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# Continental News

## Malawi declares 21-day corona virus lockdown

Malawi's Health Minister Jappie Mhang'o has declared a 21-day lockdown in the country to curb the spread of coronavirus.

The country has to date confirmed a total of 16 coronavirus cases including two deaths.

The lockdown will commence at midnight on 18 April and end at midnight on 9 May.

With the exception of law enforcement officers and providers of essential goods and services, people will need to seek permission to leave the area around their homes.

District commissioners and local chief executive officers will identify providers of essential goods and services and issue them with special permits.

While all central markets will be closed, local markets will be allowed to open between 05:00 and 18:00 local time.



Malawi is scheduled to hold a repeat presidential election in July

In a separate address, President Peter Mutharika said the lockdown could be extended if circumstances warrant it.

The president said security personnel will be deployed at

border points during the lockdown and will also set up roadblocks at strategic points across the country.

"Fighting coronavirus is a challenging war for everyone, everywhere. It is also a very

expensive war," said Mr Mutharika.

Malawi is one of 19 African countries that have benefited

from debt relief announced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) two days ago - intended to enable poor countries cope with the financial burden of fighting the pandemic.

Last week, President Mutharika announced that together with other top government officials he would take a 10% pay cut for three months.

The funds saved will be directed to the efforts to fight Covid-19 in the country.

The country is scheduled to hold a fresh presidential election on 2 July after last year's vote was annulled by the constitutional court in February citing widespread irregularities.

President Mutharika, who won the original poll, is appealing against the ruling. BBC

## Kenyans to be arrested for not wearing masks

Kenya's police boss has said the grace period for everyone not wearing face masks has expired and arrests will now take place, starting on Wednesday.

Inspector General Hillary Mutiyambai said people had

been given enough time to buy the masks and enforcement will now start.

The ministry of health gazetted that anyone found in public without a mask will be fined 20,000 Kenyan shillings (\$190; £150) or face a six-month jail term.

Public transport operators had earlier asked the government to supply them with masks, citing high costs.

Currently a single-use mask is retailing at 100 Kenyan shillings (\$0.09; £0.07) while a N95 version retails for up to 1,500 Kenyan shillings.

The government had issued a directive that everyone in public places wears a mask and contacted various companies to help in the production of masks.

The ministry has been running public education campaigns about how to wear and remove masks to ensure no contamination takes place.

Since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, the official advice from the World Health Organization has been clear. Only two types of people should wear masks: those who are sick and show symptoms, and those who are caring for people who are suspected to have the coronavirus. BBC



Kenyan government gazetted the compulsory mask rule whose enforcement begins on Wednesday

## Zimbabwe to begin mass coronavirus testing

Zimbabwe has unveiled its plan for mass testing that aims to examine at least 33,000 suspected coronavirus cases by the end of the month.

The ministry of health said it had tested 665 people by Tuesday.

The country has so far

tool approved for Covid-19 testing.

He said Zimbabwe had about 167 of the diagnostic tools and has ordered thousands of cartridges.

The government will prioritise testing for those with flu symptoms, pneumonia, fever, the aged,



The country has 18 confirmed cases of coronavirus

confirmed 18 cases of coronavirus.

Government spokesperson Nick Mangwana said the mass testing will combine polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests - using swabs to collect mucous and saliva samples for testing - as well as using a tuberculosis diagnostic

those with underlying conditions, those who worked during the lockdown, medical and government personnel.

Zimbabwe is in a partial lockdown which is due to end on Sunday. BBC

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# EDITORIAL

## Bring all of the technicians onboard

**THE WOMAN APPOINTED** recently by President George Manneh Weah to coordinate the country's COVID-19 fight, Mary T. Broh, has taken the bull by the horn by enlisting key technicians on a national structure to lead the fight.

**WE NEED TRAINED** and experienced public health practitioners, including doctors, nurses and health care workers to defeat COVID-19. And we hail Madam Broh for her line-up of statisticians and other technocrats to execute the job.

**WITH DOCTORS JERRY** Brown, Wilehlmina Jallah, Francis Kateh and others being brought onboard, Liberia is surely mobilizing frontline commanders to take this global pandemic head-on.

**HOWEVER, WHAT IS** needed urgently in this fight is government support, particularly funding, logistics and requisite supplies to dispatch professionals in the field.

**WE ARE VERY** optimistic that with all hands on deck and proper coordination, divorced of politics, Liberia would, in the words of former NPHIL boss, Tolbert Nyenswah, "get ahead of the curve."

**MADAM BROH SHOULD** also mobilize County Health Teams across the country, including the 3,000 contact tracers that were actively involved in eradicating Ebola out of Liberia.

**SHE WOULD NEED** political support at the highest level in order to succeed. Mary has never been a failure. She will not fail in this COVID-19 fight.

**ORDINARY LIBERIANS TOO** have a role to play in containing and expelling coronavirus out of Liberia, as they did to Ebola in 2015, by observing all preventive health measures.

**HOW WE CONDUCT** ourselves as a nation in coming months, would demonstrate our sincerity and commitment to defeating the virus and therefore, maintain continuous support from international partners and friendly governments.

**THIS IS A** fight to save humanity and we need all of our best generals both at home and abroad to join in this war against an invisible and common enemy. With God above and our resolve and resilient to win, victory is certain!

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# COMMENTARY

By Jim O'Neill

## Blaming China Is a Dangerous Distraction

*Nobody denies that Chinese officials' initial effort to cover up the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan at the turn of the year was an appallingly misguided decision. But anyone who is still focusing on China's failings instead of working toward a solution is essentially making the same mistake.*

**L**ONDON - As the COVID-19 crisis roars on, so have debates about China's role in it. Based on what is known, it is clear that some Chinese officials made a major error in late December and early January, when they tried to prevent disclosures of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, even silencing health-care workers who tried to sound the alarm. China's leaders will have to live with these mistakes, even if they succeed in resolving the crisis and adopting adequate measures to prevent a future outbreak.

What is less clear is why other countries think it is in their interest to keep referring to China's initial errors, rather than working toward solutions. For many governments, naming and shaming China appears to be a ploy to divert attention from their own lack of preparedness. Equally concerning is the growing criticism of the World Health Organization, not least by US President Donald Trump, who has attacked the organization for supposedly failing to hold the Chinese government to account. At a time when the top global priority should be to organize a comprehensive coordinated response to the dual health and economic crises unleashed by the coronavirus, this blame game is not just unhelpful but dangerous.

Globally and at the country level, we desperately need to do everything possible to accelerate the development of a safe and effective vaccine, while in the meantime stepping up collective efforts to deploy the diagnostic and therapeutic tools necessary to keep the health crisis under control. Given that there is no other global health organization with the capacity to confront the pandemic, the WHO will remain at the center of the response, whether certain political leaders like it or not.

Having dealt with the WHO to a modest degree during my time as chairman of the UK's independent Review on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), I can say that it is similar to most large, bureaucratic international organizations. Like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the United Nations, it is not especially dynamic or inclined to think outside the box. But rather than sniping at these organizations from the sidelines, we should be working to improve them. In the current crisis, we should be doing everything we can to help both the WHO and the IMF to play an effective, leading role in the global response.

As I have argued before, the IMF should

expand the scope of its annual Article IV assessments to include national public-health systems, given that these are critical determinants in a country's ability to prevent or at least manage a crisis like the one we are now experiencing. I have even raised this idea with IMF officials themselves, only to be told that such reporting falls outside their remit because they lack the relevant expertise.

That answer was not good enough then, and it definitely isn't good enough now. If the IMF lacks the expertise to assess public-health systems, it should acquire it. As the COVID-19 crisis makes abundantly clear, there is no useful distinction to be made between health and finance. The two policy domains are deeply interconnected, and should be treated as such.

In thinking about an international response to today's health and economic emergency, the obvious analogy is to the 2008 global financial crisis. Everyone knows that crisis started with an unsustainable US housing bubble, which had been fed by foreign savings, owing to the lack of domestic savings in the United States. When the bubble finally burst, many other countries sustained more harm than the US did, just as the COVID-19 pandemic has hit some countries much harder than it hit China.

And yet, not many countries around the world sought to single out the US for presiding over a massively destructive housing bubble, even though the scars from that previous crisis are still visible. On the contrary, many welcomed the US economy's return to sustained growth in recent years, because a strong US economy benefits the rest of the world.<sup>2</sup>

So, rather than applying a double standard and fixating on China's undoubtedly large errors, we would do better to consider what China can teach us. Specifically, we should be focused on better understanding the technologies and diagnostic techniques that China used to keep its (apparent) death toll so low compared to other countries, and to restart parts of its economy within weeks of the height of the outbreak.

And, for our own sakes, we also should be considering what policies China could adopt to put itself back on a path toward 6% annual growth, because the Chinese economy inevitably will play a significant role in the global recovery. If China's post-pandemic growth model makes good on its leaders' efforts in recent years to boost domestic consumption and imports from the rest of the world, we will all be better off.



## O-PED

By Arancha González

## How Global Public Health Could Revive Multilateralism

*In the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, national responses are vital, but in the medium term, international cooperation will be our best weapon. And reforming and reinforcing the institutions and mechanisms that underpin such cooperation will be our best defense against future global threats.*

**M**ADRID - As the world struggles to contain COVID-19 and mitigate its impact on our lives and livelihoods, it should be clear to everyone that international cooperation is the only effective way to win the battle. National responses are vital, but in the medium term, multilateralism will be our best weapon in this fight - and our best defense against future global threats.

My country, Spain, is on the front lines of the pandemic. The coronavirus hit us earlier and harder than most other countries. We are mourning thousands of deaths. Our health system has been put to an extreme test. The public is enduring long confinement with exemplary civic duty. And we have had to take unprecedented measures to safeguard our economy.

As governments, our primary responsibility is toward our nationals. But we know that no country will be completely safe until all control the pandemic and, eventually, eradicate it. Our initial international disunion has only strengthened our enemy, moving us further away from our shared goal.

Drawing on some of the lessons we are still learning, we urgently need to devise a more effective approach to global public health that integrates new international, European, and national policies and initiatives.

First, at the international level, we need a more effective framework to prevent, detect, and respond to diseases and pandemics, rooted in reinforced institutions and new mechanisms designed to prevent some of the failures we have witnessed. The new institutional arrangements should be based on a revitalized and reformed World Health Organization, with wider mandates and greater enforcement authority. The WHO ought to have the capacity to design and impose better protocols for preparedness and reaction, compel data sharing, and mobilize whatever resources are needed.

A global health framework with teeth must also be agile enough to cover the whole chain of public-health interventions, from scientific research and early warning to policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. That's why, aside from necessary reforms of the WHO's decision-making process and its Emergency Committee, the potential of other international platforms and organizations to contribute to the global health system we need should not be overlooked.

For example, the G20 and the G7 can help marshal the necessary political will. The World Bank and other regional development banks are uniquely well positioned to mobilize resources toward health-care reform. And organizations like the OECD have the analytical firepower to distill best health policies and practices. Overall, we need to advance a "one health approach" that brings together the environmental, economic, social, and security dimensions of public health.

Second, the European Union should provide a model of preparedness and crisis management that other regions might emulate, by pooling resources and devising new mechanisms for joint action. Besides leading in the establishment of a new and stronger global health framework, the EU can and should improve its own internal coordination. After all, it was sectoral collaboration on coal and steel that gave birth to the EU, the most innovative global governance mechanism that the world has seen. A similar level of ambition is now needed to combat the health challenges we share.

Deeper European integration in this area would yield several significant benefits. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control should gain greater autonomy and resources. A real European Crisis Management Unit could be established, with the means to ensure a rapid response to an emergency. Systematic stress tests on national health systems should also be conducted to assess EU members states' resilience against shocks. Like the rigorous stress tests conducted on our financial sectors, the process should allow for shortcomings to be addressed, best practices to be shared, and coordination tools to be developed.

Moreover, the EU should invest in joint databases, medical reserves, and stockpiles. Likewise, it should harmonize protocols and foster scientific collaboration on developing treatments and vaccines. In the immediate term, European countries should cooperate on a coordinated transition strategy to restart the economy without triggering a new outbreak.

Finally, at the domestic level, we all have much to do - as a duty not only to ourselves and our countries' inhabitants, but also to our neighbors and the international community at large. In Spain, we will establish a commission to assess the state of our health-care system and fix its weaknesses and shortcomings. But, because we know that pandemics affect the world's most vulnerable people the hardest, we will also reinforce our health diplomacy. Strengthening national health systems requires sharing our experience with other countries and learning from theirs, as well as placing a higher priority on health-sector reforms in our development cooperation.

If we take steps like those proposed here, this pandemic will leave us better prepared for the next one. But we should seek a bigger silver lining. International cooperation on health issues should be extended to other global "public bads" that we have failed to address effectively: climate change, armed conflicts, poverty, rising inequality, international migration, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and more. The urgency of these challenges may seem less pressing now, but the threats they pose to all of us persist.

In our interconnected world, we need to revive multilateralism by making it more coherent and fit for purpose. That means reinforcing the institutions and mechanisms that work, reforming or eliminating those that don't, and creating those we need. This crisis reminds us of our fragility and the importance of international unity. It leaves no doubt that we are in this together. And it makes clear why we should view closer cooperation on global public health as a catalyst for the multilateralism we need.

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## OPINION

By Jeremy Adelman

## The Moral Crisis of the Pandemic

*COVID-19 has intensified our dependence on local communities, and we are riveted by stories of community resilience in the face of an unseen peril. But will we be able to think broadly and deeply enough to muster the commitment needed to confront the plight of distant strangers?*

**P**RINCETON - COVID-19 has renewed the significance of locality in our lives. Social isolation and, in many places, the limits of national authority have highlighted the importance of close-to-home resources and bottom-up solutions to an invisible menace. International trade and travel have brought the virus into our neighborhoods and workplaces, but regional and local health services have had to mobilize to contain the pandemic.

Not surprisingly, we are riveted by stories of community resilience in the face of an unseen peril. We observe this acuity and resourcefulness in the daily briefings of US state governors and see it in the forbearance of neighbors and the sacrifices of health-care workers. National figures? Not so much. We continue to tell ourselves, "The world is a dangerous place. Thank goodness for neighbors and local authorities and institutions."

Yet the crisis we are facing is fundamentally global. If we breathe a sigh of relief as the contagion crests in China, France, or the United States, and resume our pre-pandemic lives, we won't be prepared when the next outbreak occurs on distant shores. We cannot turn our backs on the destiny of people beyond our borders. If we do, the global health and economic crisis will become a moral crisis of globalization.

We may celebrate local and regional responses. But will we be able to think broadly and deeply enough to muster the commitment needed to confront the plight of distant strangers? Or will the pandemic and its economic fallout become an ethical minefield in which benighted self-interest is our only guide?

As the coronavirus spreads beyond the hubs of Asia, Europe, and North America, it will continue to push into new frontiers in Africa and Latin America, where testing and treatment are extremely limited in many areas. In Latin America, the world's most unequal region, over 50,000 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed so far, in a population of about 650 million. Africa has recorded only about 10,000 cases so far, in a population of 1.3 billion. These are open frontiers for COVID-19.

COVID-19 will plow through the least-prepared and most vulnerable of these societies. Making a bad situation worse, many have experienced rising political tension and instability during the past year.

These developing areas suffer from a combination of weak governance, extreme inequality (especially in big cities), and heightened migration. In the past decade, millions have fled violence and ecological pressures in epicenters like Honduras, the source of the "migrant caravans" that whipped US President Donald Trump into a xenophobic frenzy more than a year ago, and South Sudan, from which about 2.3 million refugees have fled to neighboring countries. These are not societies and regimes equipped to cope with a pandemic. Fleeing is the means to survive. But taking refuge elsewhere risks compounding the problem by exporting it.

If we don't start thinking and acting now, the default solution will be to turn countries into mortuaries through a combination of barbed wire and border patrols. Consider Venezuela, where the authorities have confirmed only 189 cases - a number that few believe. Venezuela has long been suffering from severe institutional decomposition, becoming in recent years the Western Hemisphere's worst humanitarian catastrophe. Inmates are starving in prisons. More than half of children under five years old are malnourished, 16% of them acutely so. Almost five million Venezuelans, about 15% of the population, have fled, mostly to neighboring countries.

As the coronavirus inevitably surges in Venezuela, the country's chronic political crisis will cripple any effort to contain its spread or mitigate its effects. As with Africa's weakest states, people will flee in droves, as they have already, causing a public health crisis in countries like Brazil and especially Colombia. The result will be a regionwide economic and humanitarian crisis.

But the problem is not limited to the likes of Venezuela and South Sudan. COVID-19 will hit all the world's refugees hardest. Right now, there are officially 70 million - a number that does not include those displaced by climate change or other migrant populations. Nearly all of them lack access to government and civic resources that could protect them. By definition, they do not have access to the state and civic resources that have come to the rescue in Asia, Europe, and North America.

What will happen in refugee camps managed by the United Nations and NGOs, some of them on the scale of cities, that are already surrounded by barbed wire? And what will happen to the 46% of global refugees who do not live in camps, as in Jordan, South Africa, and Mexico, but who, because the host societies treat them as pariahs, don't or can't seek help from local authorities?

We can get ready. Global responses have been essential in stopping previous epidemics. Ebola first erupted in central Africa in 1976. In each outbreak, local health authorities and international experts joined forces to contain its spread. During the last major wave in West Africa in 2014-2016, President Barack Obama's administration teamed up with the World Health Organization to support local efforts by providing protective equipment, relief supplies, and treatment units.

The challenge now is to prevent our resources from being over-extended, or even exhausted, by the time the disease ravages the global have-nots. Fortunately, we will also have learned what works and what doesn't, and we will be stress-tested.

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# President Weah's SOE Plans to Legislature

April 13, 2020

Honorable Bhofal Chambers  
SPEAKER  
House of Representatives  
Capitol Building  
Monrovia, Liberia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I present my compliment and write to inform you of the devastation caused by the Coronavirus pandemic around the world. Globally, almost 2 million people have been infected by the virus, tens of thousands have died, and many more tens of thousands are predicted to lose their lives. The pandemic has overwhelmed the capacity of advanced healthcare systems, and has brought the economies of both developed and developing nations almost to a complete halt.

Here in our own country, the pandemic is already having serious impact. Health authorities have put the number of active cases to date at 48, with five recorded deaths and three recoveries. Linked to the 48 active cases are hundreds of persons who are presently under quarantine in designated Personal Observation Centers (POCs) around the country, or being contact-traced across various communities. Preliminary economic impacts have been observed in the form business slowdown with its passthrough impact on Government revenue. For March 2020, fiscal authorities have observed a 50 percent drop in expected revenue and are projecting revenue decline from COVID-19 to be more than \$32 million, or more than one percent of GDP, for the remainder of FY 2019/20.

Mr. Speaker, these impacts will have serious implications for both our health delivery system and for our macroeconomy, which had seen strong improvements in recent months prior to the onset of COVID-19. As with most countries around the world, economic growth will be negative for 2020, and the Government is frantically working to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the wider economy.

Recognizing these risks, the Government was quick to move against COVID-19. Informed by the devastation caused by the Ebola Viral Disease in 2014, and building from our national experience from that epidemic, the Government took prompt actions in early February 2020 to prepare against COVID-19, quarantining arrivals from highly affected countries long before any other country in Africa began such action. This was the preparedness stage that saw the mobilization of various Government entities and serious coordination with our development partners. The Star Base facility was renovated as a POC to host arrivals from highly infected countries, and the Government began using hotels as POC during the preparedness stage.

At a Joint Cabinet and Development Partner update on Liberia's preparedness held on March 13, 2020 in the cabinet room, the Government announced a Special Presidential Advisory Committee on Coronavirus (SPACOC) over which I have personally presided as Chairman, mobilizing the entire Government around the fight against COVID-19, dealing with operational and strategic issues and challenges.

I have also instituted the Executive Committee on Coronavirus (ECOC) as the operational arm of SPACOC that will focus on community initiatives and outreach as well as on logistical coordination. ECOC will support the national health and epidemiological systems built by the Liberian Government and its development partners after Ebola, using an all of Government, all-of-Society, risk-based and science-based approach that has proved highly successful against COVID-19 in the People's Republic of China and in other Asian countries.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in profoundly thanking our international development partners for rallying to Liberia's assistance during this difficult time in the world. Confronted by COVID-19 themselves, several of our bilateral partners are pledging to fund gaps in our National Response Plan, and are realigning resources in their current program to help with the COVID-19 fight in Liberia. The Government is working with several embassies and bi-lateral aid agencies to support and strengthen our National Response. Our multilateral partners are also generously coming to our aid. The World Bank is providing \$17 million to partly finance the National Response Plan. The European Union is moving to rapidly disburse at different stages almost \$15 million from both pre-COVID-19 budget support and reallocations. The Government is working with the African Development Bank to determine the Bank's support to Liberia under AfDB's recently announced \$10 billion COVID-19 support to African countries.

The Government has also requested support under the International Monetary Funds' Catastrophic Containment Relief (CRR) Trust, which provides grants for debt relief for the poorest and most vulnerable countries that are hit by catastrophic natural or public health disasters. The Government is also requesting support under the IMF's Rapid Credit Facility, which will provide general budget support. The full extent of these packages of support are being developed.

But Mr. Speaker, even as we move to mobilize resources and engage our development partners to support our National Response and Economic Recovery Plans, and even as our health teams have worked assiduously on testing, contact tracing, community outreach and on various aspects of our national response, you will have to agree with me that COVID-19 has now entered a new phase in Liberia and requires an enhanced and elevated national response. The evolution of the disease in communities means that the dynamics of our management of the disease has to significantly change, requiring much stronger additional measures to delay and contain the spread of this highly contagious virus, in order to keep our people safe.

Evidence of community spread means our people face a very serious risk in their day to day interactions, since the one fact that is known about the disease is that it is spread mainly through person-to-person interaction. Densely populated urban centers and market places where a mass of people interact daily are a dreadful recipe for transmission and have to be avoided for a period of time. COVID-19 is more contagious than Ebola, so the level of human interactions permitted during Ebola cannot be allowed to go in the current crisis.

Stopping the spread requires freezing mass interaction for a period of time, to enable health authorities easily identify and reach infected persons and prevent them from infecting others. If this infection chain is not broken, Mr. Speaker, the crisis will lead to

more deaths, and overrun our already strained healthcare and economic capacity. Evidence from countries show that as the number of COVID-19 infections grow, so does the number of deaths, and these two are sufficient to paralyze our society with fear, and collapse our social and economic systems, which will lead to further hardship.

Mr. Speaker, the combination of the above 'facts and circumstances' means Liberia is presently at war with an invisible enemy that presents a 'clear and present danger' to our lives, to our way of life as Liberians, to our economy and to our nation. For the good of public health and safety and for safety and health of each individual Liberian, we must all pay the smaller price in limiting our freedoms to move as we choose and the smaller costs in business losses or declining Government revenue for a brief period to avoid paying the bigger and higher price that comes with social, economic and national collapse.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, in keeping with my first order of business as President of the Republic of Liberia, which is to protect and safeguard the lives of the Liberian people, I sought recourse to the authority granted me under Articles 85, 86, 87, and 88 of the Liberian Constitution, and after due consultation with you Mr. Speaker of the House of Representatives and with the President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate, as required by law, I have declared a State of Emergency, that commenced on Friday, April 10 at 11:59 PM, in and throughout the Republic of Liberia, for a period of three (3) weeks, renewable until the threat to Liberia from the Covid-19 virus no longer exists, or is reasonably contained.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Article 88 of the Liberian constitution, I am required to lay before the Honorable National Legislature the "facts and circumstances" appertaining to the declared State of Emergency within seven days as of April 8, 2020. In my judgment, I have done so in the preceding pages and pray the Honorable National Legislature finds ample justification for concurrence.

Under the declared State of Emergency, all 15 counties in the Republic of Liberia are hereby quarantined from 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 10, 2020, until further notice. Movements between counties are strictly prohibited. No person shall be permitted to enter or leave or in any way cross the borders of one county into another, except for Montserrado County and Margibi County which are quarantined as a single unit. As a further measure under this State of Emergency, all Liberians and residents within the borders of Montserrado County, Margibi County, Nimba County, and Grand Kru County are to STAY AT HOME for the next 14 days, beginning at 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 10, 2020.

Throughout this period, residents may leave home only for essential journeys for reasons of health and food, which should be restricted to local communities only, and be limited to a single person per household for a maximum of one hour.

Exceptions shall be made for persons who are designated as essential staff in government offices, banks, supermarkets, and other business establishments such as hotels, petrol stations, and health facilities to travel directly to work and return directly home. All such commercial activities are to be closed no later than 3:00 p.m.

All non-essential businesses and Government offices will remain closed, with the exception of essential businesses, health facilities and a few key government offices, such as the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Bank of Liberia, the National Port Authority, the Liberia Revenue Authority, the Monrovia City Corporation, and the Liberia Broadcasting System, and accredited media, where only a limited number of staff will be given passes to work.

Other government offices may be designated as exempt based on the essential nature of their function. Meanwhile, non-exempt government employees and people in the private sector are encouraged to work from home.

Also exempted from these restrictions are: (a) production, distribution, and marketing of food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, and medicine; (b) environmental and sanitation activities; (c) members of the security forces assigned to lawful duties; (d) essential staffs of electricity, water, telecommunications, banking, and hotels, and (e) the staff of fuel stations.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has been instructed to engage the leaders of the various marketing associations in counties under this STAY-AT-HOME order to make satisfactory arrangements about the operation of markets during this period, so as to ensure the observance of social distance and enhanced hygiene protocols.

In all other counties not under this STAY-AT-HOME order, residents are to stay within their respective local communities until otherwise ordered.

I have ordered the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Chairman of the National Joint Security to enforce this STAY-AT-HOME order beginning as of the effective date.

All Liberians and foreign residents are encouraged to abide by these measures, even under the most difficult circumstances. We should all learn from the experience of Ebola. We all will have to give up certain freedoms for the time-being, until we can get through this. This is why we have found it necessary to declare this State of Emergency.

However, Honorable Speaker, while the desire to protect and save the lives of Liberians as contained in the above 'facts and circumstances' provide ample justification for the State of Emergency, the Government is equally under obligation to address social and economic ramifications deriving therefrom.

The State of Emergency has imposed necessary economic costs on Liberians and the broader economy in order to achieve a public health and a public safety objective. Depending on the course of events in the coming weeks and months, even our constitutional electoral processes may be impacted, an outcome that would require due consideration from your Honorable selves. These COVID-19 costs may well undermine the public health and public safety aims of the State of Emergency if the costs are not addressed, making it necessary to bring to the attention of the Honorable National Legislature some measures and programs that are necessary to complement measures announced in the State of Emergency.

This section of my letter will summarize the key components of these programs and measures. Their details will be worked out between our respective branches of Government. Let it also be made clear, Mr. Speaker, that as a country we cannot afford full extensions of these measures, but through a combination of national budget reallocations and



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# Yekeh's ex-security can't remember testimony

By Winston W. Parley

Montserrado County Representative Yekeh Kolubah's former chief of security Abu Keita says he can't remember what he said at the police

dropped charges against him, Keita explained Wednesday, 15 April that he worked for Kolubah as a security man, claiming that the lawmaker instructed him on 3 June 2019 to get Emmanuel Freeman by

narration in the court that he was invited by police for investigation, and he made and signed a statement.

Mr. Kolubah and his former bodyguards and supporters were jointly indicted last year by prosecution over claims that the lawmaker ordered his bodyguards to beat and wound Freeman for his alleged refusal to accept T-shirts and leaflets printed for the June 7, 2019 Save the State peaceful protest organized by the Council of Patriots (COP).

The indictment says Oliver Konneh, Abu Keita, Mohammed Keita, and Johnson Skpor illegally arrested Emmanuel Freeman in Gay Town, Old Road Community on 5 June at 4:30, stripped him naked, handcuffed him and severely beat him with sticks, rocks and piece of iron on his head and other parts of the victim's body.

Prosecutors claim in the indictment that the bodyguards acted on Rep. Kolubah's order, with allegation made that Rep. Kolubah came out of this house "with a pistol" in his

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7



Representative Yekeh Kolubah

station while being investigated at the time for beating one Emmanuel Freeman on the alleged instruction of his former boss, defendant Kolubah.

Testifying as sixth State witness after prosecutors

all cause for fear that Freeman would have disrupted a June 7 program.

"I can't remember," the witness testifies in response to a defense lawyer's inquiry as to what he said at the police station in follow up to Keita's

# Liberian child right advocate gets letter of support

By Lewis S. Teh

A Liberian child advocate Lisa T. Cooper has been recognized and given a letter of support for her advocacy for Liberian children from Kids' Rights Foundation.

Kids' Right Foundation is an international organization based in Amsterdam, and is heavily involved with working with children to create a world in which their rights are guaranteed, and they are enabled to realize their great potential.

Speaking to this paper in an exclusive interview recently, Lisa Cooper said her decision to get involved into child advocacy is to curtail violence against children and make their voices heard.

"Violence against women and children is an everyday phenomenon here in Liberia. It is against this backdrop that I established the project," Lisa explains.

She notes that people play

games with some parents who are unable to cater to their children, bringing children from rural areas with false promises that they are bringing them to urban areas for schooling.

In the end, she says those children will become breadwinners for their guardians instead of being sent to school.

Through her advocacy, she says she got the letter from the international NGO Kids' Right, informing her that it was proud of her work and assured her of its support to her initiative.

Lisa urges other young Liberians to get involved in community initiatives that will bring development, as the government can't do it all.

She notes that she established the "I AM You Movement" to work in that direction, because kids are change makers.--Edited by Winston W. Parley

# Opposition foresees

Starts from page 11

payment is done.

The lawmakers state that the "other creditors" as alluded by the president creates a big opening for fraud as was the case with the US\$25 million mop-up exercise.

They note that channeling payments through these informal means presents too many loopholes for theft and political manipulation and should be abandoned as it is a dangerous option.

Senator Lawrence says on behalf of her colleagues, the government should consider giving it directly to the women and petty traders so their children don't go to bed hungry or die of malaria, instead of giving the money to creditors.

She notes that before approving US\$40 million for a food aid program, the Legislature needs to ensure that the funding requirements

for an effective holistic fight against COVID-19 are secured.

She indicates that this includes adequate and prompt payment of salaries and incentives of health workers, purchase of equipment including ventilators, personal protective equipment, and hospital beds, among others.

"Additionally, the Legislature needs to assure itself that the Government has the capacity to make timely payment of civil servant salaries, as the current delay in the monthly payment of civil servants' salaries is still an issue of concern," she asserts.

She suggests that the government identifies the proposed sources or budget lines that will be cut to fund the US\$25 million program and specify the World Bank projects that will suffer cuts in order to fund the food aid program.--Edited by Winston W. Parley

# Fake soldiers arrested

By Bridgett Milton

The Joint Security has arrested two persons impersonating as officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).

Suspects Tony Koffa and Eugene Shaman were picked

Sherman, an ex-soldier wore AFL uniform trousers. He was arrested near Bong Mines bridge, Bushrod Island harassing peaceful citizens under the guise of enforcing the State of Emergency and lockdown, while suspect Koffa

investigation.

He assures the public the AFL remains vigilant in enforcing the lock-down but not by brutalizing people.

He warns the public to desist from impersonating as security officers, noting that



up by the Liberia National Police and soldiers of the AFL in Monrovia.

Assistant Defense Minister for Press and Public Affairs Sam Collins, says suspect

was arrested in Gainesville community, committing similar unlawful act.

Minister Collins explains the two imposters have been turned over to the Police for

such practice is unacceptable.

Police spokesman Moses Carter discloses the LNP has arrested a total of seven violators who are currently

custody for impersonating as national security officers.

Moses promises that the fundamental rights of all residents would be respected by the Joint Security during the State of Emergency and lockdown.

He warns Liberians to abide by all health protocols in the supreme interest of the Country.

President George Weah recently declared a State of Emergency for 21 days and 14 days of lockdown in Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Grand Kru counties, described as affected areas.

The Legislature is expected to endorse the State of Emergency shortly thru a Joint Resolution from both houses.



MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# T-Williams Community Initiative gives to District#13

**T**-Williams Community Initiative, a local group donates over 50 bags of 25kg bags of rice to several communities in Montserrado County District#13 as part of its awareness program against the COVID-19. Recipients of the gesture include residents of Bassa Town, New Georgia Gulf and

expelling the coronavirus out of Liberia. He says this is Mr. Williams, who is currently in the United States way of identifying with fellow Liberians back home. Mr. Togba clarifies that the donation by TWCI has no political undertone, as it was purely meant to reach people in need of assistance during this period of national emergency,

Organization as well as the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention to keep safe. According to him, the TWCI is a non-for-profit institution established by the diaspora Liberian Tijanni Williams to help fellow Liberians back home. The organization recently kicked off out what is described as Pandemic Emergency Assistance Project or PEAP, across the district,



Chocolate City, respectively, among others, all of which are situated in New Georgia Township, Gardnersville. Program Director, Francis SackorTogba, Sr. says on behalf of CEO Tijanni Williams, the organization is delighted to identifying with government's effort in

especially elderly and physically-challenged citizens. He adds that the campaign will continue throughout District#13 calls on residents of the district and Liberians at large to follow all prescribed protocols being instituted by health authorities in the country and the World Health

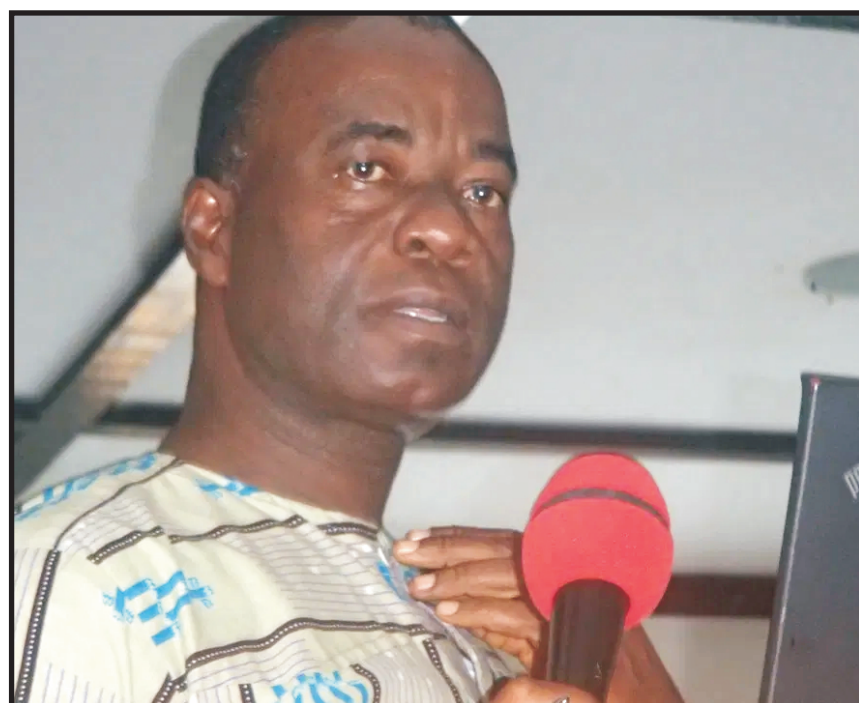
which buttresses Government of Liberia's Covid-19 Response Awareness Campaign. At the official launch, the organization distributed several assorted items, including buckets for hands washing, bleach and detergents, among community dwellers.

# BBC correspondent identifies with kinsmen

**L**iberian Journalist and BBC correspondent, Jonathan Paye-Layleh, has distributed over 160 large anti-COVID-19 hand-washing buckets and detergents to two administrative districts in his native Nimba County. Districts covered include Meinpea-Mahn, Leewehpea-Mahn and Wee-Gbehyi, respectively as his personal contribution to the current fight against the deadly virus. Hospitals and radio stations in Ganta and Sanniquellie, NimbaCounty also benefited from the gesture with an estimated cost around US\$1,800.

district officials invited to their respective headquarters to receive the items for onward distribution to over 100 towns. Mr. Paye-Layleh, a son of Meinpea-Mahn District, also

provided 60,000 Liberian dollars to the three districts to facilitate the distribution. Meinpea-Mahn and Leewehpea-Mahn Districts and a small portion of Wee-Gbehyi District constitute Electoral District8 in Nimba County.



A dispatch from a team coordinating the process, details that the distribution was carefully done through the administrative structures of the districts with a few

# Yekeh's ex-security

Cont'd from page 6

hand and allegedly remarked: "This is the man, we'll zero him tonight." After Mr. Kolubah was granted a separate trial by Criminal Court "A" to enable him attend legislative functions on Tuesdays and Thursdays while he faces trial on other days in the week, the government here subsequently dropped charges against the rest of the inditees, leaving the lawmaker a lone defendant in the case.

Kolubah, a staunch critic of President George Manneh Weah, faces charges of alleged aggravated assault, criminal attempt to commit murder, kidnapping, criminal solicitation and criminal facilitation.

His former chief of security, now a government witness, explains that following Kolubah's instruction to get Freeman by all cause, he (Keita), Frank O. Morgan and Paul Kun "went Chuboy," an area in the Old Road Community for Freeman, saying "we saw Emmanuel Freeman under Market Kitchen and he escaped."

He notes that after he and

his two men arrested Freeman and took him to Rep. Kolubah's yard, police came to the victim's rescue, following which he (Keita) was invited by police for investigation which led him to make and sign a statement at the police headquarters.

"We brought him in the yard and we put handcuff on his hand under the market kitchen and he gave us the instruction to [naked] him," the witness testifies.

But he says he can't remember what he said at the police station, and denies making stating to investigators that he and the two others arrested Freeman because the victim had allegedly stolen an iPhone.

When they took Freeman to Kolubah's yard, Keita claims that the defendant came outside [in] underwear with a gun, and allegedly said: "[Look], we will kill you."

Suddenly he says police got the information and went there, but Rep. Kolubah went in his yard upon noticing that police were coming. According to Keita, police took Freeman to JFK.

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"The message I have brought to you all is clear and simple; if stronger and bigger countries to which we should turn for help when diseases break out and overwhelm us are themselves finding it hard to contain the spread of the Coronavirus, all we in small and weak countries should do is to follow the health protocols," he pleaded, and added, "If you see me travelling all the way from Monrovia with these items to you, it means the situation is serious and nothing to joke with."

Jonathan reminded his kinsmen to see his donation of buckets and soap as an indication that fighting to defeat the virus in Liberia is a national call to duty.

"So what this means is even if a household cannot afford to buy a bucket because obviously times are hard, you can simply put clean soap-

water in a bottle and hang it before your home for regular hand-washing," he told the chiefs who nodded in approval.

After assessing the road conditions in some of the towns he had to travel through to reach his people, Mr. Paye-Layleh promised to donate a brand new chainsaw in coming months to the people of Meinpea-Mahn District to help mobilize local materials to repair the many log bridges linking some of the major towns.

The chainsaw, he assured, will be delivered once the national government has relaxed the current restrictions and people are now allowed to move around and work again.

The first two roads on which bridges are to be repaired in the district are the ones linking the historic town of Kpein with Gbehyi-Duayee and Constance's Rubber Farm to Duo.



# Français

## Covid-19 / Confinement : Weah présente son plan d'action

Le président George Manneh Weah a demandé à l'Assemblée législative de réaffecter 25 millions de dollars américains pour le reste de l'exercice budgétaire 2019/2020 à l'appui du plan de relance du gouvernement visant à faciliter la distribution de nourriture pour les ménages les plus démunis pour une période de 60 jours. Les Libériens

resteront confinés dans le cadre de la lutte contre le coronavirus dont les cas continuent d'augmenter.

Le président Weah souhaite que le gouvernement demande au Programme alimentaire mondial de mettre en œuvre le plan de relance proposé et paie intégralement ses dettes intérieures aux fournisseurs vulnérables, paie les factures d'électricité et d'eau des ménages des comtés touchés.

« Le coût total pour couvrir cette période dans les zones touchées et dans d'autres domaines pourrait s'élever à environ 40 millions de dollars. La Banque mondiale a accepté de financer cet écart hors budget à hauteur de 10 millions de dollars US, en utilisant des ressources réallouées aux projets existants », a-t-il dit dans une

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Le tribunal rejette la requête du député Yekeh Kolubah

Le président du tribunal pénal « A », le juge Roosevelt Z. Willie, a rejeté la requête du représentant du comté de Montserrado, Yekeh Kolubah, d'annuler sa décision. Le tribunal a pourtant récemment accordé la demande de l'accusation d'abandonner les charges d'autres accusés

qui avaient été conjointement inculpés avec le législateur pour crimes multiples.

Le juge Willie a statué mardi 14 avril que le parquet avait à tout moment le droit de déposer un nolleprosequi pour l'un des deux groupes d'accusés, s'il le souhaitait.

M. Kolubah et certains de ses gardes du corps et sympathisants ont été

conjointement inculpés d'avoir battu un certain Emmanuel Freeman pour avoir manifestement refusé de soutenir le fameux mouvement de protestation du 7 juin 2019.

M. Kolubah est jugé séparément sur la base de sa demande afin de participer aux séances parlementaires.

En statuant sur la requête en annulation, le juge Willie a expliqué que l'accusé Kolubah et les autres accusés font l'objet d'une indemnité de départ (dans le cadre d'un procès séparé) sur la base de la demande du législateur.

« D'un autre côté, la loi de l'article 18.3 de la loi de procédure pénale citée ci-dessus n'est applicable et ne devient une requête préalable à l'accusation que si l'accusé Yekeh Kolubah et les autres accusés sont jugés conjointement et où le procès a commencé et le jury ou le tribunal a commencé à entendre des éléments de preuve, le

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9

## Moratoire sur la dette des pays africains : sur le continent, les avis sont partagés

Alors que le FMI confirme que l'Afrique sera bien en récession cette année, les grands créanciers ont fait un geste : ils gèlent le service de la dette pour un groupe de 76 pays, dont quarante pays africains, ce qui va leur permettre de consacrer leurs ressources budgétaires à soutenir leur économie. Un moratoire donc, qui ne signifie pas une annulation. Sur le continent, la décision est saluée mais suscite aussi des réserves et des déceptions.

Pour ces 76 pays les remboursements cette année représentent 32 milliards de dollars : 12 milliards détenus par les États, 8 milliards par les créanciers privés - ceux-là seront gelés - et 12 milliards aux mains d'institution internationales, principalement la Banque mondiale, feront eux aussi l'objet d'un moratoire, si l'on en croit les déclarations d'intention du président de la Banque mondiale. La France voulait une annulation de la dette des pays africains. Pour l'instant, elle a obtenu un moratoire du club de Paris (les pays prêteurs) et du G20.

Les dettes des pays africains culminent aujourd'hui à 365 milliards de dollars, un chiffre produit avant la crise du coronavirus. Parmi les principaux créanciers : la Chine, 40% du montant total, les pays riches du Club de Paris, le FMI, la Banque mondiale, mais aussi de nombreux créanciers privés, entreprises ou gestionnaires de fonds.

Des attentes déçues

En Afrique, les ministres des Finances, réunis le 19 mars en visioconférence, avaient appelé à une suspension du paiement des intérêts des dettes pour l'année 2020 - soit 44 milliards de dollars - afin de pouvoir combattre le coronavirus et ses conséquences économiques.

Ils avaient également demandé un moratoire sur les intérêts et le principal des dettes des nations africaines « fragiles ». L'accord obtenu par la France est donc en deçà de leurs attentes.

Un moratoire ne suffit pas, estime l'économiste et chercheur sénégalais Moussa Demba Dembélé : « Le moratoire signifie pour l'instant on suspend le paiement, mais vous devez cette dette dans un proche avenir ; ce qui veut dire que le fardeau sera toujours là. Et ce n'est pas évident que dans un proche avenir, dans deux ans, dans trois ans, que les pays africains aient les moyens de payer cette dette. Et surtout que pour certains créanciers, ce moratoire risque d'être accompagné de pénalités. » Le chercheur sénégalais rappelle : « le président Macky Sall avait demandé l'annulation pure et simple de la dette. C'est une mesure qui est à la fois pressante et légitime pour permettre aux pays africains d'utiliser les ressources qui devraient aller au service de cette dette pour lutter contre cette pandémie. » Un

sentiment partagé par de nombreux acteurs de la société civile.

Cependant, cette annonce ne va pas résoudre les problèmes, remarque Broulaye Bagayoko, le secrétaire permanent du Comité pour l'annulation des dettes illégitimes en Afrique, le CADTM Afrique : « Pour eux, le moratoire c'est attendre la fin de la crise coronavirus. Quand ils font cela, c'est pour donner du temps aux pays pour pouvoir passer la crise du coronavirus et par la suite, il y aura un plan de la dette africaine, ce n'est pas du tout une solution pour nous. »

Tout ce qui permet à l'Afrique de dégager du budget immédiat pour répondre à la crise du coronavirus va dans le bon sens, estime pour sa part Messie Komlan, le secrétaire général du Forum de la société civile ouest africaine, FOSCAO - une organisation sous régionale créée par la Cédéao : « Mon grand-père dit que pour manger un éléphant, il faut le couper en petit morceau ; donc il faut aller étape par étape, et nous pensons que c'est une première bonne étape et nous continuons de pousser pour une annulation pure et simple. »

Messie Komlan espère en effet une annulation ou, pour le moins, une renégociation réelle des dettes africaines, et notamment des taux d'intérêts exorbitants pratiqués par certains créanciers. Résoudre les « problèmes structurels » des États

Alors l'annulation de la dette des pays africains sera-t-elle difficile à réaliser??

« Le principe est simple : les créanciers renoncent à leurs créances », pose l'économiste togolais Kako Nubokpo. Pour cet ancien ministre et doyen de l'Université de Lomé, le diable est dans le détail. « Il faut distinguer la dette publique de la dette privée » explique-t-il. « Sur la dette publique, les États peuvent être en première ligne et donc annuler la dette. Mais pour les dettes privées, ce sont les petits porteurs en général, donc beaucoup plus difficile à mettre en œuvre. »

Face à la crise du Covid-19, il est très important qu'il y ait une aide à l'Afrique ajoute cet ancien ministre : « L'Afrique a aujourd'hui un déficit de 66 milliards de dollars par rapport au financement de sa santé. Et donc par rapport à la crise du Covid-19, c'est important qu'il y ait une aide. La difficulté par rapport aux annulations de dettes, c'est qu'il y a la prime aux mauvais élèves. Ceux qui gèrent mal leur économie, alors que d'autres pays fournissent beaucoup d'efforts pour assainir leurs finances publiques. Il suffit de regarder les ratios d'aide sur PIB en Afrique. On a doublé la dette en dix ans en Afrique, on est passé de 30% à 60% du PIB aujourd'hui. Donc tant qu'on n'aura pas de réponse structurelle aux problèmes africains.



# Français

## Covid-19 / Confinement : Weah

communication adressée mardi au parlement.

Selon lui, ce programme aidera davantage les banques à accroître les prêts aux nouveaux emprunteurs. Il a rappelé aux législateurs que le gouvernement libérien a un stock important de dette intérieure couvrant plus d'une décennie et que le service de la dette a toujours été un défi pour le gouvernement.

La proposition du président fait suite à son décret de l'état d'urgence la semaine dernière en vue de freiner la propagation du Covid-19. Le Libéria compte plus d'une cinquantaine de cas de coronavirus dont six décès et 4 totalement guéris.

Le président Weah a précisé que son gouvernement veut que ce programme soit mis en œuvre par le Programme alimentaire mondial collaboration avec l'Etat du Libéria. « Pour ce faire, je mets en place un comité directeur national de soutien alimentaire COVID-19 comprenant les entités gouvernementales concernées et la communauté internationale de développement pour superviser ce processus », a-t-il expliqué.

Le président Weah a en outre dit à l'Assemblée législative qu'il y a quelques jours, la compagnie d'électricité (Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC)) a reçu un chèque de 4 millions de dollars américains, ce qui représente un règlement important des arriérés du gouvernement envers l'entité, ce qui représente aussi l'un des plus importants paiements uniques sur la facture d'électricité du gouvernement depuis des

années.

Il veut que le gouvernement prenne en charge les factures d'électricité et d'eau des ménages des comtés concernés pendant la période de confinement (STAY-AT-HOME).

De plus, le président Weah a fait savoir que le gouvernement travaillait avec les prêteurs pour faire preuve d'une certaine flexibilité à l'égard des emprunteurs vulnérables, car il est sûr que plusieurs petites commerçantes et petits commerçants informels, qui ont des dettes envers les banques commerciales et d'autres créanciers, enregistreront des pertes considérables en raison du confinement.

« Dans ce sens, je propose à l'honorable Assemblée législative que le gouvernement paie intégralement les dettes dues par les petites commerçantes et les petits commerçants des comtés concernés dans le cadre de la réaffectation budgétaire demandée », a-t-il ajouté.

"Nous avons un ensemble complet de soutien alimentaire à notre peuple en attendant votre examen et approbation de cette proposition", a-t-il ajouté. Selon lui, avant de proclamer l'état d'urgence, le gouvernement s'était engagé avec les partenaires concernés pour remédier à cette situation, sachant qu'il serait difficile d'atteindre les objectifs en ce qui concerne le confinement sans un soutien concomitant aux moyens de subsistance des Libériens confinés chez eux dans les zones touchées.

Le comité directeur aura un rôle de supervision, prescrira des règles et abordera les défis, tandis que le PAM mettra en œuvre le programme.

## Le tribunal rejette la requête

Procureur ne peut pas déposer une requête pour nolleprosequi pour les autres accusés », a déclaré le juge Willie.

Il a ajouté que « cela

aurait été une violation de l'article 18.3 de la loi de procédure pénale, mais pas lorsque les défendeurs sont séparés et font face à des procès séparés et distincts. »

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Jim O'Neill

## Rejeter la faute sur la Chine : une diversion dangereuse

**L**ONDRES - Tandis que fait rage la crise du Covid-19, les débats concernant le rôle de la Chine s'enflamment. D'après ce qu'on en sait, il ne fait aucun doute que certains fonctionnaires chinois ont commis une erreur très grave à la fin du mois de décembre et au début du mois de janvier, lorsqu'ils ont tenté d'empêcher que ne soient rendus publics les premiers cas imputables au coronavirus à Wuhan, allant jusqu'à réduire au silence des professionnels de soins de santé qui tentaient de sonner l'alarme. Les dirigeants chinois devront vivre avec le poids de ces fautes, même s'ils sont parvenus à résoudre la crise et à prendre les mesures adéquates pour éviter que ne se déclare un nouveau foyer épidémique.

Les raisons pour lesquelles d'autres pays pensent qu'il est dans leur intérêt de continuer à s'en prendre aux erreurs chinoises plutôt que d'œuvrer à trouver des solutions soulèvent en revanche plus de doutes. De nombreux gouvernements semblent vouloir distraire l'attention de leur propre impréparation en désignant la Chine à l'opprobre public. Les critiques de plus en plus vives à l'encontre de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé, et notamment du président des États-Unis Donald Trump [ayant récemment décidé de geler les contributions américaines à son fonctionnement], qui accuse la direction de l'agence de santé publique des Nations Unies de n'avoir pas su exiger de la Chine qu'elle rende des comptes, sont également inquiétantes. Au moment même où la priorité des priorités devrait être, au niveau mondial, d'organiser une réponse générale et coordonnée aux crises sanitaires et économiques déclenchées par le coronavirus, le jeu qui consiste à rejeter la faute sur autrui est non seulement inutile mais dangereux.

Au niveau mondial comme au niveau national, nous devons faire absolument tout ce qui est possible pour accélérer la mise au point d'un vaccin sûr et efficace, tout en redoublant collectivement d'efforts pour déployer les outils diagnostiques et thérapeutiques qui nous permettront de maintenir sous contrôle la crise sanitaire. Aucune autre organisation sanitaire mondiale n'ayant la capacité de lutter contre la pandémie, l'OMS demeure au centre du dispositif, n'en déplaise à certains dirigeants politiques.

Ayant eu affaire à l'OMS, au modeste niveau qui était le mien en tant que président de la revue indépendante sur la résistance microbienne (Review on Antimicrobial Resistance - AMR) commandée par le gouvernement du Royaume-Uni, je peux témoigner que l'agence onusienne ressemble à la plupart des grandes organisations bureaucratiques. Comme le Fonds monétaire international, la Banque mondiale, et les Nations Unies elles-mêmes, elle n'est ni spécialement dynamique ni encline à sortir des sentiers battus. Mais plutôt que de critiquer de l'extérieur du terrain ces organisations, nous devrions travailler à les améliorer. Face à la crise actuelle, nous devrions faire tout ce que nous pouvons pour aider tant l'OMS que le FMI à jouer un rôle efficace et de premier plan dans la réponse mondiale.

Comme je l'ai déjà dit, le FMI devrait étendre la

portée de ses missions annuelles de consultation au titre de l'article IV pour y inclure les systèmes de santé nationaux, qui sont un facteur déterminant de la capacité d'un pays à prévenir ou du moins à gérer une crise comme celle que nous connaissons actuellement. J'ai même soulevé cette idée auprès de hauts responsables du FMI, pour m'entendre dire que ce type d'évaluations sortaient de leur domaine de compétence car ils n'avaient pas l'expertise nécessaire pour les mener à bien.

La réponse n'était pas, alors, satisfaisante, et elle l'est encore moins aujourd'hui. Si le FMI n'a pas l'expertise nécessaire à l'évaluation des systèmes de santé publique, il doit l'acquérir. Comme le montre à l'envi la crise du Covid-19, il n'est d'aucune utilité de distinguer santé et finances. Ces deux domaines d'intervention sont profondément interdépendants et doivent être traités comme tels.

Si l'on considère la riposte internationale à l'urgence sanitaire et économique actuelle, l'analogie avec la crise financière mondiale de 2008 est évidente. Comme tout le monde le sait, cette crise se propagea à partir de l'éphémère bulle immobilière américaine, qu'avait alimentée l'épargne étrangère, étant donné les carences de l'épargne intérieure aux États-Unis. Lorsque finalement la bulle éclata, nombre d'autres pays subirent plus de dommages que les États-Unis, tout comme la pandémie de Covid-19 a touché certains pays beaucoup plus durement que la Chine.

Peu de pays pourtant, de par le monde, ont cherché à rejeter sur les États-Unis la responsabilité de cette bulle du logement hautement destructrice, alors même que les cicatrices de la crise en sont encore visibles. Bien au contraire. Nombreux furent ceux qui accueillirent avec joie le retour des États-Unis à une croissance soutenue ces dernières années, parce qu'une économie américaine forte profite au reste du monde.

Alors, plutôt que de faire deux poids deux mesures, et d'être obnubilés par les erreurs indiscutablement graves de la Chine, nous ferions mieux d'accorder notre attention à ce que cette dernière peut nous apprendre. Plus particulièrement, nous devrions nous attacher à mieux comprendre les technologies et les techniques de diagnostic que la Chine a mises en œuvre pour maintenir (apparemment) si bas, en comparaison des autres pays, le coût en vies humaines de la pandémie et relancer certains segments de son économie dans les semaines qui ont suivi le pic épidémique.

Et pour notre propre intérêt, nous devrions aussi considérer quelles mesures la Chine pourrait adopter afin de se remettre sur la voie d'une croissance annuelle de 6 %, car l'économie chinoise jouera inévitablement un rôle de poids dans la reprise mondiale. Si le modèle de croissance chinois d'après la pandémie parvient à récompenser les efforts déployés ces dernières années par les dirigeants du pays pour développer sa consommation intérieure et ses importations depuis le reste du monde, nous ne nous porterons tous que mieux.

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# President Weah's SOE Plans

Cont'd from page 5

planned support from bilateral and multilateral partners, we can derive the resources to support the affected counties to achieve our public health and safety aims in the current COVID-19 crisis.

## Food Support for Affected Households

I propose that for the remainder of FY 2019/20 the National Legislature re-appropriate the amount of US\$25 million to support food distribution to households in designated affected counties for the period of 60 days. The full costing to cover this period in affected and other areas may add up to around \$40 million. The World Bank has agreed to finance this gap off-budget to the tune of US\$10 million, using resources reallocated from existing projects.

With this, Mr. Speaker, we have a full package of food support to our people pending your consideration and approval of this proposal. Prior to my declaration of the State of Emergency, the Government had engaged with relevant partners to address this situation, knowing it would be difficult to achieve the aims of any pronounced STAY-AT-HOME order without a concomitant support for the livelihoods of Liberians remaining at home in affected areas.

The Government intends to have the World Food Program implement this program in collaboration with the Government. To ensure this, I am setting up a COVID-19 Food Support National Steering Committee comprising relevant Government entities and the international development community to provide oversight over this process. This set-up is in keeping with the All-of-Government and All-of-Society approach we are adopting in this stage of our management of COVID-19. The Steering Committee will have an oversight role, will prescribe rules and address challenges, while the WFP will implement the program.

## Electricity and Water Support during Stay-at-Home Program.

A few days ago, the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) received a check of US\$4 million dollars, representing a significant settlement of Government arrears to the entity. This is one of the largest single payments on Government electric bill in years. The LEC has submitted a COVID-19 electricity program that will be funded by this money. I propose to the Honorable Legislature that Government takes up the electricity bill of households in the affected counties for the duration of the STAY-AT-HOME order. I propose a similar support for the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation.

## Market Women and Small Informal Petty Traders Bank Loan Program

It is clear that several market women and small informal petty traders, who have loans with commercial banks and other creditors, will suffer significantly from the loss of number of selling and trading days occasioned by the Stay-At-Home order. The Government is working with lenders to show some understanding to our vulnerable borrowers. In this direction, I propose to the Honorable Legislature that the Government fully pays the loans owed by market women, and petty and small traders in affected counties as part of the requested budgetary reallocation. This will be a strong stimulus to these individuals. They have built their businesses from scratch with little or no help from the Government and deserve protection during these trying times. This program will further help the banks to increase lending to new borrowers.

## Government Domestic Debt Program

As I mentioned in my State of the Nation address in January, the Liberian Government holds a large stock of domestic debt spanning more than a decade. Servicing this debt has always been a challenge for Government and is a drag on the economy. In the current budget, we do not have appropriation to service these obligations. Prior to COVID-19, the Government was developing a program to reconcile and validate the existing stock of domestic debt. We have reached a consensus with the IMF under the IMF-supported Program that the payment of domestic arrears owed to vendors and suppliers of Government should be of high priority amid COVID-19's impact on the economy, and is a form of economic stimulus. Considering the tight fiscal space for the remainder of the current fiscal year, I propose that the National Legislature appropriates at least US\$ 15 million in the FY 2020/21 National Budget to begin servicing these arrears incurred in the last several years. Rules around servicing the recognized and validated stock of domestic debt under this program will be developed by the Government in collaboration with the IMF, as part of the request under the Rapid Credit Facility currently under consideration.

## Tax Policy and Administration Stimulus Program.

The Government is suspending for the period of six months the Surcharge Regulation that imposes an additional charge on imported goods that are also manufactured in Liberia. When instituted, this will encourage more importation without the additional cost that the surcharge imposes.

The Government is also immediately suspending the Pre-Shipment Inspections (PSI) penalty until otherwise notified. PSI requires importers to do an assessment of their consignment overseas (pre-shipment inspection) before importation.

## Other ideas or Programs to be suggested by the National Legislature

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that members of the National Legislature are brimming with similar ideas and I am eager to receive these as part of the approved.

Mr. Speaker, in the preceding pages, I have provided both 'facts and circumstances' surrounding the declared State of Emergency and programs that address social and economic issues arising from that declaration. Based on the above cited reasons, I, George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, in keeping with the Articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia as stated herein, request that the Legislature convenes in joint session of the both Houses to pass a resolution endorsing the State of Emergency as declared on April 8, 2020.

Please accept my sentiments of high esteem with the hope of unified strength to fight and defeat this Coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Sincerely

George Manneh Weah Sr.

# PERSPECTIVES

M. Gbala, Sr.  
Ma 8, 2020

## INDICTMENT AND GUILT OF THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT BY THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF CLLR. NWABUDIKE AS CHAIR OF THE NEC AND HIS QUESTIONABLE/ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

Indeed, there is no massive public wonder but shame, embarrassment and disgrace for the socio-economic and political conditions prevailing in the country, regarding:

- The abrupt withdrawal of the nomination of the Nigerian-born, "Liberian-naturalized citizen", Counsellor-at-Law NdubusiNwabudike as Chairman of Liberia's National Elections Commission (NEC) is, in fact, national as well as, in specific terms, for his alleged several questionable/illegal activities;
- The indictment/guilty-decision by the nation's high Court of Public Opinion is the result of revelations of several questionable/illegal activities by Cllr. Nwabudike in which the highest and some mid-level Government agencies and administrative officials are alleged to be involved by display of lack of *Credibility, Integrity and Commitment/loyalty*. For, these highest and mid-level government agencies and officials are responsible for and expected of the highest commitment to loyalty, transparency, credibility and integrity in government-top, executive management/administration.



But the recent revelations of *socio-economic and political intrigues, embarrassment and disgraceful activities by the alleged Nigerian "crook"* in which such high-level agencies of government and officials - *the Liberian Immigration Service (LIS), State University of Liberia (UL), the Liberia National Bar Association (LNBA), the Supreme court of Liberia, the National Legislature and the nation's Chief Executive Presidency* - were allegedly involved raise deeply-disturbing questions regarding the hotly-debated/debating issue of dual citizenship, also, with questions of public/private dishonesty, corruption and paralysis in management of the national economy.

These activities, *unfortunately, had been and are Liberian historical practices since 1847, the founding of the nation.*

But today's fast-paced activities concerned with socio-economic, political and development obligations/responsibilities driven by scientific innovations - *notably, information technology of public/private institutions* place emphasis on rational investment and **Management of Human Resources**, with functions and responsibilities to *recruit, interview, select/hire and place applicants having requisite qualifications not only for successful performance, but also, to protect the image of the institutions against dishonest and unethical practices.*

This process depends upon and utilizes the Resume` and interviews with diligent follow-up or verification of employment experiences and references indicated **on paper**, the resume'. But the Resume` of academic training/achievements and some work experiences **predicts, only basically**, successful work performance, not a positive **guarantee** that the candidate having an excellent resume` will perform successfully in the given position; not, even, the **character** of the candidate.

As a matter of fact, the resume` says very little or nothing about the character of the applicant in the community and/or in the workplace. This important, critical information regarding character or attributes and workplace attitudes - *honesty, openness, team work, cooperation/collaboration, ability to listen to and respect the views of others, irrespective of opposition, and the required behavioral patterns of commitment to democratic practices in top management* - are obtained only by diligent research and verification of references, the major responsibility of the Human Resource Departments.

But again, *this professional executive management system and requirement had been, and is, historically absent in Liberian management, particularly in Liberian government; thus, the result of Cllr. NdubusiNwabudike!*

Adding "*insult to injury*", the recent disclosures involving Cllr. Nwabudike and of Liberia's continuous, historical absence of commitment, credibility and integrity in the highest and mid-levels of government agencies and officials, particularly, at Government Health Protection institutions during this national/international deadly Pandemic of the coronavirus raise critical, crucial questions of survival of the poor, innocent, relatively uneducated men, women and children of this nation who are, now, rural-to-city migrants dwellers crammed in over-populated ghetto-slum "suburbs", surrounding the nation's Capital City of Monrovia.

At the Core of these illegal, Embarrassing Disclosures

The major Actor of the *Cast of Characters* of this intriguing, socio-economic and *Political Play* is the Nigerian attorney who seeks to hold on to his "naturalized" Liberian citizenship and, possibly, to his US-Liberia *dual citizenship of Liberia*, apparently, secured through his Liberian "connections".

Significantly, these disclosures/revelations open up, expose and make crystal clear, once again, in a continuous fashion, *Liberia's conscious attitude of failure, ignoring, lack of attention or inability to deal, diligently, against public wrong-doing efficiently/effectively, by speaking out forcefully, with "guts and the political will", particularly, with emphasis on the nation's structural economic and related problems concerned with democratic, political CHANGE.*



# Pay 3 months' salary advance

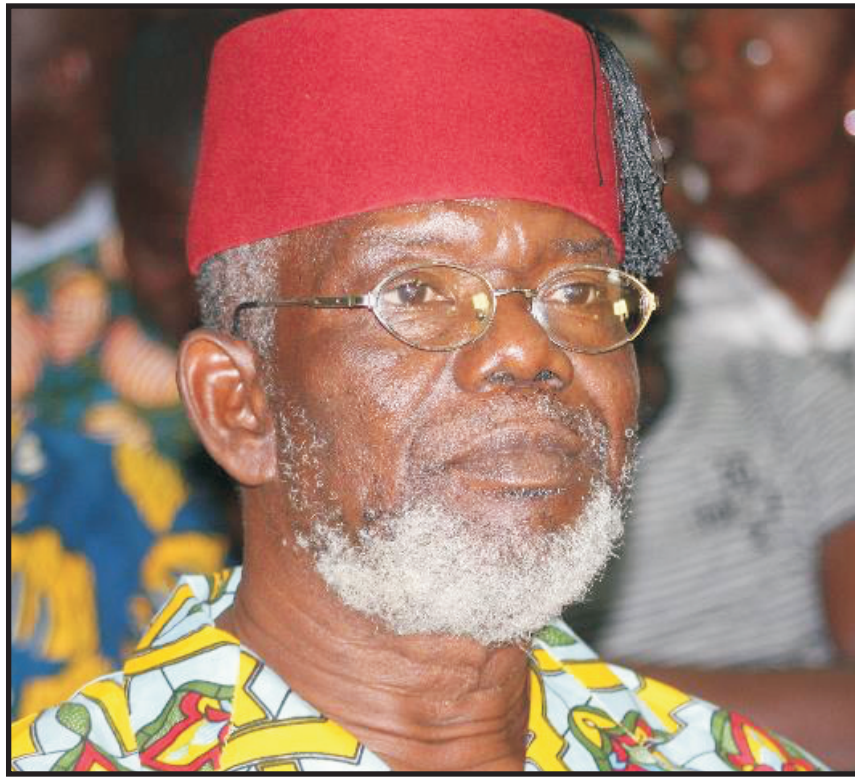
By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

**N**imba County Senator Prince Yormie Johnson is recommending that President George Manneh Weah pay Civil Servants three months' salaries advance, as they observe 14 days "Stay At Home" and 21-day nationwide State of Emergency declared by the President, as part of measures to fight the coronavirus.

He warns that failure of government to heed his advice, Liberians would roam the streets to seek daily meals for survival.

Senator Johnson also calls on the government to pay serious and keen attention to health workers throughout the country, noting that they are frontline generals that need special attention from government.

Speaking Wednesday, April 15, during a special session of



the Liberian Senate held in the rotunda of the Capitol on President Weah's stimulus package for the pandemic submitted to the Liberian Legislature for a possible endorsement, Sen. PYJ notes that if government is serious in

the combat against the deadly Corona virus, it should train contact tracers, and not pick people from anywhere to carry out such dedicated task.

On Monday of this week, President Weah had written both the House of

Representatives and the Liberian Senate, seeking their approval of a stimulus package for all Liberians, including food distribution, electricity and water supply as well as settlement of small informal petty traders' loans and government domestic debts owed local vendors.

In a communication dated April 13, read in plenary of the senate during its first special sitting for the hearing of the State of Emergency declared last week, the President writes, "I propose that for the remainder of fiscal year 2019/20 of the Liberian Legislature re-appropriate the amount of US\$25 million to support food distribution to

household in designated affected counties for the period of 60 days."

At the same time, Senator Johnson calls on Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor and other officials of government that are using the COVID-19 pandemic as a personal project to stop. He explains that Madam Taylor and others place their photos on hands washing buckets and erecting bill boards with their pictures in every corner of the city, criticizing that such practice is unacceptable, as it portrays the collective fight against the virus was being reduced to personal projects for self-glorification. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*

## Opposition foresees looting

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

**O**pposition Senators are warning that a lack of due diligence on the actual amount required in President George Manneh Weah's proposed stimulus package for the government to pay loans owed by marketers and petty traders could open the door to serious fraud and abuse like the US\$25 million mop-up exercise.

"If the Legislature approves, they would be giving the President a blank check which was never intended by the Constitution, even in times of a State of Emergency," the Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) warned during a debate Wednesday, 15 April on Capitol Hill on the Senate floor.

Senators NyonbleeKarnge Lawrence, Jonathan Kaipee, J. Milton Teahjay, Daniel Naatehn and Darius Dillon said the president's proposal for government to pay loans owed by marketers and petty traders does not specify the number of persons to benefit, who the creditors are and what is the total amount of loans to be defrayed, leaving this burden to the Legislature.

They strongly question President Weah's stimulus package document submitted to the Legislature for possible concurrence without details on who are the recipients and the creditors for loans that the administrations intends

to pay for.

In President Weah's communication to the Legislature, he proposed that the government should fully pay the loans owed by market women, and petty and small traders in affected counties as part of the requested budgetary reallocation.

The CPP lawmakers' communication which was read by Senator NyonbleeKarnge - Lawrence of Grand Bassa County, contains the argument that the proposal indicates a lack of due diligence on the actual amount required to fund this intervention.

They warn that this could open the door to serious fraud and abuse, noting that the loan scheme would [be] like the US\$25 million that was intended for mopping up excess Liberian dollars but ended a deadlock.

"The proposal does not identify any controls [that] exist to ensure legitimacy of these "loans" and of the recipients of these payments," the opposition Senators continue.

"Who are the "other creditors" to whom the President refers? Are they Susu Clubs, Credit Unions, friends? What are the controls in place to ensure that we do not have a repeat of the 'Mop Up Exercise' where unknown, unregistered, and nonexistent Foreign exchange bureau and businesses were used to "buy" USD?" the CPP Senators question further.

They indicate that without these controls in place, this

would be an easy avenue for the government to channel moneys to CDCians (partisans of the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change) in the various communities under the guise of paying the loans of market women and petty traders.

According to them, the lack of monitoring and compliance measures put donors and government's funds at a huge risk of not being expended for the intended purpose.

Rather than rebuild public trust around transparency and accountability, the CPP Senators argue that the president, yet again, is looking to exploit a public health threat which the country faces for financial gains through malpractices to benefit himself and his friends.

The opposition lawmakers point out that until more clarity is given on the potential beneficiaries, the exact amount owed by each potential beneficiary, the financial institutions owed, and the grand total of the loans, this proposal should not be approved.

They further argue that even if a listing of beneficiaries and the amount owed are presented along with the financial institutions concerned, such listing should be subjected to verification by the General Auditing Commission (GAC) before

## Gov't ignores

Starts from back page

into controversies surrounding his Liberian citizenship.

Having worked at Good Governance Commission (GC), the Nigerian - born Cllr. Nwabudike who insists he naturalized in 1982 as Liberian, was serving a tenure as Liberia Anti - Corruption Commission (LACC) chair when President George Manneh Weah appointed him last month to head the NEC, his third job in less than two years.

Until his nomination last month as NEC chair, Cllr. Nwabudike's previous confirmation by the Liberian Senate as LACC chair seemed to have gone smoothly without Liberia's weak system detecting any issues surrounding how he acquired Liberian citizenship which enabled him to practice law here.

In Count Five of his petition before the Civil Law Court, Nwabudike complains that notwithstanding his service to the Liberian Government, it is speculated by some group hiding under the banner of the LNBA to challenge his status as Liberian citizen.

He laments that until the court declares his citizenship to clear the minds of those doubtful of his Liberian Nationality, "he stands to suffer [continued] violation of his rights as a Liberian citizen."

Following his testimony at a Senate confirmation hearing for the NEC top job, the LNBA mandated its Grievance and Ethics Committee to expeditiously conduct an investigation into facts and circumstances surrounding issues raised about Nwabudike's citizenship to verify whether or not he met the requirement of becoming a Liberian citizen.

At the Senate hearing,

Nwabudike consented that his passport carries October 2, 1963 while his records at the University of Liberia have October 2, 1965, insisting that he did not have control over what is written about him at UL.

Senators and members of the public were concerned that even after naturalization, Nigerians do not forfeit their Nigerian citizenship until they make a declaration renouncing their Nigerian citizenship, and the president registers such declaration in accordance to Article 29 of Nigeria's Constitution.

His failure to present to the Liberian Senate an evidence that he had renounced his Nigerian citizenship and to show proof that his declaration had been registered by the president of Nigeria appeared to have given the confirmation hearing a suggestion that he may still be enjoying Nigerian citizenship while he carries a Liberian passport.

But in his petition, Nwabudike tells the Court that "there is no provision under our laws which requires presentation of certificate of renunciation of citizenship from the country of original birth..."

Prior to his nomination being withdrawn by President Weah, River Gee County Sen. Conmany B. Wesseh dispelled suggestion by some folks here that Nwabudike had been treated [with thorough scrutiny] because of his Nigerian origin or because he is a naturalized citizen, saying it's on the basis of credibility.

"The issue is about being beyond reproach, somebody whose character is questionable by everything that he's done," Sen. Wesseh clarified, adding that Liberians have nothing against Nwabudike.

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 6



## Gov't ignores Nwabudike's petition?



By **Winston W. Parley**

A highly placed source at the Civil Law Court has told this paper that government is yet to file its response to disgraced Nigerian-born Cllr. Ndubuisi Nwabudike's petition, pleading with the court to declare his Liberian citizenship rights to enable him to continue practicing

law here.

In what may seem to be ignoring the controversial lawyer's complaint against doubts over his Liberian citizenship, the source says the case is yet to be heard as government is yet to respond to the complaint as at the time of the conversation with this paper.

Cllr. Nwabudike fled to the

Civil Law Court recently, asking it to declare his citizenship rights after his Senate confirmation hearing for the chairmanship of the National Elections Commission (NEC) exposed long-held deep controversies surrounding how he acquired Liberian citizenship and disgracefully denied him the privilege to head the NEC.

In response to this paper's inquiry on the status of Nwabudike's case which was filed roughly over a week ago, the source explains on condition of anonymity that the only thing before the court is Nwabudike's petition which has not yet been responded to by the government.

The disgraced presidential nominee Cllr. A. Ndubuisi Nwabudike petitioned the Civil Law Court in Monrovia, pleading that it declares his citizenship right to enable him continue practicing law here, as the Liberia National Bar Association (LNBA) probe

▶ **CONT'D ON PAGE 11**



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## Coronavirus: Soccer players recover from COVID-19

Daniele Rugani and Blaise Matuidi have each recovered from coronavirus and returned negative tests, Juventus have confirmed.

Rugani was among the first wave of high-profile confirmed cases in Serie A when he tested positive for COVID-19 last month.

Matuidi followed as Juve's second case, although neither player developed symptoms.

A month on, the duo have each returned two negative

tests.

The Bianconeri's statement read: "The players have, therefore, recovered and are no longer subjected to the home isolation regime."

The duo have not missed any action as Serie A has been suspended amid the pandemic.

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) is looking to resume the season in the coming months, however.

FIGC president Gabriele Gravina has praised Juve for their apparent stance against



being awarded the Scudetto as they top the table at the time of the pause in play.

Maurizio Sarri's men are a point clear of second-placed Lazio with 12 matches remaining.

In another development, Former Manchester United star Marouane Fellaini was discharged on Tuesday after three weeks in a Chinese hospital being treated for coronavirus, his club said.

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