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TRULY INDEPENDENT
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Public Service Announcement

THIS IS TO INFORM THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND ALL OUR CLIENTS & READERS THAT THE BUSINESS AND NEWSPAPER OFFICES OF THE NEW DAWN NEWSPAPER HAVE BEEN RELOCATED ON UN DRIVE OPPOSITE THE NATIONAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION (NIC), BEHIND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY.

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Senatorial election in limbo

-Senate cites Finance Boss

RIA road project backfires



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CMYK



Continental News

Former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak dies

Former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak - ousted by the military in 2011 - has died in Cairo at the age of 91. Mubarak spent three decades in office before a popular uprising swept Egypt.

He was found guilty of complicity in the killing of protesters during the revolution. That conviction was overturned and was freed in March 2017.

His death was confirmed by Egyptian state news on Tuesday. Earlier in the day, the Al-Watan website reported that he died at a military hospital. Mubarak underwent surgery in late January and was photographed with his grandson as he recovered. On Saturday, however, Mubarak's son Alaa said that the former president remained in intensive care. Who was Mubarak?

Born in 1928, Mubarak entered the air force as a teenager and went on to play



Hosni Mubarak was president of Egypt for 30 years

a key role in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

He became president less than a decade later, following the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, and played a key role in the Israel-Palestinian peace process. But despite the billions of dollars in military aid

Egypt received during his time in office, unemployment, poverty and corruption continued to grow.

Discontent boiled over in January 2011, after similar protests in Tunisia led to the overthrow of the president there. Mubarak was forced to

step down 18 days later.

Just over a year after

Mubarak's overthrow, Mohamed Morsi, an Islamist politician, won Egypt's first democratic presidential election.

The new president lasted less than a year in office. Amid mass protests, he was ousted in a military coup led by Gen Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Gen Sisi went on to win two presidential elections. Morsi died in prison in 2019. In 2012, Mubarak was sentenced to life imprisonment over the deaths of some of the 900 protesters who were killed by security forces during the uprising a year earlier. Both he and his two sons were also convicted of corruption. But the more serious charges against Mubarak were later overturned and he was released in 2017. - BBC

Turkey confirms first troops deaths in Libya

Two Turkish soldiers have been killed in Libya, the first casualties the nation has confirmed since it sent troops to the oil-rich state.

"We have two martyrs in Libya," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, without giving further details. Last month, Turkey sent soldiers and Syrian fighters to Libya to bolster the UN-backed

government in Tripoli.

The capital has been under a 10-month-long siege by forces loyal to renegade general Khalifa Haftar. His Libyan National Army (LNA) is backed by Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), while the government in Tripoli is supported by Turkey and its ally Qatar. On Sunday, the LNA said it had killed 16 Turkish soldiers. Turkey signed a

military co-operation deal with the Tripoli-based government last year, opening the way for the deployment of troops. Turkey has also sent fighters from the Syrian National Army rebel group to the North African state. "Our brothers who are with us in Syria see being there with us as an honour," Mr Erdogan told a news conference in the Turkish capital, Ankara, on Tuesday.

He confirmed the two deaths after saying on Saturday that Turkey had sustained "several" casualties, without giving a specific number. Last week, EU foreign ministers agreed to a new naval and air mission to prevent further weapons reaching Libya.

The UN has repeatedly called for an end to the role of foreign countries in Libya, with UN envoy Ghassan Salame saying in January that reckless interference in the conflict risked making it much more dangerous.

Separately on Tuesday, the rival sides reportedly withdrew from planned UN-sponsored peace talks, which were due to take place in Geneva on Wednesday. BBC



Pro-government fighters in Tripoli are supported by Turkey and Qatar

Kenya bans commercial slaughter of donkeys

Kenya's agriculture minister has banned the slaughter of donkeys and ordered the closure of all donkey abattoirs in the country.

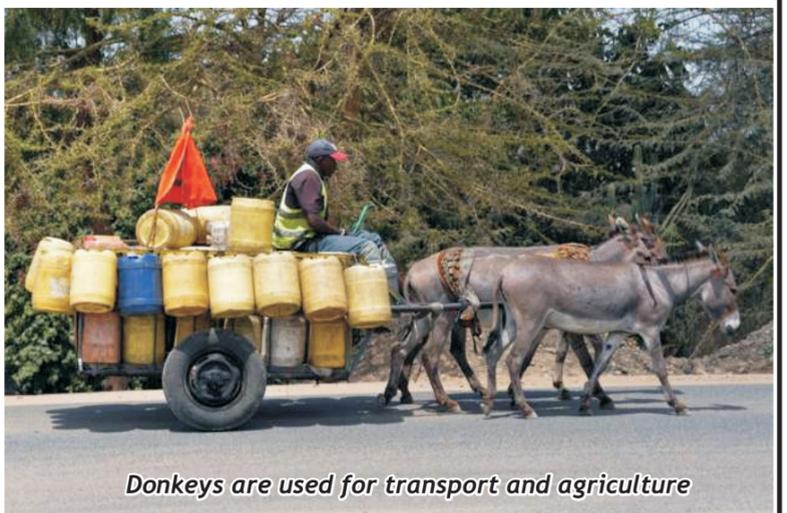
Peter Munya gave the owners of the Kenya's four donkey abattoirs a month to transition to slaughtering other livestock such as cattle and goats. The minister said those who did not comply would have their businesses closed.

taboo to eat donkey meat in some communities.

There are fears in Kenya that the country's donkey population could be wiped out if nothing is done to stop the slaughter rate.

It is estimated that as many as 1,000 donkeys are being slaughtered every day, and that the population could be wiped out in 10 years.

Exports to China have driven the demand as the gelatine produced from boiling donkey



Donkeys are used for transport and agriculture

Mr Munya's announcement came late on Monday, after speaking to a group of farmers who had been protesting outside the agricultural ministry's offices.

Farmers say an increase in demand has led to rampant theft of their donkeys.

In rural Kenya, donkeys are an essential part of life, relied on to fetch firewood and water among other uses, and it is a

skins is the essential ingredient in Chinese "ejiao" products - popular health foods and traditional medicines.

When the first donkey abattoir was set up in 2016, an adult donkey sold for about \$50 (£39), but prices have skyrocketed to about \$200, according to a recent report by the Africa Network for Animal Welfare. BBC

EDITORIAL

The CPP quarrel is complete mess

THE CURRENT RIGMAROLE in the four Collaborating Political Parties over who should be or is best suited for standard bearer is nothing but child's play. No one should take seriously a so-called opposition block that should rather be serious planning and conscientizing its followers and sympathizers for the next elections, now bent on tearing one another apart for leadership.

IT IS NOT the prerogative of the CPP Chair to determine who should become flagbearer in the next elections, but the membership or the people at primary. Why now waste precious time on something that is as clear as water in a glass?

Recent comments from Mr. Benoni Urey of ALP that ex-VP Joseph Nyumah Boakai of UP is best suited to become standardbearer for the CPP and reactions from both ANC and LP clearly indicates that something is amiss within the opposition block that needs to be addressed to allow that body puts its acts together as a true government in waiting that the Liberian people can hope on.

THE MAIN CHARACTERS in the CPP - Mr. Benoni Urey, Mr. Alexander Cummings, Ambassador Joseph N. Boakai and Senator Nyonblee Karnga Lawrence should begin to act now in ways that would win and maintain the trust of the people they want to lead.

HOWEVER, UTTERANCES COMING from member parties of the Collaboration of late, do not portray unity. Instead, we see a creeping sign that could turn the entire opposition into a mess.

AND THIS HAS been a fundamental problem in Liberian politics: lack of a cohesive opposition force that can pull strength and give the ruling party a run at the ballot box for their money. Parties that make up the CPP individually contested against the CDC in the 2017 presidential election and failed.

THEY SHOULD KNOW by now the best strategic option in the impending 2023 poll is to galvanize forces and present a united front against the Weah government, if they really want to provide alternative leadership.

WHETHER IT IS Amb. Boakai, or Mr. Cummings; Mr. Urey or a candidate from the LP, no single party or candidate can contest in an election and win definitively the first round, as the past three elections have shown.

IT IS BASED on these realities that we underscore the need that the CPP should remain a unity opposition block with a strong voice, not just in speeches but on the political battle ground to win state power.

THIS CANNOT BE achieved if there are infighting and jostling for the standard bearer position, which should actually be determined at primary than thru words of war in the media.

COMMENTARY

By Willem H. Buiter

The New Normal Should Be Cashless

The central bankers and economic policymakers who doubt that deep negative interest rates would prove effective in the next recession have not given that policy a fair chance. The fact is that in an environment of persistently low inflation and negative nominal interest rates, we need to rethink the effective lower bound entirely.

NEW YORK - In December 2019, the Swedish central bank departed from a negative-interest-rate policy that it had maintained for almost five years. The Riksbank's repo rate (the rate at which it lends to commercial banks), which reached a low of -0.5% in February 2016, had risen to 0% by January. The latest rate hike comes despite signs that the Swedish economy is slowing, with inflation running below target.

In the event of a cyclical downturn, says Riksbank Governor Stefan Ingves, stimulus will need to come from government spending and asset purchases by the central bank, given the limited effectiveness of negative interest rates. "There actually is a lower bound for the policy rate," Ingves argues, making it "hard to imagine that you would go negative to, say, minus 5 percent."

I beg to differ. It may well be that, in a low-interest-rate environment, countercyclical fiscal policy can play a more prominent role in managing the business cycle without creating any debt-sustainability issues. Even so, negative interest rates have not been given a fair chance.

Around the world, central banks and economic policymakers have been unwilling to remove (or at least lower substantially) the effective lower bound (ELB) on nominal interest rates created by the existence of cash or currency. As a financial instrument that pays a zero nominal interest rate, cash sets a floor for other financial instruments that do, in principle, have freely variable nominal interest rates. Owing to the "carry costs of currency" (the cost of storage, insurance, and so on), the ELB is probably around -0.75 basis points - a level achieved by the policy rates in Denmark and Switzerland.

To be sure, a recent influential paper by Markus K. Brunnermeier and Yann Koby of Princeton University contends that there may be an "interest rate ... at which accommodative monetary policy reverses and becomes contractionary for [bank] lending." According to the authors, this reversal rate is determined by four factors: "banks' fixed-income holdings, ... the strictness of capital constraints, ... the degree of pass-through to deposit rates, and ... the initial capitalization of banks."

I have no quarrel with the authors' argument, but I would simply point out that the degree of pass-through to deposit rates is limited by the existence of an ELB on nominal interest rates. So, the question is whether the degree of pass-through to deposit rates (and other rates paid to bank creditors) would continue to be lower at negative interest rates than at positive interest rates if the ELB were removed by abolishing currency, or lowered significantly by removing all large-denomination currency notes.

Yes, firms and households that have grown up in an economic environment with positive nominal interest rates might have trouble calculating the real (inflation-adjusted) rate of

interest associated with a negative nominal interest rate. But this difficulty would be only temporary. Neutral real rates are already at zero or in negative territory in most advanced economies, and are likely to remain there for years if not decades to come. As these economies continue to register below-target inflation, the implication is that negative nominal interest rates will become the new normal, and that the "inflation illusion" or "nominal interest rate illusion" will become a thing of the past. There is no reason to assume that such cognitive distortions will last forever.

There are three ways to eliminate the ELB. The first is to introduce a variable exchange rate between currency and deposits with the central bank (implying the same for deposits with commercial banks and other private instruments). Charging a -5% interest rate on deposits while simultaneously appreciating the value of deposits vis-à-vis currency holdings at a 5% rate would eliminate any arbitrage opportunities.

The second way to get rid of the ELB is to tax currency. But I would prefer the third option: abolish the currency and replace it with a central-bank digital currency, while allowing for a transition period during which time small-denomination notes could be kept in circulation to accommodate the digitally and financially excluded.

In Sweden's case, abolishing cash would be a minor event. The value of Swedish banknotes in circulation at the end of 2019 was just SEK60.38 billion (\$6.2 billion, or 1.26% of GDP). Of that amount, SEK44.85 billion comprised the two largest denominations - SEK500 and SEK1,000 notes (akin to American \$50 and \$100 bills, respectively) - which suggests that they were unlikely to be used in small retail transactions by technological laggards.

By comparison, in the United States, cash in circulation at the end of 2018 stood at \$1.67 trillion (around 8% of GDP), of which 80% was in \$100 bills. In the eurozone, the figure for the same year was €1.23 trillion (\$1.33 trillion, or 9% of GDP), of which 48% was in denominations equal to or higher than €100. Clearly, going digital would be more challenging for the US and much of the eurozone than for Sweden; but even in the former two, it remains eminently feasible.

Finally, there is a further benefit to abolishing currency: doing so eliminates the preferred means of payment and store of value among tax evaders, money launderers, drug cartels, human traffickers, and other criminals. I would, of course, regret depriving the libertarian community of a financial bearer instrument whose anonymity offers protection from an overbearing and possibly predatory state; but those who want anonymity could always choose Bitcoin. The rest of us could prepare to welcome -5% policy rates during the next deep recession.

The New Dawn
TRULY INDEPENDENT

O-PED

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

Wall Street Can't Burn Bernie

America's plutocrats and their media allies are certain that US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders is unelectable, or that, if somehow elected, he would bring about the collapse of the republic. This disdain is both telling and absurd.

NEW YORK - The narcissism and Panglossian cluelessness of the Wall Street elite is a marvel to behold. Sitting on their perches of power, and enjoying tax breaks, easy money, and soaring stock markets, they are certain that all is best in this best of all possible worlds. Critics must be fools or devils.

When I have mentioned my support for US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders in their company, it has been to audible gasps, as if I had invoked Lucifer's name. They are certain that Sanders is unelectable, or that, if somehow elected, he would bring about the collapse of the republic. To varying degrees, the same sentiments can be found even in "liberal" media outlets like The New York Times and The Washington Post.

This disdain is both telling and absurd. In Europe, Sanders would be a mainstream social democrat. He wants to restore some basic decency to American life: universal publicly financed health care; above-poverty wages for full-time workers, along with basic benefits such as family leave for infants and paid leave for illness; college education that does not drive young adults into lifelong debt; elections that billionaires cannot buy; and public policy determined by public opinion, not corporate lobbying (which reached \$3.47 billion in the United States in 2019).

The US public supports all these positions by large majorities. Americans want government to ensure health care for all. They want higher taxes on the rich. They want a transition to renewable energy. And they want limits on big money in politics. These are all core Sanders positions, and all are commonplace in Europe. Nonetheless, with each Sanders primary victory, the befuddled Wall Street elite and their favorite pundits puzzle over how an "extremist" like Sanders wins the vote.

An insight into Wall Street's cluelessness is found in a recent Financial Times interview with Lloyd Blankfein, the former CEO of Goldman Sachs. Blankfein, a billionaire who earned tens of millions of dollars each year, argued that he's merely "well-to-do," not rich. More bizarrely, he meant it. You see, Blankfein is a low-single-digit billionaire in an era when more than 50 Americans have a net worth of \$10 billion or more. How rich one feels depends on one's peer group.

The result, however, is the elite's (and the elite media's) shocking disregard for the lives of most Americans. They either don't know or don't care that tens of millions of Americans lack basic health-care coverage and that medical expenses bankrupt around 500,000 each year, or that one in five US households has zero or negative net worth and that nearly 40% struggle to meet basic needs.

And the elite hardly take notice of the 44 million Americans burdened by student debt totaling \$1.6 trillion, a phenomenon essentially unknown in other developed countries. And while stock markets have soared, enriching the elites, suicide rates and other "deaths of despair" (such as opioid overdoses) have also soared, as the working class has fallen further into financial and psychological insecurity.

One reason the elites don't notice these basic facts is that they haven't been held to account for a long time. US politicians of both parties have been doing their bidding at least since President Ronald Reagan took office in 1981 and ushered in four decades of tax cuts, union busting, and other perks for the super-rich. The coziness of Wall Street and Washington is well captured in a 2008 photo making the rounds again: Donald Trump, Michael Bloomberg, and Bill Clinton are golfing together. It's one big happy family.

Clinton's chumminess with Wall Street billionaires is telling. This was the norm for Republicans going back to the start of the twentieth century, but Wall Street's close links with the Democrats are more recent. As a presidential candidate in 1992, Clinton maneuvered to link the Democratic Party to Goldman Sachs through its then-Co-Chair, Robert Rubin, who later became Clinton's Secretary of the Treasury.

With Wall Street backing, Clinton won the presidency. From then on, both parties have been beholden to Wall Street for campaign financing. Barack Obama followed the Clinton playbook in the 2008 election. Once in office, Obama hired Rubin's acolytes to staff his economic team.

Wall Street has certainly gotten its money's worth for its campaign outlays. Clinton deregulated financial markets, enabling the rise of behemoths like Citigroup (where Rubin became a director after leaving the White House). Clinton also ended welfare payments for poor single mothers, with damaging effects on young children, and stepped up mass incarceration of young African-American men. Obama, for his part, largely gave a free pass to the bankers who caused the 2008 crash. They received bailout money and invitations to White House dinners, rather than the jail time that many deserved.

With the mega-hubris of a mega-billionaire, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg thinks he can buy the Democratic nomination by spending \$1 billion of his \$62 billion fortune on campaign ads, and then defeat fellow billionaire Donald Trump in November. This, too, is most likely a case of cluelessness. Bloomberg's prospects deflated as soon as he appeared on the debate stage with Sanders and the other Democratic candidates, who reminded viewers of Bloomberg's Republican past, allegations of a hostile work environment for women in Bloomberg's business, and of his support for harsh police tactics against young African-American and Latino men.

No one should underestimate the deluge of hysteria that Trump and Wall Street will try to whip up against Sanders. Trump accuses Sanders of trying to turn the US into Venezuela, when Canada or Denmark are the obvious comparisons. In the Nevada debate, Bloomberg ludicrously called Sanders's support for worker representation on corporate boards, as in Germany's co-determination policy, "communist."

But American voters are hearing something different: health care, education, decent wages, paid sick leave, renewable energy, and an end to tax breaks and impunity for the super-rich. It all sounds eminently sensible, indeed mainstream, when one cuts through the rhetoric of Wall Street, which is why Sanders has been winning - and can win again in November.

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OPINION

By Bernard Haykel

What's at Stake in Libya?

The battle for Libya is a complicated affair involving not just the warring parties on the ground, but also a host of regional and global powers vying for regional influence and control of energy resources. And, unless it ends soon, it could sow instability in neighboring countries and trigger more waves of refugees fleeing to Europe.

PRINCETON - The ongoing war in Libya is a microcosm of the tragedy that has gripped many Middle Eastern countries. If it is not resolved soon, the fighting in Libya could sow instability in neighboring countries like Tunisia and Egypt, and trigger more waves of refugees fleeing to Europe.

At root, the Libyan crisis is a civil war among various groups that are divided by tribal and regional loyalties, as well as by ideological beliefs. All are vying to control the country's oil revenues. Yet, at the moment, there are principally two sides to the conflict: the Islamist-dominated, internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), which still controls the capital, Tripoli; and the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army (LNA), which are under the command of the anti-Islamist field marshal Khalifa Haftar. While most of the country is now under the authoritarian nationalist Haftar's control, Tripoli has yet to fall.

Behind each of these warring camps are outside powers pursuing their own interests. While Turkey and Qatar have backed the GNA, Egypt, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates have been lending support to Haftar. International media coverage of the war has attributed this outside interference to competition - mainly between Turkey and Egypt - for oil and gas resources.

The Egyptians have a gas project that could potentially link up with facilities in Israel, Cyprus, and Greece to supply Europe. But that objective directly conflicts with Turkey's goal of creating an exclusive maritime zone with Libya, and of securing sole control over Libya's energy resources.

But the contest over energy is not the whole story. To understand the Libya conflict fully, one also must consider the complex links between geopolitics and ideology. A victory for the Islamists in Tripoli would allow Turkey and Qatar not only to extend their influence into a major oil-producing state on the Mediterranean; it also would offer them strategic depth, strengthening their influence over other countries such as Tunisia and Egypt (a longtime rival).

Hence, for most of the war, Qatar has sponsored the Islamists, mainly by providing financial support to a single person: the religious activist and scholar Ali Muhammad al-Salabi. With the help of Qatar's resources, al-Salabi has emerged as the GNA's de facto leader. But late last year, the GNA appeared to be on the verge of defeat, leading to Turkey's intervention on its behalf. Turkey has since committed weapons, drones, soldiers, and even Syrian fighters to the battle for Tripoli.

On the other side of the divide, Egypt and the UAE do not want to see a petrostate capable of producing 2.5 million barrels per day fall into the hands of Islamists who are beholden to their regional rivals. A victory for the GNA would turn Libya into an Islamist stronghold and a beachhead for undermining Egypt and the UAE's authoritarian vision for the region. Haftar - a uniformed and heavily ornamented military dictator straight out of central casting - would establish an order much more to their liking. If he is victorious, Libya's oil resources could then be leveraged in the broader fight against the Islamist bogeyman across the region.

Russia's motive for siding with Haftar is more intriguing, but can be summed up in one word: revanchism. Although Russian President Vladimir Putin has sent mercenaries (mainly those associated with the paramilitary Wagner Group) to join the fight, Haftar himself is not the Kremlin's top candidate to rule Libya. Putin wants to install Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, the son of the late Libyan dictator, Muammar el-Qaddafi, who ruled the country from 1969 to 2011.

With the support of former regime loyalists, Qaddafi has joined forces with Haftar. But the Russians do not trust Haftar, because they regard him as a US intelligence asset, owing to his previous life as an American citizen who lived in Langley, Virginia (incidentally, the site of CIA headquarters) for two decades. By making Qaddafi Libya's next ruler, the Kremlin hopes to prove a point to the Americans and Europeans who helped to topple his father. Following his success in keeping Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in power despite overwhelming odds, Putin wants to show that it is he who will dictate Libya's future and call the shots in the region. If the clock really is set back to Moscow time, it will be interesting to see what happens to Haftar.

The complex situation in Libya is verging on the surreal. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the very real suffering of the Libyan people, who are caught between the competing factions. For its part, the United States has been negligent in its approach to the crisis, which it has largely ignored in the hope that other regional powers will restore order. In fact, those powers are the ones sowing chaos, and only the US has the diplomatic leverage to end the conflict.

Should Libya's civil war continue, its effects will undoubtedly spill over to other parts of the region. More refugees will flee to Europe, especially if the conflict turns out to be a harbinger of civil wars to come. Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, or Lebanon could become the next theater for regional and international powers to fight proxy wars while fantasizing about becoming the Arab world's next hegemon. As the rubble that is now Syria makes clear, to the victor will go spoils that no longer justify the effort.

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SOLICITATION NUMBER: VA-669-20-00004

ISSUANCE DATE: 02/19/2020
 CLOSING DATE/TIME: 03/09/2020 (17:30 local time)

SUBJECT: Solicitation for the AID Financial Management/Budget Analyst, Cooperating Country National Personal Service Contractor (CCNPSC)

Dear Prospective Offerors:

The United States Government, represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is seeking offers from qualified persons to provide personal services under contract as described in this solicitation.

Offers must be in accordance with Attachment 1, Sections I through III of this solicitation. Incomplete or unsigned offers will not be considered. Offerors should retain copies of all offer materials for their records.

This solicitation in no way obligates USAID to award a PSC contract, nor does it commit USAID to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of the offers.

Any questions must be directed in writing to the Point of Contact specified in the attached information.

Sincerely,

/s/

Robert W. Appiah
 Supervisory Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT 1**I. GENERAL INFORMATION****SOLICITATION NO: VA-669-20-00004**

1. **ISSUANCE DATE:** 02/19/2020
2. **CLOSING DATE/TIME FOR RECEIPT OF OFFERS:** 03/09/2020 at 17:30 Monrovia time
3. **POSITION TITLE:** Financial Management/Budget Analyst
4. **MARKET VALUE:** 35,104.00 to USD 56,160.00 equivalent to CCN-10 in accordance with AIDAR Appendix J and the Local Compensation Plan of the US Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia. Final compensation will be negotiated within the listed market value.
5. **PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** Initial two years with possibility of extension depending on need, performance, and availability of funding. This is considered a permanent position.

Employment under any contract issued under this solicitation is of a continuing nature. Its duration is expected to be part of series of sequential contract; all contract clauses, provisions, and regulatory requirements concerning availability of funds and the specific duration of the contract shall apply.
6. **PLACE OF PERFORMANCE:** Monrovia, Liberia with possible travel as stated in the statement of duties.
7. **SECURITY LEVEL REQUIRED:** Facility and computer access
8. **STATEMENT OF DUTIES**

A. BASIC FUNCTION OF THE POSITION

This Health Program Management Specialist (HPMS) will provide operational support to ensure that the Health Team is responsive to all Agency programming/budgeting requirements by maintaining oversight of programming cycles, initiating data gathering, analysis and preparing Health Office fiscal/financial reports in a timely manner. The Health Program Management Specialist, (HPMS) will be in charge of coordinating all health program procurements working closely with the Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA) office. The HPMS will additionally provide advisory support by staying abreast of Agency and Office of Financial Management (OFM) programming/budgeting protocols, and alerting/assisting the Health Team (including AORs/CORs) in the operational budget planning process, GLAAS actions, and preparation of all budgetary reporting. In an advisory capacity, the HPMS will additionally take the lead in periodically monitoring Health Office and GOL compliance with the fiscal terms and conditions of Implementation Letters (ILs), and assist the Health Team in mitigating any corrective actions that should be addressed, particularly related to public financial management. The HPMS will be specifically responsible for periodic monitoring of implementation instruments and performance to ensure that health portfolio activities adhere to Agency environmental compliance requirements.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, PROCUREMENT and BUDGETING (85%)**

- Liaises with the Office of Financial Management and Democracy, Rights and Governance Office on topics related to public financial management within GOL systems, particularly related to USAID's government-to-government activities, for the purposes of ensuring accountability for USAID funding as well as building capacity within the Liberian system.
- As the Health Team's budget specialist, s/he in close coordination with the Program Office helps assure effective budget management operations in the Health team. S/he coordinates and maintains health annual budgets, prepares and maintains accurate and up-to-date health procurement/financial plans, and prepares various health budget reports. S/he is responsible for the tracking of health program budget, procurement actions (log-book), financial plan (current obligations, reservations, sub-obligations, pipeline accruals, and future funding/program actions). S/he serves as focal point for all procurement requests/GLAAS for the technical office. S/he works with Health Team members to address any adverse pipeline issues.
- Assists program management staff in setting up meetings with host government counterparts, and in negotiating the clearance of project documents through host government channels.
- Works closely with AORs, CORs, and other requestors to ensure that GLAAS actions are correctly executed.
- In conjunction with Phoenix, maintains financial spreadsheets on Health Office activities for each grant/contract, including obligations, earmarks, commitments, disbursements, pipelines, etc., and produces reports on the financial status of activities as required by the Health Team Leader and/or Mission management. Provides inputs for the Congressional Presentation and Annual Budget submissions.
- Assists AORs/CORs in monitoring financial performance of contractors/grantees and maintains a financial report tracking system. Reviews and clear invoices/vouchers to assure compliance with the terms of contract/grants agreements. Recommends administrative approvals or brings to the notice of the AOR/CORs any discrepancy which does not appear appropriate. Prepares reports on funding availability and recommends funding utilization by budget code.
- Coordinates budget, reporting and other needed implementation documentation tasks with the Program Office and provides financial quality control for the Health Team.
- Takes the initiative to coordinate with the OAA, AOR/CORs to process all procurement functions.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE (15%)

- Advises the Health Office on environmental compliance issues and the impact of programmatic decisions as they pertain to USAID environmental regulatory compliance.
- Ensures that all activities in the health portfolio, particularly G2G activities, comply with USAID compliance rules.
- Provides support to USAID partners on environmental mitigation and monitoring, implementation of the Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan, and environmental monitoring and reporting.
- Represents the Health Office on the Environmental Compliance Team and builds capacity in the Mission for environmental compliance. Improves environmental compliance monitoring throughout the Mission, and ensures best environmental practices are being followed.
- Works closely with Health Office AORs/CORs to ensure that all health portfolio activities have required and proper environmental compliance documents in place.

9. POSITION ELEMENTS:

- a. **Supervision Received:** This position reports directly to the Health Office Director.
- b. **Supervision Exercised:** None.
- c. **Available Guidelines:** The incumbent is provided with programmatic guidance on overall objectives, priorities, and deadlines; relevant operational guidance from AFR/SD and USAID/Liberia; and USAID regulations and policies. The incumbent must interpret the guidance for application to specific situations
- d. **Exercise of Judgment:** The use of good judgment as well as the financial and environmental compliance advice offered by the incumbent has a significant impact on successful implementation of project activities and achievement of program results. The incumbent must be able to exercise independent judgment in prioritizing assigned tasks and implementation issues.
- e. **Authority to Make Commitments:** The employee will have no independent authority to make resource commitments on behalf of the US Government, USAID, or the Mission's Health Office.
- f. **Nature, Level, and Purpose of Contacts:** Contacts will primarily be within the USG, and predominately within the USAID Health Office, but will include Mission leadership as it relates to financial management and oversight.
- g. **Time Expected to Reach Full Performance Level:** One year.

10. AREA OF CONSIDERATION: Open to All Interested CCNs (Cooperating Country Nationals).

AIDAR, Appendix J. 1 (b) Definitions:

- (6) "Cooperating country" means the country in which the employing USAID Mission is located.
- (7) "Cooperating country national" ("CCN") means an individual who is a cooperating country citizen, or a non-cooperating country citizen lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the cooperating country.

11. PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The work requested does not involve undue physical demands.

12. POINT OF CONTACT:

All application packages are to be submitted:

Financial Management/Budget Analyst

USAID/Liberia, C/O American Embassy Service Entrance,
 Gibson Street, Mamba Point, Monrovia
 Or by email to: Agatha W. Mangou, Human Resources Assistant, email: amangou@usaid.gov and Sylvester Browne, Human Resources Specialist, email: sbrowne@usaid.gov

II. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR THIS POSITION

- a. **Education:** A university degree in finance & budgeting, sociology/social sciences, economics, business, accounting or another management-related field.
- b. **Prior Work Experience:** A minimum of five years of progressively responsible positions in public financial management, accounting and or budget management required.
- c. **Post Entry Training:** The incumbent will receive 1-3 weeks of training in USAID procedures and systems as required during the first year in the position. This will include GLAAS training, financial management training and training in internal controls.
- d. **Language Proficiency** (*List both English and host country language(s) proficiency requirements by level (I, II, III) and specialization (sp/read):* Level IV, fluent written and oral proficiency in English is required.
- e. **Job Knowledge:** A thorough knowledge and understanding of professional accounting principles, theories, practices and terminology as well as the principles and accepted practices of governmental and business financial accounting budgeting and reporting are required. S/he must have a good understanding and knowledge of environmental compliance and its impact on project implementation. Must be a self-starter with little or no supervision required in the areas specified above.
- f. **Skills and Abilities:** S/he must possess practical and analytical skills necessary to translate data or information into concrete actions for sustained development impact and results, excellent command of computer skills including knowledge on major software.

III. EVALUATION AND SELECTION FACTORS**A. Education—10 points**

USAID will assess educational qualifications that increase the candidate's competitiveness for the position.

B. Relevant Work Experience – 20 Points

USAID will assess relevant work experience that increases the candidate's competitiveness for the position.

C. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – 50 Points

Must possess strong analytical, communication and interpersonal skills. H/she must have strong command of the English language as well as strong computer, writing and speaking skills, typing skills. Incumbent must possess highly developed organizational and task prioritization/tracking skills.

D. Communication and Computer Skills – 20 Points

Applicant skills in oral and written communication in the English language, including the ability to obtain, evaluate, and interpret reports, and to effectively communicate organizational mission and policies to staff and partners will be evaluated. USAID will evaluate the applicant's computer skills, including ease and skill in using MS-Office, and in using the internet to solve problems.

Total possible points = 100**ADDITIONAL SELECTION CRITERIA**

Management will consider potential nepotism/conflict of interest, and visa status when determining successful candidacy.

SELECTION PROCESS

After initial screening of applications, only short-listed applicants will be contacted and invited for an interview and a written exercise. Applicants selected for interview will also be evaluated on their reference checks.

HOW TO APPLY

- Applications shall be submitted no later than the closing date specified, and should include the following:
1. A clearly typed application cover letter that briefly summarizes why you believe you are qualified for this position.
 2. Resume or CV.
 3. The names and contact details of three references that can attest to your financial management experience.
 4. Documentation (e.g. copies of certificates or degrees) that address the minimum requirements of the position.
 5. One to two-page writing sample broadly related to financial management in Liberia.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: The U.S. Mission provides equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment in employment to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, marital status, or sexual orientation.



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and her donor partners procure and supply more than 60% of program drugs for Liberia and support the warehousing and distribution of the drugs and other medical commodities to public health facilities all over Liberia, in support of the Ministry of Health. To optimize the commodity supply chain and enhance the Government of Liberia's ability to efficiently store and distribute health commodities to thirty six (36) hospitals, thirteen county(13) depots and nearly two hundred (200) health facilities in Montserrado and Margibi Counties around the country where they are most needed, this Request for Information (RFI) is published to enable USAID access the market for companies capable and interested in providing sundry logistics services defined in the "Description of Services," enclosed.

DISCLAIMER

This is a request For Information Only. It is not a Request for Proposal, Request for Quotation, an Invitation for Bids, a Solicitation or an indication that USAID/Liberia will contract for the services. The RFI is an attempt to reach out to the market to determine the scope of industry capabilities and interest and will be treated as information only. In accordance with FAR 15.201 (e), responses to this notice are not offers and cannot be accepted by the Government of the United States to form a binding contract. Responses are strictly voluntary, and USAID will not pay respondents for information provided. Responses will not be returned, and respondents will not be notified of the result of the review. If request for proposal (RFP) is issued, it will be sent to a selective set of companies at a later date, and all interested parties must respond to that solicitation separately from any response to this notice. The RFI does not restrict the Government's acquisition approach on a future solicitation.

INSTRUCTIONS

To respond to this RFI, interested sources must provide not more than ten (10) pages in Microsoft Word or PDF format by Friday, March 6, 2020, 12:00 PM, Liberian time. USAID will host a market event at a date, time, and place to be provided to qualified firms who respond to this RFI. The purpose of this market day event is to provide more details about the RFI and answer questions from interested parties. Interested parties wishing to attend the market day event should send their request and business registration documents to Edward S. Lamin at elamin@usaid.gov with copy to Thomatta Cooper at tcooper@usaid.gov no later than Tuesday, February 25, 2020 at the precise hour of 5:00 PM. **Please note that only parties responded to by USAID will be allowed to attend the market day event.** Interested parties may also send questions prior to the market event by email. Please submit questions for the market Event and response to the RFI to Edward Lamin at elamin@usaid.gov and Thomatta Cooper at tcooper@usaid.gov. Interested sources must provide a capability statement expressing interest and documenting ability to meet the requirements in the Description of Services enclosed. They must also provide Full Name, Address, Contact Person and their Title.

Sincerely


Judy J. Webb
Supervisory Contracting Officer

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

The purpose of the Description of Services is to provide concise details of each service area for which USAID wishes to identify relevant private sector actors. It is also intended to inform parties who may be interested in the RFI as to what quality of capability the RFI seeks to identify in the Supply Chain Industry.

- 1. Warehouse Co-Management** – The RFI seeks to identify firms capable of providing modern warehouse mentoring service to existing warehouse management team while co-managing the Central Medicine Store (CMS) for at least two years, after which they should have trained and enabled the current management team to independently and efficiently manage the Central Medicine Store (CMS). The CMS, located in Caldwell, Montserrado County is a 55M X 68M, 12M high government owned fully equipped multi-million-dollar modern health commodity warehouse manned by a staff of fifty (50). It has at least eight (8) management and operations offices, three (3) cold rooms and storage racks totaling two thousand five hundred and fifty-three (2553) units. It is fitted with two forklifts (2019 Cat 14 1.4tons and 2018 Jungeinrich 1.2 tons). Commodities are managed through an electronic data management system, mSupply.
- 2. Equipment Maintenance Services** – The RFI seeks to identify firms capable of providing regular maintenance for a fleets of nine (9) trucks, five (5) Toyota Land Cruiser, two Toyota Hilux, one (1) 36-seated bus and two (2) 250KVA generators under a one year, renewable, service contract. Interested firms must show evidence of similar services performed and client reference.
- 3. Health Commodity Distribution/haulage** – The RFI seeks to identify logistics firms capable of providing transportation services with at least 5% cold chain to thirty-six (36) public and faith base hospitals around the country, thirteen (13) county depots and more than two hundred health facilities in Montserrado and Margibi counties, four times a year. Firms must proffer innovative approaches for getting health commodities to hard-to-reach areas in the South Eastern and Northern flanks of the country where difficult geography and bad terrains constrain movement of commodities, especially during the rainy season. The RFI seeks firms that have their own fleet, can show evidence of previous or on-going large distribution activities with references; and willing to enter a two year, renewable, commitment.

Lawmakers place stay order on Sup. Compound Renovation

Two members of the Bong County Legislative Caucus have condemned recent revelation made by Bong County Project Management Committee chair, Steve Mulbah, proposing additional \$US 99,000.00 allocation for the renovation and fencing of the much publicized Superintendent's Compound.

Delegates at the November 12, 2018 County Council sitting allotted fifty thousand United States Dollars for the renovation of the facility.

But appearing as guest on a local radio talk show recently, Mulbah said the actual amount needed to complete

outside the resolution will be a gross violation of the budget law, and will bear the full weight.

Meanwhile several citizens of Bong County have condemned the ongoing implementation of projects in the county by the PMC outside the November 12, 2018 County Council Sitting.

It can be recalled that during the administration of Former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, approximately seventy thousand (\$70,000) United States Dollars was allotted for the renovation of the same building.

Also another money was made available for the same renovation work



and fence the project is US\$149,000.

In response to Mulbah's assertion, Liberia's Deputy House Speaker Prince Moya and Electoral district three Representative Marvin Cole expressed shock over the unprecedented increment in the cost of the Project, thereby calling for the immediate halt of the project.

The pair narrated that such a huge overnight increment for the renovation of the Superintendent's compound, doesn't meet the approval of the Caucus.

They furthered that any attempt by the PMC to raise additional amount

after former Superintendent Renny B. Jackson left the County's Superintendent Position. The unspecified amount was allotted for renovation of the building following the appointment of former Superintendent Selena P. Mappy.

Many believe that the PMC Chair Steve Mulbah and Superintendent Esther Yamah Walker are allegedly planning to hoodwink the County and get money for themselves under the pretense of renovating the superintendent's compound.

-By: Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong County

DEN-L distributes medical equipment

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

The Development Education Network-Liberia (DEN-L) has embarked on the distribution of medical equipment to health facilities in Gbarnga, Bong County amid the outbreak of Lassa fever in the country.

During one of the presentations at the Soul Winning Baptist Clinic in Gbarnga, former DEN-L's Executive Director, Dorothy Tooman said the move is intended to protect healthcare workers from contracting the disease.

Tooman further explained that the donation was triggered by mounting calls from authorities in Bong for the institution's intervention, amid the deadly disease outbreak.

Tooman calls on beneficiary clinics to adequately use the materials,

noting that doing so will provide a safe working environment for them.

Tooman also admonished Bongese to wash their hands regularly and keep their environments clean in order to prevent the disease.

Materials donated include nose masks, gloves and protective gears, among others.

For her part, the Acting Officer - in - Charge at the Soul Winning Baptist Clinic, Musu Jacobs who took delivery of the materials, applauds DEN-L for the gesture, noting that it came at a time the clinic is in need.

Jacobs then outlines drug shortage and medical equipment as some major challenges facing the facility, with a call for a prompt intervention. **--Edited by Winston W. Parley**

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Judge warns against abuse of gavel

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

The assigned judge at the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court in Gbarnga, Bong County has called on fellow judges across the country not to abuse the use of their gavels. Delivering his charge

not for personal gains.

He said the calling of a judge is very honorable, but solitary place; and one taking on such a task should consider all of the consequences.

He wants judges to be sober and use the gavel helpfully and judicially, stating that everyone will be judged by his or her

“This is a perfect profession that one needs to practice with due-diligence, not to misuse the powers of the gavel and seek personal gains,” he said.

“One thing every Judge needs to know is that whatever judgment you render to anyone, it shall be rendered back to you. That’s why you see some of the Judges can have sicknesses that they can seek medication for, but can’t be cured because if you lie on someone because of money and change the right for the wrong, no matter how long it takes, you can get your rewards” he adds.

Responding to the judge’s charge, Bong County Special Prosecutor for Sexual Gender - Based cases, Cllr. Daniel T-Kay Dweh stresses the need for the establishment of separate court to adjudicate civil cases, noting that it would promote speedy trial and decongest the prison facilities.

She furthers that the Ninth Judicial Circuit court currently has about 63 criminal cases with several civil cases, arguing that all cannot be adjudged by the circuit court alone in one court’s term.--*Edited by Winston W. Parley*



during the formal opening of the February AD 2020 term of court, Judge KoiboiNuta said the gavel is intended to dispense fair justice to everyone, irrespective of age and status in the society, but

action or judgment.

Judge Nutais therefore cautions those who cannot withstand the consequences in the judge’s calling to resign and enjoy the glory of men, instead of polluting the system.

Youth group seeks clarity from police and CARI

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

A group under the banner “Concerned Youths of Suakoko District” is calling on the Liberian National Police Bong Detachment, to update the public on recent investigation launched in the alleged looting of properties belonging to the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI).

Recently, some employees of the research entity including David Tokpah and Sam Lewis, among others, were placed behind bars in connection to the alleged sale of a generator and tie wires, among other items belonging to CARI.

But, in a press statement Monday, 24 February, the concerned Youths said they have observed with sadness, those believed to be in connection to the alleged criminal act still being in the employ of the entity, thereby calling for a speedy trial in the matter.

The call by the Concerned Youths of Suakoko District comes amid the alleged seizure of the two months salaries and benefits of Mr. Arthur Wennah, Jr., a Research Scientist at the Institute, who unearthed the matter.

The youth group believes that ceasing whistleblower’s

salary and benefits undermines the integrity of the institution, thus threatening an indefinite strike against the administration of Madam Paulette Findley, if Wennah’s salaries and benefits are not paid immediately.

The group wants the police



Court permits video

Cont’d from back page

Edward Benyan Kesselly Barracks (EBK) had gone on a protest which was later quiet down by retired AFL Chief of Staff, now Defense Minister Daniel D. Ziankahn.

Following the protest by the AFL personnel’s dependents, Gen. Johnson narrates that the AFL decided to form a committee to do a report that had to go to the Chief of Staff.

Former Defense Minister Brownie Samukai, co-defendants Joseph P. Johnson and J. Nyumah Dorbor and others are standing trial for allegedly embezzling funds generated in a compulsory saving scheme established in July 2009 for AFL personnel during Mrs. Sirleaf’s rule.

The current regime indicted the officials on 9 October 2019, accusing them of committing economic sabotage, theft of property, and misuse of public money, among others.

Through the compulsory savings funds, prosecutors here allege that former Minister Samukai, former Deputy Defense Minister Joseph Johnson and former Defense Ministry Comptroller Nyumah Dorbor deducted the salaries of AFL officers from all ranks to serve as supplementary pension benefits for assistance to wounded soldiers and deceased soldiers’ families.

Over US\$1.2m of the US\$1.9m deposited was allegedly misapplied by Mr. Samukai, the prosecution alleges, and claims further that the defendants made themselves the only signatories to the account,

leaving out the then AFL Chief of Staff and other ranking officers.

In his testimony, Gen. Johnson recalls that around October 2017, his boss Minister Ziakahn [who was at the time, Army Chief of Staff], received a letter addressed to the Manager of ECOBANK under the signature of former Deputy Minister Johnson about the change of the name of the AFL pension account to the AFL Morale and Welfare Account.

He says Minister Ziankahn decided that he (Gen. Johnson) should work along with Deputy Minister Johnson.

Gen. Johnson recalls that during talks with the then Minister of Defense, his first point was why change the account’s name, adding that he was told that the need was the way “we been operating with this account, it cannot be pension but rather we should go for Morale and Welfare.”

He says he suggested to Ziankahn that they must be given an account statement to know what had been happening with the account, given that the two of them were about to be put on as signatories to the account.

“The statement was provided later by Kennedy Sackie who was the internal auditor at the Ministry of Defense. In that account statement, it had a total around 688,964.92 in November. In December, we got a new statement that also carries 711,000.00. so we affixed out signatures and I signed as “B,” that was like three months of the transition ...,” he explains.

PROMOTION

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to provide updates about the investigation concerning the alleged stolen materials from CARI and that CARI should also provide clarity about the salaries of the Whistleblower.

The Suakoko Youths have threatened demonstration, failure on the part of the police and the CARI administration to

provide the update on the alleged stolen materials and the salaries of Mr. Wennah.

CARI administration has not commented on the issue despite request for clarification from our Bong County Correspondent.-- *Edited by Winston W. Parley*

Français

Débat au sein de la plateforme de l'opposition : Le Parti de la Liberté (LP) clarifie sa position

Le sondage des opinions des électeurs sera un élément qui jouera un rôle déterminant lors des prochaines primaires si les partis n'arrivent pas à trouver un consensus quant au choix d'un candidat unique de l'opposition. Voilà la position du Parti de la Liberté (LP), membre de la plateforme de l'opposition libérienne concernant le débat qui a actuellement lieu au sein de l'opposition.

Dans une déclaration qu'elle a publiée sur les médias sociaux, la sénatrice du comté de Grand Bassa, Nyonblee Karnga Lawrence, a indiqué que la plateforme de l'opposition encourage tous les leaders politiques membres de la coalition à avoir des ambitions politiques personnelles, pourvu que ces ambitions politiques militent en faveur de la fertilisation de la démocratie.

«Ce qui est malsain, c'est de confondre une ambition politique d'un individu avec l'aspiration collective et la

volonté générale du peuple. Les partis membres de la plateforme se sont d'ailleurs réunis pour demander la volonté de notre peuple, celle de sauver le pays, le sortir du déclin socio-économique et politique dans lequel il continue de s'enfoncer constamment », a-t-elle affirmé.

C'est pourquoi, estime la

sénatrice Karnga Lawrence, il faut que l'on s'attende à ce que les leaders politiques et les membres de la plateforme de l'opposition travaillent au sein de leurs partis politiques pour renforcer leurs circonscriptions afin de se mettre dans une position forte pour toutes les élections

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Afrique : Drogba remporte une grosse victoire pour le tourisme de la Côte d'Ivoire

ABIDJAN, Côte d'Ivoire, 25 février 2020/ — La star internationale du football, Didier Drogba, a aidé son pays natal, la Côte d'Ivoire, à décrocher l'or en gagnant des protocoles d'accord pour un total de 15 milliards de dollars visant à soutenir des projets touristiques dans ce pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Cette percée précède le Forum de l'OMT pour l'Afrique, qui se tiendra à Abidjan la semaine prochaine et l'influent Forum de l'Investissement Hôtelier Africain (FIHA), qui se

déroulera à Abidjan le mois prochain (23-25 mars). Le FIHA est connu pour sa capacité à mettre en relation de nouveaux investisseurs avec les développeurs, les consultants, les entrepreneurs, les opérateurs hôteliers et les dirigeants politiques.

L'ancien attaquant de Chelsea - désormais ambassadeur mondial du tourisme - a participé au succès d'une campagne des Nations Unies visant à promouvoir l'attractivité croissante du tourisme en Côte d'Ivoire. Le pays affiche un taux de

croissance de son PIB d'environ 8% en 2019 et, en tant que destination, il occupe la troisième place en Afrique subsaharienne, avec 2 millions de visiteurs internationaux, derrière l'Afrique du Sud et le Zimbabwe, devant l'Ouganda, le Botswana, le Kenya ou Maurice. (Selon les données 2018 de l'OMT).

Matthew Weihs, directeur général de Bench Events, qui organise le FIHA, a déclaré : « L'effort extraordinaire de la Côte d'Ivoire est impressionnant ; et cela rend le Forum de cette année particulièrement intéressant parce que les engagements de financement sont en place et il s'agit maintenant de réaliser les projets. » L'année dernière le FIHA à Marrakech, qui a attiré 300 délégués venus de 28 pays fut un réel succès.

Sous la bannière, Sublime Côte d'Ivoire, Didier Drogba a été un acteur clé dans une équipe composée d'une part de hauts dirigeants économiques et politiques ivoiriens, et d'autre part de personnalités du show-business. Ils sont allés faire un roadshow à Dubaï et

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Éditorial

Exploration Pétrolière : Les Libériens ont intérêt à se calmer

Le Libéria se prépare pour lancer un deuxième appel à candidature pour des explorations pétrolières offshore au cours du mois d'avril 2020. La présidence avait annoncé fin décembre 2019 le plan de l'administration Weah de mettre en vente neuf blocs offshore dans le bassin de Harper, qui serait l'un des derniers à ne pas avoir fait l'objet d'exploration au large de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Déjà, les parties prenantes, sous les auspices de la Liberia Petroleum Regulatory Authority et de la National Oil Company of Liberia, se sont réunies à Monrovia sur les perspectives de découverte du pétrole et du gaz ici.

Le Dr Lester Tenny, vice-président de NOCAL chargé des services techniques, est passionnément optimiste quant aux perspectives de découverte de « l'or noir » au Libéria. « Le Libéria a du pétrole ; les signaux sont là ; nous avons juste besoin de découvrir le pétrole », a-t-il déclaré la semaine dernière lors d'une rencontre avec des parties prenantes.

Cependant, il faut que les Libériens fassent preuve de prudence et de patience cette fois-ci en ce qui concerne l'euphorie autour du pétrole. Il faut tirer des leçons à partir des expériences passées où notre espoir avait cédé la place à une simple illusion comme du sable mouvant. L'ancienne présidente Ellen Johnson Sirleaf avait suscité un enthousiasme inouï quant à la possibilité de l'existence du pétrole sur les côtes libériennes et vendu une douzaine de blocs pétroliers à des sociétés étrangères, dont le géant pétrolier américain ExxonMobile.

Mais après une période et d'explorations, il a été établi que le Libéria ne disposait pas de quantité suffisante de pétrole à des fins commerciales.

Même NOCAL qui a dirigé le processus a, par ses actions, déçu tous les Libériens ordinaires et frustré le pays tout entier. Après avoir dépensé des millions de dollars sur les salaires et les avantages sociaux de son personnel, des projets publics de qualité inférieure et sur la soi-disant sensibilisation nationale entreprise par des législateurs malhonnêtes, tout l'exercice a dégringolé et NOCAL a fait faillite. L'ancienne présidente est dite responsable de l'échec.

Nous ne sommes en aucun cas pessimistes, mais les expériences que nous avons tous vécues concernant ce secteur exigent que nous procédions avec circonspection pour éviter de suivre le même chemin ou de répéter les mêmes erreurs.

Selon le site Web international du pétrole basé en Norvège, la société géophysique TGS détient une gamme de données multi-clients à travers le bassin de Harper pour soutenir le cycle de licences, y compris 5 272 kilomètres en 2D et 6 276 kilomètres carrés de données sismiques, gravimétriques et magnétiques en 3D.

Il a détaillé que des pièges structuraux Syn-rift peuvent être identifiés sur une grande partie de la zone, qui offrent une prospectivité à plusieurs niveaux et que des systèmes de ventilateur de pente et de bassin du crétacé démontrant un caractère de grande amplitude ont été identifiés, dont certains couvrent plus de 300 kilomètres carrés, tandis qu'une évaluation volumétrique de ces caractéristiques suggère que des champs de plus d'un milliard de barils de pétrole en place pourraient être présents ici.

C'est une bonne nouvelle. Nous félicitons le gouvernement et les partenaires pour ces études qui nous donnent de l'espoir. Néanmoins, nous appelons l'administration actuelle, en particulier l'Autorité de Régulation du Pétrole du Libéria (LPRA), à travailler de concert avec tous les acteurs du secteur pour obtenir un résultat satisfaisant pour le peuple libérien.

Nous exhortons le président George Manneh Weah à faire de ce rêve une réalité pour le grand bonheur du Libéria en veillant à ce que, si une quantité commercialisable est découverte dans nos eaux, les libériens en tirent grand profit, y compris les générations futures.

Français

Débat au sein de la plateforme

à venir.

Ce qu'il faut surtout éviter, prévient-elle, c'est de s'affronter mutuellement au sein de la plateforme de l'opposition au risque de détourner notre attention de l'objectif primaire et commun que nous nous sommes fixé, celui de sauver la patrie.

« C'est ça le fondement de la collaboration que nous sommes sur le point de tisser, et il faut le dire, c'est bon pour notre démocratie. Il faut que nous ne perdions pas de vue la vérité selon laquelle plus nous restons attachés à la collaboration, plus fort sera le résultat de cette collaboration. Il est aussi vrai que pour espérer pour 2023, il faut que nous réussissions le test de 2020. Il faut que nous alignions nos meilleurs éléments et allions au front comme une force collective lors des prochaines élections. Il faut que nous gagnions ensemble pour le peuple libérien et suscitions un nouvel espoir lorsque les sénateurs issus de la plateforme seront assermentés pour représenter les comtés. »

Rien ne semble aller au sein de l'alliance des quatre principaux partis politiques d'opposition qui souhaitent pourtant empêcher la Coalition pour le changement démocratique du président George Manneh Weah de bénéficier d'un second mandat en 2023.

L'ANC (Alternative National Congress), membre de l'alliance, s'est dit victime de campagne de dénigrement de la part des autres partis membres, à savoir le Parti de l'Unité (UP, ancien parti au pouvoir), le Parti de la liberté (LP) et le Parti de tous les libériens (ALP).

L'ANC est dirigé par

l'ancien candidat malheureux à la présidentielle de 2017, M. Alexander B. Cummings, qui est considéré comme l'un des opposants farouches au régime Weah.

Le secrétaire général de l'ANC, Aloysius Toe, avait mis en garde, il y a quelques jours, que M. Alexander Cummings et l'ANC avaient maintes fois déclaré qu'ils n'accepteraient que des résultats issus d'un processus politique juste, transparent et démocratique.

Le secrétaire général Aloysius Toe était monté au créneau un jour après que le leader politique de l'ALP, M. Benoni Urey, avait annoncé que l'ancien vice-président Joseph Nyumah et leader politique de l'ancien parti au pouvoir, était le plus apte à diriger le bloc de l'opposition contre le président Weah lors de l'élection présidentielle de 2023.

Me Toe avait martelé que l'ANC était un parti responsable et avait l'intention de faire preuve de maturité dans toutes ses déclarations et relations avec les partis de l'opposition et le gouvernement libérien.

Il avait dénoncé des campagnes de dénigrement et de rabaissement de la part de certains partis membres de l'alliance dont seraient victimes l'ANC et son leader politique dont l'image serait ternie par une désinformation délibérée quant à la position du parti sur le processus de sélection d'un candidat unique de l'opposition par un sondage.

« Ce n'est pas la première fois que l'ANC et son leader politique sont dénigrés et rabaisés et ridiculisés par des personnes membres des partis frères. C'est devenu une habitude. Les cicatrices et les pertes de Cape Mount sont encore fraîches dans nos esprits. Ce sont toujours les mêmes personnes », a-t-il dit sans citer personne.

Afrique : Drogba remporte

Hambourg et sont revenus avec plus de 15 milliards de dollars d'engagements pour financer toute une variété de projets touristiques, allant des simples hôtels aux complexes hôteliers en passant par développement du littoral. Tous les donateurs ont été conviés au FIHA.

Philippe Doizelet, directeur adjoint de Horwath HTL, le plus grand et le plus expérimenté des consultants hôteliers au monde, a guidé les efforts de la Côte d'Ivoire. D'après lui : « C'est une page vierge sur laquelle l'industrie peut inscrire de stimulants projets. Il faut construire

beaucoup de choses - des hôtels, des centres culturels et des salles de conférence, entre autres. Le magnifique littoral de la Côte d'Ivoire offre de grandes opportunités en matière de tourisme d'affaires et de loisirs. Au-delà d'Abidjan ; L'île Boulay, Bassam et Jacquerville sont actuellement les endroits les plus prometteurs. » Le plus grand potentiel à ses yeux réside dans des projets à « usage mixte », combinant les infrastructures de loisirs, les bureaux et les commerces avec les structures d'hébergement, en particulier les hôtels de marque 2 et 3 étoiles et les appartements pour séjours prolongés.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Willem H. Buiter

La nouvelle norme économique sans argent liquide

NEW YORK - En décembre 2019, la banque centrale suédoise a abandonné ses mesures de taux d'intérêt négatifs qu'elle avait maintenues près de cinq années durant. Le taux implicite de portage de la Riksbank (le taux auquel elle prête aux banques commerciales), qui a atteint un plancher de -0,5 % en février 2016, était passé à 0 % en janvier. La dernière hausse des taux s'est produite malgré des signes de ralentissement de l'économie suédoise, l'inflation étant inférieure à l'objectif fixé.

En cas de ralentissement cyclique, selon Stefan Ingves, gouverneur de la Riksbank, il faudra stimuler les dépenses publiques et les achats d'actifs par la banque centrale, compte tenu de l'efficacité limitée des taux d'intérêt négatifs. « Il existe en fait une borne inférieure pour le taux directeur », affirme Ingves, qui fait qu'il nous est « difficile d'imaginer d'être négatif à moins de 5 pour cent, par exemple. »

Je ne suis pas de cet avis. Il se peut que, dans un environnement à faible taux d'intérêt, la politique budgétaire anticyclique puisse jouer un rôle plus important dans la gestion du cycle économique sans créer de problèmes de viabilité de la dette. Même dans ce cas, les taux d'intérêt négatifs n'ont pas eu l'occasion de faire leurs preuves.

Partout dans le monde, les banques centrales et les décideurs économiques ont refusé de supprimer (ou du moins de manière substantielle) la valeur plancher (VP) sur les taux d'intérêt nominaux créés par l'existence de liquidités ou de devises. En tant qu'instrument financier qui paie un taux d'intérêt nominal zéro, les liquidités fixent un plancher pour d'autres instruments financiers qui, en principe, ont des taux d'intérêt nominaux librement variables. En raison des « coûts de transport de la monnaie » (coût de stockage, d'assurance, etc.), la VP est probablement autour de -0,75 points de base - un niveau atteint par les taux directeurs au Danemark et en Suisse.

Certes, un article récent influent de Markus K. Brunnermeier et Yann Koby, de l'Université de Princeton, affirme qu'il peut y avoir un « taux d'intérêt ... à partir duquel la politique monétaire accommodante s'inverse et devient restrictive pour les prêts [bancaires]. » Selon les auteurs, ce taux d'inversion est déterminé par quatre facteurs : « les titres à revenu fixe des banques, ... la rigueur des contraintes sur le capital, ... le degré de répercussion sur les taux de dépôt et ... le capital initial des banques. »

Je n'ai rien à reprocher à l'argument des auteurs, mais je voudrais simplement souligner que le degré de répercussion sur les taux de dépôt est limité par l'existence d'une VP sur les taux d'intérêt nominaux. Ainsi, la question est de savoir si le degré de répercussion sur les taux de dépôt (et les autres taux payés aux créanciers bancaires) continuerait d'être inférieur aux taux d'intérêt négatifs plutôt qu'aux taux d'intérêt positifs si la VP était supprimée en abolissant la monnaie, ou diminuerait de façon significative en supprimant tout le papier monnaie à forte valeur nominale.

Oui, les entreprises et les ménages qui ont grandi dans un environnement économique à taux d'intérêt nominaux positifs risquent d'avoir des difficultés à calculer le taux d'intérêt réel (ajusté

sur l'inflation) associé à un taux d'intérêt nominal négatif. Mais il y a des chances pour que cette difficulté ne soit que temporaire. Les taux réels neutres sont déjà à zéro ou ont des valeurs négatives dans la plupart des économies avancées et sont susceptibles de le rester durant des années, voire des décennies. Alors que ces économies continuent d'avoir une inflation inférieure à leurs objectifs, il en résulte que les taux d'intérêt nominaux négatifs deviendront la nouvelle norme et que « l'illusion de l'inflation » ou « l'illusion du taux d'intérêt nominal » seront de l'histoire ancienne. Il n'y a aucune raison de supposer que de telles distorsions cognitives dureront éternellement.

Il existe trois façons de supprimer la VP. La première consiste à introduire un taux de change variable entre la monnaie et les dépôts auprès de la banque centrale (ce qui implique de faire de même pour les dépôts auprès des banques commerciales et d'autres instruments privés). Prélever un taux d'intérêt de -5 % sur les dépôts tout en augmentant simultanément la valeur des dépôts par rapport aux avoirs en devises à un taux de 5 % éliminerait toute possibilité d'arbitrage.

La deuxième façon de se débarrasser de la VP consiste à taxer la monnaie. Mais je préférerais la troisième option : abolir la monnaie et la remplacer par une monnaie numérique de banque centrale, tout en autorisant une période de transition durant laquelle les petites coupures pourraient être mises en circulation pour répondre aux besoins des exclus du système numérique et financier.

Dans le cas de la Suède, la suppression de l'argent liquide serait un événement mineur. La valeur des billets de banque suédois en circulation à la fin de l'année 2019 n'était que de 60,38 milliards de SEK (6,2 milliards de dollars, soit 1,26 % du PIB). Sur cette somme, 44,85 milliards de SEK comprenaient les deux plus grosses coupures - de 500 et 1 000 (comparables aux billets américains de 50 \$ et de 100 \$, respectivement) - ce qui suggère qu'elles ne devaient pas être utilisées dans de petites transactions de détail par les retardataires technologiques.

En comparaison, aux États-Unis, les liquidités en circulation fin 2018 s'élevaient à 1,67 milliards de dollars (environ 8 % du PIB) dont 80 % étaient en billets de 100 dollars. Dans la zone euro, ce montant pour la même année était de 1,23 mille milliards d'euros (1,33 mille milliards de dollars, ou 9 % du PIB), dont 48 % en coupures égales ou supérieures à 100 euros. Il est clair que le numérique sera plus difficile à mettre en place pour les États-Unis et la plupart de la zone euro que pour la Suède ; mais même pour les deux premiers, cela reste tout à fait réalisable.

Enfin, il y a un autre avantage à abolir le numéraire en espèces : cela élimine le moyen privilégié de paiement et de stockage de la valeur parmi les fraudeurs fiscaux, les blanchisseurs d'argent, les cartels de la drogue, les trafiquants d'êtres humains et autres criminels. Je regrette bien sûr de priver la communauté libertaire d'un instrument au porteur dont l'anonymat offre une garantie contre un État autoritaire et potentiellement prédateur. Mais ceux qui tiennent à l'anonymat pourront toujours opter pour le Bitcoin. Le reste d'entre nous peut s'attendre à -5 % sur les taux directeurs au cours de la prochaine crise économique majeure.

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW

Impact Of African Policies On Development Of Infrastructure Projects, Emergence Of Debt-Trap And Neo-Colonialism

By Kester Kenn Klomegah

In this interview taken by Kester Kenn Klomegah for Eurasia Review, Dr. Frangton Chiyemura, a lecturer in International Development at the School of Social Sciences and Global Studies, The Open University in the United Kingdom, discusses the impact of African policies on development and realization of infrastructure projects, the possible of running into “debt-traps” and the emergence of “neo-colonialism” in Africa. Here are the interview excerpts:

Q: Early December, you held discussions and shared your research on how African leaders influence the modality of engagement and negotiation process with China. What were the key points you discussed with the audience and participants who attended?

FC: First of all, I was invited to share my research findings with Oxford University China-Africa Network (OUCAN). OUCAN engages with researchers, think tanks, policy makers involved in Africa-China relations. My talk was part of this initiative to share research and evidence-based findings and conclusions on Africa-China relations.

My talk was based on my completed PhD research project where I investigated how the Ethiopian government exercised agency - defined as the ability to shape, control and influence, when engaging with the Chinese in the context of wind energy infrastructure. The key point was that the Ethiopian government was able to broker, negotiate, structure, implement and manage Chinese involvement in Adama 1 and Adama 2 wind farms.

The audience was quite engaging and wondered how the Ethiopian government was able to exercise agency as compared to other African governments dealing with the Chinese. There are several factors which make Ethiopia to have such clout when dealing with the Chinese as compared to other African countries. Such factors are not only limited to the governance and leadership model of the government especially under MelesZenawi and Hailermariam.

Secondly, it relates to the geographic location of Ethiopia, which makes it a stabilising force in volatile East African region. Ethiopia, has a unique advantage, as it is the diplomatic hub of Africa - hosting the African Union (AU) and other international organizations. This adds weight to Ethiopia when negotiating with external powers.

Q: What are the general perceptions and attitudes toward this kind of relations? How do the political and business elites, interpret the benefits of determining concrete directions of investment in Africa?

FC: Both Ethiopian and Chinese governments see the relations as win-win. This comes at the backdrop of strong relations at the political party to party level. In the case of my research I conducted, I can confirm that the Chinese Communist Party has very strong relations with the then Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. In fact, during my research, I found out that the corporate deals are informally negotiated at the party to party level before they are transferred to the government level for formalization. There seems to be a seamless connection between the ruling party and the government, and any decisions reached at the party level are by extension seamlessly binding on the government.

Q: How would you explain neo-colonialism by foreign players in Africa? What is it and what foreign (external) countries are referred to as neo-colonisers, in your view?

FC: Neocolonialism argument is present in Africa-China relations especially proposed so by scholars who come from a neo-Marxian epistemological grounding. Neocolonialism can be seen as a new form of domination, plunder and exploitation using clandestine and economic statecraft. Of course, there could be



some hints or pointers to suggest neocolonial tendencies, but I believe such claims should be levelled on case by case basis, and there has to be concrete evidence to suggest that way. That said, I think we have to be careful to scrutinize where such claims of neocolonialism are coming from, and potentially scrap beyond the surface to establish the motivations and interests for spreading or proposing such claims.

In my opinion, I believe there is no free lunch in the world, African countries should enter into partnerships based on their strategic interests and an understanding of what the partners can provide or deliver. Secondly, every African country should do a comprehensive evaluation of the structure and, the terms and conditions of their engagements with foreign powers. By so doing, this will eliminate the chances for the emergence of claims of neocolonialism. Instead of extending the blame to someone elsewhere, Africa needs to do its homework especially on the implementation and monitoring aspects of the deals. Africa has some of the best regulations and standards, but the problem lies in implementation and monitoring.

Q: Without doubt, Africa needs investment in infrastructure, agriculture and industry, and in many other sectors. Despite negative criticisms, what admirable roles is China playing here, we are talking about working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa?

FC: China is playing a huge role in infrastructure financing and development. For example, available evidence suggests that between 2000 and 2017, China provided about US\$143 billion worthy of loans to African governments. This has come quite handy especially given the shortage of finance to build the much-needed infrastructure targeting the SDGs.

In terms of trade, China became Africa's trading partner in 2009, and two-way trade volume reached its peak in 2014 at the value of US\$215 billion. Further, in 2017, it was estimated to have reached about US\$148 billion. Of course, trade transactions still remain unbalanced in favour of China. In addition, between 2000 and 2017, transport (US\$38.1 billion), power (US\$30.1 billion) and mining (US\$19.1 billion) ranked respectively as top three sectors that have received the lion's share of Chinese loans in Africa.

Q: What is your interpretation of debt-trap most often discussed in various platforms and leveled accusations on China? But, tangible infrastructure have been built with these loans in many African countries

FC: Interestingly, I don't believe in this debt-trap diplomacy. First of all, it does not make any business sense that the Chinese will design a project targeting 'failure' so that they can control or pull the strings of a particular country. Second, most of the so-called assets that the Chinese are poised to be targeting to run are very complicated, messy and at times quite straining for the Chinese to dirty their hands. Therefore, it doesn't make any sense for me.

That said, I would not refer to it as 'trap' but as merely debt and the consequences associated with that. What

that implies is that, for example, in the power sector, African requires on average more than 5 billion worth of investment per year for the next 10 years to address this challenge. Inevitably, part of the money will come from debt financing. For me, I am not really worried about 'productive debt' - defined as any money borrowed to invest in a project that has the ability to boost economic growth and at the same time, generate a revenue stream that will pay back the loan. I would be worried about countries that borrow to build, say, a presidential palace, a stadium, or to pay salaries. That type of borrowing for me is bad - its destructive and unproductive borrowing, and that must necessarily stop.

I have to disagree with the assertion that China is debt-trapping Africa. Of course, there are some African countries that are in debt distress situation, others have high risk of being in distress, but the contributions of Chinese finances towards that leave much to be desired. For example, countries such as Chad, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan are in high debt distress but the contributions of the Chinese towards that is very insignificant.

We also have some countries like Ethiopia, Cameroon and Ghana where the Chinese hold a substantial share of the debt, but those countries are not in debt distress, although they are high risk of debt distress. You will be surprised that according to World Bank, Africa's debt to China is less than 23%, compared to what Africa owes to private lenders (32%), and multilateral institutions such as World Bank, IMF etc. (35%). Sometimes, I see the hypocrisy of the West - with whom Africa has substantial debt, demonizing the Chinese on debt-trap diplomacy.

Q: In your expert view, what are the key challenges and problems facing Chinese investors in Africa, what are your suggestions how some aspects of the relations be improved between Africa and China?

FC: Of course, like any other relations, Africa-China engagements have their own challenges which need to be worked on to ensure there is mutual benefit and win-win situation. Some of the challenges relate implementation of regulations and standards by African governments when dealing with the Chinese. The issues lie not in regulations, but for me in the implementation and enforcement. This is the first aspect that needs to be addressed by African governments, especially in the infrastructure sector.

The second challenge relates to peace and security. Some of the African countries are in conflict situation or are, at least, under terrorist threat. This threatens some of the Chinese businesses and enterprises.

Third, the unbalanced nature of trade between China and Africa create room for emergence of neo-colonial arguments and such needs to be addressed immediately. Some of the challenges are minor, these include language barriers, differences in culture and work ethics. These can easily be resolved.

RIA road project backfires

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

Two senators on Capitol Hill have questioned the procedure leading to the finalization of the Roberts International Airport road modernization project, launched recently by President George Manneh Weah.

Montserrado and Margibi Counties senators Abraham Darius Dillon and Oscar Cooper said the executive branch of government is yet to inform the Liberian Senate how funding for would be generated for the project and payment made.

Addressing a news conference here Tuesday, February 25, on the grounds of the Capitol, both senators note the contract awarded to East International Construction did not go through the Public Procurement Concession Commission, as required by law, and that plenary of the Liberian Senate did not ratify such document.

Cooper and Dillon accused Montserrado County Electoral District#8 Representative



Acarous Gray and Montserrado County Senator Saah Joseph of defending the document on grounds that it ratified and passed during the sitting of the 53rd session of the Liberian Legislature thus, beyond PPCC procedure.

According to Dillon, both Joseph and Gray are liars and that the Liberian people should

not take them serious. He added that the action of the executive is illegal and that they will follow the matter to the letter.

Cooper, who represents the people of Margibi County where the project is to be implemented, stressed that the RIA Road is not appropriate; instead,

government should have considered Southeastern roads, connecting Rivercess, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee and Grand Gedeh Counties, respectively.

He recalled the East International Company during the administration of ex-president Sirleaf failed to execute little road behind the Barclay Training Center called the 'Redemption Road' in Monrovia and wondered whether it has the capacity to build the kind of modern road projected from Roberts International Airport to Monrovia.

But Senator Joseph said the two senators from the opposition block are lazy and weak, asking them to visit the journal of the senate to establish the truth.

Besides the Gbarnga streets project, investigation from the Ministry of Public Works revealed the company had failed to properly execute a number of projects, including a pre-financing agreement with the Government of Liberia in 2017 to pave 30 feeder roads, as part of the Feeder Projects across the country.

Several feeder road projects contracted to East International Group still remain uncompleted but the company has now maneuvered its ways into getting a bigger contract.

Many Liberians, including Senator Abraham Darius Dillon of the opposition Liberty Party have gone public here, expressing concerns over the RIA-Monrovia highway project.

Senator Dillon writes, "No well-meaning Liberian, whether "Ruling Position", or "Opposition" or "No Position", should ever be against positive initiatives for the development of our country and growth of our people. That is why some of us from the

"opposition" always dare to commend the positive things whilst mustering the courage to expose and condemn the wrong/bad things but with constructive suggestion as the way forward.

"It is in this light that we embrace and support the planned development of the RIA Highway. We, however, have some concerns that must be addressed regarding this project. We have seen and heard several questions and concerns that must be answered by the appropriate authorities of the Executive Branch before commencing this project. As senator, I am concerned as well."

Martin K. N. Kollie, a youth activist, says East International Group is a mafia company with no website, blog or link to enable the Liberian public review its previous projects executed in the country to get more information on its expertise.

According to Kollie, East International came to Liberia as a building materials store in 2010 and was located around the S.D. Cooper Road Junction in Paynesville City but later changed into a construction company in 2015/2016 before gaining projects for Feeder Roads Construction in 2017.

Other contracts awarded the company in the past, a source disclosed, include the rigid concrete pavements of Redemption Road, Thinker's Village road, and Smythe Road, respectively at a total cost of US\$3,224,124.

The source continued that contract for the asphalt pavement of ex-President Sirleaf's farm road which was placed at US\$19 million, was later increased to US\$24 million dollars though 10 percent of road work has not been done by the company.

This paper has not contacted the Management of East International Company for response against these charges. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*

Senatorial election in limbo

By Ethel A. Tweh

The 2020 midterm senatorial elections scheduled for October is in a limbo due to lack of funds to support the electoral budget of US\$20 million submitted by the National Elections Commission, NEC Chairman Cllr. Jerome Korkoya told the Liberian Senate Tuesday.

Appearing before the Senate, Chairman Korkoya and the NEC Board of Commissioners explain the US\$20million for both referendum and the elections was reduced to US\$17 million.

He says the Government of Liberia through the Ministry

of Finance and Development Planning issued a commitment letter to the Public Procurement Concession Commission (PPCC) of US\$7million as initial cost for pre-electoral activities, covering voter roll and assessment of various precincts, but the NEC has not received a dime.

Chairman Korkoya continues that assessment to various precincts is important to enable the Commission establish if they are still suitable for the electoral process, noting that most of those precincts are privately owned, and if they would still have access to them this year.

He informs the Senate the Commission has not placed any order for voter

registration materials, adding, the voter registration process should have been January, but was postponed to February, and now is being carried to March because of lack of money.

However, majority senators ask whether elections would be held in October and if they would be credible in the face of delays in the preparatory process.

River Gee County Senator Commany B. Wesseh, from the opposition Unity Party says, the NEC is not to be blamed for the delay, noting, the commissioners have appeared before the Senate and everything that should be done for the preparation has been done but there's no money to carry out their functions, and NEC has informed the Legislature and the Executive.

Senator Wesseh emphasizes the senatorial elections are constitutional and cannot be carried to another date, saying, if these polls were not held in October as required by law, this means there will be no senate because 15 senators will not constitute a quorum to conduct business, and that there will be no government, if one branch of government is inactive.

In view of this backdrop,



Bomi County Senator Morris Saytumah, moves that the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Samuel D. Tweah, Jr, should appear before plenary of the Liberian Senate tomorrow, Thursday, February 27, to give reasons why the NEC has not been provided money to carry

out their duties as per the Constitution.

It may be recalled the FY 2019/20 National Budget approved by the National Legislature didn't contain allotments for the conduct of the midterm senatorial elections or referendum in October 2020.





Court permits video in ex-defense minister's trial



By **Winston W. Parley**

Criminal Court "C" Judge Yamie Quiqui Gbeisay on Tuesday, 25 February permitted prosecutors to introduce demonstrative video evidence in the trial of former Defense Minister Brownie Samukai and two other former officials of the ministry over the alleged

misapplication of money deducted from soldiers' salaries as compulsory saving for pension.

Prosecutors introduced the video evidence which they say shows then Minister Samukai holding a press conference so as to ascertain from their second subpoenaed witness - the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Major General

Prince Charles Johnson what he recognized the instrument to be.

In allowing the use of the video evidence, Judge Gbeisay says to play the video does not prejudice the defendants in that the defense will also have an opportunity to view and cross examine the witness.

The introduction of video evidence in the trial came Tuesday following Gen. Johnson's testimony before the court that a halt was put to the monthly deduction from AFL personnel's pay and there was a press conference called by the Minister of Defense at the time.

The witness identified the video in court, saying: "The video was the press conference that [preceded] the investigation and the action after ... the investigation."

According to Gen. Johnson, there had been a roadblock and dependents of AFL personnel from the

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Coronavirus: Five Serie A matches to be played behind closed doors

Five Serie A matches will be played behind closed doors this weekend - including Juventus' match at home to Inter Milan - because of coronavirus.

Matches at Udinese, AC Milan, Parma and Sassuolo will take place without fans.

Games at Lazio, Napoli, Lecce and Cagliari will go ahead with supporters as normal, but Sampdoria's match on Monday is yet to be decided upon.

Italy has put towns in

northern Italy into lockdown after 229 people tested positive and seven died.

Inter's Europa League last-32 home match against Ludogorets on Thursday will also be played behind closed doors because of fears about the possible spread of the virus.

Inter were one of four Serie A clubs to postpone their games last weekend.

League leaders Juventus are ahead of second-placed Lazio by one point before they face third-placed Inter on Sunday



evening.

Serie A fixtures to be played behind closed doors: Juventus v Inter (Sun, 19:45 GMT); Udinese v Fiorentina (Sat, 17:00 GMT); AC Milan v Genoa (Sun, 11:30 GMT); Parma v Spal (Sun, 14:00 GMT); Sassuolo v Brescia (Sun, 14:00 GMT)

Serie A matches to be played with fans: Lazio v Bologna (Sat, 14:00 GMT); Napoli v Torino (Sat, 19:45 GMT); Lecce v Atalanta (Sun, 14:00 GMT); Cagliari v Roma (Sun, 17:00 GMT)

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