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**MTN RESPONDS
TO SFO
ALLEGATIONS
OF FRAUD** -P2

**DUE TO TECHNICAL REASONS
BEYOND OUR CONTROL,
WE ARE FORCED TO PRINT
IN BLACK AND WHITE TODAY.
WE APOLOGISE FOR
ANY INCONVENIENCE**

**QUEENS BOW
OUT WITH 7:2
THRASHING**
**MOURINHO EXPECTING
£25M PAY-OFF** P12

WHERE ARE THE RELIEF ITEMS?

Flood victims cry out

Nasir Ahmad Yartey &
Florian Schmelzer, Bolgatanga

Thousands of displaced persons affected by the recent flooding disaster in the Upper East Region are yet to receive any form of relief items.

About 90,703 persons, mostly women and children, have been displaced while 19,621 houses have been destroyed due to the floods. Also, 150,000 hectares of farmlands have been destroyed, affecting crops such as maize, millet, groundnuts and guinea-corn, according to the regional minister.

This came to light when a Cabinet Inter-Ministerial Disaster Relief Committee set up by President Kufuor to assess the situation in the 3 northern regions visited the region. Although several relief items have been sent to the region by government, NGOs, religious bodies and private individuals, the situation on the ground indicates that these measures are just a fraction of what is required to normalise the food situation in the region. The President has already declared the affected areas a disaster

zone.

Several residents in Gabiri, Kum, Kugblia, Taringa, Muguri, Kulungugu and the Builsa community told The Statesman that they have not received any relief items.

In Kusabriga No.1, a resident, Mark Ayubeogo said his house got destroyed 3 weeks ago as a result of which he and his families are now putting up with relatives. "They've given us nothing. We have nothing to eat. Everything is gone", he lamented.

Earlier, when these concerns were mentioned to the regional minister, he explained that although several relief items have been received, they were but "just a drop in the ocean".

Help is on the way though. Members of the Inter-Ministerial Disaster Relief Committee, which includes the Ministers of Information and National Orientation, the Interior, and Agriculture, have visited most affected areas and presented food items to the people in an effort to provide relief to flood victims in the disaster zones.

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Farmlands taken over by floods

ARE WE FORGETTING OUR HERITAGE?

Lauren Taylor

THE trade and exhibition of African art on the international market is a large scale business on a global scale, while it is undervalued and its importance overlooked in many African countries. Art is not simply visual material; it has historically acted as a powerful outlet for a country's social history, cultural tradition, political views and changing civilisation.

Ghana's history has no differently been unofficially documented through architecture, painting, drawing, woodwork and sculpture and this cultural and social history is being traded internationally (see editorial).

-the importance of valuing art

The world press have recognised the value and interest of documenting Ghanaian culture but it appears to have been disregarded in Ghana. As the country alters visually and socially there is a danger that if art is not publicised and exhibited, the story told through it may be forgotten. The medium illustrates opinions often controversial or radical and has historically played a vital role in democratic freedom, in the same way as literature, music,

theatre and journalism facilitate people's fight for freedom by acting as often the only outlets for expression.

"Art is political" Lyle Aston Harris, one of the most famous black photographers in the world, maintains. "I was asked by the *New York Times* to illustrate modernisation in African culture and was expected to produce a stereotype of a black man, bare foot using an I-Pod," he said. Instead he

confronted negative stereotypes in Western media and looked for the depiction of a real person in a real situation.

Similarly, local artist Hawa Nicoi- Olai told *The Statesman* "Art can behave in serious ways, it can be used to educate those who can not read or write by communicating through images to explain messages to the public".

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Where are the relief items?

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A typical example of the situation on the ground vis-à-vis the relief efforts can be drawn from the Builsa district where 15,000 person have been rendered homeless and 6,000 hectares and 2,180 tonnes of foodstuff have been destroyed. Yet, this district has 224 bags of rice, 397 cartons of oil and 200 pieces of student mattresses, just to mention a few.

As part of their work, the team has visited most of the affected areas and even flew to Daboya, which has been cut off due to the floods, to interact with the affected people and presented them with food items which included bread, kenkey, canned fish, and 500 bags of maize, 10 bags of salt, 500 bags of rice and 45 gallons of cooking oil and blankets.

According to a statement issued by Information Minister Oboshie Sai Cofie, three vehicles containing a third consignment of relief items such as plastic buckets, plates, cups, mattresses, bags of rice and roofing sheets from the government have been dispatched to the Upper East Region by the National Disaster Management Organisation.

The Ministry of the Interior has also taken delivery of a consignment of relief items donated by the Spanish Embassy for distribution to the affected. Another consignment of non-food items donated by the Japanese High Commission is expected to arrive in Accra shortly consisting of 5 generators sets, 400 blankets, 384 portable jerry cans, 20 tents, 5 water tanks with a capacity of 3500l each, among others.

"The Ministry is also expecting a package from the Salvation Army which will be arriving soon. It includes 100 shelter boxes each containing tents, sheets, cooking pots, blankets, ground sheets, water purification packs, plastic waste sacks, among others. The Chinese Ambassador has donated \$30,000 towards relief activities ongoing in the country and GHACEM Limited has also donated 2000 bags of cement for distribution to the affected communities," she added.

The Ministerial Committee has also met with representatives of some professional organisations like the Ghana Institute of Surveyors, the Ghana Institute of Architects, the Ghana Institute of Planners, the Ghana Institute of Engineers, Ghana Telecom, the Ghana Private Road Transport Union and the Association of Road Contractors and deliberated on ways to speed up the

relief effort. "At the meeting some measures to be taken were considered to enable government rebuild the infrastructure lost during the flood, prevent such disasters in the future and progress with plans for the reconstruction to the areas affected."

Speaking to The Statesman, Anderson, regional NADMO officer for

Contd from P 1

African artefacts played a leading role in the development of the world's art industry, initiating arguably the biggest and most significant artistic movement in the world- Cubism. Reportedly it was a collection of African masks that initiated Pablo Picasso and George Braque to develop the most radical and entirely original movement of art at the time. This was a phase of world history which heavily impacted society, defined a whole century and facilitated further modern art movements. Africa demands no credit for such an achievement, undermining value of both its artistic heritage and creative present. Museums and galleries in London, Paris, Rome, and New York among other cities around the world exhibit sculptures and paintings originally from Africa, including Ghana, and place high economic and cultural value on these pieces of work.

One of the problems restricting the integration of art in Ghanaian society is a misconception that appreciating art and critically reviewing art is an elitist activity. Internationally acclaimed Ghanaian artist, and joint founder of AISS, an NGO encouraging art in social structures, Senam Okudzeto explained, "the general public don't believe they have a relationship with art, not every Ghanaian can afford to buy a piece of art, but everyone should be able to experience it through the media, it's not something elitist".

Nigeria are fighting for their art to be

the Upper East region said the local NADMO was unprepared for a disaster of such magnitude because they do not have in place a "strategic stock of relief items".

"If there were strategic stocks, the government would have been better off in handling such a situation", he stressed.

According to him, the need for a

strategic stock of relief items has been on the drawing board for years but succeeding governments have failed to implement it, and have always "taken things for granted".

However, the region was able to respond rather quickly and provided the first relief item on the 29th of August. This was only possible because the regional NADMO built up a small strategic stock out of their own initiative.

Briefing the Ministerial task force, the regional minister, Alhassan Sarwari said the biggest threat to the region is famine. Farmers make up about 90% of the region's population.

In a related development, Interior Minister Kwamena Bartels has reassigned George Isaac Amoo to the disaster desk at the Ministry, and his position offered to Kofi Kesse Manfo, immediate past Deputy Inspector General of Police.

Are we forgetting our heritage?

exported for fair prices rather than bought cheaply by foreign art collectors and sold for vast amounts on the international market. The country has recognised the potential value in the art industry and if traded effectively with regulations can result in the growth of an industry renowned for generating financial benefits as well as standing as an outlet for cultural value and documentation of a country's history by visual means. If Nigeria can impose regulations on the trade of its local talent, Ghana should likewise recognise its local artists and place the rightful value in their work. Local talents like Ablade Glover, Victor Butler and Kofi Settojee receive very little attention from the communities they strive to serve, whilst Ghanaian artists such as Owusu Ankomah, Senam Okudzeto and Godfried Donkor, who was named as one of the 50 most influential Ghanaians in the UK this year, are highly celebrated internationally for work largely inspired from their home country's rich culture, visual beauty and social history, but little known in Ghana itself.

Hawa Nicoi-Olai is a young Ghanaian artist originally from Accra, who despite having her work regularly used commercially by publishing houses, corporate businesses and she having been commissioned to produce illustrations for the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture, considers herself unknown outside the

publishing circuit. Her illustrative drawings and paintings are based around the events of everyday life, from street selling to children playing, a culture which is slowly changing and which Hawa Nicoi - Olai's work is archiving, but without relevant credit gained. The artist told *The Statesman*, "It is very very important to document Ghana's society through art and the trends we live by everyday. Everything is changing right from what we eat to what we wear and we need to hold our own culture very high, it gives us our identity, it shows we can't be anybody else".

She attributed the undervaluation of art in Ghana to the lack of available art materials and lack of support for children to pursue careers in the creative industries, "even if art is taught in schools, there is very little encouragement, so they go into other fields rather than art which may be something they are not as good at- then they have killed their talent", she said.

Another artist, Almighty God, a self-taught painter from Kumasi, with two upcoming exhibitions in the US in October and artwork bought by a delegation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, last year, is the most collected Ghanaian artist abroad but his work is largely unknown in Ghana.

His work confronts social issues, often shocking and controversial, to bring uncomfortable topics out in the

open. The artist explained several pieces which make powerful statements. "this one illustrates a woman having an abortion while people passing by say they can stop the abortion, and another painting portrays a person holding an iron bar to destroy a different person claiming to take his soul", he told *The Statesman*. Despite addressing different issues, both artists are playing an important role in archiving Ghanaian life, historical context and social issues.

Internationally renowned Ghanaian artists include Kumasi born London based artist Godfried Donkor, joint founder of AISS, whose multimedia visual art incorporates painting, print making, collage, photography and film. He is best known for his conceptually multilayered works 'Financial Times', a series that exhibit the subject of the black body as a commodity in Western culture, firstly in the slave trade, then sports, fashion and sex. Mr Donkor uses the financial pages of newspapers to juxtapose images of boxers and figures of African women.

The future for Ghanaian art lies in public recognition of vital archiving through art, citizen support of local artists and the nation taking deserved credit for internationally acclaimed Ghanaian artists so that the rich culture and social history can be appreciated and remembered within Ghana as well as around the world.

MTN faults SFO report

Fred Tettey Alarti-Amoako

MOBILE Telecommunications Network, current owner and operator of mobile phone company Scancom Ltd has dismissed the Serious Fraud Office's allegations of money laundering, tax evasion and balance sheet fraud leveled against Investcom/Scancom and its directors, denying any wrongdoing.

"Investcom and its directors insist that during the relevant period cited by the SFO (at which time Investcom was under different ownership) they conducted the business of

Investcom and Scancom in compliance with the laws of Ghana," a statement issued in Accra yesterday and signed by Mawuna Dumor, Corporate Services Executive states.

According to her, MTN has had no reason to believe that the company's former owners "infringed the laws of Ghana" during the sale of Investcom's shares in the company to MTN.

Ms Dumor also cautioned the media and the general public against subjecting the company to a public

trial since the allegations are speculative, adding "MTN would regard it as unfortunate for these matters to be subjected to trial by the media."

The SFO, after a forensic investigations, issued a report which accused Scancom of failing to pay the state its due in the form of taxes and levies from the millions of dollars it made in its Ghana operations.

The SFO has therefore called for action to recover about \$8 trillion from the company which was sold by the Lebanese-owned Investcom to

Mobile Telecommunications Network of South Africa in May 2006, and has also issued a search warrant for three officials of the telecommunications of Investcom.

According to the SFO report, Investcom LLC, 98% equity holder of Scancom Ltd sold the leading mobile telephone company to MTN, the new owner for \$2.212 billion.

The transaction, according to the SFO, circumvented Bank of Ghana's and the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre's regulations, cheating local shareholders, among other underhand and nation wrecking deals.

However, Ms Dumor says Scancom/Areeba/MTN "is committed to conducting business in Ghana transparently and in compliance with Ghanaian legal and regulatory requirements."

She has therefore expressed confidence in the Ghanaian legal process and assured the general public that her company "will cooperate with the authorities to ensure that justice prevails in relation to these matters."

Osonoba: The Great Politician

Sammy

MILLS DOESN'T HAVE A SINGLE DOG'S CHANCE OF WINNING POWER IN 2008! I PREDICT DOOM! DOOM! BOOM! BOOM! FOR NDC!

JUDGE THEM BY THEIR ATTITUDE TO POLITICS. BOOMING CARELESSLY AND CARING AFTER. YOU KNOW HOW PAINFULL IT IS AT MY AGE NOT TO PEE FOR HOURS?

TRASH! TRASH! TRASH! THIS GUY IS A FRUSTRATED PERSON. HE JEALOUS MY TEXAS TRIP. WHERE ARE MY AZORKA BOYS? VIITOOOR!! BRING MY JAGUAR!



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