

Business and Politics in the Muslim World
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Details of the News

1. China-African Relations:

- **China defends business operations in Niger**

The Chinese embassy in Niger has denied media reports that Chinese businesses there were imposing harsh conditions on Nigerien workers, the website of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation reported Tuesday.

“For some time now, a campaign of attacks and slander has been orchestrated against the mutual cooperation between Niger and China in general and the two ongoing projects in particular,” the report quoted Xia Huang, Chinese ambassador to Niger, as saying Monday.

Xia was referring to recent media reports that described China’s mining businesses in the African country as “colonies” and the working conditions there as similar to conditions at Guantanamo.

Those reports “did not respond at all to the reality and might have a hidden agenda,” Xia pointed out. “The Nigerien people are eye-witnesses to the benefits of the friendship between the two countries and the direct beneficiaries of the achievements of this multi-form cooperation.”

Xia quoted statistics that African countries’ oil exports to China do not exceed 13 percent of their total production, while their exports to Europe and the US each surpasses 30 percent.

“Till this day, China has accomplished 48 projects in Niger’s public sector,” he said. “We have sent 15 medical teams to the country with over 400 staff. We also committed about 180 million yuan (\$26.4 million) in debt relief to the Nigerien government.”

A spokesperson from the embassy told the Global Times Wednesday on condition of anonymity that Xia’s remarks generated positive reactions among Nigeriens.

“The press conference was broadcasted across the country,” the spokesperson said. “Some Nigeriens I met told me that they were encouraged by Xia’s statement. They are

very confident in the prospect of Chinese-Nigerien cooperation and look forward to learning more about it.”

Some local reports also linked China with the unstable political situation in Niger, as a military coup in February ousted former president Mamadou Tandja, who was accused by analysts of corruption linked to mining deals.

Xia also dismissed such speculations.

“There are investors in Niger from a large number of countries and companies, yet why is it only the Chinese investments that are seen to have a negative impact?” he asked, adding that Chinese businesses were not affected by the coup.

• **Chinese government hands over refurbished stadium to Zimbabwe**

The Chinese government handed over the refurbished Zimbabwe national sports stadium to the Zimbabwean government on Saturday.

The stadium was built with the assistance of the Chinese government in 1987, but had been closed for renovations for the past three years.

Chinese amabssador to Zimbabwe Xin Shunkang handed over the new-look 60 000-seat stadium to the Zimbabwean government at a colorful ceremony where the government was represented by Media, Information and Publicity Minister Webster Shamu, Public Works Minister Teresa Makone and several senior government officials.

The Chinese ambassador revealed that the refurbishment was done at a total cost of 10 million U.S. dollars.

He hailed bilateral relations between Zimbabwe and China, saying these had continued to expand over the years.

“The construction and refurbishment of the stadium cement the traditional friendship between our two countries,” he said.

Vice President Joice Mujuru thanked the Chinese government for renovating the stadium and for its assiatnce in other areas of the economy.

She said the extensive work done by the Chinese contractors had transformed the stadium into a world class sports stadium.

“The installation of new state of the art electronic and electrical equipment as well as the overhauling of civil works has enabled the stadium to meet the Confederation of African Football standards,” she said in a speech read on her behalf.

The vice president hailed Zimbabwe's "Look East" policy through which it has sought to deepen cooperation with Asian countries including China.

Minister Makone reassured that the Zimbabwean government will strive to maintain the stadium and keep in good condition.

"The national sports stadium shall be in the hands of the Government of Zimbabwe and it will be run professionally," she said.

Among others, China Jiangsu, the Chinese contractors, refurbished the VIP lounge, upgraded two substations, installed a new scoreboard complete with control room and replaced all ablution facilities.

Two football pitches were also overhauled while part of the tarmac was resurfaced.

- **Tanzania now battles China's monopoly on rare earth metals**

China has over 95 percent market share in the global production of rare earth metals, but many alternatives are now being examined, such as the Wigu Hill deposit in Tanzania owned by Montero Mining.

Apparently Wigu Hill has a lot going for it, both geologically and geographically, according to a US newspaper San Francisco Chronicle of last week. Wigu is located 200km west of Dar es Salaam.

Montero president and CEO Tony Harwood argues that Wigu Hill's first competitive advantage is its simple carbon material, unlike many rare earths which are found in deposits that are complicated by radioactive materials or silica, creating all kinds of processing, and cost, issues.

"Geologically because the deposit is carbonatite in form with no associated radioactive materials present such as uranium or thorium that while potentially adding a revenue stream also greatly complicate the handling, concentrating and refining processes," the paper quoted him as saying.

He says that concentration is another facet of the geological advantages in Wigu's favor, saying it goes as high as 25 per cent, but is likely to average between 7 and 10 per cent. The newspaper says the other advantage is Tanzania's geographic proximity to world class mining, processing and refining expertise in neighboring South Africa.

"Opportunities like this in Tanzania should be a reminder that there are actually rare earth deposits all over the world," the paper says.

Actually, production in places like North America was shut down in the past due to environmental concerns plus cost competitiveness from China, it says, adding that South Africa and India used to be the world's leading producers.

Now that rare earths demand is surging due to their use in battery technology, old production areas can be re-started and new ones can be discovered, it says.

Wigu is of even higher grade than China's huge Bayan Obo mine that produces most of the world's supply: While China might have a monopoly in the near-term, since it takes time to re-start old rare earth mining activities in other places, in the long-term there is actually no shortage of 'rare earths', the paper concludes.

Rare earths are a collection of seventeen chemical elements in the periodic table, Scandium and Yttrium, and the 15 lanthanides of Lanthanum, Cerium, Praseodymium, Neodymium, Promethium, Samarium, Europium, Gadolinium, Terbium, Dysprosium, Holmium, Erbium, Thulium, Ytterbium and Lutetium.

According to scientists, rare-earth metals are the key to 21st Century technology: Without them, we wouldn't have smartphones, hybrid cars or precision weapons.

• **Chinese Mining Firm Keen to Work with Citizens to invest \$600 mln in Zambia copper mines**

CHINA Nonferrous Metal Mining Group Company (CNMC) president Luo Tao has said his company wants to work with the Zambian people to bring sustainable development to the country.

China Nonferrous Metal Mining (CNMC) plans to invest \$600 million (R4.4 billion) in Zambia between 2010 and 2011, encouraged by the country's abundant mineral resources and political stability, company president Luo Tao said.

"We will begin the investment of \$600 million soon and hope to finish this investment by next year," Luo said late on Monday during the signing of an agreement with the government for the joint development of a planned project to recover residue copper in tailings dams.

Mr Luo said when he paid a courtesy call on the Copperbelt Minister Mwansa Mbulakulima that his company wanted to work along side the Zambian people in contribute to the economic development of the country.

He said his management at the CNMC Luanshya Copper Mine(LCM), Chambishi mine, Chambishi smelter and Chambishi leaching plant adhered to the Zambian labour laws and the other laws that governed the country.

Mr Luo said his firm was committed to having a good relationship with the Zambian workers and that was why the top management at LCM consisted of two Zambians while 60 per cent of the departmental heads at the mine were Zambians.

"We have employed a lot of Zambians at LCM and two managers are Zambians, while 60 per cent of those managing the different departments are also Zambians," he said.

Mr Luo said his company had so far spent USD 42 million on modernising the equipment at LCM and would continue doing so until the equipment is modernised.

He said the former owners of LCM did not invest a lot in modernising the equipment at the mine saying that CNMC was a good investor that ensured that its investments had modern equipment.

Mr Luo also said President Rupiah Banda's visit to China on the invitation of the Chinese President Hu Jintao was successful.

He said President Banda signed some treaties, while he was there and that the President called for Chinese investors.

Mr Luo said President Hu then instructed those that had invested in Zambia to expand their investment and CNMC, therefore, approved a further USD 500 million in its subsidiaries in Zambia.

CNMC LCM would receive US\$300 million, while Chambeshi mine, smelter and leaching plant would receive US\$200 million this year.

Mr Luo said he was impressed with President Banda's leadership and that of Mr Mbulakulima.

He said President Banda was committed to bringing investment to Zambia that would improve the economy.

Mr Luo said Mr Mbulakulima was also working hard to upgrade the Copperbelt which has resulted in the development that he had observed over his seven visitations.

It was because of this, he said, that CNMC felt supported by the Government and triggered the company to invest further in the Copperbelt.

Mr Luo said the company had recorded progress in the Baluba mine development and that he was happy with the work that was so far done in all its subsidiaries.

And Mr Mbulakulima said the Chinese group had expressed resilience and endurance and was, therefore, Zambia's partner in development.

He said he was happy that CNMC was willing to invest USD 500 million this year in its Copperbelt subsidiaries.

Mr Mbulakulima said he was also happy that the company observed the Zambian laws as that was how it should be.

He said Zambia had world class economic policies that more Chinese investors should take advantage of and invest in Zambia.

• **Cameroon: Chinese Ambassador Assures Stronger Ties**

H.E. Xue Jinwei, paid a maiden visit to the Yaounde Gynaeco-Obstetric and Paeditric Hospital yesterday.

It was an exceptional day at the Yaounde Gynaeco-Obstetric and Paediatric Hospital in the Ngouso neighbourhood yesterday.

The Chinese ambassador to Cameroon, H.E. Xue Jinwei, paid a maiden visit to the health facility. The visit was as a result of fruitful cooperation that exists between Cameroon and China. H.E. Xue Jinwei, met the different departments notably the maternity ward, reanimation ward, Chinese pharmacy, x-ray among others and also the personnel. Traditional dance groups from the country could be seen in some corners in the hospital premises to welcome the august guest.

Speaking during the occasion, the Director General of the YGOPH, Professor Doh Anderson Sama said the hospital is classified among the referral hospitals in Cameroon and the sub region thanks to contributions from China, especially in the domains of research, human relations and equipment. He also hailed the government for its support in the functioning of the hospital. Professor Doh Anderson Sama used the opportunity to present to the ambassador the needs of the hospital for the 2010 in terms of acquisition of new materials. He said the visit was also to make the ambassador see the hospital and appreciate better the situation.

For his part, the Chinese ambassador called on the personnel to work hard to ensure quality health care in the hospital. He said health is an important factor in the relations between Cameroon and China. He said China is a faithful friend of Cameroon and that his country will continue to support cooperation between China and Cameroon especially in the domain of health.

2. Pan-African issues:

• Ten things we have learnt about Africa

The Pew Research Center has just released one of the biggest ever studies on attitudes to religion and morality in Africa, which has revealed a host of interesting facts.

Here are 10 things we have learnt from the study, which surveyed 25,000 people in 19 countries.

1. About 75% of South Africans think polygamy is "morally wrong" - bad news for their president, as Jacob Zuma took his third wife earlier this year and is engaged to a fourth. However, the survey also revealed some possible double-standards. While only 7% of Rwandans approved of polygamy (although this did include women), a rather higher number - 17% - of men said they had more than one wife.

2. An overwhelming majority of respondents disapproved of homosexual behavior. In three countries - Zambia, Kenya and Cameroon - this was a massive 98%. Interestingly, **one of the countries with the highest numbers of people - 11% - accepting homosexuals is Uganda**, where an MP is trying to get legislation passed which would punish homosexual acts with life in prison and even death in some cases. The former Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique were also relatively tolerant of homosexuality.

3. Africa is probably the world's most religious continent, with more than 80% saying they believed in God in most countries. **At least half of the Christians questioned expect Jesus Christ to return to earth during their lifetimes.** In Ethiopia, 74% of Christians say they have experienced or witnessed the devil or evil spirits being driven out of a person and in Ghana, 40% of Christians say they have had a direct revelation from God. About half of all Muslims expect to see the reunification of the Islamic world under a single ruler, or caliph, in their lifetimes.

4. Zimbabwe, where the Lemba people say they are the lost tribe of Israel, was not one of the countries surveyed. But **26% of Nigerian Christians said they traced their origins back to Israel or Palestine.**

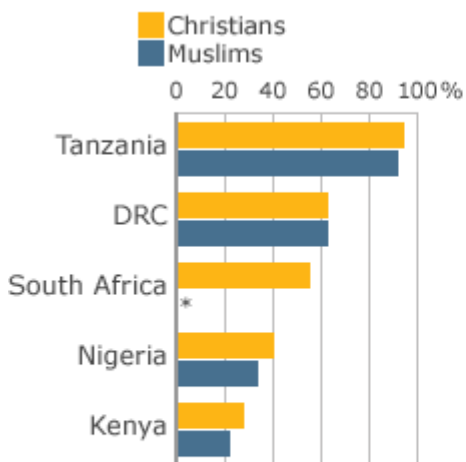
5. Belief in witchcraft is also common - about 40%; a similar percentage also visits traditional healers to cure sickness. **Belief in witchcraft is highest in Tanzania with 93%** - this is the country where witchdoctors say that magic potions are more effective if they contain body parts of people with albinism. Ethiopia had the lowest levels of belief in witchcraft - at just 17%. Belief that juju or sacred objects can prevent bad things happening was generally lower - between 20 and 30%. In Senegal, however, 75% thought such things worked - far higher than in Tanzania (49%). It may come as a surprise to

learn that South Africa had the highest number of people - 52% - saying they took part in ceremonies of traditional religions, or honoured or celebrated their ancestors.



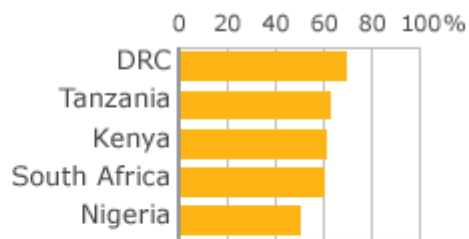
Christians from several African states trace their origins to Israel or Palestine

People believing in witchcraft

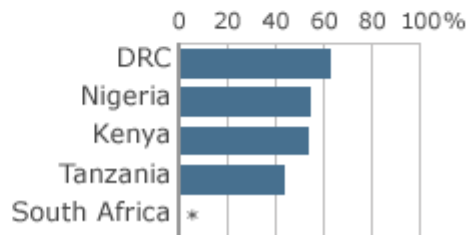


*No data on South African muslims was supplied
Source: Pew Research Center

Christians believing Jesus will return to earth in their lifetime



Muslims believing the Caliphate will be re-established to rule in their lifetime





A majority of people disapproved of Sharia punishments such as amputations

6. Predictably, there was also a religious split concerning alcohol, banned by Islam. Surprisingly, however, **more Muslims in Chad (23%) approved of booze, than Ethiopian Christians (5%)**. This comes as a huge surprise to Ethiopia experts, however, who point out that it is traditional to welcome Orthodox Christian clergy with traditional honey beer when they visit your house. Maybe "alcohol" was only taken to mean spirits by some of the respondents?

7. **Attitudes to divorce showed a strong divide along religious lines in Nigeria**. A massive 79% of Christians thought it was "morally wrong", while among Muslims, a narrow majority (46-41%) accepted divorce.

8. In recent years, Islamist hardliners in Somalia and Nigeria have introduced strict punishment based on Sharia law, such as amputating the hands of thieves and even stoning to death for adultery. **The majority of people disapproved of such Sharia punishments**. In Nigeria, they were backed by about 40% of Muslims and less than 10% of Christians. However, a majority did approve of whippings and amputations in Senegal and Mali. In nearby Guinea-Bissau, even 50% of Christians backed them. This was double the rate among Muslims in Ethiopia (25%) - maybe it feels like a more realistic prospect to them, as they share a border with Somalia and most Muslim Ethiopians are ethnic Somalis.

AFRICA HAVE YOUR SAY on BBC

The blending of religions like Islam and Christianity with African religions is one way of ensuring survival of traditional religions
BaDumisani, Berlin.

Send us your comments on BBC

9. The survey also asked about material well-being in the world's poorest continent. Not so long ago, Cameroon regularly topped surveys of champagne consumption per head. However, **a shocking 71% of Cameroonians surveyed said there were times in the past year when they did not have enough money to buy food**. In Ethiopia, which is

commonly seen as a country struggling to feed itself, the rate was far lower - at 30% - the lowest of all countries surveyed.

10. Ethiopia did, however, have the lowest numbers of people - 7% - who said they regularly used the internet. Rwanda's President Paul Kagame is striving to turn his country into Africa's answer to Silicon Valley and is being helped by the arrival of several new fibre optic cables off the east coast of Africa. He will be encouraged by the finding that 30% of his countrymen - the highest number - regularly browsed the web. Mobile phones were far more common - with 81% of respondents in Botswana owning one. Many countries reported more than 50% having phones but here, Rwanda lagged behind at just 35%.

• **African Synergy - No Vacant Position Work Continues.**

In a news conference, the executive secretary presented the organization's activities with detailed happenings within the administration.

People who talk of vacancy at African Synergy do not know how the organization functions. The Executive Secretary of African Synergy Against AIDS and Suffering, Jean Stéphane Biatcha has underscored that Hadjia Laraba Tandja, former First Lady of Niger, is still a founding member of African Synergy. It is only during the next conference of African Synergy that they will be able to know the next acting president of the association. Moreover the mandate of Laraba Tandja ended in 2009 and was extended until the next conference of the association. Stéphane Biatcha was speaking yesterday during a press briefing in Yaounde during which he outlined the activities of the association since May 3, 2009. He told press men that people may be tempted to say there is no acting president at African Synergy but in effect this is not true.

According to the Executive Secretary, Hadjia Laraba Tandja, is still alive and has not resigned from the organisation. The fact that her husband is no more the President of Niger does not mean she is no more a member of African Synergy. Besides Stéphane Biatcha added that African Synergy is not only for First Ladies, for former First Ladies can be members of the association if they wish. The association has been structured in such a way that with or without an acting president, the Founding President, Mrs Chantal Biya, is more involved in the running of the association.

Over 10 months, African Synergy has carried out activities in Africa, USA and Brazil in which they will come up with new partners to intensify the fight against HIV and other sufferings. Through a partnership with Sanofi Aventis in 2009, the association has been greatly involved in curbing non-infectious diseases such as cancer, hypertension, epilepsy, which are parts of the sufferings of African people not forgetting the association's basic fight against HIV and sufferings, etc. Last month, the association launched the fight against epilepsy in Dakar under the patronage of the First Lady of Senegal, Viviane Wade. In February this year, the association also launched the second

phase for the proper use of drugs dubbed BUM, in Burkina Faso. There are also plans to extend the fight against non-infectious diseases to Nigeria and other African countries.

Although the activities of African Synergy have been positive, Jean Stephane Biatcha acknowledged that, they still have a long way to go because humanitarian domains are too big and no matter how much they do, they realise that they still have to do more to satisfy many people who need their services. For African Synergy to move on, the Executive Secretary said, they will continue to sign and seek potential partners to spearhead the cause of the association and to get more people involved in problems in Africa.

Ghana:

1. Political News:

- **Mills under Siege: As pressure to sack ministers intensifies President John Evans Atta Mills**

President Mills might certainly not be enthused with current happenings in his government, as some top men in his administration have come under severe criticisms for purportedly neglecting party foot-soldiers, non performance, and in some cases downplaying the party's "Better Ghana" agenda.

From Yendi to Accra, district chief executives (DCEs), municipal chief executives (MCEs), members of parliament (MPs) and ministers of state, the agitators, comprising foot-soldiers of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and public servants, have often resorted to demonstrations to make their demands known.

The President himself, last year, was not spared, as he came under a barrage of criticism from his party members for allegedly being too slow in running the affairs of the country.

Last year, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Awutu-Senya, David Nana Larbie, was chased out from his constituency by aggrieved party faithful for allegedly neglecting them, and working against the interest of the party. The issue has since been addressed, enabling him to enjoy peace with his constituents.

Again, the Founder of the NDC, former president Rawlings, together with some high ranking officials in the party, started mounting pressure on the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General (A-G), Mrs. Betty Mould Iddrisu, to prosecute former government officials.

Their quest has, eventually, yielded results, as some former government officials in the immediate past government are facing trial for willfully causing financial loss to the state.

In March this year, some irate youth of the NDC in Yendi besieged the constituency offices of the party to demand the immediate dismissal of the Municipal Chief Executive of the area for his alleged involvement in some corrupt practices in awarding contracts, and also failing to provide them with jobs. He was also accused of failing to award scholarships to children of party members at the tertiary institutions, and again, working against the interest of the party.

The protesters also vowed to kill the MCE if they ever set eyes on him anywhere near the office, or within the constituency.

In the same month, Carl Wilson, then head of the Confiscated Vehicles Committee, was relieved of his position following the action of some irate youth, who stormed the offices of the national headquarters of the party and locked out the party executives.

In January this year, Dr. Kwabena Donkor, then Deputy Energy Minister, became a casualty of President Mills' first reshuffle exercise in his government, following complaints from workers of the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR) for non-performance.

He was replaced by the Member of Parliament for Tamale Central, Inusa B. Fuseini Abdulai.

And now, the heat has been turned on the substantive Minister of Energy, Dr. Oteng Adjei, for allegedly flouting the orders of President Mills, and allowing the Ghana National Petroleum Company (GNPC) to supply the nation's only refinery with crude oil, instead of allowing TOR to do its own business.

The aggrieved workers on Tuesday demanded the removal of the Minister from office, for intruding in their core business.

But, some government officials, in a sharp rebuttal, cleared the Minister off the allegations by the TOR workers, arguing that the President did not make any pronouncement barring any institution from supplying crude oil to TOR.

Just yesterday, some staff of the Ghana Statistical Service also embarked on a peaceful demonstration in their own yard, to demand the head of the Government Statistician (GS), Dr. Grace Bediako.

Clad in red bands and head gears, the aggrieved workers contend that they were fed up with the leadership style of Dr. Bediako, which they argued was derailing the gains made by the department.

They accused her of monopolising the system, and refusing to delegate authority. Some workers, who spoke to The Chronicle on condition of anonymity, said Dr. Grace Bediako's action had led to the resignation of some top officials of the Statistical Service.

"In fact, we are no more afraid to voice out our grievances. The monopolistic leadership style of the Government Statistician is collapsing the Service. If you are not in her good books, count yourself out from enjoying any benefit from the statistical department. How can a junior staff be sent abroad to upgrade himself without giving preference to a senior staff?" quizzed one worker.

They accused her of, among other things, for failing to facilitate the promotion of some workers who had for the past seven years upgraded themselves, and for unpaid allowances.

But the Acting Director of Finance and Administration, Mr. Philemon Y. Mennia, in an interview with *The Chronicle*, though admitted that the concerns raised by the staff were genuine, was quick to add that they should have exercised some patience, since the management was on top of issues to address their grievances.

"Their concerns are genuine, since it has been there from last year, but at least, they should have exercised some patience, as management was on top of issues to address their grievances. It is not that somebody wants to sit on their promotion, but there is a problem that we have to deal with holistically, in order to bring harmony into the service," he noted.

According to him, the Statistical Service was under staffed, especially at the district level, now that the economy was expanding.

He said four of its staff, as at yesterday, had been promoted to work at the district level, and therefore pleaded with the aggrieved workers to exercise restraint, as measures were being put in place to address their grievances.

He was particularly grateful to the Board of Directors of the service for their immense contribution in addressing the problems of the department.

Meanwhile, a closed-door meeting that ensued between the workers and the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Dr. Kwabena Duffour, has calmed nerves, as reports suggest that the Minister had promised to set up a committee to address their grievances. May 14th has been set as the deadline, according to the Trades Union Congress Chairman of the Statistical Service, Mr. Robert Kwabena Mensah.

- **Making Free Compulsory Basic Education a Reality**

For any country to ensure a continuous supply of its manpower requirements there should be a steady progression of those in school right from nursery to its tertiary institutions. The institutions connected with education must work to prevent avoidable dropouts, especially at the base of the academic structure which feeds the secondary stage and then to the tertiary.

If we as a society look on unconcerned while children between the ages of seven and twelve drop out of school and take to hawking on the street, we end up creating breeding grounds for all imaginable forms of social vices. Available evidence reveals that only an insignificant or negligible proportion of the children who find themselves on the street selling all manner of products, from dog chains to whatever you may think of, are able to defy all dangers that accompany streetism and turn out to be useful and productive citizens of the nation. Many of them grow up becoming armed robbers, tricksters, drug addicts perpetrating all manner of crimes in society; they become social misfits and a burden to society.

Among the many causes of streetism that have been 'studied', 'examined', 'analysed' and 'dissected' over the years and of which solutions have been prescribed is the issue of the inability or plain irresponsibility on the part of some parents and guardians to take care of their children. Thus, when the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy was introduced some years back, many were those who thought at worst it will reduce the phenomenon to tolerable levels if not make it history as the optimists anticipated.

But there is an angle to the FCUBE which the authorities seem to be overlooking and that is the issue of the child's right to basic education. The Fourth Republican Constitution provides in explicit terms under Article 25(1)(a) that "All persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realization of that right-basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all".

Government has worked towards the realization of this dream by taking concrete steps, and these include the capitation grant, the School Feeding Programme, distribution of free exercise books and lately the provision of free school uniforms although admittedly to a limited number of districts. With all these facilities in place to empower parents and guardians to send their children and wards to school, does anybody have any justification keeping their children or guardians at home? Even in the face of Article 25(1)(a) it is a flagrant violation of the child's or ward's constitutional right not to send him/her to school. Can't the law take its course regarding such parents and guardians?

If we as a collective and particularly institutions tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that children are in school are failing in our responsibilities, are we not in breach of Article 25(1)(a), hence failing to uphold and defend the Constitution as required of every citizen under Article 3(4)(a)?

What has compounded the problem is the lack of capacity in terms of infrastructure and personnel. We were therefore saddened to learn last week that an incredible number of 3,947 schools are conducted under trees? It stands to reason that if even we are to rid the streets of all the children there will not be enough classrooms to accommodate all of them, that is the dilemma and irony we are presented with.

It was therefore heartwarming when the Minister of Information, Hon. John Akologo Tia, announced to the nation last week that Government, as matter of policy priority, is embarking on a programme to eliminate such "under tree schools".

Education, we have been told for the umpteenth time, is the bedrock of development, and that is a pointed statement to all of us, especially key stakeholders. It is incumbent upon all of us to contribute our quota to realization of the objectives of the FCUBE. Let us, among other things, get the children off the streets; provide the schools with the requisite infrastructure; train more teachers and pay them decent salaries and strengthen the inspectorate division of the Ghana Education Service (GES). If we are able to put these measures in place we will be sure as nation to move rapidly in our developmental agenda towards the status of a middle income country.

• **Is the Ghana Armed Forces Really Ghanaian?**

The chickens are home to take a break! The facts and figures on the ground suggest that the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) is gradually turning into the Ewe Armed Forces (EAF).

Of the total number of 938 Army Officers, there are 228 Ewes, of the 165 Navy officers; the Ewes are 39 and the Airforce has 50 Ewe officers out of 184 men.

In the case of the Other Ranks, the Ewes have 2646 soldiers out of the 9728 men in the Army, 458 Navy men out of the total figure of 1742 and in the Airforce; the number is 543 out of 1726.

The data on the composition of the Ghana Armed Forces as at date are as follows:

Officers:

Ashanti Region has 115 for Army, 17 for Navy, 16 for Airforce bringing the total to 148 representing 11.50%.

Brong Ahafo has 27 for Army, 7 for Navy, 10 for Airforce bringing the total to 44 representing 3.4%

Central Region has 100 for Army, 27 for Navy, 16 for Airforce bringing the total to 143 representing 11.11%.

Eastern Region has 143 for Army, 29 for Navy, 33 for Airforce bringing the total to 205 representing 15.93%.

Greater Accra has 105 for Army, 15 for Navy, 27 for Airforce bringing the total to 147 representing 11.42%.

Northern Region has 62 for Army, 8 for Navy, 10 for Airforce bringing the total to 80 representing 6.22%.

Upper East Region has 75 for Army, 7 for Navy, 9 for Airforce bringing the total to 91 representing 7.07%.

Upper West Region has 52 for Army, 11 for Navy, 8 for Airforce bringing the total to 71 representing 5.52%.

Volta Region has 228 for Army, 39 for Navy, 50 for Airforce bringing the total to 317 representing 24.63%.

Western Region has 31 for Army, 5 for Navy, 5 for Airforce bringing the total to 41 representing 3.18%.

Other Ranks:

Ashanti Region has 1055 for Army, 136 for Navy, 174 for Airforce bringing the total to 1365 representing 10.34%.

Brong Ahafo has 518 for Army, 75 for Navy, 70 for Airforce bringing the total to 663 representing 5.02%

Central Region has 954 for Army, 256 for Navy, 194 for Airforce bringing the total to 1404 representing 10.64%.

Eastern Region has 1868 for Army, 321 for Navy, 360 for Airforce bringing the total to 2539 representing 19.32%.

Greater Accra has 619 for Army, 174 for Navy, 104 for Airforce bringing the total to 897 representing 6.80%.

Northern Region has 582 for Army, 77 for Navy, 70 for Airforce bringing the total to 729 representing 5.52%.

Upper East Region has 795 for Army, 120 for Navy, 98 for Airforce bringing the total to 1013 representing 7.68%.

Upper West Region has 380 for Army, 52 for Navy, 73 for Airforce bringing the total to 505 representing 3.83%.

Volta Region has 2646 for Army, 458 for Navy, 534 for Airforce bringing the total to 3638 representing 27.57%.

Western Region has 311 for Army, 73 for Navy, 49 for Airforce bringing the total to 433 representing 3.28%.

With this representation in the Ghana Armed Forces, the question now is “why were officers and men from the Volta Region against the policy of Regional Balance?”

- **Majority Of NDC Officials Are Criminals**

Right now some National Democratic Congress (NDC) elites who currently govern the country seem to have only one guiding principle: everything John Agyekum Kufuor’s NPP administration does is wrong even if it’s something the NDC members believe in. Case in point: the discovery of oil for the nation.

These NDC criminals should realize that reactionary obstructionism isn’t a political vision. It’s a myopic PR tactic to cover up their criminal deeds in which they are looting the nation for their stupid egocentric interests.

My fellow countrymen and women, since the establishment of our dear great nation, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) is the most corrupt, thieving and criminal organization that has ever governed our motherland dating from the (P) NDC era to the current administration. This NDC administration has become more pessimistic against their political opponents but they just don’t know what they getting themselves into: half of them will go to jail after the 2012 general elections including Kojo Tsikata, however old he may be. Kwawdo T publicly known as Kwadwo Tsikata is behind all the NDC tribal persecution against the NPP members who are currently being harassed by their administration. They have nothing good to offer Ghanaians but just to come to office and rob the nation and later turn around and point fingers at others for unjustifiable reasons. I dare warn the NDC should quit stealing from the nation. Thievery has become their core beliefs, but they have the audacity to turn their fingers at the opposition. These NDC criminals should realize that there is a choice between dogmatic purity and opportunistic moderation. The NDC needs to recognize that they cannot fool Ghanaians all the time with their criminal conduct and blame the opposition with the tralistic sentimental politics that they have exhibited in the country.

Now Ghanaian car importers have suffered outright injustice at the hands of John Evans Attah Mills, Carl Wilson and Mills deputy Chief of staff Alex Segbefia the criminal. The NDC has employed their past (P) NDC criminal tactics of confiscating peoples property without the due process of the law. Ever since John Evans Attah Mills administration came to office, his NDC members have increased their corruption and robbing the nation by over one hundred percent (100%) It is very sad about what took place in Osu Castle. These NDC criminals have seized people’s cars in harbor and resold them only to the NDC members for less than One Ghana cedis. This is actually what went on with the cars they seized from hard working Ghanaians whose property was taken by these NDC criminals. Some NDC members paid 50c. In other words less then one Ghana cedis for a car that somebody had brought for over five thousand dollars. This deputy chief of staff at Osu castle who was in charge of this dubious transactions, Alex Segbefia, is not even a Ghanaian, according to the information I receive from my informant the NDC deep throat. This Alex Segbefia claims his father is from the Volta Region but his mother is

from Barbados. He currently holds a British passport and is an attorney in London who was not doing well in his private business practice but now has got the opportunity to come to Ghana and rob the nation blind. This aforementioned individual cloud never exhibit such behavior in England. He would go to jail immediately but has the gall to come to Ghana and treat citizens as second class in their own land.

However, Attah Mills is afraid of Alex Segbefia. He threatens to leave Mills administration if he does not get what he wants. This is what Ghanaians are now getting from Attah Mills NDC administration-- a bunch of corrupt thieves and criminals who are at helm of the national affairs. At times Ghanaians should not blame Jerry John Rawlings for his utterances against Mill's administration because he is right. They are all criminals. Ghanaians will soon see how these criminals in the NDC will be exposed in the media about their dubious connections at the National Petroleum Authority (NPA) in which some NDC elites, including Ato Ahwoi and Tsatu Tsikata, are using their ill-gotten influence to buy the crude oil for our national consumption. Instead of them buying our nation's crude oil from the spot rate markets system, they are using methods, that serves their interest, methods by which they are making millions of dollars of daily profits on our Nation's accounts. This is a serious delimma that demand the immediate arrest of these NDC criminals who are pointing fingers at the opposition members.

- **Ghana Needs Restructuring, NOT Rebranding!**

I'm compelled to write this article in view of the recent socio political, economic and civil shenanigans and of The Brand Ghana Office set up by the Government. Rebranding Ghana in its generic sense is a means to enhance our national image and identity, instilling pride in every Ghanaian and restoring international confidence in the country among investors, development partners and tourists.

However, it's not sufficient to evoke sentiments in a bid to sell a flawed project. Rebranding a country merely on catchy phrases and slogans could hardly change a country's image and prospects physically without "overhauling" the conditions that necessitated the negative image and perception in the first place. Thus, Ghana needs restructuring, not rebranding as observed in Twi proverb "a quality product sells". A sincere attempt at rebranding Ghana can only commence first with socio political, economic and structural restructuring of the country. The government has to take bold economic and socio political reforms aimed at improving the country's investment and liveability climate. We need proper long term planning, integration and execution of national policies that suits Ghana's multi ethnic composition. We need to create a stable regulatory and legal environment to attract investors. We need corrective policies of fiscal adjustment, more flexible exchange rate and financial sector strengthening mechanisms. Foreign investors will be willing to invest in a more coherent and consistent long-term economic and investment policy framework. More so, the socio political and economic problems that give rise to the negative image and perception both internationally and nationally, such as the spate of armed robberies, tribal conflicts amounts to lawlessness, the level of corruption and bribery, cyber crimes, bureaucratic and administrative inefficiencies must be addressed through the various Government

departments and agencies. The Government, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, traditional rulers, politicians and the intelligentsia of the affected communities have to work together to address tribal and chieftaincy disputes for a lasting peace. Politically, the Government and the Opposition have to stop the political bickering and pettiness and work together for the betterment of Ghana. The Opposition have to question the Government of the day and hold them accountable for the electorates. As an alternative Government, it should be responsible for challenging the policies of the Government and produce different policies where appropriate and practicable. Opposition is not just about opposing the Government. We should not allow our democracy to crumble under the burden of ethnic divisiveness and conspiracies.

Economically, with the hope of Ghana's anticipated oil revenue, we could only look forward to the Government investing in a more stable power supply, functional health system, a diversified economy with much emphasis on agro-based industries, a more practical educational system to meet the challenges of 21st century technological-based labour market, pipe-borne water supply, sanitation and greener environment, development of transportation services and our tourism industry. These will go along way to provide jobs, help alleviate poverty and cut down on many social vices.

Socio-culturally, we Ghanaians need behavioural and attitudinal change as citizens. We need to stop dancing to the drum-beats of tribal politics, mindlessly provocative rhetoric and help preserve and respect the sanctity of the principles of rule of law in Ghana. Our diversity should be our source of strength. The world know Ghanaians as very hospitable, honest, and intelligent, committed, warm, hard working, decent and resilient people. We need to be proud of our rich cultural ethics which have influenced our lifestyles positively. We need to instil patriotism, discipline and social order in the youth to reflect in the civil and political maturity of our democracy. Today, how many school children can sing the Ghana National Anthem? Our culture is our identity and we have a duty to preserve and promote it.

Finally, rebranding Ghana as an imitation of what Nigeria and other African countries are doing right now with radio jingles, newspaper adverts, TV slots and flag waving antics though helpful, does not necessarily convinced foreigners of the perception they hold of a country without complete restructuring to address critical issues to transform and reform Ghana into a "complete package" desired by foreign investors and visitors. Any attempt to "Brand" Ghana without any attempt to restructure is only going to waste our billions in a typical Ghanaian fashion. The money will end in the private pockets of media and marketing consultants and our politicians.

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London.

- **Pressure mounts on Mills to sack ministers**

President Mills might certainly not be enthused with current happenings in his government, as some top men in his administration have come under severe criticisms for purportedly neglecting party foot-soldiers, non performance, and in

some cases downplaying the party's "Better Ghana" agenda.

From Yendi to Accra, district chief executives (DCEs), municipal chief executives (MCEs), members of parliament (MPs) and ministers of state, the agitators, comprising foot-soldiers of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and public servants, have often resorted to demonstrations to make their demands known.

The President himself, last year, was not spared, as he came under a barrage of criticism from his party members for allegedly being too slow in running the affairs of the country.

Last year, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Awutu-Senya, David Nana Larbie, was chased out from his constituency by aggrieved party faithful for allegedly neglecting them, and working against the interest of the party. The issue has since been addressed, enabling him to enjoy peace with his constituents.

Again, the Founder of the NDC, former president Rawlings, together with some high ranking officials in the party, started mounting pressure on the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General (A-G), Mrs. Betty Mould Iddrisu, to prosecute former government officials.

Their quest has, eventually, yielded results, as some former government officials in the immediate past government are facing trial for willfully causing financial loss to the state.

In March this year, some irate youth of the NDC in Yendi besieged the constituency offices of the party to demand the immediate dismissal of the Municipal Chief Executive of the area for his alleged involvement in some corrupt practices in awarding contracts, and also failing to provide them with jobs. He was also accused of failing to award scholarships to children of party members at the tertiary institutions, and again, working against the interest of the party.

The protesters also vowed to kill the MCE if they ever set eyes on him anywhere near the office, or within the constituency.

In the same month, Carl Wilson, then head of the Confiscated Vehicles Committee, was relieved of his position following the action of some irate youth, who stormed the offices of the national headquarters of the party and locked out the party executives.

In January this year, Dr. Kwabena Donkor, then Deputy Energy Minister, became a casualty of President Mills' first reshuffle exercise in his government, following complaints from workers of the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR) for non-performance.

He was replaced by the Member of Parliament for Tamale Central, Inusa B. Fuseini Abdulai.

And now, the heat has been turned on the substantive Minister of Energy, Dr. Oteng Adjei, for allegedly flouting the orders of President Mills, and allowing the Ghana

National Petroleum Company (GNPC) to supply the nation's only refinery with crude oil, instead of allowing TOR to do its own business.

The aggrieved workers on Tuesday demanded the removal of the Minister from office, for intruding in their core business.

But, some government officials, in a sharp rebuttal, cleared the Minister off the allegations by the TOR workers, arguing that the President did not make any pronouncement barring any institution from supplying crude oil to TOR.

Just yesterday, some staff of the Ghana Statistical Service also embarked on a peaceful demonstration in their own yard, to demand the head of the Government Statistician (GS), Dr. Grace Bediako.

Clad in red bands and head gears, the aggrieved workers contend that they were fed up with the leadership style of Dr. Bediako, which they argued was derailing the gains made by the department.

They accused her of monopolising the system, and refusing to delegate authority. Some workers, who spoke to The Chronicle on condition of anonymity, said Dr. Grace Bediako's action had led to the resignation of some top officials of the Statistical Service.

"In fact, we are no more afraid to voice out our grievances. The monopolistic leadership style of the Government Statistician is collapsing the Service. If you are not in her good books, count yourself out from enjoying any benefit from the statistical department. How can a junior staff be sent abroad to upgrade himself without giving preference to a senior staff?" quizzed one worker.

They accused her of, among other things, for failing to facilitate the promotion of some workers who had for the past seven years upgraded themselves, and for unpaid allowances.

But the Acting Director of Finance and Administration, Mr. Philemon Y. Mennia, in an interview with The Chronicle, though admitted that the concerns raised by the staff were genuine, was quick to add that they should have exercised some patience, since the management was on top of issues to address their grievances.

"Their concerns are genuine, since it has been there from last year, but at least, they should have exercised some patience, as management was on top of issues to address their grievances. It is not that somebody wants to sit on their promotion, but there is a problem that we have to deal with holistically, in order to bring harmony into the service," he noted.

According to him, the Statistical Service was under staffed, especially at the district level, now that the economy was expanding.

He said four of its staff, as at yesterday, had been promoted to work at the district level, and therefore pleaded with the aggrieved workers to exercise restraint, as measures were being put in place to address their grievances.

He was particularly grateful to the Board of Directors of the service for their immense contribution in addressing the problems of the department.

Meanwhile, a closed-door meeting that ensued between the workers and the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Dr. Kwabena Duffour, has calmed nerves, as reports suggest that the Minister had promised to set up a committee to address their grievances. May 14th has been set as the deadline, according to the Trades Union Congress Chairman of the Statistical Service, Mr. Robert Kwabena Mensah.

2. Economy:

• Making Oil a Blessing through Local Participation

Although significant revenues are expected from the Jubilee Field oil production, various analyses suggest the expected revenue will have little impact without the engagement of local companies to render various services.

Related to the issue of local content are the elements of timeliness and quality assurance which have been described as essentials for the engagement of local firms. In this regard, Nana Owusu Afari, President, Association of Ghana industries, has challenged local companies to promptly deliver on contracts, paying attention to contract specifications.

"When you get an order, make sure to deliver on time...Timely and quality delivery are very important," Nana Afari said on Tuesday in Accra. He was launching the first Domestic Content and Matchmaking Exhibition/Conference in the Oil and Gas Industry, which is scheduled for May 17-20, 2010.

The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) is organizing the exhibition/conference in collaboration with the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC), Tullow Oil Ltd, Ministry of Energy, and the Ministry of Trade & Industry (MOTI). The event will bring together players in the industry including oil producing companies and their subcontractors, as well as, local companies who can offer various products and services to operators in the industry.

Numerous programmes have been organized for the oil and gas sector since the discovery of oil, especially during last year. But AGI has a different focus for the exhibition cum conference, according to Nana Afari. The main thrust of the event, is to promote businesses between local companies and the international oil and gas companies. It is expected that presentations at the conference will mainly be done by international oil companies operating in Ghana. In the AGI President's view, the conference/exhibition will ultimately contribute to making oil a blessing in Ghana.

Expected annual oil revenue from phase one of the Jubilee Field project is estimated to be between US\$200 million and US\$1.6 billion. The GNPC has forecast annual oil revenue to be between US\$836 million and US\$1.6 billion.

The revenues, resulting from royalties and taxes, have been described as significant but insufficient for meeting expected development targets. However, it is anticipated that effective development of downstream activities, with active involvement of Ghanaians, through local content and participation would contribute in meeting development targets.

Additional benefits in terms of revenue and job creation are expected to accrue through ancillary activities such as catering services, transportation and fabrication of metals, for which local firms are expected to be largely engaged.

A "Local Content and Local Participation in Petroleum Activities - Policy Framework", which is still being finalized, indicates that it is the desire of government that the control, as well as, the benefits in the oil and gas discovery and production will remain with Ghanaians.

According to the document, the vision of government is to achieve "full local participation in all aspects of the oil and gas value chain of at least 90% by 2020." An objective of the policy is to increase capabilities and international competitiveness of domestic business and industrial sectors.

Nana Afari commended government for the development of the policy, noting that it will maximize the use of local expertise, goods and services, job creation for people, businesses and financing in all aspects of the oil and gas industry value chain.

Already, the GNPC is reported to have registered 120 local companies in its quest to promote local content and participation.

On the other hand, Tullow Ghana has indicated it will always champion and promote local content in its business but will conduct its business in strict adherence to the standards of the oil industry.

On Tuesday, Gayheart Mensah, Communications Manager of Tullow Ghana Limited, said the oil firm is on track to achieve its nationalization policy of ensuring that its staff profile has a 90% Ghanaian component by the end of its third year of operations in Ghana. In consonance with this, "86% of Tullow Ghana staff are Ghanaians," Mensah disclosed.

• **Inflation Continues Downward Trends**

Inflation continues its downward trend as the figure for March dipped to 13.3 percent, down from 14.2 percent in February; the ninth monthly fall in a row.

With the central bank's indication to work at further reducing the cost of borrowing through its policy rate if inflation continues to decline, the Bank of Ghana's monetary policy committee is set to factor it into a discussion on the health of the economy and possibly trim its interest rate, when it announces a new one on Friday.

Analysts say tight fiscal and monetary policies, alongside an appreciation of the cedi against the dollar that has cut import prices could spell further decreases in inflation in the coming months, and smoothen the way for an interest rate cut decision next week.

The recent falls in inflation is in line with government's targeted 5.7 percent growth in 2010 with inflation in the single digits. Bank base rates have dropped appreciably since the policy rate was reduced from 18 percent to 16 percent, the biggest cut in three years. Businesses and individuals, however, think the rates are still too high and have been calling for a further reduction.

• **Vodafone Makes Significant Strides**

It is exactly a year today since Vodafone took over operations of Ghana Telecom after it acquired a 70% stake from the Government of Ghana. The total consideration of the deal was US\$900 million on a debt-free, cash-free basis, which implied a total enterprise value for Ghana Telecom of approximately US\$1.3 billion.

The Government of Ghana then retained a 30% stake in the company.

A year on, the company has made significant strides on the Ghanaian market, making it the fastest growing telecommunication Service Provider, moving from a subscriber base of 1.5 million to some nearly 3 million over the 12 month.

The above figure constitutes a growth rate of 60% over the period, while the entire Telecom industry in the country grew by 29% over that same period. Currently, the company ranks number one in the provision of broadband services as its consumer broadband grew from 15000 in 2009 to 25000, constituting 66% growth over the period.

The company currently ranks first in Enterprise services provision and number one in the provision of a total telecom solution "which means that when you come into our retail shop, you would have access and solution to all your telecom needs, Gideon Asare Sakitey, Media relations consultant at Vodafone explained.

The company currently leads the market as the fixed network and broadband provider.

"The reason why we have improved so significantly is because we are constantly applying the latest technology to improve upon our broadband services, voice, and fixed lines," Sakitey added.

The company's financial year start from March to April. The company's Total Capital investment made in Telecommunications for the period January 1st 2009 to December 31st 2009, amounted to Three Hundred and Two Million, One Hundred and Eighteen Ghana Cedis (GH¢ 302,118,000.00),

The company also Increased its sites from 368 to 512 (Site Sharing, Green sites), and increased capacity of core elements in line with business needs during this period.

Isaac Cudjoe , Head of Corporate Communications said the Vodafone's remarkable growth rate is spurred by investments made in technology and in the state-of-the-art intelligent platforms and replaced all northern microwave link to improve upon its services.

He noted that Vodafone had over the period positioned itself as an admired company through its public engagements and social responsibility programmes and as an employer of choice.

Additionally, in line with the National Communications Authority's regulations, Vodafone will, effective 1st May 2010, harmonize the number code for fixed lines across the country

- **60 Ghanaian companies participating in Abuja International Trade Fair.**

Some 60 companies from Ghana are participating at the on-going 5th Abuja International Trade Fair, Director-General, Ghana Export Promotion Council, Mr. Geralo Mensah, said.

He told the News Agency of Nigeria in Abuja on Sunday that the companies were attending the fair under the auspices of the Ghana Export Promotion Council.

“We spread them over a total of 40 booths; some are sharing booths because the space is limited, even though we occupy the largest area in terms of square meters.

“We just have to make do with the limited space,” Mensah said.

He said the companies were in Nigeria to explore the business potential to the fullest.

“I am sure that not less than 100 companies will attend the next fair, he said.”

Mensah said that Ghana spent about \$1bn to buy made-in-Nigeria goods and services in its 2009 fiscal year.

The director-general stressed the need for a boost in trade and investment between the two countries.

“Nigerian business men should take advantage of the emerging business opportunities in Ghana.

3. Energy:

- **Conflict To Thrive With Black Gold In Ghana**

After the discovery of another non-renewable natural resource, crude oil, which is connotatively referred to as black gold, in Ghana, many were the statements made, as if it has been the only to be exploited ever in the nation’s history.

Many were the renewable and non-renewable natural resources discovered and exploited, or still remain untapped in Ghana’s economic past. Some of them are gold, diamond, and cocoa. Others include, timber, bauxite, and human resource, have all been, abysmally mismanaged to the detriment of a developing country like Ghana. The present generation of Ghanaians is anxious of the crude oil discovered, and holds the perception that, the entire economic challenges facing the nation would vanish into thin air as Ghana would soon attain the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) status.

Despite years of extracting natural and human resource, Ghana still has to source budgetary support from the World Bank. The query is, how judicious have funds from these extractive resources been managed, including those still been exploited, which gives us the impetus to believe with the black gold we would surely succeed? There is a sage which says, a bird in hand is worthy two in the bush. Are the gold, diamonds, cocoa, timber, bauxite and human resource in hand, not worth the oil?

Nevertheless, gold exploitation at Obuasi began almost at the same time with Johannesburg in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). But, undoubtedly the rate of development at Johannesburg is worthy a tale to tell. However, the story of Obuasi is that of despise and desperation. The inhabitants of Obuasi are almost all the time splitting hair, with AngloGoldAshanti, either ignoring its social responsibility of exposing the inhabitants to one health hazard, or the other. This calls on the Ghana Police Service, which often simply represents the calm before the storm. Then the qualm is who is to control the revenue from the crude oil found in Ghana? I do not generally believe every Ghanaian is dysfunctional, fractious and fragile when it comes to managing funds from our extractive resource. But beyond the spin, the question still remains, how changed are we in order not to fail with the crude oil as with the other non-renewable resources?

Actually, many have been the resources that have been misappropriated by Ghanaians, themselves. Ghana has been and will always be wealthy in human resource. This is, what is use to develop a country efficiently. Ghanaians work with international organizations like the United Nations, the Economic community of West

African States (ECOWAS), The Commonwealth of Nations, to mention but a few. The notable personality proud to mention is the immediate past Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN). Bosomuru Kofi Annan, and the former Legal Adviser at the Commonwealth, Mrs. Betty Mould Iddrisu, the current Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, they are all Ghanaians who have excelled and hoisted the flag of Ghana proudly high. Equally the current President of ECOWAS, Ambassador, Victor Gbeho, and

the former Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas are all illustrious sons that Ghana has gifted the international community. Not forgetting the worthy daughter of the land, Professor Akua Kunyehia, a supervisor at the International criminal court (ICC) in The Hague, Holland. There are yet, others to emerge. But, why does Ghana still faces the challenge of managing her own affairs, considering the magnitude of human resource available to her? This human resource is of envy to many a nation. Ghana has failed in managing this envious resource to her advantage. Therefore, what style of management do we take to the black gold discovered?

In spite of the above, have we thought of diamond at Akwatia, and how it has been handled? With the human resource at our disposal, we honestly have every excuse to perform to perfectly achieve all that is there to be achieved in the vision 2020. We, have no excuse to ruin our own enterprises. An example worth citing of a mismanaged Ghanaian Public enterprise is Ghana telecommunications (Ghana Telecom). It strolled under the management of Telecom Malaysia, then to the care of Telenor of Norway, until it was finally delivered to Vodafone to also try their managerial skills. Prior to the sale, workers and the entire nation was made to believe, if Vodafone does not come to save Ghana Telecom, the corporation was on the verge of collapse. The picture, I seek to present is, if Ghanaians who mismanaged Ghana Airways are different from the Ghanaians who are to run the affairs of the oil found then, Ghana is bound to be a success. But, without a transformation in management style and change in attitude, the black gold would also become another example of Ghana's incompetence in managing her own resources.

Another backbone of Ghana's economy, without any doubt or second thought, has been Cocoa, though timber also has contributed emencely to Ghana's development. Unfortunately our inability to manage resources appropriety has led to somewhat embargo on it. Timber firms are asked by the Forestry Commission to plant a tree wherever one is lumbered. This has not been followed deligently, and our forest cover is gradually eroding. In terms of Cocoa, the mass cocoa spraying has been politicised time and again, which often does not help matters. Ghana happened to be the leading producer of Cocoa in the World. But Ghana has now fallen behind Ivory Coast. What accounted for this sudden turn of events? What readily comes to mind is the smuggling of cocoa from Ghana to Ivory Coast, by Ghanaians themselves. Believe it, Tetteh Quashie is whimpering in his grave, for the reason, the cocoa he risked to smuggled in to Ghana is been smuggled out by the people he meant good for.

Forthrightly, Ghana has countless mismanagement past of her own resources. And this attitude has been carried to virtually every national propriety without checks or regret. This is still counting, and has cast Ghana badly. How have we pecked ourselves of cromism and nepolism? What about the almighty “kickback”?

According to Emeritus Professor Ama Ata Aidoo, an eminent Ghanaian writer and educationist, “The furthest east you run, the nearest west you get” This goes to explain why Ghanaians must know the development of Ghana is the responsibility that rest on the shoulders of Ghanaians themselves. A fact we can not run away from. How long will Ghanaians keep misappropriating resources and running back to the World Bank? For the reason, when one escape from the iciest north the fellow is bound to be caught in the tangles of the coldest south. Ghanaians home and aboard should put their shoulder to the wheel for success to be achieved with the black gold.

Equally concerning is the fact, crude oil has brought enough conflict in Africa, not to mention our West African neighbours Nigeria. The Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) should do well to reach agreements and contracts with national interest at the core.

A Hebrew proverb says, he who is not satisfied with himself will grow. Indeed we can not be satisfied with our resource management competence; hence there is the need to change. We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden.

All said and done, we have to succeed, for posterity can not count the black gold as part of our resources management failures.

4. Environment:

5. Immigration/Refugee/Idps:

- **22 Americans stranded in Ghana**

The Salvation Army says 22 volunteers from the Twin Cities are stranded in Ghana because of the volcanic ash cloud from a volcano in Iceland.

Annette Bauer, a public relations director for the Salvation Army, says the mission team has been working at a Salvation Army complex in Woe, Ghana, since April 10. Their flights through Amsterdam to Minneapolis were canceled on Friday and they had to look for a hotel in Accra, Ghana.

"At the latest we must leave Ghana on Monday to catch our flight out of Amsterdam," said Major Darryl Leedom, Salvation Army Twin Cities commander and organizer of the

missions trip.

RELATED: Iceland volcano causes world-wide air travel problems

Bauer says the group has flight confirmation for 19 of the 22 group members, but they have not been able to secure any flights to Amsterdam.

Bauer says the group spent their time in Ghana constructing a roof for the Salvation Army meeting hall and teaching classes to local students. The team, ages ranging from 15 to 77 years old, is made up of Salvation Army employees, local volunteers and church partner members who raised their own funds for the missions trip.

Bauer says although the team is in good spirits, two have become ill, one currently at the hospital for dehydration. The temperature in Accra is 90 degrees with 100% humidity.

• **Accra Mayor Detained In Columbia**

The Mayor of Accra, Alfred Okoe Vanderpuye, was a subject of a diplomatic row recently when he and other members of a government delegation, led by Vice President John Dramani Mahama, were traveling to the Brazilian city of Sao Paulo.

Mr. Vanderpuye was held in the Columbian capital, Bogota, for several hours by immigration officials in that country over his traveling documents.

This was due to the fact that he did not have a visa which could enable him to travel to Sao Paulo aside the claim that he was using his United States passport to travel on the ticket of the Ghanaian government.

Another minister in the delegation had to work extra hard, making frantic efforts to save the Mayor from further embarrassment after his virtual detention at Bogota.

The said minister was communicating between Sao Paulo and Accra to get the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain freedom for the Mayor who was held within the confines of the airport by the immigration officials.

Other members of the delegation were compelled by the prevailing circumstance to leave Dr Vanderpuye in the hands of the Colombian authorities, and headed for Sao Paulo without him. The Mayor himself has admitted running into problems with the Columbian authorities when he got there.

He told Daily Guide in an interview yesterday that he used his US passport because if he had used his Ghanaian passport, he would have needed a visa to Brazil. He only had a visa to travel to Columbia.

It is therefore not clear whether the Mayor was denied a visa by the Brazilian embassy in Accra or he just thought he could travel with his US passport into that country without a

visa.

Also mind-boggling is the Mayor's decision to travel with a US passport on the ticket of a Ghana government-sponsored trip. He noted that the Ghanaian authorities in Columbia eventually managed to secure him a visa and he later boarded a flight to join his colleagues in Sao Paulo after about 11 hours of a nightmarish wait in Bogota.

Although the delegation has since returned home to Ghana, the bitter memories of the diplomatic embarrassment would haunt the Mayor for some time to come. This is not the first time the Accra Mayor is encountering nationality challenges.

He encountered similar difficulties when he was proposed for appointment by President Mills, since he was said to be an American citizen and therefore unfit to hold public office as Mayor of Accra. He is still holding on to his American citizenship.

The issue dragged on for some time till his employers, the President and even the National Security, ignored all agitations and made sure he sailed through.

The latest issue thus revives the question of whether or not Dr Vanderpuye, who from all indications wields the passports of two countries, Ghana and the United States, can serve in a public office, since the Ghanaian Constitution bars people with dual citizenship from holding public office unless otherwise renounced.

6. Health:

7. Human rights/Gender/Social Issues:

- **Sex At Gunpoint**

THE TROUBLES of a 23-year-old lady, Sylvia, who accused Captain George Nfodjoh, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) Member of Parliament (MP) for Ho Central of sexually abusing her, appear to be far from over, as the Tema Police Regional Criminal Investigations Department has preferred four charges against her.

The charges, according to a DAILY GUIDE source at the Command, were "Deceit of Public Officer, Blackmailing, Defrauding and Disgrace to Womanhood".

Some of the charges had been described as outlandish by legal practitioners, prompting the Police Headquarters in Accra to wade into the controversy with a directive to the Tema Regional Command to wash its hands off the case.

According to Sylvia, Captain Nfodjoh admitted at the police station that he had sex with her but denied pulling a pistol on her.

However, Sylvia is standing her ground, insisting that the NDC MP threatened her with a pistol which he pulled out of his pocket and placed at the bedside before having sex with her.

Meanwhile, a police source told DAILY GUIDE that Sylvia, who had earlier reported a complaint of sexual abuse to the Sakumono Police Station, was referred to the Harbour Police in Tema, where she was expected to have her case investigated.

When she went there, she was slapped with four charges and arrested and then later granted bail.

Sylvia yesterday told Adom FM morning show host Ekuorba Gyasi that she soon saw Captain Nfodjoh at the police station talking to some of the police officers, after which one of them asked her how much she wanted for compensation.

“Thinking that they wanted to help solve the problem, I mentioned GH¢3,000 and was later surprised to realize that four charges were being preferred against me, who had rather been sexually abused by the MP,” she remarked on the radio station.

She also decried the attitude of some of the policemen and women at the station, who according to her, made derogatory remarks about her.

Another drama was soon enacted when the Police Public Relations Directorate announced that the Sakumono and Harbour police had been asked to wash their hands off the case and refer the docket to the CID Headquarters, because of the apparent embarrassment the case was creating for the police.

Sylvia narrated how Captain Nfodjoh, who claimed to be a family friend, raped her when she accompanied him to his house.

The MP had insisted that he wanted her to see his family so she could check in anytime for support, she said.

But on entering the house through the garage, she alleged that the MP pulled a pistol and pointed it at her face and asked her not to be ‘stubborn’.

According to Sylvia, the MP repeated the act at a guest house when he cajoled her into going there under the pretext of apologizing for his earlier ‘by force’ sexual act.

The MP, after the series of unprotected sexual acts, refused to pick her calls and left her to her fate, she said.

Sylvia further explained to listeners that the MP offered her a lift home after persistent refusal on her part one evening, when she had closed from work.

She intimated that after he alighted at her home, after getting to know that she was the daughter of a former colleague at a place where he had worked, the MP later visited and requested to take her for an outing.

She noted that later that night in the MP's house, he pulled a pistol on her after she had declined to allow him to have sex with her, adding that she was too terrified. "Because I didn't want Captain Nfodjoh to harm me, I agreed and said 'ok protect yourself', but he said, 'no, no', he is not going to use any condom so he had sex with me like that, raw".

She claimed that after the incident, Captain Nfodjoh prescribed a drug for her to go buy and when she asked for money for the drug, he snubbed her and drove off after the shameful act.

Sylvia told the Adom FM morning show host that even though she did not struggle with the MP, she felt she was raped because she had to do it against her wish.

She declined the assertion that she was trying to unjustifiably malign the MP because he refused to give her money after their love-making, adding that she did that fearing that if she refused, he might harm her with his pistol.

Sylvia was also quick to point to the host that she never asked him for anything. "I have never done that. Since I met him, he has never given me even five pesewas.

"I have decided to break my silence because I feel insulted by Captain Nfodjoh who has objectified me to satisfy his sexual desires without recourse to my emotions and feelings," she stated.

On the issue about whether the MP was not her lover, she denied having a love relationship with him and stated that if they were in a relationship, the MP would not have done the things he did to her and rhetorically asked: "How can you be treating your girlfriend like this?"

She claimed that she had the MP on video, naked and could prove it if she was asked to do so.

Just as the show was going on, the host announced that the Police Headquarters in Accra wanted it announced that both the Sakumono and the Harbour police stations had been instructed to suspend investigations into the alleged sex abuse on the lady by the MP, adding that the docket had been asked to be referred to the headquarters for investigations.

Most listeners who later called into the show blasted the police for what they termed unfair treatment of the lady.

At the time of going to press, DAILY GUIDE was told that some lawyers had called the radio station and expressed their willingness to offer free legal service to the lady. The

lawyers had noted that they were willing to meet the lady and listen to her side of the story.

Sylvia's story made headlines recently when it was reported that she had been sexually abused by the MP who himself has been quiet on the issue.

8. Geo-Strategic issues:

- **Port Expansion - Ghana Anticipates Lead Over Lagos, Neighbouring Ports.**

Deputy head of mission, Nigerian High Commission to Ghana, Abdullahi Salisu (white babariga in middle) with participants of an International Capacity Building Workshop for Media/Public Relations Executives in the Maritime Industry, which held at the Regional Maritime University (RMU) in Tema, Ghana, when they paid him a courtesy visit at the High Commission.

Constrained by competition from neighbouring ports, particularly Lagos port complex and port of Lome in Togo, the Ghanaian government is expanding its Tema port to have advantage over the others.

The senior public relations officer of Ghana Ports and Harbour Authority (GPHA), Peter Sabia, told ****Daily Independent***** in Ghana that their biggest constraint is the competition from neighbouring ports, especially that of Lagos, which currently controls over 50 percent of cargo coming to the sub-region.

It is expanding the berthing facilities and working on achieving deeper depth in order to attract more cargo bound for the sub-region since it will then be able to accommodate bigger vessels.

He also disclosed that the turn around time for vessels calling at the port stood at about 1.7 days and that they are working at reducing it further. On the aspect of cost of doing business in the port, Sabia said, "I think we are the lowest in the sub-region."

Sabia disclosed that the government is aiming at achieving 14 meters depth at the port, which is currently at 11.5 meters.

This feat, when achieved, would enhance the port's ability to accommodate much larger vessels, which are currently wary of coming to Lagos port because of issue of depth. Large vessels discharge midstream for smaller vessels to transfer to port in Lagos.

Tema port has two key lines with 14 berths and Sabia says government is extending one of the keys westwards to achieve deeper depth. 'We dredged berth one to six and we are aiming at 14 meters depth. It is also constructing a road from Tema to Accra

Tema port was built in 1960 by Ghana's first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, and was opened to traffic on February 28, 1962. Prior to this, the colonial masters had built Takoradi port, which is 280 kilometers from Tema in 1928 for their interest, to handle export of cocoa and other natural resources out of Ghana.

The GPHA spokesman noted that following Ghana's port reform in 2002, the port authority gave up 75 percent stevedoring operations to private companies and still retains 25 percent, saying that, "it will be dangerous to shed all."

He stressed further that their decision to retain 25 percent operations is being contested and is presently before the country's National Assembly, adding that they working very hard to ensure that the bill that would make them give up the 25 percent does not sail through.

- **Ghana Embassy in Senegal to promote made-in-Ghana goods**

The Ghana Embassy in Senegal is embarking on a programme to promote made-in-Ghana goods in Dakar, through the participation of Ghanaian companies in fairs being organised by the Senegalese authorities.

To achieve this objective, the mission is requiring information on the problems encountered by Ghanaians in previous exhibitions in that country.

This was contained in a statement issued by Mr Solomon Korbieh, First Secretary of the Embassy in Dakar on behalf of the Head of the mission, to

Ghana Export Promotion Council, Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, Association of Ghana Industries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Ministry of Trade and Industry and copied to the Ghana News Agency on Saturday.

"The purpose of the request is to enable the mission hold discussions with the appropriate host authorities with a view to eliminating these

problems.

"You may also wish to draw our (Mission) attention to any bilateral or multilateral agreements/conventions to which we may refer in putting our case to the hosts," the statement said.

It said it was the conviction of the mission that elimination of the problems would place Ghanaian exporters in a better position to participate effectively in fairs and exhibitions in Senegal, with a view to expand their markets.

"Mission would also appreciate if a list of exportable Ghanaian products is made available to facilitate its endeavours," the statement said.

Nigeria:

1. Political News:

- **Former leader of Nigeria Babangida to run for president**

Nigerian former military leader Gen Ibrahim Babangida will run in the 2011 presidential poll, his spokesman says.

He told the BBC that Gen Babangida will seek the nomination of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Gen Babangida took power in 1985 in a bloodless coup, but was forced to step down in 1993 when he annulled elections generally considered to be fair.

He had declared he wanted the PDP nomination for 2007 elections, but later withdrew his candidacy.

The PDP has said that its presidential candidate will be from the mainly Muslim north, which includes Gen Babangida - or IBB as he is known in Nigeria.

President Umaru Yar'Adua has not been seen in public since November 2009 because of his ill-health and is considered unlikely to seek re-election.

Acting President Goodluck Jonathan is from the south and so would not be a candidate under the PDP's policy of alternating power between north and south, with each region having two terms.

Correspondents say IBB, an extremely wealthy northern Muslim, is a polarizing figure in Nigerian politics - a man who either inspires great admiration or intense dislike.

He enjoys the goodwill of those he empowered during his eight-year military rule - people who now hold influential positions in business and politics, and could help his presidential bid.

However, some observers argue that under IBB's rule corruption became endemic in Nigeria, the economy deteriorated and democracy suffered.

His promises to hand over to civilian rule came to nothing and his annulment of the 1993 election allowed military strongman Gen Sani Abacha to assume power.

Gen Babangida pulled out of the 2007 election when then President Olusegun Obasanjo instead declared his support for Mr. Yar'Adua's bid for the presidency.

- **Nigeria ex-leader Babangida 'will not buy presidency'**

Former Nigerian military leader Gen Ibrahim Babangida - one of the country's wealthiest men - has told the BBC he will not buy his way to power.

On Monday, he announced his intention to seek the nomination of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in presidential elections due in 2011.

Gen Babangida, 68, said he had the necessary experience to be president.

The PDP says its presidential candidate will be from the mainly Muslim north, where Gen Babangida comes from.

Speaking to the BBC's Focus on Africa programme, Gen Babangida - known as "IBB" in Nigeria - dismissed any suggestion he might buy his way into office 17 years after leaving the top job.

Nigeria's former military leader Gen Ibrahim Babangida tells the BBC he will not use his immense wealth to buy his way to power in 2011.

"You'll be glad to know, I'm the most investigated Nigerian living today," he said.

"Perhaps after 17 years it ought to have come out by now, unless somebody is not doing his job."

He spoke of his determination to run for president for a second time even if the PDP does not select him as their candidate.

"What I am sure of - I can always find one party out of 51 that I can pitch my tent on," he said.

Gen Babangida took power in 1985 in a bloodless coup, but was toppled from power by mass protests after he annulled elections he had organised in 1993 that were widely seen as having been won by a businessman, Moshood Abiola.

The former military ruler defended his democratic credentials and said he could offer Nigerians "leadership and experience".

"I have conducted the freest and fairest - and this is attested by the international community - elections in the history of our country," he said.

"The fact that it was annulled is a different story altogether."

He pulled out of the 2007 presidential election when then-President Olusegun Obasanjo declared his support for current President Umaru Yar'Adua's candidacy.

Mr Yar'Adua, who is from northern Nigeria, has not been seen in public since November 2009 because of his ill-health and is considered unlikely to seek re-election.

Acting President Goodluck Jonathan is from the south and so would not be a candidate under the PDP policy of alternating power between north and south, with each region having two terms.

- **Nigeria - Borno debates law 'to stop Islamic extremism'**

Politicians in Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria are debating a bill aimed at curbing religious extremism.

The Islamic Preaching Bill would outlaw preaching likely to cause a breach of the peace as well as requiring most clerics to obtain a preaching licence.

The legislation was proposed after an Islamic sect was blamed for sectarian violence in northern Nigeria last year in which hundreds of people died.

Sharia code runs alongside secular law in 12 of Nigeria's 36 states.

Under the new bill, there would be stiff penalties for clerics found guilty of insulting or inciting contempt of any religious belief which causes a breach of the peace, says the BBC's Bilkisu Babangida in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State.

The penalties include at least 10 years imprisonment and a fine.

Nigeria's 'Taliban'

Our correspondent says recommendations for preaching licences would be given by a new Islamic Religious Preaching Board consisting of clerics, public administrators and security personnel.

Imams of Friday mosque congregations and those who have led congregational prayers at religious festivals would be exempt from having to obtain a licence.

The bill is an attempt to prevent a recurrence of the violence which spread across Nigeria's northern states in July 2009 when supporters of an Islamic sect called Boko Haram - known locally as the "Taliban" - attacked police and government offices.

The group wanted to overthrow the Nigerian state, accusing it of being corrupted by Western ideas, ban Western-style education and impose an extreme interpretation of Islamic law.

Boko Haram means "Western education is a sin".

The sect's leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed while in police custody after the violence.

Before he died he told the BBC: "There are prominent Islamic preachers who have seen and understood that the present Western-style education is mixed with issues that run contrary to our beliefs in Islam.

"Like saying the world is a sphere. If it runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, we reject it. We also reject the theory of Darwinism."

- **Nigeria police found guilty in Borno sect clashes case**

The family of a man who died in police custody in Nigeria during an Islamist uprising last year has welcomed a court ruling against the police.

The court in Borno State said Baba Fugu Mohammed's killing was "brutal" and compared it to the Spanish Inquisition.

The judge said he had been killed simply because he was the father-in-law of Mohammed Yusuf, the leader the Boko Haram sect behind the violence.

Mr Yusuf was also killed after the July clashes, allegedly in police custody.

Human rights groups have frequently accused Nigeria's police of extra-judicial killings, but they are rarely brought to justice.

Compensation

Boko Haram supporters attacked a police station in the northern city of Maiduguri in July 2009, leading to days of clashes and hundreds of deaths - mostly sect members.

Mr Fugu Mohammed was detained by police in Borno State during the crisis.

His son told the BBC's Hausa Service that the family was satisfied with the outcome of the case as the police had been ordered to pay them compensation of about \$665,000 (£430,000).

The court also ordered the police to apologise and exhume the body so it could be buried properly.

The death of Mr Yusuf after the suppression of the uprising has also been controversial.

Police say he was killed in a shoot-out when he tried to escape, but rights groups have said it was also a summary execution.

The Boko Haram supporters said they were fighting against Western education and believed Nigeria's government was being corrupted by Western ideas.

The sect wanted to see Islamic law imposed across the country.

- **Jonathan, Obama Hold 15-Minute Parley - Acting President Presses for De-Listing of Nigeria from Terror List.**

Abuja — Acting President Goodluck Jonathan being introduced to United States Air Force personnel by Nigerian Ambassador to the U.S., Ade Adefuye, on arrival at Andrews Air Force Base. On the left is U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Robin Sanders.

Acting President Goodluck Jonathan on Sunday met with the United States President, Barack Obama, at the White House although administration officials toned down its historic significance by describing it as "a courtesy call."

Nigeria's security and electoral reform were part of the discussions.

Jonathan is among more than 40 Heads of State invited by Obama to attend a two-day summit on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

He and Obama met for about 15 minutes, but there was no official statement on what they talked about.

However, sources said the status of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian on trial in the U.S. for attempting to blow up a U.S. airliner in December last year was brought up.

Jonathan also reportedly pressed Obama to remove Nigeria from the list of terror nations after disclosing that Abuja has met and exceeded American airport security requirements by installing scanners and approving the use of armed air marshals on all Nigeria-U.S. bound planes.

Last week, the U.S. and Nigeria announced the formation of a Commission that will help Nigeria promote good governance and fight corruption.

Aides of Jonathan confirmed he will hold discussions with the Council on Foreign Relations and then have lunch with Vice President Joe Biden.

He will also meet with the World Bank President, Robert Zoellick, before participating in the Nuclear Security Summit.

An itinerary released by the Nigerian Embassy said Jonathan would have a breakfast meeting at the Center for Global Development and hold a lunch meeting with members of the Corporate Council on Africa.

And he will also meet the President of ExxonMobil.

Jonathan is expected to depart on Wednesday after a media briefing at the headquarters of the Voice of America in Washington.

This is his first official trip outside the country since he became Acting President on February 9.

On his entourage are Minister of Foreign Affairs, Odein Ajumogobia; Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Aliyu Hong; Minister of Finance, Olusegun Aganga; Minister of Petroleum, Diezani Alison-Madueke; Petroleum Adviser, Martins Uhomoibhi; and Permanent Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Meanwhile, former Permanent Secretary in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Joe Keshi, has described Jonathan's trip to the U.S. as a welcome development, but cautioned against undue optimism.

"I can understand the excitement of Nigerians over (Jonathan's) trip to the U.S. but there is the need to put the visit in its proper perspective such that we are not carried away.

"First, this is not a state visit and, strictly speaking, equally not an official visit," Keshi told reporters in Abuja on Sunday.

"Jonathan is in the U.S. at the invitation of Obama to attend a conference on nuclear disarmament, and like many other world leaders, would utilise the opportunity to discuss some bilateral issues especially with the U.S."

"There are over 100 world leaders honouring Obama's invitation and if he agrees to grant all audience, which I doubt, it will be, as we say in diplomatic parlance, within the margin of the conference."

Nonetheless, Keshi advised Jonathan to use the opportunity presented through the visit.

"In terms of its significance, and coming against the backdrop of what has transpired in this country in the last couple of months, this is an important trip especially for Jonathan who is undertaking his first trip abroad".

"His presence at the conference will assure the world that Nigeria has sort of resolved its embarrassing leadership crisis precipitated by the ill-disposition of President Umaru Yar'Adua and is again in a position to assume its global responsibilities.

"Politically for Jonathan, this is a plus, depending on how his officials spin the outcome of the visit. I expect, if all goes well, as I hope and expect, that he would return with an enhanced status and determination to seriously move the country forward."

• **History is Made as Jonathan Meets Obama**

AFTER several unsuccessful attempts by a Nigeria leader to personally meet with an American President, which many believed would have averted Nigeria's recent listing among terrorist countries by the US, Acting President Goodluck Jonathan last Night met with the President of the United States, Mr Barrack Obama.

Clad in Ijaw, his native tribe, black coloured attire, with a black hat and a pair of shoes to match, the Acting President held one-on-one meeting with US President, a feat Nigeria achieved last during the Obasanjo era; thereby bringing the two nations, once again, together to directly discuss issues of common interest.

Several international engagements involving the Nigeria Government, which ordinarily would have provided an ample opportunity for a Nigeria leader to meet with immediate past American President Gorge Bush and current Obama were never attended by Nigeria's President.

Representatives of Nigeria's President sent to such conferences, such as the immediate past Minister of Foreign Affair, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, never had the opportunity of meeting with the American President one-on-one.

Although details of the historic meeting was very scanty as at press time, Vanguard gathered the direct talks between the two world leaders which commenced exactly 11:30 local time held behind closed doors.

The talks took place at the prestigious Blair House, across from the White House, the venue of Obama's meeting with other world leaders including the South African President Jacob Zuma. Others included Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

According to reports, the Nigeria's Acting President is among some of the 40 world leaders currently attending World Nuclear Summit aimed at finding ways to secure the world's nuclear stockpile.

Jonathan's talks with Obama, it was learnt, focused on Nuclear Security and terrorism as well as democracy among others.

Obama was quoted as saying that "if al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations acquired nuclear weapons it "would have no compunction at using them,".

"The single biggest threat to U.S. security, both short-term, medium-term and long-term, would be the possibility of a terrorist organization obtaining a nuclear weapon," Obama said. "This is something that could change the security landscape in this country and around the world for years to come."

"If there was ever a detonation in New York City, or London, or Johannesburg, the ramifications economically, politically and from a security perspective would be devastating," the president said.

"We know that organizations like al-Qaida are in the process of trying to secure nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, and would have no compunction at using them," Obama said.

The Nuclear Security Summit of more than 40 world leaders in Washington this week is aimed at securing "loose nuclear material," Obama said. He was holding one-on-one meetings Sunday with several of those leaders.

He said other world leaders including Acting President Jonathan have offered "very specific approaches to how we can solve this profound international problem."

Hails South Africa

Obama singled out South Africa for giving up its nuclear program, and said it "has been a strong, effective leader in the international community on nonproliferation issues. South Africa has special standing in being a moral leader on this issue."

"I feel very good at this stage in the degree of commitment and a sense of urgency that I have seen from the world leaders so far on this issue," Obama said. "We think we can make enormous progress on this, and this then becomes part and parcel of the broader focus that we've had over the last several weeks."

Earlier in the week, Obama approved a new nuclear policy for the United States, vowing to reduce America's nuclear arsenal, refrain from nuclear tests and not use nuclear weapons against countries that do not have them.

Obama said securing loose nuclear arms is "a central part of the process, but probably the most urgent one and the one we are most concerned with in the short term."

After his remarks, Obama met with Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani. Obama smiled and shared a laugh with Gilani, but the Pakistani leader's words were not audible.

As reporters entered the meeting room, Obama was telling Gilani, "We've made some progress since then." It was unclear what Obama was referring to.

Pakistan has a troubled history with the United States, and anti-American sentiment runs extraordinarily high among ordinary Pakistanis. U.S. leaders went out of their way to assure Pakistan that the United States will not walk away from improving relations with the country, and Congress has committed billions of dollars in new aid to the Asian nation.

• **Jonathan, Obama Meet on Niger Delta, Oil Reform**

Washington DC — Acting President Goodluck Jonathan yesterday met with US President Barack Obama at the White House, Washington DC, to discuss issues relating to the Niger Delta, oil industry reform, electoral reform and Nigeria's role in global peace, among others.

THISDAY had, last week, exclusively reported the planned meeting between the two leaders ahead of the Nuclear Security Summit currently holding in the US, which Jonathan is attending on the invitation of the American president.

Jonathan also met with the former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, yesterday a few hours before his meeting with Obama.

It is being speculated that Jonathan will offer an advisory role to the former anti-graft Czar in an effort to boost the war against corruption in the country, but the details of yesterday's meeting were not made public.

The Acting President arrived the White House at 10.30pm (Nigerian time) for the historic meeting with Obama. Very rarely has an American president met with a non-substantive president of a country.

Details of the meeting were still sketchy at press time, but THISDAY learnt that the two leaders used the opportunity to discuss outstanding issues between the two countries most of which would have been discussed all along but for the ill-health of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua.

The newspaper gathered that Jonathan used the opportunity to discuss the peace efforts in Nigeria's oil-producing region in the light of the amnesty programme put in place by President Yar'Adua which has led to a considerable reduction in militant activities and boosted oil production.

The US is Nigeria's biggest customer in the international crude oil market and much of its energy security is directly affected by militant activities in the Niger Delta.

Another issue of interest to the two countries, sources told THISDAY, is Nigeria's proposed reform which seeks to radically restructure the oil industry.

Multinational oil companies have expressed worries over the revised fiscal regimes which they claim are unfavorable to their operations.

THISDAY learnt that Jonathan thanked the US for standing by Nigeria "in these difficult times" and asked for continued support as the country seeks to reform its electoral system in the interest of electoral justice, democracy and good governance.

He also reiterated Federal Government's commitment to the anti-graft war and sought the co-operation and support of the American government in this regard.

The Acting President, THISDAY gathered, pledged Nigeria's support to the US in the move against nuclear proliferation but asked Obama to take note of Nigeria's "variegated" multi-ethnic and multi-religious make-up.

The US is currently seeking UN sanctions against Iran over its nuclear development programme and Jonathan's statement is understood to mean Nigeria may abstain from voting when the matter comes up.

Jonathan had arrived the US yesterday via the Andrew Airforce Base in Washington DC at about 9:30am (2.30pm Nigerian time) to the waiting hands of members of Nigerian mission in the US, led by Ambassador Adebowale Adefuye.

The Acting President was accompanied on the trip by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Odein Ajumogobia, and Nigeria's former Ambassador to the US, Alhaji Hassan Adamu. The other ministers and governors who were billed to accompany him had arrived the US earlier.

Also on hand to receive the Acting President, who arrived 30 minutes later than the scheduled, were the US Ambassador to Nigeria, Ms. Robin Rene Sanders, and Deputy Head of Nigerian Mission in Washington DC, Ambassador Baba Gana Wakil.

After a brief exchange of pleasantries with members of the Nigerian mission and other dignitaries, Jonathan headed for Westin Grand Hotel on M Street, Washington DC, where he was received by Governors Adams Oshiomhole of Edo State, Ikedi Ohakim of Imo State and Aliyu Shinkafi of Zamfara State.

THISDAY reliably gathered that the governors stayed back at the hotel to receive the Acting President because of the restriction of dignitaries at the Airforce base as a result of tight security. Journalists were also denied access to the place.

At about 3:15pm (local time), Ribadu, wearing a white caftan, walked into the lobby of the hotel and, after exchanging greetings with some Nigerians at the lobby, went up for scheduled appointment with the Acting President.

Ribadu left the country in controversial circumstances two years ago following his removal as EFCC chairman by President Yar'Adua and a chain of events which saw Ribadu demoted and dismissed from the police force.

Federal Government recently withdrew criminal charges against Ribadu for allegedly failing to declare his assets while in office.

The charges were reportedly dropped because of lack of evidence to press the case to a logical conclusion.

Ribadu insists the charges were politically motivated, maintaining that he had declared his assets in accordance with the laws governing the code of conduct of public officers.

Critics of the decision to enter a no-case submission by the Federal Government are of the view that the government should have allowed the judiciary to deal with the charges and free Ribadu if indeed there was no evidence to prove the allegations against him.

Ribadu is expected to be named Special Adviser on Anti-Graft to the Acting President.

He was recently quoted as saying he was ready to work with Jonathan.

• **U.S.\$12.4 Billion Scam - Falana Wants Babangida's Prosecution**

Lagos — IMMEDIATE past president of West African Bar Association (WABA) Mr. Femi Falana yesterday insisted that Military President Ibrahim Babangida has a case to answer in the \$12.4 billion oil windfall scam.

He slammed Babangida's aide prince Kassim Afegbua who last week said that Late Pius Okigbo panel did not indict the ex-military president on the \$12.4bn oil windfall scam.

According to Afegbua, the \$12.5bn was used on infrastructural development of Abuja.

"Well, these claims (Babangida's aide) flying the face of the clear and unambiguous conclusions of the Okigbo Report, "Falana said in statement made available to Daily Champion in Lagos.

The human rights activist quoted copiously from the Okigbo Report to buttress lies argument that Babangida was indicted for mismanaging the Gulf war oil windfall of \$12.4bn in 1991.

First, the Okigbo report said that "the approved budget for the Federation did not reflect the receipts into the Dedication and other Special Accounts; that the balances kept in these accounts were not included in the Federation Account, a practice which violated the

fundamental precepts of the federal fiscal relations in Nigeria, and that in a number of cases, there were significant variations between the amounts approved for payment and the actual disbursements made, without any further explanation from the documents supplied."

Second, the report said that "in a large number of cases, there were no indications, in the letters written to the Head of State seeking approval to make payments or seeking ex-post approval, as to which dedication account was to be charged - either Dedication, Sale of Mining Rights, Signature Bonus, or Stabilisation Accounts. In such cases, it would be impossible to ascertain, on the basis of the information available, whether or not the approvals were in respect of any of these special accounts.

"And yet it was the Governor of Central Bank who instructed as to which particular account was to be debited. The Central Bank was never able to establish that payments on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and the National intelligence Agency were based on genuine and well established contracts or transactions. This was because the relevant documents were never made available to the Bank, as such documents were regarded as classified items."

Third, the report stated that, "The funds accruing to these accounts had been applied mainly to payments for services of contractors, and for the purchase of military equipment and services. The gross takings on these accounts from their inception in 1988 to June 1994 totalled \$12.4billion. These had been held totally outside the country's external reserves. Indeed, if the funds had been counted as part of the external reserves and had been held as such, the impact on the exchange rate in time years under review would have been so significant that the Naira would have been stronger in 1994, in relation to the dollar, than it was in 1985 when it stood at N1 to \$1.004. It should be evident, therefore, that the burden of external debt to the Paris and London Clubs and the pressure on the exchange rate would have been substantially mitigated if not completely eliminated. It is this fact that calls to question the wisdom and prudence not in the creation of these accounts but in its disbursements."

The report, also said "the operation of such accounts was not subject to the normal budgetary processes, and therefore lacked transparency. By limiting the authorisation process for its operation to the approval of the President or Head of State, which was communicated directly only to the CBN Governor, it created considerable room for abuse of procedures, abuse of application and reduced accountability".

Falana said there was no single reference in the Okigbo report to back the claim that the funds were spent to develop the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. saying, the funds for Abuja were contained in the Federation Account.

As the Okigbo report stated, "there were many large projects of doubtful viability and many more of clearly misplaced priority. In addition to these, the Dedication and Special Accounts had become a parallel budget for the Presidency. The decision as to what expenditure items to be financed out of these dedicated accounts was made by the

President alone. For example, the accounts had been utilised to defray aim assortment of expenses that could not in any way be described as priority such as: \$2.92 million to make Documentary Film on Nigeria; \$18.30 million to purchase TV/Video for the Presidency; \$23.98 million for Staff Welfare in the Presidency; \$99 million for travels of the First Lady abroad; and \$59.72 million for security."

He said that Nigerians deserve explanations as to what exactly happened to the accrued oil revenue of \$12.4bn which apparently went missing during the Babangida government. And anyone who loves this country would expect accountability for the missing funds. No amount of misinformation or misrepresentation of the facts and conclusions of the Okigbo report by anyone can stop the demand by Nigerians for accountability in this matter. The action by the civil society groups is indeed patriotic".

A coalition of civil rights' groups, including Social Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP); Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR); Access to Justice (AJ); Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC); Women Advocates and Documentation Center (WARDC); Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA); and Nigeria Voters Assembly (VOTAS), petitioned the new Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mohammed Bello Adoke, asking him to prosecute Babangida.

The group, in its petition dated April 7, 2010, threatened to go to court to compel the Adoke to try the former military president.

- **U.S. \$12 Billion Oil Windfall - Come Up with Proofs, IBB Dares Critics**

Former Head of State, Ibrahim Babangida today challenged those accusing him of mismanaging the nation's resources during his nine-year reign to come up with proofs.

He also said he possessed the requisite experience to lead the country and give Nigerians the dividends of democracy, having earlier led the country as a military head of state.

Babangida had been variously accused of wasting money that accrued to the country from oil windfall, in the aftermath of the Gulf war of the early 1990s, in excess of \$12 billion.

The General , who spoke in an interview with newsmen at the Presidential Wing of the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos, said it was not enough for people to make allegations, adding that what was important was for such allegations to be proven.

He described talks of his antecedents in office as mere distractions to his desires to contest the 2011 presidential elections.

He said: "Antecedents are perceptions, the way we look at things. If you call me a thief and you can prove it, you know what to do not to make noise about it, go ahead and prove it."

Asked under what political platform he hoped to actualise his presidential ambition should the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) fail to give him the slot, Babangida said he would use two structures, namely the people and any other political party.

On how he planned to deliver the dividends of democracy to Nigerians should he get elected as the country's next president, Babangida said: " Nigeria is a cohesive entity, I have the requisite experience to make it possible."

He said he was still in touch with former governors thrown up during his diachical transition programme, adding that he hope to deploy their assistance to realise his presidential ambition.

"I am very much in touch with them; I still have good relationship with them and I will reach out to them. But I do not know whether I will use them to my own advantage," Babangida said.

• **Jonathan Jolted By New Graft Report on Nigeria's Leaders**

Washington DC/Lagos — A report that past Nigerian leaders stole more than \$89.5 billion from the national purse over a period of 38 years, from 1970 through 2008, has cast a shadow on efforts by Acting President Goodluck Jonathan to attract fresh foreign investment, which is part of his agenda in Washington.

Jonathan flew to the American capital on Sunday for the global nuclear security summit that began on Monday.

According to the findings of international illicit financial outflow watchdog- Global Financial Integrity (GFI), Nigeria lost more money through illegal outflows than any country in the world during the period.

The top five countries are Nigeria (\$89.5 billion) Egypt (\$70.5 billion), Algeria (\$25.7 billion), Morocco (\$25 billion), and South Africa (\$24.9 billion).

In total, Africa lost \$854 billion in illegal financial outflows.

The report paints a grim picture of the looting of resources and estimated that developing countries are losing as much as \$1 trillion every year.

"The amount of money that has been drained out of Africa - hundreds of billions decade after decade - is far in excess of the official development assistance going into African countries," said GFI Director Raymond Baker. "Staunching this devastating outflow of

much-needed capital is essential to achieving economic development and poverty alleviation goals in these countries.

"Sub-Saharan African countries experienced the bulk of illicit financial outflows with the West and Central African region posting the largest outflow numbers."

The report said illegal financial outflows from the entire region outpaced official development assistance at a ratio of at least two to one.

"This report breaks new ground in the fight to end global poverty with analyses and measurements of illicit financial outflows never before undertaken.

"As long as these countries are losing massive amounts of money to illicit financial outflows, economic development and prosperity will remain elusive."

Baker recommended transparency in the global financial system as a solution to the problem.

Back on the summit, President Barack Obama's effort has started reaping early dividends as China has agreed to work with the United States on possible sanctions against Iran and Ukraine's decision to rid itself of nuclear bomb-making materials.

Obama said the risk of nuclear attack has increased, calling it a "cruel irony" after the end of the Cold War.

He noted in his opening address to the first full day of the summit on Tuesday that the risks of nations going to war with nuclear weapons have decreased.

Nevertheless, he told representatives from 47 countries that, "The risk of a nuclear attack has gone up."

Obama was speaking of the threat of terrorists getting their hands on nuclear materials.

He had opened the summit on Monday night after two days of meetings with selected Presidents and Prime Ministers of the 47 countries assembled to recharge efforts to keep nuclear materials out of terrorist hands.

China's incremental move toward U.S. ambitions to sanction Iran and Ukraine's plans to get rid of highly enriched uranium put some wind in Obama's sails as he presses global leaders to join him in locking down all nuclear materials within four years.

• **Acting President Gets Attention**

Washington — Among the almost four dozen heads of state who have gathered here for this week's Nuclear Security Summit, Nigeria's acting president, Goodluck Jonathan, has been receiving a disproportionate share of high-level attention.

With a one-on-one with President Barack Obama Sunday and a Monday morning standing-room-only conference at the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Jonathan, who took over from long-ailing President Umaru Yar'Adua in February and has less than a year to serve out his term, is nonetheless considered a key figure by Washington's influentials.

As Africa's most populous nation, West Africa's biggest economy by far, and the fifth most-important supplier of foreign oil consumed in the United States, Nigeria's stability has long been considered a priority by U.S. policy-makers.

In Jonathan, they see an opportunity not only to reverse the dangerous sense of drift that resulted from Yar'Adua's nearly three-month absence from the country for medical treatment in Saudi Arabia, but also to advance long-stalled reforms on a variety of fronts.

Those include setting the stage for credible elections currently scheduled for January, waging a more aggressive campaign against the pervasive corruption that has long afflicted Nigeria, laying the foundation for reforms in the country's ailing power sector, and, perhaps most urgently, shoring up an eight-month ceasefire with militants in part by jump-starting economic development in the oil-rich but poverty-stricken Niger Delta.

Both in his meeting with Obama, which he described as "warm and friendly", and at his CFR presentation, the fedora-hatted Jonathan said he did not see his job as simply that of a caretaker until the January elections.

Indeed, his decision last month to replace Yar'Adua's cabinet with his own appointees was widely viewed by Nigeria specialists here as both surprisingly bold and potentially very promising in terms of pursuing a reform agenda. The decision was also popular; his approval ratings shot up to some 80 percent, according to public-opinion polls.

"...(W)e are committed to ensuring that the remaining period of the administration is not a transitional period but one which we hope will one day be viewed as a watershed, a transformational time in our young democracy," he told the audience of several hundred at the Council.

"For now, our domestic focus must be on electoral reform, delivering peace dividends to the Niger Delta and the rest of the country, and standing strong on our resolve against corruption," he said.

Jonathan's visit, his first trip outside Nigeria since becoming acting president, came just days after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who visited Nigeria last August, and Foreign Secretary Yayale Ahmed inaugurated a U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission, a forum designed to "strengthen and deepen the partnership" between the two nations.

The commission is to focus on four "key areas," Clinton said at the signing Apr. 6: good governance and transparency; regional cooperation and development, notably in the

Niger Delta; promoting reform and investment in the energy sector in ways that could help the poorest sectors in the population; and food security and agricultural development.

Of the four, good governance, particularly in ensuring the integrity of next year's elections, and consolidating the fragile ceasefire in the Niger Delta will be "first out of the box", according to David Goldwyn, coordinator for international energy affairs at the State Department.

Washington has publicly urged Jonathan not reappoint the current head of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Maurice Iwu, when his term ends in June.

Although Jonathan noted in his remarks to the Council that the perception that the Commission as presently constituted cannot conduct clean elections was "more psychological than real", he added that "before the 2011 elections, there will be a lot of changes in INEC (and) not just the chairman".

U.S. officials, including Goldwyn, have been particularly concerned about the situation in the Niger Delta, the source of Nigeria's oil for the more than half a century. The petroleum pumped from the Delta currently constitutes as much as 40 percent of Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) and about 75 percent of the government's income.

The endemic poverty and corruption of the region, whose physical environment has also been devastated by oil leaks and gas flaring, have created widespread discontent among the minority groups who live there.

That discontent, which is compounded by the lack of jobs or economic opportunity in the region, has spurred sometimes violent protests that in recent years have taken the form of attacks - mostly by militants associated with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) - on pipelines and other oil facilities, as well as the abduction of employees of foreign oil companies, such as Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron, and Total, that have long been active there.

An early ceasefire agreement worked out in 2005 between the government of former President Olusegun Obasanjo and MEND broke down after just over a year. The result has been reductions in oil production - and the loss of billions of dollars in lost revenue to the government, as well as growing concern in Washington, which is highly dependent on foreign oil imports - in each of the years that followed.

Last year, Yar'Adua proposed a programme for militants that would offer them three-staged amnesty that included promises of cash, training and eventually jobs for militants who turned in their arms.

While the programme got off to a strong start in October, it bogged down after the president left for Saudi Arabia. By February, MEND announced it was ending the ceasefire and last month MEND claimed responsibility for two bombings in Warri.

Still, most analysts believe the amnesty remains salvageable, but that the government has to act quickly to get it back on track.

"Re-integration needs to be expedited," Dimieari Von Kemedi, a key official in Bayelsa State who has worked on conflict mediation in the Delta since 1997, said Tuesday at a presentation at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) here. He added that the next 18 months - longer than Jonathan will remain in office - will be critical in determining the amnesty's success or failure.

Jonathan, who grew up in the Delta and is a member of the same Ijaw ethnic group that dominates MEND, has endorsed the programme and stressed that follow-through by his government, is a top priority.

"We have restructured the (programme's) management," he said Monday, "and we're trying to start...training (former militants) this month."

But, he added, "it takes a lot of time to train them, even for them to be in position to make a living... So it's not something you can say you can even complete in a four-year administration. But I can assure you that we've set up a solid base, and I have a clear focus on the programme, with timelines, (so) you'll see that we are progressing."

• **IBB - Why I'm Vying for Presidency in 2011**

Former military president Gen Ibrahim Babangida yesterday said he will vie for the presidency in 2011 general election. He however said he will not use his wealth to buy his way to power.

Babangida announced his intention to contest in the 2011 election at the weekend in Delta State, the home state of his late wife.

Gen Babangida, 68, said he had the necessary experience to be president. The PDP says its presidential candidate will be from the northern part of the country.

Speaking to the BBC's Focus on Africa programme, Gen Babangida - known as "IBB" in Nigeria - dismissed any suggestion he might buy his way into office 17 years after leaving the top job.

"You'll be glad to know, I'm the most investigated Nigerian living today," he said.

"Perhaps after 17 years it ought to have come out by now, unless somebody is not doing his job."

He spoke of his determination to run for president for a second time even if the PDP does not select him as their candidate.

"What I am sure of - I can always find one party out of 51 that I can pitch my tent on," he said.

Gen Babangida took power in 1985 in a bloodless coup and stepped aside in 1993 after he annulled elections he had organized in 1993 that were widely seen as having been won by a businessman, Moshood Abiola.

Babangida said defended his democratic credentials and said he could offer "leadership and experience" to Nigeria. "I have conducted the freest and fairest - and this is attested by the international community - elections in the history of our country," he said.

"The fact that it was annulled is a different story altogether."

He pulled out of the 2007 presidential election when then-President Olusegun Obasanjo declared his support for current President Umaru Yar'Adua's candidacy.

Yar'Adua has not been seen in public since November 2009 because of his ill-health and is unlikely to seek re-election.

Acting President Goodluck Jonathan is from the south and so would not be a candidate under the PDP policy of alternating power between north and south, with each region having two terms.

- **N27 Billion Halliburton Scam IBB, Abdulsalami, Diya, 77 Others Indicted.**

Lagos — EIGHTY PERSONS, foreigners and Nigerians, the living and the dead, among them four former Heads of State and two of their wives, as well as former Governors and Ministers - indeed the top echelons of the country's political and military establishments, including technocrats - have been indicted by the United States law enforcement officials over the N27 billion Halliburton bribery scandal.

Among the foreigners are Jack Chagoury, Gilbert Chagoury, and T.W. Oerlemans, an Australian; but they are rather small fish compared with indicted former Nigerian Heads of State Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha, Ernest Shonekan, and Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Maryam, the late wife of Babangida; Mariam, the wife of the late Abacha, and his son, the late Ibrahim, are included; likewise Mike Akhigbe, the second in command in the Abdulsalami junta; former Abia State Governor, Orji Kalu; and former military Governors of Rivers State, Anthony Ukpo and Samuel Ewang.

Also among the dead are Abdulkadir Ahmed, former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor; and renowned economist, Pius Okigbo, who headed the probe panel on the Gulf Crude Oil Excess sales set up by the CBN in 1994.

But among those alive are former Petroleum Minister, Rilwanu Lukman, and newly re-appointed National Security Adviser, Aliyu Gusau.

According to the report of the investigators, the 80 persons received part of the N27 billion bribe facilitated by foreign contractors for Halliburton to get the contract to build the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) plant, Africa's first, in Bonny, Rivers State.

The scandal dates back to 1994 when some foreign companies put up bids for the construction of the plant that was to cost \$6 billion. To win the contract, a joint venture company, named TSKJ, was set up - comprising equal holdings between some companies, Technip (French), Sanmprogetti (Italian), KBR (U.S.), and part of the Halliburton group and Japanese engineering and construction company, JGC.

The investigators said the consortium bribed political leaders and top government functionaries through Tri-Star Investment Limited and Marubeni Inc. They also recruited British lawyer, Jeffery Tesler, to co-ordinate the affairs of Tri-Star, as well as Wojciech Chodan, an American, to co-ordinate the affairs of Marubeni.

TSKJ mandated Tri-Star to solely take charge of bribing Nigerian officials at senior level, Marubeni was restricted to bribing junior level officials. Tesler disclosed in a court deposition that TSKJ mandated both companies to bribe the officials.

As part of the investigation, the Swiss Justice Department followed the steps of the Police Judiciare of France, which in 2003, started an investigation that revealed fraudulent Halliburton payments to Tesler.

In the U.S., KBR and Halliburton have admitted to violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) by engaging in a decade-long bribing scheme to secure contracts in Nigeria.

Both agreed to pay a combined fine of \$579 million to settle criminal and civil charges brought by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Department of Justice.

• **Jonathan Returns, U.S. Trip Successful, Says FG**

Abuja — Acting President Goodluck Jonathan returned to the country yesterday after a four-day working visit to the United States where he attended the Nuclear Security Summit, met President Barrack Obama and had other engagements.

It was his first official visit outside the country since he emerged Acting President on February 9 following President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's ill-health.

Foreign Affairs Minister Odein Ajumogobia (SAN) told State House Correspondents that the visit was successful.

"The visit was very successful. The meeting between the Acting President and President Obama was a successful one. It generated a lot of goodwill for the Acting President.

"You could see the interviews granted by the Acting President to CNN," he said.

The Presidential Aircraft, "Nigeria Airforce One," touched down at the Presidential Lounge of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja around 10. 27 am without some governors and top government functionaries that were with him in US.

Governors Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State, Ikedi Ohakim (Imo) and Adams Oshiomhole (Edo) as well as Ajumogobia and Minister of Petroleum Resources, Mrs. Diezani Allison-Madueke, among others, were with Jonathan on the visit.

While in the US, Jonathan addressed the Council on Foreign Relations and visited the World Bank where he solicited the bank's support to finance infrastructure and provide technical expertise in the power sector.

On hand to receive the Acting President at the airport were the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Alhaji Yayale Ahmed; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman, Prince Vincent Ogbulafor; National Security Adviser, General Aliyu Mohammed Gusau; Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Senator Bala Muhammed, and the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mohammed Bello Adoke (SAN).

Others were the Minister of Interior, Captain Emmanuel Iheanacho; Minister of Aviation, Mrs. Fidelia Njeze; Special Duties Minister, Navy Captain Earnest Olubolade (rtd) and the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Ogbonna Onovo, among others.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government will soon establish a Diaspora Commission that will harmonise the contributions of Nigerians living abroad and ensure proper documentation of their input in the affairs of the nation as key stakeholders.

A statement by the Senior Special Assistant Media and Publicity to the Acting President yesterday said Jonathan disclosed this while addressing the Nigerian Community in Washington DC on Wednesday to round off his official visit.

The Acting President said the establishment of the commission would enable the government have proper records of the contributions of Nigerian citizens abroad.

"We want to upgrade the Diaspora department in foreign affairs to the level of a commission to coordinate experts in the Diaspora. We are looking at establishing the commission before the end of this administration, in the next 12 months," he said.

Jonathan applauded the roles and contributions of Nigerians in the Diaspora saying that they have become some of the best in their chosen professions across the globe.

He said the government will continue to acknowledge the contributions of these noteworthy ambassadors, while thanking them for promoting the country's image internationally.

He urged the Diaspora not to relent in making positive contributions towards nation-building, noting that the task of swapping the negative perception about Nigeria with a positive image requires collective responsibility.

The forum afforded Nigerians in the US the platform to interact firsthand with the Acting President and ask questions on the state of the nation.

Jonathan in turn acquainted them on the state of the nation as well as government measures to improve the quality of life of Nigerians.

On the power sector, Jonathan said government is in the process of diversifying the sources of power generation, and is putting in place relevant legislations and enabling conditions to promote public-private partnership to boost the sector.

"The compelling need to introduce a concept to ensure efficiency in the sector informed my decision to personally oversee the ministry of power," he said.

On the 2011 polls, Jonathan reassured Nigerians: "We are confident that the 2011 elections will be better than previous ones held in Nigeria."

He said the Federal Government is taking bold steps to revamp the poor state of infrastructure in the country by embarking on major construction and expansion particularly in transportation, healthcare and education.

On corruption, Jonathan urged the Diaspora, "You must not only shun corruption but join in efforts to combat it. You have roles in this crusade, including acting as whistle blowers and providing relevant information to track and prosecute corrupt Nigerians."

US Ambassador to Nigeria, Prof. Adebawale Adefuye, said Jonathan's visit to US has given tremendous boost to the country's image abroad, making Nigerians in Diaspora hold their heads high once again in national pride.

Nigerians who spoke at the occasion applauded the progress government is making to get the country out of the woods.

They generally commended the Acting President for steps taken since his assumption of office to stabilize the country and keep it on the path to progress.

Earlier in the day, Jonathan was Special Guest at a luncheon organized by the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) where he described the recent signing of the Agreement on the Nigeria-US Bi-National Commission as a historic feat that reflects the high level friendship and collaboration that exists between Nigeria and the US.

"The Bi-National agreement demonstrates the determination of our two governments to increase and strengthen bilateral cooperation on a vast array of issues of mutual interest. Both the USA and Nigeria have a responsibility to ensure its success," he stated.

The Corporate Council on Africa was established in 1993 to strengthen and facilitate commercial trade relationships between Africa and the United States.

It usually holds programmes with visiting African leaders, ministers, US and African private sector players and multilateral agencies.

• **Ribadu's Return Not Imminent**

Acting President Goodluck Jonathan has explained why he wants former Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chairman, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu back to the anti-corruption war.

The Acting President, Saturday Vanguard gathered, allegedly said that since Ribadu's exit from the EFCC saddle, the anti corruption war has waned, hence his desire to have him back, though as his Special Adviser on Anti Corruption.

However, Saturday Vanguard also gathered that the former anti corruption czar may not be returning to the country immediately as he still pursuing his fellowship at the Centre for Global Development in Washington, USA.

Saturday Vanguard sources also revealed that it was Nuhu Ribadu who provided most of the contacts that the acting President required during his four-day visit to the United States and facilitated the meetings. And Jonathan reportedly also had a private audience with him during the visit.

"Ribadu is not returning immediately as he is involved in some consultancy works with the United States and United Kingdom's governments. But the overseas jobs would not affect Ribadu's advisory role to Jonathan as he is already playing the part in the government."

The source said that part of the role Ribadu played was the facilitation of most of the meetings and interviews Jonathan had in the United States during the Nuclear meeting of 47 world leaders hosted by the US President, Barrack Obama.

"Jonathan also had meetings with the US Vice President, Joe Biden, World Bank President, a 15 minutes parley with Obama himself, Nigerian communities. He has also had interviews with the BBC, CNN and other major media agencies".

• **Turai Angry With Jonathan**

Lagos — The gulf between the camp of President Umaru Yar'Adua and that of the Acting President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, appeared to have widened yesterday, as Daily Champion gathered that the first Lady, Hajia Turai Yar'Adua is not happy with Jonathan.

It will be recalled that Jonathan who returned to Nigeria yesterday after a four-day official visit to the United States (US) had in an interview with the Cable Network News (CNN) said the family of Yar'Adua was preventing him from seeing the sick President, even as he insisted that he would not force himself to see Yar'Adua.

Jonathan said the last time he saw Yar'Adua was on November 26, 2009.

"I have not seen him...the thinking of the family is that they should isolate him from most of the key actors in government. I have not seen him. The Senate President has not seen him ...and at every single government function, I have not seen him...but we cannot influence his family's thinking."

However, a reliable source in the Presidency told Daily Champion that the statement by Jonathan infuriated the First Lady and the family. The source said: "As I am talking to you now, the family of Yar'Adua is not happy with the Acting President. He has met with Turai on a number of occasions and he knows the issues at stake. When he wanted to visit the President was not the appropriate time. And since then, he has made no effort no effort again. It is unfortunate that he decided to go the US to play to the gallery and to heap all the blames on the family.

"He has merely succeeded in widening the gap in the relationship between the two leaders and I can tell you that Yar'Adua's family is beginning to feel that all his actions since the President left for Saudi Arabia were deliberate and they were intended to wrestle the Presidency from Yar'Adua. This latest outburst is unfortunate," our source added.

Meanwhile, Jonathan returned to the country yesterday even as the Presidency said the visit to US was significant that the country engages with outside world.

The acting president arrived at 10.30 am and was received at arrival by top government functionaries led by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Ahmed Yayale.

Others at the airport to welcome the acting president were the National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Prince Vincent Ogbulafor, Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Senator Bala Mohammed, Minister of Aviation, Mrs. Fidelia Njeze, and Minister of Interior Emmanuel Iheanacho amongst others.

The visit according to the presidency has also been described as a success and very important for the country.

The US trip was at the instance of the US president, Barack Obama.

While in US, the acting president participated in the international Nuclear Security Summit, had a one on one discussion with President Obama, lunch with the US vice president, Joe Biden, also held discussion with the President of the World Bank, at the World Bank Building, in Washington DC, and also spoke as a guest at the Centre for Global Development (CGD), in Washington DC.

Speaking at arrival, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Odien Ajumogobia said: "It was a very successful visit and I think it is important that Nigeria engages with the world again and I think we did so in a very open and successful way."

He said the meeting between Jonathan and Obama was very important as it shows the goodwill Nigeria enjoys outside the country.

"The meeting between President Obama and the acting president was very successful and I think it is very important, there is a lot of goodwill, enormous goodwill for Nigeria outside Nigeria," the minister said.

He said the administration will do everything possible to "take advantage of that goodwill, for the betterment of Nigeria."

• **IBB - Atiku Questions His Democratic Credentials**

Abuja — As Nigerians called for credible polls ahead of the 2011 general elections, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar yesterday questioned the democratic credentials of former military President Ibrahim Babangida, who he accused of banning him from contesting during his regime.

Atiku was apparently reacting to Babangida's speech at a book launch in honour of retired Justice Adesola Oguntade, where the former head of state justified his eight year-rule. The book titled, "The Force of Justice," containing 62 chapters and 888 pages was edited by Deacon Dele Adesina, SAN and reviewed by Prof Maxwell Gidado.

Babangida had said that if given the opportunity to rule again, his priority would be to reduce the cost of governance and promote peace and harmony in the country.

In eulogizing Oguntade as a man of impeccable character and courage, IBB mentioned how Atiku benefitted from the wise and erudite judgments delivered by the judge at the apex court.

The former Vice president also waved off critics of his return to the PDP aside, saying, "it was my party. So, what is strange about it? I went back to my party."

He questioned the democratic credential of Babangida, who has signified his intention to vie as President next year, recounting how he (Atiku) was denied from contesting the highest office in 1992.

Atiku was a presidential candidate under the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1992, but was disqualified and eventually banned by the Babangida administration.

"When IBB was speaking about the cases I initiated to exercise my legal right, I wish those opportunities were available to me during his transition to democratic rule when I was disqualified not once, not twice and eventually banned," he added.

Babangida in his speech earlier had joined others including presiding Bishop of Living Faith Church, Dr David Oyedepo, Former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Mohammed Uwais, President of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Mr Rotimi Akeredolu (SAN) to eulogise judicial exploits and virtues of Oguntade while serving the country.

Babangida called for a slim governance in Nigeria, adding, "There are many people in governance who need not be in governance; may be they are only in the governance corridors, yet being fully catered for with too much public resources.

"What I am saying is that there is nothing inherently wrong with the presidential system. If I were, again, in position to act, what to do is to trim down the unnecessary baggage of undue human and personnel attachments to the major actors and functionaries (elected and appointed) of the presidential system.

"I am saying that this country, everything put together, deserves a slim governance in personnel and recurrent expenditures. I do not wish to engage in criticism but certainly our recent experience since the return to elected, constitutional, democratic and civilian governance in 1999, clearly indicates that we have seen too many of what the pre-eminent Professor of constitutional law, Prof Ben Nwabueze has referred to as 'subversion of the rule of law and democracy'.

Bishop Oyedepo extolled the virtues of the retired justice, noting that the "judiciary has a great role to play in moving the nation forward," and that "the future of this nation largely depends on the quality of our judiciary."

Oguntade, while decrying the over bloated nature of the current federal structure, added that the country cannot make progress under such arrangement as the old Western region, which could be governed by about ten ministers as they were then called but now has

about nine states. That, according to him, has led to huge waste of the country's resources considering the number of commissioners and special advisers the nine states now parade.

Representatives of Lagos State governor and immediate past governor, Bola Tinubu, former NBA chairman, Wole Olanipekun SAN and Commissioner of Police, Lagos State, Marvel Akpoyibo, Oba of Lagos, Rilwan Akiolu of Lagos, Ewi of Ado, Oba Rufus Adejugbe Aladesanmi III, were among those in attendance. Others included former governor of Bayelsa State, Chief DSP Alamieyeseigha, prominent members of the bar and the bench, politicians and captain of industries. governance.

"The problem, I repeat is not the presidential system but the overload of the system by functionaries who are not to, or not necessarily required for governance. I am aware of the argument that such overblown attachments in governance may be regarded as some form of welfare employment.

"On the contrary, the proper condition for generating employment needed in contemporary Nigeria is a productive economy and a better environment for freedom and liberty; private enterprise and the flow of global resources to develop our society and the economy.

"There are many other critical challenges on governance confronting this country. These challenges were not manufactured today or even yesterday. Yet leadership have the primary duty and responsibility to them.

"Our role as Nigerian citizens particularly of leadership category is to work tirelessly to trim down the sharp edges of divisiveness and retrogression, and to increase by expanding and deepening the economic, political and cultural spaces so as to foster the ingredients of growth, development, progress, unity and good governance.

"It is true that we are making progress, but we can make better progress with the continuous development of our intellectual capacity.

"I do hope this coming election we will succeed to make our vote count. Until we make our vote count, we really do not practice democracy," Oyedepo added.

Adeshina in his remarks lauded the landmark judgments of Oguntade when he held forte at the Supreme Court.

"Without any hesitation, I am confident to say that the book "The Force of Justice" an authoritative review of the selected judgements rendered by his Lordship, is an invaluable contribution to Nigeria's legal development."

"The principal objective of this book is not only to advertise the person of Hon Justice Oguntade but also to advertise the virtues and qualities of a judex, in terms of insight,

knowledge, wisdom, in-depth understanding, analytical mind, brilliance, hard work, boldness and courage to stand even when he has to stand alone," he added.

While thanking the people for appreciating what he has done in pursuit of good governance in Nigeria, Justice Oguntade said: "you are also a democrat otherwise you would not have known the import of what I have done. So, what ever I've done, we did it together.

"It is not an occasion for me to join issues with the former President (Babangida) on his analysis of federalism as contrasted with presidentialism. However, first and foremost, I believe in this country, our first priority is to labour on primarily to enthrone the rule of law."

He recalled that when he served in the High Court of Western Nigeria and later at Ikeja, if a driver drove on the wrong side of the road, he was promptly arrested and charged to court just as the same was the case of a policeman that took bribe.

He therefore insisted that "the result was that message was being constantly sent around that anybody who broke the law would be disciplined. We now know what is happening nowadays; you can do anything and get away with it. And when you have such a state, necessarily no country can make progress (that way).

"As you came to this place to honour me I thank you.

But you must go home with a message that all of you, without exception, including presidents and former president, have a duty to labour untiringly to see that the rule of law is enthroned in our society. Without it no progress can be made.

I would want to say that federalism has not been a blessing the way it has been practised", Oguntade said.

• **Country's Break-Up Impossible, Says IBB**

Abuja — Former military President, Ibrahim Babangida, on Thursday latched on to his inter-ethnic marriage to his late wife, Maryam, to argue that it is not possible to break Nigeria up, as canvassed within and from as far afield as Libya, where Muammar Ghadafi stirred the hornet's nest on March 16.

Ghadafi said Nigeria should be divided into two nations to avoid further bloodshed between Muslims and Christians, an idea that has since elicited comments for and against; one from Senate President David Mark who called Ghadafi a mad man.

Babangida threw his hat into the ring by saying that it is impossible to split the country unless Nigerian journalists back the campaign.

He was speaking at the 55th anniversary of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) held in Abuja.

Represented by Saleh Jambo, he lamented that journalism in Nigeria is drifting away from the ideals of the founding fathers who used the pen to unite the nation.

He said reports in the media these days tend to fan the embers of break up, as journalists assume the role of hatchet men in pulling down important personalities in the society.

The survival of Nigeria lies in the hands of journalists, Babangida stressed, and they must do everything possible to ensure that the 2011 elections are conducted peacefully, with credible results.

His words: "IBB's wife is from Delta, what happens to the children when the nation is broken apart? Do you cut Aishat and Mohammed into two parts and give each piece to Delta and the other piece to Niger so as to satisfy the purpose of break up? Inter-marriage has put to rest all possibility of break-up in this country.

"We are not prepared to kill our brothers and sisters in any senseless strife all because the interest of some minute group must be fulfilled. So going our different ways as some people will say, is not possible, we should learn to live together and weather the storm together. Collectively, we will reach the promised land."

Babangida expressed concern that news celebrated by the media tend to divide rather than unite the nation, regrettably in line with the negative prophecies about the country.

He admitted that mistakes were made in the past, "But the right thing to do is to forgive and move ahead" in the task of putting Nigeria on the right track of development.

"Nigeria is at a crossroads politically; the nation needs the journalist more than ever before to put it aright. Journalists should play a noble role in helping the nation find its feet, rather than pushing the coach off the rail."

He warned that no one benefits if journalists use their pen to cause disaffection, division, and confusion in the country - rather than stress issues that will put it on the path of development.

Babangida urged the media to do a soul searching and see if the tenets of the profession are being followed in the interest of Nigeria.

House of Representatives Speaker, Dimeji Bankole, shared the same views on the role of the media in ensuring the sustenance of democracy, and promised the commitment of the House to the ideals of democracy and to help facilitate the work of the media.

His words: "Over and beyond the good story we have told about our modest successes in different sectors of the economy, there are challenges that must be surmounted for us to be able to realise the full potentialities of this blessed nation.

"We are working on achieving a comprehensive electoral reform to attain free, fair, and credible elections. We must restore the confidence of Nigerians in the electoral process, which is a key ingredient of a good democracy.

"We also know that elections alone do not make a good democracy. There must be some dividends provided by the state."

Information and Communications Minister, Dora Akunyili, represented by her Minister of State, Labaran Maku, also stressed the imperative of conscientious contribution to nation development by the media.

She urged journalists to purge themselves of tendencies that ridicule their profession.

"The outside world perceives Nigeria at a glance from our own media. The Ministry of Information and Communications believes that for the media to play other important roles required in a democracy, the media may need to engage in some internal reforms.

"The reforms should cover such important areas as enforcement of professional ethics, capacity building, staff welfare, among others. Although the business environment is not easy for the news media, the current condition of service of most journalists ought to be addressed to enhance their productivity. This is the case both for the public and private media houses," she said.

NUJ President Garba Mohamed expressed fears about the survival of democracy in Nigeria, where there is a "shortage of quality leadership at all levels of the society, which is responsible for high level of poverty, corruption, indiscipline, greed, intolerance and lack of accountability

"People seem to have misunderstood politics as a means of enriching themselves rather than a vehicle toward the realisation of our collective hopes and aspirations for good governance, human development, and economic prosperity."

• **State Gov't May Go Broke in June**

State governments in this country may not be able to pay workers' salaries in the next two months when the \$3.2 billion currently left in the Excess Crude Account is shared out, a top official of the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission [RMAFC] told Daily Trust in Abuja yesterday.

The sources said only Lagos State will be able to pay salaries if the funds from the Federation Account and Excess Crude Account further nosedive in June.

Lagos State has an Internally Generated Revenue profile of N17.5 billion, while it paid monthly salaries of N3 billion in 2009. Other states depend largely on monies from the federation account and the excess funds from the proceeds of oil sales.

For the 2009 fiscal year, the anticipated internally generated revenue for Borno State was N17.843 billion and the personnel costs stood at N 8.678 billion for the year. Daily Trust could not confirm how much Borno State raked in as internally generated revenue for the year.

But our reporter in Borno said the state may not face serious financial difficulties because it has made provision for the rainy day.

The dwindling revenue profile of the government will also affect civil servants at the federal level, a top federal civil servant also said.

Monthly revenue accruing to the federal, state and local governments has been on the decline since January this year. The three tiers of government shared N333 billion in January and N273 billion in February.

The allocation for the month of March is not yet out but a source at the Federation Account Committee said Nigerians should expect lower postings to states for the month. The depletion of the Excess Crude Account came on top of continuous downward trends in funds accruable to the Federation Account. The excess crude account was created by the Olusegun Obasanjo government when the prices of crude oil in the international market were far above Nigeria's budget benchmark. The Excess Crude Account is divided into two parts. There is the dollar part which comes from the sales of crude oil outside the shores of Nigeria by the NNPC. The other part comes from Domestic Excess Crude Sales.

Nigeria's deepening financial crisis is further captured in the envisaged 35 per cent or N1.5 trillion budget deficit for 2010.

The 2010 budget is predicated on oil production of 2.88 million barrel per day at \$67 per barrel. This is against last year's \$57 a drum. The price of sweet crude at the international market yesterday stood at \$87 a barrel. Most states depend on the funds from the federal government to pay their workers and to carry out major projects.

Government has been augmenting revenue shortfalls by withdrawing from the Excess Crude Account. The account is now down to about \$3 billion from a balance of \$20 billion in January 2009.

In February 2009, the Federation Account Allocation Committee recommended the sharing of \$2 billion after the state governors pressurized the federal government to share \$4 billion from the account. In April 2009, \$5.3 billion was withdrawn from the Excess Crude Account to fund the federal government's power project. Between June and August

2009, \$4 billion was shared by the governments, after the state governors went to court praying that the whole Excess Crude fund be shared.

Another \$2 billion was shared by the government in the heat of global economic crisis that drastically reduced international oil prices last year. Towards the end of 2009, federal government withdrew \$2 billion from the account and injected it into the economy as economic stimulus.

In the same vein, Daily Trust has also learnt that since January, in an unprecedented manner, the Federal Government has been dipping its hands into oil proceeds to offset Joint Venture Cash Calls. Nigeria has 60 percent joint holding and 40 percent to the multinationals in the JVCs.

Corroborating this fact, Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN] Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi and former minister of finance Ngozi Okonjo Iweala recently said budget 2010 is not realistic.

Meanwhile, a top government official said unless the states aggressively embark on harnessing their internally generated revenue and relying less on revenue from the federation account, they may also not be able to execute any capital project for the rest of the year.

How revenue from the Federation Account and the Excess Crude Account were shared by the Federal Government, 36 States and the 774 Local Government Councils.

Federation Account (N) Excess Crude Account (\$)

September '09: N351 billion The account had a balance of \$20 billion as at January 2009.

October'09: N354 billion \$2 billion was shared in February 2009

November'09: N374 billion \$5.3 billion was withdrawn for power emergency fund in April 2009

December '09: N370 billion \$4 billion was shared between June and August 2009. Another \$2 billion was shared in the heat of global economic meltdown in 2009

January 2010: N330 billion In October 2009, another \$2 billion was withdrawn as economic stimulus package approved by NEC

February 2010: N273 billion In March alone this year, \$3 billion was shared by the federal states and local governments

- **Trying to Remove Yar'Adua Will Be Distractive**

Attempts to invoke Section 144 of the 1999 Constitution to oust ailing President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua will be a distractive process, former Minister of Finance Mallam Adamu Ciroma has said.

Ciroma, who chaired the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Convention Committee in 2008, told newsmen in Abuja that the Executive Council of the Federation (EXCOF) should rather show empathy with Yar'Adua over his health challenge.

He said: "I can warn that anybody who is thinking of invoking that section is going to produce heartache in the whole political process. It is going to become disruptive.

"What kind of people are we that somebody is not well, somebody is acting in his place and then you want to take the step of removing him, for what? You have to be sympathetic in the way you relate to people."

Ciroma said the North would still produce PDP's presidential in 2011 in line with the party's zoning arrangement.

He said: "The zoning arrangement is something which we people who formed this party discussed and came to conclusion which we believe will serve the interest of this country better. It is not enough to think that you can get the right people or the competent people from one side of the country.

"After the death of General Sani Abacha, it was we people from this part of the world or this part of Nigeria who decided that the next president should come from the south and we agreed that the rotation should be between north and south even though there are six zones.

"So, we agreed that somebody from the south should become the president. We did not say from which part of the south. It is the way events developed in the south that produced General Olusegun Obasanjo as the president and he was to act as president for two terms. When he tried to extend his period, he met our resistance and he himself took part in choosing President Yar'Adua to become his successor.

"So, Yar'Adua is now in the middle of his term or the term which is for the north and he is unwell. If he recovers to contest the next election, there will be no problem. If for some reasons, he cannot contest, the issue is to consider as the PDP did recently that the remaining four years of Yar'Adua which is belonging to the north should be operated by a northern elected president," he pointed out.

Ciroma, who did not rule out the possibility of seeing the Acting President Goodluck Jonathan declaring interest in the 2011 election, however noted that such move would change the zoning arrangement of the PDP.

"He may wish to. If he wishes, you cannot stop him from trying. He may try and by the time he succeeds, it means the wish of the party has changed," Ciroma said.

2. Economy:

- **Fear Grips ALSCON Workers As UC Rusal Lays Off 762 in Jamaica**

WORKERS in Aluminum Smelter Company of Nigeria Plc (ALSCON) have expressed fear over the recent laid off of 762 workers and the closing of all bauxite projects by UC Rusal-owned West Indies Alumina operations in Jamaica.

ALSCON has been scaling down its operations in Jamaica amid a faltering economy.

UC RUSAL purchased a 77.5 per cent block of shares in ALSCON, a 193,000-tonne smelter reduction, anode-producing and cast house areas, a port on the Imo River and a power-generating station with an offer of \$250 million, well under Bancorp Financial Investment Group (BFIG)'s bid of \$400 million while Germany's Ferrostaal AG and the Government of Nigeria remain minority shareholders with 7.5 per cent and 15 per cent respectively.

A source from ALSCON told Daily Independent on Sunday, that most of the workers in the company are afraid of their job as UC Rusal, one of the world's biggest aluminum producer last week laid off 762 workers and stopped all bauxite projects by one of its company in Jamaica.

"UC Rusal also owns Alumina Partners of Jamaica, which terminated hundreds of workers last year," the source said.

He added: "We have to cry out now because of poor technical management of ALSCON against Federal Government plans that when well managed, at full capacity, the company would create 1,900 local jobs at the smelter with additional active development of small and medium-scale business around the smelter, developing necessary infrastructure, including port facilities, technical maintenance companies, medical and social services will generate approximately 20,000 jobs in Akwa Ibom State."

Meanwhile, a management staff of ALSCON that spoke with Daily Independent said that "the company, though facing hard times as a result of the global economic meltdown will not sack workers in Nigeria."

He said "UC RUSAL is committed to creating jobs opportunities for Nigerians, thereby adding to the general growth of the nation's economy. The company is prepared to develop small and medium businesses, as well as deliver needed infrastructural facilities, once the company is able to overcome the ongoing economic crisis affecting its operations around the world.

It would be recalled that the workers in ALSICON cried out that UC Rusal has perfected plans to sell half of its stakes in ALSICON to fund investment in other countries.

Investigations by Daily Independent also revealed that over 40% of the staff, especially in the pot room, considered a very technical department has secured fresh opportunities in aluminum plant in Qatar and Ghana as a result of gradual collapse of operational work and poor condition of services in ALSICON

The workers however disclosed that security, government/public relations, legal matters, commercial, among others, which are supposed to be headed by Nigerians, are being headed by Russians who have no basic operational knowledge of these departments in the Nigerian system.

3. Energy:

- **Jonathan, World Bank in Talks Over Power Sector**

Washington DC — Acting President Goodluck Jonathan has asked the World Bank to support Nigeria's efforts to revamp its infrastructure and overcome the challenges of power generation.

Jonathan made the call at the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC, where he held a closed-door meeting with the President of the Bank, Robert Zoellick, and the bank's top officials on Monday.

THISDAY learnt that the Acting President, while noting that currently, Nigeria's power comes from hydro-electric sources, said the turbines, due to old age, require urgent refurbishment or replacement.

He said though government is considering additional power source from its rich coal deposit, this is likely going to take a longer time to achieve, and the exploitation of a nuclear-based source may take between eight and 10 years.

Based on all these, the Acting President said Nigeria's immediate remedy lies in the activation of its hydro-electric potentials and that the bank's assistance is required.

He said for such assistance to be of maximum benefit, there is also an urgent need for a comprehensive technical audit to identify critical areas of priorities. According to him, the World Bank is in a good stead to deploy its experts to carry out the audit.

Jonathan also solicited the support of the bank for the country's infrastructure. He specifically mentioned the plan by the Federal Government to construct a rail line from Calabar to Lagos and requested the bank to help in the construction or rehabilitation of existing rail lines across the country.

The Acting President also spoke on the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) currently before the National Assembly. He said the bill, which is intended to increase government's stake in the industry from 60 per cent to 80 per cent, is also focusing on addressing sectoral distortions such as acreage management, deep offshore and gas exploitation, as well as funding.

Noting that government had never been able to inject more than \$5 billion from its fiscal allocation into the sector, he said the bill once passed would empower government to raise funds from other sources.

Jonathan also spoke on the Niger Delta, saying the problem of the area has its roots in the initial resentment of the local people against oil companies, but that today, the problem of the area also has economic undertone.

Explaining his point, the Acting President said some of the militants have discovered that when there is a state of anarchy, the greater their chances of perpetrating criminal acts like illegal bunkering, piracy and kidnapping.

He said government's decision to grant amnesty to repentant militants was aimed at turning them away permanently from such illegal acts.

Already, the disarmament phase of the exercise had been done, and the repentant militants are now being rehabilitated and reintegrated into the society as responsible citizens, he told the officials.

The World Bank President had earlier in his remarks noted that the engagement of the bank in Nigeria stands at about \$4 billion. Noting that Nigeria's financial sector has recorded commendable success, the bank chief said the achievements needed to be consolidated and sustained so as to generate beneficial economies of scale and support growth.

He, however, offered to work with the nation to source for investors from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) for the Asset Management Company set up by government.

On Jonathan's request for assistance in the power sector, the bank said it would want to see Nigeria's generating capacity backed by strong policy regime.

The bank, however, offered to assist Nigeria in sourcing for investors in the power sector but suggested that further meetings with the nation's stakeholders should be held to explore, evaluate and deploy effective strategies.

On the assistance for mass transit, the bank said it would consider including Nigeria in its African package as it was already working with some African countries in this area.

Present at the meeting were the bank's Managing Director, Mrs Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; Vice-President (Africa), Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili; Minister of Finance, Mr. Olusegun

Aganga; Nigerian Ambassador to the US, Mr. Adebowale Adefuye; Head of Strategy Sub-Saharan Africa, James Emery; and Country Director, Onno Ruhl.

• Shell Shuts Down Offshore Oil Field

Lagos — Nigeria's already unstable oil production might be affected by news that Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) has shut down the SPDC Joint Venture-operated East Area (EA) oilfield offshore in the Niger Delta as a precaution to enable repairs on equipments.

The equipments under repair, THISDAY learnt, relates to the floating, production, storage and offloading (FPSO) unit of the EA oilfield.

The shutdown of the 115,000 barrels per day capacity oilfield located in Ekeremor Local Government Area (LGA) of Bayelsa State, is coming barely eight months that crude oil production resumed at the oil field after three years of closure due to militant attacks.

Shell's Spokesman Mr. Precious Okolobo who confirmed this development in a statement yesterday however stated that only 100,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day has been deferred due to the closure.

Part of the statement reads: "The SPDC Joint Venture-operated EA field offshore Western Niger Delta has been temporarily shut down as a precaution to enable repairs to equipment which connects the Floating, Production, Storage and Offloading (FPSO) facility, Sea Eagle with the mooring platform.

"The equipment in question was scheduled to be overhauled in May this year, but bad weather - including a storm on 26 March - has forced the schedule to be brought forward."

SPDC had in September 2009 shut down the oilfield's FPSO, which is christened 'Sea Eagle' to commence repair and replacement of the facility's emergency shut down valve, which took several weeks to be completed. The deepwater field had loaded its first crude oil cargo estimated at 70,000 barrels per day in the first week of August 2009.

The EA platform, which was shut in on February 18, 2006, was one of the first targets of the Movement of the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

MEND had during the February 2006 wave of attacks set a crude oil export tanker ablaze, blew up two oil pipelines and also kidnapped nine oil workers - three Americans, two Egyptians, two Thais, one Briton and one Filipino, from a boat belonging to the United States oil services firm, Willbros.

The coalition of militant groups had earlier in January 2006 taken four foreign hostages from the EA, forcing Shell to shut down the platform for three years.

After resuming operation at the facility, Shell had said it would continue to monitor the security situation and also take necessary measures to ensure the security of staff and contractors.

Before its recent declaration of ceasefire under the Federal Government's amnesty programme, MEND had warned the oil major to drop its plans to restart the EA oilfield as "we cannot guarantee the safety of their staff and equipment."

But in an exclusive interview with THISDAY, a spokesman of the 12 EA communities and the Amananawei of Amatu 1 of Iduwin Kingdom His Royal Highness, Decca E. Keredei said the communities had resolved to provide an enabling environment for Shell to re-start the oil field.

"Amnesty is an appreciation and that is how I see it. They (militants) have created awareness on the problems in the Niger Delta. So, they should calm down and allow the agencies government has put in place to tackle the unemployment problem in the area," he said.

4. Environment:

5. Immigration/Refugee/Idps:

6. Health:

7. Human rights/Gender/social issues:

8. Geo-Strategic issues:

Other West African States

Benin:

Burkina Faso:

Cameroon:

- **Cameroon's Population Hits 19.4 million....H7**

The results of the third Population and Housing Census were officially presented in Yaounde yesterday.

Projected from the results obtained from the third Population and Housing Census of November, 2005 and based on the average demographic growth rate of 2.6 per cent, Cameroon's population as at January 01, 2010 stands at 19,406,100. This figure was revealed to an anxious population yesterday at the Yaounde Hilton by the Minister Delegate at the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development, Yaouba

Abdoulaye in a solemn ceremony presided at by the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals, Amadou Ali. The results translates what the Resident Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) described as "scientific rigour and unreserved professionalism."

From every indication and to go by the UNFPA official, the exercise was conducted in maximum respect of the regulations set by the UN. Cameroon, he said, is one of the 50 countries, 20 from Africa, that have benefited from UNFPA support in population and housing headcount. "No census in the world can deceive everyone", he said, stating the exercise in itself counts on everyone.

Contrary to tradition where such ceremonies are often marked by long speeches, some of which rain praises on the actors, yesterday's event was that of action in the direction of all expectations. What the population that turned out wanted to know was, how many people are there in Cameroon. How is the population partitioned in the ten regions of the country and probably the sex distribution among others? Answers to these questions were immediately provided when the Minister Delegate got up and instead of reading a speech, went straight to the point.

After making a run down of the steps followed in the conduct of the headcount, and recalling that the results to be announced follows a scrutiny of the sixth National Census Council, he said, "let me now declare the results." "The population of Cameroon as at January 01, 2010 is 19,406,100." No applause from the population. Was it probably because the figure did not differ very much from projections pronounced in many official speeches already known by many Cameroonians? Was it because each member of the population in the hall was anxious to know how many people are in their regions?

As if to provide another answer to their expectations, Yaouba Abdoulaye said, "the population is distributed in the ten regions as follows": Adamawa, 1,015,622, Centre, 3,525,664, East, 801,968, Far North, 3,480,414, Littoral, 2,865,795, North, 2,050,229, North West, 1,804,695, West, 1,785,285, South, 692,142, South West, 1,384,286. The results indicate that women form 50.5 percent while 52 per cent of the population lives in the urban centres.

The ceremony ended with a visit of the photo exhibition on how the headcount was conducted.

- **Sex Workers to Boycott Labour Day.....H7**

The decision aims to counter the Wouri Senior Divisional Officer decision to ban prostitution in the city.

A band of sex workers commonly called « liberal sisters » last Monday convened an extraordinary general assembly at the Njogmabi neighbourhood in Douala to retaliate the recent administrative decision which interdicts prostitution at the Bonanjo residential area. In their final communiqué, the "liberal sisters", made up of school dropouts, widows

and outlaws, stated emphatically that their activity has not only helped reduce the rate of unemployment, poverty and crime among women, but has also contributed immensely in tourism development, given that they play an indispensable role to host and guide many visitors.

Also, most striking in the five-item resolution was the freewomen's resolve to provoke a regional sit-in strike, beginning May 1st, if one of theirs' is either arrested or molested by the police. To them, the impact of their action would be more effective on May 1st, the International Labour Day, wherefore many men traditionally roundup the festive hours in taverns. In her 2009 retrospect, the head of the disciplinary committee dwelled on the fragrant abuse of legal codes and none-respect of professional ethics by some unscrupulous members of the association. The speaker frowned at the fact that bandits and murderers now regularly connive with sex workers to carryout deadly operations, and that law enforcement officers frequently co-opt the "liberal sisters" to investigate and track down suspected clients.

- **Woman Dies Embracing Repatriated Son....H5**

Aunt Pauli borrowed an enormous sum to fly her son abroad last year.

A 72-year-old woman last Sunday collapsed and died on her way from the Douala International Airport after weeping for several hours in the arms of her son, repatriated from one of the Scandinavian countries. Aunt Pauli, (other names withheld) who sells bread and beans at the Bepanda neighbourhood, was allegedly broke by the torturous look of her son, Gregoire, who is said to have spent six months of terrific agony in an alien nation, searching for a job. Family members say Gregoire, who lost his father at 11, holds a degree in Economics from the University of Yaounde since 1995. He had made heroic efforts but failed to procure any job in Cameroon. He had sat for numerous competitive examinations into the public service; he had hawked mineral water across Douala; he had sold fried corn and groundnuts from office to office; he later became a mobile shoe mender; he became a bike rider; he became a night watchman; he became a mobile home teacher; he even dug and sold sand by the Wouri River. But tough times lasted longer.

In 2009, Gregoire resolved to quite the fatherland. Aunt Pauli, who had single-handedly raised her son, went for an enormous loan to supplement the guy's hard-earned resources. It is said the woman was overwhelmed and submerged by joy and anxiety when her son waved and thinned off behind the boarding room at the Douala airport a certain Friday noon. "Sun shine, at last!" she hailed the heavens. But, joy sometimes fades too soon. Gregoire did not find peace abroad. He was welcomed by a band of crooks, who threw him out after squandering his cash and precious African foodstuff. Stranded, Gregoire sought refuge at the rail station. But winter was irresistible. He perched at the corridors of nearby group homes. But matrons were callously intolerable. He became a bedlam beggar. But the society was not charitable. He reported at the refugee camp. But his appeal was not granted. Rather, he faced a draconian option: to return home or go to jail. He chose the first.

For the past one week, Gregoire has dozed in the hangman's world. He unconsciously gazed and gesticulated at the immigration officers who held him in custody, waiting for the next flight to Africa. The neuroticism worsened when the pilot announced an imminent landing at the Douala International Airport. Gregoire, who had been rapt in an enduring trance since Zurich, broke loose and peeped through the side pane. The rugged streets of Douala laid a few just a few metres above sea level. Then, a thousand imageries darted across his memory: the pangs of misery, poverty, joblessness, idleness, and exclusion the hard reality of homeland Aunt Pauli could bear no more.

- **South West - Hub of Palm Oil Production....H2**

The crop is a great income earner but nut thieves and other hurdles are a threat to industrial production.

Tropical dwellers across the continents have palm oil as staple ingredient in their meals. Food experts testify that it provides the necessary fats for the body and as such generates the required energy for the consumer. Yet, palm oil is not only for food, it serves for other industrial products such as soap and other detergents. In Cameroon, palm oil is produced at both individual, and at industrial levels. The South West Region of Cameroon stands tall in the mill of palm oil. The rich volcanic soils of the South West offer fertile fields for the cultivation of palms. The receptive soil has pushed many into palm farming; thereby offering gainful employment and thus alleviating poverty. Such giant industrial plants in the area include the pre-independence created Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), the PAMOL Estates in Lobe (Ndian Division) and the Mukete Estates with headquarters in Kumba (Meme Division). Smallholders, mostly found in Ndian Division, are not left out in the thriving palm sector. Production levels remain huge though a common threat stands in the path of expansion for the palm sector. The defiance is chiefly nut-theft. Be it with the CDC or the PAMOL, palm nut-thieves prowl day and night to harvest the combs in the various farms. The hoodlums have even installed local mills known to everyone in places like Mutengene and Mondoni.

Following the Fako Senior Divisional Officer's visit to CDC palm plantations recently, the police has dismantled some six local oil mills in Mutengene and handed to the CDC headquarters in Bota for whatever results. Nut-thieves had prior to the police-swoop, reigned unperturbed, attacked and even butchered plantation guards leading to the admission of six of them from Mudeka into the Tiko Hospital.

Palm production hurdles

In Ndian Division, nut-thieves have constituted subjects of court cases; leading many of them to the Kumba prison. Several meetings were held jointly by administrative authorities aimed at curbing the phenomenon whereby it was even agreed to encourage and subsidise private farm production. To fight this cankerworm at its own level, PAMOL thought of subsidising palm seeds for small holders who would undertake to sell their produce to PAMOL.

Thieves are not the only threat to palms. Snails and slugs, if not checked, ravage and constitute a "physostigma" to palm farmers. The phenomenon was so alarming some 15 years ago and teething "phytosanitary" measures were employed by the CDC to arrest it. After the incident, the Ekona Research Centre began developing varied and more adaptable palm seeds.

Bad roads are a handicap to evacuating palm cones from farms, and as such much of it gets bad in some individual farms.

Despite the difficult side of palm oil production in the South West, the area remains that of high yields resulting in both local and foreign consumption of palm oil exports from here. Palms are such useful trees that they have numerous utilities apart from oil. Kernels from palm nuts are equally highly solicited for soap and other pomade production.

- **53 % of Money for Medical Care....H6**

Much of the funds to curb HIV in Cameroon serve to care for those living with the virus.

«Money to fight HIV in Cameroon is not kept in a particular account at the disposable of a particular person or organisation».

The declaration was made by Dr Ibilé Abessouguié, Deputy-Permanent Secretary at the National AIDS Control Committee dubbed CNLS in the French language. Cash to fight and care for those living with HIV in Cameroon, is managed by many different actors in various ways. At the National Committee for the Fight against HIV, officials say they control HIV budgets being used to ensure the medical care of those living with the virus, carry out prevention campaigns, care for orphans and children vulnerable to HIV as well as support actions of various private organisations involved in the fight against HIV.

Dr Ibilé Abessouguié says more than half of the HIV budget, that is 53 per cent, is allocated to medical care of patients. This is used to subsidise the treatment of opportunistic diseases, biological examinations and purchase of the anti-retroviral drugs which is in turn given free to HIV victims. Dr Ibilé explained that as of December 2009, some 164, 070 HIV victims were eligible for treatment. Amongst them, 76, 228 are effectively on anti-retroviral drugs representing 46.6 per cent of those who need the treatment. The Deputy Permanent Secretary also noted that the 53 per cent of money used for medical care is from the State and the Global Fund (GF). According to him, they have an approximate percentage of those going to the second line of treatment. While the first and second line treatment of HIV is financed by the government. Dr Ibilé added that maybe when the third line treatment will be available, its treatment cost will be taken care of by the government as well.

Furthermore, 26 per cent of the HIV budget is used on prevention which according to experts is not only about sensitisation campaigns against HIV but also involves all activities that check the virus from spreading. There is primary prevention for those not

yet infected with HIV and secondary prevention campaigns to prevent those already infected by the virus from being re-infected.

Experts also note that nine per cent of the budget goes to assist private actors such as religious communities as well as associations of people living with HIV. Orphans and vulnerable children are not left out in the fund used to curb HIV. Five per cent of the HIV budget is given to this group of people. In a bid to make sure that all the activities geared towards curbing HIV are well evaluated and coordinated, seven per-cent of the budget is allocated to a working group charged with managing all those involved in the fight against HIV in Cameroon.

Cape Verde:

Chad:

- **DPKO-DFS release of first quarter 2010 statistics on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving UN peacekeeping personnel.....H7**

United Nations, New York, 15 April 2010: As part of the efforts to improve transparency on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse involving peacekeeping personnel, as of December 2009 the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Field Support (DFS) have begun to issue quarterly press releases to make public updated statistics regarding sexual exploitation and abuse cases in field Missions.

During the first quarter of 2010, the Departments reported a total of 24 allegations, ten of them concerning minors. During the first quarter of 2009, the number of allegations was 29, ten of them concerning minors. Further details are available on the UN Conduct and Discipline website (<http://cdu.unlb.org/>).

"We are continuing our efforts to report on the issue in a more transparent and systematic manner," said Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Field Support. "We are painfully aware that SEA continues to be a major challenge for the peacekeeping family and one of our goals is to take every possible preventative measure to ensure no harm comes to those we serve", she added.

The latest Report of the Secretary-General on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, released in February 2010 (A/64/669), recognized the strong preventative measures put in place and indicated that "sustained attention must continue to be paid to the issue".

Complementing existing training materials on sexual exploitation and abuse, Conduct and Discipline Teams in Lebanon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Western Sahara and Timor Leste began piloting new induction training during the first quarter of 2010. The new materials provide an overview of the UN Standards of Conduct and focus on all other forms of misconduct, such as fraud, theft, corruption and abuse of authority.

"The vast majority of troops conduct themselves in a professional and admirable manner, but there are some instances where misconduct occurs. This is simply unacceptable when you serve under the UN flag and we convey this message on every interaction we have with our Troop Contributing Countries, with whom we are working closely" said Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. "On Sexual Exploitation and Abuse cases, we are following up with Member States on a case-by-case basis and we will continue to engage with them to increase the level of response to substantiated cases of misconduct," he said.

There are currently 14 Conduct and Discipline Teams covering 19 peacekeeping and special political missions. These teams have launched extensive outreach campaigns to ensure that the local population understands the process for filing an allegation and to call upon the UN's partners (including NGOs) to report any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse that they may be aware of as soon as possible, as rapid response is key in ensuring that investigations and follow up occur in an accurate and timely manner.

The UN is profoundly committed to a zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Sexual relations with any persons under 18 or with prostitutes are strictly prohibited (ST/SGB/2003/13).

Cote d'Ivoire:

Gambia:

- **Lt. Gen Masanneh Kinteh Appears in Court.....H1**

Lt. Gen. Masanneh Kinteh, current Chief of Defense Staff of The Gambia Armed Forces on Friday 9th April 2009 testified as the tenth prosecution witness in the ongoing treason trial of former Chief of Defense Staff Lt. Gen. Lang Tombong Tamba and seven others before Justice Emmanuel Amadi of the High Court in Banjul.

Dressed in a full military uniform, CDS Kinteh told the court that he lives at Mile 7 in Bakau and he is military officer, a Lieutenant General and Chief of Defense Staff. He also told the court that he recognised all the accused persons who are standing trial on three count charges of coup d'etat.

CDS Kinteh recalled that on the 18th November 2009 while at his residence, he received a call from somebody who introduced himself as one Ebrima Ceesay.

"He said he is an intelligent operative at the Office of the President and that he has received information that some smuggling activity is going on around the border of Senegal and was asked to go for fact finding mission at Farrafenni and Basse and needs to liaise with me to inform my men on the ground that he is going to send two agents to Farrafenni and Basse. I assured him of our cooperation. I told the deputy CDS then Brigadier General Yankuba Drammeh about the visit, and instructed him to liaise with our commanders to facilitate their mission," he said.

Lt. Gen. Kinteh further said after that, he received another call from the same person (Ebrima Ceesay) that his agent's vehicle got a break down after Barra and he needs assistance. Kinteh said he told Ebrima Ceesay that at that particular point in time, he doesn't have any vehicle.

"That was the end of my conversation with him on that day. I called the Commander, 2nd Infantry Battalion, Lt. Col. Yorro Jallow to confirm whether he has received the information of the visit from the deputy CDS and he said yes. I further instructed him (Yorro) to facilitate the mission of the operatives and I make several calls to make sure that the person I was speaking to was a member of the President's Office and all of them confirmed that he is not," he said.

According to the witness, the commanding officer of Farrafenni camp later called him and informed him that one of the agents has arrived in the camp. "I asked him to ascertain the agent's identity but confirmed that he doesn't have any identity on him. I requested to speak to the agent myself and I asked him of his identity or warrant. He told me he is a warrant officer and that he has handed over his warrant to his partner who is away from him. I then asked him to pass the phone to the commanding officer, whom I instructed not to allow the agent to leave the camp until he produces his card," he said.

Then the Director of Public Prosecution Richard N. Chenge told the court "that's all for this witness," he said.

Under cross examination by one of the defense counsel Sheriff Tamedou, the witness told the court that Yankuba Drammeh, deputy Chief of Defense Staff has been relieved of his duties but he cannot remember when. He further said that Drammeh was de-kitted at his home immediately after he was relieved of his duties, and that is the normal procedure for officers and directives comes from the appropriate authority.

Counsel Tamedou asked CDS Kinteh whether he could tell the court who this appropriate authority is. But before the witness could answer that question, DDP Chenge rose and objected. Arguing that the question is not relevant to the case and in the Armed Forces, certain secrets should not be disclosed in public. But his objection was overruled by the presiding Judge who asked the witness to answer the question on what he meant by "the appropriate authority". And CDS Kinteh said, "appropriate authority is the person empowered by law or virtue of his position to give instructions"...that's my understanding. He added that when ex-CDS Tamba was de-kitted, he (CDS Kinteh) was not in the country by then and somebody was acting as the CDS.

Another defense counsel Pap Cheyassin Secka, questioned CDS Kinteh why he gave instructions before and not wait until the identity of Ebrima Ceesay was ascertained. CDS Kinteh replied that initially, he believed the information was genuine. Defense counsel Hawa Sisay-Sabally was not in court during Friday proceedings but Counsel Lubna Farage held brief for her and did not ask the witness any question. The DDP later applied to the court for the witness to be discharged which was granted by the court.

Justice Amadi therefore adjourned the case to today Monday for continuation of trial. But not without expressing his disappointment with DDP's bringing only one witness to court. "Monday, bring almost all your witnesses so that we can move fast," he said.

The likes of former deputy Chief of Defense Staff Yankuba Drammeh, Major Kuluteh Manneh, and some NIA personnel are all expected to testify in the trial.

- **EU reacts to imprisonment of Gambian opposition politician....H7**

The European Union has expressed concern about the negative impact on freedom of assembly and freedom of expression in The Gambia after the prosecution and imprisonment of the campaign manager of the opposition United Democratic Party, Femi Peters, states a press release issued Tuesday by the British High Commission in Banjul on behalf of the EU.

"The EU calls on Gambia to act in conformity with its international human rights and treaty obligations in considering any appeal," the release said. Femi Peters was on 1st April convicted and sentenced to one year imprisonment for using loud speakers in public and control of procession without obtaining a valid permit. This is after the UDP decided to go ahead in holding a rally after several applications for police permit were rejected.

Earlier, both the British government and the United States government issued similiary releases condemning the imprisonment.

- **British gov't expresses concern over imprisonment of Gambian opposition leader.....H7**

The British High Commission in the Gambian capital Banjul on Monday issued a statement on the recent imprisonment of the campaign manager of the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP), Mr. Femi Peters, expressing concern about its implications.

"The British government has been closely following the trial of the Campaign Manager of the United Democratic Party, Femi Peters, accused of holding a rally without permission and being in possession of loudspeakers in a public place without permission, and has noted the verdict and sentence passed down on Mr. Peters.

"The British government is concerned by the heavy sentence of one year in prison without the option of a fine handed down on Mr. Peters and the negative impact of this prosecution on Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Expression in The Gambia.

"The British government reiterates the views expressed in the EU Presidency statements which were presented to the Gambian authorities on 29 June and 10 August during the trial and sentencing of six journalists on charges of sedition.

“The rights to freedom of expression and to freedom of assembly are fundamental to democracy and fundamental freedoms laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in the African Charter on Human Rights and People’s Rights, to which The Gambia is a state party.

“The British Government urges the Government of The Gambia to take these concerns into consideration and to act in conformity with its international human rights and treaty obligations in considering any appeal,” the release concludes.

- **Gambians to demonstrate in London....H7**

Gambians will stage a “peaceful demonstration” in London on Thursday (15 April) against the “harsh, perverse and politically-motivated imprisonment” of top opposition figure, Mr. Femi Peters, PANA reported Monday.

A statement from the organizers said an approval for the protest had already been secured from UK authorities and that the demonstration would be held outside the Gambian and Nigerian diplomatic missions in London.

The protest was also geared towards highlighting “the complicity of Nigerian mercenary judges and magistrates in stifling and eroding fundamental rights and freedoms in the Gambia, particularly the right to fair trial.”

The organizers, under the banner of opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) and Coalition for Human Rights in Gambia, United Kingdom (UK) chapters, urged protesters to carry along their old shoes to “symbolically stone the monster”.

They also called on all to be of good conduct during the peaceful demonstrations.

Guinea- Conakry: Guinea- Bissau:

- **US names two Guinea-Bissau military men 'drug kingpins'.....H1**

The US has accused two senior military men from Guinea-Bissau of drug running.

Air force head Ibraima Papa Camara and former navy chief Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto have been named "drug kingpins".

Under the Drug Kingpin Act, financial sanctions have been imposed on the two men and US citizens are barred from doing business with them.

Guinea-Bissau is a major transit point for cocaine smuggled from Latin America to Europe, and last week suffered an apparent army coup attempt.

Adam Szubin, head of the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, said Mr Camara and Mr Na Tchuto have played "significant roles in international narcotics trafficking.

"Naming these two individuals as kingpins enables us to then target their facilitators, people who might be laundering money for them or assisting them in moving drugs," Mr Szubin told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme.

The two men will also have their US-based assets frozen.

One of the drug kingpins, Mr Na Tchuto, has been accused of plotting a 2008 coup and was due to be handed over to the government of Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior for trial.

But last week he emerged from a UN building in Bissau - where he had been taking refuge since December 2009 - and joined an apparent coup attempt led by army Vice Chief of Staff Gen Antonio Indjai.

During the unrest, soldiers entered the office of Mr Gomes and detained him along with the army Chief of Staff Gen Jose Zamora Induta.

The US fears the drugs trade will further destabilise the already volatile country.

"We certainly have noted with concern that the narcotics trafficking and the revenues from it play a destabilising role, not only in Guinea-Bissau, but in other countries in West Africa and throughout the world," said Mr Szubin.

Liberia:

• Gov't Opposes 'Sassaywood Justice'.....H1

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has disclosed that the Government of Liberia vehemently opposes justice that is derived from trial by ordeal or Sassaywood. "Those good virtues of the traditional system could be harmonized with the formal system," she stressed

Madam Sirleaf made these remarks over the weekend when she opened a three-day national conference on enhancing access to justice (a review of the traditional and formal justice system) held in Gbarnga, Bong County.

The conference was jointly organized by the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs as well as the Supreme Court of Liberia. The intent of the conference is to determine how some traditional values can possibly be accepted within the formal justice system.

The Liberian Chief Executive indicated that even though the justice system in the country is still being confronted by challenges, yet it is expected that the court system should ensure that justice is not delayed.

President Sirleaf called for the formal system to be independent and efficient in rendering judgments. She wants the system to have integrity and some sense of fairness in accordance with the rule of law.

On the issue of bribery, Madam Sirleaf alleges that even though there is no evidence, judges and jurors are still receiving bribes from cases being held in various courts thus creating harm to the justice system.

She added that bribery is not just associated with judges and jurors but also with private lawyers who go after the big money and do not put the interest of the country first.

Also speaking at the conference was the chairman of the National Traditional Council of Liberia, Chief Zanzan Kawor. He said that the Council welcomed the idea of reconciling both the traditional and the formal system. Chief Kawor observed that the Government of Liberia is attempting to downplay traditional practices such as trial by ordeal.

He told the participants that a paramount chief does not have power any more, adding, "How can you reconcile the two when traditional chiefs no longer have authority?"

Panelists at the conference gave a brief overview of the history of the distinct systems of formal law for the 'hinterlands' and for Monrovia, the creation of the chief's hierarchy under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the role of customary dispute resolution as distinct from either the hinterland or interior regulations.

They also described the mandate of the Law Reform Commission and the role it might take in implementing the recommendations that come out of the conference.

The conference was attended by traditional leaders, judges, private lawyers, and officials of Government.

• **Labor Dignity versus Cost of Labor.....H1**

The cost of anything of value determines the importance of that thing. Similarly the cost of labor for a given piece of work equally determines how we consider the value of that work and whether it is of any importance to us that we could treat the workers in that area with dignity.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has of recent times stated categorically why workers should be paid adequately for their labor, a justification for various types of work. In short the ILO says equal pay for equal work of value.

Because this is true, it gives us a compelling need to look at the situation on the Liberian Labor Market today and the condition of the working people.

From this backdrop, Daily Observer Labor Column is today taking a very close look at the dignity of a particular class of workers who give us a sense of pride and the pleasure

of living in a decent environment and maintaining good health for all the people, irrespective of their status in society.

It is interesting to see people well dressed in up-to-date fashions going about littering the streets with plastic bags, buying and eating food wrapped in wrapping papers that are used to sell street foods. They go about throwing all forms of dirt on the streets keeping the city dirty.

Of the several thousands that litter our streets and dump garbage in drainages and street corners, it is unthinkable that not one of them is willing to participate in clean-up campaign, let alone engage in street cleaning as employee of the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC).

However, there are some citizens of the working class that have braved the tide of mockery for doing dirty work and ventured into taking up employment as street cleaners. About half a century ago, people engaged in garbage collection were looked down upon in very dehumanizing ways. They were mocked as 'dump pile heroes' while helping the public live in decency and tidiness.

From the mocking one needs not inquire whether they ever had any dignity attached to their work or whether they ever got a better pay. This awful trend has continued up till now with people still looking down upon our city service workers.

With a wrong concept, people regard the work of street cleaners as indecent and degrading and therefore treat these workers with contempt instead of pride and dignity. However, the Acting Mayor of the Monrovia City Corporation, Madam Mary Broh, has and continues to make significant strides in not only keeping the city clean but also keeping the workforce busy day by day.

In spite of this noble undertaking, there is a need to first categorize the street cleaning as a priority job and consider it in terms of the ILO understanding as a work of value. But we may pause and ask: Do we consider the MCC workers who clean the streets and handle garbage and waste disposal as performing work of value that should attract salaries commensurate to their work?

Quite frankly, garbage collection and street cleaning are jobs performed only by people with a high concept of human decency and dignity.

What would the city of Monrovia and its environs look like if these dedicated workers were not devoted to duty?

From all sincerity, they are well attired and sometimes they are seen with gloves and masks during working hours. Notwithstanding, they deserve appropriate foot wears and outer apparels to suit the weather condition under which they work from time to time. This will add dignity to the workers when they are treated with respect under decent working conditions.

Additionally, the job of cleaning streets and collecting solid waste only for fellow citizens to live in healthy condition is as noble and patriotic as occupying high managerial or political office. Just as we consider these offices high-profile workplaces, so also the workers that keep these offices clean are undertaking high-value work. It is for this reason that the workers that clean the streets deserve living wages that will enable them to attain socio-economic development and self-sustenance. This is because these MCC workers have a right and responsibility to maintain and sustain families and educate their children, not ruling out adequate medical services for their entire families. We believe that payment for work of value is not counted only on heavyweight or high-profile office but the impact of the job on the people who are being served.

- **‘Our Case Will Be Irreparably Prejudiced’ (Prosecution in Taylor Trial).....H7**

Despite prosecution fears that their case will be 'irreparably prejudiced' if they do not gain access to important background statements by Charles Taylor's current defense witness, judges late last week disagreed, and ordered cross-examination to start on Monday.

Fayia Musa, a Sierra Leonean national and former spokesperson for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group, had last week been testifying for Mr. Taylor, who is on trial for allegedly providing support to the Sierra Leonean rebels as they committed crimes during the country's 11-year conflict.

Mr. Musa, who was an RUF insider, has denied prosecution claims that the former Liberian president had control over RUF rebels, telling the judges that Mr. Taylor severed all relationships with the RUF as far back as 1992.

As the witness concluded his direct-examination, prosecutors made an application to the judges that the witness's cross-examination be postponed, citing reasons that Mr. Musa had testified about events which were not contained in his written statements disclosed by defense lawyers. Prosecution counsel, Nicholas Koumjian, told the judges that the prosecution will suffer undue and irreparable damage if the cross-examination of the witness was not postponed.

“This summary indicates that this witness only had one relevant topic to provide evidence on and that is the trips around the sub-region for fund-raising. Now he's testified about many other facts including personal interactions with Charles Taylor. Are these recent inventions? The prosecution can only know that if we see the witness statement and the original statements that this witness gave,” Mr. Koumjian said.

He added: “So we are irreparably prejudiced if we don't get the statement to see if all these interactions with Charles Taylor that this witness testified to that are not in the summary. So the witness summary is patently insufficient.”

Mr. Koumjian asked for the witness's previous statements to the defense, and for a short postponement before cross-examination starts.

Defense counsel for Mr. Taylor, Courtenay Griffiths, opposed the defense application, arguing that the witness's statement had sufficient information to assist the prosecution in their cross-examination of the witness and that the prosecution had enough time to research any necessary information about the witness. He asked the judges to deny the prosecution's request for additional statements of the witness to be disclosed as well as the request to postpone the witness's cross-examination. "How is he now unable to cross-examine given that all of the material disclosed by this witness has been in the public arena for a very long time indeed?" Mr. Griffiths asked.

He went on that "it would seem to us that the prosecution has failed miserably to place before this court any evidence that they have in fact been prejudiced, that's the important word, irreparably prejudiced by the so-called paucity of the content of the summary."

"In our submission, they have neither shown nor sought to show why they are unable to commence their cross-examination now. So in summary, we would submit that both of the applications [disclosure of more witness statements and postponement of the cross-examination of the witness] made by Mr. Koumjian should be refused," Mr. Griffiths concluded.

After hearing arguments from both parties, the presiding judge of the Special Court for Sierra Leone's Chamber, Justice Julia Sebutinde, ruled that while the witness summary disclosed by the defense to the prosecution was insufficient, such insufficiency was not gross. Justice Sebutinde also stated that prosecutors had not demonstrated any undue or irreparable prejudice that they would suffer if the defense did not disclose additional information or statements about the witness's testimony.

Reading the ruling of the Chamber, Justice Sebutinde said that "the prosecution motion for disclosure of the witness statement is therefore denied."

She added that "However the Trial Chamber does agree with the prosecution that the witness's evidence-in-chief did span over areas not specifically mentioned in the summary and to this extent, the summary could be considered as insufficient although not grossly so. As mentioned in our prior rulings, the proper remedy in that case is to allow the prosecution sometime to prepare its cross-examination in relation to those areas not contained in the summary."

Mali:

Niger:

Senegal:

Sierra Leone:

Togo: