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Continental News

Kenya appoints acting finance minister after Rotich graft charges

Kenya's presidency appointed Labour Minister Ukur Yatani as acting finance minister on Wednesday, a day after incumbent Henry Rotich was charged with corruption.

Rotich, who has been in the finance post since 2013, pleaded not guilty on Tuesday to corruption charges in connection with tenders for the construction of two dams.

Rotich, who was bailed on a surety of 15 million shillings, is one of 26 people facing charges related to the project. He is due to return to court on Aug. 8.

President Uhuru Kenyatta also replaced the finance ministry's number-two official, Kamau Thugge, who was charged alongside Rotich, also pleading not guilty.

Italian construction company CMC di Ravenna, which is also implicated in the corruption investigation, has denied any wrongdoing and said late on Tuesday it was co-operating with authorities.

"The company is working with the Kenyan judicial authority to settle the matter as soon as possible," it said in a statement.

Kenyan director of public prosecution Noordin Haji said earlier on Tuesday that Nairobi

was set to seek the extradition of one of the company's directors to face charges.

Prosecutors accuse the company and Rotich and other Kenyan officials of inflating the cost of building two dams in the west of the country to 63

billion shillings (\$608 million) from an original cost 46 billion.

Prosecutors allege that advance payments were shared out in accounts belonging to the conspirators and their agents.

CMC denied any links to those arrangements. "The accusation would refer, in fact, to the conditions of the financing, by banks of primary international standing, of the public works contracted by Kenya to CMC," it said.

Work on the two dams has not started yet, prosecutors say, an assertion the company disputes. No land where the

dams are meant to be built has yet been acquired, prosecutors say.

Hundreds of senior government officials and business people face charges under an anti-corruption drive launched last year by President Uhuru Kenyatta's government.

Yatani is a former lawmaker who served as ambassador to Austria and a regional governor before his appointment to the cabinet last year. He has a degree in economics and sociology.

All permanent ministerial appointees in Kenya have to be vetted by parliament. -AFP



Kenya's Governor of Marsabit Ukur Yatani attends a Council of Governors meeting in Nairobi

US restricts entry of 'anti-democratic Nigerians'

The United States has imposed visa restrictions on those Nigerians it says are "responsible for undermining the Nigerian democratic process".

In a statement, the State Department says the measures will also apply to those who have organised election-related violence.

It is unclear what criteria the US has used to determine who will be affected by the visa restrictions.

The names of those impacted by this announcement have not been made public but the US government stressed that the sanctions were specific to certain individuals, and "not directed at the Nigerian people or the newly elected government".

"These individuals have operated with impunity at the expense of the Nigerian people and undermined



human rights," the statement says.

This is not the first time the US has raised concerns.

During a visit to Nigeria ahead of the 2015 elections, then-Secretary of State John Kerry, promised anyone involved in political violence in Nigeria would be denied a US visa. But the government failed to follow through on its threat.

A former adviser to the State Department told the BBC that the decision to impose visa restrictions this time around, may be a sign of the declining relationship between the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari and the US diplomatic mission in Nigeria. -BBC

New Ebola vaccine sparks row

An MP from the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where more than 1,700 people have died since the start of an Ebola outbreak nearly one year ago, says he does not want residents to be "guinea pigs" for a new vaccine.

Muhindo Nzangi Butondo comments come a day after former Health Minister

Olyllunga resigned, saying it was fanciful to think that another vaccine would have much impact on the control of current outbreak.

He argued the Ebola outbreak - the 10th in the country - was a public health emergency that should be coordinated by the government and warned against the risk of installing a parallel health system that he

says isn't going to build local capacities.

There are currently four experimental vaccines considered to tackle this outbreak: Merck & Co, Janssen (Johnson & Johnson), CanSino Biologics Inc, and Rospotrebnadzor.

Only the Merck vaccine has been given approval from the DR Congo ethics committee.

While international charities and the World Health Organization (WHO) are pushing for the deployment of a second vaccine, some say it is not going to help control the outbreak and worry that it could confuse an already distrustful population.

Merck's experimental vaccine has proven effective in 97.5% of cases and mounts protection against Ebola in about 10 days. Already 170,000 people have been inoculated.

One of the issues raised by Ebola health workers is that the stock of Merck vaccine in the DR Congo is low - yet the outbreak is not under control, with about 75 to 100 new cases on average each week.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine aims to give protection on the long term which is why some people are wondering if should be a priority.

The vaccine needs to be



Copyright: AFP: A man receives a vaccine against Ebola from a nurse

administered two times in about two months apart. That might be difficult to do in a region where people often have to flee due to insecurity and are in general very mobile.

The company has recognised that it is a measure for times of peace and says the vaccine could for example be used outside of the conflict zones.

But there are concerns that people could question why one vaccine is used in one place and another in a second place.

Communication around the Ebola response is key to build trust: nearly 200 health

workers and facilities have been attacked since January according to the WHO.

For example, the Merck vaccine was not initially offered to pregnant and lactating women.

That eventually changed but some say that health officials failed to explain the reasoning, leading to a lot of fear and misunderstanding.

The amount of money poured into the Ebola response is an additional factor of mistrust.

Far more people die from malaria and other illnesses in the area and so there is confusion around the support received to tackle Ebola. -BBC

EDITORIAL

Messy July 26

THIS YEAR'S JULY 26 Independence Day Celebrations are beclouded with many distractions for various reasons, including unpaid salaries for civil servants amid a US\$500,000 (half million United States Dollars) budget for celebrations, LRD5, 000 bonoza from President George Weah to each wayward citizen or Zogo in the streets and politically-charged by-elections on July 29 to be followed by mass protest.

FROM WRITINGS ON the wall, the celebrations could be short-lived, if care is not taken by the government to stabilize situations, as they are. The fact of the matter is, some 60,000 civil servants across the country are hungry, because they haven't taken pay reportedly for two months. Multiply this figure by 4 (240,000) and add that to the rest of the population of hungry citizens across the country because of the dismal state of the economy.

PROTESTING STUDENTS FROM the University of Liberia already sent out a signal here on Wednesday, 24 July of things to come, with a street protest characterized by roadblocks on Capitol Hill in solidarity with their hungry professors and lecturers, who boycotted administering examinations because of two months' salaries.

AMID THE TENSE atmosphere, the government mandates hungry civil servants here to attend the official celebrations at the Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex in Paynesville outside Monrovia, venue of this year's Independence festivities.

THE 172ND INDEPENDENCE Day is the first major national celebration under the Weah administration since taking office in 2018, and the government is bent on impressing foreign guests, including Heads of States and governments gracing the occasion that it is governing properly.

HOWEVER, REALITIES ON the ground are quite different: Inflation is above 23 percent, direct foreign investments are non-existent, the government is struggling to pay salary and the entire economy is stagnant amid mismanagement of public funds, particularly US\$25 million withdrawn from the national reserves for so-called mop up of excess liquidity, which the administration hasn't properly accounted for.

THE GOVERNMENT MAY succeed in impressing invited guests and partners that all is well here, with a half million dollar celebrations. But this is pure white-washing or being cosmetic, because all is not well under this administration, as disenchantments loom.

AN ADVOCACY GROUP, the Council of Patriots, organizers of the June 07 protest, is gearing up for another round of street demonstrations to draw government's attention to the current state of affairs and demand solutions. The CoP had earlier scheduled its protest for July 22, but the United States Ambassador accredited near Monrovia, Christine Elder noted in a statement here that the pronouncement is "misplaced", given its proximity to the July 26 Independence celebrations.

THEN THERE ARE by-elections slated for July 29, three days after the Independence celebrations which President Weah vows no candidates from the opposition would win as long as he remains the President of Liberia. As if these were not enough, the National Elections Commission is demanding the government to pay the balance US\$1 million for the \$2.5 million budgeted for the by-elections.

LIBERIANS ARE CELEBRATING with one eye open on what comes up next after July 26, given the tense atmosphere and air of uncertainties that have gripped the nation as a result of the dismal state of the economy and its excruciating impacts on the lives of the people.

COMMENTARY

By Alon Tal

Don't Fear the Scooter

The introduction of electric ride-sharing scooters in cities around the world has been met with a surprising level of scorn, given their obvious environmental and economic benefits. Rather than banning the new technology, municipal governments should be doing everything they can to maximize its benefits.

TELAVIV - Electric bicycles and scooters are taking a lot of heat. Concerns about traffic fatalities, terrorized pedestrians, and urban lawlessness have led a growing chorus of politicians and media commentators to conclude that the technology should be banned outright. But these critics are missing the point. Small, portable, electric transportation options are a tremendous opportunity to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, avoid traffic jams, and relieve human frustration.

A scooter that averages ten miles (16 kilometers) per day produces 3,500 grams less carbon dioxide than a car traveling the same distance. If 10,000 people were to switch from cars to scooters, their combined CO2 emissions would decline by 35 metric tons per day; if five million people did so, they would produce a mere 370 metric tons per day, or just 2% of that generated by the equivalent number of cars. The problem, of course, is that transportation managers, and the politicians who set their budgets, have not yet made the policy and infrastructure adjustments to accommodate such a transportation revolution.

For lessons on maximizing the benefits of this technology without compromising public safety, they can look to Tel Aviv, which is now home to more than 5,000 rental electric scooters. To help the city's transportation and police departments formulate the best policies for managing them, my graduate students and I have delved into the usage data.

For starters, we find that while electric two-wheelers can indeed be dangerous, the hazard is primarily to the rider. Since 2014, the number of riders in Israel who died in accidents has increased from one per year to 19. And last year, an additional 414 people were hospitalized as a result of reported accidents involving scooters, almost a quarter of them under the age of 16. Of the cases involving head injuries, 95% involved riders who were not wearing helmets; and most were the result of riders being forced into the street, owing to a lack of proper bike lanes and a prohibition against riding on the sidewalk.

These findings suggest that most accidents and injuries are preventable, either through enforcement or proper infrastructure. In Israel, the number of citations filed against riders (most of them for riding on the sidewalk) increased from 12,356 in 2015 to 30,178 last year. Municipal governments have also introduced new laws requiring riders to wear a helmet; setting the minimum riding age to 16; barring scooters from pedestrian crosswalks; prohibiting more than one rider per scooter; and banning the use of cellphones or headphones in both ears. As an additional measure, two-wheelers should also be required to have a license plate to enable police and municipal authorities to bring some order to the chaos.

These enforcement measures are prudent and justifiable. But by focusing solely on scooter riders, they tend to contribute to the broader vilification of those who have embraced a socially optimal form of transportation. In

Israel, the media have led the charge against scooter riders. In our analysis of scooter-related coverage in the country's main online newspapers over the past few years, we found that 67% of articles have been uniformly negative, 13% neutral, and only 20% even remotely positive. Worse, the scorn heaped on this promising new transportation technology has generated a wave of disinformation.

So, a few facts are in order. First, more scooters actually mean fewer accidents. Countries with the highest number of cycling trips per inhabitant have the fewest fatalities per billion kilometers of bicycle travel. The cycling fatality rates in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland are one-quarter that of the United States, even though per capita bicycle travel in each country is about 20 times higher. When bicycle travel reaches a critical mass, drivers are more aware, and policymakers are compelled to provide the proper infrastructure.

Such awareness can also be legislated. In 2014, Queensland, Australia, passed an ordinance requiring motorists to keep at least one meter between themselves and cyclists whom they are passing; and at speeds above 60 kilometers (37 miles) per hour, the required distance increases to 1.5 meters. Within a couple of years, the new rule reduced cycling-related traffic fatalities by 35%, while halving collisions requiring hospitalization. Several cities across North America have since adopted similar rules.

Moreover, contrary to the usual complaints from politicians, protected bicycle lanes are not a budgetary or economic burden. By reducing traffic jams, infrastructure that encourages cycling can yield impressive economic dividends.

In Israel, a recent report from the Ministry of Environmental Protection finds that Israeli car drivers spend an average of 40 minutes per day sitting in traffic. And, owing to the rapid growth in population and car ownership rates, this daily dead time is expected to increase to 90 minutes by 2030, implying tens of billions of dollars in lost output per year. Given that people who must sit through daily traffic jams are prone to higher rates of depression and even domestic violence (in the case of men), it stands to reason that more commuters would readily adopt an alternative if they could.

Finally, scooters and electric cycles have a crucial role to play in combating climate change. For countries as hot as Israel is in the summer, banning these forms of transportation would dramatically reduce non-car vehicular traffic just when it is most needed. A far more environmentally- and economically-friendly strategy is to invest in the infrastructure and enforcement mechanisms needed to maximize the benefits of scooter usage. Rather than denounce those who have already opted for a more ethical and efficient form of urban transport, smart municipal governments should clear a path for them.

O-PED

By Anatole Kaletsky

Boris's Brexit

LONDON - Now that Boris Johnson has achieved his lifetime ambition to become the United Kingdom's prime minister, the tragicomedy of Brexit is approaching its climax. While the rest of the European Union has viewed this with barely disguised horror, there is good news and bad news in Johnson's apotheosis.

The bad news is that the "no-deal" withdrawal from the European Union that Johnson advocated to win the leadership of the Europhobic Conservative Party could cause a sudden stop in economic activity comparable to the disaster that followed the failure of Lehman Brothers in 2008. Although this business breakdown might initially affect only trade-related businesses in Britain, and produce some kind of UK-EU compromise within a few weeks or months, we learned in the 2008 financial crisis that even a brief interruption of normal commercial relations in one part of the economy can reverberate for many years.

The good news is that Johnson is a far cleverer and more adroit politician than his predecessor, Theresa May. And pessimism about Britain's prospects has become so widespread that any Brexit outcome other than a no-deal rupture would now be a positive surprise, causing an economic resurgence not just in Britain but across Europe. Yes, Britain is bound to suffer in the long run from any version of Brexit. But in any version of Brexit other than "no deal," the short-term damage would be offset by a rebound in business and consumer sentiment as the risks of total breakdown were suddenly replaced by the certainty of a lengthy transition period in which Britain's economic relations with Europe would remain almost unchanged.

In this scenario, policy changes on both sides of the Channel could outweigh even the structural damage of Brexit to Britain and its trading partners. The UK would benefit from a cyclical stimulus promised by Johnson in the form of higher public spending and tax cuts. The rest of Europe, especially Germany and France, would gain from the commercial opportunities from new EU policies likely to squeeze British competitors out of the single market in lucrative industries such as finance, media, pharmaceuticals, defense, and autos.

What, then, is the probability of an orderly outcome and long transition period, as opposed to a potentially catastrophic sudden rupture?

Political betting markets now put the odds of no deal at 33%, and some financial analysts rate it as high as 50%. This is no surprise, given that Johnson devoted most of his leadership campaign to normalizing the idea of no deal. There are, however, at least three reasons why a no-deal Brexit remains very unlikely, despite Johnson - or perhaps because of him.

First, parliamentary numbers are stacked higher than ever against a no-deal outcome. All opposition parties are more united against Johnson than they were against May, while his effective parliamentary majority has been reduced to only two or three MPs. So, in principle, it would take only two Tory defectors to vote down Johnson's government and trigger a general election. With 40 Tory MPs having voted this month to weaken Johnson's negotiating tactics, there are clearly enough potential dissidents to topple his government should that be necessary to avert "no deal". And if an election were triggered before Johnson could re-unite his party by delivering some version of Brexit, he would probably lose, becoming the shortest-serving prime minister in British history. Provoking a rebellion among opponents of a no-deal Brexit is therefore a much greater risk to Johnson than upsetting the Europhobes who sabotaged May.

Second, Johnson has a means of avoiding a rupture that was not available to May. If he could persuade EU leaders to offer some minor cosmetic changes to May's withdrawal agreement, Johnson could almost certainly get Parliament to pass his "new" deal. This is because the hard-line Euroskeptics determined to replace May with a "genuine" Brexiteer would now have no choice but to vote for Johnson's deal or risk an election in which they might lose Brexit altogether. Meanwhile, many pro-Europeans in both major parties who had previously hoped to prevent Brexit will now support almost any negotiated agreement, just to avoid the no-deal nightmare.

The main threat therefore comes from the EU side. Will European leaders give Johnson enough cosmetic concessions to turn "May's pig of a deal" into "Boris brings home the bacon"? The answer is probably yes. EU leaders are almost as desperate as Johnson to end the Brexit saga - and Johnson really needs only one small concession: a change to the "Irish backstop" designed to guarantee an open border in Northern Ireland.

Because the border issue really matters only to Ireland, the EU will be guided by the Irish government's interests. And it is hard to see why the Irish government would prefer the certainty of immediate damage to Ireland's economic and security interests in a no-deal Brexit to a slight softening of the "Irish backstop" that would guarantee a long transition period in which nothing would change. As Pat Leahy, a prominent Irish Times commentator, recently noted: "Isn't the possibility of Border checks in a few years' time better than the certainty of checks on October 31st?" Better still from the Irish standpoint, during the transition period following an orderly Brexit, Britain would be eager to negotiate a permanent EU trade agreement, which would put Ireland in an even stronger position to insist on open-border conditions.

This leads to a third reason for betting against a no-deal outcome: Johnson's own statements and political style. While Johnson has repeatedly promised to leave the EU in October "with or without a deal," he has also put the chance of no deal actually happening at "a million to one against," because he is confident of a successful EU negotiation.

Why has the world accepted Johnson's promise of "with or without a deal" as gospel truth, while dismissing his prediction of an agreed Brexit as irrelevant wishful thinking? Focusing on personal ambitions and downplaying promises, which has usually been the best way to predict Johnson's actions, suggests the opposite conclusion.

If Johnson goes for a no-deal Brexit, he risks disaster whatever happens: an economic meltdown if he manages to bypass parliamentary opposition and delivers the promised rupture, and a premature general election if Parliament blocks it. If, on the other hand, he genuinely tries to negotiate an orderly withdrawal agreement, Johnson could still deliver a symbolic Brexit by his October deadline, but also secure the transition period that Britain desperately needs.

The resulting rebound in business confidence would then allow a generous budget of tax cuts, public spending giveaways, and Keynesian fiscal stimulus, paving the way for a general election next spring that Johnson would be almost certain to win with a big majority. For a political libertine whose only consistent principle has been inconsistency, an orderly, negotiated Brexit would surely be the favored option, regardless of the reckless promises to Europhobes that put him in power.

OPINION

By Kaushik Basu

The Language of Conflict

NEW DELHI - I was having lunch in an Ithaca restaurant with my mother-in-law, who was visiting from India, when the Chinese waitress serving us asked her where she came from. "Kolhapur," my mother-in-law replied, referring to the small town in Maharashtra where she was born. Much to my surprise, the waitress looked overjoyed. "I lived there for several years," she said.

They hit it off. My mother-in-law said that the world's best ice cream comes from there, and the waitress agreed that she had never had better since she left. After a while, I realized what was happening: my mother-in-law was talking about Kolhapur, and the waitress about Kuala Lumpur. But all their facts matched perfectly, so I decided not to spoil their joy.

Language is a strange thing. It is an enabler of human progress and happiness (including through amusing misunderstandings like the one in Ithaca), but it can also be a source of conflict and an instrument of oppression.

The connection between language and conflict is not as far removed from the social sciences, including game theory, as many think. By exploring this important link more closely, economists and other researchers could perform a great service by helping us understand the contemporary world.

After all, we live in the best and worst of times. The world has never been as rich as it is today. Yet it is coming apart at the seams, amid increasing political polarization, great-power rivalry, and xenophobia.

Today's mix of rising prosperity and deepening divisions is reminiscent of the Industrial Revolution that began in the mid-eighteenth century and lasted nearly a hundred years. Unsurprisingly, that era coincided with major theoretical breakthroughs in political economy, from Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, to the contributions of Augustin Cournot and Léon Walras. Theirs were not everyday research findings. Like the later seminal work of John Hicks, Paul Samuelson, and Kenneth Arrow in the twentieth century, they produced deep insights that provided sudden, blinding clarity about how the economy works, and how politics interacts with markets and economic wellbeing.

Although we cannot predict the path of future political-economy research, past experience suggests it will be in multiple directions. Language is likely to be one of them. Some scholars have already provided critical insights into the political economy of language, such as Princeton University's Stephen Morris on political correctness. But there is much more to be done, particularly on the connection between language and conflict.

Signs of this link are evident in the United States, where, earlier this month, President Donald Trump made statements which seem patently racist. He said that four nonwhite Democratic congresswomen should "go back" to the countries they came from - even though three were born in the US and the fourth is a naturalized citizen who arrived as a child refugee. And yet Trump's appeals to white identity appear to have cost him few supporters. I do not believe all his supporters are racists. The generous interpretation is that they use language differently from Trump's critics.

Because what a speaker means and what a listener hears can be very different, language can be an instrument to foment trouble. Much of the problem stems from the fact that the real world is extremely varied and granular, whereas language is coarse by comparison. Some political leaders seek to exploit this to control and subjugate the population.

George Orwell's 1984 describes a team of bureaucrats working on the eleventh edition of the *Newspeak Dictionary* to "cut language down to the bone." As Orwell puts it, one of them "bit hungrily into his bread," and said, "It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words."

If, for example, people regard the words "socialism" and "communism" as synonymous, rather than describing different systems of political economy, then it can become impossible to talk about the former without stoking fears of the latter. Similarly, a right-wing group in Israel can silence dissent by promoting the view that criticism of the group is equivalent to anti-Semitism (or self-hatred, in the case of Jewish critics). This would prompt many people who would hate to be anti-Semitic to avoid criticizing the group.

In India, some groups label anyone espousing ideas to the left of the extreme right as an "urban Naxal," referring to a violent revolutionary group with which few want to be associated. In a similar vein, the Indian columnist Mrinal Pande has highlighted how the use of modern Hindi to promote a chauvinist culture and totalitarian ideas creates division, and also damages the reputation of the language itself.

Digital technology and the continued growth of social media are increasing the scope for conflict and political mischief by bringing together large numbers of people from different cultural and political backgrounds. For many of them, the same word may have a different emotional or political valence, and the same sequence of words may be interpreted in different - even contradictory - ways.

As words acquire new meanings, many people stop using certain words in order not to be seen as sitting on the fence. As the fence shifts, this becomes a dynamic process producing increasingly polarized societies. Understanding these dynamics will require a combination of logic, equilibrium analysis, philosophy, and creativity.

The world is changing as rapidly as it did during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, if not more so. It is time for economists to venture out in novel directions, as their illustrious predecessors did.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MSF expands mental health treatment to West Pointers

The international medical humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is expanding a free treatment program for people with mental health disorders in Liberia with activities beginning this month in the densely populated township of West Point in Monrovia.

The program, run in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other partners, now provides outpatient care for about 1,350 people with mental health disorders or epilepsy in a total of five health facilities in Monrovia and other areas of Montserrado County. Epilepsy treatment is included as it is part of Liberia's national mental health strategy.

"Severe mental health disorders are found in every country, affecting about 2 to 3 percent of the population each year," said Dr. Gregory Keane, MSF mental health adviser. "People with untreated psychosis, severe depression, or other severe disorders may be less able to properly care for themselves or manage their daily lives. Families really struggle with how to respond when medical



treatment is not available."

In the last 30 years, Liberians have endured two civil wars and an Ebola epidemic that claimed thousands of lives in the region, including a disproportionate number of health workers. Like many low-income countries, Liberia has limited medical services for people with mental health disorders, with one psychiatric hospital and only two psychiatrists.

However, the Ministry of Health has worked with MSF

and other organizations to improve its strategy for delivering mental health care at the community level, Keane said. As part of this strategy, an MSF team is supervising and supporting nine mental health clinicians in primary health care centers in Bensonville, Bromley, Clara Town, Pipeline, and West Point. The clinicians, who have completed a six-month training, assess patients and provide treatment with ongoing support from an MSF psychiatrist, Hassan Nasser, and psychologist, SaimaZai.

It is critically important to help family and community members understand a person's condition and support their care to overcome social stigma and avoid harmful practices.

"Many people with psychiatric disorders have been struggling for years with spiritual healers or herbalists and have not been receiving medical treatment," Nasser said. "I have even seen individuals who were chained or locked up at home because of social stigma or fear of aggressive behavior. But when people accept that these are medical conditions, and we treat these patients, they finally have relief from their symptoms and live normally in their communities."

Demand is already high for mental health treatment in West Point, a crowded urban area with tens of thousands of people on a narrow coastal peninsula. MSF, the Ministry of Health, and the National Catholic Health Council are working in West Point's primary health care center, called Star of the Sea.

Previously, more than a quarter of the mental health patients in the neighboring area of Clara Town were residents of West Point. With treatment now available locally, more patients are expected.

"The population density in West Point is very, very high," said Justine Hallard, MSF project coordinator. "There is sometimes flooding in the area, so people are living in very hard conditions, in crowded dwellings. The stress can lead to a higher rate of mental disorders."

As in other locations, the mental health program in West Point relies heavily on local workers, called government community health volunteers, to visit patients and follow up by phone. With support from MSF, four volunteers from West Point visit patients at home, help families understand mental health conditions and encourage adherence to treatment.

"The government community health volunteers are really key to this effort," Hallard said. "If we increase the number of patients each month, it is thanks to the amazing work of these individuals. They know how to

talk to people and build awareness of mental health, strengthening the role that families and communities play in supporting people who need care."

MSF supplies most of the psychiatric medications in the five participating health facilities. Across Liberia, however, people are not always able to obtain psychiatric medications, and supplies may be interrupted from time to time, leading patients to relapse. This is one of the main challenges that people with mental health conditions face in Liberia, according to Benjamin Ballah, general secretary of a Liberian organization that advocates for mental health services, Cultivation for Users' Hope.

"You find a lot of people living with mental illness," Ballah said. "Our complaint is about not supporting mental health as compared to other medical health. You cannot build a resilient health system without mental health."

According to Ballah, overcoming social stigma is the other major challenge. As an advocate, he tells people that he had a mental health condition, and with treatment, he was able to recover, complete his education, and work as a schoolteacher.

Patients with epilepsy also face challenges in society, but treatment can help. With support from MSF, clinicians assess epileptic patients and provide medications to control seizures, according to national and international guidelines. "There is a stigma when people cannot control their seizures and are not able to function normally," Hallard said. "Children who have epilepsy too often cannot go to school because they are stigmatized, and don't even play with other children. Now that they are on treatment, they are going back to school, and they can have a normal life."

MSF began working in Liberia in 1990 and provided medical care during the civil war years. In 2014, MSF returned to the country to respond to the West African Ebola epidemic. MSF currently runs a pediatric hospital, Bardnesville Junction Hospital, and the mental health program, which began in 2017.

Youth organizations benefit from assets through UNDP/UN Volunteer Programme

Volunteerism to another level, United Nations Volunteer Programme through UNDP, identifies with three youth organizations by donating assorted assets.

2 laptops, 1 desk top screen and a multi-purpose printer were turned over to Volunteers Hub Liberia, the Pan Afrikan Volunteers' Network and the Messengers of Peace, for use within their

respective institutions.

Cllr. KaniaGbala, UNV Country Coordinator of UNDP expressed appreciation to the youth groups for promoting volunteerism in Liberia.

Counselor BaiGbala noted that the assets worth over US\$2000dollars, are to help boost the work that they do on a daily basis, which he stressed is worthy of support.

He appealed to them not to look at the cost but the intent

that goes with it. "Little is much when God is in it," said Kania.

Turning over the items on behalf of UNDP Management, Procurement Specialist Lady Pokolo- Andrewson extolled the efforts and commitment of the youth organizations working to bring to the fold, issues that confront young people of Liberia.

Miss Pokolo- Andrewson said their relentless advocacy will go a long way in helping Liberians work together for the common good of the nation.

The proud recipients highlighted the challenges they face with respect to logistics, noting that the ICT assets will help boost effective delivery of services rendered to the youthful population of the country.

Volunteers Hub Liberia, Messengers of Peace, and the Pan Afrikan Volunteers' Network expressed appreciation to UNDP through the UN Volunteer Program for the gesture, stressing that the move is an indication of a stronger partnership that is in the interest of sustaining the peace in Liberia.



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EPA launches Information System

By Bridgett Milton

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched Liberia's Reducing Emissions Deforestation Forest Degradation (REDD) + Safeguards Information System (SIS).

(CI) and Skills and Agricultural Development Services (SADS) in consultation with Safeguards Working Group (SWG).

The development of the SIS was bankrolled by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF).

Authority (FDA) and the EPA in collaboration with Conservation International, the system is there for the entire country to benefit.

"This is a national instrument that will be used across all sectors. It will be used by the EPA, FDA, and all environmental bodies, as well as the community," Mr. Blama explains.

The SIS is a practical, easy-to-use system built on existing information systems, and ensuring that information is accessible in an appropriate format for different stakeholders to meet their needs.

While the system is being managed by the EPA and the FDA with funding provided by the FCPF, the EPA boss says he does not want the system to be abused, noting that it will help the country adapt properly.

He says this information must be used to build the country as Liberians get to know the impact and effect of climate change.

In brief remarks, the Technical Director of Conservation International, Mr. George Ilebo, says the newly built information system is in the interest of development.

Liberia remains the biggest custodian of West African forest; however, Ilebo wants Liberians to be mindful not to lose their forest resources.--
Edited by Winston W. Parley



Speaking at the launch of the SIS on Tuesday, 23 July, EPA Executive Director Mr. Nathaniel T. Blama expressed confidence that the system will bring great benefits to the nation.

Liberia REDD+ Safeguards Information System was recently developed by Conservation International

According to Mr. Blama, the system has been tested and proven to be one of the best in the world, noting that it is going to help the country in its conservation and forest management.

The EPA boss points out that though the system was made possible through the efforts of the Forestry Development

Baptist prelate warns graduates

By Emmanuel Mondaye

A Baptist preacher and Administrator of the Jake Memorial Baptist College in Liberia Dr. Wallah S. Wilsitoe warns graduates of the college to practice the six principles of the Lord Jesus Christ by being men with integrity in their ministerial works.

He gave the warning here Sunday, 21 July in the edifice of the Bethlehem Baptist Church located in Keyhole community, Old Road while admitting 11 graduates of the college into the college's Alumina Association.

The graduates received Associate Degrees in Theology and Christian Education. The 21 July commencement brings to 10th the number of graduations held by the college since it was established 19 years ago.

He also warns the graduates to hold onto the fundamental principles of God, which include, among other things, love, care, and be their brother's keepers, noting that the graduates have an obligation to win more souls for the Lord by ensuring that unbelievers are brought to the saving grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Wilsitoe stresses that no matter how many money a person may have in the bank, how many houses he built, or cars he owns, and luxuries he acquired while on the face of the earth, what matters is where he spends eternity after death.

He challenges the graduates to be aware that human lived in a world of hypocrisy, coupled with mistrust, calling on them to practice, teach, preach, and go in the battle in a heavily-crowded field to bring lost souls to the saving knowledge

of Jesus Christ who is the finisher of men's faith.

He emphasizes that after obtaining an AA Degree himself from the college 19 years ago, he decided to pursue further studies by acquiring Bachelor, Master's and doctorate degrees, respectively from the Colorado University based in the United States of America (USA) before returning home to make his contribution.

He expresses gratitude to the college's oversea partners, faculty, administration and supporting Baptist Churches for their continue contributions which will go a long way in addressing the spiritual needs of unbelievers and lead them to the saving knowledge of God as well as repent from their wicked deeds.

Earlier, the college President, Rev. John K. Sackie, discloses that the biggest challenge has been payment of fees by students and supporting Baptist Churches, which sometime compelled the administration of the college to waive fees in order to help students go through their academic studies.

He hopes that the college would move from AA degree level to a full degree program when the college's application of intent is approved by the National Commission on Higher Education.

He calls on supporting Baptist churches to encourage young people in their churches to enroll in the college by offering them financial gifts that would keep them in school, while commending those who have and continued to support the work of the college over the years, praying God's blessings on them.
Editing by Jonathan Browne

INCHR ends 3 days workshop in Bong

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

The Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) of Liberia has concluded a three-day workshop with regional human rights investigators and monitors in Gbarnga, Bong County.

Speaking in an interview with this paper at the end of the three days training in the county, Madam Oretha S. Davis said the intent of the training is to build the capacity of regional human rights investigators and monitors.

Madam Davis is one of the commissioners at the Independent National Commission on Human Rights with oversight on the Department of Complain, Investigation and Monitoring (DCIM).

Madam Davis describes the three days training for regional human rights investigators and human rights monitors as important because the DCIM is charged



with the responsibility to recommend immediate interim relief for victim(s) and approach the courts, seeking declaratory judgment to obtain relief for victim(s).

She discloses that the training drew 65 participants from the 15 counties of Liberia and facilitators from the INCHR.

According to Madam Davis, the INCHR needs to empower Regional Human Rights Coordinators and County Human Rights Monitors with logistics like motorbikes and laptop computers for the monitors to get to hard - to - rich areas in some of the counties.

She notes that the

availability of motor bikes for the monitors will help in carrying on them carry out their function in the Country.

"Also in line with this Act, the Commission submits quarterly and annual report on the human rights situation of the country to the heads of the three branches of the Liberian Government: the Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary," Madam Davis stresses.

Some participants who spoke with our Bong County Correspondent lauded the Department for Complaints, Investigation and Monitoring for organizing such a unique workshop here.

The INCHR was established by an Act of the Legislature in 2005 as the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights in Liberia.

The establishment of the INCHR came out of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in Accra on the 18th of August 2003 that stressed the need to address the wanton disregard and disrespect for human rights which in part led to and characterized the Liberian civil war.--
Edited by Winston W. Parley

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MOD-AFL welcomes MOU with UN Peacekeeping Operations

The Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) have welcomed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of Liberia and the United Nations regarding the AFL's contribution to the UN Peacekeeping Operations in Mali (MINUSMA).

This MOU now solidifies the contribution of the Armed Forces of Liberia to the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mali.

Both the Ministry and the AFL said they see the signing of the MOU as a great step for Liberia and speaks to the level of transformation the Liberian Military has gone through since its restructuring in 2006.

Commenting on the signing of the MOU, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia, Maj/Gen Prince C. Johnson III, said the MOU with the United Nations could not have been possible without the support of the Liberian Government under the leadership of the Commander-in-Chief of the



Armed Forces of Liberia, President George Manneh Weah, and former Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who initiated the restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia back in 2006.

Maj/Gen Johnson also lauded the efforts of others, including the former Command Officer-in-Charge (COIC) of the AFL, the late Maj/Gen. Suraj Alao

Abdurrahman, one of Nigeria's finest Generals, who was seconded to the AFL in 2007 to lead the young Army; former Liberia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Lewis G. Brown II, the current Liberia Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Dee-Maxwell SaahKemayah Sr., and former Defense Minister Hon. Brownie

J. Samukai, and rank and file of the Armed Forces of Liberia and their families for their efforts and sacrifices in the achievement of this milestone.

It can be recalled that the Armed Forces of Liberia's first

post-war peacekeeping mission to the West African state of Mali started with the deployment of a platoon of AFL personnel in June 2013. With a professional and effective military force ready to conduct operations, Liberia agreed to deploy a contingent to participate in the peacekeeping mission in Bamako, Mali.

During the signing ceremony on 23rd July 2019 in New York, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Operations Support, Mr. Atul Khare, signed on behalf of the UN while Ambassador Dee-Maxwell SaahKemayah Sr., Liberia's Permanent Representative to the UN, signed for the government of Liberia. The event was witnessed by LT/Col. Daniel Holman of the Armed Forces of Liberia along with other officials of the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations in New York.

Weah urges citizens to serve diligently -honors senior citizens, others

By Winston W. Parley

President George Manneh Weah has decorated 10 Liberians for their exceptional services to the nation, calling on all citizens to be inspired by the occasion and serve their society and nation diligently.

"We hope this will inspire all citizens to serve our society and our nation diligently," President Weah said Wednesday, 24 July at the C. Cecil Dennis Auditorium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Monrovia.

The event was graced by Liberian officials, foreign ambassadors accredited here and other international partners.

At the investiture, President Weah notes that every July 26 which is celebrated as the nation's Independence Day, certain individuals are chosen to be decorated.

Among the honorees at this year's investiture, President Weah honored senior citizens including 117 - year - old Mr. DazoeFolley with a rank of Grand Band, Star of Africa; and

110 - year - old Martha Kono - KpawoKolleh Rambo with rank of Grand Band, Star of Africa.

Other honorees include Mr. Gerald F.B. Cooper, Grand Band, Star of Africa (GBSA), Mr. Joseph P. Kelleh (GBSA), Professor Charles Steiner, Grand Commander, Star of Africa (GCSA); Imam Sheik Ishmael Sesay of Black Jinnah Mosque (GCSA); and Ms. Grace - Ann Dickson, Officer, Star of Africa (OSA).

Additionally, Mr. SedekeeKromah was honored with rank of OSA, while Mr. Derrick Dunbar got rank of Knight Official, Humane Order of African Redemption (KO-HOAR) and the late former Lone Star of Liberia Captain Mr. Mark Gibson with KO-HOAR.

Reading the citation for honoree Charles Steiner, Liberia's Chief of Protocol Rev. Jarvis Witherspoon read that Prof. Steiner was born on 15 August 1942 in Switzerland, and obtained a professional certificate in Zoology in his country.

In 1962, the Protocol indicates that the honoree migrated to Liberia, employed at the Department of Biology at the University of Liberia where he founded and established the Zoo and Animal Orphanage located in Lakpazee and served as director.

"Your work provided much

insight and knowledge to the Liberian community," the citation reads.

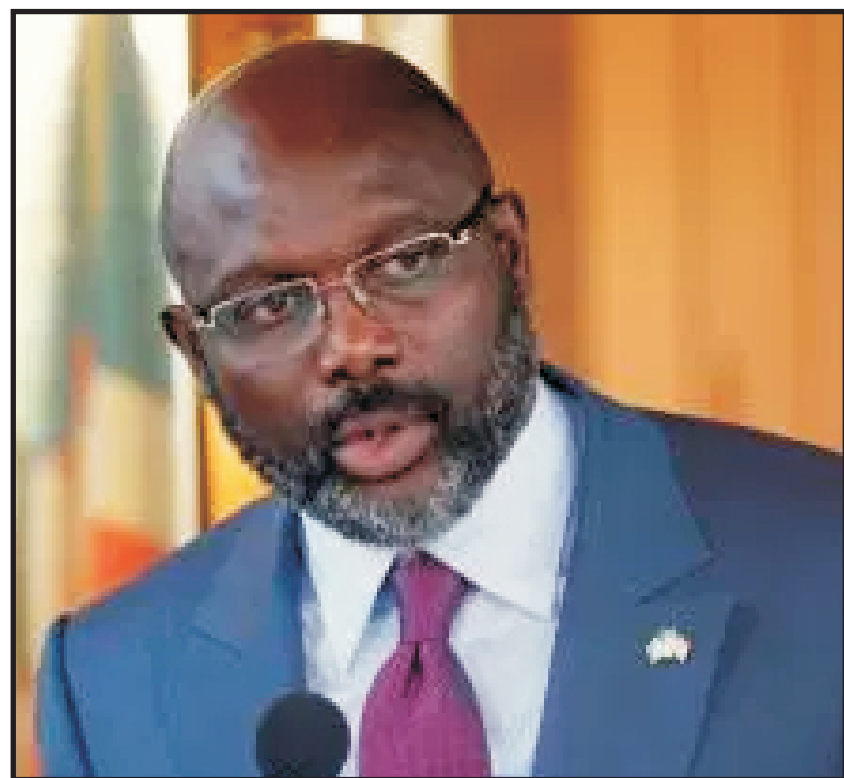
The citation for the late Sports Activist Mr. Mark Gibson recalls how the honoree served as captain for some major national football teams, and his instrumentality in winning many championships, including the famous "Who Owns the Land" Social Security ... tournament.

He headed the Lonestar to key victory in regional African qualifiers, winning the admiration of fans and peers who dubbed him a Midfield General.

He lead the national team to participate in a six - month training tour in Brazil and ensured the including of now President George Manneh Weah, as one of the few young players to make the trip in 1986.

Responding on behalf of the honorees, Mr. Joseph P. Keller notes that he didn't think that many of the honorees expected this, thanking President Weah, the government and everyone who made the day a success.

However, he says it's a great honor to be recognized individually for their contributions to the country.



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Français

« Les élections partielles du 29 juillet sont inconstitutionnelles », dénonce l'ECC

Le Comité de coordination des élections (ECC) conteste les élections partielles du 29 juillet dans le comté de Montserrado, les qualifiant d'« anticonstitutionnelles » car « elles ne réunissent pas les conditions minimales en vertu de la loi fondamentale libérienne ».

Lors d'une conférence de presse à Monrovia, mardi 23 juillet, Oscar Bloh, président du Comité de coordination des élections, a déclaré que le retard continu des élections partielles rend l'ensemble du processus électoral inconstitutionnel et que tout nouveau retard ébranlerait d'avantage la Constitution de 1986 du Libéria.

A la question de savoir si le CCE reconnaitra quand même la légitimité des législateurs qui seront élus aux cours des deux élections partielles, M. Bloh a répondu que le CEC n'a pas le pouvoir de décider, mais qu'il appartient aux acteurs politiques d'en débattre.

Le CEC se dit profondément

préoccupé par le report des élections partielles dans ce pays, tout en avertissant que : "Cela crée un précédent dangereux pour la démocratie naissante et fragile du pays. Le non-respect de l'état de droit sape la consolidation de la paix et les principes fondamentaux

de la bonne gouvernance et de la démocratie."

Selon lui, le report des élections pourrait également se traduire par une faible participation le jour des élections et par conséquent mettre à mal la légitimité des élus. Les deux élections

partielles du comté de Montserrado ont été provoquées par le décès de la sénatrice Geraldine Doe Sherif au début de cette année des suites d'une longue maladie et du représentant du district 15, Adolph Lawrence, dans un tragique accident de circulation sur la route de l'aéroport Roberts International, le jour de son anniversaire.

M. Bloh a rappelé que la Constitution du Libéria est la loi suprême et fondamentale du Libéria et que ses dispositions sont au-dessus de tous, y compris les autorités et les citoyens de la République. Il a fait référence à l'article 37 de la Constitution libérienne, qui confie à la Commission électorale nationale le mandat de pourvoir à tout siège vacant constaté au parlement au plus tard 90 jours après avoir été notifié par l'un des chefs des deux chambres du parlement.

Le CEC appelle donc le gouvernement libérien à mettre à la disposition de la commission électorale le reste d'un million de dollars américains pour que les élections partielles aient lieu le 29 juillet, tout en mettant en garde qu'un énième report des élections portera atteinte à l'état de droit et à la Constitution libérienne.

Par ailleurs, il a annoncé que son organisation déploiera 424 observateurs pour les élections

partielles du 29 juillet, puis ajouté que « le CEC publiera des déclarations préliminaires sur ses efforts d'observation le jour des élections et le 30 septembre, respectivement. Alors que les élections approchent, le CEC appelle tous les acteurs politiques à s'abstenir de l'utilisation des médias sociaux et des propos incendiaires qui incitent à la violence », a-t-il averti.

Sept candidats se disputent le siège sénatorial du comté de Montserrado qui abrite la capitale Monrovia. Il s'agit de Mme Pualita Wiep pour la coalition au pouvoir, de M. Abraham Darius Dillon pour l'alliance des quatre principaux partis politiques de l'opposition, de Mohammed Ayoub Dukuly pour le Parti pour la transformation du Libéria, de Mme MacDella Cooper, Massa Massaquoi Kanyon, et M. Kimmie Weeks et le représentant sortant de la circonscription électorale no 6 du comté de Montserrado no 6, Samuel Enders, tous candidats indépendants.

Cependant, tout semble indiquer que la course électorale a lieu entre M. Dillon et Mme Wiep pour la sénatoriale, et entre M. Abu Kamara de la coalition au pouvoir et Tellia Urey de l'alliance des quatre principaux partis politiques de l'opposition pour l'élection législative.



L'union Africaine (Ua) Au Chevet Des Déplacés Internes De La Crise Au Mali

Une mission humanitaire de l'Union africaine (UA), conduite par Mme Cessouma Minata Samate, commissaire chargée des affaires politiques à l'UA, s'est manifestée aux côtés des déplacés internes de la crise avec un chèque de 100.000 dollars US. C'était ce mardi 23 juillet 2019, à la cité ministérielle de Bamako, en présence du ministre de la solidarité et de la lutte contre

la pauvreté, M. Amadou Konaté et de l'Ambassadeur et représentant spécial de l'Union africaine au Mali, M. Pierre Boyoya.

Présente au Mali depuis les débuts de la crise, mais, cela est une première dans les missions de l'organisation africaine de prendre en compte et évaluer minutieusement la question des populations déplacés à l'interne. Une mission humanitaire, sous forme de sous-comité chargé spécifiquement

de la question des réfugiés, des rapatriés et des déplacés internes de la crise au Mali. Durant son séjour depuis un moment, la forte délégation conduite par Mme Samate a approché et discuté avec tous les acteurs humanitaires impliqués dans la gestion de cette crise au Mali. A savoir, non seulement du gouvernement du Mali, mais aussi des ONG nationales et internationales, sans oublier également les populations elles-mêmes concernées. Après des visites sur le terrain, la mission de la plus grande organisation africaine a pu s'imprégner de la dure réalité sur le terrain. C'est pourquoi, elle a décidé de soutenir les efforts du département en charge de la solidarité dans la prise en charge des besoins des personnes déplacées, avec un montant de 100.000 dollars US, soit plus de 50 millions de francs CFA. Mme Samate dira que cette somme n'est que symbolique pour manifester la présence de toute l'Afrique aux côtés des frères maliens. La présidente du sous-comité chargé des réfugiés, des rapatriés et des déplacés, Mme Cessouma Minata Samate, dira dans son allocution que ce problème ne concerne pas que le Mali, mais de toute l'Afrique. C'est pourquoi d'ailleurs, les



Articles traduits

Par Valéry G. Guhéna

E-mail: valeryghn10@yahoo.com

Tel: 076 589 44 0881483394

chefs d'État et de gouvernement de l'Union africaine ont choisi comme thème phare cette année, à l'instar des thématiques qu'ils adoptent chaque année, la question chargée des réfugiés, des rapatriés et des déplacés dans toute l'Afrique. Selon elle l'Union africaine ne dispose pas d'assez de moyens, mais elle jouera de sa casquette politique pour démarcher les partenaires qui seront à mesure de prendre en charge la souffrance des populations déplacées. Tout en rassurant le gouvernement quelle s'impliquera pour la mise en œuvre des inquiétudes prises en compte par cette mission d'évaluation auprès de l'organisation de l'Union africaine, la cheffe de mission n'a pas manqué de mettre un accent particulier sur la situation des enfants et des femmes dans cette crise. Quant au ministre Konaté, il

s'est réjoui de la considération de l'étendue et de toutes les dimensions de cette crise par la mission de l'Union africaine au Mali. Selon le ministre de la Solidarité et de la Lutte contre la pauvreté, cette visite de la délégation de l'UA est un grand signe d'espoir pour le Mali. Il a réaffirmé son inquiétude à celles déjà évoquées par la cheffe de mission envers les femmes et plus particulièrement les enfants, dont l'avenir de la plupart se trouve condamné par la crise. C'est pourquoi il a exhorté la mission de l'Union africaine à s'impliquer davantage pour mettre en œuvre rapidement des mesures d'accompagnement parrainées envers les populations déplacées. Il a enfin, rassuré les heureux donateurs que le chèque ainsi reçu sera utilisé à bon escient et que toute action menée dans ce cadre sera portée à la connaissance de la commission de l'Union africaine.

Français

Le Président Weah inaugure la première usine d'acier du Libéria

Le Président George Manneh Weah a inauguré la première usine d'acier du Libéria, exprimant son optimisme quant à l'intérêt que les investisseurs étrangers portent à l'économie libérienne.

Le président Weah exhorte les Libériens à travailler avec les « différentes puissances économiques » pour attirer des investisseurs étrangers au Libéria pour la relance de l'économie du pays.

Il dit regretter que le Libéria ne dispose d'aucune usine pour produire des chaussures et d'autres produits à la base du caoutchouc en dépit du fait que le pays produise de l'hévéa. Selon lui, il est temps qu'il existe sur le marché des produits « Made in Liberia » comme les autres pays africains.

Le président Weah a fait observer qu'il est important que le pays s'octroie plus d'usines qui pourront transformer les matières premières dont regorge le pays en produits finis afin de relancer de manière considérable l'économie.

Il a plaidé auprès de la direction de la société Seti Brothers pour faire preuve de tolérance à l'égard des Libériens qui travaillent pour elle. Il a, par la même occasion, prodigué de sages conseils aux employés libériens, leur demandant de respecter leur hiérarchie et de faire preuve d'honnêteté dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

Le président Weah a indiqué que les Libériens n'ont qu'à s'en prendre à eux-mêmes pour le sous-développement de leur pays. Il a profité de l'occasion pour exprimer sa gratitude au Caucus législatif du comté de Nimba, par l'intermédiaire du sénateur Prince Y. Johnson, pour son rôle dans le processus qui a abouti à la création de la première usine sidérurgique du Libéria.

Le Président Directeur General de l'usine, M. Paul Sethi, a révélé que l'entité a actuellement un effectif de 500 employés, dont la plupart des Libériens et dit espérer employer

davantage de Libériens au fur et à mesure que les choses avanceront.

Il a remercié le président Weah d'avoir créé un environnement favorable permettant aux investisseurs étrangers de venir au Libéria pour y investir et créer des opportunités d'emploi pour les Libériens.

Il a aussi fait savoir que les quelques employés étrangers de l'usine formeront leurs collègues libériens, qui reprendront par la suite la relève des opérations de l'usine de sorte que l'entreprise devienne entièrement une entreprise libérienne.

Pour sa part, le consul indien accrédité au Libéria a félicité le président Weah pour son « leadership visionnaire » et dont « le programme pour les pauvres pour le développement et la prospérité attire les investissements étrangers ».

Il a donné des conseils aux Indiens qui travaillent au Libéria, tout en les exhortant à respecter les lois du pays. Il a également promis de travailler en étroite collaboration avec le gouvernement, notant que l'usine sidérurgique fonctionnera comme toutes les autres usines de production dans le monde.

Quant au ministre libérien du Commerce et de l'Industrie, Wilson K. Tarpeh, il a dit que le gouvernement du Libéria est ouvert et résolu à créer un environnement commercial porteur qui attirera les investisseurs.

Il a déclaré que l'ouverture de l'usine sidérurgique est la preuve de la volonté du gouvernement de collaborer avec le monde des affaires et les investisseurs pour investir au Libéria, ajoutant que le Libéria peut désormais se vanter de posséder une usine de fabrication.

Par ailleurs, le représentant des travailleurs a remercié le gouvernement d'avoir attiré l'investissement dans le pays, « ce qui a créé des possibilités d'emploi pour certains Libériens qui étaient sans emploi ».

COMMENTAIRE

Par Alon Tal

N'ayons pas peur des trottinettes !

TEL AVIV - Les critiques s'abattent sur les vélos électriques et les trottinettes. Les inquiétudes quant aux accidents possibles, aux piétons terrorisés et aux incivilités conduisent de plus en plus de responsables politiques et de commentateurs à conclure que ces moyens de transport devraient être interdits. Ils se trompent. Ces moyens de transport innovants, de petite taille, portatifs et électriques constituent une formidable opportunité pour réduire les émissions de gaz à effet de serre, éviter les embouteillages et diminuer la frustration des citadins.

Une trottinette qui permet de parcourir en moyenne 16 kilomètres par jour produit 3,5kg de moins de CO2 qu'une voiture parcourant la même distance. Si 10 000 personnes abandonnaient la voiture pour la trottinette, les émissions de CO2 diminueraient de 35 tonnes par jour, et si 5 millions de personnes en faisaient autant, à elles toutes elles n'émettraient que 370 tonnes de CO2 par jour - tout juste 2% de la quantité produite par le même nombre de voitures. Néanmoins un problème se pose : les responsables de la voirie et les élus qui établissent leur budget ne prennent pas encore en compte la modification des infrastructures qui devrait accompagner cette révolution des modes de transport.

Pour avoir un exemple sur la manière de tirer tous les avantages de ces nouveaux moyens de transport sans compromettre la sécurité, examinons la situation à Tel Aviv où il y a maintenant plus de 5000 trottinettes en location. Pour aider le service de la circulation urbaine et la police à en assurer la gestion, mes étudiants en fin d'étude et moi avons analysé les données relatives à leur utilisation.

Ainsi nous avons découvert que si les véhicules électriques à deux roues sont dangereux, c'est avant tout pour leur utilisateur qu'ils le sont. En Israël, depuis 2014, le nombre d'accidents mortels de trottinette est passé de 1 à 19 par an. Et l'année dernière, 414 personnes ont été hospitalisées suite à un accident de trottinette, dont près du quart âgées de moins de 16 ans. 95% des utilisateurs de trottinettes blessés à la tête ne portaient pas de casque, et la plupart des accidents étaient dus à leur présence sur la chaussée en raison de l'absence de piste cyclable et de l'interdiction d'utiliser le trottoir.

Ces conclusions montrent que la plupart des accidents pourraient être évités grâce à une réglementation adaptée et aux infrastructures voulues. En Israël, le nombre de citations à comparaître devant les tribunaux visant des utilisateurs de ces nouveaux moyens de transport (la plupart du temps pour avoir emprunté le trottoir) a fait un bond de 12 356 en 2015 à 30 178 en 2018. Les municipalités ont introduit une nouvelle réglementation imposant un âge minimum aux utilisateurs, 16 ans, le port du casque, l'interdiction aux trottinettes d'utiliser les passages piétons, la présence de plus d'une personne sur une trottinette et l'utilisation d'écouteurs sur les deux oreilles, que ce soit pour écouter de la musique ou pour téléphoner. Mesure supplémentaire, les véhicules électriques à deux roues doivent avoir une plaque d'immatriculation pour permettre aux mairies et à la police d'éviter le chaos.

Ces dispositions sont de bon sens, mais visant exclusivement les utilisateurs de trottinettes,

elles stigmatisent peu ou prou ceux qui ont choisi un moyen de transport optimal du point de vue de l'intérêt général. En Israël, les médias sont les premiers à accabler les utilisateurs de trottinettes. Nous avons étudié la manière dont les journaux en ligne parlent des trottinettes depuis quelques années : 67% des articles sont négatifs, 13% neutres et 20% vaguement positifs. Pire encore, le mépris affiché à l'égard de ce nouveau moyen de transport très prometteur a suscité une vague de désinformation.

Rétablissons un certain nombre de faits. Plus de trottinettes se traduit par moins d'accidents. Les pays qui connaissent le plus grand nombre de déplacements à vélo par habitants sont ceux où le nombre de tués par kilomètre à vélo est le plus faible. Le taux d'accidents de vélo mortels en Hollande, au Danemark, en Allemagne et en Suisse est quatre fois inférieur à ce qu'il est aux USA, alors que les déplacements à vélo y sont 20 fois plus nombreux. Quand l'utilisation du vélo atteint une masse critique, les conducteurs font plus attention et les responsables politiques construisent les infrastructures voulues.

Cette prise de conscience peut aussi passer par la loi. En Australie en 2014, le Queensland a adopté une loi stipulant que lorsqu'ils dépassent un cycliste, les automobilistes doivent passer au minimum à 1m de lui s'ils roulent à moins de 60km/h, et à 1,5m au minimum s'ils roulent à plus de 60km/h. Deux ans après, le nombre de décès de cyclistes a baissé de 35% et le nombre d'hospitalisations de cyclistes accidentés de 50%. Plusieurs villes d'Amérique du Nord ont adopté une réglementation analogue.

Par ailleurs, contrairement à ce que disent souvent les politiques, les pistes cyclables ne représentent pas un fardeau financier. Réduisant les embouteillages, elles encouragent l'utilisation du vélo, ce qui est très avantageux, économiquement parlant.

En Israël, un récent rapport du ministère de l'Environnement indique que les conducteurs israéliens passent en moyenne 40 minutes par jour dans les embouteillages. Et du fait de la croissance rapide de la population et du nombre de voitures, ce temps mort quotidien pourrait augmenter de 90 minutes d'ici 2030. Autrement dit, des dizaines de milliards de dollars seront perdus chaque année. Etant donné que les personnes qui sont se retrouvent chaque jour prisonnières des embouteillages sont plus souvent sujettes à la dépression, voire se livrent plus fréquemment à des violences domestiques (dans le cas des hommes), on peut en déduire que de plus en plus de personnes choisiront une alternative si elles en ont la possibilité.

Enfin, les trottinettes et les vélos électriques ont un rôle crucial à jouer contre le réchauffement climatique. Pour des pays aussi chauds qu'Israël en été, l'interdiction de ce type de moyen de transport se traduirait par une augmentation du nombre de voitures sur la chaussée, alors qu'il faudrait chercher à le réduire. Il serait bien plus écologique et économique d'investir dans des infrastructures destinées à rentabiliser l'utilisation de la trottinette et d'adopter une réglementation en ce sens. Plutôt que de montrer du doigt ceux qui ont choisi un mode de transport urbain éthique et efficace, les villes devraient tout faire pour faciliter leur utilisation.

ARTICLE

How We (UP) lost the Elections in 2017

Abdoulaye W Dukulé
Cont'd from last edition



President Sirleaf did not have to help CDC, UP was doing all the work. Self-preservation took over the legacy.

Former President Pro-Temp Findley - current Minister of Foreign Affairs had worked for years in Bassa County to regain his footing in preparation for 2017. He walked away from UP and joined CDC. He was rumored to be on a short list for running mates to VP Boakai. By the time it was all over, UP had expelled Mrs. Sirleaf and her close "allies."

The misunderstanding between the two leaders of UP reached such high pitch that on the day of President Sirleaf's birthday, UP under Boakai held a special meeting and issued a communiqué accusing her of betrayal and deciding to expel her from the party. It took several interventions to stop President Sirleaf from holding her own press conference.

VP Boakai was facing serious challenges. The youthfulness of the electorate, with more than 60 percent of voters under age 35, most of whom had veneration for the CDC leader, was a factor not to dismiss. UP had been in power for 12 years, this led to a general fatigue and a desire for change. The Vice President had been in the limelight for 12 years and therefore vulnerable to attacks. How could he reinvent himself? How could he walk on the thin blue line between legacy and change? The VP was also the target of the other opposition parties who all thought they could defeat Mr. Weah. The UP's defeat can now be counted among loses by ruling parties in the region in this decade, from Senegal to Nigeria, through Ghana, Sierra Leone, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and The Gambia. However, it did not have to happen in Liberia.

When the results of the first round were announced, Liberty Party (LP) of Cllr. Charles Brumskine decided to contest the results and took National Election Commission (NEC) to the Supreme Court. Rather than prepare for the second round, the Boakai campaign spent its energy and time to support a lawsuit that was doomed from the onset. LP was seeking to annul the results and start all over. As the elections were mostly donors funded, there was little enthusiasm to do a rerun. By the time the Supreme Court rejected the case, CDC had locked down the country while UP was in court. The VP had only a few days to get back on the campaign trail.

One night, a group of senior cabinet ministers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Marjon Kamara, Minister of State Sylvester Grisby, Defense Minister Brownie Samukai and the Minister of Justice Frederick Cherue crisscrossed Monrovia, trying to patch up things between the President and the Vice-President. The two agreed to meet. But the phone never rang and UP continued its path of self-destruction. It was too late.

The question of who is responsible for the debacle of UP at the polls in 2017 will have many answers but one thing is certain, the campaign failed. In the end, all the CDC had to do was to wait patiently to harvest the fruit that UP could not nurture. How the party would regroup and regain its standing will still depend on the capacity of the two leaders to make peace for the sake of the party. They owe that much to the partisans and people who were caught in the crossfire. Will they allow UP to fizzle away as all former Liberian ruling parties? Or would they regroup, bury the hatchet and pass the baton?

The much touted "generational change" is inevitable, as time and nature command. Will UP stay in "protective" collaboration of opposition parties or will it get its troops back in line and stand on its own? Will the current collaboration lead the way to the formation of one opposition party before the 2020 and 2023 suffrages, such as a repeat of the Grand Coalition of 1985? Would the young people who worked so hard be able to reach out to each other and "wake up" UP? Time does not wait, and History has no reset button.

The biggest irony in all this, President Sirleaf and VP Boakai never uttered one public negative statement about each other. It was all done by surrogates through the media, everything built up through rumors.

"In school, you take a lesson and then you are tested, in life you are tested and then you learn a lesson," Uncle Joe told me the last time we met, in June 2019. Can the elders make peace and pass the torch, and can the youth look back at their tracks and regroup? As Dr. Amos Sawyer said, "what did we do with what we had? Could we have done better? And can we do better?"

Open Letter to President George M. Weah

Maxson Kpakio

Current Address:
United Kingdom

Home Address:
Rehab Community

Paynesville, Liberia
H.E. Dr George M. Weah
PRESIDENT
Republic of Liberia

14th July 2019

Open Letter to President George M. Weah

Dear Mr President:

I present compliments of my highest esteem to you and your family including members of your cabinet.

As a concern citizen and an advocate for social justice, I am hugely constrained writing you this letter. Your Excellency, few weeks ago, I learned that you are planning a huge celebration for our Independence Day on 26 July. My understanding also is that such celebration is to be sponsored by the State, meaning that every penny that will be spent will come from the national cover.

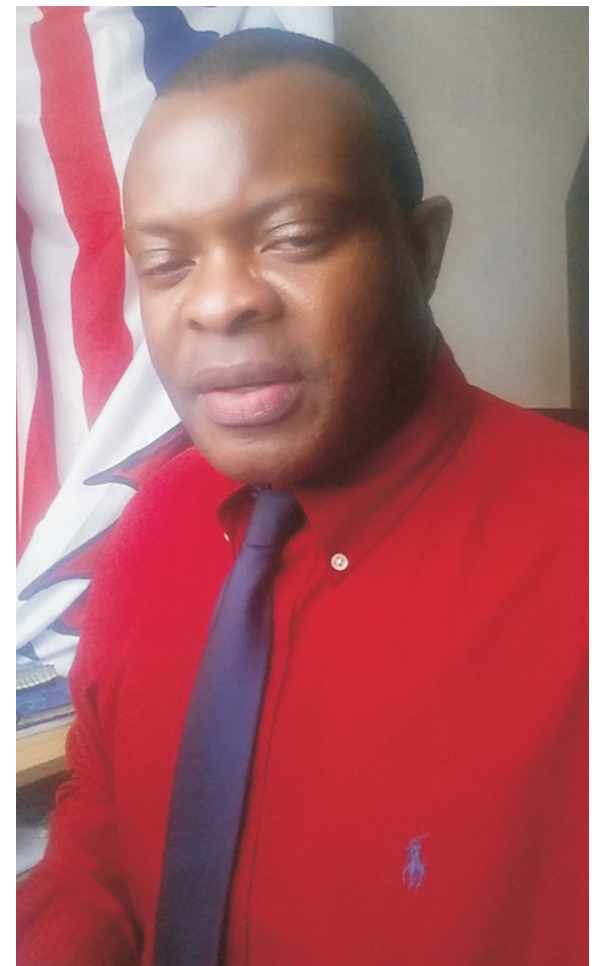
Mr President, permit me to kindly appeal to you in the name of God to see reason and have the celebration cancelled. Your Excellency, under the current climate in the country, especially the economic hardship which is even leaving our healthcare centers vulnerable, I want to plead with you to abandon any form of celebration that we as a nation will spend more than US \$1,000.00.

There are so many hospitals right now in our country that lacks the basics including medication to treat an emergency patient let alone to talk about a life threatening sickness. Whatever budget that has been raised for such celebration could be diverted to assist few hospitals across the country instead of us using it for merry making.

Mr President, as a reminder, one of your colleagues, President John Magufuli upon taken office as leader of Tanzania, he cancelled such celebrations stating that his country was facing huge challenges including financial difficulties. Stressing further that it's better to save such amount and put it in the system for the improvement of lives, than to waste it on merry making for the few. Agree with me or not Mr President, our current financial situations are challenging and you as our leader will have to take that precious time to accept and admit that in deed our country is struggling. This means that you are the only person that can lead us out of it.

Yours, Sincerely

Maxson S. Kpakio
Concern Citizen/Social Justice Advocate
+447574378999
skmax15@yahoo.co.uk



Govt. halts payment to NEC?

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

The New Dawn reliably gathers that the Comptroller General of Liberia has placed a hold on payment of the balance US\$1 million to the National Elections Commission to conduct the Montserrado County by-elections.

Speaking to this paper via mobile phone late Wednesday, 24th July in Monrovia, the National Elections Commission chairman, Cllr. Jerome George Korkoya discloses the board of commissioners were beaming with smiles after receiving news that the remaining US\$1 million has been made available for the two by-elections in Montserrado, but their joy was short-lived when the Comptroller General of Liberia, Mr. Janga Kowo placed a hold on disbursing the fund to the NEC's account.

Chairman Korkoya



explains that Comptroller General Kowo, who is also the National Secretary of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change, maintains that unless the NEC submitted expenditure report for the US\$1.5 million disbursed earlier for the polls, it would

not release the last disbursement.

The NEC chair notes that the position of the comptroller general has a propensity to undermine a peaceful conduct of the already delayed by-elections, arguing that the process for which the money

was disbursed is still in progress, and that full report will be provided at the close of the entire electoral process.

However, Chairman Korkoya discloses that the commission, in a spirit of coordination, forwarded financial report to the Office of the Comptroller General, but Mr. Kowo is yet to respond to the report up to the time he left office yesterday evening.

The Liberian government had earlier provided US\$1.5 million against the US\$2.5 million budget submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning for the pending senatorial and District#15 by-elections in Montserrado.

When questioned about the holding of the by-elections, Chairman Korkoya says the commission has put in place all

mechanisms for the polls on Monday, July 29.

He, however, expresses fear if the US\$1 million were not made available before 29 July poll workers may create tension at the close of voting.

When Comptroller General Kowo was contacted via mobile phone for comment, his phone rang endlessly without a response.

The senatorial by-election is as the result of the death of Senator Geraldine Doe Sherif after a protracted battle with cancer and the death of Montserrado County Electoral District #15 Representative Adolph Lawrence, in a car crash along the Roberts International Airport-Monrovia highway after celebrating his 50th birthday in Buchanan, Grand Bassa. **by Editing by Jonathan Browne**

UL students protest for teachers' salaries

By Ethel A. Tweh

Students at the state-run University of Liberia (UL) staged a protest in demand of instructors' salaries, setting roadblocks in the main street on Capitol Hill to claim authorities' attention.

The students' protest on Wednesday, 24 July came as UL instructors refuse to administer final exams for the semester owing to concerns that they have not received salaries for four months.

Financial crisis struck the University following President George Manneh Weah's "free tuition" policy pronouncement last

year, a decision that is seen to have immensely affect the income of the institution as government funding to the institution continues to delay.

Leading the protest, the Student Unification Party (SUP) Chairman Carlos Tengbeh Eddison urges President Weah to stop giving money to wayward Liberians also referred to as Zogos at a time teachers cannot get their pay.

Mr. Eddison argues that UL students had never asked the President for free education, but rather quality education.

According to him, since President Weah made the pronouncement of free

tuition, he has not been able to mark his words with deeds.

Mt. Eddison complains that since the announcement of the free tuition by President Weah, the education system at UL has been undermined, noting that education which is students' vital right is now under threat in Liberia.

According to Eddison, for the past four months, UL instructors have not gotten any money, and some staff's salaries have allegedly been cut off. In the wake of the protest, the Inspector General of the Liberia National Police (LNP) Col. Patrick Sudue personally engaged the students and calmed the situation.

Making his intervention, Col. Sudue assures the students that the process of paying instructors their salaries has started.

Col. Sudue request that Chairman Eddison take the students off the road and follow him on the campus to make follow up on the teachers' salaries issue. The police chief further indicated that they will go to all the places necessary to show to Chairman Eddison that the teachers have started taking their pay.

According to Col. Sudue, if the teachers are not taking pay, he will go to the Ministry of Education to [make follow up]. **--Edited by Winston W. Parley**



LISGIS validates Household Income and Expenditure Survey

The Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has conducted a 3-day validation on the Thematic Analysis of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES).

The HIES was conducted in 2016 covering the entire country, in an attempt to produce more accurate and

Statistical Abstract produced. In addition, the idea was to also engender more gender specific issues in details in the reports to aid development planning.

The Validation Workshop held in Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County was designed for stakeholders in various thematic areas to be aware of methods and tools used to compute indicators as well as



reliable information for national accounting for GDP estimations, enhance price statistics production and agriculture sector monitoring, etc.

However, given the need to produce more data for monitoring the newly launched Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), the need to conduct an in-depth analysis in thematic areas such as health, demographic dynamics, education, agriculture and other aspects of human development was considered, given the richness of the dataset beyond the

to gain knowledge on any related information that may be published and associated with their respective institutions.

It provided an opportunity for stakeholders to make inputs and also conduct checks and balances in the methods used to obtain facts and figures as well as their interpretations and relevance in relation to the PAPD and the SDGs.

A total of 52 participants of the National Statistical System as well as Consultants, Researchers and their Associates formed part of the exercise.

FIFA bans ex-Liberia football chief over Ebola funds theft



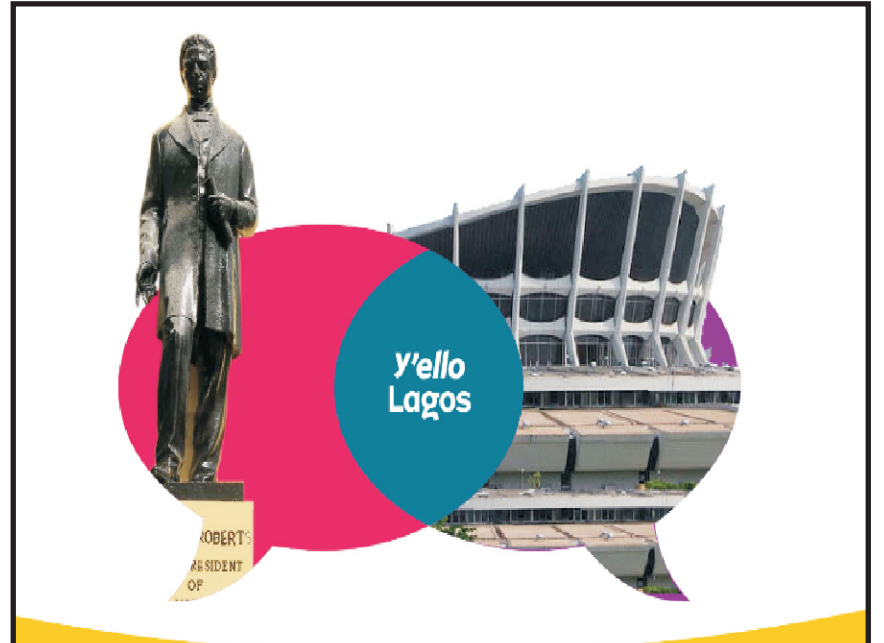
FIFA on Wednesday banned the former head of the Liberian Football Association from football for 10 years over corruption, including misuse of funds intended for an Ebola awareness campaign.

Musa Hassan Bility, an executive committee member at the Confederation of African Football (CAF), was also hit with a 500,000 Swiss franc (\$507,000, 455,000 euros) fine

by judges at FIFA's independent ethics committee.

FIFA's investigation targeting Bility, launched in May 2018, "related to the misappropriation of the funds granted under FIFA's '11 against Ebola' campaign," the world football's governing body said in a statement. The campaign that saw top football stars promoting Ebola awareness measures was formed in November 2014, near the peak of a pandemic that killed

more than 11,000 people across Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. In addition to stealing Ebola prevention funds, FIFA judges found Bility guilty of misusing others resources sent to the LFA and diverting money to businesses controlled by him or his family. Bility had attempted to run as a candidate to replace FIFA's disgraced former president Sepp Blatter in a 2015 campaign ultimately won by Gianni Infantino.



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Messi banned for one game for Copa America red card

Argentina captain Lionel Messi has been banned for one game and fined \$1,500 after being sent off against Chile in the Copa America third-place playoff and levelling accusations of "corruption" at South American soccer chiefs.

Messi was shown the red card after clashing with Gary Medel and afterwards alleged that the tournament had been fixed



in favour of the hosts Brazil, who beat Argentina in a controversial semi-final on their way to claiming the title.

Messi called the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) "corrupt" and did not attend the ceremony to pick up his medal. CONMEBOL said on Tuesday that Messi's comments were "unacceptable" but backed down from imposing a

tougher sanction on the five-times world player of the year. The ban is expected to be served in Argentina's first qualifier for the 2022 World Cup.

In another Argentina-related decision on Tuesday, CONMEBOL removed the head of the Argentine Football Association's Claudio Tapia as their official representative at FIFA.

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