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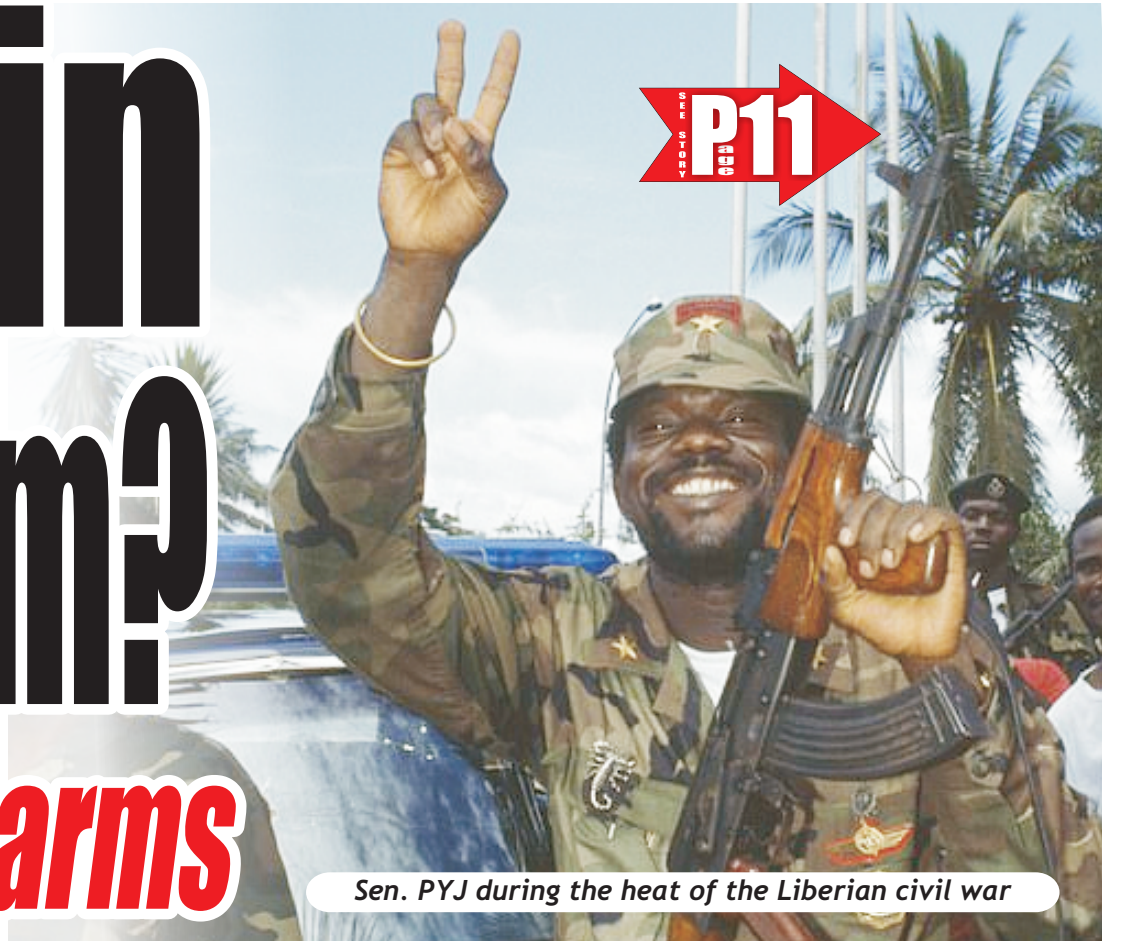
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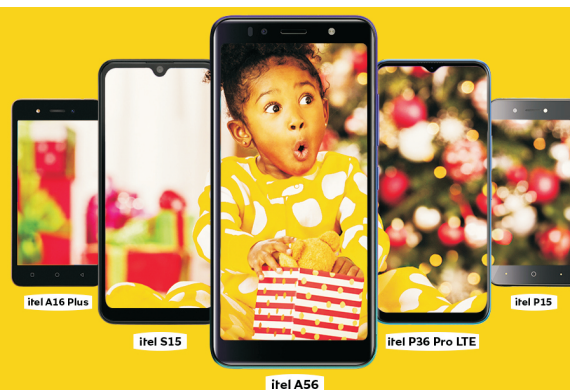
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Continental News

Historic mosque damaged in Ethiopia conflict

The Ethiopian government has promised to repair a centuries-old mosque that was damaged last month during the conflict in the northern Tigray region.

The al-Nejashi Mosque was reportedly shelled. Its dome, the minaret and tombs of Islamic figures were damaged. The government said a nearby church damaged during the conflict would also be repaired.

Locals believe al-Nejashi was built by the first Muslims to migrate to Africa during the time of Prophet Muhammad.

They had fled persecution in Mecca and were given refuge in what was then the Kingdom of Aksum. The mosque is the oldest in Africa, though others believe that title belongs to one in Egypt.

The mosque is near Wukro town, some 800km (500 miles) from Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

An Orthodox Christian church named Saint Emmanuel was also damaged, but further details are unavailable. A Turkish aid agency launched a project in

2015 to renovate the mosque, saying it wanted to "preserve the heritage" of the monument and wanted it to become a major destination for "religious tourism". The mosque and nearby church were damaged during the month-long military operation that led to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) being ousted from power in the region on 28 November. A Belgium-based non-profit

organisation, Europe External Programme with Africa, reported on 18 December that al-Nejashi Mosque was "first bombed and later looted by Ethiopian and Eritrean troops".

"Tigrayan sources are saying that people have died trying to protect the mosque," it added.

The government has not commented on the reports.

Both the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments also deny that Eritrean forces are in Tigray to help in the fight against the TPLF. On Monday, Ethiopian state television quoted residents as saying that TPLF forces had dug trenches around the mosque, without giving any more details. The government has imposed heavy restrictions on the media in Tigray, making it difficult to know what exactly is happening. Access to Tigray has also been restricted for aid workers.

In a BBC Amharic interview, the deputy director of the Ethiopian Heritage Preservation Authority, Abebaw Ayalew, said a team

would be sent to inspect the damage to both the mosque and church before they are repaired. "These sites are not only places of worship. It is also the heritage of the whole of Ethiopia," he said. It is unclear how many have been killed in the conflict, but Mr Abiy previously said that the military did not kill a single civilian during the operation that led to the TPLF's removal from power.

UN and other human rights bodies are calling for an independent investigation into allegations of against all sides, including the massacre of civilians and the shelling and looting of residential areas and a hospital.

More than 50,000 people have fled to Sudan to escape the fighting. BBC



caption Locals believe the al-Nejashi Mosque is the oldest in Africa

Niger to Hold 3 Days of Mourning After Deadly Attack

Niger will hold three days of national mourning after an attack on two villages in the nation's southwest that killed more than 100 civilians, the government said. The government is strengthening security in the area of the attacks near the border with Mali and will provide support to those living there, it said in

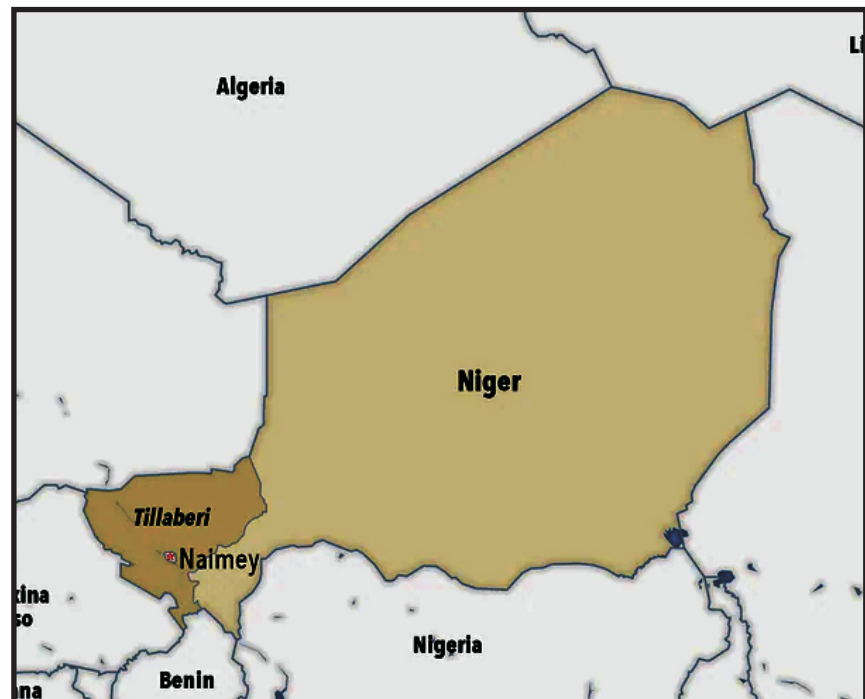
a statement after an emergency Cabinet meeting called by President Mahamadou Issoufou late Monday. The attacks on the western villages of Tchombangou and Zaroumdareye took place on Saturday, the same day that Niger announced its presidential elections would go to a second round to be held on Feb. 21.

The villages in the insecure

Tillaberi region were attacked after residents killed two rebel fighters, local officials said. Niger's Prime Minister Brigi Rafini visited the two villages Sunday.

The attacks are among the deadliest in Niger and come on the heels of several others, including one by the Islamic State West Africa Province in the Diffa region a few weeks ago in which dozens of people were killed. Niger and neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali are battling the spread of deadly extremist violence which is displacing large numbers of people, despite the presence of thousands of regional and international troops. While no group has claimed responsibility for Saturday's killings, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara has been mounting attacks there for some time.

Niger is pressed on all sides by extremist groups and must deal with instability spilling over from both Mali and Nigeria, which is exacerbated by local tensions. VOA



The woman feeding jobless Kenyans in the UAE

A Kenyan woman has been making free food and distributing it to fellow Kenyans living in the UAE who lost their jobs during the coronavirus pandemic. Wangeci Waruire was a driver for Dubai Taxi when the pandemic hit.

"I had to resign in October 2019 after months of minimal earnings because Terminal One at the main airport was closed and we earn from

pick," she says. Mrs Waruire makes 20-25 plates of food twice a week.

She has previously won the award of Best Dubai Taxi driver: Police in Nigeria's Lagos state have raided several nightclubs, arresting 71 people for allegedly violating Covid-19 protocols.

The police say the raids happened in the Lekki and Surulere areas of Lagos city and the suspects will be



commissions," Mrs Waruire told the BBC.

The mother of three noticed that many other people were jobless and thought of easing their strain by providing free food: "My husband who was still working started buying me the ingredients and I started making food that I would pack and share photos on Facebook for people in my neighbourhood to come and

prosecuted for allegedly violating guidelines put in place in an attempt to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Lagos state police spokesperson Olumuyiwa Adejobi told the BBC that the club-goers had allegedly violated a ban on large gatherings and the reopening of clubs and had broken a midnight to 04:00 curfew in the state. BBC

EDITORIAL

Weah's Executive Order#103 and Liberia's economic woes

PRESIDENT GEORGE MANNEH WEAH at the close of 2020 issued Executive Order No.103 in what the Executive Mansion in Monrovia says is aimed at stimulating economic growth in the country without explaining clearly how.

THE PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE Order#103 slashes taxes here and there, and effects series of waivers but stops short of detailing how the Liberian economy, that has nose-dived, would experience a turnaround and hit growth that had diminished in the last three years.

FOR INSTANCE, THE President's Order declares that the Commissioner General of the Liberia Revenue Authority, in consultation with the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, may set forth a schedule of Waivers, in Regulation, to be reviewed annually for the granting of relief from assessment of penalties and interest related to Real Estate Taxes, Customs Duties and Related Levies including those under Administrative Review, Judicial Review, Audits or Examinations as a result of either or both failure to file or failure to pay such Taxes, Duties and Levies when due.

"FAILURE ON THE part of a Taxpayer to take advantage of a Waiver offered during an annual period shall preclude the Taxpayer from taking advantage of future annual Waivers for a period of 5 (five) years, during which period the Taxpayer is to be subject to sanctions, including the seizure and forfeiture of assets," noted the President's Executive Order.

BUT HOW CAN citizens and foreign business people remain faithful to paying taxes regularly when the economy is plummeted due to serious cash shortage and poor sales? The President failed to address the key issue of depleting the Government Consolidated Account with the Central Bank of Liberia that has led to borrowing from commercial banks without paying thus, affecting banks' liquidity.

WE ALSO WONDER how reducing taxes on air travel tickets from 10 percent to 7 percent and extending Work Permits to five years amid a heightened global pandemic stimulate growth in an economy that is heavily consumption-based.

"COLLECTION OF WORK and Residence Permits Fees: All fees for Work and Residence Permits shall be paid directly to the Liberia Revenue Authority for deposit into the Consolidated Account of the Government of Liberia."

THE EXECUTIVE MANSION also failed to address the critical issue of confidence crisis in the banking sector that has been characterized by restricting daily withdrawal which has inversely discouraged depositors from banking.

IF THE ECONOMY is to be resuscitated, restoring confidence in the banking sector is very critical to generating liquidity to avoid speculation and capital flight.

ADHERENCE TO TRANSPARENCY and accountability are similarly important to having a predictive economy that can stimulate forecasting and reliability. But when billions of local banknotes are printed and brought into the country, but never put in circulation without any explanation it leaves room for uncertainty and apprehension.

PRESIDENT WEAH AND his Economic Management Team should go back to the drawing board and carve a realistic economic plan that would give Liberians hope both for the short and long-term that they would get out of the current quagmire that is leaving many family heads with serious hypertension and early death.

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COMMENTARY

By Ngozi Okonjo-iweala

Globalizing the COVID Vaccine

In less than a year, the world has come together to develop effective COVID-19 vaccines and a multilateral platform for allocating them most efficiently around the world. But with the risk of vaccine nationalism still looming large, now is the time to finish the job.

LAGOS - The development and approval of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines less than a year after the start of the pandemic is a truly remarkable achievement, offering hope that the end of this devastating crisis may be in sight. What will follow in the coming months - or even weeks - will be equally remarkable: COVID-19 vaccines will be made available to people around the world - not just in the wealthiest countries - at roughly the same time.

Vaccines will reach the majority of rich-country citizens in the first quarter of this year, and citizens of low- and lower-middle-income countries will also begin to access them. The speed and scale at which vaccines are being provided is both extraordinary and necessary to end the pandemic, and is possible only thanks to an unprecedented show of global solidarity and multilateral support for COVAX, the central mechanism in the global COVID-19 vaccination effort, launched last year by the World Health Organization and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (which I led).

COVAX will facilitate the rollout of two billion vaccine doses over the next year, reaching people in 190 participating countries and economies, regardless of their ability to pay. In fact, there should be enough doses to protect all health- and social-care workers worldwide by mid-2021. And despite meeting with its share of naysayers, the program has continued to attract more governments, economic policymakers, and vaccine manufacturers. These participants are signing on because they recognize that COVAX is the only viable global solution to the COVID-19 crisis.

Now that we have reached this critical juncture, speculation about whether COVAX will fail must stop. It is time to start providing the support needed to ensure that it succeeds in doing what it was designed to do. The development and approval of vaccines is merely the first step. As long as the coronavirus can be transmitted between people, many will continue to be infected, and some will die. The hope of returning to normal trade, commerce, and travel will remain elusive.

To end the cycle, we cannot vaccinate only some people in some countries; we must protect all people everywhere. Yet as vaccines have been rolled out, demand has predictably outpaced the still-limited supply. Under these conditions, even if doses are promised for the rest of the world further down the line, allocating vaccines

to the highest bidder will merely prolong the crisis. Vaccine nationalism is precisely the problem that COVAX was created to solve.

In tackling COVID-19, we must avoid a repeat of 2009, when a small number of rich countries bought up most of global supply of H1N1 flu vaccine, leaving the rest of the world with none. Because every national government has a first-order duty to protect its own citizens, it is no surprise that some 35 countries have already concluded bilateral deals with pharmaceutical manufacturers for COVID-19 vaccines.

These arrangements are not ideal when it comes to the global vaccination effort. Although COVAX is flexible enough to work around this particular problem, it can do so only as long as manufacturers provide it with the same access to vaccines as national governments receive. Unfortunately, we are already seeing some governments buy far more doses than they need, adding to the pressure on global supply during this critical initial phase.

Some of these countries have indicated that they will donate their surplus orders, in which case these additional doses will need to be redirected as quickly and as equitably as possible. The best way to ensure that they are is for donor governments to go through the Gavi/COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) mechanism, which was created to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are made available to people living in the world's 92 low- and middle-income countries.

So far, COVAX has secured around one billion doses for people in these countries, by striking deals with manufacturers of several of the most-promising vaccine candidates. But many more doses are needed. All manufacturers must step up and make their vaccines available and affordable to COVAX, so that there can be a timely global rollout. Some manufacturers have already done this; and international donors have contributed the \$2 billion that the COVAX AMC needed for 2020. But the program needed an additional \$5 billion for 2021, and in December, the United States allocated \$4 billion for Gavi in its second COVID-19 relief package.

Back in February, few imagined that by year's end we would have more than one approved vaccine and be in a position to deliver doses to high- and lower-income countries simultaneously. But the global community rallied and created a platform for doing precisely that. All COVAX needs now is enough international support to finish the job.

O-PED

By Mohamed Hegazy

Electrifying African Transport

Transport investments will be crucial in determining whether Africa follows an equitable, zero-carbon development path. Development banks and governments should move away from capital-intensive mass-transit projects, and toward enabling micro-entrepreneurs to build effective, electrified public transport networks.

CAIRO - Many transport experts think that we are succeeding in decarbonizing the sector: electric vehicles are taking off, public transport use is increasing, and cities worldwide are promoting cycling. But this sense of success is illusory. Globally, transport-related greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions are increasing faster than ever, despite technological advances and investments in decarbonization. This is especially so in Africa.

Transport investments will be crucial in determining whether Africa heads toward an inequitable, carbon-heavy development trap or a much fairer zero-carbon path. To achieve full decarbonization, development banks and African governments should move away from capital-intensive rail and bus rapid transit (BRT) projects, and toward enabling micro-entrepreneurs to build effective, electrified public transport networks. The solution may lie in fostering impact-driven transport network companies (TNCs).

Although Africa is responsible for some 3% of cumulative global carbon dioxide emissions, it is urbanizing at lower levels of per capita GDP than any other region. As the continent's cities continue to expand, Africans increasingly need to travel - by motorized public transport, motorcycles, or private cars - in order to attain the same level of prosperity as people elsewhere.

Micro-entrepreneurs are meeting many of those transport needs by investing in vans and providing informal bus services that connect the urban dwellers with schools, hospitals, and jobs. Such operations have helped Africa's cities to grow, generated significant employment, and will continue to dominate public transport for a long time.

But the bus drivers, some of whom own their vehicles, are short of capital and rely on low-cost, low-tech, high-polluting vans. Passengers aspire to own a private car, and those who can invest in a car-centric lifestyle, mimicking a development pattern that has failed elsewhere. A development trap thus kicks in: African cities remain crowded, disconnected, and costly, reducing social mobility and entrenching economic inequality.

Fortunately, a range of urban and technology interventions can lead to a radically different development pathway. The key is to re-imagine African streets and move away from the current car-focused design. We should emphasize public transport, and give micro-entrepreneur bus operators priority lanes in exchange for meeting minimum vehicle-quality standards. That implies electrifying van-buses and integrating them within multi-modal urban transport systems.

Achieving this transition will require development banks and governments to focus less on capital-intensive investment projects, which, while helpful and desirable, cannot and will not solve Africa's transport problem. Successful implementation of credit-backed metro and BRT projects in African cities is in doubt, owing to the current debt distress aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These schemes are at risk of being completed too late, and thus having too little impact as urbanization proceeds apace.

In Egypt, for example, the Cairo Metro, which is majority-financed by international development agencies, receives 92% of national investment in public transport. This is one of two national projects, along with the Sustainable Transport Project (led by the United Nations Development Program), designed to mitigate Egypt's CO2 emissions and use international climate-financing schemes. But both projects combined cut annual CO2 emissions by less than is added each year as more people travel increasingly far. Capital-intensive public transport projects will neither reform nor decarbonize African transportation.

Development banks and governments should therefore invest in street infrastructure, including dedicated bus lanes, stops, and electric vehicle charging stations, and they should finance vehicle upgrades by covering the cost difference between low-tech vans and BEVs. TNCs would be able to channel the investments, work with public bodies to implement metropolitan-level multi-modal transport networks, and monitor and enforce quality standards using innovative, scalable technology.

We need to rethink Africa's transport infrastructure and enable a transition that makes sense for hundreds of thousands of workers, some of whom are also micro-investors. Achieving public-service goals will require governments to guide the sector, harnessing private-sector informal transport providers and TNCs while absorbing temporary risks and cost differences.

Public and international capital can close the cost gap that drivers will face in making the switch to BEVs and support them through the current pandemic-induced shock, which has led to an average decrease of 40% in public transport use in African cities. Private capital would realize efficiencies, and distributed public micro-capital would allow many people to acquire a stake in an industry with widely shared gains.

Transforming African transport will require nothing less than the elimination of GHG-emitting vehicles. Let's aim for that, and help African cities to become better connected drivers of clean and equitable development.

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OPINION

BY JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.

How Will Biden Intervene?

Broadly defined, intervention refers to actions that influence the domestic affairs of another sovereign state, and they can range from broadcasts, economic aid, and support for opposition parties to blockades, cyber attacks, drone strikes, and military invasion. Which ones will the US president-elect favor?

CAMBRIDGE - American foreign policy tends to oscillate between inward and outward orientations. President George W. Bush was an interventionist; his successor, Barack Obama, less so. And Donald Trump was mostly non-interventionist. What should we expect from Joe Biden?

In 1821, John Quincy Adams famously stated that the United States "does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own." But America also has a long interventionist tradition. Even a self-proclaimed realist like Teddy Roosevelt argued that in extreme cases of abuse of human rights, intervention "may be justifiable and proper." John F. Kennedy called for Americans to ask not only what they could do for their country, but for the world.

Since the Cold War's end, the US has been involved in seven wars and military interventions, none directly related to great power competition. George W. Bush's 2006 National Security Strategy proclaimed a goal of freedom embodied in a global community of democracies.

Moreover, liberal and humanitarian intervention is not a new or uniquely American temptation. Victorian Britain had debates about using force to end slavery, Belgium's atrocities in the Congo, and Ottoman repression of Balkan minorities long before Woodrow Wilson entered World War I with his aim to make the world safe for democracy. So, Biden's problem is not unprecedented.

What actions should the US take that cross borders? Since 1945, the United Nations Charter has limited the legitimate use of force to self-defense or actions authorized by the Security Council (where the US and four other permanent members have a veto). Realists argue that intervention can be justified if it prevents disruption of the balance of power upon which order depends. Liberals and cosmopolitans argue that intervention can be justified to counter a prior intervention, prevent genocide, and for humanitarian reasons.

In practice, these principles are often combined in odd ways. In Vietnam, Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson argued that the US military was countering North Vietnamese intervention in South Vietnam. But the Vietnamese saw themselves as one nation that had been artificially divided on the basis of realist Cold War balance-of-power considerations. Today, the US has good relations with Vietnam.

In the first Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush used force to expel Iraq's forces from Kuwait to preserve the regional balance of power, but he did so using the liberal mechanism of a UN collective security resolution. He considered himself a realist and refused to intervene to stop the shelling of civilians in Sarajevo, but after devastating images of starving Somalis on US television in December 1992, he deployed troops for a humanitarian intervention in Mogadishu. The policy failed spectacularly, with the death of 18 US soldiers under Bush's successor, Bill Clinton, in October 1993 - an experience that inhibited US efforts to stop the Rwandan genocide six months later.

Because foreign policy is usually a lower priority than domestic issues, the American public tends toward a basic realism. Elite opinion is often more interventionist than that of the mass public, leading some critics to argue that the elite is more liberal than the public.

Nonetheless, polls also show public support for international organizations, multilateral action, human rights, and for humanitarian assistance. As I show in *Do Morals Matter?* Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump, no one mental map fits all circumstances. There is little reason to expect the public to have a single consistent view.

For example, in the second Gulf War, American motives for intervention were mixed. International relations specialists have debated whether the 2003 invasion of Iraq was a realist or a liberal intervention. Some key figures in George W. Bush's administration such as Richard Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were realists concerned about Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction and the local balance of power; but "neo-conservatives" in the administration (who were often ex-liberals) stressed the promotion of democracy and the need to maintain American hegemony.

Outside the administration, some liberals supported the war because of Saddam's abominable human rights record, but opposed Bush for failing to obtain the institutional support of the UN, as his father had in the first Gulf War.

Broadly defined, intervention refers to actions that influence the domestic affairs of another sovereign state, and they can range from broadcasts, economic aid, and support for opposition parties to blockades, cyber attacks, drone strikes, and military invasion. From a moral point of view, the degree of coercion involved is important in terms of restricting local choice and rights.

Moreover, from a practical point of view, military intervention is a risky instrument. It looks simple to use, but it rarely is. Unintended consequences abound, implying the need for prudent leadership.

Obama used force in Libya, but not in Syria. Both Trump and Hillary Clinton said in 2016 that the US had a responsibility to prevent mass casualties in Syria, but neither advocated military intervention. And there was remarkably little discussion of foreign policy in the 2020 election.

Some liberals argued that the promotion of democracy is America's duty, but there is an enormous difference between democracy promotion by coercive and non-coercive means. Voice of America broadcasts and the National Endowment for Democracy cross international borders in a very different manner than the 82nd Airborne Division does.

In terms of consequences, the means are often as important as the ends. Where will Biden land on the spectrum of interventions intended to promote security, democracy, and human rights? We may find an encouraging clue in his history of good judgment and contextual intelligence. But we must also bear in mind that sometimes surprises occur, and events take control.

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SPECIAL

ARTICLE

21st Press Conference by Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Xinjiang-related issues in Beijing

CONT'D FROM LAST EDITION

In the morning of December 21, 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China holds Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region's 21st Press Conference on Xinjiang-related Issues at the press release room in Beijing, briefing Chinese and foreign media on Xinjiang's situation and answering their questions. The participants from Xinjiang include deputy director-general Xu Guixiang of the Publicity Department of CPC Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regional Committee, spokesperson Ilijan Anayat of the Information Office of Xinjiang People's Government, Hatip Obulhasan Tursunniyaz of the Jama Mosque in Hotan City, two graduated trainees Ablajan Ablat and Tursunnisa Ali who graduated from a vocational education and training center in Aksu Prefecture and Hotan Prefecture respectively, and two workers Shirali Mamtimin from Hotan Prefecture and Paziliya Tursun from Aksu Prefecture.

Jiang Xiaoyan: Good morning. Welcome to the press conference brought to you by Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

To answer your questions, we are happy to have invited deputy director-general Xu Guixiang of the Publicity Department of CPC Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regional Committee, spokesperson Ilijan Anayat of the Information Office of Xinjiang People's Government, Hatip Obulhasan Tursunniyaz of the Jama Mosque in Hotan City, two graduated trainees Ablajan Ablat and Tursunnisa Ali who graduated from a vocational education and training in Aksu Prefecture and Hotan Prefecture respectively, and two workers Shirali Mamtimin from Hotan Prefecture and Paziliya Tursun from Aksu Prefecture, Please introduce your organization before asking questions. Now, we open the floor for questions.

Xu Guixiang: Friends from the press, good morning. It's a great pleasure to communicate Xinjiang-related issues with you. I've met some of you in Xinjiang. Meanwhile, there are some new friends. I'd like to extend my welcome to you all.

In recent years, the overall situation in Xinjiang has seen remarkable changes. Xinjiang now enjoys steady and sound economic growth, constant improvement of people's livelihood and steady progress in all undertakings. The sense of fulfillment, happiness and security has been on the rise across Xinjiang. Firstly, the overall situation in Xinjiang is stable. Frequent terrorist and violent activities have been the thing of past. No single case of violent terrorism has been occurred in Xinjiang for the past four years.

The number of criminal cases, public security cases, cases of endangering public security and public safety incidents has fallen significantly. People's hope for peace and stability has been realized. Secondly, steady and healthy economic growth. Stick to the new development philosophy, we have achieved high quality development of economy. From 2014 to 2019, the GDP in Xinjiang rose from 919.59 billion yuan to 1.35 trillion yuan, with an annual growth rate of 7.2%; the general public budget revenue rose to 157.77 billion yuan from 128.23 billion yuan, with an annual growth rate of 5.7%. Continued improvement of infrastructures. All the regions and prefectures in Xinjiang have entered the era of express ways. Thirdly, people's life has been greatly improved. The annual growth rate of per capita disposable income of residents in Xinjiang was 9.1%. 1.69 million rural houses and 1.56 million government-subsidized housing projects in cities and towns have been constructed. More than 10 million people have moved to new houses.

Public service has upgraded continually; social security increasingly improved. All the residents in Xinjiang have access to free physical checkups. The medical infrastructure in rural and pasturing area has

improved a lot. Standardization for clinics in townships and villages reached 100%; and 99.7% residents were covered by the basic medical insurance. Fourthly, decisive results have achieved in poverty alleviation. More than 3 million people were lifted out of poverty under the current poverty line. Poverty was eliminated in 3666 poverty-stricken villages and 32 towns. The absolute poverty issue in Xinjiang has been solved historically.

The hard-won achievements of stability and development in Xinjiang represent the hard work from people of all ethnic groups which have earned supports from visionary people worldwide. It should be further cherished. For journalists present here today, we are grateful to your objective and fact-based reports. Meanwhile, our policy on Xinjiang are wantonly slandered by some anti-China forces, media outlets, think tanks and politicians. They spread groundless reports and viciously vilify Xinjiang related issues. They intend to sow discord in ethnic relations, disrupt development in Xinjiang and confuse the international community. People of all ethnic group in Xinjiang firmly oppose it and they are indignant about it!

Here, I solemnly make it clear that the so called Xinjiang-related issues are not at all about ethnicity, religion, or human rights, instead they are about anti-violence, anti-terrorism, anti-separatism and deradicalization.

These issues have been properly handled in Xinjiang based on facts, truth and justice. We resolutely defend



the achievements of Xinjiang's stability and development, all ethnic groups' fundamental interests, and national security. We will speak the truth loudly and never give in, and we will firmly rebuke any slander and smear towards Xinjiang.

I believe that lies repeated a thousand times are still lies, for everyone's eyes are bright. Today, the purpose for us to hold this press conference on Xinjiang issues is to expose lies and tell the truth about Xinjiang to everyone. I hope everyone here will report objectively and rationally and represent an authentic Xinjiang to the world.

Thank you.

Questions raised by foreign media

NBC: 1) In March the ASPI accused international brands including Adidas, Gap and Nike of using Uighur forced labor in their textile supply chains. And recently a report by Washington-based think tank the Center for Global Policy cited online government documents as proof that in 2018 three majority-Uighur regions within Xinjiang sent at least 570,000 people to pick cotton as part of a state-run coercive labor transfer scheme. Will you welcome foreign media to visit factories and farms to independently verify if these claims are accurate or not? 2) In a new book Pope Francis said: "I think often of persecuted peoples: the Rohingya, the poor Uighurs, the Yazidi." It was the first time he had called China's Uighurs a persecuted people. Can we say the Pope was right or wrong?

Xu Guixiang: The so called "massive forced labor" in Xinjiang are lies and fallacies fabricated by some US and Western anti-China organizations and individuals, and we have exposed it on many occasions. In real practice, laborers of all ethnicities in Xinjiang choose their jobs out of their free will, and sign labor contracts with and receive payment from companies on the basis of equality and voluntariness according to The Labor Law of PRC and relevant regulations. They enjoy full freedom in deciding where to work. Thus the alleged "forced labor" thing just doesn't exist in Xinjiang.

On September 17, the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China issued a White Paper on Employment and Labor Rights in Xinjiang which gave a full account of Xinjiang's employment situation, proactive employment policies, labor rights protection and demonstrable results. All laborers of all ethnicities in Xinjiang work voluntarily according to The Labor Law and The Labor Contract Law. On November 13, employees of ethnic minorities from Hotan, Turpan and other places telling their stories about their experience at workplace or in starting their own businesses at the press conferences on Xinjiang related issues. If people from overseas really care about the employment situation in Xinjiang, they should read the white paper and listen to what these employees said.

It must be pointed out that all ethnic minority laborers in Xinjiang, who are a part of the labor force of the country, are free to choose their jobs and each of their rights and benefits is protected by law. They have full freedom in deciding where to work and what jobs they do.

Either working in Xinjiang or in other cities, they all enjoy equal rights to be get paid, to rest, to workplace safety, to social insurance, and to freedom of religious belief and to use their ethnic languages in accordance with law. They work and live in an pleasant and comfortable environment and their families back home are free of worries about them.

In recent years, employees of ethnic minorities get steady income through employment. According to incomplete statistics, the annual per capita income of workers from Xinjiang who are working in other provinces is about 40,000 yuan, roughly equal to the per capita disposable income of permanent urban residents in the places where they work. The local people who left their home to work elsewhere in Xinjiang have an annual per capita income of 30,000 yuan, much higher than earnings from farming. Where does this forced labor come from when all the workers and their families are satisfied with the arrangement of transferred employment?

It has proved that Xinjiang's policies and practices concerning employment and job security comply with Chinese Constitution and relevant laws, conform to international labor and human rights standards, and support the will of all ethnic groups to live a better life. These policies and practices can withstand any test. Ignoring Xinjiang's tremendous efforts in guaranteeing human rights and promoting employment of all ethnic groups, some people in the US and Western countries violate the basic labor rights of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang under the banner of human rights by hyping their false claims of so-called "forced labor" in the region. Their acts amount to a denial of the fact that the local people in Xinjiang enjoy the right to work, aspire to move out of poverty and backwardness and are working towards that goal. Their attempts defy people wishes.

When talking about "cotton picking", years before, when it came to the harvest season, many workers from Provinces of Henan, Sichuan, Gansu came to Xinjiang by train, they were called "cotton picking contingents".

TO BE CONTINUED

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Beach and water way employees storm MFDP

By Bridgett Milton

Once more employees of Beaches and water way of Liberia early Monday storm the Ministry of Finance and Development planning in demand of their salaries own

arrears and had agreed to pay them four months ahead of the festive season-something which they say did not materialize. They alleged that only few people benefitted from the promised salary payout.

Speaking to this paper

and water way told them they were unauthorized to get the money even though they have identification cards to show that they are employees of MYS.

According to her, the Minister said he didn't know how they got on the job, adding that they have been working with that group since 2017.

She added that the reason they stormed the MFDP in demand of their salaries is because after they contacted Minister Wilson, he redirected them to Minister Tweah, alleging that he was the one who cut their money.

She said if they don't get their money, the next step will be going to the president because he was the one that employed Minister Wilson.

Also speaking, another employee Mattie Koffa said they have been talking about their payment since March 2020.

She lamented that they are calling on the president to step in their case because school have opened and their children are out of school for nonpayment of fees.

It can be recalled that last



them by the government of Liberia.

According to protesters, the government through the Ministry Youth and Sports owe them 21 months in salary

Monday, one of the affected employees, Frances Juwle said some part of last week the Minister of Youth and Sports Zoegar Wilson while paying some employees of the beach

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10

Cllr. Koffa tips as favorites

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

Political activities at the Capitol Hill has resumed as members of the House of Representatives prepare to elect a new deputy speaker upon their return.

Our reporter at the Capitol says, Grand Kru County Electoral District #2 Representative J. FonatiKoffa appears to be the favorites among those seeking to replace former deputy speaker Prince Moye, who recently got himself elected Senator in the just ended December 8 special senatorial elections.

Legislators at the House are expected to return next week to begin normal legislative works, at which time the post of the deputy speaker will be declared vacant and interested lawmakers would put themselves up for election.

But according to our reporter, consultations being conducted by Cllr. Koffa, show that lawmakers are willing to come onboard to support his quest.

Speaking on the Truth fm

morning phone in show, Grand Bassa County Representative Vincent Willie, said Cllr. Koffa, who chairs the house's judiciary committee is the best person for the post on grounds that his personal and close working relationships with his colleagues put him a better position to serve as the second man in command of the house.

Rep. Willie, who just

contested the Grand Bassa County Senatorial election, intimated that Cllr. Koffa is well schooled and easy to work with when it comes to the rudimental engagement of legislative political and controlling of the floor.

After serving three years as Chairman on the Committee

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10



PISOTA dialogues with farm owners in Nimba

By Emmanuel Mondaye

The Management of PISOTA Agricultural Industries Inc. and hundreds of local farm owners in Nimba County are said to be engaged in intensive exchange of ideas with the aim of promoting their involvement in growing cashew nuts in that part of the country.

According to a dispatch from PISOTA Agricultural, the ongoing dialogue between the company and local farm owners is being spearheaded by the President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PISOTA Agricultural Industries Inc. Mr. Ahmad Massaquoi.

When finalized, according to the dispatch, local farm owners will work along with the Management of PISOTA Agricultural Industries Inc. with the aim of vigorously engaging in the planting of Cashew Nuts on their various farmlands.

country to give them better picture of Cashew Nuts farming.

According to the dispatch, Mr. Massaquoi assured the farmers that his company is 100% prepared to bring local farm owners in Nimba County up to speed with Cashew Nuts farming and production while they continue with their regular agricultural activities.

Mr. Massaquoi maintains that local farm owners in the county stand the chance of benefiting from outside exposure in building the skills, knowledge, and methods of cashew nuts farming and production processes.

In response, a local farm owner in Nimba County Mr. SayeGonyon, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, expresses appreciation to the Management of PISOTA Agricultural Industries Inc. and assures that they are fully prepared to work with the



The dispatch signed by the company's Head of Operations Mr. Bai T. Moore also discloses that PISOTA Agricultural Industries Inc. will provide technical support to farm owners leading to the planting and harvesting processes of Cashew Nuts.

The dispatch notes that the company will further train farm owners about the various processes leading to the production of Cashew Nuts in Nimba County by adding more value to their productions.

It also adds that even though most farm owners in the county do not have the expertise about Cashew Nuts farming, PISOTA Agricultural Industries Inc. would at the same time provide capacity building training and field trips to local farm owners at some of the company's existing Cashew Nuts farms in the

company in making its dream a reality.

Mr. Gonyon believes that the planned training and exposure of local farm owners by the Management PISOTA Agricultural will encourage more and more farm owners in Nimba County to take advantage of the opportunity being provided farmers in the new dispensation of agriculture in Liberia.

According to research, the production of Cashew Nuts goes through various stages such as drying, rooting, and peeling before coming into being edible.

The dispatch indicates that the company is interested in promoting increased local consumption, creating awareness on the health benefit of consumption; farmers'

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Education boss urges teachers to uphold calling

By Lewis S. Teh

Liberia's Minister of Education, D. Ansu Sonii, has urged teachers across the country to live up to the calling, saying, at times some teachers see the profession as an area for money making thus, causing harm to the education sector.

"You are a teacher, and you will remain a teacher, and your calling as a teacher is to develop a nation", Minister Sonii underscored.

According to the Education boss, if teachers in Liberia would continue to extort money from students or demand sex for grade, such attitude has a propensity to undermine the country's education and threaten the future of students.

He observed often teachers are the ones that give birth to doctors, ministers, including presidents, yet they never own a house or a bicycle, but those who they build, have all of the skyscrapers. "But this is our calling and today I have come to

Finance Minister for Economic Planning at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Augustus Flomo extended sentiments on behalf of Finance Minister Samuel Tweah to teachers who have demonstrated patience since the pronouncement of the stimulus package by President George M. Weah.

He pledged government's commitment to working along with both private and public school teachers across the country for the cardinal role they continue to play in impacting knowledge to youths who are mostly considered future generation of any country.

"The future of this country lies in your hands as teachers, and your purpose is to make sure that the nation developed; that is why you are being called a teacher".

Meanwhile, the president of the National Teachers Association of Liberia, Mary Mulbah, thanked President Weah and the government for responding to the plight of private school teachers, saying the launch of the private school teachers' stimulus package is a testament of government's commitment to working with teachers across the country.

"We the teachers across this country want to applaud the president, and his government for the continuing support to us", Madam Mulbah expressed.

The Government of Liberia announced a US\$1000, 000 stimulus package for private school teachers after private schools here shut their doors in 2020 due to outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**



Minister of Education, D. Ansu Sonii

He made the call in remarks recently at the Ministerial Complex in Oldest Congo Town during official launch of stimulus package for private school teachers across Liberia.

The Minister also challenged teachers to uphold ethics of the teaching profession, noting that teachers are people that build the foundation of any nation, and serve as role models for future generation.

say no teacher should expect a life like a banker or a pilot."

"If you are not called to teach, don't enter the classroom, because there are only two callings: a call to teach, and a call to preach."

Minister Sonii continued that teaching is a profession of sacrifice, saying, "Giving a life to service that doesn't necessarily bring back returns, but this is a life that we all are being called to."

Speaking also, Deputy

Former Lawmaker Calls for Intervention in Road Project

Former Bong County Legislative Caucus Chair, George Mulbah has called for the intervention of the Bong and Lofa Counties Legislative Caucuses in the delay in the Gbarnga-Salayea road construction project.

Mr. Mulbah said construction works on the Lofa road has been halted for several months now, with no reasons given by CHICO, the company hired to build the road and the Ministry of Public Works for the delay.

Appearing on Radio Gbarnga Let's Find Out at the weekend, former Mulbah said

OPEC Fund for International Development to support the pavement of the first phase of the Gbarnga-Mendikormah road project.

The Sirleaf's administration also pledged to work with the Saudi Fund for Development, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development to finance the rest of the project.

The 81 kilometers stretch is a US \$ 72m project, which aims to enhance the economic and social development of the central region of Liberia and link the country with



Mr. George Mulbah

the delay in the project stems from the government's failure to ensure that the donors make good on their promises.

"It will be very good for Lawmakers from the two counties to quickly invite the Ministry of Public works and the company to ascertain the actual cause that has brought the delay in the work. Let our Lawmakers question those responsible" he adds.

The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, during the administration of Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf on February 22, 2016 signed a US \$ 20m loan agreement with the

neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Since the groundbreaking ceremony in 2017, construction works on the road have been going like a snail. Construction works on the road came to a halt in September of 2020 and it is yet to resume.

Former Representative Mulbah believes the intervention of the Lofa and Bong Legislative Caucuses will put the executive's feet to the fire to ensure that the project is completed soon.

By: Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong County

Starts from back page

Family wants ERU

was reported to have been found on Friday, 27 November 2020 with alleged bullet wounds.

The deceased officer had prior to his demise headed the police's elite force Emergency Response Unity (ERU), commanded a company within the police's riot control group Police Support Unit (PSU) and served as Regional Commander for Montserrado and Grand Gedeh County, respectively.

During the opening of the Book of Condolence for the late officer, Mr. John Saye noted Tuesday that the

bereaved family wants nothing to intimidate or serve as hindrance to the court proceedings, thereby seeking the transfer of the murder suspect Mr. Penue from Grand Gedeh Correction Palace to Monrovia or Grand Bassa.

He also appeals to the police authorities to ensure that the late Alexander Saye gets justice "so that he will be happy while in his grave."

"The way in which he died, it's glaring that he was killed and we don't want this to go just like that. We want to ensure that the late Alexander Saye gets justice," he says.

He suggests that after Alexander's funeral, the most important thing that the family wants is to ensure that justice is served.

In special remarks, Police Inspector General Col. Patrick T. Sudue says it is saddening for the police to begin the year this way, but they cannot question God for the loss of one of their senior officers, Alexander Saye.

"His death was very untimely and unexpected! But again who are we to judge our true living God? God knows why and God is in control," he says.

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"And as I sign the book of condolence, I would like to inform the family that you should take heart, take courage in the Lord. The Lord who giveth, is the Lord that taketh," Col. Sudue notes.

Earlier, Deputy Police Inspector General for Operations Col. Marvin Sackor indicated that it is

unfortunate that at the beginning of the year the police will have such an event due to the death of one of their heroes.

Col. Sackor expresses thanks to the family of the late officer, as well as senior and junior officers of the LNP for being a part of the program.

Français

Le président Weah prend un décret pour stimuler la croissance économique

Le président George Weah a pris le décret n° 103 pour stimuler la croissance économique.

Selon la présidence, le décret 103 devrait consolider les gains réalisés en vertu du décret N0 96 et continuer à stimuler la croissance économique libérienne.

La présidence indique que l'économie de ce pays a connu un ralentissement prolongé des activités et une croissance lente qui est due à la baisse continue et persistante des prix et de la demande des produits d'exportations primaires comme l'hévéa, le minerai de fer et le bois.

Le décret présidentiel inspire également de l'adoption effective du TEC de la CEDEAO qui limite la capacité du Libéria à utiliser les droits d'importation comme instrument de politique fiscale pour protéger les industries locales de la concurrence déloyale et du dumping - ce qui a contribué au faible niveau des activités commerciales dans les secteurs industriel, commercial et de la vente au détail.

Compte tenu de la

situation, le décret présidentiel donne pouvoir au commissaire général de l'Autorité fiscale du Libéria, en consultation avec le ministre des Finances et de la Planification du développement, d'établir un calendrier des dérogations, dans le règlement, qui sera examiné chaque année par eux pour l'octroi d'un allègement de l'évaluation des pénalités et des intérêts liés aux taxes foncières, aux droits de douane et aux prélèvements connexes, y compris ceux faisant l'objet

d'un examen administratif, d'un contrôle judiciaire, d'audits ou d'examens en raison de l'un ou des deux manquements à la déclaration ou du non-paiement de ces taxes, droits et les prélèvements à l'échéance.

« Tout contribuable qui refusera de profiter de l'offre d'exonération pendant la période d'une année se verra empêcher de profiter des offres annuelles futures pendant une période de 5

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Mali : Al-Qaïda revendique la mort de deux soldats français

Une branche djihadiste affiliée à Al-Qaïda a revendiqué l'attaque ayant coûté la vie à deux soldats français, le sergent Yvonne Huynh et le brigadier Loïc Risser, tués par un engin explosif au Mali.

Le Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans a revendiqué l'attaque qui a coûté la vie à deux soldats français, le sergent Yvonne Huynh et le brigadier Loïc Risser, de la force « Barkhane », tués le 2 janvier 2021, par un

engin explosif, dans la région de Ménaka, au Mali.

C'est dans un communiqué publié par sa plateforme de propagande Al-Zallaqa que le Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans (GSIM), une alliance djihadiste affiliée à Al-Qaïda a effectué cette revendication, dénonçant le passé colonial français.

Dans ce message, le GSIM confirme avoir « fait exploser un engin explosif » au passage du véhicule de deux soldats de la force anti-djihadiste « Barkhane », dont une femme, « portant le bilan total à 5 morts en moins d'une semaine », indique l'AFP. Leur mort intervient en effet cinq jours après l'attaque ayant coûté la vie à trois soldats français tués dans la zone frontalière avec le Niger et le Burkina Faso.

Tous deux issus du 2ème régiment de hussards de Haguenau, près de

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Éditorial

Le décret n° 103 de Weah et les difficultés économiques du Libéria

À la fin de 2020, le président George Manneh Weah a pris le décret n° 103, qui, selon la présidence, s'inscrit dans des efforts du gouvernement de stimuler la croissance économique, sans expliquer clairement le comment.

Le décret présidentiel n° 103 réduit les impôts ici et là, et effectue une série de dérogations, mais s'arrête avant de détailler comment l'économie libérienne, qui a piqué du nez, connaîtrait un revirement et une croissance qui avait diminué au cours des trois dernières années.

Par exemple, le décret présidentiel donne le pouvoir au commissaire général de l'Autorité fiscale du Libéria, en consultation avec le ministre des Finances et de la Planification du développement, d'établir un calendrier de dérogations, dans le règlement, qui sera révisé chaque année pour l'octroi d'une dispense de cotisation. Des pénalités et des intérêts liés aux taxes foncières, aux droits de douane et aux prélèvements connexes, y compris ceux faisant l'objet d'un examen administratif, d'un contrôle judiciaire, d'audits ou d'examens en raison d'un ou des deux manquements à la production ou au non-paiement de ces taxes, droits et prélèvements à l'échéance.

« Tout contribuable qui ne profitera pas de l'offre pendant la période d'une année se verra refuser toutes exemptions annuelles futures pendant une période de 5 (cinq) ans, période pendant laquelle le contribuable sera soumis à des sanctions, dont la saisie et la confiscation des biens », a dit le décret présidentiel.

Mais comment les citoyens et les hommes d'affaires étrangers peuvent-ils rester fidèles au paiement régulier des impôts lorsque l'économie s'effondre en raison d'une grave pénurie de liquidités et de mauvaises ventes ? Le Président n'a pas abordé la question clé de l'épuisement du compte consolidé du gouvernement auprès de la Banque centrale du Libéria, qui a conduit à emprunter aux banques commerciales sans payer ainsi, ce qui a eu une incidence sur la liquidité des banques.

Nous nous demandons également comment la réduction des taxes sur les billets d'avion de 10% à 7% et l'extension des permis de travail à cinq ans au milieu d'une pandémie mondiale accrue stimuleront la croissance d'une économie fortement basée sur la consommation.

« Frais de recouvrement des permis de travail et de séjour : tous les frais relatifs aux permis de travail et de séjour doivent être payés directement à l'Autorité fiscale du Libéria pour dépôt sur le compte consolidé du Gouvernement libérien. »

La présidence n'a pas non plus abordé le problème critique de la crise de confiance dans le secteur bancaire qui a été caractérisé par la restriction des retraits quotidiens, ce qui a inversément découragé les usagers.

Si l'économie doit être relancée, le rétablissement de la confiance dans le secteur bancaire est essentiel pour générer des liquidités afin d'éviter la spéculation et la fuite des capitaux.

Le respect de la transparence et de la responsabilité est tout aussi important pour avoir une économie prédictive qui peut stimuler les prévisions et la fiabilité. Mais lorsque des milliards de billets de banque locaux sont imprimés et introduits dans le pays, mais jamais mis en circulation sans aucune explication, cela laisse place à l'incertitude et à l'appréhension.

Le président Weah et son équipe de gestion économique devraient élaborer un plan économique réaliste qui donnera aux Libériens l'espoir à court et à long terme de sortir du borbier actuel qui provoque de sérieuse hypertension et mort prématurée chez les pères de famille.

Français

Le président Weahprend

(cinq) ans, période pendant laquelle le contribuable sera soumis à des sanctions, dont la saisie et la confiscation des biens », note le décret présidentiel.

En ce qui concerne les déclarations de licences d'importation, le décret n° 103 ordonne que tous les importateurs commerciaux de marchandises au Libéria soient dispensés de demander des licences d'importation et de déposer des déclarations de licences d'importation, qui ont été administrées par le Ministère du commerce et de l'industrie.

Les importateurs de marchandises doivent cependant continuer à notifier le Ministère du commerce et de l'industrie, par écrit en remplissant et en soumettant le formulaire de notification d'importation (INF), leur intention d'importer, laquelle notification écrite ne sera utilisée par aucune agence gouvernementale, y compris le Ministère du commerce et de l'industrie, pour contourner cette interdiction de demander des licences d'importation et de déposer des déclarations de licences d'importation.

Concernant la protection des fabricants et producteurs nationaux, le président Weah, par le biais du décret, ordonne, à titre de mesure d'atténuation supplémentaire, au ministre des Finances et de la Planification du développement d'imposer, par règlement administratif, une surtaxe sur les marchandises importées dans le pays qui sont en concurrence avec les produits locaux.

En outre, le décret décide de la réduction des taxes sur la vente des billets de 10% à 7%. Selon le décret 103, les services de voyage signifient les tarifs de base en argent ou en nature, payé ou payable pour les services rendus à

toute personne, directement ou indirectement, à l'exclusion des droits, prélèvements, frais et charges payés ou payables sur ou en raison des services.

Toujours selon le décret présidentiel n° 103, les permis de travail sont délivrés pour une période maximale de cinq (5) ans selon le choix du titulaire ou du bénéficiaire et les frais pour les permis de travail sont évalués par le ministre du Travail en consultation avec le ministre des finances et de la planification du développement et doit être publié par règlement.

« Les permis de séjour sont délivrés pour une période maximale de cinq (5) ans selon le choix titulaire ou du bénéficiaire. Les frais de permis de séjour sont évalués par le commissaire du Service de l'immigration du Libéria (LIS) en consultation avec le ministre de la justice et le ministre des finances et de la planification du développement et doit être publié par règlement », déclare le décret.

« Frais de perception des permis de travail et de séjour : Tous les frais de permis de travail et de séjour doivent être payés directement à l'Autorité fiscale du Libéria pour être déposé sur le compte consolidé du gouvernement du Libéria.

En ce qui concerne les frais de location de surface, l'Ordre ordonne que dorénavant, un concessionnaire sera tenu de payer la location de surface annuelle pour un terrain non grevé uniquement.

« Le paiement des redevances de location de surface pour les terrains non grevés sera conforme aux dispositions requises du Code des impôts du Libéria, tel que modifié. Les charges auxquelles il est fait référence ici sont celles résultant de réclamations légales reconnues par le gouvernement du Libéria qui empêchent un entrepreneur d'utiliser une partie des terres concédées par le gouvernement dans le contrat de concession », déclare le décret. - Communiqué de presse.

Mali : Al-Qaida revendique

Strasbourg, à l'Est de la France, le sergent Yvonne Huynh et le brigadier Loïc Risser ont été tués dans la région de Ménaka, au Nord-est du Mali. Entre les deux opérations, Serval et Barkhane, 50 soldats français ont été tués au Sahel depuis 2013.

Sur la question de l'attaque de deux villages de

l'Ouest du Niger près de la frontière avec le Mali et le Burkina Faso, ayant coûté la vie à 100 personnes, samedi, le GSIM clame dégage sa responsabilité, tout en précisant que « cette attaque, quels qu'en soient les auteurs, n'est pas différente des massacres de l'occupant français et de ses milices criminelles ».

COMMENTAIRE

Par Ngozi Okonjo-iweala

COVID-19 : la vaccination doit être mondiale

LAGOS - Moins d'un an après le début de la pandémie de COVID-19, le développement et l'approbation de vaccins sûrs et efficaces constituent un véritable exploit qui laisse entrevoir la fin du tunnel. Ce qui se passera dans les prochains mois, voire les prochaines semaines, tiendra aussi de l'exploit : la mise à disposition sensiblement au même moment des différents vaccins anti-COVID-19 au profit des populations du monde entier - et pas seulement dans les pays riches.

La majorité des citoyens des pays riches pourra se faire vacciner au cours du premier trimestre de cette année, et il en sera rapidement de même pour l'ensemble de la planète. Vitesse et mise à disposition à grande échelle des vaccins sont une nécessité pour mettre fin à la pandémie. Cet effort extraordinaire est possible grâce à un élan sans précédent de solidarité mondiale et de soutien multilatéral à COVAX, le dispositif central d'accès mondial à la vaccination contre le COVID-1, lancé l'année dernière par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé et Gavi, l'Alliance pour les vaccins (que j'ai dirigée).

Au cours de l'année prochaine, COVAX facilitera la mise à disposition de deux milliards de doses de vaccin au profit de la population des 190 pays participants, indépendamment de leur capacité de payer. Il devrait y avoir suffisamment de doses pour protéger tous les travailleurs des secteurs sanitaires et sociaux du monde entier d'ici la mi-2021. Et bien qu'il rencontre une certaine opposition, de plus en plus d'Etats, de décideurs économiques et de fabricants de vaccins participent à COVAX parce qu'ils savent que c'est la seule solution viable pour sortir de la crise du COVID-19 au niveau mondial.

Nous en sommes maintenant à un point critique, et les spéculations sur l'échec de COVAX doivent s'arrêter. Il est temps d'apporter le soutien nécessaire à ce dispositif pour qu'il réussisse pleinement ce pour quoi il a été conçu. Le développement et l'approbation des vaccins ne sont qu'une première étape. Tant que le coronavirus reste transmissible, beaucoup de personnes continueront à être infectés, certaines en mourront, et il n'est pas possible de prévoir le moment du retour à la normale en matière d'échanges, de commerce et de voyage.

Pour mettre fin à cette situation, il ne suffit pas de vacciner quelques personnes dans seulement quelques pays : nous devons protéger tout le monde partout sur la planète. Pourtant, comme on pouvait s'y attendre, à mesure que les vaccins sont distribués, la demande dépasse une offre encore limitée. Dans ces conditions, même si l'ensemble de la planète doit bénéficier d'un vaccin, son attribution au plus offrant prolongera la crise. Or COVAX a été créé

précisément pour éviter le nationalisme vaccinal.

Dans la lutte contre le virus, nous devons éviter de reproduire ce qui s'est passé en 2009, lorsqu'une poignée de pays riches a acheté la majeure partie de l'offre mondiale de vaccin contre la grippe H1N1, laissant le reste du monde démuné. Chaque Etat voulant avant tout protéger ses propres citoyens, il n'est pas surprenant que 35 pays aient déjà conclu des accords bilatéraux avec des laboratoires pharmaceutiques pour s'approvisionner en vaccin anti-COVID.

Ces accords ne constituent pas une solution idéale en terme de politique de vaccination mondiale. Le dispositif COVAX est suffisamment souple pour contourner ce problème dans la mesure où les laboratoires lui offrent le même accès aux vaccins qu'aux Etats. Malheureusement, certains achètent déjà des doses en quantité largement supérieure à leurs besoins, ce qui augmente la pression sur l'offre mondiale lors de cette phase initiale très critique.

Certains de ces Etats ont indiqué qu'ils feront don de leurs commandes excédentaires ; il faudra alors les réorienter aussi rapidement et équitablement que possible. Il faudrait pour cela que les Etats donateurs passent par le Mécanisme de garantie de marché (AMC, Advance Market Commitment) de Gavi/COVAX, créé pour veiller à ce que les vaccins soient mis à la disposition de la population des 92 pays à revenu faible ou moyen de la planète.

Grâce à des accords avec les fabricants de plusieurs des candidats vaccins les plus prometteurs, COVAX a obtenu environ un milliard de doses pour les habitants de ces pays ; mais c'est insuffisant. Pour que le déploiement mondial des vaccins puisse se faire en temps voulu, tous les fabricants doivent s'engager à rendre leurs vaccins disponibles à un prix abordable pour COVAX. Certains fabricants l'ont déjà fait, et les donateurs internationaux ont apporté les 2 milliards de dollars dont le Mécanisme de garantie de marché de COVAX avait besoin pour 2020. Le programme a besoin de 5 milliards de dollars supplémentaires pour 2021, or en décembre, les USA ont alloué 4 milliards de dollars à Gavi dans le cadre de leur deuxième programme de lutte contre le COVID-19.

En février dernier, peu de gens imaginaient que fin 2020, non pas un, mais plusieurs vaccins auront été approuvés et que nous serions en mesure de fournir des doses simultanément aux pays riches et aux pays pauvres. Heureusement la communauté internationale s'est mobilisée et a créé une plateforme précisément pour cela. Tout ce dont COVAX a besoin maintenant, c'est d'un soutien international suffisant pour parvenir à son objectif.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Bong county: Women Boycotted the Referendum to Teach Government a Lesson

By: Joseph Titus Yekeryan

Insufficient voter education left many Liberians hesitant to make a “yes” or “no” decision in the national referendum vote organized on December 8, 2020.

Approximately two thirds of registered voters voting in the referendum cast an invalid ballot, according to official data published by the National Elections Commission (NEC).

“Before the election, we were calling on the big-big people to [change the] time for the referendum but they never listened to us and I can clearly say that they forced it on us. I just left the entire

Yarkpawolo said the women will continue to boycott elections as long as the government fails to properly teach voters about the referendum and what it means.

The women voters, many of whom have told journalists that they did not touch the referendum ballot paper, cited little or no awareness as part of the reason why they felt hesitant and to make a choice in the referendum and instead folded the ballot paper and placed it in the ballot box unmarked.

Based on current published results from the NEC, only about 30.5% of the registered voters cast their referendum ballot. In Bong county, about two thirds of the referendum ballots were

constitution, so you don’t just jump up and start to do your own thing,” Tokpah said.

Nancy Jimmy, a certified nurse in Bong county wants the government to re-organize the National Referendum to enable citizens’ full participation.

“All I can say is that NEC needs to re-conduct the referendum. I am saying that because decision about the country needs the participation of everyone, and not just a few people since provisional results have already made us to understand that there were too many invalid votes, I think it will be important for us to go back the polls and vote again.”

“When that is done, everyone will feel being part of the constitutional decision and no one will feel left out of the process,” nurse Jimmy said.

According to Article 91 of the Constitution states that the constitution amendments must be validated by “two-thirds of the registered voters, voting in a referendum conducted by the Elections Commission not sooner than one year after the action of the Legislature.”

In this case, two thirds of the 30.5% voters that cast a ballot needed to have marked “yes” in order to validate a proposition.

Voters decided on eight propositions, seeking amendments to Article 28 on dual citizenship, Article 45 to reduce the senators’ tenure from nine to seven year, and Article 48 to reduce the tenures of members of the House of Representatives from six to five years.

Moreover, the referendum seeks to amend Article 50 to reduce the tenures of the President and Vice President from six to five years, and to amend Article 83 (a) to change the date of the general elections from the second Tuesday in October to that same Tuesday in November.

Cllr. Koffa tips

Cont’d from page 6

of Judiciary -- a committee which cut across all statutory and standing committees of the House of Representatives; and which role is to oversee the scrutiny of bills and judicially advice the House of Representatives on executing its power, as prescribed in Article 34 of the 1986 Constitution, is poised and qualified to become Deputy Speaker.

Rep. Cllr. Koffa brings to his quest for Deputy Speaker unique skill set of experience and competence that would greatly be an advantage and an asset into the upper echelon of the house to compliment the leadership so as to steer the acceleration of legislative rebranding which was proffered at the onset of the 54th.

According to our reporter, he is in consultation as to whether he should throw his hat in the race or back-off. Rep. Koffa was one of three prominent members of the House of Representatives who participated in the 74th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Their selection came amid the pressure on Liberia on the rule of law and justice and women empowerment.

The establishment of War and Economic Crime Courts and the amendment of

constitution against racism are already before the House of Representatives for consideration.

The Judiciary Committee Chairman, Rep. Cllr. Koffa, who is also the proponent of the proposed amendment to change the negro-only citizenship clause in the 1986 constitution of Liberia, attended forums on Confronting Hate & Protecting Rights – UN Initiatives to Promote Inclusion and Ensure Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Religion or Belief; Tax Inspectors Without Borders Panel Discussion: “Four Years & Half a Billion Dollars Later...”; High Level Meeting on Mali and the Sahel and attend the Opening/General Debate of the Seventy-fourth Session of the UNGA.

However, the complete line-up of lawmakers with interest for the second highest office in the House are: Lofa County District #3 Representative Clarence Massaquoi; Education Chairman, Rep. Johnson Gwaikolo of Nimba County District #9; Commerce Committee chairman Rep. Samuel Kogar (Nimba County District #5); Rep. Moima Briggs-Mensah of Bong County District #6 and Rep. Richard Koon of Montserrado County District #12, respectively. -Edited by Othello B. Garblah



Nayquita Yarkpawolo, the Head of the Rural Women United. Photo Credit: Joseph Titus Yekeryan

[ballot] paper like that, and I put it in the [ballot] box because I don’t know what was on it,” said Nayquita Yarkpawolo Tokpah, the President of the Rural Women United for Improved Businesses in Bong county.

Yarkpawolo said that most of her colleagues from the Gbarnga central market, in Bong county, never marked the referendum ballot paper, which she believes will be a lesson for the government to pay attention next time when voters ask to know about what they are voting on.

“We planned this as a group, we only went to vote for our [Senate] candidates but never marked any of those referendum ballots.”

invalid.

Well before the election date, voters across the country expressed concerns that they have not been educated on how to vote in the referendum.

Tenneh W. Tokpah, a visually impaired widow, said that since she asked her son to explain to her what the referendum was and what was she supposed to do, but he could not help either.

“Because of that, when I entered the voting hall, since he too did not know about it, I only told him to vote for my candidate and leave the rest of the papers unmarked.”

“I think those who are responsible need to make sure that civic and voter education can be done before this kind of elections. This is about the

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education and post-harvest handling practices, and advocacy visitation to the 15 political subdivisions of the country.

Meanwhile, research information provided by the group indicates further that Cashew nuts are widely grown in Brazil, India, and Vietnam

PISOTA dialogues with

and it contains Vitamin C, Vitamin B 1 (thiamin), Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), Vitamin B3 (niacin), Vitamin B6, Folate, Vitamin E (alpha-tocopherol) and vitamin K (phylloquinone).

It describes Cashew Nuts as a good source of magnesium, which is vital for the healthy

development of bones, muscles, tissues, and organs of the body, and help to maintain healthy blood pressure, sustain the immune system, maintain nerve function, and keep the bones strong. --Edited by Winston W. Parley

Beach and water

Cont’d from page 6

week, the government of Liberia through the Ministry of Youth and Sports began the payment of salaries owed to young people working with the Liberia beach and waterway project.

Several employees on the project received one and two months’ salary on Tuesday December 29, 2020 respectively.

Meanwhile people affected by sea erosion from West Point were also seen protesting at MFDP in demand of the money they claimed were promised them by President Weah.

Speaking to this paper the head of the group, Daniel S. Grant said on the 19 of June 2020, the sea erosion made 230 homeless.

He explained that the President heard about the incident and sent the folks

from the National Disaster Management to do a survey of the and after which he later promised to give the victims mattresses, food and 230 United States Dollars to start off with.

He said everyone received the food and mattresses but when it came to the money, only 51 persons received.

He claimed that every time try to engage the National Disaster Management office, they folks there usually refer them to Minister Tweah, because he is yet to disburse the balance money to them.

Grant added that since the incident, they have been seeking shelters and are now worried that they would have nowhere to stay since schools have reopened.

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Dangerous for your health

The former Liberia Medicines and Health Regulatory Authority (LMHRA) Managing Director and one of Liberia's best Pharmacists, Dr. David Sumo warned that the proliferation of the street selling of energy drinks needs to be regulated.

"These days, our streets are flooded with the increasing wave of unregulated street selling of caffeinated energy drinks, young boys and girls are usually seen between moving vehicles and the sidewalks with varieties of brands of Energy Drinks for sale," Dr. Sumo, Pharmacist said.

According to Dr. Sumo, it is a deadly potential weapon that if left to thrive in the population unregulated as it currently is, there will be a

LMHRA is known for his stance against fake, counterfeit and expired medical drugs and other health products on the Liberian market.

Dr. Sumo noted that research has found that the health risks associated with energy drink consumption are primarily related to their caffeine content.

Speaking on some of the potential risks associated with energy drinks consumption, Pharmacist Sumo said caffeine overdose lead to a number of symptoms, including palpitations, high blood pressure, nausea and vomiting, convulsions and, in some cases, even death.

The former LMHRA Boss pointed out that perhaps this is one of the contributing factors to the increase cases of stroke among young people in Liberia

consumption of the combination of the substances in energy drinks is unknown but could be harmful.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sumo has called on the authorities responsible to curtail this situation like the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Health and others to help create a prevention awareness to abolish or stop young people or others to avoid the use of mixing energy drinks with alcohol.

He said the increase practice of mixing energy drinks with alcohol as often seen in drinking spots around Monrovia, also carries risks and young people specifically are urged to stop.

Dr. Sumo disclosed that research shows that the consumption of high amounts of caffeine (as found in energy drinks) reduces drowsiness without diminishing the effects of alcohol, resulting in "wide awake drunkenness."

"Therefore, there is the risk that people will engage in risky and dangerous behaviour, such as violence or sexual assault, as the mix of alcohol and caffeine can lead to a loss of inhibition," he said.

Pharmacist David Sumo earned a PhD in pharmacy and medicine and he is the former Managing Director of the Liberia Medicine and Health Regulatory Authority (LMHRA) and also a medical practitioner for over many years.

According to Dr. Sumo, there is a need for policy development and enforcement to regulate and control the sale and advertisement of energy drinks in Liberia.

Speaking from a medical point of view on his official Facebook page, Sumo suggested the following policies that could be of great help to the government and its people; noting that an evidence-based, upper limit for the amount of caffeine allowed in a single serving of any drink.

He said there should be restrictions in sales of energy drinks to children, adolescents' and proper education provided to healthcare providers to recognize caffeine intoxication, withdrawal and dependence.

PYJ dresses in military uniform?

When Senator Prince Yormie Johnson, also leader of the disbanded Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia [a dreaded rebel group that participated in the 14 years Liberian Civil War] reportedly attires in military outfits and tours major towns in Nimba County in a campaign-style, it is cause for concern, as alarms by Representative Larry Younquoi of Nimba County electoral district#8.

Representative Younquoi, a fierce critic of Senator Johnson, told Truth Breakfast Show hosted by Truth Fm 96.1 on Tuesday, January 5, 2021

process", he added. Through the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process, thousands of fighters and militias were disarmed and demobilized under supervision of the United Nations.

But Rep. Younquoi noted that PYJ was taken to out of Liberia by ECOMOG in the 90s as a mere refugee after he surrendered to the regional force.

According to him, he has embarked on a mission to demystify Sen. PYJ who continues to portray himself to the Nimba people as a deity.

Younquoi describes Sen. Johnson as unpredictable and inconsistent in his public



continue loss of precious lives of very important members of the society.

On his official Facebook page, Dr. Sumo revealed that some, if not most of these energy drinks are usually near to expire or have already expired before finding their way to the open market at very low cost.

Dr. Sumo, who has been critical when it comes to fighting fake, expired, or counterfeit drugs or drinks and other harmful substances on the Liberian market, disclosed that the daily consumption of caffeine concentrated caned-drinks (Energy Drink) is on the rise.

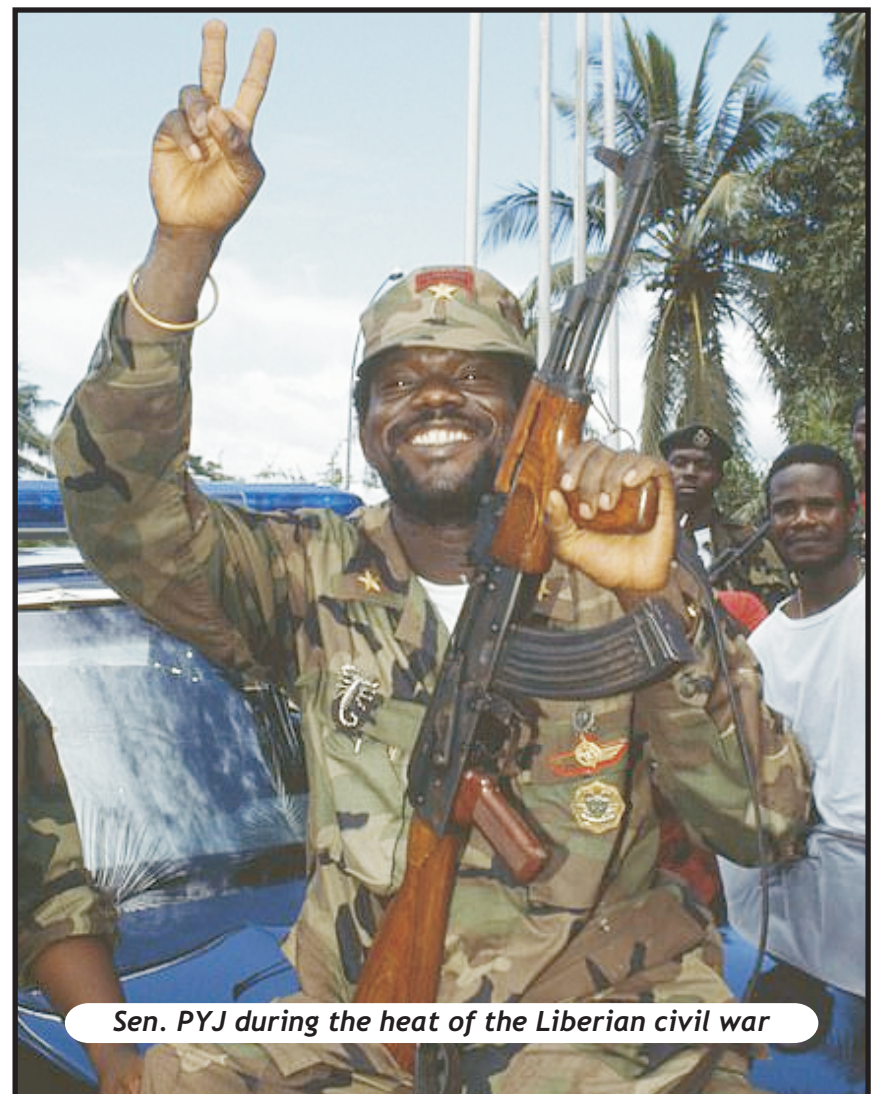
"People of various ages, young and old (some with pre-existing conditions including hypertension and diabetes) are seen consuming anywhere between two to three servings of these dangerous drinks daily as a means of replacing lost energy," Pharmacist Sumo averred.

Dr. David Sumo, a pharmacist and former Managing Director of the

now. He stressed that one of the risks associated with huge consumption of energy drinks could be a typetwo diabetes; as high consumption of caffeine reduces insulin sensitivity; adding that this is another growing health problem in Liberia as of now.

The former LMHRA Managing Director said the danger associated with the huge consumption of expired energy drinks could lead to late miscarriages, low birth-weight and stillbirths in pregnant women; adding that this could also be caused by a call for cushion among young underprivileged women of child bearing ages.

Research has shown that energy drinks also contain a variety of other ingredients, such as guarana, and the effect of long-term regular



Sen. PYJ during the heat of the Liberian civil war

that Sen. Johnson recently dressed in full military outfits in Nimba and toured Yekepa, Gborplay, and Buutuo, among other major towns in the county that were invaded by rebels during the onset of the Liberian Civil War on December 24, 1989.

Sen. Johnson has neither denied nor confirmed the allegation by the Nimba district#8 lawmaker.

Younquoi also reminds that Johnson, Field Marshall of the rebels INPFL was never demobilized after the cessation of hostilities, as leader of one of the fiercest Liberian rebel groups. "I was a member of the disarmament

utterances, noting that at one point he (Johnson) would criticize President George Manneh Weah for bad governance, but the next moment, lavishes praises on the President.

Recently, he disclosed that Senator Prince Johnson is the ex-warlord who killed more Nimbaians than any other warring faction leaders during the 14 years Liberian Civil War, but the people still awarded him with two 9-year terms (18 years) at the Liberian Senate, besides unsuccessfully voting twice for the presidency.

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Family wants ERU officer's case transferred to Monrovia



The late police officer Alexander Saye

By Winston W. Parley

In its quest for non-political or religious interferences with the judicial proceedings surrounding the death of senior police officer Alexander Saye, his family has appealed to Liberian authorities to transfer the

case from Grand Gedeh County to either Montserrado or Grand Bassa to avoid possible intimidation or hindrance in the proceedings.

Mr. John Saye, one of the bereaved said the family wants a level playing field in the trial of the case ahead of the signing of the Book of Condolence

opened by the Liberia National Police (LNP) at its headquarters Tuesday, 5 January for the late Deputy Commissioner of Police Alexander Saye.

"And also we want to say that where the suspect is serving his [pretrial detention] at the Grand Gedeh Correction Palace, uh, during the term of court we are appealing that the venue be changed from Grand Gedeh County to Montserrado or Grand Bassa maybe because of other political interference and religious interference," he says.

Following the death of Officer Saye, it was reported in mid-December 2020 that the police in Grand Gedeh County had arrested and charged the National Security Agency (NSA) regional commander for Grand Gedeh County Mr. Sampson Penue for allegedly killing Officer Saye.

Officer Saye's lifeless body

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11

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