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Continental News

Senegal opposition leader Sonko charged with rape

A judge in Senegal has charged opposition leader Ousmane Sonko with rape and released him on bail, after days of deadly protests sparked by his arrest last week.

Mr Sonko, 46, is accused of assaulting a woman who worked in a beauty salon.

He says the case is politically motivated to stop him running again in elections in 2024.

Demonstrators scuffled with security forces outside court in the capital, Dakar, before Monday's hearing.

Police have deployed armoured cars in the city in the wake of several days of clashes in which at least eight people were killed, including a teenager in the southern town of Diaobé - the most serious violence Senegal has seen for several years.

Mr Sonko is popular among young Senegalese, and an opposition collective known as the Movement for the Defence of Democracy has called for three days of mass protests, starting on Monday. Schools in the capital

have also been ordered to close for a week following the unrest. On Sunday a top Senegalese official whose job is to settle conflicts, Alioune Badara Cissé, said the authorities "need to pause and speak with our youth" and warned that "we are on the verge of an apocalypse". Mr Sonko's arrest is seen as a "lightning rod for much broader

discontent and frustrations," Francois Rouget of security consultancy Control Risks told the BBC's Newsday programme.

"These [protests] come at a difficult economic time - there are lots of frustrations coming from curfews that have been imposed to tackle coronavirus, so we are seeing a lot of convergences in

grievances," he said. Much of Mr Sonko's support comes from the large group of young Senegalese who feel disillusioned about their prospect of finding work.

A lot of the anger is also directed at President Macky Sall, who is being accused of using the judiciary for his political aims.

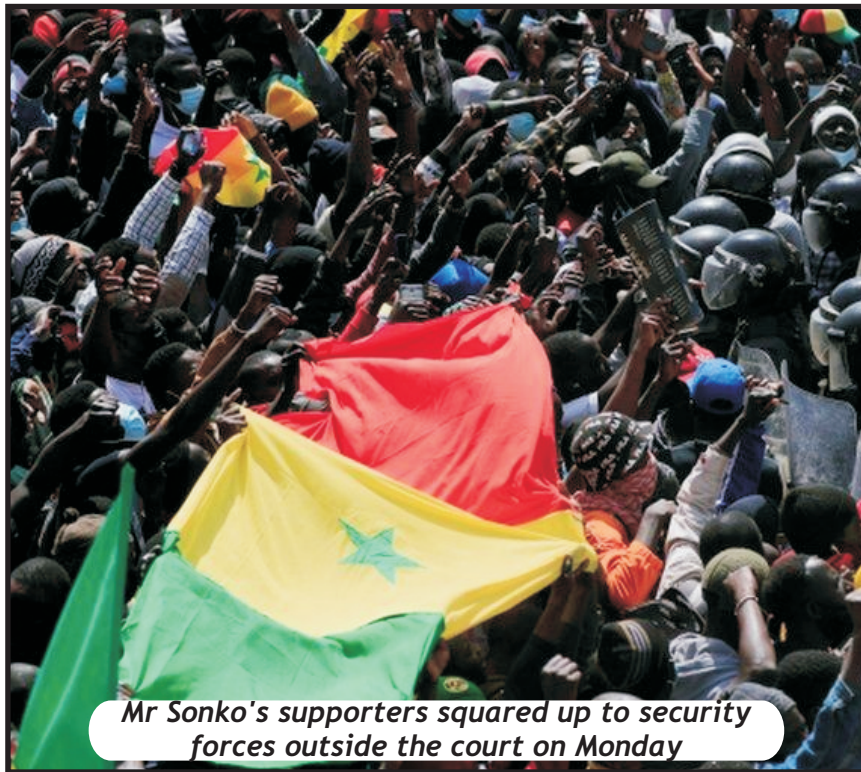
Two other opposition leaders were excluded from the 2019 election after convictions which they say were politically motivated. Mr Sonko is currently the country's only major opposition leader.

Mr Sonko was accused of rape in February. He was arrested on Wednesday as he was on his way to court,

accompanied by a group of supporters, on charges of disrupting public order when he refused to change his route. A 46-year-old former tax inspector, he formed his political party and contested the 2019 presidential election where he came third with 15.7% of the vote.

He was fired from the civil service in 2016 after Mr Sonko made allegations of tax anomalies against the president's brother, Aliou Sall.

His opponents dismiss him as a demagogue and agitator but he is popular with young people for his pan-African rhetoric and condemnation of France's continued economic role in Senegal. BBC



Mr Sonko's supporters squared up to security forces outside the court on Monday

Equatorial Guinea blast deaths rise to 31

A series of explosions on Sunday in Equatorial Guinea is now known to have killed 31 people, officials say. The number of those injured rose to 600. The blasts hit a military base in the country's main city, Bata. Officials blame badly stored dynamite along with stubble burning by nearby farmers.

Almost all buildings and homes in the city suffered "huge damage", President Teodoro Obiang Nguema said.

Three young children have been rescued as survivors scour the rubble.

They were taken to hospital, state TV said.

There are fears the death toll could rise further as some victims may still be trapped. In a

statement, President Obiang Nguema said the blasts had been caused "by the negligence of a unit charged with the care and protection of stores of dynamite and explosives" at the Nkoantoma military base.

He said the base "caught fire due to neighbouring farmers clearing farming land by setting it alight, leading to the explosion". The president called for international aid.

In a series of tweets, the health ministry called for volunteer health workers to go to Bata Regional Hospital and for urgent blood donations. The ministry said mental health teams were also being deployed to help victims. Some hospitals have been overwhelmed by the number of patients admitted, state TV reported. It broadcast images of wounded people lying on the floor of a crowded hospital.

Video of the aftermath of the explosions showed a chaotic scene with distressed people fleeing as smoke drifted over the area. One resident told AFP news agency: "We haven't slept all night. The houses were

Deadly fire at migrant detention centre in Yemen

Many people are feared dead after a fire at a migrant detention centre in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, on Sunday.

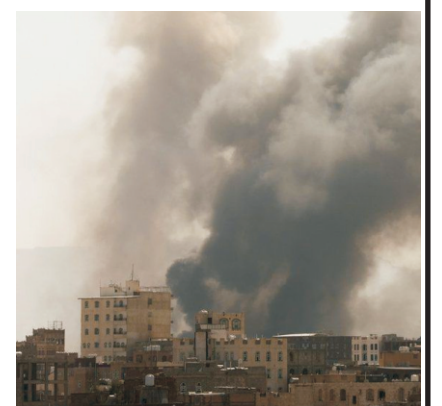
The International Organization for Migration (IOM) confirmed eight deaths, but officials at the UN agency said as many 30 might have been killed.

It is not known what caused the blaze at the facility, which was holding hundreds of mostly Ethiopian migrants. But an air strike by a Saudi-led coalition fighting the rebel Houthi movement damaged buildings nearby.

The coalition carried out the strikes on Sanaa as the Houthis launched drones and ballistic missiles at cities and oil installations in Saudi Arabia.

Yemen has been devastated by a conflict that escalated in 2015, when the Iran-aligned Houthis seized control of large parts of the country and the Saudi-led coalition launched an operation to restore the government's rule.

The UN says the war has caused created the world's



worst humanitarian crisis and caused an estimated 233,000 deaths, including 131,000 from indirect causes such as lack of food, health services and infrastructure. IOM regional director Carmela Godeu said in a tweet that both migrants and guards were among those who died in Sunday's fire.

The migration group's staff were offering emergency care to more than 170 injured people, of whom at least 90 were in serious condition.

"The cause of the fire incident in the holding facility remains unclear," Ms Godeu added. "But this is just one of the many dangers that migrants have faced during the past six years of the crisis in Yemen." BBC



The blasts scattered debris across a wide area

burning all night long and we kept hearing small explosions."

Another described how his uncle had found the burned bodies of five members of his family. The only opposition party, the CPDS, described the blasts as "the greatest humanitarian catastrophe in

the history of Equatorial Guinea" and called on Spain, France and the United States to send aid, including rescue teams, medical staff and medicines. The Spanish embassy said its nationals should remain at home and issued a series of emergency numbers. BBC

EDITORIAL

Welcoming the 96,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses

HEALTH AUTHORITIES IN Monrovia joined by senior officials of the Government of Liberia and foreign diplomats received the first consignment of 96,000 doses of the coronavirus vaccine at the Roberts International Airport in Margibi County on Friday, March 5, 2021.

ACCORDING TO THE Ministry of Health, the consignment is the first of a total of 384,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses expected in the country and that formal vaccination commences within two weeks, starting with health care workers, members of the executive, the Legislature, the Judiciary branches of government, followed by the Military and para-military, marketers and the general population.

UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR to Liberia Michael A. McCarthy, speaking at the RIA Friday, congratulated the Government of Liberia for its continued commitment to reducing transmission and curbing the spread of COVID-19 both in the country and in the region.

HOWEVER, AMBASSADOR MCCARTHY warned that the work does not stop here, hoping that Liberians will take the opportunity to receive safe and effective vaccines, if offered.

AND THIS IS WHERE our concern lies: Effective and impartial administration of the vaccine doses to protect the population. We do not want this exercise to be conducted the “Liberian way” where personal interest overrides the general good.

WE RECALL VIVIDLY during the peak of the Coronavirus in 2019 when front-liners such as doctors, nurses, midwives and other health workers were left unprotected due to lack of PPEs despite emergency funds provided by donors.

BUREAUCRATIC BOTTLENECKS AND political influence suffocated a process that should have been professionally handled thus, leading to the deaths of several doctors and nurses.

THIS TIME AROUND, we hope that things would be done differently, so that areas and people that are most in need, including the elderly would get preference.

AUTHORITIES AT THE Ministry of Health should be able to advise the President on the way to proceed, because COVID-19 vaccine doses are intended to stabilize the entire population, beginning with most-at-risk persons such as health workers, security forces manning our borders and residents in congested communities.

AS AMBASSADOR MCCARTHY cautioned, the work does not stop at receiving the doses of vaccine. No, they are not to be stacked in warehouses and in private clinics for personal gains while the population remains vulnerable. Rather, we should endeavor to reach the most needed in order to make impact.

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+231-775407211 Managing Editor: Othello B. Garblah; Editor-In-Chief: Jonathan

COMMENTARY

By Alassane Ouattara

A Test for Ivory Coast's Democracy

YAMOUSSOUKRO - When Europeans or Americans ask about Ivory Coast, we locals may sound a little bit like we are quoting Charles Dickens. We have, after all, lived through the best and the worst of times. This week's parliamentary election will play a major role in determining which we will face in the coming years.

After independence from France in 1960, the best of times came to Ivory Coast. In a difficult regional environment, our country was a beacon of progress, stability, and prosperity, with surging exports fueling steady economic growth. In 1981, Ivory Coast's annual per capita GNP was among the highest in Africa.

But, in the late 1980s, commodity prices collapsed, decimating Ivory Coast's export income and ushering in the worst of times. The ensuing decades were marred by corruption, decay, and two bouts of civil war.

Over the last decade, however, Ivory Coast has been on the road to recovery. Per capita GDP has doubled over the last eight years, and grew by nearly 2% in 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2014, 2015, and 2019, the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index recognized Ivory Coast as one of the ten countries that had made the most progress on reform.

But this progress is not unassailable. In fact, the upcoming election will amount to a critical test for Ivory Coast's democracy.

The election process has often posed a significant challenge for our country. In the decades after independence, our politics were heavily dominated by one party, and political discussions were severely limited, taking place largely behind closed doors. In that context, elections were viewed more as a ritual than as a true expression of democratic deliberation and popular consent.

Politics began to open up in the 1990s. But Ivory Coast's institutions did not embrace the growing diversity of opinion. Instead, identity politics took root, fueling intolerance, division, and ultimately violence.

We are determined not to let that happen again. That is why my government has worked hard to build and consolidate a vibrant democracy, underpinned by the rule of law. It is also why, following the unexpected death of Prime Minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly - my party's presidential candidate - last July, I decided to delay my planned retirement and run for another term.

Public trust in politicians - essential to individual freedom and collective development - depends on free, fair, and transparent elections. So, my government

has taken a number of steps to bolster public confidence in the election process.

Heading into the March 6 vote, Ivory Coast boasts a truly independent electoral commission that is not controlled or directed by any authority, including me. Its voting and vote-counting processes are technically secure, and a mechanism for the peaceful resolution of any potential disputes is in place. Dozens of independent organizations will be on the ground to monitor the voting and verify the count.

To support this effort, my government has also pursued security-sector reform, so that Ivorian forces are operating according to the highest international standards. Our security services understand that their purpose is to safeguard the population, protect human rights, uphold the rule of law, and fight against extremists.

As was true during last year's presidential election, the pandemic poses particular logistical and health challenges. But we have worked to mitigate them. In Ivory Coast, COVID-19 infection rates are modest, and the mortality rate, at 0.6%, is among the lowest in Africa. My government has made available all necessary resources to promote the health and safety of voters and polling staff throughout the election process.

But such technical and institutional preparations would mean little without a level playing field on which political parties can compete. And here, too, we have made tremendous progress: for the first time in over a decade, all major political parties are actively participating in the campaign.

Even as Ivory Coast's political parties compete with one another, they share a commitment to a free, fair, and peaceful election that respects the rule of law and due process. They understand that, despite their differences, they must unite around our country's fundamental values. In this spirit, citizens must also remember that extremists and opportunists have no place in a healthy democracy.

Of course, I fully support the candidates of my party, the Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace, who I believe will win many seats. But, ultimately, that is up to the will of the people. In any case, democracy is not a zero-sum game, and a strong opposition within a diverse parliament will challenge the government constantly to improve.

Too often, the real losers in Ivory Coast's elections have been ordinary Ivorians. We now have an opportunity to leave our democratic lapses in the past, and lay strong foundations upon which the next generation of Ivorian leaders can build. The future is theirs, and it is bright.



REPUBLIC LIBERIA
THE FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

P. O. BOX 3010
Whein Town, Mount Barclay
Monrovia, Liberia

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) as an Implementing Agency received financial support from African Development Bank (AfDB) under the Fund for Africa Private Sector Assistance (FAPA) to promote the private sector by scaling up the participation of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in the secondary wood processing industry to promote inclusive green growth, employment and economic diversification in the Republic of Liberia.

The FDA-AfDB-FAPA Project Implantation Unit and Joint Technical Committee TCO and Project is to conduct Mid-Term Progress Review workshop with stakeholders to review and discuss progress reports and deliverables on the FDA-AfDB-FAPA Project activities. The forthcoming Mid-Term progress review will take a broad synopsis of all the capacity building trainings that were conducted for Seven (7) weeks at BWI and also, the training in Chainsaw milling Operations and tree identification, as well as, log and timber scaling techniques in line with the Two modules conducted at Forestry Training Institute (F.T.I). In addition to other consultancies and activities to be rolled out by the FAPA PIU. The Workshop is scheduled to take place at the Corina Hotel, Snkor, Monrovia, Liberia and to be held on March 30 and 31, 2021. The Cooperation of all stake holders' members for this workshop is highly appreciated.

Fund for Africa Private Sector Assistance (FAPA) Project
Project Coordinator
Forestry Development Authority
Whein Town, Bernard Farm



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The Cooperation of all stake holders' members for this workshop is highly appreciated.

Fund for Africa Private Sector Assistance (FAPA) Project
Project Coordinator
Forestry Development Authority
Whein Town, Bernard Farm

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Pres. Weah reopens LMTI

By Bridgett Milton

President George Manneh Weah has reopened Liberia Maritime Training Institute (LMTI) in Marshall City, Margibi County after months of closure due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Making remarks Friday, 5

as Commissioner General.

At the same time, President Weah calls on the cadets to exert all efforts in taking their lessons serious.

He urges that they should acknowledge that their service out there upon graduation won't just bring pride to themselves or their parents and loved ones,

Mr. Weah adds that education and professional skills provided at LMTI are essential to developing a pool of national workforce.

President Weah says he is glad to participate in the reopening ceremony of the institute, and expresses satisfaction with the structural outlook of the institute compared to what he saw the last time when he was at the facility.

For his part, the Commissioner General of Maritime Lenn Eugene Nagbe says the reopening of the institution is a breakthrough for Liberia Maritime sector.

He explains that since 1984 when Liberia launched this program, it has been going from strength to strength.

Nagbe adds that Liberia Maritime has been delisted from the coast guard blacklist, stating, "Liberia is no more blacklisted."

Nagbe maintains that at the end of this month, the authority will be moving to its new corporate headquarters.

According to him, work is speedily ongoing to ensure that the timetable is met.

He says since the establishment of LMA in 1948, it will be the first time the entity will be moving in its own building.--Edited by Winston W. Parley



March at the reopening of LMTI, President Weah praised the tremendous work the institution is doing and congratulated Mr. Eugene Lenn Nagbe, for the wonderful transformations at the Liberia Maritime Authority since he took over

but to Liberia and the world at large.

According to President Weah, the institute stands as the first level of exposure for Liberians interested in maritime studies, as it brings the country closer to becoming a maritime nation second to none.

Ambassador McCarthy signs Greening Diplomacy Initiative Pledge

At World Wildlife Day celebrated March 3, 2021, United States Ambassador Michael McCarthy signed the Greening Diplomacy Initiative pledge to commit to sustainability, energy efficiency, and conservation. Members of the Embassy's Green Team joined the Ambassador to show their support.

According to the Embassy of the United States here, by signing the Greening Diplomacy Initiative pledge, Ambassador McCarthy promises to enhance the energy security and environmental performance of the U.S. Embassy Monrovia and its facilities. He also pledged to engage the Liberian government and local communities on sustainability by sharing best practices.

The release says World Wildlife Day was established in 2013 by the United Nations



General Assembly. It celebrates the signing of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in 1973. The 2021 theme is "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet" to highlight the

central role of forests, forest species, and ecosystems services in sustaining the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people globally.

It says the United States is proud to partner with Liberians to improve

Rise up from the past

-Clergyman tells Liberians

By Lewis S. Teh

The General overseer of the Congregation of God Church, Rev. Patrick Appleton says it's about time Liberia rises from the spirit of the past and rethinks for the future.

"If Liberia must get on the right trajectory, then it's time to rise up from the past and prepare for the future that is ahead", he said.

Preaching during official worship service held in the edifice of the church in New Kru Town, Bushord Island, Rev.

14, 1979 Rice Riot was the work of few greedy politicians, something he said, didn't augur well for the country.

He said Liberians should never think that such incident will occur again, lamenting that the demonstration left a terrible experience and mark on the country, so citizens were still living with fear that such might reoccur every time season of lent comes to the church, particularly around April.

The Rice Riot was organized by the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), headed by the late political activist Gabriel



Rev. Patrick Appleton

Appleton said the cup of the past can only pass over Liberia if the nation and the church put their houses in order.

Speaking on the theme: Prayer is the possibility with text from Matthew 26:36-41, he said only prayers will remove the cup that is hanging over Liberia.

He did not detail what type of cup but noted the spirit of the past continues to haunt Liberians to the extent they are beginning to think the country will return to the days of bloodshed.

According to Rev. Appleton, the bloodshed from the April

Baccus Matthews against the backdrop of a proposed increase in the price of a 100lb bag of rice from \$22 to \$26.

According to official records, the intent of the increase was to buttress Liberian farmers' efforts to maximize production and economic viability for the nation's staple food producers.

Since that fateful day, some political activists and observers of political events in Liberia have described the event as the most turbulent in the annals of Liberian history.--Editing by Jonathan Browne

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conservation of Liberia's natural resources. USAID, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. State Department are supporting establishment of new National Parks, improved forest management, conservation education,

counter wildlife trafficking, and sustainable economic development. These efforts have helped protect the rare, endangered, and undiscovered wildlife that inhabits Liberia's forests, according to the Embassy of the United States. - Press release

SPECIAL

FEATURE

Reaching the unreachable

-Weah puts spotlight on Betu and other rural communities

Weah in Gbetu

By Othello B. Garblah

As inks get dry on reports from President George Manneh Weah's six-county tour, analysts have concurrently begun to put their final word on what they consider their takeaways, negative or positive, from the trip. It is true the news media have done some great work covering and reporting every step of the way; reporting on the movement of the presidential caravan and their interactions with the rural hosts. The reception of the people was incredibly massive everywhere and the President did not leave conditions of the people as they were upon arrival; he took decisions, made presentations that instantly changed situations or will change the people's conditions in the not too distant future. Celebrations broke out amongst the people who not inundate the president with various appeals that would lift them up but also with gifts to appreciate a president for showing them much care and love.

Amid the euphoria of celebrations and exchange of good tidings between the hosts and the guests, there were extraordinary exploits that characterized President Weah's 18-day visit to Bong and Grand Kru counties, through Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland which newsmen's cameras and microphones grossed over and rarely captured. After all, some people think a president's visit to the hinterland is a common practice; that it is a time for political leaders who benefit from the suffrage of the masses to reciprocate with visits and face-to-face meetings and the exchange of dry-goods gifts. Thus, as the version of President Weah's

countryside visit is being discussed, it will be not a surprise that some pundits would mistake it as such, and dismiss it in a hurry.

But it would be a huge mistake to do so. First, analysts must get the distinction. Rarely had any Liberian president spent over two weeks in a single outing into the countryside, and covered six counties in a chunk spreading over more than half a month. Second, most presidential visits if not all had been about the provincial capitals as prime targets, as the prime host and the lodging

place. And third, and most importantly, not many presidents or say no president in the past had ever veered from the primary route of their upcountry tour into the jungles of the jungles, to spend time with the remotest of the remotest communities, and to see and interact with the poorest and most neglected of Liberians.

Mr. Weah, on his first visit to the hinterland did. He did so not in a rush. He slept in provincial capital cities as well as in outlying towns and hamlets. He was never in a haste, nor did he do so for the mere pomp of a presidential visit. For him, the visit to some of Liberia's most marginalized and forgotten communities, amongst them Betu in Grand Kru and Gbi and Duru in Nimba County, was precipitated by a thoroughly thought-through motive and plan anchored in liberation of a suffering and neglected people from squalor and disconnecting them with the larger society.

Thus, as he and his caravan combed the countryside, aware of pervasive socioeconomic challenges amongst the people, he however had in mind already that all communities were not the same in terms of access to minimal modern standards of life, in terms of public and private support and in terms of direct relationship with central government. He had researched and found that there were towns and villages and tribespeople that are lands unto themselves, woefully cut off and isolated from the rest of Liberia; communities and people never heard of by the outside world. And as he arrived in the various counties and interact with their locals, he was not oblivious of his original plan to trace, open up such communities and connect them with the rest of the country.

Such thoughtfulness and plans took the President to Gbi&Duru in Nimba, and later Betu in Grand Kru. These are communities that even

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7



Reaching the unreachable



local administrations and ordinary citizens in those counties admitted have long been cut off, given little or no attention and left alone to nurse their own wounds of exclusion.

What is true also is that most Liberian rural communities, Gbi/Duru and Betu no exemption, however remote, far-flung and ignored are not just parched, dry and empty lands lacking resources that can be used for their transformation and the transformation of the larger Liberian nation. Gbi&Duru, for instance, are exceptionally endowed with arable soil for year-round agriculture activities; its belly carries immeasurable quantum of minerals and valuable species of timbers that dot the landscape like bats on turfs of cotton tree.

There also is Betu, another faraway town, carrying every potential for tourism, eloquently heralding Liberia's beauty in no uncertain term that nothing else does better. Several kilometers away from Sasstown, there lies Betu River, after which the town is named, weaving (wrapping itself) around the Atlantic Ocean in spectacular ecstasy as beaches of glittering sands line up in witness of God's supreme artistic prowess.

The question is, how come a small country like Liberia, small in terms of its population and geographic size, has existed for 174 years and

yet there are still corners and hamlets and citizens effectively cut off from the rest of the country—so cut off that many locals as old as 20 to 25 years have never seen motor cars, let alone have access to ordinary niceties of modernity. How come there are some territories and some tribesmen in this country are generally unheard of as part of this country, and that no one shows concern in dismantling their disconnect from Liberia, and pull them out of, their century-old exclusion and marginalization.

If there is any better takeaway from President Weah's six-county tour, marking a distinction of his recent upcountry visit from other presidential tours in the past, it is his physical courage, thoughtfulness and political will to venture deeper into the woods, far away from regular towns and near-urban citizens to reach out to the unreachable and to bridge the unbridgeable to the rest of Liberia. The president drove five hours to go and five hours to come from Gbi&Duru where the presidential convoy beat its own road into the jungle. He similarly crossed streams and winding terrains to wend his way into Betu.

Visiting these heretofore unknown communities and people, the President put national spotlight, adequate embers of public awareness upon, and possibly set the pace for development interventions for them. Not only

do they now have some hope that they, too, belong to the country called Liberia, the President's visit also gives them visibility that thrusts them in arms of national, international and private individuals and institutions having fiduciary and altruistic interest in supporting marginalized and indigent communities and people.

And strategically, the President travelled with policy makers and policy implementers who, along with him, saw the desperate conditions searing fellow Liberians in those parts of the country. The presence of all these people from Monrovia in the woods and with rural Liberians is bound to trigger and/or inform a new development intervention paradigm that intentionally prioritizes rural communities and people who far-flung from the seat of government benefit from the national cake, be it in agriculture, health, education, roads, etc.

For a president who is a nonconventional and un-elitist person, the chief mission for the tours in the countryside finds ultimate conclusion in Gbi&Duru and Betu, which are a macrocosm of Liberia's development paradox and a stimulant for effective breakaway into a more equitable, justice and holistic development program.

Français

Les législateurs empochent 1,4 million de dollars américains

Malgré l'énorme défi économique et la grave contrainte financière auxquels sont confrontés l'administration Weah et l'ensemble des populations libériennes, les membres du parlement libérien, à savoir notamment la Chambre des représentants et le Sénat libérien, ont reçu 1,4 million de dollars américains comme allocation budgétaire supplémentaire.

Le montant est la ligne budgétaire la plus élevée du budget de refonte placé sous le déguisement d'opérations et de services. Le budget supplémentaire devrait s'étendre de mars au 30 juin.

Conformément à la pratique normale et aux normes acceptables, le pouvoir législatif attribue des allocations à chaque agence gouvernementale.

Le pouvoir législatif s'est donc alloué la bagatelle de 1,4 millions de dollars américains, alors que le secteur de l'éducation n'a reçu que 700.000 USD, le projet de l'autoroute de l'aéroport international de Roberts 900 000 \$

US, l'achat des transformateurs pour l'électrification de Monrovia 600 000 \$ US, les lits d'hôpital 500 000 dollars, voyages intérieurs 400 000 dollars EU, réparation et entretien des véhicules 300 000 dollars USD, etc...

Le budget supplémentaire présenté initialement était de 10,5 millions de dollars, mais plus tard, le montant est passé à 24,3 millions de dollars suite à un ajout de 13 millions de

dollars destiné à l'apurement de la dette de la Banque du Libéria pour le développement et l'investissement due par le gouvernement.

Le budget supplémentaire a été approuvé par le Sénat.

Un montant de 9 millions de dollars américains a été identifié par les entités génératrices de revenus comme des « revenus

► CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Elections législatives en Côte d'Ivoire : le pouvoir et l'opposition revendiquent la victoire

Ces déclarations sont intervenues alors que la Commission électorale indépendante n'a pas fini de compter les bulletins de vote.

Le pouvoir et l'opposition ont revendiqué, dimanche 7 mars, leur victoire aux législatives de la veille en Côte d'Ivoire, avant la proclamation des résultats par la Commission électorale indépendante (CEI), qui

continue de compter les bulletins de vote. Pour la première fois depuis dix ans, l'ensemble des principaux acteurs politiques ont participé à ces législatives, laissant espérer qu'elles permettent d'apaiser la vie politique d'un pays à l'histoire récente marquée par de fortes tensions et les violences électorales.

« Notre objectif était de remporter autour de 60 % des

sièges, nous y sommes », a déclaré Adama Bictogo, numéro deux du Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP, au pouvoir). « A cette étape du dépouillement, les premières tendances [...] montrent clairement que notre parti sortira vainqueur avec une majorité confortable », a-t-il ajouté. En début d'après-midi, Niamkey Koffi, coordinateur général pour les législatives du Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI, principal parti d'opposition), avait lui aussi revendiqué la victoire. « Nous pensons être autour de 128 sièges avec nos alliés », a-t-il affirmé, soit juste la majorité des 255 députés de l'Assemblée nationale. Le PDCI, de l'ex-président Henri Konan Bédié, a formé une alliance avec Ensemble pour la démocratie et la souveraineté (EDS), une coalition regroupant les partisans de l'ex-président Laurent Gbagbo et dominée

► CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Éditorial

Le travail ne s'arrête pas à la réception des doses de vaccin

Les autorités sanitaires de Monrovia, accompagnées de hauts responsables du gouvernement libérien et de diplomates étrangers, ont reçu le premier lot de 96.000 doses du vaccin contre le coronavirus à l'aéroport international Roberts dans le comté de Margibi, le vendredi 5 mars 2021.

Selon le ministère de la Santé, le lot est le premier d'un total de 384.000 doses de vaccin de la Covid-19 attendues dans le pays. La vaccination pourrait formellement commencer dans deux semaines par les agents de santé, les membres des pouvoirs exécutif, législatif et judiciaires de l'État. Après, ça sera le tour des militaires et des paramilitaires, ensuite viendront les commerçants et la population en général.

L'ambassadeur des États-Unis au Libéria Michael A. McCarthy, s'exprimant à la RIA vendredi, a félicité le gouvernement du Libéria pour son engagement continu à réduire la transmission et à freiner la propagation de la COVID-19 tant dans le pays et que dans la sous-région.

Cependant, l'Ambassadeur McCarthy a averti que le travail ne s'arrête pas là, espérant que les Libériens saisisseront l'occasion pour recevoir des vaccins sûrs et efficaces.

Et c'est là que réside notre préoccupation: une administration efficace et impartiale des doses de vaccin pour protéger la population. Nous ne voulons pas que cet exercice soit mené à la « libérienne » où l'intérêt personnel prévaut sur l'intérêt général.

Nous nous souvenons vivement du pic du coronavirus en 2019, lorsque des agents de première ligne tels que des médecins, des infirmières, des sages-femmes et d'autres agents de santé ont été laissés pour compte sans protection en raison du manque d'équipements de protection individuelle malgré les fonds d'urgence qui avaient été mis à disposition par les donateurs.

Les goulots d'étranglement bureaucratique et l'influence politique ont étouffé le processus qui aurait dû être ainsi géré professionnellement. Conséquences : il y a eu des morts dans le rang des médecins et des aides-soignants.

Cette fois-ci, nous espérons que les choses seront faites différemment et que les régions et les personnes qui en ont le plus besoin, à savoir notamment les personnes âgées, seront prioritaires.

Les autorités du ministère de la Santé devraient être en mesure de conseiller le président sur la manière de procéder, car les doses de vaccin de la COVID-19 sont destinées à stabiliser l'ensemble de la population, à commencer par les personnes les plus à risque telles que les agents de santé, les forces de sécurité qui sont aux frontières et les résidents des communautés congestionnées.

Comme l'a mis en garde l'ambassadeur McCarthy, le travail ne s'arrête pas à la réception des doses de vaccin. Non, ils ne doivent pas être empilés dans des entrepôts et dans des cliniques privées à des fins personnelles tant que la population reste vulnérable. Nous devons plutôt nous efforcer d'atteindre ceux qui sont les plus dans la nécessité pour que cela ait un impact positif.

Français

Les législateurs empochent 1,4

nationaux».

Au cours du débat sur l'adoption du budget supplémentaire, les législateurs ont fait valoir que le budget devrait être sous forme de programme, ce qui signifie que si des fonds sont alloués pour des fauteuils, l'exécutif et le comité du budget doivent détailler le nombre d'écoles qui en bénéficieront et le nombre de chaises attribuées à chaque école et il sera précisé dans le budget.

Mais les 1,4 million de dollars alloués par les législateurs ne sont pas détaillés. Il a été seulement question « d'opérations et de services.

Le sénateur controversé du comté de Montserrado, Abraham Darius Dillon, qui se fait passer pour « la lumière » et le sénateur du comté de Grand Bassa qui se fait passer pour « l'intègre » ont tous deux participé aux délibérations et à l'adoption du budget, mais ils n'ont rien dit sur l'énormité du budget qui leur a été alloué.

Chaque année budgétaire, une allocation énorme est faite pour la gestion du bâtiment du Capitole et de

ses locaux, mais le Capitole souffre toujours de mauvaises conditions sanitaires. À l'exception du bureau du vice-président, du président, du président intérimaire et du vice-président, toutes les salles de bains restent fermées aux employés et aux visiteurs au motif qu'il n'y a pas d'eau. Les employés et les visiteurs sont contraints de se mettre derrière un conteneur pour uriner.

Les chambres communes de William Richard Tolbert, un lieu où se tiennent en particulier des sessions conjointes, et où le président livre ses messages annuels coulent abondamment pendant la saison des pluies, tandis que les ascenseurs du bâtiment sont bloqués depuis des décennies. Pourtant, chaque année, les législateurs reçoivent d'énormes allocations budgétaires pour les opérations et les services.

Tous les bus destinés aux employés de la Chambre des représentants et du Sénat libérien sont actuellement cloués au sol en raison d'un mauvais entretien et du manque de soutien de la direction dirigée par les présidents du Sénat et de la Chambre des représentants.

Elections législatives en Côte d'Ivoire :

par son parti, le Front populaire ivoirien (FPI).

« L'opposition n'est plus audible » Ces deux déclarations sont intervenues alors que la CEI, chargée de la proclamation des résultats, n'en avait annoncé dimanche soir qu'une partie. « Notre inquiétude, c'est la manipulation des résultats », a dit M. Koffi, mettant en garde « le gouvernement contre toute tentative qui fausserait la sincérité du scrutin ». Il a dénoncé « des résultats provisoires émaillés de tricheries, de tripatouillages, de manipulations », ainsi que « des tentatives d'inversion des résultats » dans plusieurs grandes villes et circonscriptions importantes où le PDCI et le RHDP revendiquent la victoire.

Il a listé les communes de Yopougon, Abobo, Port Bouët et Marcory à Abidjan, la capitale politique, Yamoussoukro, la cité balnéaire de Grand-Bassam, ainsi qu'Agboville, où se présentait le numéro deux du parti au pouvoir, Adama Bictogo. Ce dernier a récusé les accusations de fraudes. « Ils sont dans leur logique, la logique des perdants », a-t-il affirmé, ajoutant : « L'opposition n'est

plus audible. »

Selon M. Koffi, le taux de participation « ne dépasse pas 20 % » au niveau national - contre officiellement 34 % aux précédentes législatives de 2016 -, en raison des « craintes de violences » qui ont dissuadé les électeurs d'aller voter. « La population n'a pas manifesté un réel intérêt pour cette élection », a indiqué, sans donner de chiffres, Indigo, une organisation ivoirienne qui avait déployé 500 observateurs dans tout le pays. Le grand retour du FPI Les législatives de samedi se sont dans l'ensemble déroulées dans le calme, contrairement à la présidentielle d'octobre 2020, marquée par des violences, avant et après le scrutin, qui avaient fait 87 morts et quelque 500 blessés. Ce scrutin avait été boycotté par les partis d'opposition, et le président Alassane Ouattara avait été réélu avec plus de 94 % des voix pour un troisième mandat controversé.

Le vote de samedi a marqué le grand retour du FPI, qui boycottait tous les scrutins depuis l'arrestation de M. Gbagbo, en avril 2011 à Abidjan, et son transfert à la Cour pénale internationale (CPI), à La Haye, après des violences post-électorales ayant fait quelque 3 000 morts.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Alassane Ouattara

La démocratie de la Côte d'Ivoire mise au banc d'essai

YAMOUSSOUKRO - Quand les Européens ou les Américains nous interrogent sur la Côte d'Ivoire, nous, qui venons de ce pays, avons parfois l'air de citer Charles Dickens. Après tout, nous vivons la pire et la meilleure de toutes les époques. Les élections législatives de cette semaine vont jouer un rôle décisif dans la détermination de ce qui nous attend dans les années à venir.

Après l'indépendance de la France en 1960, la meilleure de toutes les époques a débuté en Côte d'Ivoire. Dans une situation difficile sur le plan régional, notre pays a été un modèle de progrès, de stabilité et de prospérité, avec des exportations en hausse qui ont alimenté une croissance économique stable. En 1981, le PNB annuel par habitant de la Côte d'Ivoire était l'un des plus élevés d'Afrique.

Mais à la fin des années 1980, les prix des matières premières se sont effondrés, ce qui a provoqué une baisse brutale des revenus d'exportation de la Côte d'Ivoire et nous a fait entrer dans la pire de toutes les époques. Les décennies qui ont suivi ont été marquées par la corruption, le déclin et deux épisodes de guerre civile.

Mais au cours de la dernière décennie, la Côte d'Ivoire se situe néanmoins sur la voie de la reprise. Le PIB par habitant a doublé au cours des huit dernières années et a augmenté de près de 2 % en 2020, malgré la pandémie de COVID-19. En 2014, 2015 et 2019, l'Indice de la facilité à faire des affaires de la Banque mondiale a reconnu la Côte d'Ivoire comme l'un des dix pays ayant fait le plus de progrès en matière de réformes.

Mais ces progrès ne sont pas incontestables. En fait, les prochaines élections seront une mise au banc d'essai, d'importance cruciale, pour la démocratie ivoirienne.

Le processus électoral a souvent représenté un défi important pour notre pays. Dans les décennies qui ont suivi l'indépendance, notre politique a été largement dominée par un seul parti et les débats politiques ont été très limités, eux qui se déroulaient en grande partie à huis clos. Dans un tel contexte, les élections étaient plutôt considérées comme un rituel que comme une expression authentique de délibération démocratique et d'adhésion des citoyens.

La politique a commencé à s'ouvrir dans les années 1990. Mais les institutions ivoiriennes n'ont pas adhéré à une diversité des opinions de plus en plus marquée. Au lieu de cela, la politique identitaire a pris racine, faisant le jeu de l'intolérance, de la division et en fin de compte de la violence.

Nous sommes déterminés à ne pas laisser de tels faits se reproduire. C'est pourquoi mon gouvernement s'emploie d'arrache-pied à la construction et à la consolidation d'une démocratie dynamique, soutenue par l'État de droit. C'est aussi la raison pour laquelle, après le décès inattendu du Premier ministre Amadou Gon Coulibaly - le candidat à la présidence de mon parti - en juillet dernier, j'ai décidé de

retarder mon départ à la retraite et de briguer un nouveau mandat.

La confiance de l'opinion publique en ses politiciens - essentielle à la liberté individuelle et au développement collectif - dépend d'élections libres, régulières et transparentes. Mon gouvernement a donc pris un certain nombre de mesures pour renforcer la confiance du public vis-à-vis du processus électoral.

En vue du vote du 6 mars, la Côte d'Ivoire dispose d'une commission électorale véritablement indépendante qui n'est contrôlée ni dirigée par aucun pouvoir, y compris par le mien. Ses processus de scrutin et de dépouillement sont techniquement sûrs et un mécanisme de règlement pacifique de tout conflit potentiel est en vigueur. Des dizaines d'organisations indépendantes seront sur le terrain pour surveiller le vote et vérifier le décompte.

Pour soutenir cet effort, mon gouvernement a également entrepris une réforme du secteur de la sécurité, de sorte que les armées ivoiriennes opèrent conformément aux normes internationales les plus exigeantes. Nos services de sécurité comprennent que leur but est de protéger la population, de protéger les droits de l'homme, de faire respecter la primauté du droit et de lutter contre les extrémistes.

Comme ce fut le cas lors de l'élection présidentielle de l'année dernière, la pandémie pose des défis logistiques et sanitaires spécifiques. Mais nous nous employons à les atténuer. En Côte d'Ivoire, les taux d'infection par la COVID-19 sont modestes et le taux de mortalité, à 0,6 %, est parmi les plus faibles d'Afrique. Mon gouvernement a mis à disposition toutes les ressources nécessaires pour promouvoir la santé et la sécurité des électeurs et du personnel électoral tout au long du processus électoral.

Mais de telles préparations techniques et institutionnelles n'auraient aucun sens sans une égalité des chances permettant aux partis politiques de rivaliser entre eux. Là encore, nous avons fait des progrès considérables : pour la première fois en plus d'une décennie, tous les grands partis politiques participent activement à la campagne.

Alors même que les partis politiques ivoiriens rivalisent les uns avec les autres, ils partagent un même engagement en faveur d'élections libres, régulières et pacifiques qui respectent l'État de droit et la procédure officielle. Ils comprennent qu'en dépit de leurs différences, ils doivent s'unir autour des valeurs fondamentales de notre pays. Dans cet esprit, les citoyens doivent également se rappeler que les extrémistes et les opportunistes n'ont pas leur place au sein d'une démocratie forte.

Bien sûr, je soutiens pleinement les candidats de mon parti, le Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix, qui, selon moi, vont remporter de nombreux sièges. Mais en fin de compte, cela va dépendre de la volonté du peuple. Dans tous les cas, la démocratie n'est pas un jeu à somme nulle et une opposition forte au sein d'un Parlement diversifié poussera constamment le gouvernement à s'améliorer.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Rep. Fallah laments plight of rural dwellers

By Emmanuel Mondaye

Montserrado County electoral district #5 Representative Thomas P. Fallah says he is disappointed that rural dwellers are still defecating in bushes and drinking from creeks.

Speaking at a WASH Sector

fetching drinking water from creeks, as though the country was still in the old days.

He made specific reference to Todee District in Montserrado County, where he went on a campaign trail and wanted to use the restroom but to his astonishment, he was directed to the bush by an elderly

with issue of toilet tissue and had to clean himself with leaves, instead.

The ruling party lawmaker said he thought to share his experience so that those in government can know how rural dwellers are suffering from lack of basic social services for years.

He wants more attention paid to rural dwellers to stop what he experienced on a tour of the district.

"My son, this is how we are living in Todee District. Nobody cares about us for the many years we lived here and we have yet to see any improvement in our conditions. It is good that you as lawmaker have seen this so that you can take the message to you colleagues",

Representative Fallah quoted the elderly woman to have said.

He named places like West Point and other coastal communities where children, women, and men sit openly on the beach and defecate as though the country was still in ancient days, stressing that government should do everything to ensure that such practice is eradicated.

He joined Finance and Development Planning Minister Samuel Tweah in calling on the Wash Commission to focus more on rural Liberia where basic social services are non-existing to bring changes to the lives of rural dwellers.

woman.

Rep. Fallah said pressed by nature and wanted to free himself, he was constrained to enter the bush where he eased himself because the town has no restroom.

He emphasized that after using the bush, he was faced



Representative Thomas P. Fallah

High-Level Stakeholders Consultative Forum held recently in Monrovia, Representative Fallah disclosed that during a tour of the seventeen political districts of Montserrado County in the heat of political campaign, he saw people

WASH commission seeks US\$140m

By Emmanuel Mondaye

The Executive Director of the water, sanitation, and hygiene commission Mr. Bobby Whitefield has proposed an annual budget of US\$140 million to implement its programs across the country.

He made the disclosure during the opening of the WASH Sector High-Level Stakeholders Consultative Forum taking place at the Boulevard Hotel in Sinkor, Monrovia.

The forum is being held under the Theme: "Improving Water Services Delivery in Monrovia."

Providing statistics on the sector, Mr. Whitefield said between 40 to 42% of people living in Monrovia are without access to pipe borne water, while two million others practiced open defecation.

According to him, 50 percent of health care facilities in Liberia also lack



Mr. Bobby Whitefield

access to improved water source, while 24 percent is without sanitary facilities.

Director Whitefield told participants at the forum that 36 percent of Monrovia residents does not have basic access to hygiene services, and 67 percent lack basic waste management services.

He lamented that 47 percent

of schools operating in Liberia are without access to water, so the commission needs at least one hundred and forty million United States dollars for the wash sector per annual.

This figure, he continues, will cover cleaning up, hygiene, and sanitation, among others, adding that the

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Acting LACC boss dismisses rumors

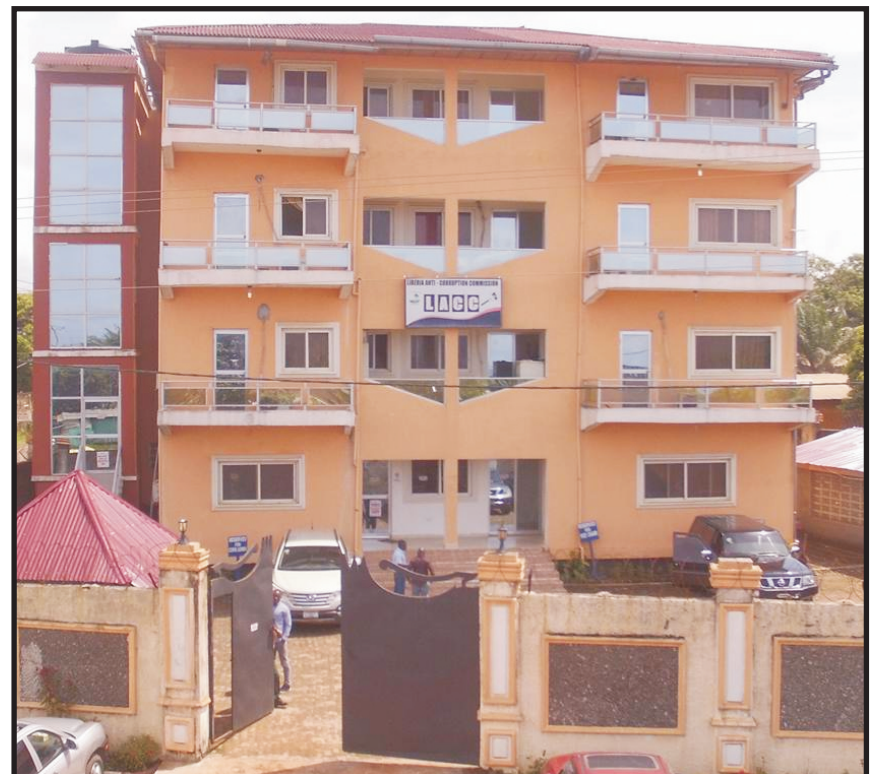
By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

The Acting Executive Chairman of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) says public insinuations that the LACC is in crises are absolute falsehood and mere propaganda.

Speaking in a news conference at the LACC office in Monrovia over the weekend, Cllr. Kanio Bai Gbala said the

accusations and counter-accusations within the LACC but the reality is all these allegations are untrue and total falsehood. The actions of these people to deliberately place these allegations in the media by some people are people who don't want [to] see progress at the commission," he said.

Speaking about his acting role as executive chairman,



Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission is alive and well with all functions of the commission effectively moving forward in accordance with laws.

"The LACC is alive and well. In the past few days there are lots of uproars in the media alleging that the commission is unstable and there are some internal fights. That there are

Cllr. Gbala references Article 6.1 of the Act that created the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission which gives the direct mandate that in the absence of the executive chairman, the vice chairman should act and perform all functions of the executive chairman.

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commission intends to promote and regulate the development and management of water, sanitation and hygiene services and serve as the principal government entity on water, sanitation and hygiene throughout Liberia.

The wash boss noted that the focus of his proposal is on the regulation and compliance mandate of the NWASHSC, and that implementation will be concentrated in six of Liberia's fifteen counties, namely; Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Grand Bassa, Margibi and Maryland respectively.

He added that the National Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Commission's regulations and compliance department and inspectorate personnel will be trained to use various tools and procedures. He said personnel will be deployed on a routine basis to carry out robust

compliance monitoring and issued categories of permits to water producers, extractors, hotels, banks, health centers, food centers, entertainment centers, and shipping centers, among others.

Director Whitefield disclosed further the commission will open separate account for payment of fees and enter into agreement with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) on revenue sheering scheme with the Government of Liberia at a percentage of 60-40.

NWASHC will use the 60% allocation to sustain its equipment, routine compliance monitoring mission and other activities; the commission will also recruit at least 10 persons in each of the six concentrated counties, and will fine violators of various standards in keeping with law and such fines will be deposited into government's consolidated accounts.

Campaign promises Vs. realities

Naymote Partners for Democratic Development through its Legislative Accountability Project (LAP) has tracked completed, ongoing and unfulfilled campaign promises of nine (9) members of the House of Representatives, from January 2018 to January 2021.

A 3-year performance report on nine (9) members of the House of Representatives from Montserrado, Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Rivergeee Counties uncovered that since the ascendancy of these representatives into office, actions have been taken towards a combined total of 77 campaign promises, of which 23

Representative Alexander Poure from Rivergeee County and former Representative Zoe E. Pennue from Grand Gedeh County, now a senator.

The report published Monday, March 08, 2021 on the entity's website notes that as a result, the nine lawmakers involved achieved very little in lawmaking which is one of their cardinal functions.

It details that in Bong County, Representative Moima Briggs Mensah, of electoral district # 6 made 13 campaign promises, of which five are rated completed, and eight promises are ongoing, while her colleague, Representative Robert F. Womba, of electoral district # 4, made 12 promises, five of which were completed, six ongoing, one has not started,

ongoing.

Nimba County Representative Roger S. W. Y. Domah of electoral district # 7 made 8 (eight) campaign promises; one completed, six ongoing and one not rated due to the lack of available information.

In Grand Gedeh County, former Representative Zoe E. Pennue of electoral # 1 (now Senator) made seven (7) campaign promises; six completed and one ongoing, and in Rivergeee County, Representative Alexander Poure of electoral district # 1 made seven (7) campaign promises; six completed and one ongoing within six years in office.

Meanwhile, Naymote recommends that elected officials/lawmakers should focus more on implementing their campaign promises and keep holding town hall meetings with their constituents.

It also calls for public education to help citizens to understand workings of their lawmakers and lawmakers should be more accessible, responsive, and accountable to the needs of their constituents.

Naymote recommends need to have distinction between the County Development Funds projects and lawmakers' self-supported projects to ensure accountability and transparency for public funds.

"As Liberia's prime democratic advancement institution, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development considered the Legislature as the fulcrum of Liberia's democracy because of its constitutional responsibilities to enact laws, represent citizens' interests, and oversee executive policy implementation and performance. However, citizens do not often hear from those elected lawmakers until the next election", reads the executive summary of the report.

Members of the House of Representatives in Liberia are elected for six years with three cardinal functions: Lawmaking, Representation and Oversight. **-Story by Jonathan Browne**



campaign promises were completed, 42 ongoing, and 12 promises have not started or not rated due to the lack of available date to assess any action taken.

According to the report, majority of the promises tracked focused on the provision of social services, including support to education, health care, construction or rehabilitation of community roads, market buildings, handpumps, setting up district development committees, renovation of school building, local government offices and support to youth and women groups, including agriculture projects, among others.

Legislators' performance tracked from NAYMOTE's project locations include former Representative Prince K. Moya, now a senator; Representatives Moima Briggs Mensah and Robert F. Womba from Bong County, Representatives Richard N. Koon, Samuel R. Enders and Rustonlyn S. Dennis from Montserrado County; Representative Roger S.W. Y. Domah from Nimba County,

and one not rated. Former Representative Prince K. Moya of electoral district # 2 (now Senator) made 7 campaign promises, none completed, six are ongoing, and one not rated due to the lack of available information.

In Montserrado County, Representative Rustonlyn S. Dennis, of electoral district # 4 made 8 (eight) campaign promises, none completed and are all ongoing, while Representative Richard N. Koon of electoral district # 11 made 10 promises, 2 completed and eight ongoing. Representative Samuel Enders, electoral district # 6 made five (5) campaign promises; none completed, and all five are

Tomorrow is "Decoration Day"

President George Manneh Weah, has by Proclamation declared the Second Wednesday, March 10, 2021 as "Decoration Day" and it is to be observed as a National Holiday throughout the Republic.

The Proclamation is in consonance with an Act of the Legislature, which was passed on October 24, 1916 declaring the Second Wednesday in March of each year as "Decoration Day" to be observed as a National Holiday.

A Foreign Ministry Release says the observance is in recognition of the nation's past heroes and heroines, who have lived and died in the interest of their country.

The Proclamation states that important events in the history of our nation should be constant reminders to the citizens and youths to inspire them to larger measures of service and patriotism.

The Proclamation also adds that it is befitting that a day be set aside to celebrate the memory of those blessed dead, who lived and died in the interest of their country, thereby keeping alive their deeds and invaluable contributions rendered to society and the state.

The Ministry of Education being cognizant of the day, agrees to observe this occasion, through specially planned programs to further raise awareness amongst the

population on the deeds and contributions of great men and women and their loved ones, through a parade by students, government officials, staff of the Ministry of Education, etc., to the graves of the late President William V.S. Tubman, the state cenotaph of the pioneers and an educator, at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion on Ashmun Street, as well as a procession to Warren Street to the grave of the late President Daniel B. Warner and onto the Palm Grove Cemetery on Center Street to the graves of the late Presidents Joseph Jenkins Roberts and Williams R. Tolbert.

The release further stresses that an indoor program commemorating the day, will be held at the Providence Baptist Church on Broad and Ashmun Streets commencing at eight thirty ante meridian, with Reverend Dr. Samuel B. Reeves, Jr. providing the memorial message to the state.

The Liberian President, in the Proclamation, calls upon all ministries, agencies, local and international organizations and the general public to join the Ministry of Education, to organize and execute appropriate programs to make the day meaningful.

President Weah has ordered that the National Ensign be flown at Half-Staff from all public buildings, Military Camps and private residences from 6 o'clock ante meridian to 6 o'clock post meridian consistent with the prescribed COVID-19 health protocols.

Acting LACC boss

Cont'd from page 10

Cllr. Gbala confirms that he's now the acting head until President George Weah can deem it necessary to appoint someone in the post.

According to him, he has taken some administrative decisions for forward march of the entity and changed the dispensation of trending issues there.

He says the LACC remains engaged with partners, including the African Development Bank on the educational sector of the commission and that all programs remain active, contrary to speculations.

The acting LACC boss points out that he's cognizant of the groundless, factless and untrue allegations being made against him purely for political reasons and that he's aware why those false allegations are being brought against him now.

He continues that an entity like the LACC which mandate clearly states that

confidentiality is key and hallmark of the day to the extent that an accused by the commission has rights until proven by investigation and through the judiciary verdict before information can be given out to have engaged in smear campaign is unacceptable within the laws and operations of the anti corruption institution.

Meanwhile, Cllr. Gbala welcomes call by the Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia for an investigation at the LACC with consent of President George Weah.

"Over 40 years I have held my name tight and worked [for] not plenty money but my reputation stands tall and it is so dear. These allegations cannot happen to me because I have protected them jealously," he maintains.

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CL: 36-team tournament could be agreed



Plans for a reformed 36-team Champions League which would start in 2024 could be agreed by the end of this month.

European Clubs' Association (ECA) chairman Andrea Agnelli expects the final details - around how the four extra places will be allocated - to be resolved in the next couple of weeks.

If the ECA meets that timescale, European governing body Uefa would almost certainly look to sign it off.

Should that happen it would end further talk of a

European Super League (ESL).

Uefa general secretary Giorgio Marchetti referred to the ESL concept in his opening address to the ECA general assembly on Monday.

"Unity can be lost when insidious ideas are pursued under the pretence of survival, growth and business needs," he said.

Agnelli, who is also chairman of Juventus, was vague when asked about his involvement in ESL talks but described the new-style Champions League as very close to his ideal.

The idea, which has been credited to Ajax chief executive

Edwin van der Sar, would lead to radical change to the group phase.

Instead of eight groups of four playing six games each as is currently the case, all teams would play 10 matches against opponents of varying strengths and decided on each club's Uefa ranking.

Results in these matches would form an overall table which, along with some two-legged play-offs, would determine qualification for the post-Christmas knockout rounds.

The individual European leagues want the four additional places to go to champions of 'middle-tier' countries - leagues whose champions do not already automatically go through to the group stage - and be decided on sporting merit.

But the likelihood is two of the places will be given as 'wildcards' - with England likely to benefit from an additional fifth place - which could be decided on co-efficient.

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Chelsea beat Everton to strengthen top-four hopes

Chelsea scored a goal in each half to see off top-four rivals Everton and maintain Thomas Tuchel's unbeaten start as Blues boss.

The hosts took the lead when Kai Havertz's shot took a big deflection off Toffees defender Ben Godfrey.

England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford made a fine save to deny Chelsea's Marcos Alonso and Havertz thought he had scored, but had handled the ball before finishing.

However, the hosts doubled their lead through a Jorginho penalty after Pickford brought down the impressive Havertz.

With 10 league games of the season left, Chelsea remain fourth and in the last Champions League qualifying spot, only three points behind third-placed Leicester and four adrift of Manchester United in second.

Crucially, this victory takes the Blues four points clear of Everton in fifth and Carlo Ancelotti's side - who have a game in hand over Chelsea - will drop to sixth if West Ham avoid



defeat against Leeds in Monday's late game.

Chelsea have not been beaten since a 2-0 loss at Leicester in Frank Lampard's penultimate game as manager on 19 January, with Tuchel yet to suffer defeat in 11 matches in charge.

Chelsea have played in the Champions League in 15 of the past 17 campaigns, but were ninth in the Premier League, and five points off the top four, when they sacked Lampard in January.

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