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Saunders sticks to carding in Toronto

By Peter Uduehi

Newly appointed Toronto police chief and first Black Canadian in that post Mark Saunders says the practice of "carding" needs to be overhauled and not scrapped as many people are calling for.

Speaking recently in an interview, he said carding, which gives police in Toronto the power to stop and search individuals at will, is a good law which helps police rid the community of criminals and gangsters. When we started to identify that there are gangs of criminals within the city we had to do business differently," he said, noting you can't do business the same. He stressed carding is legal and "I am not going to support officers who



New police chief Mark Saunders

do anything illegal".

Saunders also emphasized that the solution

to the problems many see in carding is to revise the practice itself, indicating that the practise of stopping citizens at "random" must be eliminated as part of revamping carding. He intimated that he too has been subjected to carding as a civilian, once when he wore his baseball cap backwards, an admission that the police take into consideration the issue of "perception". Carding has been condemned by detractors as racial profiling, pitting minority interests to that of law enforcement. Most of carding's suspects have been Blacks and other minorities in disproportionate numbers. Information from carding are stored in a police database indefinitely and some Blacks say the law has negatively impacted them in their job search.

Discover Africa in the heart of Toronto

Theme remains the same as Afrofest begins at Woodbine Park

By Peter Uduehi

The theme of this year's Afrofest remains the same but the spectacle of new acts, musicians and first-impressions to the annual event will them-



selves make history, says organiser Music Africa's president Peter Toh.

The event, which starts July 5 and ends July 7 at Woodbine Park, showcases African culture, arts and craft every year to Canadians of every background. It is considered the largest outdoor cultural festival at any one spot for two days in Canada.

However, one difference to this year's event, says Toh, "is that we are experimenting with its span; so instead of the usual two-day-Saturday-and-Sunday staging at Woodbine Park, the festival this year will last for three days beginning on Fri-

day the 5th of July". But Friday's aspect of the event will take place indoors at Remix Lounge on 1305 Dundas Street in Toronto (9 p.m. till 1 a.m.).

There are a few other exceptions to this year's festival, notes Toh. Afrofest will be more interactive, engaging and distinguished, he said, adding the flame of the PANAM games, taking place in Toronto in a few months, will pass through the main stage of the festival. "That is definitely a first for us and Toronto because Afrofest wants to connect more with everyone in the community, every culture in the country, not just people of African descent; Toronto is a melting pot of cultures from everywhere in the world and if Afrofest can help bring everyone together the better we all will be." Toh said it was a nice gesture from the city of Toronto to have the



torch-staging historical event arranged with Afrofest.

In keeping with its aim of also promoting some of the best musical acts from Africa and the diaspora, the internationally acclaimed zouk group Kassav from the Antilles in the Caribbean will grace the main stage of the festival. Other big names that have performed at the festival include Papa Wemba from the DR Congo, Oumar Sangare from Mali, Thomas Mamfumo from Zimbabwe and Petit Pays from Cameroon.

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Of the cuff!

Africans in Toronto sound off on police practice of carding

Africans in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) have been rendering their opinion on the controversial Toronto police practice of "carding", the random-on-the-spot identification process of individuals perceived to be questionable in terms of their allegiance to criminal activity. The information police garners are put in a database indefinitely. Many of you have emailed us your opinions on this issue and here is a pulse of the community on it.

Writes Olumide Tope:

Allow me a space in your newspaper to say something about "carding". I believe the process of carding is racist and dehumanizing and has no place in the Canadian society. This is a country that prides itself on humaneness because there are laws governing the attitude on relations among the diverse ethnic groups in the GTA. Why must anyone think that carding will work when there are laws already in place to catch the criminal elements among us? Many people I know who have been victims of carding are Black and I have as many Black friends as Asian or White ones; none of my White friends have told me anything about being carded but 60 percent of my Black friends have informed me of being carded. So from my own experience alone, you can see that carding is discriminatory and racist. It should be stopped.

Writes Phillip Omegbemi:

I will like to give my opinion on carding and I hope you can publish this. Carding, according to the newly appointed first Black Toronto police chief himself, Mark Saunders, is all about "perception". He said in an interview that he felt he was once carded as a civilian because of his dress code. He said he wore his cap backwards on his head, and that, according to him, was why he was carded. That is enough to throw the practice of carding into a place where it can longer be retrieved. It contradicts the view that carding is not about racial profiling, or profiling period. Carding is anti-Canadian and democratic. With carding, a lot of young people will stand convicted by the police who might perceive the hipster clothing and mannerisms on the street as being criminal-intended or negative. Carding must go, whether it's law or not.

Writes Chidi Udeh:

I have an opinion on carding which I will likw to share with your audience. For me, I think carding is a good thing because it could help to identify the bad people among us. Though some police might abuse the system from time to time, I think if carding is done properly whereby it doesn't violate the individual, it can really help with cuebing crime. This is why I am not totally in favour of scrapping carding. The approach by the new chief of police should be given consideration. The police chief, Mr Saunders, has said he too was carded at one time but he supports the practice. I think carding should be fine-tuned to make it more humane, the same thing Saunders has said. The "random" aspect of it should be eliminated and we should continue with the programme.

Writes Tita Dikko:

Let me pitch in my two cents on carding please and I hope you will do your readers justice by printing my thoughts. No matter how much re-packaging some people want to do with carding, wrong is wrong and right is wright. Carding is wrong, period. It doesn't matter how some people, including the new chief of police, want the practice to work; carding is just wrong. You cannot make a bad thing work by making it all over, there should be no revamping or refining of carding. Carding pits minorities against the police because they feel the police is gunning for them to make life more difficult for them. Most of the people carded so far through this programme have been those that come from the minority communities of Toronto. That's what the figures tell us. Carding is creating discord where there should be none. This is not America where police and minority communities are being harassed everyday. Are we trying to import everything form America into Canada? Enough is enough!

Those are some of the opinions on carding to our newspaper. On burning issues of our time, please write to info@africanworldnewz.com. Your opinion matters and your are free to have your say with us. Many thanks to those who proffered their opinion here.

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Africa: Focus On Migration - the Enduring Damage of Displacement

From *AllaAfrica.com*

Political tensions in Burundi have been growing since April, when the president announced he was running for a controversial third term in office.

Violent confrontations and a failed coup have stoked fears of large-scale conflict, with memories of Burundi's 1993-2005 civil war still raw. So far, tens of thousands of people - mostly women and children - have fled to neighbouring countries in Africa's Great Lakes region, and the UN warns this number may double over the coming months.

The sudden exodus is undermining Burundi's economy, with a reduced workforce and political insecurity hampering production. Research shows that after the outbreak of war in 1993, food production remained below what had been the pre-war norm for several years; and by 1996, the country had lost a fifth of its cattle. The food insecurity that resulted is a pattern likely to be repeated this time around.

Less easy to predict, but potentially far more economically damaging over time, is the harm inflicted upon the country's future workforce: its children.

Children displaced by war and other crises experience numerous, intersecting vulnerabilities. Undernutrition is common. A 2014 study on Colombia found that displacement increased the likelihood of chronic malnutrition in early childhood by almost a fifth. A study on the 1998-2000 conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia showed that exposure to war and displacement also stunts children's growth.

These experiences can have permanent and irreversible impacts on cognitive capacity and overall health. And, as affected children mature into adulthood, they often find there is a knock-on effect on their ability to work and earn money, particularly in low-income countries where physical strength and good health underpin many livelihoods.

Damage to education prospects, another devastating side effect of displacement, further harms future employment chances. One study on Burundi [C3] suggests that the probability of completing primary schooling declines by six percentage points for every forced displacement experience and by two percentage points for each year of residence in a displacement camp.

So can anything be done? Health and food transfer programmes that target young children and pregnant and lactating women might help mitigate some of the impacts. Evidence from northern [C4] Uganda suggests that food-for-education programmes - which provide snacks and meals to children in school - can improve the growth rates of young displaced children.

UN finds Eritrea Guilty of Gross Human Rights Abuses

There are very "clear patterns of violations and abuses in a new United Nations report against Eritrea, notes a four-month investigation into the human rights situation in the East African nation. at .

Delivered at the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, the report states "Most Eritreans have no hope for their future," said Mike Smith, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Human

Rights in Eritrea, which despite not being granted permission to visit Eritrea, collected testimony from more than 500 members of the Eritrean diaspora.

Presenting the Commission's interim report, Council, Mr. Smith said that in Eritrea national service is universal and of an indefinite duration. From the age of 17, Eritreans could expect to spend their lives in national service, struggling to live on less than two dollars a day.

Meanwhile, the Government has curtailed basic freedoms to the extent that, "individuals feel that they have hardly any choice with regard to the main decisions in their lives: where to live, what career to pursue, when to marry or who to worship," he noted in a news release on the report.

For Eritreans, Mr. Smith said, "detention is an ordinary fact of life, experienced by an inordinate number of individuals - men and women, old and young, including children." Detention centres range from official to the unofficial, located above ground or underground. Some have metal containers where prisoners are kept in extreme heat.

"Once in one of them, there is a likelihood that you will be subject to torture to extract a confession or to simply punish behaviours," he added.

Torture is widespread, both in detention and during national service. Some Eritreans interviewed by the Commission had been beaten or tortured simply for asking for medicine, or for drinking water without permission.

Mr. Smith pointed out that these violations take place against a backdrop of the so-called "no war, no peace" situation related to Eritrea's unresolved border issues with neighbouring countries.

"This has become the pretext for almost all the State's actions that generate and perpetuate human rights violations in the country," he said. "It is an expression abusively used by the Eritrean authorities to disregard international human rights law."

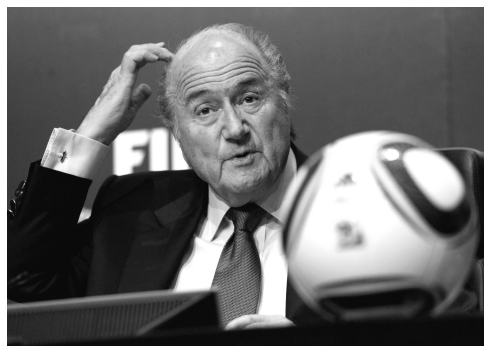
Under this pretext, the entire society has been militarised, the Constitution has never been implemented and there is no rule of law, according to the news release, which added that no one was being held accountable for human rights violations.

The Commission of Inquiry, established by the Human Rights Council, is examining a broad range of alleged violations since Eritrea gained independence. It will present a written report of its findings to the Council in June 2015.

Ghana FA wants non-European to succeed Blatter

From *the Nigerian Independent*

Lagos — Amid expectations of Blatter's imminent exit as FIFA boss, President of Ghana Football Association, Kwesi Nyantakyi, has said an European candidate jostling to succeed Blatter may not get enough votes from Asia and Africa.



Sepp Blatter, embattled.

Hinging his stance on the reform being put forward by UEFA, which, according to him, is only meant to serve its interest and kill football in Africa, Nyantakyi said it is unlikely that any European planning to succeed Blatter will receive votes from Africa.

"I don't think a candidate from Europe can have enough votes from Africa and Asia to become the next FIFA President," he said.

"The reforms being put forward by Europe is only meant to serve their interest and will kill football in Africa.

"For instance, they made a request to the FIFA Executive Committee to play friendly matches only amongst themselves.

"They have also increasingly restricting the number of African players in their leagues where in fact African players have played integral roles in making them (European leagues) attractive."

Blatter remains very popular in Africa and Asia mainly for the reforms that increasingly leveled the playing field in terms of decision making and profit sharing at FIFA as against the desire of the Europe block to have a majority say due to their superior resources.

Seychelles gets needed loans

The Government of the Republic of Seychelles has received a loan worth US \$ 20.6 million, in addition to a US \$1.668 million grant, from the African Development Bank (AfDB) to finance part of the Mahe Sustainable Water Augmentation Project. The accords were signed on May 27, on the sidelines of the AfDB's 50th Annual Meetings held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Signing the AfDB loan and the grant accords, Seychelles' Minister of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy, Jean-Paul Adam, expressed gratitude to the AfDB, for strongly supporting the country's 2013-2017 Medium Term National Development Strategy, as well as fulfilling the targets as set out in the 2008-2030 Water Development Plan supported by the African Water Facility (AWF).

"When fully implemented, the project will boost Seychelles' economy, by providing reliable and affordable water supply, which is critical in supporting tourism, the country's main employer and economic driver, and other manufacturing sectors (fishing and beverages)," said Adam.

AfDB's Vice-President in charge of Agriculture, Water, Human Development, Governance and Natural Resources, Aly Abou-Sabaa, also noted that the project will tremendously contribute to Seychelles' economic development. "The Bank will continue to work closely with your Government in its efforts to strengthen the economic and social well-being of the people of Seychelles," he underscored. "We also count on Seychelles' constant support, over the years to ensure timely and effective implementation of this important project." The project outputs include raising the height of the La Gogue dam embankment by six (6) metres; constructing a new water treatment plant downstream of the dam; enhancing the public utilities corporation's capacity to execute the project through recruitment of dam engineering and project management technical assistants; and engaging an experienced project engineering supervision consultancy firm. In order to prepare for future strategies, a study on the groundwater and small/medium scale storage potential on the islands of Mahé, Praslin and La Digue will be undertaken under this project. This funding is, therefore, a natural progression of the country and the Bank's prior engagements in the sector," Abou-Sabaa said. "As a small island developing state, Seychelles is extremely vulnerable to rainfall variability. The project will contribute to building a resilient society and solid economic foundation."

Eastern DR Congo making gouda cheese in war zone

By Judith Raupp

After decades of conflict, many in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have lost heart, but some people will not be discouraged. In the midst of chaos, a young man set up a cheese business modelled on Swiss dairies.

Goma - Alex Kasole still has vivid mem-



ories of that morning in April 2012. As he was just about to head up to his mountain pasture, the telephone rang. "Stay home, boss! They're shooting," his assistant shouted into the phone. The Congolese army and the M23 militia had entrenched themselves in the Masisi mountains. The war broke out on Kasole's summer pastureland. It lasted for one and a half years.

Since then, the M23 has been defeated and the cattle graze undisturbed. Herdsmen joke as they milk the cows. Neighbors stop by to try cheese from Kasole's dairy farm. It is located near the village of Mushaki, 40 kilometers (25 miles) west of Goma, the provincial capital. The Congolese call the region the 'Switzerland of Africa.'

One reason the Masisi mountains bear this name is the breed of cows to be found there, known as Brown Swiss.

Kasole's wife is from Switzerland. Her grandfather had brought the breed into the area at a time when Congo was still under Belgian rule. Brown Swiss cows as well as the Friesländer breed adapt to high altitudes better than African cattle.

"This here is an ideal place to raise cattle," Kasole says with delight. He has several dozen Swiss Brown and Friesländer cows grazing on his 285-hectare (704-acre) upland pasture. The cows provide 400 liters (106 US gallons) of milk a day, which Kasole uses to make the popular Masisi Gouda cheese.

Kasole's cheese factory has glazed tiles, and the tub in which the milk ferments is made of metal. Other dairy farmers in the region produce their cheese in bathtubs standing in wooden sheds. Proper hygiene is important to Kasole. He has seen cheese factories in Switzerland and regards them as models for his dairy.

Visits to Europe have inspired the 33-year-old entrepreneur. Not long ago he went to see his parents-in-law in Switzerland and brought back cow bells - not for nostalgic reasons, but for a very practical one: The ringing of cow bells is supposed to alarm the herdsmen when bandits try to steal cattle at night. "I reckon I'm the only one in the Masisi region whose cows have bells," Kasole says with a grin. Other farmers are so impressed by the idea that they want to follow suit.

Belgian monks had originally brought cheese production to Congo. Initially, they only made their Gouda for themselves, because they were plagued by a yearning for European food. Local people have since come to appreciate Gouda cheese as well. "The population here loves cheese," says Moise Lokenzi, one of Mushaki's 2,000 residents. "Someone who likes cows must also like cheese. Someone who likes milk must also like cheese. That is the life we lead here. That is our culture."

Not everyone can afford this culture, however, at least not in the city. In nearby Goma, 1 kilo (2.2 pounds) of young Gouda costs the equivalent of 3 euros (\$3.42). Two kilos of aged Gouda cost about three times as much. "Cheese is a luxury item reserved for certain people," Passy Mubalama, who lives in the city, says. "Gouda cheese enhances a breakfast, but poor people who even have to do without breakfast certainly can't afford to buy cheese."

But supermarkets and large restaurants in Goma and the distant capital, Kinshasa, regularly purchase Gouda from the Masisi mountains. Peter Brüderli is a cook at a luxury hotel in Goma. Because he comes from Switzerland, his expectations are different from those of local people. Brüderli thinks the Congolese cheese is "not

bad" - it is simply a mild cheese. "For me, it's too bad there isn't a somewhat stronger tasting cheese," the cook says.

Demand from the foreigners has inspired Kasole. He is busy working on a small hydroelectric installation on the river flowing through his pasture. Once he is finished, he will finally have electricity around the clock. Kasole wants to build a cold-storage room and expand production. In addition to the 1,500 Gouda wheels that he produces every month, he wants to offer other products. "I'm going to try to produce Camembert, and perhaps even butter. Especially for the foreigners in Goma. Let's see how that works out."

But what if war breaks out again? The idea does not unsettle him. Production would continue just like it did the last time. He even has a solution for transporting the cheese from the mountains to Goma. If there's war, motorcycle taxis will smuggle the cheese across the front.

ANALYSIS: Biggest land grab yet in Africa?

By Chris Arsenault

Markala, Mali - Malian farmer Balima Coulibaly and his fellow villagers watched with dread as 100,000 hectares of fertile land they have farmed for generations were handed to Libyan investors with no discussion about the impact on their impoverished communities.

In one of Africa's largest and most secretive foreign agricultural investment deals, oil-rich Libya, under the leadership of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, signed a 50-year, renewable lease for the land with Mali's government in 2008.

The land in the Office of Niger, the agricultural heart of the West African country, was provided rent free, with water rights included, on the condition that Libya build canals and roads to cultivate rice and cattle there.

But seven years on, with Libya in chaos following Gaddafi's ouster and drought-hit Mali grappling with an insurgency, the project has stalled. It highlights concerns facing many African nations about whether large-scale foreign investment in farmland brings benefits.

In this part of south-central Mali, fading billboards advertising the Malibya project and an irrigation canal are the only visible signs of the Libya deal. Villages in the area remain without paved roads, phone lines or water pipes.

Mali's government admits it's unsure what will happen with the deal since the collapse of Libya's government. Tens of thousands of poor families living and growing crops on the land say they remain uncertain what their future holds.

"We don't know what will happen to us," said Coulibaly, an aging local leader, sitting on the floor of a sweltering mud house in Sangha village, as children with plastic bags tied to their feet in place of shoes cling to their mothers.

"We have a big hunger problem. At the moment, we are just trying to survive."

The project's fate highlights a clash happening across Africa between international investors buying large tracts of agricultural land as a strategic asset, and small-scale farmers who have cultivated the earth for decades and fear displacement.

Backers of land deals say they bring much-needed investment to Africa, and can provide jobs and improve the productivity of the land. But rights activists say local people are rarely well compensated for their losses and handing over land could exacerbate local food shortages.

Few in Mali, the world's sixth poorest country, dispute the need for investment in agriculture. More than half of the country's 15 million people live below the official poverty line and nearly two million are hungry, says the U.N.'s World Food Programme.

But Chantal Jacovetti, a researcher with Mali's Coordination of National Farmers' Organisations, a rights group, said foreign investors often want land, but not the farmers on it.

Family farmers - including those in rich countries - produce about 80 percent of the world's food, according to the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Jacovetti said small-scale farmers in the Office du



Niger could triple their food production if they had government support to build infrastructure and, crucially, access to formal land tenure.

"Some communities have been on that land for 800 years," Jacovetti said. "(But now) they are totally precarious. Companies want to grab this land and get rid of the peasants."

Sangha village, with a population of a few hundred living in mud and straw houses amid millet fields, is one of several communities located inside the Malibya concession.

An estimated 60,000 small farmers reside within the area, each farming less than half a hectare, Jacovetti said.

A 40 km (25 mile) canal built to irrigate rice fields on the Libyan land cuts through Sangha's ancestral territory but local people aren't allowed to use the water, said Sidiki Coulibaly, a chieftan from neighbouring Finn village.

Authorities have ignored their requests for water access and pipes, he said.

Sangha and Finn residents do not have formal title to the land they farm, although Malian law recognises customary tenure. They say they were not consulted ahead of the Libyan deal and have no idea what is happening now or could happen next.

Wearing a crisp white thobe and knitted prayer cap, Coulibaly said he tries not to worry about the lack of information. He believes his village, where many are illiterate, doesn't have a lot of bargaining power in international business deals.

Plans for the land deal were reportedly hatched in direct negotiations between two leaders who have since been deposed - exiled Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure and Libya's Gaddafi, who was captured and killed after being toppled from power.

"It's like two guys tried to decide the fate of the Office du Niger without knowing anything about it," Jacovetti said.

At the time, terms of the deal weren't publicly released but it was rumoured all rice grown there would be exported.

Many large-scale foreign land investment deals in Africa are designed to shore up food security in the country acquiring the land or on international markets, not in local ones, experts say.

Moussa Djire, a University of Bamako legal scholar who analysed the Malibya investment, said secrecy over the agreement led some to suspect shady dealings but personality politics probably played a bigger role in creating the project than illicit cash.

An undated copy of the contract obtained by the Thomson Reuters Foundation showed the deal granted Malibya, a subsidiary of Libyan sovereign wealth fund Libyan African Investment Portfolio, land for 50 years with no mention of exports.

Despite Mali facing three droughts in the past decade, the contract gave investors water "without restrictions" from June to December with some limits in drier months.

"How can they guarantee water for foreigners and not us Malian people?" fumed Binan Coulibaly, a local farmer. "It's already difficult for us to survive."

The Office du Niger, with green trees and healthy herds of cattle grazing by the roadsides, contrasts with Mali's desert north where almost nothing grows.

Irrigated by a dam built by French colonialists in the 1930s, the agricultural area operates as a separate administrative unit from other parts of Mali's government and is responsible for much of the country's food. It could produce more if better managed, experts say.

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Toronto's largest celebration of African music, heritage and culture is back for its 27th year! Afrofest 2015 will take place Saturday July 4th and Sunday July 5th, at Woodbine Park, Lakeshore Boulevard East, and Coxwell Avenue.

Presented by Music Africa, in partnership with Africa New Music, the vibrant two-day outdoor festival is a chance to immerse oneself in the beauty and diversity of the African continent.

Peter Toh, President of Music Africa, says that this year's theme will include many acts from the African Diaspora. "The major theme is always the celebration of African culture and we are happy to be able to highlight the contribution of African culture to the Americas," says Toh.

The festival will feature performances by top international groups and local stars of African music, along with dancing, drumming, and theatre. This year's outstanding Main Stage line up will feature Kassav (Martinique & Guadeloupe), Wenge Music – Nouvelle Generation (DRC), Zal Sissokho, Sergio Perere & Chico Antonio (Senegal/Quebec/Mozambique), San Fan Thomas (Cameroon), Cheka Katenen Dioubate (Guinea), Obeah Opera (Jamaica), Tich Maredza Band (Zimbabwe) and more.

Music Africa is a non-profit community-based organization whose main objective is to promote African music in Toronto through the Afrofest music festival and other occasional events. Established in 1990, Music Africa is among the oldest and most respected organizations promoting African music in Canada.

Music Africa also supports the activities of other non-profit cultural organizations through partnerships for various events. Through its activities, Music Africa is committed to enhancing appreciation and awareness of African music among Canadians while also striving to establish Toronto as a thriving global center for African music.

Music Africa gratefully acknowledges the funding support of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Celebrate Ontario, Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council. www.musicafrika.ca For media information, please contact: (416) 469 5336

Afrofest is an annual musical festival that celebrates African culture and brings together many African communities. Many of the greatest stars of African music have performed at the event including Hugh Masekela, Papa Wemba, Amampondo, Oumou Sangare, African Guitar Summit, Mzwakhe Mbuli, Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi and many other ambassadors of African culture. With over 100,000 people attending over the weekend, the festival is the largest annual gathering of African communities in Canada.



PETER TOH, PRESIDENT OF MUSIC AFRICA



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New Nigerian president Buhari

Nigeria: Our military will take down B'Haram - Buhari

From the Leadership Newspaper in Abuja, Nigeria

President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday in Niamey, the capital of Niger Republic, said the Nigerian Army was formidable enough to crush the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Buhari, who made this declaration after holding talks with Nigerien President Issoufou Mahamadou, asserted that the Nigerian Army, which had earned a good reputation globally, remained a virile fighting force.

"I am four days in office today and we have already started the process of ending the insurgency," he told journalists after meeting with his host.

The president hinted that he had, at the over five hours' meeting with heads of Nigeria's Armed Forces and security agencies on Tuesday, taken time with the service chiefs to review ongoing operations against Boko Haram for better results.

Buhari added, however, that because of the peculiarities of terrorism, the movement of terrorists across borders and the unconventional nature of the war against terror, Nigeria would continue to seek the support of neighbouring countries in its bid to overcome the militants.

President expresses worry over influx of 150,000 Nigerian refugees in Niger Republic

He also expressed worry at the influx of refugees as a result of the insurgency, noting that there were over 150,000 displaced Nigerians in Niger.

"Another issue of concern to us, which is closely associated with the insurgency in the region, is the influx of refugees and other displaced persons. We are aware that, currently, there are over 150,000 displaced persons comprising refugees and returnees taking refuge in various parts of Niger," Buhari stated.

According to him, he was in Niger Republic to seek more support from the country in bringing a quick end to the atrocities of Boko Haram, and would hold similar meetings with Chadian authorities after leaving Niamey today.

Buhari further noted that Nigeria would also require the assistance of other nations and multi-lateral institutions to rebuild areas adversely affected by the insurgents and rehabilitate displaced persons.

Earlier at the opening of bilateral talks between Nigeria and Niger earlier, President Buhari praised his host's contributions to the ongoing multi-national effort against terrorism, insurgency and cross-border crimes.

He said, "Permit me also to acknowledge the consistency with which the government and people of Niger Republic have stood beside Nigeria under all circumstances. I would like to convey the appreciation of Nigeria for the sacrifices by Niger in the ongoing efforts to counter the menace of the Boko Haram insurgency.

"Niger Republic has, over the years, proved to be a reliable ally to Nigeria both at bilateral and multilateral levels. It is our hope and aspiration that this special relationship would be further consolidated during my administration.

"My administration will bring new impetus and a renewed commitment to the efforts to wipe

out the menace of the Boko Haram insurgents. As a first step, we have directed the relocation of the command post of the counter-insurgency operations to Maiduguri until such a time that the insurgency is completely defeated.

"Our administration will work closely with governments of the affected states to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons and their host communities. The ultimate objective, however, remains to end the insurgency and facilitate the displaced persons' return to their homes."

On his part, the president of Niger commended President Buhari for making Niger the first country he would visit after his inauguration.

Mahamadou assured Buhari that Niger would continue to support Nigeria in the fight against Boko Haram.

"Your decision to move the military command of Nigeria to the North East has further strengthened our conviction that the war against terrorism will soon come to an end", he said.

Buhari also urged Nigerians to be patient with his administration, saying the task of rebuilding Nigeria will be a very difficult one.

Speaking when he met with members of Nigerian community in Niger, he said, "As you are aware, our government is just coming on board and is still in the process of setting out appropriate modalities on how to actualize its agenda of revamping Nigeria, as contained in the APC manifesto on which basis we were elected. I urge you to exercise some patience as the task of rebuilding Nigeria is indeed an arduous one."

He listed the challenges his government intends to tackle in revamping Nigeria to include the challenges of insecurity, near economic collapse, pervasive corruption and power shortages.

The president continued: "I want to reassure that we are going to tackle these challenges head-on. Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted national responsibility to us. We must not succumb to hopelessness and defeatism. We can fix our problems.

"However daunting the task to surmount these challenges may be, they are by no means insurmountable. There is now a national consensus that our chosen route to national development is democracy. To achieve our objectives, we must consciously work to improve the democratic system.

Sassou Nguesso to extend his rule

From Africa in Fact, South Africa

While elections in the Republic of Congo are a year away, Brazzaville, its riverside capital, is awash with rumours that the president will amend the constitution, again, to remain in power.

Denis Sassou-Nguesso, 72, has ruled over the oil-rich state for nearly 35 years, against a backdrop of coups, civil wars and repeated constitutional revisions. He first came to power after a military takeover in 1979 and ruled until 1992, when he lost a presidential election to Pascal Lissouba in the nation's first multi-party elections. He took the reins again in 1997 at the end of a period of bloody civil war. He won two disputed elections in 2002 and 2009.

Often referred to as Congo-Brazzaville (to distinguish it from neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo), this nation's first constitution was replaced by a second one in 2002, which, ironically, Mr Sassou-Nguesso himself helped to draft. Article 57 limits consecutive presidential terms to two; and Article 58 forbids candidates over the age of 70 from running. The president should be excluded on both counts.

While Mr Sassou-Nguesso has made no public statement regarding his potential candidacy, opposition leaders and other observers are convinced that the president will try to change the constitution to run again. Few forget his late 1970s campaign slogan Kaka Nguesso ("Nguesso one more time" in the Lingala language).

The president is consulting constitutional experts to modify "the constitution to his advantage", said Mathias Dzon, president of the opposition Patriotic Union for National Revival. This information is "not a secret", he added.

The ruling Congolese Labour Party (PCT) has only encouraged these perceptions. In December 2014 the PCT's steering committee approved plans to modify Articles 57 and 58, according to several newspaper reports.

But Article 185 remains a major obstacle: it prohibits revising the restrictions on presidential terms. The only way to remove the term limits is to scrap the constitution entirely.

The country's first post-colonial constitution was adopted in 1963. After 29 years of one-party rule, the constitution adopted in 1992 paved the way for multi-party elections. But Mr Sassou-Nguesso abolished it when he overthrew Mr Lissouba and replaced it with a transitional charter in October 1997.

A civil war, fought between partisans of the two men, continued on and off until December 1999, when Mr Sassou-Nguesso, with the help of the Angolan army, finally won a decisive victory. He led a transitional regime until elections in 2002, when a new constitution was adopted.

But even with these limits, the 2002 constitution still gives the president imperial powers. The president is both chief of state and head of government. He appoints ministers, councillors and directors-general. In addition, he is commander-in-chief of the army and president of the superior council of magistrates. "In Congo, the president does everything," said Vivien Manangou, a law professor at the University of La Rochelle in France.

The 2002 constitution was drafted to restore the state's authority, weakened by years of civil war. By extending powers to the executive, it sought to break away from the 1992 constitution's French semi-presidential system, in which parliament played a counterbalancing role.

But what Mr Manangou qualifies as a "paternalistic" constitution nevertheless had one important caveat: Article 185.

Those in favour of removing Article 185 argue that the constitution has done its job. "The historical role played by the [2002 constitution] has ended," said Thierry Mougalla, minister of telecommunications. "The constitution is not the bible. [It] was drafted by men in a specific political, social and economic context. What has been drafted by men at that period in time, influenced by major political circumstances, can be modified by these same men."

If Mr Sassou-Nguesso succeeds in scrapping the old constitution and drafting a new one, it will not be the first time he has changed the rules to suit his needs. He may need to remain in power to avoid prosecution and protect his patronage networks.

For instance, he could face charges for his in-



volvement in the murder of Marien Ngouabi, Congo's president who was assassinated in 1977. Mr Sassou-Nguesso was defence minister and head of intelligence at the time and became president two years later. In 2013 several independent newspapers dared to link Mr Sassou-Nguesso to Mr Ngouabi's murder. The national agency responsible for regulating the media suspended the news outlets for inciting "violence, defamation and dishonouring certain high authorities of the state".

The president could also face charges of crimes against humanity. Commentators have linked him to various political crimes, not least the infamous Brazzaville Beach incident in May 1999 in which over 300 Congolese refugees, returning from exile at the Kinshasa port, were allegedly tortured and murdered.

The president's family, close friends and his Mbochi ethnic group dominate the media, state business and key government agencies. General Jean-François Ndenge, a close friend, heads the national police force. The president's nephew, Jean-Dominique Okemba, is in charge of the national security council.

If there is a constitutional referendum, it will most likely take place before presidential elections scheduled for July 2016. Aside from the legal hurdle, Mr Sassou-Nguesso faces an increasingly mobilised and vocal opposition. In the last election in 2009, opposition candidates called for a boycott. They released a statement on election day asserting that turnout was only 10%, a claim disputed by the government.

The PCT's support for an extension of the president's rule is creating the ingredients of a "very grave" crisis, Mr Dzon said. The president's "unpopularity is established," he added. Yet still "he wants to move mountains... to offer himself an additional term he is not allowed to have. The Congolese people are not going to let that happen."

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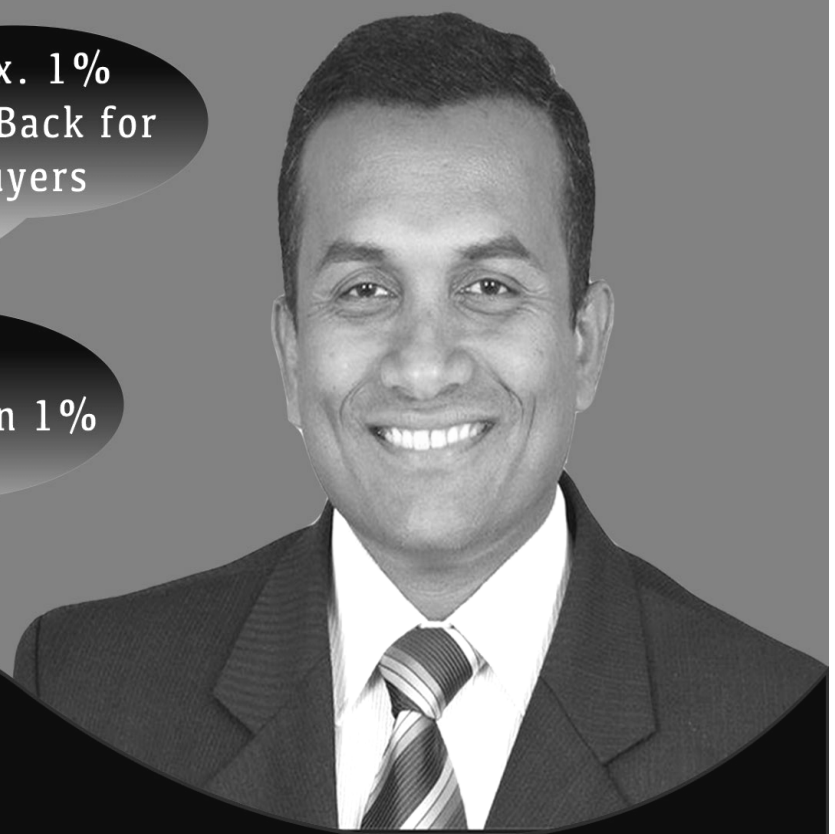
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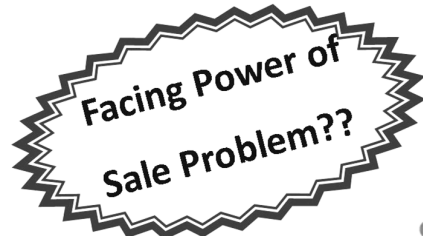
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Africa's support for FIFA boss Sepp Blatter justified

COSAFA president Seketu Patel has justified Africa's support for embattled Sepp Blatter during yes-

"To be honest this campaign is being championed by the British media and it all started when England failed to

"The people who stand accused today are not voted by FIFA but by their national confederations to rep-



Embattled FIFA boss Sepp Blatter

terday's FIFA congress in Switzerland.

Meanwhile, Patel, who is also CAF vice president disclosed that the continental football rejected a £600 million bribe to support England's bid to host the 2018 FIFA world cup that was won by Russia.

Patel, who is also Confederation of African Football (CAF) vice president, said this week's incident that saw several high ranking FIFA officials arrested in Zurich by Swiss police for alleged corruption at the request of the United States of America, was a ploy to discredit the integrity of the world football body.

win the rights to host the 2018 World Cup. They came to us and offered to invest 600 million dollars in developing world football if we supported their bid but we refused," Patel said.

He said despite the criticism surrounding Blatter's leadership, Africa will always value and support his commitment to the development of football in the continent.

"I am part of the Review and Audit committee of FIFA and review all procedures to ensure that things such as corruption do not happen. There is nothing that FIFA has done wrong.

resent their countries at FIFA, the issue here has nothing to do with the world football federation," Patel said.

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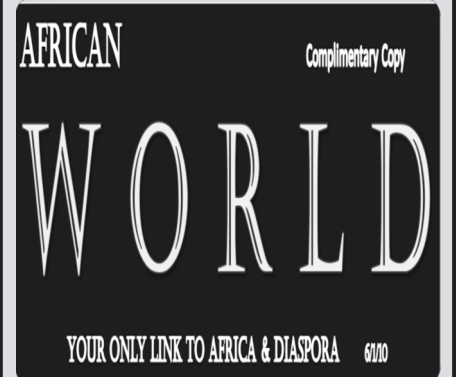
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