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Questions on poverty buster 'food prize' as IFAD turns page

BY JAN FILOPOWICZ

ROME – As Kanayo Nwanze cleared his desk at IFAD, questions have been raised over the award of the dlr 100,000 Africa Food Prize to the head of the UN agency by the African Green Revolution Forum in the latest of a string of controversies that marred the flamboyant Nigerian honcho's turbulent eight-year presidency, UN sources said Wednesday.



President Emeritus of IFAD Kanayo Nwanze (second right). Photo credit: IFAD

Under the rules governing conduct of heads of UN specialized agencies Mr Nwanze was unable to trouser the cash prize when he was awarded it some six months ago, the sources said. But evidently an informal deal was reached with the chairman of the AGRF 'independent' prize panel, Nwanze's countryman the former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, under which the prize was simply "placed on hold," until after the IFAD president's last day in office in Rome on Friday, after which he will conveniently be sent his winnings, said the sources, speaking to the Italian Insider on condition they not be named. Ironically AGRF itself is itself reportedly a recipient of aid from IFAD meaning the agency may have awarded Mr Nwanze, 70, another golden handshake for his retirement by an unorthodox route, diplomatic sources say.

There was no immediate comment from AGRF when contacted by Italian Insider. The murky prize booty is one of the most bizarre episodes in Nwanze's two-term reign that saw the costs of revamping Ifad's image soar to expenditure of as much as an estimated dlr 2 million following the disclosure by the

Italian Insider in 2010 of the scandal surrounding Mr Nwanze's luxurious lifestyle including renting a sprawling villa on the Appian Way for as much as 500,000 dlr per year, providing him with a fleet of BMWs and a team of gardeners to maintain the park where he threw lavish parties for the diplomatic corps, often on a daily basis.

In another dubious chapter, two members of the IFAD media team ghost wrote a book signed by Mr Nwanze entitled A bucket of Water, which was launched at Warwick University in January when the IFAD kingpin received an honorary degree thanks to the brother of a senior IFAD executive working at the university – both members of the powerful Muthoo clan of Indian playboys at the UN food agencies in Rome.

One of the flaks, American Bruce Murphy, was promoted to a well-paid P5 position at IFAD for the ghost writing operation and received an IFAD presidential medal while the other, Karen Zagor, wife of Canadian scribe Eric Reguly, received just a worthless medal, the sources said.

Throughout his reign as many as three full time staff were employed to ghost write Nwanze's thunderous speeches.

The turnover of vice presidents, associate VPs and Chefs de Cabinet at IFAD has been unprecedented under the mercurial African ruler. Associate Vice President John McIntyre, a former CGIAR buddy of Nwanze, was fired by the Nigerian supremo with 15 minutes notice to leave the sprawling IFAD headquarters building in the Laurentina district, evidently falling from grace for challenging policies.

Respected professional Kevin Cleaver hung on as long as he could despite repeated bullying. Carlos Sere, another CGIAR crony named associate vice president, threw in the towel. Nwanze was investigated for alleged involvement in graft while working at CGIAR but an inquiry exonerated him totally of any wrongdoing.

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Pope Francis attends the Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on April 16, 2017. PHOTO: Eric Vandeville

Italy arms sales soar

BY JAMES JOSHUA

ROME – A major deal with the Kuwaiti government meant that Italian exports of weaponry and artillery reached 14.6 billion euros in 2016, an increase of 85 percent in respect to the 7.9 billion euros generated in 2015, an annual report produced by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers says.

The report was compiled with contributions from the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Economics and Economic Development, before being sent to be discussed in Parliament.



Fifty percent of the figure generated by exports of arms is due to the supply of 28 Eurofighter jets to the Kuwaiti government from Italian global hit company Leonardo.

The company is the ninth-largest defence contractor in the world in terms of 2014 revenues and is partially owned by the Italian government through the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The Eurofighters supplied to the Kuwaiti government are the most advanced multi-functional defence jets on the market and the agreement made in April 2016 was estimated to bring in over 4 billion euros for the Italian society.

The most recently produced figure means that Italy is among the largest arms exporters in the world, as the country continues to increase market penetration through Leonardo.

In addition to the exports of aircraft (8.8 billion euros), the next most sold category of arms from Italy is that of bombs, torpedo rockets, missiles and accessories, which generated 1.2 billion euros in 2016.

The country's imports of arms also reached record levels in 2016, with the government spending 612 million euros on acquiring the latest defence systems.

Mafia boss daughter jumps to her death

BY PHOEBE TILELLI

REGGIO CALABRIA - Carabinieri were probing the case of Maria Rita Logiudice, a daughter of a mafia boss, who committed suicide, jumping from her second-floor room.

Maria Rita's suicide is sadly not remarkable in Reggio Calabria - she joins the long list of women from 'ndrangheta families who couldn't cope with the weight of a surname synonymous with extortion, exploitation and murders.

According to those who knew Maria Rita well, she "felt ill at ease with her family situation." She didn't leave any note but the investigators confirm that "it's clearly a suicide."

Maria Rita, like many before her, was overwhelmed by mafia environment, so ingrained in the fabric of her family

life. Her father, Giovanni Logiudice, is in prison because he is thought to be one of the leaders of clan of the same name, along with the more famous uncles, Luciano and Nino. Maria Rita was only two years old when, in 1994, the wife of Pietro Logiudice, Angela Costantino, was killed by her relatives for cheating on her husband while he was in prison. Another aunt, Barbara Corvi, wife of Roberto Logiudice, has not been heard from since 2009.

Maria had tried to escape this situation and dedicated herself to study. At

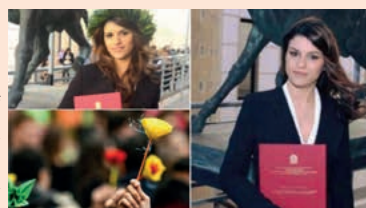


Photo credit: Dagospia

the end of 2016, she graduated with a first class Economics degree and was enrolled in a Masters degree in Economics at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria.

According to some of her friends, "she felt inhibited by her surname even at university."



Sheikh Al-Emadi finalizes his investment in NanoSiliCal Devices, an Italian cancer research start-up. Photo: James Joshua Report page 8

