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VOL.11 NO. 044

TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 2021

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Continental News

Barack Obama's Kenyan grandmother dies, aged 99

Barack Obama's step-grandmother, Sarah Obama, has died at a hospital in Kenya at the age of 99.

Affectionately called Granny Sarah by the former president, Mrs Obama defended her grandson during his 2008 presidential campaign, when he was said to be Muslim and not born in the US.

Her home became a tourist attraction when he was elected as the first black US president.

Sarah Obama was the third and youngest wife of Barack Obama's grandfather.

She died early on Monday at a hospital in the western town of Kisumu, her daughter Marsat Onyango told Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper.

A family spokesman said Mrs Obama had been unwell for a

week, but did not have Covid-19.

She will be buried later on Monday.

"We will miss her dearly," Barack Obama said, "but we'll celebrate with gratitude her long and remarkable life." Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta said on Twitter that Mrs Obama was "a strong, virtuous woman" and "an icon of family values". Before her

grandson became a household name, Sarah Obama was well known for the hot porridge and doughnuts she served at a local school, AFP reports.

She became more widely known when Mr Obama visited Kenya in 2006. At the time he was a senator from the state of Illinois, but a national celebrity in Kenya, and his grandmother spoke to the media about his rise in politics. He returned in 2015, becoming the first sitting US president to visit Kenya, meeting Mrs Obama and other family members in Nairobi. Mr Obama visited his step-grandmother's home in the village of Kogelo in 2018, after leaving office, joking he had been unable to visit earlier

because the presidential plane was too big to land at the local airport. Sarah Obama was born in 1922 in a village on Lake Victoria, according to AFP. She was a Muslim and part of Kenya's Luo ethnic group. For decades, she ran a foundation in Kenya to help educate orphans and girls, something she felt strongly about as she couldn't read herself.

She was the third wife of Hussein Onyango Obama, President Obama's paternal grandfather.

Her husband, who died in 1975, fought for the British in Burma, now called Myanmar, and is reported to be the first man in his village to swap goatskin clothing for trousers. BBC



After leaving office, Barack Obama visited his grandmother's village of Kogelo in western Kenya

Preacher blames president for Kenya Covid wave

Days after the government of Kenya imposed severe restrictions on businesses and movement in five counties to curb the spread of coronavirus, a preacher in the capital, Nairobi, has excoriated President Uhuru Kenyatta for

the decision.

"You [President Kenyatta], and your fellow politicians are to blame for this devastating third wave and the buck stops with you," said Bishop Peter Ambuka from the Pefa church in Kahawa West area.

He added that majority of Kenyans now have to suffer the

consequences of their "careless actions".

"You continue living your lavish lifestyles thanks to the taxes we continue to pay even as we lose our source of income," Bishop Ambuka said. He said that when infection rates slowed late last year, President Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga restarted their campaign to change the constitution, which attracted huge crowds.

Deputy President William Ruto, who opposes the change, also held massive rallies.

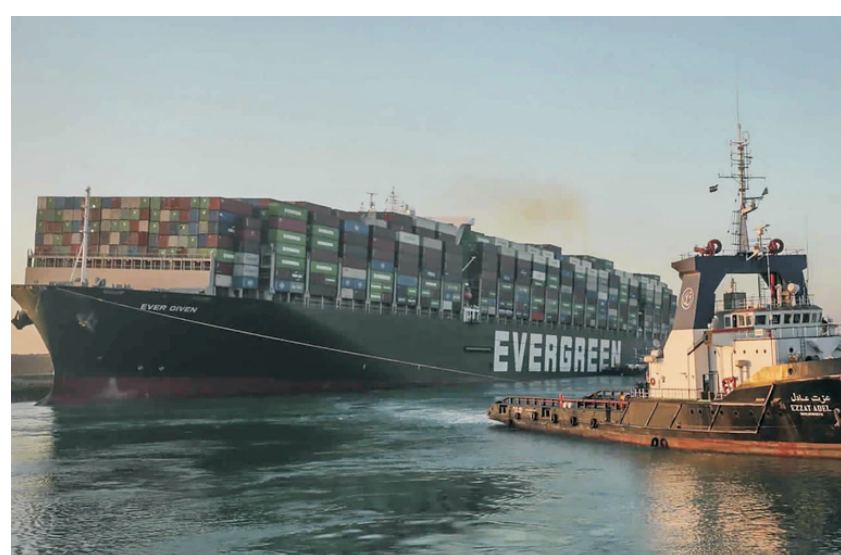
These were "super spreader" events, Bishop Ambuka said. The bishop also said that the latest measures introduced by the president were insufficient and were likely to keep Kenyans in a cycle of lockdowns and curfews.

"A massive campaign of testing and vaccination, is what will bring us back to a normal life," he said.

Kenya has reported more



Suez Canal Authority says Ship '80 percent' Refloated



Officials with the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) said Monday they have succeeded in moving the massive container ship Ever Given "80 percent" in the right direction, signaling the six-day blockage of the crucial waterway may be coming to an end.

Officials with the authority told reporters that further tugging operations would resume to fully restore the ship in the right direction once the tide rises later Monday.

The 400-meter ship became jammed diagonally across a southern section of the canal in high winds on March 23, halting shipping traffic on the shortest shipping route between Europe and Asia.

While the canal is still not

open, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi from his official Twitter account wasted no time declaring the crisis over. "By restoring matters to their normal course, with Egyptian hands, the whole world will be assured of the path of its goods and needs that are passed by this axial navigational artery," he tweeted. But the CEO of the salvage company involved in the rescue efforts told Dutch public radio the operation was far from complete. The developments come after nearly a week of blocked traffic at the key shipping route connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. More than 360 ships were waiting to enter the canal as of late Sunday. VOA

than 130,000 cases of Covid-19 and more than 2,000 deaths.

The doctors' union said

last week that the country had run out of ICU beds which were mostly occupied by Covid-19 patients. BBC

EDITORIAL

The Liberian media need institutional capacity building, not just training

-A Repeat

FOR THE PAST two decades or more foreign partners have spent millions of dollars in Liberia to train reporters and editors without considering institutional capacity building, which is a very key component in having a vibrant media. From UNMIL to various international development partners including IREX and Internews, millions of United States Dollars have been directed at training and training, but if measured against such pouring in of funds administered by local and international organizations the impact leaves much to be desired.

JUST TRAINING ALONE has not really helped in strengthening the media because professionally trained personnel are leaving media houses to seek greener pasture.

THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA as a business does not operate in a vacuum. It relies on the economy in order to attract, maintain and increase advertisements for its survivability. But with a devastating economy such as the one we have in Liberia coupled with poor readership and dwindling circulations, the media is unable to pay professional staff and maintain them.

AS IF THAT was not enough, the impact of the COVID-19 on media institutions here has left many to a near collapse.

WITH AN APPALLING economic environment, the media is left alone to thrive, which is one of the key reasons why professional journalism is being relegated, giving way to mediocrity. Such a condition brings in the compelling need for a paradigm shift in the way funds intended to assist the Liberian media should be utilized. We suggest that rather than conducting two weeks, one week, or three days' training for journalists, grants should be provided to enable media houses to build their operational capacity.

SUCH GRANTS SHOULD come along with set benchmarks that media managers, including publishers, would have to meet in order to qualify for future engagements. This is a fact: for instance, some media institutions just can't afford to buy newsprint and other operational costs on a daily basis, let alone to regularly pay staff.

THIS IS EVEN compounded by delays in payment of services rendered to clients, including the government, which remains the major advertiser in the country. The woes get deepen by international non-government organizations and others directing their advertisement to the Executive Mansion's website-the President of the Republic of Liberia website depriving media institutions of much-needed advertisement revenues.

YET STILL, SUCH payment, particularly in the public sector whenever ready, a requirement to disbursement is tax clearance. Where does a struggling media entity in such an economy like ours get money to be current with taxes? This argument is for another day.

BUT THE TRUTH of the matter is the media in Liberia need serious help. They lack the operational capacity to provide the kind of services the public needs. A soft grant from international partners would go a long way in strengthening the media independence to enable play its critical role in our democratic dispensation.

THIS IS AN ideal that media development partners need to consider as we work together in strengthening the press in Liberia. We have had series of professional training programs. But in the absence of vibrant institutions journalists are turning their backs on the newsroom to seek a better life.

IF THE MEDIA should return to the right trajectory with appropriate standards to provide the kind of services the public deserves it needs help beyond training. The operational strength of media houses needs boosting thru grants.

The New Dawn
FULLY INDEPENDENT

Published by the Searchlight Communications Inc.,
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COMMENTARY

By Joschka Fischer

The Return of German Politics

BERLIN - Angela Merkel's 16-year reign as German chancellor is coming to an end. Whatever one's feelings about her, she has put her stamp on an entire era. But political epochs rarely end quietly, and "Mutti's" long goodbye is no exception.

German electoral politics have finally started to heat up. The first two state elections of what will be a super election year pointed to the possibility that the federal election on September 26 could produce a new government coalition without Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union.

In both Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, large losses for the CDU coincided with equally strong gains for the Greens and a stable share of the vote for the Free Democrats (FDP). Hence, there is now talk of a possible "traffic light" coalition between the Social Democrats (red), the FDP (yellow), and the Greens. Suddenly, a change of government in Berlin seems like a realistic possibility.

Moreover, criticism of the Merkel government's management of the pandemic - including a staggering amount of corruption in the procurement of masks - has grown increasingly loud. And for now, the power vacuum at the top of the CDU/CSU remains unfilled. The CDU's rather unconvincing leader, Armin Laschet, is facing off against the CSU's more charismatic Markus Söder.

Whoever prevails, the CDU/CSU faces an uphill battle, especially following the resounding defeats in two states where the CDU has for decades presided over a quasi-hereditary fiefdom. Those losses, and the steady rise of the Greens, augur a potential disaster for the CDU/CSU. With every passing day, Germans are coming to the difficult realization that Merkel's chancellorship is indeed ending. Her departure will be all the more painful given the power vacuum within the conservative camp.

The Merkel era largely coincided with the heyday of globalization - that is, with the opening of China's massive export market. Domestically, however, it was characterized by resistance to reform, and will be remembered more as a time of talk than of political dynamism. Numerous working groups, stacked with the usual commendable experts, were established to discuss topics like digitization. But nothing ever really came of it all.

Consider climate and energy policy. Although Germany abandoned nuclear energy after the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan, Merkel had reversed a decision to phase out nuclear power just weeks before. Though the decision was nonetheless courageous, she had to perform something

of a "double U-turn" to help her party in Baden-Württemberg's state elections. But the maneuver failed. Since 2011, Baden-Württemberg - a core German industrial region - has been governed by a Green minister-president (Winfried Kretschmann).

Even more courageous was Merkel's 2015 decision to open Germany's doors to refugees fleeing violence in Syria and other parts of the Middle East. But these achievements were exceptions that proved the rule. The Merkel era was primarily characterized by quietude, a feature that German voters, having re-elected her three times, obviously appreciated. With the economic sun seemingly always shining on her, why take the risk of reform or strategic audacity?

After such a long period of complacency, it is no surprise that the country is now facing massive structural challenges. Along with the European Commission and other EU member states, the German government will have to work hard to overcome the loss of confidence following Europe's botched COVID-19 vaccine rollout. The pandemic fallout will have to be high on the agenda regardless of who forms the next government.

While the pandemic has accelerated digitization, this momentum must now be used to help Europe catch up to the United States and China. Success here and on digital innovation more generally would be a decisive contribution to Europe's sovereignty, helping the German and European economies remain competitive in the twenty-first century. This will require huge investments in research and development, as well as modernization of education systems. Fortunately, the EU's €750 billion (\$884 billion) recovery plan, Next Generation EU, offers a historic opportunity to advance all of these objectives.

The greatest challenge, however, lies in "greening" the economy while also safeguarding workers and preserving social cohesion. Here, the task is too large to manage at the national level. It will have to be done collectively, at the European level, through a European Union that has developed into a global power in its own right.

Thankfully, Donald Trump has left the White House (for good, one hopes), and Europeans recognize that a well-functioning transatlantic alliance will be crucial for protecting their interests in this century. But to strengthen that relationship, Europe will have to share more of the security and political burden and do its part to address the challenges introduced by China's rise.

Neither task will be easy for Germany. But the Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate elections have driven home the fact that Merkel's era of lofty talk and no action is over. Reality is knocking hard on Germany's door, and later this year new caretakers may finally open it.

OPINION

By Andrés Velasco, Frank Muci

Brazilian Debt Jitters

LONDON - Two things have changed in fiscal policy worldwide in recent years. The first is that sustained low real interest rates have enabled governments to run larger deficits and carry larger debts. The second is that the coronavirus pandemic has made using this enlarged fiscal space imperative to bail out households and businesses and to stimulate economic recovery.

Advanced economies are spending whatever it takes to keep their economies afloat. In the United States, skeptics argue that President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion package may be too large, but no one worries that investors will refuse to buy the resulting debt or demand a risk premium. The story is different among emerging economies, which are less indebted than rich countries, but face higher interest rates and have smaller and more volatile tax revenues.

Among emerging economies, Brazil seems determined to test the limits of debt. The good news is that Brazil responded vigorously to the pandemic. Discretionary fiscal measures totaling 8.3% of GDP - more than in most emerging economies and even many advanced economies - helped poor households and contained the pandemic-induced recession, with output falling "only" 4.1% in 2020.

The bad news is that markets are jittery about Brazil's debt, which, at over 90% of GDP, is the largest in the emerging world (excluding small island states) after Egypt and Angola, surpassing even neighboring Argentina. Brazil is heavily indebted even when compared to advanced economies, exceeding the United Kingdom and the European Union average as a share of GDP.

As a result, the country's borrowing costs, while still low (though moving up) for short-term bonds, rise steeply as the government tries to borrow at longer (and safer) maturities. Debt worries are also behind the persistent weakness of the Brazilian real, which hardly rallied when most emerging-market currencies did earlier this year, and depreciated again recently. That weak exchange rate has been pushing up inflation, forcing the Brazilian Central Bank to raise interest rates sharply this month, accompanied by strong hints that additional hikes are coming.

Brazil was in a challenging economic and fiscal position prior to the pandemic. Five years earlier, the country had experienced the worst economic contraction in its history. Growth slowed significantly in 2014 and turned sharply negative in 2015-16. Brazil's total fiscal deficit ballooned to 10% of GDP in 2015, and was still 6% in 2019.

Successive governments enacted two reforms to limit the deficit and curb debt accumulation. First was a fiscal rule approved during President Michel Temer's administration, which capped inflation-adjusted federal expenditures at the 2016 level for 20 years. Next, early in President Jair Bolsonaro's term, came a pension reform that increased the retirement age (pension spending is extraordinarily high in Brazil, accounting for 44% of the federal budget). Then the virus arrived, and budget deficits went sky-high once again.

Viewed in a longer-term perspective, not all the news is bad. Interest rates may be edging up again, but they have fallen dramatically over the past two decades: the central bank policy rate went from a high of 26% in 2003 to just 2% in early 2021. Similarly, the government issued a great deal of short-term debt during 2020, but the average maturity of debt remains longer than during much of the last decade.

Still, pessimists have plenty to worry about. It is not hard to come up with scenarios in which debt reaches 125% of GDP or more by 2025. These scenarios are sensitive to assumptions about what happens to growth and interest rates, so they must be taken with more than a grain of salt. Still, debt ratios cannot rise forever. A recently adopted constitutional amendment will help slow down debt accumulation (and ensure that, at least formally, the legally-mandated debt cap is not violated), but that change alone will not be enough.

Rollover risk is another concern. In the first three quarters of 2021 more than R\$1 trillion (\$173 billion) in bond debt comes due, which the Brazilian Treasury will have to roll over. An extreme panic in which investors simply refuse to buy the new debt seems unlikely, but - especially if market interest rates keep rising in the United States - investors may demand much higher returns or be willing to buy only ever shorter-maturity debt. Either scenario would only aggravate existing vulnerabilities. Brazil has been there before.

Such an outcome is not pre-ordained. It helps that most public debt is in local currency, and that its holders are overwhelmingly domestic. International experience suggests that countries with large domestic-currency debts are less exposed to rollover risk. The reason, of course, is that the central bank can always serve as lender of last resort to the fiscal authority.

How can Brazil solve its debt conundrum? Given that many government expenditures automatically rise with the rate of inflation, and that much of the debt is indexed - either to consumer prices or to the short-term interest rate - the potential for inflating away the problem is limited. Debt default or restructuring would be toxic, not least because the financial system holds R\$1.4 trillion (or 20% of GDP) in government securities. A large haircut applied to public debt could wreck the balance sheets of banks, pension funds, and insurance companies, and would wipe out overnight the existing equity of the financial system.

Brazil illustrates the point that despite low interest rates worldwide, there are limits to debt and deficits in the post-pandemic world. Brazil's tax burden, at over one-third of GDP, is already high for an emerging economy, so taxation alone is unlikely to quash the rising fiscal risks. And expenditure cuts face obvious difficulties, especially given the country's political fragmentation and high income inequality.

Regardless of the path Brazil chooses, inaction is not an option. Brazil's poor and middle class were the victims of previous fiscal crises. They should be spared another one.

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Independent Committee of Experts (ICE)

On Vetting INCHR Chairperson/Commissioners

C/O Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia

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JOB VACANCY NOTICE

FOR THE POST OF ONE CHAIRPERSON AND FOUR COMMISSIONERS AT THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (INCHR)

The Office of the Chief Justice of the Republic of Liberia, represented by the Independent Committee of Experts (ICE), is seeking applications from qualified Liberians at home and abroad to occupy the vacant position as Chairperson and four positions of Commissioners at the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR):

POSITION TITLE: ONE (1) INCHR Chairperson
FOUR (4) INCHR Commissioners

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must be Liberian citizen

- of at least 40 years of age and above;
- with good human rights record (not have been associated with human rights violation/abuse)
- a non-partisan or without shown political interest;
- not have been convicted by a court for any criminal offense involving financial or moral turpitude;
- and with proven professional competence, knowledge of human rights, and commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.
- The Chairperson shall be a senior lawyer with a proven professional excellence and commitment to human rights and the rule of law.

TENURE & OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- The Chairperson shall hold office for six (6) years, Commissioners for five (5) years.
- The Chairperson and Commissioners shall not:
 - hold any other public or government office.
 - engage in any other paid occupation, business, profession or activity.
 - hold any position incompatible with his/her official duties.

COMPETENCIES

A Candidate for Chairperson or Commissioner must:

- Be sensitive to issues involving vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, the disabled, detainees, and others who may face the risk of becoming victims of abuses.
- Demonstrate experience in human rights advocacy, monitoring, investigation, reporting, and documentation regardless.
- demonstrate working knowledge of the Paris Principle and other human rights mechanism in the protection and promotion of human rights.
- show knowledge in litigating or otherwise handling cases of human rights violations before judicial or quasi-judicial bodies, as well as in research.
- have experience in lobbying, advocacy, working with authorities responsible for the protection of human rights such as the court, military, police, prison officials and other security agencies;
- have proven record of independence, impartiality, and high degree of integrity.
- have a university degree or equivalent practical experience in a discipline related to the mandate of the INCHR.
- have excellent oral, written and interpersonal communication skills

HOW TO APPLY:

- Write a letter of application not more than two pages explaining your suitability for the position you are applying to and submit together with a CV and other supporting document(s).
- Subject line should state: **Chairperson for INCHR or Commissioner for INCHR**
- Send by e-mail to: expertscommittee7@gmail.com
- And submit hard copies to:
 - Mrs. Roseline Toweh
 - Chairperson
 - Independent Committee of Experts
 - On Vetting INCHR Chairperson/Commissioners
 - C/O The Young Women Christian Association (YWCA)
 - Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia
- All applicants should ensure they obtain acknowledgement of receipt (name, date, time & phone #) on a copy of your application submitted.
- Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

CLOSING DATE: Thursday April 8, 2021 at 15:00 HRS GMT (Applications submitted after this time will be rejected).

ARTICLE

ARTICLE

'Crazy' for Development Leafing through Pres. Weah's unusual passion for speedy progress

By Sherman C. Seequeh

My 11-year-old son, Habakkuk, was at it yet again—talking beyond his age. “Dad, this road is so fresh and beautiful. Is it [President] George Weah who built it?” he quipped, eyes apparently still marveling at the deep black tarmac road running fast beneath us as we drove on. Like many kids and most Liberians, he called him, simply, George Weah.

I was concentrating on something else as we drove on the newly built Johnsonville pavement. He did not get an answer. But Habakkuk knew the condition of the route on which we were riding. We had plied the route hundreds of time. At that time, the road was then worse than any Southeastern road or any distant rural road in the raining season. Johnsonville road was a complete and clear catastrophe. It was total disgrace to modern man.

When I could not respond to him immediately, Habakkuk, as his nature is, pestered me more: “I was asking whether it is [President] George Weah who built this road.”

At this point, the answer came smoothly and calmly—perhaps proudly. “Yes, it's President Weah who built it,” I said with a smile as our eyes caught up briefly. And he returned a smile.

“Why did you ask?” I asked.

“He must be crazy for development, dad,” Habakkuk said firmly.

Chills ran through my spine hearing this very young, innocent mind say that. But acting like I did not hear him again, I almost yelled, “What? Say that again!”

Perhaps feeling that I had a problem, like I was uncomfortable with his use of the word ‘crazy’, he almost recoiled. “Sorry for the use of the word crazy, but I meant to say George Weah likes to make things look fine too much.”

He continued: “I am saying so because I also saw a video on mom's phone the other day with new street lights in the night and a lot of people were dancing, saying it was [President] George Weah who provided it. The areas I saw in the video were looking very fine in the night. And someone said the President will soon bring street lights to Johnsonville, too.”

To assure the lad that he was not rude in the use of “crazy” in talking about President Weah's passion for development”, I hastened to tell him this: “You are not wrong at all, my son, in using the word ‘crazy’. In fact, I am thinking about the craziest word to use because the President we have now in this country is more than crazy for development. In fact, he is mad for development. As you, the kids, would say, he is ‘arbie’ or ‘greedy’ for development.”

How can a Liberian President, who has not gone four years in office be so anxious, so intentional, so speedy, so sleepless, and so restless about making this long backward country fine like other countries and making people so happy, so peaceful and so relaxing.

Give him the US\$15billion that came into the

country shortly after the civil conflict. Make him President of the ‘Growth Without Development’ epoch when Liberia's per capital income toppled the wild world. Can anyone imagine what would happen to this country if we had a ‘development crazy’ president, a leader who says what he does and does what he says; a president who feels instantly itchy and attracted to cries and woes of indigent people and communities? Can anyone imagine how Liberia—from Cape to Cape Palmas, from Montsererado to Lofa would like in three years, not to mention six years?

Watching President Weah closely interact with rural Liberians, from Bong to Grand Kru through Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland, then from Bomi to Gbarpolu and Grand Mount unequivocally confirms that Liberia has had no such president like President Weah who's so exceedingly passionate, enflamed and crazy, to borrow from Habakkuk, for tangible, speedy transformation of Liberia.

And the problem with President Weah's itchiness about development is that he's not just obsessive with building roads all over the place, as one would see in

communities and people are seeing finished, painted and colorful houses cropping up before their eyes, and in their lifetime.

And lest one forgets, as roads are being built connecting communities and cities, with ambitious plans for many including inter-country superhighways, WAEC/WASSCE fees are also being paid yearly for all Liberian students facing those public exams, including private school students. Special tutorial classes are being fully funded for the beneficiary students. At the same time, millions of dollars have been spent to make public universities and colleges free, not to mention the first ever electronic registration portal for students at the University of Liberia. Amid cheers and celebrations in nine rural provinces already visited, the President acquiesced building vocation and technical schools in communities distant from those facilities.

At the same time, while street lights are being lighted with utmost speed, costing millions, and electricity grid is being catapulted or de-stagnated to full acceleration, reaching more homes and communities in Monrovia and its environs, there also is the President going crazy again planting solar lights in almost every community so far visited.

And he is moving with utmost speed re-budding and expanding the long-forgotten agriculture sector. Concretizing this, a big agriculture fair is taking place soon this year besides the one held recently in Gbarnga, Bong County. Also, the President has just issued orders to heads of line ministries and agencies to begin communal mechanized farms this year in nearly all counties. Combing communities in the hinterland, the President excites rural Liberians to ascribe for or assess up to US\$16 million set aside for farmers towards food security in the country.

As if that was not enough burden of development craziness on hand in a short period of time, the President is going worry and restless about the Coastal High Way

that is to pierce the mangrove swamps, savanna grass, sandy beaches and thick forests of the Bassas and the Krus. Along with the Coastal Highway, the President is simultaneously weight-lifting the North and Southeastern corridor with tarmac superhighway running thence through the high woods of the Manos, Gios, Krahn and Grebos. Already, the Kissis and Lormas and Kpelles are celebrating the development craziness that is also taking paved road in their tick forests from Gbarnga to Lofa County.

Indeed, the President hardly goes to bed comfortably, as he's preoccupied with pressing donors and other stakeholders to hasten with ongoing bidding processes for the Southeastern corridor roads to start this year.

With all these also comes restless anxiousness to better the health sector. While John F. Kenneh Hospital has got ample facelift in terms of rehabilitation works, pushing dozens of doctors for specialized training amongst many other things, including the recent installation of the country's first dialysis. Liberia's first



Johnsonville, Duahn Town and Tusa Field and Pipe Line. Or when one talks about paved roads in Neklay Town in Paynesville or Fair Ground in Buchanan and all over the place. The President is at the same time building market buildings here and there, almost every community now feeling the impact of modern, state-of-the-art market halls. Everywhere one turns, the noises of hammers, zincs and cement mixers are heard. He cruised through the countryside, President Weah leaves impression of the long neglected people cascading not just pledges but iron commitments to building market halls for the rural people.

Sleepless is actually is about how the impoverished majority of Liberians are feeling the pains and discomfort of living in dilapidated homes, homes that resemble those of Stone Age people—leaking roofs, mud and bamboo walls, ceiling-less houses—the President moves with deliberate speed to build concrete houses replete with bathrooms, kitchens and living-rooms for poor Liberians who had not known decent homes all their life before. Not only is he moving with deliberate speed, he is also spreading the benefit of good, modern homes to every nook and corner of Liberia. Slum

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Motorbike thieves rampaging Somalia Drive

-Police arrest four suspects

By Winston W. Parley

The Liberia National Police (LNP) has warned alleged motorbike thieves that are rampaging the entire Somalia Drive, taking away innocent citizens' motorbikes under dubious means to desist from such acts or brace themselves to face the full weight of the law.

Announcing the arrest of four suspected bike thieves Monday, 28 March at the LNP Headquarters in Monrovia, Police Spokesman Moses

police received information about a citizen's bike that was taken away around the Bend and Stop area in Barnersville.

"These are individuals who are alleged to have been rampaging the entire Somalia Drive of some of our innocent citizens' bikes; bikes taken away from them through dubious and criminal means," Mr. Carter explains.

In the wake of rampaging bike thievery along the Somalia Drive route, Carter indicates that police have taken steps by activating a Police Support Unit

under either cutlass, knife or some other deadly weapons and the bikes are taken away from them. And so we have been running a lot of intelligence in ensuring that we can clamp down on this act of which some of our citizens have been victimized," Carter says.

However, he says since the team of armed PSU officers was set up in New Georgia Junction, "the situation has improved."

He details that the PSU officers are not only limited to the New Georgia Junction, but the route of Somalia Drive as a way of responding to crime scenes there.

"Some citizens have complained of their bikes being hijacked from them through several other means; either means by which they are dropped or means by which their operators are hijacked," Carter adds.

The police spokesman sounds a warning to motorbike thieves on Somalia Drive or anywhere in Liberia to desist now or they will be made to face the full weight of the law.

According to him, the police have made significant progress in arresting some of the suspects for their involvement in motorbike theft, adding that those arrested will be duly charged and forwarded to court.

Carter assures the public that the police remain committed in ensuring that those engaged in these acts will not go with impunity, urging citizens to also continue to share information with the police for a successful fight against crimes.

He calls on the citizenry, especially bike operators to be mindful about who they drive, given the sinister motives of the bike hijackers.

(PSU) team at the New Georgia Junction, saying the essence of the armed PSU officers' presence there is to effectively respond to such situations.

He explains that sometimes some of the hijackers pretend as though they are passengers, sit on the bike and direct the bike operator to wherever a dragnet has already been set and once they arrive, the operator is threatened with deadly weapons and the bike is taken away.

"The bike operator is placed



Carter said LNP will improve on its night patrols with the few vehicles the police have received from the government.

According to him, the alleged bike thieves arrested include the group ring leader Alfred Tawaeh, 22, alias Chemical; Edward Mamulu, 20, alias Automatic; Amara Sesay, 20, alias Rickey Ross; and Abraham Condy, 22, alias Hard Head Boy.

He discloses that the four suspects were arrested after

If Jesus Christ lifted your hand, I'll beat you

- River Gee Lawmaker tells opponents

By Lewis S. Teh

River Gee County Representative Alexander Poure vows to defeat all of his opponents at the poll in next election.

"Look gentleman, I'm not deterred, but I can say this without any form of fear that if Jesus Christ himself lifted your hand in my district, I'll beat you", he vows.

Representative Poure hosted a news conference in his office at the Capitol over the weekend, at which time he officially declared his membership for the ruling Coalition for Democratic

government comprises of three separate branches. "And having formed part of one of them, it was prudent for me to help them succeed for the benefit of the Liberian people."

Representative Alexander Poure, who was a strong member of the opposition All Liberian Party, a constituent party of the four Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) says he has absolutely no regret in leaving the ALP and by extension, the CPP, noting that he tendered in his letter of resignation several days before joining the governing CDC.

He disclosed that the



Representative Alexander Poure

Change.

When quizzed what triggered his decision to pledge support, and join the ruling CDC, Rep. Poure said his decision was triggered as a result of his personal conviction, and with support and call of the people he represents.

"When the people whom I represent petition me for a particular job, I as a representative, have no option but to obey them".

According to him, it was also necessary to bring his expertise on board since the

decision was taken during President Weah's first leg of nationwide tour when the reception received from the party hierarchy was welcoming.

Asked how will the CDC hierarchy see him following the role he played that led to the ruling party losing the recent senatorial election in River Gee County, Representative Alexander Poure quickly replies, "During the just ended senatorial elections I was in the opposition, and at such I was under obligation to making sure

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Government representatives.

CEO Lowe told the diplomats AML is planning to make a bold step into the future with the resumption of its expansion project known as Phase II at an additional cost of approximately \$800m, taking AML's total investment in Liberia to over \$2.5Bn. The AML expansion will triple production from 5mtpa of direct shipment ore (DSO) to 15mtpa of high-value concentrate product with plans for further growth in the future.

Mr Lowe added that the project represents major

Top diplomats

economic and social benefits for the government and people of Liberia in jobs, revenue, and social development.

The current model of operations will be transformed with the introduction of expanded mining, state-of-the-art processing technology, and upgrades to rail and port infrastructure. Importantly, the project will also involve developing the skills of Liberians and expanding the life of the mine for up to thirty years.

Lowe said: "ArcelorMittal Liberia has been in Liberia since 2006, and we are in this for the

long haul. We intend to be a part of Liberia's long term future, delivering growth for the benefit of the country, community, employees, and shareholders."

Ambassadors provide feedback

U.S. Ambassador McCarthy described the ArcelorMittal Liberia investment as a "hope for the future of Liberia" and encouraged the company and staff to continue the good work.

He said the AML VTC is exactly what Liberia needs, noting that the company has

put the future in the people's hands, and they [the youth] need to take it from there.

The French Ambassador Michaël Roux shared similar views about the impact of AML's business and also highlighted the role of TVET in Liberia's economic development.

Head of E.U. Delegation in Liberia Ambassador Delahousse spoke of the importance of Public-Private partnership, and hoped that other companies in Liberia or

from abroad will come, invest, create jobs and give a future to all young Liberians.

The recent visit of the three diplomats followed earlier high-level visits by other members of the diplomatic corps and most recently, H.E. President George M. Weah to the AML Concession, something CEO Scott Lowe said is an indication of the strong partnership between AML, the government, the international community and people of Liberia.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Senate concurs to print LRD48 Billion

By Ethel A. Tweh

The Liberian Senate has concurred with the House of Representatives for the printing of new family of Liberian bank notes, totaling over L\$48 Billion in three years (2021-2023). The denomination of the new bank notes are to be in L\$20, L\$50, L\$100 and L\$500. Also to be printed are L\$10 and L\$5 in coins.

The Senate committee on banking and currency as lead,

authorities of the CBL, the MFDP and expert witnesses including, the President of the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment or LBDI, Mr. James Davies, who heads the Liberian Bankers Association; the Chairman of the Liberian Business Association and the Dean of the Economic Department of the Graduate School of Business at the University of Liberia.

In the hearings, the panel discussed the proposal in its entirety, including justification

stock is outside of the banking system and also that there are two distinct families of bank notes currently in circulation including a high quantity of mutilated bank notes - factors that have resulted to serious liquidity problem in the country.

Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Liberia says it can only provide US\$21 million towards printing cost, and that for the printing to take effect, the Government of Liberia should source a deficit of US\$24 million plus US\$5 million for logistics.

On February 2, 2021, the CBL submitted a formal request to the Liberian Senate, seeking replacement of all Liberian dollars currently in circulation. The Bankers' Bank also proposed a currency reform in compliance with Section 23 of the Act creating the Central Bank of Liberia.

The House of Representatives recently passed a bill seeking for replacement of the current banknotes to a brand new family of banknote.

On Tuesday, February 18, the House of Representatives voted following a report from its Committee on Banking and Currency, and a resolution. Over 60 Representatives signed the resolution in agreement to authorize the printing of the new family banknotes.

According to the resolution, the printing of L\$48.733 billion new banknotes, as requested by the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL), will replace the current family of banknotes including the L\$8 billion-plus mutilated Liberian dollars in the market. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**



followed by the committees on Public Account, Ways, Means and Finance and the Judiciary Human Rights Claims and Petition met with committees from the House of Representatives and had a joint hearing with officials of the Central Bank of Liberia and the Minister of Finance and Development Planning to justify request for complete replacement of the existing Liberian bank notes.

The joint committee for the second time met with

for printing, volume of money, economic implications, cost, sources of funding, internal control measures and other procedures.

The committee reports that all of the expert witnesses that appeared confirmed the need to print new family of Liberian bank notes, noting that their input and recommendation influenced its works. The committee added that there was sufficient justifications to print new money, noting that 89.36 percent of Liberian money

U.S Ambassador

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operations and enhance the efficiency of the handling of cash and cash movement in the rural parts of the country and also serve as CBL's replenishment point, including replacement of mutilated banknotes.

Further stressing on the importance of cash hubs, the Executive Governor highlighted the absence of commercial banks in six (6) of the fifteen (15) counties, many of which have mining communities. The investment, Governor Tarlue added, will drastically lessen the burden commercial banks face in shipping cash from Monrovia to leeward counties and will drastically reduce the cost of doing business for them.

The Executive Governor disclosed that one cash hub is undergoing construction in Gbarnga City, Bong County, with three others planned for key counties.

The meeting also highlighted ongoing engagements with National

Stakeholders about currency reform to print a new family of Liberian dollar currency that will ease the lingering liquidity challenges in the financial sector and the economy at large.

Executive Governor Tarlue reassured the visiting American Ambassador that accountability will be the guiding principle before, during and after the printing as well as infusion of the new family of banknotes to enhance confidence in the banking system, although, with hindsight, Executive Governor Tarlue said the Bank has made notable improvement in the internal operations and control processes over the last one year on account of commitment by Management of the CBL, to implement much of the recommendations of Kroll Associates. The proposed printing of a new family of Liberian dollar currencies will further enhance confidence in the banking system and support monetary policy operations, the Executive Governor concluded.

If Jesus Christ lifted

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the CPP candidate wins."

Meanwhile, the River Gee Lawmaker says those who claim his support for the CDC is meant to secure his job is unfortunate, saying, "I'm not joining the CDC to secure any job, because even Jesus Christ himself hold your hand in my district I will beat you."

Rep. Poure: "So many reasons led me to the CDC, and one of those I am a southeaster and I feel this is an opportunity to support our own, because when it slips

then you might not see such opportunity again".

At the same time he calls on fellow lawmakers both in the opposition and the ruling Coalition for Democratic Change to work in close collaboration for the benefit of the people, saying, if anyone claims that he or she is in opposition so they wouldn't help to rebuild the country then it will be the ordinary people who will suffer." **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**

Mo Ali defends Facebook post

By Bridgett Milton

Days after his release from Police custody in Monrovia, the secretary general for the opposition Unity Party Mohammed Ali says he stands by his post that drew attention of the Liberia National Police which invited him for questioning.

Speaking Monday on Okay Morning Rush hosted by Okay FM 99.5, Mr Ali said when people make statement, they should be responsible for their utterance and this is why he takes responsibility for his post.

He claimed that his Facebook post dated March 1, 2021 against the failure of the



National Elections Commission (NEC) to certificate Lofa County Senator-Elect, Brownie J.

Samukai, was meant to be carried out through legal means.

Senator-elect Samukai, a member of the opposition UP and former minister of defense, won the senatorial seat for Lofa County during the December 8, 2020 midterm senatorial election, he was convicted by the court for misapplication of over US\$1 million of soldiers' welfare funds.

He has agreed to refund the amount as requested by the court but still faces legal challenges at the Supreme Court, which is impeding his formal certification by the National Elections Commission.

Ali was arrested by the Liberia National Police last Thursday and subsequently released Friday morning on orders of the Minister of Justice Cllr. Frank Musa Dean.

He vowed not to tone-down

on issues affecting the Liberian people, adding he 'has no regrets' for previous comments posted on his social media which prompted Police call-in and his subsequent incarceration on multiple charges.

The opposition politician clarifies that grievances on electoral matters in the country will be addressed through legal means instead of engaging in violence.

Mr. Mo Ali was charge with terrorism, criminal attempt to commit murder, arson and terrorist threat.

Meanwhile, Police spokesperson Moses Carter confirms here that Mr. Ali was released to his lawyer last Friday and he is a free man, no longer wanted by the Police. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**

Français

Le Président Weah solde ses comptes avec le sénateur Sherman, d'autres

Le président George Weah a lancé des critiques au sénateur Varney Sherman et aux autres législateurs en les accusant d'être la raison du sous-développement du Libéria.

S'exprimant samedi lors de son dernier meeting à Robertsport, dans le comté de Grand Capemount, à la fin de la deuxième étape de sa tournée nationale, M. Weah a demandé aux citoyens s'ils avaient des législateurs dans le comté.

« Avons-nous des législateurs dans ce comté ? » Le président Weah a demandé : « S'il y a un législateur dans ce comté et qu'il n'investit pas dans un hôtel ou ne construit pas sa propre maison afin que, lorsque les dirigeants viennent ici, ils puissent être hébergés, alors c'est lui le problème, car en tant que représentant du peuple, il vous incombe le devoir de développer des lieux d'attraction ? » a poursuivi M. Weah.

« Regardez dans notre gouvernement, nous avons des hommes et des femmes qui sont de Robertsport. Si je

dresse une liste de ces fonctionnaires de Robertsports qui font partie du gouvernement, alors que ce comté n'est du tout pas développé, alors vous comprendrez que ce n'est pas la faute du gouvernement », a-t-il dit.

« Je suis entré à Robertsport, la célèbre ville de Robertsport dont on parlait quand j'étais jeune, nous entendions parler

de temps en temps de cette ville, et voir Robertsport comme ça avec tous les grands leaders que vous aviez, alors cela donne à réfléchir. Ce n'est pas du tout la faute du gouvernement.

Les propos du président font suite aux doléances que lui avait formulées le sénateur Sherman dans un discours, le priant de bien

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La NEC organisera une conférence des parties prenantes nationales

La Commission électorale nationale (NEC), par le biais de sa section de suivis et d'évaluation, organise ce mardi une conférence de deux jours sur les leçons apprises par les parties prenantes nationales sur les élections sénatoriales spéciales du 8 décembre 2020, le référendum constitutionnel et les élections législatives

partielles.

Près de 100 participants, y compris des représentants des partis politiques, des représentants du parlement national, des membres du corps diplomatique, tels que les unions européennes et africaines, des groupes de la société civile et le gouvernement du Libéria discuteront sous le thème des leçons apprises, Réfléchir,

apprendre et Innover.

Selon la directrice de la Section de Suivis et d'Évaluation de la NEC, Ernestine Kenyan Bass, les principaux objectifs de la conférence externe sur les leçons apprises sont de concevoir et de proposer des stratégies sur la manière dont la NEC peut améliorer sa prestation de services conformément à son mandat ainsi qu'à la budgétisation et au financement. En ce qui concerne l'éducation civique et électorale, ainsi que la participation inclusive des femmes, des personnes handicapées et l'enregistrement des électeurs et les mises à jour.

Mme Bass a déclaré que la Conférence sur les leçons apprises des parties prenantes vise également à recueillir des informations sur les réalisations et les défis lors de la planification et de l'exécution des élections sénatoriales spéciales de 2020 et du référendum.

Elle a déclaré que les

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Éditorial

Les médias libériens ont aussi besoin de renforcement des capacités institutionnelles

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, ou plus, des partenaires étrangers ont dépensé des millions de dollars au Libéria pour former des journalistes et des rédacteurs en chef sans penser au renforcement des capacités institutionnelles, qui est un élément clé pour les rendre dynamiques.

De la MINUL en passant par d'autres partenaires au développement internationaux, dont l'IREX et l'Internews, des millions de dollars américains ont été consacrés à la formation, mais malgré l'afflux de fonds venus des organisations locales et internationales, l'impact laisse beaucoup à désirer.

La formation à elle seule n'a pas vraiment aidé à renforcer les médias, car le personnel formé professionnellement quitte les maisons de presse pour chercher des pâturages plus verts.

Les médias indépendants en tant qu'entreprise ne fonctionnent pas en vase clos. Il s'appuie sur l'économie pour attirer, maintenir et augmenter les publicités pour sa survie. Mais avec une économie dévastée comme celle que nous avons au Libéria, couplé avec un lectorat médiocre et une diminution des diffusions, les médias sont incapables de payer leurs travailleurs et de les entretenir.

Comme si cela ne suffisait pas, l'impact du COVID-19 sur les institutions médiatiques s'est fait ressentir sévèrement.

Avec cet environnement économique épouvantable, les médias ont été abandonnés au point de périr. C'est au fait l'une des principales raisons pour lesquelles le professionnalisme en matière de journalisme a cédé la place à la médiocrité.

Dans de telles conditions, il faut un changement radical dans la manière dont les fonds destinés à aider les médias libériens devraient être utilisés. Nous suggérons qu'au lieu de dispenser une formation de deux semaines, une semaine ou trois jours aux journalistes, des subventions soient accordées pour permettre aux maisons de presse de renforcer leurs capacités opérationnelles.

Ces subventions devraient être accompagnées de critères que les responsables des médias, y compris les éditeurs, sont tenus de respecter pour en bénéficier. C'est indéniable, certaines institutions médiatiques n'ont pas les moyens pour acheter quotidiennement ne serait-ce du papier journal et faire face à d'autres frais d'exploitation, et encore moins de payer régulièrement le personnel.

Ceci est même aggravé par les retards de paiement des services rendus aux clients, y compris le gouvernement, qui reste le principal annonceur du pays. Les malheurs s'aggravent lorsque des organisations non gouvernementales internationales et d'autres dirigent leur publicité vers le site Web de l'Executive Mansion - le site Web du Président de la République du Libéria prive les institutions médiatiques de revenus publicitaires indispensables.

Et chaque fois qu'il est prêt à payer des frais de publicité, des conditions sont posées, dont être en règle vis-à-vis du fisc. Mais, une entité médiatique en difficulté dans une économie comme la nôtre, où va-t-elle prendre de l'argent pour être à jour avec les impôts ? En tout cas, ce débat est pour un autre jour.

Mais la vérité est que les médias au Libéria ont besoin d'une aide sérieuse. Ils n'ont pas la capacité opérationnelle de fournir le type de services dont le public a besoin. Une subvention douce de partenaires internationaux contribuerait grandement à renforcer l'indépendance des médias pour permettre de jouer son rôle essentiel dans notre régime démocratique.

C'est un idéal que les partenaires au développement des médias doivent prendre en considération pendant que nous travaillons ensemble au renforcement de la presse au Libéria. Nous avons eu une série de programmes de formation professionnelle. Mais en l'absence d'institutions dynamiques, les journalistes tournent le dos à la salle de rédaction pour chercher une vie meilleure.

Français

Le Président Weah solde

vouloir aider le comté à terminer une maison à Robertsports afin que lors de sa prochaine visite, il y soit logé.

Le Sénateur Sherman : « On me dit que vous avez déjeuné au Nana's Lodge. Vous avez probablement vu la maison du Superintendent sur votre gauche quand vous vous dirigiez vers Nana Lodge. Le plus grand bâtiment là-bas Monsieur le Président, nous voulons compléter ce bâtiment pour qu'il devienne une auberge présidentielle, c'est-à-dire que le président du Libéria pourra y résider chaque fois qu'il se rendra dans notre comté. S'il vous plaît, Monsieur le Président, aidez-nous à terminer cette maison d'hôtes afin que vous puissiez y loger lors de votre visite. Nous vous exaltons, vous implorons et vous implorons d'achever ce bâtiment ». Mais, pour Weah, si les législateurs avaient suffisamment planifié pour faire un usage judicieux des fonds de développement régional qui leur sont alloués toutes les années, ils ne feraient pas cette demande.

Weah : « Et ce que je veux dire ici, ce que je veux dire

ici, il y a les fonds de développement des comtés. Maintenant, il faut revoir votre stratégie. Je demande aux dirigeants de Capemount et à mes anciens collègues de revoir leur plan. Si vous décidez et chaque année réalisez un projet pour le comté, avant que les 9 années ne s'écoulent, vous aurez développé ce comté.

« Supposons que chaque année vous gagnez 1,6 million de dollars, vous construisez une route cette année, l'année prochaine vous construisez un hôtel et l'autre année vous mettez la lumière. Vous verrez un changement », a-t-il dit.

M. Weah a dit qu'il est important que les fonctionnaires du gouvernement disent à leurs citoyens la vérité sur leur propre rôle au sein du gouvernement lorsqu'ils leur parlent plutôt que de les faire applaudir pour rien.

« Nous devons aller au parlement dans tout ce que nous faisons pour demander leur avis. Donc, si un parlementaire se tient ici... lorsque nous sommes à ce podium et que nous parlons à notre peuple, nous devons être honnêtes, nous devons être prêts à leur dire la vérité.

La NEC organisera une

objectifs visent également à obtenir des commentaires du personnel de la NEC et des principales parties prenantes électorales sur l'organisation des élections spéciales de 2020 et des processus référendaires, le jour des élections et les opérations post-électorales, la violence lors des élections, y compris la violence à l'égard des femmes et la résolution des contentieux électoraux.

« Les recommandations qui seront adoptées à l'issue de la conférence des parties prenantes incluront des priorités à court, moyen et

long terme, réalistes et réalisables, mises en œuvre grâce à une planification appropriée et un calendrier clair », a déclaré Ernestine Kenyan Bass. La Section du suivi et de l'évaluation de la Commission électorale nationale a organisé au total quatre conférences régionales sur les enseignements tirés dans les villes de Tubmanburg, Buchanan, Zwedeh et Gbarnga, avec un financement du Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement et du Bureau d'appui électoral du PNUD au Libéria.

COMMENTAIRE

Par Joschka Fischer

Le retour de la politique allemande

BERLIN - Après 16 ans passés au poste de Chancelière allemande, le règne d'Angela Merkel touche à sa fin. Qu'on l'aime ou qu'on la déteste, elle laisse son empreinte sur tout une période de notre histoire. Mais les époques politiques se terminent rarement dans le calme, et les adieux de « Mutti » à la politique allemande ne font pas exception à la règle.

La campagne politique allemande commence enfin à s'animer. Les deux premières élections d'État dans une super année d'élections portent à croire que les élections fédérales du 26 septembre risquent de déboucher sur une nouvelle coalition gouvernementale, sans l'Union chrétienne-démocrate de Merkel, ni son parti frère bavarois, l'Union chrétienne-sociale.

Dans les États de Bade-Wurtemberg et de Rhénanie-Palatinat, les pertes importantes pour la CDU ont coïncidé avec des victoires tout aussi importantes pour les Verts, ainsi qu'avec une proportion stable des voix pour le Parti libéral-démocrate (FDP). Il est donc question aujourd'hui d'une possible coalition « tricolore » entre le Parti social-démocrate (rouge), le FDP (jaune) et les Verts. Tout à coup, il devient réaliste d'envisager un changement de gouvernement à Berlin.

En outre, les critiques à l'égard de la gestion de la pandémie par le gouvernement Merkel (en particulier une quantité stupéfiante de corruption dans l'achat de masques), se font de plus en plus virulentes. Pour l'instant, la vacance du pouvoir à la tête de la CDU/CSU persiste. Le dirigeant plutôt peu convaincant de la CDU, Armin Laschet, fait face à Markus Söder, le candidat plus charismatique du CSU.

Quel que soit le vainqueur, la CDU/CSU devra livrer une bataille acharnée, notamment à la suite de défaites retentissantes dans deux États où la CDU a dirigé durant des décennies un fief quasi-héréditaire. Ces pertes, associées à la montée régulière des Verts, laissent présager un désastre potentiel pour la CDU/CSU. Chaque jour un peu plus, les Allemands réalisent non sans quelque difficulté que la chancellerie de Merkel touche effectivement à son terme. La vacance du pouvoir au sein du camp conservateur va rendre son départ d'autant plus douloureux.

L'ère Merkel a largement coïncidé avec l'apogée de la mondialisation - c'est-à-dire avec l'ouverture du marché d'exportation massif de la Chine. Sur le plan national, toutefois, cette ère s'est caractérisée par une résistance aux réformes : à ce titre, cette période sera considérée davantage comme une ère débat que comme un moment de dynamisme politique. De nombreux groupes de travail, dotés de leur foule habituelle d'experts dignes d'éloges, ont été créés pour discuter de sujets tels que la numérisation. Mais en fin de compte ces groupes n'ont rien produit de concret.

Voyons par exemple le cas de la politique climatique et énergétique. Bien que l'Allemagne ait abandonné l'énergie nucléaire après la catastrophe de Fukushima au Japon en 2011, Merkel avait inversé sa décision de supprimer progressivement l'énergie nucléaire quelques semaines auparavant. Bien que cette décision ait été courageuse, elle a dû faire un « double demi-tour » pour aider son parti aux élections dans l'État du Bade-Wurtemberg. Mais cette manœuvre a échoué. Depuis 2011, le Bade-Wurtemberg - une région industrielle allemande centrale - est dirigé par un ministre-président des Verts (Winfried Kretschmann).

Plus courageuse encore fut la décision prise par Merkel en 2015 d'ouvrir les portes de l'Allemagne aux réfugiés qui fuyaient la violence en Syrie et dans d'autres régions du Moyen-Orient. Mais ces succès ont été des exceptions qui ont confirmé la règle. L'ère Merkel s'est caractérisée principalement par la quiétude, une caractéristique que les électeurs allemands, après l'avoir réélue trois fois, ont évidemment appréciée. Alors que le soleil économique brille toujours au-dessus d'elle, pourquoi prendre le risque de réforme ou d'audace stratégique ?

Après une si longue période de complaisance, il n'est pas surprenant que le pays soit confronté à présent à des défis structurels de taille. Avec la Commission européenne et d'autres États membres de l'UE, le gouvernement allemand devra faire de gros efforts pour surmonter la perte de confiance suite au mauvais déploiement du vaccin contre la COVID-19 en Europe. Les répercussions de la pandémie devront être mises en tête de l'ordre du jour, quelle que soit la composition du prochain gouvernement.

Alors que la pandémie a accéléré la numérisation, il faut à présent utiliser cet élan pour aider l'Europe à rattraper les États-Unis et la Chine. Un succès sur ce point et plus généralement sur l'innovation numérique constituerait une contribution décisive à la souveraineté de l'Europe, en aidant les économies allemande et européenne à rester compétitives au XXI^e siècle. Cela va nécessiter d'énormes investissements dans la recherche et le développement, ainsi que dans la modernisation des systèmes éducatifs. Heureusement, le plan de reprise de l'UE, d'un montant de 750 milliards d'euros (Next Generation EU), représente une occasion historique de faire progresser tous ces objectifs.

Le plus grand défi réside toutefois dans le « virage vert » de l'économie, tout en protégeant les travailleurs et en préservant la cohésion sociale. Sur ce point, la tâche est trop importante pour être gérée au niveau national. Elle devra être réalisée collectivement, au niveau européen, par le biais d'une Union européenne qui a atteint le rang d'une puissance mondiale en soi.

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'Crazy' for Development

Cont'd from page 5

ever state-of-the-art hospital for the armed forces and paramilitary is already complete. Another huge hospital complex, the new Redemption Hospital, is nearly complete, while groundbreaking has already taken place for a similar modern facility on the Western flank of Liberia, specifically Gbapolu. Meanwhile, there is also restlessness to contain COVID-19, as the country is widely internationally praised for its incredible handling of the pandemic.

The list of development initiatives, both completed and ongoing within three years and earmarked to be completed in six years, and a litany of projects broken ground for during the first two nationwide tours, is long for a single commentary. It calls for a 300-page yearbook.

But the point being made here is that Liberians and friends of Liberia did not see this level of intentional craziness for development in the past. Yes, there were attempts, or say efforts in the past, by one administration or the other to undertake some aspects of development or another and at one time or the other. Absolutely, there is no reason to discredit any one or the other on this. But the undisputed true is, what is currently ongoing in this country, and under the watch of the 24th President of this Republic, in terms of development and transformation strides in just three years, is purely, utterly stunning and crazy. Bundling up all and every development need at once, and doing so in a measured, deliberate, hasty and skillful way, and for all counties and communities, is stunningly rare and unprecedented in history.

What makes this President's courage for rapid development more inconceivable and crazy is this—toting the responsibility of building more paved roads, more decent housing units for the poor, many huge hospitals, countless decent market halls, driving away long time darkness away with lightening of streets, expanding electricity, providing free college education and free public examinations, etc.—is not only because everything is being done at the same time and with unusual speed. It is also because this is happening when the country's breadbasket or revenue regime has hit its worst famine.

The economists will admit, and say all this is happening when the value and taste for Liberia's traditional sources of revenue such as iron ore, rubber, timber, etc. on the international market have grossly diminished. They will say, for instance, that what has got things a bit buoyant during the decade and half that followed the end of civil war—the period between 2003 and 2017—was the huge presence of foreign forces on



the ground, the massive international goodwill and the excuse of 'we are just from war'.

But with all the advantages and opportunities of yesteryears nearly dried up—former Vice President Joseph NyumahBoakai would say "squandered"—it is expected and natural that the Liberian economy would emaciate and get malnourished. And it would also be expected that the Government which bumped into the raging drought would decide to pick and choose, and even downplay some development needs and just simply shrug full commitment towards speedy national transformative developments.

Because, after all, even those who presided over epochs of Liberia's Gold Ages—like when the country's per capita income toppled all nations on Planet Earth except for Japan and also between 2006 and 2017—made excuses. Some had said, "We cannot do what past leaders from Joseph Jenkins Roberts' time could not do".

In other words, while clawing away the fortune of those good old days, political administrations before this period made excuses. They simply, truly squandered opportunities. And with a debilitating drought of things everywhere in the country and out, President George Weah and his administration could have made excuses, too. But they are not.

Let it be made clearer: The President and his people are not saints. They are not blameless. Can they do even better? Yes? But something is however indisputable: For this Government, and mainly for this President, and under the prevailing famine-shrouded social, economic and political circumstances, bundling up and toting on his chest all the critical development needs of this 173-year-old nation in just a short time, and with few available resources, and meeting those needs concretely and speedily without complaining and without making excuses is totally insanely, crazily humane, patriotic and presidentially called for.

One can understand why kids like Habakkuk would say rather divinely that the President is crazy for development.

The big question is, if all this is happening in just two or three years, can one guess what can possibly happen in six or 12 years?

FEATURE FEATURE

Save a drowning soul, OXFAM female scholars cry for help



As OXFAM prepare to end its mission in Liberia, the hope of at least eighteen females in various tertiary institutions is about to be dashed.

The OXFAM Girls' Education Empowerment Project (OXGEEP) runs a scholarship program at three universities in Liberia including the University of Liberia (UL), African Methodist Episcopal University (AMEU) and the United Methodist University (UMU) with at least eighteen less fortunate girls enrolled.

OXGEEP main objective is to ensure that girls in tertiary institutions acquire education so that they be self-empowered, confident, and reliant.

But as OXFAM gets ready to leave Liberian finally, the scholarship program will immediately end while staying in school to acquire their full tertiary education for the remaining semesters seems to be a major hurdle they are facing currently.

The female scholars are all students maintaining high grades points in their quest for better educations, equality, and better future across the three major universities in Monrovia.

The girls are made up of orphans, survivors of gender-based violence while others are from extreme poor family backgrounds.

Like several other girls across Liberia, the stories of many of the young women on the OXFAM scholarship are scaring as some of them before the intervention of OXFAM have to stay out of schools due to lack of proper care and support either due to the deaths of their parents or poor family backgrounds.

Many of them are worried how their journey for education will continue in the absence of OXFAM, an organization good will have kept them in school for the past years since the inception of the scholarship program in 2018.

At the Project Talent Exhibition and Fundraising Event held on the main campus of the University of Liberia on March 26, 2021, it was clearly mentioned by authorities of OXGEEP that in order to have the girls remain in school the intervention of philanthropists, goodwill institutions and the government must take the bold step to raise the needed finance for maintenance of the program.

OXGEEP Project Coordinator Josephine Goweh Urey said OXFAM is leaving Liberia soon and due to that OXGEEP is soliciting support to keep the less fortunate girls in school and bring onboard many of them that are really in need of support at these various higher institutions of learning.

"Because OXFAM is leaving Liberia soon and due to our passion to continue this process that is why we held the program today to solicit funding from other organizations. We want to find people with the passion for education to help these girls." Mrs. Goweh-Urey said. "We are asking influential individuals who want to see women acquire education and have their own role to play in the society. We believe when they are empowered, they will play a significant role in the society. We want to invite donors who will take over form OXFAM to help these girls." She told the program.

"I can say yes, we are getting some positive responses. Yes to some extent it's like 50/50, we are getting some good responses and the scholars themselves are looking at different fund raising strategies where they can be able to raise funds in a way and see how they can help themselves and those that are left behind." Mrs. Urey mentioned.

Out of the eighteen, six have already graduated. Five out of the six are already working. The remaining twelve, two will be graduating this year, 2021, while the eight will be fighting to get along." For his part, OXFAM Education Programme Manager in Liberia Zwannah Kimber saidn OXFAM wanted a more holistic approach in empowering women and girls and that's while the OXGEEP project was focused on having promising women of different discipline that are covered under the scholarship program.

"At OXFAM, we wanted a more holistic approach in empowering women and girls, so that's while the OXGEEP Project was focused on having promising women of different discipline that were captured under this scholarship." He said.

"So why this scholarship, it was meant to showcase to the government and partners that there is a need to support women in tertiary education because they have been left behind for far too long." "The issue here is about sustainability, OXFAM will be leaving Liberia, but we are leaving, and our eyes are behind. To compliment that, we are hoping that our partners (the government and various institutions) will be able to provide support our women and girls especially those that have suffered for this scholarship and even to expand the program beyond this." Zwannah noted.

For their part, project participants applauded Oxfam for securing a future for them.

Gladys Kamara of African Methodist University said the project did not limit her to specific credits but has enable her to stay in school.

"They helped us pay tuition, allowances, transportation, the money is being paid to the bank, and the entrepreneur workshop has impacted my life as a young woman."

Some of the scholars currently run their own businesses since they participated in the entrepreneur training program, others have NGOs.

Apprehension over CBL's LD48bn

By Othello B. Garblah

A request by the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL), to print about \$48 billion new Liberian bank notes at the cost of approximately US\$45.522 million is causing stir here.

The request if approved, would see the CBL maintaining some of the old denominations of L\$5, L\$10, L\$20, L\$50, L\$100, L\$500, with a however, a new currency denomination of L\$1,000 would add.

CBL's Executive Governor J. Aloysius Tarlue had informed lawmakers that the money, which will be printed over a 3-year period (2021-2023), will be used to address the country's current liquidity problems and restore confidence in the Liberian dollars.

But the request has been greeted with criticism with many saying, it is intended to enriched public officials and not address the problems.

Already, the noise over the

economy, requires a clear definition of the problem, the prescription for remedy, and objectives or outcome to be achieved. The former Coca-Cola Executive added that anything to the contrary is tantamount to side-stepping the main vexing issues underpinning our current monetary space and may lead us into a circular path to nowhere, or what I often refer to as 'doing the same thing over and again and expecting different result.

See excerpts of the letter below:

Excerpts of the letter: "The critical problem haunting monetary policy in the Country, as even alluded to by numerous expert reports and analysis, including Kroll, is the lack of confidence in the banking sector due mainly to systemic failures, administrative inefficiencies, and mismanagement. The key questions for the Legislature and those responsible for our monetary policy are: What has led to the complete loss of control of monetary policy by

December Senatorial elections that included LRD 500 notes that were reportedly out of the commercial banking sector?

►The Minister of Finance and Development Planning, by his own admission, announced the successful subscription of auctioned Bonds intended to retrieve Liberian Dollars outside the banking sector. Despite the Minister's pronouncement, Commercial Banks were reporting serious liquidity problems. There needs to be an audit and accounting of the sales of Bonds.

►The Finance Ministry and CBL are still to fully account for the mismanagement of the 25 million United States Dollars. To date, no one has been held accountable.

►The GoL is yet to fully comply with the KROLL and PIT's Recommendations calling for a forensic investigation into the USD25 million "mop-up" fiasco.

In addition to the above



"Missing LRD16 Billion" has not gone away coupled with demands that the government account for the recently printed LRD\$4 billion just before the December 8, 2020 mid-term elections.

In a letter addressed to Senate Pro-tempore Albert Chie, Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor and House Speaker Boahfal Chambers, the Alternative National Congress (ANC), Political Leader Mr. Alexander Cummings warned the hierarchy of the Legislature to exercise extreme caution and critical analysis before giving an approval.

Mr. Cummings opined that this will avoid unintended consequences that may adversely exacerbate the already difficult economic conditions faced by the country.

He explained that monetary policy, like all economic policies intended to cure defects in the

this government? How can the printing of 48 billion family of currency, as necessary as that might be at some point in the future, solve the confidence crisis now? Which should come first, the printing of this huge quantity of money amidst the systemic, administrative, and managerial issues, or the resolving of those defects before printing additional money?

Here are few issues to ponder as the Legislature consider the CBL's request:

►The CBL, by its own admission, has indicated that the total estimated volume of money currently in circulation is 23bn (twenty-three billion). Why is it requesting the printing of 48bn (forty-eight billion), a difference of 25bn, which doubles the original amount in circulation?

►Has there been a proper audit and accounting of all previous monies printed, including the recent printing of 4bn (four billion) before the last

issues, it is confusing for the CBL of late to be heralding the digitization of the economy or the use of mobile money, ATM, and other electronic money transaction systems and at the same time requesting the printing of such huge sum of money, even if it were for reserve purpose. In the absence of proper sanitization of the system and proper accountability and transparency, the problem of LACK OF CONFIDENCE in the banking sector will continue to persist. Also, the printing of huge sum of currency, if not managed properly, especially by what is evidently an inept and incompetent government, will lead to inflation that could worsen the suffering of the Liberian people.

Finally, the hurry to print such huge amount of currency without addressing the many controversies and questions surrounding past monies, especially the USD25 million mop-up fiasco could lead to

NEC to certificate Geevon Smith, Gbotoe today



The National Elections Commission (NEC) has announced a joint Certification ceremony of the Senators Elect of Gbarpolu and Rivercess Counties at its headquarters today Tuesday.

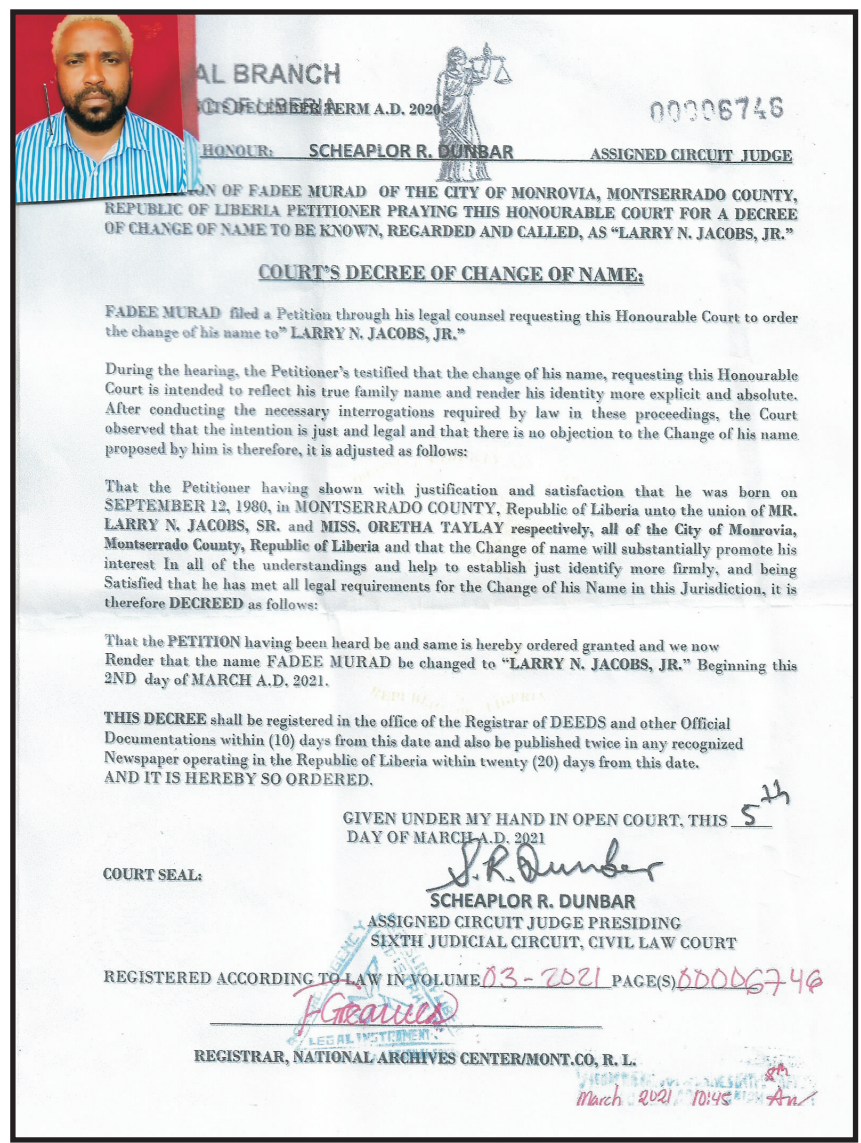
Senators elect from the 8 December 2020 Special Senatorial Elections, Botoe Kanneh and Willington Geevon Simth will be certificated as Senators of Gbarpolu and Rivercess Counties respectively, on Tuesday.

A statement from the NEC issued 29 March 2021, says the joint certification ceremony

starts at 10:30AM in the James M. Fromyan Conference Hall at the headquarters of the Commission.

The NEC statement says a mandate from the Supreme Court of Liberia to the National Elections Commission will precede the certification of Senator Elect BotoeKanneh, of Gbarpolu County.

Independent Candidate Steve Tequah withdrawn his petition against process following the recount of the remaining 104 polling places in Rivercess County by the NEC as mandated by the Supreme Court of Liberia.



the sanctioning of individuals of this government for money laundering as hinted in the KROLL and PIT Reports, and could also put the Country at risk of being blacklisted. We therefore call on the Senate to

delay the CBL's request for the printing of 48 billion until there is full accountability of previous monies and until there is sanitization of the system.

U.S Ambassador pays courtesy visit at CBL



The United States Ambassador to Liberia, Mr. Michael McCarthy, accompanied by a host of officials from the United States Embassy and Mrs. Sara Walters, Director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) made a courtesy call on the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL).

The Executive Governor J. Aloysius Tarlue, Jr. expressed

happiness about the visit of the US Ambassador and the delegates while recognizing the longstanding historical ties between the United States of America and Liberia, dating back to the founding of Liberia. The Executive Governor also expressed gratitude to the United States Embassy and USAID for hiring the Kroll Associates, who provided technical expertise in the procurement and safe delivery

of L\$4 billion to CBL.

US Ambassador Michael McCarthy, in turn, thanked Executive Governor Tarlue and the CBL Management for the warm welcome and reassured solidarity to assist the CBL to deal with the current difficult tasks confronting the Bank.

As part of the efforts to reduce the liquidity pressure outside Monrovia, the Executive Governor briefed the American Ambassador on the establishment of cash hubs in strategic locations of Liberia. He emphasized that the cash hubs will support the availability of liquidity to commercial bank branches and other regulated financial institutions in the rural parts of the country and enhance the CBL cash distribution capability in the economy and National Payment System infrastructure. The facility, the CBL Executive Governor also noted will enhance the Bank's capacity to effectively manage its cash circle

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7

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Top diplomats visit ArcelorMittal - Applaud investment in Liberia

The United States Ambassador to Liberia, the Head of the European Union Delegation in Liberia, and the French Ambassador here have visited ArcelorMittal Liberia (AML) to learn about the existing operations, discuss the Company's plans for the future and review its readiness to recommence construction.

According to a press

release, U.S. Ambassador Michael A. McCarthy, E.U. Ambassador Laurent Delahousse, and French Ambassador Michaël Roux toured the AML mine, rail and port operations and visited the Vocational Training Center (VTC) in Yekepa recently. The guests also held a meeting with AML's senior management headed by Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Scott Lowe.

Briefing the Ambassadors,



Photo Caption: ArcelorMittal Liberia's CEO Scott Lowe and some senior managers of the company alongside U.S. Ambassador Michael A. McCarthy, E.U. Head of Delegation Laurent Delahousse, and French Ambassador Michael Roux Touts at the top of Gangra Mine.

CEO Lowe said it was a great honor to have them visit AML and reaffirmed the company's strong commitment to Liberia.

CEO sets out the vision for the future

Welcoming the delegation, the AML CEO, said the company has exciting expansion plans for the future in Liberia that will benefit all stakeholders. He said AML is strategically aligned to and supporting the Government's Pro-poor Agenda and working closely with

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 6

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