

# **Business and Politics in the Muslim World**

## **West African News Monitoring**

### **Weekly Report 116**

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*By John Paul*

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## POLITICAL NEWS

### GHANA

#### **Mills snubs people demanding DCEs' dismissal**

President John Evans Atta Mills has indicated that he will not be influenced by calls by some members of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to dismiss some District Executives (DCEs) for alleged nonperformance.

"What the President would do or not do about DCEs would be determined by how well or not well they perform," Mr Koku Anyidoho, Director of Communication at the Presidency, said.

He made the President's reaction known to journalists after a closed-door meeting with the last batch of DCEs in the Northern Region on Tuesday.

Mr Anyidoho said the President made his sentiments known when responding to questions at the meeting about calls by some party supporters to dismiss some DCEs for non-performance.

Mr. Anyidoho who described the meeting as a frank encounter between the President and the DCEs.

President Mills, however, charged the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives to be more innovative and proactive in addressing development challenges of

the people.

He warned that he would not entertain under-performance by his appointees.

He charged them to think outside the box, explaining that there was the need for the executives, as leaders in the various districts, to lead the way for vigorous national growth.

President Mills, who met the 22 District and Metropolitan Chief Executives in two batches on Monday and Tuesday behind closed doors as part of his two day visit to the region, also charged them to ensure judicious use of state resources, making it clear to his appointees that he would not hesitate to dismiss those who misused allocated resources.

The President reminded them that they were appointed on the basis of their expertise and, therefore, much was expected of them.

The success of the government, he said, depended largely on development progress made at the grassroots, and the government was expecting the DCEs to effectively implement development projects.

"Your performance is critical," Mr Anyidoho quoted the President as saying.

According to him, the chief executives, for their part, made their challenges known to the President, and called for more collaboration and sup

## **Media must educate public on parliamentary proceedings -MPs**

The Minority Leader, Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu has called on the media to play a significant role in educating the public on the activities of parliament. He said since the country returned to constitutional rule in 1992, the media have done little to inform the citizenry about functions of the legislature, thus making them have a negative perception about proceedings in parliament.

Mr. Mensah-Bonsu, who was addressing media practitioners at a forum in Ho, to interact with journalists in the Volta region, as part of Parliamentary outreach programme on Monday, this week, mentioned the lack of commitment on the part of some journalists in parliament to follow parliamentary proceedings to the end, to enable them report adequately about debates and activities in Parliament.

The Minority Leader, in buttressing his point, said many parliamentarians were being blamed by the electorate for not being vocal in parliament, which might not be so, but the lack of proper communication has created that bad impression about the MPs. "Let me

say that no MP is a liability in Parliament, because the MPs work in committees and every committee member makes an impact, which people do not know”.

Mr. Mensah-Bonsu suggested that parliamentary reporters must be allowed to report from parliament for a long time, to enable them understand parliamentary terminologies and their appropriate usage. According to him, the tendency of changing reporters after every term of government would not create room for these reporters to gather enough experience about parliamentary work.

According to him, the media, as the fourth estate of the realm has a crucial role to play in the political dispensation of the country's democracy since as watchdogs, they check the activities of the executive and the other two arms of government. He, therefore, advised journalists to stop associating themselves with political parties without thinking about the consequences of such decision on the public.

The Majority Leader of Parliament, Hon. Cletus Avorka, on his part said the media should respect press freedom by being responsibly and work within the ethics of the profession, and should refrain from misinforming the public on national issues but rather concentrate on developmental issues.

Mr. Avorka urged the media to articulate the ideals of parliament to the electorate, and that anything short of this would amount to misinformation. He further urged the media to be circumspect in reporting parliamentary proceedings so as to provide accurate information to the public.

He noted that Parliament acknowledged the importance of journalists and was committed to partnering them to work more effectively by educating the electorate on parliamentary activities as well as inform parliament about the public perceptions and concerns by the public, regarding parliamentary work.

Mr. Avorka advised media houses to make available special pages for parliamentary issues and other areas of development to deepen the democratic development of the country.

The Volta Regional Chairman of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Mr. Victor Kwawukume said even though the media plays an important role in governance, they are not given the necessary support to deliver; noting that press freedom alone would not help the media.

The Volta Regional Minister, Mr. Joseph Amenowode, commended the media in the region for their cooperation and support, noting that the media in the region had exhibited high level of professionalism and urged them to keep it up for the accelerated development of the region and the country in general.

# **An Address by Nana Akufo-Addo**

**'FIRST STEPS TO BRINGING BACK HOPE'**

**AT A MEDIA INTERACTION AT HIS NIMA RESIDENCE  
ACCRA, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2012**

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, I am honored and delighted by your presence here this morning and I thank you most sincerely for honoring my invitation.

I asked you here today to for a discussion on how to restore hope in Ghana. Yes, I have picked up my nomination forms to contest for the position of Presidential Candidate for the New Patriotic Party in the 2012 elections.

I thank the Ghanaian people, particularly the 4,480,446 who voted for me in 2008. Should my party, by the grace of our Lord, place their hope of returning to Government in 2012 in me again, I pray and hope that I can begin, not from zero, but by first banking on you - the nearly four and a half million Ghanaians who voted for me in 2008. My message to you is that my party and I will need your active support to convince new undecided voters and a good number of the other four and a half million people who thought they were voting for a better Ghana to vote in 2012 for the president and the party they can trust to deliver with competence and decisiveness for all of Ghana – myself and the NPP. But, before that, there is that important task of winning the confidence of my party delegates.

The NPP has done a lot of reflection since 2008. We have not been complacent. Shortly after the 2008 elections, the Party set up a committee to inquire into the defeat and make recommendations for the future. We have followed that with a series of reorganisations from the polling station level to the national leadership level. Going by our Party's constitution, the National Council has now set August 7, 2010 as the date to elect the 2012 Presidential Candidate of the Party. We have expanded our electoral college by 4,700%, from the 2,293 who voted for 17 of us in 2007 to some 115,000 who will vote to choose a new flagbearer from a maximum number of five contestants next August. By this, the NPP has taken a giant step in deepening internal party democracy and mobilising the grassroots of the Party. No other political party on our continent has shown such bravery in extending decision-making powers to their foot soldiers – to the men and women who actually do the door-to-door campaign. Shall I take this opportunity to urge our friends in the other political parties to emulate this example.

Reflecting on the problems that affected the NPP's chances in 2008, some of us championed the expansion of the Electoral College. This has broadened the decision-making powers to include the over 105,000 polling station executives across Ghana. I am proud of my contribution towards the expansion. I congratulate all who supported the process and campaigned throughout the country for the expansion.

Thankfully, the polling station executives of the NPP have now been recognised and empowered as a very important arm of the party leadership. In moving for this sweeping organic expansion, my colleagues and I were mindful of another important thing: bringing power to the youth who form the base of our party. If you look at the end result,

the aim has been achieved. Young men and women who would not normally have taken part in the decision-making process of our party can do so today. The enthusiastic involvement of the youth in the affairs of the party is critical to the party's growth and success. That is why I shall continue to unfold programmes for the economic, social and political development of the youth in my party and the youth in Ghana, as a whole. After falling short of winning the presidency by less than 0.5% of the total votes cast in 2008, I have had to do a lot of reflection myself. I have listened to my party members and I have heard and seen the suffering of the majority of Ghanaians. There is every indication that the income of the majority of Ghanaians has fallen in just over one year of a 'Better Ghana' and it continues to fall. This is after workers' pay enjoyed an average of 20% increase in real terms from 2003 to 2008 under the NPP. But, should we be surprised?

Despite the systematic attempt to denigrate President J A Kufuor's eight-year record, we in the NPP are satisfied that he laid a solid record of achievement in virtually all aspects of our national life.

For example, in 1992, with a population of 15.34 million people, the number of poor Ghanaians was estimated to be 7.93 million. By 1999, one year before the NDC lost power, Ghana's population had gone up to 18.21 million, 7.19 million Ghanaians (39.5%) still lived below the poverty line of \$1 a day.

By, 2006, after just five years under the NPP, with a population of 22.24 million, the number of Ghanaians living below the revised poverty line of \$1.25 had fallen to 6.34 million, from 39.5% to 28.5%. It went further down in 2008 to less than 26%. These figures are from the World Bank.

But, as a result of the economic policies adopted by President Mills and his government, the World Bank is now estimating that half a million more Ghanaians will fall below the poverty line by this year alone.

Thus, under the 'Better Ghana' agenda, Ghanaians are for the first time in almost a decade, going to get poorer. We are hamstrung with a government that appears to be incompetent even at managing and maintaining the economy the NPP bequeathed to them. They have succeeded in turning a growth rate of 7.3% that they inherited to between 3-4%. We are moving backwards; slowly but surely. Ghanaians are yearning to feel Prof Mills' presidency and not just his residency at the Castle.

Statistics released last Friday from the Bank of Ghana make grim reading. Data from the Bank of Ghana's Composite Index of Economic Activity (CIEA) which is used in gauging the pulse of the economy, shows the decline in economic confidence deepening during the first two months of this year, implying a slowdown in the pace of economic activity. According to Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, the Governor of the Bank of Ghana, "the factors contributing to the declining index were: [low] imports, tourists spending, private sector transfers to social security, consumer spending (derived from VAT collections) and commercial banks' credit to the private sector."

What it means is that Ghanaians no longer have enough money to spend on consumer goods and local manufacturers simply don't have the demand to import the requisite capital inputs. While the Governor of the central bank is telling us that transfers to SSNIT

has fallen, the Minister of Information is propagating that 1.6 million mystical jobs have been created from the halo of a better Ghana in just one year.

The fact of the matter is that the economy of Ghana is shrinking. Hence, you cannot create jobs (except 1.6 million phantom ones!). With a declining economy can government revenue grow? Well, unless through increasing taxation and tolls. Bad officials must be dealt with according to law. However, the President should stop blaming hardworking CEPS officials for revenue declines and direct his anger positively at dealing with the fundamental problem of growing the economy.

But, the root of the matter should be tackled. When they meet at the top level they only plan persecution. This is a government of witch-hunting. There are clear signs that the Mills government is embarking on a series of politically motivated prosecutions. Their intention is to dismember the NPP. They will not succeed!

At the lower level, they are at each others throats. They are fanning ethnic and chieftancy conflicts. Under this era of the Asondehene, the peace of our nation is threatened. Investor confidence is eroded. Why would the economy not shrink?

We need to restore hope. Ladies and gentlemen, this is my basic motivating factor today. If by the grace of God I have the chance, I will bring back hope and restore the kind of confidence that we need to move our nation forward.

It is of course refreshing to know that headline inflation has now dropped to 13.2%. The basic economic principle of demand and supply means you can beat inflation simply by reducing the purchasing power of the people – by impoverishing the people.

The relative stability this year, helped by strong commodity prices for our exports and reductions in both public and consumer spending, has been achieved by factors other than the competence of the present administration. It does not demonstrate imaginative or competent economic management. Any Senior High School economics student can stabilise an economy by choking it off, which is exactly what the NDC has done.

The challenge of economic management is to maintain stability while growing the economy even in the face of a global economic crisis. The entire economic policy of the Mills-Mahama government has been premised on a false understanding of the actual state of the economy. We were first told that the size of Ghana's economy was around \$16 billion and the fiscal deficit was about 15% of that, an ailment which called for appropriate remedy of very tight fiscal discipline. Just recently, both the International Monetary Fund and the Ghana Statistical Service came out to say that in fact Ghana's economy could be twice as large and may be more than \$30 billion. This immediately cuts the percentage of the nation's fiscal deficit by half. So Ghanaians have been forced to suffer based on false statistics and the obsession of a new government to make its predecessor look bad.

Petroleum prices and electricity tariffs are about to go up, while there are no signs of corresponding increases in workers wages and salaries. This, ladies and gentlemen is not

the better Ghana that I-Care-for-You Mills promised. The first 16 months of the Mills-Mahama government has been characterised by incompetence, lies, hypocrisy, and lawlessness. There is a general state of insecurity in the country driven by the NDC foot soldiers and an unchecked culture of “It’s my government so I can get away with it.”

Barely a week goes by these days without news of violent acts of lawlessness being committed by members of the ruling NDC in one part of the country or the other. Toll booths are confiscated; NHIS and NYEP offices locked up and their staff forcibly sacked and locked out. The control of public toilets these days has become the ultimate symbol of power and authority under the reign of the Asomdwehene – the King of Peace. Law and order has broken down. Ghanaians are living in fear. Ladies and gentlemen, this is the era of the Asomdwehene, the King of Peace.

From day one, the NDC has poisoned the business/investment climate by lying about the economy, lying to voters, and lying to their own foot-soldiers. Ghanaians are broke. Ghana is breaking. Who must fix it? Who can fix it? Who will fix it?

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope this explains why after nearly 35 years of being in the frontline of Ghanaian politics, this 66-year-old, short and not so handsome young man still has the energy and passion to lead Ghana to a new and exciting future. The very challenges, hardships and oppressive environment that motivated 33-year-old Akufo-Addo to help organize and lead the PMFJ’s mobilization of the people against the obnoxious Union Government concept of the Acheampong regime in 1977/8 were the very same ills that motivated 51-year old Akufo-Addo to help lead the Kume Preko demonstrations of 1995. It is this same motivation that is driving me to lead the battle to recapture power for the NPP and for the good of Ghana in 2012. Yes, I still believe in Ghana.

Ghana needs a bold and decisive leadership: A leadership that is sincere and not condescending; A leadership that sees evil, hears evil and acts against them; A leadership that can bring back self-confidence in the Ghanaian people; A leadership that believes in Ghana and in the manifest destiny of this blessed land of ours. This is why I am still in the race to lead my party to lead Ghana. Insha Allah, it shall come to pass.

God willing, I intend to begin my national tour of all 230 constituencies in Ghana tomorrow beginning with the Central Region. Apart from appealing to the 115,000 delegates of the National Congress for their votes on August 7, I intend to use this national tour to listen to the party people, especially the five polling station executives in each of the more than 21,000 polling station areas nationwide, their accounts of the opportunities and challenges facing our great Party. What we need to do to prepare and equip ourselves sufficiently for Victory 2012. I want to share ideas with them on how best to improve the Party’s fortunes in every corner of the country.

As we celebrate the 18th anniversary of the NPP, I want to thank the grassroots activists of the Party for their hard work, unwavering loyalty and commitment to the cause of the Danquah-Dombo-Busia tradition. Ours is a tradition born out of struggle to wage an uncompromising battle for the establishment and maintenance of liberty, justice, responsibility and prosperity.

From 1947, right through the years of dictatorship to the Fourth Republic, the rank and file of our tradition stood firm in their conviction to uphold, defend and promote the party and its principles of rule of law, multi-party democracy and individual freedom. Even though, the individual expectations of many of you, our foot soldiers could not be met during the eight years of positive change under President J A Kufuor, you showed your patience and higher understanding of democracy and the challenges and opportunities of a developing economy in a fiercely competitive multi-party democracy. Those of us in leadership position of the party shall forever be grateful to you.

I also want all of our members and activists to consider the imperative of unity for victory 2012. I know that I do not have to convince anyone of the supreme need for unity. Indeed, any time I have had the privilege of interacting with our grassroots activists, they have pressed home the need for the NPP to forge and present a united front, for united we stand divided we fall. Let me say that I fully subscribe to this important, principled value of political party organization and wish to assure our teeming supporters that, as I have always done, I will continue to strive to maintain and build on the unity that is so critical to our party's organizational and electoral success. We must work together, because we dream together; we must think together and strategize together; we must stay together and win for all; we must protect each other, because we suffer together; and we must trust each other if we are to stick together. We are one party, one family with one goal: Victory 2012! NPP, Ghana ani da mo so!

I hope to convince our grassroots, through the power of my positive campaign, to assert their wisdom and the supreme authority granted them by the party's constitution, to vote for the most appropriate person to lead the party into victory in December 2012 in order for us to begin the process of fixing the nation and binding us closer together after January 7, 2013.

I have done a lot of reflection since our defeat in 2008. As a human being, I assure you that I have examined myself; I have examined my strategies. I assure you that I have come out stronger for future leadership. I believe I am standing on the brink of a great victory for our great party and I ask all party faithful to give me the desired push for a sweet victory in 2012.

My soundings in the party tell me that there is broad support for my candidature from all sections within the party, young and old, men and women, from the established figures of the party, emerging figures, through the polling stations and constituencies across the country. I am assured by this broad support that I therefore represent the best prospect for uniting the party. I believe that this broad support within the party is a reflection of the broad support I enjoy within the Ghanaian population.

I am appealing to all my supporters not to resort to any negative campaign. We have a positive story to tell. Let us keep it clean and healthy.

The NPP believes in the supreme dignity of humankind. We shall continue to defend and promote the economic and social rights and freedoms of every individual in a multi-democratic and liberal economic environment, where access to success and prosperity is opened to all.

These are my first steps to bringing back hope!

God bless you!

God bless the NPP!  
And, God bless mother Ghana!

## **Veep appeals to foot soldiers of NDC to exercise patience**

Vice President John Dramani Mahama on Sunday called on foot soldiers of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to exercise patience for the government to focus on their demands. "The government has started addressing the demands throughout the country, but as I keep on saying, it is not possible for everybody to be satisfied at the same time, so all we ask of them is to exercise restraint while we keep addressing them."

Vice President Mahama made the call when he addressed the Muslim community in the Sunyani Municipality as part of a day's official visit to the Brong Ahafo Region on Sunday.

The meeting attracted chiefs of the various ethnic groups, Imams and other Muslim hierarchy in the region. The Vice President said his recent comments on the party's foot soldiers was not meant to undermine them, but to let them understand the realities on the ground.

"Some people who did not understand what I meant thought I was snubbing the foot soldiers who, helped us to come into power, but my utterance was more or less an appeal for them to listen to the leaders just like other Ghanaians."

He called on the Muslim leaders to educate the youth against the use of violence and other unorthodox ways of pressing home their demands and rather seek dialogue with the authorities.

"It is extremely difficult for us to satisfy the over four million Ghanaians who voted for the party within one and half years. We are all born differently, but God has a way of satisfying us and I know at the appropriate time we shall all be served."

Vice President Mahama also called on potential pilgrims to forward their documents early enough to the Hajj Committee to avoid delays in the processing of their travelling documents. He said the Committee would soon present their report to government for appraisal and gave the assurance that measures would be put in place to improve the Hajj in future.

Alhaji Baba Gausu, Secretary to the Chief Imam of Sunyani commended the government for organising a successful Hajj last year. He appealed to the government to extend the

protocol allotment of tickets to chiefs since the concentration had been always on Imams. Alhaji Gausu also appealed to the government to help construct satellite mosques in the municipality since a number of Muslims had to travel long distances to worship on daily basis.

## **LIBERIA**

### **Ellen Wants PUL to Account for US\$100,000**

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has asked the Press Union of Liberia (PUL), the umbrella organization of media entities and journalists in the country, to give comprehensive account of the US\$100,000 donated to the Union by her government.

The money, given in 2008 at program marking the celebration of World Press Freedom Day, was the Sirleaf administration's contribution towards the construction of PUL national headquarters in Monrovia.

The fund was given by the Sirleaf government in response to PUL's appeal for public support for its headquarters construction project.

Besides the Sirleaf administration's financial contribution to the Union for the success of the headquarters project, other sources had reportedly donated to the project.

Addressing an interactive press conference held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Capitol Hill, Tuesday, April 20, 2010 in Monrovia, the President said, "I am waiting to hear what happened to the US\$100,000 that was given for the construction of the press union offices."

The President's concern about the funds was expressed at the news conference during which she was bombarded with questions, some of which bordered on transparency, accountability, her Government's declared war against corruption in the public sector, as well as her position on the findings and recommendations of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) audit conducted on some key ministries by the General Auditing Commission (GAC).

The GAC audit of the ministries including Finance, Health and Social Welfare, Public Works, Education and Lands, Mines, and Energy highlighted fraud, waste and abuse as well as other irregularities in the public sector amidst vehement protests by heads of the audited entities.

When contacted through a mobile phone on President Sirleaf's concern regarding the US\$100,000, PUL president Peter Quaqua said he was in the traffic driving and as such he could not say anything on the issue.

It may, however, be recalled that upon taking over the PUL, the Quaqua leadership halted the construction of the PUL headquarters project which was being implemented by his predecessor, George Barpeen, because the Quaqua leadership had problem with the way the funds were being used, especially at the time the tenure of the Barpeen leadership of the PUL had almost phased out. The matter was later taken to court where it is yet to be adjudicated.

## **Executive and Legislature in Consultation over Threshold Bill**

Consultations are taking place among members of the National Legislature to resolve the stalemate over the Threshold Bill. The consultations, which also involve the Executive branch of Government, are aimed at reaching a compromise between the two branches of Government on the issue.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, on Tuesday, April 20 told a press conference that the consultations involve “finding the right balance between making sure there is proper representation in the Legislature based upon the Census, and putting the number -- if we are going to have additional numbers that can be financially supported -- without undermining the allocations to other priority sectors.” The President said she is hopeful that the matter will be resolved within a week, noting that there is serious work being done by the National Legislature to resolve the problem.

The President has requested the National Elections Commission (NEC) to begin preparatory work for registration to ensure that as soon as the Bill is passed, the Commission can begin registering eligible voters, adding, “nobody wants a delay in the elections; there wouldn't be a delay; we've got to make sure it comes off on time.”

The Threshold Bill has been vetoed twice by the Liberian leader on financial and constitutional grounds. The President maintained that signing earlier versions of the Bill would have meant diverting resources from other important priorities such as education, health and public works to accommodate the 23 additional members of the Legislature which the 40,000 threshold implied.

Meanwhile, an assessment team recently sent to Liberia by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has concluded an initial report which confirms that Liberia has met all the conditions for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

Addressing Tuesday's press conference, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said she remains optimistic that, based on a further assessment scheduled for June, the IMF Board will reach a decision during its meeting between now and June that Liberia has reached the Completion Point of the HIPC.

The end result, President Sirleaf stressed, is to open the fiscal space, “to enable us to do a certain amount of borrowing. We gonna be very cautious to make sure we don't put Liberia in debt trouble again,” the President promised. The relief, she said, would give the country a little flexibility to accelerate development programs.

The IMF assessment, the President said, covered economic performance, which now projects an increase in the country's growth rate. The President expressed delight that investments which were delayed as a result of the global financial crisis are again back on track.

The President disclosed that ArcelorMittal is accelerating its investment portfolio, and has confirmed that all those laid off during the economic downturn are being re-employed. The company, she said, would move with speed to ensure that it ships the first consignment of iron ore around the third quarter of 2011.

Negotiations with other companies are ongoing, the Liberian leader stated. “The Western Cluster negotiations have started; Decoris, the Oil Palm Plantation in Maryland, is also ongoing. China Union is back on course. We have to return the assets to them; once we do that, they will start operations,” the President told the Press

## **Challengers Line Up to Take On Popular Incumbent in 2011 Polls**

Monrovia — Depending on which side of the political divide you stand, you would either agree with, or dismiss as purely partisan, the thunderous applause Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf received upon announcing that she would contest next year's presidential election. Her pronouncement, made during her annual state of the Nation Address to parliament in January, has charged Liberia's political atmosphere.

Politicians and parties have started maneuvering in preparation for the election, which will test the country's new National Elections Commission (NEC). The body's only experience so far has been holding by-elections to fill vacant seats of deceased representatives and senators. The new commission is entirely Liberian managed, unlike during the last election, and has a new, American-funded U.S.\$2 million complex from which to operate.

"We are also providing \$17 million to build NEC's capacity to prepare for and carry out the 2011 elections, which will be, and must be, free and fair, open and transparent," said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S Ambassador to Liberia, recently. During each by-election that has been held, Thomas-Greenfield noted the victor had been "selected in a free and fair vote."

The front pages of newspapers and discussions on street corners now seem dominated by news of the coming presidential and general elections. All indications point to a tenacious contest when Africa's first female president will be challenged at the polls in October next year.

Views on Johnson Sirleaf's chances of success are mixed. Supporters point to the transformation - mainly in the areas of infrastructure development, good governance and job creation - that the country has seen during her presidency, which began just as Liberia was beginning to emerge from decades of conflict. Opponents characterize her performance as mediocre, saying there is much at stake and a lot more that can be done.

Johnson Sirleaf recently has taken a tougher stance on her deputies, dismissing those alleged to be involved in corruption, which is likely to be an issue in the coming elections.

Her latest ax fell on Dr. Joseph Kortoe, who until his dismissal served as the country's education minister. Ambulai Johnson, who was regarded as one of the president's confidants, was replaced at Internal Affairs.

And the former information minister, Laurence Bropleh, is up before the courts.

Opposition politicians have described the latest actions by the president as too little, too late, and their voices have become louder on radio talk shows as 2011 approaches.

The main actors in the coming elections remain largely the same as in 2005. They include the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Snowe; prominent businessman Musa Bility, who until now was viewed as a confidante of the president; Lewis Brown, former foreign minister; and D. Tuan Wleh-Mason, a businessman and diplomat. They have formed a new party to oppose Johnson Sirleaf.

There are new contenders as well, including Senator Prince Johnson of Nimba County, who announced his intention to run for election minutes after President Johnson Sirleaf's January declaration. He described himself as being the real "formidable" force, a word that was used by the president to characterize her candidacy.

Senator Johnson was a rebel leader who is alleged to have captured and killed former president Samuel K. Doe during the civil war. His candidacy is not regarded as particularly significant, except in his stronghold in northeastern Nimba County. Some analysts have observed, however, that he could take away much-needed votes from Johnson Sirleaf in the county - Liberia's second most populous.

In the midst of the politicking, there is a general recognition that since Johnson Sirleaf remains a largely popular incumbent, defeating her at the polls will be an uphill battle. This may be why most of her opponents have sought an alliance with the soccer legend, George Weah, who is inexperienced but a crowd puller. He was defeated by Johnson Sirleaf only in the second round of the 2005 election.

Weah's presence on the campaign trail in last November's senatorial by-election in Montserrado, the most populous county and seat of the country's capital, Monrovia, was seen as a determining factor in the victory of the candidate he backed.

# **US Under Secretary of State Arrives Today**

The Executive Mansion has announced the arrival in Liberia of United States Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. William J. Burns, tomorrow.

Mr. Badio told newsmen Monday that Mr. Burns will hold talks with President Sirleaf at her office, followed by a press conference.

Other sources disclosed that Mr. Burns will also hold brief discussions with selected members of President Sirleaf's Cabinet.

The Under Secretary for Political Affairs is the U.S. Department's third-ranking official and its senior career diplomat. He serves as the day-to-day manager of overall regional and bilateral policy issues, and oversees the bureaus for Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, the Near East, South and Central Asia, the Western Hemisphere, International Organizations and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

The Assistant Secretaries of the geographic bureaus and offices advise the Under Secretary and guide the operation of the U.S. diplomatic missions within their respective regional jurisdiction. They are assisted by deputy assistant secretaries, office directors, post management officers, and country desk officers. These officials work closely with U.S. embassies and consulates overseas and with foreign embassies in Washington, DC.

The Bureau of International Organization (IO) Affairs develops and implements the policies of the U.S. Government within the United Nations and its affiliated agencies, as well as within other international organizations of which the U.S. is a member. The IO Bureau engages in what is known as multilateral diplomacy to promote and defend the many overlapping interests of the American people. The IO Bureau also promotes effective and efficient management within international organizations.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) advises the U.S. Government on the development of policies and programs to combat international narcotics and crime. INL programs support the Department's strategic goals of reducing the entry of illegal drugs into the United States and minimizing the impact of international crime on the United States and its citizens. Counternarcotics and anticrime programs also complement the war on terrorism by supporting foreign criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies charged with the counter-terrorism mission.

Mr. William J. Burns replaced R. Nicholas Burns (no relation) of Massachusetts on February 29, 2008. He was the former United States Ambassador to Russia.

## **US Gov't to Provide US\$19.75M for LNP**

The visiting Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, William J. Burns, has disclosed that the United States Government will provide US\$19.75 million this year to support the capacity of the Liberia National Police (LNP).

Mr. Burns told newsmen that the U.S. Government recognized that security is paramount to the sustainability of peace in Liberia and as such they have decided to support the police.

The US Under Secretary of State was speaking yesterday during a news conference held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs minutes after he had held talks with President Sirleaf and some selected ministers.

Burns, who is the U.S. Department's third ranking official and its senior career diplomat, added that his Government will continue to support the new Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the judicial system in the country.

Mr. Burns told Executive Mansion reporters that he has come to reaffirm his Government's commitment to the Government and people of Liberia. He said the U.S. will encourage and support free, fair and transparent elections in the country.

On the issue of the Threshold Bill, Mr. Burns who was on a one-day working visit to Liberia, expressed hope that the bill will be passed into law because, according to him, it is the basis for free and fair elections in the country. He lauded President Sirleaf for the level of vibrant leadership and progress made in the country in a short period of time.

“When you retrospect where Liberia was three years ago, you observe that much has been achieved,” Mr. Burns stressed.

For her part, President Sirleaf said she was happy to see the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in the country to see some of the progress her Government had made and the challenges the country is faced with to meet its development goal.

She praised the U.S. Government for the strong partnership given the people of Liberia, specifically in support of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) which has four pillars.

Madam Sirleaf expressed the hope that Liberia will become a post-conflict success story where the people of America will be major contributors to that success story.

## **CAMEROON**

# **Decentralisation - Governors To Oversee Proper Functioning of Councils**

The semester conference of Regional Governors ended last Friday with pertinent instructions from Marafa Hamidou Yaya.

Governors of Cameroon's 10 Regions will have to better coordinate and ensure the harmonious functioning of external government services that contribute to effective and efficient execution of the decentralisation process in Local and City Councils. The Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MINATD), Marafa Hamidou Yaya on Friday, April 16 instructed the Governors to ensure that resources transferred to councils this year are judiciously and effectively used for the intended projects.

Speaking at the end of the Governors three days semester conference, Mr Marafa enjoined them to oversee the effective execution of giant projects within their areas of command, proper functioning of all measures intended to protect the national road network and give necessary support to municipal councillors in drawing up development strategies and the search for necessary funds with which to execute the strategies. The Governors will also ensure the effective putting into use and ultimate maintenance of council infrastructure.

Empowered by the decree of November 12, 2008 as representatives of the State authority in Regions, Marafa said, Governors have the responsibility to coordinate, supervise and inject coherence in all external services within their areas of command. In this connection, the Minister of State for MINATD instructed Governors to ensure that all insignia that still bear "provincial services" conform with the November 12, 2008 decree transforming provinces into regions, exclude dubious businessmen from public contracts, respect the decision suspending the creation of chieftaincy institutions and special Civil Status Registration Centres. They also have to oversee the effective preparation of the Agro-pastoral Show announced to take place this year, in the South Regional headquarters, Ebolowa, as well as National Day that will coincide with celebrations of 50 years of Cameroon's independence.

The Governors in a general report presented by the Secretary General of MINATD, Alphonse Ngbwa proposed the popularisation of texts related to decentralisation and building of capacities of actors in the decentralisation process. They equally requested that administrative authorities be involved in the conception and execution of giant projects within their regions, given that they are representatives of the State at the local level and the definition of protocol ranks and allowances of staff in new positions created by the November 12, 2008 decree, among others. Marafa Hamidou Yaya in responds, announced training seminars for all actors in the decentralisation process, stating that the seminar for journalists will take place soon. All texts related to decentralisation, he said, were being compiled in both English and French. He disclosed that supplementary texts were being prepared to complete the judicial arsenal that will define new protocol ranks and allowances of staff occupying new positions in Governors', Divisional and Subdivisional Offices.

## **SIERRA LEONE**

# **Ambassador Sacked.....Rape Scandal Rocks Sierra Leone Embassy in Russia**

It is all over in the Russian media, not a good news story, not an interesting reading to patriotic Sierra Leoneans about a small country in the West Coast of Africa, but news story occupying the pages of the Russian media that is embarrassing to the state and the Presidency, whose appointment to represent his image in a foreign land has been tarnished and the reputation of country compromised.

The Russian Authority, seeing this unpalatable development emerging in their midst created by individuals from another country has imposed a persona non-grata on Sierra Leone's Ambassador Salieu M. Turay for crimes committed by his son Teshim Rahim Wilson whom he traveled with to that part of the world as his son.

Whether Teshim Rahim Wilson is the biological child of Ambassador Salieu M. Turay whose name formed part of the family list of the diplomat or an adopted child, with different life style and disgraceful behavioural pattern devoid of his father's true character is another subject of political and diplomatic debate.

Ambassador Salieu M. Turay has now been declared persona non-grata by the Russian Authority for his non action over the alleged rape allegation levied against his son by four Russian ladies. Moscow sources say, the publication of the rape stories by the Russian media rocked the Sierra Leone Embassy and affected its staff, which prompted the immediate action of State House and the Foreign Office to recall and terminate the diplomatic journey of Ambassador Salieu M. Turay and members of his family he traveled with including the alleged perpetrator to Russia.

The Spokesman to the Sierra Leone's Minister of Foreign Affairs and international Co, operation Mr. Abdulai Baraytay has maintained seal lips, like any civil servant observing the civil service code when asked by Standard Times as to why Ambassador Salieu M. Turay is seen in town moving around in a state of disappointment and disillusionment and not on his seat in Russia.

Mr. Teshim Rahim Wilson, son of the Ambassador fell for Russian women, but was unable to transform his feelings to an acceptable approach, and applied a method considered uncivilized and barbaric. The first allegation of rape levied against him by a Russian lady received pardon, but reports of repeated rape incidents were no more seen as mistakes, but a serious crime against the state of Russia, which should have sent him to prison for a number of years but immunity prevented him from becoming a member of the inmates at the Russian Prisons and was asked to immediately leave the shores of that country.

Report of the alleged rape scandal is sending disturbing signals about President Koroma's representatives to foreign countries at this time when effort to rebrand the image of the country is receiving positive dividend. President Koroma State House sources say, is not prepared to sacrifice the success stories and positive signals he is receiving for unscrupulous and indecent behaviours that would reverse all the current and projected gains of his administration.

The recall and termination of Ambassador Salieu M. Turay is the beginning to close the ugly chapter of the country's diplomatic officers serving in foreign countries. A list has been reportedly compiled at State House and very soon the President sources say would commence releasing his bullets on those officers whose cups had runneth over

## **GUINEA CONAKRY**

### **Continued Support Crucial as Country Prepares for Democratic Polls - UN Official**

Guinea requires continued support from the United Nations and its partners now that the West African country is preparing to transition from military rule to a civilian Government once elections scheduled for 27 June are held, a senior UN official in the country said today.

"I think the country deserves support from the UN and its partners in terms of supporting it through the elections [and] the post-election [period] in responding to the transition, recovery and development needs," said Anthony Ohemeng-Boamah, newly appointed UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Guinea, when he briefed reporters in New York.

He said donors had already provided most of the \$27 million required to fund the electoral process, but stressed that continued support will be required after polls to ensure that transitional period is successful.

Mr. Ohemeng-Boamah expressed concern that the operations of the UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS), which helps deliver humanitarian aid to people living in some of Guinea's remotest areas, would cease as early as the start of next week if no further funding is made available for the service. More than \$3 million is required for UNHAS operations in Guinea to continue beyond the end of this month.

Guinea was gripped by unrest after Government forces opened fire on unarmed protesters last September in the capital, Conakry, killing at least 150 people. The UN has hailed recent moves taken by the interim President, General Sekouba Konaté, including the formation of a national unity Government led by a civilian Prime Minister, Jean-Marie Doré, named by the opposition, and the intention to hold elections.

## ECONOMY

### GHANA

# Turkish Airlines Integrates Lagos-Accra in Expansion Plan

Turkish Airlines is now to connect Accra, Ghana through Lagos during the summer season as part of its expansion policy in Africa.

The Managing Director of Turkish Airlines, Nigeria, Mr Orhan Guven, who is overseeing the expansion in West and Central Africa, said the new operation would start in June. This brings to two the number of airlines connecting Accra via Lagos, as Lufthansa Airlines had long connected both cities with its hub in Frankfurt, Germany.

Guyen said: 'We are glad to announce the beginning of operations to Accra, Ghana in June so as to allow more of our teeming passengers to West Africa fly with us. "The flight will commence from Istanbul, Turkey, carrying passengers for Lagos, Nigeria, and Accra, Ghana, with passengers for Lagos dropped first, while the flight continues to Accra and back to Lagos for the return journey to Istanbul."

He said the airline was deploying a bigger plane, Airbus A340 for the operation to enable it accommodate more passengers and baggage. Mr Orhan explained that there would be no alteration to the timing, as everything had been taken into consideration to ensure that passengers arrive Istanbul for on time connection to their final destinations.

He noted that Turkish Airlines currently operates to Dakar, Senegal; Entebbe, Uganda and Dar Es Salam, Kenya and Central Africa region.' Turkish Airlines recently announced its decision to add 35 Boeing 737NG airplanes to its fleet, 20 jets certain and 10 jets optional. Being the fastest growing carrier of the world, Turkish Airlines became one of the biggest airline companies in the aviation industry. New aircraft are announced to be joined to our fleet.

The most rapidly expanding airline company, Turkish Airlines is continuing to increase its share in the global aviation market and the airline's Board of Directors as announced before 105 airplanes, 30 jets optional, will be joined to the fleet. According to the decision of the Board Directors, 35 airplanes of Boeing 737, 20 jets definite, 15 jets optional will be delivered. The airplanes, Boeing 737-800 and 737-900 ER, will take place in our fleet and the "Sky Interior" inside the cabins.

With this decision the jets in the fleet of Turkish Airlines which will be delivered, increase to total number of 86, 64 jets definite, 25 jets optional.

By the end of 2015, the number of single aisle jets in the fleet of Turkish Airlines will increase to 155 and the number of twin aisle aircraft will rise to 36 with the deal of these new jets. The total number of aircraft in the fleet of Turkish Airlines will reach to total of 196 aircraft, 5 of them cargo airplane

## **Ghana's International Reserves Grow By 4.4%**

The Gross International Reserves position of the Bank of Ghana which increased to 3.2 billion dollars in December 2009 grew further by 4.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2010 to 3.3 billion dollars. The growth means that Ghana now has three months cover of imports of goods and services as against the gross reserves of 1.8 billion dollars recorded in March 2009 which can provide cover import for only 1.8 months.

Addressing a news conference in Accra, Mr. Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, Governor of Bank of Ghana, said that the favourable external environment continued to support the stability in the foreign exchange market.

The nominal exchange rate of the cedi against the dollar, he said, revealed that the cedi depreciated on year-on-year terms by only 2.5 per cent a year earlier.

“For the period January – March 2010, however, the cedi appreciated by 0.7 per cent against the dollar.

This compares with a depreciation of 11.9 per cent over the same period in 2009,” he said.

Provisional data on the external sector, he said, indicated that Ghana's total merchandise exports for the quarter of 2010 amounted to 1.7 billion dollars, a growth of 20.9 per cent on year-on-year basis.

“Cocoa beans and products earned 704.1 million dollars, an increase of 28.5 per cent and gold earned 678.2 million dollars, an increase of 16.5 per cent. These compared with 35.9 per cent in the export of cocoa beans and products in 2009 and a decline of 4.4 per cent in gold exports,” he said.

The Governor, however, stated that concerns existed over the attainment of the 2009/2010 major season target of 650,000 tonnes of cocoa purchases.

“By the first week of April 2010, only 518,304 tonnes had been purchased compared with 562,538 tonnes at the same time during the 2008/2009 crop season,” he said.

Mr. Amissah-Arthur said that other exports during the review period improved by 17.6

per cent from 280.9 million dollars to 330.2 million dollars in the first quarter of 2010, compared with 20.4 per cent growth recorded in a similar period of 2009.

Total merchandise imports in the first quarter of 2010 amounted to 2.2 billion dollars, 5.9 per cent higher than the level recorded in the first quarter of 2009.

Oil imports for the three-month period amounted to 399.1 million dollars or 43.9 per cent above the 277.4 million dollars recorded a year ago.

Mr. Amissah-Arthur said that the increase was mainly due to a price effect, as the average realised price recorded for crude oil imports was 64.1 per cent above the 47.9 dollars per barrel realised a year ago.

He said volumes of crude and oil products imported in the economy declined by 9.5 per cent to 622,417 metric tonnes from 687,497 metric tonnes a year ago.

The Governor said capital and intermediate goods together accounted for 75.1 per cent of total non-oil imports at the end of the first quarter of 2010, compared with 69.5 per cent recorded in a similar period of 2009.

The trade balance recorded a reduced deficit of 487 million dollars in the first quarter of 2010, which compares favourably with deficit of 665.5 million dollars recorded in the corresponding period of 2009.

## **Ghana Test Fails to Find Oil**

LONDON—Tullow Oil PLC's shares fell as much as 3.3% Tuesday morning after the U.K.-listed company said it failed to find oil or gas at a test well off Ghana's coast.

The Dahoma-1 exploration well was the first of 12 planned deep-water exploration wells, the company said. The well was classified as high-risk and was used to evaluate the potential for oil in the area of the West Cape Three Points license, Angus McCoss, exploration director at Tullow Oil, said.

"We now look forward to incorporating the data from this well and to pursuing the largely independent and considerable remaining prospectivity in the West Cape Three Points block which we will be drilling through 2010," Mr. McCoss said.

The company's shares were recently down 2.6%, making it the worst performer among FTSE 100 stocks. The FTSE 100 index in London was up 0.4%.

Analysts at Evolution Securities said the results could hurt Tullow's shares more than warranted if investors become concerned that the test well augurs poorly for the area.

Tullow will now move the rig at Dahoma-1 to drill the Mahogany-5 well. Tullow's next high-impact wildcat is Owo-1, in the Deep Water Tano license off the coast of Ghana, which will be drilled in June.

Tullow has a 22.9% interest in the West Cape Three Points license. Kosmos Energy, the operator, and a subsidiary of Anadarko Petroleum Corporation own 30.88% each in the license while the E.O. Group owns 3.5%, Sabre Oil & Gas 1.85% and the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation owns a 10% carried interest in the license.

In the Deepwater Tano license, Tullow is the operator with a 49.95% equity stake. Kosmos Energy and Anadarko Petroleum each own an 18% stake in the license while Sabre Oil & Gas owns 4.05% and the GNPC owns a 10% carried interest.

## **Ghana pineapple growers hit by volcanic ash delays**

Pineapple producers in the West African nation of Ghana are hurting because of the lack of flights to Europe caused by volcanic ash.

Alex Yeboah, airside operations manager of the main cargo handlers at the airport in Ghana's capital, said Tuesday that no cargo flights are taking off yet.

He said the lack of refrigeration facilities at the airport has been a big blow to pineapple and pawpaw farmers in Ghana who sell to Europe.

The ash cloud from Iceland has had drastic consequences in parts of Africa -- showing how one event can have a big impact in today's global economy.

In Kenya, thousands of day laborers are out of work because produce and flowers can't be exported amid the flight cancellations.

## **Tullow provides results of Dahoma-1 exploration well**

Tullow Oil says that the Dahoma-1 exploration well in the West Cape Three Points licence encountered water bearing reservoirs.

The Dahoma-1 exploration well was drilled 11 kilometres south of Mahogany-3 to explore a down-dip satellite prospect within the southeast Jubilee area, outside of the main Jubilee Unit Area. It intersected 30 metres of good quality sandstone reservoir below a possible oil-water contact and some indications of oil migration point to good potential for oil trapped up-dip.

The Atwood Hunter rig drilled Dahoma-1 to a total depth of 4,390 metres in water depths of 1,564 metres and will now move to drill Mahogany-5 to appraise the up-dip oil accumulations eastwards of Mahogany-3.

A comprehensive drilling programme is planned for the remainder of 2010 and into 2011 targeting a combination of lower-risk and high-impact exploration and appraisal targets. The next high-impact wildcat is Owo-1, in the Deep Water Tano licence, which will be drilled in June with the Sedco-702 rig targeting the upside potential in the greater Tweneboa fan system.

Tullow has a 22.896% interest in the West Cape Three Points licence and its partners are Kosmos Energy (Operator) and a subsidiary of Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, (30.875% each), the E.O. Group (3.5%), Sabre Oil & Gas (1.854%) and the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) (10% carried interest).

Tullow (49.95%) operates the Deepwater Tano licence and is partnered by Kosmos Energy (18%), Anadarko Petroleum (18%), Sabre Oil & Gas (4.05%) and the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) (10% carried interest).

Angus McCoss, Exploration Director, said, 'Dahoma-1 is the first of 12 wells in our deepwater Ghana Exploration and Appraisal campaign not to encounter hydrocarbons. It was a high-risk well required to evaluate the upside potential of the area by exploring a long way down-dip from known oil. We now look forward to incorporating the data from this well and to pursuing the largely independent and considerable remaining prospectivity in the West Cape Three Points block which we will be drilling through 2010.'

### **GIA loses US\$ 500,000 as a result of volcanic disruptions**

Ghana International Airlines (GIA) has pegged its revenue losses so far as a result of the Icelandic volcanic disruptions at a provisional figure of approximately US\$ 500,000.

The amount, the Airline says represents the cost it has incurred by way of lost-revenue for the past one week since the phenomenon begun. Globally, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that the crisis cost airlines revenues of more than 1.7 billion dollars as at Wednesday April 21.

This, the association has emphasized is devastating for an industry that lost 9.4 billion dollars last year and was forecast to lose a further 2.8 billion dollars in 2010. GIA however resumed its operations on Wednesday with its first flight from Accra to the United Kingdom at 11:30 pm after receiving clearance from the UK Civil Aviation Authority.

Speaking to CITI BUSINESS, the Chief Executive, Gifty Anna Myers says the revenue loss of 500 thousand dollars is as a result of the suspension of flights to its three destinations for a whole week. "We have three destination points, we have Kotoka International, we have Gatwick London and then we have Dusseldorf in Germany, so

these three come together. And we haven't flown in the last week to any of these destinations, so we are looking at approximately \$500,000 US Dollars which we've lost so far."

She says that their immediate priority for now is making arrangements for the backlog of passengers scheduled to fly on GIA rather than plans towards recovery of the losses. "We have to repatriate our passengers that's our No 1, before we even look at what next because people are stranded, and it's not the fault of any airline operator it was caused by a natural phenomenon, but they still are stranded and we have to try and get them to their destinations, so that is our primary concern although initially safety was paramount now we have clear instructions from the UK civil aviation that it's safe to fly. We've resumed and we're doing so."

She added they are still receiving regular updates from the Air traffic Control to know their next line of action

## **Ghana Stocks Climb to Seven-Month High**

Ghanaian stocks rose to a seven-month high, the second-biggest gain worldwide, as investors bought stock in Standard Chartered Plc's local unit before its dividend deadline and SIC Insurance declared a payout.

The 36-member Ghana Stock Exchange All-Share Index surged 1.7 percent to 6,315.03 near the close in the capital, Accra, the strongest since Sept. 28.

Standard Chartered Bank Ghana Ltd. rallied 15 percent to 39.69 cedis, its highest level on record. Ghana Commercial Bank Ltd., the West African nation's biggest bank by branches, climbed to its highest level in 15 months. CAL Bank Ltd. increased 5 percent to 21 pesewas, while SIC Insurance Co. rose 3.5 percent to a one-month high.

Standard Chartered will pay a final dividend of 2.47 cedis per share to shareholders registered by tomorrow, the company said on March 31.

"Everybody is struggling to get the share before the dividend closure," said Mahama Iddrisu, head of EDC Stockbrokers in a telephone interview in Accra.

SIC Insurance, the country's biggest insurer, will pay a dividend of 2 pesewas per share for the year through December, it said today.

Ghana's benchmark index has advanced 13 percent this year, outpacing a 9.8 percent gain in the Morgan Stanley Frontier Market Index, after being the worst performer worldwide in 2009. The country's economy is forecast to grow 5.7 percent this year, boosted by gold and cocoa revenue, the Bank of Ghana said last month. Ghana is the world's second-biggest cocoa grower after Ivory Coast and Africa's second-largest gold producer after South Africa.

Consumer-price inflation fell for the ninth straight month in April, sparking the third straight cut in the central bank's benchmark lending rate on April 16.

## **Iran supports Ghana Chamber of Commerce**

The Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry will soon start doing business with their Iranian counterpart. A memorandum to this effect was signed when a delegation of the Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry went to Iran to deliberate on how to promote Ghana's private sector. This came to light at the general meeting of the association in Accra.

The first vice Chair of the Ghana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and MP for Nkawka, Seth Adjei Baah, said a \$20million credit facility was secured from Iran as well as another \$15 million to assist Ghanaian businesses which want to import from Iran.

Mr. Adjei Baah asked members of the associations wishing to take advantage of the credit facility to present business proposals to the association. The President of the Chamber, Wilson Atta Kroffa said because of the changing trends, businesses must engage people with special skills to inject innovation into their jobs.

He said the association is working on options to credit for its members.

## **EITI legislation extended to Ghana's oil industry**

The Government is extending legislation on the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) to Ghana's oil and gas sector for full disclosure.

Deputy Ministry for Energy, Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah says the initiative coupled with the Freedom of Information Bill, is expected to ensure good governance in the oil and gas industry.

The Ghana National petroleum Corporation and the Environmental Protection Agency have also been tasked to ensure that operators strictly abide by set standards.

He disclosed this in speech read for him at the Ashanti regional forum on the Local Content and Local Participation in Petroleum Activities. The Local Content policy framework, which has been approved by Cabinet is to be developed into legislation to ensure Ghanaians obtain maximum benefits from the oil find.

Mr. Buah noted the prevention of resource curse requires that exploratory and productive activities are not exposed to serious security risks.

He says the construction of pipelines to convey gas to the Aboadze Thermal plant among other industrial projects offer prospects for local professionals and investors.

“We have plans to build an industrial estate to house the petrochemical and other industrial facilities. A mini harbor, warehousing facilities and storage tanks would be required. A rail line would also be required. With the availability of gas as cheap energy source, any sort of industrial activity can take place within the area.

“As for ancillary business activities like real estate, telecommunications, banking, insurance, weather forecasting, search and rescue services, transport and catering, the opportunities are unlimited”, the Deputy Energy Minister stated.

Mr. Buah challenged local investors and businesses to improve their capacity and skills level to take up investment opportunities available in the emerging oil and gas industry.

## CAMEROON

### **National Cocoa, Coffee Association in Gestation**

Stakeholders held concertation meetings in Yaounde last week to finalise preparations.

Everything being equal, a national association for cocoa and coffee farmers will soon see the light of day in the country to better uphold the plight of farmers so that they fully reap the fruits of their labour. Meeting in Yaounde last week, in one of the preparatory meetings to get the association operational, participants were unanimous that farmers in the country are so scattered that they cannot jointly appraise their problems, their magnitude as well as where and how to go about the solutions.

According to Clement Fonteh, vice president of the North West Cooperative Union Limited, who also doubles as the president of Bamenda Area Cooperative Union Limited, the new association will bring farmers together to reflect, diagnose their problems and see where and how to channel them to the authorities for solution. They said formerly cocoa and coffee farmers were a branch of the Cocoa and Coffee Interprofessional Council and that coming out as an association will permit them to pursue a common goal, that of maximising production and sale of their produce. "People in a peer group would always want to have their interest protected and that is what we seek to do", Mr Fonteh said.

Organised by the Cocoa and Coffee Interprofessional Council support programme in partnership with the Cameroon - European Union Cooperation, last week's workshop, which lasted three days, was to evaluate the path covered thus far in preparation and what is still needed to take the association off the ground in no distant future. One of the farmers, Mosima James Lobe, president of the South West regional college of cocoa and

coffee production said preparations to kick-start the association started three years ago. "We are already drafting the constitution after which we will embark on sensitisation campaigns to the regions, he said, adding that, "we will strive to come up with delegates from the divisional, regional and national levels where a constituted assembly is supposed to be formed and the officers put in place". At the end of the meeting, participants rejoiced that government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is already providing farmers with inputs to boost yields. The intervention they said is responsible for a steady improvement in productivity. "It is thanks to the intervention that the production of cocoa has catapulted from 175,000 tons three years ago to 205,000 tons annually as at last year", Mr Mosima said.

## **Palm Oil - Concerted Efforts to Boost Production**

Two projects piloted by the Ministries of Scientific Research and Innovation and that of Industries, Mines and Technological Development seek to modernise activities.

A full-scale government action is on course to modernise oil palm production in the country with the purpose of maximising productivity and ensuring sufficiency both for family and industrial consumption. The Ministries of Scientific Research and Innovation and that of Industries, Mines and Technological Development have two giant projects, which upon completion, should move oil palm from the now rudimentary production, mostly at family scale, to a modern level.

The project in the Ministry of Industries, Mines and Technological Development, code-named, "project for improving the income generating potentials of the palm oil sector in the West and Central African Regions, notably in Nigeria and Cameroon", seeks to use the Malaysian experience to curb oil palm deficit in the country estimated at 50, 000 tons annually. The 48-month FCFA 2.305.520.000 project, financed by the Common Fund for Commodities and executed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), will support farmers and farming activities to attain high yields. According to the project's coordinator, Chief Mbi Oruh Michael, also Technical Adviser NO.1 in the Ministry of Industries, Mines and Technological Development, the project consists in ensuring technology transfer so as to improve on existing oil processing units and helping farmers to increase their supply capacity, by giving them fertilisers and teaching them good agronomic techniques so that they can be able to improve their farm yields. It also targets improving on the quality and quantity of oil they produce so that it can ably stand competition in the international market.

In the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, there is a project to provide farmers with improved, disease-resistant and high-yielding oil palm seedlings at reduced cost. The five year programme, hosted by IRAD, Dizangue, Dibamba of the Littoral Region, seeks to produce over 15 million improved oil palm seedlings that would be given to farmers at FCFA 200 per seedling, down from FCFA 235. With FCFA 3 billion, the project is expected to supply farmers with seeds that can improve national production

of oil palm which is estimated at 200,000 tons annually. If the projects are properly executed and the timeframes respected to the letter, oil palm production in the country should hit the skies in the years ahead

## LIBERIA

### **China Gov't Economic and Trade Delegation Visits Liberia**

Dr. Fu Ziyong, Vice Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, which is in charge of China's foreign aid and foreign economic relations, will lead a delegation to visit Liberia from April 22 to 25, 2010 as part of his five-nation (Chad, Central Africa, Gabon, Liberia and Congo (Brazzaville) tour in Africa.

His delegation will be 40 strong, comprising 14 government officials, 21 business executives and five journalists. The purpose of the visit is to improve China's aid work in Africa and promote trade and economic cooperations with said countries.

During his stay in Liberia, Deputy Minister Fu will pay a courtesy call on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, hold official bilateral talks with relevant ministers or their deputies, sign five documents on aid and economic cooperation with Liberia, witness the launching of the Bong Mines project, have dialogues with diplomats and journalists on issues of Sino-African relations and attend a Forum on Economic and Trade Cooperation with Liberia, among others.

Vice Minister Fu and his entourage will also visit some China-aided projects like the SKD Stadium, the Bamboo and Rattan Weaving Training Program, the Vegetable Growing Program and the Fendall Campus where he will meet representatives of China aid workers in Liberia to raise their moral and encourage them to make meaningful contribution to the post-war reconstruction of Liberia.

## HUMAN RIGHTS/ GENDER

## LIBERIA

## **'Arms Dealer' in Court Again**

A Dutch court has overturned the acquittal of a man accused of supplying arms to Liberia during the presidency of war crimes suspect Charles Taylor. The Dutch Supreme Court referred the case of timber trader Guus Kouwenhoven for a new trial.

Mr. Kouwenhoven, who was granted a bid under dubious circumstances to run the Hotel Africa in Virginia during the height of the war, is accused of breaking a UN arms embargo by supplying anti-tank weapons and rifles to Mr Taylor's government.

In 2006 Mr Kouwenhoven was sentenced to eight years in jail. In 2008 he successfully appealed and was freed. Mr Kouwenhoven has always acknowledged close ties with Mr

Taylor, but denied any wrongdoing.

### **Civil War**

On Tuesday, the Dutch Supreme Court said that appeal judges had been wrong to reject a prosecution request to hear the evidence of two new witnesses.

"Under the circumstances, the court should have left the public prosecution more opportunity to have these witnesses heard," it said in a statement. The date for a fresh appeal hearing is yet to be set.

Mr Kouwenhoven was president of the Oriental Trading Corporation between 2000 and 2003, when the arms smuggling allegedly took place.

His close associate, Charles Taylor, is now on trial in The Hague at a UN-backed court on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Mr Taylor is accused of backing militias in Sierra Leone who murdered, raped and tortured civilians during the country's civil war from 1991 to 2001

## **Another Witness Differs**

Another defense witness has again contradicted Mr. Charles Taylor's testimony that Sierra Leone rebel leader Foday Sankoh only visited Gbarnga for a few days but was never based there prior to the invasion of Sierra Leone.

A number of defense witnesses have contradicted some of Mr. Taylor's key accounts, including his denial that he never had heavy weapons in 1998 and that he never used child soldiers.

The testimony of Fayia Musa, former RUF spokesman, has led the prosecutors today to declare that Mr. Taylor lied under oath.

From the court, courtesy Alpha Sesay: Fayia Musa, a Sierra Leonean rebel insider, today told the Special Court for Sierra Leone that at some point during his country's brutal 11-year conflict, rebel leader Foday Sankoh spent about six months with Mr. Taylor at his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) headquarters at Gbarnga in Liberia. Prosecutors said this account by Mr. Musa, former spokesperson for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group, contradicted Mr. Taylor's own account. The former Liberian president, during his own testimony, had denied suggestions that Mr. Sankoh used to stay at NPFL headquarters at Gbarnga. Mr. Sankoh was only a visitor there for a few days, Mr. Taylor had told the court.

According to Mr. Musa, this was not the case.

"You see Mr. Witness, I believe you told us the truth - I believe Charles Taylor lied under oath," prosecution counsel, Nicholas Koumjian, said to the witness.

"He [Mr. Taylor] was asked "did Foday Sankoh base with you in Gbarnga?" He [Mr. Taylor] answered, "well again, Foday Sankoh was not based with me in Gbarnga." He was asked "please explain what you mean when you say he was not based with you in Gbarnga." And he answered, "well to be based means to be permanent from my understanding, so it was not permanent. If your question is, he visited me in Gbarnga, yes, but he was not based with me in Gbarnga, no," Mr. Koumjian said, recounting to the witness the earlier exchange with Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Koumjian asserted that Mr. Taylor lied in his testimony when he said that Mr. Sankoh would only spend a few days with him at Gbarnga and then he would return to Sierra Leone.

"So we see here, Mr. Taylor lies and says that Foday Sankoh would only stay two or three days. You told us that Foday Sankoh and Mr. Tengbeh went to Gbarnga for six months before they returned to Sierra Leone, isn't that correct?" Mr. Koumjian asked the witness.

In his response, the witness said that "it is correct."

"They [Mr. Sankoh and Mr. Tengbeh] were there up until the end of the Top 40." The operation code named Top 40, according to Mr. Taylor and several witnesses, marked the end of collaboration between Mr. Taylor's NPFL and the RUF in 1992. Prosecutors, however, allege that the relationship between Mr. Taylor and the RUF continued even after 1992 and that the former Liberian president continued to provide support to the rebel forces in Sierra Leone. With Mr. Taylor's support and advice, prosecutors say that

the RUF committed widespread atrocities against the civilian population of Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has dismissed the allegations as false.

Earlier in court today, Mr. Taylor's defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths informed the judges that the defense will be incapacitated to present witnesses next week due to the problems faced by airlines in flying in and out of Europe caused by volcano ash spreading across the continent's airspace. With only one more witness after Mr. Musa presently in The Hague, it may be difficult to transport witnesses from West Africa to Europe unless there is a significant change with flight availability, he said.

"As a consequence of the disruption to airline traffic into Europe, we will have problems progressing the trial next week because currently there is only one further witness in The Hague, and we know not how long the current travel difficulties will persist or whether indeed flights will be coming in from West Africa at anytime soon," Mr. Griffiths told the judges.

Presiding judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde, conferred with her colleagues and then responded that the problems affecting airline traffic into and out of Europe is disappearing gradually. If progress is made with airline traffic by next week, then the challenge envisaged will not affect the trial, she said.

As Mr. Musa concluded his testimony today, Mr. Taylor's ninth defense witness took the witness stand. The witness, a Liberian national, Martin Flomo George, told the court that he fought for the RUF from the start of the conflict in Sierra Leone in 1991 to its conclusion in 2002.

Mr. Taylor has previously said that Liberian nationals could have fought in Sierra Leone as part of the RUF but that he did not send them there. He said that he had no links with the Liberians who fought in Sierra Leone. Liberian nationals now testifying as former members of the RUF seek to corroborate Mr. Taylor's account that they were indeed part of the RUF in Sierra Leone but with no links to Mr. Taylor.

## **U.S. Human Rights Report 'Erroneous' - Pres. Sirleaf**

The 2009 US State Department Human Rights Report on Liberia, concluding pervasive corruption at 'all levels' of the government, has again come under attack, with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf describing it as "erroneous".

The President, at a press conference Tuesday, did not point out the report's "erroneous" aspects, but she said she will personally write US Secretary Hilary Clinton expressing her disapproval of the report.

Following its release, the President expressed similar opinion, but later issued a statement welcoming the report.

The report touched on many aspects the government, including systematic corruption in the judiciary. It said "judges regularly take bribes", a statement that the President repeated recently when she addressed a conference on traditional justice.

But the President said she will send "a confidential document to Secretary Clinton.

"Let me not disclose the contents", she added, before it is received. But she promised to release the letter after it is sent.

She added, however: "The report was prepared by the Ministry of Justice. They cite out the inaccuracy. But the report has a lot of merit. So I am sending it forward," the president said.

## **Witness Never Saw Charles Taylor or NPFL Commanders While RUF Trained At Camp Nama in Liberia**

Neither Charles Taylor, nor any member of his Liberian rebel group, ever visited the base where Sierra Leonean rebel forces underwent training in Liberia, a defense witness for Mr. Taylor told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today in The Hague.

Former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, is on trial for allegedly supporting Sierra Leonean rebels during the country's brutal 11-year war as they raped, mutilated and killed civilians while benefitting from the country's diamond wealth. Prosecutors say that Mr. Taylor gave the rebel group weapons in exchange for blood diamonds, and either controlled, or jointly planned, the rebels' atrocities in his neighboring country. Mr. Taylor has denied all 11 charges against him of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international law. His defense case started in July 2009 with Mr. Taylor on the stand, and since February 2010, witnesses have come forward in his defense.

Martin Flomo George, a Liberian national, today told the court about how the Sierra Leonean rebel group – the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) — underwent training at Camp Nama in Liberia before they invaded Sierra Leone in 1991. Mr. George – who said he was a member of the RUF throughout Sierra Leone's war between 1991-2002 – said he was approached by RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, to join the rebel group in 1991. Based in the Liberian town of Gbarngaha at the time, Mr. George said he willingly joined the group once Mr. Sankoh told him that a liberation struggle in Sierra Leone needed the witness' help. (Gbarngaha served as the headquarter town for Mr. Taylor's National

Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Camp Nama was within NPFL controlled territory within this time in the early 1990s).

Mr. George said he was taken to the RUF training base at Camp Nama, where he met other Liberians and Sierra Leoneans also undergoing revolutionary training. This did not mean that Mr. Taylor and his NPFL rebels supported the RUF rebels during their training at Camp Nama, however, Mr. George said. Instead, the portion of Camp Nama where RUF rebels were trained — called "Crab Hole" — was cut off from other groups there. Mr. George said he never saw Mr. Taylor at Camp Nama, corroborating a previous defense witness' testimony about "Crab Hole".

As Mr. Taylor's defense counsel, Morris Anyah, asked him whether he ever saw or heard of Mr. Taylor being at Camp Nama, the witness said that "I never saw him there, not a day did I see him on that base."

"When I was training at Camp Nama under the RUF, I never heard about Charles Taylor in Camp Nama," the witness added.

Prosecutors have alleged – backed up by prosecution witnesses – that Mr. Taylor provided support for the RUF during their training at Camp Nama and that RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, held meetings with Mr. Taylor and other NPFL commanders at the camp during this period. Mr. Taylor has dismissed this assertion as false. In his testimony today, the Mr. George sided with Mr. Taylor's account.

Asked by Mr. Anyah whether he ever saw or heard of Mr. Sankoh meeting with any NPFL commanders while at Camp Nama, Mr. George said no.

"I never heard about that and I never saw it," the witness said.

In his testimony yesterday, however, Mr. George said that while the RUF underwent training at a particular section of Camp Nama — which he said was a big military barracks — an NPFL artillery unit was also undergoing training at another section of the camp. He did not say that the two groups interacted with each other.

Also in his testimony today, Mr. George said that when RUF rebels completed their training at Camp Nama in 1991, they did not have any weapons to attack Sierra Leone. He said that as they advanced to enter Sierra Leone, they came across a bundle of arms and ammunition at the Liberian border with Sierra Leone. These weapons, the witness said, were used to attack Sierra Leone. He said they did not know who put the weapons there.

The witness drew a harsh response from the presiding judge of the Chamber, Justice Sebutinde, for the manner in which he responded to her question asking him to clarify his statement about the weapons found by the RUF.

"What should I say? Should I say they were wasting there?" the witness responded in a harsh tone.

This response did not go down well with Justice Sebutinde.

"Mr. Witness, I don't like your attitude when you are answering questions," Justice Sebutinde said.

"Nobody in this court was there. You are here to give evidence and to help us understand what went on for the purposes of a very serious trial. Now kindly cooperate with your lawyer in answering and making yourself understood. If you use words that we can't understand, we ask for your clarification. I don't know with whom you are losing your temper," Justice Sebutine told the witness.

"Check your attitude and be courteous to everybody, as we are trying to be courteous to you," she added.

The witness apologized and thanked the Justice Sebutinde for her caution.

Mr. George's testimony continues tomorrow.

## **GHANA**

### **Political parties urged to support aspiring Assemblywomen**

Political parties have been urged to support more aspiring Assemblywomen to contest the forthcoming District Assembly election scheduled for the third quarter of this year. The Chairman of the Upper East Regional Inter-Sectoral Gender Network (RISEGNET), Mr Daud James Abang-Gos, made the call during a stakeholder-meeting held at Bolgatanga, the Upper East Regional capital on Friday.

RISEGNET is a gender network that seeks to promote women participation in governance at all levels and dealing with other negative issues affecting women in society. Mr Abang-Gos stressed the need for political parties to stop paying lip services to giving more positions to women while in government and actualize the promises they make to the course of women. He explained that in spite of the fact 30 per cent of women should participate in the District Assembly, it was not so and this was affecting issues of development.

Mr Abang-Gos noted that RISEGNET in the past had organized series of capacity building programmes including public speaking, lobbying skills, sensitization programmes in communities among others for aspiring assembly women through support from Action Aid Ghana (AAG) and Ibis Africa, all Non Governmental Organizations. He added that this had led to victory for some women, who contested the Assembly elections. He said through the efforts of RISEGNET, the region now had Assembly

Women caucus made up of 55 of which 21 were elected and 34 appointed by government. Mr Gregory Dery, Gender and Women's Rights Programme Officer of Action Aid Ghana (AAG) and also a member of RISEGNET said governments have failed to take advantage of the opportunity available through the Constitution to appoint 30 per cent of assembly members in favour of women. He said among all the nine districts in the region, it was only the Kassena-Nankana and Bongo District Assemblies that seemed to have considered a number of women for appointments. Mr Dery appealed to political parties to bury their political differences and to dialogue and team up to support aspiring Assembly women irrespective of their political lineage if only they were capable of performing.

He noted that some political parties supported aspiring women in the last district assembly election without taking cognizance of their abilities to deliver and that had affected the performance of many assemblies. A former Assembly Woman for Zoliba Tindongo in the Talensi-Nabdam District in the region called on the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to come out early with its educational programmes to sensitize the public on the need to vote for women contesting the assembly election. The Bolgatanga Municipal Director of NCCE, Mr Cletus Abang, said his outfit had lined up a number of programmes including presentation of manifestoes, public speaking, campaign strategies, radio discussions, among others to support Aspiring Assembly women during the forthcoming District Assembly Election. The stakeholder-meeting attracted participants from Civil Society Organizations, NCCE officials, Media practitioners among others. They pledged to encourage and support more women, who would be contesting the election. 24 April 10

## **CAMEROON**

### **Notorious Rapist Arrested**

Aged 44, John M., was sentenced three years ago for rape but has allegedly persisted doing the same act; this time on a three year-old baby girl.

John M., who lives in Quarter 18 in Mutengene, has been arrested for allegedly raping a three year-old baby girl. Gendarmes told CAMNEWS that the suspect was brought to the Brigade by the population of Quarter 18 last week when the little girl was discovered by the mother as she was crying during her bath. When her mother examined her, she shockingly discovered with dismay that puss and blood was oozing out of the child's vagina. When questioned by the mother to know who did the act, the little girl pointed at John M.'s door just 30 metres away from her parents house. As they all moved to the door, the innocent baby still pointed directly at John saying "na he this, na he this". Immediately, the child was taken to the Tiko District hospital where medical reports in the possession of CAMNEWS proves that the little girl was raped.

While the child is currently undergoing treatment in hospital, John M. is at the Gendarmerie cell helping in investigations. According to Gendarmes, the same John was sentenced by the Tiko Court some three years ago for the same act of rape in Mutengene

## IMMIGRATION/ HUMAN RIGHT

### GHANA

#### **Ghanaian pleads guilty to horrific double murder**

##### **He had sex with murdered Girl**

Toronto, Canada -- A jealous man admitted Thursday he slaughtered his common-law wife and her teenaged brother while her other terrified brother watched the Christmas Day carnage.

Nana Yaw also acknowledged he violated Iliada “Lois” Zois’ corpse a day after she died, while forcing her brother, Thomas Zois, to watch.

“This is how much I love your sister,” Yaw told his disgusted captive.

Etobicoke Crown attorney Sarah Welch described the graphic details of the nightmarish ordeal of Dec. 25-26, 2007.

“To lose two children in such horrific circumstances defies imagination. To have a third child seriously injured, repeatedly threatened with death and held hostage for more than 36 hours, during which time he was forced to witness the murder of his siblings, and the indignity performed on his dead sister, would, for most, be beyond human endurance,” Welch said.

Justice Ian Nordheimer sentenced Yaw to life imprisonment with no chance of parole for at least 20 years, saying “the circumstances of this case are truly shocking and almost unimaginable.”

“They were not simply just killed by Mr. Yaw, they were essentially slaughtered,” Nordheimer said.

Yaw, 30, an immigrant from Ghana, pleaded guilty to two counts of second-degree murder of Lois, 22, and Jaime, 14, and aggravated assault for the wounding of Thomas, now 18.

“In my 30 years on the service, this was one of the worst scenes I have ever witnessed, to have people victimized this badly, and continuously and with this degree of callousness,” Det. Sgt. Gary Grinton said.

Thomas Zois, then 16, witnessed both brutal murders. Jaime was wounded and left gasping for air for hours until Yaw stomped on his head, saying, “Shut the f--- up.” Jaime died almost instantly from the blunt force trauma to his face, mouth, lower jaw and brain, Welch said.

Thomas and his brother had been asked to stay with their sister because she feared Yaw and planned to leave him soon. On Christmas morning they were startled to hear a bathroom mirror shattering and loud arguing between Lois and Yaw.

Yaw was brandishing a corkscrew and she screamed for him to stop, yelling “please, help, he is trying to kill us!”

Yaw stabbed Lois with a kitchen knife, dropping her to the floor. She tried to crawl toward the door but Yaw kept plunging the knife into her chest, back, neck, upper arm and thigh, Welch said.

Massive internal bleeding killed her. Jaime tried to flee to get help, but Yaw grabbed and stabbed him. Jaime suffered six wounds to his neck, back, upper arm and torso. His neck wound allowed blood to fill his lungs. He was seriously injured but alive.

Yaw chased Thomas, who was stabbed in the right chest and left forearm. He tried to escape via the balcony of the Kipling Ave. highrise, but it was too high to jump to safety. “Thomas pleaded for his life and Yaw did not kill him,” Welch said. Instead, Yaw helped him tend his wounds.

Yaw drank heavily and threatened to kill Thomas but was convinced to spare him.

Yaw moved Lois’ corpse and Jaime, still alive, into another room. When Jaime wheezed loudly, Yaw killed him.

Yaw gagged Thomas and tied him to a chair in a bedroom closet, and then fled.

Thomas freed himself and went to police, on Dec. 26.

Thomas, amazingly, has graduated from high school and received kudos last summer while working for the Toronto Police on a youth program, court heard.

Yaw took a bus to Windsor on Dec. 27, then returned to Toronto and surrendered to police.

He apologized in court Thursday, saying, “I still cannot believe that I did these terrible acts. I am locked in a jail, but what is worse is that my mind is locked in the horror of my actions day and night. I will never recover from the horror of my actions; they will haunt me forever. My life is over.”

## HEALTH

### BURKINA FASO

## **New Meningitis Strain Arrives**

Ouagadougou — A new strain of meningitis, strain NMX, also known simply as strain 'X', has broken out in Burkina Faso, where it caused just over half the new cases reported in the past week. Six of Burkina Faso's 13 regions are at epidemic level.

Since the beginning of 2010, 5,118 cases of meningitis have been reported and 718 people have died according to the health ministry. Health Minister Seydou Bouda told reporters at a press conference on 22 April that strain X was not "well-known in Burkina".

Meningitis - transmitted by nose and throat secretions - usually spreads across sub-Saharan West Africa in the dry months from December to June.

Ten cases of the strain have been reported in Niger according to Dr Mamadou Djingarey, a World Health Organization (WHO) official in the capital, Ouagadougou. Niger experienced an epidemic of strain X in 2006.

Strain X is "no more worrying than other meningitis strains", the official told IRIN; strain A is the most lethal of the 12 meningitis strains, according to WHO.

Strain X has been reported in 14 of Burkina Faso's 65 districts. Bouda said the symptoms of the new strain were the same as other strains - sudden fever, headache, and vomiting - while children less than one year old might experience swelling in their head.

Across West Africa, some 14,700 meningitis cases and 1,650 deaths were reported between 1 January and 11 April 2010, according to the most recent WHO statistics available. This is not as critical as the same period in 2009, when 49,209 people were infected in an outbreak that killed 2,767.