



[World body admits it should have done more to prevent 2010-2012 tragedy, finding half of those who died were children. Almost 260,000 people, half of them young children, died of hunger during the last famine in Somalia, according to a UN report that admits the world body should have done more to prevent the tragedy. The toll is much higher than was feared at the time of the 2010-2012 food crisis in the troubled Horn of Africa country and also exceeds the 220,000 who starved to death in a 1992 famine, according to the findings.]

BURUNDI :

Liberté de presse : sauvée au Togo, menacée en Tunisie et au Burundi

jeudi 2 mai 2013/Écrit par Léonce Gamaï /lanouvelletribune.info

03 mai 2013. Journée mondiale de la liberté de presse. En Afrique, si des pays doivent faire preuve de plus d'attention dans le cadre du traditionnel bilan sur l'état de la liberté de presse, ce sont, entre autres, la Tunisie, le Burundi et le Togo. Et pourquoi ? Tableau.

Tunisie : lois à combattre

En Tunisie, une nouvelle loi en vue sur les medias, fait planer l'Épée de Damoclès sur la liberté de presse. C'est un projet de loi présenté à l'Assemblée nationale constituante par le Congrès pour la République, un allié du parti islamiste Ennahda au pouvoir. Le texte prévoit des peines allant de 3 mois à 3 ans de prison pour quiconque critiquerait le Président de la République, les membres du gouvernement, ainsi que les instances relevant de leur pouvoir.» Il y a aussi l'article 21 de la nouvelle Constitution en cours d'élaboration, qui vise la restriction de la liberté de presse. Selon nos confrères de Rfi, reprenant des propos, cet article «favorise le retour de la censure et la création d'une instance de contrôle et de surveillance équivalente au ministère de l'Information sous un régime totalitaire.»

Tout porte à croire, selon des observateurs, que la question de la liberté de presse telle que traitée par la Troïka au pouvoir, chapeauté par le parti islamiste Ennahda, est l'une des grosses désillusions de la Révolution du Jasmin. Avec l'environnement actuel et ces nouveaux textes en cours d'élaboration, on a l'impression que les méthodes anti-liberté de presse de l'ère Ben Ali n'ont pas disparu. Elles sont juste remodelées. La période post-révolution est marquée par une montée de la violence et des agressions contre les journalistes, qui ont pourtant joué gros dans le départ de Ben Ali. "Le secteur de l'information et les journalistes sont plus que jamais menacés par les tentatives du pouvoir de restreindre les libertés par le biais de la loi", a déclaré à l'Afp Nėjiba Hamrouni, présidente du Syndicat national des journalistes tunisiens.

En réponse à ce climat hostile à la liberté de presse, les syndicats et associations de journalistes, soutenus par la société civile, organisent une grande mobilisation ce 03 mai, pour protester contre la menace qui plane sur la liberté d'expression. Ils le feront via une nouvelle coalition (journalistes acteurs de la société civile) créée pour défendre la liberté de presse.

Burundi : ne promulguiez pas, M. le Président !

Au Burundi, chez Pierre Nkurunziza, l'on n'est pas loin du sort réservé à la liberté d'expression en Tunisie. Le Sénat burundais a adopté, le 19 avril, un projet de loi qui définit de nouvelles infractions liées aux métiers de la presse, et prévoit des amendes exorbitantes pour les journalistes qui les commettraient, a-t-on appris d'Amnesty international.

La nouvelle loi, en attente d'être promulguée par le président Pierre Nkurunziza restreint le droit de couvrir des sujets liés à la sécurité publique ou à la sûreté nationale, et de diffuser des informations qui menacent l'économie ou insultent le président. Tout manquement pourrait valoir au journaliste une amende pouvant aller jusqu'à six millions de francs burundais (environ 3 760 dollars des États-Unis.) Pis, Le projet de loi tel qu'il est actuellement rédigé pourrait rendre les journalistes passibles de poursuites pénales, uniquement pour avoir fait leur travail, a indiqué Amnesty International. Dont le directeur Afrique, Netsanet Belay, a déclaré que : «La liberté d'expression au Burundi est gravement menacée par cette loi répressive, qui se prête aux abus, et place les journalistes à la merci des autorités.» C'est pourquoi, il demande au Président Nkurunziza de «rejeter ce projet de loi et de veiller à ce que les journalistes soient en mesure de travailler librement, sans que pèse sur eux la menace d'une action en justice. »

Si elle est promulguée, cette loi viendra en réalité aggraver le sort des journalistes dans un pays où ils sont déjà exposés aux actes de harcèlement et d'intimidation et aux arrestations arbitraires, uniquement en raison de leur travail.

Togo : De justesse

Au Togo, le pire pour la liberté de presse a été de justesse évité. Et ce à cause de la pression des journalistes dont les membres de la Cour Constitutionnelle semblent avoir entendu le cri de cœur. Chez ce voisin (du Bénin) de l'Ouest, une nouvelle loi organique de la Haute autorité de l'audiovisuelle et de la communication, chargée de réguler et protéger la liberté de presse, renforce ses pouvoirs et lui donne même le droit d'interdire un journal. Les acteurs des médias du pays, ayant vu le danger pointer à l'horizon, ont manifesté, fait des journées presse morte, pour désapprouver le nouveau texte et demander aux autorités de revenir sur leur décision.

En mars, la Cour Constitutionnelle togolaise a cassé le texte, faisant constater que «les articles 58, 60, cinquième et sixième tirets, 62, dernier tiret, 63, troisième et quatrième tirets, 64 et 67, de la loi organique adoptée le 19 février 2013, portant modification de la loi organique n°2009-029 du 22 décembre 2009 relative à la HAAC , ne sont pas conformes à la Constitution"

Le cas togolais devrait peut-être servir d'exemple aux journalistes béninois. D'autant plus que dans ce pays qualifié de laboratoire de la démocratie, sans aucune grille de sanction préétablie, la Haute autorité de l'audiovisuelle et de la communication se donne le droit d'interdire un journal, sans même recourir à la justice.

RWANDA :

Bond yields too low? There's always Rwanda

Reuters/ By Carolyn Cohn/May 3, 2013

LONDON (Reuters) - Last summer, euro zone member Spain was struggling to borrow money for 10 years at a yield below 7 percent. Last week, Rwanda had no trouble.

Rock-bottom interest rates in the developed world have left investors scrambling for yield, while economies in the developing world are eager to raise capital to boost their economies and reduce their dependence on international aid.

The result in the past few years has been a frenzy of unfamiliar names issuing dollar debt, and finding huge demand.

Investors may regard any kind of debt as a safer harbour than equities, shrugging off specific country risk.

Latest was Rwanda, still recovering from the 1994 genocide. Orders for the East African country's debut dollar bond last week reached \$3.5 billion, more than 8 times the bond's issue size.

"In a market where you constantly get burnt trading fundamentals, traders are going to the other extreme, ignoring fundamentals and just looking for yield," said Manik Narain, emerging markets strategist at UBS.

"It's really reaching bubble-like proportions."

Single-B rated Rwanda issued dollar debt at a yield of 6.875 percent, paying not much more than euro zone member Slovenia, which issued 10-year debt on Thursday at 6 percent.

Rwanda's yield is below the 7 percent threshold which investment grade-rated Spain briefly breached last July, before the European Central Bank's OMT bond-buying plan helped to dampen yields.

And Rwanda is not alone. Other debut or infrequent borrowers to issue debt in the last two years span the continents, including Bolivia, Nigeria, Mongolia and Zambia. Bolivia issued a 10-year bond at 4.875 percent. Zambia paid 5.625 percent.

Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea are expected to issue maiden dollar bonds soon, while previous borrowers such as Panama have been adventurous in maturity, issuing a 40-year bond last week.

With the Bank of Japan the latest developed world bank to print money, keeping official rates and yields at low levels, it doesn't take much to make the yield attractive on a frontier market bond.

"You add a spread for liquidity or ratings, you are still looking at borrowing costs of 6-7-8 percent. That's affordable," said Stuart Culverhouse, chief economist at frontier markets broker Exotix.

"Yields are so low because policy rates are so low."

Exotix estimates 35 frontier sovereigns have issued dollar or euro debt since the start of 2012 totalling \$32 billion, including at least nine first-time borrowers.

Investors such as pension funds looking to cover liabilities are finding that even mainstream emerging market debt is yielding on average below 5 percent, near record lows, according to JP

Morgan's widely-watched emerging sovereign bond index.

EMERGING ALLOCATIONS

Investors are also slowly increasing their allocations for emerging markets, to match their share of global growth.

Goldman Sachs predicts developed markets' share of global GDP to shrink to 31 percent by 2050, from 63 percent in 2011.

"Sources of capital have had a rotation into emerging markets and by extension frontier markets, that has been playing out for the last couple of years and may be expected to continue," said Culverhouse. "Many people like the story."

Outstanding emerging market government and corporate debt is currently estimated at around \$10 trillion, a fraction of the \$100 trillion estimated for the global bond market.

Frontier debt is also finding buyers because of supply shortages due to overall redemptions of debt by more conventional emerging market borrowers.

JP Morgan forecasts sovereign issuance for global emerging market borrowers at \$80 billion this year, but that figure drops to \$11 billion on a net basis, more than three quarters of which is frontier debt.

And as aid budgets come under pressure in many developed markets, poor countries are looking elsewhere for funds which also have the advantage of coming without strings attached.

"This is a world where people love yield," said Angus Halkett, fund manager at Stone Harbor Investment Partners.

"There are people who are borrowing who should not be borrowing. Whenever markets in general are doing well, everyone can do well. It's only when the market goes down that you realise who is good and who is not."

Rwanda's debt is currently trading around issue price, even though the bond's \$400 million size means it is ineligible for JP Morgan's emerging bond indices, against which \$560 billion of assets are benchmarked.

Some of the exotic borrowers have done better than others. (<http://link.reuters.com/kun77t>)

Zambia launched its debut dollar bond to much fanfare last year, with bids worth more than 15 times the amount on offer, but the bond has fallen in value. Investors cite tight pricing on the bond and a deteriorating economic outlook.

Bolivia, which is already planning a second bond six months after the launch of its first in 90 years, has seen that bond spend much of the time trading below issue price.

"We did not get involved with Bolivia, it was just way too expensive, especially for a country that has a history of expropriating assets," said Kevin Daly, fund manager at Aberdeen Asset Management. "Why would you lend them money at 5 percent?"

The price of debt for the smallest economies still depends on the headlines out of the biggest ones.

Recent weaker economic data from the United States pushed down U.S. Treasury yields and delayed expectations for a withdrawal of quantitative easing - a liquidity lifeline that has encouraged flows into higher-yielding emerging markets.

An upward reversal in the U.S. economy's fortunes could leave frontier debt vulnerable to that loss of funds.

Many frontier bonds sold off sharply earlier in the year when the news from the United States and China was more encouraging.

Graham Stock, strategist at Insparo, pointed to fears that African debt, for example, "would prove to be relatively illiquid if there were a mass exit from emerging markets".

(Additional reporting by Sujata Rao; Editing by Peter Graff)

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

SOUTH AFRICA :

Zambian vice-president: 'South Africans are backward'

David Smith in Lusaka/guardian.co.uk/Wednesday 1 May 2013

Guy Scott wastes little time on diplomatic language as he lets loose on Africa's biggest economy, race, Mugabe and gay rights

One of the most colourful men in African politics happens to be white. Guy Scott is the vice-president of Zambia but his race is probably the least exceptional thing about him.

On a recent afternoon in the capital, Lusaka, Scott held court with the kind of candour – and eccentricity – seldom heard from today's media-honed political class. He dismissed South Africans as "backward", insisted that Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe wants to quit, and discussed Zambia by way of references to Marlon Brando and the Klingon empire.

The 68-year-old grandfather was just back from Margaret Thatcher's funeral in London when he took the Guardian on an impromptu tour of an emerald auction at the InterContinental Lusaka hotel. Discussing similar auctions in India with a deferential salesman, Scott said: "Jaipur is a terrible dump. It produces nothing but zinc."

As officials fluttered around him, Scott, wearing a dark suit, blue striped shirt and blue and red tie, was informed that the Hollywood actor Mila Kunis recently visited a local mine as an "ambassador" for Zambian emeralds. "How come I didn't see her?" he pondered morosely.

The son of English and Scottish immigrants – his father Alexander was also an MP here – Scott then gave an interview that wasted little time on diplomatic language. Discussing neighbouring Zimbabwe, where Mugabe has ruled for 33 years, he disclosed: "I think if you asked him he'd say it was enough. That's what he said to us a few months ago. I said the way forward in African democracy is the way we do it in Zambia. He said, 'I absolutely agree, I wish it would happen to me.'"

As in lose an election? "Yes, and a smooth handover. I think he meant it, or he was toying with the idea of meaning it. He wanted to hear how it sounded, maybe. Or something."

Scott went on to describe 89-year-old Mugabe's persona. "He's a funny chap. He seems to doze off and then he suddenly laughs at a joke while in the middle of dozing. And very articulate, without a note, without a scrap of anything.

"He's an anglophone. He loves to give lectures on the English language, English weighing systems, English this or that. He was a teacher and so he taught himself all that."

Zambian president Michael Sata – whom Scott refers to as "the boss" – is known to be on friendly terms with Mugabe, who used to work as a teacher in Zambia. "I'm sure any good African nationalist admires Mugabe," the vice-president added. "Racism in Zimbabwe is a serious issue. I was sent to school down there and it was like being in the Hitler Youth: the theories about black inferiority and this kind of stuff.

"It was a whites-only school; they tried to introduce an Indian and he was hounded out at the instigation of the parents of the boys. I think Mugabe is a product of having to contend with that."

But Scott has far less time for South Africa, the continent's biggest economy. "The South Africans are very backward in terms of historical development," he said. "I hate South Africans. That's not a fair thing to say because I like a lot of South Africans but they really think they're the bees' knees and actually they've been the cause of so much trouble in this part of the world.

"I have a suspicion the blacks model themselves on the whites now that they're in power. 'Don't you know who we are, man?'"

Scott scoffed at the inclusion of South Africa in the Brics grouping of emerging economies. "They think in Brics that the 's' actually stands for South Africa whereas it stands for Africa. Nobody would want to go in for a partnership with Brazil, China, India and South Africa for Christ's sake.

"I dislike South Africa for the same reason that Latin Americans dislike the United States, I think. It's just too big and too unsubtle."

Warming to his theme, Scott let rip at South African President Jacob Zuma, comparing him with the last apartheid leader, FW de Klerk. "He's very like De Klerk. He tells us, 'You just leave Zimbabwe to me.' Excuse me, who the hell liberated you anyway, was it not us? I mean, I quite like him, he seems a rather genial character but I pity him his advisers."

Fewer than 40,000 of Zambia's 13 million-strong population are white. Scott, a wildly popular MP for Lusaka, notes that the country has more than 80 tribes and several major language groups. "That doesn't add up to a bipolar formula for the scrap" along racial lines.

He became vice-president in 2011 but his presence baffles some African leaders at high-level

meetings. "I think they regard me as a sort of mascot, a good luck charm for African politics. Michael's very clever, he knows people tend to regard him as a racist because he talks rough.

"He's usually tried it out on me already. He says things like, 'What would you be if you weren't white?' I said, 'The president?' That shut him up."

But opposition parties have accused the Sata-Scott leadership of orchestrating violence, banning rallies, throwing dissenters in jail and dragging Zambia towards authoritarianism. Scott sarcastically predicted that opponents would complain to the Commonwealth, then the UN and, if still unsuccessful, the Klingon empire.

"It's a wheeze, it's an attempt I suppose based on some of the stuff that took place in Russia to denounce a government rather than eject it," he said. "But I really am very hard-pressed to find a corner I can sit in and believe that we're looking at a one-party state again."

He added: "It doesn't help that people don't know where Zambia is and they don't know what Zambia is like. If you were to write a story about America getting out of hand and going to a one-party state, everybody knows so much about the United States that they won't believe you.

"If you say, 'Somewhere over there in the African hinterland, not far from where Marlon Brando had a house surrounded by stakes with heads of his enemies on, not far from the Congo, there's a place where there's a one-party state ...' Well, there probably is, probably several. And so it's a lot easier for that because there's no built-in balance."

One recent incident in which Zambia's civil liberties credentials took a battering, however, was the arrest of a human rights activist who had appeared on live TV calling for homosexuality to be decriminalised.

Scott admitted: "The problem with this guy going on television was that we had to do something because if we had done absolutely nothing we would have got a bollocking from all these evangelical churches plus damn idiots. On the other hand, we didn't want to give him a particularly hard ride."

As newspapers and TV shows whipped up homophobia, Scott set out priorities that offer little consolation to anyone who is gay. "I think you've got so much cleaning up to do of killings and defilements and this and that, it's almost self-indulgent to think, 'Well, why don't we sit here and talk about gay rights?'

"It's indulgent politics that assumes yes, we don't actually have 7 million unemployed people. Realistically, I think even an average gay, if you gave him a list of all the concerns Zambia had, would not necessarily put gay rights on top."

He went on: "There's tonnes of gay joints in this town. Well, not tonnes but they're there, well known. It's entirely the same phenonemon you get anywhere else. It's live and let live. Stirring up and making it worse, that is the biggest danger. Let sleeping dogs lie is an easier policy."

If Sata were to die in office, Scott would make history as the first democratic white leader in Africa, albeit as a three-month caretaker until an election was held. Seeking the presidency full-time would be "a bridge too far" for qualifying rules because his parents were born outside the country.

Scott, whose wife is from Greenwich, south-east London, has health worries of his own, including a right hand that trembles slightly. "It's possibly Parkinson's, I haven't had it diagnosed yet." He is

also concerned about possible cancer under one eye. "In my age group, there is on average six things wrong with you at any one time."

Scott departed, stepping into a lift and flanked by security guards, making a quip about how many emeralds he could conceal in his hand.

TANZANIA :

Tanzania: New Credit Bureau to Open in Dar es Salaam

By Anthony Tambwe/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/3 May 2013

DUN and Bradstreet Credit Bureau Tanzania, the first licensed credit bureau in Tanzania, is on Friday set to meet with bank executives at a consultative workshop in Dar es Salaam.

The workshop which is a precursor to the official opening of Dun and Bradstreet Credit Bureau's offices in Tanzania, is aimed at developing working relationship between the credit bureau and the banks and financial institutions, many of whom have played a key role in ensuring that Tanzania gets a bureau that is of international standards.

According to Mr Miguel Llenas - C.E.O of Dun & Bradstreet Credit Bureaus Limited, the aim is to build the most comprehensive Credit Bureau that will play a role in boosting Tanzania's economy and financial soundness.

The General Manager of the bureau Adebowale Atobatele said, they considered banks and financial institutions in Tanzania to be their partners and therefore the workshop would be an opportunity to meet them. "We want to serve them and it is important for us to understanding the specific challenges that they encounter in their business of creating risk assets," he said.

KENYA :

Kenya: 2 Iranian Plotters Convicted

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/May 2, 2013

Two Iranian citizens, whom officials accused of planning to attack Western targets inside Kenya, were found guilty on Thursday by a Kenyan court of terrorism-related charges. Officials in Kenya say the two suspects may have been planning attacks on Israeli, American, British or Saudi Arabian interests in Kenya. The two Iranians, Ahmad Abolfathi Mohammad and Sayed Mansour Mousavi, were arrested in June 2012 and led officials to a 33-pound stash of explosives. Iranian agents are suspected in attacks or thwarted attacks around the globe in recent years, including in Azerbaijan, Thailand and India. Most of the plots had connections to Israeli targets. Kenyan antiterrorism officials said the Iranians were members of the Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

Kenya's Raila Odinga on life after losing the election

2 May 2013 /bbc.co.uk

Kenya's former Prime Minister Raila Odinga has kept a relatively low profile since losing the March 4th hotly contested election that gave his rival Uhuru Kenyatta the presidency.

He did not attend the swearing-in ceremony or the opening of parliament.

Mr Odinga is currently in the United Kingdom and when BBC Newsday's Veronique Edwards caught up with him, she first asked him how he feels now that the election is over.

Kenya: I Will Protect Media Freedom, Pledges Uhuru

By Lordrick Mayabi/Capital FM (Nairobi)/2 May 2013

Nairobi — President Uhuru Kenyatta has affirmed his commitment to support the freedom of the media in the country.

President Kenyatta said that his government appreciates the critical role the media plays in informing, entertaining as well as protecting the public interest.

He said that his government will among other measures fast-track media related Bills including The Media Bill, The Data Protection Bill, The Access to Information Bill and Communications Commission of Kenya Bill.

The President said: "Media freedom, including online media, today plays a dynamic role in the economic transformation of society. Some countries have benefited from such freedom in attracting foreign direct investments."

"My government will therefore prioritise media freedom. Further, my government will pursue and enact policies, initiatives and programmes to empower the media sector," he added.

"I assure the media fraternity in the country that my government will support the media to be free, fair and responsible in conducting their business as provided for by our Constitution as well as international conventions to which Kenya is a signatory," he further pledged.

The president who spoke at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre when he officially opened a regional journalists' convention said that the legislation will provide for independent bodies in the regulation of the media sector and which will strengthen professionalism in the industry.

He further told the conference that the government was committed to ensuring diversity and plurality in the media industry.

"Indeed, Kenya has set an example for Africa in terms of non- interference in media freedom. We will uphold this proud reputation," the President said.

The Head of State President challenged the media must safeguard professionalism jealously in order to sustain the trust and faith of the public by remaining objective and impartial.

The Head of State observed that as his government seeks to entrench and expand media freedom that independence must come hand in hand with a deep sense of responsibility.

Speaking at the same function both the chairman of the Media Council of Kenya Joseph Odindo and Media Owners Association Chairman Kiprono Kittony called for the licensing of a third independent signal distributor.

Odindo said that the law currently provided for a third signal distributor but that the media industry was concerned at the inordinate delay in awarding the licence.

"We are concerned that the organisations licensed to distribute signals have close association with the government but we need another licence holder who is independent to give broadcast operators options," Odindo said.

Speaking during the convention, Nairobi Governor Evans Kidero appealed to the media to allocate more space to education items that will instil patriotism and unity.

Other speakers at the two day convention included Information and Communication Permanent Secretary Bitange Ndemo who assured the media fraternity in Kenya that the Government has taken steps to ensure fairness in the distribution of digital signals.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Great Scott, Mugabe wants to lose!

by David Gleason/bdlive.co.za/03 mai 2013

IN ANOTHER life I was deputy president of the Zambian Commercial Farmers Union. Guy Scott, now deputy president of Zambia, was an agricultural researcher and analyst for the union. He's 68 now and, by his own admission, he hasn't worn well.

He thinks he might have Parkinson's and is worried about the possibility of cancer under one eye. "In my age group," he quipped recently, "there is on average six things wrong with you at any one time." Perhaps that's what living under Kenneth Kaunda and his equally dreadful successors does to one.

Anyway, he's just been chatting, impromptu-style, with the Guardian from London, during which he had rather a lot of things to say, much of it unkind, about South Africa. "The South Africans are very backward in terms of historical development. I hate South Africans ... they really think they're the bee's knees and actually they've been the cause of so much trouble in this part of the world."

Scott is very dismissive of South Africa's inclusion in the Brics grouping of leading emerging economies. "They think in Brics the 's' stands for South Africa, whereas it stands for Africa. Nobody would want to go in for a partnership with Brazil, China, India and South Africa, for Christ's sake. I dislike South Africa for the same reason that Latin Americans dislike the US, I think. It's just too big and unsubtle."

Nor does Scott think much of President Jacob Zuma, comparing him unforgivingly with FW de Klerk. "He's very like De Klerk. He tells us: 'You just leave Zimbabwe to me.' Excuse me, who the hell liberated you anyway, was it not us?"

"I mean, I quite like him, he seems a rather genial character, but I pity him his advisers."

Talking about neighbouring Zimbabwe, Scott described 89-year-old Robert Mugabe as "... a funny chap. I think if you asked him, he'd say it was enough. That's what he said to us a few months ago.

"I said the way forward in African democracy is the way we do it in Zambia. He said, 'I absolutely agree. I wish it would happen to me.'"

Did that extend, asked his startled interlocutor, to losing an election? "Yes," responded Scott, "and a smooth handover. I think he meant it, or he was toying with the idea of meaning it. He wanted to hear how it sounded, maybe. Or something."

This is so curiously phrased that it makes you wonder if this was the genial Scott smoking something. I doubt anyone this side of the Limpopo will believe that view of Mugabe.

...

I READ Tim Cohen's column on the crumbling Manichean order with my usual cynicism, reserved not for Cohen but for the author he quotes, David Cannadine (*The Undivided Past: History beyond our Differences*).

Two thousand years ago, Manichaeism was a major religion, originating in Persia but spreading throughout the East and into the Roman Empire.

Put briefly, believers embrace the view that a continual struggle takes place between a spiritual world of light and an evil material world of darkness. Simplistically, it's a choice between good and evil.

Cannadine's thesis is that Manichaeism is crumbling. If that's so, I wonder what he would make of what Alexander Tyler, an Edinburgh University history professor, had to say in 1887 about the fall of the Athenian Republic, 2,000 years earlier?

"A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government ... (it) will exist up until the time that voters discover they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse over loose fiscal policy, which is always followed by a dictatorship."

Tyler reckoned a genuine democracy would last roughly 200 years and nations would always progress through the following sequence: from bondage to spiritual faith, to great courage, to liberty, to abundance, to complacency, to apathy, back to dependence, and then to bondage.

Being much less of an optimist about human behaviour, my vote goes to Tyler.

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World M&A numbers: go figure

DISPARITIES in international reporting in the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) sector continue to be visibly obvious. According to Thomson Reuters, worldwide M&A in the first quarter totalled \$543bn. Mergermarket disagrees. It says deals were valued at only \$418bn. The difference is startling. Who do you believe?

Cross-border activity was down 24%, but emerging markets business accounted for a full quarter of international M&A in the period. Energy and power was the most vibrant sector, according to Thomson Reuters. Not in Mergermarket's book — it had technology, media and telecoms leading the pack.

Here at home, M&A activity hit R76bn, R13bn of it accounted for by deals executed with firms outside the country. This was significantly better than the outturn for the first quarter last year, when M&A activity slumped to only R49bn. Three deals failed, pulling the overall total down to R75.6bn. It is tempting to compare this with the result for the final quarter of last year — R122bn. But that confuses things because the last quarter is traditionally a time when deals are dragged along for registration to beat the closing bell.

Black economic empowerment activity remains very limited, with only R2.9bn registered off five deals, substantially less than the R4bn recorded in the year-ago quarter.

The biggest was the C\$1.3bn (R11.8bn) purchase of the remaining 48.6% minorities in Uranium One by ARMZ Uranium Holding, Rosatom's mining arm. It was followed by Implats' R8.3bn sale of a 51% stake in Zimbabwe Platinum Mines, as ordered by Zimbabwe's government. Third was the purchase of Kingway for \$864m (R7.7bn) by China Resources Snow Breweries, in effect a joint venture with SABMiller.

General corporate finance activities showed a big jump, up from R19bn in the first quarter of last year to R50bn. The single biggest deal was the unbundling by Gold Fields of 732-million shares in Sibanye Gold to shareholders, valued at R9.92bn.

A full survey will be carried in Business Day on Thursday.

Tunisie : le doyen de la faculté des lettres de la Manouba acquitté
Par RFI/vendredi 03 mai 2013

En Tunisie, l'affaire avait fait grand bruit dans le pays, suscitant des divisions entre laïcs et islamistes. Le doyen de la faculté des lettres de Manouba, près de Tunis, Habib Kazdaghli, a été acquitté, jeudi 2 mai. Il avait été accusé d'avoir agressé deux étudiantes portant le niqab en mars 2012. Les plaignantes ont été, elles, condamnées à deux mois de prison avec sursis. C'est une affaire qui a pris beaucoup d'ampleur en Tunisie.

Le procès du doyen de la faculté des lettres de la Manouba, c'était un dossier emblématique du bras de fer entre laïcs et islamistes en Tunisie. Habib Kazdaghli était poursuivi par deux étudiantes portant le niqab qui avaient mis à sac son bureau. L'une d'elle avait été exclue de la faculté pour avoir porté le voile intégral en cours et elle accusait le doyen de l'avoir giflée.

Au terme de ce long procès, le doyen a finalement été acquitté et les deux étudiantes ont été condamnées pour atteinte aux biens d'autrui et préjudice à un fonctionnaire dans l'exercice de ses fonctions. Habib Kazdaghli risquait jusqu'à cinq ans de prison pour « acte de violence commis par un fonctionnaire ».

Habib Kazdaghli se dit soulagé et heureux qu'à travers ce dossier la justice ait été rendue à l'université et à tous ceux qui croient à une Tunisie moderne.

UN/AFRICA :

UN says Somalia famine killed nearly 260,000

02 May 2013/ Source:Al Jazeera And Agencies

World body admits it should have done more to prevent 2010-2012 tragedy, finding half of those who died were children.

Almost 260,000 people, half of them young children, died of hunger during the last famine in Somalia, according to a UN report that admits the world body should have done more to prevent the tragedy.

The toll is much higher than was feared at the time of the 2010-2012 food crisis in the troubled Horn of Africa country and also exceeds the 220,000 who starved to death in a 1992 famine, according to the findings.

"The report confirms we should have done more before the famine was declared," said Philippe Lazzarini, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia.

"Warnings that began as far back as the drought in 2010 did not trigger sufficient early action," he said in a statement.

Half of those who died were children under five, according to the joint report by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the US-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network.

"Famine and severe food insecurity in Somalia claimed the lives of about 258,000 people between October 2010 and April 2012, including 133,000 children under five," said the report, the first scientific estimate of how many people died.

Children toll

Somalia was the country hardest hit by extreme drought in 2011 that affected over 13 million people across the Horn of Africa.

"An estimated 4.6 percent of the total population and 10 percent of children under five died in southern and central Somalia," the report said, saying the deaths were on top of 290,000 "baseline" deaths during the period, and double the average for sub-Saharan Africa.

Lazzarini said that about 2.7 million people are still in need of life-saving assistance and support to rebuild their livelihoods.

Famine was first declared in July 2011 in Somalia's Southern Bakool and Lower Shabelle regions, but later spread to other areas, including Middle Shabelle, Afgoye and inside camps for displaced people in the war-ravaged capital Mogadishu.

In Lower Shabelle 18 percent of children under five died, the report said.

During the famine, it was feared that tens of thousands had died, whereas the report now shows more people died than in Somalia's 1992 famine, when an estimated 220,000 people died over a year.

Famine implies that at least a fifth of households face extreme food shortages, with acute malnutrition in more than 30 percent of people, and two deaths per 10,000 people every day, according to the UN definition.

Mark Smulders, a senior economist for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation and one of the authors of the report, said the area had suffered one of the worst droughts in over 50 years in the whole of Africa.

"Livestock were dying," he told Al Jazeera. "People simply did not have access to food, and purchasing power went down."

Somalia, ravaged by nearly uninterrupted civil war for the past two decades, is one of the most dangerous places in the world for aid workers and one of the regions that needs them most.

However, security has slowly improved in recent months, with fighters linked to al-Qaeda on the back foot despite launching a deadly bombing campaign.

At the time, most of the famine-hit areas were under their control, and the crisis was exacerbated by their ban on most foreign aid agencies.

'Catastrophic political failures'

The aid agency Oxfam said the "deaths could and should have been prevented".

"Famines are not natural phenomena, they are catastrophic political failures," Oxfam's Somalia director Senait Gebregziabher said in a statement.

"The world was too slow to respond to stark warnings of drought, exacerbated by conflict in Somalia and people paid with their lives."

More than a million Somalis are refugees in surrounding nations, and another million are displaced inside the country.

Next Tuesday, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and British Prime Minister David Cameron will co-host a conference in London to discuss how the international community can support Somalia's progress.

More than 50 countries and organisations are due to take part.

Oxfam said leaders should "ensure that this was Somalia's last famine" by helping generate jobs and "ensuring trained, accountable security forces".

The UN declared the famine over in February 2012.

Source:

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