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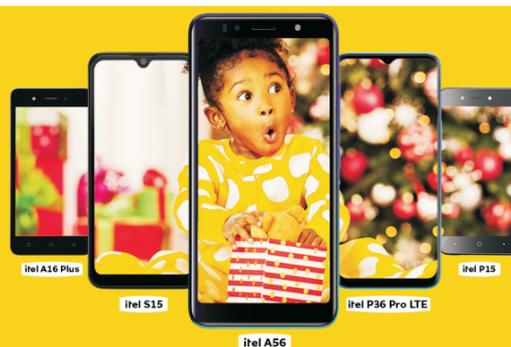
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Continental News

Ethiopia admits to firing at UN team in Tigray

Ethiopian troops shot at and detained UN staff after they drove through check-points in the conflict-hit northern Tigray region, government spokesman Redwan Hussein has confirmed.

The UN team ignored instructions not to be in the area, he added.

Government forces have been battling the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the region since 4 November. The UN team was reportedly trying to visit a camp for Eritrean refugees on Sunday when the shooting occurred. There has been much concern about the fate of the refugees following unconfirmed reports that Eritrean troops had crossed into Tigray, and had taken some of them back to Eritrea.

Both governments deny that Eritrean troops are in Tigray to help defeat the TPLF.

The UN has appealed to the Ethiopian government to

give it "unfettered humanitarian access" to Tigray amid concern about food shortages and medical supplies in a region with a population of more than eight million. "Some of the UN staff were actually detained and some were shot at," Mr Redwan was quoted by AFP news agency as saying.

"They broke two check-points

to drive to areas where they were not supposed to go, and that they were told not to go. When they were about to break the third one, they were shot at and detained," he added.

The UN has not yet commented on the incident. Many Eritreans have fled across the border to

Tigray over the years to escape military conscription and political persecution.

Eritrea is a highly militarised one-party state that has been ruled by President Isaias Afwerki since it gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1993. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed won the Nobel Peace Prize last year for making a deal with Mr Isaias to end the "no war; no peace" situation that had existed between the two countries since their 1998-2000 border war.

Critics say the deal has turned out to be a "security pact" with thousands of Eritrean troops entering Ethiopia to help defeat the TPLF. Reuters news agency quoted a US government source as confirming that Eritrean forces were in Tigray, despite the denial of the two governments.

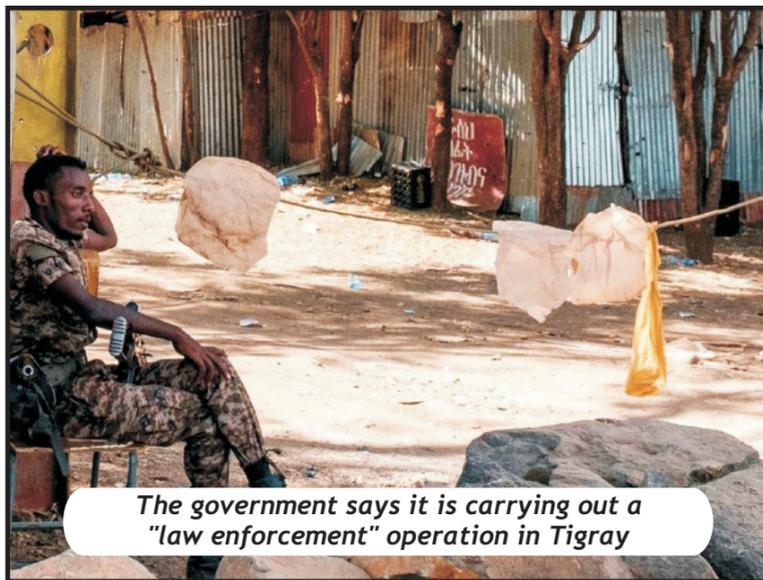
"There doesn't appear to be

a doubt anymore," it quoted the unnamed source as saying.

The TPLF also fired a barrage of rockets into Eritrea after the conflict started. Ethiopian troops captured Tigray's capital, Mekelle, from the TPLF on 28 November, but fighting has continued in parts of the region.

"There are a few remnants of the militia or special forces not yet controlled," Mr Redwan said. A former guerrilla movement, the TPLF had been the governing party in Tigray since 1991, with about 250,000 fighters under its control.

Mr Abiy ordered the military to oust it from power after it attacked a federal military base in Tigray. It followed sharp political differences over reforms that Mr Abiy had introduced since taking office in 2018. More than 40,000 people have fled across the border to Sudan and many others may have been forced from their homes. BBC



Three fathers jailed for paying people smugglers

A Senegalese court has sentenced three fathers to a month in prison for paying smugglers to take their sons to Europe.

One of the boys, 15-year-old Ousmane Faye, died at sea in October. He was a talented footballer who hoped to join an academy in Italy. Faye's father did not tell his wife he was sending their son abroad, the court heard, wanting it to be a surprise. The court in the city of Mbour also gave the fathers two-year suspended sentences for endangering lives.

This is the first time parents of undocumented migrants have been sentenced to jail in Senegal, the BBC's Ndèye Khady Lo reports from the capital, Dakar.

The ruling has divided public opinion but many say it will not stop young people taking their chances in makeshift boats, our reporter adds. The UN says the Canary Islands, an overseas Spanish territory some 1,400km (870 miles) from Senegal, has seen a surge in migrants coming from West Africa.

It reports that 11,000 arrived there between January and

October this year, compared with 2,557 during the same period last year. But the peak was 2006, the UN says, when more than 32,000 people arrived seeking entry to the Canaries.

In just one operation in November, Senegal's police say they intercepted more than 1,500 migrants at sea. All three fathers sentenced on Tuesday - Keita Lo, Serigne Dieng and Mamadou Lamine Faye - are fishermen. Faye is still grieving for his son, Ousmane, nicknamed Doudou.

The boy was one of many passengers in a wooden boat heading to the Canaries in October. But he fell ill en route and died, with his body thrown overboard.

His father had paid a \$450 (£338) fee to the smugglers.

"I don't think this trial is a solution," Boubacar Sèye of migrant non-governmental organisation Horizon sans Frontières told the BBC last week.

"Doudou's father needs psychological assistance more than a trial. If he knew that his son was going to die, he wouldn't let him board. The solution is to fight the smugglers." BBC



Many more people are risking their lives to reach the Canary Islands, UN data shows

Fact-checking misinformation from Ghana's election

Voters in Ghana have gone to the polls to choose a new president and 275 members of parliament. The country is regarded as one of the most democratic in West Africa.

But there have been some examples of misinformation about the voting. A video has been circulating on social media channels that purports to show a ballot with a larger fingerprint box for President Nana Akufo-Addo. The video - which is just over three minutes long - claims the ballot paper has been produced in such a way that votes for opposition candidates will be discounted because the blank boxes, where the thumb impression goes, are too small.

The footage shows an individual making this claim, and placing his finger in the box of an opposition candidate to show it won't fit within the space. This claim was first highlighted by West African fact-checking site Dubawa.

However, the ballot featured in the video is missing some of the features that appear on official ballots, such as a red background behind all the images and an official



stamp.

An official from Ghana's electoral authorities told the BBC that the ballot did not come from the commission. The video was found circulating in WhatsApp groups, but as it's a closed social media platform it's not possible to calculate the exact number of shares.

However, when the BBC received the video it came with the label "forwarded many times". Some users have shared videos online, which they say are examples of polling day incidents where there's been police or security force involvement.

On examination, these are actually taken from police training or simulation exercises in preparation for the vote, and not from polling day itself. One example is a video said to show the police shooting someone who had allegedly snatched a ballot box at a polling station in southern Ghana. BBC

EDITORIAL

Electoral violence undermines peace

WHETHER THEY ARE in position, opposition or no position Liberians generally have duty to reject and denounce violence during and after Tuesday's senatorial election and national referendum to keep the Motherland stable and united.

IT IS FOOLHARDY for any Liberian, be it a voter or loyalist to a particular candidate or political party in these elections to think that narrow interest of a political party or candidate is above the survival of the State. Nurturing such believe is not being myopic in thought, but blinded by selfish motives that do not contribute to the national cause.

INSTEAD, THE OVER-RIDING responsibility of every citizen irrespective of party, tribal or religious affiliation should focus on contributing towards building a better Liberia in which all would co-exist harmoniously and endeavor to achieving his or her full potential.

NEWS FROM GRAND Cape Mount county over the weekend about campaign violence that led to burning of cars and a home is both scaring and disappointing. That we would want to revert our dear country to anarchy and vandalism after 14 years of violent killings and destruction just to satisfy a political party or candidate is sad.

WHY PEOPLE WOULD want to go so low in desperation for power that is purely inherent in the people. If the people of Grand Cape Mount county decide to elect candidate X or Y, it is their full right under the Constitution, which should be respected.

A CANDIDATE LOSING an election should always know there are more opportunities ahead, and such experience from a poll just signals a need to return to the drawing board and re-strategize for future election. Current President George Manneh Weah is a glaring example of the benefit of exercising patience and self-control, for when God's-appointed time comes, you will have it all without much sweat.

WE ARE SURE no politician or candidate in the race wants to preside over a burning country that drives away partners and investors and leaves the citizenry in misery and starvation. Any Liberian carrying such ambition does not mean well for the country and his fellow compatriots.

THIS IS WHY we join call by Foreign Missions accredited to Liberia for the Grand Cape Mount violence to be investigated promptly so that perpetrators would be brought to justice to reassure both citizens and foreign residents.

CONDEMNATION AND OF the violence by President Weah and call for political partisans and their leaders to conduct themselves peacefully is not enough. The government should apply the strong arm of the law to make sure it is not repeated anywhere else in the country.

ELECTIONS WOULD COME and go but Liberia, our common denomination should always supersede all self interest that is just for a while, for without a stable country, every other thing is meaningless.

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COMMENTARY

By Melvyn Krauss

Getting NATO Back on Track

France and Germany must heal their current defense rift, and America must maintain its security guarantee for Europe. One possible solution would be for Germany to spend more on European defense, thus providing a measure of the independence that France seeks, while keeping the US troops it wants.

STANFORD - US President-elect Joe Biden's nomination of Lloyd Austin, a recently retired four-star general, as Secretary of Defense is a further welcome sign that America has come to its senses and will, after January 20 next year, no longer seek to punish its friends and reward its enemies. To demonstrate this shift to the world, Biden should, immediately on taking office, rescind President Donald Trump's order last July to withdraw 12,000 US troops from Germany.

Without costing the US a penny, Biden would dramatically repudiate Trump's isolationism and throw a wrench into Russian President Vladimir Putin's divide-and-rule strategy in Europe. Reversing the troop withdrawal would also strengthen NATO, Germany, and Chancellor Angela Merkel - whose potential successor will be chosen in mid-January by her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) - as they battle Putin and homegrown anti-Western populists.

Trump claims that he wanted the US troops out because Germany was short-changing the NATO alliance on defense spending, compelling America to make up for the shortfall. But that is nonsense. And as one of the people who previously advocated it, I should know.

For decades, Republican and Democratic presidents never cared that America was spending far more on NATO than Germany was. For a while, I was convinced that they should care, so in 1986 I wrote *How NATO Weakens the West*, a book about German defense free-riding. So gung-ho was I about this idea that I also wrote a commentary for *The Wall Street Journal* entitled, "It's Time to Change the Atlantic Alliance."

But never did I imagine that Trump would use my now-ancient strategic argument as a wrecking ball to demolish NATO solidarity and empower Putin. True, Germany may not be spending enough on defense; the French certainly think so. But the argument that Germany is making a fool of the United States with its frugal defense spending is simply a fig leaf for Trump's determination to reward Putin while rebuking Merkel. Putin has long wanted a reduced US troop presence in Europe, and in Trump, he found a US president who was willing to collaborate with him.

My own thinking about NATO and Germany's contribution to it began to evolve not long after my book was published. While promoting it, I debated Lawrence Eagleburger, who was subsequently US Secretary of State under President George H.W. Bush, and met many serious, well-informed military people. I recognized then that what counted most for the US - and still does - is control over the structure and purpose of European defense, not its cost. The transatlantic Cold War-era "bargain," according to most US military experts, was that America would pay the lion's share of NATO's expenses in return for leadership of European defense.

In fact, I dropped the "Germans are playing us

for suckers" line, born of my wish for an effective transatlantic alliance, when I abandoned the conservative populism that had influenced my early thinking. Moreover, evidence from the 1980s shows that the military experts who criticized my book were right. The transatlantic disputes of that period were not about money, but rather over issues like siting Pershing II missiles in West Germany to counter the Soviet Union's ballistic missiles. West Germans, because of their fraught history and strong peace movement, were wavering on the issue.

After much tumult, and true leadership on the part of the Social Democratic Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and his CDU successor Helmut Kohl, West Germany installed the Pershing IIs in 1983. And they served their purpose well: NATO traded them away in the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with the Soviet Union, a key agreement in defusing the nuclear threat. The Pershing IIs were subsequently destroyed, and rumor has it that some of the scrap material wound up in special ballpoint pens at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, which gave them out as gifts.

Although Trump failed to make German defense spending into a major political issue in the US, it has become a contentious subject in Europe. In a recent interview with *Le Grand Continent* magazine, French President Emmanuel Macron - a staunch advocate of greater European sovereignty in defense matters - strongly criticized German defense minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer for publishing a commentary in *Politico* entitled "Europe still needs America." Europe would need America less, Macron implied, if Germany increased its defense spending.

It is clearly bad for NATO and EU unity when the Union's two most important members are at odds about America's role in Europe. The Western alliance needs a US security guarantee for Germany and other European countries, but this cannot come at the cost of a Franco-German split, which would be another gift to Putin.

France and Germany must heal their current defense rift, and America must maintain its security guarantee for Europe. The continent needs US boots on the ground, not only in Germany but throughout the Baltic states as well. One way out of the conundrum would be for Germany to contribute more to European defense budgets, thus providing a measure of the independence that France seeks, while keeping the US troops it wants.

Biden could start this process of reconciliation between France and Germany - and, more importantly, between the US and its NATO partners - by canceling Trump's planned troop withdrawal. He could then use the resulting leverage and his personal contacts (Biden has attended the annual Munich Security Conference for decades and knows nearly all of the key German foreign-policy players) to persuade Germany to spend more on European defense. The main aim of such a commitment would not be to placate America, but rather to boost Macron, a genuine friend of Germany.

O-PED

By Michael Spence &
Danny Leipziger

The Pandemic Public-Debt Dilemma

Much of the conventional wisdom about how governments should manage the COVID-19 economic fallout is perfectly appropriate for advanced economies, but dangerous elsewhere. Even if developing and emerging economies could simply borrow and spend more to weather the storm, doing so could jeopardize their long-term economic prospects.

MILAN - Increased government spending during the pandemic is essential for managing public health, supporting households that have lost income, and preserving businesses that otherwise may fail and thus cause longer-term damage to output and employment. Kristalina Georgieva, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, has urged policymakers to “spend but keep the receipts.” Likewise, World Bank Chief Economist Carmen M. Reinhart reminds us that, “first you worry about fighting the war, then you figure out how to pay for it.”

Although these are sound recommendations for countries with solid fiscal foundations, the long-term risks of increased spending may be dangerously high for others. In 2008, the Commission on Growth and Development (on which we both served) showed that successful developing countries owe their economic growth in part to the quality of their social and capital spending. And the most successful of these countries, we found, had run their economies with savings levels at or close to investment levels, such that their current account deficits were small.

Today, however, there are many countries - some that entered the pandemic already highly indebted - that have not been effective stewards of public resources, owing to poor project selection and implementation, ineffective targeting of social spending, wasteful subsidies, or outright corruption. Both the World Bank and the IMF have effective tools for measuring the quality of public spending, and there are a plethora of indices showing how well a country's governance fares across standard benchmarks. For governments with a poor track record, simply borrowing and spending more may not be the best course of action.

After all, a country's citizens are not well-served when their government becomes more indebted in order to spend imprudently. For such countries, borrowing in hard currencies when exports are depressed and their own exchange rates are under duress simply makes future debt re-scheduling more likely, and it may place international financial institutions like the IMF in an awkward position, given that they are now urging additional unconditional spending.

Economic growth depends on high returns from public investment in human capital and infrastructure. Countries that have invested wisely in these areas have seen their economic fortunes rise, whereas those that have invested poorly have been left more indebted and less able to repay, especially if those debts are in a foreign currency. Given that most developing countries have limited scope to borrow in their own capital markets, any additional spending is likely to be externally and commercially financed. That is potentially a recipe for disaster.

In today's low-interest-rate environment, it is often said that as long as borrowing costs are below the rate of growth, additional debt-financed spending makes sense. But, again, while this argument is defensible when applied to rich countries, it poses dangers in the context of emerging and developing economies, where factors such as the efficiency and equity of spending matter greatly. These issues must not be overlooked - even during a pandemic - because they can increase future debt burdens and reduce the chances of long-term successful development.

Moreover, there are more effective approaches to deal with the fiscal dilemmas facing emerging and developing economies. These include increasing the amount of targeted assistance for vulnerable populations; extending the duration of IMF lending, which could be conditional on assurances that resources will be put to good use; and combined IMF and World Bank programs that include fiscal-performance measures.

In the aftermath of the 1980s debt crises, the Bretton Woods institutions collaborated to produce medium-term policy frameworks that would both provide new financing and embed funds in sensible development plans. Such formal frameworks could now be revived in some fashion to provide greater assurances to creditors that key structural bottlenecks and governance concerns are being addressed.

To those worried about the implications of such conditionality, it is worth remembering that debt re-profiling, if it is to be done pre-emptively, requires borrowers to produce growth- and debt-sustainability frameworks that can be designed and implemented with third-party guidance. The alternative - debt re-scheduling under duress or outright default - is a far worse option than jointly financed World Bank-IMF programs that can crowd in private debt on revised and more affordable terms.

Of course, a framework that provides longer-term relief while also addressing fiscal gaps and unsustainable debt implies improved international financial mechanisms to put debt repayments on a sustainable path. In contrast to previous debt-reduction exercises (the Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative), current circumstances indicate that debt distress will fall largely on middle-income borrowers. As such, there needs to be a new debt-rescheduling architecture that actively involves commercial lenders.

Any such initiative would need to be endorsed by the G20, which has already agreed to work toward a new global debt-restructuring framework. This approach must formally include all major creditor countries. It is in the interests of all creditors to join such an exercise, both to avoid free-rider problems and to ensure transparency of debt information.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. Failing bold action, developing countries could be on track to lose years or even decades of progress in the post-pandemic world. In the pandemic economy, fiscal shock absorbers, efficient public spending, and new instruments for pre-emptively re-profiling unsustainable debt payments are each an indispensable part of the necessary response.

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OPINION

By Marcel Fratzscher

The EU Must Break the Brexit Deadlock

With the Brexit negotiations now in their final days, it is crucial that the European Union break the impasse and secure a deal. If Europe cannot even forge an agreement to establish its long-term relationship with the United Kingdom, it will have little chance of becoming a global power in its own right.

BERLIN - This week, we will finally know whether a Brexit deal can be agreed. Whatever is decided, it will have significant long-term implications for Europe, affecting not just the terms of trade and common rules but also the European Union's place in the world. To be able to stand its ground and defend its interests vis-à-vis China and the United States, the EU must maintain a strong relationship with the United Kingdom and prove that it can adapt to changing global dynamics.

The importance of the current Brexit negotiations is only superficially linked to the commercial costs of the UK crashing out of the EU and having to adhere to World Trade Organization rules (though this would almost certainly create havoc for supply chains in the coming months). The looming political, social, and strategic costs are even more consequential.

After all, a no-deal scenario would deprive Europe of the foundation on which to build a future relationship with the UK. Pretty much everyone agrees that the goal should be to build a strong long-term partnership that respects UK sovereignty and gives each side sufficient space to pursue its interests. This is necessary even if, as many in the EU are wont to point out, nation-states' sovereignty is inherently limited in a globalized world.

The message that a no-deal Brexit would send to the rest of the world would be devastating for Europe. It would indicate that other leading powers need not worry about respecting Europe's wishes in key policy areas. In today's polarized world, China is becoming increasingly self-confident and assertive, and the US is looking inward to its own domestic problems (this will likely remain the case under President-elect Joe Biden's administration). It has never been more important for Europe to pool its resources and influence so that it can speak with one voice.

Moreover, a strong relationship upon which to achieve mutual prosperity is as important for the EU as it is for the UK. Britain has much to offer in areas where Europe is lacking. For example, as the continent's only global financial center, the City of London could play an instrumental role in maintaining Europe's status as an attractive place for international investment and a leader in financial innovation, as well as a platform on which to strengthen the international role of the euro.

Of course, failure to reach a deal would also seriously threaten the UK, whose national integrity depends in no small measure on the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the absence of a physical border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. But as the latest internal challenges from Poland and Hungary show, the EU cannot take its own integrity for granted, either. It would be foolish to think that taking a tough line with the UK will discourage these governments from acting as spoilers, let alone make it easier to tackle much-needed EU reforms in the future.

The rational decision, then, is for everyone to agree on a deal this week and move on. The EU is in a position of relative strength in these negotiations. It knows that Brexit will change little with respect to its internal functioning, and that the UK is facing the monumental task of rebuilding its institutions and charting a new policy course outside of the EU.

At the same time, given the EU's strong interest in a prosperous post-Brexit UK, it should take the first step toward breaking the current deadlock, by softening its stance on maintaining the equivalent of the existing state-aid and dispute-settlement regimes. It is highly unlikely that a relatively large country like the UK would - or even could - free-ride on the EU in the way that some small countries do. Moreover, the EU should drop its insistence on fishing rights, which are economically unimportant but politically potent within the UK as it pursues some degree of demonstrable sovereignty.

The most important task for the remainder of the negotiations is to draw up a blueprint for rebuilding the EU-UK relationship in the months and years ahead. In an increasingly polarized world, both sides need to agree in principle on common goals and objectives, so that they can cooperate on climate change, the digital transformation, and other shared challenges.

The details of the future EU-UK relationship will not be decided by the Brexit deal. That process will unfold and evolve for years to come. Nonetheless, the terms of the separation that are being decided right now will have profound implications both for the further development of bilateral ties and for Europe's role in the world.

An amicable agreement that can serve as a solid foundation for the next phase of engagement is thus essential. The European Commission and the German and French governments would do well to adopt a longer-term perspective, because that would show them that the only reasonable step now is to break the deadlock.

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LMD FELLOW

STORY

Representatives who Run for Senate Cost the Country Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars

By Sampson David

BUCHANAN, Grand Bassa - Seventeen of the total 118 candidates for the Special Senatorial Elections who are current sitting Representatives in the Legislative wish to abandon the House and join the Senate. If any of them wins elections, their seat in the House of Representatives will become vacant, and the NEC will have to organize by-elections, again.

And this is just one of the problems: organizing by-elections is extremely expensive. In a Facebook post on September 28 the National Elections Commission wrote that the December 2020 by-election for the two seats in the House of Representatives costs an estimated \$398 thousand USD (62 million Liberian dollars). However, NEC communication director, Henry Flomo, said the amount could be higher if the by-election were organized by itself, and not in conjunction with another election, as it is the case for December 2020.

Against this background, the NEC funds for voter awareness in the December 8 election have been slashed and delayed, causing extreme concern among civil society organizations.

The executive director of the Bassa Women Development Association (BAWODA), Martha Flanjay Kanga, said that sitting Representatives should not waste Liberia's money and stay put where they are. "I facilitated a workshop and a lot of women said they don't want a sitting Representative to seek the senatorial position [...] because it will put burden on the country - the country has no money." Kanga said that more than just the money, there is the issue of credibility and trustability, since some of these Representatives have just 3 years into their tenure but want to abandon the mission for which they were originally elected.

"What are you saying to the citizens, and the citizens themselves what are they saying?" Kanga wondered. "When people trust you in a position, be in that position, work with them. When you work with them sufficiently, they will take you to the next level when the real time comes," she said.

A bill to ban such practice is in discussions, but Kanga said it was a waste of time because legislators will not approve it because they want to continue the practice.

The Race for the Senate

Of the 118 Senate candidates who compete for just 15 seats, 44 are running as Independent while political parties and alliances account for the rest.

The 17 sitting Representatives who are competing for a place in the Senate are from 13 counties, including Grand Bassa, Nimba, Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Gbarpolu, Bong, Bomi, Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland Counties.

Four of the 17 candidates are on the ticket for the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) party. Their names are IvarKokulo Jones of Margibi, Thomas PangarFallah of Montserrado, Emmanuel Zoe Pennue Sr. of Grand Gedeh and Alfred GayflorKoiwood of Gbarpolu.

The remaining names of Representatives who aspire to a place in Senate are Deputy Speaker Prince KermueMoye of Bong and Ben Fofana of Margibi, both from the Collaborating Political Party; Jeremiah KpanKoung of Nimba for the Movement for Democracy and Reconstruction; Grand Gedeh Rep. George SaigbeBoley from the United People Party; Lofa County Rep. Mariamu Bryan Fofana of All Liberia Coalition Party (ALCOP), Nathaniel N. Bahway, Sr. of Grand Kru and Emerson Kamara of Grand Cape of the Mount People's Unification Party.



The National Elections Commission, Liberia. Photo Credit:

The rest are Independent candidates Vincent Willie of Grand Bassa, Julie FartormaWiah of Lofa, Edwin Melvin Snowed of Bomi and Mambu M. Sonii of Grand Cape Mount, Isaac B. Roland of Maryland, and Francis Saywon Younger.

If any of these legislators wins a seat in the Senate, the NEC will have to organize costly by-elections. By-election is organized when a sitting member of the legislative either dies, resigns, or becomes incapacitated. Article 37 of the Liberian Constitution establishes the rule of by-election:

"In the event of a vacancy in the Legislature caused by death, resignation, expulsion or otherwise, the presiding officer shall within 30 days notify the Elections Commission thereof. The Elections Commission shall not later than 90 days thereafter cause a by election to be held; provided that where such vacancy occurs within 90 days prior to the holding of general elections, the filling of the vacancy shall await the holding of such general elections." Sitting Representatives have taken advantage of this Constitutional provision on the grounds that there is no law to ban them from doing it.

'No Vote,' says Association of the Blind

The head of the Christian Association of the Blind (CAB) Grand Bassa County Chapter, Robert Kpadoe, said that the participation of sitting Representatives in senatorial elections is not in the interest of the citizens, and that it creates unnecessary financial burden on the country amidst struggling economy. For this reason, he added, he has instructed his organization members not to vote for any sitting representative who seeks a place in the Senate.

"They already have a job. So, what they want again? All the money that supposed to go to other developments are going to by-elections. It is not good for poor country like this."

Kpadoe emphasized that the Liberian government constantly complains of lack of money, and therefore it is irresponsible of lawmakers to try to abandon their current positions and seek a seat in the Senate, which may cause by-elections in various districts. "It is wrong. That Representative who is running from that position to another one, if he doesn't want to work for government, let [them] sit down because if [they] win, the same government will look for money to replace him or her."

Kpadoe said there is a need for a law to require

current government officials who wish to run for another government position, to resign from their current seat at least one year prior to the election.

Representative Willie says all parties are doing it. Grand Bassa fourth district lawmaker and Senatorial candidate, Vincent Willie, said that he will not support any bill to ban sitting Representatives from contesting any elections on grounds that it will alienate and disenfranchise others. He argued that it was better for a sitting Representative to contest for a place in Senate than to resign and contest: "If he is seated, contested, and lost, there will be no by-election, but if he resigned and contested, whether he wins or not, there will be by-election and that's what I want those who are arguing to look at."

Speaking on the financial constraints and the cost of by-elections, he told The Bush Chicken that there is no need for people to complain because other political parties, including the ruling CDC and the opposition CPP, both have Representatives who are contesting in the Senate elections.

"People are complaining that the government does not have money, but the same government created two by-elections - Saah Joseph and Joseph Nagbe, and the same government is about to create additional five by-elections if they win. So, I am the one they see? They don't know that the government has money that is why it is creating by-elections?"

Article 30 of the Constitution states that citizens of Liberia who have attained the ages of 30 for the Senate and 25 for the House of Representatives, and domiciled in the country or constituency to be represented not less than one year prior to the time of the election, and be a taxpayer, are eligible run for, and to be elected members of the Legislature.

Dave L. Dixon concurred with Representative Willie and argued that the process is supported by the Constitution.

Henry Flomo said that NEC has no authority from stopping anyone from running, as long as they fall within the legal provisions.

"There is no law to prevent people from running while they are still in the same seat," he said. "As long as there is no law, there is nothing we can do." In the event that any of the contestants from the House of Representatives wins the senatorial elections, NEC will be notified by law to fill the vacancy, and prepare the budget to organize by-elections.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

GVL Dedicates High School For Over 350 Students in Butaw, Sinoe County

By Winston W. Parley

Sinoe County - More than 350 children in Butaw Community and its surroundings are enjoying a new High School and a teacher's residence with a full sanitation facility valued at USD \$128,000.00 constructed and dedicated recently by Southeastern Liberia's oil palm company, Golden Veroleum (Liberia) Inc. ('GVL'). The projects are in fulfillment of many project commitments made to the people of Butaw in the Memorandum of Understanding Incorporating Social Agreement (MOUSA) signed between GVL and Butaw District Communities on February 10, 2017. The construction of the High School in the area which is the first of its kind, now avoid students from travelling long

the Butaw Community and Golden Veroleum (Liberia) Inc. "thanks to those who made us to be here today to present valuable infrastructure that will bring life to our children for the future. The company will continue to work with local communities to improve social and economic opportunities," said Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris further disclosed that GVL has been spending over US\$290,000 this year to support schools in its concession areas in Sinoe and Grand Kru Counties under its GVL Educational Support (GES) program. The GES Program is intended to support the educational needs of both GVL employees' dependents and pupils from the surrounding communities. He added that the program will run for three years beginning academic 2020/2021. Stressing the importance of education, the GVL Vice President for Sustainability,

living standard of the life of every individual. "your decision to invest in education was never a mistake. "she cautioned. Madam Kandakai called on the community to support the GVL investment in order to benefit more developments and urged them to properly Manage the School for its longevity. Speaking in separate remarks, the Acting County Education Officer (CEO) of Sinoe County, Mr. Moses Tuleh, and Butaw District Education Officer, Mr. Jarhwleh, praised Golden Veroleum (Liberia) Liberia for the school project. Adding that the construction of the school will boost the educational system in Butaw District and its surrounding and will also put an end to students travelling long distances to acquire high school education as it was done in the past. "We are happy that GVL has put smile on our faces, the construction of this school will boost education not only in Butaw but in Sinoe and it will put an end to long distance walking by students to acquire high school education." they asserted. Also speaking at the ceremony, the Chairman of ButawAbloateh Committee, Mr. Benedict Manawah, the Chairman of the Butaw Community Development Fund Committee, Mr. DoegmahTeah thanked the Management of Golden Veroleum (Liberia) Inc. for being committed to the MOU signed with the community and acknowledged the many contributions GVL have made in Butaw citing the construction of the Butaw seaside road, Ceedor Road as some of the many developments implemented by the company." GVL is doing lot of good things here in Butaw and if anyone says GVL is doing nothing, that person is ungrateful. "he lamented. Mr. Manawah further assured that the people of Butaw are willing to provide more land to the company for oil palm development as there has been peaceful co-existence between the two parties. Receiving the keys to the facility, the principal of the Butaw School, Charles Tarpeh thanked GVL for the facility and pledged that the School will be properly managed and taken care of for community children benefit.



distances to acquire high school education. Prior to the school dedication, the company provided 350 pieces of arm chairs and several teaching and learning materials to support the school and rescue students from sitting on concrete blocks, and baboon plated chairs. Speaking at the dedicatory ceremony held on the school campus, GVL Vice President for Sustainability, Strategy, and Stakeholder's engagement, Elvis G. Morris, lauded his team and the people of Butaw for the collaboration and said that the company is faced with many challenges but remains committed to fulfilling the promises made in the Memorandum of Understanding and Social Agreements signed between

Strategy, and Stakeholder's engagement called on the community to take advantage of the facility by encouraging their children to make use of the opportunity, as they are the future managers of the company. He then thanked the Ministry of Education for the support and collaboration. For her part, the Regional Coordinator for Basic and Secondary Education at the Ministry of Education thanked GVL Management for constructing such a modern facility and the support to education. Madam Evelyn Kandakai who represented the Asst. Minister for Basic and Secondary Education said the decision by GVL to invest in education was never a mistake as education helps in the development of personalities, personal standards and transform the

Liberian Red Cross elects new leadership at 50th GA

The Liberia National Red Cross Society (LNRCS) has elected Mr. Jerome N.J. Clarke, II, for the second term as president at its General Assembly (GA) which lasted for two days. According to a press release, the GA is the highest decision-making body of the Liberian Red Cross while the president's role is non-executive and the president is Head of Governance and Chair of the Board LNRCS. The GA which was held in Sanniquellie, Nimba County from December 1-2, 2020 marked the Liberian Red Cross' 50th Assembly, attended by over 70 delegates from the counties and representatives from the government and witnessed by the media. Mr. Jerome N.J. Clarke, II,

to regain the confidence of its donor partners, in 2019 the Leadership started rethinking the future of the NS and asking as to how it could do thing differently in the new century after completing its first 100 years of existence. "Our new thinking includes strengthening our Resource Mobilization in a diverse and unique way, professionalizing our membership based and volunteer network, pushing for new partnership and seeking new support, engaging and exploring to new innovations and creativities," he noted. Mr. Clarke added: "Today we are grateful that the confidence has been reposed in us to stir the affairs for the LNRCS for the next for years and therefore we will be robust in consolidating the gains and



was reelected along with Mr. Charles Kpan as vice president for the Western Region, Mr. Joseph Nagbe as vice president for the Southeastern Region, and Mr. D. Mongar Grigsby as vice president for the Central Region. Others elected include Mr. Wee Rogers as National Treasurer, Albert Zorgbe as Chair on the Youth and Volunteer Development Commission and Mr. Philip G. Moore as Chair on Policy and Governance Support Commission. According to Mr. Clarke, his new leadership will be more robust in its national strategies to improve the Red Cross and ensure stability for the future. He said his leadership inherited zero integrity and damaged financial system when he was first elected, but significant gains are made. He said as LNRCS continues

sustaining the NS in moving forward," he said. "Therefore, we must think together and connect the future better for the NS. Our leadership remains determined to grow and sustain the NS and promote its community actions across Liberia, with a renewed emphasis on local partnerships; Focusing on fundraising and capacitate building to support our humanitarian and development works and ensure that we remain visible, sustainable, functional and relevant," he continued. In the GA, reports of progress and challenges of the National Society were submitted, viewed and adopted, followed by the elections of the new board of governance which is charged with the responsibility to deliver the affairs of the

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Liberia, AfricaRice sign Host Country Agreement

In support of the country's flagship national development plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), the Government of Liberia and Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) have signed the Host Country Agreement in Monrovia.

According to a Foreign Ministry release, the Host Country Agreement will grant, through AfricaRice, the privileges and amenities that they are entitled to, under the Conventions for International Organizations.

The signing ceremony took place on Friday, December 4, 2020 in the conference room of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Liberia's Foreign Minister Mr. Dee-Maxwell SaahKemayah, Sr., signed on

this agreement," Minister Kemayah stresses.

The Liberian Foreign Minister discloses that President George Manneh Weah is very particular about the agriculture sector. According to Minister Kemayah, the Liberian economy has had some challenges, but he emphasizes that one area that provides a key source of hope for the economy is the agriculture sector.

Describing the agriculture sector as the lifeblood of the Liberian economy, Minister Kemayah says the signing of the Host Country Agreement between Liberia and the Africa Rice Center would go a long way in helping to address the food needs of the country, particularly the nation's staple food, rice.

"It is within the framework of our flagship national

and farmers' school programs in agriculture.

Additionally, Minister Kemayah calls on Dr. Roy-Macaulay to convey to the rest of the AfricaRice team that Liberia looks forward to a ceremony at which time the organization's headquarters can be returned to the country, owing to the fact that the war is over and Liberia has returned to normalcy.

For his part, Dr. Harold Roy-Macaulay, Director General of the Africa Rice Center, says rice has become a priority crop in other countries beyond the 14 countries that started the West Africa Rice Development Association.

He says 28 countries are now members of the association, noting that rice has now become important and political.

Over the years, Dr. Macaulay says, AfricaRice has developed research, technology, methods and practices, policy options to improve rice production, and generated knowledge on rice grown in Africa. He says it is important that these new innovations be brought to Liberia.

Dr. Macaulay also notes that the Liberian Government has done its job, as he expresses appreciation to Liberia and gave AfricaRice's assurance and commitment to the agreement which has been signed.

"And with regards to our job here, I want to assure you as well that we are going to have [a] very, very cordial relationship with the Minister of Agriculture and we have looked through the strategy and we are working to bring support to the Republic of Liberia," he says.

In brief remarks, The Minister of Agriculture, Madam Jeannie M. Cooper applauds Foreign Minister Kemayah for the initiative in engaging friendly partners who are interested in supporting Liberia's drive towards becoming self-sufficient in food production. She indicates that all the other things done in agriculture in Liberia could become meaningless if the sector does not get the production of rice right.

"We've been many, many years where we have been

Teenager discovered dead in New Kru Town

By Emmanuel Mondaye

A girl believed to be between ages 12 and 13 years has been discovered dead on the beach behind the D. Tweh Memorial High School in New Kru Town, Montserrado electoral district #16 with body parts extracted amid residents' demand for probe into the incident.

The minor, according to information, went missing last weekend from her beachside community without any trace whatsoever.

Some community dwellers who begged for anonymity, disclosed that the victim's mother allegedly sent her to go meet some unidentified individuals waiting at the beachside.

They said the girl did not return home until after two days when her lifeless body was found not too far from the community.

According to them, the deceased identified only as Itrana, lost her eyes and private parts.

The community dwellers claimed due to the situation, the mother of the victim escaped to Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Meanwhile, a pressure group, Borough Youth to Fight

Crimes against Humanity, is demanding full investigation into the mysterious death of Itrana.

The spokesman for the organization, KoffahBestman, said since the death of the girl nothing has been done by local authorities to ensure suspects or perpetrators are apprehended and brought to book.

Bestman lamented his group was astonished when it received information that the mother of the girl has fled the country.

According to him, this is not the first time for bodies to be discovered on the beach, as remains of persons had been similarly found on the beach with body parts missing.

He called on authority of New Kru Town to mount pressure on the Liberia National Police (LNP) detachment in the borough to launch an investigation immediately.

He identified the deceased's mother, currently out of Liberia as Trouble Girl. When the home of girl's mother was visited, the grandmother of the victim confirmed that her daughter Trouble Girl has left for Sierra Leone, but did not say for which purpose.

Speaker dishes

Starts from back page

reduce tenures for the presidency and the House from six to five years; tenure for the Senate President Pro-Tempore from six to five years; tenures for the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the House from six to five years, respectively; change the date of election from second Tuesday in October to second Tuesday in November; change the time for the National Elections Commission to hear complaints from 30 days to 15 days, and Dual Citizenship.

Speaker Chambers also held several meetings with his constituents and campaigned for the CDC Candidate James P. Biney.

Speaking to citizens during a town hall forum in Pleebo city, he thanked his constituents and colleagues in the House of Representatives, including the ruling CDC and President George Manneh Weah for affording him the opportunity to serve as

Speaker for the 54th Legislature.

According to Chambers, the best way to move both Maryland and Liberia forward is partisans should exercise party discipline by electing all CDC candidates in the race, including all eight propositions in the referendum.

Several local officials from the county attended the forum, including the President of the Tubman University, Dr. Elliott Wreh-Wilson; county development superintendent, Robin Scott; Pleebo City Mayor, Wellington Kyne; PleeboSodoken District Superintendent, Aloysius Williams; and District Education Officer, Scearis B. Doe, among others.

The CDC is battling incumbent Senator H. Dan Morias and opposition CPP Candidate Eric Wlea Giko, among others for the senatorial seat in Maryland County. -

Editing by Jonathan Browne



AfricaRice

behalf of the Republic of Liberia, while Dr. Harold Roy-Macaulay, Director General of the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), signed for his institution.

While signing the agreement, Foreign Minister Kemayah said the Government of Liberia looks towards not only the production of rice, but the implementation of the value chain as key in realizing the objective of the agreement signed.

"Rice is a very strategic and important commodity for our country which is tied into livelihood throughout the land and breadth of our country. No matter what we as Liberians eat daily, if we don't eat rice, it means we have not eaten. That speaks volume as to the necessity of

development plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) that was envisioned and crafted under the astute leadership of His Excellency President George Manneh Weah," Minister Kemayah further emphasizes.

He assures an unwavering support and commitment to the Ministry of Agriculture for the success and realization of the Ministry's mandate because, according to him, when Minister Jeannie M. Cooper succeeds, President Weah and the country have succeeded and will have enough food.

Through the agreement, Minister Kemayah expresses hope that a multifaceted approach would be implemented, taking into consideration small holder farmers and the promotion of some on-the-site demonstration

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Français

Liberia : début du vote pour un référendum

Les bureaux de vote ont ouvert mardi matin au Liberia, où quelque 2,5 millions d'électeurs sont appelés à approuver ou non huit amendements à la Constitution, dont un réduisant la durée du mandat présidentiel de six à cinq ans, et à choisir la moitié de leurs 30 sénateurs.

Les opérations de vote ont commencé vers 08H00 (locales et GMT) dans le bureau de Kendenja à

Monrovia, à l'heure d'ouverture prévue à travers le pays, a constaté un correspondant de l'AFP. Dans un autre quartier de la capitale, des électeurs faisaient déjà la queue une heure et demi avant l'ouverture, selon un autre correspondant.

Les bureaux doivent fermer à 18H00. Les premiers résultats sont attendus avant la fin de la semaine.

L'échéance a valeur de double test pour le président George Weah, qui il y a trois ans

avait soulevé un immense espoir en accédant au pouvoir dans ce pays toujours marqué par la guerre civile de 1989-2003 et l'épidémie d'Ebola de 2014-2016.

"Je veux que vous disiez oui au référendum parce qu'il y va de votre intérêt", a lancé ce weekend en meeting l'ancienne star du football, qui n'est pas parvenu à redresser l'économie et a vu sa popularité s'effriter.

Ses adversaires lui

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Côte d'Ivoire : Laurent Gbagbo de retour dans son pays "au cours du mois de décembre"

L'ancien président ivoirien, acquitté par la Cour pénale internationale (CPI), a finalement obtenu son passeport après plusieurs mois d'attente.

Les partisans de Laurent Gbagbo le 31 août 2020, lors du dépôt de sa candidature à

la présidentielle d'octobre, brandissent une photo de l'ancien président ivoirien. (SIA KAMBOU / AFP)

Les partisans de Laurent Gbagbo le 31 août 2020, lors du dépôt de sa candidature à la présidentielle d'octobre, brandissent une photo de

l'ancien président ivoirien. (SIA KAMBOU / AFP)

C'est une nouvelle qui a réjoui les GOR (Gbagbo ou rien), les fidèles partisans de l'ancien président ivoirien Laurent Gbagbo, et qui fait la une de la plupart des journaux ivoiriens depuis ces dernières heures.

Dans un communiqué publié le 4 décembre 2020, Laurent Gbagbo a annoncé qu'il avait reçu deux passeports (ordinaire et diplomatique) des autorités ivoiriennes. Un document dont il avait annoncé fin juillet 2020 avoir fait la demande et dont la délivrance était devenue une affaire politique.

Dans le premier entretien accordé depuis son arrestation en 2011, à la suite de la crise post-électorale, l'ancien président avait déclaré qu'il était "un peu honteux pour (la Côte d'Ivoire)" qu'un ancien président fasse ce type de requête auprès de son ambassade. Il s'exprimait

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Éditorial

La violence électorale menace la paix sociale

Peu importe leur appartenance politique, qu'ils soient de l'opposition ou de la majorité au pouvoir, les Libériens n'ont d'autre choix que de rejeter et de dénoncer la violence avant, pendant et après les élections sénatoriales et le référendum national de mardi pour promouvoir la paix et la stabilité politique, gage du développement socio-économique. C'est au fait un devoir patriotique.

Il est regrettable qu'un libérien, qui qu'il soit, place l'intérêt d'un parti politique ou d'un candidat au-dessus de la survie de la nation. On ne peut en réalité se rendre coupable d'un tel comportement que quand on souffre d'une myopie mentale ou d'un aveuglement égoïste et cupide, qui sont bien évidemment incapables de contribuer à la cause nationale.

La responsabilité primordiale de chaque citoyen, peu importe son parti, sa tribu ou de son appartenance religieuse, est de contribuer à la construction d'un meilleur Libéria dans lequel tous peuvent coexister dans une harmonie et réaliser leur plein potentiel.

Les nouvelles de la violence électorale dont le comté de Grand Cape Mount a été le théâtre au cours du week-end en marge de la campagne, qui s'est soldée par l'incendie des voitures et d'une maison sont à la fois effrayantes et décevantes. Ces actes barbares laissent penser que nous voulons ramener notre cher pays à l'anarchie et au vandalisme après 14 ans de meurtres violents et de destruction juste pour satisfaire un parti politique ou un candidat.

Pourquoi des gens voudraient-ils se rabaisser aussi bas par cupidité pour le pouvoir qui n'appartient qu'au peuple. Si les habitants du comté de Grand Cape Mount décident d'élire un candidat X ou Y, c'est leur plein droit en vertu de la Constitution et cela doit être respecté.

Un candidat qui perd une élection doit toujours savoir qu'il y a plus d'opportunités à venir, et qu'une telle défaite signifie simplement qu'il faut revoir sa stratégie pour les élections futures. Le président actuel George Manneh Weah est un exemple flagrant d'un homme qui a eu à faire preuve de patience et de maîtrise de soi. C'est le lieu de dire que quand le moment fixé par Dieu arrive, on aura ce pourquoi on s'est battu tout ce temps.

Nous sommes plus que convaincu qu'aucun politicien ou candidat en lice ne voudra présider un pays à feu et à sang, qui fait fuir les partenaires et les investisseurs et dont les citoyens s'engouffrent dans la misère et la famine. A moins qu'on soit clairement un ennemi du pays.

C'est pourquoi nous voudrions relayer l'appel lancé par les missions étrangères accréditées au Libéria qui exigent que les violences de Grand Cape Mount fassent l'objet d'une enquête rapide afin que les auteurs soient traduits en justice pour rassurer les citoyens et les résidents étrangers.

Le fait que le président Weah condamne la violence et appelle les acteurs politiques et leurs dirigeants au calme est loin d'être suffisant. Il faut que le gouvernement fasse pour cette fois preuve de fermeté afin que de tels actes de violence ne se répètent dans le pays.

Les élections viennent et passent, mais le Libéria, qui est notre dénominateur commun, demeure toujours, c'est pourquoi nous sommes tenus à privilégier l'intérêt de la nation, car sans la stabilité, tout est insensé.

Français

Liberia : début du vote

attribuent la volonté de tirer profit d'une modification de la Constitution pour remettre à zéro son compteur présidentiel et briguer le moment venu un troisième mandat, comme viennent de le faire ses homologues guinéen Alpha Condé et ivoirien Alassane Ouattara.

Son entourage affirme qu'il "ne pense pas à un troisième mandat". Les principaux partis d'opposition ont appelé à boycotter le référendum.

Le référendum vise aussi à autoriser la double nationalité, une question qui divise la société du Liberia,

plus ancienne république d'Afrique noire fondée au XIXe siècle sous l'impulsion des Etats-Unis pour des esclaves noirs affranchis.

La population "autochtone" reproche à l'élite américano-libérienne, don't de nombreux membres sont secrètement citoyens des Etats-Unis, d'utiliser l'argent qu'ils gagnent au Liberia pour se construire des propriétés aux Etats-Unis.

Si la proposition passe, les futurs binationaux auront accès à la propriété au Liberia, ce qui devrait donner un coup de pouce à l'économie d'un des pays les plus pauvres au monde.

Côte d'Ivoire : Laurent Gbagbo

alors sur la chaîne francophone TV5 en octobre 2020, à quelques jours de la présidentielle pour laquelle sa candidature avait été invalidée.

Acquitté par la Cour pénale internationale (CPI) mais en liberté conditionnelle, l'ex-dirigeant ivoirien a indiqué qu'il comptait rentrer dans son pays "au cours du mois de décembre 2020". "Tant que je ne serai pas rentré chez moi, avait confié l'ancien chef de l'Etat à Denis Epoté de TV5, je me considère encore un petit peu comme un prisonnier". Pour Laurent Gbagbo, dans de telles conditions, "cet acquittement a un goût d'inachevé".

Il charge aujourd'hui Assoa Adou, secrétaire général de l'aile du Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) qui lui est restée fidèle, "d'approcher les autorités compétentes afin d'organiser son retour dans la quiétude conformément à son statut d'ancien président de la République".

Un "petit pas" pour Simone Gbagbo

A l'instar de son leader, dans un communiqué, "le FPI demande aux autorités ivoiriennes d'étudier avec diligence les conditions du retour du président Laurent Gbagbo en terre ivoirienne où sa contribution à l'avènement de la paix est attendue de tous les ivoiriens". De même, son parti "salue l'acte que vient

de poser les autorités ivoiriennes dans le sens de la décrispation du climat sociopolitique" en Côte d'Ivoire.

Tout en exprimant sa gratitude au gouvernement ivoirien pour l'octroi de ce passeport, l'ancienne première dame Simone Gbagbo a estimé que "ce n'est qu'un petit pas" à l'antenne de la chaîne panafricaine Africa 24. Un avis qui fait écho à celui exprimé par l'ancien président ivoirien qui notait qu'"à la lumière des récents événements qui ont endeuillé la Côte d'Ivoire, l'obtention de son passeport est un épiphénomène".

Une sortie qui n'a pas plu au parti au pouvoir, le Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP) qui "condamne fermement de tels propos méprisants qui vont contre l'aspiration de nos populations à vivre ensemble et en paix" dans un communiqué relayé par le journal pro-gouvernemental Fraternité Matin.

En Côte d'Ivoire, ce week-end chargé - annonce de l'octroi du passeport de Laurent Gbagbo et retour au pays du président Alassane Ouattara après un séjour français - s'achève par la commémoration ce 7 décembre de la disparition en 1993 de Félix Houphouët-Boigny, le "père" de l'indépendance ivoirienne. En 1990, il nommait Alassane Ouattara Premier ministre, l'homme autour de qui la vie politique ivoirienne semble se cristalliser depuis trois décennies.

COMMENTAIRE

By Melvyn Krauss

Remettre l'OTAN sur les rails

STANFORD - La nomination de Lloyd Austin au poste de secrétaire de la Défense par le président américain élu Joe Biden, qui fait ainsi le choix d'un ancien général quatre étoiles depuis peu à la retraite, constitue un nouveau signal encourageant, celui d'une Amérique qui a retrouvé la raison et qui, après le 20 janvier prochain, ne cherchera plus à punir ses alliés tout en récompensant ses ennemis. Pour exposer pleinement ce changement au monde, et dès sa prise de fonctions, il serait désormais souhaitable que Biden annule l'ordre donné par le président Donald Trump au mois de juillet, consistant à rapatrier d'Allemagne 12 000 soldats américains.

Sans que cela ne coûte un centime aux Etats-Unis, Biden se désolidariserait ainsi de l'isolationnisme cher à Trump, et mettrait un frein à la stratégie du président russe Vladimir Poutine consistant à diviser pour mieux régner en Europe. L'annulation du retrait des troupes soutiendrait également l'OTAN, l'Allemagne et la chancelière Angela Merkel - dont le potentiel successeur sera choisi mi-janvier - dans leur combat contre Poutine et les populistes nationaux détracteurs de l'Occident.

Trump a prétendu vouloir procéder à ce retrait de troupes américaines parce que l'Allemagne aurait trompé l'alliance de l'OTAN concernant sa contribution financière à la défense, obligeant ainsi l'Amérique à compenser le manque. C'est tout à fait absurde, et je le conteste avec d'autant plus de certitude que j'ai moi-même dénoncé autrefois l'insuffisance de la contribution allemande.

Pendant des décennies, les présidents républicains et démocrates ne se sont jamais offusqués que les Etats-Unis dépensent beaucoup plus que l'Allemagne dans l'OTAN. J'ai considéré à une certaine période qu'ils auraient dû s'en offusquer, et c'est pourquoi j'ai écrit en 1986 *How NATO Weakens the West*, qui traite de l'Allemagne et de son comportement de passer clandestin en matière de défense. J'étais si persuadé de ma thèse que j'ai également publié dans le *Wall Street Journal* un article intitulé « Il est temps de transformer l'Alliance atlantique ».

Mais jamais je n'aurais cru que Trump userait de mon raisonnement stratégique, désormais ancien, pour démolir la solidarité de l'OTAN et renforcer Poutine. Certes, l'Allemagne ne dépense sans doute pas assez pour la défense ; c'est ce que pensent clairement les Français. Pour autant, l'affirmation selon laquelle l'Allemagne tromperait les Etats-Unis en contribuant trop peu à la défense n'est qu'une absurdité de plus pour dissimuler la détermination de Trump à récompenser Poutine tout en réprimandant Merkel. Poutine souhaitait depuis longtemps une présence militaire américaine moindre en Europe, et il a trouvé en Trump un président américain disposé à collaborer avec lui.

Ma propre réflexion concernant l'OTAN et la contribution allemande s'y rattachant a commencé à évoluer peu après la parution de mon livre. Pendant sa promotion, j'ai débattu avec Lawrence Eagleburger, qui a par la suite été secrétaire d'Etat sous la présidence de George H.W. Bush, et j'ai rencontré de nombreux et très sérieux responsables militaires bien informés. J'ai alors compris que ce qui comptait le plus pour les Etats-Unis - et encore aujourd'hui - c'était le contrôle sur la structure et l'objet de la défense européenne, bien davantage que les coûts. Le « deal » transatlantique conclu après la guerre froide était le suivant, selon la plupart des experts militaires américains : l'Amérique paierait la majeure partie des dépenses de l'OTAN, et conserverait en échange le leadership sur la défense européenne.

En réalité, j'ai abandonné l'expression « les Allemands nous prennent pour des pigeons », liée à mon souhait d'une alliance transatlantique efficace, lorsque je me suis affranchi de ce populisme conservateur qui avait influencé ma pensée initiale. Par ailleurs, plusieurs preuves dans les années 1980 démontrent que les experts militaires détracteurs de mon livre avaient raison. Les disputes transatlantiques de l'époque ne concernaient pas les dépenses, mais plutôt des questions telles que l'installation de missiles Pershing II en Allemagne de l'Ouest pour contrer les missiles balistiques de l'Union soviétique. Compte tenu de leur histoire difficile et d'un fort mouvement pacifiste, les Allemands de l'Ouest hésitaient beaucoup sur cette question.

Après de nombreuses tergiversations, et grâce au solide leadership du chancelier social-démocrate Helmut Schmidt puis de son successeur à la CDU Helmut Kohl, l'Allemagne de l'Ouest installera finalement les missiles Pershing II en 1983. Ces missiles serviraient d'ailleurs très bien leur objectif : l'OTAN en usera comme d'une monnaie d'échange en 1987 dans le cadre du Traité sur les forces nucléaires à portée intermédiaire (FNI) avec l'Union soviétique, un accord phare dans le désamorçage de la menace nucléaire. Les Pershing II seront par la suite détruits, et la rumeur dit que certains des matériaux résiduels auraient fini en stylos à bille à la bibliothèque présidentielle Ronald Reagan, qui les auraient donnés en cadeau.

Même si Trump n'a pas réussi à faire de la contribution allemande aux dépenses de défense une question politique majeure aux Etats-Unis, le sujet est devenu polémique en Europe. Dans un récent entretien pour le magazine *Le Grand Continent*, le président français Emmanuel Macron - fervent partisan d'une plus grande souveraineté européenne en matière de défense - a vivement critiqué la ministre allemande de la Défense, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, qui avait publié dans *Politico* un article intitulé « L'Europe a encore besoin de l'Amérique ». L'Europe aurait moins besoin de l'Amérique, a sous-entendu Macron, si l'Allemagne revoyait à la hausse ses dépenses en matière de défense.

Ce n'est jamais bon pour l'OTAN, ni pour l'unité de l'UE, que les deux plus importants membres de l'Union soient en désaccord sur le rôle de l'Amérique en Europe. L'alliance occidentale a certes besoin d'une garantie américaine de sécurité pour l'Allemagne et d'autres pays européens, mais pas au prix d'une scission franco-allemande, qui constituerait une offrande de plus pour Poutine.

La France et l'Allemagne doivent réduire leur fracture actuelle en matière de défense, et l'Amérique maintenir sa garantie de sécurité pour l'Europe. Le continent a besoin de soldats américains sur le terrain, pas seulement en Allemagne mais également dans les pays baltes. L'une des issues à cette problématique pourrait consister pour l'Allemagne à contribuer davantage aux budgets de la défense européenne, ce qui apporterait le degré d'indépendance souhaité par la France, tout en conservant les troupes américaines de son choix.

Biden pourrait amorcer ce processus de réconciliation entre la France et l'Allemagne - et plus important encore entre les Etats-Unis et leurs partenaires de l'OTAN - en annulant le retrait militaire prévu par Trump. Il pourrait ensuite exploiter le levier qui en résulterait, ainsi que ses connaissances personnelles (Biden ayant assisté à la Conférence annuelle de Munich sur la sécurité depuis des décennies, et connaissant presque tous les principaux responsables de la politique étrangère allemande), pour convaincre l'Allemagne d'investir davantage dans la défense européenne. L'objectif majeur d'un tel engagement consisterait non pas à apaiser l'Amérique, mais plutôt à encourager Macron, ami sincère de l'Allemagne.

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LRA awards outstanding taxpayers

The Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) has traditionally appreciated and awarded outstanding and complaint taxpayers in the country. They were recognized for their commitment to tax payment and valuable contributions to the country's revenue envelope, covering the fiscal period 2018-2019.

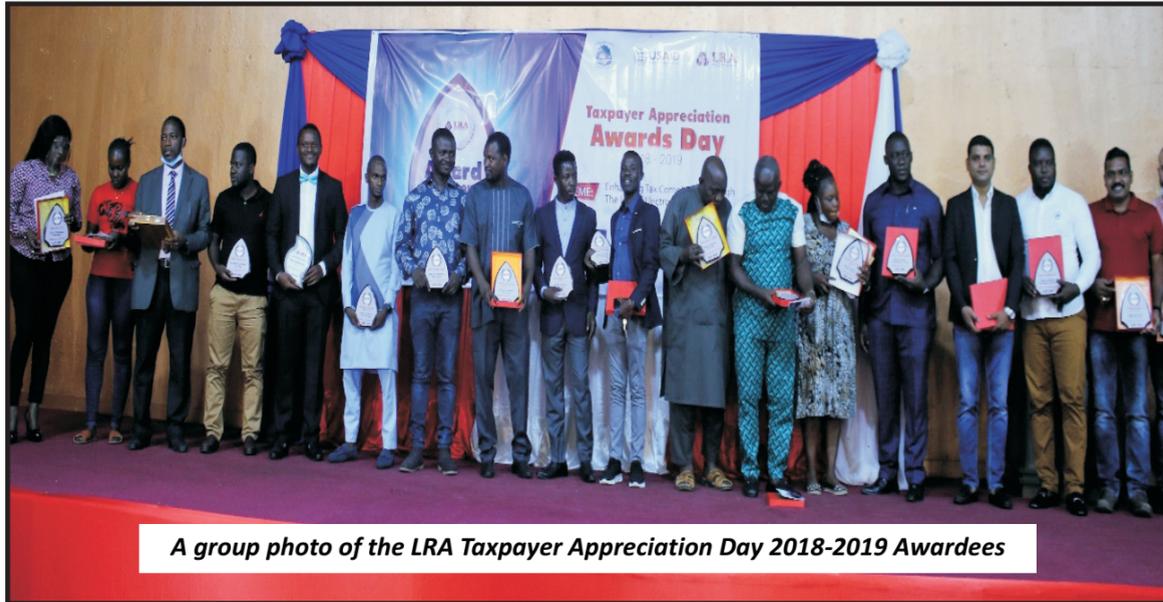
During the period, the LRA collected \$525.9 Million against the projected \$518.9

of all citizens, as taxpayers.

The LRA is digitizing its tax payment processes with the introduction of new technologies such as online, mobile and visa card payments, the CG said.

Liberia's Controller and Accountant General Janga A. Kowo, in remarks, thanked the awardees for their commitment and contributions to tax payment. He renewed government's assurance to use the taxes collected to support

award in the Large Tax Division nationwide was presented to Metalum Inc. Firestone Natural Rubber Plantation got the most compliant taxpayer award nationwide in the natural resource tax sector, while Electro Shack Inc. was named the most compliant taxpayer for the Medium Tax Division. For the Small Tax Division, John Building Material Center got the most compliant taxpayer award, while Family



A group photo of the LRA Taxpayer Appreciation Day 2018-2019 Awardees

Million, Commissioner General Thomas Doe Nah disclosed when he addressed the occasion at the Paynesville City Hall on Dec 3, 2020.

According to the LRA, Commissioner General Nah acknowledged the great efforts taxpayers are making to contribute to the national revenue basket of Liberia.

He noted that meeting the country's developmental needs requires the contributions of all citizens in honoring their tax obligations.

"To enable the government work towards what the country and its people want, everyone must participate in paying their fair share of taxes", he indicated.

The LRA currently has an ambitious agenda to take the country's revenue collection from around US\$500 million to a billion, and Nah says it will require total involvement

national development programs.

This year's celebration was under the theme: "Enhancing Tax Compliance Through The Use of Electronic Services." USAID-funded Revenue Generation, Governance & Growth (RG3) Project collaborated with the LRA to host the event. Forty four (44) businesses, individuals, and organizations received awards and special recognitions, and were selected based on either their total tax compliance record or the amount of tax contributions.

TOTAL Liberia Inc. collected the Gold Award as the highest tax contributor nationwide, while Arcelor Mittal-Liberia for the second time won the Silver Award as the second highest tax contributor, followed by Orange Liberia Inc. which received the Bronze Award, as third highest in the tax payment category.

The most compliant taxpayer

Focus Petty Shop was named the most complaint taxpayer in the petty trade category.

Under the Customs category, West Oil Investment Liberia Limited was named highest petroleum contributor, as the highest contributing Land-Border County award was presented to Ganta / Nimba County, follow by Bo-Waterside / Grand Cape Mount County in second place. The most compliant importer award was won by Eagle Electrical

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Liberia, AfricaRice

Cont'd from page 7

getting rice wrong, and this is one key step in making sure that we get rice right and I will be very pleased to convey to President Weah that we are taking this step; we are reinforcing our relationship with the AfricaRice Center," she says.

Earlier in a welcome remark, Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Cllr. Deweh E. Gray says the signing ceremony was a result of many months of back and forth in

terms of the language of the Host Country Agreement which will provide and grant, through AfricaRice, the privileges and amenities that they are entitled to under the Conventions for International Organizations.

AfricaRice grew out of the West Africa Rice Development Association which was created in 1971, and was hosted by the Republic of Liberia. The organization now has its headquarters in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire.—Press release

Voters blast

Starts from back page

Assembly of God high school in Caldwell, an elderly man identified as John Cooper says this election is important because of the kind of Liberia that people want to see.

He says often times Liberians make mistakes by electing people who are not in

the interest of the ordinary people, but rather themselves.

He encourages citizens to make good and sound decision that will bring growth and development to the country and not the candidate themselves.—Edited by Winston W. Parley

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MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PROCUREMENT NOTICE
REQUEST FOR QUOTATION
4A30/PSD/004
Supply and Delivery of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) for Liberia Electricity Corporation

Background and Context
 The United States of America, acting through the Millennium Challenge Corporation ("MCC") and the Government of Liberia (the "Government" or "GoL") have entered a Millennium Challenge Compact for Millennium Challenge Account assistance to help facilitate poverty reduction through economic growth in Liberia (the "Compact") in the amount of approximately 256,726,000 USD ("MCC Funding"). The Government, acting through Millennium Challenge Account - Liberia (the "MCA Entity"), intends to apply a portion of the MCC Funding to eligible payments under a contract for which the Request for Quotation ("RFQ") is issued.

MCA-Liberianow invites priced quotation from eligible firms/suppliers for the Supply and Delivery of Heavy Fuel Oil for Liberia Electricity Corporation.

TheRFQ is for:

Supply and Delivery of Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) for Liberia Electricity Corporation

How to Participate in the Process:

Interested firms/suppliers should send an email to MCALiberiaPA@cardno.com requesting a copy of the RFQ, which is free of charge.

No.	Activity	Dates
1	Release of RFQ	December 02, 2020
2	Deadline for Submission of Quotations	December 10, 2020 at 5:00 pm

Cont'd from page 6

Liberian Red Cross

organization within four years.

This year's General Assembly is being held under the theme: "Thinking Together and Connecting the Future." International partners of the Red Cross, representatives of the government, civil society organizations and special guests are attending the occasion.

During the opening program of the General Assembly, Dr. Edward Lama

Wonkeryor, president of the Nimba County University College, served as a Keynote Speaker.

According to Dr. Walkeryor, the Liberian Red Cross is a hope for vulnerable people in times of needs and disasters in Liberia; as such members of the organization should make sound decision in electing a new unit of leadership that will better represent growth of the Red Cross.—Press release

Liberians eagerly await results

By Winston W. Parley & Bridgett Milton

Liberians are glued to their radios and social media pages awaiting provisional results from a largely peaceful joint senatorial election and national referendum across the 15 counties.

This follows months of heated exchanges between the ruling establishment and the opposition in a tense political environment that had vast majority of the population on its heels for unpredictable post-election events.

Days before the election saw violent clashes in Grand Cape Mount County, where the convoy of opposition candidate Simeon Taylor, was reportedly attacked and set ablaze, allegedly by supporters of ruling Coalition candidate incumbent Senator Victor Watson, on Saturday, 5 December in Dambala Town, Porkpar District, Grand Cape Mount County.

Mr. Taylor is the senatorial candidate for the Collaborating Political Parties (CPP). The Collaboration involves the former governing Unity Party; the Alternative National Congress; the All Liberian Party; and the Liberty Party.

Candidate Taylor reportedly survived the attacks, but his whereabouts have not been officially established.

President George Weah immediately issued a statement condemning the act calling for thorough investigation and the perpetrators being brought to book.

The opposition CPP also issued a statement condemning the attack on its candidate and urging the government to desist from state sponsor intimidations.

In all pre-campaign political events leading to the senatorial election witnessed series of violence in Montserrado and few of the 15 counties that are desperately needed by both the ruling party and the opposition, but the campaign period and the Election Day on 8 December were both peaceful.

Anger over the government's combination of the national referendum with the senatorial election has prompted the opposition Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) to urge its supporters to vote no to all the eight propositions contained in it, while the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) campaigned for a 'yes vote'



to all propositions.

Some of the contentions raised against the referendum include lack of adequate awareness and education for the population and a fear that incumbent President George Manneh Weah could follow in the steps of his counterparts in neighboring Guinea and Ivory Coast to seek third term once the presidential tenure is dropped from six to five years, among others.

But Weah insists that he has no interest in a third term bid. In fact, Article 93 of the Liberian Constitution makes that very clear that any amendment would not benefit the incumbent president.

Article 93 states: The limitation of the Presidential term of office to two terms, each of six years duration, may be subject to amendment; provided that the amendment shall not become effective during the term of office of the incumbent President.

Beyond that the senatorial election has had the country in so much tense political situation due to all the rhetoric the people have had to endure over the year, leaving others to suggest that the limited time used to talk about the referendum would have many voters ill prepared to make rational decisions at the ballot box.

Meanwhile, polling places visited across Montserrado were seen to be calm as voters stood in queues to vote in the senatorial election and the referendum. Some polling places were encouraging in the morning hours of Tuesday, but some places appeared to witness very low turnout of voters.

Among other key vote-rich counties, Montserrado has been so far one of the main centers of attraction in the senatorial race as the opposition CPP's

senatorial candidate Abraham Darius Dillon, an incumbent, battles with the ruling CDC's Thomas Fallah, a sitting representative in the county.

Polling places in Brewerville City on Tuesday, 8 December were seen empty on the day of election.

According to our reporter who visited polling centers within the VOA Community in Brewerville, National Elections Commission (NEC) workers were seen to be relaxed and most of them were seen on their phones as voters seemed scarce.

Speaking to our reporter, one bystander identified as John Saah suggests that most people were trucked to Bomi County to vote, thereby abandoning the county in which they reside.

Saah who is believed to be in his early 30s, suggests that the hardship in the country may have led some voters to be trucked to different part of the country to vote.

He explains that some people go to bed hungry and they don't have anything for their family to live on.

On Monday, 7 December, thousands of voters were seen at the VOA Junction boarding NTA buses headed for Bomi County apparently to go and cast their votes there. Brewerville reported a huge turnout in the 2017 elections.

It can be recalled during the replacement of voters card this year, many residents of Montserrado County were seen being trucked to Bomi County allegedly by two former House Speakers J. Alex Tyler and Edwin M. Snow, both of whom at battling to unseat incumbent Bomi Senator Sando Johnson.

Mr. Snow is a sitting Bomi County Representative who got elected in the 2017 polls, having transferred from

Montserrado County where he had already served two terms as representative and a short

serving House Speaker.

At one point Bomi County citizens resisted the influx of people who were being transported to the county on board National Transit Authority (NTA) buses during the voter registration and voter ID replacement exercise.

In Clara Town on Bushrod Island, NEC Polling Officer at Royal Foundation Mr. Varney Freeman indicates that turnout is encouraging, but expresses hope that voting process ends peacefully.

As at the time of the interview with this paper, Freeman says he had not seen an incident of conflict arising from voters at the polling center.

For those who registered twice, he says names of some of them were not found in the Final Registration Roll so they were not eligible to vote. - Edited by Othello B. Garblah

LRA awards outstanding

Cont'd from page 10

Corporation, follow by AbiJaoudi&Azar Trading Corp.

Other award recipients were the National Industrial Company most compliant taxpayer using e-Filing; Lonestar Cell MTN most compliant taxpayer - Direct Transfer User; Dr. C Nelson Oniyama highest contributor to Real Property Tax (Overall);

others.

Finance & Development Planning Minister Samuel D. Tweah Jr. and the Embassy of Sweden received special awards for their contributions To LRA's growth, while United Bank for Africa Liberia Limited, Lonestar Cell MTN and Orange Liberia Inc. were presented special awards for contributing to LRA's



MomoluDukuly V. Sirleaf-Cemenco Liberia highest contributor Real Property (Industrial); Mr. George W. Wallace Jr, highest contributor to Real Property Tax (Vacant Land); and Leone Investment Inc. highest contributor Real Property (Commercial), among

Digitalization Program.

The annual Taxpayer Appreciation Day launched in 2017, appreciates all taxpayers in the country and specifically recognizes compliant and highest taxpayers for meeting all their tax obligations on time and in full. -Press Release

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Speaker dishes out cash



Speaker Bhofa Chambers addresses supporters in Pleebo Sodoken District



senatorial election and national referendum in Maryland County, the Speaker also announced availability of more than 15 hand pumps to restore safe-drinking water to various communities in PleeboSodoken District.

He said the gesture which came on the heels of election demonstrated government's love for the people, adding, "So as you go to the poll Tuesday, please make a right choice to move this government forward and to see the government goals being achieved."

Chambers arrived in his native Maryland County over the weekend where he voted and was received by jubilating marketers, motorcyclists, youths, elders and traditional leaders, among others.

Liberians went to the poll Tuesday, December 8, 2020 to elect 15 senators across the country and vote in a national referendum that contains eight propositions, seeking to

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

Patrick N. Mensah,
Maryland County

House Speaker and ruling Coalition for Democratic Change lawmaker (District#2) in Maryland County Bhofal Chambers has pledged additional One Million Liberian Dollars (LRD1Million) in grant to marketers in PleeboSodoken District, Maryland County and Three Hundred Thousand (LRD300,000) for youth

empowerment, rallying citizens to elect CDC senatorial candidate for the county, James Biney.

Speaker Chambers had initially presented LRD1,000,000 to marketers in Pleebo as a revolving fund prior to the senatorial election and national referendum besides an existing LRD 2,000,000 scholarship grant.

Speaking with his constituents over the weekend on the heels of Tuesday's

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Lonestar Cell MTN

Voters blast NEC staffers

By Lewis S. Teh

Some voters in Duala and Caldwell have expressed anger and blasted National Elections Commission (NEC) staff over difficulties faced in identifying voters' names and their assigned voting rooms.

Liberians voted in a peaceful senatorial election and referendum on Tuesday, 8 December across the country.

At some places on Election Day, polls opened at about

7am to 8am, with virtually huge turnouts, and it took electorate close to an hour to identify their names, and room number to cast their ballots.

In the polls Tuesday, Liberians voted to elect 15 new senators, two representatives in Montserrado and Sinoe counties.

They also voted in a referendum that has eight propositions including dual citizenship; reduction of the tenures of the presidency and



representatives from six to five years, each; and senators from nine to seven years.

The other propositions in the referendum include reduction of the tenure of Speaker, deputy speaker and protemp, reduction in the hearing of an election complaint from 30- to 15 days, and changing the voting days from October to November of every election year.

Speaking to this paper at the

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