

high as 60%. There have been numerous factory closures and those that manage to stay afloat are running at capacities as low as 25%. Even at that rate, inventories remain extremely high due to very low purchasing power of the general public. The dual exchange rate, which was only recently ended, allowed army officers, government officials, their families and friends to buy foreign exchange at N22 for a US dollar and immediately sell at N80, making astronomical profits - sometimes without leaving the premises of the bank. Our foreign debt remain around US\$30 billion in spite of Abacha's Finance Minister's spurious claim sometime ago that he had almost paid it off.

Consultants and the resident doctors in the Teaching Hospitals have been on strike for almost two months and the Minister of Health is not particularly worried. The government seems more interested in hosting a soccer fiesta - the World Soccer Youth Championships. It has made arrangements with the world football association, FIFA for the treatment of any injured footballer abroad; apparently unworried about its own injured or ill citizen. Fake drugs flood the country and doctors wonder whether they are still relevant.

Though Alhaji Shagari's civilian government was extremely corrupt, it's misdemeanours pale into insignificance when compared with what occurred during Gen. Babangida's term (the \$12.5 billion Gulf war windfall that accrued to Nigeria is still being looked for amongst his baggage). The mind boggles as we continue to listen to the disclosures by the Abubakar regime of massive sums that had been looted and are now being recovered from members of Gen. Abacha's family, officers, ministers and friends. Yet the culprits remain free. On the other hand, there are scores of senior banking officials who have been held in custody for upwards of four years on the allegation that they gave out unsecured loans.

The army, which has been involving itself in the governance since 1966 on the claims that it came to save Nigeria from bad governance, has become the greatest obstacle to a peaceful progressive polity. It has enthroned corruption as a national culture, has created disharmony so much that Nigerians have become ethnic-centred. It has driven the economy aground, destroyed the judiciary and has made basic infrastructure look like facilities that can be enjoyed only by the most advanced community at the end of the coming century. Of course the social services such as health, housing, transport, clean drinking water are things that can only be enjoyed by the very wealthy.

Everyone, including members of the armed forces, are now convinced it was time they left governance permanently. It is however unfortunate that the present