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Details of the News

1 China-African Relations:

China Jiangxi International denies allegation

The Management of China Jiangxi Corporation for International Economic and Technical Cooperation (CJIC) has denied workers' allegations of wrongful and frequent dismissals; under payment; failure to provide them with safety gadgets and payment of compensation. Workers of the company working on the Akatsi-Tadzewu-Dzodze-Akanu road in the Volta Region had complained to the GNA about what they described as bad treatment by the Management.

Reading a press statement at a press conference in Accra on Friday in response to the accusation, Mr Vincent Pu, Interpreter to the Project, said: "The Management of China Jiangxi Corporation for International Economic and Technical Cooperation (CJIC) was very surprised and shocked on Tuesday 8th June 2010 when a publication captioned "Workers accuse Chinese Company of Maltreatment" was published on no less a media than the Ghanaweb and sourced to Ghana News Agency, then subsequently on myjoyonline and other media websites.

"The story sought to say that tension was mounting among the 221 Ghanaian workforce of the company engaged on the Akatsi-Tadzewu-Dzodze-Akanu road over bad treatment by the Chinese management.

"The story also said among other things that management effected wrongful and frequent dismissals, under payment, failure to provide them with safety gadgets and refusal to pay compensation to workers who died or suffered payment disabilities on duty.

"The specially calculated malicious publication sourced an unnamed spokesperson who said the company did not provide any medical package for the workers.

"The anonymous spokesperson also accused management of frustrating attempts by the workers to form a union under the Construction and Building Material Workers Union (CBMWU) of the GTUC.

"Now in our response, the Management of China Jiangxi Corporation for International Economic and Technical Cooperation hereby state that all the accusations or allegations are NOT TRUE. They are mere fabrications meant to drag the good name of OUR COMPANY into the mud.

"To start with, even the picture used in the story has nothing to do with us. You may get to understand from our Consultant that we have not started doing our U-Drains or what we call gutters laying works at all. "The present total number of Ghanaian employees at our project is 189, including the 40 newly-employed workers in May. Hence, the so-called 221 workers was fictitious and far from the truth. Besides, no tension had mounted at the site at all. On 8th June, 2010 our monthly site meeting was successfully held as scheduled with the attendance of our client Ghana Highway Authority, our Consultant Twum Bofo and Partners and other invited agencies, from whom you can confirm that our undergoing works are smooth and well-regulated.

"No one had been wrongfully dismissed let alone the so-called "frequent dismissals". According to our Payrolls, you can find that our employee number is steadily increasing month by month. Although some employees had left, the management made the decisions on the basis of the complete negotiation and respect. Few were let go because of stealing and negligence which had already caused huge damages financially and technically.

"With regards the under-payment and the workers not knowing the wage ranges, we hereby state that all workers are duly informed their particular salary rate and the mode and time of payment before they are recruited.

They have Time cards which states the daily hours they have earned. If there are any missing or wrongly-calculated hours, everybody is free to cross check his/her hours whenever they want and we always amend accordingly as soon as possible.

"As for medical care, we fully pay every employee whenever the bills are brought to us. We have some receipts here to show.

"The company had duly compensated the family of the worker who passed away in the Quarry Accident and we have documents here to prove including the police and hospital statements.

"The unfortunate worker who lost a leg suffered from a road accident by a tipper truck and not a pay-loader as reported. He was a driver's assistant then. We reported it and brought the tipper driver immediately to Dzodze Police Station as it happened.

Afterwards, we bore all medical bills accrued and we hired one full-equipped ambulance with escort to take him home in the Northern Region when his family requested to have him brought home. "We had never frustrated nor stopped our employees from joining workers union. We have an apology letter from the Volta Regional Secretary of GTUC to show you.

Some workers who decided to form a union ended up causing havoc among themselves. They beat up their local people and locked the main gate to the site, thus holding the entire company and its workers to ransom for one and half hours. One of them was eventually taken to Court.

"We are law-abiding professionals rated among the top 225 International contractors in the world. We would never do anything to maltreat any employee from Ghana for that matter.

"Against this we also request the Ghana News Agency and all media website to withdraw the story and correct the erroneous impression they have created about China Jiangxi International.

"If this is not done, we would exploit every avenue to seek justice." The GNA was performing its statutory duty when it carried the original story and has published this rejoinder because the Constitution of the Fourth Republic enjoins the Agency to publish rejoinders and not because of the veiled threat of legal action.

Chinese bid for Pamodzi mines ‘not good’

AURORA Empowerment Systems’ troubled attempt to acquire two of Pamodzi Gold ’s mines received a boost yesterday when Enver Motala, lead liquidator of Pamodzi’s assets, said a rival offer from a Chinese consortium was “not a good bid”.

Late last year Aurora was named the preferred bidder for the mines at Orkney and Grootvlei after Pamodzi went into liquidation. The empowerment group has been running the mines since then, but has so far been unable to secure the R650m needed to complete the acquisition, and gold production ceased after it fell behind in payments to workers.

Mr Motala said yesterday that Aurora was on track to raise the funds by the end of August.

It needed to complete the acquisition of the cash shell Labat Africa, which would give it a presence on the JSE once regulatory processes were done . That would fulfil the conditions of a funding arrangement with the Swiss investment group GEMS.

In the meantime, Aurora was discussing a deal with GEMS that would give it R50m of interim funding. That would become available once it had acquired a controlling interest in Labat, which was expected in the next two or three weeks.

“That will make sure they can sustain the cost of the care and maintenance of the mines going forward,” Mr Motala said.

Aurora’s move for the mines looked threatened last week after a Chinese consortium stepped in with a rival offer.

However, Mr Motala said the latter offer was in the region of R360m, far lower than Aurora’s bid of R650m.

“It also imposed 42 very onerous conditions on the liquidators, some of which we could never comply with,” he said.

But he emphasised that the Chinese bid would not be dismissed outright, and he expected to “re-engage with them”.

The Solidarity trade union said last week that 100 workers responsible for care and maintenance at Grootvlei had walked out over unpaid wages, but Mr Motala said work was continuing.

Making the most of Chinese aid to Africa

It’s time to move beyond sterile arguments and accept China’s role in Africa. But it’s also time for China to enhance that role.

The debate over China’s role in Africa continues to rage. One side contends that China is a rapacious neocolonial oppressor, while the other sees it as a miraculous alternative to

decades of failed Western aid. To a large extent, however, facts on the ground have rendered this debate academic: China already has become an indisputably significant force in Africa's development, with substantially increased commitments and engagements just in the past few years. Pragmatism argues for moving the discussion ahead, to how China's involvement can reap the greatest benefit for both Africans and Chinese.

African and Chinese leaders—along with interested outside parties, such as multilaterals, foundations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—should focus on three opportunities. The first is strengthening Africa's economic-development strategies and capabilities at the national and regional levels. Second, China's willingness to undertake additional strategic-development projects in Africa, including the recent emphasis on sustainable and results-driven models, should be supported. Finally, collaboration between Chinese institutions working in Africa and other donors or partners ought to be developed and encouraged.

China's role in Africa is dynamic, with deep historical roots and a wide range of ever-changing engagements and models that don't lend themselves to black-and-white categorization. By pursuing these three opportunities, Africa and China can uncover new ways to promote economic development and the reduction of poverty on the continent.

Africa: China's Complex View of Africa

The increasing role of China in Africa's infrastructure building and the management of the continent's economy has become a subject of intense discussion not only by Africans but from people beyond the continent.

China is different from the West in its strategic approach towards Africa. Its leaders advocate a policy of non-interference in what they describe as "sovereign affairs." Yet, this is an issue that exposed China to criticism of overlooking violations of human rights and the absence of good governance by regimes it chose to deal with. Its involvement in Sudan and DRC are often cited as an illustration.

Neither is China like other multilateral institutions that are much concerned with export to debt ratio when lending to African countries. Its leaders rather prefer to look at the promise and potential a certain country presents. This, too, is cause for criticism by pundits and academics alike. China is in Africa shaping a new mode of engagement to promote a secure supply zone for its hungry industries, both for raw materials and power.

Through a collaboration of three newspapers in Africa – Fortune (Ethiopia), Les Echos (Mali), and Sud Quotidien (Senegal) as well as a web based news organisation in Italy, www.afronline.org – Joshua Massarenti, from Afronline.org, talked to Jonathan Holslag (Prof) to decode Chinese vested interests in Africa.

As a head of research at the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies (BICCS), Holslag has conducted his doctoral thesis on regional security in Asia. He is also an

expert of the EU-China Academic Network (ECAN), an academic forum established by the European Commission. In 2007, he was the team leader of a multidisciplinary research group that prepared several reports on China's foreign policy for European Parliament. He is regularly invited as a commentator by Belgian and foreign news media.

He studied political science at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB) and completed additional programmes on geopolitics and international security. Holslag's interests in China and Asia, in general, developed while doing research for the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre (ESISC), a Brussels based think-tank.

Why is China so interested in Africa? What place does Africa hold in Beijing's foreign policy?

Clearly, the most pressing need remains to gain access to Africa's natural richness. However, China tries to reduce the resource intensity of its industrial growth, [but] its dependence on foreign supplies of energy and minerals will only continue to grow. Africa also helps Beijing soft balance against the West.

Although China has made remarkable progress in its domestic development, it still has many interests in common with third world countries. In international organisations, it therefore continues to work closely with African countries in promoting alternatives for the economic and political norms that the West has been promoting. We have seen that in the context of the Human Rights Council, negotiations for a new world trade agreement, and talks about climate change. It is thus a matter of both economic and strategic political objectives.

What is the magnitude of Chinese investment in Africa? Which economic sectors and geographic areas are the most valued by China across the African continent?

Statistics probably remain the most slippery part in the China-Africa relations. However, China, on average, has been investing around one billion dollars in the last three years in Africa, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce. This is still fairly small. Even if one includes investments via Hong Kong or the Cayman Islands, this would not make China's investment much bigger. Beijing presents huge packages of investment to Africa, but often these are compilations of several existing or forthcoming smaller projects.

Moreover, investments are often loans. The volume of Chinese loans is much larger than direct investments. Most of these loans are used for contracted projects like the construction of roads, railways, government buildings, and schools. Last year, China realised about 15 billion dollars' worth of such projects.

It all looks like investment, and in the end China expects to see its money back.

Do the investment efforts produced by China in Africa during these last 10 to 15 years have unanimous support across the Chinese regime board?

Most Chinese companies look after their own commercial interests in the first place. But there is still a lot of steering by the national and provincial governments.

China has a catalogue with guidelines for different priority sectors in Africa. Chinese companies that follow these guidelines get easy access to government support and loans. Even though Beijing has showed itself concerned about illegal Chinese migration, the government understands that the Chinese Diaspora in Africa plays a very important role in the export of consumption goods and will certainly not make life difficult for these communities.

I would say that there is a lot of private initiative, but [it is] often developing within government policies.

How has the Chinese presence evolved these last few years on a political and strategic level?

I think that China has made impressive headway in developing its relations with political elites in Africa. There is no other country that comes even close to the enormous efforts that Beijing has made to develop political relations at all levels with heads of state, ministers, local leaders, and key officials. They now also have coordination with African regional organisations. Furthermore, it seems that China started reaching out to opposition groups in some countries to secure Chinese interests in case of a change of government. It is a very impressive and sophisticated strategy.

Who are the protagonists of the Chinese presence in Africa, both at the state level and at the private sector level? What kind of power relationships exist between these key players?

There is a constant proliferation of actors. Whereas in the 1990s there were just a few big state owned enterprises operating in tandem with the national government, there are now dozens of big companies active in Africa. Most of them have close linkages with either national or provincial governments. The largest companies are still those involved in energy, mining, and construction. But telecom operators, manufacturers, and banks have also been consolidating their positions.

At the level of the government, it is mainly the National Development and Reform Council (NDRC) that, in cooperation with the top leadership of the Communist Party (CP), defines the main economic objectives. On several occasions, President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao had important personal inputs in policymaking towards Africa. The Ministry of Commerce, in its turn, is the most active player when it comes to implementation, but it also works increasingly together with other specialised departments like agriculture and railways. Provinces and municipalities also play a very active role.

Also, do not forget the military. China pursues a very active military diplomacy towards Africa that helps it to monitor the security situation and respond to violent incidents. The military attachés are, among others, responsible for facilitating arms sales.

African countries, which are very much attracted by Chinese investments in terms of facilities, are more and more doubtful of the Chinese presence on the continent. Little impact on economies' growth, obscure businesses tied to money laundering, illegal exploitation of natural resources, unclear investment contracts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the plundering of lands scare public opinion in countries such as Mali, Senegal, and Niger. Is a normal relationship with China plausible?

China is not an NGO. It is a country that still has to lift millions of people out of poverty and faces major domestic economic challenges. It therefore has to be very efficient in its foreign economic policy [and] try to benefit as much with the smallest financial input possible. In the end, Chinese leaders are responsible for the development of the Chinese, not the Africans.

That does not mean, however, that Beijing neglects the interests of the African countries. It understands very well that without amicable relations, its long-term economic interests cannot be safeguarded. China's economic diplomacy is thus a delicate balancing exercise. China's behaviour, to a large degree, depends on how African societies can organise themselves and defend their own collective interests. In states with a strong and democratic government, China tends to be more serious about social responsibility and sustainable development.

In misgoverned states, it behaves more pragmatically.

Agriculture has been a privileged area in the relationship between China and Africa. In Senegal, especially in the region of Casamance, the first Chinese aid workers have arrived to cultivate rice since the 1960s. In which areas could this country be useful today to Africa which is seeking to come out of poverty and malnutrition?

China's involvement in African agriculture could be a blessing for the continent's development. But Africa needs to be careful not to replace fragile subsistence farming with large-scale agribusiness, certainly not without creating alternative jobs in processing and food industries.

The 1990s were marked by a decrease of European and American investments on the African continent. Has the West lost Africa today to the benefit of China?

Not at all, it is logical that, now that China acts as the factory of the world, the EU should bother less about securing supplies, mineral ores, or cotton in Africa. But the European Union remains the largest investor and donor of development aid in Africa. In spite of the impact of the financial crisis, I believe that there are a lot of opportunities for the EU in

farming, clean energy, tourism, and even manufacturing. There could even be cooperation with China in this regard, but it requires more coordination. The EU's Africa policy has been too fragmented.

In recent years, the EU has offered to set up a framework of trilateral dialogue and cooperation between Africa, China, and the EU. Why is the EU promoting this initiative? Is Beijing interested in this form of trilateral dialogue?

The aim of this dialogue was to find complementarities in Chinese and European policies towards Africa. I have been following this initiative closely, and there has never been any interest whatsoever to obstruct China. The EU just believes that, because of Africa's needs, there is a need to join forces. The dialogue was also meant to build mutual understanding and to exchange views on important challenges like violent conflicts, governance, and the environment.

Beijing has not been very interested, so far. I believe that is a major mistake, and its distrust towards the European Union is groundless.

China and the West have two different policies in Africa. Europe and the United States tend to condition their aid to the respect of human rights and good governance, while China makes political non-interference the pillar of its intervention. Is the Chinese model sustainable in the long-term? Is it conceivable that Beijing and the West can find a common ground in Africa with two such different approaches?

I do not believe that China provides unconditional aid. Its economic conditions are often very tough and it also expects governments to protect Chinese citizens. I do not really believe in the fact that China does not interfere in internal politics. True, it does not say to African governments that they should be transparent and respect human rights. But it often suffices to provide aid or investments to influence the political situation in a country. It can help a president win an election, [just] as it can diminish the chances of opposition parties [getting voted in].

Any form of economic cooperation involves a kind of political interference, directly or indirectly.

How do African governments see these two strategies? And, according to you, which one of these two strategies would best encourage Africa's development in the long-term?

For most political elites, the Chinese state centric approach is of course very tempting. For the African people, China's approach is less attractive. It is not certain whether China in the long run will move towards the policies of the EU. A lot will depend on how China perceives the intentions of players like the EU and the US. The more it gets the impression that the West does not like a strong China in Africa, the more Beijing will try to gain political influence at any expense.

If the West manages to build confidence, then I believe that cooperation and a consensus on the rules of the game is possible. But right now, the situation remains uncertain.

Beijing is increasingly putting pressure on financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank to augment its power. Does China have African countries' support in this battle? Could a Chinese rise within these institutions benefit Africa?

That is difficult to predict. What might be more important, right now, is that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is, to some degree, taking over the role of these institutions.

Drawing from its enormous foreign exchange reserves for all kinds of loans and currency swaps, China is laying the fundamentals of ambitious regional and bilateral monetary cooperation. Also in Africa, Chinese policy banks have become more influential and [have] established numerous synergies with local counterparts.

Who is the big winner in the Africa-China relationship?

Africa could be the biggest winner, if only it had the political leadership to convert the numerous Chinese opportunities into gains for the African people. I believe that China presents many benefits, but it is up to Africa to build its own future.

Zimbabwe: Cotton Prices - Govt Ropes in Chinese Firms

Harare — Government has roped in some Chinese companies to buy cotton this season as it seeks to increase competition in an industry that has been affected by poor prices.

This follows an impasse between cotton growers and traditional buyers over producer prices.

Cotton farmers were complaining over the US30 cents per kilogramme that was being offered by buyers.

They argued the price is not viable.

This prompted the Government to intervene and announce the price of US42 cents per kilogramme, which some farmers still said was low considering the high production costs.

In an interview yesterday, Agriculture Minister Joseph Made said an agreement had been concluded for Chinese companies to participate in the purchasing of cotton.

"China already has some companies supporting tobacco and we are also looking at assistance that should go towards cotton farmers. The Chinese are major players in the cotton sector as they consume eight million kilogrammes per year," he said.

Minister Made said some contractors this year did not support cotton growing as they supplied inputs for low hectareage.

"The contracted crop should be sold to the contractor but the farmer is free to sell the remainder to willing buyers," he said.

Chinese companies are expected to support farmers in terms of inputs.
"Zimbabwe's challenge has been delivery of crop inputs, cotton demands in terms of seed and fertilizers and chemicals for the production of high quality crop.

"We hope the Chinese will be able to support farmers and venture on agro-processing so that we will be able to benefit from raw cotton," he said.

On the rejection of the US42 cents per kilogramme price by farmers, Minister Made said they were justified because they were looking at viability.

"Government is looking into the matter with the seriousness it deserves. Cotton is their only crop hence they need to realise a reasonable profit to allow them to get back on the land next season," he said.

Minister Made said although it was important to consider international prices, it was also equally important that farmers aired their views on the producer prices.
He said farmers should, however, speak with one voice through their unions or representatives.

"We should not leave the farmer to die because we can easily import everything. We should defend farmers, we should defend land reform," Minister Made said.
He said his ministry would continue to lobby the Ministry of Finance for increased assistance to cotton farmers.

Producer price disputes have riddled the cotton industry since the beginning of the marketing season.

Merchants were offering US 31 cents per kilogramme, prices cotton growers rejected. This resulted in growers withholding their crop prompting Government intervention and set the price at US42 cents.

Farmers have however, rejected the price arguing that the crop should fetch more to cushion them against high production costs.

Minister Made yesterday morning met the Ministry of Industry and Commerce officials to discuss the way forward on the cotton issue but the outcome of the meeting could not be established.

2 Pan-African issues:

AFRICA: Go-ahead for IDP convention

African Union members have adopted plans to implement the Kampala convention on the protection of internally displaced people, including increasing their contributions to refugee and IDP funding and accelerating the convention's ratification, signature and domestication, the AU said.

Signed by 26 countries since it was endorsed in the Ugandan capital of Kampala on 23 October 2009, the convention obliges governments to recognize that IDPs have specific vulnerabilities and must be supported, according to Walter Kälin, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.

It covers all causes of displacement, is forceful in terms of responsibility and goes beyond addressing the roles of states to those of the AU and non-state actors. The instrument is aimed at progressively eliminating forced population displacement caused by conflicts and to reduce the suffering of those displaced by natural disasters in Africa.

AU ministers responsible for forced displacement, who met in Addis Ababa on 4 and 5 June, agreed to seek support for implementation from non-traditional and private sector partners and to accelerate the convention's ratification at an AU summit in Kampala in July. Domestication includes voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement, and strategies for prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, as well as post-conflict reconstruction and peace building.

More than 10 million sub-Saharan Africans are affected by forced displacement, according to the AU. These include 2.1 million refugees, 305,000 asylum-seekers, at least 6.3 million IDPs and about 100,000 stateless persons. Africa is also home to three of the world's five countries with the largest conflict-induced IDPs, namely Sudan (about 4.9 million), the Democratic Republic of Congo (one million) and Somalia (1.5 million), data from the Brookings-Bern Project shows.

The Kampala convention, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which is the custodian of international humanitarian law, provides a solid framework for enhancing the protection and assistance of IDPs in Africa. To become a binding document, it has to be ratified by 15 of the AU's 53 members. So far, one has done so.

What African Countries Can Learn From British Election

The Commission for Africa which was set up by former British prime minister Tony Blair to examine and provide impetus for development in Africa, will launch its report at the UN Summit in September.

The report, compiled almost five years ago, emphasises implementation of its contents. Former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa, who is one of the Commissioners, said at the recent World Economic Forum held in Dar es Salaam said that some of the report's recommendations such as improvement of governance and free and fair elections have been fairly dealt with.

However, he said: "While we are satisfied that the report was timely and also worthwhile in that it worked with a great momentum in issues of good governance and elections, more could have been done on improvement of agriculture and infrastructure," he said.

While during the report's preparations, coalition governments - as an aspect of good governance and free and fair elections - were non-existent in Africa, the Commission now faces the challenge of considering whether coalition governments on the Kenyan model and later Zimbabwe could be setting a bad trend on the continent.

However Mr Mkapa said coalition governments in Africa can work depending on particular political situations. Commissioner Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia said Kenya and Zimbabwe had such unique political crises that, in the interests of national unity, coalition governments were the only way out. "But they do not offer a blanket solution to every disputed election," he cautioned.

Two Zimbabwean leaders attending the World Economic Forum - Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his deputy Arthur Mutambara.

The latter said unity governments are not easy to run, and that Zimbabwe opted for one for the sake of the national interest.

Mr Mutambara said the coalition government provides Zimbabwean leaders with a shared platform to plan and make decisions such as the need to have a new constitution. Reaching out to investors, the deputy prime minister said the country was ready for economic reforms in which investors will be protected, but the removal of economic sanctions by Western governments is a must for this to succeed.

"Zimbabwe is stable; we want to tell the world that we want investors not for charity, but for a win-win situation," he added.

"We are calling for total and unequivocal removal of sanctions to enable investment to flow in. Zimbabwe is greatly affected by these sanctions," said Mr Mutambara.

Commissioner Anna Tibaijuka who is also the executive director of UN Habitat expressed particular concern about implementation of the reports' recommendations on human settlement patterns for arresting rapid and chaotic urbanisation.

"We have done well in some cases, like curbing the HIV prevalence, but we have failed to address the unplanned urbanisation problem," she said.

For true African development, said Mr Mkapa, Africans should be encouraged by leaders to accept that development will come after they change the perception that there are other nations that caused their backwardness.

"Africans should change this attitude that has made them donor dependent 50 years after Independence," he said.

‘UK cuts may hit HIV/AIDS programmes in Africa’

Chief Executive of UK’s National Aids Trust (NAT) Ms Deborah Jack has expressed fears that the current wave of cuts in public spending by the new coalition government may affect some HIV/AIDS programmes in Africa.

Speaking at an African media event in London, Ms Jack said if the government carries out its extensive plans to cut public spending in its bid to reduce the country’s huge deficit, many HIV/AIDS programmes targeting African countries would be axed.

The African media event, organised by African HIV Policy Network (AHPN) in partnership with The Trumpet Newspaper and supported by the National Aids Trust was aimed at exploring how the HIV sector can work with the media to create greater awareness about HIV, sexual health and general well-being among African communities in the UK.

She said her organisation will make strong case against cutting funds for its AIDS programmes, and noted that the UK spear-headed the global campaign for HIV/AIDs treatment and awareness, especially in Africa.

Publisher of The Trumpet Newspaper Mr. Femi Okutubo spoke on the corporate responsibility for increasing awareness about HIV among African communities in the UK.

Chief Executive of AHPN Dr. Ade Adeagbo noted that working closely with the media was a fundamental platform to deliver “key messages about awareness, education and prevention of HIV to African communities in the UK.”

Nigeria:

1. Political News:

Bankole: CNPP threatens to sue EFCC

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mrs. Farida Waziri, if she fails to prosecute Speaker of House of Representatives Dimeji Bankole over allegations of fraud levelled against him.

National Secretary of CNPP Chief Willy Ezugwu, at a press conference yesterday in Abuja, said that there was enough evidence in its possession to nail the embattled speaker.

Ezugwu while reading the text of the press conference on behalf of the CNPP Chairman, Alhaji Balarabe Musa, called on Bankole to honourably resign because the Nigerian public has lost confidence in his leadership.

“CNPP calls on the Speaker to honourably resign and the Chairman of EFCC to forthwith prosecute the Speaker Dimeji Bankole and his cohorts or she will meet us in court,” Ezugwu said.

Apart from the controversial N2.3 billion allegedly spent on the purchase of 380 Peugeot cars by the House leadership, the CNPP also alleged fraudulent activities against the House leaders in the purchase of photocopier machines, HP Desktop, Range Rover (treated), Mercedes Benz S-500, Samsung LN, which it alleged were all highly inflated against market price.

He said, “The controversial 380 Peugeot purchased at the cost of N2.3 billion, without any official discount, hence the delivery of 407 Comfort Automatic Peugeot against the top of range 407 ST Pack Sports Peugeot paid for, with a price differential between the two ranges of N1, 109, 175.00 per unit. The House also wasted huge public funds in the Power and other probes and ended up compromising itself, thus the speaker killed all the probes without commensurate results.

“For the purpose of brevity, we commenced the opening of the Pandora-box with the House of Representatives, not only because the monumental corruption in the House of Representatives is an eye sore, but that most Nigerians expected the House made up of younger elements to be more progressive, radical and anti-corrupt.”

Agency to generate 110,000 jobs before Dec

The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) says it will generate 106,700 jobs in the country before December this year. Speaking yesterday in Abuja at the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NERFUND and the National Board for Technology Incubation (NBTI), the Managing Director of NERFUND Mr. Baba Gimba, said before the year end the Fund would disburse N3.39 billion to 970 projects with a potential to generate 9,700 jobs directly and over 97,000 jobs indirectly.

According to Mr. Gimba, the fund still target to provide more jobs in the years to come through the provision of loans as it had received over 2000 loan applications from many micro/small and medium enterprises.

He said the NERFUND's collaboration with NBTI will further spread its reach to cover technology related enterprises, adding that its modest target of 106,700 jobs provision before December may be surpassed with the collaboration.

Earlier in her address, the Director General of NBTI Professor Gambo Laraba Abdullahi said the collaboration between the two agencies would help in the establishment of more technological related small scale firms in the country.

‘Jega’s nomination good omen to Nigeria’s democracy’

The Chairman, Governing Council of the Federal College of Education, Zaria, Malam Muhammad Damakka Abubakar, yesterday described the nomination of Professor Attahiru Jega as a healthy development in Nigeria’s democracy.

Malam Abubakar said at this period of Nigeria’s history, the country needs people like Prof. Jega to be at the helm of affairs of an important national body like INEC.

He described the university don as an intelligent person who always gives priority to the wellbeing of Nigerians as well as the development of the country.

“I was excited when I heard about Jega’s nomination. INEC needs people like Prof Jega who are known to be credible and patriotic. I am confident that his nomination would bring a lot of changes in Nigeria’s politics, therefore the nomination is a good omen to the country’s democracy,” Malam Abubakar explained.

Jega: Will He Make Any Difference?

The question on the lips of many Nigerians is how far Professor Attahiru Jega will go as the new head of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Imam Imam writes on the past antecedents of Nigeria’s electoral umpires and Jega may likely be assessed

Last Tuesday’s nomination of Professor Attahiru Jega, former ASUU President and Vice Chancellor of Bayero University Kano as the new chairman-designate of the Independent

National Electoral Commission (INEC) brought to an end weeks of speculations as to who will succeed Professor Maurice Iwu to head of the country's electoral umpire.

The interest generated in who becomes the new chairman has been unprecedented in the country's political history. In the weeks since Iwu was asked to proceed on terminal leave ahead of his final disengagement, many names have been bandied in the media as to who may clinch the hot seat. In the end, President Goodluck Jonathan opted for a university don whose radical views may ultimately have played a huge part in his nomination.

INEC has had a tumultuous history within the larger Nigerian entity. Its origin goes back to the period before Independence when the Electoral Commission of Nigeria was established to conduct the 1959 elections. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) established in 1960 conducted the immediate post-independence federal and regional elections of 1964 and 1965. However, the electoral body was dissolved after the military coup of 1966.

In 1978, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) was constituted by the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo to organize the elections of 1979, which ushered in the Shehu Shagari's government in the second republic. It also conducted the general elections of 1983.

The regime of General Ibrahim Babangida established the National Electoral Commission (NEC) headed by Professor Humphrey Nwosu which conducted the 1993 elections. Till date, the election has been adjudged the best election held in the country. The June 12 1993 election was however annulled by the military.

In December 1995, the military government of General Sani Abacha established the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) which conducted another set of elections.

These elected institutions were however not inaugurated before the sudden death of General Abacha on June 8, 1998 aborted the process. In 1998 General Abdulsalam Abubakar's administration dissolved NECON and established the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The new commission organized the transitional elections that ushered in the Nigerian Fourth Republic on May 29 1999.

Jega however comes into the job knowing he has to succeed where large chunk of his predecessors have been adjudged to have performed below par. However, the Kebbi-state born university researcher comes into the job with a pedigree no one doubts.

As seen from his past, he can stand up to powers that be, even at the risk of serious threat to his life. In the late 80s, as ASUU President, he spent two weeks at the Kirikiri Maximum Prison in Lagos for daring to confront the then military regime of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. As administrator in the university circle, many have hailed Jega for his meticulous and unbiased approach to issues.

The INEC job though is seen as different from all previous positions he had held. Overnight, the quiet but unassuming professor has once again been thrust to national limelight. He will head a commission whose performance many say will determine not only the future of Nigeria's democracy, but the survival of the country as a whole.

His task is made all the more daunting considering the fact that out of the ten persons to have head the commission in the past, only two have been judged positively by Nigerians. They are Professor Humphrey Nwosu who conducted the controversial June 12, 1993 elections, and late Justice Ephraim Akpata whose tenure ushered in the present democratic dispensation in 1999.

To Jega's credit, many Nigerians, especially those in the ever-critical civil society community, have commended his choice. The NGOs, as well as their human rights counterparts, have played a leading role in pressuring the Federal Government to make the reform of the electoral process an important priority.

Speaking on Nigerian's expectations from the new men at INEC, former President of Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Mr. Olisa Agbakoba (SAN) said Jega is competent to handle the job. "I urge him to spring into action by shaking the root and branches of INEC within his first month in office. After this, he can set an agenda for the commission which include having a genuine national voters register to check rigging, see to the unbundling of the commission, ensure the implementation of the Uwais electoral committee report once it is passed by the National Assembly and set up a national election plan."

Similarly, Barrister Festus Okoye, who like Jega, served in the Uwais Electoral Reform Committee, described Jega's choice as a good one. "He has the intellectual ability to steer the affairs of INEC. He is a very principled person and he has been very committed to democracy and electoral process for a very long time.

My advice is he should lay the foundation for the conduct of a free, fair and transparent election. The time table available to him between now and 2011 will not be sufficient for him to clean up the process that will meet national and international standards. But I know he will do a good job."

Also speaking, President of Civil Rights Congress (CRC), Malam Shehu Sani said Jega's nomination is commendable because he is the 'best man' suited for the job. "He is a man of impeccable character, principled, humble and credible.

With his nomination, INEC is in safe hands. This is because he has the pedigree, experience, exposure, capability and capacity to deliver. Going by his track records, I am confident Jega will not let Nigerians down.

I believe he will exorcise the spirit of rigging that has bedeviled our electoral process. He will put into practice his knowledge and advocacy. I urge Nigerians to give him the

chance to succeed, and I call on the Federal Government to give him and his team a free hand and the necessary funding to justify his choice and to ensure their success.”

On his part, Professor Auwalu Yadudu, a former presidential adviser on legal matters and a constitutional lawyer, said despite Jega’s impressive credentials, he will need the cooperation of all stakeholders, especially the government, to succeed. “First of all, my fear is that a tree cannot make a forest, as such he must be given an able team that will work with him to chart a new course for the development of the electoral process.

The political class must also be prepared to change otherwise all our efforts will come to naught. This is the best time to start afresh and I am confident Jega will live a positive imprint in INEC,” he added.

While a lot has been said about the enormity of the task ahead of the new men and women at INEC, one constant issue Nigerians have expressed fear on is the endemic corruption rocking the commission. Some of the staff have been accused in the past of selling their consciences to willing and culpable politicians who seek various advantages over their opponents.

Similarly, because the image of INEC has received serious bashing from Nigerians in the past decade, the new men in charge will be faced with the task of rebuilding that battered image before they could get the confidence of Nigerians, and eventually their support. In addition to these, is the primary responsibility of organizing free, fair and credible elections that will stand the test of scrutiny from Nigerians and members of the international community.

2011: Pensioner vows to mobilize against Jonathan

A retired employee of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and renowned Hausa artist, Umaru Danjuma Katsina popularly known as Kasagi has vowed to mobilize other Federal Government pensioners against Jonathan in 2011 if the Federal Government fails to pay the nine years pension arrears being owed them. Speaking to Daily Trust in Katsina, Umaru Danjuma Katsina said since 2001, some Federal pensioners had not received pension.

He added that majority of the pensioners were suffering and were relying on the unpaid arrears to pay their debts and provide for their families. Kasagi called on President Jonathan to use part of the money earmarked for the country’s golden jubilee celebration to settle the pension arrears of the over 100,000 federal pensioners in the country.

“In the case of ABU Zaria, go to Samaru village and see how professors who served the country are suffering because of non payment of these arrears. Many of them are suffering from cancer, diabetes and hypertension and they do not have money to go to the hospital”, he added.

He lamented that unlike in other countries where pensioners are honoured because of their contributions to the development of their countries; the reverse was the case in Nigeria.

“I served ABU and my state for over 30 years in the Department of Theatre arts, I wrote books, some of which have won international awards and some have been translated into French and German languages, yet I have been waiting for nine years for my pension to enable me marry off my children”, he said.

Ribadu: Coming Home to Politics?

Former EFCC chairman Mallam Nuhu Ribadu is due to return to Nigeria next Sunday. Already, speculations in various quarters say his return may signal the beginning of his journey into politics. Imam Imam looks at the issue

The reports that former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu would return to Nigeria next Sunday after spending over a year on self exile, is being viewed by many as the beginning of his journey into politics.

Surprisingly, many Nigerians are already expecting the anti-corruption czar to join the country's murky political terrain.

Their hope is that with his known stance against Nigeria's number one ill, he may help in bringing sanity to the system. This accounts for why his name featured prominently among contenders for the vacant Vice President seat before Namadi Sambo was eventually chosen.

To some Nigerians, Ribadu is returning to the country at a time his services are most needed.

It would be recalled that Ribadu left the country on January 3, 2009 after complaining of “serious” threats to his life. However, his counsel, Mr. Femi Falana told THISDAY last weekend that Ribadu's “final return to Nigeria is on Sunday, June 6.”

Falana also said that Ribadu's return would be heralded by an honorary doctorate degree in law to be conferred on him the same day, by Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State. The university is owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

As a prelude to his eventual return, the Federal Government few weeks ago dropped charges of non-declaration of assets it was pursuing against Ribadu at the Code of Conduct Tribunal. The government also went ahead to re-instate him as an Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG) and also retired him on the same rank, with effect from December 22, 2008.

Ribadu was in 2007 removed as EFCC Chairman after he fell out with the former regime of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and was replaced by Mrs. Farida Waziri. He was

asked to proceed to the Nigeria Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) in Kuru, Jos.

However, towards the end of his course, he was ordered to revert to his former rank of DCP. But at the completion of the course, he was not issued a certificate, and was forcefully dragged out of the graduation hall on account that he was not supposed to have attended the course in the first place.

In this wise, a special ceremony was organised for him and his NIPSS certificate awarded to him following the insistence of the then Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, who was also chairman of the institution's board.

In September last year, Ribadu sneaked into the country in a dramatic fashion to pay condolences visit to Fawehinmi's family over the death of Chief Gani Fawehinmi. He even went to the mortuary to pay his respects to the human rights activist.

Since then he has been doing the circus of delivering speeches and attending international conferences.

Since he left the country, Ribadu has been consistent in his calls for change of attitude among Nigerians especially those in position of authority. He said becomes necessary if the country must tackle corruption problems currently bedeviling it. While some of his remarks were targeted at the political establishment, he also tasked Nigerian youths to explore their potentials by exhibiting good character at all times.

Incidentally, almost all the lectures Ribadu delivered has touch of politics written over them. For example, at a reception organized for him by Mr. Reno Omokri, the Vice President of Joe Trippi and Associates, a Washington-based consultancy firm, Ribadu rose to the defense of Nigerian youths who he described as capable of running the affairs of the country without any hitch. He made the remarks in an apparent reference to earlier statement credited to General Ibrahim Babangida who was quoted to have said youths are not ready to rule Nigeria.

At the Washington event, Ribadu said Nigerian youths are "capable of leadership and have both the responsibility and the ability to clean up the mess that some of the old breed' have made of the country. "I appeal to you to believe in yourselves and believe in Nigeria.

The time has come for us to take our country back. Those before us messed it up. It is our responsibility (to now take it back.). Nigeria is in dire need of people to do something for her. Only the youths can do it.

We just have to do it for ourselves and do it for our future. We should do it for our own children as well. Nigeria does not deserve what it is today. It's time for us to get up and say enough is enough and that it is our own country. And it is our responsibility to fix it," he added.

Last Tuesday, in a lecture delivered at the University of Stanford's Center for Democracy Development and the Rule of Law, Ribadu said the only way to achieve substantial victory in the fight against corruption, is for anti-corruption officials to find their way into governments. He reasoned that by having political powers at their disposal, they will effect necessary changes that will move their countries forward and tackle the menace of graft.

Asked by Stephen Krasner, a former US Deputy National Security Adviser what steps he believed were needed to strengthen the anti corruption battle, Ribadu said the most important factor was the support of the political leadership.

He also indicated that there must be a minimally functional judiciary for an anti corruption war to be effective. He cited the case of the Vaswani Brothers as an example of how corrupt persons use the weaknesses and loop holes in the judiciary to circumvent the system.

He added that structural defects in the judiciary must be corrected in order to avoid defeating the system.

Ribadu also called for the establishment of an International Corruption Court to be modeled after the International Criminal Court to try persons who are corrupt whenever they leave their home countries, noting that in most instances their home countries might protect them and enable them benefit from their criminality.

In answer to a question on whether there was political interference in his duties when he was head of EFCC, Ribadu stated that contrary to some people's belief, no one interfered with what he did all through his tenure.

He told the audience that Nigeria was a unique country and should be praised for being the first country to have successfully recovered and then repatriated funds looted by past rulers. He said stating that the Philippines could not recover money looted by the Marcoses, Congo DRC did not recover Mobutu's loot, as did Haiti with the Duvalier's loot, but where these countries failed Nigeria succeeded.

He also called on the international community to recognize that though there was a problem with fraudulent emails and faxes coming out of Nigeria, this was not a Nigerian cultural failure but the work of a tiny syndicate. He urged the international community to give kudos to Nigeria for arresting prominent kingpins and refunding over \$750 million back to victims of advanced fee fraud (aka) '419'.

Should he decide to join politics, many believe that he will be in the forefront of those to be used by President Goodluck Jonathan, should he decide to contest for the 2011 presidential polls. Though Northerners by extraction, Ribadu and his friend Nasir el-Rufai have vehemently spoken against the PDP's zoning of the country's top post. Both insist that merit, not region, should determine who gets what in the country's political equation.

The question many are asking is, does Ribadu have the patience to survive Nigeria's murky political terrain? It is a fact that politicians were among some of the people he prosecuted while as head of EFCC, and today, many have found their ways back to the political power bloc, would they accept him in their fold? That is a big question begging for answer.

To some, should Ribadu declare for any of the country's 57 political parties, he will bring with him a breath of fresh air into the murky political terrain. Considering the huge followership he has especially among the masses and youth who see him as a hero, Ribadu's entry into politics, if it becomes a reality, will no doubt energise the entire political terrain especially with 2011 just around the corner.

The Man INEC Needs

Without doubt, the most important task ahead of President Goodluck Jonathan now is the appointment of the Chairman of and some National Commissioners for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The appointments are so crucial because they will determine the direction the country will take ahead of 2011. Gauging from media reports, the name of the new chairman is expected to have been revealed yesterday (Tuesday) at the National Council of State meeting in Abuja.

The task ahead of whoever emerges is daunting. This is because Nigerians would expect the person to perform miracles by conducting free and fair polls in all forthcoming elections.

In addition to that, I think the person will not only have to convince Nigerians that he is up to the task, he will require the skills of a trapeze artist; juggling various interests and balancing them with the expectation of Nigerians and members of the international community.

The person will also need to build confidence among Nigerians that the task of achieving free and fair elections in the country is achievable. Many have already expressed their doubt about the ability of the present administration to bequeath a positive electoral legacy.

But a bigger test will await the new chairman if President Jonathan decides to run for the presidency come 2011. This is because, would the president allow a free and fair contest in an election where he is not certain of winning?

Will members of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) allow one of their appointees to midwife a process that will lead to their failure at the polls? Considering the

norm among political parties in the country, how would the new chairman approach the issue of internal democracy among the political parties?

Having approached previous elections with a do or die mentality, would political parties, notably the ones ruling at the federal and state levels, allow a contest devoid of killings, intimidation of voters, vote buying and ballot box snatching?

Another critical issue the new chairman must face is the fact that as at today, no substantive arrangement has been put in place by INEC for the next general elections.

Expert opinions indicate that INEC needs at least a minimum of about six or seven months to produce electoral materials. If elections would take place early next year, registration of all eligible Nigerians would pose serious problems because the commission has not done much to give Nigerians credible voters' register.

Also, the electoral law is yet to be passed by the National Assembly, so the commission may have to rely on the Electoral Act of 2006 or it will be handicapped to the conduct of the elections.

As stated above, the new chairman will also have to deal with the problem of lack of internal democracy in the political parties. How to force the parties to obey their own rules is important in order to reduce friction. Most of the rancour arising from disaffection among members can be avoided if the parties adhere to the laws. Political parties in the country often fail to abide by the rules given by INEC, especially in the conduct of congresses.

While the problems may appear insurmountable even to the most versatile, I think with commitment, zeal and co-operation of all stakeholders, the task can be achieved. It will be a tough act to execute, but for the new chairman, this will require Solomonic wisdom, a thick skin but a warm heart. He will have to hit the ground running, because time is certainly not on his side.

For the new man to succeed, Nigerians must also turn a new page and look to the future with optimism and tenacity of purpose to get our act right this time round. This is important because most Nigerians hardly give faltering public institutions the need for co-operation, and patience to succeed.

The problem at INEC is akin to engineering a turnaround project. Turn-around programmes are not a task that will bring an immediate result. Like the blindfolded woman of Justice who brandishes a machete to decapitate the head of a culprit, a turn-around manager does not understand the language of emotion, passion or sentiments. His mandate is to achieve set goals irrespective of whose ox is gored.

Zoning: North Tackles PDP, Jonathan

For many political watchers of events in the North, the next few months will be eventful as some big weights in the region are resolute on their stand on the contentious “gentleman agreement” claimed to have been reached between leaders of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to allow for power rotation between North and South of the country.

They said it is a pact that must be kept. They are not shifting grounds and have sworn that, in spite of the denials, there was indeed an agreement within the ruling party to keep power in the North for eight years.

The protagonists are of the opinion that the latest call in many quarters that zoning is not democratic is nothing but a betrayal of trust. In their bid to sway public opinion, they argue that even the emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan is, in a way, a product of zoning.

They are concerned that if the North is denied the opportunity, the whole nation would suffer in the future as power might be locked down in a certain region. Zoning, they insist, is the only way to ensure all parts of the country feel a sense of belonging.

Accordingly, top politicians in the region who favour zoning are holding meetings, reaching out to other stakeholders to ensure that the north produces the next president. Checks show that they are prepared, if need be, to support a consensus candidate and attempt to get block vote from the region.

They are also reaching to politicians from the south that may be willing to accept the zoning arrangement. It is believed that a zone in the south would be promised the vice presidency with the hope that after the turn of the north, the region can have a full go at the presidency.

Another strategy is to seek the presidency outside the ruling PDP the way Governor Ibrahim Shekarau of Kano state hopes to do. That, in the view of many, is a huge challenge considering that there may not be a better platform now than the PDP.

However, the most efficient strategy for some of the politicians in the north is to continue to harp on the gentle man agreement, to appeal to reason and get the support of the nation. The protagonists are convinced that the way forward is for all concerned to respect the said pact reached many years ago.

It is a task that appears herculean because those who speak against zoning are equally convinced that they have sterling reasons for opposing it. They believe that they are committed to what they view as a “new Nigeria”, where merit will be the order.

It is a movement that is catching on especially with the progressives who want a “new order”. In fact, many are even in doubt if such an agreement was ever reached in the first place. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has denied knowledge of the pact.

Other senior members of the party have said even if there was an agreement, it was not binding. Chief Solomon Lar said that much recently. And many other commentators are bashing the whole principle. Zoning, they aver, is a continuation of a predatory political mindset that does nothing but “feed on the ignorance of the people”, in the words of one of them.

Another reason they give is that zoning automatically rubbishes any hope for a free and fair election, arguing that those who say it is their turn to rule have no faith in elections.

But to Alhaji Isyaku Ibrahim, a founding member of the Peoples Democratic Party, it would be dishonest for any of the stakeholders to renege on what he called a gentleman agreement based on mutual trust.

He said that he was shocked at the current stance of some of those “who were in the meeting where we all agreed on this. I remember clearly what was discussed at that meeting. So for some people who were not even privy to that meeting to come and say what they are saying, is pitiful.”

According to him, the whole arrangement was contrived to aid the rotation of power among the regions. He stressed that without the apparatus of zoning: many regions will not have a chance to produce the nation’s leader. His words: “the fact is that if you do not allow for zoning as we had it and that numbers will always determine who becomes the next president, there could be a danger that a particular region with that dominance in number will continue to rule this country.

So, this is just a vehicle we use to ensure that we get the needed maturity before we start getting it right. zoning will obviate a situation where a certain region controls power for ever, because of the imbalance in our population spread. It is just common sense and it makes for political sense.”

On whether Jonathan should run for office or not, Ibrahim noted that it would be important to watch the president’s performance first. He said “all those who are clamouring for Jonathan to run for office, are they saying he has performed so perfectly that he deserves it or what?

Let us see how he performs in the entire various sectors like power, health, anti corruption and others. If he has performed so wonderfully well, and that is why these calls are coming, I may understand. But my point is that the party Jonathan belongs to has an agreement. First thing first before other issues.”

This view is also shared by former National Chairman of the PDP, Audu Ogbeh. In a recent interview, Ogbeh said that he was aware of the agreement. He said he was shocked that the same people who were present at the meeting where the idea of zoning was hatched are now disputing it.

In his own submission, civil rights activist, Comrade Shehu Sani, said it would be wrong to jettison the idea of zoning. "I wonder why Jonathan wants to overstretch his luck. The truth is that if his party has agreed on zoning, why does he want to go against it. He has a lot of good will now.

Why would he not just do his term, conduct a great election and leave. His candidature will raise a big moral burden. He would only end up looking like a power hungry person. That is not good for his image."

Sani noted that the principle of zoning was at the heart of the choice of Vice President Namadi Sambo. According to him, "politicians are funny. If zoning does not mean anything, why did they accept that the VP should come from the North-west?

I mean, it should have been any Nigerian who is qualified. Why zone the position to the North-west? I guess it is because the president is from the south. Well that is the common sense in zoning. Like I said Jonathan is enjoying good will now. If he decides to run in 2011 his image will take a bashing."

But for those rooting for a Jonathan presidency in 2011, the issue of image does not even arise. They believe that Jonathan has all it takes to rule the country. They make glowing reference to his serenity and the fact that he seemed to have ushered in a regime of positive changes. Besides, they believe it is right as a citizen to run for office.

Jonathan himself has remained unperturbed in all this. He has not announced his ambition yet, but many political commentators said he would run, noting that his body language speaks volume. When one of his aides recently said Jonathan would run, the statement was quickly withdrawn due to the immediate backlash.

And as the hide and seek game goes on, some politicians in the North are strategizing. Apart from meetings where strategies are drawn to counter Jonathan should he run, prominent politicians are already joining the presidential race. Former governor of Yobe state, Sen. Bukar Abba Ibrahim has equally declared his intention to run.

For this class of politicians, zoning is not deterrence. They are of the opinion that zoning is really a PDP internal matter which has nothing to do with the nation's constitution. Former governor of Sokoto state, Attahiru Bafarawa recently said that the nation should ignore the PDP and its "zoning troubles" and get ready to embrace any competent

candidate. He urged men and women of proven track record to come and seek the presidency in spite of the zoning formula.

Aondoakaa: Zoning is unconstitutional

Chief Mike Aondokaa (SAN) is the controversial Attorney General and Minister of Justice during the last administration of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. In this interview with journalists in Abuja, he said clamour for zoning within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is unconstitutional. Chuks Okocha was there

How has it been abroad in your new assignment?

Quite fine. I reported at the United Nations Institute for Private Law for the New Millennium (UNIDROIT) and I was elected into the six-member Committee for Strategic Planning that will transform UNIDROIT to a UN body that will meet the legal challenges of the 21st Century. So, I have been doing the job there.

What is your view about the new government in the country?

The government should be supported to deliver dividends of democracy. I understand from what I read on the Internet that they have not abandoned the 7-Point Agenda. The President should be given the support he needs to bring democratic dividends to Nigerians.

How are you preparing for 2011 governorship poll in Benue State? Are you still in the race?

I am not aware of that, I am not aware of what you are saying. I have a friend who is contesting as Governor of Benue State, the incumbent Chief Gabriel Suswam; I have no plan to run. I don't betray my friends; I don't like to betray any trust that a friend has in me except he has given me a cause to do so. I have confidence in the choice of Suswam.

Do you think zoning is necessary in the light of the debate over 2011 Presidency? Fundamentally, a zoning policy of any political party is a sort of an agreement which appears to be in conflict with the provision of the 1999 Constitution. If you zone the Presidency to a particular zone, it means you are creating discrimination, which is fundamentally a violation of the 1999 Constitution which gives the right to any Nigerian who is qualified to contest.

Are you saying President Goodluck Jonathan can contest?

Well, if it is on the basis of the zoning that they are talking, they will be unfair to ask him not to contest and will be infringing on his constitutional right. It is a right given to him by the Constitution which he has a sole discretion to exercise. And ideally, political

parties should not come up with guidelines and policies that directly infringe on the provision of the constitution.

Honestly, the issue of zoning is a distraction and unconstitutional. Nigerians at this stage should be talking of credible elections and free participation. Credible people should be allowed to participate in the election. I come from a minority tribe (Tiv) and if we start talking that the minority cannot have their way, we will be creating a bigger problem for this nation.

The moment we allow everybody to contest, the issue of settlers or non-settlers will stop. I think we are on course. The choice of who should be elected as President should be left to the electorate.

Is it because ex-President Umaru Yar'Adua is dead that you are saying this?

If the late President was alive, it would still have been the same ticket. I look at things rationally. I am looking at it from the rational point of view and international best practices.

In America, an incumbent President can only be denied the right to contest presidential election only if there is glaring evidence that he cannot carry out the programmes of the party. And over the years, all incumbent American President have always had the right to seek re-election. Secondly, Vice-President have always been given opportunity to contest for the Presidency when the incumbent President is not contesting.

What advice do you have for Nigerians in this circumstance?

The most rational thing which Nigerians and members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) should consider, is that PDP government came in 2007 with a Seven-Point Agenda that could deliver dividends of democracy and between 2007 and till ex-President Yar'Adua died in 2010, President Goodluck Jonathan was the co-pilot of the agenda.

He appears to be in the knowledge of the Seven-Point Agenda more than anybody. He also participated in the implementation of the Seven-Point Agenda with Yar'Adua more than anybody.

And the actual implementation of the Seven-Point Agenda has commenced with the amnesty package in the Niger Delta; enhanced security, power, electoral reform and food security. All these have taken off in the last three years. One would expect that a person who will ensure the full implementation of the Seven-Point agenda should be the President in 2011. This is the naked reality and we must accept that naked reality because Nigeria has suffered from so many abandoned programmes and we must ensure stability.

What I am trying to explain is that anybody who was loyal to ex-President Yar'Adua and genuinely felt that his programmes were good for this country should give support to

Jonathan to ensure the full implementation of the Seven-Point Agenda. That is the only way to pay tribute to the late President.

Why have you changed tune when you legally frustrated Jonathan from becoming the Acting President?

I have no reason to become a turn coat, I am being truthful. I have no problem with President Goodluck Jonathan but we must face the reality. I was loyal to the late President and the loyalty must transcend to his co-pilot who is in a better position to implement the Seven-Point agenda.

Is this position you are canvassing that of members of the late Yar'Adua's cabal? Well, I don't know whether a cabal existed or not. But if anybody really loved Yar'Adua and cherished the Seven-Point Agenda, I believe it will be unwise to work against President Jonathan because he is the one implementing the Seven-Point Agenda.

I am talking of what I feel. My passion is that the ideals that were conceived by the late President and his co-pilot should be fully implemented. Except someone has his own private motive, President Jonathan should be allowed to continue.

When Lagos Assembly Retreat for Good Governance

Recently, Lagos State House of Assembly organized a five-day retreat with a theme "Strengthening Good Governance and Economic Growth through Legislation." Jaiyeola Andrews who attended the sessions writes

Lagos lawmakers recently gathered at the Eko Tourist Beach Resort, Akodo, Lagos for a retreat organized by the leadership of the House in furtherance of its commitment to good governance and growth of the state's economy through quality and effective legislation.

It would be recalled that the House was recently enmeshed in controversy over the propriety of performing its oversight functions by probing allegations of financial mismanagement leveled by a group "True face of Lagos" against the administration of Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola. An attempt by the House to carry out the investigation was thwarted by the court which overruled the House on the legality of the exercise.

However, away from the controversy and frosty relationship between the executive and the legislature in the state, the House opted for the retreat to improve the legislative skill of members and other supporting staff.

At the sessions, lectures on the roles of legislature in the promotion of good governance and economic growth, citizens' expectation with respect to public procurement, public procurement reform, fiscal responsibility and public procurement Acts of 2007, as well as a comparative analysis of mortgage legislation were delivered by eminent scholars.

The Speaker of the House, Hon. Adeyemi Ikuforiji while declaring the retreat open, said there was no alternative to good governance. He said all legislators should be up and doing in the onerous task of ensuring that principles of good governance were adhered to by political office holders. He said if the principles were entrenched, it would ensure economic growth and to a large extent, impact positively on the lives of the people.

The Speaker said that the Lagos House of Assembly had risen to the occasion of constitutionally performing its oversight functions aimed at bettering the lots of the people of the state, insisting that the House would never shy away from its constitutional responsibility of making the executive arm of government to be accountable to the people.

Ikuforiji said the retreat came at the right time, as it would enable the legislators and staffers to be more abreast of their constitutional responsibilities. He said all hands must be on deck to ensure that the people benefit from the much-needed democracy dividends, 'so as to reciprocate the confidence reposed on those they elected into offices.'

"For democracy and its dividends to reach the people, the legislature must rise above personal gains and ensure that the Executive arm is held accountable to the people. The Legislature may be hampered in performing its duties to the satisfaction of the people if it is not adequately funded and independent of the executive arm," Ikuforiji said.

The Speaker however said it has become imperative to strengthen the legislative arm of government both at the federal or state levels, adding that the institutional framework being put together for the take-off of the Assembly's Service Commission is nearing completion.

In his paper titled "Emerging role of the legislature in promoting good governance and economic growth", former member of the House of representatives, Hon. Chris Asoluka said emerging trends indicate that the legislature worldwide is becoming more assertive, tending towards a transformative organ which reclaims its power of the purse and playing a more active role in the budget process.

He pointed out that democratization and constitutional reforms are creating opportunities for the legislature to redefine contribution to public budgeting. He added that effective legislative participation provides checks and balances, enhances openness, facilitates public debate, and provides a platform for broad-based input and importantly, deepen consensus on budget choices.

Asoluka listed the benefits of expanded legislature role in budget and fiscal policy preparation to include, finding a better balance between the executive and the legislature, improving budgetary transparency and enhancement of transparency and effective scrutiny and compliance.

He stressed that checks and balances are ingredients of good governance, adding that "one central dilemma of good governance is that although unfettered executive power

might be an asset in the initial phase of economic reform, it progressively becomes a liability."

Continuing, Asoluka noted that checks and balances are necessary to ensure good governance in budgeting in the medium and long term, and averred that the legislature has an obligation to ensure that the revenue and spending measures it authorizes are fiscally sound, match the needs of the population with available resources, and that they are implemented properly and efficiently.

"When legislature failed to meet this obligation, a lengthy but ultimately ineffective legislative budget process has no real value. A token involvement in the budget process relegates the legislative power of the purse to the realm of constitutional fiction," he added.

Delivering his paper on good governance and economic growth legislation; citizens' expectation with respect to public procurement, fiscal responsibility and mortgage bills, Dr. Emmanuel Remi Aiyede of Political Science Department, University of Ibadan said fiscal responsibility or procurement laws must be targeted at enhancement of fiscal transparency, and the promotion of independent analysis and debate on medium and long-term fiscal policies.

He noted that "it must be recognized that mere legislation of a law cannot compel responsible fiscal behavior. Appropriate norms must be promoted among all stakeholders in good governance; political society, economic society and civil society."

In his submission titled "Public Procurement Act and Fiscal Responsibility Act 2007; insight from the National Assembly experience", Abiola Sanni, a lecturer at the Department of Commercial and Industrial Law, University of Lagos said there was a huge disconnect between budgeting and service delivery thus limiting the effectiveness of governmental programmes and impairing the confidence of the citizens in the government.

He noted that the constitutional, legal and administrative frameworks of budget process have become considerably undermined, adding that budgeting process is riddled with unrealistic forecast and fragmented budgetary system, uncoordinated borrowing, uncoordinated tax exemption and waivers, poor saving culture, poor access to fiscal records, massive corruption and lack of accountability.

Sanni listed the principle of public procurement as economy, efficiency, fairness, transparency, accountability and high ethical standard. Explaining further, Sanni said: "Economy means procurement to be awarded not necessarily to the lowest bidder but one that will ensure maximum value for money over the operating span of the item. Efficiency is handling issues in both swift and simple manner.

As for fairness, it is running issues consistently on impartial basis. Transparency means open competitive bidding where rules must be accessible and unambiguous.

Accountability and Ethical Standard provide that officers and practitioners must strive to do what is right at all times."

After exhaustive discussion, the House was urged to organize seminars that would empower each individual committees of the House to carry out thorough oversight functions that would ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the appropriation law by the executive arm.

The House equally reiterated its commitment to the principle of checks and balances, transformative legislation which are essential tools for ensuring good governance, particularly in budgeting with a view to making the executive more answerable to legislature as demanded by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

It was also resolved that the House should take advantage of the Conference of Presiding Officers of Nigerian Legislature to push issues that are of mutual benefits to both the States and the Federal Government.

The retreat also tasked the House Committee on Finance to take cognizance of the pitfalls in some sections of the Public Procurement Act 2007 such as sections 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 31, and 33 which it said are similar to the provisions of the public Procurement Bill aimed at enhancing economic efficiency, value for money and transparency.

The gathering also resolved that the joint House Committee should create a clause in the proposed law that would criminalize undervaluation and overvaluation of the subject matter of mortgage and prescribe appropriate sanctions to erring valuers which may include but not limited to jail term, fine, as well as forwarding reports to appropriate professional bodies.

Jonathan: New Political Order Emerges in N'Delta

The emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as President has thrown up new variation to the politics of the Niger Delta region. Segun James in Yenagoa gauges the mood of the people and their expectations from the President

It was a political paradigm shift achievable only by an act of God, or how else could it have happened?

The emergence of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and, to a large extent, the subsequent swearing-in of Patrick Yakowa as Governor of Kaduna state are things that could not have been planned or scripted by any political tactician or strategist.

Yet, a minority tribesman from the South-south as president of Nigeria and a Christian minority as governor of Kaduna state.

As the euphoria of the emergence of Jonathan as the president dies down, like it happened after the election of Barack Obama as the first Black President of the United State of America, the reality is beginning to dawn on the people of the region, especially the Ijaw ethnic nationality which had waged a war of attrition against the Federal government, a situation which precipitated economic sabotage. Their grievance is mostly in the neglect of the Niger Delta region whose oil account for over 90 percent of the nation's revenue profile.

The action of the Ijaw which raged for several years resulted in the selection of Jonathan as Vice President of the country in order to placate them. However, like in the United States, where the performance of Obama is now under close and constant scrutiny, this to beginning to take place in Nigeria.

Jonathan ordinarily has about a year to complete the tenure of his former boss Umaru Musa Yar'Adua which is due to end in May 2011, is now faced with the task of organising a free and fair election. Similarly, he is being tasked to ensure stability in power supply and to fight corruption, among other key demands.

Yet the people of the Niger Delta whose land, in the last 40 years, has bore the burden of fending for the entire nation through the proceeds of oil extracted from the bowel of their soils, have, surprisingly, yet to make any demand to the new president, at least publicly.

Many believe that since President Jonathan is one of them and as a former Governor in the region, he has firsthand knowledge of what the situation is and how to solve the problems.

To those people, Jonathan has the magic wand to solve all the problems of the region.

This enthusiasm was attested to by the Bayelsa State Commissioner of "information, Chief Nathan Egba who insisted that the Niger Delta area will be one of the main focus of the President whether now or when he runs for the office next year.

This position is supported by the state Governor, Chief Timipre Sylva who is at the fore front of the agitation for Jonathan to continue in office beyond 2011.

According to Sylva, the militant agitations in the region have had negative impact on the nation's economy and image. He said with the emergence of Jonathan, militancy and disruption of oil production activities in the region has died down. Hence, the nation needed to consolidate on this by allowing him (Jonathan) to continue as President. This he said would ensure a rapid economic growth for the country which had suffered many economic setbacks in the last few years.

The opposition Action Congress (AC) in Bayelsa state agrees with Sylva on this score. The chairman, Miriki Ebikibina said the nation needed the Niger Delta region more than over, hence there is the need to do so much and very fast for the area.

According to Mr. Ekio Benson, the first thing that should be done is the development of key infrastructures and enthrone a viable plan of action that will bail the region out of its current state.

He said Jonathan should quickly construct the Nigerian coastal road which should run from Epe in Lagos to the Bakassi border in Cross River State, adding that the entire Ijaw areas which is in the deep part of the Delta and bordering the Atlantic Ocean have no federal presence at all.

He said that a federal university in the Ijaw speaking areas will also give the people a sense of belonging.

On his part, Frank Dufar, a newspaper publisher in the region, said the country has been making some progress in the last eleven years of democracy, even if it is slow. He lamented that while the people of Nigeria have a military mindset shaped by years of military rule, the people of the Niger Delta, especially the Ijaws, now have a mindset shaped by militancy a way of life which only a concerted effort at rapid infrastructural development can erase.

He said every past leader in the country, be it military or civilian have used the opportunity of their position to develop their states of origin and their regions. He urged President Jonathan not shy away from doing same because the region has been the most forgotten and neglected in the country.

Besides, he stressed that the region is the least developed area of the nation, yet it produces the bulk of the nation's wealth, so Jonathan must concentrate on its developmental effort.

He insisted that among the projects that must be urgently awarded before president shift his focus towards politics as the elections approaches is the completion of the strategic East-West Road (Benin-Warri-Port Harcourt-Uyo-Calabar) road.

The award of contract for the construction of the coastal road, and in Bayelsa State, the takeover of the three senatorial roads linking Yenagoa to communities in the coastal area.

Even as the nation celebrates eleven years of democracy, the agitation has become very strong for Jonathan to run next year. Leading this campaign is Governor Timipre Sylva who is ably supported by repentant militants.

How the rest of the nation reacts to Jonathan's decision to run is a matter that time and situation will sort out. However, the consensus is that there is much to be done in the Niger Delta region, and the expectation is that appreciable level of progress can be recorded before 2011.

Halliburton: Group asks Jonathan to prosecute Obasanjo

President Goodluck Jonathan has been urged to persecute former President Olusegun Obasanjo for allegedly using Halliburton bribery and corruption scandal to enrich himself.

The appeal was made by the Movement for All Nigerians (MAN) yesterday in Abuja saying that a serious probe should also be done on N360 billion tax-payer money channeled to Chief Tony Anenih when he was Minister of Works during Obasanjo administration.

In a statement signed by group's Chairman Publicity Committee, Barr. Dele Akindada Moses said President Jonathan should stop investing in "the power sector until the billions of Naira wasted by Obasanjo regime are recovered"

MAN also said President Jonathan should ensure that Obasanjo resigned for his position as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chairman Board of Trustee since there are too many cases of corruption against him.

While calling on patriotic lawyers to join the group to ensure Obasanjo is properly arraigned, the group said "We call for an immediate probe into the controversial sell of NICON to Pentascope by Obasanjo regime, which leaves Nigerians embarrassed," the statement added.

2. Economy:

3. Energy:

• 8 Communities Threaten Shell over Oil Spill

Anglo-Dutch oil giant, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and eight of its operations host communities in Southern Ijaw Local Government areas of Bayelsa State are now at daggers-drawn over the refusal of the company to honour the agreement reached on the payment of compensation to communities impacted by spillage from an oil well known as Seibou Well 2L in the area.

Following the spill, which devastated the communities (Ogboinbiri, Azagbene, Kologbene, Apoi Olodiana, Kemebiana, Lobia, Okubie and Okparatubo) over four years ago, an agreement was reach between both parties, but Shell reneged, a situation which forced the people to resort to litigation in a suit numbered FHC/YNG/CS/22526/2009 where the communities asked the court to compel the SPDC to pay compensation to the tune of N7.2 billion.

In the suit, which was filed at the Federal High Court sitting in Yenagoa under Justice R.M. Aikawa, indigenes of the aggrieved communities, including Chief Goodnews Ayibabemi claimed that on the October 25, 2005, a leakage was noticed from the pipeline owned by the SPDC and the leakage was later referred to as 'product equipment failure'

and that an intensive clean up was done by the oil company with a promise to pay compensate for damaged done.

According to them, at a meeting called by State Governor, Chief Timipre Sylva to look into the continued face-off between the people and Shell over the issued, no solution was reached, said Ayibabemi.

Following the disagreement, the people have once again gone before the courts to compel Shell to pay the compensation demanded. Justice Aikawa has adjourned further hearing till 13th October, 2010.

4. Environment:

5. Immigration/Refugee/Idps:

6. Health:

- **NAFDAC Impounds Consignments of Fake Drugs Valued At N500 Million**

The National Agency of Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has intercepted and impounded consignments of Fake Drugs imported through NAHCO Shed of Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos in the past three weeks.

Addressing newsmen on Monday, the Director-General of NAFDAC, Dr. Paul Orhii said the fake drugs are worth an estimated value of Five Hundred Million Naira (N500,000.00).

"These Fake drugs were imported from Hong Kong, China aboard Qatar Cargo Airline between 8th-27th of May, 2010 on five (5) different Flights as five (5) different consignments totaling fifty four (54) large packages consigned to BUBIC NIGERIA LTD. And DUBIC NIGERIA LTD. All in Lagos," he said

The seizure of fake drugs and destruction without prosecution has been a worrisome issue for NAFDAC. The Agency therefore decided to increase surveillance both in China and in Nigeria in an effort to arrest fake drugs importers and check the fake drugs menace.

Since the multiple seizures of the unaccompanied fake drugs, we have been on the trail of the unidentified importers.

With the Cooperation of the Chinese authorities, the airline and security agencies, this incessant import of Fake drugs by a Clandestine Syndicate have been broken. The importers had consistently imported these fake drugs in collusion with their counterparts in China in a syndicated manner which involved evading the Police and Airport

authorities in China and linking up with their associates at the Tarmac of the MMIA (Murtala Mohammed International Airport) in Lagos.

Our investigation has revealed their modus operandi; ie goods shipped in by the airline containing the fake drugs are intercepted at the Bulk breaking area of the Tarmac and later declared missing. The importer, later returns to make claims for the missing Cargo from the airlines.

With these discoveries, the mysteries of missing Cargoes and unidentified importers of fake drugs may have been solved.

The Suspects are:

- Mr. Pauline Ejike
- Mr. Chika Obiekie

Both of them have been arrested and will soon be charged to court, the DG said.

The collaboration and networking with the Chinese authorities is ongoing to fish out the perpetrators of these heinous crimes in China; and the assistance of Qatar Airline in developing a pre-shipment Profile for all imports from China tom Lagos, Nigeria, as anti-counterfeiting measure is welcome. "We are working with other airlines and carries to develop a similar pre-shipment profile to help track down these perpetrators," he said.

7. Human rights/Gender/social issues:

• Army, militants disagree over Niger Delta clash

Several months after the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) ceased fire in the Niger Delta the movement may have resumed hostilities with its purported clash with Nigerian soldiers attached to the Joint (Military) Task Force (JTF) in the Niger Delta.

The movement's spokesperson in an email said the militants confronted the JTF "after one of our patrols ran into two gunboats of the JTF at Ogulagha in Delta state". He wrote that "there was a bloody confrontation at about 0030 Hrs today, June 10, 2010 between our fighters and men of the military JTF. A fire fight ensued which lasted about 30 minutes."

Gbomo claimed that the movement learnt that JTF lost four soldiers while an unspecified number were injured.

In his response via a text message, the media coordinator of JTF Lt.Col. Timothy Antigha, denied Gbomo's claims. Instead, he pointed out that "the JTF is not aware of

any resumption of hostilities between it and any militant group in the Niger Delta whatsoever.”

According to him, “the statement circulating in the internet, claiming there was a bloody confrontation last night is completely false. Therefore, the statement and its authors should be ignored and disregarded, as they appear bent on stalemating the amnesty programme.”

He stressed that the JTF is now in a defensive mode and its position is that it can only attack in self defense. “So far we have not have a situation that would warrant a confrontation,” he indicated.

- **MEND demands \$1.5m to release Russian sailors**

The Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is demanding a \$1.5 million ransom for the release of two Russian sailors abducted from a vessel at a port in Cameroon last month. The North Spirit vessel with a Russian-Ukrainian crew, flying the flag of St.

Vincent and the Grenadines and owned by Greece ‘s Balthellas Chartering S.A., was attacked on May 16 while anchored in Cameroon ‘s largest port of Douala .

“The hostages will not be released until the ship owners pay \$1.5 million,” a local militant called Perewei said.

MEND is holding Russia’s Captain Boris Tersintsev and Chief Engineer Officer Igor Shumik hostage in Nigeria and has forced Tersintsev to get in touch with the ship’s owners and tell them how badly they are being treated.

A source intimated our reporter that the captain communicated that they were being held in a mangrove forest without clean drinking water.

8. Geo-Strategic issues:

Other West African States

Cape Verde:

Chad:

Chad government ends ban on fish exports.....H2

The Chad government has lifted a ban on the export of fish from Lake Chad, acknowledging the damage done to the local fishing industry. "We are getting help

[with food security], which allows us to give fishermen some reprieve - they need to feed their families also," Communications Minister Kedallah Younous told IRIN.

Fisheries in Lake Chad provide food and employment to at least 10 million people in the region, according to UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

The government banned exporting fish in January 2009 to help local consumers beat the rising cost of living, but current cereal and maize prices are still higher than in the last five years. The World Food Programme (WFP) launched an emergency operation in March to feed an estimated 737,000 people after a poor harvest across the country.

"We have lost one-third of our population since the export ban," said Abakar Adoum Bodou Mbami, representative of the chief on Kinaserom, one of the hundreds of islets in Lake Chad. He told IRIN that in the last 18 months the island's population of 9,000 had dwindled to 6,000 because most of the men had gone elsewhere to look for work.

A ministerial delegation visited Kinaserom on 7 June to announce the end of the embargo. "I was relieved. At our weekly market on Tuesday [8 June], we sold fish destined for export for the first time again," Mbami said. "The fish was packed and left the lake for Nigeria on Wednesday."

Gambia:

'Kukoi Resisted Extradition From Bissau'.....H1

Lang Tombong Tamba, the former chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of the Gambia Armed Forces (GAF) and the first defence witness in the ongoing three counts criminal charges filed in against him and seven other persons, yesterday informed the High Court presided over by Justice Emmanuel Amadi, that the ring leader of the 1981 foiled coup plot in the Gambia, Kukoi Samba Sanyang, had resisted with stronger terms his extradition order to the Republic of the Gambia from the republic of Guinea Bissau.

Lang Tombong Tamba made this revelation in response to a question posed to him by the director of Public Prosecution (DPP) Richard Chenge, despite the defence counsel Sherrif Tamedou objection on the ground that answering the said question will amount to revealing state secret, which according to the defence runs contrary to the oath of the secrecy the witness said he had sworn to. The defence counsel therefore urged the court to hear the answer to the question in camera.

The presiding Judge drew the DPP's attention to the issues relating to the state secrets and evidence that could be heard in public and those that could not, but the DPP insisted that the witness answer the question saying it has nothing to do with state secrecy.

Shortly before responding to the DPP's question, Lang Tombong Tamba drew the court's attention to his earlier evidence that he had sworn to the oath of secrecy, but said he

would be obliged to answer the question if the court allows him to do so. The court then allowed the DPP to ask the question.

The DPP then asked Lang Tombong: "As the CDS, are you aware of the arrest of Kukoi Samba Sanyang at the Guinea Bissau Airport and you were assigned to go and bring him to The Gambia?" Lang Tombong replied in the positive and said "yes my lord, I and other soldiers, about 15 of us flew to the Republic of Guinea Bissau to receive Kukoi Samba Sanyang.

Whilst we were waiting for him at the airport in Guinea Bissau, he (Kukoi) arrived with the Guinea Bissau authorities accompanied by a representative of Ecowas based in Guinea Bissau. At the airport, Kukoi refused to board the plane (the Slok Air International) on the ground that the Ecowas representative had failed to produce a document for his extradition to The Gambia.

I reported the matter to my boss, the president and commander-in-chief of GAF, H.E Sheikh professor Dr Alhagie Yahya A.J.J Jammeh and he instructed that we should return and we returned to the Gambia without Kukoi Samba Sanyang," Lang Tombong explained to the court.

When asked by the DPP as to whether he (Lang) wants the court to believe that someone who has been arrested and kept in custody by the Guinea Bissau authorities was the one who decided not to enter the plane, Lang Tombong said Kukoi Samba Sanyang was not handed over to them at the Bissau airport, instead he was under the custody of Bissau authorities at the airport and that he (Lang) and his men had no authority to force Kukoi to board the plane.

"My lord we could have brought Kukoi Samba Sanyang to The Gambia, if he was handed over to us," Lang Tombong said and denied the allegation by the DPP that he (Lang) and his men waited in the plane at the Bissau airport before the arrival of Kukoi and Guinea authorities.

According to Lang Tombong, upon their arrival at the Bissau airport, they disembarked from the plane and waited for the arrival of Kukoi and the Bissau authorities and when Kukoi refused to enter the plane, the Bissau authorities said they cannot force him to enter, as result the [Lang and others] returned to The Gambia without Kukoi after receiving the instruction from the president, Sheikh professor Dr Alhaji Yahya Jammeh and commander-in-chief of the GAF.

"My lord we cannot bring Kukoi to the Gambia for the simple reason that he was arrested by the Guinea Bissau authorities. He was brought to the airport to be handed over to us by the Bissau authorities but following his refusal to enter the plane, the Bissau authorities decided not to hand him over to us and that was how we returned to the Gambia.

When Kukoi was arrested by the Bissau authorities, they sent Gambian authorities a message to go and receive him and it was the same Bissau authorities who refused to hand him over to us following his refusal to enter the plane," Lang Tombong stated. He also denied that he (Lang) was the very one who told Bissau authorities not to hand over Kukoi knowing that he was planning a coup with him.

According to Lang Tombong, he went to Guinea Bissau with 15 soldiers from GAF to receive Kukoi and it couldn't have been possible for him to tell Bissau authorities not to hand over Kukoi without being seen by one of the soldiers. "My lord it's not true that I deceived the president of the Republic of the Gambia and commander-in-chief of the GAF for not bringing Kukoi Samba Sanyang to The Gambia from Guinea Bissau.

I told this court that I flew with 15 soldiers and upon our arrival at the Bissau Airport, we disembarked from the plane. We were together at the airport till the arrival of Kukoi and the Bissau authorities. If I deceived the president as alleged by the DPP, one of these soldiers will inform the president about that.

On PW2 Rui Jabbi Gassama

When asked by the DPP as to how its possible for a man he (Lang) denied ever seeing know his house, Lang Tombong said Rui Jabbi Gassama has been a liar and a criminal and he is capable of telling the court that he knows his house. He added that this was the reason he (Lang) mentioned in his statement that when he was confronted with PW2 Rui Jabbi at the NIA headquarters in Banjul, he gave a wrong direction and description of his house and the said statement was tendered in the court.

On Official place for keeping military uniforms

The former CDS of GAF, further responding to questions posed to him by the DPP, explained among other things that there is a place for keeping uniforms not yet issued to the members of GAF. He went on to explain that uniforms issued to the members of GAF are kept in accordance with the way the user wishes to keep it and that those uniforms not issued are kept in stores at the various units of GAF.

According to Lang Tombong, he alone cannot wear the number of uniforms exhibited in the court, because he has served in GAF for 23 years. He further drew the court's attention to his evidence-in-chief when he said uniforms are retained by soldiers whenever they are transferred from one unit to another, as such he could use more uniforms than what is shown in the court. He denied that the said uniforms were issued on the same date, saying that though they look like new ones, they were not issued at the same time.

"My lord I was happy when I was removed from the GAF, because I know that one day or the other I will not be there. So I was happy when I was removed contrary what the DPP said. I told this honourable court that, when I was removed from the GAF, I forgot about some uniforms which were given to me way back in the year 2004, when I was

appointed commander State Guards and these uniforms were packed in a suitcase as they were no longer part of the dress code of GAF and as a result I forgot to hand them to the dekitting officers.

I had no intention of keeping them," Lang Tombong explained and went further to deny the allegation that PW1 Ebrima Marreh called him for a duration of seven minute instead of seven seconds without an answer to the call.

The former CDS pointed out that his telephone printouts are there to show that PW1 called him for seven seconds without any answer to the call; he therefore disagreed with the DPP that the call was seven minutes.

On contacts with co-accused persons

The DPP put it to Lang Tombong that each of the accused persons gave him several calls in the year 2009, Lang Tombong denied, saying it's not true that all the accused persons made several calls to him in 2009.

"My lord it's not true that all the accused persons made several calls to me in 2009, but I do know that some of them made several calls to me by virtue of their work relations with me. I told this honourable court in my evidence-in-chief that the second, third, fifth, and eighth accused persons made several calls to me, but the seventh accused called me once," he said and denied that the seventh accused has been helping him for long.

The ex-CDS of GAF explained that the seventh accused person helped him once, and that was when he was clearing his vehicle from the GPA, and apart from that he has nothing else to do with the seventh accused, except when he (Lang) lost his father sometime in September 2009, in Siffoe Village, when the seventh accused was among those who turned up to commiserate with him.

Regarding the number of sangars (guard posts within a military barrack) at the Farafeni military barracks, Lang Tombong told the court he cannot remember telling the court that if he needed information on the number of sangars (in the Farafeni military barracks he would send a military officer rather than a civilian.

"My lord I cannot remember saying such in court, but I do remember telling the court that I cannot send a liar and a criminal like Ebrima Marreh PW1 to spy on how many sangars and how many personnel that man these sangars in the Farafeni barrack, as this is the information I already have as the CDS of the GAF, because I have access to classified information within the GAF and therefore I don't need to send PW1 Ebrima Marreh," he said.

Lang Tombong further denied calling somebody in Guinea Bissau to come and collect money from him in The Gambia as alleged by PW1 Ebrima Marreh. He maintained that all what he told the court is the truth and denied conspiring with any of the accused

persons to overthrow the democratically elected government of The Gambia, under what he called his own brother Sheikh professor Dr Alhaji Yahya Jammeh.

He denied allegations that he purchased some arms in Guinea Bissau for the purpose of killing the president and to overthrow the government of The Gambia. Lang said he had no idea as to what the PW1 went to the Farafenni military barracks for and as such he can tell, because did not send him.

He also denied the comment that his (Lang's) step-father prepared some charms for him for the purpose of the coup and explained in detail how he used the D5000 given to him by the eighth accused for the operations in foiling the 21st March 2006 coup plot led by Colonel Ndure Cham. He finally denied knowing what happened to Daba Marena, the former DG of NIA.

Ndure Cham issue revisited

Lang Tombong told the court that his Predecessor, Ndure Cham and himself went to the Banjul International Airport to see the president off on the very day the president travelled to the Republic of Mauritania.

He further explained that the GRTS clip would attest to his assertion that both of them were at the airport on March 20, 2006 to see the president off. Lang admitted giving one 2nd Lieutenant Gaye a small tape recorder to record Ndure Cham's plans for the foiled coup. He explained that as the said 2nd Lieutenant Gaye was invited by Ndure Cham for the purpose of the said coup plot, he took Gaye in his car and dropped him a few metres from where they had planned to meet.

The Defence witness told the court that as soon he received the tape and listened to the conversation, and knowing that the coup would be staged at about 11.00pm, he quickly invited the State Guard commander at the time, Brigadier General Serign Modou Njie; the then IGP, Ousman Sonko; Brigadier General Ousman Badjie; then Captain Lamin Bo Badjie (the third accused) and they all listened to the tape in the presence of 2nd Lieutenant Gaye.

According to Lang Tombong, after listening to the tape, he immediately planned operations with the aforementioned officers to have Ndure Cham and Bunja Darboe arrested, as the two were the only two names that were mentioned in the tape at the time. He told the court that he did not deem it necessary to place a surveillance team to monitor Ndure Cham as he needed to confirm the information on the coup plot.

On 2009 alleged coup

When asked by DPP, Chenge that he told the court that he took care of PW 1, Ebrima Marreh, Lang Tombong replied in the negative, but added that he paid PW 1's tuition fee. When asked when PW 1, Ebrima Marreh stole the said cheque amounting to D28, 000 from his wife's mini-market, if he (Lang) had him (PW 1) drilled, tortured, or punished in

the army barracks, he replied that as the CDS at the time, it was not his role to inflict torture or punishment on PW1, Ebrima Marreh, and had no idea as to what happened to him at the Fajara barracks.

Lang Tombong further revealed that nobody reported to him that PW1, Ebrima Marreh was either tortured or punished when he was arrested and taken to the Fajara barracks. He further explained that the action he took was to get him arrested and hand him over to those responsible at Fajita barracks.

The witness confirmed that PW 1 was never prosecuted before a court of law for the said crime, noting that Access Bank compensated his wife with the said stolen amount as the said bank accepted that it was their fault for honouring the cheque when PW1 presented the cheque for payment.

When quizzed by DPP Change as to why a man Lang Tombong helped and treated well would turn around, steal his wife's cheque and then tell lies against him, Lang Tombong told the court that PW 1 Ebrima Marreh is a liar and a common criminal, pointing out that he lied to him, saying he is his sister's son, so he can lie to the court and accuse him of plotting a coup. When asked how much was his monthly salary as the CDS of GAF, Lang Tombong replied that he doesn't know.

when further asked if his emoluments could have been possible for him to acquire his storey building at Bijilo and his Kololi residence, his wife's mini-market and other assets put together, even if he had served as CDS for 50 years, Lang Tombong disclosed that the storey building at Bijilo was rented for him by the Ministry of Defence, as it is required for a CDS to be provided accommodation by the government.

He said the Kololi Residence was just a simple and ordinary building which anyone can build considering the fact that he had served in many United Nations Peace Keeping Missions and his wife had been working in the super market business for more than 20 years.

On his appointment as Ambassador

Lang Tombong told the court that he was given an appointment letter as the ambassador to the Republic of China on Taiwan by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that his former military assistant, Lt Colonel Alagie Sanneh can confirm having received the said letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He said he couldn't take up the appointment because he is presently detained at the Mile 2 Prisons. He added that the week he was supposed to meet the minister of Foreign Affairs was the week he was arrested. "I was to meet him on Monday but I got arrested on Friday," he said. Lang Tombong denied DPP Chenge's assertions that he was the one who was lobbying at the President's Office for an ambassadorial appointment as he was told that a dismissed officer could not be given an ambassadorial appointment.

Lang Tombong dismissed DPP Chenge's suggestions that he once had a quarrel with PW 2, Rui Jabbi Gassama, saying he can only quarrel with someone he knows. "If you didn't quarrel with him why would he come to the court to tell lies against you?" DPP Chenge asked. Responding, Lang Tombong disclosed that PW 2, Rui Jabbi Gassama is a criminal who is capable of telling lies, against him as he had told the court lies about his drug dealing activities in the USA and in Europe.

When asked by the DPP, Chenge, to tell the court why PW 2, Rui Jabbi Gassama would leave Guinea Bissau for The Gambia to tell the court that he (Lang) was the very one who planned the alleged November 2009 Coup with him, Lang Tombong remarked that PW2 Rui Jabbi Gassama is a businessman who deals in all kinds of business and therefore, lying is also part of his business and as result PW 2 lied against him by saying he plotted a coup against the democratically elected government of The Gambia.

When further quizzed as to why PW2 Rui Jabbi Gassama would choose him as the very one who planned a coup with him, Lang Tombong told the court that he cannot answer the said question, adding that all what PW2 said about him were all lies as he (Lang) had never seen PW 2 in his life, until December 24, 2009 when he was confronted with him before the investigating panel at the NIA headquarters in Banjul. Lang Tombong also described PW 1, Ebrima Marreh allegations that he took part in the alleged coup plot as lies and mere fabrication.

On the telephone printout

Lang Tombong admitted he made calls to Guinea Bissau to the following people in 2009: One Abdou Jarjue, an employee at the Gambian Embassy in Bissau; his sister, Olimatou Tamba; his brother, Sadibou Tamba; and nephew, Salimina Sanyang.

He further admitted that he also made phone calls to the Guinea Bissau former CDS, Zamora Nduta but denied making telephone calls to either Kukoi, PW2, Rui Jabbi Gassama or the sixth accused, Gibril Ngorr Secka in 2009 for the purpose of the alleged coup.

"My mobile telephone printout is here to show such calls if I had made calls to them," he said. He also denied using an anonymous number to call Kukoi, the sixth accused, Gibril Ngorr Secka or PW2, Rui Jabbi Gassama for the purpose of the alleged coup. Hearing continues on Thursday, 3rd of June, 2010 at 1.00pm

Guinea- Bissau:

Mali:

Mauritania :

Niger:

Thirsty as well as hungry

ZINDER, 10 June 2010 (IRIN) - A bad harvest season has punished the rural and urban poor across Niger, but food insecurity and livelihoods have been compounded by a critical lack of water in the worst-hit southern province of Zinder.

"The women with whom I've spoken in villages have said water is their first problem," UN Under-Secretary General John Holmes told journalists during a visit to Zinder in late April.

He found the stress on water striking, and this was backed by the similar experience of staff at humanitarian agencies; a food security survey by the government and humanitarian partners in April 2010 also found that almost half the country's households shared the same anxiety.

Niger is facing a severe food crisis resulting from erratic rainfall in 2009, which caused large cereal and pasture shortages. Some 7.1 million Nigeriens - or half of the population - are moderately or severely food-insecure, according to the most recent government study undertaken in April 2010.

Farmers in Dalli, a village 100km from the town of Zinder, suffered a total harvest failure in 2010 and now travel 20km to Tanout town to buy water. "Even if we have food, how can we prepare it without water?" Mariam, 55, a mother of 10, told Holmes.

Some water points in Zinder's most parched districts are drying up. In Koleram village, 15km from the town of Zinder, Oubeida Ichaou, 30, told IRIN the water level in the only well was falling fast and she sometimes had to wait several hours before she could draw water. "There are too many people around the well, too many cattle. You have to come very early in the morning, or even stay the night ... to draw water."

Zinder's Regional Director of Water Resources, Mamane Moussa, said engineers sometimes had to dig down several hundred metres before they found water, which was very costly.

Nutrition, health, education

Water points at health centres across Zinder, which are part of the malnutrition response, LINK, are also facing shortages, said Moustapha Niang, a Water, Hygiene and Sanitation specialist at the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"The heavy use of water points ... in periods of great heat means these water points can no longer meet the drinking needs of people or their animals," Niang told IRIN.

The number of malnourished children admitted to health centres has sharply risen in recent weeks as the lean season peaks, according to UNICEF.

In urban areas, 42 percent of people have access to drinking water, and seven percent to improved sanitation facilities; in rural areas 32 percent have drinking water and three percent have access to improved sanitation. UNICEF estimates that 80 percent of deaths in children younger than five are linked to lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

Niang called on donors to "ensure water and sanitation activities are financed, for without this any malnutrition response will not be effective ... Clean drinking water and decent sanitation [is essential] to reduce the prevalence of diarrhoea, which can exacerbate the problem of severe malnutrition."

Need for investment

Desert covers three-quarters of Niger, yet it has valuable renewable water sources, including about 31 billion cubic metres of surface water, 2.5 billion cubic metres of groundwater in natural aquifers, and 2,000 billion cubic metres of non-renewable water. According to the government, just 20 percent of renewable water resources are being tapped, and almost none of the non-renewable sources.

There are few studies and little data to help humanitarian actors understand the scope of Niger's needs in agriculture, livestock, people and energy. The Ministry of Water Resources did not respond to IRIN's requests for an interview.

In a national investment report presented at a 2008 conference on "Water for agriculture and energy in Africa", officials stressed that "Water is one of the government's priorities" to fight food security and poverty, and estimated that investments totalling \$1.5 billion would be required in the "short, medium and long term".

Donors, including the World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union, and various countries, have injected more than \$300 million in projects directly or indirectly related to agriculture, livestock, and water over the past decade, according to the government. In December 2009 the previous government announced it would invest \$54 million in 2010 to improve the availability and quality of water.

Despite these collective efforts, the needs are still far from being covered, particularly in drought-prone regions like Zinder and Tanout. Holmes highlighted the need to act in concert to deal with the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in Niger.

"The water is there, [deep] down. It is worth investing in," he urged. "We could do that; the cost is huge, but it is not impossible."

Sénégal: