

# New Strain of Bird Flu Detected in Nigeria

United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Agency (FAO) has announced that it has discovered a new strain of Avian flu never reported in Africa in Nigeria.

THISDAY gathered that tests conducted by Nigeria and the FAO showed that the new virus strain, similar to strains identified

**From Constance Ikoku**  
in Washington, D.C.

last year in Italy, Afghanistan and Iran, is genetically distinct from other forms detected from the country's outbreaks in 2006 and 2007.

"It seems unlikely that wild birds have carried the strain to

Africa, since the last migration of wild birds from Europe and Central Asia to Africa occurred in September 2007, and this year's southerly migration into Africa has not really started yet," International Wildlife Co-ordinator of FAO's Animal Health Service, Scott Newman said.

According to Newman, inter-

national trade or illegal and unreported movement of poultry may have been other ways through which the virus reached Nigeria, adding that this could increase the risk of the virus spreading to other parts of the region.

"Many countries have succeeded in getting the virus under control; but as long as avian influenza remains endemic in some countries, the international community needs to be alert," says FAO's Chief Veterinary Officer, Joseph Domenech.

Meanwhile, the FAO has called for stepped up surveillance to monitor the virus and keep track of its spread. The avian flu, or H5N1, has impacted more than 60 countries since the epidemic began five years ago in Asia, and most nations have eliminated it from poultry.

In Nigeria, bird flu was contained after being found in 25 states. FAO has a team of animal health experts and veterinary epidemiologists working with the country, the UN said.

## Aviation Probe: Senate C'ttee' Summons Usman, Aondoakaa

Senate Committee on Aviation, probing the N19.5 billion Aviation Intervention Fund has summoned the Finance Minister, Dr Shamsudeen Usman, the Attorney General of the Federation, Mr Michael Aondoakaa and Accountant General of the Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Dankwambo, to appear before it tomorrow over operations of the controversial Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) Account.

The Committee, headed by Senator Anyim Ude, said yesterday in a statement issued in Abuja, that the trio would explain "the warehousing of the BASA Fund domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria."

"They were to appear on Monday, June 30, 2008, but the Attorney General of the Federation had, through a letter, communicated to the Committee that he traveled out of the country for an official assignment," Ude said.

The Committee, in the two-page statement, signed by its Clerk, Victor Abiorade, explained that it was difficult for a new date to be fixed for the meeting before the Senate went on recess last month, "since the Attorney General and Minister of Finance were at differ-

**From Sufuyan Ojeifo**  
in Abuja

ent times not available."

The statement noted that Aondoakaa would shed light on the legal impediments, if any, why the Committee's directive in January, this year, for management of the BASA account to be transferred to the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), within one week was not complied with.

The meeting, at which the directive was issued, had issued a

communicate which stated in part: "the Accountant-General of the Federation is to transfer management of the BASA Fund to NCAA by effecting a change of signatories."

"This action of transfer of BASA account to NCAA is consistent with Section 75 of the Civil Aviation Act, 2006. The Honourable Minister of Transportation and the Honourable Minister of Finance are to facilitate the change and ensure that action is completed within one week, from January 28, 2008."

## 'Don't Politicise Suspended NDDC Chairman's Travail'

A non-governmental group under the aegis of Concerned Niger Delta Citizens, has warned some political groups in the region to desist from politicising the scandal involving suspended Chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Ambassador Sam Edem.

In a statement signed by Mr Duoye Diri, former Sports Commissioner in Bayelsa State, the group said the ploy by a group, Patriotic Niger Delta Mothers, to

resume their campaign of calumny against other top members of the NDDC, is nothing but malicious mischief.

It argued that "the alleged plot of Edem to kill Timi Alaibe should not be used as a ploy to visit Alaibe with another kind of death by the so-called Patriotic Niger Delta Mothers," adding that "if they are truly mothers, they should rejoice over the failure of the plot, not introduce this base and dehumanising politics into a matter as serious as life and

death."

The Patriotic Niger Delta Mothers, had in a paid advertisement yesterday claimed that the scam was a vindication of their claim that the Commission was corrupt and should be probed. The same group, three months ago, had made wild allegations against the Commission in paid advertisements.

But Diri, in the statement, pointed out that there is no direct correlation between Edem's plot and accountability or lack of it in the NDDC, and so "the ignoble plan of Edem, a part-time member of the Board cannot now be used to justly undermine the Commission and its operations," adding that the NDDC has been executing its mandate dutifully.

"It is grossly illogical for this faceless group to accuse Alaibe of corruption, whereas, the reason why Edem wants Alaibe dead is, to enable him have his way in the Commission. If Alaibe was conspiring with Edem, why would he want him dead?", he asked.

## EC Grants to EFCC Now \$32m, Says Waziri

Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) Chairman, Mrs Farida Waziri, has disclosed that grants given to EFCC by the European Union now stands at \$32 million.

In a welcome address at the commissioning of EFCC's Data Centre yesterday in Abuja, Waziri said the grant covers strategic areas as enhancement of its operational and institutional capacity through provision of equipment and training, development of a sustainable state of the art and IT solutions, to enhance national, regional and international cooperation.

She also said the grant covers support for advocacy and increased public awareness about EFCC, support for development and piloting and implementation of a comprehensive framework to strengthen judicial integrity and capacity.

The Centre will serve as a repository of data for the EFCC, which was funded by the European

**From Ali M. Ali in Abuja**

Commission (EC), while the United Nations office on Drugs and Crimes implemented development and deployment of the applications and infrastructure.

Speaking also at the occasion, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Michael Aondoakaa, reiterated the Federal Government's

zero tolerance of corruption and resolve to fight it to a standstill within the ambit of the law.

"As an administration anchored on the rule of law, we desire to achieve zero tolerance for corruption by prosecuting the war on corruption within the ambit of the law. We can fight the crime and enforce the law within the ambit of our Constitution. We are determined to fight corruption decently as civilised people."

## 'UBEC Trained 1m Teachers in One Year'

Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) said yesterday that it has trained some one million teachers between 2005 and 2006 to ensure the success of the UBE.

A statement from UBEC yesterday in Abuja, said Dr Ahmed Modibbo, Executive Secretary, disclosed this on Monday in Yola, during a graduation cere-

mony of the Ahmadu Ribado College.

The statement signed by Public Relations Officer David Apeh, quoted Modibbo as saying that the beneficiaries were trained on basic skills and teaching methods.

"The beneficiaries were made up of 30,798 primary school teachers, 671,971 care givers and

136,475 junior secondary school teachers," it said.

"They were trained on various methodologies of teaching, effective school management, computer skills and HIV/AIDS awareness," the statement added.

"We attach great priority to the continuous professional development of teachers to maintain high standard in the system," the Modibbo said.

### BRIEFLY

#### Assembly Orders Contractors to Use Standard Materials

Yobe State House of Assembly yesterday ordered contractor handling construction of the N1.3 billion ultra-modern hospital at Gashua, to use standard building materials to avert building collapse. The Assembly Committee on Health, while on inspection tour of the project, discovered that substandard building materials were used by the contractors and directed the Commissioner for Housing, Architect Mohammed Saleh, to call him to order by stopping the use of substandard materials. It was learnt that the building materials, especially the blocks, were tested and found to have failed the test of the committee on building materials. Speaking on the development, the committee Chairman, Honourable Musa Gamcho Tella, told reporters in Damaturu, the state capital that, "the contractor handling this hospital project has faulted the terms of contracts by using sub-standard building blocks and materials. The cement blocks being used in the building of the hospital are not only sub-standard, but failed to meet the committee's verification and certification requirements of on-going health project."

#### Fire Destroys N10m Property

Tragedy struck in Enugu Onicha, in the once troubled Onicha Local Government area of Ebonyi State, when property worth about N10million was completely destroyed by fire. The mystery fire razed a 12-room bungalow in the area, housing more than 25 residents. Though no life was lost, the inferno left the entire community in utter shock, as they kept wondering what would have caused the tragedy. The landlady, a widow, Mrs Roseline Onu, was hospitalised over shock. Items destroyed by the fire include, cash, a mini market, two motorcycles, six television sets, one generating set, sewing machine, two video cameras, musical equipment and food items, among other valuables. Early callers at the scene of the incident, including member representing Onicha West State Constituency, Mr Michael Ude-Umantia and Coordinator of Ezeukwa Development Centre, Honourable Chigbo Uzor, described the incident as very tragic. A displaced resident and an eye-witness, Mr Benson Ikwaagwu, told THISDAY that the fire started at about 12 noon when everybody was out, adding that the cause of the fire was still a mystery, as neither was the house electrified nor anybody at home when the fire started. "Nobody was at home when the fire started; the owner of the house is a widow who lost her husband last year. The house has 12 rooms with a mini supermarket. Nothing was removed from the house because the whole rooms were locked and before we could break in, it was too late," he said. Ude-Umantia expressed shock at the extent of damage, noting occupants of the building lost all their belongings. He said "in fact, I'm deeply saddened to note that people from this constituency have to face this, meaning that they are homeless, so I'm absolutely in mourning mood."

#### Kano Empowers 500 Youths with Equipment

Youth empowerment equipment worth millions of naira have been distributed by the Kano state government to 500 youths in furtherance of the state government's youth development drive. Speaking during the graduation of the youths who were trained under the auspices of the state directorate of youth development, the state governor, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, stated that the scheme was part of the administration's human development initiative. According to him, "human development is the best dividend of democracy hence our resolve to accord more attention to youth and women empowerment in view of their position in the scheme of things." Governor Shekarau said the government did not only prioritize job creation for youths to alleviate poverty but as a matter of policy integrated moral reorientation in its youth development programs to make beneficiaries respectable citizens.

#### Shekarau Tasks Council Chiefs On Transparency

Kano state governor, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, has warned local government officials in the state to be prudent and transparent in managing public funds, saying they would be called to account for their actions before God. At a two-day retreat for the local government top functionaries and officials of the state Hisbah board at Zaramda Hotel, Bauchi state, Governor Shekarau went philosophical saying: "as Muslims, you should bear in mind that you would stand before God in chains on the Day of Judgment. It is your transparency, accountability, and integrity that would set you free." Governor Shekarau stressed the need for them to effectively and efficiently manage the human and material resources entrusted to them, pointing out that the ultimate goal was to give the people the much desired good governance. He charged them to complement the efforts of the state government toward ethical rejuvenation of the citizenry, saying a morally deficient society would not be appreciative of the numerous developmental projects embarked upon by the tiers of government.

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•Former Senate President, Senator Ken Nnamani (left) and Trustee Chairman, Joint National Association of Persons With Disabilities



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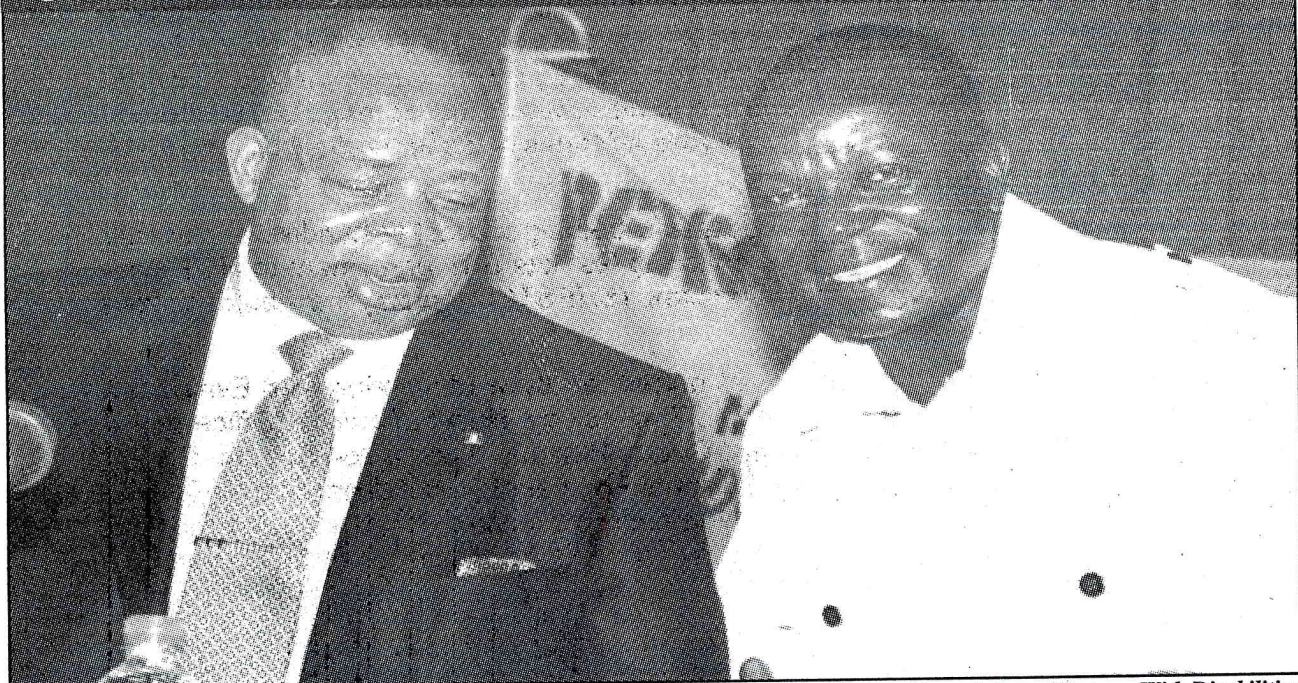
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## SUPPORTING PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED...



•Former Senate President, Senator Ken Nnamani (left) and Trustee, Chairman, Joint National Association of Persons With Disabilities, Senator Anthony Agbo, at the inauguration of the United Association of Physically Challenged Persons of Nigeria held in Abuja on Monday

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