

THISDAY

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Finn's Facts: Lutheran leaders should censure graft culprits among them

FINNIGAN WA SIMBEYE,
DAR ES SALAAM

THE country's northern tourist enclave of Arusha town will this week play host to a high profile Lutheran Church leaders' conference. Lutheran World Federation leaders will convene at the Arusha International Conference Centre (AICC) to discuss several issues pertaining to its global members' activities.

This LWF conference is being held in the country at a time when the government of President Jakaya Kikwete has gone head-on to tackle high level graft in public office.

The church, specifically the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), has played a leading role in denouncing high profile graft among public officials. During annual Christian commemorations such as Easter, Christmas and the like, ELCT leaders have used the opportunity to call on their followers to emulate the life of Jesus Christ by practising honesty, courage in defending the church and justice while leading a simple life.

But this time around, the ELCT and some of its so-called Northern partners are in the dock. Graft, embezzlement and cheating allegations have been made against some personalities at ELCT, its German partners, Nordelbisches Zentrum für Weltmission und Kirchlichen Weltdienst (NMZ) and Arusha based Lutheran Mission Cooperation.

There are serious concerns that some church officials at ELCT and particularly from the Southern Central Diocese of Iringa, NMZ and LMC are engaged in acts which are contrary to the moral teachings of Christ and in some cases, acts which border on criminal offence.

When I first got the allegations against an NMZ seconded employee, Reichenbach Vogt Ingeborg who worked as treasurer at SCD between 2003/5 when audit reports from the diocese show misappropriation of funds, I took a task of contacting the Germany-based institution and the individual but so far no response has been made.

Ms Vogt Ingeborg's tenure at ELCT/SCD left several stories of loss of EUR 100,000 and some 270m/- cash lost through graft and thefts. Several church leaders who faced allegations at ELCT/SCD were booked by the police in Iringa Region but later left free following a visit by a former prime minister.

There are serious allegations on how some ELCT/SCD church leaders at Bulongwa Lutheran Hospital collaborated with some dishonest Ministry of Health and Social Welfare officials to close down a properly functioning HIV/AIDS clinic which used a German made Cyflow CD4 Counter machine and replaced it with an American made FacsCount CD4 Counter and threw away most of its volunteer personnel including an Austrian medical doctor, Dr Rainer Brandl in 2005.

Today we are told that the FacsCount machine at Bulongwa is no longer working and that people living with HIV and AIDS through their association, PIUMA, are dying or going through the worst suffering because some dishonest ELCT/SCD leaders have betrayed their trust. The church is seriously in need of cleansing itself before the public in Makete where the country's worst cases of the HIV/AIDS virus are found and yet some greedy people are cashing on human suffering.

Dr Brandl and some PIUMA members accused the LMC of collaborating with ELCT in making sure that funds from the Northern partners such as NMZ and the government goes to BLH where graft is the order of the day and past culprits have been left off the hook.

Serious allegations have also been made against leaders at LMC, NMZ and ELCT/SCD but have often been dismissed. In the worst act of defiance against allegations of wrongdoing at ELCT/SCD the NMZ published articles recently stating that all is well in Tanzania and that its German members can continue to bankroll projects which ordinary

Other news

Dr Mwakyembe blasts new Richmond 'cover-up' plot

THE chairman of the parliamentary committee that investigated the Richmond power generation deal, Dr Harrison Mwakyembe, has challenged legislators implicated in the scandal to resign from the House if further evidence that he is prepared to unearth.

Calls for 'military force' in Zimbabwe on the rise

PRESIDENT Jakaya Kikwete and other Southern Africa leaders began an emergency meeting in Swaziland yesterday to discuss Zimbabwe's political crisis as pressure mounted for military action against Robert Mugabe's government.

ANALYSIS: SADC's credibility at stake over Zimbabwe crisis

MORGAN Tsvangirai's decision to withdraw from what he has aptly described as "a violent, illegitimate sham of an election" in Zimbabwe confronts the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with both its most shameful moment and its last opportunity.

Sports news

Ruvuma ready to upset Iringa

RUVUMA regional U-17 soccer team is in combative mood ahead of today's Copa Coca-Cola semi-final against Iringa at the National Stadium in the city.

WORLD CUP 2010: Cape Verde end Stars' hopes

TAIFA Stars' faint hopes of advancing to the second phase of the 2010 World Cup/African Nations Cup qualifiers ended yesterday when Cape Verde thumped Mauritius 3-1.

Academy Boys thrash Dar Gymkhana

ACADEMY Boys underlined their quest to restore their dented pride with seven-wicket thrashing of Gymkhana in the Dar es Salaam regional cricket committee league match in the city at the weekend.

people on the ground argue are simply misappropriated by few dishonest individuals on the ground.

The LMC secretary Lars Hofgren from Sweden, vice chairman Manfred Scheckenbach from Bavaria in Germany are among the names being accused of continuing to work with ELCT/SCD by backing them financially while ignoring graft allegations being made against its leadership some of whom have been forced to resign.

But LMC's secretary Mr Hofgren dismissed all the allegations made against the charitable institution arguing that LMC and ELCT/SCD are completely different entities with different managements. They only have a memorandum of understanding to work together.

Lutherans in the country and the general public who benefit from generous contributions being made by the ELCT/SCD at Bulongwa and elsewhere want to see action taken against few individuals who are shaming the church by their immoral conduct.

The LWF should also censure some of its own high profile members from LMC, ELCT and NMZ who have formed a cartel whose conduct and activities are a disgrace in the eyes of Lutheran faithfuls and the general public. The LWF must seriously be seen as an anti-graft crusader especially among its hierarchy members.

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