Memorial service for stadium victims

President Kuffuor pays his last respects to the 126 departed souls.

The Kotoko delegation arrive at the memorial service.

Military officers and others pay their final respects.

Chiefs and Queen mothers were also there to pay their respects.

Amil Awai Shaibu offers prayers for the departed ones.

Members of the diplomatic corp were well represented.

Regional Minister Sheik I.C. Quaye in a chat with Herbert Mensah.

Joy FM had the opportunity to interview the Kotoko boss.
Damirifa Due!

“No one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish caught in a cruel net or birds caught in a trap, so are humans caught at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them.” [Ecclesiastes 9.17]
Wednesday May 9th 2001

I will never ever forget this day. I still wake up at night and early in the morning and wonder what the hell happened. As a result I have come to the conclusion that the whole event took place. It is itself, the linesman’s flag, the poor officiating, the tear gas, the images of people who were burning on each other. That is the tear gas, the confusion and the stampede, the injured and the dead, the chaos and the mayhem that the living and the dead created.

The hope came from one supporter alive but injured at the Military Hospital. As I visited the wounded he called me and told me not to worry…he told me that but for the officiating things could have been different. He was the concerned parent and direction was right. I was astounded and could only keep my eyes dry.

On Sunday May 13th 2001

Last Sunday afternoon I attended a special inter faith service on the forecourt of the state House. The service was organised by the Government to honour and remember the dead. The event was both poignant and emotional for me and when I had to give a brief speech I could hardly contain my feelings!

A brief summary of my speech is outlined as follows:

*I am truly humbled to be here today. In making this short speech I would like to start by quoting Ecclesiastes 9 verse 17.

*No one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like a fish caught in a cruel net not birthed in a trap, so man cannot avert a calamity when it suddenly falls upon them. (Ecclesiastes 9 verse 17)

*This is not a personal tragedy for Hearts or Kotoko: it is a national disaster for all of us. That is why the nation mourns and that is why the football community is grieving and that is why we as individuals cannot weep more loudly.

*The death of 126 young men, women in children in circumstances, which could and should have been avoided, is particularly personal and painful to those of us at the very top of the pyramid. It is an unimaginable and unparalleled at the international level. The trauma of having to save the dead from the crush will haunt me forever. I still wake in the morning haunted by the events of that fateful night. I cried over twenty bodies and never for one moment considered whether they were Kotoko supporters or Hearts supporters. I only knew them to be Ghanaian young people who may well be avenged. I knew I had to try my best to save them. We did all what we could in our own way on that fateful night. Sadly it was not enough! But that does not diminish the tragedy. Lessons will have to be learned to prevent such a dreadful event from ever happening again.

*Our thoughts are particularly with the families and friends. Those young men, women, children, Hearts and Kotoko supporters alike, are in our hearts and in our minds. Just as we do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother’s womb, so we do not know the work of God who makes everything and takes everything away.

*The 126 young people are gone, but they will never be forgotten!!

Saturday May 12th 2001

Whilst watching the English FA Cup between Arsenal and Liverpool I received a visit from a young Hearts of Oak supporter. He is a member of the famous/infamous Chapter O. He had been at the stadium the night of the tragedy and he had seen us all working hand in hand in try to save the living and removing the dead. I later saw him at the Military Hospital the same night. This young man restored a lot of my faith in soccer. Even though some people should know better but don’t. We must learn to know better, to be better role models for young people to hear this young Hearts of Oak supporter exhibiting the kind of objectivity that will enable us to get through this tragedy. We need to do what we are doing and not to worry…he told me that but for the officiating things could have been different. He was the concerned parent and direction was right. I was astounded and could only keep my eyes dry.

I watched Arsenal lose to Liverpool in the FA Cup final. This is a match they had won and only chose to lose! They outplayed Liverpool throughout the match and missed when it would have been easier to score.

My telephone did not stop ringing throughout the day. The need to be in touch with as many affected families as possible was key!

Friday May 11th 2001

This was a sad day. It was a day when the Muslims amongst the dead were buried. They were buried as was their tradition and the afternoon service was attended by His Excellency President J.A. Kuffuor and His Excellency Vice President Aliu Mahama. Also in attendance in the noon service was attended by His Excellency President J.A. Kuffuor and it was to be attended by the late President A.K. Addo. They were buried as was their tradition and the after service was attended by His Excellency President J.A. Kuffuor and His Excellency the Vice President. For our supporters I continue to ask for your patience and understanding when we are not able to keep you informed on developments that matter to us as Ghanaians for our total good and the Police are a part of this.

The Management of Sports in Ghana

I am so sad that this tragedy that we have now experienced may be the wake up call that is needed to put us on a programme to ensure that we move forward into never return to this situation and start achieving the targets that we as a nation are more than capable of achieving.

I fully sympathise with the Government’s position although I have heard a little controversy about the provision of the fund. Clearly the legacy of E.T. Mensah has meant that it requires a great deal of strength and courage of mind to take public office, particularly at this point and it is for this reason that we have and are keeping fairly silent in the expectation that government and the people will rise to the great challenge. But this is not a personal tragedy for Hearts or Kotoko: it is a national disaster for all of us. That is why the nation mourns and that is why the football community is grieving and that is why we as individuals cannot weep more loudly.

At this stage the Joy FM management will have to decide on what to do with their fund which apparently has raised close to ¢200,000,000 (two hundred million cedis). There may also be a need to consider nationalising the fund into that of the government’s. There may also be a case for the establishment of a national fund to help the families of the deceased, the families of the injured, the families of the victims and the orchestra. There is a need for leaders to start encouraging a situation where it can be both private and public to contribute all that they can to this fund. I am sure that the Joyce FM fund will not outpace the government’s. There may also be a case for the establishment of a national fund to help the families of the deceased, the families of the injured, the families of the victims and the orchestra. There is a need for leaders to start encouraging a situation where it can be both private and public to contribute all that they can to this fund. I am sure that the Joyce FM fund will not outpace the government’s. There may also be a case for the establishment of a national fund to help the families of the deceased, the families of the injured, the families of the victims and the orchestra.

I found the advertisements in one of the dailies at the weekend in which one of the famous/infamous Chapter O and told me not to worry…he told me that but for the officiating things could have been different. He was the concerned parent and direction was right. I was astounded and could only keep my eyes dry.

In the meantime…

Public announcements from a section of Hearts supporters from Nima that they were going to attack the stadium on Thursday, I was not worried but only saddened because they simply DO NOT represent the views of the majority of their supporters. I have received great support from a large number of them and I was touched when some of the people I saved at the stadium (Hearts supporters) came to congratulate me later.

The violence that arose afterwards and the threats against me, Kotoko supporters in Legon etc. must be contained and stopped. An attack on Kotoko or me would be an attack on all of us. It is for this reason that we have and are keeping fairly silent in the expectation that government and the people will rise to the great challenge. But this is not a personal tragedy for Hearts or Kotoko: it is a national disaster for all of us. That is why the nation mourns and that is why the football community is grieving and that is why we as individuals cannot weep more loudly.

I am bitterly disappointed by the irresponsible statements made by some Hearts officials. Their public attempts to apportion blame are absolutely inaccurate and irresponsible. Statements such as ‘at least 7 were responsible for the tragedy’ and ‘this is a personal tragedy for Hearts’ are simply a means of trying to deflect responsibility. It is a personal tragedy for Hearts and for Kotoko. The government has been responsible for the national disaster and all statements succeed in motivating a small section of their supporters to take to arms that the consequences of the actions must be on their conscience forever! We at Kotoko harbour personal feelings which I believe were not productive and an inability to police public at this point and it is for this reason that we have and are keeping fairly silent in the expectation that government and the people will rise to the great challenge. But this is not a personal tragedy for Hearts or Kotoko: it is a national disaster for all of us. That is why the nation mourns and that is why the football community is grieving and that is why we as individuals cannot weep more loudly.

I am truly humbled to be here today. In making this short speech I do not diminish the tragedy. Lessons will have to be learnt to prevent such a dreadful event from ever happening again. I believe there is a need for leaders to start encouraging a situation where it can be both private and public to contribute all that they can to this fund. I am sure that the Joyce FM fund will not outpace the government’s. There may also be a case for the establishment of a national fund to help the families of the deceased, the families of the injured, the families of the victims and the orchestra. There is a need for leaders to start encouraging a situation where it can be both private and public to contribute all that they can to this fund. I am sure that the Joyce FM fund will not outpace the government’s. There may also be a case for the establishment of a national fund to help the families of the deceased, the families of the injured, the families of the victims and the orchestra.

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Ghana mourns stadium victims
Cont’d from page 3

Until last Wednesday Ghana was but a blip on most international news channels, but all that changed minutes after news of the disaster broke on local television and radio stations.

Indeed a couple of Ghanaians first heard the news from loved ones abroad who were shocked by a BBC breaking news report early Wednesday evening announcing that over 100 people had died at the stadium.

What was to follow next was both chaotic and orderly. In the midst of the chaos one news report filed by a one Catherine Nartey and posted on the CNN website mentioned that President Rawlings was visiting hospitals in the capital to see the victims.

Obviously someone at CNN was still in the last century.

CNN of course later did a live report with BBC correspondent Kweku Sakyi Addo and several strings with GTV’s Francisca Ashietey-Orutun. BBC have not let Kweku off the hook and in hungry fashion sent down Ghanaian-born Ben Dotsi Malor to help ‘excavate’ any bit of news that was left for the nosy British Broadcasting Corporation.

Kweku reportedly had his phone ringing the whole day and at one time when CNN wanted him to go live he had to give up on them because his cell phone battery conked out! And CNN, like bloodhounds phoned an obviously uninformed Kofi Coomson for a rather hollow version of events.

As the week came to a close a two-man crew from M-NET’s renowned investigative news programme Carte Blanche arrived in town to do some news analysis of their own. Led by Producer Diana Lucas and anchor David Ampofo the team ‘ran riot’ in Accra over the weekend visiting the Military hospital morgue, the Accra Stadium, interviewing victims as well as talking to Herbert Mensah and Harry Zakkour.

One Ghanaian journalist left out of all these though was popular sportscaster and journalist, Kwabena Yeboah.

Yeboah left Accra for London last Monday to witness the FA Cup tie between Liverpool and Arsenal. It may perhaps come as a relief to him that he was not here to witness the frightening spectacle of bodies strewn everywhere at the 37 Military Hospital morgue. He returns on Friday.
Dear Editor,

I would like to congratulate coach Ernst Middendorp and the entire playing body for their splendid performances in the off-season matches played a couple of months ago most of which they won.

Now that there is positive change in the country, I strongly believe that it will affect my darling club, Kumasi Asante Kotoko. Since we are the pace-setters it is important that we develop our game so that the other clubs can learn from us. We must all know that the responsibility for success is ours as supporters. We pride ourselves with the success of the club. The success of the club is a source of great pride to all of us. Do we not have a divine mandate to help ourselves in the things that gives us satisfaction? Why have a part to play in this. Whatever we do to help our dear club is of ourselves i.e. success for our satisfaction.

Dear Editor,

Let’s belong to G7 not HIPC

When the league was about starting, many were those who were hunted by last season’s initial horrible outings. In view of that though very confident of our team making great impact in this year’s league, I was extremely meticulous coming out with any conclusive predictions to unduly inflate hopes only to inflate uncontrollable passion of supporters.

Of course, my expectations of good things to come actually drained away like water upon realising that our first match league was against RTU at the grassless Kaladan Park. Obviously, that venue has been Kotoko’s Waterloo for sometime now and to play the first match at a place where hardly win or draw was enough to send mild shocks to the spines of the numerous Kotoko supporters.

Nevertheless, our players managed to put up a vintage performance to secure a point from Kaladan Park. A point which brought quite excessive joy that brightened the future outlook of our team making a splash in this direction. I can only hope the people who make these ugly noises get their just deserts. I urge management to get back to the basics because it is what we need for success. The vital ingredients which form the basics are: Good leadership, Good technique, the direction, Enthusiasm of supporters, Publicity and openness, Definitive development plans and Suitable financing. Is the present management team and structure ready to meet these? The supporters should focus on issues. The enthusiasm as it is today is different from how it was three years ago. Supporters of the club had deserted our matches and the club was slowly dying.

Leadership has done everything necessary about all the basic things listed above. The seventh which to me is the most important requires the response of SUPPORTERS. We have to respond in order to balance the equation. What I mean is that we should respond to the call by management. We are always acclaimed to have the greatest supporters in the world. Demonstrably so, we should go on and REGISTER. The contributions of our supporters are the most sustainable source of financing for our CLUB. I hope somebody comes out to prove me wrong but until that time when I am proved wrong I will hold very dear the idea that SUPPORTER FINANCING is the most suitable source of financing for our dear club now. Supporters of teams like Manchester United providentially finance the club. The basics are in place for the club and therefore they can attract and retain the best players in the world. Why should we not provide the finance so that we can position our club the way Manchester United fans have done for their club? I am confident that it was enthusiasm and love that compelled supporters of Man U to buy the shares of the club when it was initially floated. Why should we not learn from the Man U experience? I am confident that our club can register at least one million supporters. I urge all supporters to rise and be counted.

ASSETS

We may ask ourselves the question, who owns the stadium at Old Trafford? I think it is the property of Man U. It’s a pity that a club of Asante Kotoko’s stature cannot point to a park which the club can call its’ own. I am grateful to Otumfu Osei Tutu II for donating land for the Kotoko City Project. This is one project which all supporters should hold very dear to their hearts.

I am confident that we will see a City which we can call ours, i.e., with everything therein if we can organise one million supporters. With this massive support-base, we should not wait to be tagged HIPC.

I call on all and sundry to get involved in the registration exercise. We should belong to the G 7 of football clubs and not HIPC. Let us contribute to develop the club. Several jobs will be created when the Kotoko City Project takes off. Leadership has provided the vision for us and we need to respond positively. A positive response means registering in our numbers. Let us all help to make ourselves happy.

I will rest my case by urging all supporters of the club to heed to the clarion call by either joining a CIRCLE, REGISTERING BY MAIL or PAYING into KOTOKO FC SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP ACCOUNT A/C No. 213556045

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Greetings to Kwadwo Ochene-Duah and all other supporters of the fabulous club.

In the mean time, I recall that about two to three years ago, Mr. Kwame Sherdil (School of Administration) appeared on television with Alhaji Jawula. Mr. Gyasi who happened to be my lecturer said the "GFA should rid itself of the old guards who have so many skeletons in the cupboard of each other such that efficiency and effectiveness are impaired". I will fully support his statement now. Strong leadership devoid of the antics of the past is what we need for our club.

Kwasi Owusu-Bonsu

Registered Circle Akwatia.
The President, Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor has stressed the importance of not dispensing with the services of the police for failing to function properly on a number of occasions.

Since last Wednesday there have been widespread condemnation of the police for causing the death of 126 able-bodied Ghanaians who paid a minimum of c10,000 to watch a league match between Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko.

With the police service now reeling under immense credibility pressure, the military has found favour with the people. At the Abosey Okai Central Mosque where the muslim casualties were laid in state before burial last Friday, angry youth chased away some police men who had come with the view to maintaining order amidst chants of "we want soldier, we want soldier". But the president has advised them that despite their punctured and badly damaged image, what the police service needs is transformation and reinvigorating it to enable society and expectancies. Kufuor said, "this nation has come through many trying episodes and when we have triumphed, it has been because we have stood together as one people".

At this crucial time, the president stated that the nation needs to cultivate a sense of unity, fellowship and human solidarity to overcome this national predicament. He remarked, "that is our tradition, that is our way of doing things. And there is no reason to abandon such a virtue".

Kufuor said this is the time for Ghanaians to stand together and resolve never to have a repetition of such a tragedy befall the nation again.

The majority leader in parliament and Minister for...
**Ejisu Circle 89 of Kumasi meet on Thursday**

**Bawku Circle 27 to meet**

**Circle 24 of Nkawkaw meet on Thursday**

**The Licensing Office Group meets tomorrow**

**Circle 98 of Pankrono calling**

**Invincible Circle 80 of Ahwiaa, Kumasi to meet**

**Odorkor Asante Kotoko fan club to meet**

**Atonsu supporters to meet on Saturday**
**Kumasi laments stadium disaster**

The beautiful game of football is meant to bring unity and friendliness among people through FAIR PLAY. But the unity and friendliness that was to be derived from the game rather brought pain and sorrow to the entire country as a result of police over-zealousness.

Some members of the public in Kumasi have reacted to the national disaster, which is now referred to as Black Wednesday.

**Justice Addo (Tailor, Ash-Town)** – It is good that the President has advised us not to pass judgment at the moment but I had long ago anticipated something of this nature, though not to such alarming proportions, because of the way our referees have in most cases handled some matches with bizarre decisions. Violence should never be endorsed in anyway but I think there is a level of patience of human beings. The issue of referees’ appointment must be seriously looked at.

With the police I think they simply take delight in firing tear gas. They acted rather callously. Their penchant for firing tear gas is quite on the high. As the President has promised, offenders must be dealt with after the Presidential enquiry. To our people who are bereaved I would want to take this opportunity to express my profound condolences. I pray for quick recovery for the injured and to the departed, may the good Lord grant them a peaceful rest.

**Anthony Boadi Moore** – It is very sad for Ghana to lose as many as 126 human lives because of football. It is terrible but I hope that the culprits would be brought to book after the Commission of Enquiry set up by the President has had the work done and would hope again that they be dealt with according to the dictates of the law.

The arrival of the new administration has witnessed a number of shake-ups in the various sectors of the economy but not in sports. I think there is a lot of politicking in the sports sector, which I believe government should take a critical look at. We voted for them because we needed “positive change” and we are eager to see the change!

To the police, they better be up and doing. I wish the human life and it is here that the role the police played comes into focus. If they knew that tear gas canisters were used to disperse crowds they should not have used it in an enclosed area like the stands at the stadium. The police are there to protect life and property and if they have failed to do so then they should be punished for their irresponsible action.

As a member of the GFA when we meet what I will put across is that the police should be well educated about the role they should play in such situations. They should also be re-trained in handling such situations so that there will be no repetition of the Accra stadium disaster.

I am urging the bereaved families to take heart and commit all that happened to the Almighty God and for the injured I wish them speedy recovery.

**Osei Kofi** – I put the blame on the police, the Sports Council and the referee who handled the match since in my opinion none of them played their role or roles effectively. I think if any one of them had behaved responsibly in the execution of their jobs the incident would not have occurred in the first place.

The reason why I am saying this is very simple. If the referee had played his role well the crowd would not have responded violently. If the police had also realized that they were there to protect lives they would not have fired the teargas.

There is no doubt that matches between the two sides are always characterized by tension, therefore the moment fans of one side realize that their team is being given a raw deal, they begin to react negatively.

On the other hand if the two sides realize that everything is fair, everybody accepts the outcome.

I know Hearts had beaten Kotoko several times in the past but I see this defeat as a result of poor officiating so I am not surprised by the outcome.

For the dead, all that I can say is that they should rest in peace. To the bereaved families they should also accept my condolences and to the injured I wish them speedy recovery.

**JOSEPH E. Sampson** – The scale of the disaster is too great to recount. It has never happened in the annals of the country’s political history. I pray the dead rest in perfect peace.

I blame poor and bias officiating as the root cause of the disaster.

In such tension-packed matches between two sides any indiscretion on the part of the referee was bound to spark off trouble and possibly even lead to more terror.

For some time now Hearts has been beating Kotoko and one had to be broken at all cost thus the tension was high.

The referee marked the match in such a way when he ignored the assistant referee’s flag and set the stage for spectacular agitation.

To the police, they better be on duty at the time reached the spectators’ sector and command all that happened to the Almighty God.

For the injured I pray for their quick recovery. I console the bereaved families.

**Alhaji Yahaya** – Right from the word go the referee did not hide his intention of favouring Hearts. He interacted freely with the Hearts side but the same could not be said of the Kotoko side and this heightened supporter’s apprehension that they would not be treated fairly.

For the “Positive Change” message to be realized there should be a major shake-up at the GFA leadership. Agra, Ampem Darko and Larveya, the man who has been appointing referees should all go since their positions have been compromised.

It is all that I can say is that they can save lives. Police personnel who will be detailed to provide security at league centres should be adequately trained and they will go a long way to forestall such unfortunate situations.

I will like to stress that pent up feelings amongst soccer fans will always be expressed irrespectively of the consequences and no one can suppress it, so long as referees continue to behave irresponsibly on the field of play.