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VOL.10 NO. 110

WEDNESDAY, JULY 01, 2020

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Continental News

Anger erupts after Ethiopian protest singer killed

Seven people have died in Ethiopia in protests that followed the killing of musician Hachalu Hundessa, well known for his political songs, medics have told the BBC. Police are investigating his death.

Hachalu's songs often focused on the rights of the country's Oromo ethnic group and became anthems in a wave of protests that led to the downfall of the previous prime minister in 2018. The 34-year-old had said that he had received death threats. But it is not clear who was behind his shooting on the outskirts of the capital, Addis Ababa.

He was attacked at around 21:30 local time (18:30 GMT) on Monday when he was driving.

Thousands of his fans headed to the hospital in the city where the body of the singer was taken on Monday night. To them, he was a voice of his generation that protested against decades of government repression.

Hachalu was more than just a singer and entertainer.

He was a symbol for the Oromo people who spoke up about the political and

economic marginalisation that they had suffered under consecutive Ethiopian regimes.

In one of his most famous songs, he sang: "Do not wait for help to come from outside, a dream that doesn't come true. Rise, make your horse ready and fight, you are the one close to the palace." The musician had also been imprisoned for five years when he was 17 for taking part in protests.

Many like him fled into exile fearing persecution but he

remained in the country and encouraged the youth to struggle. In Addis Ababa, police used tear gas to disperse the crowd outside the hospital and gunshots have been heard in the city where people set fire to tyres. In Adama, 90km (56 miles) south-east of Addis Ababa, five people died after being shot during demonstrations and 75 others were injured, hospital chief executive Dr Mekonnin Feyisa

told BBC Afaan Aromo.

Nineteen others were injured in nearby Dera town, he added.

Meanwhile, in the eastern town of Chiro, two people were shot dead during protests, a medic at the local hospital told the BBC.

The internet has also been shut down in parts of the country as the protests spread in Oromia regional state.

Hachalu's body was being taken to his hometown, Ambo, about 100km west of the capital, but protesters tried to

stop it and insisted that he should be buried in Addis Ababa.

In the eastern city of Harar, protesters have pulled down a statue of a royal prince - Ras Makonnen Wolde Mikael - who was the father of Haile Selassie, Ethiopia's last emperor.

The statue shows Ras Makonnen, an important military figure and former governor of Harar province in the 19th Century under then-Emperor Menelik II, sitting on a horse. BBC



The 34-year-old's songs focused on the rights of his Oromo people

The president who 'argued with God'

In the unmistakable cadence of a preacher, Malawi's new President, Lazarus Chakwera, appealed for unity in his country shortly after he was sworn in on Sunday.

The day of the week seemed fitting as the former head of the Malawi Assemblies of God, one of the largest Christian

denominations in the country, treated the stage like a pulpit to inspire fervour with his words.

The country is fractured after a divisive 13 months following the disputed 2019 election, the result of which was cancelled by the courts.

Speaking in a style and accent that had hints of US civil rights leader Martin Luther King,

President Chakwera talked about the dream "that binds us together [which] is for us to enjoy shared prosperity, not just freedom". But he then said it was no good just having a dream.

"The time has come for us to go beyond dreaming.

"We all must wake up because this is a time to arise from slumber and make our dream come true."

Mr Chakwera is a man of God in a deeply religious country.

The 65-year-old emerged as leader of the Malawi Congress Party in 2013 without having any previous political experience. He came to the job after leading the Assemblies of God for 24 years, but admitted, when he was first running for president in 2014, that making the decision to become a politician was not easy.

"I had to argue with God over a direction in life that didn't seem natural to me," he said in a video published by St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in California. BBC



Lazarus Chakwera's political fortunes were revived by a court ruling that annulled last year's flawed election

Belgian king expresses regrets for colonial abuses

Belgium's King Philippe has expressed his "deepest regrets" to the Democratic Republic of Congo for his country's colonial abuses.

The reigning monarch made the comments in a letter to President Félix Tshisekedi on the 60th anniversary of DR Congo's independence.

Belgium controlled the central African country from the 19th Century until it won its independence in 1960.

Millions of Africans died during Belgium's bloody colonial rule.

There is a renewed focus on the European nation's history after the death of George

remorse for what happened during the country's colonial rule. The remarks, however, fell short of an outright apology.

In a letter sent to President Tshisekedi and published in Belgian media, King Philippe praises the "privileged partnership" between the two nations now.

But he says there have been "painful episodes" in their history, including during the reign of King Leopold II - who he does not directly name - and in the 20th Century. "I would like to express my deepest regrets for these injuries of the past,



King Philippe made the remarks in a letter to President Félix Tshisekedi of DR Congo

Floyd in police custody in the US and the Black Lives Matter protests that followed. Thousands of Belgians have demonstrated in recent weeks and statues of Belgium's colonial leader King Leopold II have been vandalised. Authorities in Antwerp have removed a statue of him from a public square.

More than 10 million Africans are thought to have died during his reign. King Philippe is a descendant of the 19th Century ruler. This is the first time a Belgian monarch has formally expressed

the pain of which is now revived by the discrimination still too present in our societies," King Philippe wrote.

"I will continue to fight all forms of racism. I encourage the reflection that has been initiated by our parliament so that our memory is definitively pacified."

Just like the UK, Belgium is a constitutional monarchy - meaning King Philippe's statement will have been agreed beforehand with the government of Prime Minister Sophie Wilmès. BBC

EDITORIAL

Confrontation is unhealthy for business

THE NATIONAL SECURITY Agency (NSA) an investigative arm of the state, is reportedly probing the Chief Executive Officer of Orange Liberia, Mamadou Coulibaly, for alleged involvement with protesters who recently erected roadblocks with burning tires in Monrovia, demanding cancelation of surcharge imposed on GSM companies by the Government of Liberia.

THE SUSPICION BY the government stems from earlier Writ of Prohibition filed before the Supreme Court of Liberia by Orange Liberia against the surcharge. The High Court however, denied the petition.

AND SO WHEN an erratic pressure group here, Council of Patriots, mobilized youth into the street last week, burning tires and erecting roadblocks in demand of cancelation of the surcharge, government suspects that CEO Coulibaly, who had earlier gone to court against the levy, may be behind all this hence; Police called him for questioning and subsequently turned Coulibaly over to the NSA for further interrogation.

IT IS NOT only disappointing, but highly counterproductive for a business entity to be in confrontation with the government under which it operates. This is bad business practice. Rather than going to court on the matter, we think CEO Coulibaly should have sat with the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) the regulatory body, to discuss all outstanding issues.

IN 2018, THE LTA issued Order# 0016-02-25-19, imposing floor prices and surcharges on one-net voice calls and data. Before issuing the Order, the LTA got all stakeholders involved and their inputs were considered.

IF THE GSM companies in this case, Orange Liberia, had reservations it should choose dialogue with the relevant government entities to reach common grounds for peaceful business environment.

LEST WE BE misconstrued here; the New Dawn holds no suspicion against CEO Coulibaly, neither does it support or defend ongoing interrogation by the government.

BUT WE URGE both sides to quickly realize that a confrontational business environment poses threat to the economy, something that neither parties wants to see in Liberia, particularly Orange Liberia, as a foreign partner.

WE CAN BUT only hope that the questioning would be concluded soon and suspicions cleared so that CEO Coulibaly would return to his business and carry on normal operations without having to constantly be on the watch for plain-clothe security coming to take him for interrogation.

THE LAST THING that this country wants is a business environment that is clouded with mistrust and strain, because such atmosphere drives away the dollars the economy needs to thrive.

COMMENTARY

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

How Inequality Fuels COVID-19 Deaths

High inequality undermines social cohesion, erodes public trust, and deepens political polarization, all of which negatively affect governments' ability and readiness to respond to crises. This explains why the United States, Brazil, and Mexico account for nearly half of the world's reported deaths since the start of the pandemic.

NEW YORK - Three countries - the United States, Brazil, and Mexico - account for nearly half (46%) of the world's reported COVID-19 deaths, yet they contain only 8.6% of the world's population. Some 60% of Europe's deaths are concentrated in just three countries - Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom - which account for 38% of Europe's population. There were many fewer deaths and lower death rates in most of Northern and Central Europe.

Several factors determine a country's COVID-19 death rate: the quality of political leadership, the coherence of the government's response, the availability of hospital beds, the extent of international travel, and the population's age structure. Yet one deep structural characteristic seems to be shaping the role of these factors: countries' income and wealth distribution.

The US, Brazil, and Mexico have very high income and wealth inequality. The World Bank reports the respective Gini coefficients for recent years (2016-18) at 41.4 in the US, 53.5 in Brazil, and 45.9 in Mexico. (On a 100-point scale, a value of 100 signifies absolute inequality, with one person controlling all income or wealth, and zero means a completely equal distribution per person or household).

The US has the highest Gini coefficient among the advanced economies, while Brazil and Mexico are among the world's most unequal countries. In Europe, Italy, Spain, and the UK - with Gini scores of 35.6, 35.3, and 34.8, respectively - are more unequal than their northern and eastern counterparts, such as Finland (27.3), Norway (28.5), Denmark (28.5), Austria (30.3), Poland (30.5), and Hungary (30.5).

The correlation of death rates per million and income inequality is far from perfect; other factors matter a lot. France's inequality is on par with Germany's, but its COVID-19 death rate is significantly higher. The death rate in relatively egalitarian Sweden is significantly higher than in its neighbors, because Sweden decided to keep its social distancing policies voluntary rather than mandatory. Relatively egalitarian Belgium was battered with very high reported death rates, owing partly to the authorities' decision to report probable as well as confirmed COVID-19 deaths.

High income inequality is a social scourge in many ways. As Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson convincingly reported in two important books, *The Spirit Level* and *The Inner Level*, higher inequality leads to worse overall health conditions, which significantly increases vulnerability to COVID-19 deaths.

Moreover, higher inequality leads to lower social cohesion, less social trust, and more political polarization, all of which negatively affect governments' ability and readiness to adopt strong control measures. Higher inequality means a larger proportion of low-income workers - from cleaners, cashiers, guards, and delivery persons to sanitation, construction, and factory workers - must continue their daily lives, even at the risk of infection. More

inequality also means more people living in crowded living conditions and therefore unable to shelter safely.

Populist leaders exacerbate the enormous costs of inequality. US President Donald Trump, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson were elected by unequal and socially divided societies with the support of many disgruntled working-class voters (typically white, less-educated men who resent their declining social and economic status). But the politics of resentment is almost the opposite of the politics of epidemic control. The politics of resentment shuns experts, derides scientific evidence, and resents elites who work online telling workers who can't to stay home.

The US is so unequal, politically divided, and badly governed under Trump that it has actually given up on any coherent national strategy to control the outbreak. All responsibilities have been shifted to state and local governments, which have been left to fend for themselves. Heavily armed right-wing protesters have, on occasion, mobbed state capitals to oppose restrictions on business activity and personal mobility. Even face masks have become politicized: Trump refuses to wear one, and he recently said that some people do so only to express their disapproval of him. The result is that his followers gleefully reject wearing them, and the virus, which started in the "blue" (Democratic) coastal states, is now hitting Trump's base in "red" (Republican) states hard.

Brazil and Mexico are mimicking US politics. Bolsonaro and Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador are quintessential populists in the Trump mold, mocking the virus, disdaining expert advice, making light of the risks, and flamboyantly rejecting personal protection. They are also guiding their countries into a Trumpian disaster.

With the exception of Canada and all too few other places, the countries of North and South America are being ravaged by the virus, because almost the entire Western hemisphere shares a legacy of mass inequality and pervasive racial discrimination. Even well-governed Chile fell prey to violence and instability last year, owing to high and chronic inequality. This year, Chile (along with Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru) has suffered one the world's highest COVID-19 death rates.

Inequality is certainly not a death sentence. China is rather unequal (with a Gini score of 38.5), but its national and provincial governments adopted rigorous control measures after the initial Wuhan outbreak, essentially suppressing the virus. The recent outbreak in Beijing, after weeks of zero confirmed new cases, resulted in renewed lockdowns and massive testing.¹

In most other countries, however, we are witnessing once again the enormous costs of mass inequality: inept governance, social distrust, and a huge population of vulnerable people unable to protect themselves from encroaching harms. Alarming, the epidemic itself is widening inequalities even further.

The New Dawn
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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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O-PED

By Yanis Varoufakis

The COVID Class War

The European Union's proposed recovery fund to counter the pandemic's economic fallout seems destined to leave the majority in every member state worse off. Finance will again be protected, if badly, while workers are left to foot the bill through new rounds of austerity.

ATHENS - The euro crisis that erupted a decade ago has long been portrayed as a clash between Europe's frugal North and profligate South. In fact, at its heart was a fierce class war that left Europe, including its capitalists, much weakened relative to the United States and China. Worse still, the European Union's response to the pandemic, including the EU recovery fund currently under deliberation, is bound to intensify this class war, and deal another blow to Europe's socioeconomic model.

If we have learned anything in recent decades, it is the pointlessness of focusing on any country's economy in isolation. Once upon a time, when money moved between countries mostly to finance trade, and most consumption spending benefited domestic producers, the strengths and weaknesses of a national economy could be separately assessed. Not anymore. Today, the weaknesses of, say, China and Germany are intertwined with those of countries like the US and Greece.

The unshackling of finance in the early 1980s, following the elimination of capital controls left over from the Bretton Woods system, enabled enormous trade imbalances to be funded by rivers of money created privately via financial engineering. As the US shifted from a trade surplus to a massive deficit, its hegemony grew. Its imports maintain global demand and are financed by the inflows of foreigners' profits that pour into Wall Street.

This strange recycling process is managed by the world's de facto central bank, the US Federal Reserve. And maintaining such an impressive creation - a permanently imbalanced global system - necessitates the constant intensification of class war in deficit and surplus countries alike.

Deficit countries are all alike in one important sense: whether powerful like the US, or weak like Greece, they are condemned to generate debt bubbles as their workers helplessly watch industrial areas morph into rustbelts. Once the bubbles burst, workers in the Midwest or the Peloponnese face debt bondage and plummeting living standards.

Although surplus countries, too, are characterized by class warfare against workers, they differ significantly from one another. Consider China and Germany. Both feature large trade surpluses with the US and the rest of Europe. Both repress their workers' income and wealth. The main difference between them is that China maintains huge levels of investment through a domestic credit bubble, while Germany's corporations invest much less and rely on credit bubbles in the rest of the eurozone.

The euro crisis was never a clash between the Germans and the Greeks (shorthand for the fabled North-South clash). Instead, it stemmed from an intensification of class war within Germany and within Greece at the hands of an oligarchy-without-frontiers living off financial flows.

For example, when the Greek state went bankrupt in 2010, the austerity imposed on most of the Greek population did wonders to restrict investment in Greece. But it did the same in Germany, indirectly repressing German wages at a time when the European Central Bank's money-printing was sending share prices (and German directors' bonuses) through the roof.

Class warfare is arguably more brutal in China and the US than it is in Europe. But Europe's lack of a political union ensures that its class war verges on being pointless, even from the capitalists' perspective.

Evidence that German capitalists squandered the wealth extracted from the EU's working classes is not hard to find. The euro crisis caused a massive 7% devaluation of the surpluses that the German private sector had accumulated from 1999 onwards, because capital owners had no alternative but to lend these trillions to foreigners whose subsequent distress led to large losses.

This is not only a German problem. It is a condition afflicting the EU's other surplus countries as well. The German newspaper Handelsblatt recently revealed a notable reversal. Whereas in 2007, EU corporations earned around €100 billion (\$113 billion) more than their US counterparts, in 2019 the situation was inverted.

Moreover, this is an accelerating trend. In 2019, corporate earnings rose 50% faster in the US than in Europe. And US corporate earnings are expected to suffer less from the pandemic-induced recession, falling 20% in 2020, compared to 33% in Europe.

The gist of Europe's conundrum is that, while it is a surplus economy, its fragmentation ensures that the income losses of German and Greek workers do not even become sustainable profits for Europe's capitalists. In short, behind the narrative of northern frugality lurks the specter of wasted exploitation.

Reports that COVID-19 caused the EU to raise its game are grossly exaggerated. The quiet death of European debt mutualization guarantees that the gigantic increase in national budget deficits will be followed by equally sizeable austerity in every country. In other words, the class war that has already eroded most people's incomes will intensify. "But what about the proposed €750 billion recovery fund?" one might ask. "Is the agreement to issue common debt not a breakthrough?"

Yes and no. Common debt instruments are a necessary but insufficient condition for ameliorating the intensified class war. To play a progressive role, common debt must fund the weaker households and firms across the common economic area: in Germany as well as in Greece. And it must do so automatically, without reliance on the kindness of the local oligarchs. It must operate like an automated recycling mechanism that shifts surpluses to those in deficit within every town, region, and state. In the US, for example, food stamps and social security payments support the weak in California and in Missouri, while shifting net resources from California to Missouri - and all without any involvement by state governors or local bureaucrats.

By contrast, the EU recovery fund's fixed allocation to member states will turn them against one another, as the fixed sum to be given to, say, Italy or Greece is portrayed as a tax on Germany's working class. Moreover, the idea is to transfer the funds to national governments, effectively entrusting the local oligarchy with the task of distributing them.

OPINION

By Mark Lynas

Saved by the Pandemic?

The COVID-19 crisis has brought climate and economic imperatives into closer alignment than ever before. If the world seizes this historic opportunity, then future generations will surely remember 2020 as the year in which humanity both defeated a pandemic and saved the planet.

HAY-ON-WYE - COVID-19 has killed more than 500,000 people worldwide, made millions more ill, and continues to wreak havoc. But as the saying goes - and without wishing to downplay this human tragedy in any way - it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. If we make the right choices as lockdowns ease, then the pandemic might just have thrown humanity a lifeline in dealing with the much greater challenge of climate change.

Before the coronavirus struck, activists like me had all but given up hope that the world would meet the Paris climate agreement's target of limiting global warming to 1.5-2°C above pre-industrial levels. Instead, it looked like the world would heat up by 3-4°C.

That would be a planetary catastrophe. We would lose all of the world's coral reefs and the majority of its rainforests, while many of the most densely populated regions would become intolerably hot. Food production would plummet, threatening famine and starvation as harvests failed in the world's major breadbaskets.

Now, however, none of that needs to happen. The coronavirus has forced us to lock down economies to such an extent that carbon dioxide emissions have plunged. We have all seen the evidence, in the form of bluer skies, smog-free cities, and pedestrians and cyclists replacing polluting cars. Scientists estimate that global CO2 emissions will fall by up to 7% this year, and that maintaining this level of annual emissions reductions would put the world back on track to meet the 1.5-2°C target. That in turn would save coral reefs and rainforests, avert a global refugee crisis, limit sea-level rise, and keep the Arctic ice cap mostly frozen.

But while the COVID-19 crisis has given us an unexpected climate opportunity, we obviously can't maintain lockdowns forever. Millions of people are currently out of work, and a prolonged economic shutdown would have a disastrous effect on livelihoods, with the burden falling mostly on the poor.

Fortunately, the choice we face is not between economic collapse and climate breakdown. By an extremely lucky coincidence, the world urgently needs to invest trillions of dollars in decarbonization just when the global economy equally urgently needs a huge stimulus to get people back to work.

To help finance these measures, countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom should issue long-term government bonds with maturities of 50 or even 100 years. With interest rates on some advanced economies' government debt currently negative, national treasuries could raise large amounts of money at very little short-term cost. And because deflation is currently a much bigger risk than inflation, creating extra money via bond issues would help to stave off a potential global economic depression.

Some might object on moral grounds to governments borrowing money that our children and grandchildren will have to repay. But issuing long-term public debt to deal with a civilizational-scale challenge is far from unprecedented. The UK, for example, paid off its last remaining World War I debt only in 2014, and UK citizens today are about five times richer per capita than the generation that fought in that war. And assuming economic growth continues over the next century, our descendants will be better off still, thus easing future debt-service burdens.

Greta Thunberg and millions of young climate strikers around the world have rightly tried moral exhortation to persuade today's leaders to take future generations' interests seriously. But now we need to talk hard cash.

Tackling climate change requires huge capital investments now. For starters, ensuring a habitable climate in the second half of this century requires scaling up renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind power sufficiently, so that they replace fossil fuels as the major primary-energy providers.

Furthermore, we will need to produce liquid fuels, most likely ammonia and synthetic hydrocarbons, on an even larger scale than electric power in order to decarbonize shipping, aviation, and industrial processes such as steelmaking. Next-generation nuclear technologies such as advanced modular reactors, or AMRs, will play an essential role in this effort.

Major infrastructure investments are by nature long-term projects, and the cost of capital must be lowered if clean technologies are to out-compete fossil fuels. Governments can borrow the required amounts at much lower rates than the private sector, and the resulting investments will create millions of jobs to replace those lost in dirty industries, and help to revive the global economy after the pandemic.

The UK government has already issued £72 billion (\$90 billion) worth of bonds with maturities of 50 years or more, which will fall due from 2055 onward. The UK and other countries could issue 50 times this much debt - £3-4 trillion (\$3.7-5 trillion) - redeemable later this century, to help finance the investment needed to overcome the climate challenge.

Such long-maturing bonds could be a safe asset for pension funds and other long-term investors, and also offer them a way to divest permanently from fossil fuels. After all, there will be no "safe" assets in a world of escalating climate damage.

I am not suggesting that governments should financially support clean technologies indefinitely. Rather, the challenge is to reduce their costs - as has been done successfully with solar energy - through research and development and large early deployments, until clean tech becomes cheaper than fossil fuels and the energy transition becomes self-sustaining.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought climate and economic imperatives into closer alignment than ever before. If we seize this historic opportunity, future generations will surely remember 2020 as the year in which humanity both defeated a pandemic and saved the planet.

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Section I.

PROCUREMENT OF COMPUTERS AND ACCESSORIES

Contract Identification No.: IFB/EPA/CCCD/NCB/001/2020

1. The Government of the Republic of Liberia through the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** has received Fund from the Global Environment Facility in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), through the Cross-Cutting Capacity Development Project (CCCD) for Fiscal Year 2020 and intends to apportion part of the funds towards the procurement of **COMPUTERS AND ACCESSORIES**.

1. The Environmental Protection Agency now invites sealed bids from eligible registered bidders for the supply of **COMPUTERS AND ACCESSORIES**.

2. Bidding will be conducted through the **National Competitive Bidding Process** as specified in the Public Procurement & Concessions Commission Act (PPCA) of 2010.

3. Specification & Quantity

| NO. | DESCRIPTION | Specification | QUANTITY |
|-----|--------------------|---------------|----------|
| 1. | COMPUTER (DESKTOP) | | 10PCS |
| 2. | LAPTOP | | 1PC |
| 3. | BACKUP | | 10PCS |

4. Qualification and Requirement include :

- ❖ Current business registration certificate+
- ❖ Current tax clearance
- ❖ Reference (s) listing of previous clients supplied over the past three (3) years. Please provide contact telephone NOs, e-mail address and any other details that will make due diligence easier.
- ❖ Company Profile/ Track Record
- ❖ Letter of Certification from at least three (3) previous clients.; and
- ❖ PPCC vendors registry certificate

5. Interested eligible bidders can obtain a copy of the bidding documents from the **Procurement Unit of the Environmental Protection Agency** beginning Tuesday June 30, 2020 from 9:00 am-2 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. A complete set of bidding documents in English are available to be purchased for a non-refundable fee of Twenty Five United States Dollars (US\$25.00).

6. The deadline for submission of bids is on **Friday July 24, 2020 at 12:00 noon**. Bids received after the deadline will be considered late and will be rejected and returned unopened. Electronic bids will not be accepted. Bids will be opened in the presence of Firms/Company or their representatives who choose to attend on **Friday July 24, 2020 at 12:00 noon** in the **Public Awareness Theater on the ground floor of the EPA**.

7. Bids submitted must be sealed and labeled: **IF NO. GOL/EPA/CCCD/NCB/001/2020**.

8. All Sealed Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of **US\$ 500.00** from a reputable bank in the form of Bank Guarantee. Bids shall be valid for a period of **90 days** after the deadline of bid submission.

Submissions must be delivered to the address stated below.

Attention: The Procurement Unit
Behind the main building within the compound of the
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
4th Street, Sinkor
Monrovia, Liberia
Cell #: 0886-512-339



COVID-19 threatens to reverse gains

-UNFPA warns

The United Nations Population Fund or UNFPA has released the State of World Population 2020 report with a warning that while progress has been made in ending some harmful practices against girls worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse such gains.

The report published Tuesday in New York, says a recent analysis revealed that if services and programmes remain shuttered for the next six months, an additional 13 million girls may be forced into marriage and an additional two million subjected to female genital mutilation between now and 2030.

“The pandemic both makes our job harder and more urgent as so many more girls are now at risk,” says UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem, vowing, “We will not stop until the rights, choices and bodies of all girls are fully their own.”

The report details that every year, millions of girls are subjected to

neglect that leads to their death as children, resulting in 140 million “missing females.”

However, it notes that some harmful practices are waning in countries where they have been most prevalent. But because of population growth in these countries, the number of girls subjected to them will actually rise in the coming decades, if urgent action is not taken.

Countries that have ratified international treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child have a duty to end the harm, whether it’s inflicted on girls by family members, religious communities, health-care providers, commercial enterprises or state institutions, it says and adds that many have responded with laws, but laws alone are not enough.

Decades of experience and research show that bottom-up, grassroots approaches are better at bringing change, the UNFPA report states.

“We must tackle the problem by tackling the root causes, especially gender-biased norms. We must do a



practices that harm them physically and emotionally, with the full knowledge and consent of their families, friends and communities.

It says at least 19 harmful practices, ranging from breast ironing to virginity testing, are considered human rights violations, highlighting three most prevalent ones, including female genital mutilation, child marriage, and extreme bias against daughters in favour of sons.

“Harmful practices against girls cause profound and lasting trauma, robbing them of their right to reach their full potential,” Dr. Kanem explains.

According to UNFPA, this year, an estimated 4.1 million girls will be subjected to female genital mutilation and another 33,000 under age 18 will be forced into marriages, usually to much older men. Also, an extreme preference for sons over daughters in some countries has fueled gender-biased sex selection or extreme

better job of supporting communities’ own efforts to understand the toll these practices are taking on girls and the benefits that accrue to the whole of society by stopping them,” Dr. Kanem says.

It also adds that economies and the legal systems that support them must be restructured to guarantee every woman equal opportunities, stressing that changing rules for property inheritance, for example, can eliminate a powerful incentive for families to favour sons over daughters and help to eliminate child marriage.

Ending child marriage and female genital mutilation worldwide is possible within 10 years by scaling up efforts to keep girls in school longer and teach them life skills and to engage men and boys in social change. Investments totaling \$3.4 billion a year through 2030 would end these two harmful practices and end the suffering of an estimated 84 million girls, the report shows. -Press Release

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Cocoa holds Liberia's future

-Min. Cooper

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

As Liberia falls in global rubber production, the Minister of Agriculture Jeannie Cooper says cocoa is the future for the county's economy and government is now taking measures and interest in investing more resources in the

together in moving the sector forward.

He describes the sector as a shining star, saying, "Since I came to office, we have some people producing chocolate in Liberia at its superior quality. The sector is ready to industrialize in Liberia despite all the challenges."

A day-long meeting to discuss prospects and challenges facing the cocoa sector was held over

Former Montserrado County lawmaker currently president of the Farmers Union Network, Josephine Francis George, stresses the need for better coordination amongst policymakers and players in the sector.

Madam George points to concern about existing cocoa trees that have been around since the 70s and loss of interest by farmers' children since in fact, most farmers are aging.

"Most of the trees in Liberia are very old and because of that most of them are developing low production. The farmers are old, and their children have gone to venture in other sectors of life. Can we rehabilitate these trees? We have LACRA, we have CARI, the Ministry of Agriculture we need a good coordination and not reinventing the wheel", she underscores.

She calls for training of graduates from the College of Agriculture and Forestry from the University of Liberia to jumpstart the process, noting that cocoa is a low hanging fruit and there are good chocolate companies who want to do business with the Liberia.

The Liberian National Cocoa Sector Public Private Platform established in 2019, is a public private platform that has played a significant role in the visioning, coordination, and facilitation of some key interventions within the cocoa sector.



sector. Addressing a recent workshop Monrovia, Minister Cooper notes that the cocoa sector is gradually taking over and could become a major boom for the economy, rallying farmers and partners to work

the weekend. According to Minister Cooper, the meeting sought to reactivate the cocoa sector platform, a multi-disciplinary platform that bring together donors, processors, exporters and farmers.

Web portal launched to enhance transparency in COVID - 19 donations

By Lewis S. Teh

Information Minister Eugene Nagbe says the support from the private sector through the launching of the Liberia Private Sector Executive Committee (LIPSEC) web portal will enhance transparency and accountability for donations coming to the government during this coronavirus crisis.

"The importance of this portal is in the interest of transparency, efficiency," he said Tuesday, 30 June at the Ministry of Health in Oldest Congo Town during the launch of LIPSEC web portal.

According to him, it will give the people more confidence that the government and its partners are proceeding rightly, indicating that the web portal will enhance transparency interns of finance, material and coordination including health care equipment.

He explains that this launch is a private - public - partnership to work along with the Incident Management System (IMS) to drive the COVID - 19 response.

According to Minister Nagbe,



a group of individuals and entities have decided to support the government of Liberia's efforts to eradicate COVID - 19 from Liberia, saying their contribution has been immense.

Representing the Minister of Health, the Chief Medical Officer of Liberia Dr. Francis Kateh says the launch of the portal marks an

important step in government collaboration with the private sector and its partners to defeat COVID - 19.

Dt. Kateh says this innovative approach will help the Government of Liberia to account for private sector

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Father, son jailed -for alleged violence

By Emmanuel Mondaye

The Bushrod Island Magisterial Court on the outskirts of Monrovia has jailed a 48-year-old father and his son for beating a female in their Duala Community on 27 June, resulting to the victim sustaining injury

Defendant James Sneh and Co-defendant Johnson Sneh (son) according to court record, were on 26 June arrested and formerly charged

the ground, while neighbors tried to intervene.

The document continues that the complainant had to take several stitches due to severe bleeding and injury sustained in the hands of the defendants.

The court case presided over by Magistrate Peter Gbor the ordered the clerk of court to immediately transfer both defendants to the Monrovia Central Prison in Monrovia, if



with the crime Aggravated Assault and Attempt to Commit Murder by the Liberia National Police depot in New Kru Town.

The document disclosed that while the victim, Mary Bropleh, sat at her residence on the morning of June 26, the two defendants jumped on her and beat her up thereby, injuring her on her forehead.

It further revealed that the defendants also dragged complainant Mary Bropleh on

they failed to file a valid criminal appearance bond.

According to the court, the alleged action by the two defendants is not only criminal but an attempt to commit murder due to the form and manner in which the complainant was brutalized.

Complainant Mary Bropleh is being represented in court by William & Associates Legal Service in Monrovia. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**

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ALJA condemns COP's lawlessness

The Association of Liberian Journalists in the Americas (ALJA) has described the Liberia based Council of Patriots' (COP) recently orchestrated lawlessness in the Old Road Community in the City of Monrovia as an unfortunate development.

ALJA condemned in the strongest term the incident and the COP for the unnecessary disruption of traffic and the chaos and confusion it caused the residents of the community and the people of Liberia as a whole.

The Association in a press release issued on June 30,

2020, called on Liberians the world over to denounce the incident because it has the proclivity of derailing the prevailing peace and stability in the country.

On Thursday, June 24, 2020, a group of reported members of the COP during the early morning hours obstructed traffic and set ablaze several tires on the main street of Tubman Boulevard in the Old Road Community. The action of the alleged COP's operatives was in reaction to controversial surcharges the Liberian government through the Liberia Telecommunication Authority (LTA) imposed on telephone companies in the country.

The COP opposes the surcharges because it believes they are too high; and would eventually be passed on by the companies to the financially stripped Liberian telephone subscribers. The road block and the burning of tires caused panic in Monrovia.

However, the situation was later brought under control by the intervention of officers of the Liberia National Police (LNP). Liberia's talk show host, Henry Costa, the US based chairman of the COP, has since declared the unfortunate incident as the work of the COP.

ALJA says following 14 years of civil wars that decimated an estimated 250 thousand human lives and millions of dollars' worth of properties in Liberia, the country does not need a repeat of such carnage.

The Association says though it recognizes and respects the rights of Chairman Costa and the COP to publicly denounce societal ills in Liberia; and seek redress to matters of national concern, they must do so within the ambit of the laws of the country. The Association maintained that the June 24th fire setting and the obstruction of traffic in the Old Road Community and the Tubman Boulevard vicinity

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Rep. Fallah donates 30 bikes, LRD1m to local govt

Montserrado County District # 5 Representative Thomas Fallah has presented 30 motorbikes and one million Librin dollars to Montserrado local authorities y in Bentol city.

Making the presentation at the Bentol City Hall over the weekend, Rep. Fallah said the donation is a gesture from President George Manneh Weah to the local government following appeal to the President.

"This is just a continuation of what we always do for the people of District #5. We want our county leaders for movement and the amount is intended for stationeries and other operational cost. This is an initial start of what my collaboration with our President will do for you in the near future. Our leaders deserve cars but since we don't have cars now these brand new motorbikes can be a help until otherwise other",

the lawmaker, who is aspiring for senate said.

Fallah, who is serving his third term in the House of Representatives, noted the plights and wellbeing of the Liberia people is of top concern of President Weah.

Also speaking at the

program, Montserrado County Senator Saah Joseph said the county stands to benefit more if Fallah is elected to the senate.

Meanwhile, Senator Joseph has promised to repairs bridges along the Bentol and Careysburg area and another at Arlington city to ease movement of residents.



PATEL warns intruders

The Patriotic Entrepreneurs of Liberia (PATEL) warns those it terms intruders and misguided individuals, impersonating as PATEL members in the corridor of the Liberian Business Community.

The warning comes in the wake of tremendous efforts by PATEL for a wholesome and better economic condition for all Liberian.

In a press statement PATEL

appointed him as secretary on the committee to produce and distribute one million nose masks to Liberians.

At the same time he lauds President Weah for contracting the Liberia Tailor Union to produce one million nose masks for the public.

Commenting on the government's reopening strategy, he urges citizens to observe health protocols announced to break the COVID-



chairman Presley S. Tenwah, warns the Liberia Business Association and all those that continue to shield such unscrupulous individuals to desist.

Tenwah notes that as part of its numerous efforts, PATEL is currently working with the National Port Authority to address challenges faced by Liberian-owned businesses in clearing and shipping goods to Liberia.

According to Tenwah, President George Weah has

19 transmission.

Tenwah underscores that compulsory wearing of nose masks in public places is part of the reopening strategy that would help to push the economy in a running gear.

PATEL is a combination of Liberian businesses and entrepreneurs working to promote economic self-reliance, capacity development, trade and general advocacy for the business community. -Press Release

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Français

COVID-19 : Les élèves de la 12e année ont repris les cours

Les lycéens, en particulier les élèves en classe de 12e année, ont repris les cours ce lundi 29 juin sur toute l'étendue du territoire national en dépit du fait que le COVID-19 continue de faire ravage dans le pays.

Les élèves ont repris les cours en vue de se préparer

au prochain examen de fin de cycle secondaire qui est prévu pour le 4 août de cette année. L'ouverture intervient plusieurs mois après que les autorités ont procédé à la fermeture des écoles pour, à l'instar de tous les pays du monde, tenter de freiner la propagation de l'épidémie du coronavirus.

Cependant, le couvre-feu

imposé par le gouvernement en raison de l'augmentation de s c a s d e coronavirus pourrait bien constituer une contrainte majeure pour bon nombre de lycéens.

Le premier jour à l'école a été marqué par le respect des mesures préventives. Les élèves ont l'air heureux d'être de retour en classe pour apprendre. C'est le cas par exemple de la présidente du conseil des élèves du système scolaire baptiste St. Simon, Mlle Hawa J. Manie, qui s'est réjouie de la reprise des cours après la pause de trois.

Toutefois, le couvre-feu constitue une inquiétude pour elle. C'est pourquoi elle appelle le gouvernement à revoir l'heure du couvre-feu, de sorte que les élèves puissent rester longtemps dans leurs écoles afin d'étudier leurs leçons pour mieux affronter l'examen.

A noter que les élèves doivent rester dans leurs écoles de 8h30 du matin à 17h tous les jours sur ordre du

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Adoption de l'ECO : George Weah appelle à la création d'un « comité spécial »

Le président du Liberia, George Weah, a appelé au cours d'une réunion de la Zone monétaire ouest-africaine, à la création d'un « comité spécial » chargé de discuter avec les présidents Ouattara et Macron afin d'aplanir les différends liés à l'adoption de la monnaie commune de la CEDEAO, l'ECO. Le président du Liberia, George Manneh Weah (photo) a appelé les dirigeants de l'Afrique de l'Ouest à continuer à travailler dans un « esprit de solidarité et d'unité africaine » afin d'aplanir les « malentendus » liés à la mise en œuvre du programme de la monnaie unique de la CEDEAO, l'ECO. C'était au cours d'une conférence virtuelle des chefs d'Etat de la zone monétaire ouest-africaine (ZMOA) élargie à la Guinée, tenue le mardi 23 juin. Convoquée par le dirigeant de la Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio, qui en assure actuellement la présidence, cette rencontre a pour but de discuter des différends apparus suite à la décision des pays de la zone U E M O A d'adopter

unilatéralement l'ECO comme monnaie officielle en remplacement du franc CFA, cette année.

Intervenant à cette occasion, le président du Liberia, George Weah, a estimé que la seule façon de sortir de « l'impasse actuelle » est de promouvoir un « dialogue informé et cordial » entre les blocs francophones et

anglophones. Le dirigeant a ainsi suggéré la création d'un « comité spécial » pour discuter avec le président Alassane Ouattara de la Côte d'Ivoire, qui a fait la déclaration d'adoption de l'ECO au nom du bloc francophone. L'objectif de ce comité, à en croire George Weah, est d'éviter que

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Côte-d'Ivoire : La corruption jusqu'à la moelle épinière...un enjeu électoral absolu si

La corruption est devenue un fait banal en Côte d'Ivoire. Plus les années passent, plus cette gangrène prend des proportions inquiétantes et les Ivoiriens observent tous une tolérance sans pareille.

En 2019, le rapport de Transparency international, une ONG allemande classait la Côte d'Ivoire à la 106e place sur 180 pays classés. Les autorités ivoiriennes avaient réagi pour démontrer que la Côte d'Ivoire avait fait des efforts et que ce n'était pas encore la grande catastrophe. Elles avaient même corrigé le classement de Transparency en donnant la Côte d'Ivoire 105e et non 106e.

« Depuis 2012, seuls 20 pays, dont l'Estonie et la Côte d'Ivoire, ont considérablement amélioré leur score. Ces performances sont reconnues par le Millenium Challenge Corporation. Nous avons gagné 8 points et nous sommes passés de la 136e place en 2013 à la 105e place et non à la 106e place en 2018. La Côte d'Ivoire n'a donc pas un niveau alarmiste en ce qui concerne la corruption », avait objecté Bakari Traoré le directeur de cabinet de la Haute autorité de la bonne gouvernance (Habg) lors d'une conférence de presse la même année.

Mais qu'à cela ne tienne. Ces chiffres institutionnels issus d'enquêtes orientées et qui ne prennent pas souvent en compte toutes les données pratiques, ne rendent pas souvent compte fidèlement de la réalité implacable d'un fléau qui risque de faire périr si l'on n'y prend garde, tous les fondements de la nation en construction.

Tenez bien. Les élèves des classes d'examen ont commencé les évaluations de fin d'année au plan national. A commencer par les épreuves d'EPS (Education physiques et sportive). A la place des épreuves proprement dites, on assiste plutôt à une scène de moisson de billets de 1000 FCFA ou de 2000 FCFA. C'est la somme à payer pour avoir la bonne note entre 15 et 18 si ce n'est 20 sur 20. Et là, les examinateurs ne s'en cachent plus face aux élèves qui rentrent dans le contexte. Ceux que l'on voit courir sur les 100 m, au lancer du poids, au triple saut, sut en longueur ou en hauteur, sont ceux qui n'ont pu satisfaire aux exigences du prof par manque de liquidité. Ils sont évalués à leur risque et péril et ne dépasseront pas, dans la plupart des cas, 13 sur 20 comme note finale.

Que dire des concours administratifs ? Ici, on ne

cherche plus votre niveau de connaissance après des mois de veillée consacrés à la préparation. Il faut délier la bourse pour avoir sa place à la fonction publique. Les autorités en charge de ces concours vous diront qu'ils sont entourés de la plus grande transparence possible. Mais en réalité, c'est de la poudre aux yeux. En février 2020, une scabreuse affaire avait secoué le ministère de la fonction publique au sujet d'une fraude qui avait consisté à inscrire sur la liste des admis, des gens qui n'avaient jamais été candidats ou des candidats déclarés non admis après les premières délibérations. Le directeur de cabinet avait réfuté cette thèse de fraude au cours d'une conférence de presse et l'affaire a été enterrée. Là où il avait promis de mettre fin à la mafia des brebis galeuses.

Autre ministère, autre scandale, l'éducation nationale. Pour son programme social, le gouvernement ivoirien avait promis de recruter 10.300 enseignants pour combler les déficits dans ce milieu. Au terme de l'opération menée par le ministère de l'Education nationale, un peu plus d'un millier de jeunes postulants seront laissés de côté sous prétexte qu'ils n'avaient pas des diplômes d'enseignement alors qu'ils ont été régulièrement admis. Ils n'auront donc pas d'affectation. Ils auront fait le siège de la tour D, au Plateau, en vain. Selon des sources crédibles, leurs places ont été vendues à des plus offrants et l'affaire est restée sans suite. Ces jeunes gens sont aujourd'hui, des frustrés qui grossissent les chiffres des diplômés chômeurs.

Un marché public qui ne se gagne pas sans pots de vin, une promotion sociale qui attend que vous la fluidifiez par des espèces, un fonctionnaire du Trésor qui attend toujours un retour sur investissement "intellectuel" après avoir défendu le budget d'une institution ou d'un Epn, le douanier qui ferme les yeux sur ce qui entre dans le pays parce que ses pieds ont été mouillés, le journaliste qui prend la toge de l'avocat pour défendre avec sa plume, un ministre mis en cause dans une affaire de drogue sans la moindre réserve, un électeur qui estime de le temps des élections est le "temps du mangement"... voici le visage hideux qu'offre la Côte d'Ivoire dans une sorte de négligence coupable de l'autorité.

Français

COVID-19 : Les élèves de la 12e

ministère de l'Éducation, alors que le couvre-feu commence à 18h00. Ce qui veut dire que les élèves n'ont qu'une seule heure pour regagner leur domicile, ce qui est pratiquement impossible vu les embouteillages et le manque de véhicule de transport public.

Certains élèves vivent très loin de leurs écoles. Il leur faut souvent deux à trois heures pour arriver chez eux, « alors quitter l'école vers 17 heures n'est pas une bonne idée pour leur sécurité », a martelé Mlle Manie.

Quant à Mlle Tracy Blamodu lycéenne adventiste du septième jour (SDA), elle a mis l'accent sur les difficultés économiques. A noter que beaucoup de parents ne

travaillent plus en raison de la pandémie. Certains parents ont du mal à trouver des frais de transport pour leurs enfants.

Pour le directeur de l'école secondaire GW Gibson, M. Moses W. Kangar, l'ouverture de l'école n'est pas une mauvaise chose, mais encore faut-il que le gouvernement mette en place beaucoup de choses pour que les élèves se retrouvent dans un environnement sécurisé et propice à l'apprentissage.

Selon M. Kangar, avant l'ouverture des classes, les autorités du ministère de l'Éducation avaient organisé un atelier d'une journée pour les directeurs d'école. Il y a eu des propositions et des promesses. Mais depuis lors, rien de tout ce qui a été promis n'a été livré.

Adoption de l'ECO : George Weah appelle

L'UEMOA adopte unilatéralement sa version de l'ECO, et ainsi gagner un certain temps pour permettre à la CEDEAO de continuer les discussions sur la question afin de « remettre l'ECO sur le cap ». Ce comité spécial devrait, selon le dirigeant libérien, également solliciter une audience auprès du président français, Emmanuel Macron. Une proposition soutenue par le président du Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, qui a par ailleurs insisté sur la nécessité que les différends soient réglés le plus rapidement possible. Il a tout de même estimé que la décision prise par le bloc francophone de la CEDEAO de passer à l'ECO aurait dû être

plus inclusive.

Pour sa part, le président du Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, qui a ce même jour brandi la menace de dislocation de la CEDEAO à travers une série de tweets, a exhorté ses pairs à « se réunir sur cette question ». Il a relevé au passage l'importance de l'ECO et les progrès qui ont été réalisés y compris l'adoption d'un régime de taux de change.

Cet ordre du jour de cette rencontre des chefs d'Etat de la ZMAO fait clairement apparaître une CEDEAO profondément divisée sur la question de l'ECO depuis notamment l'annonce par la zone UEMOA d'adopter cette monnaie en remplacement de franc CFA très controversé.

Le Libéria rouvre son aéroport après trois mois de fermeture

L'aéroport de Monrovia a repris ses opérations lundi, avec un premier vol en provenance de Bruxelles annoncé dans la soirée, après trois mois de fermeture à cause de la pandémie de nouveau coronavirus, a constaté un correspondant de l'AFP.

L'aéroport international Roberts a officiellement rouvert dimanche, mais les rotations n'y recommençaient que lundi.

Tous les voyageurs devront justifier d'un test effectué avant leur départ et les déclarant négatifs au coronavirus, ou devront se soumettre à un test de

dépistage rapide à l'aéroport, a dit à l'AFP le directeur général de l'autorité aéroportuaire, Bishop Allan Klayee.

Si ce test se révèle positif, ils seront retenus à l'aéroport le temps que le test soit confirmé, puis confiés aux services sanitaires et mis en quarantaine. Les passagers seront soumis à une prise de température à l'arrivée comme au départ, devront porter des masques, se laver les mains et respecter les marquages de distanciation physique.

Le président libérien George Weah avait décidé la fermeture de l'aéroport après le premier cas confirmé de contamination par le coronavirus mi-mars.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Jeffrey D. Sachs

L'inégalité, source de morts de la COVID-19

NEW YORK - Trois pays - États-Unis, Brésil et Mexique - concentrent près de la moitié (46%) des décès de la COVID-19 déclarés dans le monde, tout en ne représentant que 8,6% de la population mondiale. Environ 60% des décès en Europe se concentrent dans trois pays seulement - Italie, Espagne et Royaume-Uni - qui représentent 38% de la population européenne. Il y a eu beaucoup moins de décès et des taux de mortalité inférieurs dans la plupart des pays d'Europe du Nord et d'Europe centrale.

Plusieurs facteurs déterminent le taux de mortalité liée à la COVID-19 d'un pays : la qualité du leadership politique, la cohérence de la réponse du gouvernement, la disponibilité des lits d'hôpitaux, l'ampleur des voyages internationaux et la structure d'âge de la population. Pourtant, une caractéristique structurelle profonde semble façonner le rôle de ces facteurs : le revenu et la répartition des richesses des pays.

Les États-Unis, le Brésil et le Mexique ont des inégalités de revenu et de richesse très élevées. Selon la Banque mondiale, le coefficient de Gini pour les dernières années (2016-18) est de 41,4 aux États-Unis, 53,5 au Brésil et 45,9 au Mexique. (Sur une échelle de 100 points, une valeur de 100 signifie une inégalité absolue, c'est-à-dire une situation dans laquelle une personne contrôlerait l'ensemble des revenus ou de la richesse, et une valeur de zéro signifie une distribution complètement égale par personne ou ménage.)

Les États-Unis ont le coefficient de Gini le plus élevé parmi les économies avancées, tandis que le Brésil et le Mexique sont parmi les pays les plus inégaux au monde. En Europe, l'Italie, l'Espagne et le Royaume-Uni - avec des scores de Gini de 35,6, 35,3 et 34,8, respectivement - sont plus inégaux que leurs homologues du nord et de l'est, comme la Finlande (27,3), la Norvège (28,5), le Danemark (28,5), l'Autriche (30,3), la Pologne (30,5) et la Hongrie (30,5).

La corrélation entre les taux de mortalité par million et les inégalités de revenus est loin d'être parfaite ; d'autres facteurs importent beaucoup. L'inégalité de la France est comparable à celle de l'Allemagne, mais son taux de mortalité liée à la COVID-19 est nettement plus élevé. Le taux de mortalité dans une Suède relativement égalitaire est nettement plus élevé que chez ses voisins, car la Suède a décidé de maintenir ses politiques de distanciation sociale sur base volontaire plutôt que de les rendre obligatoires. La Belgique, relativement égalitaire, a été frappée par des taux de mortalité officiels très élevés, en partie en raison de la décision des autorités de signaler aussi bien les décès confirmés que ceux probablement liés à la COVID-19.

Des inégalités de revenus élevées représentent un fléau social à bien des égards. Comme Kate Pickett et Richard Wilkinson l'ont rapporté de manière convaincante dans deux livres importants, *The Spirit Level* et *The Inner Level*, un niveau d'inégalité plus élevé entraîne une aggravation de l'état de santé général, ce qui augmente considérablement la vulnérabilité face à la COVID-19.

De plus, une inégalité plus élevée entraîne une baisse de la cohésion sociale, une baisse de la confiance sociale et une polarisation politique accrue, ce qui affecte négativement la capacité et la volonté des gouvernements à adopter des mesures de contrôle rigoureuses. Un degré d'inégalité plus fort signifie qu'une plus grande proportion de travailleurs à faible revenu - des nettoyeurs, caissiers, gardiens et livreurs aux travailleurs de l'assainissement, de la construction et des usines - doivent continuer leur vie quotidienne, même au risque d'être infectés. Enfin, une plus forte inégalité signifie davantage de personnes vivant dans des conditions de vie surpeuplées et donc incapables de se loger en toute sécurité.

Les dirigeants populistes exacerbent les coûts énormes des inégalités. Le président américain Donald Trump, le président brésilien Jair Bolsonaro et le Premier ministre britannique Boris Johnson ont été élus par des

sociétés inégales et socialement divisées avec le soutien de nombreux électeurs mécontents de la classe ouvrière (généralement des hommes blancs, moins instruits qui sont mécontents face au déclin de leur statut social et économique). Or, la politique du ressentiment est presque l'opposé de la politique de contrôle des épidémies. La politique du ressentiment fuit les experts, se moque des preuves scientifiques et rejette les élites qui télétravaillent et disent aux travailleurs qui en sont incapables de rester à la maison.

Les États-Unis sont tellement inégaux, politiquement divisés et mal gouvernés sous Trump qu'ils ont en fait abandonné toute stratégie nationale cohérente pour contrôler l'épidémie. Toutes les responsabilités ont été transférées aux gouvernements des états et des villes, qui ont été laissés à eux-mêmes. Des manifestants de droite lourdement armés ont, à plusieurs occasions, envahi les capitales des états pour s'opposer aux restrictions sur les activités commerciales et la mobilité personnelle. Même les masques sont devenus politisés : Trump refuse d'en porter un et il a récemment déclaré que certaines personnes ne le faisaient que pour exprimer leur désapprobation. Le résultat est que ses partisans rejettent joyeusement de les porter et que le virus, initialement localisé dans les États côtiers « bleus » (démocrates), frappe maintenant durement la base de Trump dans les États « rouges » (républicains).

Le Brésil et le Mexique imitent la politique américaine. Bolsonaro et le président mexicain Andrés Manuel López Obrador sont des populistes par excellence qui, comme Trump, se moquent du virus, dédaignent les conseils d'experts, prennent les risques à la légère et rejettent de façon extravagante toute protection personnelle. Ce faisant, ils guident eux-aussi leur pays vers une catastrophe Trumpienne.

À l'exception du Canada et de trop peu d'autres endroits, les pays d'Amérique du Nord et du Sud sont ravagés par le virus, car presque tout l'hémisphère occidental partage un héritage d'inégalités de masse et de discrimination raciale omniprésente. Même le Chili, bien gouverné, a été la proie de violence et d'instabilité l'année dernière, en raison des inégalités élevées et chroniques. Cette année, le Chili (avec le Brésil, l'Équateur et le Pérou) a enregistré l'un des taux de mortalité liée à la COVID-19 les plus élevés au monde.

L'inégalité n'est certainement pas une condamnation à mort. La Chine est plutôt inégale (avec un score de Gini de 38,5), mais ses gouvernements nationaux et provinciaux ont adopté des mesures de contrôle rigoureuses après l'épidémie initiale de Wuhan, faisant quasiment disparaître le virus. La récente épidémie à Pékin, après des semaines où aucun nouveau cas n'a été confirmé, a entraîné de nouveaux blocages et une campagne de tests massive.

Dans la plupart des autres pays, cependant, nous assistons une fois de plus aux coûts énormes liés aux inégalités élevées : une gouvernance inapte, une méfiance sociale et une énorme population de personnes vulnérables incapables de se protéger contre les dommages galopants. De façon alarmante, l'épidémie elle-même aggrave encore les inégalités.

Les riches travaillent et prospèrent désormais à distance (la richesse du fondateur d'Amazon, Jeff Bezos, a augmenté de 49 milliards de dollars depuis le début de l'année, grâce au virage décisif vers le commerce électronique), tandis que les pauvres perdent leurs emplois et souvent leur santé et leur vie. De plus, les coûts des inégalités ne manqueront pas d'augmenter, car les gouvernements assoiffés de revenus réduisent les budgets et les services publics vitaux pour les pauvres.

Néanmoins, l'addition est en vue. En l'absence de gouvernements cohérents, capables et dignes de confiance pour mettre en œuvre une réponse à une pandémie et une stratégie de relance économique équitables et durables, le monde succombera à de nouvelles vagues d'instabilité générées par un nombre croissant de crises mondiales diverses.

House to discuss SOE extension

By Bridgett Milton

The House of Representatives has instructed its committee on Judiciary and Health to peruse the 30 days extension of the State of Emergency by President George M. Weah.

After reading of the

motion that the communication be forwarded to the Committee on Judiciary and Health with the Judiciary committee to lead the perusal and report to Plenary on Thursday in a special session.

But Rivercess County district#1 Representative Rosana Schaack, objected and

President Weah by proclamation extended the State of Emergency (SOE) by additional 30 days, in consultation with the 54th Legislature.

The President said the decision will afford the government an opportunity to re-examine its COVID-19 response strategy.

The proclamation quotes Mr. Weah as saying that despite the measures that have been put in place to curtail spread of the Coronavirus in the country, including compulsory wearing of facemasks, hand washing and social distancing, cases and deaths from the virus continue to rise.

The Liberian government initially declared the State of Emergency in April in response to the global pandemic. At the time, movements were restricted and the Joint Security called upon to help with the enforcement of set of protocols recommended by health authorities.

Those measures expired on June 21, 2020 in keeping with the SOE's timeframe.

President Weah has said that the extension takes immediate effect, pending deliberations at the National Legislature in keeping with the Constitution. *-Editing by Jonathan Browne*



communication from President Weah to the House of Representatives during its regular session Tuesday, June 30th, 2020, Nimba County district # 5 Representative Samuel G. Kogar, made a

argued that the Committee on Health should instead, lead the process because it has to do with health matter but her suggestion was ignored by Rep. Samuel G. Kogar.

On 22nd of June 2020

Sea erosion still threatens Kru Town

By Emmanuel Mundaye

Scores of beachside residents of the Municipal Borough of New Kru Town on Bushrod Island have alarmed over existing threat to their lives by sea erosion.

A female resident of Lagoon Community in the borough said

placed along the coastline to prevent it from further claiming more land and destroying properties.

According to her, the erosion is also undermining the coastal defense, saying, "We do not sleep at night because of the way the sea water beats



since the tide of the sea rose two weeks ago, the sea water has been beaming on their zinc structures, causing them not to sleep in peace at night.

Cecelia Koon, wife of a fisherman told this paper that the sea erosion is passing over the costal defense rocks

on our houses. We are awake to observe the level of the sea water to avoid the water from destroying our homes."

There are unconfirmed reports that the Government of Liberia (GOL) through its

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Disgraced ERU officer

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helped by assigned court officers to walk from the male's bathroom at the Monrovia City Court, Temple of Justice.

His murder charge follows investigation into the incident to establish circumstances which led to the death of victim Mildred.

Investigators indicate that detailed inquiries revealed that the victim along with other friends including James E. Dumo were at a birthday party at the View Point Community.

At about 1:00 AM, defendant Dumo, his girlfriend Salamatu Kaba, one Randall and another man called Dashekie were walking ahead of victim Mildred Kumba Tamba and her fiance Emmanuel F. Johnson and others to be identified who were a bit distant.

Dumo allegedly started beating on his girlfriend Salamatu Kaba, which prompted Randall and Dashekie's intervention, telling the defendant to stop, police revealed.

However, police say the accused continued beating Salamatu, threw her into the drainage and then raised out his service arm and fired a



round which then ricocheted after hitting the concrete sidewalk, penetrating Mildred's forehead. At the time of the shooting, police found that victim Mildred was standing on the road about eight feet from defendant Dumo.

She was waiting for her fiance Emmanuel Johnson when defendant Dumo allegedly fired the round which hit her about eight feet away from the defendant.

"She immediately fell unconscious on the ground and began to bleed profusely. After the victim was noticed lying unconscious on the ground by

her fiance Emmanuel F. Johnson, he began alarming that his fiancee got hit in the head by the gun that was fired by defendant Dumo," the police disclose.

Following the shooting, police say defendant Dumo attempted absconding from the crime scene, but he was attacked by an angry crowd who subdued him and took away the weapon from him.

Subsequently, police say a member of the Kapiro Secure Liberia, retrieved the weapon from a member of the angry crowd and later turned it over to the LNP for investigation.

ALJA condemns COP's

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were not acts of advocacy, but deliberate actions meant to cause havoc.

ALJA says while it abhors President George Weah and the Coalition of Democratic Change (CDC) government's unmasked acts of corruption and leadership deficit, it however, remains opposed to anyone, or group of individuals that would engage in acts that are inimical to Liberia's peace and stability.

Meanwhile, ALJA is urging Monrovia City Mayor, Jefferson Kojjee, to desist from making irresponsible public pronouncements that have serious security implications on the lives of Liberians.

ALJA says Mayor Kojjee's recent threat to deplore officers of the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC) Police along with militia groups under his self-styled Citizens Action Unit (CAU) with the sole purpose of forestalling presumed acts of terrorism prior to police intervention, is wrong and unacceptable.

The Association called on the Mayor to eschew such plan with immediacy. ALJA says as

city mayor, Mr. Kojjee's term of reference doesn't give him the authority to set up militia groups in Monrovia or dabbles into national security matters.

ALJA maintained that the Mayor needs to focus on the challenging responsibility of keeping the City of Monrovia dirt-free; and urged him to leave national security matters with the Ministers of Justice and Defense, and the Director of the Liberia National Police. Furthermore, the Association notes "Being a city mayor doesn't make Mr. Kojjee a spokesman of the Liberian government".

ALJA is a conglomeration of current and retired Liberian journalists residing in the Americas. The Organization was founded in 1998 in Washington, D.C. USA, by a group of well-meaning Liberian journalists. The Association is a 501c (3) non-profit media advocacy group based in the United States of America (USA); and it is currently headquartered in the Midwest, specifically Minneapolis, Minnesota.

MOJ's letter chokes Gov't

By Winston W. Parley

State witness Baba Boakai has shunned a letter read to him by defense lawyers suggesting that Justice Minister Cllr. Frank Musa Dean told Crane Currency that it acted in good faith throughout the execution of the two banknotes printing orders for the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) in 2016 and 2017.

During cross examination Tuesday, 30 June at Criminal Court "C", the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC's) Program Manager in the Enforcement and Investigations Division told the defense team that "the instrument just read by the counsel was never a document that I came across or analyzed and that I cannot speak to it."

Additionally, witness Boakai argues that "the Government of the Republic of Liberia has the prerogative to drop charges or indictment against anyone that it [had]

communication after witness Boakai testified Tuesday that Crane Currency and the CBL printed far above the contracts' terms and conditions and without the CBL making full disclosure to the Government of Liberia through the Legislature as to the actual amount printed and shipped to Liberia.

Mr. Boakai confirmed his previous testimony that Crane Currency conspired and colluded to print excess of LD\$2,645,000,000 and concealed the actual amount that was printed in respect of the printing of the LD\$10 billion.

Regarding the Justice Minister's communication of January 2020, Boakai says as a witness he testified to instruments that he reviewed and analyzed and made reference to in his final report of an investigation that he was part of, detailing earlier that the final report of is dated February 2019.

In his testimony Monday, 29 June, Mr. Boakai said there is no

Liberian Legislature for the printing of LD\$10 billion, unlike the case of an initial LD\$5 billion earlier printed following signing of a contract on 6 May 2016, shipped to Liberia, received by CBL "and duly accounted for."

Former Governor Weeks and three other former CBL officials are standing trial for multiple charges including theft and economic sabotage of billions of Liberian dollars printed and shipped to Liberia, following a series of mass protests that prompted local and international investigation into claims that the money went missing.

The prosecution is holding to account four defendants in the case including Mr. Weeks who has been in all of the previous indictments for this case, and the new batch of indictees in persons of David Fahart, Elsie DossenBardio and Kollie Tamba.

The fifth defendant Melisa A. Emeh is said to be out of the bailiwick of Liberia and has not been brought to court, therefore the court has granted prosecution's request to grant her a separate trial so as to enable the four other defendants that are available to get speedy trial.

All the defendants on trial have pleaded not guilty for charges of theft of property; economic sabotage; fraud on the internal revenue of Liberia; misuse of public money, property or record; theft or illegal disbursement of public money; criminal conspiracy and criminal facilitation.

According to witness Boakai, the total Liberian Dollars printed, shipped and received by CBL authority for the purpose of LD\$10 billion was LD\$13,004,750,000.

"Contrary to this, authority of the CBL informed the investigation that only 10,359,750,000.00 as the total amount that was printed and received by them," he explains, adding that there was a variance of L\$2,645,000,000 as the amount that is unaccounted for by defendant Weeks.

He testified that the investigation also found from analyses of payment documents that instead of the contract cost of US\$10,121,689.00, the CBL paid the total of US\$10,555,587.00 for the printing of the S\$10 billion plus Liberian Dollars.

According to him, this left a variance of US\$433,898.00 as the amount that was paid in excess of the contract cost.

Witness Boakai continued that the printing of the banknotes far exceeded the [plus or minus] as required in standard printing procedure, indicating that there is no

Web portal launched

Cont'd from page 6

donations and support to COVID-19 response.

He says when Coronavirus hit Liberia in early March this year, the government through the Health Ministry exhausted all efforts in revitalizing the private sector engagement committee to function as a coordinating arm to support the IMS for COVID-19.

For his part, Liberia's Ambassador to the United States George Patten, speaking via zoom, says the launch of the web portal is a step geared towards

ensuring transparency and accountability in the country.

Amb. Patten notes that he is excited to form part of this great initiative, adding that the decision of the government and the private sector including its partners is welcoming.

He notes that the web portal will demonstrate government's commitment to openness and fairness on any donation that will come in from donors and the private sector.---Edited by Winston W. Parley

Sea erosion still

Cont'd from page 10

contractor firm would recommence the coastal defense project to push back the sea to secure more dry land.

She observed that the rocks placed along the coastline are not enough to contain or prevent the waves from reaching homes of residents close to the sea.

Sea erosion had left several hundred buildings destroyed in New Kru Town and other part of the country since the 70s to present, displacing thousands of residents most of whom were compelled to re-settle elsewhere.

The situated at the time witnessed the complete disappearance of the original motor road constructed by the late President William R. Tolbert that passes through Corner West community to the D. Twe High School in the Borough.

The government was forced to re-construct an alternative route, which currently passes side the Redemption Hospital, an area that was then a very large swam. -Editing by Jonathan Browne



previously charged or indicted."

Boakai's response was based on questions posed to him by the defense after Cllr. Abraham Sillah read a communication in which he suggests that on 10 January this year, Justice Minister Dean issued a statement favoring Crane Currency, saying every banknote manufactured by Crane was delivered and accepted by the CBL.

In that communication, Cllr. Sillah says Minister Dean indicated that Crane was paid the current amount for the banknotes delivered, adding that as a result of the conclusion of investigation, government confirmed that it had dismissed its indictment against Crane Currency and no legal action would be brought against it.

The defense lawyer brought about this

further justification provided [by] former Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) Executive Governor Milton A. Weeks for printing excess LD\$2,645,000,000, saying the accused used his authority to get a board resolution to legalize an action he already took.

"The investigation further found that from analyses of documents received, that the CBL and that of Crane Currency [were] also in violation of the very contract that they signed," he testified Monday, 29 June at Criminal Court "C" in Monrovia.

Mr. Boakai testified that defendant Weeks used his authority in dual capacity in assembling the Board of Governors in September 2017 to come up with a board resolution to legalize and perfect an action he took as far back as June 2017.

He testified further that no authorization was given by the

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further justification provided [by] co-defendant Weeks in particular for the [excess] printed of the bank notes.

This third indictment in the case did not include former President Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf's son Charles E. Sirleaf who served as Deputy CBL Governor for Operations when the financial scandal emerged at the bank, because he was nolleprosequi with prejudice last month.

Besides Mr. Sirleaf, the prosecution here also entered a nolleprosequi (dropped charges) in favor of defendants Richard H. Walker, Dorbor M.

Hagba and Joseph Dennis.

The government here indicted the officials in 2019 for their alleged roles in the misapplication of billions of Liberian Dollars printed and shipped to Liberia to replace old local currency after a series of mass protests led local and international institutions to investigate a claim that the money had gone missing.

The indictment alleges that the defendants conspired to willfully conceal the actual amount in circulation for the purpose of committing theft, depriving the Government of Liberia of its resources.

Disgraced ERU officer charged with murder



Emergency Response Unit (ERU), James E. Dumo

By Winston W. Parley

The Liberia National Police (LNP) has charged one of its officers from the elite force Emergency Response Unit (ERU), James E. Dumo for recklessly murdering victim Mildred Kumba Tamba with his assigned police service pistol early Saturday morning, 27 June in Paynesville.

Defendant Dumo who has been disrobed from the police

force due to the incident was submitted before the Monrovia City Court Tuesday, 30 June with a charge sheet alleging that without being exposed to any imminent threat or danger, he pulled out his assigned pistol and discharged it.

According to police, the bullet ricocheted when it hit the edge of the concrete sidewalk at View Point Community in Paynesville, penetrated victim Mildred's

forehead and resulted in her death.

Victim Mildred was pronounced dead on arrival by the doctor on call at the John F. Kennedy Medical Hospital and subsequently deposited at the Abraham Robert Funeral Home for preservation.

Although defendant Dumo legally possessed the gun, police say, however, that he failed to abide by the safety guidelines or the four candid rules governing the use of firearm.

Defendant Dumo was seen in court Tuesday with a banished head and unable to walk without being aided, likely due to pains he may be suffering from beating he endured from the angry crowd's attacks against him. The mob responded quickly that early Saturday morning in anger over his fatal shooting of victim Mildred.

Dumo held his stomach and bent over as he walked as slowly as he could while being

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UEFA says Champions League final tournament still on

UEFA currently sees no need for a plan B for the Champions League final tournament due to be held in Lisbon, despite several suburbs of the Portuguese capital preparing to go back into lockdown as coronavirus cases surge again.

"UEFA is in permanent contact with the Portuguese Football Association and the local authorities," the governing body told French

sports daily L'Equipe.

"We hope that everything will go well and that it will be possible to organise the tournament in Portugal. For the moment there is no reason to have a plan B.

"We're monitoring the situation on a daily basis and we'll adapt if we have to."

UEFA said earlier this month that this season's Champions League, suspended in March because of the COVID-19 pandemic, would be completed



with an eight-team mini-tournament in Lisbon from Aug. 12-23.

Last Thursday, the Portuguese government said that those living in the affected areas of the capital - 19 parishes not including downtown Lisbon - would be allowed to leave home only to buy essential goods or to travel to and from work.

The measure will be in place July 1-14 and will then be reviewed.

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