

## Group Demands SNC On N'Delta Crisis

By Emma Maduabuchi  
SNR CORRESPONDENT, Lagos

A group, Coalition of Ethnic Nationalities in Nigeria (CENN) has joined those calling on the Federal Government to convoke a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) as a means of addressing the crisis in the Niger Delta region.

In a communiqué after its meeting on July 18, the group also called for withdrawal of troops from the region, granting of amnesty to militant fighters in the region and the release of Henry Orkai and other detainees in the interest of peace.

Claiming that the people of region are disposed to peace and peaceful resolution of the crisis, it stated that it was unfortunate that the Federal Government was insincere and paying lip service to its determination in addressing the issue of injustice in the region.

In the communiqué signed by its Leader and Host, Wernipre N. Digfa, Chairman, Fredrick Fasahun, and General Secretary, Bright Ezeocha, the group also called for quick investigation into the spate of kidnappings in the region, which according to it, was not caused by freedom-fighters but by forces outside the region, who want to make gains from prolonging the crisis.

## INEC Enjoins Edo People To Collect Permanent Voter Cards

By Francis Onoibhola  
SNR Correspondent, Benin

Resident Electoral Commissioner in Edo State, Aniedi Abasi Ikioyak, has appealed to the people of the state, who registered during the last registration exercise to collect their permanent voters' cards from INEC offices in the local government areas of the state.

He made the call on Wednesday at Afuze Owan East Local Government Area in an interactive forum with stakeholders in the council area.

Ikioyak told the people that he was in the council area to educate the stakeholders on the need to go and collect their permanent voters' cards and also to enlighten them on the procedures to be adopted on ward creation.

Emphasising the importance of the permanent voters' card, the Resident Electoral Commissioner disclosed that permanent voters' cards replace the temporary ones issued to voters in the last registration exercise.

## Vigilantes Arrest PHCN Cable Vandals

By Chukwujekwu Ilozie  
REPORTER, Onitsha

Five persons have been arrested for vandalising Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) property, thereby plunging some parts of Awka, Anambra State capital and other parts of the state into darkness.

St. Mary area of Awka has been in darkness in the last one month due to the activities of vandals.

District Manager of the company in Awka, Ben Nworehu, told *Daily Independent* in an interview in Awka that two persons suspected to have vandalised and stolen PHCN cables in St. Mary area were arrested by vigilance men.

Their activities, Nworehu said, caused the blackout experienced in the area.

He added that three other men were arrested at Onitsha for selling suspected stolen PHCN cables.

"We sent our men to buy electric cables at Onitsha. When they came back with the cables we discovered they were PHCN cables stolen from one of the locations. So, we sent the men back with some security operatives, who arrested them. They are now in the police cell while the other two in the custody of vigilance men", he said.

# Flood Submerges 16 Houses In Awka, Two Feared Dead

By Okey Maduforo  
CORRESPONDENT, Awka

Two persons were feared dead on Wednesday in Awka, the Anambra State capital, following flood occasioned by a downpour between Tuesday night and Wednesday morning.

It was gathered that a roadside vulcaniser standing on the edge of the canal along Zik Avenue was swept away by the flood and a seven-year-old child, on an errand, was also lost at UNIZIK junction.

Also affected were four additional buildings apart from

## Set Aside Power Panel Report, Lawmaker Tells FG

By Felix Uka  
Correspondent, Abakaliki

The Rilwan Lukman-led committee report that recommended that about \$85 billion would be spent to guarantee stable power supply, has been described as frustrating and scary.

Senator Anthony Agbo made the call on Wednesday, saying that the money allocated to the power sector had most times been misappropriated.

He, however, advocated engagement of independent marketing agency in the sector as in the telecommunication sub-sector, which led to GSM investments.

His words: "I had earlier called on the Presidency to declare state of emergency on the power sector, which the President has done, but I felt concerned with the report of the committee with the submission that \$85 billion would be spent for Nigerians to have stable power supply. I feel that such report is frustrating and frightening. So, I'm calling on the President to set the report aside."

Agbo, former Speaker of the old Enugu State House of Assembly, spoke to *Daily Independent* in his Abakaliki home, stating: "I do not imagine that our neighbouring countries that have stable power supply spent such money, the report is outlandish to me."

In the interim, he said, the Presidency should step up measures to improve power supply to the pre-Obasanjo's administration, improve from there and discussions should begin on the independent marketing agency.

On road construction, he said he regretted that in many instances roads are budgeted for and were done. He, however, commended Yar'Adua's administration for approving reconstruction of some roads across the country including the Southeast zone.

# No Tension In Assembly, By Delta Speaker

By Tunke-Aye Bisina  
SNR Correspondent, Asaba

Speaker of Delta State House of Assembly, Martin Okonta, has refuted report in a newspaper that there was

12, which are always submerged by Iyagu flood anytime it rained.

A breakdown of the situation showed that two churches, a hospital, residential buildings and two petrol stations were involved.

Three vehicles were also swept away by the flood but later recovered on Wednesday morning by sympathisers and rescue team.

*Daily Independent* gathered that but for the ongoing channelisation work on Iyagu waterways by the state government more casualties would have been recorded.

Speaking with journalists at the scene of the incident, Coordinator, Awka Environment Watch, Osita Obi, who is also a member of the state's implementation committee on the channelisation, said work was ongoing as "you can see and we are making efforts at creating more drains and opening blocked underground drains to ease off water".

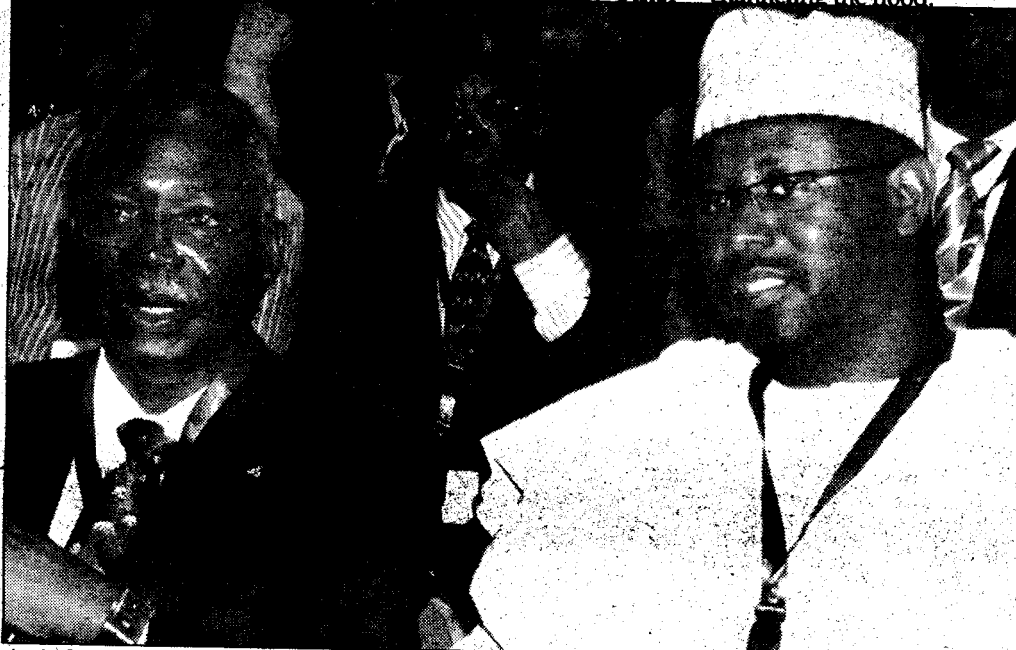
Meanwhile, inhabitants around Iyagu waterways and part of St. Johns road, Awka have started evacuating their property to safe places in the state capital to avert being caught napping any other

time.

Already two buildings have already been vacated by the occupants, but efforts to speak with the landlords of the affected houses proved abortive.

Similarly, an American-based environmentalist, Ikenna Ellis Ezenekwe, who spoke with journalists, raised an alarm of a possible outbreak of epidemics in the area.

He said the residents should make provision for water catchment pits as well as high converts in front of their buildings, urging them to embark on neighbourhood efforts at re-channeling the flood.



Agriculture and Water Resources Minister, Sayyad Abba Ruma (right), and Group Managing Director, First Bank Plc, Jacobs Ajekigbe, at an International Conference on Food Security, in Abuja on Wednesday. PHOTO: Jide Oyekunle

## NCP, UAD To Protest Military Deal On N'Delta

By Rafiu Ajakaye  
SNR Reporter, Lagos

United Action for Democracy (UAD) and National Conscience Party (NCP) will on Saturday hold a joint rally in protest of the military deal the Presidency signed with Britain in resolving the crisis in the Niger Delta region.

The rally will hold in Benin to register public displeasure over the deal, which according to the groups, would threaten the sov-

ereignty of Nigeria, UAD Convener, Abiodun Aremu, Secretary, Taiwo Otitolaye, and Southwest Coordinator, Wale Balogun, told a press conference in Lagos on Wednesday.

"We are fully involved in the rally holding in Benin on Saturday, which would be led by the National Conscience Party (NCP) to reject the security deal and have sustained regular contact and solidarity with Nigerians in Britain, who are also mounting opposition against the deal. We urge Nigerians at home to brace up to attack the British government's interests

across the country should there be any indication of her interest in the state violence against the militants and people of Niger Delta", UAD said.

Aremu said the deal undermines the sincerity of Yar'Adua on solving the problem of the region within 100 days of assuming office and described him as a 'lame-duck President', who is not bothered about the plight of Nigerian children that have been at home for the past four weeks and teachers, who are legitimately demanding the implementation of the Teachers' Salary Structure (TSS).

## Customs To Generate N324b Before Year End

By Harris-Onkon Emmanuel  
CORRESPONDENT, Warri

Barely five months to the end of the year, Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has set a target of making revenue of N324 billion into the coffers of the Federal Government.

Federal Government has asked NCS to generate revenue of about N204 billion this fiscal year.

Comptroller-General of NCS, Hamman Bello Ahmed, who made the disclosure in Warri while on a working visit to Delta/Edo

Area Command, expressed optimism that the revenue target is realisable and urged men and officers of NCS to redouble efforts so as to achieve the goal.

According to him, this is only way to improve pay package and finance capital projects.

He also made a call for the entrenchment of a culture of professionalism in all facets of operations, adding that NCS has remained in doldrums for too long apparently due to the pre-shipment regime

and charged men and officers to wake up from their slumber as a new dawn has emerged, stressing that 48 hours new clearing policy would be a mirage if they don't seat up.

"I want you to be better officers so that we can maintain our jobs and meet expectations. The law authorises NCS to board a vessel or aircraft for inspection but over the years, the Navy and Police have taken over our responsibilities as regards oil sector".

## Cabal Wants To Stop My Return -Imoke

By Bassey Inyang  
CORRESPONDENT, Calabar

Former Governor of Cross River State, Liyel Imoke on Wednesday declared that a 'cabal' and some detractors are planning to stop him from flying the flag of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the rerun election.

The rerun poll was ordered by the Appeal Court sitting in Enugu following the annulment of the governorship election in the state.

Imoke made the declaration while addressing a crowd at the reception organised for him by members of the state's PDP and the state government at the Cultural Centre, Calabar.

He arrived Cultural Centre at about 1.30 p.m, where he told the crowd that the fight against the cabal was not yet over, hence they should work hard to ensure that their opponents do not truncate their desire to give their mandate to the preferred candidate.

"They have gone to greater length seeking means to prevent me from contesting the rerun, having seen that the people of Cross River State want Imoke. They are still trying to steal your mandate. It is your mandate. I only ask you to pray that God vindicate me. Pray that the right thing be done. Pray that whatever day INEC will choose, Cross River State will make a statement to Nigerians that we have a unique state and the people are hospitable. People, who are honest and sincere, committed, dedicated and peaceful. People that are loving and are the only one who will decide who will be the next Governor of Cross River State."

"There are those who will prefer that Cross River State is run by a cabal, whereas the state belongs to all of us. Cross River State belongs to you and me and it is your mandate that was stolen."

"The mandate is yours and it is for you to give it to whoever you choose."

"There are those who will prefer that we do not give contracts to our people. There are those who will prefer that we do not implement due process. There are those who will prefer that we do not develop", he said.

## Lady Dies In Inferno

By Harris-Onkon Emmanuel  
CORRESPONDENT, Warri

Tragedy struck on Wednesday at Ovin-Aghbarho in Ughelli North Local Government Area in Delta State, as a lady in her mid-twenties was burnt to death in a mid-night inferno.

The lady whose name was given as Ruana, a hairdresser, was staying with her police boyfriend in one-room apartment of a bungalow, which fire gutted.

According to Mrs. Blacky Enaahwo, the owner of the house, the fire sparked off from a candle light, adding that the fire started at about 12 mid-night.

She said she has on several occasions warned the deceased and her lover against using candle.

It was gathered that the remains of the deceased has been deposited at the Aghbarho General Hospital mortuary. Meanwhile, rehabilitation of breakwaters and dredging of East-West ports will cost the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) N16 billion, according to its Managing Director, Abdusalam Mohammed.

Mohammed made the disclosure while chatting with stakeholders in Warri during an official visit.

Addressing a cross section of the stakeholders, he informed that the challenges of repositioning the Port was enormous and, therefore, solicited the cooperation of the stakeholders in the new formed partnership with the organised sector.

"The current management does not have programmes on his vocabulary but challenges, we believe that for us to achieve our objectives as a port authority, we need to relate with the stakeholders of our commercial organisation, without this we can not be able to surmount the challenges on ground", he said.

mises on Tuesday and heavy security build-up over an alleged plot to suspend two members.

But Okonta, speaking before the commencement of the House sitting of Wednesday, said there is no truth in the report, adding that Tuesday's sitting was very calm and members were very lively in their deliberations.

"In the light of the foregoing, I wish to say that there is no tension in the House. The insinuation that security was beefed up at the main gate of the House is not true," he said.

He, however, urged the public to disregard the report and also appealed to journalists to always crosscheck their facts before going to press.