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DATE	BUYING	SELLING
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2024	L\$179.3891/US\$1.00	L\$181.0487/US\$1.00

These are indicative rates based on results of daily surveys of foreign exchange market in Monrovia and selected cities of Liberia. These rates are collected from the Central bank, commercial banks, parallel market and the license forex bureaux. The rates are not set by the Central Bank of Liberia.
Source: Research, Policy and Planning Department, CBL.

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I'm still in charge

Cllr. J. Fonati Koffa

-Defiant Speaker Koffa prays for writ of mandamus

Ghost chases Dr. Conteh



Dr. Al-hassan Conteh

-At Senate hearing

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Continental News

Mali junta chief fires prime minister in row over return to civilian rule

Mali's military leader has sacked the Prime Minister, Choguel Kokalla Maïga, and his government. It follows rare criticism by Maïga of the junta's lack of clarity about a once-promised return to democracy. A decree read on state television by junta leader Col Assimi Goïta said the duties of the prime

and his civilian prime minister have been worsening for some time. On Saturday, Maïga while speaking to his supporters, criticised the lack of transparency in the running of the transition. "The transition was supposed to end on 26 March, 2024, but it has been postponed indefinitely, unilaterally, without debate within the government," he said.



There had been calls for Maïga to step down over his criticism of the junta

minister and the members of the government were "terminated".

Mali has suffered years of jihadist and separatist violence - resulting in military coups in 2020 and 2021. The junta had promised to hold elections and hand back power to civilians by March 2024, but subsequently postponed the vote. Relations between the military president

"This is not normal in a government," he added, revealing that as prime minister, he was not informed about the junta's decision to postpone elections.

He also underscored the potential challenges and risks the current confusion surrounding the transition could pose for the country.

Prior to his dismissal, there had

been calls for Maïga to step down following his outrage against the military leaders. A pro-military group, the Collective for the Defence of the Military, on Sunday urged him to resign within 72 hours, describing his outburst as betrayal.

But his dismissal comes as little surprise given signs of a rift within the ruling class for months.

In June, Maïga openly endorsed a document by one of his supporters who had been arrested a month earlier for criticising the military's prolonged stay in power.

Maïga was appointed prime minister in 2021 by the junta leader, following a second coup against the transitional president Bah N'Daw. The 66-year-old has previously served as a minister on several occasions and ran three times as a presidential candidate. His departure from the government further raises uncertainty about the running of the transition, and his future. There is speculation that he might morph into an opposition figure who could potentially challenge his former boss for the country's top job, whenever elections are scheduled.

There have been mixed reactions locally and regionally after his sacking, with supporters saying he should aim for the presidency while others see him as a traitor.

False alarm over DR Congo hero's golden tooth

The gold-capped tooth of Patrice Lumumba, the Democratic Republic of Congo's independence hero, is safe and has not been stolen, his daughter has told the BBC. The news comes as a relief to a nation gripped by fear that the only remains of the country's revered first prime minister had been swiped after his mausoleum in the capital, Kinshasa, was vandalised on Monday night. But Juliana Lumumba said previous concerns about the security of the site had prompted the family to move the tooth to a more secure location. The tooth was only returned to the Lumumba family by former colonial power Belgium two years ago - and had been placed in the special memorial building. Lumumba was much loved not just by many at home but across Africa for his outspoken criticism of colonialism - and he became an icon of pan-Africanism. He

was seen as a symbol of change and hope after the harrowing years under Belgian rule, during which millions of Congolese people died or were brutalised. But within months of the country's independence from Belgium in 1960 he was toppled as prime minister. At the age of 35 he was shot by a firing squad in January 1961, with the tacit backing of Belgium.

His body was then dissolved in acid, but Belgian police officer Gerard Soete, who oversaw the

destruction, took the tooth as a macabre memento. The return of Lumumba's gold tooth in June 2022 was a cause for celebration in DR Congo - and it was taken on a tour of the vast country so people could pay their respects.

The vandalism of the mausoleum has caused outrage - and when Culture Minister Yolande Elebe Mandembo announced on Tuesday that an investigation had been launched, many feared the worst.



The gold tooth was placed in this mausoleum after its return to DR Congo in 2022

Inside South Africa's 'ruthless' gang-controlled gold mines

Along with about 600 other men, Ndumiso lives and works in a small gang-controlled "town" - complete with markets and a red light district - that has grown up deep underground at a disused gold mine in South Africa. Ndumiso told the BBC that after being laid off by a big mining firm, he decided to join the gang in its underground world to become what is known as a "zama zama", an illegal miner.

He digs for the precious metal and surfaces every three months or so to sell it on the black market for a huge profit, earning more than he ever did before - though the risks now are far higher.

"The underground life is ruthless. Many do not make it out alive," said the 52-year-old, who spoke to the BBC on condition that his real name was not used as he feared reprisals. "In one level of the shaft there are bodies and skeletons. We call that the zama-zama graveyard," he

of Stilfontein, around 90 miles (145 km) south-west of Johannesburg, which is at the centre of global attention after a government minister, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, promised to "smoke out" the hundreds of miners who were underground there, with the security forces preventing food and water from being sent down. "Criminals are not to be helped. Criminals are to be persecuted," Ntshavheni said.

A campaign group, The Society for the Protection of Our Constitution, has launched a court case to demand access to the mineshaft, which police say is about 2km (1.2 miles) deep. The court has given an interim ruling, stating that food and other essentials could be delivered to the miners. Ndumiso works at a different shaft at the mine, and surfaced last month, before the current stand-off. He is now waiting to see how the situation unfolds, before deciding whether to return.

The stand-off follows a government decision to crack down on an industry that has spiralled out of control, with mafia-like gangs running it. "The country has been



said. But for those who survive, like Ndumiso, the job can be lucrative. While he sleeps on sandbags after back-breaking days underground, his family lives in a house he has bought in a township of the main city, Johannesburg. He made cash payments of 130,000 rand (about \$7,000; £5,600) for the one-bedroom house, which he has now extended to include another three bedrooms, he said. An illegal miner for about eight years, Ndumiso has managed to send his three children to fee-paying schools - one of whom is now in university. "I have to provide for my wife and children and this is the only way I know," he said, adding that he preferred to toil underground rather than adding to the high crime rate by becoming a car-hijacker or robber, after spending many years trying to find legal work. His current job is at a mine in the small town

grappling with the scourge of illegal mining for many years, and mining communities bore the brunt of peripheral criminal activities such as rape, robbing and damage to public infrastructure, among others," said Mikateko Mahlaule, chairman of the parliamentary committee on mineral resources. South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa said the mine was a "crime scene", but police were negotiating with the miners to end the stand-off, rather than going down to arrest them. "Law-enforcement authorities have information that some of the miners may be heavily armed. It is well-established that illegal miners are recruited by criminal gangs and form part of wider organised crime syndicates," he added. Ndumiso was among hundreds of thousands of workers - both locals and nationals of neighbouring states like Lesotho - who have been retrenched as South Africa's mining industry has gone into decline over the last three decades. BBC

EDITORIAL

Giving coins to children is dangerous

Children in homes across Liberia are not safe enough. Not least with newly minted 5 and 10 Liberian Dollar coins in their reach. This is because most kids take these coins as toys and usually placed them in their mouths, and eventually swallow them with health implications.

Children are exposed to coins both in homes, school campuses and outside where the metals are given as change when they go buy bread, juice, candy, biscuit and other snacks during recess.

The situation is scaring, leaving a health practitioner in Monrovia to alarm recently, alerting the public especially, parents. A concerned X-ray technician, Jackson Coleman, revealed that he has handled 28 cases, and 12 of them were children requiring surgery after swallowing coins.

The alarming discovery is sparking growing concern among medical professionals and parents alike, as the ingestion of coins might lead to serious health risks, including choking, internal injury, or damage to the digestive system and other organs of the body.

As a parent, imagine yourself one day returning home from work or from business activity and being confronted with situation involving your little kid swallowing pieces of coins that could lead to unforeseen consequences. Surely this is not an experience you want to have.

The 5 and 10 Liberian dollar coins are part of a new family of currency issued by the Central Bank of Liberia, as part of a currency reform. The coins are made of nickel-plated steel and feature a latent image security feature.

Parents are being advised to be extra vigilant and ensure that these coins, which have become more common in daily transactions, are kept out of reach of children. This means they should not be kept or placed loosely in homes that children can easily access.

The Central Bank of Liberia is yet to comment on the situation, but we think there is a need for public education on radio, in communities and schools about keeping coins from reach of children to minimize risks.

All hands should be brought on deck to advert a potential health problem for our children. Remember, ‘a stitch in time saves nine.’

The coins are necessary to make daily transactions easier especially in market places and when riding taxi or commercial tricycles. But keeping them away from children especially minors, is safer.

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COMMENTARY

By Azalina Othman Said

Can Technology End Corruption?

KUALA LUMPUR - At the end of October, the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) held its annual meeting in Vienna. Representatives from 81 member states assessed progress on the organization’s mission to fight corruption through education, capacity-building programs, and research.

Corruption disproportionately affects the poorest and most marginalized communities, making it an economic and social tragedy as much as a political issue. According to the World Economic Forum, corruption costs the world economy an estimated \$2.6 trillion annually, or about 5% of global GDP, leaving fewer resources for essential services in many developing countries.

Digital tools can and should play an important role in the effort to eradicate corruption. Governments can use them to increase transparency, promote accountability, and empower citizens. But, as the IACA assembly concluded, technology alone cannot guarantee success. Policymakers must also commit to anti-corruption measures, deliver leadership and vision, and uphold the rule of law.

For starters, technology can aid the fight against corruption by enabling the digitalization of government services. Cumbersome bureaucratic processes all too often become breeding grounds for graft and bribery. Digital platforms that streamline and automate such services would minimize face-to-face interactions and thus reduce opportunities for wrongdoing. For example, Estonia, a pioneer in e-government, has digitalized nearly all of its public services, from tax payments to business registration, providing greater transparency and making it harder for corrupt officials to demand kickbacks.

Governments could also use blockchain technology and artificial intelligence to identify and prevent corruption. Blockchain-based public-procurement systems would create a transparent and immutable record of tender processes. Moreover, governments have begun using AI and data analytics to track illicit financial flows that often cost billions of dollars in lost tax and customs revenue. AI also could detect patterns and anomalies that might indicate corruption, such as suspicious financial transactions or

inconsistencies in procurement data. Such tools enable early intervention, which can stop corruption from growing unchecked.

Some of the world’s largest corruption scandals have been exposed by whistleblowers. To facilitate reporting of wrongdoing, policymakers should introduce encrypted systems that allow individuals to report incidents of corruption and bribery anonymously. These platforms, coupled with social media, enable citizens to speak up quickly and without fear of retaliation, putting pressure on governments and businesses to act.

Despite the advances in digital tools for uncovering corruption, however, technology cannot prevent bad actors from finding workarounds. Moreover, the digital divide between rich and poor countries means that citizens and officials in the developing world often lack access to anti-corruption tools, despite having the greatest need. This problem is especially pronounced in rural areas, where corruption tends to be more widespread and people may not have the digital literacy or resources to use e-government services or online whistleblowing platforms.

For digital tools to be effective in combating corruption, the people in power must have the skills to spot wrongdoing and be aware of best practices. To that end, the IACA has focused its efforts on education and training programs. Ethics and moral reasoning must be integrated into school curricula starting from a young age. And public officials, business leaders, and law-enforcement officers should receive regular training on the most effective and efficient anti-corruption measures.

Likewise, governments should uphold the rule of law by vigorously enforcing anti-corruption legislation and closing legal gaps. Convicting corrupt actors requires strong legal frameworks, an independent judiciary, and empowered law-enforcement agencies, without which even the best technology will fail to have any real impact.

Rooting out corruption is one of the defining struggles of our time, and we now have a new set of powerful digital tools at our disposal. But while technology can help detect and prevent wrongdoing, anti-corruption laws and the authorities tasked with enforcing them must be granted the authority to finish the job.



Lord, this life ehn, it be turn by turn

Dear Father:

You see, this life ehn, they say that turn by turn. Today, you may be on the good side of life, tomorrow, it will be another person turn. So, make you treat another person well when it dey for your turn. Hmm, my son, da whatin be this one again, you dey feel talk in parable?

Father, um, you no hear say, dey people weh dey for our Traditional Council, dey don conspired finished against de Paramount Chief. Dey don take vote remove him. Dey Paramount Chief say, he no geh problem for them to remove him, bor they moh do dey correct thing. Them say no.

In fact, they no come to de pallor weh dey don make law for our village to remove him. Them dey do it in another place.

You see ehn, Father, make I feel tell you one thing-our people say for our village da wen you point your finger, dey other four don come back to you.

Ley people don celebrate. Then dey jubilate. Bor one thin, them no feel understand is life da turn by turn. To day it be de Paramount Chief.

My son da whatin dey Paramount Chief don do for your village da make de other Chiefs dey remove fhan?

Father, they say, de Paramount Chief don play ball. He dey bring him pekin them from all over de place weh they don come occupy de Traditional Council. Then say he dey geh him own separate departments he don create for loyalty. Father dey feel talk plenty thin oo.

Bor you see ehn, de thin weh dey don tell for our village people is da, they don wan to be audited. De Paramount Chief say make we audit you people to see whatin you don do with de village money-they don say no.

So, na whatin dey Paramount Chief will do na?

Father, I heard say de Paramount Chief don run to our village Palaver Hut. He don tell dey Elders for our village whatin dey don happen for our Traditional Council. You joking!

Lala, Father, this one na be joking matter oo. Na, na as we dey talk so, eh, one Traditional Council dey geh two Paramount Chiefs for our village-we dey inside. So, whatin dey father for your village don talk inside this matter?

Aah, hmm, they say de Papay hand don dey inside proper. They say him pekin them and de Kountry Giant then they work together on this project. They say everybody don fear de Paramount Chief for 2029.

You say whatin?

Father da true I dey talk so. They say de Paramount Chief dey build himself for 2029. He feel gather all dey people from different, different party for him office.

And my brabee say da wah making everybody dey scare for him. So they don say make we break him wings before he come finish us in 2029.

So, you mean all this noise is because of 2029?

Father, da de thin I don talk finish. All de noise at de Traditional Council is becos of 2029-period!

OPINION

By Sophie Scherger

Carbon Farming Won't Save the Planet

BERLIN - Healthy soil is indispensable to life on Earth, sustaining nearly 60% of all living species. As the second-largest carbon reservoir after oceans, soil is also among our planet’s most important natural assets in the fight against climate change.

But the world’s soils are under immense strain. Droughts are increasingly turning fertile land into deserts, while pesticide use drastically reduces soil biodiversity, threatening our ability to produce healthy food. As high-quality agricultural land becomes scarcer, conflicts over shrinking topsoil - critical for crop growth - are intensifying.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation’s recent Soil Atlas highlights the many ways we are losing the ground beneath our feet. The current industrial agriculture system has been a major driver of soil degradation, accelerating biodiversity loss and depleting vital carbon reserves. Yet despite its impact, the agriculture sector has made little progress in advancing climate goals. Its global greenhouse-gas emissions have remained largely unchanged over the past decade.

As countries worldwide set new emissions-reduction targets under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, it is clear that achieving real emissions cuts will require developing strategies to reduce the agriculture sector’s carbon footprint.

One approach touted as a potential solution is “carbon farming,” which uses market incentives to reward farmers for storing carbon in their soil. By adopting practices like planting cover crops, farmers can earn certificates for increasing carbon storage. These certificates can then be sold as carbon credits in voluntary or government-mandated markets, providing farmers with an additional income stream.

This concept has gained traction in both public-policy circles and the private sector. Fertilizer and pesticide companies like Yara and Bayer have already rolled out their own certification programs, while major agriculture producers such as Canada and Australia have integrated these credits into their markets. The European Union is also developing a certification program for carbon farming, and global carbon markets are expected to follow suit.

Unfortunately, the newfound popularity of carbon farming risks perpetuating the false notion that emissions reductions and soil carbon storage are interchangeable. Even if we accept this premise, developing a system to offset emissions through carbon storage is extremely difficult. For such a system to be effective, storage must originate from a change in farm practices and be measurable and secure for at least a century.

But given that carbon stored in soils is inherently unstable and can easily be re-released into the atmosphere by droughts, floods, or shifts in farming practices, long-term storage remains highly unreliable.

Previous attempts to address this instability in other natural reserves have been unsuccessful. For example, reserve credits set aside to offset unintended carbon releases from forests in California are being depleted faster than anticipated after the intense wildfires there. And there has been little interest in credits with expiration dates, which would require buyers to renew them periodically.

While it is possible to measure the carbon stored in soil, doing so is neither simple nor cheap. The accuracy of these measurements depends on several factors, including sampling depth, location, and timeframe. Alternative methods, based on limited sampling or mathematical models, have failed to overcome measurement challenges.

Since prices for soil-carbon credits have been too low to cover the costs of changing agricultural practices, farmers are unlikely to embrace them. In response, European regulators have opted to make credit generation easier, rather than adjusting price incentives, thus compromising the system’s integrity.

Beyond methodological challenges, carbon farming can serve as a smokescreen for the livestock industry. Industry groups claim that carbon storage in grasslands can offset methane and nitrous-oxide emissions. But this scenario is unrealistic, given that it would require vast amounts of grassland. It is well established that the most effective way to reduce livestock emissions is to cut livestock numbers and consumption of meat and dairy.

The carbon-market approach views maintaining soil health and reducing emissions as an either/or choice. In reality, both are necessary, as healthy soil is essential for food production. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found that sequestering carbon in soils - or anywhere else - cannot replace emissions reductions. Targeting emissions reductions, rather than relying solely on soil credits, could have the additional benefit of weakening the appeal of controversial technologies that aim to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Simply put, a market-based approach to carbon storage cannot deliver the transformative change we need. We cannot offset our way out of the climate crisis. Instead, we should redirect public funds currently spent on agricultural subsidies to investments that improve soil health and support farmers as they undertake the transition to a climate-resilient food system.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE

A City in Peril: The Struggle for National Security in Liberia:

By: Austin S Fallah-A True Son of Planet Earth Soil:

As the sun sets over Monrovia, the vibrant heart of Liberia, a shadow, looms more significant than the twilight itself. Once a city synonymous with social engagement, economic vibrancy, and cultural richness, Monrovia has grappled with an alarming resurgence of criminal gangs and hooliganism that has left its streets dangerous after dark.

The echoes of a once peaceful existence, experienced even during the tumultuous civil wars of the late 1990s and early 2000s, seem to fade with each passing day as citizens navigate a landscape marked by fear and uncertainty. In light of these developments, the call for a robust national security framework, including a revitalized police force and an efficient army, resonates deeply within the societal fabric of Liberia. The restoration of safety is paramount, and life must return to Monrovia.

The Dichotomy of Past and Present:Liberia's recent history has been dramatically shaped by its civil wars and the aftermath of human genocide that unfolded within its borders. International observers witnessed the systematic breakdown of civil order and the rise of conflict, a narrative etched into the nation's psyche. The late 1990s were marred by violence, yet amidst this chaos, a semblance of societal structure remained.

With its bustling markets and lively streets, Monrovia operated as an organized trade and community engagement hub. People sought solace in their neighborhoods, clinging to hope despite their dire circumstances. Remarkably, even during these civil upheavals, certain parts of the city retained a degree of safety, especially during daylight hours. However, the contemporary issue of gang violence and hooliganism marks a stark contrast to that historical resilience. Today, many citizens of Monrovia can no longer enjoy their city in safety.

As night descends, criminal elements proliferate, instilling a deep sense of insecurity among those once proud to call the capital their home. The security situation has deteriorated, so residents devise elaborate strategies to avoid gang-related confrontations when the sun sets. Reports reveal a staggering increase in crime rates, including robberies, assaults, and an erosion of public order, reminiscent of a city on the brink of anarchy.

The Urgent Need for Effective National Security:The Liberia National Police (LNP), tasked with safeguarding citizens and maintaining public order, faces formidable challenges in confronting the ever-evolving crime landscape. Systemic issues, including inadequate funding, insufficient training, and a lack of resources, have rendered the police force ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of contemporary gang culture.

There is a pressing need for comprehensive reform within law enforcement agencies, reestablishing public faith in their capability to protect citizens effectively. Furthermore, the military component of national security must not be overlooked. The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), though disbanded at the height of the civil war and later restructured under international supervision, must be amplified with purpose and clarity. Their role should not only be limited to defense against external threats but should also support police operations in urban warfare against rampant criminal gangs.

Military support can serve as a deterrent, signaling an end to the impunity that currently reigns in the capital after dark. Community Engagement and Partnerships:However, bolstering national security in Liberia can not rest solely on the shoulders of law enforcement and military entities. It must encompass community involvement and collaboration. Engaging local communities is critical in developing a multifaceted approach to security that addresses the underlying socio-economic drivers of crime.

Factors such as unemployment, lack of access to education, and systemic poverty lay the groundwork for disenfranchised youth to join criminal gangs, seeking belonging and financial gain in illicit activities. Establishing community policing initiatives prioritizing dialogue between law enforcement and residents can foster a sense of collective ownership over public safety. Grassroots programs that connect the youth with educational and employment opportunities can redirect their energies away from crime and towards community-building efforts.

Collaborative efforts can develop into a formidable bulwark against crime, fostering hope and unity in a community besieged by fear. The Role of Government and International Partnerships:The Liberian government must also actively foster national security by prioritizing budgetary allocations to law enforcement and defense agencies. Political will is essential in tackling the menace of insecurity.

Leaders must recognize the necessity of a comprehensive national security strategy as a foundation for rebuilding the state's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. Moreover, investments in training, technology, and equipment for the armed forces and police can yield dividends in operational effectiveness, enhancing the general populace's sense of safety. International partnerships and support are also crucial.

The lessons learned from Liberia's turbulent history should inform the global community's approach to assisting the nation. Capacity-building programs emphasizing accountability, human rights, and operational effectiveness can lead to the development of a modern police force that adheres to ethical standards and engenders trust within the populace. The Vision for a Safer Monrovia:

In envisioning a safer Monrovia, a collaborative strategy that integrates local initiatives, governmental action, and international support must be pursued and embraced. As Liberia stands at a crossroads, it is incumbent upon its leaders, citizens, and global partners to consciously and deliberately cultivate an environment of safety and security. The vital first step involves airily clearing Monrovia of criminal elements that currently overshadow its streets after dark.



Initiatives must incorporate visible police presence in neighborhoods, community-led safety programs, and youth engagement strategies that redirect potential gang recruits toward constructive activities. Life must return to Monrovia. Children should roam freely in their neighborhoods, families should gather for evening meals, and commerce's vibrant hustle and bustle should echo in the night air once more.

With shared responsibility and commitment to reform from all stakeholders, a secure Monrovia can re-emerge, offering its citizens protection and a renewed sense of hope and purpose for their shared future. In Liberia's quest for national security, Monrovia is pivotal in its history.

The challenges of crime, gang violence, and public safety are daunting, yet they are not insurmountable. As the city grapples with its dark present, the emphasis on creating a vibrant, effective, and efficient national security framework is more urgent than ever. Through cooperation between communities, the government, and international bodies, the citizens of Monrovia can reclaim their right to a secure existence, paving the way for a brighter future where the lights of liberty outshine the shadows of fear.

The time to act is now. Monrovia can rise from the ashes of its tumultuous past and thrive as a beacon of hope and resilience for generations to come.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Cllr. Varmah unveils LNBA transformation agenda

Cllr. Varmah has promised to work for legal reforms across the country to enhance access to justice.

By Lincoln G. Peters

Monrovia, November 22, 2024: The Secretary General of

Monrovia. Consistent with the Constitution of the LNBA, members of the bar are



the Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) Cllr. Borno M. Varmah has released a ten-point political agenda for the transformation of the Bar. Contained in the agenda are key priorities for pursuing legal reforms to enhance access to justice and good governance and to address corruption in the public sector. On Thursday, November 21, 2024, Cllr. Varmah announced his presidential bid for the LNBA upcoming election. He also unveiled his campaign team which was graced by dozens of supporters in

expected to converge in Ganta City, Nimba County, on November 30, 2024, to participate in the Annual Convention of the Association to elect a new corps of officials for a three-year term. During a news conference, Cllr. Varmah said he will be contesting for the Presidency of the LNBA. He disclosed a ten-point agenda that he believes will transform the LNBA and mitigate corruption through legal reforms when elected. "In view of the above, I have announced my bid to become the next president of the Liberian National Bar

Association for the next three years." "To support this aspiration, I and my team come today to launch our platform to eventually attract support from distinguished members of the Bar," he disclosed. Cllr. Varmah named strengthening legal education, legal professional development, rule of law and policy advocacy, global legal network, and knowledge exchange as part of his agenda. He also named infrastructure development, enhanced visibility, and professional growth, among others. The Liberian legal scholar assured his colleagues that his team would advocate for the welfare of all legal professionals, including the establishment of a provident fund for lawyers. He also pledged a uniform pay grade for lawyers working in government ministries and agencies. He laid extensive emphasis on strengthening legal education, the rule of law, and policy advocacy. Cllr. Varmah said he would advocate for the autonomy of the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law and enhance the dual legal rights system, formal and customary justice. He added that he will foster international exchange programs with law schools globally to broaden the educational experience for Liberian law students as was

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7

MCSS wants Monrovia public schools under its control

The Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS) is advocating to have public schools in Monrovia under its control.

By: Kruah Thompson

Monrovia, Liberia, November 24, 2024 - The Superintendent of the Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS) James A.S. Momoh, wants public schools operated by the Ministry of Education in the Commonwealth District of Monrovia transferred to the MCSS. Supt. Momoh explains that the goal is to foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment that nurtures every aspect of students' growth. This will primarily focus on academic achievement, character development, and overall well-being of individuals, empowering them to thrive in all areas of life. Making the suggestion Thursday, November 21, at a press conference in Monrovia, Supt. Momoh revealed that there are ongoing discussions

Education, Dr. Jarso Jallah, to bring all public schools in Monrovia under the supervision of the MCSS. He adds that once this is achieved, they plan to build a robust support network with partners and community stakeholders to drive success of students in those public schools. This initiative aims to address what he describes as complex challenges of poverty, while

creating solutions to uplift everyone involved. Momoh continues that they will ensure that all public schools under the turnover implement programs that will provide essential resources and guidance, and empower disadvantaged individuals by opening doors to opportunities that lead to both academic and personal success. He adds that the ultimate

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 7



Over 2,000 teachers are victims of salary threshold

The Government of Liberia moves here to up salary of civil servants with priority on teachers, security, doctors and health workers.

By Stephen G. Fellajuah (contributor)

Monrovia, Liberia, November 22, 2024 - Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan says the Government of Liberia plans to address salary disparities among teachers by ensuring that starting next year, teachers will be paid according to their appropriate pay level. This adjustment is part of a broader effort to bring teachers in line with the national pay grid, ensuring they are compensated fairly for their work. The move also aims to rectify current situation where over 2,000 teachers are receiving salaries below the designated-threshold and improving the financial well-being of educators across the country. Explaining the FY2025 Draft National Budget here Wednesday, November 20, 2024, Minister Ngafuan also announced

benefits without additional financial strain. The initiative is part of a broader effort to improve the overall compensation package for public service workers. Minister Ngafuan continues that government has allocated US\$10 million in the FY2025 budget to address needs of pensioners, recognizing that the issue of pension payments is a priority. This allocation reflects government's commitment to ensuring that pensioners receive due benefits, highlighting the importance of securing financial stability for those who have served the country in their respective roles. By including this substantial provision, the government aims to tackle long-standing challenges related to pension payouts and improve the welfare of retired public sector workers. Ngafuan, in his discussion of the draft national budget, says US\$50 million has been allocated for



that as part of the FY2025 National Budget, nurses and physicians will receive salary increase of US\$50.00, while specialist doctors, who fall within a specific category, will see a substantial salary enhancement of over US\$200. This move is intended to improve compensation for healthcare professionals, acknowledging their critical role in the nation's healthcare system, and addressing concerns about the adequacy of their pay. The salary adjustments are part of a broader effort to ensure that key public sector workers are fairly compensated for their services. At the same time, the Minister confirms that government will "take on the cost of insurance for public sector workers", including teachers, nurses, physicians, security and others. By covering insurance premiums, the government aims to further support these workers, ensuring they have access to necessary health and life insurance

roads, specifically development and maintenance of the country's road infrastructure, which is crucial for enhancing transportation, boosting economic activities, and improving overall connectivity. According Ngafuan, significant road projects are set to begin soon, including the much-anticipated roadworks from the Gabriel Tucker Bridge to the Free Port of Liberia, which will be funded by the Japanese government. In addition to this key project, other major road developments across the country, such as Saclepea road in Nimba, are also included in the government's plans. These projects are part of a broader effort to improve the nation's infrastructure, enhance regional connectivity, and stimulate economic growth by improving access to critical areas. Minister Ngafuan also acknowledged that while the new budget, once passed, will not solve all of the country's challenges, it will bring

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Liberia undergoes IMSAS audit

inspection and detention of foreign ships are done in line with IMO regulations and then our port state which covers the inspection of ships that dock at the various ports of Liberia. The PSC regulation is to catch substandard vessels to ensure that they are manned and operated in compliance with international regulations. The IMO Auditors will also look at the legal framework we have in place as a country in dealing with any violations,” he stated. The Commissioner stressed that LiMA took steps to

internally review where we are as a contracting government before the IMO auditors arrive. “We conducted a mock audit process as part of our internal assessment. We are lucky that some of our staff are certified IMO auditors. We worked with the certified IMO auditors we had in our institution to help us assess how prepared we were for this IMSAS audit scheme. This internal exercise was very critical because we attach seriousness to this auditing process. As a Category “A” member state, we are obliged to be at the top in every aspect of the global

maritime sphere. Making high marks in this audit is important for the future of the Liberian maritime program. “Liberia is a key actor in the three jurisdictional areas in the global maritime industry-flag state, port state, and a major coastal state. At the IMO, we are IMO Council Category “A” and playing a pivotal role. Passing the audit has reputational benefits - an indication that we are not only affixing our signature to important instruments but implementing them, too.”- Press release.

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goal is to create an educational environment that embraces diversity and values every individual’s journey, fostering a culture of respect and belonging, regardless of socioeconomic background. Meanwhile, Supt. Momoh highlights several achievements under his administration such as sending 15 teachers and 3 students to India for studies in various academic disciplines, up to PhD level. He says they have successfully brought in 22,500 modern corrugated

MCSS wants Monrovia public

steel armchairs for students, and received food, non-food items, and educational materials from the Chinese Embassy near Monrovia. At the same time he reveals that the MCSS has banned sale of uniforms in schools and is currently processing over 200 volunteer teachers to be placed on government payroll. He says MCSS principals and school administrators have been trained by Dr. Mathew Miller, a principal from a U.S. School District.“We are also offering a five-year career paths program for students in grades 10 to 12 to bridge the

gap between high school and college education. We are aligning our academic programs with technical vocational education and renovating the MCSS Central Office," he adds. Momoh also reports that he has signed a MOU with the Liberia Public School Project to supply MCSS with school materials, including discussions held with the Sierra Leonean Ambassador in Liberia to construct a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) school for the MCSS. Editing by Jonathan Browne

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about significant improvements and some level of progress. He says the budget is designed to make tangible strides in key areas such as infrastructure, public sector compensation, and social welfare. His remarks reflect a realistic understanding that while the budget won't resolve every issue, it lays the groundwork for long-term development and positive change.The Minister made these

disclosures during an exclusive interview with OK FM on November 20, 2024, which was simulcast by several networks, providing the public with insights into the government's fiscal plans for the upcoming year. The Minister had earlier revealed that over 2,000 teachers across the country are being paid salaries below the established threshold. This disclosure highlights ongoing concerns regarding the

remuneration of educators and raises questions about the adequacy of pay within the public sector, particularly for teachers who play a crucial role in the nation's development. Further details on the reasons behind these disparities and potential steps for addressing the issue were not immediately provided, but this announcement has sparked calls for reform in the pay structure for teachers. Editing by Jonathan Browne

LINSU condemns Police brutality, economic hardship

Monrovia, Liberia, November 22, 2024 - The Liberia National Students’ Union (LINSU) has unveiled its inaugural committee under the leadership of newly-elected President James G. Washington. The announcement, made on November 21, 2024, also highlights critical national issues, including police brutality on university campuses, rising commodity prices, and commendable developments in the Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS).In a press conference, Mr. Washington said the inaugural committee is a milestone for the current leadership of LINSU, following

his election during the 6th Post-War Congress in September 2024. The committees include organizing, public relations, recruitment, and social culture, aim to unite students and drive the new leadership's agenda under the ARTS manifesto.He named female student activist Yassah Wesley to serve as chair of the organizing committee.With more than 30 persons already named on various committees, he stressed that other individuals will subsequently be called upon by the leadership of the student union to bring on board their expertise for total inclusion. Henry Jerome Varfee, George P. Carr and Prince Gbaryou were all appointed to chair the committees on Public Relations,

Social Culture as well as Recruitment, Mobilization and Outreach respectively.At the same time, Washington expressed grave concerns over recent reports of police violence at the University of Liberia (UL), strongly criticizing the Police for what it describes as “unwarranted muggings” of students, citing incidents of brutality captured in videos circulating on social media. “Academic spaces must remain zones of intellectual engagement and freedom,” he emphasized, while calling on the LNP to cease invading university campuses and to handle student-related matters within the bounds of the law. The newly-elected LINSU president warned against actions that undermine academic freedom and peace in Liberia.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Lawmakers urged to resolve the crisis through a legal framework

WANEP-Liberia believes that a speedy resolution of the stalemate at the House of Representatives will demonstrate leadership between majority and minority blocs.

Monrovia, November 22, 2024: A National Non-Governmental Peacebuilding Organization (NGO) in Liberia has urged members of the House of Representatives to resolve a longstanding political crisis through the legal framework.The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding-Liberia (WANEP-Liberia) says its attention has been drawn to the ongoing political impasse at the House of Representatives who have derailed legislative functions. "WANEP has observed for the past weeks with keen interest, the disruption in normal proceedings at the House of Representatives," a statement issued in Monrovia has said.For over a month, members of the House of Representatives have been split into minority and majority blocs, in a battle to oust or maintain House Speaker Fonati Koffa. The majority bloc announced on Thursday, November 21, 2024, that it had voted to oust Speaker Koffa, and subsequently elected and sworn in Rep. Richard Nagbe Koon as the new House Speaker.

undermine Liberia’s hard-earned peace, discourage foreign investment and donor support, ruin the confidence of international partners and erode citizens’ trust in the protection guaranteed by the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia. This situation, WANEP added, has the proclivity to invite chaos and undermine democratic development, peace, and human security. The NGO indicated that Liberians would never want to revert to those dark days of war years, which broke down the country’s economy and governance structure and groomed monsters that took away the lives of more than 250,000 people, mostly women, and children.It reminded lawmakers that Liberia's war years left over a million in refugee camps across the sub region and other parts of the world. As National Convener of Peace, the Management and Board of Directors of WANEP-Liberia has urged the “Majority Bloc and Minority Bloc” to utilize the legal framework of Liberia in resolving their internal differences.It cautioned that Liberians deserve better after reposing trust and



Koffa's removal on Thursday leaves more questions as some of those who earlier opted to get him later appear to rescind their decision.But it remains unclear if the majority bloc considered the defections in deriving the needed number of Representatives to oust Koffa.Meanwhile, WANEP-Liberia suggested that the crisis should be resolved in the interest of the general good of all Liberians. "This power contending struggle between both groups of the House of Representatives named and styled “Minority bloc” and “Majority bloc” derails Legislative functions and further delays the progress of the 55th Legislature in general, thereby stagnating the overall progress of the Country," the statement noted.WANEP stated that a divide in the Legislature can be equated to a divided Nation. It continued that this could

confidence in those elected into various offices of trust, especially at the Legislature. WANEP-Liberia believes that a speedy resolution of the current stalemate in the nation’s first branch of Government will not only demonstrate leadership within both blocs.However, it believes that it will further project a positive image of the House of Representatives to the citizens of Liberia and the international community.WANEP added that this will indicate that Liberians are indeed responsible for resolving their differences in a more professional and law-abiding manner. According to its press release, WANEP-Liberia is a National Network of WANEP Regional, headquartered in Accra Ghana. WANEP has succeeded in establishing strong National Networks in every Member State of ECOWAS, with over 700 member organizations working on peace and security across West Africa.

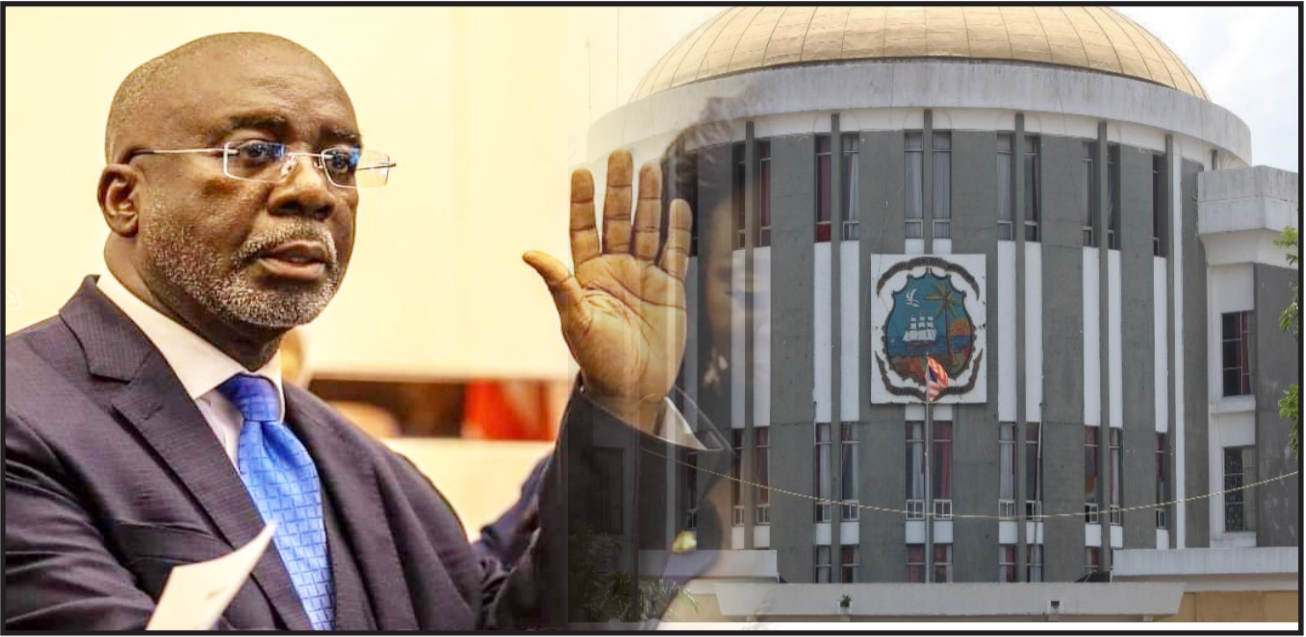
Français

Crise politique : l'avenir de Maître J. Fonati Koffa en question

Le Président de la Chambre des Représentants, Maître J. Fonati Koffa, envisagerait de revenir sur sa position initiale et pourrait annoncer sa démission imminente.

son bloc minoritaire étaient engagés dans des consultations marathon. Cependant, à 16 h 30, aucune décision définitive n'avait été prise concernant son avenir. Interrogé, le Président de la Chambre a confirmé

condition que le représentant du comté de Nimba, Musa Bility, soit désigné pour lui succéder. Un tournant décisif dans une crise prolongée Cette nouvelle phase de la crise politique, qui paralyse la Chambre des représentants



Cette information, relayée par des sources proches du Parlement, intervient alors que les tensions au sein de l'institution atteignent leur paroxysme. Mercredi, Maître Koffa et

l'existence de discussions en cours, tout en précisant qu'aucune conclusion n'avait encore été tirée. Des rumeurs circulent sur un possible accord : Maître Koffa accepterait de se retirer à

depuis plus de deux mois, a été déclenchée mardi 19 novembre par la défection de deux députés proches de Maître Koffa en faveur du bloc majoritaire. Les représentants Bernard

Licenciement massif dans le Maryland : 87 employés congédiés, indignation générale

Un climat de tension sociale s'installe dans le comté de Maryland, où 87 employés de la Cavalla Rubber Corporation (CRC) et de la Maryland Oil Palm Plantation (MOPP) ont été licenciés. Ces mesures, justifiées par les entreprises comme une réponse à des pertes financières importantes, suscitent une vive indignation au sein de la population et des travailleurs, quelques jours seulement après des négociations avec le Caucus législatif du Maryland à Monrovia. Malgré une consultation

organisée les 5 et 6 novembre 2024 à Monrovia, où la direction de MOPP et CRC avait promis de reconsidérer son plan de réduction d'effectifs initialement élaboré en 2022, la décision de licencier a finalement été actée. Dans une communication officielle publiée sur sa page Facebook, le représentant Anthony F. Williams, du district de Pleebo, a informé la population que le groupe Sifca, propriétaire des deux concessions, avait convenu de renoncer à son plan de licenciement basé sur des statistiques obsolètes. Cependant, cet engagement n'a pas été respecté : 37 employés de CRC et 50 de MOPP ont été

congédiés, portant à 87 le nombre total de travailleurs impactés. Paul W. Dweh, président du syndicat GAAWUL Local #3, a exprimé son profond regret face à cette décision, rappelant qu'en 2022, un plan initial visant à licencier 59 employés avait été suspendu après des discussions constructives. Bien que cette dernière vague de licenciements respecte l'article 14.5 de la loi sur le travail décent de 2015, il a dénoncé un manque de soutien de la part des responsables locaux. M. Dweh a critiqué le représentant Anthony F.



Éditorial

Les dangers des pièces de monnaie pour les enfants, un problème à ne pas sous-estimer

Les enfants dans les foyers libériens sont exposés à des risques sanitaires accrus, en particulier avec la disponibilité des nouvelles pièces de 5 et 10 dollars libériens. Souvent perçues comme des jouets, ces pièces finissent fréquemment dans la bouche des enfants, augmentant ainsi le risque de les avaler, ce qui peut entraîner des complications de santé graves.

Les enfants sont en contact avec ces pièces non seulement à la maison, mais aussi à l'école et dans les lieux publics, où elles leur sont souvent remises lors de petits achats : pain, bonbons, jus, biscuits, ou autres en-cas pendant les récréations. Cette situation inquiète de plus en plus les professionnels de santé, après les révélations de Jackson Coleman, technicien en radiologie à Monrovia, qui a pris en charge 28 cas d'ingestion de pièces, dont 12 ont nécessité une intervention chirurgicale.

L'ingestion de pièces peut entraîner des risques majeurs pour la santé des enfants, tels que l'étouffement, des blessures internes, voire des lésions permanentes au niveau du système digestif et des autres organes vitaux. Ces dangers, bien qu'évidents, sont encore trop souvent sous-estimés, ce qui nécessite une prise de conscience collective.

En tant que parent, il est difficile d'imaginer l'angoisse que pourrait provoquer la découverte qu'un enfant a avalé une pièce. Si un tel incident survient, les conséquences peuvent être imprévisibles et graves. Il est donc impératif de prendre des mesures pour prévenir ce type d'accident.

Les pièces de 5 et 10 dollars libériens font partie d'une nouvelle série de monnaie lancée par la Banque centrale du Liberia dans le cadre d'une réforme monétaire. Composées d'acier plaqué nickel et dotées de caractéristiques de sécurité, elles sont désormais couramment utilisées pour les petites transactions quotidiennes dans le pays. Toutefois, leur omniprésence dans les échanges implique également un accès plus facile pour les enfants.

Face à cette situation préoccupante, il est crucial que les parents redoublent de vigilance et prennent des mesures pour garder ces pièces hors de portée des enfants. Elles ne doivent pas être laissées dans des endroits facilement accessibles, comme les poches ou les tiroirs non sécurisés.

La Banque centrale du Liberia n'a pas encore réagi officiellement à cette problématique, mais il semble nécessaire de mettre en place une campagne de sensibilisation à l'échelle nationale. Des programmes de communication, notamment à travers les radios, les écoles et dans les communautés, pourraient aider à mieux informer le public sur les risques liés à l'accessibilité des pièces de monnaie pour les enfants. Il est essentiel que la société toute entière prenne des mesures pour éviter un problème de santé publique qui pourrait affecter gravement nos enfants. Comme le dit l'adage : « Un mal évité en vaut deux. »

Bien que ces pièces soient nécessaires pour faciliter les transactions, en particulier dans les marchés et les transports en commun, leur gestion doit être plus rigoureuse afin de prévenir les accidents. Garder ces pièces hors de portée des enfants est une précaution essentielle pour leur sécurité.

Français

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Crise politique : l'avenir de Maître

Benson (17e district, Montserrado) et Zinnah Normam (1er district, Gbarpolu) ont annoncé leur ralliement, portant à 45 le nombre de membres du bloc majoritaire. Cette dynamique s'est ajoutée à la présentation, lundi, du projet de budget national 2025 par l'Exécutif sous la majorité présidentielle de Joseph Nyuma Boakai.

Cependant, le Président Boakai a suspendu pour la deuxième fois cette année le dépôt du projet de budget, citant une récente décision judiciaire liée aux tentatives visant à destituer Maître Koffa.

Les défis pour atteindre la majorité qualifiée

Pour destituer le Président de la Chambre, le bloc majoritaire doit obtenir les signatures de 49 membres. Depuis septembre, cet objectif reste hors de portée.

Lundi 19 novembre, Maître Koffa avait défié ses opposants, les invitant à réunir ce nombre constitutionnellement requis. Cependant, les derniers développements indiquent que le camp anti-Koffa se rapproche de son objectif, plusieurs alliés du Président ayant exprimé leur intention de changer de camp. Un soutien qui s'effrite

Mercredi 20 novembre,

Moima Briggs Mensah, représentante du 6e district du comté de Bong, a officiellement annoncé son retrait du bloc pro-Koffa, réduisant le nombre de ses soutiens à seulement 26 députés sur les 73 que compte la Chambre.

Mme Briggs Mensah a pointé du doigt l'ancien Président George Weah, qu'elle accuse d'être l'instigateur de la campagne contre Maître Koffa. Elle a également critiqué l'incapacité du Président de la Chambre à réunir les députés et à rétablir une cohésion au sein de l'institution.

« En tant que législatrice expérimentée, je constate que Maître Koffa a échoué à unir ses collègues et à relancer les travaux de la Chambre. Dans ces conditions, j'ai décidé d'adopter une position neutre, » a-t-elle déclaré.

Elle a ajouté qu'elle s'abstiendrait de participer aux séances jusqu'à ce qu'un consensus soit atteint, appelant ses collègues à revenir à la table de travail pour servir les intérêts du peuple libérien.

Un avenir incertain

La pression s'intensifie sur Maître Koffa, alors que le bloc majoritaire semble se rapprocher du seuil critique des 49 signatures nécessaires à sa destitution. Avec un soutien en déclin et des tensions toujours vives, les prochaines heures pourraient s'avérer décisives pour l'avenir politique de la Chambre des représentants.

Lewis Brown promet de repositionner stratégiquement le Libéria sur la scène internationale



Lewis G. Brown, ambassadeur désigné du Libéria auprès de la Mission permanente des Nations Unies à New York, s'est engagé à repositionner stratégiquement le pays au sein de l'ONU. Cet effort vise à répondre aux besoins sociaux, économiques et politiques du Libéria, en alignement avec l'agenda ARREST du président Joseph N. Boakai.

Lors de son audition de confirmation devant la Commission des affaires étrangères du Sénat, le mercredi 20 novembre, M. Brown, qui revient à ce poste après l'avoir occupé sous l'administration de l'ex-présidente Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a exprimé son intention de poursuivre et de renforcer la défense des intérêts nationaux sur la scène internationale.

Malgré sa petite taille et ses défis liés au sous-développement, le Libéria, a-t-il souligné, a toujours su occuper une place importante dans les affaires mondiales. « Le Libéria n'a jamais été un simple spectateur dans le développement global », a déclaré l'ambassadeur désigné.

Ancien ministre des Affaires étrangères sous la présidence de Charles Taylor, M. Brown a rappelé le rôle de premier plan joué par le Libéria dans les grandes décisions régionales et mondiales, notant que de nombreuses nations, grandes et petites, se sont tournées vers le Libéria pour son leadership et

ses orientations.

« Dans cette tradition historique de leadership, je me tiens humblement devant vous. Je sais que nous partageons tous une profonde conscience des réalisations passées de notre pays et de ce qu'il nous incombe de faire aujourd'hui et à l'avenir. Le Libéria a une place à la table des nations, et il est temps de la revendiquer. Ensemble, nous restaurerons la fierté et l'héritage de cette nation. Nous répondrons avec responsabilité à cet appel et remplirons notre devoir avec diligence », a-t-il affirmé.

Le président Boakai a également annoncé, le 6 novembre 2024, une série de nominations diplomatiques pour des missions à l'étranger, notamment aux États-Unis, au Royaume-Uni, en France, au Japon, au Koweït, au Qatar, au Sénégal, au Maroc et au Ghana, ainsi qu'à la Mission permanente du Libéria à New York.

Les ambassadeurs désignés incluent Al Hassan Conteh (États-Unis), Genevieve Kennedy (Royaume-Uni), Teeko Yorlay (France), Edward Appleton (Japon), Brahim Kaba (Koweït), Mohammed Kanneh (Qatar), Ali Sylla (Sénégal), Joseph Johnson (Maroc), Musu J. Ruhle (Ghana) et Lewis Brown (Mission permanente du Libéria à New York).

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Licenciement massif dans le Maryland : 87

Williams pour son absence de dialogue direct avec les travailleurs. Il a notamment comparé la situation actuelle à celle gérée par l'ancien président de la Chambre, Bhofal Chambers, qui avait efficacement résolu une crise similaire. "Bhofal Chambers avait travaillé main dans la main avec l'administration et trouvé une solution. Malheureusement, nous ne voyons pas ce même niveau d'engagement de notre représentant actuel", a-t-il déclaré.

Lors d'une réunion à Monrovia, John Lootvoet, directeur exécutif de CRC, MOPP et Golden-Sifca Incentives (GSI), a exposé les défis auxquels les entreprises sont confrontées. Il a évoqué des pertes financières considérables dues à une faible productivité, des vols de produits, des exploitations illégales de terres et une ingérence des communautés locales dans les affaires des travailleurs.

Malgré ces contraintes, M. Lootvoet a rappelé les réalisations des concessions : construction de ponts, de cliniques et de pompes à eau, ainsi que le financement de l'éducation pour les enfants des employés. Cependant, il a souligné que ces efforts ne suffisent pas à équilibrer les pertes.

Les licenciements de cette ampleur sont rares sous l'administration Weah, mais rappellent un épisode similaire survenu sous la présidence d'Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2008-2009), lorsque plus de 150 travailleurs avaient été licenciés. Toutefois, la réaction publique actuelle témoigne d'un mécontentement croissant face à une situation socio-économique particulièrement délicate.

Les membres du Caucus législatif du Maryland, notamment le sénateur J. Gblebo Brown et les représentants P. Mike Jurry, Anthony F. Williams et Austin Blidi Taylor, font face à une pression accrue pour trouver un équilibre entre les attentes des

Le tribunal rejette les mandats séparés de l'accusation

Le juge Blamo A. Dixon, président du tribunal criminel « C » de Monrovia, a rejeté les deux mandats déposés par les procureurs du gouvernement dans le cadre du procès en cours impliquant d'anciens responsables, dont Samuel Tweah, Jefferson Karmoh, Nyanti Tuan et d'autres anciens membres du gouvernement de l'ex-président George Weah. Ces derniers sont accusés de corruption et d'abus de pouvoir public, des charges qu'ils contestent. Lors de l'audience, l'avocat du comté de Montserrado, représentant l'accusation, a demandé l'émission de mandats de subpoena duces tecum et de subpoena ad testificandum visant le Commissaire général de l'Autorité des recettes du Libéria (LRA), Dorbor Jallah. L'accusation a estimé que son témoignage était essentiel pour valider la caution présentée par la défense au nom des accusés.

Cependant, Me Arthur Johnson, avocat principal de la défense, a fermement opposé cette demande, en invoquant les chapitres 63 du Code de procédure civile et 13 du Code de procédure pénale du Libéria. Selon lui, la validité de la caution relève de la seule compétence du tribunal, et non d'un témoignage extérieur.

Après avoir pris connaissance des arguments des deux parties, le juge Dixon a tranché en faveur de la défense, rejetant les mandats

demandés par l'accusation et validant la caution des prévenus.

Le juge a précisé que, selon la législation libérienne, l'accusation peut contester la suffisance de la caution en déposant un avis d'exception dans les trois jours suivant son approbation. « L'accusation peut déposer un avis d'exception, et si la caution est jugée suffisante après examen, elle sera validée ; dans le cas contraire, un nouveau garant devra être présenté », a-t-il précisé.

Référant à l'Article 21(d)(1) de la Constitution libérienne, qui garantit le droit à la liberté sous caution de tout accusé, il a rappelé que celle-ci ne doit pas être excessive.



ARTICLEARTICLE

Padding as Legislature criminality 101

By Seltue Karrweaye

For over three weeks, Liberians have been watching in awe as their representatives in the House of Representatives have engaged in heated debates over the allegations surrounding the embattled Speaker of the House, J. Fonati Koffa. Koffa, who once served as Deputy Speaker of the 54th Legislature, recently revealed on Spoon Talk that some members of the 54th Legislature's Joint Committee on Ways, Means, and Finance would meet in Room 1026 at the Boulevard Palace Hotel to discuss the budget. He mentioned that during these discussions, various government ministries and agencies would be invited to review the initial budget allocations proposed by the Ministry of Finance. However, Koffa also noted that some lawmakers would inform these officials of their intentions to inflate the budget to secure kickbacks for themselves.

Budget padding highlights a significant challenge within our legislative process, where the practice of creating new budget estimates often strays from the original proposals put forth by the Executive. According to the Liberian Constitution, the Executive is empowered to propose budget estimates, which the Legislature then reviews and approves. Ideally, these estimates should be grounded in well-established national programs and plans, developed by government ministries, departments, and agencies that understand revenue sources and have meticulously planned and costed their projects.

However, there are instances where the National Legislature, feeling empowered by its authority to approve the budget, introduces additional elements that may not have been originally planned. This phenomenon, known as padding, involves adding projects that lack prior planning or cost estimation.

In the last 18 years, the National Legislature has sometimes responded to perceived imbalances in funding allocations by proposing new initiatives. While these adjustments may be well-intentioned, aiming to address inequalities, they can unintentionally lead to poorly conceived projects that do not serve the public interest effectively. We must find ways to channel this legislative creativity toward initiatives that are carefully evaluated and strongly aligned with national priorities.

As such, the budget allocated to the National Legislature has increased significantly, rising from USD 9.4 million in Fiscal Year 2006-2007 to USD 57.9 million in the recast budget for Fiscal Year 2024. This growth presents an opportunity for us to re-evaluate our budgetary processes and encourage transparency and accountability that better serve our constituents and strengthen governance overall. Fostering constructive dialogue and collaboration between the Executive and Legislature will help ensure that our budget reflects the actual needs and aspirations of the people we serve.

A critical area of concern within the legislative budgeting process is the inclusion of phantom projects, often created through collaborations among like-minded ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). These projects can lead to fraudulent collection and distribution of allocated funds. Speaker Koffa recently brought attention to this issue during his appearance on Spoon Talk. It is vital to recognize that such padding harms governance, as it distorts the alignment between governmental programs and the budget, ultimately compromising its intended objectives.

The challenge of legislative padding has deep roots in Liberia, with notable budget increases illustrating this trend. For example, the budget for the Speaker's office has grown from \$605,412 in 2010 to \$1.9 million in the 2024 budget. Similarly, the budget for the Deputy Speaker's office rose from \$334,088 in 2010 to \$1.3 million in 2024, while the Office of the President Pro Tempore saw its budget grow from \$334,088 to \$1.5 million during the same period.

To address these challenges, current administrations must adopt a proactive approach. Over the past 18 years, no president has felt empowered to reject the budget passed by the National Legislature, despite concerns about significant additions to the budget line. Additionally, there has been limited progress in identifying inaccuracies stemming from MDAs. Moving forward, we must prioritize transparency and accountability in our budgeting processes, ensuring that every budget reflects genuine needs and supports effective governance. Through collaborative efforts, we can work towards restoring integrity in our financial practices and safeguarding public resources for the benefit of all citizens.

Oversight is an essential sector within our legislature that, unfortunately, has faced challenges due to instances of criminalization. The National Legislature holds the important responsibility of overseeing and reviewing the activities of Ministries,

Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). To effectively fulfill this role, legislative committees are created alongside government structures, allowing them to monitor MDAs closely and ensure they operate under the principles of good governance while serving the needs of citizens.

Recently, there have been concerns raised by embattled Speaker Koffa regarding the conduct of some committees. It has been reported that a few committees have strayed from their intended purpose by pressuring MDAs to pay bribes. When MDAs have resisted these demands, threats to reduce their budget allocations have been issued, while some committees inflated their budgets to secure kickbacks.

These practices jeopardize the integrity of the oversight function and can undermine public trust. Rather than pursuing a path of accountability and transparency, these committees risk adopting tactics that parallel organized crime, shifting focus from exposing wrongdoing within MDAs to participating in the very criminality they should be combating.

In 2024, the 55th National Legislature cleverly maneuvered to persuade President Boakai into endorsing their controversial Legislative Support Projects and district development efforts, amounting to a staggering US\$13.2 million. Through the Legislative Support Project, each of the 73 Representatives will receive US\$100,000 for District Development Funds, while each Senator will be allocated US\$150,000. The funding distribution across counties reveals alarming sums: Montserrado will receive \$2 million, Nimba \$1.2 million, Sinoe \$600,000, Grand Bassa \$800,000, and Maryland \$600,000, among others. This strategy is designed to create the illusion for constituents that their representatives are delivering essential projects to their communities.

In these regions, influential legislators wield significant power in determining project allocations, often coordinating closely with their party and the executive branch. However, it deviates from the normal practice for each legislator to pursue their projects, as their primary roles should focus on lawmaking and legislative oversight, not project initiation.



The most alarming issue is that, while these projects are supposed to be managed by Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), legislators have manipulated the process to demand that contracts for "their" projects be awarded to companies they endorse. By personalizing the process, numerous projects remain unrealized, and substantial funds often end up misappropriated, highlighting an urgent need for accountability and reform in project management. This trend, evidenced by practices in the County Development Fund (CDF) and the Social Development Fund (SDF), severely undermines proper governance.

Maybe, the most serious element of padding in the National Legislature is the budgetary increment to their budget. Over the years, we have witnessed the emergence of a huge slush fund for the leadership of the National Legislature. The greatest

secret in contemporary Liberia is the detailed budget of the National Legislature. They make their budgets and spend it without any element of transparency and accountability. It was during the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf administration that the National Legislature took a great leap forward. It went from 16 million in 2007 to US\$ 47 million in the fiscal year 2016/2017. Since then, it has continued to grow.

In the 2023 budget, the National Legislature was allocated \$51,614,330, but the outturn report amounted to \$67,963,832. This was \$16,349,503 higher than the actual amount allocated to the National Legislature in the 2023 approved budget, which included a \$1,520,854 allocation to the Office of the Senate Pro Tempore. However, the outturn report for the Senate Pro Tempore amounted to \$3,351,821, which was \$1,217,231 higher than the actual amount allotted to the Senate Pro Tempore's office. How and where did we get the additional \$16,349,503, what did we spend it on?

We must save our legislature. The theory of representative democracy is constructed on the principle of the election of legislators by the people to represent them at the lawmaking level. It is this legitimacy derived from the electoral process that gives them the power to map and mold the views and concerns of citizens and constituents into public policy.

When, however, legislators put aside the public good and negotiate pecuniary benefits using their constitutional powers as a bargaining tool, they are abusing, rather than exercising, their powers of representation. Today, the Liberia National Legislature has developed a fairly bad reputation with the public due to criticisms of their perceived selfishness and focus on excessive benefits to themselves. The circle must be broken. The budget is neither for the executive nor for the legislature. The budget is an instrument for the pursuit of the PUBLIC GOOD Not for Conmen. I rest my pen.

I'm still in charge

Despite the election of a new Speaker here by Majority lawmakers of the House of Representatives, ousted Speaker J. Fonati Koffa says he is still in charge.

By Lincoln G. Peters &
By Bridgett Milton

Monrovia, Liberia, November 22, 2024 - Embattled House



Cllr. J. Fonati Koffa

Speaker Cllr. J. Fonati Koffa remains defiant here, maintaining that he remains the duly elected speaker and presiding officer of the House. Majority lawmakers replaced Speaker Koffa on Thursday, November 21, 2024 by ruling UP lawmaker Richard N. Koon on white ballot as new Speaker of the House. Koon is Montserrado County district#11 Representative, who lost the race for the speakership to Cllr. Koffa during the inception of the 55th Legislature in January. But a defiant Koffa has filed a six-count petition to the Supreme Court of Liberia, praying for a writ of mandamus against members of the Majority Bloc, challenging his removal and subsequent replacement on grounds that it was done outside of legal process. A writ of mandamus is a court order that compels a lower court or government official to perform a legal duty or correct an abuse of discretion. The term comes from a Latin word mandamus, which means "we command." Newly elected Speaker Koon, has been sworn in office by the Majority bloc, becoming the second Speaker of the 55th Legislature. Following his election Thursday in the Joint Chambers of the Capitol, defiant Koffa took to his Facebook page, encouraging himself and his supporters that "Nothing has happened." Despite the election of a new Speaker, Cllr. Koffa contends in his writ of mandamus to the Supreme Court that he remains the duly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives of the 55th Legislature and Presiding Officer. According to him, the majority bloc that announced his removal had refuse to attend duly-convened legislative sessions of the plenary of the House of Representatives, while attaching a notarized affidavit issued by the sergeant-at arms

of the House, confirming the respondent's refusal to attend sessions. He argues that the refusal of the majority bloc to attend sessions

have created a constitutional procedure impasse due to lack of the constitutional quorum required by the Liberian Constitution for the House to conduct official business, including enactment into law of the national budget for the ensuring 2025 fiscal year. The veteran Liberian lawyer and lawmaker continues that the action by the majority bloc raises grave, urgent and pressing constitutional issues that have created a constitutional impasse, which require immediate attention of and resolution by the Bench. "The majority bloc's failure to attend these sessions is a violation of the Constitution, the statutory laws of Liberia and the Standing Rules of the House of Representatives. Their actions violate Article 33, which prevents the plenary from performing legislative duties due to the lack of quorum. Also, Article 34 of the constitution was violated which gives the House right to enact laws. Wherefore, and in view of the foregoing, petitioners respectfully request the court to cause the Alternative writ of mandamus to be issued, requiring the majority bloc to attend plenary legislative sessions as mandated by Article 33 of the Constitution of Liberia, Statutory laws and the House Standing Rules", the Grand Kru County representatives pleads. According to the Majority bloc, 50 Representatives signed the resolution for the removal of Speaker Koffa. The resolution was read in the Joint Chambers of the 55th Legislature during the Majority session presided over by Acting Chief Clerk, Comic Chea, following a motion by Bong County Representative, James Kolleh. The Majority bloc took the decision following a specialized committee's report. The report notes that Speaker Koffa was invited on several occasions to answer to allegations raised against him

by six of his colleagues, which he failed to respond to. During reading of names that signed the resolution, names of some key Koffa's supporters were called, as being among those who signed his removal. They include Representatives Thomas Goshua of Grand Bassa district# 5; Rep. Matthew Joe of Grand Bassa district# 3; Montserrado County district#5 Representative Priscilla Cooper; Montserrado County district#1 Representative Rukie Barry; Sinoe County Representatives Alex Sonnyboy Noah, and Grand Cape Mount County Representative Bintu Massally. At the same time, the Majority bloc has given the ousted Speaker a week to turn over all government property in his possession, including his office. In-coming Speaker Richard N. Koon expresses profound gratitude to members of the Majority bloc for the trust they have placed in him. He notes that the moment is not just about him, but represents a collective dream, a hopeful vision for a brighter future that will see the House of Representatives particularly, and the Liberian Legislature arising anew. "Together, we have taken a monumental step toward the change we seek in legislative governance and democratic pluralism within legislative politics rooted in our shared values, aspirations, and commitment to doing the work of the Republic of Liberia in a people-centered manner", Koon says. He adds that the current governance systems and institutions are faced with a multiplicity of quagmires, citing inequities, dire commitments to political cleavages and sectarian politics that divide them, coupled with inefficiencies and inadequacies that discourage them, and the critical logjams that dampen their collective potentials for growth and progress. "However, I want to encourage you to remain steadfast and hopeful. As an integral part of the whole, I witnessed and participated in the struggles that landed us here today. Now that I am the Speaker of the Honorable House of Representatives of the 55th National Legislature, barely eleven months into the tenure of President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, I am committed to working with you - all of you to achieve your shared hopes and dreams. I am sternly dedicated to facing these challenges head-on with honesty, integrity, and relentless determination with the wholeness of my being." Koon assures his colleagues that together, they will undertake hard but necessary work of reforming their systems, with transparency and accountability at the core of their interventions. Editing by Jonathan Browne

Ghost chases Dr. Conteh

Liberia's Ambassador-designate, to Washington D.C., Professor Dr. Al-hassan Conteh, is being entangled in an alleged rape incident involving a minor that occurred in 2020 under his administration, while serving as Ambassador to Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

By Lincoln G. Peters

Monrovia, Liberia, November 22, 2024 - The Liberian Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs chaired by Montserrado County Senator Abraham D. Dillon mandates Liberia's Ambassador-Designate to the United States of America, Dr. Al-hassan Conteh, to provide full investigative report on an alleged rape incident involving a 7-year-old minor at the Liberian Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria under his administration. A Liberian Embassy official assigned to the country's diplomatic mission in Abuja, Nigeria, had alleged that his seven-year-old daughter was sexually abused right in the embassy's premises by two perpetrators.

Complainant Nat Bayjay, then Minister Counselor for Press and Public Affairs deployed in Abuja, had narrated that his daughter was sexually abused over a period of seven months by two different perpetrators in 2020.



Dr. Al-hassan Conteh

President Joseph N. Boakai on Wednesday, November 6, 2024 nominated Ambassadors of Foreign Missions in the United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Japan, Kuwait, Qatar, Senegal, Morocco, Ghana, and Liberia Permanent Mission in New York. Those nominated are: Al Hassan Conteh, Ambassador Designate, United States of America, Genevieve Kennedy, Ambassador Designate, United Kingdom, Teeko Yorlay, Ambassador Designate, France and Edward Appleton, Ambassador Designate, Japan. The list also include Brahim Kaba, Ambassador Designate, Kuwait, Mohammed Kanneh, Ambassador Designate, Qatar, Ali Sylla, Ambassador Designate, Senegal, Joseph Johnson, Ambassador Designate, Morocco, Musu J. Ruhle, Ambassador Designate, Ghana and Lewis Brown, Ambassador Designate, Liberia Permanent Mission in New York. During confirmation hearing on November 20, 2024, in the chamber of the Liberian Senate for both Dr. Conteh and Lewis Brown, the committee developed deep interest in the alleged rape case and posed several questions to Ambassador

Conteh, who failed to provide adequate information on the situation. However, the committee ordered Dr. Conteh to provide full investigative report of the incident to the secretary of the Liberian senate to properly establish his role played in addressing the issue. Meanwhile, the Ambassador-designate assured the committee to work with the Senate Secretary to provide both hard and soft copies of investigation conducted, which was later sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Monrovia during the administration of former Foreign Minister D. Maxwell Kemayah. Bomi County Senator, Edwin Snowe, who is also member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, asked the nominee if he were aware of the alleged rape at the Liberian Embassy in Nigeria and to state his role in the incident as then head of Mission and what he could he have done better. Senator Snowe laments that the situation brought

embarrassment to the country, stressing that it is therefore, important that Dr. Conteh tells the body what happened, and to assure that such will not occur in the United States, where he will be deployed, if confirm. Responding to the questioned, Dr. Conteh admitted that the incident mentioned by Senator Snow happened at the Liberian Embassy during his administration, which he termed as very unfortunate. However, he told the senators that he did his best by properly addressing the issue. According to him, when the matter was reported, he took seized of the situation and chaired the investigation and provided recommendation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Monrovia that it was beyond his jurisdiction, so it needed to be forwarded to court. However, Dr. Conteh stated that after his recommendation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs followed the recommendation to the Ministry of Justice and the court was involved, and as far he knows, the case is currently in court and there are details he can't provide now as a matter of law.

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