily on Nigerians and called on federal government to concentrate its energy on creating good atmosphere and policies that will alleviate suffering of the masses.

The group urged the Obasanjo led peoples democratic government to stop chasing shadows and embarking on wastage of public funds on unproductive programmes, but to concentrate on delivering democratic dividend to the people, especially the south-east zone.

"Federal government... putting enabling environ-

News

Nigerians are suffering - Group

From Beatrice Onuchukwu, Stringer (Akwa)

ments and policies that will alleviate the excruciating hardship Nigerians are going through rather than dissipating its energy on chasing imaginary political enemies," they said. "We want to remind those in authority particularly President Obasanjo that if God has been so magnanimous to spare his life, pick him from prison to presidency, God will demand of him an accountable government based on equity, justice and fairness to all," the group added.

AKHA confirms nomination of commissioners, special advisers

From Edet Ekanem, Stringer (Lyo)

The Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly had yesterday approved the names of four nominees as commissioners and 2 others as special advisers as sent to it by the Executive Governor of the state, Obong Victor Attah.

Following the acceptance of the report of House Committee on Judiciary, Justice, Human Rights and Public Petition, the Speaker of the House, Chief Nelson Efiog, subjected them to public screening on the floor of the Assembly chambers.

Confirmed as commissioners and special advisers are, the Editorial Consultant to *Champion Newspapers*, Mr. Parehi Umoh from Ibiomo. Until his appointment, Mr. Umoh also served as Chief Press Secretary to all the military administrators of the state; Commissioner, Ethical and Attitudinal Re-orientation Commission and Chairman, Publicity Sub Committee Attah/Ekpenyong Campaign Organisation.

Others as commissioners include: Mr. Donatus Okon, an indigene of Uruan local government area, Dr. Okon

Emah, Etinan and Mrs. Asa Ebiene from Okobo local government area.

Those confirmed as special advisers are Joe Udoibia from Mkpatt Enin local government area and Mr. Monday Udoifa from Ini local government area of the state.

Submitting the reports to the House, the committee Chairman, Mr. Usen Obong Akpabio, representing Uruan state constituency, noted that his committee was guided by the 1999 federal Constitution.

Barrister Akpabio further stated that his committee spread its tentacles to various agencies including members in the house representing the areas of the nominees, all to ascertain the credibility and acceptance of the nominees for their respective offices.

The legal practitioner further disclosed that after due considerations, all of them were found qualified and therefore should be confirmed as commissioner and special advisers to the state government.

From Abdulrazaq Adebayo, Correspondent (Ilorin)

"My attention and that of Shonga emirate community have been drawn to the criticisms of several projects embarked upon by your innovative administration, including the strategic and unprecedented Commercial Farming Project at Shonga" the Emir wrote in the letter.

"A state executive faced with the task of alleviating the pervasive poverty among his people has many strategic options to choose from. You have settled for some-one of

then which is the Commercial Farming Project," he stated further.

The Emir praised Dr. Saraki for initiating the project, saying it is capable of turning around the economic fortunes of both the area and the adjoining communities and local governments.

The monarch enjoined Dr. Saraki not to be discouraged by the criticism of the project, but to explore the opportunity for transformation of agricultural practices which would be offered by the professional white farmers.

According to Mr. Anthony Chukwuclue, Obasanjo had counselled donors to his campaign funds to consider such as bad investment, arguing that he could not dip hands into public purse to ingratiate them, but he won-

dered why the president now compels Anambra State Governor, Dr. Chris Ngige to commit such offence. He queried, "why is Ngige forced to empty the lean purse of Anambra tax payers money to appease self styled god fa-

ther and his associates. Why is Ngige hunted, humiliated and wounded like a common criminal on account of his principle stand of not surrendering the collective wealth of Anambra citizens to greedy contractors?"



The territory manager of NITEL, Sokoto, Alhaji Garba Adamu (left), discussing with the territory manager of NITEL Zamfara, Alhaji Bello Maigari, at the Nigerian Telecommunication, North-West zonal customers forum in Kaduna...recently.

Tinubu, Odili disagree over criticisms by clergy

From Adelanwa Bamgboye, Correspondent (Lagos)

The Governor of Lagos State, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his Rivers State counterpart, Dr. Peter Odili, Tuesday in Lagos disagreed over whether or not clergyman are competent enough to criticise the policies of the federal government especially the erratic power supply in the country.

The two governors spoke at the public presentation of a book entitled: "St Paul's Church Bread-Fruit Lagos (1852 - 1999) from a slave depot to a living church" launched under the chairmanship of Mr. Alex Ibru, the *Guardian* Publisher.

It all started when in his welcome address, the Most Rev. (Dr.) Ephraim Ademowo, Bishop of Lagos, charged the federal government to solve the problems of erratic power supply in the country.

According to Bishop Ademowo, the citizens were spending too much money on diesel, adding that Nigerians deserve better treatment.

But in his reaction, Dr. Peter Odili, who was the chief launcher rose up to defend the federal government.

Dr. Odili urged the people and the clergy to resist the temptation of attacking political leaders. Saying that both Rivers and Lagos State governments were doing their best to improve power supply.

The Rivers State governor said that the success re-

corded by the clergy in reducing evil should also be compared with the success political leaders have so far made, adding that God's talent which everyone has will be accounted for.

However, Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu of Lagos State disagreed with the Rivers States Governor saying that the clergy should not stop to criticise the political leaders.

"I differ from Governor Peter Odili. I urge court

church leaders to continue to speak loud and criticise political leaders because that will pose a challenge for us (political leaders) to do better.

According to Tinubu, the religious and church bodies have a social responsibility and if they can't speak against the sufferings of the people, there will be no need for sermon.

"Don't stop, continue to criticise where we are wrong. It is only the courageous criticism that we can enjoy democracy," Governor Ahmed Tinubu said.

Obasanjo glorifies OPC-APC chairman

From Hassan A. Karofi, Correspondent (Dutse)

The Chairman of the Arewa Peoples Congress (APC), Alhaji Sagir Mohammed, has accused President Olusegun Obasanjo of indifference to the outlawed Odu'a People's Congress (OPC).

He told *Daily Trust* that it was sad for the government to protect an organisation that destroys lives and property at the slightest or no provocation at all.

According to him, although northerners stand for peace and progress of the country, if such attacks against its people continue, it will be left with no option but to retaliate.

"We have not been talking because we wanted peace for the progress of this country, but I am afraid this patriotic gesture is being miscon-

strued to a sign of cowardice and we ask for how long can we continue to overlook the dastardly act of a gang of murderous who are engaged in relesh satanic activities, enough is enough."

He therefore berated President Obasanjo for glorifying the OPC especially by using soft glove case of handling OPC and its atrocities.

"It is unfortunate, sad and pathetic that Obasanjo glorifies OPC and whatever mayhem or destruction it commit against other Nigerians, you finds it difficult to exonerate the government of the day from culpability on the mayhem visited on innocent people," he further added.



Terms of Reference for Consultancy to Package Actionable Projects for Institutional & Organization Development of the Nigerian Customs Service

Background:

The Federal Government of Nigeria is currently implementing a programme of economic and social reform to reposition the nation for growth, equity and improved competitiveness. As part of the holistic and system-wide approach, strategic public institutions are being re-positioned to contribute effectively to the overall objective.

In connection, a Presidential Committee for the Restructuring of the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) was established under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Finance to review the organizational structures, systems and processes of the establishment and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the achievement of its mandate. The overall objective of the restructuring programme is to ensure:

- Sustained increase in non-oil revenue;
- Effective action against fraud and corruption;
- Improved NCS integrity and credibility;
- Efficient resource management;
- Effective human resource development;
- Improved compliance with relevant provisions of legislation;
- Validation of systems and procedures; and
- Utilization of modern strategic planning methodologies.

The Presidential Committee has submitted its recommendation to the Federal Government, which has been accepted. The core areas identified as critical to the successful implementation of the reforms include the following:

- Human Resources Development and Management
- Information and Communication technology and processes (equipment & system)
- Logistics and operational support services including communication gadgets, logistics aircraft, bullet-proof jackets, gadget protective
- Client services improvement
- Organizational strengthening
- Infrastructure development, including head office complex, Staff College, staff schools, clinics, etc.

Objectives:

Much of the activities required to address these issues are inter-dependent and linked. To this end, UNDP is seeking the services of consultants to support the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Nigerian Customs Service in the elaborating the recommendations of the Presidential Committee and other relevant instruments to implementable projects and activities in three main areas:

- (i) Infrastructure development
- (ii) Information and communication technology for improved service delivery
- (iii) Resource management (Financial and Human resources)

Scope of Work:

Under the joint supervision of UNDP, the Presidential Implementation Committee on Customs Reform and the Nigerian Customs Service, the Consultant(s) will carry out the following duties and responsibilities:

- Review all relevant reports and documents on the NCS and identify critical proposals and recommendations for actions in the key subject areas and sub-areas identified above.
- Elaborate these into clearly articulated objectives, results, outputs and activities with timelines and costing
- Package each discrete proposal in a form to be presentable to funding institutions or potential providers of services.
- Provide specifications for works, services and goods to be procured in order to achieve the reform objectives including the formulation of relevant terms of references, bid requirements, equipment, specifications, etc to guide the NCS and FMF in proceeding with contract awards, technical assistance request and investment proposal preparations
- Identify in details, sustainable options of funding for implementing the proposal(s) from both the private and public sector, delineate responsibility of parties and performance indicators
- Identify opportunities for private sector, donor and other stakeholders participation in the various schemes
- State critical factors for success and risks
- Undertake any other activities that may be contingent on this task

Task One: Infrastructure

- Identify suitable location in the FCT for construction of infrastructure for NCS including head office complex, Staff College, staff schools, clinics, power generators and solar panels
- Assess the status of existing or planned office and support infrastructures for NCS headquarters, zonal and state offices, outposts and make proposals for improvements in line with the recommendation of the Presidential Committee.
- Assess the adequacy or otherwise of existing staff housing arrangements and

make recommendations on improvements.

- Assist in identifying the strategic areas that require donor support in the short, medium and long term.
- Support the NCS to package proposals that meet donor or other funding mechanisms requirements

Task Two: Information and Communication Technology

- Review the architecture of the Management Information Systems of the entire Nigeria Customs Services;
- Assess existing and proposed systems for Local and Wide Area Network (WAN) and identify requirements for the most efficient communication networking facility for NCS formations at headquarters, zonal and area commands;
- Determine key users and potential users of information to be generated by the MIS both internally and externally;
- Prepare a prioritized gap analysis between the information currently available and that which is required including payroll, printing press, database for management of records etc;
- Design an effective integrated Management Information System that links all the Operational Units of the NCS with the FMF.
- Review methodology for dealing with the trading community nationally, regionally and internationally as captured by Asycuda ++ and identify systems requirements
- Review the status of the current website facility and, if necessary, propose alternative options for new developments, maintenance and sustainability of the website.
- Analyze options and prepare business case for investment, taking account of necessary linkages to eventual web-based application of Asycuda ++.
- Prepare technical and capital proposals on each element of the identified IT Support systems for grant and other financing options.

Task Three: Administration, Finance, human Resource Development and support functions

- Review the existing organization's current/future requirements and make recommendations for effective organizational structure and processes.
- Identify existing organizational needs and propose options for meeting these.
- Review roles, responsibilities and activities/linkages of, and between, HRD and the training school, and identify areas for capacity building
- Assess existing processes and systems for staff development and identify critical areas for strengthening
- Prepare proposals for technical and capital funding of the elaborated activities.
- Review the current code of conduct for the NCS and identify areas for improvement.

Qualifications

- Reputable firms with long-standing expertise in Information Communication Technology, Administration, human Resource Management & Development, Organizational Development, and Process Improvement and Infrastructure Development will be preferred.
- Minimum of 10 years practical experience in supporting such activity

Duration

- Two months

Outputs

- Proposals and recommendations for actions in the key subject areas and sub-areas
- Clearly articulated objectives, results, outputs and activities with time-lines and costing
- Discrete proposals for funding by institutions or potential providers of services
- Specifications for works, services and goods to be procured in order to achieve the reform objectives including relevant terms of references, bid requirements, equipment, specifications, etc to guide the NCS and FMF in proceeding with contract awards, technical assistance request, and investment proposal preparations.
- Sustainable options of funding for implementing the proposal(s) from the private and public sectors with clearly delineated responsibility of parties and performance indicators
- Opportunities for private sector, donor and other stakeholders participation in the various schemes

Submission of Proposals

- Completed Proposals should be returned, five copies, in sealed envelopes marked at the top left corner "Consultancy: Nigeria Customs Service" and addressed to the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Finance, Garki, Abuja not later than four (4) weeks from the date of this advert.
- Interested consultants can review the background materials and collect bidding documents from Alhaji J.I. Zarewa, 3rd Floor, (Foreign Exchange & Trade Relations Division) Federal Ministry of Finance, Garki, Abuja.

Inside Politics

I am against ethnic presidency - Donald Duke

The North and the South-South have had a long political relationship. Here you are in Kaduna, the Rivers State governor was here and we hear the Edo State governor is coming also. We want to know the nature of these visits. Do they have anything to do with the politics of 2007?

On my part, no. 2007 to me is just the end of my term and not the beginning of another thing. I came as guest of the governor and the Emir of Zauzau I came to wish both of them happy Sallah. The governor of Rivers State, I think came for the same reason. He was at the Dubar and went back to Port Harcourt from there. I am aware that the governor of Edo state is coming. But I think it is a private visit.

Recently, the South-South Peoples Assembly met and decided that the presidency should come to them. Your host, Governor Makarfi is at the head of a return of the presidency to the north. With this in mind, you will understand why we are very inquisitive.

I don't know what you want me to say about this 2007. I said I came for a dubar and you are insisting I came to discuss politics. I did not come to discuss politics because it is far from my mind right now. I think it is too early to talk about 2007. Yes, every zone want to have the president, which I think, is unfortunate. We should be taking about the best president for Nigeria and not an ethnic president. We can't move forward like this. I don't mind the next president coming from Owo, President Obasanjo's village if he will deliver. You don't get anything special by having the president from your zone. What will the south will the South West say they have gotten by having the Presidency from their zone? Nothing. If you say you get more appointments, I don't think so because it is a Federal Character issue here. Anybody that is spending his time now in early 2005 for the presidency in 2007 is only going to waste his resources.

So much has been heard about your tourism development programme. For those of us who have not been to Cross Rivers, would you throw more light on this especially in view of the international cycling competition that is being planned?

Our major focus is on tourism. We have two primary focal areas, agriculture and tourism and, over the last five and half years we have invested our resources, primarily in these two areas. Agriculture is doing very well now and it is growing. Fortunately, we have private sector participation in this

area. For tourism, we have the tourism circuit which flows from Calabar and it is also historical. The slave route, the contours from Calabar through the creeks to the waterfalls at Ikwu into the forest. We are having a very long kind of work going on there. This is a virgin forest and when you walk above it, you will be able to see the animals in the forest. Then you have the Monolith, which is stone caving dating to over 3000 years and of course the Ranch. I would like to describe the Ranch as the icing on our cake. It is an excellent land formation with mountains approximately 1700 decere above sea level. We have spent considerable time there developing it. We have an airstrip, which is being expanded into a modern airstrip with Instrument Landing System (ILS) and night landing facilities. We have a lot of accommodation, which is not enough. It will never be enough and we never want it to be enough because we really want people to move into the surrounding towns of Ogoja, Obudu and Ikom. For tourism to be meaningfully the local population should feel the impact of the tourists. That way, it contributes to the economy of the society. We want our people to convert their houses to guest lodges to accommodate people. The facilities at the Ranch will attract a lot of people. It has a huge water park at the bottom of the mountain. It has the cable car, which is the longest in the world, which allows you to see the incredible mountain formation. We have the Dairy farm, a honey factory and a whole golf course. There is also a bird sanctuary. Half of the verity of birds you find in Africa can be located in the Ranch. We have a jogging train, three restaurants, a presidential retreat and lots more. It is a first class facility and it will be ready by the middle of April this year.

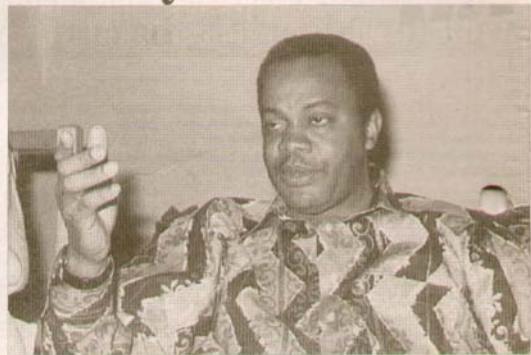
You undertook an aerial mapping of the state, which has been widely reported. What was the purpose of this exercise?

The first major thing we did when we came into office was to have an aerial digital map of the entire state, which shows the details of the entire houses in the state. It also shows the contours. We use it for planning; we are going to use it for the census because with it, you can

easily know how to do the demarcations. You can immediately have the approximate houses in an area, and know the approximate number of people in an area. We used it for the construction of the cable car. It was almost impossible to get the contours of the mountains, but that helped us. I think it is something, that the entire nation should have because it enable you helve at your fingertip where the boundaries are and you know the areas that you are in charge of and you know how you are planning. If you ask us what have we done that we are very proud of, I will say the auto-photography. It enables us to know our territory. When we have boundary problem and we bring it out, it enables us to solve it easily. You can immediately determine what is where and where the boundary should be. We are very proud of that. Recently, we signed a contract for what you could say is Africa's premier business resort TINAPA in Calabar. Tinapa is a business resort modeled after Dubai in context. In other words, it is a very large shopping complex. It also has leisure facilities like boat ride, jet sailing, cinema theater, bowling allies, casinos etc. Each of the auditoriums is like two football pitches put together. So, anything you can find in Europe, Dubai or the Far East, you can find in Tinapa. It will amaze you to know that 20% of the traders that goes to Dubai are Nigerians. We want to reverse that. We are not saying you shouldn't buy, but save your money and buy it in Nigeria. For us, all these will create traffic within the state and with that, there will be a multiplier effect on the people of the state. Transporters will benefit, hoteliers, restaurants owners, craft makers etc will benefit. We are putting all these in place and we are hoping and estimating that by the year 2008, we should be having about 3 million people coming as visitors to Cross River state annually. That will have a great impact on the economy of the state.

All these things you have enumerated must have cost the state governor a fortune.

The resources are not there, but we have done a lot of financial re-engineering. The Tourism circuit, right from the creeks to the Ranch and all other areas cost about N7 billions. We have been working on this now right from my first term into this



Governor Donald Duke of Cross River State

second term. We went to the capital market to raise funds and that was successful and we have expended that money and we are now paying back. The Ranch should be privatized by the end of the year. Eventually, all the investment that we've put in there will be gotten back. Tinapa is a private sector project and we are raising money from private sources. We believe that it can be done through a private/public sector partnership, which is what Tinapa is all about. But for the tourism circuit, it is difficult to sell the idea to the private sector right now. But having developed it, we will run it for about six months or one year and then, it will be easy to catch the viability of it and then, we can off-load it. We will have to privatize it for its sustainability.

You are a good friend of the Nigerian media and Charles Taylor is a renowned enemy of the Nigerian media. How comfortable are you hosting him in your State?

I think that makes me a perfect host (general laughter). I am in a situation where I arbitrate. On a more serious note, Charles Taylor has been very quiet and has comported himself very well. Don't forget that he has been in the trenches for a very long time. He is about 54 now and he has been in the trenches right from his 30s. Last week, I was with him and I told him to write his own story and let the whole world know what is going on there. I don't want to speak for him because it is not in my position to speak for him. I think that the incident about the Nigerian journalists is quite an unfortunate one. I hope one day he will be afforded an opportunity to express his regrets. Other than that, he has comported himself well and his children have settled into the schools.

In view of the fact that Charles Taylor is wanted to face the War Crime Tribunal in Sierra Leone, are you not

afraid of a possible sanction of corruption against the international community?

First, I do not want to speak for Nigeria. I think the President should do that. My brief actually is to host Charles Taylor. That is an optional thing, which any governor could have been asked to do. I do know that it was not a unilateral decision by Nigeria to grant him amnesty without due consultation with other countries not only in West Africa, but countries that are members of the UN Security Council. I also know that the decision of Taylor to leave office was voluntary. He volunteered to relinquish power in Accra. If you volunteered to leave power, only to be taken to court, then there is some conflict here. I think that the thinking behind all these was to get Taylor out of power so that peace can return to Liberia. Charging Taylor to court may satisfy the thinking of some people but how does that guarantee peace in Liberia? He is not just an ordinary folk in Liberia. He is a big fish and he still has a large following in Liberia. Recently, the Liberian parliament passed a motion saying that all those who were involved in the civil strife should be granted amnesty and immunity from prosecution and Taylor was specifically mentioned. So, this is the thinking of the parliament of Liberia. The Sierra Leonean court is not an ICJ court. It was set up by Sierra Leone and supported by the International community. You know the system in Sierra Leone totally broke down and they required help to get things started. But there is this conflict there. There is an underlying understanding that Nigeria is going to take him away primarily to promote peace. The issue of punishment will come later. The president has stated that if a democratic government in Liberia should request for Charles Taylor, he has no alternative than to hand him over; and Taylor himself has accepted this.

There is this allegation of corruption against the former IGP which has put to question the anti-corruption programme of the federal government. How would you react to this?

What I have heard about the Inspector General of Police is from the pages of newspaper. So, I am not really competent to speak on that. But I do hope that we take the issue of corruption seriously.

Recently there was this report about your certificates being forged. Although this has been denied, there is this belief that your coming to Zaria is to put records straight at ABU.

You see, in this politics, I hear all sort of things everyday. You sit down here and say you saw something in Russia. If you want to take me up on anything, certainly not on my qualification and background. Without meaning to be bashful, there are certain things that I consider sacrosanct and impeccable. I am possibly one of the few politicians in this country that uses a birth certificates. I have an original birth certificate. However, it is something I don't want to comment on because it is very childish. There is nobody who was in ABU between 1979 and 1982 that will say he does not know Donald Duke; in those three years, I did not just go through the University, the university went through me. I want to see anybody who was in Zaria within that period who would say he does not know Donald Duke. I went to the law school. You don't even need to ask a question about that because there is a register published by Gani and Gani would not have my name there if I did 'not go to law school. It was published in 1988. The Council for Legal Education updates the register every year. Everything is there. If you talk about my master's degree, go and ask the University of Pennsylvania. If they say I wasn't there, then prosecute me.

Inside Politics

2007: Support Buhari, if you mean well for Nigeria, Obasanjo challenged

Even as his 2003 electoral victory is still being challenged at the Supreme Court by the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd.), President Obasanjo has been urged to support his ANPP challenger for the 2007 presidential election to make good his professed commitment to the cause of Nigeria.

Throwing the challenge in an interview with *Daily Trust* in Abuja, the deputy national welfare secretary of ANPP, Alhaji Muhammadu Murtala said that with

By **Abdu Laharan, Group Political Editor**

Obasanjo's commitment to democracy in question the only thing that would salvage his image as a genuine statesman and patriot is to support General Buhari in 2007.

"Obasanjo professed patriotism and commitment to the cause of the nation will be put to the test in 2007. The whole world is watching and waiting to see who he will support to succeed him and if he supports any candidate other than Buhari then all his claims to wanting nothing but the best for Nigeria will

amount to nothing," he declared asserting that the ANPP flag bearer is the most qualified to solve Nigerians many problems.

The ANPP chief said that although the party was not looking beyond the 2003 presidential election, since it has taken its appeal to the Supreme Court, it however, considers General Buhari as its present and future flag bearer pending the ratification of that position at a future convention.

He accused those eyeing the party's 2007 presidential ticket as being spoilers as, according to him, all those who are touting themselves as

presidential hopeful cannot deliver their wards far less the country without invoking the "impeccable" name of General Buhari.

Alhaji Murtala who expressed confidence that ANPP would wrestle power from the ruling party (PDP) in 2007, asserted that the Nigerian electorate would not meekly submit to the subversion of their will "as happened in 2003" adding that "that history will never be allowed to repeat itself."

According to him, even those who connived in the manipulation of the results of the 2003 presidential election to deny ANPP victory, are now regretting their action and will therefore not allow the rape of the peoples mandate to take place again.

He said that the current PDP crisis and the sacking of Tafa Balogun as Inspector-General of Police were good omen for the party alleging that the police under the Balogun conspired with the PDP to deny Nigerians their choice during the 2003 general elections.

... as Group urges Nigerians to checkmate his dictatorial tendencies

A Kaduna based youth group, the Amalgamated Middle Belt Youth Organisation (AMBYO) has described President Obasanjo as a "civilian dictator" calling on him to resign from office with immediate effect.

In a statement signed by AMBYO national president and secretary, Chief Gabriel Idokoson Amufa and Comrade Musa Yahaya respectively, the group asserted that Obasanjo was not the messiah Nigerians

From **Hir Joseph, Correspondent, Makurdi**

had expected to lead the country from its perfidious past to a prosperous future.

The statement accused the president of causing current the crisis rocking the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) alleging that he (Obasanjo) is benefiting from the attendant confusion in the country.

Calling on all democracy loving and minded Nigerians and friends of Nigeria to

unite in opposition to Obasanjo's dictatorial reflexes, AMBYO warned that our democracy was headed for the rocks if Obasanjo is allowed to continue with his anti-democratic style of governance.

According to the group, Nigeria belongs to all Nigerians and not just one person for that person to be allowed to tinker with it as he pleases and therefore urged for a collective resolve "to fight this creeping one man dictatorship that is invariably leading our young democracy towards its Waterloo."

The group also condemned those it called "perpetual apologists" who never see any wrong in whatever those in power do even if the action is in conflict with national interest calling on Nigerians to expose and reject such "self-serving and unpatriotic Nigerians."

SE senators reaffirm support to Wabara

Amidst speculations that another leadership crisis is imminent in the senate, the South East caucus of the Upper legislative chamber on Tuesday issued a communique affirming its solidarity with the President of the Senate, Chief Adolphus Wabara.

Presenting the two point resolution, chairman of the caucus, Senator Fidelis Okoro said the Southeast senators commended the "sterling leadership qualities of Rt. Hon. (Dr.) Wabara and we urge him to continue his leadership style along the path of transparency and equity."

Okoro said the two-point resolution was arrived at following a meeting of the caucus at Wabara's country home in Ohamebe, Abia State last Thursday.

He said the meeting, which lasted eight hours, deliberated on state of the nation, the economy and equity in the federal set up, among others.

The caucus, Okoro said, was "fully satisfied with the high performance of the President of the Senate," and therefore decided to remain behind him.

Okoro presented the communique alongside

By **Habeeb I. Findiga, Political Reporter**

Senators Arthur Nzeribe, Uche Chukwumeriji, Ike Ekweremadu, Emma Anosike, Azu Agboti, Ken Naamani, Chris Adighije and Christopher Nshi.

Nzeribe had last year spearhead a move to impeach Wabara.

Daily Trust gathered that yesterday's declaration by the South East caucus may be a pre-emptive move against some voices of discontent in the senate.

Asked whether their decision was to foil any moves against Wabara, Okoro denied this, saying the resolution came as an affirmation of support ahead of the last leg of this legislative session.

On the reported support of the caucus to a Wabara Presidency in 2007, the chairman said though they never heard of the project, they would support it "if he (Wabara) likes to contest."

He said also that the caucus had not discussed the Anambra saga, because "the matter is being handled by higher authorities. We are products of a political party and the constitution of the PDP states that the party is supreme. Therefore since the party is handling it, we ought to wait."



Hon. Sani Sha'aban, (left) chairman House Committee on Pension in a *tete-a-tete* with Hon. Modibbo A. Ahmad, chairman House Committee on Banking and Currency during a seminar on Banking and Currency Operations in Nigeria held at Yur'Adua Foundation Abuja, recently.

NANs oppose political reform confab

The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANs) has kicked against the President Olusegun Obasanjo's Planned Political Reform National Conference, describing it and the method of selecting representatives as a charade and scandalous.

NANs Senate President, Comrade Ohimini Alechenu, who disclosed the association's position in a statement made available to *Daily Trust* in Jos said that the conference was an exercise in futility that will

From **Rakiya A. Muhammad, Jos Correspondent**

lead the government and the people of Nigeria to no where alleging that it is another attempt by the present administration to waste tax payers' money.

"We the Nigerian Students are vehemently opposed to the government's posture as we stand out that only a sovereign national conference is the panacea to Nigeria's problems," Comrade Alechenu stated.

According to the students association, a sovereign national conference would

provide the needed raw materials for the constitutional amendments and serves as the veritable basis for redefining Nigeria's focus as a nation.

NANs senate president reiterated students' rejection of the privatisation of hostel accommodation and any attempt to commercialise education.

"The senate secretariat also wish to state that, those who have indicated their intention to purchase hostels in our tertiary institutions should stay clear as we shall resist this inhuman and satanic sales of our collective heritage by some selected few as this is the hope for Nigerian students," he asserted.

Commenting on federal scholarship award, Comrade Alechenu said the award "is now a circus show" as recipients of 2003 have not been given their award while interview for 2004 has not been conducted.

While raising objection over the pattern and conditions for award, Alechenu said Nigerian students had insisted that the awards should reflect present economic realities even as they demanded uniform scholarship for all Nigerian students.

He also chided the federal government for its callous refusal to accept the error in excluding some of the students unions from the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC), and called for immediate redress of the situation.

New Marwa group debuts in South South

A new political group in the South-South geo-political zone, the South-South Youths Coalition (SOSOYOCOA) has emerged in the political scene to garner support for the Buba Marwa presidential bid in the zone come 2007.

The group has concluded plans to commence campaign across the geo-political structures of the zone including all the local government areas, wards and polling areas, and towards this end, the state chapters of the SOSOYOCOA have been constituted in all the South South states.

General co-ordinator of the SOSOYOCOA, Mr. Ken Jack stated in Calabar that the group was poised to

From **Bassay Ita, Correspondent (Calabar)**

bring Marwa to the South-South states and that the group is currently putting its acts together to ensure it establishes a firm stronghold in the area.

Mr. Jack's statement, which was contained in a fact sheet about the organisation's intention for a Marwa presidency in 2007, added that the people of the South South geo-political zone would welcome a Marwa Presidency because of the peaceful and committed disposition which his antecedents was known for.

"The aura that surrounds Marwa is that of peace and commitment to the development of the polity. His capacity and ability to

arrest the many insecurity problems in Lagos and his commitment to the development of Borno State when he was military governor of those states are enough antecedents to call for strong support for his presidential bid.

"We believe that such disposition will ensure a peaceful Niger Delta area and a developed entity for the South-South people in particular," declared the group.

The organisation, which is made up of youths from all the states of the zone, has however, mapped out far reaching programme with the ultimate aim of building a social structure for the actualisation of the Buba Marwa presidency in 2007, the statement added.



ALGON

ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF NIGERIA ABIA STATE CHAPTER

COMMUNIQUE

The Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) Abia State Chapter comprising chairmen of all the 17 Local Government Councils held an emergency meeting in Umuahia on Wednesday, January 12, 2005. The meeting was convened to address the issues raised in the January 10, 2005 edition of Tell magazine and credited to one Ama Abraham, a former special adviser to Governor Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State.

In the said publications Mr. Abraham made some wild and malicious insinuations deliberately concocted to cause disaffection among our people and smear our hard-earned reputation.

Having studied and discussed critically the issues raised in the magazine and considering the damage it is likely to cause if we chose to keep silent (which is what such a trash deserves) we have reached the following decisions:

1. We have never had any dealing with the said Mr. Abraham, either covertly or overtly, before or during his tenure as a special adviser, and therefore would not have gone to the Okija Shrine as he purported

2. Since we assumed office in June 2004, whatever deductions made had been done with the strictest sense of probity, transparency and accountability, and in total compliance with all existing laws.

3. The Governor has never been a part of the State Joint Allocation Committee neither has he ever come anywhere near the venue of the allocation meeting.

4. We condemn in unmistakable terms the incessant false publications in the media alluding to illegal deductions from local government allocations by the state government.

5. We advise all those engaged in this ignominious act to desist forthwith or else we will be forced to institute legal action against them.

6. Our colleagues from other states always feel baffled each time we discuss these malicious publications about illegal deductions since they know there is no iota of truth in them.

7. We advise anybody who is interested to know more about Abia State local Government Allocation to get in touch with the leadership of ALGON in Abia State.

8. We shall be compelled to seek legal redress if Mr. Abraham and the management of Tell Magazine failed to retract the said story and tender unreserved apology to ALGON, Abia State Chapter.

1. Elder Kaku Eke Kalu,
Chairman, Arochuku LGA

2. Barr. Emeka I.U. Kalu
Chairman, Obafia LGA

3. Barr. K.C. Ughoja
Chairman, Ikwuano LGA

4. Rev. Sam Green Ekeledo
Chairman, Umuahia North

5. Dr. G. C. Duru
Chairman, Aba South LGA

6. Prince Eleke Chukwu
Chairman, Aba North LGA

7. Chief Allen Nwachukwu
Chairman, Osisioma Ngwa LGA

8. Chief Chukwu Ngozi Chukwu
Chairman, Bende LGA

9. Chief Engr. Charles Ojukwu,
Chairman, Isuikwuato LGA

10. Hon. Ndukwe Adindu
Umuahia South LGA

11. Chief Friday Onukwue
Chairman, Isiala Ngwa North LGA

12. Chief Barr. P. Onwuka
Chairman, Isiala Ngwa South LGA

13. Chief Macaulay Obia
Chairman, Obingwa LGA

14. Chief Eze Nwanganja
Chairman, Ngwuhagbo LGA

15. Chief Joseph O. Adiele
Chairman, Ukwia East LGA

16. Barr. Chinedum Elechi
Chairman, Ukwia West LGA

17. Chief Chidiebere Ude
Chairman, Umunneochi LGA

SPORTS

AFRICAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP

Nigeria reach final

The Flying Eagles are through to the final of the African Youth Championship after beating Morocco 5-3 on penalties on Wednesday.

Kennedy Chinwo was the hero for Nigeria when he fired a hot-kick home to secure a 2-2 after the match had ended 2-2 after extra time.

Monrocco twice led in the match, and opened the scoring eleven minutes into the tie through Moussine Iajour.

Yet Solomon Okoronkwo equalised for Nigeria in the 53rd minute to take the match into extra-time.

Iajour fired Morocco into a 2-1 lead in the 101st minute, but Nigeria found a dramatic late equaliser through Obinna Victor Nsofor to take the tie to penalties.

The Samson Siasta-tutored Eagles will meet the winner of the second semi-final be-

By Ismaila Umara Lere, Group Sports Editor with Agency reports

tween hosts Benin and defending champions Egypt in Saturday's final.

Meanwhile, the head of the Technical Study Group, Adegboye Onigbinde has scored low the performances of the eight teams participating in the championship.

The FIFA/CAF Instructor also advised the four teams that have already qualified for the World Youth Championship to beef up their teams technically if they wish to perform well at the global soccer championship.

"So far it has been an interesting competition. But at the technical level, one is more concerned about the performance than result. Results are very important, but one wants to know if there has been an improvement in the

standard of our football.

"I particularly have not been happy about the standard of play in this competition. We have seen the eight teams displayed strategies and one has the fear that unless some serious work is done on all the teams representing Africa at the World Youth Championship, it

may be another sad story in Holland". Onigbinde told KICK OFF at his PL, Alejo Hotel, Cotonou.

"I also have a feeling that CAF itself is already getting worried. We were in Helsinki where all our teams at the Under-17 were knocked out in the first round of the championship. Also towards the

end of 2003 at Dubai championship, only one or two African team got to the second round of the competition and that was the end," the erstwhile Super Eagles handler pointed out.

"What gives one a lot of worry is the fact that before now, Africa commanded a lot of respect at the age group

competition, but that is not so any more. And if our performances are dwindling at age group level, then what is going to happen to our football in future? Because the boys playing right now are the African hope for tomorrow.

"That is why one would appeal to all the teams that have qualified to represent Africa in Holland to really work very hard and improve on their strategies," Onigbinde advised.

Flying Eagles get foreign contracts

Flying Eagles players have already started reaping the fruit of their labour in the ongoing African Youth Championship in Cotonou as not less than seven players in the team will jet out for trials while others will start new career with some clubs abroad after the end of the African Youth Championships.

Argentine Agent, Marcelo Houseman says he has concluded plans to take striker Obinna Nsofor and Kolawole Anubi to International of Port Alegre in Brazil while he had also talked to others in the team.

"I have already talked to Obediah Ifeanyi and Onyekachi Apam of the possibility of playing for Olympiakos in Greece. I am just waiting for the club's letter and another clearance from my partner Nikos Carras to formalize everything," Houseman, who saved the Flying Eagles from embarrassment by paying the bills for using the Hotel Marina pitch for the team's training for two days, told KICK OFF on Tuesday.

The FIFA Licensed agent also revealed "the players are moving to play in Brazil because they can not play in Europe now as a result of their ages which are below 18 years. By the time they play for three to four months there,

they will be ready to storm Europe," Marcelo said.

He also disclosed that, "Obinna will have the chance to launch himself to limelight by playing for International Port Alegre in the South America Cup, equivalent to UEFA Cup championship in Europe because many international managers will be there to watch Brazilian talents on display. You know that if they suddenly find a Nigerian on display there, then they will believe that he is good enough to play in such a high level club side." Marcelo told KICK OFF in Cotonou.

Tsunami benefit match finishes all square

Germany and a Bundesliga international select XI played out an entertaining 2-2 draw in a benefit match for the victims of the tsunami disaster that struck Indian Ocean coastlines on December 26.

The German Football Federation (DFB) hoped to raise up to four million euros for the estimated 200,000 victims and the German team contributed 200,000 euros for the flood victims in South East Asia before the match.

"The players wanted to give something themselves and we donated 200,000 eu-

ros to the cause," explained German international Michael Ballack.

A lump payment of 1.5 million euros will be allocated for the rebuilding of hospitals in the devastated Banda Aceh area of Indonesia.

"Even if it was just to build one hospital the match would be worth it," said Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder, president of the German Football Federation (DFB).

German manager Jurgen Klinsmann fielded eight regulars, including Bayern Munich duo Ballack and Oliver Kahn, in his starting line-up and after a minute's

silence his team kicked off proceedings in front of the 51,900 fans at the Arena Auf Schalke.

But it was the Bundesliga 'Allstars', sporting red strips and white shorts, who enjoyed the lion's share of the possession early on and had the ball in the net in the 20th minute through Dutch international Roy Makaay - only for the effort to be ruled out for offside.

Bernd Schneider put Germany ahead six minutes later with the Bayer Leverkusen midfielder curling a shot into the top corner after a clever feint.

Less than 120 seconds later Makaay scored again and this time it was not disallowed.

Brazilian Marcelinho of Hertha Berlin flicked a lovely through ball to Makaay and he unleashed an unstoppable first-time volley past Bayern Munich team-mate Oliver Kahn. "It was nice to score and I really enjoyed the game," enthused Makaay. "I think the fans who turned out also enjoyed the match."

Schalke favourite Gerald Asamoah restored Germany's lead scoring in front of his home fans on the half

hour mark.

The second half saw two different teams line up with Brazilian World Cup winner Lucio and compatriot Ailton coming in for the international XI while Arsenal's Jens Lehmann replaced arch rival Kahn in the German goal.

Lehmann had to pick the ball out of the net just six minutes after coming on as Slovakian international Marek Mintal, the top-scorer in the Bundesliga this season,

struck home the equaliser after some indecisive defending.

The Allstars had a good penalty shout turned down in the 77th minute when Schalke 04's Christian Pander, making his German debut on his home ground, felled Brazilian Ze Roberto.

Ailton also went close late on but Lehmann produced a point-blank save to ensure the match finished all square.

Italian FA opens way for synthetic pitches

Italy's leading clubs could be disputing Serie A matches on synthetic pitches as early as 2006, according to the president of the Italian Football Federation.

UEFA in November approved plans for artificial pitches to be used at national and club level from next season, but they are still banned in Serie A.

"We need to check that the latest generation of artificial pitches do not have a damaging effect on the environment or player performance," Franco Carraro was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Wednesday.

"Once we've done that I believe we can start playing Serie A games as soon as next year." The debate surrounding synthetic pitches is particularly lively in Italy, where many of the top clubs do not own their stadiums and are forced to share facilities with other teams.

The extra wear and tear leads to the playing surface becoming cut-up and in need of regular "refills".

The best-known example is the pitch at Milan's San Siro stadium, home of AC Milan and Inter Milan, who frequently blame the uneven playing surface for injuries suffered by their players.



Inter Milan's Alvaro Recoba of Uruguay, background, looks at his Nigerian teammate Obafemi Martins celebrating after he scored during the Italian Serie A match between Inter Milan and Chievo at the San Siro Stadium in Milan, Italy on Saturday.

Mourinho monitors Okoronkwo

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho is said to be monitoring the progress of Flying Eagles striker Solomon Okoronkwo with a view to taking the Hertha Berlin starlet to the London millionaires.

Argentine player agent Marcelo Houseman told KICK OFF in Cotonou, venue of the African Youth Championships, that the Chelsea boss has been impressed by Okoronkwo.

"Mourinho is my friend,"

Houseman told KICK OFF. "And I can tell you that he has special interest in Okoronkwo and he is monitoring the boy's progress with keen interest."

"Once he is eligible for a work permit, I am sure he will be closer to his dream move to Chelsea," Houseman stated.

The Argentine players' manager also disclosed that Solomon Okoronkwo will turn 18 in March and will be ready to play for his German club,

Hertha Berlin from then.

"Based on what I have watched so far, I believe Nigeria and Egypt will play in the final of this championship. Both teams have what it takes to win. They are fit, strong and technically balanced. But we shouldn't rule out surprise performance from the host, Benin Republic. But Nigeria looked good to win the (AYC) trophy."

Sports

AFRICAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIP

Matete condemns referee for poor officiating

Lesotho's coach, Sefophe Matete, has joined many others in condemning bad officiating of matches by some referees at the ongoing African Youth Championship (AYC) in Cotonou.

Irked by a seeming poor handling of the match between his team and Egypt, Matete told NAN that many of the referees' decisions were faulty.

"It's unfortunate that in the game of football, it is only one person that awards

penalties. Its the referee and his decisions are final," he said.

The team lost the match by 4-1 to Egypt. Coach Samson Siasia of Nigeria had also once criticised a referee for alleged poor officiating when the Flying Eagles pipped Cote d'Ivoire 1-0 on Saturday.

Eagles excited over minister's visit. Nigeria's Sports Minister, Musa Mohammed, is expected to visit the Flying Eagles' camp in

Cotonou this week where the boys are campaigning for honours at the championship.

The permanent secretary in the ministry, Solomon Matankari, disclosed that to NAN during an official visit to the camp on Sunday.

Already, the Eagles' camp, which got a hint of the proposed visit, is bubbling and full of expectations as the minister might bring some words of encouragement from President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The Eagles, armed with a

world cup ticket, have already landed in the semi-finals of the AYC slated for tomorrow in Cotonou.



Egyptian players celebrate victory over Lesotho

LOC officials in show of shame

There was a show of shame yesterday at the secretariat of the ongoing African Youth Championship in Cotonou as two top officials of the Benin Football federation, a deputy secretary and a secretary, threw decorum to the President of the federation, Martin Adjagodo and his deputy, Moucharaf Anjorin publicly exchanged fierce words over the supply of petrol to official vehicles.

The situation drew outright condemnation from soccer fans, drivers and journalists who witnessed the episode.

The open drama ensued when Anjorin visited his boss' office where his request for petrol was rebuffed, thereby prompting a shouting match to the surprise of all.

Striking-drivers defiant over feeding allowance

Striking-official drivers at the ongoing African Youth Championship in Cotonou say they may not resume work until tournament officials pay their feeding allowances.

The drivers, who downed tools on Saturday, have held tournament officials to ransom as transportation of players and top government officials became difficult.

But a press attache to the championship, Remmy Hounsou, told NAN that the local organising committee (COCAN) was not responsible for their allowances.

"The drivers are all civil servants deployed from the ministry of finance. We discover that there was no arrangement for their payments in the ministry but we are working to resolve the impasse," he said.

CAF commends organisers

Africa's soccer governing body CAF, says it is satisfied with the organisation of the African Youth Soccer Championship (AYC).

It said it was satisfied with the organisation of the tournament in spite of the killing of the Beninese goal keeper Semiou Yussouf.

CAF director of communications Suleiman Habuba, expressed the satisfaction in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Cotonou, venue of the ongoing championship.

"CAF is satisfied with the level of organisation because we have not received any major complaints from the eight participating countries and officials.

"So far, so good both on and off the pitch except the only major problem of an individual player who left his hotel and we know that something dramatic happened and he died," he said.

Habuba said that CAF had set up an investigation committee to find the goalkeeper's killers.

"Generally, the organisation is fine; the two venues, training grounds and logistics are all great.

"We have also received journalists from abroad including NAN, BBC, VOA, VON and from Mali, Cote d'Ivoire etc," he said.

The CAF director, however, said that the organisers had been advised

to improve on the area of playing the national anthems of participating countries.

He said that the noticeable lapse in that area was due to inexperience by the LOC.

"This is the first major international tournament to be held on their (Benin republic) soil, so, its difficult for them in terms of organisation and how to run some events.

"When some European journalists heard about the competition taking place in Benin, their first reaction was on how to send stories, but now you can see the equipment in the press centre.

"They all have internet connection with high speed, television, radio sets, photocopying machines etc," Habuba said.

NRA crisis deepens, Nnaji to register parallel body

The crisis which rocked the Nigeria Referees Association (NRA) last year is far from over as Mr. Ray Nnaji, who was at the centre of the problem, has completed plans to register a parallel body for the men in black.

Nnaji had hoped to contest for the coveted post of NRA President but could not after he went to court to contest his exclusion.

The Enugu-based referee, who wants officiating liberalised in the country, has concluded arrangements to register a new body to be known as Football Referees Association in Nigeria (FRAN) with the Corporate Affairs Commission.

Nnaji said FRAN had begun a membership drive among young school leavers, graduates, sports journalists, young athletes and football players as well as energetic members of public to join the

association.

"We will encourage football players to be part of soccer officiating. However, they will not practice where



Ibrahim Galadima, NFA boss

constituted unfair monopoly of refereeing in Nigeria even though it was not registered by the Corporate Affairs Commission.

He added that the decision to form a parallel referees body was based informed by alleged witch-hunting of those referees who supported his ambition for the NRA presidency.

"We found out that a

greater majority of our good and qualified FIFA-badged referees, who supported us during a run-down to the NRA election were left in the doldrums, some of them were suspended and even expelled. We feel that those people should be fairly treated."

Nnaji claimed that FRAN was formed over what he described as falling standard officiating in Nigeria.

Female 5-aside soccer kicks off in Lagos

The Female Football Interest Group (FFIG) 5-aside championship, kicked-off at the National Stadium, Lagos yesterday.

"The championship has helped the discovery of talents. In fact there is presently no player in any of the National teams that has not taken part of the championship," Smart Ebdodaghe, one of the organisers of the annual event, said.

According to him, the players were usually grouped into 16 teams, with a maximum of 15 players in each of the teams.

He said that the female footballers always look forward to taking part in the championship in order to showcase their talents.

Ebdodaghe explained that the championship had been running annually since the last five years. "We have been encouraged large turnout every year."

He said, the winner of the

championship would take home N25,000, while second placed team goes home with N10,000 and third placed gets N5,000.

Vmobile basketball tourney begins

Eight clubs are taking part in the week-long basketball competition sponsored by Vmobile Nigeria Ltd, the company's Executive Head in charge of North West Region, Mr. Babatunde Lawson, disclosed in Kaduna on Monday.

The competition is being held at the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna court.

Lawson said the competition was his company's contribution to sports development in Kaduna, adding that Vmobile would also begin the

renovation of some primary schools and provision of water by drilling boreholes. He said that prizes would be presented to the winners.

The state basketball association vice chairman, Malam Bashir Chidi, commended the company for sponsoring the competition.



AFN plans six zonal meets

The Athletic Federation of Nigeria (AFN) is to organise six zonal meets for home-based, under-23 athletes during the 2005 athletic season, according to its 2005 Competitions Programme released by the AFN yesterday in Lagos.

The meets which would hold as two-day events, will begin at the Liberty Stadium, Ibadan (March 4 and 5); the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium, Bauchi (May 25 and 26) and the U.J. Esuene Stadium, Calabar (April 29 and 30).

The fourth zonal meet will hold at the Nnamdi Azikiwe

Stadium, Enugu (May 6 and 7); the 5th meet would be at National Stadium, Abuja (May 21 and May 22), while the 6th meet will hold at the Dan Anyiam Stadium, Owerri from June 10 to June 11.

Other competitions include the Mount Cameroon Race, Buea, Cameroon on Feb. 14; the Djibouti International Half Marathon (Feb. 18) and the Afro-American Challenge which would hold in Abuja from March 11 to March 12.

The Dakar International Half Marathon is scheduled for March 12; the TINAPA Invitational Games, 2005 will hold in Calabar from March

18 to March 23, while the 13th IAAF World Cross Country Championships are slated for Saint Galmer, France from March 19 to March 20.

A National Senior athletic Championship is scheduled for Lagos from May 21 to May 22, while the African Championships in the Combined Events and Walking will hold in Tunis on May 22.

The Nkoyo Ibori National Games is scheduled for May 24 to May 28 in either Calabar, Asaba or Lagos, while the 2nd National finals of the Maltina Secondary School Relays Competition will hold in Lagos from June 10 to June 11.

Sports

Ogunjobi, others sent on compulsory leave

Embattled NFA Secretary-General, Chief Taiwo Ogunjobi, and his management team have been ordered to proceed on compulsory leave by the three-man probe panel instituted by the NFA board to investigate impropriety and administrative lapses.

Alhaji Sabo Adama Jumba, a member of the panel disclosed the letters sending them on forced leave were delivered yesterday.

Sports minister, Colonel Musa Mohammed (rtd.) had sacked the Ogunjobi-led management on grounds of corruption and administrative ineptitude but the management

Yusuf blames Oneya over Ogunjobi's contract

Two-time NFA secretary-general, Dr. Ahmed Tijani Yusuf, has blamed Brigadier-General Dominic Oneya for signing a fraudulent contract with Chief Taiwo Ogunjobi and other members of the NFA management staff.

Dr. Yusuf alleged that the former NFA board chairman breached the provisions of Decree 101, which empowers the Sports Ministry to make such appointments.

"Oneya had no constitutional rights to sign any such contract. It is the prerogative of the minister. So if he signs any contract it was a serious breach because such appointments are usually done by the Civil Service Commission.

"Again in an event where the civil service has exhausted avenues to fill the vacancies to no avail, the opportunity is then given to contract staff and the NFA chairman does not have the right to sign their engagement letters," he said.

Dr. Yusuf also alleged that the interview that brought in Ogunjobi "was a fraud," because proper procedures were not followed.

"We are all aware that the interview conducted for the jobs was a fraud. Qualified persons were not offered the job," he said, wondering why Oneya should accuse the sports minister Musa Mohammed of over-stepping his grounds even when he is the one to blame for perpetuating illegality.

The deputy director, who was eased out of the football house and replaced by Ogunjobi, said several individuals had sought to convince the then minister, late Mark Aki to play by the rules but to no avail.

Late Aki had begun a sweeping reform which overhauled the NFA management but did not live long enough to complete what he initiated.

By Patrick Andrew, Senior Reporter (Sports)

sought the intervention of FIFA who obliged them on the strength of the argument that the minister's action did not follow due procedure.

FIFA had said it was the responsibility of the NFA board and not the Sports Ministry to case out the management since it was the NFA chairman that

signed their engagement letters.

Consequently, the board constituted a probe panel headed by the vice chairman, Chief Gabriel Chukwuma, to look into the finances that accrued to the NFA within Ogunjobi's tenure and how they were expended.

The panel, which began sitting 11 days ago, has received submissions from

Chief Ogunjobi, Olabode Oke, the head of finance and administration, Jerome Mose, Tukur Babangida who headed international and national competitions departments respectively along with Samuel Kaalu, and Lizzy Onyenwenwa.

Trustports learnt that the other members of the management team exonerated themselves from blame while

accusing Ogunjobi and Oke of running an exclusive administration that denied them input in the daily running of the secretariat.

"I was not part of the budget, neither did I know of the details of funds that FIFA, CAF and other corporate organisations gave us nor was I consulted or even informed when expenses were made," a management staff said, noting that it was wrong

for the minister to have condemned every member of the management for the sins of one or two persons.

Nevertheless, the probe panel decided to order all to proceed on compulsory leave to allow them sufficient room to make their findings without hindrance, more so, as they (management personnel) have all testified. Fanny Aman takes over as acting scribe.

NFL is illegal - Galadima

The Nigeria Football League is not a legal entity. The new law establishing it has not been passed. It is therefore not proper to discuss things which are legalistic with the NFL," the NFA board chairman, Alhaji Ibrahim Galadima said in a swift reaction to demands for various contract documents the NFA entered in respect of the league.

The chairman asserted that it was improper to hand over legal documents to a body whose legal status he has no knowledge of, stressing that "lawyers would tell you that the NFL cannot sue nor be sued, since it is not yet a legal entity."

The leadership of the NFL had gone to the NFA secretariat to submit the league statute for ratification as well as demand

handover from the association especially those which have bearings with the league.

However, the NFA though accepted the statute but failed to oblige the other request, noting Decree 101 has no provision for the NFL and until the new operational instrument comes into effect, the league body remains an illegal organ.

"We are waiting for the legal status of the NFL to be sorted

out first. As at today, I don't know what the legal standing of the NFL is.

"Besides, the instrument that NFA operates on, Decree 101 has no provision for the NFL, so we cannot enter into any legal discussion with it."

The chairman said the NFA board would ratify soon, the statute of the league body, noting that it would be subjected to the same rigorous process that FIFA subjected the

NFA new statute to.

On the 10 committees recently constituted by the NFL, Galadima accused the league body of usurping its functions because FIFA gives the federation only such powers and not its affiliate.

"To ratify the statute calls for special deliberation. And I should think so because that's what FIFA did to us.

"However, fundamental issues must be addressed first

before they start setting up committees because that as yet rests with NFA. Though I can't say the committee is illegal but things must be done properly."

Galadima also expressed disdain over the proposed deduction of N50 million from its budget to the NFL. "NFA was never consulted nor part of the NFL budgetary processes that resulted to N50 million. And if it is NFA's money courtesy demands that we be consulted."

'League board can't appoint referees'

The president of the Nigeria Referees Association, Dr. Sam Jaja says the Nigeria Football League does not exercise authority over his members and as such, cannot appoint them to officiate in the league.

"The referees are affiliate of the national football federation as recognised by FIFA. They are never affiliated to the league board. So they do not have jurisdiction over the NRA.

"We therefore cannot submit the list of our

members to them to assign officiating functions. Only the NFA has that authority," Dr. Jaja said, noting that it would amount to an illegality to give the NFL free rein to assume functions that is statutorily not theirs.

"The NFL is a league body and by FIFA's Rules 763, it is only the NFA Referees Committee and not any other body that can appoint referees to officiate matches.

"FIFA specifically stated that under no circumstances should any other body exercise jurisdiction over the referees. In respect of our participation in the league, we are still discussing our position with the appropriate quarters."

He denied discriminating against some referees in the assignment of functions asserting that last season, some appointments made by the NRA were turned down. "The referees in most cases were not allowed to perform their job. But we have promised that nobody will compromise standard and whoever does so will be dealt with, sincerely."

He denied knowledge of a parallel referees body, noting refereeing is an hobby and not a business enterprise to be registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission.

Barister Ray Nnaji, who took the leadership of the NRA to court last year, heads the Football Referees Association of Nigeria, along with other aggrieved members.

He denied discriminating

Dr. Simon Ebohoziaye, Secretary-General of the Athletic Federation of Nigeria (AFN), who confirmed this to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Lagos, said the athlete was selected by IAAF.

Aghatise, 24, of the Nigeria Police, won a bronze at the World Junior Athletic Championships in

Kingston, Jamaica in 2002 with a jump of 6.34 metres. She also won gold in the event at the 8th All Africa Games in Abuja in October 2003 with a jump of 6.58 metres.

Earlier, two female athletes - Ibifuro Tobin-West, a long jumper and Glory Nwosu in the combined events - had undergone similar trainings at the IAAF Regional Development Centres in Dakar and Mauritius in 2001.

The IAAF has three Regional Development Centres in Africa - in Dakar, Senegal, Nairobi, Kenya and in Mauritius.

Aghatise leaves for Dakar on training

Esther Aghatise, a long jumper, left Lagos for Dakar on Sunday to train at the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) Regional Training Centre in the Senegalese capital.

Dr. Simon Ebohoziaye, Secretary-General of the Athletic Federation of Nigeria (AFN), who confirmed this to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday in Lagos, said the athlete was selected by IAAF.

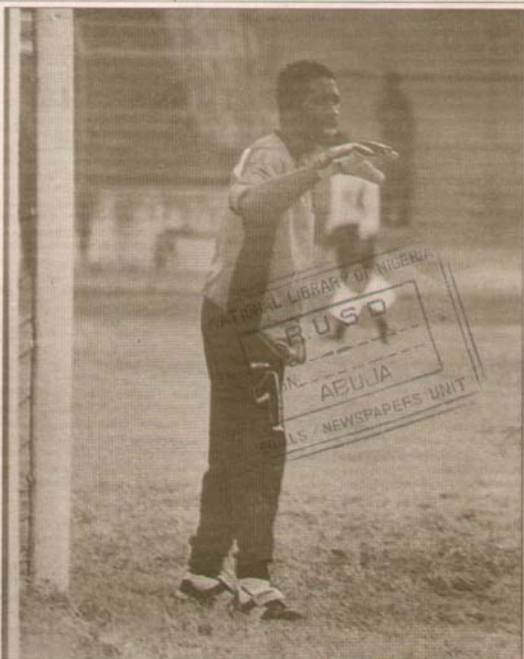
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She also won gold in the event at the 8th All Africa Games in Abuja in October 2003 with a jump of 6.58 metres.

Earlier, two female athletes - Ibifuro Tobin-West, a long jumper and Glory Nwosu in the combined events - had undergone similar trainings at the IAAF Regional Development Centres in Dakar and Mauritius in 2001.

The IAAF has three Regional Development Centres in Africa - in Dakar, Senegal, Nairobi, Kenya and in Mauritius.



Dolphins FC goalkeeper, Chijioke Ejiogu looking forward to his club's continental debut against Rinsascimento of Equatorial Guinea in the first leg of this year's CAF Champions' League preliminary round in Port Harcourt on Sunday.

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Tony Blair's Commission for Africa

Is'haq Modibbo Kawu
kawumodibbo@yahoo.com

"It is naive to assume that the glaring global economic inequalities are mere accidents of history, divorced from the dictates of political and economic interests. If anything, it is the policies of the rich countries that have strangled the economies of the poor countries." - Sipho Secepe, writing in South Africa's *Mail and Guardian*.

One of the biggest events of the development calendar in recent years was the launch on May 4, 2004 of the Commission for Africa, that was initiated by the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The new commission draws inspiration from the Brandt Commission, a panel spearheaded by the former German Chancellor, Willy Brandt in the early 1980s, which set out a similar plan for global development.

Earlier at the beginning of the 1970s, the Pearson Commission's Report, *PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT* had also received a rave review in many quarters, and was even hailed in the developing countries, as ushering in a new era, in the words of Abdurrahman Muhammad Babu, "a sort of turning point, in international cooperation for development." So from the Pearson Commission and the Brandt Commission leading up to the new Blair Commission, a lot has happened to the African peoples and societies. A feeling of *deja vu* is very appropriate here. We shall come back to this premise later.

But back to the Blair Commission for Africa. It is interesting to note the broadly ambitious canvas that was painted for the work of the commission. Blair had outlined that it would look at "economic issues, education, conflict resolution, health, the environment, HIV/AIDS and governance." Tony Blair was very worried about the depressing nature of the statistics in respect of the African condition. "Africa," he pointed out, "is the only continent to have grown poorer in the last 25 years."

Furthermore, Africa's "share of world trade has halved in a generation and it receives less than 1% of direct foreign investment. Forty four million children do not go to school, millions die through famine and disease or conflict and Africa risks being left behind."

The gloomy picture of Africa's underdevelopment was further taken up when Tony Blair visited the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa in October, 2004 for the second session of the Commission for Africa. Blair took a look at the world of the early 21st century, which he described as "a time of unprecedented wealth and opportunity for the world." Africa is however not within the frame of wealth and opportunity, because "Africa has not enjoyed the progress which other parts of the world have seen."

Tony Blair, a sincere Christian, if a leading imperialist politician, took a moral attitude to the despair which faces the African continent, and concludes that "this is wrong." "It is wrong," he went further, "that somebody's chances in life depend so starkly not on their talents or ambitions or how hard they work, but on where they are born... That is why NGOs from all over the world, in Africa itself, in Europe, in Asia and North and South America - are joining together to call on world leaders to Make Poverty History. That must be our aim. So there is a moral cause."

But there is a strategic purpose involved in this latest act of generosity for the African peoples. One that falls within the security calculations of the imperialist regimes of Great Britain and the United States. Blair adds that "we know that poverty and instability leads to weak states which can become havens for terrorists and other criminals."

He then used the platform to draw Africa into the orbit of geo-political security concerns of the Western nations more firmly. "Even before 9/11," Blair declared, "Al Qaeda had bases in Africa. They still do. Hiding in places where they can go undisturbed by weak governments, whilst they plan their next attack - which could be anywhere in the world, including right here in Africa, as we have seen. For these reasons, because it is morally right and because it is in our own interests, it is clear that Africa deserves the attention of the rest of the international community."

Membership of the commission is broad based, drawing in members as diverse as the musician Bob Geldof, K. Y. Amoako, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa; South African Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown and Nigeria's own Fola Adeola. They are seventeen men and women from government, business and civil society from around Africa and the rest of the world. Their job is to look at the evidence and then produce a comprehensive plan, for how the international community can support African development. It is expected that their report would be published this year.

Already, according to Blair, a few basic steps to help Africa have been taken by Britain to lead the way by doubling

its aid budget, so that "the UK would reach the 0.7% UN target by 2013." It would also invigorate the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative along with other elements of debt relief as well as "action to open up opportunities for business in Africa to grow faster by trading with the rest of the world."

It seems that despite the moral burden that Tony Blair has decided to carry in respect of the African condition, not much is likely to change, because the conceptualisation of the problems of the African societies has not shifted from the dominant paradigm located in its integration within the world capitalist system, a process that has been under way over the past five centuries or so. Blair, as a leading spokesperson for the Western world, does not see Africa's route



British Prime Minister, Tony Blair

out of the morass, other than the beaten path of further integration into the process.

From an African perspective however, it is pertinent to examine the basic assumptions that underlie the frankly racist, neo-Malthusian wielding of statistics about the condition of the African peoples. This is not because we dispute the veracity of the gloomy picture painted, but because they have been extracted largely as if there is something intrinsically wrong with Africans. But history teaches that Africa's state of underdevelopment is largely a product of its integration within an externally-responsive globalisation process that is to the benefit of the advanced capitalist countries, and to the detriment of the African peoples.

This process was deconstructed effectively in a post-script to Walter Rodney's *HOW EUROPE UNDERDEVELOPED AFRICA*, which was written by the African Revolutionary Intellectual, Abdurrahman Muhammad Babu, in 1971. Writing against the backdrop of the launch with so much fanfare of the UN's Second Economic Decade, a launch which included an appeal to the developed countries to be charitable and contribute '1% of their national income' for helping the developing countries, "as if," in the words of Babu, "the population of the world can continue to condone poverty so that the rich can be charitable!"

Babu leaning on the experience of the continent during the 1960s had posited that the 1970s "will experience the same disappointments which climaxed the end of the sixties." As we all now know, the seventies did not deviate from the gloom of the earlier decade, and would give way to the gloomier pictures of the 1980s; the 1990s called Africa's lost decade and the new millennium, despite the different commissions, such as the Pearson, and the Brandt commissions.

Babu had asked what was wrong. "Is it inherent in the very nature of underdevelopment that makes development

such an impossible task?" He felt that it was urgent to explore the issues, because the African peoples have borne the whole burden of all the difference experiments, imposed from outside our continent, mainly by the Western world. Africa's problem is rooted in the inability of its elite, especially those with access to power, to ask fundamental questions or even understand the need for those questions.

It is this reality which keeps us in a vicious circle of entrapment within the dominant paradigm that reinforces our dependency and deepens our underdevelopment. Take the issue of 'foreign investments' that has become the reigning mantra under the neo-liberal orthodoxy of recent times. Babu had located it within the history of African colonial underdevelopment, when he asked pertinently that "are we not underdeveloped now because we have been colonised in the past?"

He went further to explain that "there is no other explanation to the fact that practically the whole of the underdeveloped world has been colonised either directly or indirectly by the Western powers. And what is colonialism if it is not a system of 'foreign investments' by the metropolitan powers? If it has contributed to our underdevelopment in the past is it not likely to contribute to our underdevelopment now, even if the political reins are in our hands?"

These were thoughts that disturbed an African patriot as long ago as 1971, when those lines were written. In the thirty four years since then, the African cloud has become gloomier. The capacity of the African state to play a decisive role in the development process has been eroded by a combination of factors, the most important being the conversion to the neo-liberal paradigm. Unfortunately the underlining crisis remains unattended to.

For example, our economies retain the distortion inherent in production for a so-called world market, which in the words of Babu, was "founded on the hard rock of slavery and colonialism," and therefore our economies have remained colonial. The more we strive to produce for that market, the more of African resources are diverted from people's development. The material and technical base of our economies are responsive only to what the Western world is prepared to buy and sell, and not responsive to our internal needs.

It is important to underline that this unacceptable state of African affairs has been compounded by the debt crises. Africa owes about \$300 billion, but its debt is much greater than that of other regions of the world, for three reasons. First, the ratio of Africa's total debt to export earnings has been rising more rapidly than those of other regions; secondly, the ratio of Africa's total debt to Gross National Product (GNP) has grown rapidly and thirdly, despite incurring the highest borrowing growth rates, sub-Saharan African economies have grown slower than those in other developing countries.

These are the fundamental issues of the African condition. These fundamentals are not within the purviews of the Blair Commission for Africa. Blair wants some palliative that might ease the pains but above all, aid the strategic interests of the imperialist countries. The African condition must be overturned by the African peoples, within the context of our felt needs. Blair's Commission will go the ways of others before it, because it is not the way to liberate Africa from underdevelopment.

It is important to make the point that Africa cannot break the vicious circle of underdevelopment by relying on the charity of the political and economic forces of the Western world. These forces have largely defined the premise which ensured the underdevelopment of our continent as a result of the exploitative relationships that we entered into with them over several centuries. The truth is that they have benefited and continue to benefit from the extant state of affairs, and beyond window dressing, are not going to change the fundamentals.

The new-found concern of recent times must be understood within the context of contemporary strategic considerations of the imperialist powers, especially in the post-9/11 world. The American imperialists have defined the world in the frame of a war against terror. They also realise that the economic regimes imposed on the African countries from the mid-1980s, encapsulated in Structural Adjustment Policies have weakened the corrupt, post-colonial states all over Africa.

The alienation of the peoples of our continent from a non-caring state provides a fertile ground for the emergence of non-state actors that might unleash new forms of violence and terror, inimical to imperial interests in Africa. This is the context within which the Blair Commission must be understood. Africa's basket case must be alleviated for its sake, but above all; for the interest of the security of the Western world. Not much can come out of this type of mind set.

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