

PRESS RELEASE
THREE COMPLAINTS CONCLUDED

17th May 2007

The IMC has concluded three complaints lodged by the public recently.

(1)

Hon. Dr. Princess Baba Jigida against Mr. O. R Awoonor Gordon, Managing Editor, Peep Magazine

The Commission deliberated on a complaint from Hon. Dr. Princess Baba Jigida, Member of Parliament in respect of a defamatory article published in the “*Peep Magazine*.” The Publication was captioned “Ow nor for talk again Babajigida?” on the 13th April 2007.

Hon. Dr. Baba Jigida reaffirmed that the article was malicious and seen as a deliberate attempt to malign her good name, character and reputation. She maintained that the said article gave the impression that she was carrying an illegal name and that she took undue advantage of an office messenger without cross-checking the facts.

The Complaints Committee conducted one hearing on the matter during which the complainant and defendant were cross-examined by the Committee members. Mr. O. R. Awoonor Gordon, Managing Editor of Peep Magazine said that he bore no malice for Hon. Baba Jigida but that the complainant could not deny the fact that the incident which he reported did take place. He told members that he conceded to satirizing Hon. Baba Jigida’s name. However, he said, Hon. Baba Jigida, too, over-reacted in her letter of complaint to the Commission.

At the end of the deliberations, the matter was amicably resolved. Both parties thanked the Committee for adjudicating on the complaint.

(2)

**Mr. Alusine Kala Kamara against Mr. Shiekh Sesay, Managing Editor,
Exclusive Newspaper**

Mr. Alusine Kala Kamara, Vice-Chairman, SLPP Bombali District, had forwarded a complaint against the Exclusive Newspaper to the Independent Media Commission expressing his grievances against the newspaper for what he termed the “false, malicious and defamatory articles” published about him in the said newspaper.

The Independent Media Commission conducted four hearings. The complainant was present at two hearings without the defendant. The Committee advised him not to attend any further hearing and he would be informed of the outcome of the deliberations in due course. The defendant appeared for the third and fourth hearings. He was cross-examined by the Committee and asked to produce evidence by way of documents, reports or witnesses to substantiate the story.

Mr. Mohammed Sesay who deputized the Managing Editor informed members that as he had no evidence to authenticate the story, he would like to tender his unreserved apology to the complainant. He said that as a matter of fact, the article carried the wrong name. He informed the Committee further that his newspaper had since published a retraction captioned “Corrigendum”.

After reviewing the “corrigendum”, the Committee ordered Mr. Mohammed Sesay to carry a proper retraction in the next edition of his newspaper and forward a letter of apology to the IMC for onward transmission to the complainant. The Committee pointed out that in matters of this nature, it is the Managing Editor and not a member of his staff that should appear before the Commission and advised him to pass on this observation to Mr. Shiekh Sesay for the future.

Mr. Mohammed Sesay thanked members of the Committee for the way they had handled the complaint. He agreed to publish a retraction in the next publication

of the Exclusive. He also agreed to send a letter of apology to the Commission for transmission to Mr. Alusine Kala Kamara.

(3)

Mr. Bassie Turay, Director of Drugs and Medical Supplies against Mr. Mohammed Koroma, Managing Editor, African Champion Newspaper

Franklyn Kargbo & Associates represented by Mr. Ibrahim Kanu in respect of Mr. Bassie Turay had forwarded a complaint against the Champion Newspaper to the Independent Media Commission expressing his grievances over what he termed as “false, malicious, libelous and defamatory publications in the 13th, 17th and 18th April 2007 editions of the African Champion Newspaper”. He attached copies of the offending articles.

The Independent Media Commission conducted three hearings. The complainant, his lawyer and witnesses were present at all of the hearings. The defendant appeared for the second and third hearings.

Mr. Bassie Turay insisted that the articles were false, malicious, libelous and defamatory. He described them as a deliberate attempt to malign his good name, character and reputation. He maintained that the said articles had caused a lot of embarrassment to his family. Mr. Turay went to great length to explain to the Committee the disbursement procedure of drugs at the Medical Stores. He stressed that the African Champion published three articles each emphatically alleging the embezzlement of government funds and impropriety at the Medical Stores without cross-checking the facts even when his Department held a press conference to the effect.

When cross-examined by the Committee and asked to produce evidence by way of documents, reports or witnesses to substantiate the stories, Mr. Koroma could not do so.

He informed members that he had no evidence to authenticate his stories. He said that he had come to realize that he was hoaxed by some disgruntled Medical staff. He told the Committee that he would like to tender his unreserved apology to the complainant and that he would also publish a front page retraction.

The Committee asked whether the complainant and his lawyer accepted the complainant's submission. They accepted and warned that in future, Mr. Koroma should demonstrate the ethics of professional journalism which requires a journalist to investigate reports properly before going to press.

Both parties thanked members of the Committee for their time and patience in deliberating on the complaint.

Commissioner Bernadette P. Cole	-	Chairperson
Commissioner Ade P. Bell	-	Member
Commissioner Anthony Brewah	-	Member
Commissioner Cassandra Davies	-	Member
Commissioner Francis L. Davies	-	Member
Commissioner Christo Johnson	-	Member
Commissioner Dr. Abu Bakarr Kargbo	-	Member
Commissioner Patricia Macauley	-	Member