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>>> Menas Nigeria Politics & Security

1.0. Political Developments

- > The Federal High Court sitting in Abuja ruled on 13th January that Vice-president **Goodluck Jonathan** can commence exercising the powers of President in the absence of **President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua**. However, the ruling, by Chief Judge **Daniel Abutut**, stopped short of making an order that Jonathan could be made acting President. Yar'Adua has now been out of Nigeria for 55 days.
- > Following reports of Yar'Adua's death by some international media, and the report of a Lagos based newspaper *Next* that the President is brain damaged, the **BBC's** Hausa language radio service released a recorded interview of the President where he thanked Nigerians for their support and prayers whilst he receives treatment. The interview was apparently given late on Monday 11th January but it has not caused the political crisis in Nigeria to abate.
- > The President told the BBC that he was undergoing treatment and was gradually getting better but expressed his hope that there will be "*tremendous progress*" which will enable him return home to his duties. When asked about when he will return to Nigeria, the frail sounding President was evasive and said that he will return to his official duties when he is finally discharged by his doctors. On the issue of Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, the President said that he had spoken to the Vice President, adding that "*everything is in order based on the provisions of the Constitution*".
- > Perhaps in a bid to prove that it was not an old interview, Yar'Adua went on to wish the Nigerian football team, the *Super Eagles*, success at the **African Cup of Nations** which is currently holding in Angola. Many Nigerians have, however, remained sceptical about the authenticity of the interview, with some insisting that if the President was indeed well enough to speak, he should have a televised interview, to prove that he was truly alive and is recovering.
- > Opposition political parties have also criticised Yar'Adua for granting his first interview since he left the country to a

foreign media organisation, and saying that it was unconscionable and an example of the contempt that Nigerian leaders had for Nigerians. Having said that, however, the BBC is highly regarded in Nigeria as a professional and politically independent organisation so it was, perhaps, an obvious choice for the interview.

- > A source close to the Yar'Adua family has told **Menas Associates** that, once he returns, there will be a reckoning with all those who are being disloyal to the President.
- > The Nigerian legislature resumed its 2010 plenary sessions on Tuesday 12th January. Top of the list of issues for consideration by the upper and lower legislative chambers was the President's continued absence and the resultant political impasse.
- > In the *Senate*, there was a tense debate on the President's absence and a motion for a Senate delegation to visit in Saudi Arabia, to ascertain the true state of his health was denied by the Senate president, **David Mark**. He shot down attempts by some Senators to invoke the provisions of *Sections 143, 144 and 145* of the *1999 Constitution of Nigeria*. According to Mark such matters as the President's health and capacity were not within the purview of the powers of the Senate.
- > The lower legislative chambers, the *House of Representatives* chose not to have a public session to debate the issue of the President's health. The *House* went into an executive session, at the end of which it resolved that it appreciated and understood the provisions of *Section 145* of the constitution and the related laws, assuring that it will continue to be guided by the Constitution at all times, and also resolved to send a delegation to visit the President in Saudi Arabia to convey goodwill messages and discuss issues on national importance.
- > The 36 State Governors in Nigeria, under the aegis of the *Governors' Forum (GF)* have met in Abuja ostensibly to discuss matters arising from the President's continuing absence. In particular, the *Governors' Forum*, under the chairmanship of Kwara State's Governor **Bukola Saraki**, discussed how to resolve the political deadlock which has arisen as a result of the President's failure to formally handover his official duties to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, in his absence.
- > Meanwhile reports confirm that, in a separate meeting, the *Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)* state governors met to pick a successor to Goodluck Jonathan who, according to sources

connected with them, say will soon officially take over from President Yar'Adua. Apparently the question for them is not whether Jonathan will become President but who replaces him as Vice President.

- > The *Governors' Forum*, for obvious reasons, favour one of their own rank to take over and the apparent favourites are Katsina State's Governor **Ibrahim Shema**, Gombe's Governor **Danjuma Goje**, Jigawa's Governor **Sule Lamido**, and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, **Adamu Aliero**, who was previously the Governor of Kebbi State. Of the four candidates, the frontrunner appears to be Shema because he is from President Yar'Adua's home State.
- > South-South and Eastern Governors are said to favour Goje as the new Vice President because of his apparent ability to reach out to other zones. Some Yar'Adua loyalists are, however, reportedly rooting for Aliero who has been linked with one of Yar'Adua's daughters who is supposedly being billed to become one of his wives. It is also no secret that former President **Olusegun Obasanjo** is angling for the Jigawa State's Governor Lamido to become Vice President.
- > Obasanjo chaired a *PDP Board of Trustees* meeting at the Aso Rock Presidential Villa in Abuja on Wednesday 13th January. His return to Aso Rock in the absence of Yar'Adua to hold a tightly secured meeting has sparked a great deal of interest in political circles. Those who attended *BOT* meeting were accredited at the *Hilton Hotel* and given passes before being put on a bus to the venue.
- > Obasanjo does not see eye-to-eye with all members of the *PDP BOT*, and particularly his onetime Works & Housing Minister **Tony Anenih** and former Senate President **Ken Nnamani**.
- > The *Governors' Forum* put forward a proposal pushing for primaries as early as March/April. Meanwhile some of Yar'Adua's loyalists and allies are almost on the verge of a no-holds barred falling out and are trading blame for the failures in managing the public relations challenges created by his long drawn out absence. There is said to be no love lost between Economic Adviser **Tanimu Yakubu** and the *GF's* chairman Kwara State's Governor **Bukola Saraki**.
- > There is said to be an alleged plot by some senior members of the government to expose Attorney General **Michael Aondoaka** for allegedly changing entries in his asset declaration form upwards to match newly acquired gains.

- > As the political deadlock over Yar'Adua's absence continues, members of civil society groups and opposition political parties, staged a protest march to the *National Assembly* to protest about his absence and the resultant issues. The protest march which was organised by a group of 100 prominent Nigerians under the aegis of *Save Nigeria Group (SNG)* was attended by Nobel Laureate **Wole Soyinka**, human rights activist and lawyer **Femi Falana**, religious leaders, leaders of civil society organisations, lawyers, students and representatives of the Nigerian people.
- > Some of the demands made by the group are that Yar'Adua should vacate office forthwith and formally hand over to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan. Soyinka, addressing the protesters said that the President's continued absence and lack of a replacement was allowing corruption to flourish.
- > The attempt by the Speaker of the *House of Representatives* **Dimeji Bankole**, to address the protesters was unsuccessful because he was heckled by the crowd, who insisted that they did not wish to listen to him and urged him to do the "*right thing*". Curiously posters and banners affirming support for Yar'Adua and proclaiming "*down with the anarchists*" appeared overnight in Abuja, placed in strategic locations including those that the protesters had planned to march through.
- > The *PDP* has expunged the names of its members that decamped to other parties in the run-up to the Anambra gubernatorial elections.
- > This was revealed in a letter signed by the *PDP's* National Secretary **Baraje Kawu**. It stated that, by contesting an election on the platform of another political party without formally resigning from the *PDP*, the members have forfeited their membership of the party and will therefore be de-registered.
- > The affected party members include
 - **Andy Uba**, who switched to the *Labour Party (LP)*,
 - **Uche Ekwunife** who is now with the *Peoples Progressive Alliance (PPA)* and
 - **Nicholas Ukachukwu** now of the *Hope Democratic Party*.
- > All of these three have been nominated as candidates of their respective new parties in the Anambra gubernatorial elections which will be held next month.

2.0. Niger Delta

- > Nigerian soldiers supposedly employed by **Chevron Nigeria** have shot dead two workers at the construction site of Chevron's *Escravos Gas-To-Liquid (EGTL)* plant in Delta State. According to the Delta State government spokesperson, the incident was a result of a "*minor disagreement that got out of hand*". Apparently, a bus conveying Chevron workers failed to stop at a security checkpoint in the plant as the bus driver engaged in an argument with the security guards.
- > In a bid to disperse the crowd the soldiers detailed to guard the plant fired shots into the crowd that had gathered which resulted in the death of two Nigerian workers. The latter responded to the killings by rioting and setting the plant's buildings on fire until the situation was controlled by local officials.
- > Following the incident, Chevron's Makaraba-Utonana crude oil pipeline in Delta State was attacked by "*unknown*" gunmen. The attack has affected the delivery line from Abiteye to Escravos. Confirming the attack on its pipelines, Chevron announced that it has consequently been forced to cut output by 20,000 b/d.
- > The ***Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)*** has released a statement saying that although its fighters were not involved in the actual attack, it had sanctioned the attack. Following the Federal Government's amnesty programme the violent attacks on oil installations ceased in the Niger Delta. However the continued absence of President Yar'Adua who conceived the amnesty programme, has virtually halted all post-amnesty programmes and this has once again heightened tensions in the Niger Delta area.
- > The national coordinator of ***Niger Delta Re-orientation Project***, **Sheriff Mulade** and the leadership of ***Gbaramatu Kingdom*** at Warri in Delta State condemned the attack on Makaraba-Utonana pipeline which is blamed on angry ***Ijaw*** youths, in retaliation for the killing of the two local workers - **Sunday Mala** and **Solomon Tonfa** - at *EGTL* project site.
- > The ***Gbaramatu*** leaders dissociated their communities from the attack and said that they had instead resolved to employ civilised and lawful mean of redress for the deaths. However, in a statement signed by some of its leaders, the leadership of the ***Gbaramatu Kingdom*** urged the Federal Government to probe the activities of the ***Joint Task Force (JTF)*** in the area

and labelling the recent killings by soldiers, as a "*genocide*" attack on the *Gbaramatu* people.

- > It will be recalled that in May 2009, the *JTF* launched an offensive in Gbaramatu in its bid to flush out the leading militant commander, **Government Ekpemupolo** (a.k.a. **Tompolo**). The leaders urged that the Federal Government should immediately de-militarise the area or the killings and attacks by the military on its people would never stop
- > The leadership of *Ijaw* youths in the Niger Delta and former militants have met in Yenagoa in Bayelsa State to discuss the activities of the *Presidential Committee on Amnesty's (PCA)* work-plan for the reintegration rehabilitation process for the ex-militants under the government's amnesty programme.
- > Amongst others the meeting, which was held behind closed doors, was attended by:
 - **Kaiser Ogoriba** - the founding president of the *Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality (MOSEID)*;
 - **Chris Ekiyor** - president of the *Ijaw Youth Council (IYC)*;
 - **Kingsley Kuku** - secretary of the *Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee* and
 - **Patterson Ogon** - founding director of *Ijaw Council for Human Rights*
- > Before its deliberations, the forum addressed reporters and criticised the document produced by the *PCA* as its work-plan, as "*hogwash*". They said that it could not accept the *PCA's* work-plan which did not actively engage the youth of Niger Delta.
- > In an action which may signal the end to the relative peace that has been enjoyed in the Niger Delta region in recent months, four expatriate contract workers were kidnapped on Tuesday 12th January. Their convoy which was travelling from Port Harcourt in Rivers State to Abia State when it was attacked by about 30 gunmen who killed a Nigerian policeman and injuring a driver.
- > The four are employees of **Netco Dietsmann**, - which is a joint venture between the state-owned *National Engineering and Technical Company* and the Dutch company **Dietsmann** – and they were attached to **Shell Petroleum Development Company's (SPDC) Afam V1 Power Plant** in Port Harcourt.
- > The kidnapped men are three Britons named as **John Bennet** (64), **Kevin Gray** (51) and **Martin Phillip** (49) and a Colombian

called **Fabien Sanchez**. Although no group initially claimed responsibility a ransom demand of 300 million Naira (US\$ 2 million) has now been made. The authorities have offered a 2 million Naira (US\$ 13,000) reward for information leading to their release and the arrest of the kidnappers.

- > This is the latest in the recent series of violent incidents in the Niger Delta. On 19th December *MEND* claimed responsibility for an attack on a major crude oil delivery pipeline in Abonema Rivers and last week there was the incident at Chevron's EGTL. Observers have blamed the recent events on President Yar'Adua's absence which has effectively stalled the post-amnesty programme.



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