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Search:

Search Magazine dated:

21

12

Daily News | Daily News On Saturday | Sunday News

Thursc

:: Menu

- » Home
- » Local news
- » Business & Finance
- » News Analysis
- » Columnists
- » Editorial
- » Features
- » Sports
- » News In Picture

:: Newspapers

- » Daily News
- » Daily News On Saturday
- » Sunday News
- » Habari Leo
- » Habari Leo Jumapili

:: Daily Online

- » Jobs and Career
- » Tenders
- » Classifieds Ads

:: Quick Links

- » Job career tips
- » Viewer's Comments
- » Online Rate Card
- » Newspaper Rate Card

::HEADLINES::4th phase govt keen on pledges ::: Power crisis will be contained - PM ::: Fi

:: index>News

Home News

More in this Category!

Democracy vital in poverty fight, says Albright

KILASA MTAMBALIKE

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FORMER US secretary of state Dr Madeleine Albright yesterday emphasised the importance of democratic transition in alleviating poverty.

Dr Albright, who is also the co-chair of the Commission of Legal Empowerment of the Poor (CLEP), also said that she has been impressed with the government's efforts in fighting poverty.

She made the comments when briefing the press shortly after the closing of a two-day National Consultative Conference on Legal Empowerment of the Poor.

Dr Albright said she was particularly impressed with the Kinondoni Hananasif development project, which she visited yesterday morning.

"I am impressed by the stage aspect of the development of the project. The area is a very difficult place to live; it has flooding, lacks water and paved roads. People will benefit from project," she said.

She said their commission is trying to listen to the people, who are excluded from the legal system, saying that poor people are not stupid and they know where their problems are.

Dr Albright further stated that poor people only lack the tools to get out of their poverty, but have incredible stamina, hope and entrepreneurial spirit and that they look at them as partners.

Former President Benjamin Mkapa said at the briefing that a country cannot have true democracy without involving the poor, and that, development cannot be attained without empowering the poor.

Mr Mkapa, who is also a member of the commission, said that the target of their commission's work is to protect the poor and the little that they have.

He also said that they want to empower those who are poor so that they can use the little resources at hand to develop themselves and improve their lives.

Mr Mkapa said it would be up to individual countries to see they can incorporate recommendations from the commission.

Tanzania has a Property and Business Formalisation Programme (Mkurabita), which aims at legally empowering the poor. Mr Mkapa hinted that the programme has progressed and they have now reached the stage of preparing recommendations for structural changes in diverse sectors.

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Contacts:

TSN Daily News building, Samora Avenue, Plot No. 7, P.O.Box 9033, Dar es Salaam,
E-mail: newsdesk@dailynews-tsn.com; Telephone: +255222110595, Fax: +255222135239 Or +255222112881
028842