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VOL.10 NO. 63

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2020

PRICE LD\$40.00

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Continental News

Kenya plans to reopen schools

could mean in schools if the government takes that path".

While children who contract the virus appear less likely to become sick, scientists believe they can pass the infection along to other people, hence causing widespread infection among staff and families.

Educators have asked whether Education CS George Magoha plans to conduct an audit of the necessary

materials and supply chain for cleaning, disinfecting and preventing the spread of the disease should children return to school.

The Kenya Union of Post-Primary Education teachers, in a memorandum to the Education ministry, demanded the school calendar rescheduled and exams postponed.

In view of the foregoing, President Kenyatta said the

government will release a schedule on how learners will return to schools, especially those who are to sit the national exams.

"We need to know when it will be done and how it will be done. When that time comes, we will elaborate details of how we will make sure all this is taken care of," he said.

The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam was scheduled to start on November 2 and end on November 3, while the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exam was to start on November 4 and end on November 30. Already, three weeks of the school calendar have been lost. Although its impact on school activities cannot be underestimated,

headteachers say it is easily recoverable.

They argue that if normalcy returns and schools are opened before June, then it is possible to recover the time lost. Schools were scheduled to reopen on May 4 but the coronavirus crisis could well eat into part of the second term. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development requires schools to have fully covered the syllabus by the end of September.

In calling for partial reopening, sector players and educationists say it is conceivable to have some schools open fully, some partially and others to remain closed. In the proposal, headteachers want candidates to report first.

President Uhuru Kenyatta yesterday hinted at a partial reopening of schools and dismissed speculation that the KCPE and KCSE exams could be cancelled.

Speaking during a live radio interview from State House, Nairobi, the President said the Education ministry will look at measures to enable candidates to sit the exams.

Since schools were closed on March 15, the future of the candidates has been a subject of debate, with divergent opinions causing anxiety.

But in the absence of more specific national guidance, Education expert Janet Muthoni says there is a need to work out the intricacies of what the school day will look like when they reopen. "If we want to get kids back in the fall, we need to talk about what that's going to look like today." Her worry is "the fear of what a disease outbreak



A general view of a looted damaged Checkers supermarket truck in Bonteheuwel as security

Quarantine escapees arrested in Kenyan bar

Two people who fled a quarantine centre in Kenya have been arrested at a bar where they were found drinking despite social distancing regulations.

They were among dozens of people filmed jumping over a wall of the facility in the capital, Nairobi, drawing public condemnation.

While under arrest they said they had planned the escape because they were not getting tested for the virus.

All bars in Kenya have been ordered to close, to halt the spread of Covid-19. The pair, who are now awaiting charges, had complained that they couldn't afford to pay for their confinement out of their own

pockets.

This costs between \$20 (£16) and \$100 a night - depending on the centre.

More than 400 people are under forced quarantine in the country, which lasts for an initial period of 14 days - though this has been extended twice at some centres.

Some are being held because they flouted curfew orders while others have been detained on arrival from abroad.

Many fear they are at greater risk from coronavirus inside, saying poor hygiene is widespread and overcrowding makes social distancing impossible.

As many as 50 people out of 200 escaped from Kenya Medical Training College's quarantine facility according to local reports, but officials have not confirmed the numbers.

Footage of detainees scaling the wall was shared by Kenya's biggest newspaper: Local police boss Muthuri Mwangera told the



A viral video shows detainees fleeing the quarantine centre in Nairobi

COVID-19: Nigeria to ban interstate movement

The governors of Nigeria's 36 states have agreed to ban interstate movement for two weeks in an effort to curb the spread of the new coronavirus, a joint statement said.

Lagos and Ogun states, as well as Nigerian capital Abuja, are already under federally imposed lockdowns, while various states have instigated their own containment

added without providing further detail.

Only President Muhammadu Buhari can impose a total cessation of interstate movement. However, individual states can block entry points. States including Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Ebonyi, and Abia have already used barriers to stop people entering their states.



measures.

"Governors unanimously agreed to the implementation of an interstate lockdown in the country over the next two weeks to mitigate the spread of the virus from state to state," the Nigeria Governors' Forum said in a statement issued late on Wednesday. Only essential services will be permitted, the statement

A spokesman for the president's office declined to comment.

Rivers state, the home to the oil hub of Port Harcourt, recently detained oil workers and helicopter pilots who arrived in the state despite a federal government waiver allowing them to travel. AFP

BBC that he was waiting for the director of public prosecution's office to charge the two suspects who had been arrested at a bar in the Roysambu area, north of the city. "A majority of those who escaped had been arrested

around this area before being taken to quarantine and so we know we will arrest more with time," Mr Mwangera said.

Residents living near the bar apparently tipped off the police that it was still open. BBC

EDITORIAL

Transparency matters in Liberia's COVID-19 fight

ANNOUNCING AN ADDITIONAL \$1million here for Liberia's COVID-19 fight, the Chargé d'Affaires at the United States Embassy in Monrovia, Alyson Grunder, warns both the Government of Liberia and civil society organizations the U.S. is partnering with to maintain the highest standards of accountability and transparency in this ongoing fight.

"WE WANT OUR resources to have maximum impact and to complement the efforts and initiatives of the government and of other donor partners and organizations", the U.S. Envoy underscores.

THIS IS IMPORTANT because when countries that are already devastated by the global pandemic are bending over to send their taxpayers' money here to help Liberians survive the pandemic, unscrupulous individuals both in government and civil society should not see this as an opportunity to siphon donors' funds, and therefore, deny those directly affected from benefiting.

THE CALL COMING from the United States should claim immediate attention of the government and people running civil society organizations in the country to be very careful in handling funds coming from foreign partners.

IT WOULD SEND a very bad image for us as a country when we cry out to friendly nations and humanitarian organizations for support, but when these assistance come, they are misused, wasted and deliberately pocketed.

THE CORONAVIRUS IS rapidly taking away lives in Liberia with just 99 confirmed cases. With the current death rate at 8.8 or 9 percent, more Liberians risk dying by the time our confirmed cases hit about 500 or more.

WE NEED TO equip our health workers and hospitals across the country to be able to withstand what probably lies ahead of us as a people. And we will heavily rely on our foreign friends and donor organizations to achieving this.

HOWEVER, WHEN WE begin to mismanage or pocket donors' money and ignore our people's plight, we are shooting ourselves in the leg.

WE CALL ON the Weah administration to take heed of the call from the U.S. Embassy and put its feet down firmly on funds coming to the country to help in fighting the COVID-19.

FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS AND partners would be glad in seeing impacts of funds coming to the country to help us, which could serve as motivation for increase funding and future support. A hint to the wise...

The New Dawn
TRULY INDEPENDENT

Published by the Searchlight Communications Inc.,
UN Drive, P.O. Box 1266 Opposite National Investment Commission,
Monrovia-Liberia. Tel: +231-06484201, +231-77007529, +231-886978282 /
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COMMENTARY

By Bassem Awadallah
& Adeel Malik

Shelter from the Middle East's Perfect Storm

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens every region in the world, none more so than the Middle East. With oil prices plummeting and public-health costs poised to skyrocket, the Arab world must use this tragic occasion to forge a new cooperative regional order.

OXFORD - The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a public-health emergency and a steep reduction in oil prices, which represents a perfect storm for the Middle East, where everything from salaries to subsidies are dependent on oil revenues. As in the past, the oil-price shock will inevitably spill over to non-oil-producing countries through reductions in official aid transfers and lower worker remittances, further eroding the fiscal cushions needed to cope with COVID-19.

Worse, the pandemic has hit the region at a time when it was already reeling from multiple crises. The Syrian tragedy continues, civil wars have been raging in Libya and Yemen, and the "Arab street" has been remobilizing. From Algeria and Sudan to Iraq and Lebanon, protesters are speaking out in unison against a development model that has produced only corruption and social instability.

The public's perceptions are not unfounded. Though it is still characterized as a middle-income region, the Middle East has witnessed a worrying uptick in poverty and income inequality. A recent World Bank report shows that the share of the region's people living in close proximity to violent conflicts increased from 6% to 20% between 2007 and 2017 - far exceeding the global average of 3%. The region now accounts for 40% of the world's displaced people. With the world's highest youth-unemployment rate, its bloated public sectors were already becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Whether Iraq can even pay its civil servants' salaries next month remains to be seen. And it is not alone.

Now that COVID-19 is upon us, the Middle East faces an extraordinary challenge that will require an extraordinary response. Though there is a growing chorus calling for global efforts to deal with the pandemic, the first thing the Middle East needs is a targeted regional strategy. The crisis should be recognized as an opportunity to build a new political order for the region. Now is the time for the Arab world to work toward common solutions, embrace a shared destiny, and launch a new development model to address its increasingly interconnected socioeconomic challenges.

The post-World War II regional order had already reached its breaking point by the end of 2019. The United States is no longer the sole arbiter of Middle Eastern affairs, owing to its declining reliance on oil imports and its growing fatigue with external military engagements. And while Russia, the European Union, and regional powers have shown an increasing willingness to intervene in the region, none has the resources or desire to fill America's shoes.

As a result, Arab countries can no longer rely wholly on global powers for assistance in confronting the existential challenges they face. While some Middle Eastern countries are in talks with the International Monetary Fund for emergency financial assistance, most governments lack the political bandwidth to adhere to IMF conditionality. And even if the Fund relaxed its usual requirement of tight fiscal

consolidation, its assistance would help only with funding short-term social protection. After the immediate crisis, it will be up to the region's policymakers to devise a more sustainable development model.

That task cannot be carried out by any one government, even one that has the support of international donors. Because the region's economic problems are so interconnected, only an integrated approach can address them.

Among the most pressing issues, public health is and will remain high on the agenda. But the Middle East also needs to expand the availability of water, gas, oil, and transportation, as well as strengthen its environmental protections. All of these issues involve cross-border dynamics, and therefore require regional coordination. Likewise, to revive economic growth, Middle Eastern countries need to boost regional integration in tourism, trade, services, and other major sectors.

Such a holistic growth strategy cannot be achieved through existing cooperative frameworks. The traditional model of Arab regionalism is now defunct. The Arab League's regular summits are increasingly viewed as useless gatherings - all talk and no action. Sub-regional structures such as the Gulf Cooperation Council have become equally irrelevant, owing to internal discord among member states. While such divisions will certainly pose difficulties in creating a new multilateral framework for cooperation, the question we must ask is whether there is any hope for the Middle East without it.

As matters stand, feuding Arab countries are fighting a war of attrition that yields no individual victories, only collective losses. Never before has there been a greater need for collective effort. As the pandemic lays bare the region's fault lines, Arab leaders must recognize that a strategic vacuum never remains unfilled. Absent coordinated action, those pursuing their interests unilaterally will seize the initiative, ensuring still more conflict and instability. While the world struggles to flatten the contagion curve, Arab countries have the additional task of flattening the conflict curve. If they fail, neither health nor wealth will lie in the region's future.

To end the conflicts and chart a new, unified approach to the region, Arab leaders must abandon old assumptions and confront new realities head-on. The global pandemic offers an opportunity to imagine a different future. Partnerships are easier to forge in the crucible of a crisis. Now is the time to come together and start drafting a minimum agreeable agenda, focusing on core humanitarian concerns: the cessation of hostilities, support for refugees, post-conflict reconstruction, and market access for firms affected by the latest wave of disruptions.

Long after the COVID-19 crisis is over, the rest of the world will be preoccupied with other concerns. Only by helping each other can Arabs help themselves. Their leaders should start now.



Lord, forgive them, for the know not what they are saying

Dear Father:

You know, I often sit and wonder whether the people we put in power are our problems or we are their problems or both.

What do you mean my son?

Father, can you imagine how people go at great length to ignore all forms of reasoning in the name of trying to defend a politician when the person is indefensible.

They would rain insults at you and say things that you wonder if they really have some home training, yet the one they claim to be defending is no saint.

Tell me about it my son

Yes Father, just the other day our chiefs at the Traditional Council were called to look at a piece of paper for our village. They were to on that paper agreed with our village leader, the Country Giant or Bad Road Medicine about this whole stay home bisnay.

Our Chiefs went there and said since they were already on their vacation before the Bad Road Medicine called them back they have to pay them for sitting before they sign the paper.

And indeed, they all got not less than 6500 American people money even though some got more. Among the chiefs, was one new chief, who has continued to parade himself as the light at the Upper End of the Traditional Council.

This chief has bragged over and over that he is clean and whom take any money that he has not justly earned and that is good. He has carried some level of soundness at the Traditional Council. But this time around he let his guard down and was among the first group of people to line up to take the money.

They all collected based on their level some took 6500, and the big shots took home 10000. Can you imagine this?

Now, while these chiefs are busy dividing our village meager money saying it is their sitting fees or whatever operation fees, our poor health workers continue to cry for hazard pay, and protective gear-to this they pay no attention. Yet their praise singers are jumping all over the place defending them-saying they have done nothing wrong in the emergency situation.

So, when this mouthy chief took to the town criers to brag, how he collected his share of the money and said it was not a pay to sign the piece of paper but for operation, it raised concerns.

But instead of his people looking at the fact that this man is letting down his guard small, small, they turn to social media to rain insults at the messenger.

My son oo, but ehn da these same people say the Country Giant children don't know how to argue they can only insult?

Da it there oo Father, they are no different. They have this other man with all his integrity questions hanging over him sitting down in Uncle Sam's village and saying nonsense. I just looked at him and laughed.

But you know, it is only in villages like ours that clowns can become hero over night with followers. That is why it is very important not to keep your people hungry and destitute, because they will find a leader in any clown or crook-so for that I do understand.

And the fact that they would go on insulting because the character of their saints have been questioned speaks volume.

In all these things Father, we come to understand that these people don't know what they are doing. Our village is in trouble with hustlers wanting to be president and some blind loyalists doing the following-our village is really in serious trouble. We inside!

OPINION

By Joseph E. Stiglitz, Arjun Jayadev & Achal Prabhala

Patents vs. the Pandemic

As researchers around the world rush to develop new diagnostics and treatments for COVID-19, we must not forget that such cooperation is an exception to the rule. In the absence of public intervention, we will remain reliant for life-saving drugs and vaccines on a monopoly-driven system that favors profits over people.

NEW YORK - Imagine a world in which a global network of medical professionals monitored for emerging strains of a contagious virus, periodically updated an established formula for vaccinating against it, and then made that information available to companies and countries around the world. Moreover, imagine if this work were done without any intellectual-property (IP) considerations, and without pharmaceutical monopolies exploiting a desperate public to maximize their profits.

This may sound like a utopian fantasy, but it is actually a description of how the flu vaccine has been produced for the past 50 years. Through the World Health Organization's Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System, experts from around the world convene twice a year to analyze and discuss the latest data on emerging flu strains, and to decide which strains should be included in each year's vaccine. As a network of laboratories spanning 110 countries, funded almost entirely by governments (and partly by foundations), GISRS epitomizes what Amy Kapczynski of Yale Law School calls "open science."

Because GISRS is focused solely on protecting human lives, rather than turning a profit, it is uniquely capable of gathering, interpreting, and distributing actionable knowledge for the development of vaccines. While this approach may have been taken for granted in the past, its advantages are quickly becoming clear.

In responding to the pandemic, the global scientific community has shown a remarkable willingness to share knowledge of potential treatments, coordinate clinical trials, develop new models transparently, and publish findings immediately. In this new climate of cooperation, it is easy to forget that commercial pharmaceutical companies have for decades been privatizing and locking up the knowledge commons by extending control over life-saving drugs through unwarranted, frivolous, or secondary patents, and by lobbying against the approval and production of generics.

With the arrival of COVID-19, it is now painfully obvious that such monopolization comes at the cost of human lives. Monopoly control over the technology used in testing for the virus has hampered the rapid rollout of more testing kits, just as 3M's 441 patents mentioning "respirator" or "N95" have made it more difficult for new producers to manufacture medical-grade face masks at scale. Worse, multiple patents are in force in most of the world for three of the most promising treatments for COVID-19 - remdesivir, favipiravir, and lopinavir/ritonavir. Already, these patents are preventing competition and threatening both the affordability and the supply of new drugs.

We now have a choice between two futures. In the first scenario, we continue as usual, relying on the big pharmaceutical companies, hoping that some potential treatment for COVID-19 will make it through clinical trials, and that other technologies for detection, testing, and protection will emerge. In this future, patents will give monopoly suppliers control over most of these innovations. The suppliers will set the price high, forcing downstream rationing of care. In the absence of strong public intervention, lives will be lost, particularly in developing countries.

The same problem will also apply to any potential COVID-19 vaccine. Unlike Jonas Salk's polio vaccine, which was made freely available immediately, most vaccines that come to market today are patented. For example, PCV13, the current multi-strain pneumonia vaccine administered to babies, costs hundreds of dollars because it is the monopoly property of Pfizer. And although Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance subsidizes some of the costs of the vaccine in developing countries, many people still cannot afford it. In India, more than 100,000 preventable infant deaths from pneumonia are recorded every year, while the vaccine brings in roughly \$5 billion in revenue for Pfizer annually.

In the second possible future, we would acknowledge that the current system - in which private monopolies profit from knowledge that is largely produced by public institutions - is not fit for purpose. As public-health advocates and scholars have long argued, monopolies kill, by denying access to life-saving medicines that otherwise would have been available under an alternative system - like the one facilitating the yearly production of the flu vaccine.

There is already some movement in favor of alternative approaches. For example, Costa Rica's government recently called on the WHO to establish a voluntary pool of IP rights for COVID-19 treatments, which would allow multiple manufacturers to supply new drugs and diagnostics at more affordable prices.

Patent pooling is not a new idea. Through the Medicines Patent Pool, the United Nations and the WHO have for years sought to increase access to treatments for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and tuberculosis, and have now expanded that program to cover COVID-19. Patent pools, prize funds, and other similar ideas are part of a broader agenda to reform how life-saving drugs are developed and made available. The goal is to replace a monopoly-driven system with one based on cooperation and shared knowledge.

Joint Statement on Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Gender Based Violence during COVID-19

FOR RELEASE April 20, 2020

Signatories: Kvinna till Kvinna, Oxfam, Plan International, Action Aid, Tearfund, Medica Liberia, and International Rescue Committee

The COVID-19 pandemic has already had a tremendous impact on the health and wellbeing of people all over the world, as well as on health, social and economic systems.

While we applaud the Government of Liberia's difficult decisions to declare a State of Emergency and lockdown to slow the spread of the virus and save lives, we also recognize the enormous toll that this will have on Liberian citizens, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable communities – and the women and girls among them.

Recent statistics indicate that more men have reported cases of COVID-19; however, women will disproportionately suffer the socio-economic impacts. Women and girls are more likely to be informally employed, selling in open air markets, and engaging in petty trade. Restrictions on travel and selling will impact their ability to earn income and feed their families during the outbreak. Women also make up the majority of healthcare workers and will face higher risk of contracting the disease without adequate personal protective equipment (PPE). They will also bear the increased burden of care in their informal and unpaid roles as caregivers in the home and communities. The burden will even be higher for many female-headed households, as these women are often solely responsible for the feeding and other basic needs of children and elderly family members. With school closures and the stay at home order, women will take on greater responsibility for children who are home from school.

Having significant collective experience in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response, including and working with survivors, we know that oftentimes homes are not always safe spaces. It is true that "for many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest — in their own homes." Under normal circumstances, violence against women and girls is Liberia's most widespread and persistent human rights abuse. In Liberia as elsewhere, the rates of domestic and intimate partner violence will skyrocket with more people confined to their homes, and with increased household poverty and financial pressure due to loss of income. Other stressors such as confinement and isolation in narrow spaces, disruption of social networks and public services coupled with violent masculine norms are likely to contribute to higher incidence of SGBV. Because of inflection in the home or government lockdown, women and girls experiencing domestic violence and sexual abuse will become trapped in environments with their abuser(s). This will not only place them at greater risk of harm, it will also lead to unwanted pregnancies, as was seen during the Ebola outbreak. When the doors are locked, and movement is restricted, it becomes even harder than normal to escape from your abuser.

While violence in homes is increasing, services and justice for survivors will likely be harder to access. The lockdown is negatively affecting the already weak system to address SGBV and provide justice for survivors. There may be a substantial breakdown in the referral pathway, with hospitals overburdened and law enforcement focused on enforcing the stay at home order, curfew and other orders under the State of Emergency. Restrictions on movement (limited to one family member per hour and within communities) will also hamper reporting of SGBV cases and contribute to an increase in teenage pregnancy for girls who will be unable to access contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health services during the lockdown.

Finally, as a result of the lockdown being enforced by largely male-dominated security forces, there may be an increase of violence not only in the homes, but also in the public sphere. The current environment is amenable to hyper-masculinity characterized by domination, control, violence and terror. This contributes to an environment prone to violence and conflict and to human rights abuses. There have already been calls by Liberian human rights activists to ensure that the joint security forces enforcing these regulations do so with a high degree of professionalism and respect for the rule of law. We will echo this call and highlight the element of sexual exploitation and abuse. After curfew during the Ebola outbreak, unofficial and self-organized community "security" perpetrated sexual violence. There were also some reports of joint security forces perpetrating sexual violence and plenty of anecdotal evidence that sexual exploitation and abuse was rampant at checkpoints for women wanting to pass with goods.

Protection of women and girls is a life-saving intervention – especially in times of emergencies. Therefore, there must be a clear plan in place to maintain critical services for survivors. Recognizing that: 1) there is a serious need to maintain gender-based violence protection and response mechanisms in the context of the coronavirus outbreak and 2) that the Government has an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish and provide redress for acts of SGBV. Therefore, we collectively recommend the following:

To the Government of Liberia:

- Ensure that SGBV protection and response services are integrated as essential in the multisectoral COVID-19 national response plan;
- Ensure the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, including the GBV Unit and Adolescent Girls Unit, include messages on anti-domestic violence and rape and the open referral pathways as well as strengthen reporting mechanisms as part of awareness efforts around COVID-19. This requires the Ministry is prioritized and adequately resourced to maintain its coordination, information sharing and data-collection role remotely;
- Ensure that SGBV support services, including those at county level, remain a critical and life sustaining activity, therefore granting access to SGBV case managers and responders during the lockdown, ensuring the Women and Children Protection Section at the Liberia National Police remains staffed and functional (not reassigned and with adequate resources for fuel and logistics), and increasing resources to one-stop centers, safe-homes, shelters, and public health facilities to address women's specific health needs in communities;
- Establish clear protocols and a whistleblowing mechanism for reporting SGBV cases including those that involve the joint security forces; and maintain an updated referral pathway to ensure reported cases are managed properly and safely (from investigation and preservation of evidence all the way to survivors' redress);
- Ensure that women and girls, including female headed households and women in caregiving roles (especially unpaid care) are targeted in expanded nationwide social protection programs to reduce the vulnerability and pressure at household level. This should include food and basic commodities, women specific needs (baby formula, sanitary pads, etc.), subsidies and cash grants;
- Ensure sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) services including contraceptives, family planning information, STIs prevention and HIV treatment and care services are deemed essential and SRHR information incorporated into community health engagement activities for COVID-19. This is particularly important to prevent stock-out of critical commodities and lifesaving medications for women living with HIV.

To the international donor community (including UN entities, bilateral partners, International Financial Institutions and the EU):

- Provide immediate flexibility within current and pipeline funding to ensure that existing programs can adapt to the gender-specific risks and impacts of COVID-19, including protection and provision of food and non-food items;
- Rapidly review the need for extra support to women's rights organizations, safe homes and women's safe spaces, as a response to the increasing numbers of SGBV cases as a result of lockdowns and curfews;
- Advocate for the Multisectoral COVID-19 National Response Plan to recognize SRHR and SGBV services as critical and essential within the COVID-19 response;
- Closely monitor developments of violations of women's rights and SGBV by security forces and call out any repressive and undemocratic policies and excessive use of force.

Signed by:



ARTICLE

By Joe Monyue

Background check; the Nwabudike debacle

The story of Nwabudike, the rejected nominee for the National Elections Committee

(NEC) chairmanship, is a wake-up call for the government of Liberia to bulletproof its institutions from future predators. A rigid background check of nominees and appointees to positions of trust in government should be imperative. The nominee to the NEC position had several red-flags regarding his naturalization and eventual Liberian citizenship, but yet he was shuttled through to sit before the Liberian Senate for a confirmation hearing.



How did Nwabudike, a Nigerian citizen, get this far without any institutional intervention, especially when he did not hide the fact that he was Nigerian-born. His Nigerian accent was a dead giveaway; There's an argument to be made that President Weah inherited the candidate, and assumed that since he was a practicing lawyer that he had met the requirements for citizenship.

True. Only Liberian citizens are allowed to practice law in Liberia. It is also true that the Government of Liberia runs a Civil Service Agency that could have easily provided due diligence on Nwabudike covering his education, citizenship, naturalization, or the lack of it. This vetting would have saved the president the embarrassment of pulling a nominee; there is also another argument that says that Nwabudike knew of his shortcomings regarding his citizenship or naturalization, and should have voluntarily withdrawn his candidacy.

The candidate, it appears, had gamed the system, from his days at the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, his practice of law in Liberia to his appointment as the chair of the Liberia Governance Commission and the list goes on; so there was a certain level of chutzpah that emboldened him to sit before a venerated senate body to bestow on him the honor of chairing Liberia's National Elections Commission. In the absence of a functioning body tasked with the due diligence of government appointees, of course, there will be individuals who will take advantage of the loopholes in the system. Just last week the Liberian Criminal Court B at the Temple of Justice revealed that they could not find any document in its archives to support Nwabudike's claims of Liberian citizenship. The Liberian Immigration also could find no indication of an application. However, during the Senate hearing, the candidate produced two Liberian passports to help buttress his claim.

Somehow, the government institutions, such as the Supreme Court of Liberia, as well as the Liberian National Bar Association, failed in their fiduciary duties in vetting the candidate.

The Nwabudike debacle is not unique. It is following a pattern. In 2015, the body of Michael Allison, a promising "Liberian" lawyer, washed ashore a beach in Monrovia. According to an autopsy by several forensic pathologists, he died from drowning. There was no foul play, as some social media conspiracy theorists were suggesting. Here's where it gets terribly bizarre.

The "Liberian" lawyer known as Michael Allison, who claimed to be the son of the late Liberian General Gray D. Allison, was actually Nkrumah Mosiah Nadir Mulmi, formerly Maurice Denzel Bryce, a dual citizen of the Bahamas and the United States of America. His US Citizenship and identity were confirmed by the US Embassy in Liberia via fingerprint.

So how did Mulmi become Allison? Here's one theory. Children born out of wedlock is a Liberian cultural phenomenon, so it was quite easy for Mulmi to grab a name that was recognized in Liberian social circles and claim to be the son of the general. The fact that both General Allison and his wife had been dead over 20-plus years gave the scam more traction.

It also appears that some collaboration with corrupt officials at several Liberian institutions to get the relevant documents that would attest to his Liberian citizenship allowed the imposter to pull off this caper; Mulmi came to Liberia as part of a UN contingent during the interim government, at a time when there were little or no institutions to adequately vet incoming immigrants. As an employee of the UN, and later a private company in Monrovia, he appeared to have a robust social network in Liberian society. That network, as may have been the case with Nwabudike, allowed him to get two Liberian passports with conflicting birthplaces, Harper, Liberia, and New York, USA, and also allowed him into the LNBA, thus certifying him, like Nwabudike, to practice before the Supreme Court of Liberia.

The LNBA is one of few Liberian organizations that jealously guards its membership. Proof of Liberian citizenship is an iron-clad prerequisite to membership. One would think that with such a strict requirement that the LNBA would employ some fraud-proof mechanism to protect against imposters. But it did not.

Liberian culture has a pull and attraction to it. For over a century the country has been a magnet for people of African descent all over the globe during times of war and peace, including our brothers and sisters from the Caribbean as well as the African continent. That's why it's mission imperative that a risk-mitigating background-check infrastructure that includes a government database with data from border control, national police, vehicle registration, birth certificates, etcetera, is put in place to vet all those applying for positions of trust within the Liberian government. That would have quickly exposed the veil of duplicity in the case of Mulmi, and also clarify the somewhat confusing explanation of Nwabudike's citizenship.

Joe Monyue is a Las Vegas-based entrepreneur and social commentator. monjue@gmail.com

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Unknown worms destroy crops in Zota

--Farmers seek government's intervention

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan

Some local farmers in Zota District, Bong County have alarmed over the outbreak of what seems to be army worms that is extremely damaging crops in the area.

Our correspondent who

are crops mostly being eaten by the strange worms.

The situation has left poor farmers with little or no hope of benefiting from their labors, as they call on the government through the Ministry of Agriculture to intervene.

leave, we will see them [in] abundance in the next day," Wornukai General Town Chief Peter Kuamue told journalists.

Mr. Kuamue says they started experiencing the presence of the worms that appear like caterpillars since the beginning of this month, but they started in another town called Kpaimue, north of Zota District.

He says the invasion began in Kpaimue before spreading into nearby towns and villages in the area.

"For me as a farmer, I have been seeing these caterpillars but they have never been on this kind of large scale and eating crops," he adds.

An experienced farmer in Denyea, Jerry F. Mulbah, says the district faces the challenges of the strange worms that are threatening the livelihoods of over 90 percent of the population in the area that depend on agriculture.

According to him, there is a crucial need to enhance capacity at the district and county levels to prevent, detect and respond rapidly to any new worms and diseases threat.

He tells reporters that it is not time to sit in the

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visited the district recently says about 11 towns and other surrounding villages are seriously being affected by the crops - killer worms.

Garden egg, pepper, cocoa and cabbage, among others,

"We are really facing problem with these worms, they are destroying our farms on a daily basis and we don't even know what to do to kill them because when we try to apply method to make them

Islamic cleric urges Liberian Muslims to pray for health and peace

As Liberian Muslims join millions of their counterparts across the globe in observance of the Holy Month of Ramadan, an influential member of the Islamic community here is making a rallying call for his religious brothers and sisters to join ranks in praying for a peaceful and healthy world.

"As we begin this religiously momentum period of fasting and supplication during Ramadan, let's pray for a healthy society and that this plague of Coronavirus may come to an end," Sheikh Rashid A. Sheriff, Chief Imam of the Brewerville Central Mosque said in a bulletin on Thursday, 23 April.

"Ramadan is of great virtue and importance to Muslims. It is a time of intense spiritual reformation and devotion to God. Fasting in the month of Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars on which the Islamic creed or faith is demonstrated," Imam Sherif intones.

He however observes that this year's Ramadan takes a

different dimension as Liberian Muslims will not be carrying out their regular early morning and evening prayers in their various Mosques, owing to the ravaging effects of the Coronavirus and its associated social distancing protocols.

"Under normal conditions, Muslims, in this month, Muslims would congregate in huge

numbers to worship Allah (God) in various Mosques (Masajids) to unify and strengthen their spirituality and brotherhood. Families also gather to share meals. Charities are given to the poor, the scholarly Imam observes.

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Madagascar discovers local herb for Coronavirus

By KesterKenn Klomegah

Amid the medical race to find an effective vaccine for the coronavirus that is currently spreading around the world, Madagascar, a southern Africa, could possibly make tea from a local plant to cure the disease.

The coronavirus disease appeared first in 2019 in Wuhan city in China. The disease was, first identified in Wuhan and Hubei, both in China early December 2019. The original cause still unknown, it remains a puzzle and an enigma for the world scientific community.

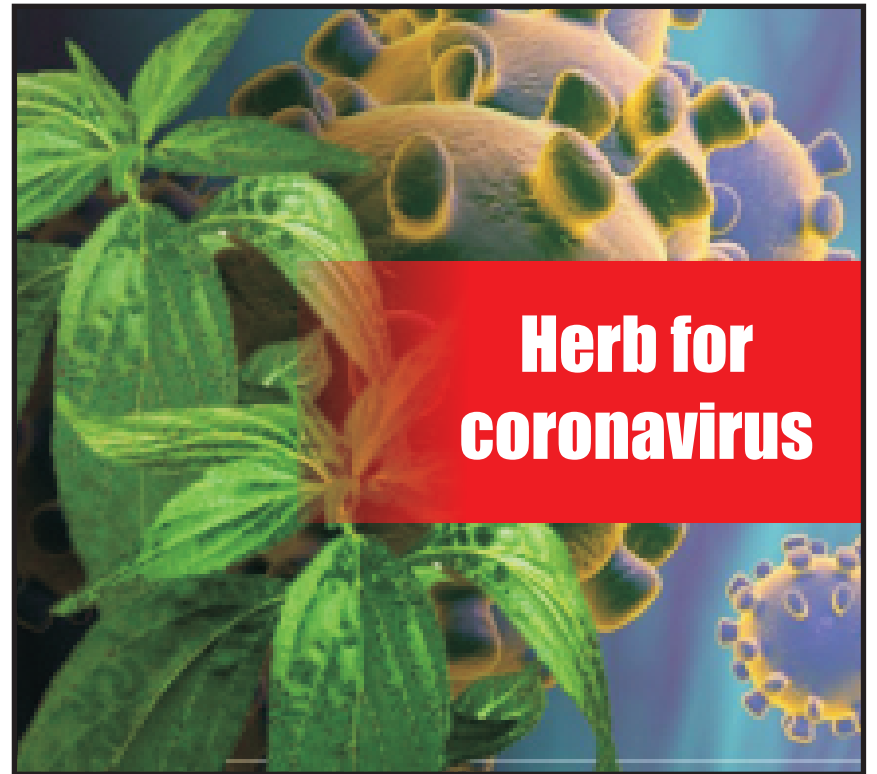
The disease symptoms include high body temperature with persistent dry cough and acute respiratory syndrome. Some medical researchers say it is a pneumonia-related disease.

derived from artemisia - a plant with proven efficacy in malaria treatment - and other indigenous herbs, according to the IMRA.

But its safety and effectiveness have not been assessed internationally, nor has any data from trials been published in peer-reviewed studies. Mainstream scientists have warned of the potential risk from untested herbal brews.

Rajoelina brushed aside any such reservations and said the concoction would be offered to schoolchildren, as it was his duty was to "protect the Malagasy people".

"Covid-Organics will be used as prophylaxis, that is for prevention, but clinical observations have shown a



On April 21, the President of Madagascar Andry Rajoelina has officially launched a local herbal remedy claimed to prevent and cure the novel coronavirus.

"Tests have been carried out -- two people have now been cured by this treatment," Rajoelina told ministers, diplomats and journalists at the Malagasy Institute of Applied Research (IMRA), which developed the beverage.

"This herbal tea gives results in seven days. I will be the first to drink this today, in front of you, to show you that this product cures and does not kill," stressed Rajoelina.

The drink, which has been called Covid-Organics, is

trend towards its effectiveness in curative treatment," said Dr. Charles Andrianjara, IMRA's Director General.

Faced with further possible spread, it taken strict measures and have to adopt a range of tracking technologies to control the spread of the virus, as recommended by experts. Madagascar recorded 121 coronavirus cases since the epidemic began, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Madagascar, located in southern Africa, belongs to the group of least developed countries, according to the United Nations. It is a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and African Union (AU).

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Judicial order prohibits jailing Covid-19 suspects

By Winston W. Parley

A judicial order issued in Monrovia prohibits courts in Liberia from committing to prison persons infected with or suspected of being infected with coronavirus, in a range of measures taken by the Judiciary in observance of health protocols during the health crisis here.

“And under no circumstance shall a party infected with, or suspected of

with eight deaths and 35 recoveries.

After lawmakers here recently extended to 60 days, a 21 - day state of emergency declared by President George Manneh Weah over increasing coronavirus cases, the Judiciary announced on Thursday, 23 April that it is temporarily scaling down its workforce at this time.

The judicial order instructs that unless in cases involving non - billable offenses, all

applicable.

Under the judicial order, all courts in the Republic are mandated to reduce activities to a bare minimum within their respective jurisdictions.

It says cases before the Supreme Court will be minimally assigned so that no more than four counsellors will be available for the presentation of arguments before the court.

The Supreme Court says it will concentrate more at this time on writing opinions in cases already heard and only urgent high profile cases of national concern and growing out of allegations of violations of rights under this state of emergency will be prioritized.

It therefore gives circuit and specialized courts mandate to give preference at this time to petitions for the writ of habeas corpus and to other matters of alleged violations of the fundamental rights of citizens and residents growing out of this state of emergency.

The judicial order notes that no more than two cases are to be assigned per day, saying one case should be heard in the morning and the next in the afternoon, with only party litigants and their lawyers permitted in courtrooms to avoid overcrowding.

Further, the Judiciary suspends classes for professional magistrate training at the James A. A. Pierre Judicial Institute, and orders that normal court activities throughout the Republic shall be closed at 2:00PM, from Mondays to Fridays until further notice.



being infected with the coronavirus be committed to prison; instead, Health Authorities should be promptly contacted,” says the judicial order signed by Liberia’s Chief Justice Francis S. Korkpor and all four associate justices.

Liberia which maintains one of the highest death rates of the coronavirus disease in the sub - region has recorded 103 coronavirus virus cases

courts are to use available options under the law or personal recognizance, to avoid party defendants from being committed to prison.

It orders that each subordinate court is required to have a maximum of four support staffs, inclusive of clerk, file clerk, bailiff, and sheriff at work each day.

But the restriction does not include court security and maintenance workers where

Grand Kru rallies support -for COVID-19 fight

The Grand Kru County COVID-19 Response Team is literally begging sons and daughters (kinsmen) of the county for support to stop the spread of the virus in the county, and Liberia at large.

The co-chair for the Grand Kru County COVID-19 Response Team Hansen Doe, told journalists on Thursday that only a united fight would wipe out, the threat of the virus.

Already, Grand Kru County Representative J. FonatiKoffa, has set up an awareness and funding

campaign team that is working directly with the General Services Agency for proper training.

Grand Kru County has reported one confirmed case of the Corona virus with several undergoing quarantined in the county.

Speaking to this paper Thursday, April 23, at the GSA in Monrovia, Mr. Doe said Representative Koffa had already donated his one month salary to the team as a way to encouraging team members to stay on board in helping the county defeat the virus.

He explained that already,

two pickups filled with medical supplies and materials have been sent to the county and they are appealing to all Grand Kru citizens to help by donating money and medical supplies.

Members of the Grand Kru COVID-19 Response Team include Estella Taypoh, NathalynZepu and Helen Nah with office at the General Service Agency (GSA).

The GSA Director General, Madam Mary Broh, is serving as National Response Coordinator for the Executive Committee on Corona virus (ECOC) in Liberia.

Madam Broh will provide supervision toward a single

Unknown worms

Cont'd from page 6

backseat, but for all of the citizens to join hands with local authorities and seek the government’s immediate response.

Mary Kollie, a mother of four children, tells journalists that if the situation continues she will be left with nothing to sell and buy food for her children.

She adds that the strange worms started eating her crops before spreading to other parts of the area.

“So the only thing I want is for the government to help us fight these worms because if [they] continue, we will be left with nothing at the end of the farming season,” she concludes.

Some of the towns being affected are Tinsue,

JorkaiKpamue, Flomota, Narwai and Prulukpae, among others.

There has not been a comment from authorities of the Ministry of Agriculture concerning the situation.

This is not the first time for worms to attack crops in Zota. In 2009, an armyworm outbreak started in the same district and later spread to other parts of the county.

Our Bong County correspondent says since news of the strange worms broke up, there have been hikes in the prices of local commodities especially garden egg, cabbage and pepper, a situation that has led many citizens to blame the caterpillars’ invasion.--*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

Islamic cleric urges

Cont'd from page 6

But he notes that this is not possible “during this period (Corona crisis) as we are obliged to adhere to the various health protocols, especially those relating to social distancing and the avoidance of large gatherings.”

Imam Sheriff then encourages Muslims to ensure the success of the month of Ramadan by following the various health protocols and support efforts for the elimination of the coronavirus.

“As we fast and pray during this period, let’s keep in our minds that we too have an obligation as citizens to collectively work together to defeat this virus,” he says.

“Achieving this goal will culminate into a victory for fasting and praying,” he adds, and advises fellow Muslims on crafting innovative ways to help people who may not have a strong understanding of the Quran during this period.

“Many of our members rely on their Imams and other family members to lead through prayers during the Ramadan. And with the

lockdown, congregating at the Mosques is impossible. Therefore, we should devise innovative ways to share verses and recitations with our members as they go through the Ramadan,” Sheik Sheriff suggests.

He also encourages Liberian Muslims to continue their culture of giving alms to the less fortunate and disadvantaged in society during the Ramadan.

“During this period, many of our underprivileged members go to the Mosques in anticipation of getting assistance. But they can’t do that now due to this crisis. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us who have to share with these people by reaching out to them at their homes and other places,” he continues.

He says giving help is a core feature of Ramadan, urging Muslims not to forget about reaching out to others.

“Fasting, praying and reaching out to the less fortunate should be a hallmark of this Ramadan,” he concludes.--*Dispatch*

set of national strategic objectives for defeating the Corona virus. She will also coordinate the National COVID-19 multi-sectorial response plan, in coordination with the United Nations (UN), donor partners, Ministry of Health and National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL).

Mr. Doe said the county’s COVID-19 Response Team supervises fight in the Grand

Kru and serves as liaison between the county and the National Response Team as well as mobilizes funds, drugs and non-food items for the fight in Grand Kru County.

“The purpose of this team is to support the front-liners in the county to stop the spread of the infection”, he said.

He said though there is an active case in the county, it hasn’t been confirmed and there is no new case.

Français

COVID-19 : 20 guéris et zéro nouveau cas enregistré mercredi au Libéria

Vingt personnes sont guéries du COVID-19 à l'hôpital militaire 14 et aucun nouveau cas n'a été enregistré dans le pays, ont indiqué mercredi les autorités sanitaires du Libéria. A la date du mardi 21 avril, le Libéria comptait un total de 101 cas confirmés de COVID 19, dont 7 guéris et 8 décès.

Mais le mercredi 22 avril 2020, le pays a signalé zéro cas avec 13 nouvelles guérisons, portant le nombre total de patients guéris à 20. Le nombre de cas actifs jusqu'à jeudi sont donc de 73.

A noter que le samedi 18 avril, la petite nation ouest-africaine avait enregistré le taux de mortalité COVID 19 le plus élevé de la sous-région et au-delà. Le pays fondé par des esclaves américains affranchis, avait enregistré 8 décès alors qu'il comptait 91 cas confirmés de COVID. Le taux de mortalité était de 8,8%, le plus élevé dans la sous-région, alors que beaucoup de pays avaient enregistré

bien plus de cas confirmés que le Libéria.

Pour le moment, les choses sont au ralenti ici comme dans la plupart des pays du monde. Le 8 avril, le président George Weah déclarait l'état d'urgence et un confinement du pays pour une période de 21 jours. En vertu de la loi libérienne, les législateurs avaient jusqu'à une semaine pour approuver ou rejeter la déclaration du président.

Le vendredi 17 avril, les membres de l'Assemblée législative libérienne ont non seulement approuvé l'état d'urgence du président, initialement fixé à 21 jours, mais ils l'ont prolongé à 60 jours, assorti d'un plan de relance.

Samedi dernier, le pays avait signalé 10 nouveaux cas

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Les pays en développement sevrés de l'argent des immigrés

La Banque mondiale prédit cette année une chute de 20 % des transferts d'argent des immigrés vers leur pays d'origine. Un nouveau coup dur pour les pays émergents et en développement.

Les pays en développement ne cessent d'engranger des mauvaises nouvelles. Déjà confrontés à une possible baisse à venir de l'aide au développement des

pays riches ainsi qu'à une chute des investissements directs étrangers (-35 %) et des flux de capitaux (-80 %), ils vont devoir aussi supporter le tarissement des transferts d'argent des immigrés vers leur pays d'origine.

C'est la sombre perspective que dresse, mercredi, la Banque mondiale. Selon ses estimations, ces transferts d'argent vont chuter de 20 %

cette année en raison des conséquences de la pandémie du Covid-19. Le confinement et la fermeture des usines et chantiers un peu partout dans les pays industrialisés va se payer cash.

Les sommes envoyées par les travailleurs migrants dans leur pays d'origine, qui représentent jusqu'à un tiers de l'économie de certains pays pauvres, devraient s'établir à 445 milliards de dollars cette année après le record de 554 milliards l'an passé. C'est la plus importante chute de l'histoire récente, souligne l'institution multilatérale. « Les envois de fonds aident les familles à acheter de la nourriture, des soins de santé et des besoins de base [...]. Nous nous efforçons de maintenir les canaux de transfert de fonds ouverts et de protéger l'accès des communautés les plus pauvres à ces besoins les plus élémentaires » a commenté David Malpass, le président de la Banque.

Les envois d'argent représentent par exemple un

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Éditorial

Amenez tous les techniciens à bord

La femme récemment nommée par le président George Manneh Weah pour coordonner la lutte contre le COVID-19, Mary T. Broh, a pris le taureau par les cornes en enrôlant des techniciens clés dans une structure nationale pour mener la lutte.

Nous avons besoin de professionnels de la santé publique formés et expérimentés, y compris des médecins, des infirmières et des travailleurs de la santé pour vaincre COVID-19. Et nous saluons Madame Broh pour sa formation de statisticiens et d'autres technocrates pour exécuter le travail.

Avec l'arrivée des médecins Jerry Brown, Wilehlmina Jallah, Francis Kateh et d'autres, le Libéria mobilise sûrement les commandants de première ligne pour affronter de front cette pandémie mondiale.

Cependant, ce qui est nécessaire de toute urgence dans ce combat, c'est le soutien du gouvernement, en particulier le financement, la logistique et les fournitures nécessaires pour envoyer des professionnels sur le terrain.

Nous sommes très optimistes qu'avec les mains sur le pont et une bonne coordination et sans interférence politique, le Libéria, selon les mots de l'ancien patron de NPHIL, Tolbert Nyenswah, "remportera la victoire face à cet ennemi tueur".

Madame Broh devrait également mobiliser les équipes régionales de santé à travers le pays, y compris les 3000 traceurs de contact qui ont activement participé à l'éradication d'Ebola du Libéria.

Elle aura besoin d'un soutien politique au plus haut niveau pour réussir. Mary n'a jamais été un échec. Elle n'échouera pas dans ce combat contre COVID-19.

Les Libériens ordinaires ont également un rôle à jouer pour contenir et expulser les coronavirus du Libéria, comme ils l'ont fait pour Ebola en 2015, en observant toutes les mesures de santé préventives.

La façon dont nous nous comporterons en tant que nation au cours des prochains mois démontrera notre sincérité et notre engagement à vaincre le virus et, par conséquent, maintiendra le soutien continu de partenaires internationaux et des gouvernements amis.

C'est un combat pour sauver l'humanité et nous avons besoin de tous nos meilleurs généraux, au pays et à l'étranger, pour participer à cette guerre contre un ennemi invisible et commun. Avec Dieu au-dessus et notre détermination et notre résilience pour gagner, la victoire est certaine !

Français

COVID-19 : 20 guéris et zéro nouveau

confirmés, dont 9 dans le seul comté de Montserrado et un dans le comté de Nimba, ce qui portait le nombre total de cas confirmés à 91, avec 76 cas actifs et plus de 489 contacts répertoriés pour le suivi.

Le taux de mortalité croissant du Libéria par

rapport à ses voisins d'Afrique de l'Ouest a suscité des inquiétudes au milieu des prévisions de la Commission économique des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique (CEA) selon lesquelles l'Afrique pourrait voir entre 300000 et 3,3 millions de décès dus au coronavirus.

Les pays en développement

quart, voire un tiers de l'économie de certains pays pauvres, comme le Soudan du Sud, Haïti, ou encore le Népal.

Par région, c'est l'Europe et l'Asie centrale qui devraient subir le choc principal avec un recul de 27,5%. Le manque de main-d'œuvre des pays de l'est pour les récoltes agricoles saisonnières en constitue l'un des exemples. L'Afrique subsaharienne (-23,1%), de l'Asie du Sud (-22,1%) suivent de peu avant les pays du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord (-19,6%).

Du fait des mesures de confinement et de la forte dégradation de la conjoncture, les flux de migrants devraient également être en recul, a expliqué Dilip Ratha, économiste en chef de ce

rapport. Les travailleurs migrants sont particulièrement exposés aux pertes de revenus en opérant dans les secteurs les plus affectés comme la restauration, l'hôtellerie, la vente au détail et en gros, le tourisme ou encore les transports et la construction. « Au moment où la saison des récoltes commence dans de nombreux pays, des signes de pénurie de main-d'œuvre apparaissent [...] », note l'institution.

Cette dernière s'alarme aussi du fait que les migrants sont exclus des programmes gouvernementaux d'aide face au Covid-19, y compris l'accès aux soins de santé, et ne peuvent pas non plus rentrer dans leur pays d'origine faute de transports. La crise pourrait même exacerber le traitement xénophobe et discriminatoire des migrants, alerte la Banque.

Les sénateurs ont refusé de prendre part à la séance de mardi dans un contexte de crise sanitaire

En dépit du fait d'avoir reçu chacun la bagatelle 6 000 dollars pour approuver l'état d'urgence dans un contexte de crise sanitaire sans précédent, comme l'a attesté le sénateur du comté de Montserrado, Abraham Darius Dillon, les membres du Sénat libérien ont snobé la session parlementaire du mercredi 22 avril.

Depuis qu'ils ont approuvé l'état d'urgence et le plan de relance, les sénateurs ont refusé de prendre part à la session parlementaire conformément à la Constitution libérienne de 1986, qui oblige le pouvoir législatif à rester en session pendant toute la période de l'état d'urgence.

Les chambres du Sénat libérien et de la Chambre des représentants sont restées vides mercredi 22 avril, car seuls quelques législateurs se sont rendus au Capitole.

Certains membres du personnel ont été irrités par l'absence de leurs patrons

respectifs au Capitol Hill. Certains se plaignaient du coût du transport quotidien pour se rendre au travail. Les législateurs ne semblent pas vouloir exercer leurs fonctions pour lesquelles ils sont payés.

Certains sénateurs, principalement des dirigeants, avaient eu un entretien avec le pro-tempore du Sénat, Albert Chie, pendant des heures. Rien n'a filtré de cette rencontre. Les informations qui circulent dans les couloirs du Capitole font état de la volonté du Sénat d'établir un calendrier pour ses sessions.

Vendredi dernier, les membres de l'Assemblée législative du Libéria ont voté à une écrasante majorité en faveur du prolongement de l'état d'urgence déclaré par le président George Manneh Weah de 21 jours à deux mois.

La Chambre des représentants et le Sénat libérien ont tous deux adopté une résolution commune, approuvant le plan de relance et prolongeant l'état d'urgence à 60 jours.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Bassem Awadallah & Adeel Malik

S'abriter d'une vraie tempête au Moyen-Orient

OXFORD - La pandémie de Covid-19 entraîne une urgence sanitaire et fait plonger les prix du pétrole, en somme lance un avis de tempête sur le Moyen-Orient, où tout, des salaires aux aides sociales, dépend de la recette pétrolière. Comme par le passé, les répercussions du choc pétrolier sur les pays non producteurs sont inévitables, puisque les transferts, qu'ils soient assurés par l'aide publique ou par les envois d'argent des travailleurs à l'étranger, se réduisent, resserrant un peu plus les marges budgétaires qui permettraient d'affronter la crise.

Pire : la pandémie touche la région alors qu'elle est déjà ébranlée par de multiples crises. La tragédie syrienne se poursuit, les guerres civiles font rage en Libye et au Yémen, tandis que la « rue arabe » se remobilise. De l'Algérie et du Soudan à l'Irak et au Liban, les manifestants dénoncent un modèle de développement ne produisant qu'instabilité sociale et corruption.

Les perceptions de l'opinion ne sont pas infondées. Si le Moyen-Orient est encore considéré comme une région à revenu moyen, il n'en connaît pas moins une augmentation de la pauvreté et des inégalités de revenu. Un récent rapport de la Banque mondiale montre que la part des populations de la région vivant à proximité de conflits violents est passée de 6% à 20% entre 2007 et 2017 - proportion très supérieure à la moyenne mondiale (3%). La région compte aujourd'hui 40% des personnes déplacées dans le monde. Avec le taux de chômage des jeunes le plus élevé de la planète, il devenait déjà difficile de maintenir son secteur public hypertrophié. Il n'est pas certain que l'Irak puisse payer, le mois prochain, ses fonctionnaires. Et ce pays est loin de faire exception.

Le Covid-19 est là, et le Moyen-Orient fait face à des difficultés sans précédent, qui appellent une réponse sans précédent. Si les voix qui réclament une action mondiale pour lutter contre la pandémie sont de plus en plus nombreuses à se faire entendre, le Moyen-Orient a d'abord besoin d'une stratégie régionale bien définie. La crise devrait apparaître comme l'occasion de construire un nouvel ordre politique dans la région. Il est temps aujourd'hui que le monde arabe œuvre à des solutions communes, qu'il assume un destin partagé et lance un nouveau modèle de développement qui lui permette de relever des défis socio-économiques de plus en plus interconnectés.

L'ordre régional issu de la Seconde Guerre mondiale était déjà parvenu, à la fin de 2019, à un point de non-retour. Les États-Unis, moins dépendants des importations de pétrole et de plus en plus las de leurs engagements militaires extérieurs, ne sont plus l'unique arbitre des affaires moyen-orientales. Et si la Russie, l'Union européenne et les puissances régionales ont montré leur volonté d'intervenir dans la région, ni les uns ni les autres n'ont les moyens ni le désir d'endosser l'ancien habit américain.

En conséquence de quoi les pays arabes ne peuvent plus s'en remettre entièrement à l'aide des puissances mondiales pour relever les défis auxquels ils font face. Alors que certains pays du Moyen-Orient sont en pourparlers avec le Fonds monétaire international dans le but de débloquer une aide financière d'urgence, la plupart des États n'ont pas la bande passante politique qui leur permettrait de remplir les conditions du FMI. Et quand bien même le Fonds assouplirait ses exigences ordinaires de consolidation budgétaire, l'aide apportée ne consisterait qu'à financer une

protection sociale à court terme. Après la crise, c'est aux décideurs politiques de la région qu'il reviendra d'inventer un modèle de développement plus durable.

Aucun gouvernement, même avec le soutien des donateurs internationaux, ne pourra s'acquitter seul de cette tâche. Les problèmes économiques de la région sont tellement interconnectés que seule une approche intégrée peut les résoudre.

Parmi les questions les plus pressantes, celle de la santé publique est prioritaire et le restera. Mais le Moyen-Orient doit aussi étendre l'accès à l'eau, au gaz, au pétrole et aux transports, tout en renforçant la protection de l'environnement. Toutes ces questions appellent des dynamiques transfrontalières, et nécessitent par conséquent une coordination régionale. De même, pour rétablir la croissance économique, les pays du Moyen-Orient devront accélérer l'intégration régionale du tourisme, des échanges, des services et des autres principaux secteurs d'activité.

Cette stratégie globale de croissance ne peut être suivie dans les cadres existants de coopération. Le modèle traditionnel du régionalisme arabe a vécu. Les sommets réguliers de la Ligue arabe sont de plus en plus considérés comme des réunions inutiles - des paroles que ne suivent pas les actes. Et les structures sous-régionales, comme le Conseil de coopération du Golfe, deviennent, elles aussi, désormais, inadaptées, étant donné les désaccords internes entre les États membres. Ces divisions poseront certainement problème dans la création d'un nouveau cadre multilatéral de coopération. Mais existe-t-il en dehors de ce dernier un espoir pour le Moyen-Orient ? C'est la question que nous devons nous poser.

Dans l'état actuel des choses, des pays arabes en rivalité mènent une guerre d'usure qui ne conduit à aucune victoire de l'un ou de l'autre mais à la perte de tous. Jamais le besoin d'un effort collectif n'a été plus fort. Tandis que la pandémie met à nu les fractures de la région, les dirigeants arabes doivent comprendre que tout vide stratégique est appelé à se combler. En l'absence d'action coordonnée, ceux qui défendent unilatéralement leurs intérêts prendront l'initiative, créant à coup sûr plus de conflit et d'instabilité. Alors que le monde peine à aplatir la courbe des contaminations, les pays arabes doivent en plus aplatir celle des conflits. S'ils échouent, ils ne recouvreront ni la santé ni la prospérité.

Pour mettre un terme aux conflits et dessiner une nouvelle vision, unifiée, de la région, les dirigeants arabes doivent abandonner leurs vieux préjugés et faire front devant les réalités nouvelles. La pandémie mondiale offre une chance d'imaginer un avenir différent. Dans l'épreuve d'une crise, il est plus facile de forger des partenariats. Il est temps aujourd'hui de nous unir et de commencer à dérouler un agenda sur lequel nous puissions trouver un accord minimum et qui répondra questions humanitaires essentielles : cessation des hostilités, aide aux réfugiés, reconstruction après-guerre et accès aux marchés pour les entreprises touchées par la dernière vague de perturbations.

Tant que la crise du Covid-19 ne sera pas terminée, et longtemps encore après elle, le reste du monde aura d'autres soucis que le Moyen-Orient. Les pays arabes ne parviendront pas à s'aider eux-mêmes s'ils ne s'aident pas les uns les autres. Et leurs dirigeants doivent commencer dès à présent.

ARTICLE

By Julius Kullie Kanubah

Milking a Failed State: A New Robin Hood in the Liberian Senate?

Our 'Liberian state' is inherently corrupt and based on neo-patrimonial institutions and logics. Actors occupying public positions allot themselves money in the guise of performing certain functions or roles in the public interests.

Such allotments are made to look legitimate because they were approved by the legislature in coordination with the executive bureaucracy.

Afterwards, our public officials would argue that the allotment is legal. What is legal of allotting yourself money and then receiving the same money and saying it is a legal money?

In times of coronavirus pandemic in a nation without a fitting healthcare system and precarious livelihood challenges, it is even wicked for a single public official to receive a handsome sum of US\$6,500. Imagine a single Senator takes home \$6,500 in the name of "operational budget"?



Senator Abraham Darios Dillon

Collectively, 30 Senators allot themselves and take away US\$195,000 of what should be public resources.

How about the House of Representatives?

There are 73 members in the House. Assuming each member got the same figure (US\$6,500) as the Senate, it means a sum of US\$474,500 was allotted and taken by the House of Representatives as a collective.

So, in total, both the Senate and the House of Representatives made away with US\$669,500 in the name of "operational budget" for members of the legislature. That's over half a million USD. A lucrative amount, indeed!

Well, it is the case that some public officials are acting like Robin Hood. Steal or receive money from the State and then give some back to the public as 'humanitarian interventions' while pocketing the rest. In a failed state as Liberia, there are always a Robin Hood. Yet there is a new one in town!

DISCLAIMER: THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE ARE THAT OF THE AUTHOR AND NOT OF THIS PAPER.

OP-ED

By Ricardo Hausmann

Target R and Wait for the Vaccine

Opening up the economy means allowing more human interaction and hence greater potential for new #COVID19 infections. Two numbers matter for deciding whether this can be done safely any time soon.

CAMBRIDGE - Many countries are now under lockdown to lower the growth rate of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Given the astronomical costs of such efforts to "flatten the curve" of COVID-19 infections, policymakers are under growing pressure to "reopen the economy." But how can they do so safely?

Given that it takes an average of 5.2 days between infection and the onset of symptoms, and 13 days from onset to death, if the lockdown would bring new infections to a halt, the number of new cases and deaths should drop to zero within three weeks. By this standard, the actual process has been amazingly slow. Italy, for example, imposed a severe lockdown on March 9, a day when authorities there confirmed 1,797 new cases and 97 new deaths. On April 18, the numbers were 3,491 and 482, respectively. Italians are dying at a rate four times higher than they were before the lockdown.

And yet some, including US President Donald Trump, believe it is time to relax the restrictions. If the epidemic curve is an inverted U and we have seen a peak, the worst is behind us, right?

Wrong. And this mistake could cost tens of thousands of lives (if not many more) and lead to a longer W-shaped recession.

We know enough about the "mathematics" of epidemics to know when we should expect the outbreak's peak in a given location. Exponential growth occurs if the number of susceptible persons infected by each infected person is above one. That number is equal to the R factor: the number of persons to whom each infected person transmits the virus times the probability that the person receiving the viral load is susceptible.

The pre-lockdown R in most countries was closer to three than to two. Lockdowns lower R; below one, the number of cases and deaths declines. So, the peak we have seen is that associated with the low R of the lockdown, not the R of the post-lockdown, which, without controls, would be much higher. A peak is ahead of us, and its size will depend on what we do next.

Given the contagiousness of the coronavirus, the only way to overcome the pandemic is for 80-90% of the population to have immunity. This number is actually not too sensitive to R. There are two ways to acquire immunity: getting sick or getting vaccinated.

Without a vaccine, the peak of the pandemic occurs when a proportion $1/R$ of the population has not yet been exposed. Thus, an R of 1.5, two, and three, implies that the peak occurs when, respectively, 33.3%, 50%, and 66.7% of the population have already been exposed.

How close are we to these numbers? The calculation is not straightforward, but we are actually very far, even in the most affected areas. The problem is that we cannot trust the official number of cases, because few of those exposed to the disease were tested. For example, dividing the number of confirmed cases in Italy by the country's population yields a figure of just 0.27%.

One way to estimate an upper bound of the number of people exposed is to assume an optimistic death rate and try to infer the number of those exposed from that and the actual number of deaths. If we optimistically assume a death rate of just 0.2%, rather than of 0.3-3%, as others have estimated, at most 16.6% of Italians and 22.5% of New Yorkers have been exposed.

Opening up the economy means allowing more human interaction and hence greater potential for new infections. Two numbers matter for deciding whether this can be done safely any time soon: the post-lockdown R factor that results from the relaxation measures and the percentage of people who have already been exposed.

The R factor is the variable that governments try to influence through social distancing policies and other recommended behaviors, and it can be "nowcasted" daily by looking at the daily growth rate of cases and deaths. An R of two would generate a peak late this summer that would make Lombardy and New York look like a bunny slope. The scale of death and chaos would be politically unacceptable, especially after so much effort was invested in the lockdown. An R of 1.5 would generate a shallower but still overwhelming peak sometime between November and February, that would have many nasty months after it. Any R exceeding one will eventually overwhelm most health systems.

An alternative strategy is for governments to target a particular R, borrowing the framework from central banks' inflation targeting. First, we need to establish clear and robust methodologies to nowcast R every day. Then comes the issue of choosing the target.

US\$195,000 for operation or compensation?

While Montserrado County Senator Abraham Darius Dillon revealed here Tuesday this week that senators on Capitol Hill received US\$6,500 each as operational fund after they endorsed the State of Emergency and stimulus package submitted by President Weah, Senator Prince Yormie Johnson rather says the amount is compensation for extra-sitting in the wake of their Easter Break.

The Liberian Senate netted a total of US\$195,000 (not 180,000 as earlier) this week for 30 senators, at the time health workers, doctors and nurses on the frontline of

entitled to compensation and that's what the money received is meant for.

Uganda's parliament has come under scrutiny after legislators allocated themselves a total of \$2.6 million to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the BBC. Lawmakers say the funds are being used to feed constituents. But the High Court may order them to return the money.

Early this month, Uganda's parliament passed a supplementary budget of \$80.2 million meant to support the fight against the spread of COVID-19, which included \$2.6 million in pay to legislators, or about \$5,250 to each member.

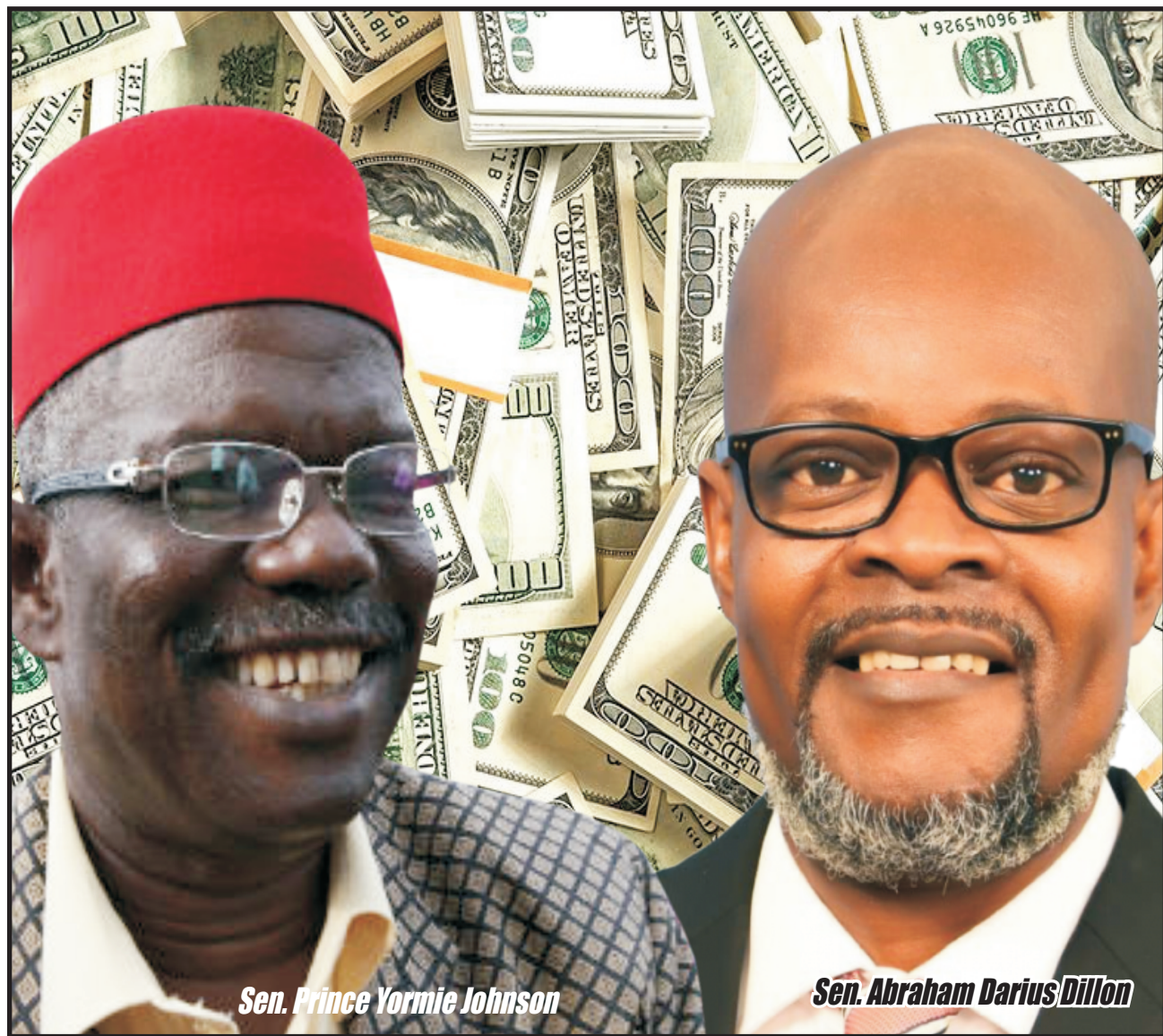
Sen. PYJ branded fellow

other vital tools.

Former Maryland County senator John Ballout was discharged from the 14 Military Hospital on Wednesday along with several others after 21 days surveillance.

Sources had earlier claimed each senator received US\$9,000, but speaking to Joy FM Tuesday, Senator Dillon clarified each senator actually received US\$6,000 and that the amount is intended for operational cost for lawmakers.

There are speculations that members of the 54th Legislature signed the Joint Resolution because of the financial package attached, but Dillon said, based on his



Sen. Prince Yormie Johnson

Sen. Abraham Darius Dillon

the fight against the novel coronavirus are crying for Personal Protective Equipment, including nose and facial masks, gloves, and hand sanitizers, among others to keep safe.

Senator Johnson told Truth Breakfast Show Thursday, 23 April that he personally received US\$6,500.00 of the amount, which he describes as "chicken change", defending that this is normal legislative practice in many parts of the world, including Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda, respectively.

He says when lawmakers had left for break and the President calls them for urgent business, they are

Liberians as jealous people, for widespread criticism that legislators are heartless and selfish. Many say such money should have instead, been directed to the health sector or used to pay civil servants, who are currently under a 14-day "Stay-At-Home" or lockdown, to buy food for their families.

About 20 health workers have tested positive of the virus, while a former senator walking out of quarantine Wednesday, 22 April after 21 days, said the 14 Military Hospital, which is the government's main quarantine center for COVID-19 patients, lacks Intensive Care Unit (ICU), standard laboratory, Oxygen and X-ray machine, among

conviction, the stimulus package and the State of Emergency are helpful for the citizenry and the State.

When asked if the money did not amount to clear bribery, he defended that it was for speedy passage of both documents. The opposition lawmaker, who is seeking re-election, maintained the amount has nothing to do with bribery, instead; it is meant for operation.

However, he failed to explain what sorts of operational cost lawmakers have incurred or they expect to incur during the coronavirus pandemic. **Story by Jonathan Browne**

Court suspends

Starts from back page

Judge Gbeisay adds that the six month sentence for Dorkor is also suspended, but warns that failure for the defendant to retribute, he shall serve the full six months in common prison and make restitution.

The judge explains that under Chapter 50.5 and Chapter 15, Section 15.4 of the Penal Law, misuse of public money is a felony of the first degree with a maximum prison term of 10 years.

Under the provision, he says theft of property in which the value of the property exceeds 50,000.00 is a second degree felony with a maximum prison of five years respectively.

He continues that the minimum term of imprisonment not being stated, it is presumably left within the sound discretion of the trial court, giving due consideration to the fact and circumstances of the commission of the crimes and the defendants' previous records.

Judge Gbeisay recalls that

in the court's final judgment, it ordered the restitution of US\$687,656.35 to the AFL retirement funds and US\$460,000.00 to the Government of Liberia's account and further ordered the Probation Services Division of Montserrado County, to conduct a pre-sentence investigation of the defendants' conducts and file its report with the court in 14 days, in obedience to Chapter 31.5 of the Criminal Procedure Law.

Judge Gbeisay notes that the report was filed with the Clerk of the Court, adding that the synopsis indicated that it found no previous criminal record against any of the defendants.

However, he says it concluded that the crimes as charged and proven by the State post a national security threat to the nation, considering that the money, subject of the crimes, is for men and women of the Armed Forces of Liberia.

Kenya promises

Starts from back page

something else."

Kenyan football is currently at a standstill following an order by Sports CS Amina Mohamed for the closure of all sports facilities in a bid to curb the spread of Covid-19.

All football matches in the country have been suspended indefinitely, leading to a loss of revenue to players, coaches, referees, and other stakeholders.

There has been a continuous call for the government to help footballers, and athletes, in general, to survive the hard times.

Leading to Harambee Stars forwards Michael Olunga and Allan Wanga have called on the authorities to support players.

"It is very difficult for a Kenyan footballer without a salary and bonuses because they don't even earn much,"

said Japan-based Olunga.

"This is the point where players fall into depression," added Wanga.

TOUGH TIMES FOR CLUBS

This week, the Ministry of Sports asked FKF to furnish it with names of footballers and officials competing in the Kenyan Premier League, Women Premier League, National Super League, plus the Division One and Division Two leagues.

"We are also affected, no training, no games means no revenue from sponsors. We are talking to the government and Fifa and expect a development soon," said FKF president Nick Mwendwa.

Several KPL clubs have publicly stated it will be difficult for them to meet their obligation of paying players their salaries under the current circumstances.

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Court suspends Samukai, others' imprisonment



By **Winston W. Parley**

Criminal Court "C" Judge Yamie Quiqui Gbeisay has sentenced former Defense Minister J. Brownie Samukai and his deputy Joseph P. Johnson to two years suspended imprisonment, provided that they resituate the whole or substantial amount of the judgment sum within six months and stipulate restitution of the balance within 12 months.

Further, Judge Gbeisay sentences the third defendant James Nyumah

Dorkor to a suspended six months imprisonment, provided that he resituates his share of the judgment sum in whole or in substantial part in six months and file a stipulation to pay the balance in 12 months.

Announcing the sentences Thursday, 23 April, Judge Gbeisay recalled that the court, following a regular trial, adjudged all the three defendants guilty of the crimes of misuse of public money, a felony of the first degree, theft of property for over a million USD, a felony of the second

degree, and criminal conspiracy.

The three former Defense Ministry officials had been awaiting sentencing after they were convicted through a bench trial for allegedly misusing funds generated through deducting the salaries of officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) for saving into a compulsory retirement funds account established in 2009.

Judge Gbeisay says he is suspending Samukai and Johnson's two year sentence provided that they elect to make restitution, as failure on their part the convicts would serve the full two years sentence.

Further, Judge Gbeisay says though defendant James Nyumah Dorkor elected to reserve the right to the privacy of his health status, the court, considering his physical condition and his minor role in the commission of the crime, sentenced him to six months imprisonment.

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Kenya promises financial support to athletes hit by virus crisis

AFC Leopards midfielder Marvin Omondi has welcomed President Uhuru Kenyatta's promise that the government is working to cushion sportsmen and women who are struggling financially owing to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I can assure you we have not forgotten our athletes. We know they are suffering," said President Kenyatta during an interview with the

media. "We have the National Sports Fund which we will use to get money and help support them at these difficult times."

In an exclusive interview with Nation Sport, 20-year-old Omondi said he had struggled to make ends meet in the last eight months so much that he was considering quitting professional football altogether.

"It is good news the President has finally remembered us. I last received



my (monthly) salary in August (last year). We were in pre-season in Mumias at the time and the sponsor (SportPesa) had stopped their partnership with the club," the youngster recalls.

"The management has tried but still struggles to pay us. We now rely on handouts from fans and well-wishers. I play football to expose my talent and earn. Now I cannot survive and maybe it is time I tried

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