

## Group Defends Uba's Romance With The Clergy

A political organisation known as Anambra Democratic Alliance (ADA) has described as untrue the allegation that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate for the state, Andy Uba, has been making financial inducement to the churches.

President of the group, Victor Okoye, who made the refutation in Awka on Tuesday, however, accused some church leaders of campaigning for certain gubernatorial and national assembly candidates, insisting that it is unbecoming of their revered positions.

Okoye contended that the 2007 politics in Anambra State should not be reduced to mere backbiting and character assassination, warning that such acts of maligning opponents would overheat the polity.

"People should campaign on issues and not persons. When a candidate visits church leaders it is basically to seek their blessings and spiritual protections."

## Polls: Group Alerts UN Rapporteur

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers has been alerted about an imminent breakdown of law and order in Nigeria following the deteriorating situation of rule of law.

Access to Justice, an organisation that promotes independence in legal and judicial institutions and rule of law, alerted UN in a letter signed by its Executive Director, Joseph Chu'ma Otteh. The letter bore a personal address to Leandro Despouy, the Special Rapporteur, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland.

The letter was entitled, "Early Warning: Alert on Nigeria's Deteriorating Rule of Law Situation and Request for Urgent Intervention". It highlighted the dangers of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)'s apparent loss of independence, autonomy and focus to executive interventions even though the constitution provides for the electoral agency's independence. It stated how the refusal of INEC to abide by court decisions limiting its powers to disqualify candidates seeking elective offices under its organised-elections is making nonsense of the virtue of rule of law.

## Tanker Accident Claims 90 In Kaduna

No fewer than 90 people perished in an accident involving a fuel tanker in a village in Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

The accident occurred when the driver of the tanker containing fuel lost control.

Almost immediately the tanker fell on its side with fuel gushing out, the people of the village mobilised themselves to scoop the petroleum product.

However, a few hours later, the tanker went up in flames as a result of which all the people around were trapped and roasted alive.

The village was thrown into a deep mourning as there was no family that was spared the tragedy.

Even passersby were not spared in the tragedy. Jerry cans, buckets and containers used in scooping fuel were seen at the scene of the incident.

Kaduna State deputy governor, Ibrahim Yakowa, along with the state's Commissioner of Police and members of the State House of Assembly visited the scene of the accident.

The deputy governor lamented that the people had not learnt any lesson despite the loss of lives which had attended similar incidents in recent past.

# Militants Kill Four Policemen In Rivers

By Odudu Okpongete  
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT,  
Port Harcourt

Suspected militants in the Niger Delta on Tuesday morning killed four anti-riot policemen at the Ogbakiri Junction in Emuohua Council in Rivers State.

Sources said the armed men, who pretended to be men of the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) on patrol in the volatile community, killed the policemen about 4a.m.

The militants dressed in military uniform swooped on the po-

licemen stationed at the junction and asked them to come down from their vehicle and identify themselves.

In obedience to the command, the policemen who felt they were soldiers attached to the JTF began to introduce themselves one after the other only to be shot at closed range.

Unofficial police sources said the four policemen died on the

spot while the militants made away with their rifles and abandoned their corpses on the roadside.

Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Mr Felix Ogbaudu, who confirmed the attack to journalists on telephone, did not give details.

There were insinuations that the killing might be a reaction to the arrest and parade of sus-

pected militants in the area by the State Security Service (SSS) in Port Harcourt on Sunday.

The state Director of SSS, Mr Kola Adesina, had on Sunday placed N5 million bounty on Prince Igodo, believed to be the kingpin of the militants who is still in hiding.

Ogbakiri, which is said to be one of the hideouts of the militants, had been deserted by the natives since 1999 following protracted communal conflicts that resulted in the destruction of entire homes and loss of several lives.

## Momoh Identifies Bad Leadership As Bane Of Nigeria

By Victor Ebimomi  
REPORTER, Lagos

Nigeria could have become one of the economic and political heavy-weight nations in the world if the country had not suffered from lack of good leadership.

This was the consensus of speakers at the public presentation and launch of a book titled "Leadership Challenge: Gani Adams and Oodua People's Congress" in Lagos on Tuesday.

Former Minister of Information, Tony Momoh, while commending Adams, for his contributions to the growth of Nigeria lamented that "we lack leadership" and then advised "all of us to learn to be leaders".

Adams is a leader of the Yoruba youth militant group, Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC).

According to Momoh, any leader is so called because he is a servant, stressing that any leader who leads as a master is bound to be a failure.

He described Adams as an institution and OPC as a peaceful organisation "wanting to mould a people in a polity that lacks discipline".

Adams, in his own speech, noted that leadership remains a major challenge to the country.

He pointed out that the hallmark of true leadership is measured and evaluated by the responsibility and the challenge of personal example.

"The major problem that confronts Nigeria as a country of multi-ethnic nationalities and indeed the African continent is leadership challenge. This challenge has posed a big question mark at the different levels and sectors of our society on leadership which must be addressed drastically", Adams said in his welcome speech.



Minister of Federal Capital Territory, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai (left), Minister of Commerce and Industry, Dr Umar Aliyu Modibo (middle) and Minister of State for Finance, Mr Elias Mbam, at an extra-ordinary meeting of the National Council on Commerce and Industry in Abuja... on Tuesday.

Photo: Jide Oyekunle

## PTDF Gets \$10m To Train 2,500 Engineers

By Charles Okonji  
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT, Lagos

The Federal Government has approved \$10 million (about N1.3 billion) for the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF). The money would enable the organisation to train about 2,500 Nigerian engineers overseas.

The Executive Secretary of PTDF, Alhaji Kabira Mohammed, disclosed this on Tuesday at the International Local Content Conference 2007.

He noted that the 2,500 engineers would be trained in collaboration with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

Mohammed spoke through PTDF's Manager, Legal Department, Mr Balarabe Ahmed.

He stressed in a paper entitled: "Manpower Development and Capacity Building Strategies for

Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry," that the training of the engineers is to improve the quality of the nation's manpower in the petroleum industry.

He pointed out that the Overseas Scholarship Scheme (OSS) was a combined effort of PTDF, which is aimed at making post-graduate courses in the areas relevant to the oil, gas and solid minerals industries available to Nigerians.

The PTDF boss stated that the organisation has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a few universities and Kaduna Refining and Petrochemical Company (KRPC) on research into some areas of the oil and gas industry.

He admitted that PTDF has not made any significant impact on capacity building of the manufacturing sector, stating that the

organisation has concentrated on critical areas like engineering, fabrication and welding.

"That is what we are concentrating on now. Of course, we believe that it is part of our mandate and sooner or later, we have to extend to such areas so that we enhance the capacity and capability of the manufacturers' products. They can provide goods and services to the oil industry," he said.

PTDF, which is a branch of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, funds the scholarship, while Univation, a commercial company of Robert Gordon University, manages.

Since the Scheme's inception, Univation has placed over 100 graduates in MSc's in top universities throughout the United Kingdom and plans to place a further 100 graduates in the coming academic year.

## We Didn't Dump Toxic Waste In Nigeria - Shell

By Bassey Udo and  
Charles Okonji, Lagos

Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) on Tuesday denied reports that it has dumped toxic waste in the country.

The company was reacting to the recent reports in the media alleging that its Managing Director, Mr Basil Ominyin, and 19 others were charged to court.

SPDC said in a statement that it has never been involved or charged in

connection with dumping of toxic waste anywhere in the country as alleged.

It admitted though that the Federal Government had filed some charges at the Federal High Court in Abuja against the company and some other corporate organisations, including some individual employees of these organisations.

The company explained that the case was in respect of some radioactive tools belonging to one of SPDC's contractors, which allegedly went

missing in transit between the company's Ogunu jetty and the contractor's work site at a rig location in SPDC's western swamp area.

The main charge against SPDC, the statement stressed, was that the company allegedly stored, handled and transported radioactive tools from the jetty to the rig site without authorisation from the Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority.

Radioactive sources, according to SPDC, were routinely and widely used globally to differentiate oil from

gas in well formations and the company, like other operators, had contracts with technical companies, which were licensed to own and operate such tools.

SPDC noted that these companies were responsible for importing, storing and transporting such tools to and from the locations where they are needed, adding that these technical companies carry out well evaluations to help determine the presence, nature and volumes of oil or gas in a well.

## Obasanjo Says No To Interim Government

By Chesa Chesa  
STATE HOUSE, Abuja

President Olusegun Obasanjo has dismissed suggestions that an Interim National Government may be foisted on the country after May 29 if the general elections fail to hold as scheduled.

He spoke at a State Banquet held in his honour after the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential campaign rally in Katsina.

The President said the notion of an Interim National Government

was the creation of "mischief makers and enemies of the country".

He reassured Nigerians that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is fully prepared to conduct the general elections as scheduled on April 14 and April 21.

Obasanjo said the people should stop "criminalising and undermining" the commission by their unguarded and mislead-

ing utterances on the state of its preparedness.

He said INEC should be supported by all patriotic Nigerians to succeed in its arduous task of conducting free, fair and credible elections to usher in new administrations at the state and federal levels.

Obasanjo stated that as head of government and leader of PDP, he would never encourage, support or countenance electoral malprac-

tice in any form.

He also gave an assurance that adequate security measures would be taken to maintain law and order at polling stations across the country.

The President thanked the people of Katsina State for massively endorsing the PDP's choice of Governor Umar Musa Yar'Adua as its presidential candidate.

The governor's remarkable humility and dedication to serve his country had endeared him to the PDP leadership, his colleagues and the entire country, he stated.