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TRULY INDEPENDENT

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Striker and Midfielder

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Mr. Upjit Singh Sachdeva

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-Says Indian Ambassador

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Continental News

'It Was A War': Ethnic Killings Cloud Ethiopia's Election Buildup

As gunfire crackled outside, Genet Webea huddled with her husband and seven-year-old daughter, praying they would be spared in the latest bout of ethnic strife to rock central Ethiopia.

But that morning in April, around a dozen gunmen broke down the front door and, ignoring Genet's pleas for mercy, fatally shot her husband in the chest and stomach.

He was one of more than 100 civilians to die in a recent flare-up of violence in the town of Ataye that also saw the assailants torch more than 1,500 buildings, leaving once-bustling streets lined with charred and twisted metal.

The destruction continues a pattern of unrest that has blighted the tenure of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, and now threatens to disrupt elections in which he will seek a new term.

Ethiopia's polls are scheduled for June 21, but



Alabachew Belay stands among the remains of his destroyed property in Ataye, Ethiopia,

officials say insecurity and logistical challenges make voting impossible — at least for now — in at least 26 constituencies across the country.

That includes Ataye, where Abiy's vision of unity for Ethiopia's diverse population of 110 million can seem like a distant dream. Since Abiy

became prime minister in 2018, the town has endured at least six rounds of ethnic killings, and ties between members of the country's two largest groups, the Oromos and Amharas, have visibly frayed, said mayor Agagenew Mekete. Genet, an ethnic Amhara, told AFP that since the April attack she blanches

when she hears the language of her husband's ethnic Oromo killers, saying it conjures the painful image of him bleeding out on their kitchen floor.

"I don't want to see or hear them," she told AFPA lowland farming town 270 kilometers (167 miles) northeast of Addis Ababa, Ataye's population of 70,000 is majority Amhara, but it borders Oromo settlements in three directions. For Agagenew, the mayor, the relentless violence reflects tensions over lush land used to grow wheat, sorghum and maize. Ethiopia is Africa's second most-populous country, with different ethnic groups living cheek by jowl in some areas, straining ties as they jostle for land and resources. In recent years tensions have worsened in

parts of the country, leading to deadly violence and displacing millions. Abiy took office vowing to put an end to the government's iron-fisted rule, yet this has created space for violent ethno-nationalists to wreak havoc, Agagenew said.

"There has been a looseness after Abiy came to office, in the name of widening the democracy," he said.

"There is looseness in enforcing the rule of law."

Like Genet, he blames the killings partly on the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), a rebel group that lawmakers last month designated a terrorist organization. But the OLA denies any presence in the area and says officials falsely invoke the rebels to justify "ethnic cleansing" against ordinary Oromos. VOA

Kenyans to sue British army over wildfire

A Kenyan court has allowed over 1,000 residents living near a British military training base in the country to jointly seek damages alongside an environmental lobby group, over a wildfire that destroyed 12,000 acres (4,800 hectares). The fire broke out

in March at the Lolldaiga Conservancy in the country's central region during an exercise by British troops.

At the time, the British High Commission in Kenya said: "Investigations are ongoing into the fire during a UK-led exercise." Our priority is to urgently assist the local

community - we are putting all resources into containing the fire and working closely with the Kenyan authorities to manage the situation."

A local environmental lobby group sued the British army and the management of Lolldaiga Conservancy over the fire, seeking compensation for the area's residents.

It also wanted the British army and the conservancy to bear responsibility for restoration of the vegetation.

The lobby group argued that no measures were put up to prevent wildfires as the British troops trained in the area. Local residents are now allowed to be part of the case.

The environment court also told the residents to publish an advert in local newspapers inviting others who may be interested to join the case.

Last month, the British army filed a case saying that Kenyan courts have no jurisdiction over the matter. The court is yet to rule on the request. BBC



2 Migrants Dead, More Than 100 Rescued Off Tunisian Coast

The bodies of two migrants have been recovered from the Mediterranean Sea and another 20 remain missing a day after two Europe-bound boats foundered off the coast of Tunisia, officials said Wednesday.

Tunisian naval units rescued a total 109 people, the Defense Ministry said.

migrants from Sudan and Eritrea and one from Egypt. They told officials they had set off from the Libyan town of Zuwara the night before.

In a second operation, 39 migrants were saved off the port city of Sfax where they had embarked, the ministry said.

The International Organization for Migration said



Most of the migrants were from sub-Saharan Africa.

The separate sinkings were the latest in a series of accidents involving migrant boats off the North African country.

A ministry statement said rescuers moved into action after getting an alert from an oil platform, saving 70

20 people were dead or missing in Tuesday's incidents.

"These tragic sinkings underscore the unfortunate conditions and the perilous trips of these vulnerable migrants," the IOM's Azzouz Samri said.

Fifty migrants drowned off Tunisia in mid-May while 100 others were rescued at the end of the month. VOA

EDITORIAL

Please help the media Ambassador Delahousse

THE EUROPEAN UNION Head of Delegation to Liberia Ambassador Laurent Delahousse could be of great help in strengthening the press in Liberia by specifically identifying media institutions in the country that he claimed received money to write derogatory articles against Liberia's Foreign Minister Dee Maxwell Saah Kemayah, who he described as his friend rather than to leave such dark cloud to linger perpetually on the entire media landscape of Liberia.

MAKING REMARK MONDAY, May31, 2021 at a Roundtable in Monrovia, the EU Envoy sweepingly accused the media of targeting his good friend, Minister Kemayah, who was accused by a former female staff of sexual harassment, while serving in New York.

UNDISPUTEDLY, THE EU is a strong partner of Liberia that has supported various sectors of the country, including the media in our developmental drive. But for Ambassador Delahousse to have made such blanketed indictment against the Liberian media is least expected and highly disappointing.

THE MEDIA IN Liberia is still grappling to understand how could a foreign diplomat, attempting to defend a friend while speaking at a media roundtable would bundle all journalists in the country into one category. It is quite unfortunate.

HOWEVER, WE HASTEN to call on the EU Head of Delegation to work with the Liberian media to identify and shame those media houses allegedly involved in such unprofessional practices in order to safeguard ethical journalism and acknowledge sacrifices made by Liberian journalists over the years in promoting good governance, free speech, tolerance pluralistic democracy.

SPECIFICALLY, THIS CAN be achieved by working with the Press Union of Liberia or the Publishers Association of Liberia in bringing those involved in mercenary journalism to book. The journalism profession is not a license for character assnigation and should not be condoned in Liberia.

INSTEAD, THE MEDIA is an effective tool for societal transformation, peace, unity and growth, aspirations that the Liberian media subscribes to and preaches.

BOTH THE PUL AND the PAL would never encourage or condone any practice that could bring the media here to disrepute and erode public confidence in its work.

WE BELIEVE STRONGLY that the EU collaborating with the Liberian media in strengthening quality and ethical standards would go a long way in not just promoting and sustaining Liberia's socio-economic development, but attracting more assistance from our foreign partners.

THE SOONER AMBASSADOR DELAHOUSSE provide copies of specific newspaper publications of such derogatory articles against his best friend the easier it will be in knowing those media institutions bent on tainting the good image of the Liberian media.

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COMMENTARY

By John B. Taylor

The Stimulus Didn't Work, Again

STANFORD - Between March 2020 and March 2021, the United States enacted three fiscal packages to stimulate the economy and support businesses and households following the economic shock caused by COVID-19. President Donald Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act on March 27, 2020, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act on December 27, and these were followed by President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan on March 11, 2021.

With each round of legislation, an "economic impact payment" (EIP) was paid out to people through direct deposit, a check, or with a special prepaid debit card, and in each case, the idea was that the funds would be spent on consumption to support aggregate demand and thereby stimulate the overall economy. The EIPs came in specific dollar amounts ranging from \$600 to \$1,400 for an individual and from \$1,200 to \$2,800 for married taxpayers up to a certain income threshold.

The rationale for these temporary payments was based on the Keynesian consumption function, according to which an increase in income increases spending and thereby boosts the economy. But alternative views, such as the permanent income hypothesis that Milton Friedman first articulated in the 1950s, hold that such increases in income lead to only small increases in consumption - if any at all - precisely because they are temporary.

The graph below shows the actual effects of the EIPs on disposable personal income (DPI) and on personal consumption expenditures (PCE) from January 2019 to April 2021, according to the latest data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis. The three peaks in DPI are due to, and coincide with, the three EIPs, indicating that DPI increased sharply when an EIP was made, and then fell rapidly back to its original level when the payments ended. These were clearly temporary increases in income and were advertised as such.

Now look at the PCE line: it shows no increase at the time of the three EIPs. The recovery of consumption tracks the path of the more permanent DPI without the payments (the dashed line). The additional "stimulus" had little to no impact on consumption in the months when there were huge increases in EIP-fueled DPI - April 2020, January 2021,

and March 2021. The permanent income hypothesis predicts that a large amount of the temporary EIPs would be saved rather than spent on consumption and stimulating the economy, and that is precisely what appears to have happened.¹

While the graph is already crystal clear about the EIPs' small impact on consumption, one can further confirm the finding by formally testing for the impact using statistical regression techniques. Here, one finds that the EIPs' impact on consumption was statistically insignificant, whereas that of DPI excluding the payments was statistically significant.

This is not the first time that the US government has tried to stimulate the economy with temporary infusions of income. Like the EIPs of the past year, the one-time "rebate" payments in the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 increased DPI but had no noticeable effect on consumption, and thus did little or nothing to stimulate aggregate demand or the economy. Again, a regression analysis shows that the impact of the rebates on consumption was statistically insignificant while that of the more permanent DPI excluding the rebates had a statistically significant effect.

Back in 2008, there was general agreement among economists that temporary payments would not work as a source of stimulus. Following that earlier experiment, many economists examined the policies and showed that they did indeed do nothing to stimulate the economy. These findings raised serious doubts about the use of temporary discretionary countercyclical fiscal policy in practice. John F. Cogan, Volker Wieland, and I laid out these problems in a 2009 Wall Street Journal commentary titled "The Stimulus Didn't Work."

Nonetheless, there was a dramatic revival of interest in precisely the same form of stimulus as soon as COVID-19 arrived. Rebate payments have returned with a vengeance. Although they now bear a new name, the pattern remains the same. Whether one uses revealing charts or formal regression techniques, the most up-to-date empirical evidence that we have confirms the view put forth a decade ago (or even decades ago): temporary stimulus programs simply do not increase consumption or stimulate the overall economy.



Lord, why we can't promote our own?

Dear Father,

You know, last Sunday most of the churches in my village celebrated Mothers' Day. In some, they crowned women as special mothers and pined all women including potential ones.

But one thing that was shocking to me was the Mothers' Day celebration in one particular local church where my family and I were invited to play guest to the special mother.

Hmmm, what happened there again?

Don't get me wrong Father, I don't know whether it is an obsession or we just don't like our own, but all the songs the choir sang in that church for the nearly 5-hours service were Nigerian gospel music.

You mean songs from Oga land?

Yes, Father, all their performance besides one or two gospel music from Uncle Sam's village, the rest came from Oga Land-I mean not one song was sang in that church from our village.

Father, I sat in my seat twisting and turning and wondering where we are headed as a village and people. Funny enough, neither the pastor nor the choir master is from Oga Land, all including the choir members are from our village but they took pride in promoting the songs of foreign artists over their own.

And I asked my wife, do you think, you can go to a church in Oga Land and the entire service in which more than 15 songs are sung are all from our village or a foreign village?

Father the thing has begun so rampant that when you wake up in the morning and tune into the religious stations, Nigerian music will be blaring all over the place for the next one to two hours depending on the duration of that program.

So when will your own be heard?

Father, this is the one million dollar question, I keep asking myself every day. But it does not just stop at the songs and the movies, even some couples choose to dress like Nigerian king and queen mothers at their weddings.

The Nigerian style of dressing nearly took over my church from its early days during programs and worship services, till I refuse to pine women who had themselves completely attire as Nigerians. Thank God it has completely disappear.

Do you hate Nigerians?

Absolutely not Father. In fact, part of my family, a minute portion is of Nigerian heritage, but the way we have adopted everything Nigerian over our own until you don't even know what is Liberian anymore is worrisome for our future generation.

Father, even some of the movie producers are asking their stars to speak in Nigerian-tongues or accents, which is so bad. This keeps me asking about the whereabouts of our identity.

As if that was not enough, even some of our leaders who should set an example for all to follow, are all dressed up like Nigerians at our village National Legislature, the highest public building in our land.

You mean the Traditional Council?

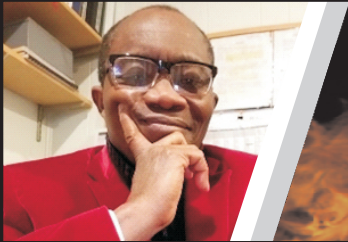
Yes, Father.

I remember when I was in Charlie land, the frequent screening of Nigerian movies over locally made film was an issue. One particular television station was in the habit of filming Nigerian movies over Ghanaian movies.

And so when the locals protested, that television station was told that if it wanted to continue screening Nigerian movies, it should screen three local movies before filming just one Nigerian movie. The argument at the time was Ghanaian movies were too inferior to their Nigerian counterparts. The same argument which are being repeated here.

But today, Ghanaian movies are competing head and shoulders with Nigerian movies.

Why can't we adopt policies that will promote our own rather than flooding our streets, our air waves with Nigerian movies and music? After all not one song or movie from Liberians will ever be played or view in Nigeria.



LIBERIA POLITICAL HOT-FIRE

With Jones Mallay fredrickdiamondm@yahoo.com

Should President Weah continue to be apprehensive over CDC's massive senatorial defeat, or simply ignore it completely?

Political Hot-Fire asks: "Should President Weah continue to be apprehensive over CDC's massive senatorial defeat, or simply ignore it completely?"

The writer is aware that CDC's Stewarts would refer to him as being stupid or has no sense of direction. But the fact of the matter is that the senatorial results are self-evident of president Weah's systematic declining football popularity that took him to the majesty-high of the Liberian politics, where he now served as President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia.

However, President Weah's well-deserved football popularity was not the only factor that gave him the Presidency. Two other political parties stood with the CDC to capture the government in the form of a coalition led by Alex Tyler (Liberia People Democratic Party (LPDP); and the National Patriotic Party under Jewel Howard Taylor. These two parties helped to enforce CDC's overwhelming success through its "Coalition for Democratic Change."

But the political foundation of LPDP and NPP in the coalition is seemingly cracking at a disproportionate level, which should by and large make Pres. Weah apprehensive due to the just-ended CDC massive senatorial defeat which is a political referendum on Pres. Weah's if he chooses to run for 2nd term in 2023.

Pres. Weah should also be apprehensive for three reasons: First, either the coalition base did not support any of his senatorial candidates, or the coalition members simply refused to vote for them either the coalition leadership was simply unhappy over the limited political pie Pres. Weah has to offer them and keep the most lucrative jobs for CDC partisans.

Second, President Weah may have turned his blind eyes on everything they agreed on or he simply doesn't respect the power of the coalition anymore. Third, either President Weah is now overconfident at this time in his presidency after mastering and understanding the Presidency, or he no longer needs any type of political expertise going into the 2023 election.

But the writings are very clear on the wall. The parties that make up the coalition are the same parties that may undermine the CDC in the 2023 elections for three reasons: First, they may feel Pres. Weah used them for his political aggrandizement at their peril. Second, they may also feel that President Weah dumped them and deceived them by denying them lucrative jobs.

Third, the coalition parties would feel that they have nothing to lose, but Pres. Weah has all to lose, because if the CDC is yearning for 2nd term in 2023, with or without any coalition which in my mind is very dangerous tactics, that could possibly be the end of CDC political existence. But the LPDP and the NPP are not sleeping as well. They could be in search of another political opportunity to build a much stronger coalition that may inevitably endanger Pres. Weah chances in 2023.

Other CDC partisans think that Pre. Weah has a very strong political popularity from his football career days which is still active to earn him the 2023 presidential victory whether coalition or no coalition parties. Three reasons account for the President's confidence come 2023. First, Pres. Weah did employ an array of election Commissioners that can easily twist their hands in the direction of President Weah in the 2023 presidential election and make him the winner. Second, Pres. Weah did employ all the election Commissioners who should also return similar favor in kind by making him the winner in the 2023 election. Third, African governments are very notorious when it comes to cheating and nothing can ever happen to them.

Aside from the coalition fallen apart due to Pres. Weah's own political maneuvering capabilities, the ruling CDC has its own bad political odors heading into the 2023 Presidential election could also affect Pres. Weah directly. The first bad political odor is associated with the deplorable economic status of the nation where Pres. Weah has put the economics of the nation in the charge of his friends, who are simply not doing well? Pres. Weah has received calls from oppositions to replace unqualified Liberians with qualified Liberians but he doesn't care. This could cause a problem for Pres. Weah in 2023 Another bad odor has to do with the CDC party itself.

The party membership will need to be revamped to be reflective of a more responsible personality who do not subscribe to militants' ideologies. The CDC should be a respected ruling political party in Liberia, but it is not. There are many level-headed Liberians who are finding it difficult, if not impossible to take up active membership within the CDC political entity due to the type of characters who are currently manning the CDC.

Political-Hot Fire is told that the CDC is run largely by boys who are militants and who make militants' utterances and dress like militants who are ready to kill. Some responsible Liberians at home and abroad argued that the CDC doesn't have a well-structural layer of functionaries, nor does it have well-educated professionals and political technocrats to man its day-to-day political affairs or guide its strategic planning and actionable goals.

Many level headed Liberians in CDC led-government are often ashamed to associate themselves in public with the CDC party officials who are just violence oriented according to one inside source familiar with the CDC inner working. These are some of the rationales while Pres. Weah has to be apprehensive in the 2023 election for 2nd term.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE

FAO: Agriculture will make or break Africa's free trade

Transforming agri-food systems can unlock Africa's potential

By: Abebe Haile-Gabriel

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) holds the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty and end chronic food insecurity in Africa. However, its success rests on countries' ratification and implementation, in particular in the agriculture sector.

Africa depends on its exports to the rest of the world of agricultural commodities such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, tobacco and spices to generate much-needed foreign exchange. But the continent is a net importer of staple foods such as cereals, vegetable oils, dairy products and meat.

Intra-African agricultural trade as a percentage of total African agricultural trade consistently remains below 20 per cent, one of the lowest for any region. Total trade between African countries was just 2 per cent during 2015-2017, compared to 67 per cent for intra-regional trade among European countries, 61 per cent for Asia, and 47 per cent for the Americas, according to the UN's trade organization UNCTAD.

The AfCFTA aims to change that. It created the largest free trade area in the world, representing a market of 1.2 billion consumers, and commits countries to remove most tariffs and non-tariff barriers to improve the flow of goods and services across countries, boosting economic growth along the way.

But since trading under the AfCFTA started on 1 January 2021, only 36 out of the 55 African Union member states have ratified the agreement.

Importance of agriculture

It is in agriculture where the AfCFTA's ambitions can find the most fertile ground, in particular through developing inclusive regional value chains around priority commodities, led by a dynamic and diverse private sector of smallholders, commercial farmers, processors and service providers.

Africa's single market has the potential to create a positive, more competitive business environment for agriculture, encouraging further investments and ultimately a modern, dynamic, productive, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agriculture sector that can lift millions of Africans out of poverty.

Strengthening national food production capacities and linkages to regional markets will provide a strong basis for countries to boost regional trade. Policies and programmes need to encourage the private sector to inject new

investments, add value to commodities, compete with imports, and create jobs.

Regional approach

Many of the continent's regional economic communities have already identified strategic commodities for further development into regional value chains: Eastern Africa has prioritised rice, beans and dairy, among others. West Africa has prioritised sorghum,



livestock, fish and aquaculture products, among others. Southern Africa's priorities include soya beans and groundnuts.

This regional approach has the potential to absorb smallholder farmers including women and youth, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and connect them to the larger private sector which dominates input and output markets.

Increased integration of stakeholders along agricultural value chains, from farmers to processors, transporters to retailers, is likely to create sustainable jobs and improve long-term agricultural productivity and, ultimately, food security and nutrition.

Many of the continent's regional economic communities have already identified strategic commodities for further development into regional value chains: Eastern Africa has prioritised rice, beans and dairy, among others. West Africa has prioritised sorghum, livestock, fish and aquaculture products, among others. Southern Africa's priorities include soya beans and groundnuts.

In this International Year of Fruits and Vegetables, reduced tariffs on fresh food and the gradual elimination of non-tariff barriers could see more people in Africa able to afford nutritious, diverse foods - FAO's latest analysis shows that almost a billion people in Africa cannot afford a healthy diet.

Paradigm shift away from business as usual

Increased trade between African countries is a paradigm shift away from business as usual. The success of the world's largest free trade area rests on governments and the private sector.

Countries and companies face major hurdles such as addressing incompatible rules of origin and food safety and labelling requirements, and must overcome poor infrastructure such as telecommunications and road networks, and the need for quality market information.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the African Union recently launched a framework to support countries to adapt to the new single market.

A key objective of the Framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services is to support countries to triple intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services which is one of the seven commitments undertaken by African governments under the Malabo Declaration adopted in 2014.

Enabling a robust private sector is an important early step, because small-to-medium enterprises are vital partners in the structural transformation of agriculture and food systems in Africa.

Governments need to build buyer-supplier networks, connecting small and medium producers, including smallholder farmers, to buyers locally and regionally. Women and youth must be included in these efforts.

The shift from subsistence-oriented production systems towards more market-oriented, efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable systems requires improvements in farm-level productivity, inputs, mechanization and post-harvest management driven by investments, technology, innovation and indigenous knowledge.

It is estimated that tariff liberalisation could generate welfare gains of up to \$16.1 billion, and growth in intra-African trade of 33 per cent.

Looking further ahead, Africa's single market has the potential to create a positive, more competitive business environment for agriculture, encouraging further investments and ultimately a modern, dynamic, productive, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agriculture sector that can lift millions of Africans out of poverty.

Mr. Abebe Haile-Gabriel is the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

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Weah arrives in Lofa County



Weah arrives in Lofa County



Français

Le Libéria organisera une réunion sur le climat des affaires

Il y a quelques années, le président George Weah a mis en place un groupe de travail ad hoc sur le climat des affaires pour examiner les voies et moyens pour l'amélioration de l'environnement des affaires dans le pays. Chargé de cette responsabilité, le ministère des Finances et de la Planification du développement a mis en place le Secrétariat du climat des affaires pour diriger la coordination et le diagnostic du climat des affaires dans le pays.

Les mois qui ont suivi ont été marqués par la tenue de réunions techniques visant à identifier les contraintes et les solutions réalisables non seulement pour améliorer les scores du pays dans le rapport de la Banque mondiale sur la facilité de faire des affaires, mais aussi pour ouvrir la voie à un environnement commercial propice pour les Libériens et les étrangers pour y participer avec équité.

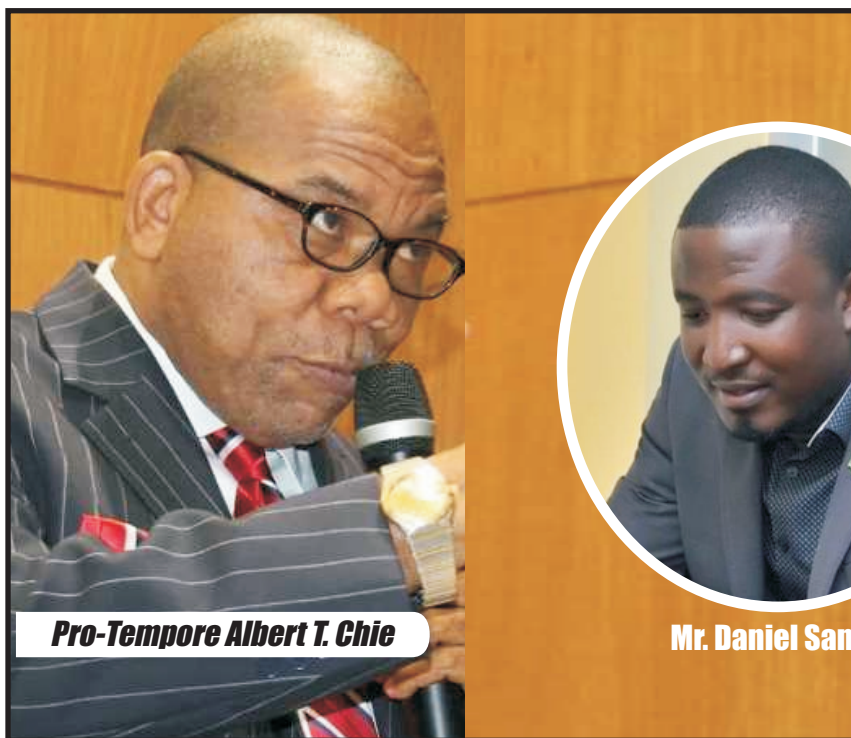
Le rapport final du Secrétariat du climat des

affaires a souligné plusieurs défis clés qui entravent la facilité de faire des affaires dans le pays. Les efforts pour résoudre certains problèmes n'ont pas été faciles à faire, en particulier dans les domaines du commerce transfrontalier qui implique le transport terrestre et maritime. Le rapport de la Banque mondiale sur la facilité de faire des affaires 2020 a classé le

Libéria au 175e rang parmi 190 économies sur le commerce transfrontalier. Les scores du pays dans la résolution de l'insolvabilité, l'exécution des contrats et l'accès au crédit sont également à la traîne.

Afin de réexaminer et de réévaluer les acquis et les

► CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Côte d'Ivoire : le gouvernement «prend acte» de la date du retour de Laurent Gbagbo

Laurent Gbagbo rentrera bien le 17 juin. Le gouvernement « prend acte » de cette annonce faite lundi par ses partisans, après avoir regretté mardi 1er juin ne pas avoir été consulté. Les discussions entre les émissaires de l'ancien président et le gouvernement se poursuivent pour préparer ce retour et notamment savoir quelle forme il

prendra.

Alors que depuis 48h la polémique enfle autour de l'annonce de la date du retour de Laurent Gbagbo le 17 juin, le ministre de la Réconciliation Kouadio Konan Bertin a rendu visite ce lundi au FPI GOR.

À la sortie, KKB a tué la controverse. « Les deux parties sont en négociations pour que ce retour soit un retour apaisé. Maintenant, nous sommes un

État de droit. Gbagbo est un homme libre. C'est à lui de décider quand il vient dans son pays. Nous avons appris qu'il vient le 17. Nous prenons acte », a déclaré le ministre de la Réconciliation. Le ministre de la Réconciliation a tenu à rappeler que compte tenu de son statut particulier d'ancien chef d'État, « son retour doit s'étudier en tenant compte des questions de sécurité, de logements, etc ». « Nous avons estimé qu'avant de fixer une date, il fallait préparer tout ça », a encore déclaré Kouadio Konan Bertin pour expliquer la réaction du gouvernement qui regrettait ne pas avoir été consulté avant.

De son côté, le secrétaire général du FPI GOR Assoa Adoua a indiqué qu'il avait rencontré le Premier ministre Patrick Achi ce lundi, et que ce dernier s'était dit prêt si nécessaire à affréter un avion pour ramener Laurent Gbagbo au pays. « Je dis à tous ceux qui veulent polémiquer de se référer à la déclaration du président Ouattara, du 7 avril, qui a dit ceci : « Laurent Gbagbo et Charles Blé Goudé

► CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Éditorial

Faire écho à l'appel de M. Alexander B. Cummings

Il y a un adage qui dit : « refuser de planifier son succès, c'est accepter de planifier son échec ».

Cela pourrait hélas être le sort des élections de 2023, à moins que l'administration Weah commence dès maintenant d'apporter un soutien financier à la Commission électorale nationale afin qu'elle entame ces activités préparatoires. C'est plutôt l'inquiétude du leader politique de l'Alternative National Congress, M. Alexander B. Cummings.

En fait, il n'est pas le premier politicien à souligner la nécessité d'une préparation précoce en vue des élections de 2023. Le sénateur Varney Sherman du comté de Grand Cape Mount avait lancé un tel avertissement au gouvernement.

En avril, le sénateur Sherman, qui préside le Comité judiciaire du Sénat, a suggéré la nécessité de former un comité conjoint de la Chambre des représentants et du Sénat libérien pour siéger avec la Commission électorale nationale (NEC) et le président du Libéria pour commencer à planifier les élections générales, soulignant qu'une planification précoce empêcherait un report inutile des élections pour manque de financement suffisant.

« Le respect des dates prescrites par la Constitution concernant le processus politique est l'un des fondements de la démocratie. Ne manquons pas de nous y conformer », a déclaré Nota Sherman.

Sur ce point, M. Cummings est totalement d'accord avec le sénateur et il ajoute que l'organisation des élections à temps est une épreuve élémentaire dans n'importe quel pays qui se veut démocratique. « Le Libéria ne peut pas échouer à cette épreuve, car il veut être connu comme un pays démocratique. L'organisation à temps des élections libres, justes et crédibles est garant de paix et de stabilité politique », a-t-il dit.

Il y a suffisamment de raisons pour que ces alertes précoces émanent de deux dirigeants politiques avisés de notre pays. A noter que le président George Weah a récemment reporté le recensement national de la population et des logements de 2021 à 2022 en raison du manque d'argent. Une autre raison de préoccupation est le retard accusé par la Commission électorale pour payer les fournisseurs dont elle avait loué les services lors des élections sénatoriales du 8 décembre 2020, ce, en raison de difficultés financières.

Forts de ces exemples, Me Sherman et M. Cummings ont choisi d'avertir le gouvernement. N'oublions pas que les élections sont une question constitutionnelle qui doit être traitée avec prudence.

Pour reprendre les mots de Cummings, les élections donnent au peuple la possibilité de s'exprimer et de choisir ainsi, les gouvernements démocratiques sérieux ne retardent pas les élections et il n'est pas nécessaire de leur rappeler de planifier leur soutien aux élections.

Nous ajoutons également qu'il ne s'agit pas seulement d'organiser des élections, il faut surtout que le processus, du début à la fin, soit transparent, équitable et crédible. Cela n'est possible qu'avec une préparation rapide et un financement adéquat.

Hélas, à ce rythme, tout porte à croire que le gouvernement envisage déjà d'échouer, ce qui pourrait être désastreux non seulement pour notre démocratie, mais aussi pour la paix précieuse dont les Libériens jouissent actuellement.

On dit souvent qu'« un point dans le temps en sauve neuf ». Le gouvernement doit tenir compte de ces appels et commencer à agir dès maintenant pour assurer la tenue d'élections pacifiques.

Français

Le Libéria organisera une

défis qui se profilent encore, le Secrétariat du climat des affaires doit organiser un Symposium national d'une journée au Complexe ministériel de Congo Town le 10 juin 2021 et la 4e Conférence judiciaire nationale qui débutera le 7 juin 2021. Le thème de la Conférence judiciaire nationale : Le droit, les politiques publiques et l'économie : examiner le lien entre l'état de droit et l'accès à la justice en tant que catalyseur et facilitateur d'une entreprise.

Plingloh Emmanuel Muniyeh, le chef du Secrétariat du climat des affaires au MFDP a noté que la rencontre prévue réunira des acteurs majeurs des secteurs privé et public. Plus précisément, le sommet de cette année examinera les liens entre trois indicateurs clés de la Banque mondiale : l'exécution des contrats, la résolution de l'insolvabilité et l'accès au crédit dans les relations avec l'accès à la justice et l'état de droit. Des orateurs de la Chambre de commerce du Libéria, de l'Association des entreprises du Libéria, des banques commerciales et centrales et de la Commission nationale des investissements devraient faire des présentations.

Le combinaison de la réunion sur le climat des affaires de cette année avec la 4e Conférence judiciaire nationale vise à examiner l'état de droit et l'administration de la justice comme des voies vers la croissance du secteur privé, l'efficacité des opérations de marché libre, l'équilibre entre l'offre et la demande et l'économie, ainsi que les relations entre les prêteurs et les emprunteurs. Selon Muniyeh, les lois qui découlent de la source des politiques publiques doivent servir le bien commun au peuple et par extension améliorer le bien-être de la société.

Les partenaires commerciaux du pays, notamment les communautés peule, libanaise et indienne, devraient fournir des informations sur des décennies d'activités commerciales et sur les leçons apprises jusqu'à présent. Les acteurs internationaux, y compris la Société financière internationale, devraient fournir des perspectives internationales sur la résolution de l'insolvabilité et l'exécution des contrats ainsi que sur les obstacles au développement des marchés financiers. Des représentants de certains concessionnaires du pays, notamment Golden Veroleum, Mittal Steel, Firestone et APM Terminal Liberia, devraient être présents.

COMMENTAIRE

Par John B. Taylor

Les plans de relance temporaires sont inefficaces

STANFORD - Entre mars 2020 et mars 2021, les USA ont connu trois plans de relance budgétaire pour stimuler l'économie et aider les entreprises et les ménages face à la crise déclenchée par le COVID-19. Il s'agit de la loi CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security et du Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act) signés respectivement le 27 mars 2020 et le 27 décembre par le président Trump, et du Plan de secours américain (American Rescue Plan) signé le 11 mars 2021 par le président Biden.

Chaque loi s'est traduite par une aide financière versée directement aux Américains (par virement, par chèque ou au moyen d'une carte de paiement spécifique). Son montant allait de 600 à 1400 dollars pour une personne seule, et de 1200 à 2800 dollars pour une famille, ceci en dessous d'un certain seuil de revenu. Ces lois reposaient sur l'idée keynésienne que cette augmentation temporaire de revenu allait encourager la consommation et stimuler ainsi l'économie.

Mais il existe d'autres points de vue. Ainsi, selon la théorie du revenu permanent formulée pour la première fois par Friedman dans les années 1950, une hausse temporaire du revenu n'entraîne qu'une faible hausse de la consommation, voire aucune - précisément parce qu'elle est temporaire.

Le graphique ci-dessous montre l'impact de ces aides sur le revenu personnel et sur les dépenses de consommation des citoyens entre janvier 2019 et avril 2021 selon les dernières données du Bureau américain d'analyse économique. Les revenus ont effectivement augmenté lors de la mise en œuvre de chacun des trois plans de soutien, avant de retomber rapidement à leur niveau initial lorsque les paiements ont pris fin. Il s'agissait clairement d'augmentations temporaires, annoncées comme telles.

Examinons maintenant la courbe des dépenses de consommation : elle ne montre aucune augmentation de ces dépenses lors de la mise en œuvre des plans de secours. La reprise de la consommation suit la trajectoire du revenu disponible, aide financière déduite (la courbe en pointillés). Dans les périodes où elle a été versée, en avril 2020, en janvier 2021 et en mars 2021, l'aide de l'Etat n'a eu que peu ou pas d'impact sur la consommation. Or selon la théorie de Friedman, les individus ont

tendance à épargner la plus grande partie d'un supplément de revenu temporaire plutôt que de l'utiliser pour consommer et stimuler ainsi l'économie. C'est précisément ce que l'on a observé.

Le graphique montre clairement le faible impact de l'aide financière en faveur de la consommation. On peut confirmer cette constatation en mesurant cet impact au moyen de calculs de régression statistique. On voit alors que l'impact des aides sur la consommation est statistiquement non significatif, alors que celui du revenu disponible à l'exclusion des aides est lui statistiquement significatif.

Ce n'est pas la première fois que le gouvernement américain tente de stimuler l'économie par une injection temporaire de revenu supplémentaire. À l'instar de l'aide fournie l'année dernière, en 2008 le dégrèvement fiscal prévu par la loi en faveur de la stimulation économique a augmenté le revenu disponible des ménages, mais sans effet notable sur la consommation. Ce dégrèvement n'a donc pas ou peu stimulé la demande globale et l'économie. Ici aussi, un calcul de régression montre que son impact sur la consommation est statistiquement non significatif, alors que l'évolution du revenu disponible hors dégrèvement a un effet statistiquement significatif.

En 2008, les économistes s'accordaient à dire qu'une hausse de revenu temporaire ne stimulerait pas l'économie. Après cette première expérience, de nombreux économistes ont examiné les plans de soutien temporaires et ils ont conclu qu'ils n'ont eu aucun impact sur l'économie. Cette conclusion a suscité de sérieux doutes quant à l'intérêt d'une politique budgétaire anticyclique temporaire. John F. Cogan, Volker Wieland et moi-même avons exposé ce problème en 2009 dans un article du Wall Street Journal intitulé La stimulation a échoué (The Stimulus Didn't Work).

Il y a eu néanmoins un regain d'intérêt spectaculaire pour le même type de stimulation économique dès l'arrivée de COVID-19. Les dégrèvements sont revenus en force sous un autre nom, le principe restant le même. Que l'on examine les graphiques ou que l'on procède à des calculs de régression, les éléments empiriques les plus récents confirment l'opinion émise il y a dix ans (et même bien davantage) : les mesures de relance temporaires n'augmentent pas la consommation et ne stimulent pas l'économie.

Côte d'Ivoire : le gouvernement

peuvent rentrer quand ils veulent ». Quand j'ai rencontré le Premier ministre pas plus tard que le 31 mai, il a dit que le président Ouattara était décidé à prendre en charge les frais du voyage du président Laurent Gbagbo. Même s'il faut prendre un avion, nous sommes prêts à en envoyer un. Nous, ça nous suffit. » Face à la presse, KKB et AssoaAdou ont voulu clore la polémique, née d'abord du silence des autorités, puis de la réaction du ministre de la Communication Amadou Coulibaly regrettant que le gouvernement n'ait pas été consulté. « Pour nous il n'y a pas de date », avait-il déclaré à RFI. Si Laurent Gbagbo n'a pas consulté le gouvernement avant d'annoncer la date de son retour, au FPI on affirme que

le Premier ministre a été prévenu dès lundi après-midi. Depuis des semaines, les discussions se poursuivent entre le gouvernement et le FPI pro-Gbagbo sur les modalités du retour. Restent toujours deux points majeurs. D'abord, le format du retour. Les autorités veulent éviter une marée humaine et des risques de débordements. Le FPI veut un accueil triomphal et populaire. Autre question à trancher, mais probablement une fois son retour effectué : celle de sa condamnation par la justice ivoirienne à 20 ans de prison pour l'affaire dite du « casse de la BCEAO ». L'ancien président aurait reçu des garanties sur ce point de la part du pouvoir. « C'est une condamnation politique qui se règlera de façon politique », estimait il y a deux jours sur RFI le porte-parole de l'ancien président.

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India not financing Jeety's hot meal initiative

By Winston W. Parley

India's Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia Mr. Sailas Thangal has dismissed reports here that the Indian Government has been financing the home-cooked free hot meal initiative through which former Indian Honorary Consul General to Liberia Mr. Upjit Singh Sachedeva (Mr. Jeety) has been feeding inmates and less fortunate people over the years.

"I know for sure and there has been lot of appreciations for former Honorary Consul General Upjit Singh Sachedeva or Jeety, doing his philanthropist work, and he's

Military Hospital which is a bilateral project, and also provided 45 buses along with three containers of spare parts.

Amb. Thangal continued that India also provided five trucks, one container spare parts and two consignments of medicines to the Government of Liberia during the heat of the coronavirus crisis here.

He described the claim of alleged external support as a wild allegation which he said cannot think that somebody is saying that, adding "I am sorry, he's doing it on his own, he will stop when he wants to."

The Indian Ambassador said he is very happy that a fellow Indian citizen, Mr. Sachedeva is doing such a great job, "winning

the payment of US\$2m by the Government of India was not done through Jeety, but it was through the Government of Liberia.

Even as India's Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia, Mr. Thangal explained that the Government of India does not pay money to him that is intended for these countries he is accredited to, saying "It is strict from government to government."

Mr. Sachedeva, an Indian Businessman, diplomat, and philanthropist has repeatedly explained here that his food distribution initiative is from Jeety Trading Corporation, adding that "we are not getting external support or internal support from anyone."

Through his monthly distribution of home-cooked hot food to inmates at the Monrovia Central Prison, Mr. Sachedeva said recently that he strongly believes he will be able to inspire one of his fellow businessmen who will also think about helping the inmates one day.

With this aim, he said he and his team from the Jeety Trading Corporation carried home-cooked hot food for over 1,300 inmates which included rice, kidney beans, chicken, water, juice and cakes.

Mr. Sachedeva's efforts in forging friendship, cordiality, peace and love between Liberia and India and enormous contributions to the growth of Liberia's commercial sector have been recognized by both the past and current governments.

The Indian businessman and philanthropist was in April this year honored and decorated by Liberian authorities with the rank of Knight Grand Commander of Humane Order of African Redemption during a cocktail reception held in honor of members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps here.

At that event on 23 April, Mr. Sachedeva renewed his pledge to continue his humanitarian and philanthropist works even having ended his tour of duty as India's honorary consul general in Liberia.

many hearts and souls of Liberian brothers and sisters, specifically the less fortunate, underprivileged."

While praising Mr. Sachedeva's free hot meal initiative, Amb. Thangal emphasized that the first basic need of any human being is food because if you are hungry, you cannot reasonably think or work.

Additionally, Amb. Thangal clarified that Mr. Sachedeva is not under investigation by the Government of India in relation to alleged US\$5m intended for Indians, explaining that "Government of India does not pay any money to Honorary Consul General."

According to Amb. Thangal,



Mr. Sailas Thangal

Mr. Upjit Singh Sachedeva

doing it from his own. No Government of India has paid any money for that," Amb. Thangal said during a press conference held in Sinkor Thursday, 3 June.

Mr. Thangal explained that when the Government of India has a cash contribution to make toward the development efforts of the Government of Liberia, that transaction is done directly from government to government, and not through Mr. Jeety.

As an instance, Amb. Thangal recalled that India has provided the Government of Liberia US\$2m for the construction of the 14th

Land Authority faces challenge over squatter right

By Lewis S. Teh

The Chairman of the Board of Commissioners at the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) Atty. J. Adams Monobah says squatter rights and the court system, among others, are huge challenges that continue to impede the working of the entity.

Atty. Monobah revealed Thursday, 3 June during the Ministry of Information's regular press briefing, that the numerous challenges confronting the LLA range from the court system, surveyors, and illegal land sellers, including those squatting on public lands.

"Look, there are dozens of challenges confronting the LLA, but few among others, are squatter rights, our court system, professionalism, limited resources [and] surveyor," Atty. Monobah said.

competing issues the government has.

According to him, the government will continue to engage its partners, as he expressed gratitude to the World Bank for providing training for 20 staff who are currently undergoing Forestry Institute Training in Tubmanburg, Bomi County.

"We are also carrying on training at Blue Crest University to ensure that we have licensed surveyors across this country because when you assume responsibility and don't have the knowledge, it poses another threat," Atty. Monobah added.

He explained that land governance is a process, and he is sure that Liberia will make progress in that light, adding that given the positive steps taken along with the technicians who are qualified, the country



Atty. Monobah indicated that when someone gives you a squatter right, it means you should stay for a very short period. But according to him, here in Liberia, squatter right is a different story, noting that people who know themselves to be squatter will build big houses and this puts LLA in a very tough position.

He also complained further that two institutions are still issuing documents for land in this country, which he named as LLA and the Center for National Documents, Records and Archives (CNDRA), noting that this poses another challenge for LAA.

He said his administration at LAA inherited archaic knowledge which he said, still remains a challenge at the institution, thus emphasizing the need for people there to be trained despite the many

can achieve its goals.

"While I'm at Land Authority, I want to ensure, in collaboration with the Local Government Act, at the end of this year we should have effective, efficient and well coordinated counties land offices," he said.

LLA's primary mandate is to develop policies on a continuous basis, take actions and implement programs in support of land governance, including land administration and management.

The land governance functions of the authority are to control and manage effectively, impartially, and in the interest of equitable development, access to and use of public land and government land, except reserved, protected areas, proposed protected areas, and diplomatic missions, as of the Effective Date of the LLA Act of 2016.

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Striker and Midfielder

By Jonathan Browne

In what seems a rare public acknowledgement of cozy relations between them despite perceptions out there, President George Manneh Weah has told the people of Salayea in Lofa County that he relies on the wisdom and experience of his Vice President, Jewel Howard Taylor in running the government.

President Weah, who kicked off second to the last leg of his tour of all 15 counties which started in March, describes Vice

accompany the President.

Besides, the Vice President vehemently rejected and campaigned against the governing Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC's) senatorial candidate Henry Yallah in that election, and instead, supported her own choice, Prince Moya, who won the seat, something that glaringly exposed the depth of sour ties between the two.

However, speaking Thursday, June 03, 2021 in Salayea, the first major town to Lofa, President Weah said he usually looks to VP Taylor for guidance

Brownie J. Samukai, whose certification by the National Elections Commission is being blocked by the Supreme Court following his conviction of misapplying soldiers' benefits. Senator-elect Samukai, a member of Mr. Boakai's Unity Party, has been mandated by Criminal Court 'C' at the Temple of Justice in Monrovia to retribute in phases, over US\$1 million misapplied from soldiers' retirement benefit.

The people of Lofa are not generally happy over the delay in certificating their



President Jewel Taylor as the midfielder of the government with him (Weah) as striker, reminiscent of his fond memories from the soccer pitch.

This is the first time VP Taylor is traveling with President Weah on his tour that has taken him to all of the counties, but Montserrado County which remains the last. Even Bong County that situates in Central Liberia where Ms Taylor hails from, contested for the senate and won twice before becoming Vice President, she didn't

and advice to effectively govern, something that appears to contradict previous strains between them.

However, President Weah may be presenting a united face to the people of Lofa in a tour that is generally intended to galvanize support for his re-election bid in 2023.

Lofa is a politically sensitive area for Mr. Weah for two critical reasons: He lost the county during the 2017 elections to former Vice President Joseph Boakia, and also the December 8, 2020 midterm senatorial election to a son of Lofa and former minister of defense,

son, and it is brewing political tension here.

Strangely however, as President Weah departed Monrovia Wednesday for Lofa, former vice president Boakai - a critic of the administration, called on citizens of the county to welcome the President to the county amidst the simmering political tension.

Meanwhile, Mr. Weah has urged the people of Lofa to work with their lawmakers to achieve development programs they are yearning for.

Religious bills are my campaign promises

-Sen. Snowe

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

Bomi County Senator Edwin Melvin Snowe, also chief proponent of three controversial religious bills before the Liberian Senate says those bills are his campaign promises to the people of Bomi County during his senatorial bid.

The proposed acts include; An Act to making Easter Monday a Public Holiday", "An Act to making Eid al-Adha (Abraham's Day) a Public Holiday", and "An Act to making Eid al-Fitr (End of

the Holy Month of Ramadan, the Festival of Breaking Fast) a Public Holiday, respectively.

Muslims in Liberia are advocating for holidays, claiming they are being marginalized, and accusing the counterparts from the Christian faith of enjoying special privileges, including holidays.

In 2020, a group under the banner, the Movement for Islamic Holidays in Liberia called on the Liberian Legislature to pass into law two major Islamic festivals - Eid al-Fitr, known as Ramadan Day and Eid al-Adha also called Abraham day as national holidays.

Speaking to reporters in his

office at the Capitol on Thursday, June 3, Senator Snowe said majority of the people of Bomi County are Muslims and during his senatorial campaign, he was engaged and subsequently made a commitment to sponsor bills seeking holidays for both Muslims and Christians.

The Senator says he's performing his role as a lawmaker but some quarters of the society consider him an 'attention seeker', with no serious intention in submitting those bills.

Debunking them, Snowe maintains he's performing his

St. Francis Catholic

Starts from back page

Mr. Weah recalls that similar situation occurred at another Catholic school - the Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Harper last year, when some students were taken to prayer home by their parents.

It was alleged that some students at Lady of Fatima had terrible dreams of their classmates initiating them into witchcraft, offering them food and clothes, among other.

"It looks like a spiritual or demonic attack on our schools because when this same thing happened to our sister institution in Harper, the priest and other religious people, offered prayers for the school and students."

He called on parents, guidance, religious leaders to keep the institution and its students in prayers.

At the same time parents of the affected students, have expressed fear and frustration over the situation, lamenting their children had never complained about any medical condition before leaving their houses early Monday morning for school.

"We want this thing to be looked into properly because similar thing had happened before at the Lady of Fatima, another Catholic School in Harper, for which seven female students from the 9th Grade class fainted, alleging that they had seen a skeleton in the bathroom, but the outcome of that wasn't encouraging", some parents stressed.

"We are now getting afraid because this thing is not happening at other schools in the county; why only Catholic Schools?" They asked.

They called on the administration of the Catholic Schools System to find urgent remedy to the problem, while recommending that prayers be offered for both students and the institution.

Although prayers have been offered, other residents speaking to this paper in the district warned the school administration to handle the matter both religiously and traditionally, recommending a need to call in the Ministry of Internal Affairs to perform some traditional rituals, as it concerns spiritism.

According to them, the first time such incident happened in Harper, the root cause was never established so the Ministry of Internal Affairs should be involved to avoid a future occurrence.

They stressed that intervention of the ministry is very significant because mysterious situations keep occurring on Catholic school's premises.

On April 4, 2020, citizens and residents of Pleebo were dismayed over the mysterious disappearance of the body of an 83-year-old woman from her grave at the St. Francis Catholic Cemetery on the outskirts of the city, similar area where the school is situated.

The incident, which many people opined is the first of its kind, for a body to be stolen along with the coffin, was reported last year by the caretaker of the cemetery, only identified as Jlahah.

"At about 5:55 p.m. on Thursday, Mr. Jlahah sent his son to inform the family that our mother's grave was broken into," Mieh said in an interview.

He explained that when the family went on the scene to confirm the report, the casket had been taken away along with the remains of his mother, a situation that was "very strange and sad for the family."

Mieh continued that he immediately reported the case to the Kru tribal leadership in Pleebo, local county authorities and the Pleebo Detachment of the Liberian National Police. -

Editing by Jonathan Browne

role and fulfilling his campaign promises and that his styles of politicking is not to deceive people for votes instead, he will push for the possible enactment of the bills.

The Plenary of the Liberian Senate read the bills in session but strangely, they were poised for next Tuesday for further discussions before sending them to committee room.

Snowe reveals that he's already received various text messages from high profile individuals especially, Christians who have expressed dissatisfaction over the bills.

He stresses that the essence of the bills is for religious freedom, tolerant and acceptable co-existence among Liberians.

He says considering

Liberia's significant position as Africa's oldest independent and free Republic, its rich history of religious tolerance and unequivocal respect for religious freedom as guaranteed by the Constitution, and in order to put Liberia on par with nations of the world, it would be a remarkable step were the august body to honor the many sacrifices being rendered to the state by Muslim by endorsing the legislation.

Commenting on the many holidays here already, he discloses plan to also proffer a bill to reduce the many holidays, including presidents' holidays to one celebration, to be called Presidents' Day and to combine both Independence Day and Flay Day's commemoration. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

St. Francis Catholic School conducts prayers

-after mysterious casket appearance leaves 16 students fainted



By Patrick N. Mensah,
Maryland County

The St. Francis Catholic Elementary School in Pleebo, Maryland County Electoral district#2, has ended two days of vigorous prayer sessions amidst alarm over mysterious appearance of a casket with skeleton in one of the school's bathrooms, leaving 16 female students unconscious.

On Tuesday, June 2 and Wednesday, June 3, 2021, scores of citizens including parents gathered on campus to witness prayer sessions

conducted by religious leaders for the school.

But despite the two days' prayers, students have been asked to stay away from campus until the situation is properly addressed.

The shocking situation, which occurred on Monday, May 31, 2021, left both students and parents in disarray and forced the school administration to suspend classes.

Speaking to reporters in the county, the Principal of the St. Francis Catholic Elementary School, Mr. Danicious Weah describes the shocking situation as regrettable and worrisome.

According to him, since he took over the institution as principal, this is the first incident for students to faint on campus, while having regular classes and alleging that they had seen skeleton in the bathroom.

Principal Weah notes that though students had experienced similar situation in the past, it was attributed to medical condition and medically addressed by the school.

"But as they have claimed of seen skeleton in the bathroom, it's very worrisome and as such, the administration of the institution has viewed it as a demonic attack on the students", he discloses.

He further narrates that due to its spiritual or demonic nature, the administration contacted the Priest of the St. Francis Catholic Church to offer prayers for the students and the institution.

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Laporta confirms Koeman to stay on as Barcelona coach

Ronald Koeman will remain as Barcelona head coach for the 2021-22 season, president Joan Laporta confirmed on Thursday.

Dutchman Koeman - a legend in his playing days at Camp Nou - guided Barca to a third-placed finish in LaLiga last term, meaning they finished outside of the top two for the first time since 2007-08, though the Blaugrana did succeed in winning the Copa del Rey.

They were inspired by Lionel Messi, who scored 30 league goals to win an eighth Pichichi trophy, though the 33-year-old is also the subject of speculation over his next move, with his contract at Barca coming to an end.

Koeman was appointed by Josep Maria Bartomeu last year, after Quique Setien's ill-fated tenure, with the former Netherlands coach signing a two-year contract.

Laporta succeeded Bartomeu in March, taking charge at Camp Nou for a second spell, and reports



had suggested he was keen to install his own choice as coach.

On Thursday, however, he confirmed the 58-year-old will remain in charge for at least another year.

"After this reflection period, we have agreed that we will continue the current contract of Ronald Koeman," Laporta told a media conference.

"We're very satisfied with the conversations we have had. They were frank conversations and the coach's behaviour was impeccable.

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