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The New Dawn

French Version Inside

TRULY INDEPENDENT

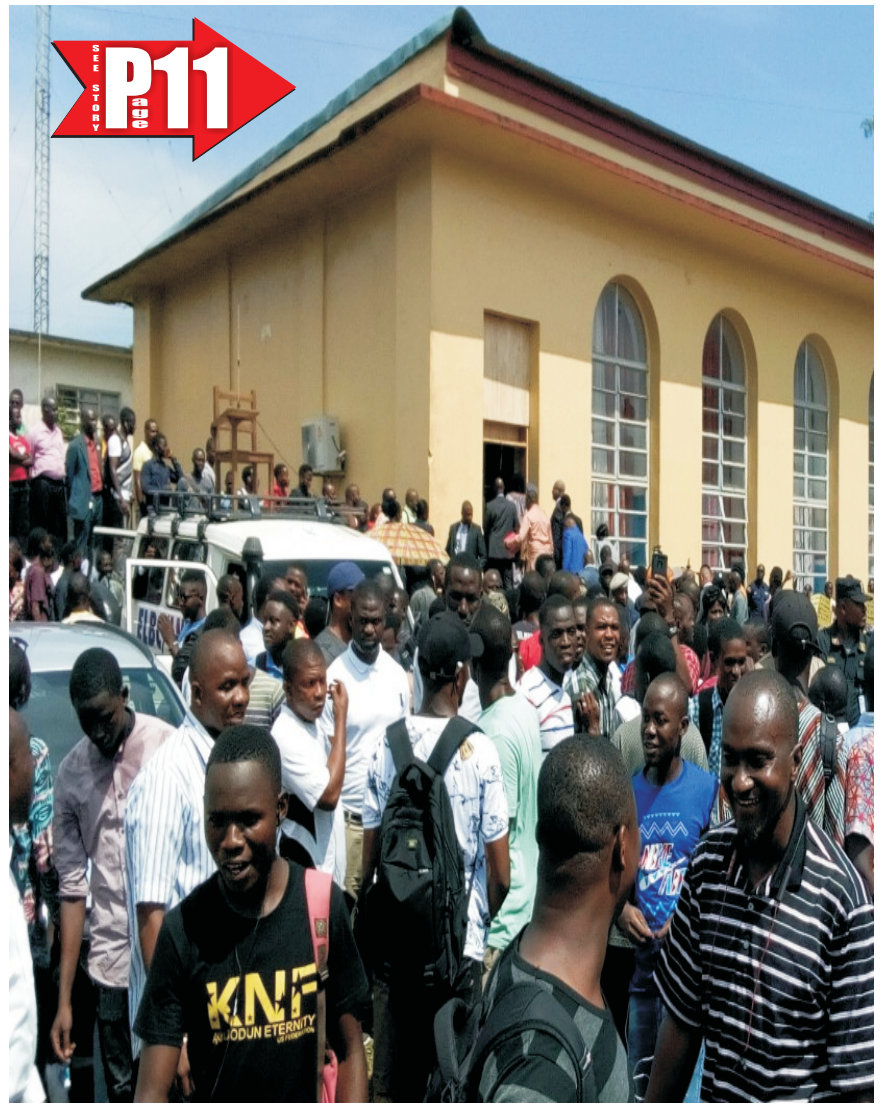
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President
Weah at UL**
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VOL. 8 NO. 191

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2018

PRICE LD\$40.00

Weah declares free university education



Robbery at Afriland Bank in Gbarpolu

-Several million Liberian Dollars stolen



Continental News

Nigeria sets \$14m presidential campaign cap

More than 84 million Nigerian have registered to vote next year. Image caption: More than 84 million Nigerian have registered to vote next year

Nigeria's parliament has passed a law capping campaign spending for next year's elections.

The following limits have been set:

- Presidential candidates: \$14m (£11m)
- Gubernatorial candidates: \$3m
- Senate candidates: \$700,000
- House of Representatives candidates: \$280,000.

The Electoral Act also stipulates how electronic card readers, used for the accreditation of voters at polling stations, should work.

The BBC's Aliyu Tanko in Lagos says this is seen as a move to address the



malpractices that have characterised previous elections.

Card readers were used at

some polling stations during the last elections, but there have been worries about them functioning in rural

areas where power shortages can be an issue.

It will be mandatory to use them now and the law says that should a card reader fail and a new one

not be deployed within three hours, the election at that polling station should be cancelled and held within 24 hours.-BBC

Kenya student murder: Governor freed on bail

Governor Okoth Obado has been in custody for more than a month. Image caption: Governor Okoth Obado has been in custody for more than a month.

Kenya's High Court has

released Governor Okoth Obado, who has been charged with aiding and abetting the brutal murder of his ex-girlfriend, on \$50,000 (£39,000) cash bail. Migori County governor has been in custody since his arrest last

month, which followed weeks of public anger after the body of Sharon Otieno, a 26-year-old university student, was found in a forest. A post-mortem revealed she had possibly been raped, and stabbed eight times in the neck, abdomen and back. She lost her unborn child during the attack.

Kenyans have been demanding justice following the murder of Sharon Otieno. Image caption: Kenyans have been demanding justice following the murder of Sharon Otieno

The married governor, his assistant and a county employee, who have also been charged with murder, have all pleaded not guilty to the charge. It is Mr Obado's second attempt at securing bail following his arrest. His initial request was rejected on 27 September when the prosecution raised concerns about the safety of witnesses in the murder trial. Mr Obado has been asked to surrender



Mugabe son-in-law in court

Former President Robert Mugabe's son-in-law Simbarashe Mutsahuni, alias Chikore, appeared at the Harare Magistrates' Court yesterday facing charges of unlawfully detaining ex-Zimbabwe Airways legal head Bertha Tsitsi Zakeyo.

BY DESMOND CHINGARANDE

Chikore (41), who surrendered himself to the police upon return from Asia, was not asked to plead when he appeared before magistrate Elisha Singano, who remanded him to November 7 on \$30 bail.

Police allegedly swooped on Chikore at the Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport and

briefly detained him before releasing him into the custody of his lawyer Jonathan Samukange.

As part of his bail conditions, Chikore was ordered to reside at his given address and not to interfere with Zakeyo.

However, Samukange placed the State on notice that on the next remand date, he would file an application for refusal remand if they fail to furnish him with a trial date.

Chikore's accomplice, a security guard Simbarashe Mutimbe, is already on remand after being granted \$30 bail by magistrate Rumbidzai Mugwagwa last month. NewsDay

his travel documents, including his passport, and his movements have been restricted to within 20km (12 miles) of the boundaries of Migori County in western

Kenya. His assistants have been denied bail as the court said they may interfere with investigations. The next hearing will be on 17 May 2019.-BBC

EDITORIAL

The economy needs urgent revival

THE LIBERIAN ECONOMY is rapidly deteriorating under the Weah administration much earlier than expected, pushing ordinary Liberians tightly to the margins of society, as prices of basic commodities, including food, petroleum products and the exchange rate keep rising.

THE FRENCH-OWNED PETROLEUM importer and distributor, TOTAL, is scaling down from the counties, while the price for a gallon of gasoline in Monrovia has jumped from 540 Liberian Dollars to 700 LRD, amid suspected artificial shortage characterized by hike in transport fares.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER TAKING office in January, President George Manneh Weah announced that he inherited a broke economy amid rising inflation, primarily as a result of the soaring exchange rate. In June, the President constituted an economic management team to help salvage the economy. The team is comprised of technicians from the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Central Bank of Liberia, among others.

THE GOVERNMENT THRU the Central Bank had announced it was releasing US\$25 million into the financial market to mop up excess liquidity in the economy in a bid to offset the exchange rate, officially setting the rate at 150 Liberian Dollars for one United States Dollar. But these initial steps have yielded no tangible impact, as the current rate in the forex market is between 156 and 160 Liberian Dollars for one U.S. Dollar.

LAST WEEK, THE President again constituted another economic team, the Business Climate Working Group to identify quick "low-hanging fruits" in the business climate and deliver them in the shortest possible time, accompanied by an action plan.

HOWEVER, LIBERIANS ARE becoming skeptical, particularly so when previous interventions by the current administration brought no relief, as the soaring exchange rate and prices still persist amid elaborate lavish lifestyle by government officials, some of whom have adapted a habit of buying expensive cars and houses, costing hundreds of thousands of United States Dollars less than 12 months in a government that professes to be for the poor people.

THESE CHALLENGES ARE being further compounded by news of the alleged disappearance of "containers and bags of moneys" or newly printed Liberian banknotes, totally about US\$15.5 billion LRD from the Freeport of Monrovia. The Government of Liberia is probing issue surrounding the missing moneys alongside assistance by the Government of the United States to get the facts.

WE ARE WONDERING whether the Business Climate Working Group would produce any tangible gains in improving the general business climate in the country to impact citizens' lives as the Weah administration ends one year in office.

PRESIDENT WEAH MAY have good intentions for the citizenry, but he seems to be chewing too much than he can swallow, breaking grounds here and there for roads and other constructions despite serious lack of funds.

WE BELIEVE IT is not the amount of committees or projects announced that matters, but tangible results that impact lives of the people. The government can't claim it is in financial squeeze, while its officials, including the President himself, are on purchasing spree and massive renovation of private properties, barely nine months in office.

The New Dawn
FULLY INDEPENDENT

Published by the Searchlight Communications Inc., Crown Hill-Broad Street,
Adjacent Afriland Bank Monrovia-Liberia.

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COMMENTARY

By Ngaire Woods

Why a Sino-American Cold War Won't Happen

Rather than a superpower standoff, the world is more likely to be heading toward an international system led by four powers. In this scenario, the US, China, Russia, and Germany dominate their respective regions while seeking the upper hand in international negotiations.

OXFORD - It is often said that the US and China - superpowers at economic, geopolitical, and ideological loggerheads - are heading toward a new cold war. And the rhetoric - at least from one side - has come to resemble that of Winston Churchill's 1946 "Iron Curtain" speech, one of the inaugural events of the Cold War. Just this month, US Vice President Mike Pence accused China of predatory economic practices, military aggression against the United States, and attempts to undermine US President Donald Trump.

But despite the media hype, a new cold war is not inevitable - or even likely. To be sure, Chinese leaders, fearing disorder and any weakening of the Communist Party of China's legitimacy, are determined to prevent the US from forcing changes on China's political and economic system. China will continue to pursue reforms at its own pace and in its own way. For Chinese President Xi Jinping, a top priority is to merge the CPC with the machinery of government in order to reduce corruption and burnish the state's ideological credentials. Any attempt to interfere in this process would be crossing a red line.

Fortunately for Xi, Trump has no interest in "democratizing" other countries, and he doesn't seem to have been swayed by the US investors, financiers, and technology titans who want his administration to press for more access to the Chinese economy.

No doubt, US tariffs threaten the 18% of Chinese exports that go to the US each year. But the Trump administration has more urgent priorities than changing China's system of government, notwithstanding the aggressive rhetoric of US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and White House National Trade Council Director Peter Navarro. Trump desperately wants to bolster US manufacturing by repatriating global supply chains and blocking or curbing imports. "Make America Great Again" is really about making in America again.

Still, even if today's US-China standoff does not evolve into a new cold war, it could weaken both countries and usher in a more multipolar world. Within China, US rhetorical broadsides, tariffs, and sanctions may be empowering Xi's domestic critics. And it doesn't help that China currently has limited options for retaliating. True, it could start to sell off some of its \$1 trillion in US dollar reserves. But that would weaken the value of the US Treasuries that it continues to hold.

Within the US, Trump's decision to pursue sweeping import tariffs has been described by one industry representative as "the most self-destructive trade act I've ever seen." And the administration's renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement - which includes a clause to prevent Canada or Mexico from negotiating with China - has met with similar disdain. Such policies threaten both to destroy US jobs and to alienate America's allies, many of which are already distancing themselves.

Indeed, the Trump administration's "America

First" positions have increasingly translated into "America Alone." The US now constitutes a minority of one within the G7, the G20, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. After Trump pulled the US out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the remaining parties moved ahead on their own. Far from setting the terms of debate on international issues, the Trump administration has convinced other countries to reduce their reliance on US leadership.

Widespread circumvention of the US will hasten the emergence of a new multipolar order. For example, by withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, Trump has essentially dared the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, Russia, and the European Union to defy US prerogatives.

For now, countries that rely on Iranian oil may have no choice but to go along with the US. Like most traded goods, oil exports are paid for in dollars - largely through the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) in Belgium - and the US has the power to shut down such transactions. Most companies and countries have concluded that doing business in Iran is not worth losing access to the US market and the international dollar-payments system.

But in the future, they may no longer have to make such tradeoffs. On August 21, Germany's foreign minister, Heiko Maas, urged Europe to establish payment channels that are independent of the US. And the following month, the EU's foreign policy chief announced plans to form a "special purpose vehicle" to "assist and reassure economic operators pursuing legitimate business with Iran."

Meanwhile, Russia has said that it is developing its own system for financial transfers, to protect itself from being shut out of the SWIFT system in the event of harsher US sanctions. And China has been pursuing a similar project at least since 2015, when the People's Bank of China launched a system to facilitate cross-border transactions in renminbi.

None of these alternative systems have yet to match the convenience of SWIFT and the dollar system. But if a new system were to take hold, it could rapidly shift power away from the US.

Rather than a cold war, the world may be heading toward an international system led by four powers, with the US, China, Russia, and Germany dominating their respective regions and seeking the upper hand in international negotiations. Such a scenario is reminiscent of the World War II vision of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who proposed that the four victorious allies - the US, the UK, China, and the Soviet Union - act as "Four Policemen," each patrolling its own sphere of influence and negotiating with the others on world peace.

Today, approximations of the same four powers are once again in the lead, only now we have stronger international institutions to help keep the peace. Whether that peace lasts will depend on the willingness of the four powers to use and adapt those institutions to the emerging international system.

O-PED

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

Killer Politicians

NEW YORK - "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome priest?" asked Henry II as he instigated the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, in 1170. Down through the ages, presidents and princes around the world have been murderers and accessories to murder, as the great Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin and Walter Lunden documented in statistical detail in their masterwork *Power and Morality*. One of their main findings was that the behavior of ruling groups tends to be more criminal and amoral than that of the people over whom they rule.

What rulers crave most is deniability. But with the murder of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi by his own government, the poisoning of former Russian spies living in the United Kingdom, and whispers that the head of Interpol, Meng Hongwei, may have been executed in China, the curtain has been slipping more than usual of late. In Riyadh, Moscow, and even Beijing, the political class is scrambling to cover up its lethal ways.

But no one should feel self-righteous here. American presidents have a long history of murder, something unlikely to trouble the current incumbent, Donald Trump, whose favorite predecessor, Andrew Jackson, was a cold-blooded murderer, slaveowner, and ethnic cleanser of native Americans. For Harry Truman, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima spared him the likely high cost of invading Japan. But the second atomic bombing, of Nagasaki, was utterly indefensible and took place through sheer bureaucratic momentum: the bombing apparently occurred without Truman's explicit order.

Since 1947, the deniability of presidential murder has been facilitated by the CIA, which has served as a secret army (and sometime death squad) for American presidents. The CIA has been a party to murders and mayhem in all parts of the world, with almost no oversight or accountability for its countless assassinations. It is possible, though not definitively proved, that the CIA even assassinated UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

The CIA has only been held to public account on one occasion: the 1975 US Senate hearings led by Frank Church. Since then, the CIA has continued its violent and, yes, murderous ways, without any accountability for it or for the presidents who authorized its actions.

Many mass killings by presidents have involved the conventional military. Lyndon Johnson escalated US military intervention in Vietnam on the pretext of a North Vietnamese attack in the Gulf of Tonkin that never happened. Richard Nixon went further: by carpet-bombing Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, he sought to instill in the Soviet Union the fear that he was an irrational leader capable of anything. (Nixon's willingness to implement his "madman theory" is perhaps the self-fulfilling proof of his madness.) In the end, the Johnson-Nixon American war in Indochina cost millions of innocent lives. There was never a true accounting, and perhaps the opposite: plenty of precedents for later mass killings by US forces.

The mass killings in Iraq under George W. Bush are of course better known, because the US-led war there was made for TV. A supposedly civilized country engaged in "shock and awe" to overthrow another country's government on utterly false pretenses. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians died as a result.

Barack Obama was widely attacked by the right for being too soft, yet he, too, notched up quite a death toll. His administration repeatedly approved drone attacks that killed not only terrorists, but also innocents and US citizens who opposed America's bloody wars in Muslim countries. He signed the presidential finding authorizing the CIA to cooperate with Saudi Arabia in overthrowing the Syrian government. That "covert" operation (hardly discussed in the polite pages of the *New York Times*) led to an ongoing civil war that has resulted in hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths and millions displaced from their homes. He used NATO airstrikes to overthrow Libya's Muammar el-Qaddafi, resulting in a failed state and ongoing violence.

Under Trump, the US has abetted Saudi Arabia's mass murder (including of children) in Yemen by selling it bombs and advanced weapons with almost no awareness, oversight, or accountability by the Congress or the public. Murder committed out of view of the media is almost no longer murder at all.

When the curtain slips, as with the Khashoggi killing, we briefly see the world as it is. A *Washington Post* columnist is lured to a brutal death and dismembered by America's close "ally." The American-Israeli-Saudi big lie that Iran is at the center of global terrorism, a claim refuted by the data, is briefly threatened by the embarrassing disclosure of Khashoggi's grisly end. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who ostensibly ordered the operation, is put in charge of the "investigation" of the case; the Saudis duly cashier a few senior officials; and Trump, a master of non-stop lies, parrots official Saudi tall tales about a rogue operation.

A few government and business leaders have postponed visits to Saudi Arabia. The list of announced withdrawals from a glitzy investment conference is a who's who of America's military-industrial complex: top Wall Street bankers, CEOs of major media companies, and senior officials of military contractors, such as Airbus's defense chief.

The US prides itself on being a constitutional democracy, yet when it comes to foreign policy, the president is little different from a despot. Trump has just announced the US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty without so much as a mention to Congress.

Political scientists should test the following hypothesis: countries led by presidents (as in the US) and non-constitutional monarchs (as in Saudi Arabia), rather than by parliaments and prime ministers, are especially vulnerable to murderous politics. Parliaments provide no guarantees of restraint, but one-man rule in foreign policy, as in the US and Saudi Arabia, almost guarantees massive bloodletting.

Americans are rightly horrified by Khashoggi's murder. But their own government's murderous ways may be little different. The pervasiveness of state-sponsored killings is no excuse for treating murder as acceptable, ever. It is instead a rationale for subjecting power to strict constitutional constraints and especially to international law, including the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is our only true hope for survival and safety in a world where the casual resort to violence can easily be the end of all of us.

OPINION

By Naomi Burke-Shyne

Bangladesh's Deadly War on Drugs

LONDON - The audio quality is poor and the sound of gunshots muffled, but the agony in Ekramul Haque's voice is unmistakable. On May 26, while speaking with his family by phone, Haque, an elected official in southern Bangladesh, was gunned down by police in an apparent extrajudicial killing.

Bangladeshi authorities insist Haque was a drug dealer who died in an exchange of gunfire, but the audio evidence - captured by his wife as she listened to her husband die - suggests that the officers involved killed him and then planted drugs at the scene. The recording casts a disturbing light on Bangladesh's new drug-control strategy.

Since May, when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina revamped her government's war on drugs, an estimated 25,000 people have been arbitrarily imprisoned, and at least 200 have died in alleged shootouts. The parallels to President Rodrigo Duterte's brutal drug crackdown in the Philippines are chilling. There, human rights are routinely violated and more than 20,000 people have been slaughtered since 2016. While Duterte's campaign has drawn international condemnation, Hasina's purge has been subject to less scrutiny.

The relative lack of international criticism seems to have emboldened the government to act even more ruthlessly. In early October, the authorities doubled down by proposing a draft law, which has now been submitted to Parliament, to expand the use of capital punishment for drug offenses. Under the proposal, possession of more than five grams of "yaba" - a methamphetamine-based drug targeted by the government's crackdown - could be punishable by death.

While the death penalty for drugs has existed in Bangladesh for decades, it has rarely been used. This could change dramatically if Parliament approves the government's bill. The ferocity of the authorities' anti-drug campaign, together with the extremely low threshold for yaba possession, means that even people who use drugs and low-level dealers could face execution.

Despite what governments claim, the death penalty for drug offenses does not target kingpins. It is the poor and the most vulnerable who suffer. This would certainly be the case in Bangladesh, where some Rohingya refugees - who have fled horrific persecution in neighboring Myanmar - rely on the drug trade for economic survival.

Moreover, there is simply no evidence that the death penalty for drug use lowers rates of consumption or trafficking. Almost 4,000 people have been executed for drug offenses in the past decade, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime admits that the drug market is still booming. Death penalty laws are little more than grotesque grandstanding by governments seeking to appear "tough" on drugs while blindly ignoring the facts.

Bangladesh's legislation move would move the country to the extreme fringe of the international community and buck the global trend toward abolishing capital punishment. According to Harm Reduction International's research, of the 33 countries that retain the death penalty for drug offenses, only a handful - mainly Saudi Arabia and China - actually carry out executions. Most other countries have changed tack.

For example, drug-related executions in Iran fell dramatically after judicial reforms late last year (although the country still applies the death penalty for other offenses). Meanwhile, Malaysia's cabinet is considering a bill to abolish the death penalty for all crimes. If it passes, the measure would commute the sentences of the 1,267 people currently on death row in the country, including 900 convicted of drug-related crimes.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh is not alone in favoring extreme measures. Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena recently said that his country would end a 42-year moratorium on executions and begin killing people convicted of drug crimes. While it is unclear if Sirisena will follow through, his threat is part of a worrying trend among populists who view the death penalty as a panacea for the drug trade. In a rambling speech earlier this year, US President Donald Trump suggested that he, too, supports such a policy.

The European Union has urged Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to reconsider their strategies, arguing that "the death penalty doesn't act as a deterrent to crime, and any error of judgment is impossible to correct." These are wise words, and countries everywhere - especially EU member states - must do more to reinforce this view.

Bangladesh's Parliament still has an opportunity to reject the draft law and move the country toward a more effective drug-control policy. Enacting the death penalty would only exacerbate an already deteriorating human-rights situation. Around the world, countries are recognizing that executions, much less extrajudicial killings, have no effect on the drug trade. Bangladesh must recognize this, too.

LIBERIANS DEBATE

With Sally H. Gaye Cell#: 0886726282 Email:sh0770291004@gmail.com



President George Manneh Weah declares tuition free for undergraduates at the University of Liberia and all public universities and colleges in the country. The Visitor to the University of Liberia made pronouncement Wednesday, 24 October in the UL Auditorium following a tour of the Capitol Hill Campus.



Vernon Washington

“Excited, no I'm not. This is good but not the urgent priority! We need free and quality primary education. Offering a tuition free university education to folks who could somehow or someway afford the cost is good but absolutely not urgent. Dear Mr. President, please also, at your most favorable gesture, ensure that there's free, and not

free of knowledge, educational institutions for our young students most especially, primary school going kids that you might feel comfortable sending some your grandchildren to without hesitation. Thank you! And y'all at UL, congratulations. I might enroll there.”



Hansford Ama-jowel

“Free education, spell your name. This was the song we once sang during our elementary days in school..... I am in tears of joy at moment. After several decades of existence, President Weah has declared the University of Liberia tuition-free with only ten months in office. No more standing in long queues for hours to get ULSU financial aid

just to be in school. Students protested and disrupted normal learning activities for many years, resisting the administration over tuition rise. Many student leaders got expelled and suspended by authorities of the University for their Radical Postures in defense of struggling students at the state-run university. Today, the students can now stay home or wherever, run their registration by planning their courses online without having to interact with anyone physically and get registration complete free of charge. Hope is now restored at the University of Liberia.”

Michael Tipayson

“As a President of your Country, the least I owe you is to EDUCATE YOU- And, I want you to use that Education to DEVELOP LIBERIA. President George Weah remarks today at the University of Liberia when he declared Free Tuition for all Public Universities in Liberia. To further enhance this statement, I will begin an appeal to President Weah as a citizen of the Republic of Liberia. I want to read HYDROLOGY so as to help close the gaps in that sector. Your declaration is powerful and will help most of the less fortunate students across the country.”



Joshes Jones

“The economy must be strong to fully fund the UL. There are many other private donors of students at the UL, you are also limiting the UL ability to raise revenue by this move. Free university is supported by the citizens through committed taxpaying, not only central government. How about those primary and secondary schools? Are they going to keep paying tuition and fees, where struggling parents can't afford to send their kids to school?”



Bgraciousyandibo

“CONGRATULATIONS to President George M. Weah for the free tuition for all students at the University of Liberia. This pronouncement means a lot to Liberians as well as strengthening the education sector in Mama Liberia. At least those who have the university requirements, but cannot afford tuitions can now enroll. And this is ready giving hope to education



in Liberia.”

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Welcome To The New World

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GoL to launch Pro-Poor Agenda in Ganta

President George Manneh Weah will on Saturday, 27 October launch the national development plan of the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

A press release from the Ministry of Finance says the launching is expected in Ganta, Nimba County after a series of reviews and a national validation of the PAPD.

It adds that the validation process was led by government through the Ministry of Finance with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The launching of the PAPD will be held at the United Methodist Hall in Ganta, Nimba County under the Theme: Unveiling of an Integrated Five Years Medium-term National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

According to the Ministry, the PAPD is the current five years Medium-term National Development Plan of the Government of Liberia.



The PAPD is the second in the series of five years' national development plans that seek to raise Liberians out of poverty and reduce the vast inequality and disparity gap.

According to the release, the objectives of the PAPD are: to build more capable and

trusted state institutions that will lead to a stable, resilient and inclusive nation embracing its triple heritage and anchor on its African identity.

The objectives include: to provide greater income security to an additional one

million Liberians, and reduce absolute poverty by 23 percent across 5 out of 6 regions through sustained and inclusive economic growth driven by scaled-up investments in agriculture, in infrastructure, in human resource development, and in social protection.

The release says during the six years period, the concepts of the PAPD are: Placing the needs of the poor and vulnerable at the center of all development interventions, doing development in ways that will lift the poor and vulnerable out of poverty without severely affecting the wealthy.

The concept also include: reducing waste in government and repurposing the savings to improve the lives of the poor and vulnerable.

The Five Years Medium-term National Development Plan outlines the four pillars.

Pillar 1 talks about giving Power to the People by empowering Liberians with the tools to gain control of their lives thru more equitable provision of opportunities in

education, health, youth development and social protection thereby leaving no one behind.

Pillar 2 talks about the Economy and Jobs, focusing on a stable micro-economic environment enabling private sector-led economic growth, greater competitiveness and diversification of the economy.

Pillar 3 talks about Sustaining the Peace by promoting a more peaceful and united society that enables economic transformation and sustainable development.

Pillar 4 talks about Governance and Transparency by promoting an inclusive and accountable public sector for shared prosperity and sustainable development.

The National Launch of the PAPD will bring together Development Partners, Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector, the Legislatures, the Judiciary, Ministries, Agencies and Commissions of Government, County Superintendents, the Press, and other citizens of Liberia.-- *Press release*

Stakeholders discuss integrity challenge

By Jonathan Browne

Stakeholders and key integrity institutions in Liberia identified lack of willpower as among challenges impeding smooth adherence to integrity issues and laws on the book.

Attending a stakeholder discussion Wednesday, 24 October at the World Bank Liberia Country Office in Oldest Congo Town, Monrovia on a new World Bank publication "License To Drill", they emphasize the need to enhance transparency and accountability, particularly in the extractive industries.

"License To Drill" is a manual on integrity due diligence in extractive sector licensing. "A how to" manual, the book aims at helping countries improve background checks on applicants for licenses and concessions in natural resource and extractive sectors.

The publication highlights three key areas: (1) beneficial ownership checks; (2) criminal background checks and (3) conflict of interest checks, all geared at licensing only companies and concessions that are likely to meet high integrity standards in developing a country's valuable assets.

World Bank Liberia Chief Economist and Officer-In-

Charge, Daniel Boakye, says the publication is to enhance transparency and accountability, and gaps of licensing companies.

He notes Liberia was among the first countries to sign the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative or EITI progress. "We look forward to a very productive engagement", Mr. Boakye stresses. Lead author, Cari L. Votava, is Senior Financial Sector Specialist of the World Bank with wealth of experience in the extractive sector for about 10 years.

She has worked both in Liberia and Sierra Leone. A lawyer and financial expert, she focuses the book on the legal steps that should be required in licensing companies in the sector.

But the Vice Chairman of the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) Attorney J. Adams Manobah, says the problem in Liberia is not laws, but leadership to implement laws on the book.

Attorney Manobah notes that Liberians are not willing to make a difference in whatever public office they occupy except for the salary.

"We have to go beyond where the wall stops, and ensure implementation", he stresses.

Mr. Othello Garblah, Publisher of the New Dawn Newspaper agrees that lack of political will is a serious challenge in upholding transparency and accountability in the public sector, and stresses the need to involve all major institutions such as the National Investment Commission, business registry and others into such discussions. Speaking earlier, Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy for Operations, Emmanuel O. Sherman emphasizes the need for a reliable Information Technology (IT) and database systems that would centralize information from key government ministries and sectorial agencies that would make it easier to not only background check companies coming to invest in the country, but records of due diligence done by other public agencies in the licensing process.



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University students in court over nude video

By Winston W. Parley

Four young female students from privately-run United Methodist University (UMU) are in court for their alleged link to the sharing of a nude video of their female friend and schoolmate on social media between June and July 2018.

The accused include Anita Woods, Stephanie Ajavon, Deddeh Yaesiah and Charlotte Dixon.

A police Charge sheet that accompanied them to the Monrovia City Court on Wednesday, 24 October says they face a charge of dissemination of obscene materials, for knowingly and purposely distributing a nude video secretly recorded by the victim on her phone while at home.

Both the complainant and the defendants are friends and schoolmates at UMU on Ashmun Street in Monrovia, according to police.

The victim is said to have done a secret recording of herself while at home on her



cellphone; and that co-defendant Anita Woods allegedly had access to the nude video while it was still in the victim's phone, the police add.

Prior to the video sharing incident, police say the victim had some misunderstanding with her fiance in June this year and then moved out of

their SKD Boulevard residence, relocating to the Old Road.

Anita is said to have come in to make some intervention between the victim and her fiance and was at some point allegedly seen in closed door with the victim's fiance during late night hours.

Police say this sparked commotion, and that days

later, a nude video of the victim was secretly being shared in a shared inbox by the defendants.

Co-defendants Charlotte Dixon and Deddeh Yaesiah allegedly distributed the video among others with titles: "La sex tape is really lit ooh and we are making sure every citizen of this country will have a copy of the sex tape."

The police indicate that defendant Stephanie Ajavon is a member of the chart room called "We Chart" and was fully involved with the sharing of the nude video of the victim.

Lawyers representing defendants Anita, Deddeh, Stephanie and Charlotte made a submission seeking a pre-trial conference to narrow down the issue and to avoid legal technicality.

On their behalf, Counsel Jimmy Saah Bombo says the request is in good faith, intended to foster and ensure transparent justice and speedy trial.

But prosecuting lawyer Cllr. Sam Y. Cooper resists the submission as being unmeritorious, arguing that the statute provides that there should be a meeting of the mind of an attorney of the defendants and the prosecuting attorney for a pretrial conference [before the request can be made in court].

In essence, Cllr. Cooper uprightly rejected a pre-trial conference as has been requested because prosecutors were not

consulted by the defense to narrow down those issues that are befitting the court.

He then asks that the Court to order the defendants in the dock to file the appropriate bond so as to secure their day to day appearance.

In the absence of that, the lawyer says the defendants should be remanded at the Monrovia Central Prison (MCP) or South Beach so as to deter the naked showing.

Stipendiary Magistrate Kennedy Peabody denied the application for pretrial conference because it seemed that there was no meeting of the mind based on the resistance filed by the prosecution.

He however instructed the defendants to proffer the appropriate criminal appearance bond commensurate the crime charged, warning that if they fail to do so, they will be turned over to the sheriff of court who have them incarcerated at the MCP pending the issuance of the criminal appearance bond.

Meanwhile, only co-defendant Antia's lawyer was able to file a bond and secured her release, while the rest Deddeh, Stephanie and Charlotte were sent to jail at the Monrovia Central Prison due to their failure to file their bonds.

As per the court's instruction, they will remain incarcerated pending the filing of their criminal appearance bond. -Edited by Othello B. Garblah

Weah criticized for poorly managing economy -Afrobarometer survey

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

President George Manneh Weah's government is being poorly rated by most Liberians for dismally managing the economic, but the President still enjoys massive approval since he assumed office in January 2018, according to survey by Afrobarometer.

Afrobarometer is a pan-African series of national public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, and society.

The survey, conducted in collaboration with The Khana

Group, was released here Wednesday, October 24, indicating that President Weah receives the highest approval ratings among political leaders in Liberia.

It notes that majority of citizens say he is doing a good job in areas of national security, domestic and foreign policy issues.

"Citizens give the government a passing grade on providing infrastructure and basic services but failing marks for its economic performance and efforts to address the country's most important

problems," the survey details.

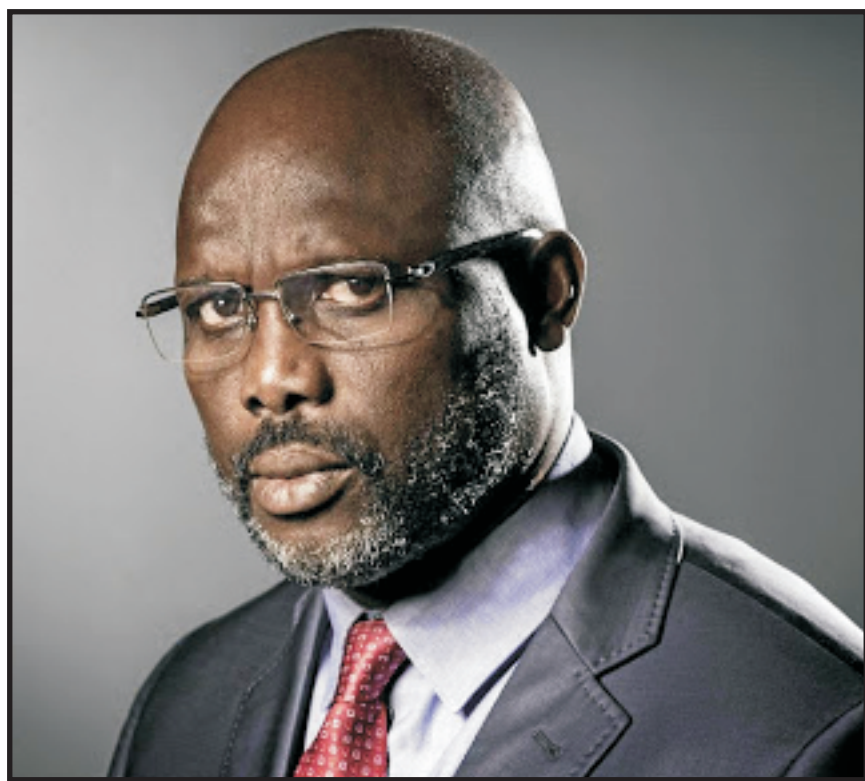
According to Taa Wongbe, the survey was conducted in June, about the time that an alarming depreciation of the Liberian dollar resulted in price hikes and worsening economic conditions in the country.

56 percent of Liberians "approves" or "strongly approves" of President Weah's job performance. His rating is the best among political leaders, followed by mayors, 47 percent and county superintendents, 44 percent, with senators receiving the lowest performance rating, 39 percent respectively.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of Liberians want the exclusive black citizenship law in the Constitution of Liberia maintained, against the President's call for dual citizenship, the Afrobarometer survey also reveals. The same proportion says only Liberian citizens should be allowed to own land here.

President George Weah describes the current citizenship and land ownership laws as "unnecessary, racist, and inappropriate for the 21st century," and advocated strongly for the Land Rights Act.

The act, which was passed in September 2018, allows non-Liberian missionary, educational, and other



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benevolent institutions to own property as long as it is used for the purpose acquired.

The survey also found that a majority of Liberians would grant citizenship rights to persons born in Liberia of a Liberian parent and one non-Liberian parent as well as to persons from other countries who have worked in Liberia and want to stay, and to persons born in Liberia of two non-Liberian parents. The

least deserving to be Liberian citizens, according to the respondents, are husbands of Liberian women and persons who wish to hold dual citizenship.

The study also shows that majority perceive widespread discrimination against native Liberians, Muslims, and people of Congolese descent, Christians, and their own ethnic groups. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

Français

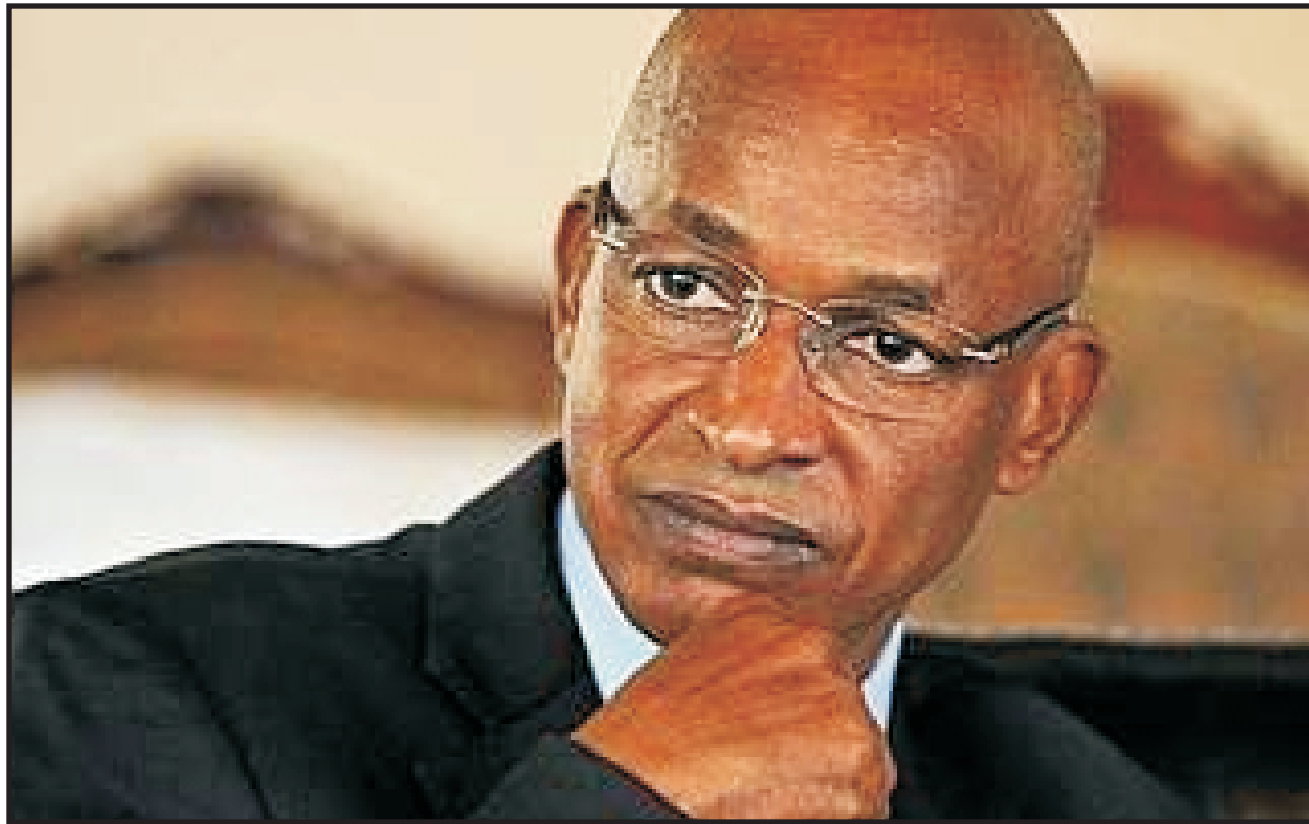
Guinée : un mort et la voiture du chef de l'opposition visée par un tir

Alors qu'un adolescent a été tué par balle, mardi 23 octobre, en marge de la manifestation interdite de l'opposition guinéenne, Cellou Dalein Diallo, chef de file de l'opposition, a indiqué que sa voiture avait été visée par un tir.

En fin de matinée mardi, le leader du parti UFDG s'apprêtait à rejoindre ses partisans à qui il avait demandé de se mobiliser pour dénoncer les conditions d'installation des conseils communaux. Mais Cellou Dalein Diallo raconte que sa voiture a été arrêtée par les forces de l'ordre à deux kilomètres à peine de son domicile.

« Ils nous ont arrosés de gaz lacrymogènes au point qu'on n'arrivait plus à se voir, on avait mal aux yeux. C'est alors qu'on a tiré sur ma voiture, raconte-t-il. La balle a percé le pare-brise et est allée percer la lunette arrière de la voiture. »

Une balle a effectivement



traversé le véhicule de Cellou Dalein Diallo, confirme un expert en armement interrogé par RFI. L'impact est visible sur le pare-brise avant et arrière du véhicule. L'opposant a même publié des photos sur Twitter :

La balle n'a pas fait de victime. Le chauffeur a été

très légèrement blessé par des éclats de verre, mais Cellou Dalein Diallo dit se sentir en danger.

Démenti des autorités

De leur côté, les autorités mettent en doute les propos du chef de file de l'opposition. Le ministre de l'Information, Amara

Somparé, assure qu'aucun coup de feu n'est venu des gendarmes et policiers.

« Je suis très surpris d'entendre qu'une balle aurait traversé son pare-brise parce que les forces de maintien de l'ordre qui sont déployées dans la ville pour disperser les manifestants ne sont équipées que d'armes conventionnelles de maintien de l'ordre. Donc, un coup de feu ne peut pas partir du côté des forces de l'ordre », assure-t-il.

Le ministre de

l'Information précise par ailleurs que la marche était interdite par les autorités en raison d'un risque important de trouble à l'ordre public. La manifestation de l'opposition avait en effet été interdite. Une décision ignorée par les manifestants privés, estiment-ils, de marches depuis le mois de juillet.

Dès les premières heures de la matinée, les forces de l'ordre ont donc occupé le lieu de départ prévu de la manifestation à Conakry, menaçant de châtier tout contrevenant. Au fur et à mesure que le nombre de manifestants grossissait, la tension montait et les esprits s'échauffaient de part et d'autre.

En voulant ériger des barricades sur un grand boulevard de la banlieue, des jeunes ont été gazés par les forces de l'ordre massivement déployés dans les quartiers fiefs de l'opposition. C'est dans le quartier de Cosa qu'un homme de 18 ans a été tué par balle.

Dans le cortège, outre Cellou Dalein Diallo, il y avait aussi d'autres opposants, dont Faya Millimouno, Dembo Sylla, le Dr Ibrahima Diallo et Ahmed Kourouma du parti GRUP.

Les élèves de l'école « More than Me » s'opposent à sa fermeture

Quelque 130 parents et élèves de l'académie "More Than Me" de Monrovia ont manifesté mardi devant les bureaux du président libérien George Weah pour s'opposer à la fermeture de l'établissement, où des jeunes filles ont été abusées

par le cofondateur de l'institution pendant des années.

L'école, ouverte en 2013 dans un bidonville de la capitale libérienne, fut la première des 18 de More Than Me, une ONG américaine, dans cet Etat pauvre d'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Selon les révélations d'une longue enquête du site d'investigations américain ProPublica, également publiée par le magazine Time, des filles étaient abusées par le cofondateur de l'ONG, Macintosh Johnson. Il est mort du sida en 2016, alors qu'il devait être jugé, et il est à craindre qu'il ait infecté ses victimes, parfois âgées de 10 ans seulement.

Macintosh Johnson était lié à Katie Meyler, la fondatrice de l'ONG, une évangélique venue apporter son aide au Liberia à la suite de 14 ans de guerre civile, se donnant comme mission d'aider les filles des bidonvilles.

Portant des pancartes "Macintosh a abusé de son pouvoir, pas Katie", "More Than Me n'est rien sans Katie Meyler" ou "Arrêtez de stigmatiser nos filles, elles n'ont pas le Sida", 55 étudiants de l'école, en uniformes, ont marché avec leurs parents jusqu'au siège



de la présidence pour délivrer un message à George Weah.

"Nous avons dit au président que fermer l'école n'était pas la chose à faire et que nous ne voulons pas le départ de Katie Meyler", a affirmé à la presse un représentant du personnel, Morris Siassay, à l'issue de l'entretien.

La fondatrice "a fait ce qu'il fallait" quand les faits ont été connus, a-t-il estimé, en précisant que George Weah leur avait dit attendre la fin des enquêtes pour prendre une décision.

"Nous voulons que nos

enfants restent dans cette école. Nous n'avons pas d'argent et sans cette école, les enfants vont retourner dans la rue", a déclaré à l'AFP une mère de famille de 31 ans, Angeline Nyonnoh. "Nous voulons aussi que le président dise aux Libériens d'arrêter de traiter nos enfants de malades du Sida", a-t-elle ajouté, en expliquant que c'était actuellement le cas "partout où ils passent".

"Nous sommes profondément, immensément désolés", a écrit l'association More Than Me sur son site à la mi-octobre, en réaction aux révélations de ProPublica.

Articles traduits

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Français

Éditorial

L'économie a besoin d'un coup de fouet

L'économie libérienne se détériore rapidement sous l'administration Weah, beaucoup plus tôt que prévu, poussant les Libériens ordinaires à la marge de la société, alors que les prix des produits de base, comme les produits alimentaires, les produits pétroliers et le taux de change, continuent de grimper.

L'importateur et distributeur français du pétrole, TOTAL, a réduit ses effectifs, tandis que le prix d'un gallon d'essence à Monrovia a bondi de 540 à 700 dollars libériens, sur fond de soupçons d'une pénurie artificielle caractérisée par une hausse des tarifs de transport.

Immédiatement après son entrée en fonction en janvier, le président George Manneh Weah a annoncé qu'il a hérité d'une économie en ruine face à la hausse de l'inflation, principalement en raison de la hausse du taux de change. En juin, le président a constitué une équipe de gestion économique chargée d'aider à sauver l'économie. L'équipe est composée de techniciens du ministère des Finances et de la Planification du développement, du ministère d'État aux Affaires présidentielles, du ministère du Commerce et de l'Industrie et de la Banque centrale du Libéria, entre autres.

Le gouvernement, par la voix de la Banque centrale, avait annoncé le décaissement de 25 millions de dollars pour l'injecter sur le marché financier afin d'éponger l'excès de liquidité et compenser le taux de change. Il avait fixé en outre officiellement le taux à 150 dollars libériens contre un dollar américain. Mais ces étapes initiales n'ont produit aucun résultat tangible, d'autant plus que le taux actuel sur le marché des changes se situe entre 156 et 160 dollars libériens pour un dollar américain.

La semaine dernière, le président a de nouveau constitué une autre équipe économique, le groupe de travail sur le climat des affaires, qui a pour objectif d'identifier rapidement les « résultats positifs » dans le climat des affaires et de les mettre en œuvre dans les plus brefs délais d'un plan d'action.

Cependant, les Libériens deviennent sceptiques, en particulier lorsque les interventions précédentes de l'administration actuelle n'ont apporté aucun soulagement, alors que la hausse du taux de change et des prix persiste malgré le style de vie somptueux et élaboré de certains responsables gouvernementaux, dont certains ont adopté l'habitude d'acheter des voitures et des maisons chères de luxe coûtant des centaines de milliers de dollars américains, alors que ce gouvernement dit favorable aux pauvres n'a que 10 mois d'existence.

Ces difficultés sont encore aggravées par l'annonce de la disparition présumée des « conteneurs et des sacs d'argent » ou des billets de banque du dollar libérien nouvellement imprimés, représentant environ 15,5 milliards de dollars. Le gouvernement du Libéria a ouvert une enquête et sollicité le soutien du gouvernement des États-Unis afin de faire la lumière sur ce qui constitue le plus grand scandale financier de l'histoire du pays.

Nous nous demandons si le groupe de travail sur le climat des affaires apportera des résultats tangibles en améliorant le climat général des affaires dans le pays de sorte à avoir un impact positif sur les conditions de vie des citoyens.

Le président Weah a peut-être de bonnes intentions pour les citoyens, mais il semble qu'il en fait trop en ouvrant des chantiers ici et là pour, dit-on, construire des routes et autres infrastructures malgré le manque criard de moyens financiers.

Nous pensons que ce n'est pas le nombre de comités ou de projets annoncés qui compte, mais les résultats concrets qui ont un impact positif tangible sur les conditions de vie des gens. Le gouvernement ne peut pas prétendre être aux prises avec des difficultés financières, pendant que ses responsables, y compris le président lui-même, s'offrent du luxe après à peine neuf mois de pouvoir.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Ngairé Woods

Pourquoi la guerre froide sino-américaine n'aura pas lieu

OXFORD - On dit souvent que la Chine et les États-Unis - superpuissances à couteaux tirés sur les plans économique géopolitique et idéologique - se dirigent vers une nouvelle guerre froide. Et les déclarations - du moins d'un côté - en viennent à évoquer le discours de Churchill de 1946, au cours duquel il mentionna pour la première fois le « rideau de fer », l'un des événements qui inaugureront la guerre froide. Ce mois-ci, le vice-président des États-Unis, Mike Pence, est allé jusqu'à accuser la Chine de pratiques économiques prédatrices, d'agression militaire contre les États-Unis et de tentatives de déstabilisation contre le président Donald Trump.

Pourtant, malgré le battage médiatique, une nouvelle guerre froide n'est pas inévitable - et peut-être n'est-elle pas plus probable. Certes, les dirigeants chinois, craignant des désordres et tout ce qui serait susceptible d'affaiblir la légitimité du Parti communiste chinois (PCC), sont résolus à empêcher toute tentative de États-Unis qui aurait pour but de contraindre la Chine à changer son système politique et économique. La Chine continuera de mener ses réformes à son propre rythme, et de la façon dont elle l'entend. La fusion du PCC avec la machine gouvernementale est pour le président chinois Xi Jinping une priorité absolue, censée vaincre la corruption et renforcer la cohérence et la crédibilité idéologique de l'État. Chercher à entraver ce processus serait franchir une ligne rouge.

Heureusement pour Xi, Trump ne manifeste guère d'intérêt pour la « démocratisation » des pays tiers, et il ne semble pas avoir été ébranlé par les investisseurs, financiers et autres géants de la technologie américains qui aimeraient bien voir son administration faire pression pour leur ouvrir un accès plus large à l'économie chinoise.

Sans doute le relèvement des droits de douane aux États-Unis pèse-t-il sur les 18 % des exportations chinoises qui chaque année partent vers l'Amérique. Mais l'administration Trump a des priorités plus urgentes que le changement du système de gouvernement en Chine, nonobstant les déclarations agressives du représentant au commerce américain Robert Lighthizer et du président du Conseil du commerce national à la Maison Blanche Peter Navarro. Trump cherche désespérément à renforcer le secteur manufacturier aux États-Unis en y rapatriant les chaînes d'approvisionnement globales et en bloquant ou en réduisant les importations. « Faire à nouveau la grandeur de l'Amérique », c'est surtout faire à nouveau en Amérique.

Pourtant, si la confrontation actuelle entre les États-Unis et la Chine n'évolue par vers une nouvelle guerre froide, elle pourrait affaiblir les deux pays et instaurer un nouveau monde multipolaire. En Chine, les rododromes américaines, les tarifs douaniers et les sanctions pourraient alimenter d'éventuelles critiques contre Xi, et les options de représailles relativement limitées dont dispose actuellement celui-ci ne l'aident pas. Certes, le pays peut commencer à se débarrasser d'une partie des mille milliards de dollars accumulés dans ses réserves de change, mais il affaiblirait du même coup la valeur des bons du Trésor américain qui resteront dans ses caisses.

Aux États-Unis, un représentant du monde de l'industrie a qualifié la politique tarifaire de Trump, fondée sur la hausse radicale des barrières douanières, d'« acte le plus autodestructeur qui [il ait] jamais vu en matière commerciale ». Et la renégociation par l'actuelle administration de l'Accord de libre-échange nord-américain - qui comprend une clause interdisant au Canada et au Mexique de négocier séparément avec la Chine - s'est attiré le même genre de critiques. Ces mesures menacent non seulement de détruire des emplois américains, mais de lasser la bonne volonté des alliés de l'Amérique, déjà nombreux à prendre leurs distances.

À la vérité, le slogan de l'administration Trump, «

l'Amérique d'abord » se traduit de plus en plus par « l'Amérique toute seule ». Désormais, les États-Unis sont isolés au sein du G7, du G20 et de la Convention cadre des Nations unies sur le changement climatique. Après leur retrait du Partenariat transpacifique, les parties restantes avancent sans eux. Loin de poser les termes du débat dans les questions internationales, l'administration Trump a fait tant et si bien qu'elle a convaincu les autres pays qu'il valait mieux éviter de trop faire crédit à la direction américaine.

Ce détournement généralisé à l'égard des États-Unis hâtera l'émergence d'un nouvel ordre multipolaire. Ainsi, en se retirant de l'accord sur le nucléaire iranien, Trump a surtout incité le Royaume-Uni, la France, l'Allemagne, la Chine, la Russie et l'Union européenne à défier les prérogatives états-uniennes.

Pour le moment, les pays qui ont besoin du pétrole iranien n'ont d'autre choix que de se conformer aux exigences américaines. Comme pour la plupart des biens échangés, les paiements des exportations de pétrole sont effectués en dollars - en passant, pour la plupart, par la Society for Worldwide Interbank Telecommunications (SWIFT) établie en Belgique - et les États-Unis ont les moyens d'interrompre ces transactions. La plupart des entreprises et des pays en ont conclu que poursuivre leurs activités avec l'Iran ne méritait pas de leur faire perdre l'accès au marché américain et au système international de paiement en dollars.

Mais à l'avenir, ils pourraient ne plus devoir se résoudre à de tels arbitrages. Le 21 août, le ministre des Affaires étrangères allemand, Heiko Maas, a exhorté l'Europe à mettre en place des mécanismes de paiement indépendants des États-Unis. Et le mois suivant, la cheffe de la diplomatie européenne, Federica Mogherini, annonçait la création d'une « entité juridique pour faciliter les transactions financières licites avec l'Iran, et [permettre] aux sociétés européennes de continuer à commercer avec l'Iran conformément aux règlements de l'UE ».

Dans le même temps, la Russie affirmait développer son propre système de transferts financiers, afin de se prémunir contre une éventuelle exclusion de la SWIFT si les États-Unis venaient à durcir leurs sanctions. Quant à la Chine, elle poursuit un projet similaire depuis 2015 au moins, lorsque la Banque populaire de Chine a lancé un véhicule destiné à faciliter les transactions transfrontalières en renminbis.

Aucun de ces mécanismes de rechange ne sont encore parvenus à rivaliser avec la commodité de la SWIFT ni avec le système des échanges en dollars. Mais si l'un d'entre eux venait à prendre pied, il pourrait rapidement laisser les États-Unis impuissants.

Plutôt que vers une guerre froide, le monde pourrait s'orienter vers un système international dirigé par quatre puissances, les États-Unis, la Chine, la Russie et l'Allemagne, dominant chacune sa région et cherchant à prendre la main dans les négociations internationales. Ce scénario rappelle la vision du monde qu'avait après la Seconde Guerre mondiale le président des États-Unis Franklin Delano Roosevelt, qui proposait que les quatre alliés victorieux - les États-Unis, le Royaume-Uni, la Chine et l'Union soviétique - se comportent comme « quatre gendarmes », assurant chacun la sécurité dans sa sphère d'influence et négociant avec les autres les questions relatives à la paix mondiale.

Aujourd'hui, ce sont approximativement les quatre mêmes puissances qui mènent à nouveau le monde, à ceci près que nous disposons d'institutions internationales plus fortes pour contribuer à faire régner la paix. Le maintien de cette paix dépendra de la bonne volonté des quatre puissances à utiliser ces institutions et à les adapter au système international qui est en train de voir le jour.

Speech by President Weah at UL

REMARKS

BY

H.E. DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

AND

VISITOR TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LIBERIA

MAIN CAMPUS

CAPITOL HILL

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

24 OCTOBER 2018

Dr. William E. Allen, Vice President for Academic Affairs of the University of Liberia and Head of the Management Team;

Members of the Faculty Senate;

Members of the UL Administration;

Professors and Instructors of the University of Liberia;

Officials of Government here present;

The Leadership of the University of Liberia Students Union;

The General Student Body;

Special Invitees;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

One of my duties as President of the Republic of Liberia, by law, is to serve as Visitor to the University of Liberia. This is an honor that I accept with deep humility. But it is also a responsibility that I take very seriously.

As Visitor, it is incumbent upon me to use my good offices as President to ensure that the Nation's highest institution of learning is well established, adequately funded through budgetary support from the Government, and properly managed by competent administrators.

It is given to me as my Presidential duty, to appoint the President and members of the Board of Trustees of the University, who, in turn, are mandated to engage professors and other members of the teaching staff who have earned high standards of academic qualifications, so that students enrolled at this University will receive quality education that will enable them to become productive in their chosen fields upon graduation.

Besides these official functions, I am personally concerned that the University should be run smoothly and efficiently, so that it is enabled to concentrate on its growth and development plans, and fulfill its ambition to become one of the best universities in Africa.

One such example of this concern is that, over the years, we have observed that students of the University of Liberia have suffered from standing in long queues, delays in the registration processes, lack of systems to effectively and efficiently manage students' records, and to adequately manage the University's Administration and its system in general.

With a student body of close to 40,000 students, it has been extremely difficult to efficiently manage the registration and administrative processes of the University on a manual basis.

As we are all aware, there have been many instances when the registration processes have ended in riots, conflicts and demonstrations on the campuses of the University. In 2017, the UL Administration made a decision to digitize the University of Liberia. But up to the time I took Office in January of this year, the project had not yet been started.

Realizing the critical importance of digitization to the smooth and efficient running of the University, I gave the project maximum priority and budgetary support at the very beginning of my Administration.

It was my pleasure to visit your Fendall Campus on the 4th of this month, to dedicate the new digital system. It is now installed, and in use, providing not only ease of registration, but also vital internet access so critical for research and study.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Last Monday, October 22, was the official commencement of classes for this new semester. As your Visitor, I would like to take this occasion to welcome the Administration, faculty and staff, and especially the students, back to school.

However, in my continuous dialogues and conversations with administrators as well as

students, I have been made acutely aware of another major problem facing the student body.

Let me tell you a story:

Last Friday, I heard that students were chanting again in front of my Office. I asked, "What is happening?" I was told that it was the UL students, again. So, I sent for them.

The students told me that the Administration had increased the tuition per credit hour. I was not happy about that, so, I sent to the University to speak with someone. Mr. Norris Tweah, Vice President for University Relations came and we spoke. Mr. Tweah communicated to me that the fees were not increased as mentioned by the students. According to him, the credit per hour is still the same US\$4.00 but due to the fluctuation of the LD to the USD, a fixed rate of LD150 to USD1.00 was established to avoid confusion.

During Mr. Norris' explanation about the students' condition, I was shocked when I was told that every semester about 20,000 students go through the billing process, yet only about 12,000 students attend and pay.

Furthermore, about 5,000 of the 12,000 students who are in attendance are dependent on some form of financial aid or scholarship. The rest of the students do not attend due to the lack of financial means.

Based upon our discussion, I called in the Finance Minister to find a solution to the problem.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The inability of our young people to continue their education is very sad and troubling and has a direct impact on them, and their ability to make a positive contribution to the nation's growth and development.

By this time, it should be clear to all, that we will never be successful in achieving the goals of our Pro-Poor Agenda if we do not place more emphasis on the development of our human capital. And in so doing, we have to invest in quality education.

I believe in education. As the late Kofi Annan once said, and I quote: "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, and in every family."

The increasing cost of education in Liberia, leading to non-enrollment, non-attendance, and frequent drop-outs, is becoming counter-productive to our development goals. I believe, therefore, that the time has come to take bold initiatives and make direct social interventions to address this problem.

There is a definite link between a well-educated citizenry and economic growth, and in recognition of that, my Government has decided to invest in our human capital in order to achieve sustained economic growth. Having a good education is important to one's success in life. Education is the key to success because it enables a person to think logically and communicate effectively.

I therefore wish to declare tuition-free for all undergraduate students at the University of Liberia as well as all other public universities in Liberia.

Now, make use of the opportunity given today to reach your full potential in your educational sojourn.

The details and modalities will be arranged and finalized between the Administration of the University and the relevant sectoral Ministries of Government.

But, to the students: Let me inform you that this will be a win-win partnership between you and Government, as you will still be expected to pay all other fees charged by the University.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

By this intervention, my Government shows its commitment not only to invest in physical capital, such as roads, but in human capital, for the over-all growth of our citizens and our economy. We believe that no country can develop without investing in the education of its people. This policy will continue to form an integral part of our Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity.

Now there is no need for you not to enroll in school, and for you not to attend your classes. There is also no reason now for you to drop out of school because of financial constraints.

According to Nelson Mandela, my hero, and I quote: "Education is the greatest weapon that you can use to change the world."

I am now giving you that weapon.

Go forth, and change Liberia!!!

May God bless the works of my Hands, and safe the State.

I thank you.

Weah declares free university education

By Winston W. Parley

President George Manneh Weah has declared free tuition for all students at the state-run University of Liberia (UL) and all other public universities in Liberia.

"I therefore declare free tuition for all university students at the University of Liberia as well as all other public universities in Liberia," he said Wednesday, 24 October at UL's Capitol Hill Campus amid interruptions from cheering students celebrating the decision.

In recognition of "a link between a well-educated citizenry and economic growth," President Weah says his government has decided to invest in human capital so as to achieve sustained economic growth.

With this latest declaration, President Weah now says there should be no reason to drop out of school for financial constraint.

As Visitor to UL, President Weah says it is incumbent upon him to use his good office as President of the Republic of Liberia to ensure that UL is well-established, adequately funded through budgetary support from government and properly managed by competent administrators.

Over the years, President Weah says for a student body of closed to 40,000, he has observed that UL students have suffered delayed



registration processes in long queues, lack of systems to effectively and efficiently manage students as well as UL Administration and systems in general.

He says registration processes have ended in riots, demonstrations and conflicts on the campuses of UL.

In the wake of the new measures announced, President Weah tells the student population at UL that he does not want to see vibration "because some vibration can be military vibration or immigration vibration."

He pleads with student leaders to always negotiate when issues arise, saying he

personally felt dissatisfied when he heard that there was fee increase on campus.

President Weah says he was shocked when UL Vice President for Relations Norris Tweah explained that out of 20,000 students that go through registration process, only 12,000 would pay their fees due to lack of money while others depend on student aid.

Instead of hiring foreign experts, he says Liberian students should not limit themselves because the country needs its own engineers, pilots, mechanics and other technicians, saying more investments must be made in all of these areas to

make Liberia a better place.

President Weah's visit on UL Capitol Hill Campus was greeted with mixed reaction-one group of students welcomes the president's visit while another protested against him.

Protesters from Student Unification Party (SUP) had dissent against the closure of classes throughout Wednesday due to a pronouncement expected from the Visitor, President Weah.

"Even if he is coming to announce free education, it still does not justify the shutting down of normal academic activities. It only suggests that an 'all-powerful' President is exalting himself above the ultimate interest of almost 20,000 students that should be learning amidst the high rate of illiteracy, poverty, and disease in Liberia," SUP says.

It adds that henceforth, it will stand up against "any

newborn fascist in camouflage."

They distributed leaflets containing their dissent while chanting militant slogans against the UL Visitor, President Weah, at the same time supporters of the President hailed him and jubilated on the other side.

University of Liberia Students Union (ULSU) president Maiwo Flomo pleads with President Weah to urge the UL Administration to consider consulting students before taking decisions that affect the students, especially when it comes to increase in fees.

He applauds the President for some of the interventions made so far, but he brings to the attention of the president and UL Administration that the University is faced with consistent sanitation problems, internet facility, and other necessities. **-Edited by Othello B. Garblah**

Health officials deploy

Starts from back page

and mercury, causing pollution in the area.

It was alleged that the Company recently released some chemicals from its operation site into the ground which is said to have affected the only hand pump at the Sayewhen Town Public School.

It is also reported that school going kids usually drink from the hand pump, and they allegedly continue to drink the "unsafe" water since the chemical allegedly affected the hand pump.

But Superintendent Walker told reporters in the County that the situation is being exaggerated and she believes that such is not good for the image of the County.

She explains that she will make any report that will come from the investigation team public for citizens to understand what is also transpiring in Sayweh Town, Kokoyah District.

But she has come under attack from citizens in Bong, with some accusing her of always speaking in the interest of the company even when the realities are shown in the interest of the citizens.

The citizens claimed that Madam Walker and some lawmakers from Bong County always defend the company for reasons known to themselves, an allegation the head of the Bong Legislative Caucus Sen. Henry Willie Yallah has denied.

Meanwhile Superintendent Esther Walker has disclosed that the people of Sayweh Town have filed a lawsuit against MNG Gold.

But she did not give details of the lawsuit, only arguing that such legal action by the citizens will not create a smooth working environment between them and the company.

She claims that the situation in Sayweh Town, Kokoyah District is not as alarming as it is being reported.

Following her visit there, she claims that no one in the town is sick with the exception of a child who was vomiting and was taken to the Phebe Hospital for treatment.

She claims that the child was diagnosed of malaria and ulcer.

In spite of her denials, report continues to emerge from Sayweh Town about the illness of about 19 school kids of the Sayweh Town Public School.

Our Bong County Correspondent who visited the place along with the Superintendent states that some of the students are actually ill but it is not clear whether they are sick as a result of MNG's chemicals.

But some in the area are attributing the kids' illness to the loose dirt of mining company MNG Gold that is being dumped around the vicinity of the school.

Many believe that the loose dirt includes chemicals that have affected the only pump on the school campus that students also drink from.--

Edited by Winston W. Parley

Robbery at Afriland Bank in Gbarpolu

Police in Monrovia have confirmed a robbery at a branch of Afriland First Bank in Gbarpolu County, western Liberia with several million Liberian dollars stolen.

Initial reports gathered by this paper put the total money stolen from the bank at more than 11 Million Liberian Dollars plus US\$4,000.

Attempt to get official comment from authorities at the Afriland First Bank Head Office in Monrovia Wednesday,

24 October was unsuccessful, but sources inside the bank put the amount at a little over 6 million Liberian Dollars.

The robbery at the AFB branch, which is about five minutes' walk from the police station in Gbarpolu, reportedly occurred early Wednesday at about 2:00 in the morning when everyone was asleep.

However, community residents identified a well-known police informant Daniel

Rick, alias Monk, as the prime suspect.

He is said to have led a group of armed robbers riding in a black pathfinder jeep without plate to the bank in carrying out the crime.

This paper also gathered that Monk, who is a notorious armed robber, was armed by the police, provided communication set and a sim card with number 0770800141.

When this paper contacted Police Spokesperson, Moses Carter, he confirms the robbery at the Afriland First Bank branch in Gbarpulo County.

Carter discloses that the Police are investigating the robbery and adds information available indicates Monk is police informant, and every effort is being made by the Liberia National Police to have him arrested, including all those involved and brought to justice.

According to the Police Spokesman, community residents from the county revealed they saw Monk in their community a day before the robbery. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**



Health officials deploy in Bong

-following alleged chemical pollution



By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

A team of experts from the Ministry of Health, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in Bong County to ascertain facts into claims of chemical pollution that allegedly led to the closure of a school as students fall ill.

The deployment of the health officials comes as report continues to emerge

from Sayweh Town, Bong County about the illness of about 19 school kids from the Sayweh Town Public School following alleged pollution of chemical blamed on MNG Gold operations.

Our Bong County Correspondent says in spite of the deployment of health experts in the area and a lawsuit against MNG Gold, Bong County Superintendent

Esther Walker remains in denial of the incident, claiming that no one is sick except a child diagnosed of malaria and ulcer.

Our correspondent indicates that Superintendent Walker outrightly dismisses reports about the school kids' health condition, rejecting suggestions that they may have fallen ill after drinking water from a hand pump at their school which was allegedly affected by waste from MNG Gold company.

School going kids in Sayweh Town and other parts adjacent held a two-day demonstration in gold-reach Kokoyah District, Bong County, demanding the relocation of their school following its rapid closure due to alleged pollution.

There were claims that gold mining company MNG Gold allegedly spilled chemical including cyanide



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Moses linked with shock move to Manchester United

Victor Moses is reportedly attracting interest from Manchester United, according to the Express.

The report claims that United have been named as favourites to land the Nigerian, following suggestions he could be on the move in January.

Moses is said to be considering his immediate future at Chelsea after

falling out of favour under Maurizio Sarri.

The former Crystal Palace man has fallen victim to the change of formation implemented by Sarri, having been a regular under former head coach Antonio Conte.

The ex-Chelsea boss reinvented Moses as a right wing-back and he managed to cement himself in the Blues side after several loan spells away from the club.

He now once again looks destined to leave Stamford Bridge in the search of regular game time.

Moses joined Chelsea in 2012 but spent time on loan at Liverpool, Stoke and West Ham before breaking through at Stamford Bridge.

During his time with the Blues he has won the Premier League, FA Cup and the Europa League.



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