



[A truck carrying illegal migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has flipped in Angola, killing 16 people and seriously injuring three others. The illegal immigrants were travelling from the border post of Soyo, in Angola's northwest, to the capital Luanda, when the accident occurred on Sunday. According to police chief Andre Massota of Angola's Zaire Province, the immigrants were hiding in the container of the truck. "The victims died of injuries and asphyxiation."]

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

Rwanda: Can Rwanda Avoid Graft Despite Corrupt Neighbours?

By Frank Kanyesigye/The New Times/6 January 2013

The governance index by Transparency International for the last couple of years has ranked Rwanda among the least corrupt countries in Africa.

A peek into the scope of governance in the country shows tough measures have been put in place to ensure zero tolerance to corruption, but one wonders how doable and plausible it is for Rwanda to achieve its dream and sustain it in the face of neighbouring countries, where corruption and economic stagnation is at peak.

In neighbouring countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania, graft appears to have evolved into a culture that is 'consumed' with impunity.

A report released late last year by the global anti-corruption watchdog showed Rwanda's consistent track record in the fight against corruption among the five countries in the East African Community (EAC) region.

The survey ranked Rwanda as the third least corrupt African country, first in the EAC, and 50th in the world, jumping one position from fourth in 2011 and dropping one position from 49th to 50th position at the global level.

Cape Verde topped the list of least corrupt African countries with a score of 60 out of 100, and the country is on 39th position globally, followed by Mauritius on 43rd position with 57 scores, and Rwanda in the third position.

The East African Bribery Index 2012 launched in Kampala last year ranked Rwanda the least corrupt country, followed by Tanzania, Kenya, in second and third positions, respectively, Burundi was fourth and Uganda trailed.

Rwanda has a bribery aggregate index of 2.5 percent. Burundi, the worst ranked country in 2011, recorded a significantly lower index of 18.8 percent, Kenya and Tanzania were 29.5 percent and 39.1 percent, respectively, while Uganda registered the highest bribery levels in the region with a percentage value of 40.7 percent.

Speaking to The Sunday Times yesterday, Marie Immaculee Ingabire, the chairperson of Transparency Rwanda (TR), said her body has come up with a work plan for this year that includes nationwide anti-corruption public awareness and sensitisation campaigns for specific targeted groups.

"We have put in place mechanisms to have zero tolerance to corruption, but we face challenges from the people who cover up for others in the cases of corruption and courts which are reluctant or ignore to cooperate with us," she said.

Ingabire said it was still a big challenge to Rwanda to have zero tolerance to graft due to her neighbours that have maintained a track record of highest bribery levels.

"We need to harmonise our strategies and roles towards fighting corruption in the region, especially in trading policies, because as we integrate, graft will also take its course once our neighbouring countries don't address it," she stated.

The TR 2011 report showed the likelihood of encountering bribery occurrences at 1.19 percent, the prevalence of bribery at 0.8 percent and the average size of bribery was Rwf 19,844.

TR regularly, on an annual basis, carries out the Rwanda Bribery Index to determine the extent of corruption in the country.

However, Kenya has the highest number of reported fraud cases compared to her EAC neighbours, and most fraud in Kenya targets government and financial sectors.

Unlike Rwanda, in countries such as Uganda, Burundi and DRC, there is lack of strong political will in the war against corruption and zero tolerance to corruption, despite the countries' leaders on several occasions pledging to stamp out it.

The reason why countries such as Cape Verde and Mauritius have maintained a leading record in the graft fight on the continent is because of tough measures adopted by the countries in the struggle for good governance, the control of public finances and the fight against graft which are clear to the public.

In those countries, there is an 'ethical imperative' that obliges political office holders to manage public resources well and exclusively for the common good.

Sheikh Khalfan Omar Bizuru, a lecturer of Political Science at the National University of Rwanda, says it is not that the regional countries have failed to stamp out corruption, but lack of strong political will to implement their measures against the monster is still a challenge.

"Rwanda finds herself in a challenging situation to achieve 'zero tolerance to corruption' if her neighbours don't put in more efforts to fight it," he said.

Bizuru stated that it was necessary for Rwanda's neighbours to ensure more transparency in public and private sectors to get rid of graft and as well as at the various levels of the hierarchy.

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Uganda: Tourism - Is Uganda the Region's New Bigwig?

By Simon Musasizi/The Observer (Kampala)/6 January 2013

When National Geographic recently named Uganda among the world's top 20 destinations for tourists in 2013, it may have not been the first time a ranking of its kind was in favour of the country. However, the catch line used to describe Uganda spoke volumes.

Describing Uganda as "Africa's new frontier" in the rankings, which only had Malawi as the only other African country, sends out a strong message to neighbours Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, who have invested heavily in marketing their countries. National Geographic, one of the world's largest non-profit scientific and educational institutions, has done a good job blowing Uganda's trumpet.

It describes the country as "the land [that] mixes savanna, enormous lakes, rain forests, and the glacier-clad Rwenzori mountains, one of Africa's tallest ranges." It adds: "Uganda's parade of animals is amazingly diverse. Hippos graze along the shores of Lake Edward in Bwindi Impenetrable national park, while lions lounge in the trees of Ishasha, in Queen Elizabeth national park. The star in Bwindi is the mountain gorilla, a species down to about 720 animals visible in their tiny habitat."

CNN, one of the world's top news groups, also released its rankings that still favoured Uganda. CNN's first list of Africa's 10 best national parks had Kidepo Valley national park, making its debut in the rankings. Kidepo came third after renowned and well-marketed Maasai Mara (Kenya), and Botswana's Central Kalahari game reserve. Another CNN list of the seven new places ready to be discovered had Uganda in fourth position.

Industry players feel that Uganda's appearance on these lists is another indication that the country

could be the region's tourism bigwig. Over the last two years, Uganda's international rating has improved tremendously. Lonely Planet, the world's leading travel magazine, ranked Uganda in 2011 as the world's number one tourism destination for 2012, while Mt Rwenzori was voted among the top hiking places in Africa. It was the only mountain in Africa that made it to the top 15 best hiking spots in the world.

Uganda is regarded as Africa's best destination for birders. The country, which is the size of United Kingdom, boasts of over 1,058 bird species, accounting for 11% of the globe's total, and half of Africa's.

History:

Uganda was in the 1960s, the cornerstone of tourism in the region. However, the turbulent times in the 1970s and 80s saw the wildlife hunted to virtual extinction in all the national parks. Tourism infrastructure was vandalized and as a result, Uganda lost its regional dominance. Now, Kenya and Tanzania attract more tourists, with only a few coming to Uganda to see the famed mountain gorillas. The magic for these countries has been the stability and heavy investment in marketing their countries.

Last year, for example, Tanzania invested about \$23m while Kenya and Rwanda invested \$20m and \$5m respectively. Yet Uganda instead cut down its tourism budget from \$1m to \$700,000. Even with this little investment, the return of relative peace coupled with its rich natural diversity, Uganda is steadily regaining its ground. Tourist arrivals have been growing, reaching 1,151,000 in 2011.

Foreign exchange earnings from the sector have been steadily growing too, shooting to \$805m in 2011 from \$662m in 2010 -with the tourism sector now the country's second foreign exchange earner, after foreign remittances. The revenues may still be far below what Kenya and Tanzania earn from the sector, but Amos Wekesa, the proprietor of Great Lakes Safaris, says if Uganda only got a little push from government, it would surpass what its neighbours get.

"We have all it takes to beat everyone in the region," Wekesa notes, adding: "We just need to up our marketing."

Dr Andrew Seguya, the executive director, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), equally agrees with Wekesa. He says Uganda is second to none in biodiversity richness in the region.

The only red light ahead of this sector could be oil, which has been discovered in the rift valley that harbours majority of the country's national parks and wildlife reserves. However, the oil dollars if used well, could better the tourism sector.

Uganda: Tracking Down Adam Kalungi

By Simon Masaba/The New Vision/6 January 2013

The long arm of the law finally caught up with Adam Suleiman Kalungi in the Kenyan port city of Mombasa.

Kalungi, also known as Luli, the fugitive lover of former Butaleja District Woman MP Cerinah Nebanda, was arrested on Thursday night, bringing to an end a three-week hunt for him.

His capture, sources said, is crucial as it is expected to provide vital details surrounding the death of the MP, now shrouded in controversy.

Kalungi was tracked and smoked out of hideout by a four-man team from the Police's Violent Crime Intelligence and Operations Unit (VCIU), working in close collaboration with the Kenyan police.

He was later handed over to Ugandan authorities Friday morning.

According to Police spokesperson, Judith Nabakooba, Kalungi was being held in Uganda and, by press time, was preparing to go with the Police to revisit the crime scene in Kansanga, a city suburb.

The tracking:

The team is said to have tracked down Kalungi through calls made on his cellular phone shortly before vanishing from Mukwaya General Clinic on the ill-fated night.

That was shortly after dropping his ailing lover at the clinic on December 14, last year.

The lawmaker died on December 14 at the facility, shortly after Kalungi and some friends dropped her in critical condition. Prior to that, the Police say she had been with Kalungi at his Buziga residence.

"We intercepted communication and alerted the Kenyan Police, VCIU, together with Interpol, who kept monitoring and tracking down Kalungi," a Police source, who declined to be named, said.

The source added that twice, the Inspector General of Police, Lt. Gen. Kale Kayihura flew to Kenya, closely monitoring the progress in tracking Kalungi.

At the time of his arrest, Kayihura was reportedly in Kenya with a six-man team. He personally finalised Kalungi's deportation process.

The team was headed by the deputy Criminal Intelligence and Investigations boss, Geoffrey Musana, who had camped at the Malaba border, a source said.

Police statement:

According to the Police press statement issued on Friday morning, Kayihura stated that the Kenya government yesterday morning deported Adam Suleiman Kalungi back to Uganda.

"At this moment, Kalungi is in Ugandan Police custody to help us with the ongoing investigations into the death of Nebanda," Kayihura noted in a statement.

Kayihura added that although evidence has been gathered from diverse sources, Kalungi still has to explain circumstances and cause of Nebanda's death.

Kalungi is significant indeed, as he is the one single person who knows and must explain the events and circumstances leading to the death of Nebanda, Kayihura said.

"Especially that it was from his apartment in Buziga that Kalungi and his associate took the

deceased to Nsambya General Clinic, where her death was pronounced."

Kayihura added: "Uganda pays tribute to the Kenya government and, in particular the Kenya police, for their efforts to trace and deport the fugitive."

The controversy:

The death of the MP led to a controversy, culminating into the acrimonious standoff between the Parliament and the executive, each side accusing the other of dishonesty.

A doctor and two MPs, Chris Baryomunsi (Kinkizi West) and Mohammed Nsereko (Kampala Central) were arrested and are now out on police bond.

Kalungi's fears:

Another trusted Police source within the interrogation team says Kalungi is co-operating well with Police. "From his initial statement, he has corroborated the story, which Khan gave us earlier," the police source said.

Khan Abu is one of the suspects arrested earlier with the illegal possession of narcotic drugs and charged in Makindye Court. He had stated that he was part of a drug trafficking racket linked to Kalungi.

"Khan had become his close friend. Kalungi was his retail agent and Khan was in the process of elevating him to a higher level in the drug trafficking business," the source said.

"That is why he fled after his girlfriend died because he knew he would be eliminated to kill the evidence and protect the syndicate."

The source added that Kalungi still fears for his life because he says the drug mafia have penetrated high political circles, security and business positions and can still kill him.

Uganda: M23 Rebels Appoint New Figure Onto Delegation

By Raymond Baguma/The New Vision/6 January 2013

The M23 rebels have appointed Roger Lumbala, an opposition Member of Parliament onto their delegation to negotiate with the DRC government in Kampala.

Roger Lumbala, who represents the Congolese opposition political party Congolese Rally for National Democracy (RCDN), joins the M23 delegation as the vice chairperson of the negotiating team.

The M23 rebels, as well as the government delegations are back in Kampala for resumption of the talks which had been suspended for the Christmas holiday.

The talks are taking place at Speke Resort Munyonyo.

Fred Opolot, the Executive Director of Media Centre said that the heads of delegation had met with the chief facilitator Dr. Crispus Kiyonga, who is the Ugandan defence minister, ahead of the

commencement of substantive discussions.

However, the M23 rebels have prepared a draft ceasefire agreement to be presented in the dialogue and have threatened to walk out of the talks if the government delegation does not agree to a ceasefire.

Jean-Marie Runiga recently said, "The demand for a ceasefire is not a sign of weakness, but a political act that reflects the actual parties to continue the search for solutions to the problems by peaceful means.

"It is also a sign of respect for our people who suffered so much from the ravages of war."

Runiga said that ever since the M23 withdrew from Goma on December 2 last year, the DRC Government has reinforced government troops presence with support from the Hutu FDLR rebels.

However, Lambert Mende, the spokesperson of the Congolese government, told journalists in Kinshasa recently that Lumbala is wanted to answer treason charges by the DRC government.

SOUTH AFRICA :

Mandela recovers from surgery, lung infection: official

By Jon Herskovitz/Reuters/Sun Jan 6, 2013

JOHANNESBURG |

(Reuters) - Former South African President Nelson Mandela has recovered from a lung infection and surgery to remove gallstones that kept him in hospital for nearly three weeks, the government said on Sunday.

Mandela, 94, who has been in frail health for several years, spent most of December in a Pretoria hospital - his longest stay for medical care since his release from prison in 1990.

He has been receiving treatment at his Johannesburg home after he left hospital on December 26.

"President Mandela has made steady progress and clinically, he continues to improve," the Office of the Presidency said in a statement.

Mandela had recovered from his surgical procedure and the lung infection, it said, citing his medical team. He has made steady progress and was slowly returning to his daily routine.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mandela has a history of lung problems dating back to when he contracted tuberculosis as a political prisoner. He spent 27 years in prison, including 18 years on the windswept Robben Island off Cape Town.

He became South Africa's first black president after the first all-race elections in 1994 brought an end to apartheid.

MORAL COMPASS

Mandela has been mostly absent from the political scene for the past several years due to poor health, while questions have been raised as to whether his ruling African National Congress (ANC) has lost the moral compass he bequeathed it.

Under such leaders as Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo, the ANC gained wide international respect as it battled white rule. Once the yoke of apartheid was thrown off, it began ruling South Africa in a blaze of goodwill from world leaders who viewed it as a beacon for a troubled continent and world.

Close to two decades later, this image has dimmed as critics accuse ANC leaders of indulging in the spoils of office, squandering mineral resources and engaging in power struggles.

Mandela's "Rainbow Nation" of reconciliation has come under strain under President Jacob Zuma, a Zulu traditionalist with a history of racially charged comments, including a statement in December where he reportedly said dog ownership was for whites and not part of African culture.

Mandela has spent much of the past year at another home in Qunu, his ancestral village in the poor Eastern Cape province.

His poor health has prevented him from making public appearances for about two years, although he has continued to receive high-profile visitors, including former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

(Editing by Angus MacSwan)

South African women drinking to harm their unborn babies

news.com.au/ January 07, 2013

PREGNANT women in one of South Africa's poorest areas are drinking heavily to deliberately harm their unborn babies in order to claim higher welfare payments.

There has been a spike in the number of babies born with disabilities in the country's Eastern Cape, where crime and unemployment are widespread and newborn babies represent a form of income for mothers.

Sky News reports that impoverished families receive 250 South African rand (\$28) per child per month, but the state's disability allowance is far more "lucrative" at 1200 rand a month (\$134).

Women who drink heavily during their pregnancy run a much greater risk of giving birth to children with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Children with this condition are born with characteristic physical and mental defects, including short stature, and small head and brain, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

WHO reports South Africa has had the highest number of FASD cases in the world since 2002.

There is no cure for FASD and treatment is focused on mental health and medical services to manage the resulting lifelong disabilities that include learning difficulties, behavioural problems,

language, delayed social or motor skills, impaired memory and attention deficits.

The Eastern Cape Liquor Board has launched an awareness campaign in an attempt to teach young women about the consequences of drinking heavily whilst pregnant.

A major problem is the prevalence of illegal drinking houses called shebeens, where homemade, highly addictive and damaging alcohol called kah-kah is sold.

Kah-kah is a milky brown liquid and while its exact ingredients are unknown police have found batches made from yeast, water and battery acid.

"If I don't drink this, I'm like someone who is sick," one mother told Sky News, swigging from a transparent bottle containing kah-kah. "I can't sleep, and I can't think straight but when I have this then I am better and I can do anything."

She said she drank about "five or six bottles a day" and that this started from "about nine o'clock" in the morning.

While police frequently raid shebeens and shut them down, new shebeens open up just as quickly.

"[Kah-kah is] cheap to produce and this represents an income to these people," Colonel Abdoerahmaan Humphries told Sky News.

South African troops headed to embattled Central African Republic

By Greg Botelho and Nana Karikari-apau, CNN/January 7, 2013

(CNN) -- Hundreds of South African troops are headed to the embattled Central African Republic, where they will work alongside members of that nation's military who are trying to quash a rebellion.

South African President Jacob Zuma on Sunday announced the deployment of 400 troops "to render support in fulfillment of an international obligation of the Republic of South Africa towards the CAR."

Despite fits and starts in the peace process, the insurgency in the Central African Republic remains an active and real threat to the government of President Francois Bozize. On Saturday, rebels attacked two more towns -- having already seized several others, as well as threatening to head to the capital of Bangui -- according to a government official.

Zuma's directive does not indicate South African troops will fight rebels directly. Rather, the statement says they "will assist with capacity building of the CAR Defense Force and will also assist CAR with the planning and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes."

"The employment of members of (South Africa's military) to CAR is one of the efforts that South Africa is making to bring about peace and stability in the region," said the South African statement, which was released through government spokesman Mac Maharaj.

The crisis started in December, when the Seleka rebel coalition accused Bozize of reneging on a

peace deal and demanded he step down. They seized towns in the northern part of the landlocked country and threatened to march on Bangui.

Bozize has called on the international community, including the United States and France, to help stave off the rebellion.

The foreign ministers from the Economic Community of Central African States will meet Tuesday in Gabon's capital, Libreville, to set an agency for peace talks, said Placide Ibouanga Ndinga, a spokesman for the group.

By Thursday, the talks were expected to include the Seleka, opposition party officials, private sector representatives, U.N. officials and Bozize, according to Ndinga.

Still, some in the Central African Republic questioned the utility of such talks, if they occur as rebels continue to wage attacks.

"How can there be peace if the rebels are looting, raping and abducting our civilians?" said Jules Gauthier Ngbapo, a spokesman for Josue Binoua, minister of decentralization and territorial administration.

Ngbapo said that around 1 a.m. Saturday, rebels attacked the towns of Alindao and Kouango, which lie between Bangui and Bambari, a town it already had seized.

The rebels yelled to civilians, asking them to come out and promising that they'd protect them, the spokesman said. He accused the opposition fighters of "shooting randomly, destroying properties and ... raping civilians."

"Civilians are afraid, and most of them have fled the town and are now hiding in the forests," he added. "But the rebels are still patrolling the towns, waiting for the innocent people to come out."

CNN was unable to confirm the government claims about the occupation of the towns.

As the government scrambles to put down the rebellion, alarm is growing as children are separated from their relatives.

"Reliable sources have informed us that children are newly being recruited among their ranks. These reports are of serious concern," said Souleymane Diabate, the U.N. children agency's representative in the nation.

Armed groups are forcing people younger than 18 to fight, carry supplies and serve as sex slaves, the agency said last Friday.

Before the conflict started last month, 2,500 children were linked to various armed groups. That number is expected to rise as the recent conflict continues, officials said.

About 300,000 children have been affected by the rebellion, including family separation, sexual violence, displacement and lack of access to education and health facilities.

S. Africa Sends Troops to Central African Republic

By ANDREW MELDRUM , Associated Press/(AP)/ January 6, 2013

JOHANNESBURG

The South African presidency announced Sunday that is sending 400 army troops to Central African Republic to help the country's army as it faces a threat from a coalition of rebel groups.

Sending soldiers to Central African Republic is part of South Africa's efforts "to bring about peace and stability in the region," said the announcement by President Jacob Zuma's office.

Central African Republic's neighboring countries Cameroon, Gabon and Republic of Congo already have sent about 120 troops each to help stabilize the country confronted by the rebellion.

Chad, a longtime ally of President Francois Bozize's government, also has provided hundreds of forces who are fortifying the road to the capital, Bangui, to prevent rebels from reaching the seat of power, a city of 700,000.

The South African National Defense Force troops will "assist with capacity building of the CAR Defense Force and will also assist CAR with the planning and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and re-integration processes" to deal with the country's rebels, said Zuma's statement.

The rebels had pledged to halt their advance pending peace talks in Gabon that are due to start Tuesday. However, residents say rebels seized two more towns over the weekend, though they are not en route to the capital.

A dozen towns have come under rebel control since the rebel alliance calling itself Seleka began its offensive on Dec. 10.

Negotiations between the rebels and the Bozize government are set to begin in the nearby country of Gabon on Tuesday.

Associated Press writer Krista Larson contributed from Bangui

TANZANIA :

Tanzania: Mtwara Leaders Under Fire Over Gas Pipeline Dispute

By Pius Rugonzibwa/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/7 January 2013

MEMBERS of the Cabinet who are also Members of Parliament hailing from Mtwara Region have broken their silence, saying that local leaders are to blame for not educating Mtwara residents on the decision to build a natural gas pipeline from Mtwara to Dar es Salaam.

Ms Hawa Ghasia, the MP for Mtwara Rural and Minister in the President's Office responsible for Public Service Management and Mr George Mkuchika, the Newala legislator and Minister responsible for Good Governance, said that local leaders were to blame for not enlightening people

on the matter.

The two told the 'Daily News' that a lot of money was spent in the past to send a group of MPs and other leaders from Mtwara and Lindi regions abroad for a study tour but astonishingly they remained mum when they came back.

"The MPs were sent to Trinidad and Tobago and Thailand while the Lindi Regional Commissioner, his Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) and other leaders in the Local government were sent to Norway for a similar mission. "Why didn't they communicate back their findings?" asked Minister Ghasia.

According to her, all the political parties that persuade people to oppose plans to transport gas from Mtwara should bear in mind that they are misleading uninformed people on the matter. She added that these politicians have their own hidden agenda.

Minister Mkuchika said he was of the view that all government leaders in Lindi and Mtwara regions have to make sure they provide the education they acquired on gas investments to the people. He said that the leaders have been trained well and are expected to lead sensitization teams.

He added that it was not clear why Mtwara people believe that they will not benefit from the project while they have been told that the gas will benefit them for more than 200 years. "What will happen if every region that is home to a big national project demands 100 per cent project ownership?"

I think all the leaders here should make sure they provide the required education on this issue," he stressed. However, Mr Mkuchika was quick to add that apart from supporting the gas project, he was also of the view that Mtwara should benefit fully from it.

He also went as far as saying that the gas issue should not be regarded as a conflict involving the whole region. He cited the example of his constituency (Newala) where people had not complained because they were already educated on the matter.

Mr Mkuchika cautioned some politicians with vested interests in the dispute to stop confusing people. He added that although some MPs who went on the study tours differed on the matter, consensus on the matter must be reached for the welfare of the nation.

The Mtwara and Lindi Regional Commissioners could not be available for comment when contacted as they were reportedly in long meetings throughout the day with their respective Regional Police Commanders. A couple of days ago, hundreds of Mtwara residents held a peaceful demonstration opposing the construction of a gas pipeline from Mtwara to Dar es Salaam.

Their demonstrations caused a heated public argument on the matter. However, President Jakaya Kikwete and the Minister for Energy and Minerals, Prof. Sospeter Muhongo, offered clarification on the matter saying that the project will benefit all Tanzanians.

KENYA :

Kenya: Mudavadi Urges Kenyans to Pray for Peaceful Elections

By Laban Wanambisi/Capital FM (Nairobi)/6 January 2013

Bungoma — Amani Coalition presidential candidate Deputy Prime Minister Musalia Mudavadi has urged Kenyans to pray for peaceful elections and remain united before, during and after the forthcoming historic general elections.

Speaking on Sunday when he attended a church service at Webuye Catholic Church accompanied by New FORD Kenya leader Eugene Wamalwa, Mudavadi said past turbulence in the Country calls for Kenyans to pray for peaceful elections and also vote wisely to avoid a repeat of the violence experienced after 2007 elections by electing the Amani Coalition.

"Pray for our country but vote for Amani Coalition because the other outfits represent the past elections when we have experienced turbulence that threatened our country. We in Amani coalition stand for peace, unity of all Kenyans and offer an alternative peaceful leadership and not the polarizing political competition of our opponents," he reiterated.

Mudavadi said a vote for Amani will be a vote for a peaceful transition and stable Kenya adding that the other coalitions have very complicated names for the common man to understand and are meant to hide their true intentions of dividing the country.

"But here is Amani meaning peace, reconciliation, unity and stability that you understand and desire. I ask Kenyans to associate themselves with and vote for Amani and not fellows who will call each other names from day one in government," he said.

He appealed to residents of the region not to listen to propaganda by his opponents scared of his candidature.

"Some leaders fueled by ethnic hate have started misinformation that I am a Luhya leader only. They conveniently forget that western is the most cosmopolitan after Rift Valley and Nairobi. Why do want to discriminate the Teso, Sabaot, Kisii, Luo and Kikuyu who live happily here amongst the Luhya. We don't want your primitive ethnic politics exported here," Mudavadi cautioned.

He said the Amani Coalition offers all the people of Western region the greatest gift of the long time elusive unity to vote together as they have lived, draw respect in national politics and offer leadership to the country.

"I want to thank my brother Eugene for sacrificing his ambitions to support me. We will work together to unite Kenyans in the western region so as to earn respect and end being the laughing stalk in national politics," he told the congregation.

The trip to Bungoma County has come just a day after Wamalwa quit the presidential race in favour of Mudavadi who was endorsed as Presidential candidate for Amani Coalition that brought together UDF, New FORD Kenya, KANU and New Vision parties, among others.

A large contingent of western leaders accompanying the DPM include Ministers MPs Shoita Shitanda, George Khaniri and Manyala Keya; MPs Alfred Sambu, Bonni Khalwale, Musikari Kombi, Benjamin Washiali, Yusuf Chanzu; former MPs Mukhisa Kituyi and Kipruto Arap Kirwa; and Kenneth Lusaka Bungoma among many other Gubernatorial aspirants from the region.

Kenya: Raila and Partner Parties Unveil Nomination Process

By Maureen Waruinge/The Star/6 January 2013

The CORD alliance will conduct joint nominations for its partner parties ODM, Wiper and Ford Kenya on the 17th of this month. The coalition yesterday unveiled its nomination details and appointed members of the election board. Team leaders are urging Kenyans to engage actively in nominations saying it is an opportunity to pick leaders that have their interests at heart.

ANGOLA :

Angola truck accident kills 16, injures 3

presstv.ir/2013/01/07

A truck carrying illegal migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has flipped in Angola, killing 16 people and seriously injuring three others.

The illegal immigrants were travelling from the border post of Soyo, in Angola's northwest, to the capital Luanda, when the accident occurred on Sunday.

According to police chief Andre Massota of Angola's Zaire Province, the immigrants were hiding in the container of the truck. "The victims died of injuries and asphyxiation."

Massota added that it took the police two hours to open the container.

He also said the driver of the truck, who had charged the passengers \$200 (150 euros) for the ride, fled away after the accident.

In the past two weeks, over 30 migrants, most of whom are from the DRC, have been taken back to the border in Angola.

NT/HJL

AU/AFRICA :

Ties with Africa important for Iran: Salehi

Mon Jan 7, 2013 /presstv.ir

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi says the expansion of ties with the African continent is important for the Islamic Republic.

"Considering our affinities with this continent, we should place Africa among the priorities of our foreign policy and solemnly take measures in support of this continent," Salehi said in an address to a gathering of Iranian expatriates in the Ghanaian capital of Accra on Sunday.

The Iranian foreign minister also called for "effective measures" to promote the ties between Iran and the countries in the African continent, in particular Ghana.

Ghana's economic growth heralds a "bright future" for the country, he said.

During his visit to Ghana, Salehi is set to meet with senior Ghanaian officials, hold talks on the expansion of Tehran-Accra relations and discuss the latest regional and international developments.

He will also participate in the inauguration ceremony of President-elect John Dramani Mahama.

Thirteen African heads of state, one prime minister, two vice presidents and 18 government foreign delegations are expected to attend Mahama's swearing-in ceremony at Independence Square in Accra on January 7.

In a meeting with Benin's Foreign Minister Nassirou Bako-Arifari earlier on Sunday, Salehi noted that as the current president of the African Union, Benin can play a significant role in international developments.

Salehi praised the enhanced relations between Tehran and Porto-Novo, and called for the further expansion of cooperation between the two countries.

Bako-Arifari, for his part, lauded Iran's policy toward Africa and Benin in particular and said, "as a regional power" and as the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Iran can promote the level of diplomatic ties between countries.

The two officials also discussed the latest developments in the African continent, including those of Mali and the Central African Republic.

On Saturday, Salehi began his tour of three African countries, namely Benin, Ghana and Burkina Faso, in order to expand the Islamic Republic's relations with these countries.

YH/HMV/HJL

Congo-Kinshasa: AU Summit to Discuss DRC Crisis

By Edwin Musoni/The New Times/7 January 2013

The Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Lamtane Ramamra, has said the upcoming AU summit will focus on the ongoing crisis in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

African Heads of State and Government are expected to meet in Ethiopia later this month for the 20th summit of the African Union.

Ramamra, who arrived in Rwanda from DRC on Friday for a four-day visit disclosed this after visiting Ntarama Genocide memorial site, where he paid tribute to Genocide victims before visiting Rwanda Military Academy, Gako in Bugesera district, yesterday.

As part of his visit to Rwanda, the diplomat met with several government officials, including politicians and military officers with whom they discussed a range of issues, mainly focused on

DRC and Rwanda's role in peacekeeping missions.

"I am learning a lot about the crisis in the Eastern DRC which will help us to contribute as AU to resolve the underlying causes of the conflicting situation in this region. And also for us to be in a better position to interact with the UN and other key partners especially as we prepare for the AU summit which will largely focus on eastern DRC and the way to promote peace and stability in the Great Lakes region," he said.

Ramamra, however, refrained from divulging details of his discussions with the Rwandan officials.

But, he said his visit mainly focused on how to improve the situation in the Eastern DRC, including the progress of the peace talks going on in Kampala, Uganda which resumed last week.

The M23 rebels started fighting in April, last year, the rebels later captured Goma, but pulled out after the Kinshasa government agreed to hold talks with them. Several options have since been considered to restore peace in the war torn country, including the deployment of a Neutral International Force.

Deploying neutral force

According to Ramamra, the AU is looking forward to deployment of the Neutral Force and finding ways how it will work with the United Nations Mission for the stabilisation of DRC (MONUSCO), so that both forces can work together efficiently and make an impact on the ground.

Without mentioning the dates, Ramamra said that the senior staffs and the commander of the Neutral Force are likely to be deployed 'in a matter of days.'

"We are also looking at developing a political framework that would assist all countries concerned in addressing the root causes of the situation and making sure that we succeed in coming up with a lasting and final solution," he said.

When asked to comment on whether the UN Security Council sanctions against the M23 rebel leaders could affect the peace talks he said.

"I believe that the sooner the discussion in Kampala reaches a successful conclusion the better because that would give a strong and healthy foundation to move forward and look at the lasting security arrangements and more importantly to the political framework... the Security Council is a master of its own programmes and agendas but on the AU level we believe we need synergies and we are certainly convinced that our next AU summit will give the right path to this process."

Meanwhile, Ramamra commended Rwanda's contribution to international peace through the provision of peacekeeping forces.

Rwanda is the sixth largest contributor of peacekeepers to the UN, with about 3,200 soldiers in the United Nations African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur, (UNAMID) and 850 in South Sudan under the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The country also maintains about 500 police officers deployed in Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leon, Sudan, and South Sudan and Ivory Coast.

FM: Iran Committed to Expand Ties with Africa

Monday 07 Jan 2013/english.farsnews.com

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, who is in Ghana on the second leg of his tour of Africa, underlined Tehran's determination to further boost ties and cooperation with African states.

Addressing Iranian nationals residing in the Ghana's capital city of Accra on Sunday evening, Salehi said relations with Africa set a priority for Iran's foreign policy.

"Iran is committed to expand relations with African countries including Ghana," the Iranian minister stated, and added, "Despite pressures, Iran has made good progress in various fields of science, including the launch of satellites, peaceful nuclear energy and animal cloning."

Salehi noted that Ghana has a good percentage of growth and there is a bright economic future for it.

During his stay in Accra, Salehi will meet Ghana's senior officials to discuss the latest regional and international developments as well as bilateral relations.

Tehran has prioritized promotion of its economic and political ties with the African states and the country is now considered as one of the African Union's strategic partners.

Tehran's efforts to boost ties and cooperation with Africa have led to its acceptance as an observing member of the African Union (AU), where it has shown an active presence in the AU summit meetings.

Les Coptes d’Egypte célèbrent Noël dans l’inquiétude

06/01/fr.euronews.com

Premier Noël sans Moubarak et sous un pouvoir issu des frères musulmans pour les coptes d’Egypte.

Cette communauté – la plus importante de la chrétienté dans le monde arabe – fédère à elle seule entre 6 et 10% des Egyptiens et a toujours été protégée à l’époque de l’ancien raïs.

Mais le climat a radicalement changé depuis l’arrivée au pouvoir de Mohamed Morsi, pas vraiment en odeur de sainteté avec cette frange de la population, même s’il a toujours pris soin de se présenter comme le “président de tous les Egyptiens”.

Les Coptes s’inquiètent notamment de la multiplication des menaces à leur égard émanant des islamistes radicaux.

“Les membres de la communauté copte ont de sérieuses réserves et préoccupations au sujet de la constitution et de ce qui se cache entre les lignes de ce texte qui pourrait fondamentalement affecter leur vie, affirme Youssef Sidhom, rédacteur en chef de l’hebdomadaire de la communauté copte égyptienne Watani.”

Un sentiment de malaise qui ne doit rien au hasard car les affrontements entre musulmans radicaux et chrétiens n'ont cessé de se multiplier depuis la chute de Moubarak.

Le 1er janvier 2011, un attentat attribué à Al-Qaida avait causé la mort de 23 personnes à la sortie d'une église d'Alexandrie, peu de temps après la messe du Nouvel An.

RCA: la rébellion Séléka fait état de pressions de la CEEAC pour aller à Libreville (porte-parole)
(Xinhua)/06.01.2013

Eric Massi, porte-parole et coordonnateur international de la coalition rebelle Séléka à Paris en France, a reconnu samedi des pressions de la Communauté économique des Etats de l'Afrique centrale (CEEAC, organisation régionale à laquelle la République centrafricaine appartient) pour la participation à une réunion prévue dimanche à Libreville au Gabon.

Composée de l'Angola, du Burundi, du Cameroun, du Congo, du Gabon, de la Guinée équatoriale, de la RCA, de la République démocratique du Congo (RDC), de Sao Tomé-et-Principe et du Tchad, la CEEAC, actuellement présidée par le président tchadien Idriss Deby Itno, a entrepris une médiation pour une solution de crise entre le pouvoir de François Bozizé et la rébellion qui menace de le renverser.

Malgré les déclarations d'intention des deux camps, l'organisation régionale peine à les mettre d'accord pour un calendrier des négociations prévues dans la capitale gabonaise. Avant une réunion des ministres des Affaires étrangères mardi, une rencontre préalable a été programmée dimanche avec les responsables de la rébellion.

"La CEEAC a mis la pression sur la Séléka sur le terrain pour qu'ils acceptent d'aller à Libreville", a déclaré à Xinhua samedi Eric Massi, qui a précisé n'avoir par été contacté lui-même et d'avoir simplement eu connaissance par voie de presse du communiqué de presse de la CEEAC annonçant la réunion de dimanche.

"Le général Garcia (secrétaire général adjoint de la CEEAC en charge du dossier, NDLR) a privilégié les contacts de terrain", a-t-il expliqué. Mais, a-t-il assuré, "on est en train d'harmoniser nos positions".

Eric Massi a réitéré l'exigence du départ du président Bozizé, au pouvoir depuis 2003 suite à un coup d'Etat contre Ange-Félix Patassé, élu démocratiquement quatre ans auparavant et décédé en 2001.

Selon lui, "la Séléka, les partis politiques et le peuple centrafricain veulent qu'un seul point soit discuté : c'est le départ de François Bozizé", accusé de se réarmer dans une option de reprise des hostilités.

Le Séléka fait pression avant les négociations

6 janvier 2013/liberation.fr

Retour sur . la rébellion en Centrafrique

Les rebelles centrafricains de l'alliance Séléka ont pris deux nouvelles villes samedi, juste avant le

début des négociations organisées à partir d'aujourd'hui à Libreville, au Gabon, entre le pouvoir, la rébellion et l'opposition. Alindao et Kouango sont deux petites villes éloignées de la capitale Bangui et elles n'ont pas d'intérêt stratégique. Mais leur conquête, juste avant le début des négociations au Gabon, est une démonstration de force de l'alliance Séléka, qui affirme avoir repris les...

Egypt Cabinet reshuffled as economic concerns mount

By Jeffrey Fleishman, Los Angeles Times/January 6, 2013

President Mohamed Morsi replaces his finance and interior ministers a day before meeting with the IMF over an anticipated \$4.8-billion loan.

CAIRO — President Mohamed Morsi replaced Egypt's finance and interior ministers Sunday in a Cabinet reshuffle aimed at calming growing economic and security pressures over unemployment, poverty and plummeting foreign capital reserves.

The nation's dire financial predicament — the Egyptian currency has tumbled to new lows against the dollar — is likely to prove Morsi's biggest challenge, despite its having been overshadowed by political unrest and the passage of an Islamist-backed constitution. The president and his Muslim Brotherhood party have yet to convince foreign investors and working-class Egyptians that they can rescue the economy.

The Cabinet changes, which also strengthened the Brotherhood's hold on the government, were announced a day before Morsi was to meet with representatives of the International Monetary Fund over an anticipated \$4.8-billion loan to Cairo. Morsi has promised tax increases and food and energy subsidy cuts to prove he is willing to enact unpopular austerity measures.

Finance Minister Mumtaz Saeed was replaced by El-Morsi Hegazy, an expert on finance linked to Islamic principles and a professor at the University of Alexandria. Interior Minister Ahmed Gamal Eldin was replaced by one of his deputies, Gen. Mohamed Ibrahim. Morsi has been suspicious of the Interior Ministry, which controls domestic security forces that still include officers who were loyal to deposed President Hosni Mubarak.

Eight other new ministers, three of them Brotherhood members, were also named by Morsi in his effort to gain confidence from a disillusioned public.

Over the last two months, Morsi has expanded his powers and hurried through a much-criticized Islamist-backed constitution. The moves resulted in protests by Egyptians who said he was advancing the Brotherhood's agenda at the expense of a country whose foreign currency reserves have fallen by more than half, to about \$15 billion.

Egypt's central bank has called that figure a "critical minimum" level.

Morsi contends that his actions have been necessary to open the way for parliamentary elections and to allow him to press his policies without interference from Mubarak-era holdovers. But Brotherhood members have acknowledged that their political clout will suffer further if the economy is not quickly mended.

"There is no chance for the president's reshuffle to bring back people's trust in the government and

economy," said Magdy Sobhi, a political economist with the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. "While the new finance minister has done extensive research on Islamic finance, he has no political or governmental experience. You have severe budget constraints and debt. The country is in a terrible economic situation."

He added: "If the IMF deal isn't closed quickly, that means we won't be able to obtain loans or aid from other nations. In this situation, bankruptcy is not far off."

Morsi's erratic handling of the economy has symbolized the Brotherhood's clumsy and volatile course toward political Islam after 30 years of Mubarak's autocratic secular rule. In December, the president retreated from a program of tax increases to avoid a public backlash ahead of the constitutional referendum. That delayed the IMF loan and raised questions about the soundness of Morsi's economic strategies.

Months of political turmoil and deadly street protests have further shaken the economy, leading to labor strikes and an ailing tourism industry. Many in this country, where more than 40% of the population lives on \$2 a day, were expecting better economic times after a popular uprising unseated Mubarak almost two years ago.

Fearing further devaluation of the Egyptian pound, which on Sunday traded at 6.45 against the dollar, many Egyptians have begun buying dollars, prompting banks to limit the practice. And the Brotherhood has indicated the financial turmoil is far from over.

"The challenges require concerted efforts and I call on all political powers to avoid their differences and work with the new government in order to cross this economic crisis peacefully," Saad Katatni, head of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, said in a statement.

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Morsi Expands Brotherhood Influence in Egyptian Cabinet

VOA News/January 06, 2013

Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Morsi has expanded the number of Muslim Brotherhood ministers in his Cabinet as part of a reshuffle aimed at improving the government's handling of an economic crisis.

Ten Egyptian ministers were sworn in on Sunday, three of them members of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood movement. A Brotherhood spokesman said the reshuffle increases the number of Brotherhood Cabinet ministers from five to eight.

Morsi also appointed a Brotherhood-allied expert in Islamic finance as the new finance minister. El-Morsi Hegazy replaces former finance minister Mumtaz el-Said, whom the Brotherhood had accused of being too close to the Egyptian military, which ruled the country for more than a year before handing power to Morsi in June.

In another key appointment, Morsi named a new interior minister, Mohammed Ibrahim, to replace Ahmed Gamal Eddin, who was criticized for his handling of last month's violent street protests for and against Egypt's new Islamist-backed constitution.

Morsi promised a Cabinet reshuffle last month as part of a plan to restore confidence in the economy, which has seen a slump in foreign tourism and investment due to political instability since the 2011 ouster of longtime president Hosni Mubarak in a popular uprising.

Egypt also has been suffering a currency crisis that has seen the Egyptian pound weaken to eight-year lows against the dollar. Egypt's central bank has spent billions of dollars to support the value of the pound since 2011, leaving its foreign reserves at what it calls a "critical" level. In a report Sunday, the central bank said Egypt's foreign reserves were just above \$15 billion in December, a slight decline from the previous month.

Morsi also is under pressure to raise taxes and introduce other austerity measures in exchange for a \$4.8 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund. An IMF official is due in Cairo on Monday to discuss terms of the loan with Egyptian officials. Egypt reached a preliminary agreement on the loan in November but delayed finalizing the deal last month as it focussed on dealing with the protests over the constitution.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

Washington : Hillary Clinton de retour aux affaires

le 07.01.2013/leparisien.fr

Hillary Clinton reprend ce lundi ses fonctions à la tête du département d'Etat américain. La ministre américaine des Affaires étrangères était absente de la scène publique depuis un mois en raison de problèmes de santé.

Elle a quitté l'hôpital en milieu de semaine dernière. Plusieurs rendez-vous sont prévus à son agenda cette semaine. Les premiers se tiendront dès ce lundi. Jeudi, notamment, elle doit rencontrer le président afghan Hamid Karzaï et dîner avec lui.

Virus gastrique, commotion cérébrale après un évanouissement dû à une forte déshydratation, hospitalisée pour un caillot sanguin dans le cerveau le 30 décembre... Les conseillers d'Hillary Clinton ont multiplié les annonces peu rassurantes depuis début décembre. Des rumeurs ont même fait état d'un accident d'avion en Iran. Malgré cela, ses médecins ont toujours affiché leur optimisme.

Une autre explication avancée pour justifier son absence était son audition prévue devant le Congrès, le 20 décembre, sur l'attaque contre le consulat de Benghazi le 11 septembre. L'ambassadeur américain en Libye y avait, entre autres, perdu la vie. Des failles dans la sécurité de la mission américaine avaient été mises au jour par une commission d'enquête.

Hillary Clinton s'était déjà déclarée «épuisée» par le rythme de ses déplacements ces quatre dernières années. Avec plus de 1,5 million de km parcourus en avion, 112 pays visités et 400 jours

cumulés passés à voyager, elle détient le record absolu de tous les secrétaires d'Etat américains.

John Kerry s'apprête à prendre la relève

John Kerry succédera dans quelques semaines à Hillary Clinton. Le président Barack Obama a désigné celui qui fut le candidat démocrate malheureux à la présidentielle de 2004, face à George W. Bush, pour diriger la diplomatie américaine. Le sénateur Kerry, 69 ans, est depuis quatre ans à la tête de la prestigieuse commission des Affaires étrangères au Sénat. «Fils de diplomate, John Kerry s'est en quelque sorte préparé toute sa vie à occuper ces fonctions», a déclaré à son sujet le président américain. Hillary Clinton a déjà salué en son successeur «un homme d'Etat respecté à travers le monde».

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

Congo Brazzaville: l'ambassadeur est rappelé au pays, la N-VA parle de règlement de compte le dimanche 6 janvier 2013/rtbf.be

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères Didier Reynders a rappelé au pays l'ambassadeur de Belgique au Congo Brazzaville, Jan De Bruyne, pour être sorti de son obligation de réserve en s'exprimant trop durement à l'égard du pays hôte. Le sénateur N-VA Karl Vanlouwe n'y voit rien d'autre qu'un règlement de comptes.

"Je l'ai rappelé au pays. Il ne quitte pas la diplomatie, mais il ne représentera plus la Belgique à Brazzaville, car pour nous représenter dans un pays, il faut être accepté par les autorités de ce pays, et j'ai bien senti que ce n'était plus le cas", a indiqué Didier Reynders dans une interview relayée par Belga.

L'ambassadeur qui ne prononçait jamais le mot "Belgique"

Jan De Bruyne, étiqueté N-VA par la presse, a présenté fin décembre à Brazzaville une mission organisée par l'agence à l'exportation flamande FIT et à laquelle se sont jointes les agences wallonne et bruxelloise. Ne s'exprimant qu'en néerlandais sans citer une seule fois la Belgique, il s'en est pris au pays hôte, critiquant son passé, ainsi que son président, selon des témoins.

Un discours uniquement en néerlandais

Jan De Bruyne s'est défendu en affirmant qu'il n'avait fait son discours qu'en néerlandais car il n'y avait que trois francophones et que ceux-ci avaient déclaré parler le néerlandais.

Il a démenti avoir tenu des propos choquants et insultants et réfuté avoir parlé de pays corrompu ou avoir critiqué la femme du président. Pour Didier Reynders, la courtoisie linguistique nécessitait au minimum quelques mots en français.

"C'était une mission de l'agence flamande à l'exportation, mais ce n'est pas une raison pour ne pas parler aussi un peu français, surtout là", a relevé Didier Reynders.

"Il n'a pas voulu le faire, ce qui est une faute". "Le deuxième élément, plus grave, c'est de sortir totalement de son obligation de réserve en s'exprimant de façon publique aussi durement, parce que ça casse le lien avec le pays", a justifié le chef de la diplomatie belge.

Un règlement de compte selon la N-VA

"C'est comme un règlement de comptes", a affirmé pour sa part le sénateur N-VA Karl Vanlouwe. L'ambassadeur est sanctionné sur base d'allégations et n'a même pas eu l'occasion d'être entendu", a affirmé le sénateur nationaliste flamand.

"La diplomatie en Belgique est fortement politisée. Les meilleurs postes à l'étranger reviennent à des diplomates de partis traditionnels", a ajouté Karl Vanlouwe. Le diplomate avait intenté avec succès une action au Conseil d'Etat contre des nominations d'ambassadeurs par les Affaires étrangères pour des postes qu'il convoitait.

Belga

CHINA/AFRICA :

INDIA/AFRICA :

Where is South Africa's Jantar Mantar moment?

Rebecca Davis/dailymaverick.co.za/7 January 2013

The brutal gang rape and murder of a New Delhi 23-year-old has sparked global condemnation and top-level political talks in India about urgently amending rape laws. It has also seen thousands of protesters gather each week since the crime at the 18th century masonry observatory of Jantar Mantar. What would it take in South Africa to provoke such a response?

“Reaction to the death of a young Indian woman who suffered organ failure after being gang raped reverberated beyond Asia to South Africa,” ran an AFP article carried by a number of international publications last week. “News of the 23-year-old’s death prompted a groundswell of anger and a good deal of introspection about why South Africa persistently has some of the highest incidences of rape in the world.”

That might be the case – though there’s little indication that this “groundswell” has swollen much

off the ground, beyond some mutterings on social media and a petition started by India-origin South Africans in support of the Delhi protestors. But as welcome as such a catalyst would be, wouldn't it be a little unnerving if it took a despicable event in India to finally kickstart a proper national conversation about rape in South Africa?

The New Delhi gang rape was horrific: an attack so ferocious that the 23 year-old paramedical student was found with only 5% of her intestines left inside of her. It is fitting that the attack should have prompted such an outpouring of outrage, both domestically and abroad. It is also entirely appropriate that the response from Indian politicians and security officials has been prompt and vocal (though no doubt influenced by the pressure of public protests).

The day after the gang rape, the Indian parliament saw MPs from both houses put aside their regular business to discuss the case and demand punishment for those responsible (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-20765869>). Politicians like Sonia Gandhi, president of the governing Congress Party, cancelled their New Year celebrations as a mark of respect to the murdered young woman. The army also cancelled all official celebrations. An Indian parliamentary delegation to South Africa has been called off.

An investigation into the rape and murder was quickly organised: led by a retired Delhi High Court judge, it has been tasked with identifying any kind of negligence which may have facilitated the attacks. Legal reforms for rape trials are being mooted, including the establishment of fast-track courts to give judgement within 30 days. Some want to go further, calling for the chemical castration of rapists or the death penalty.

It has been announced that from now on, there will be a minimum of 10 female constables at every New Delhi police station to assist with the reporting of rape cases. In at least one Indian state, a website has been set up to publish the names and addresses of convicted rapists, in the hope of using Indian sensitivity to public embarrassments as a disincentive to rape.

By all accounts, these measures are long overdue in a country with a serious sexual violence problem, where the invidious euphemism "Eve-teasing" is given to the sexual harassment of women. In India, 24,206 cases of rape were reported in 2011, in a country of roughly 1,21 billion people. Women's rights groups believe this reflects only a tenth of the number of actual rapes taking place. One reason for the under-reporting of rape in India was exposed last month, when a 17 year-old girl committed suicide after police allegedly tried to persuade her to drop a complaint of gang rape and either accept a cash offer or marry one of her rapists.

In 2011 in South Africa, the number of reported rapes rose to 56,272: more than double the Indian rate. Gender activists here also believe this number is far lower than the actual figure. Yet despite a number of headline-grabbing atrocities, the country has yet to have anything approaching a Jantar Mantar moment. In April of last year, a 17 year-old mentally handicapped Soweto teenager was gang raped by seven young men who filmed her screaming and begging for mercy. The case only came to the police's attention after the video of the rape began to circulate at Joburg schools.

Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities Lulu Xingwana condemned the attack, asking the country to "spare a thought for this young girl". Government spokesperson Jimmy Manyi told the media that "Cabinet calls on the law enforcement to ensure that the full might of the law is implemented". Op eds were written denouncing South Africa's rape culture. The crime trended on Twitter. Yet within a few weeks the matter appeared to have been forgotten.

2013 has only been around for a week, and already the litany of horrific South African rapes is chilling.

On 2 January, Butterworth: a man is arrested for the rape of a 13-year-old girl. Police reported that he raped her in a field after she refused his offer of a R2 coin.

On 3 January, Soweto: a man is arrested for the rape of a 17-year-old girl in a shebeen in full view of other customers.

On 3 January, Butterworth again: two men appear in court for the rape of an 18 year-old, one of the men's sister. Police reported that her brother invited her into his room and raped her. "After he finished his friend came in and raped her also," a police captain explained.

On 4 January, Kimberley: a man is arrested for the rape of an 82-year-old woman.

And then there's Limpopo. In the last week of 2012, six girls were raped. The youngest was three years old. Another was a seven year-old raped by her father. In the wake of these crimes, Limpopo police issued some "hints" to be adhered to over the festive season.

"Avoid walking alone during the night at secluded places," the notice read. Don't accept drinks from strangers. Avoid frequenting liquor outlets. Avoid hitchhiking. Elderly women should not be left alone at homes.

These "hints" are no doubt sensible in many contexts. But, as usual, they place all the burden of avoiding being raped on women. They say as much explicitly: "Females are therefore sensitised to be vigilant to avoid being victims of rape". There is no attempt to appeal to men not to rape women in the first place. Rape is presented as something close to inevitable, like bad weather, and it is up to women to take the necessary precautions to avoid it.

Women should not go to liquor outlets, just in case someone there decides to rape them. Elderly women need to be guarded at all times, just in case someone breaks in and rapes them. (In October, it was announced that adult daycare centres were to be set up in KwaZulu-Natal to protect grannies from rape.) This is the way our culture handles an epidemic of sexual violence: by asking women to live fearful, circumscribed, cloistered lives.

The Limpopo police "hints" also fall short on another score: they fail to take into account the fact that home may be one of the least safe places for South African girls and women. The seven year-old Limpopo girl raped by her father was not hanging around a shebeen. The 18 year-old Butterworth teenager was raped in her brother's bedroom, rather than being abducted while hitchhiking.

What will it take for South Africa to have its own Jantar Mantar moment? If the gang rape of a mentally handicapped 17 year old failed to get thousands on the streets in protest, what will? It is almost impossible to imagine what level of atrocity would have to be breached in a country where octogenarians and toddlers are raped weekly. Even a high-profile victim likely wouldn't do it: this is the country, after all, where the president's own first wife – Sizakele Zuma – reported being raped by four men at Nkandla in 1999.

In South Africa, as has been the case all over the world, the rape and murder of the young New Delhi women, and its aftermath, has dominated the news for some weeks. The most fitting tribute to

her memory, however, would be to apply the same kind of public pressure, and political impetus, to handling the long list of sexual crimes which take place in our own country every week. DM

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

Brazil announces 'audit' to curb mad cow fears

Reported by AFP/Monday, January 7, 2013

Brazil's agriculture ministry announced Sunday a top-to-bottom "audit" of its cattle industry as the world's top beef exporter tries to stave off a growing crisis over a case of mad cow disease.

"We will review all procedures to be sure we are doing everything necessary," Celio Porto, international relations secretary for the agriculture minister, told the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper.

"It's like an audit by the ministry of agriculture on state services," Porto said, adding that it would follow guidelines set by the Paris-based World Organization for Animal Health.

Japan, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan and China have suspended all beef imports from Brazil in connection with an atypical case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) that was confirmed last month in an animal that died in 2010 in the southern state of Parana.

Five other countries have imposed some restrictions on beef over the same case.

Brazilian officials insist the case poses no risk whatsoever to public health or to animal hygiene and have not ruled out complaining to the World Trade Organization over the restrictions.

Between January and October, Brazil, with nearly 200 million head of cattle, exported one million tons of beef, the agriculture ministry said. Major customers were Russia, China and Hong Kong.

More than 190,000 cases of mad cow disease have been detected in the European Union since it was first diagnosed in Britain in 1986, forcing the destruction of millions of cows.

More than 200 people around the world are believed to have died, most of them in Britain, from the human variant of the disease.

Scientists believe the disease was caused by using infected cow parts as a component in feed for other cattle.

Authorities believe eating meat from infected animals can trigger the human variant of the fatal brain-wasting disease.

EN BREF , CE 07 Janvier 2013 ... AGNEWS/DAM,NY, 07/01/2013

