

Senator calls for attention on road network

By Emmanuel Aziken

ABUJA—SENATOR Tokunbo Ogunbanjo (PDP, Ogun East) has expressed concern over what he called the increasing accident rate on the Lagos-Ibadan expressway and demands commensurate attention on the nation's network of inter-country roads as given air travel.

Speaking against the background of Monday's accident on the expressway that claimed the lives of seven aides of Governor Rasheed Ladoja of Oyo State, Senator Ogunbanjo regretted that the authorities had seemingly failed to respond to the gravity of the situation of that road which he claimed was consuming blood on a regular basis.

While appreciating the concern of the authorities and stakeholders on the need to improve the safety of air travel following the crash of Bellview Flight 210, Ogunbanjo said that it, however, remained a fact that road accidents consumed more lives than air mishaps all over the world.

"That road is terrible and I believe that something urgent needs to be done about it," Senator Ogunbanjo told Vanguard in a telephone interview yesterday.

"That road is a death trap

and it is more ironical that it is an important linkage between most sections of the country and the nation's commercial nerve centre.

"The road which should ordinarily have been a two lane expressway is now virtually a single lane in critical sections and the situation is compounded by trailers and traders who fence off portions of the road, in fact it is no longer an expressway," he said.

Harping on the need to boost safety standards on the roads to the level given air travel in the country, the lawmaker said:

"I still believe that air travel is still the safest means of travelling all over the world. The number of fatalities from air crashes is infinitesimal to the fatalities that accrue from road mishaps."

"If you check the number of casualties from air crashes in a whole year you will see that we lose more than that from the accidents that happen on our expressways in a month. I agree that efforts should be made to make air travel safer, but closer attention should be paid to road travel. More people travel by road than by air and this should compel the authorities to make our roads safer. Particularly the Lagos-Ibadan expressway, it is undulating, curves here and there, it is a death trap," Senator Ogunbanjo concluded.

Chairmen, board members are part-time appointees — Ekaette

By Chris Ochayi

ABUJA—SECRETARY to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Chief Ufot Ekaette, yesterday issued a code of conduct to all appointed members of Boards of Federal Government parastatals, warning them against usurping the functions of the chief executives.

Chief Ekaette gave the charges in Abuja during the inauguration of the board of six parastatals under his purview, which include Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, Utilities Charges Commission, National Commission for Refugees, National Lottery Regulatory Commission and National Lottery Trust Fund Board of Trustees.

According to him, "experience over the years has shown that there are always problems in the relationship between boards and the parastatals as well as the supervising ministry/office.

I, therefore, intend to highlight some of the issues in order to insulate you from the experiences of the past and draw attention to what you should be familiar with, if only to engender team work, cooperation and harmonious working relationship between the boards, the management of the parastatals and my office."

"Chairmen and members of the Board are part-time appointees. They should not assume full-time and executive functions, which are re-

sponsibilities of the chief executives. In other words, they should not interfere in the day-to-day running of the parastatals, but should provide policy guidelines for the smooth operation of the parastatals."

He said, "where the enabling laws provide for full-time Chairman and Commissioners, the role of the Director-General/Secretary as the Accounting Officer should be so recognised in order to avoid constant friction between the Chairman and the operating officer."

Chief Ekaette who noted that, "the Chief Executives and management staff of parastatals are guided by Public Service Rules, Financial Regulations and Extant circulars in the performance of their functions," added that "Board members should as much as possible familiarise

themselves with rules, regulations or extant circulars, so as to guard against unintended situations of issuing instructions or demands which extant rules and regulations do not support and which public servants will find difficult to comply with, thus running the risk of erosion of their authority."

He explained, "on the other hand, the Chief Executives of parastatals and their management staff must place the totality of their knowledge and expertise at the disposal of their Board members so that the system is made proactive in terms of preventing the Board from taking faulty decisions or making irregular demands."

According to him, "the approved channel of communication between the Board and the parastatals is the Chief Executive."

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The sponsor is the Volkswagen Foundation of Hannover, Germany, under its new funding initiative on "Knowledge for Tomorrow Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa." An award has been made under this initiative to the University of Jos and five partner universities in Sudan, Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, and Germany. The title of the project under which the award was made is "Sharia Debates and Their Perception by Christians and Muslims in Selected African Countries."

All proposals falling within the overall project title will be considered, but in Nigeria proposals on the following topics will receive special consideration: (1) the history and current position of debates on implementation of sharia in the southern parts of Nigeria, including the "independent sharia panels" recently instituted in the south; (2) the role of women in sharia implementation in the north since 1999, and its effects on them.

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Deadline: 30 November 2005. No application received after close of business on this date will be considered.

Contact person: Dr. Philip Ostien, Faculty of Law, University of Jos, PMB 2084, Jos, Nigeria. Phone: 0803-700-0313, E-mail: ostienp@unijos.edu.ng, ostienp@yahoo.com

We regret that more details cannot be given here, but the cost is prohibitive. For more information about the overall programme, minimum qualifications for awards, award benefits, what the proposal should cover, and selection procedures, please send a request by e-mail to Dr. Ostien.



AWARD: From l-r; Dr. Adhiambo Udaga, Ford Foundation; Juliah Wood, North South Development & Ndidi Nwaneli, LEAP Africa at the Global Micro Entrepreneurship Awards held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja. Photo by Abayomi Adeshida

Muslim group calls for independent commission to investigate corrupt public officers

ABUJA—THE Nigerian Muslim Network (NMN) has called for the setting up of an independent commission to investigate all public office holders charged

with corruption. In a statement in Abuja, the body stated that the commission should be constituted by the attorney general and given full powers and jurisdiction to handle such investigation.

It noted that although the EFCC has so far discharged its duties admirably, it however expressed the belief that it would be more prudent to use an independent commission rather than an entity formed by the presidency.

It urged all Nigerians to eschew corruption in all its

forms and play a leading role in creating awareness about combating the menace of corruption in the country. The network attributed the suffering of vast majority of Nigerians to high level corruption in the country. It said that "billions of naira that should have been used to provide services are perpetually siphoned to foreign accounts or misappropriated by corrupt officials entrusted to manage these funds."

The statement signed by the NMN Secretary General, Malam Saleh Abdullahi, urged

the EFCC to demonstrate high level of discipline, professionalism, fairness and justice in all its activities to expose corrupt practices in the country.

"We are disturbed by the apparent slow pace of the prosecution of indicted public officials in our court system," the network added.

While commending the progress so far made by the EFCC, the network expressed regret over the inability of the commission to prosecute some officials involved in corrupt related offences.

MCF enjoins muslims to eschew evil conducts

ABUJA—AS Nigerian Muslims join their counterparts in celebrating Eid-Fitr, they have been advised not to go back to the evil ways they abandoned during the 30-day ramadan fast.

This was contained in Eid-Fitr messages issued yesterday in Abuja by some Islamic societies and associations to mark the end of the fast.

In a message, Chairman of the Muslim Consultative Forum (MCF), Imam Nurain Dindi, urged Muslims to see the last 30 days as a training

ground for the remaining 11 months ahead.

Dindi reminded Muslims to continue the good deeds they demonstrated during the month of ramadan after the expiration of the fast.

In his message, the Coordinator of Movement for Islamic Cultural Awareness (MICA), Abuja chapter, Mr. Mufadil Bakare implored Muslims to continue to do charity and remember the less privileged in the society after the ramadan.

Bakare advised muslims to

celebrate the festive period with moderation and not allow all the lessons learnt during ramadan "to be of no effect."

In a related development, the Obafemi Awolowo University Muslim Graduates Association (UNIFEMGA), Abuja chapter, congratulated all Muslims for successfully completing the fast.

The association reminded muslims to fear Allah in their endeavours, saying the purpose of fasting was to have self-restraint and follow the dictates of Almighty Allah.