

The return of *Newswatch*

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After about five months suspension, *Newswatch* magazine returned to news stands on Saturday, 26 January 2013. Billionaire businessman and chairman of Newswatch Communications Limited, Dr. Jimoh Ibrahim suspended the publication in August last year to carry out "A comprehensive turn around".

When Dr. Jimoh Ibrahim suspended the publication of *Newswatch* magazine in August last year to enable him carry out what he called "a comprehensive turn around" of the 26-year-old troubled publication, many thought it would no longer return to the news stand.

In fact, four directors of the magazine - Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese, Yakubu Mohammed and Soji Akinrinade - were so bitter about the shut down. "Only Mr. Ibrahim has broken the magazine's rhythm," declared the directors. The billionaire businessman during the course of the dispute sacked the four aggrieved minority shareholders from the board. They subsequently dragged the chairman to court.

However, Ibrahim was not intimidated. He continued with his turn around programme silently. In the process, the workers were relocated to a new corporate office; new equipment was bought, while those he said could not fit into the newly repackaged *Newswatch* were laid off. New editorial hands were also brought in "to drive the new vision of the magazine." They were also put through what Ibrahim described as "rigorous training programme to meet the challenges of modern day journalism."

The businessman told *THISDAY* that the result of his sleepless nights in the theatre "is the new look world class magazine" that will be on news stands and subsequently, on a monthly basis. "While some people were abusing us, we have been working tirelessly in the last five to ensure that we have a magazine that can compete with the best in the world. The result is what you have out there today. I am a turn around expert with result to show all over the place. I knew quite all right that it was necessary to shut the magazine down for sometime in order to carry out a thorough surgery. We now have a world-class magazine that every African will be proud of. The difference is clear."

The all gloss 120-page preview edition of the new-look magazine focuses on the 2013 budget as its cover story. Titled, *Tough Year Ahead - What Budget 2013 Portends for You*, the story attempts to unmask salient areas of the budget with negative implications on the masses of the people. The cover features an interview with Professor Eddy Omoihinwa, formerly of the University of Lagos who stated that the foreign loan expected to help fund budget 2013 'will make life tougher for Nigerians.'

The Nation segment of the preview edition takes a critical look at the performance of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala under the

Jonathan administration with analysts rating the finance minister's performance as below average. There was also a focus on the recent floods that ravaged the country with experts saying that it could have been avoided. *The untold story of Governor Chime's Illness*, *The Secret behind Justice Akinsanya's Landmark Judgement*, and an interview with Sunny Obazu-Ojeagbase are some of the other interesting stories in the magazine.

Analysts are of the opinion that if the standard displayed in this preview edition is sustained, then the sky will be the limit for the magazine. The stories were detailed and well edited. The pictures also came out sharply, except for the cover picture (President Jonathan) that was a bit blurred. The printing quality is above average. Ibrahim confirmed that it was printed abroad and this will continue for sometime "because it is cheaper to print abroad."

However, there were no exclusive stories in the preview edition. Virtually all the stories published were just a rehash of old stories. Perhaps, because it was a preview edition. *Newswatch* has a tradition of breaking big stories. The tradition of publishing exclusive stories must be sustained. The new look *Newswatch* will need to do this, and much more. The magazine also needs to recruit world-class journalists. This is the only way to stay ahead of the pack.

But just as Dr. Ibrahim said last night, the magazine's quality of stories will improve with every edition. "Just wait for us. You will get all the exclusive stories you want. We will break all the big news every month. It is a promise to Nigerians."

An elated Ibrahim said on the successful turn around of *Newswatch*: " Our group is a corporate hospital. It was set up for sick corporations and as long as we have corporations falling sick, we will always be here providing treatment. What we do is to keep on carrying out operations. Our theatre is there and it is well equipped with personnel that are well trained by us. We would only stop acquiring companies when we are too old to perform surgeries or when there are no more sick corporations to be acquired. For now, I am still here as the chief surgeon and there are still many sick corporations to be acquired. So, we are still in business."

Also in his segment (from the publisher) in the preview edition titled, *Report From the Corporate Theatre*, Dr. Ibrahim apologised to readers and said the "complete loss of loyalty from all angles in the magazine" was the final blow that led to the suspension of the magazine last year. "Your *Newswatch* magazine is out of the theatre and all is well. Enjoy your magazine; Nigeria's foremost news magazine. I thank our loyal readers, advertisers and employees for their continued support and patronage and reassure them that this is just the beginning of better things to come.'

Dr. Ibrahim's much talked about *Newswatch* newspapers also entered the Nigerian market last week Saturday. It is from an entirely new company under his stable called Newswatch Newspapers Nigeria Limited. The weekend titles are already running and the daily is expected to join in a few weeks time. Dr. Ibrahim said he introduced the publications to provide something special for the upscale market and to create more jobs for Nigerians.

Source: [allAfrica](#)

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