

## Graft scandals plague African football

Thirty-four years after the youth of Soweto set aside their textbooks and marched to the Orlando Pirates football stadium, the sprawling township would find itself at the centre of the universe. **Legalbrief** reports that the death of 13-year-old Hector Peterson and the riots that followed sparked a revolution that would lead to the fall of apartheid and SA becoming the darling of the international community. So much so that on the night of 11 July 2010 global football's showpiece event – the World Cup final – was hosted at a glittering new stadium in Soweto where Nelson Mandela made his final public appearance. **For Fifa, which had expelled the local football association a month after the Soweto riots, it was a fitting reward.** In the years that followed, however, African football has mostly been in the news for all the wrong reasons and many of the continent's football associations have been embroiled in graft scandals.

*In the most recent incident, Confederation of African Football (CAF) president Ahmad Ahmad was questioned last week by French authorities in Paris.* Ahmad, a former Malagasy Cabinet Minister, had been reported last month to Fifa's ethics committee for alleged corruption and sexual harassment by CAF general secretary Amr Fahmy, who was then fired. Ahmad was in Paris for the Fifa Congress ahead of the start of the Women's World Cup. His confederation's marquee event, the African Cup of Nations, kicks off in Egypt next week. A report on the **EWN** site notes that **Ahmad allegedly forced CAF to buy sportswear through a French company rather than directly from manufacturers and at inflated prices.** A report on the **IoL** site notes that Ahmad was released without charge on Friday. World football's governing body said it had asked 'the French authorities for any information' that might be of interest to its ethics commission. Ahmad is already the subject of an investigation by the commission, opened after Fahmy submitted a dossier in March alleging 'mismanagement'. Ahmad has denied the accusations. Fifa's statement on the arrest concluded: 'Fifa is now clean from the scandals that tarnished its reputation and this same determination should prevail in governing bodies such as confederations. Fifa will be at the forefront of ensuring that this is enforced by everyone involved in football.'

*Former World Footballer of the Year George Weah, who was Fifa's biggest African role model in the 1990s,* is now feeling the heat as President of Liberia. This weekend, **thousands of protesters took to the streets of Monrovia to voice concerns over the corruption and economic decline** that many associate with him. **Legalbrief** reports that their main gripes are a stagnant economy in which most still live in deep poverty and a scandal in which the country last year reportedly lost \$100m in newly-printed bank notes destined for the central bank.

**See Regional News.**

*Meanwhile, five top officials of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) have been ordered to appear in court on 1 July* for the alleged misappropriation of funds. As previously reported in **Legalbrief Today**, they include federation president Amaju Pinnick, vice-presidents Seyi Akinwunmi and Shehu Dikko, general secretary Mohammed Sanusi, and executive committee member Ahmed Yusuf. The charges include failure to declare their assets, and the alleged disappearance of \$8.4m paid by Fifa to fund Nigeria's participation in the 2014 World Cup and for the arrangement of international friendly matches which did not take place. They have denied all the charges. '**Our lawyer is handling the matter and the NFF will only make a statement at the appropriate time,**' NFF director of communications Ademola Olajire told **BBC News**.

*In other developments, Fifa has lifted Sierra Leone's international ban* following a meeting its council in Paris. It said the suspension was lifted after the High Court of Sierra Leone acquitted SLFA President Isha Johansen and general secretary Christopher Kamara of various graft charges on 27 May. Fifa suspended the country in October due to third-party interference in the running of its association. '**This is very good news. Our football family will embrace one another once again, and focus on one agenda – which is putting Sierra Leone first,**' Johansen told **BBC News**. The ban saw the country disqualified from the qualifying campaign for this month's Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt.