

Dear readers,

Welcome back to my Monday column which went “to bed” while I went down under. Though a sad journey, I have come back with ideas and information, which I’ll share with you in the next couple of columns.

While I was away, there was another very sad event, the death of Professor Saburi Biobaku, the eminent historian. My tribute to him will appear in another column. My heartfelt sympathy to his widow and family.

In the last few months, an increasing alarm is being voiced about another life-threatening condition— D.V.T Deep Vein Thrombosis which afflicts passengers in aeroplanes that fly over nine hours non-stop. The state of forced immobilization of the lower limbs especially can cause DVT, which has been proven to have killed several passengers. Most of such passengers travelled in economy class, so the DVT is also known as the economy-class syndrome illness. Though renamed “world travelers cabins” by some airlines, the fact remains that the cabins for economy class ticket holders are the 20/21st centuries equivalent of the steerage quarters in the trans-Atlantic/Pacific ocean ships of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Given the appallingly cramped seating in the economy class part of the plane, it is no wonder that DVT is a serious threat. The international airlines have responded by treating the symptoms, not the cause. You will now find in the seat pockets well-illustrated advice to passengers on how to combat DVT by ankle and shoulder exercises to be done while seated; passengers are further advised to walk up the aisles as much as possible but not during meals; snacks are handed out of form or turbulence. The airlines have also begun a disinformation campaign in the media claiming that only (sic) those who are elderly, pregnant, obese, suffering from hypertension or heart problems are at risk. After all, that is still a significant num-

## Nina' Mba's Insider / Outsider's Account



# Flying Far, Flying Fear

ber of people, but this argument was undermined in January when three British Olympic cyclists returning from Australia were hospitalized on arrival in the UK with DVT. This seat shudders among healthy, slim, non-pregnant, air travelling passengers.

What the aeroplanes have been silent about is what they are going to do to provide more legroom in the econ-

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omy section. The easy answer is to remove one line of seats lengthwise and one row. i.e. 9 instead of 10 seat rows and remove two rows of 20 seats. Though still tight, that will allow more human and healthy space. But of course, it will rob the airlines of profit from about 100 passengers.

From the airlines’ perspective, the best solution is for vulnerable passengers to pay double or triple money for a club of a first-class ticket.

Most Nigerian travellers are not likely to face the trait of DVT since they travel to Europe or within Afri-

ca, but they may on trans-Atlantic and Asia/Australian flights. Worldwide, it is the most potentially dangerous because the greatest distances are flights to and from Australasia.

Therefore, the DVT problem is of special concern to those countries. There was a conference on the DVT in Sydney airport of the relevant medical specialist this month.

The result of the DVT scare is that passenger behavior in the economy section seems bizarre. Throughout the flight, the passengers walk up and down the aisles and then assemble outside the toilet and small space around the exit doors. Kicking, wriggling, squirming, levitating.....all looking in desperate need to go to the toilet or like the members of the Folangong cult in China but actually, they are just exercising to avoid the dreaded DVT.

Flying into Murtala Mohammed Airport, Lagos sets up another awful syndrome for passengers from ALL cabins of ALL airlines which fly into Lagos.

Passengers experience sweating, palpitations, acute anxiety, and claustrophobia. The cause? The woefully cramped arrival hall, inadequate air conditioning, only one functioning baggage carousel, insufficient trolleys, a resultant stampede as hundreds of passengers from two airlines which arrive at the same time claw each other to get their luggage. There is an obvious solution to this syndrome which I will name the Lagos Airport Syndrome – L. A. S.