The Nigerian parliament, the National Assembly, has been called upon to promote transparency and accountability in the country by urgently passing the Freedom of Information Bill currently before it.

The call formed part of the resolutions of a recent workshop on 'Contentious Issues in the Review of the 1999 Constitution' organised in Abuja by the Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR), a network of civil society organisations.
Participants at the workshop implored the law makers to approach their oversight functions with higher sense of responsibility, and to ensure that the National Women policy which provides that at least 30 percent of all positions should be occupied by either sex, is supported by law.

The workshop identified the contentious issues in the review of the 1999 constitution to include Federalism, Affirmative Action, Political Parties/State Independent Electoral Commissions, Resource control, Religion, State Police, and National Conference. It appealed to the Federal Government to revisit the review of the constitution by appointing an Independent Commission and issuing a time table to guide the exercise.

DELE GIWA: OPUTA REPLIES CRITICS

The Chairman of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC), Justice Chukwudifu Oputa (Rtd), has said that he is not disturbed by comments of those who are imputing political motives to the recommendations of the commission, especially as they affect the murder of the late Editor-in-Chief of Newswatch magazine, Mr. Dele Giwa.

"With my experience in life, I don’t think things like that bother me again… What is important is that an assignment was given to us by our country and we did it very well to the best of our knowledge, without fear or favour from any quarters,” Justice Oputa said in an interview with The Punch newspaper.

Loyalists of former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, had sneered at the commission’s report, claiming that it was a hatchet job, targeted at combusting the presidential ambition of the former military leader.

Oputa refused to comment on the politics of the report, contending that the matter was subjudice.

Babangida and two of his erstwhile security chiefs, General Haliru Akilu (Rtd) and Colonel Kunle Togun (Rtd) had gone to court, seeking orders to stop the implementation of the commission’s report as it affects the murder of late Dele Giwa.

NAWOJ WARNED AGAINST HOLDING CONGRESS

More than a month after it banned beats associations operating in the establishments of its affiliates, the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) has warned female journalists operating under the umbrella of National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) against holding a congress slated for later in the year.

Mr. Ray Ekpu, President of NPAN, who gave the warning in Port Harcourt, South-East Nigeria, said NAWOJ and similar
beat associations operating as an arm of journalism
industry remained banned.
> The NPAN president affirmed that the only body recognized
> by the Nigeria Press Council within the media industry
> remains the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ).
>
> “In other words, NAWOJ and all the others that are
> parading themselves as an organisation within the media
> industry are doing so without recognition, and they will be
> stopped,” Ekpu said.
>
> Despite the ban, it is common knowledge in the media
> circles that beat organizations still thrive in Nigeria.

PRINT MEDIA

PUNCH RAISES ALARM OVER POLICE HARASSMENT

The management of Punch Newspapers has raised alarm over
alleged intimidation and harassment of its staff by
officers and men of the Nigeria Police.

In an editorial in its edition of Tuesday July 16, 2002 The
Punch said it was disturbed by “evidence that some
members of the Nigeria Police Force may have identified
Punch as the deadly foe of the police.”

The newspaper noted that “almost daily, in the last
few weeks, staff of the newspaper have been harassed,
abused and threatened at various check points in the Lagos
metropolis. The trend is so noticeable that it is now
hazardous for staff of the company to produce their
identity cards on demand by the police.”

It attributed the police hostility to their grouse over the
critical coverage of the recent police killings at
checkpoints in Lagos. It, however, observed that no aspect
of its report on the killings had been refuted by the
police authorities.

“What sections of the police probably resent about
the paper is its commitment to publishing the facts as they
are. But the police would be fighting the wrong enemy if
they direct their aggression against Punch for dutifully
holding up a true mirror to them,” the paper
declared.

In a related development, the Lagos State Council of the
Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), has appealed to the
State Police Commissioner, Mr. Young Arebamen, to stop the
harassment and intimidation of journalists by policemen,
especially those mounting roadblocks and those conducting
“stop-and-search” operation in Lagos.

The union, in an open letter to Arebamen, complained that
policemen had made it their duty to harass journalists
especially those carrying Punch identity cards.
DAILY TIMES PETITIONS JUDICIAL COMMISSION

The Daily Times of Nigeria Plc. (DTN) has dragged a judge of the Kogi State High Court, Justice S.I. Leslie, to the National Judicial Commission over alleged professional misconduct in a Libel suit brought against the newspaper by the Kogi State Governor, Prince Abubakar Audu.

In a petition sent to the Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Mohammed Uwais, the Managing Director and Chief Executive of the DTN, Dr. Onukaba Adinoyi-Ojo, accused the judge of bias against the DTN, its managing director and the Sunday Times Editor, Mr. Tunde Ipinmisho.

Adinoyi-Ojo alleged that following the suit instituted against the DTN after its publication of the purchase by Audu of some exotic houses in Europe and America, Justice Leslie, against the tradition of fair hearing, proceeded to grant the injunction without ensuring that the parties in the suit had been served.

“In fact, we have been reliably informed that Justice Leslie was on a two-week casual leave to attend a course on pastoral work at Living Faith Church, Lokoja, when he signed the injunction in his house at 8 p.m,” the DTN alleged.

BROADCAST MEDIA

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) is to work with all the Departments of Mass Communication in the nation’s universities to ensure quality manpower for the broadcast industry.

NBC’s Director General, Malam Danladi Bako, said in the latest edition of the commission’s in-house journal, that the research and planning department of the commission has been mobilized to liaise with such institutions in the country with a view to achieving its vision for the production of quality mass communication graduates.

Bako said the training programme would encompass the rules and codes of broadcasting, to familiarize the students with what they would be confronted with in real practice.
Nigeria: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY URGED TO PASS INFORMATION BILL
Published on Pambazuka News (https://www.pambazuka.org)

> MICROSOFT SEEKS COOPERATION ON PIRACY
>
> The private sector has been called upon to assist the
government to combat the scourge to piracy in Nigeria.
>
> Microsoft’s Marketing and Anti-Piracy Manager in
Nigeria, Meekam Mgbenwelu, who made the call, disclosed
that Nigeria has the highest piracy rate of 71 percent in
West Africa.
>
> “This shows that seven out of every ten personal
computers in use are running pirated software”, he
added.
>
> He noted that intellectual property (IP) rights in the
country have been relegated to the background, adding that
Nigeria may be hindered from enjoying the gains of the
information age if piracy is not tackled.
>
> According to him, “software piracy blights the
economic landscape, crippling opportunities for the viable
take off of the country’s software industry and sends
a negative message to potential foreign investors,
particularly those interested in information
technology,” he said.
>
> IILL’s $100m LOAN: LONGE, FIRST BANK TRADE TACKLES
>
> With the Federal High Court in Lagos fixing July 31, for
hearing in the suit brought against First Bank Nigeria Plc
by its former Managing Director, Mr. Bernard Longe, the
battle line is drawn between the two parties.
>
> Longe who was in the employ of First Bank for 33 years is
contesting his June 13 dismissal for allegedly unilaterally
disbursing $111.7 million to the promoters of Investors
International (London) Limited (IILL) in their bid to
acquire 51 percent equity share of the Nigeria
Telecommunications Limited, contrary to corporate financial
regulations.
>
> The former Chief Executive, through his lawyer, Chief
Rotimi Williams (SAN), is seeking among others, an order
that the bank’s board of directors erred in
dismissing him, a reversal of the decision as well as
compensation to the tune of N136,614,584.
>
> Longe, in a newspaper adversarial last week denied that he
acted alone in granting the loan to IILL, alleging that his
removal was a conspiracy.
>
> But the Bank insists that Longe stands guilty of non-full
disclosure on the credit to IILL.
>
> He was said to have failed to ensure full protection for
the bank on the transaction in which he was accused to have
overshot the bank’s lending.

Page 5 of 9
Nigeria: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY URGED TO PASS INFORMATION BILL
Published on Pambazuka News (https://www.pambazuka.org)

> First bank, had last year granted IILL $111.7 million to
> enable it pay a mandatory deposit of 10 percent for 51
> percent stake of NITEL.

> First Bank’s management have obtained the services of
> Chief Richard Akinjide, SAN, former Attorney General and
> Minister of Justice and Dr. Hameed Kusamota, to represent
> it in the case before the Federal High Court, Lagos.

> NCC BEGINS PROCESS OF LICENCING SECOND CARRIER
>
> The Nigerian Communications Commission on July 18, 2002
> began the process of receiving applications from
> prospective operators of the Second National Operator
> (SNO).

> By the timetable contained in the “Information
> Memorandum and Application Instruments”, successful
> applicants at this stage will, on July 30, 2002 proceed to
> the financial stage, after payment of the stipulated
> deposit.

> Announcement of the three highest bidders is expected to be
> made on August 9, 2002 while the successful bidder has
> until Friday, August 30, 2002 to effect payment of the
> requisite license fee.

> The SNO license is made up of a National Carrier License,
> an International Gateway License and Digital Mobile
> License.

> REPS ACCUSE GSM OPERATORS OF FRAUD
>
> The leading operators of the Global System of Mobile
> telecommunications (GSM) in Nigeria, Econet Wireless and
> MTN, have been accused of defrauding subscribers to the
> tune of N12 billion.

> The Ad hoc committee of the House of Representatives, the
> lower arm of the Nigerian parliament, investigating the
> operations of the GSM companies, said the sum represented
> the losses incurred by subscribers on account of the GSM
> operators’ billing system.

> The committee led by Hon. Tony Anyanwu, in its report to
> the House, claimed that its computation of the cost to
> Nigerians of the average time loss per user, based on the
> pre-paid services of both MTN and Econet, showed that
> subscribers lose a third of the call-time guaranteed by
> their respective refill cards due to the arbitrantress of
> the billing system.

> “Consequently, for every refill card purchased, the
> subscribers lose on the average the sum of N500 in the case
> of MTN and N333 to Econet. It said when these base figures
> are applied to the declared profits by MTN recently, the
> firm would be seen to have defrauded its Nigerian
The committee advised the Minister of Communications and
the Nigeria Communications Commission to design the best
possible means for the GSM firms to ensure a refund of the
fraudulently obtained N12 billion to subscribers, while all
incentives to them be withheld until their tariffs are
slashed to N10 per minute.

Reacting to the report, Afam Edozie who is in charge of
MTN’s marketing operations said the move to regulate
prices for GSM services was against free market enterprise,
adding that “it does not make business sense.”

Stressing the promise of a free market environment at the
beginning, Edozie said, “it is very important that
when we set rules in an industry we have to stick to the
rules.”

Similarly, Mr. Titi Omo-Etu, the Chief Executive of
Cyberchuul, cautioned the House against the use of
executive fiat to force down GSM tariffs, as it could be
counter productive.

He said that rather than using legislative might to enforce
GSM tariff review, the House of Representatives should
monitor the activities of the executive arm of government
with a view to ensuring the provision of infrastructure
needed for the smooth operations of the telecom sector.

Meanwhile, the NCC has promised to set up an arbitration
panel to protect GSM subscribers in the country.

NCC’s Chief Executive, Mr. Ernest Ndukwe said the
panel will look into complaints by consumers and give
redress to complaints while guilty operators would be
fined.

ADVERTISING

NPAN GIVES AGENCIES ULTIMATUM TO PAY N800m DEBT

Advertise agencies indebted to members of the Newspapers
Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) have been given
two weeks to settle their debt.

The ultimatum, which expires at the end of July 2002, was
the high point of the National Executive Council (NEC)
meeting of the association held in Port Harcourt,
South-East Nigeria.

Total indebtedness of the agencies to the print media is
put at about N800 million, “Our rough estimates is
that the print media is owed about N800 million by the
advertisement agencies. A lot of the debts have remained
unpaid for a long time, and the agencies have been riddling
the media on this stage and we thought it was time to take
firm action to recover our money”, Mr. Ray Ekpu, president of NPAN said.

He said the ultimatum was merely to reiterate a position earlier adopted at a media summit in Abuja, some months ago.

LETTERS

(We begin, this week, to publish the feedback we have been receiving from our readers).

MIN, A REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT

The issues you report in MEDIA IN NIGERIA are judiciously chosen and the reports themselves quite illuminating. Overall, a remarkable achievement.

Keep up the good work.

-Prof. Olatunji Dare
Bradley University, USA

CUTTING OFF CORRUPTION

I enjoyed the MEDIA IN NIGERIA edition of 01 July 2002, especially its news analysis titled “Journalism in Danger”. I believe that the gangrene of corruption needs to be totally cut off from Nigerian journalism if our democracy must survive.

-Dr. Tunde Babawale
Dept. of Political Science
University of Lagos, Nigeria.

-----ENDS----

TO CONTRIBUTE:

Participation by way of contributing ideas to MEDIA IN NIGERIA is encouraged. Opinion articles should focus on issue(s) reported in this publication and be at most 1000 words (for full articles) and 200 (for letters).

Contributions should be sent to Akin Akingbulu at:
mediainnigeria@yahoo.com [2] OR imeso@hyperia.com [3] OR imesoimeso@hotmail.com [4]

TO SUBSCRIBE/UNSUBSCRIBE:

If you want to subscribe, simply send a message to mediainnigeria@yahoo.com [2] OR imesoimeso@hotmail.com [4] saying you want to subscribe to MEDIA IN NIGERIA. If you no longer wish to subscribe, send a message that you no longer wish to subscribe to the same address.

TO CONTACT US:
Nigeria: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY URGED TO PASS INFORMATION BILL
Published on Pambazuka News (https://www.pambazuka.org)

The Nigerian parliament, the National Assembly, has been called upon to promote transparency and accountability in the country by urgently passing the Freedom of Information Bill currently before it. The call formed part of the resolutions of a recent workshop on 'Contentious Issues in the Review of the 1999 Constitution' organised in Abuja by the Citizens' Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR), a network of civil society organisations.

Country: Nigeria [9]

Source URL: https://www.pambazuka.org/node/11109

Links:
[1] https://www.pambazuka.org/author/contributor
[2] mailto:mediainnigeria@yahoo.com
[3] mailto:imeso@hyperia.com
[4] mailto:imesoimeso@hotmail.com