

NEW AFRICAN REVIEW APRIL 2010 ISSUE

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Nigeria at the crossroads

Nigeria is going through a difficult time. There is a political impasse the resolution of which is difficult to predict. New African reports that for three months, from November last year till February this year, Nigerians have been in the dark about what was going on with their president, not knowing whether he was dead or alive, except that he left to visit a Saudi hospital because of some medical condition. Apparently, every official delegation that went to find out what was ailing the president 'was blocked by his wife, Turai. And that was that.'

In spite of his condition being serious, as rumours had it, the ailing president did not write to the legislature authorizing power to his vice as required by the constitution. Perhaps he was too sick to do that. But then neither did the legislature deem it fit to impeach him on the grounds that 'it would not do to impeach a sick man.' New African reports that 'eventually, the legislators reached a compromise and made Jonathan [his vice] the acting president.' Shortly afterwards the president was sneaked back into the country. Not even the vice president, now acting president was informed. The president's chief press secretary has since confirmed that the president is indeed alive and that his vice can continue as the acting president. As New African asks, 'What is one to make of it all?' How is the vice president, now acting president, Mr. Goodluck Jonathan going to manage all this? Has he the ability to do so? Are there forces other than Nigerian politics that will shape how everything turns out? In a set of four articles: Nigeria at the crossroads, Imagine another Nigeria, Nigeria must not fail and Death and destruction in Jos, New African wraps it up. The piece 'Focus on Nigeria' goes well to complement the politics with the economic issues, particularly of oil and banks that are at the heart of Nigerian politics.

Democratic Republic of Congo; The curse of Coltan

'The untapped mineral wealth of The Democratic Republic of Congo is estimated at \$24 trillion, equivalent to the GDP of Europe and USA combined; it makes DR Congo potentially the richest country in the world,' New African observes. It is the extraction and trade in part of this 'mineral wealth... which is [then] readily smuggled that continues to fuel the conflict that has devastated the country and the lives of its people.'

One of these highly priced minerals is Colombo-tantalite, commonly called coltan. When crushed; it forms a heat resistant powder capable of holding very high levels of electric charge. It is thus used as a heat resistor and in power storing units of many electronic devices—mobile phones, laptops, spacecraft and thousands more. Its use has made it possible the reduction in size of many electronic devices as well as today's advanced wireless technology

New African writes that among other minerals, coltan's 'multi-million dollar trade has served to brutally destabilize eastern Congo, and fuel the ongoing conflict in which an estimated 5 million deaths have occurred since 1996.'

DR Congo has relied heavily on the support of a UN peace keeping contingent to maintain order and to put a check to the 'illegal exploitation of natural resources [which]

continues to fuel internal conflict.’ But lately, New African reports that this contingent has been accused of complicity with rebel groups and other kinds of illegality and malpractice. Now the Congolese government has requested its withdrawal, by June 2011. Could this lead to a resurgence of the insurgency?

Dying for Britain and France, for nothing

‘Over one million Africans fought for Britain, France, Italy and Belgium in World War II, and yet their exploits have gone unmarked in the annals of metropolitan powers,’ writes New African.

In this article New African looks at a new book, *Fighting for Britain-African Soldiers in the Second World War*, written by the British academic and historian, David Killingray, seeks to change that.

The book is categorical that Africa contributed many men, and a very few women, to the war; that, however, these men and women have not been given the attention they deserve in the historical literature. It also notes African soldiers fought gallantly and sacrificed their lives to capture enemy territories. Sadly, they were never allowed to do the actual capturing, for ‘Africans were not supposed to deprive the Europeans of the honour of capturing enemy cities.’ Discrimination and racism was the order in those days; one would wonder why the Africans got drafted into the wars in the first place. Who were these Africans? Of what substance were they made? New African provides some insight.

A continent of beggars?

In this reflection, writing in New African, Akua Djanie struggles with the disturbing widespread phenomenon of begging. ‘What is going on?’ She wonders. ‘Why have we turned into a continent of beggars? Our leaders go abroad to beg for ‘aid’ to run our countries. Our police and immigration officers have turned themselves into ‘beggars in uniform’. From extended family members to the young bank teller, everyone seems to think begging is okay. Why?’

She argues that there is no ‘problem with asking for help when you need it.’ That it need be also obvious that one is seriously limited. Citing the example of abundance of precious minerals and other natural resources in a good number of African countries, highly demanded elsewhere, she says it beats logic that we give these away at throw away prices, and then go back to the very countries to beg for aid. Why can’t we in this case for example dictate the prices of our resources? Why can’t we take control of how we mine, polish and sell our diamonds to the world, instead of begging European companies to come and do everything?

She says that though salaries be low, begging is not the answer. It is high time that Africans, from individuals, to families, communities, organs of the state, states and through the continent itself, make better use of their skills, resources and manpower.

NEW AFRICA FOOTBALL

In this issue New African Football looks at the just concluded African soccer awards ceremony organized by CAF. Yet again CAF finds itself drawn into controversy. Though all other awards were applauded the award for Africa’s player of the year is said to have been awarded to one that did not really merit it. It was given to Didier Drogba, whereas many believe that Samuel Eto'o was better suited for it. For the third year in a row, this award has been awarded to undeserving players.

New African Football also looks at the serious errors African teams are committing weeks before the World Cup, changing coaches. This could spell doom for these teams. Plus

it seems the South Africans were so keen on preparing to successful host the World Cup that they forgot to prepare a suitable training ground for their own team.

Kolo Toure, is the star player featured in this month's interview.

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