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Continental News

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Mass trial begins of Tunisian president's opponents statements". Campaigners say the trial

prominent opposition group". Ifigures began in Tunisia Human Rights Watch has labelled

mass trial of around 40 and "belonging to a terrorist

on Tuesday, in a case that it a "mockery of a trial" based on lawyers, relatives and rights "abusive charges", while the UN

highlights Saïed's authoritarian control over the judiciary, after dissolving parliament in 2021 and ruling by decree.Since he was first elected six years ago, the

former law professor has rewritten the constitution to enhance his powers.

As the trial began on Tuesday,

defence lawyers complained that they were not granted access to the full case file. "You can put an end to this madness and absurdity," lawyer Abdelaziz Essid told judges in court. Among those on trial are ex-presidential chief of staff Nadia Akacha, the former leader of the Ennahda opposition party Abdelhamid Jelassi and Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, who was a high-profile critic of the president's 2021 power grab.

Some of the defendants, including Akacha, were tried in absentia having already fled the north African country. Among the defendants are people who were arrested two years ago and detained ever since, with Saïed labelling them "terrorists".BBC



motivated.

Saïed are among the defendants. They could face the death penalty if found guilty of charges which include "plotting against state security"

groups say is politically recently urged Tunisian authorities to end "all forms of persecution of political UN's statement with "astonishment" and criticised what it said were "inaccuracies", and added that "Tunisia can give lessons to those who think they

Diplomats, politicians, lawyers, and journalists who opponents". The country's are critical of President Kaïs foreign ministry said it read the

UK will not pay Rwanda more for scrapped migrant deal he UK government has said "unjustified punitive measures which the UK was "legally

migrant deal between the two Monday. countries.

government spokesperson has recently been more Yolande Makolo said the UK had defensive, saying it has had to asked Rwanda to "quietly forgo" take measures to deal with the the remaining payment - "existential threat" posed by reportedly amounting to £50m genocidal militia near its (\$64m) - based on "trust and borders. good faith". However, Rwanda UN experts have previously some aid to the country.

spokesperson said that "no further payments in relation to this policy will be made and Rwanda has waived any additional payments". The row over payments linked to the Rwanda scheme comes after the UK government announced it would halt bilateral aid to the east African country last month, except for "support to the poorest and most vulnerable".

The UK took the decision to cut aid after accusing the country of supporting M23, a rebel group that has captured swathes of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in a deadly uprising.

The aid cuts have amounted to

it will not send further to coerce Rwanda into payments to Rwanda compromising our national asylum seekers to Rwanda, following the cancellation of the security", Makolo said on devised by the previous

Rwanda has often denied On Monday, Rwanda's backing the M23 rebel group, but

has now asked the UK to pay the estimated that between 3,000 remainder of the money it says it and 4,000 Rwandan troops are in is owed, accusing the UK of eastern DR Congo. Makolo said In a statement, a UK government breaching trust by suspending Rwanda would now be "following spokesperson said: "The Home up" on outstanding payments Secretary has been clear that In a statement, a UK government relating to the migrant deal to the costly Migration and

bound". The plan to deport some Conservative government in 2022, cost the UK £240m (\$310m) before being scrapped by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer. Speaking in July last year, shortly after being elected, Starmer said the plan was "dead and buried", arguing that the scheme had "never been a deterrent" and would only deport "less than 1%" of small boat arrivals.



One-year-olds among those raped during Sudan civil war, UN says

rmed men are raping and sexually assaulting children as young as one during Sudan's civil war, says the UN children's agency, Unicef.So traumatised are the survivors that some say they have attempted to end their lives.Mass sexual violence has been widely documented as a weapon of war in the country's nearly two-year conflict.But Unicef's report is the first detailed account about the impact of rape on young children in Sudan.A third of the victims were boys, who typically face "unique challenges" in reporting such crimes and seeking the help they need. Unicef says that, although 221 rape cases against children have been officially reported since the start of 2024, the true number is likely to be much higher.

Sudan is a socially conservative country where huge societal stigma stops survivors and their families from speaking out about rape, as does the fear of retribution

Catherine Russell. "Millions of children in Sudan are at risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which is being used as a tactic of war. This is an abhorrent violation of international law and could constitute a war crime. It must stop."According to evidence presented by international human rights groups, victims in the RSF's stronghold of Darfur were often targeted because they were black African rather than Arab, apparently with the aim of driving them out of Sudan. The UN humanitarian response for Sudan is already underfunded. Recent cuts in US aid are expected to reduce programmes to help the victims even further. Harrowing details in Unicef's report underscore the dire situation."After nine at night, someone opens the door, carrying a whip, selects one of the girls, and takes her to another room. I could hear the little girl crying and screaming. They were raping her," recalls Omnia (not her real name), an adult female survivor who was held by armed men in a room with other women and girls.

"Every time they raped her, this girl



from armed groups.

The Unicef report provides an appalling window into the abuse of children in the country's civil war.

Perhaps its most shocking victims were under the age of five years, including four infants. Unicef does not say who is responsible, but other UN investigations have blamed the majority of rapes on the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), saying RSF fighters had a pattern of using sexual violence to terrorise civilians and suppress opposition to their advances.

The RSF, which is fighting this war against its former allies, the Sudanese Armed Forces, has denied any wrongdoing. "Children as young as one being raped by armed men should shock anyone to their core and compel immediate action,"

said Unicef executive director

would come back covered in blood. She is still just a young child. They only release these girls at dawn, and they return almost unconscious. Each of them cries and speaks incoherently. During the revelation is that 16 of the 19 days I spent there, I reached a point where I wanted to end my life. "Unicef says the attacks included armed men storming homes and demanding that the girls be surrendered, raping some of them in front of their loved ones. Victims were sometimes left with serious injuries and unwanted pregnancies.In addition to the 221 rapes reported by Unicief were an additional 77 cases of sexual assault against children - mostly attempted rape. As a fractured nation at war, Sudan is one of the most challenging places on earth to access services and frontline workers."The sheer scale of sexual violence we have documented in Sudan is staggering," said Mohamed Chande Othman, chair of the UN's fact-finding mission when its previous report was published in October.BBC

EDITORIAL

US\$5 million budget for "Regime Speaker" Koon is a disservice to Liberians i

regime Speaker Richard Koon of the House of Representatives is a happy man. He was unconstitutionally elected by the Majority Bloc in the House to replace embattled Speaker J. Fonati Koffa of the former ruling CDC.

According to members of the Majority Bloc, they illegally removed Speaker Koffa because of alleged conflict of interest and for overspending his budget of US\$4 million.

They then elected Koon illegally and upped his budget to US\$5 million. In their thinking, this is OK for the so-called Rescue Mission of the Unity Party-led government.

But for heaven's sake, what do we gain as a country, in allotting US\$5 million to the office of an illegitimate speaker, who the Supreme Court of Liberia and influential members of the Liberian society do not recognize except the executive that supports his illegal ascendency.

We understand; they have come to rescue the country from corruption, economic hardship and poverty or so they had promised the Liberian people during the 2023 election.

And so with a US\$5 million budget just for 12 months, a happy "Regime Speaker" Koon has reportedly begun building for l himself a bigger house for comfort and current status, regardless of how badly this allotment is bleeding the National I Budget.

While "Regime Speaker" Koon is benefiting this amount of money for his illegal election, budgets of the nation's major referral hospitals combined, including JFK, Redemption and Jackson Fiah Doe had never passed US\$1 million in an entire fiscal year.

But in what could be largely considered as mere publicity stunt, perhaps to divert public attention from his elaborate budget, Koon visited the JFK Hospital in Monrovia and promised to increase its budget to US\$20 million! This is too good to be true, especially so when the United States Government has cancelled all USAID-sponsored programs for health, education and infrastructure.

With US\$5 million allotted to his office, while public hospitals | Evenso, spending flagged almost immediately. this is to commission an independent, high-level and schools across the country lack basic drugs, equipment infrastructures and instructional materials, Koon has to present himself as somebody sensitive, though he's been in the House for I more than 12 years without raising on the floor, the poor state of health institutions in the country.

We caution authorities at the JFK to take the promise of "regime Speaker" Koon with a pinch of salt, because it is nothing but a mere bluff coming from an illegitimate Speaker who is on a campaign to fix his poor public image to erase the questionable manner thru which he ascended to the Speakership and is being awarded US\$5 million annually.

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By Nilima Gulrajani

Making a Better Case for Foreign Aid

month back in the White House, President poorest countries had declined, and hosting Donald Trump dismantled the US Agency for refugees at home, which now consumes at least International Development (USAID) and froze one-quarter of the aid budget in seven foreign aid, calling it wasteful and fraudulent. countries. With other public-policy priorities The United Kingdom recently followed suit, gobbling up resources earmarked for trading off its international-aid budget for development assistance, the OECD's claim that higher defense spending.

Advocates of official development assistance years and lacks a convincing narrative.

future of the international aid system that can year. forge a new political consensus on the rationales for foreign aid, while also articulating a vision for the post-aid world international cooperation regime will likely collapse with no robust alternative in its place.

stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations." The US was the foremost champion of help nations afflicted by poverty, disease, and

decade later, nearly all European countries had services. some kind of aid program, and being a donor had become synonymous with being a modern, "developed" country.

about the plight of low-income countries.

The question remains relevant today. Even generations prosper. before Trump set his sights on US foreign aid, Development Assistance Committee.

This includes directing development assistance

ONDON - Foreign aid is being slashed to Ukraine, a middle-income country which in across the Global North, nowhere more so 2023 became the largest-ever recipient of than in the United States. Within his first foreign aid, while the share of aid reaching the a record amount of foreign aid was spent by donors in 2023 rings hollow.

(ODA) rightly argue that it saves lives and Meanwhile, foreign aid has become an easy serves national interests. But that does not target in high-income countries that face change the fact that the system has been growing fiscal deficits, cost-of-living crises, and hemorrhaging credibility and resources for new security concerns. Right-leaning governments, in particular, often portray this foreign assistance as inefficient and ineffective. The upcoming United Nations Conference on In 2024, seven national governments and the Financing for Development, set for mid-2025 in European Union announced \$17.2 billion in cuts Seville, Spain, will likely reiterate the long- to ODA to be implemented sometime between held but rarely met target for high-income 2025 and 2029. Now, the Trump administration countries to spend 0.7% of their gross national has slashed some \$60 billion in foreign income on ODA. What is really needed, assistance, while the UK will shrink its aid however, is an independent commission on the budget by roughly £6 billion (\$7.6 billion) per

Given that the world's second-largest donor, Germany, spent \$27 billion less than the US on many are now demanding. Without an effort to foreign aid last year, it will be difficult for any recalibrate and reset foreign aid, the system country to fill such a large gap. And the UK's will face death by a thousand cuts. Its ambition decision suggests that there is little interest in of catalyzing sustainable development will be picking up the pieces left by Trump's wrecking left unrealized, and an eighty-year ball, likely leaving us at the tipping point of "peak aid."

Many have suggested using this foreign-aid The modern global aid regime has looked crisis as an opportunity to reduce African brittle since the 2008 financial crisis. But dependency on politicized external finance America's withdrawal is a massive blow to a through changes to global trading rules and by system whose purpose is laid out in Article 55 of lowering the cost of capital, or by building a new the UN Charter: "the creation of conditions of cooperation paradigm focused on global public investment.

Yet in his drive to "Make America Great Again," these goals: in his 1949 inaugural address, Trump has shown no desire to advance such President Harry Truman called for a "bold new alternative visions and little understanding of program" for sending technology and capital to the value of the soft power that USAID spent decades trying to cultivate. This is why the elimination of USAID cannot be described as a normal merger between the diplomatic and By the 1950s, America was actively promoting development branches of government, as in foreign aid as a universal obligation, both to Canada or the UK, but only as an attack on avoid shouldering the financial burden alone America's role as global benefactor. This and to find common cause with anti- offensive comes with few domestic political communist allies. That led, in 1961, to then-US consequences but with a high immediate human President John F. Kennedy creating USAID. A cost for those reliant on aid-funded goods and

America's abrupt inward turn underscores the need to reimagine a global aid system built for a world order that no longer exists. One way to do To reboot donor support, in 1968, the World review of the global aid regime that can Bank invited former Canadian Prime Minister articulate a new paradigm that does not rely on Lester B. Pearson to lead an independent the benevolence of any single donor. A Pearson commission tasked with finding a new Commission 2.0 could outline several new rationale for foreign aid. In other words, the rationales for international transfers, present Pearson Commission sought a persuasive alternative financial and policy frameworks, argument for why affluent countries beset by and explore new global institutional domestic challenges should be concerned arrangements to minimize aid dependency and reduce fragmentation, while still providing for the most vulnerable and helping future

the rationale for such assistance had become As these massive aid cuts take effect, the risk of increasingly tenuous. In recent years, Global contagion is real. Unless the international North countries have directed their aid community undertakes a systematic effort to budgets toward a range of foreign-policy understand the root causes of the current crisis priorities, many of which follow the letter but and explore plausible solutions, countries still not the spirit of ODA, as defined by the OECD's investing in ODA may start to worry that they are just rearranging the deck chairs on a sinking aid WEDNESDAY

By Shang-Jin Wei

How to Counter Trump's Tariffs Productively?

EW YORK - After months of threats and speculation, US President Donald Trump has officially launched his long-anticipated trade war. He has just imposed 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports. His new 10% tariff on Chinese imports will further strain the world's second-largest economy, which is already grappling with slowing growth and unfavorable demographics. And his postponed - but not canceled - 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico, together with threats to impose new tariffs on the European Union, India, and many more countries, put greater pressure on key US allies.

While many countries are considering retaliatory tariffs on US goods, such measures are both unproductive and unlikely to deter Trump. One reason is that most countries run trade surpluses with the United States and therefore have fewer US goods to target than the US does. More importantly, higher tariffs on US imports would hurt their own citizens and firms. Consequently, their ability to counter Trump's tariffs is severely limited.

A more productive approach would be to focus on minimizing the economic fallout. To do so, it is important to recognize that both a trade and a financial channel could cause Trump's trade war to trigger a global economic downturn.

Beyond his tariffs on metals and China, Trump has previously pledged to impose a 10% tariff on all imported goods. More recently, he proposed targeting only countries with which the US has a trade deficit, as well as a "Fair and Reciprocal Plan" that would tailor tariff rates to US trading partners' own barriers. While that may sound like a more measured approach, the US currently runs bilateral deficits with most countries including 12 of its top 15 trading partners.

Although Trump's tariffs will inflict economic pain on US households and businesses, that is unlikely to discourage him, partly because he views tariffs as a way to offset - at least partly - the revenue losses from his planned tax cuts. The fact that his tariffs will ultimately be paid by American consumers, especially middle- and low-income households, does not appear to concern him.

Although Trump's tariffs probably will not reduce the US trade deficit, they will have farreaching implications for interest rates worldwide. If the Federal Reserve takes no action, the tariffs will drive up the prices of both imported goods and domestically produced goods that compete with them or rely on imported inputs.

But the Fed is unlikely to sit idly by, especially with US inflation already above its 2% target. Instead, it will likely delay its planned interest-rate cuts or even raise rates to offset the inflationary impact of Trump's tariffs. Financial markets already anticipate such a response: the dollar has been appreciating with each new tariff threat.

Higher US interest rates will likely trigger a global liquidity squeeze, putting corporations and governments with high dollar-denominated debts at risk of default. If other central banks follow the Fed's lead on interest rates, as they often do, even firms and households without significant dollar debts could face financial difficulties.

Governments can take several steps to mitigate the Trump trade shock. First, they must devise effective retaliation strategies. The EU's Anti-Coercion Instrument provides a useful model for applying economic pressure without directly harming domestic industries. For example, these measures could allow the bloc to suspend intellectual-property protections for US software and streaming services or restrict US banks and financial-service providers from operating within EU markets. Developing countries might find such measures especially attractive, because the US tends to run large trade surpluses in intellectual property and financial services.

China's mineral-export restrictions offer another example. Since China effectively controls the global supply of several critical raw materials, these measures could hurt US corporate profits while simultaneously raising those of domestic firms. China had refrained from doing this in the last decade after losing a World Trade Organization case on restricting rare-earth exports. Since the US tariffs also violate its obligations under the WTO, the Chinese may feel less constrained this time. A number of other countries have market power in some key products they export, and might explore a similar approach.

Governments must also consider the indirect yet significant impact of interest-rate and exchange-rate fluctuations from Trump's tariffs. For emerging markets and developing economies, this means keeping short-term foreign debt at sustainable levels. Globally, companies must prepare for the possibility that interest rates will remain elevated for longer than anticipated.

Beyond individual responses, countries must pursue collective action. Strengthening regional economic integration by removing trade and investment barriers within existing trade blocs would be much more productive than raising tariffs on US goods. Expediting negotiations on new trade and investment agreements - including interregional partnerships like the incipient one between the EU and Latin American MERCOSUR bloc - could also serve as an effective countermeasure.

The Trump administration's trade war is like a Category 5 hurricane: while inherently destructive, its impact can be mitigated. By avoiding panic and fostering strategic partnerships, the world economy could better weather the storm.

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OPINION

By Jayati Ghosh

Weaponizing Data Against Democracy

EW DELHI - For those of us who have witnessed the shock-and-awe tactics of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the past decade, the events unfolding in the United States since Donald Trump returned to the White House evoke a sense of déjà vu. In India, we have learned the hard way: authoritarian leaders are often far more dangerous in their second term than in their first.

The reason is simple: by their second term, such leaders have mastered the system. They have learned how to bend institutions to their will and dismantle them when they no longer serve their interests, leaving them free to pursue their agendas aggressively.

Modi's visit to Washington underscores the striking similarities between him and Trump. Both are known for sudden, unpredictable policy shifts, leaving opponents scrambling to respond and unsure of what comes next. Both leaders take pride in being disruptive - but selectively so. While they undermine institutions, discard longstanding norms, and erode democratic safeguards, they also protect and reward their favored interest groups.

More importantly, their governing style is rooted in a politics of division and intolerance, designed to consolidate power and enrich oligarchic capitalists - whose interests and fortunes are inextricably linked to their own - at the expense of almost everyone else. Both rely heavily on manipulating public perception, using mass media to push their favored narratives and suppress dissent.

These tactics comprise the playbook for aspiring autocrats worldwide. However different they may seem, today's authoritarian leaders study one another closely - not to govern more effectively, but to tighten their grip on power.

Control over data is at the heart of this effort, leading to a fundamental shift in how public information is accessed and used. Even as citizens around the world are increasingly forced to provide their personal data to authoritarian leaders and their allies - like Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) acolytes - they are being denied access to the information needed to hold those leaders accountable.

Nowhere is this more evident than in India, where Modi's government has systematically undermined and weaponized the country's statistics authorities, once arguably the most reliable in the developing world. First, it politicized the National Statistical Commission originally an independent expert body responsible for verifying and overseeing the collection of official data. It then targeted the Central Statistics Office, which collects most economic data, effectively destroying the CSO's credibility. Using a routine revision of the base year for growth estimates as a pretext, the government altered the CSO's methodology in ways that inflated growth, casting doubt on the reliability of official economic data. Similarly, the government abruptly withdrew the 2017-18 consumption expenditure survey - a key tool for assessing well-being - reportedly because it revealed declining consumption and rising poverty in rural India.

By the time the 2022-23 household expenditure survey was due, the government once again revised its methodology. Then, just before the 2024 general elections, it released a "factsheet" claiming that the poverty rate had fallen to 5%.

The government's fear of reliable data is so extreme that it has even refused to conduct the decennial census, which was due in 2021, and has yet to confirm when it will take place. As a result, the most recent official data on India's population, demographics, employment, and living conditions are from 2011.

Likewise, audits of the government's own policies and programs are suppressed or quietly buried when they produce unfavorable results. For example, an official review of the Ganges River clean-up project has never been released. During the COVID-19 pandemic, official mortality figures were widely challenged, with the government refusing to acknowledge independent estimates of excess mortality from the World Health Organization.

Even the National Family Health Survey, conducted by the Ministry of Health and the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) - a semi-independent body - has not been spared. After a report highlighted poor nutrition levels and inadequate sanitation services, the IIPS director was forced to resign, ostensibly over an unrelated matter. The message to researchers was clear: contradict the government's preferred narrative at your own risk.

The 2005 Right to Information Act, a landmark transparency law passed by the previous Indian National Congress-led government, has also been hollowed out. Modi's government has deliberately left key positions vacant and appointed only people who yield to political pressure, thereby ensuring that most petitions go unanswered.

The government's efforts to evade accountability have been largely successful. But by prioritizing propaganda over governance, it has blinded itself to India's economic and social realities, impeding its ability to make informed policy decisions.

At the same time, Indians are being forced to surrender more personal data than ever, thanks to the expansion of Aadhaar, a biometric identification system now linked to their bank accounts, tax returns, mobile phone numbers, travel records, and major transactions. This system has already had devastating consequences, as fingerprint mismatches have led to millions of Indians being denied wage payments, food allowances, and other essential services.

Yet, despite the risks, India still has not implemented a framework for data protection. With no oversight, data breaches are rampant. And given that Big Tech companies, which already hold vast amounts of personal data, have aligned themselves with the government, the consequences could be catastrophic.

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Rising lawlessness in Liberia-an alarming trend

ast week, the lawlessness in Liberia reached an unprecedented level, with officers from the Liberia National Police and the Armed Forces of Liberia displaying a blatant disregard for the rule of law. This issue pervades all levels of government, from the Executive to law enforcement agencies.

The violent clash between LNP and AFL officers, sparked by an attempt to enforce traffic laws, clearly demonstrates the new norm of violating laws with impunity here.

The story of the LNP and AFL officers is just the tip of the iceberg. In recent years, Liberia has been grappling with a surge in lawlessness that has sparked widespread concern both locally and internationally. The tiny West African nation, still recovering from the ravages of more than two decades of civil wars, now faces this new challenge: a rampant increase in lawlessness.

The new level of rising lawlessness in Liberia poses significant threats to the nation's stability and development. It also undermines the credibility and functionality of democratic institutions. The government can lose its legitimacy and support from its citizens if it cannot ensure their safety and security.

Furthermore, lawlessness and impunity, especially coming from those entrusted to uphold and protect the constitution, can deter foreign investment and hamper economic growth. Businesses are less likely to operate in areas where the rule of law is not respected.

It is undisputable that government officials, including law enforcement agencies, violate these basic traffic laws with impunity. A traffic law only becomes enforceable when it applies to ordinary citizens.

For example, law enforcement officers, including the police, AFL, and other security apparatus, violate traffic rules they are supposed to enforce by using unregistered vehicles, lacking driver's licenses or insurance, and ignoring nogo zones.

These actions highlight the pervasive disregard for the laws and constitution they are sworn to uphold. For them, these regulations are only applicable to citizens. They see themselves as being above the law.

And rightfully so, because they take queue from their bosses at the National Legislature and the Executive Branches of Government who have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate the flagrant violation of the very laws that empowered them.

Both the Legislative and Executive branches have disobeyed Supreme Court rulings. President Joseph Boakai ignored a Supreme Court decision that protected tenure positions and proceeded to suspend officials at his discretion while appointing individuals to act in their steads.

Similarly, the House of Representatives refused to comply with a Supreme Court ruling to return to the status quo after the Superior Court rendered its opinion in the ongoing Speakership dispute that has lasted for several months.

The Executive and the Senate would choose to ignore the Supreme Court, endorsing the actions of a so-called majority bloc that has since failed to gain legitimacy from the House of Representatives' leadership but has seized power by circumventing the law- and yet this is okay.

The above narrative tells how far Liberia has descended into lawlessness. What is more scaring is that, besides being an impediment to foreign investment, lawlessness undermines the stability of the state. Lawlessness deepens social divides and fosters a culture of mistrust among different communities. This fragmentation can lead to further violence and instability.

Finally, the escalating lawlessness in Liberia is a complex issue with deeprooted causes and far-reaching implications. Addressing this challenge requires concerted efforts from the government, civil society, and the international community. The Government can start by respecting the rule of law. The law is not discriminatory; it protects the weak against the strong and promotes equality and fairness.



The AU Must Reconceptualize Regional Integration on the **Continent to Achieve Peace and Sustainable Development**

his opinion piece summarizes the PhD dissertation for Prof. Thomas Kaydor, Jr. from the Faculty of Government and European Studies, New University, Slovenia. The topic for the PhD research was 'reconceptualizing Africa's regional integration for peace and sustainable development'. Chapter five of the UN charter focuses on peace, and security; and Chapter VIII on regionalism. The dissertation investigated how AU utilizes its authority to mitigate conflicts on the continent. The research also evaluated whether Africa's regional integration leads to economic growth and development in Africa. You can read a full summary of the research at https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.807139.

The research has established that unless the continent engages in deeper economic integration, regionalism will not lead to regional development. It recommends how Africa might alleviate extreme poverty and attain sustainable development in the 21st Century and beyond. Its' four specific objectives were to: a) identify the benefits and challenges of Regionalism in Africa. b) ascertain why extreme poverty is widespread in Africa and propose what should be done through regional integration to alleviate the extreme poverty in Africa. c) find out the impact of Official Development Assistance (ODA) on Africa's regional development and propose ways to strengthen the impact of aid on poverty alleviation and economic development in Africa, and d) propose what Africa should do to Achieve Sustainable Development.

This research was Qualitative. Researchers use this method to explore meanings; investigate and study social phenomenon; or unpack meanings ascribed to activities, situations, events, or artifacts; and build a depth of understanding about some dimension of social life with detailed information from a small sample. Qualitative research is appropriate when one's primary purpose is to explore, describe, and explain.

Chapter one provided the research background, explained the research topic, discussed the research problem, and stated the research questions. It also contained the research aims. purpose and objectives. Chapter one further discussed the research methods used to undertake the research and described the chapters of the dissertation. It discussed other research already done on this subject matter. The chapter also indicates the anticipated research results and contribution that the research made to scholarship in general and specifically to international relations theory. It finally indicates the application of the research results. Narrative and explanatory methods were used in writing this chapter. The second chapter provided the theoretical perspective of this dissertation. It evaluated additional research already conducted is in this chapter. This chapter discusses what other authors and scholars have written and published about regional integration in Africa and other parts of the world. It found the research gaps in these previous scholarly works eviewed. These pieces of research have gaps that the dissertation attempts to bridge. The methods used in this chapter were historical, exploratory, and evaluative.

Chapter 3 in the PhD dissertation constituted the Review of Related Literature. This chapter reviewed not less than 100 academic pieces of literature related regional integration in African and globally. Chapter Four is the presentation, analysis, and discussion of field data. Chapter four presents, analyses, and discusses data collected through key informant nterviews at the AU Commission. As indicated earlier, the AU has a chairperson who heads the AU Commission and a Deputy Chairperson who assists the Chairperson. The Union also has six commissioners responsible for thematic areas. The six commissioners are elected by the AU Executive Council and appointed by the Assembly for a four-year term renewable once. These commissioners head thematic areas, including Technology, Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment; Political Affairs, Peace, and Security; Infrastructure and Energy; Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining; Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation; Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development. The heads of the departments of women, gender and youth, and civil society and diaspora were also interviewed.

AS I SEE IT, for Africa to have peace and achieve sustainable development through the continent's regional integration mechanism, the African Union (AU) needs to implement the 1991 Abuja Treaty; fully arm, equip and support the African Standby Force to make and keep peace. Africa needs a United States of Africa under one army, one border, one government, one foreign policy and one currency. The AU also needs to ensure that 80% of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) in African states goes towards infrastructural development. Africa needs to constitute an AU sovereign fund for all Africans to contribute a dollar for infrastructural development on the continent. The AU needs to manage the environment appropriately and sustainably. The AU should focus on agricultural productivity, value addition and provision of safe drinking water to address the extreme hunger, malnutrition, water issues, hunger, and poverty on the continent. Finally, the AUC needs to become a Permanent Member of the UNSC.

About the Author: Prof. Tom Kaydor, Jr. serves as an Assistant Professor at the IBB Graduate School of International Studies. He holds a PhD from the Department of Government and European Studies, the New University, Slovenia where he specialized in International Development and Diplomacy (with Security Aspects). His dissertation topic was 'Reconceptualizing Africa's Regional Integration for Peace and Sustainable Development.' He earned a Master of Public Policy (MPP) specialized in Development Policy or Development Economics with Distinction from the Crawford School of Economics and Government (now the Crawford School of Public Policy), Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. He also obtained his first master's degree as a Master oj Arts (MA) in International Relations (Highest Distinction), and Bachelor of Arts (BA) Magna Cum Laude in Political Science from the University of Liberia where his Minor was History with Mass Communication as his Elective. Tom holds a Diploma in Leading Economic Growth from the Kennedy Graduate School, Harvard University, USA; and he holds other professional diplomas and certificates from Italy, UK, Pakistan, China, and Israel. Prof. Kaydor is also an Adjunct Professor of International Development Studies at the AME University Graduate School. Dr. Kaydor is an evidence-based researcher, a blogger, a columnist, and a published author. One can reach him via (kaydorth@ul.edu.lr or thkaydor@gmail.com).

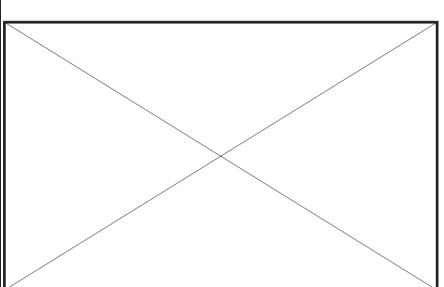
MORE HEADLINE NEWS

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BL hosts validation workshop

By Naneka A. Hoffman

onrovia, March 5, 2025 Stakeholders' feedback and mandatory insurances As a crucial step recommendations will be including third-party motor toward establishing incorporated into the final insurance, Fire Insurance,



Commission of Liberia, the Office of the President for Monrovia.

Insurance Sector of Liberia.

The validation workshop will conducting insurance bring together stakeholders business in Liberia. with diverse expertise to Under the draft Act, the enhance the validation of the proposed Insurance

Central Bank of Liberia on onward submission to the Wednesday, March 5, begins a National Legislature for three-day validation passage. Upon passage by the workshop to review the draft Legislature, the Insurance insurance law of 2020 at the Commission Act will lead to Centennial Pavilion in the creation of the National Insurance Commission of The validation runs until Liberia. Amongst other Friday, March 7. The things, the draft Proposed validation aims to review the Insurance Commission Act Proposed Draft Insurance includes the framework for Commission Act, a critical the issuance of regulating and step towards establishing a supervising the Insurance robust legal framework for Sector, licenses, enforcement the establishment of the of compliance, taking unitary insurance commission enforcement action against to effectively regulate the unlicensed firms, and establishing standards for

Proposed Draft Insurance Commission will have power

to subpoena information and witnesses from various Commission Act. government entities, enforce the National Insurance draft to be submitted to the Marine, Professional indemnity Insurance and create a department to handle complaints against insurers or insurance institutions. This new entity will be the

sole regulator of the insurance industry, ensuring that license holders are supervised on a risk-sensitive basis, fostering competition within the industry and expanding access to the insurance market in Liberia. By fostering a well-regulated insurance sector, the commission will also contribute to the overall economic stability and growth of the country.

The Central Bank of Liberia is optimistic that the involvement of stakeholders in the validation process of the draft act will ensure due diligence and best practices as required for the passage of the act and subsequent establishment of the insurance commission.

The CBL also emphasizes that the engagement and contributions of stakeholders are vital to the successful validation of the Draft Insurance Act, which aims to create a transparent, efficient, and inclusive insurance industry in Liberia. -Press release.

Rep. Williams resigns from Maryland Caucus

March 4, 2025 - Amid V internal fight, Maryland County_ Representative Anthony F. Williams announces his resignation from the county legislative caucus, a decision that has sparked discussions across the district and left many constituents wondering.

Representative Williams has been a prominent figure in Maryland politics, after he defeated former House speaker Bhofal Chambers in the 2023 general and presidential elections.

His recent visit to his constituency with a focus on education, healthcare, and roads connectivity demonstrates a commitment to progressive policies and willingness to challenge the status quo of the district and the county at large.

Though specific details regarding his resignation remain undisclosed, insiders suggest several factors could be at play. These range from He adds that it has been

aryland, Liberia about his resignation, the Maryland County electoral district#2 Representative says the decision is due to unresolved conflicts among members of the caucus.

In his resignation letter dated March 1, 2025, Rep. Williams notes, "I writing to inform you that I'm suspending my activities with the Caucus for an indefinite period, and effective immediately, I hereby resign as General Secretary of the Caucus." The release continues that

the decision comes after much consideration, and driven by several concerns. Over past years, it has become evidence that there is a lack of concern for the people that elected us and the Caucus has been unable to resolve self-interest conflicts created by one of its members.

According to him, the selfinterest conflict has hindered the ability to work efficiently and develop their districts respectively.



GVL supports Educati its concessio

Management parties." 130 volunteer teachers.

GVL in a press release explains that volunteer teachers are appointed directly by schools, overseen by educational authorities with the company having no hand in recruitment process of teaching staff.

According to the company, the stipend program was suspended in March 2024, part way through the 2023/24 academic year, in consultation with the worker's union, the Ministry of Education and participating schools and teachers.

"This was communicated in

onrovia, Liberia, March writing and through payments was made to 2025 - The consultation with affected teachers in June 2024 and last

GoldenVeroleum Liberia says However, following the September 2024 with monthly stipends for over September 2023 and February 2024. The first round of

payment was made in

since 2019, it has supported suspension, GVL reviewed its During the review period, a more than 50 public schools in records to confirm payments group of teachers took court prompting legislators to seek responsibility is to serve our Sinoe and Grand Kru counties due for time worked between action against GVL due to a

CONT'D ON PAGE 7



internal caucus dynamics to noted that there is lack of personal challenges. Often, resignations can stem from ideological disagreements, power struggle within the people. caucus or external pressures, a new path.

significant questions for Williams' constituents. First and foremost, the absence of legislative caucus may reduce their influence amongst his colleagues, knowing that the caucuses often serve as critical platforms for discussing and promoting legislation that benefits specific communities. Without representation, there is a risk that the needs and priorities of Williams' constituents may not be effectively addressed. Despite growing concerns

support for one another in simple situation that should bring happiness to the

"I believe our primary constituents and work The resignation raises towards their betterment. Unfortunately, the current situation within the caucus has made it difficult for me to their representative from the fulfill this duty without facing negative feedback or distraction from other members, as I promised to remain committed to working for the people of my district and continue to do so independently. I hope that the caucus can address these issues and refocus on the needs of our constituents", Representative Williams' letter continues.

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

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Mamaka Bility Again?

2025

amaka Bility, the allies are prioritizing HPX's of a few well-connected controversial Minister of interests at the expense of politicians. There is growing State Without Portfolio in Liberia's economy. By replacing suspicion that Bility and her



office, is once again at the heart operator, the government would The scandal, which embarrassed of a major national controversy. Following the widely criticized dollars to a private entity for government engaging in a Yellow Machine scandal, Bility is services that AML is already dubious multi-million-dollar now allegedly spearheading providing at no cost. Many see equipment deal that left serious efforts to remove ArcelorMittal this as an unnecessary financial questions about corruption and Liberia (AML) as the operator of burden, particularly at a time accountability. the Buchanan-Yekepa railway in when basic social services in Many Liberians are questioning favor of High-Power Exploration Liberia are severely why a government struggling (HPX) and its subsidiary, Ivanhoe underfunded. Liberia Limited.

Agreement (MDA) is approved.

AML, which has been operating reckless. in Liberia for over 20 years, has already invested more than \$800 ensure the railway's benefits from both transit fees struggling economy? functionality.

State Sylvester Grisby, and along with the 2,000 new jobs matter will not only determine others within the President's AML's expansion is expected to the fate of the railway but also office are reportedly lobbying generate. However, Mamaka send a clear message about its for AML's removal as the railway Bility and her allies have approach to governance operator. Their plan involves engaging a third-party company to take over management of the rail line—a move that could cost the government millions annually, an expense that AML is currently covering at no charge to the Liberian government.

Start From Page 6

only to transport iron ore from financial challenges, with when hospitals lack medicine, for shipment. Under the essential supplies, public education funding is at an alltransit fees. In stark contrast, context, the idea of spending long-term investor like AML.

Critics argue that Bility and her rather about lining the pockets generations to come.

associates have vested personal interests in ensuring HPX secures favorable terms, even at the expense of the country's financial well-being. The question many Liberians are asking is: Why fix something that isn't broken-especially when fixing it means adding more financial strain on an already struggling government? This latest development has

raised concerns over Bility's influence in government decision-making, particularly in light of her recent involvement in the controversial Yellow President Joseph Boakai's AML with an external railway Machine procurement scandal be forced to allocate millions of the administration, saw the

with budget constraints would Liberia's economic struggles are prioritize an arrangement that HPX, a company with no direct well-documented. The country reduces revenue and increases investment in Liberia, intends continues to face mounting operational expenses. At a time Guinea to the Port of Buchanan healthcare facilities lacking roads remain impassable, and proposed arrangement, HPX and schools struggling with time low, it is unfathomable that Ivanhoe Atlantic would pay the underfunding, and key national leaders would entertain Liberian government a mere \$5 infrastructure projects stalling a deal that benefits a foreign million to \$10 million annually in due to budget shortfalls. In this company while pushing aside a

AML is offering the government millions on a railway With Liberia at a critical up to \$200 million per year once operator—when AML is willing to economic juncture, the debate its new Mineral Development cover those costs—seems not over the Buchanan-Yekepa only impractical but outright railway's future is more than just a corporate dispute-it is a The push to replace AML is even test of the government's more baffling considering that commitment to transparency, million in rehabilitating and ArcelorMittal has expressed its fiscal responsibility, and the best maintaining the railway. As the willingness to allow HPX and interests of its people. Will current exclusive operator other companies to use the President Boakai's under its concession agreement railway, as long as it remains the administration bow to political with the government, AML also operator. This arrangement maneuvering, or will it act in the spends millions annually to would ensure the government best interest of Liberia's

from HPX and the \$200 million in The stakes are high. The Despite this, Bility, Minister of annual contributions from AML, government's decision on this allegedly convinced President investment, and financial Boakai to reject this offer and management. As pressure instead find another company to mounts, the nation watches take over operations—despite closely to see whether the the additional cost to Liberian administration will uphold taxpayers. Many observers Liberia's economic interests or believe this push to remove AML bow to political deal-making is not about national interest but that could prove costly for

GVL supports Education

September 2024].

perceived delay in payment. Payments to After comprehensive review and consultations volunteer teachers involved in this legal action the program has resumed for the 2024/2025 were paused pending the court's decision, in academic year. Around 130 volunteer teachers line with legal process. Following the ruling, all have been engaged by educational authorities outstanding payments were made by in Sinoe and Grand Kru Counties, where GVI operates palm plantations. Press Release

Liberia and

-To upgrade power supply to 50 Megawatts

The Government of Liberia takes step to increase electricity supply from neighboring Ivory Coast to 50 Megawatts.

By Lincoln G. Peters ▲ onrovia, Liberia, March 5, 2025 - The Interim Managing Director of the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) Thomas Z. Gonkerwon, takes a giant step here to address electricity gap and power supply distribution across the country by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with CI Energies and CIE of Ivory Coast to secure stable power supply to Liberia.

On Monday, March 3, 2025, the Government of Liberia through the LEC signed a power purchase landmark agreement with CI-Energies headquartered in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire to provide electricity to Liberia from 2025 through 2027. LEC's Power Purchase Arrangement (PPA) with CI Energies and CIE, remains a commercial agreement for the purchase and supply of electricity, which has over the year provided capacity for LEC to meet its energy demands. Through the newly signed Private Partnership

Also in attendance were Cllr. Malayan Keita-Brown, head of Legal Services, Mrs. Verity Neufville-Sonkarlay, Communications Manager, Mr. Tomah She Floyd, Sr., CEO, Jungle Energy Power and Mr. Maissa Diagne, CEO Albedo/Libenergy.

Following signing of the agreement, the Interim Managing Director of LEC, Mr. Thomas Z. Gonkerwon expressed words of appreciation to the management of both CIE and CI-Energies, for their unflinching support to the energy sector of Liberia.

He acknowledged series of discussions held with the two institutions and highlighted that by agreeing to supply Liberia energy even before all the legal arrangements, CIE and CI-Energies have shown a sign of brotherhood and African solidarity.

Mr. Gonkerwon assured his Ivorian counterparts that the Government of Liberia has



Agreement (PPA), LEC's contracted supply is 50 megawatts of electricity from its Ivorian counterpart.

Also, LEC has initiated a solar repair Unit 1 at Mount Coffee Hydro Power Plant, which also expected to be completed in 2025 and expand the mount coffee hydro by two additional turbines are all measures taken by the company to address Liberia's future energy needs. While there, plans are underway for more investment in green energy, LEC short-term plan is to increase Liberia's thermal capacity which normally comes in during dry season to boost generation from Mount Coffee. The LEC delegation was to Ivory Coast was led by Interim Director Gonkerwon and accompanied by Cllr. Emmanuel A. Tulay, Chairman, LEC Board of

Directors and Mr. Adam Sheriff,

head of Finance.

prioritized the energy sector and instructed the LEC to install prepaid meter at all government institutions except medical facilities.

farm project which is expected "The LEC management is to go live in October 2025, confident that the country is getting closer to its national goal of increasing access to electricity for all Liberians. With the growing demand for electricity, the LEC management is encouraging all its customers currently connected to the national grid, to use electricity efficiently and avoid wasteful consumption" he urged.

> The LEC head noted that electricity serves as a catalyst for economic growth, adding that going forward, the LEC has embarked on a mission to connect more large users, especially the Industrial Park along the Somalia drive whose demand is around 27 megawatts and the industrial freezone.

rançaıs

Des affrontements éclatent (les Églises Méthodistes au

2025, des scènes de ■chaos ont marqué les offices religieux dans plusieurs Eglises Méthodistes du Liberia, alors que des membres dissidents ont violemment résisté à leur expulsion des propriétés de l'Église,

de fidèles avaient récemment quitté l'Église Méthodiste Unie (UMC) pour protester contre l'application présumée de cette loi, introduite dans le Book of Discipline. Celle-ci autorise désormais le mariage entre deux adultes consentants, en opposition à la loi libérienne qui

e dimanche 2 mars 72e rue, où plus d'une centaine Kanneth Jackson, 142 membres se sont opposés à la direction de l'UMC qui tentait de les évincer pour installer un nouveau pasteur, le Révérend Simeon Doe.

La situation a dégénéré lorsque des fidèles résistants ont affronté les forces de l'ordre accompagnant la direction de l'UMC sous l'égide de la Conférence Annuelle du Liberia. Des chants de protestation et des jets de pierres ont conduit la police à utiliser des gaz lacrymogènes pour disperser la foule.

« Nous ne voulons pas des droits des homosexuels ». scandaient les manifestants. Selon eux, ils se sont vu refuser l'accès aux bâtiments de l'église en raison de leur scission d'avec l'UMC sur des questions liées aux politiques LGBTQ+.Des incidents similaires ont été rapportés dans d'autres Églises Méthodistes Unies, notamment à l'Église N.B. Whitfield à Buchanan, à

CONT'D ON PAGE 9



refusant d'accepter le mariage homosexuel en vertu de la nouvelle loi de régionalisation.Les troubles ont débuté à <u>l'Église Méthodiste de la</u>

n'admet que le mariage entre un homme et une femme. Sous la bannière de la nouvelle Église Méthodiste Globale (GMC), dirigée par le Révérend Dr. Jerry Kulah et le Pasteur Résident

Cour rejette la requête de

Finances Samuel D. ■Tweah, Jr., ainsi que quatre autres anciens responsables du régime de George Weah, sont confrontés à des accusations

de sabotage économique. Le juge Roosevelt Z. Willie de la Cour criminelle « C » a rejeté la demande de Samuel D. Tweah et de ses coaccusés visant à faire annuler les poursuites pour corruption en invoquant des raisons de sécurité nationale. Tweah, accompagné de Cllr. Nyanti Tuan (ancien ministre intérimaire de la Justice), Stanley S. Ford (ancien renseignement financier), D. Moses P. Cooper (ancien contrôleur du renseignement financier) et Jefferson Karmoh (ancien conseiller en sécurité nationale du président George Weah), a été inculpé par la Commission Anti-Corruption du Liberia (LACC) pour sabotage économique, vol, dépenses et décaissements illégaux de fonds publics, conspiration criminelle, détournement de fonds

détaillées Selon l'acte d'accusation, les prévenus auraient enfreint la

publics et facilitation criminelle.Les accusations

'ancien ministre des loi sur l'Agence de Renseignement telle qu'une instruction Financier de 2022 en conspirant pour transférer 500 000 USD et 1 055 152 540 LRD depuis la Banque centrale du Liberia vers le compte opérationnel de l'Unité de Renseignement Financier (FIU).

> La semaine dernière, la défense a déposé une requête auprès du juge Willie pour demander l'abandon des poursuites, arguant que la cour n'avait pas compétence pour traiter cette affaire en raison de l'intérêt supérieur de la sécurité nationale.Le rejet de la requête par la Cour

vendredi 28 février, le juge Willie a Constitution de 1986. Par estimé que l'affaire ne pouvait conséquent, ils ne peuvent directeur général du être rejetée en raison de la nature des faits et des lois applicables.

Il a précisé que la LACC n'avait fourni aucune preuve tangible,

officielle ou une demande formelle émanant de la Sécurité Nationale conjointe, de la FIA ou d'une résolution de sécurité commune, ni de l'ancien président George Weah à l'intention de Samuel Tweah pour approuver et ordonner le transfert des montants en question vers le compte de la FIU.

Le juge a souligné que les actions des accusés semblent dépasser le cadre de la protection accordée aux agents du président en vertu Dans sa décision rendue le de l'article 61 de la bénéficier de cette immunité et doivent répondre de leurs

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Éditorial

<u>L'anarchie s'impose au Capitole</u>

Par Daron Acemoglu

a crise qui secoue la Chambre des représentants du Liberia a franchi un nouveau seuil d'escalade avec ✓ l'intrusion violente des députés majoritaires dans les bureaux du président contesté, J. Fonati Koffa. Destitué dans des circonstances controversées, ce dernier a vu son espace de travail investi de force par des élus déterminés à imposer leur autorité, sans aucun mandat judiciaire.

Soutenu par l'Exécutif, le bloc majoritaire a ainsi agi en marge du cadre légal, affichant un mépris flagrant pour l'État de droit et la Constitution. Une telle démarche, indigne de législateurs, remet en cause les principes démocratiques qu'ils sont censés défendre. L'incident survenu lundi marque un précédent préoccupant pour la gouvernance du pays.

Le président de la commission des règles, de l'ordre et de l'administration, James Kolleh, a tenté de justifier cette action en invoquant des demandes répétées adressées à M. Koffa pour qu'il libère les lieux. Toutefois, il a omis de préciser si l'usage de forces de l'ordre armées, en l'absence d'une décision judiciaire, respectait l'État de droit.

Cette intervention survient malgré un récent avis de la Cour suprême du Liberia qualifiant d'ultra vires – donc illégales – les actions menées par les deux camps dans cette lutte pour le contrôle de la Chambre. Pourtant, les députés majoritaires persistent à imposer Richard Nagbe Koon à la tête de l'institution, en violation des procédures

Face à cette situation, J. Fonati Koffa a averti que ses opposants pourraient employer les mêmes méthodes illégales pour l'évincer physiquement de son bureau, comme ils l'ont fait en imposant un nouveau président alors qu'il revendique toujours la légitimité de son mandat.

Ces événements soulèvent de sérieuses inquiétudes quant au respect des principes démocratiques et de l'État de droit au Liberia. De nombreux citoyens s'interrogent : le pays est-il encore gouverné par la loi ou par des ambitions personnelles dictées par la soif de pouvoir?

Le silence de la Cour suprême, qui se distance de cette crise institutionnelle, témoigne de la gravité de la situation. Les députés majoritaires mesurent-ils l'impact de leurs actions sur l'image des institutions?

Au-delà de cette querelle politique, c'est un message dangereux qui est adressé aux générations futures : contourner la loi pour satisfaire des ambitions personnelles serait un mode de gouvernance acceptable. Or, quelles que soient les victoires que certains pensent avoir remportées, une vérité demeure : ce qui est obtenu en dehors du cadre légal ne saurait être considéré comme légitime.

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Français

Des affrontements éclatent dans Starts from page 8

l'Église Méthodiste Unie de Ganta, à l'Église Méthodiste de Dwazohn et à l'Église Méthodiste Unie de New Georgia.

Les membres dissidents, farouchement opposés à la doctrine de l'UMC qui soutient le mariage homosexuel et la nomination de pasteurs gays, affirment vouloir défendre les véritables enseignements de Jésus-Christ, même au péril de leur vie.

Le Dr. Jerry Kulah et ses partisans mènent une campagne contre la politique de régionalisation de l'UMC, qu'ils accusent de promouvoir des pratiques immorales contraires à la Bible, qui prône uniquement le mariage entre un homme et une femme.

Le Révérend Kulah a publiquement accusé l'Évêque de la Conférence Annuelle du Liberia de l'UMC, le Révérend Dr. Samuel J. Quire, Jr., de trahir les enseignements originaux de l'église. « L'Évêque Quire et nous avions convenu que le jour où l'UMC mondiale adopterait la politique de régionalisation, nous partirions chacun de notre côté », a-t-il déclaré.

Selon lui, l'évêque Quire, après avoir initialement soutenu cette position, aurait changé de cap après la convention mondiale de 2023.Le camp du Révérend Kulah estime que l'acceptation des pratiques homosexuelles dans l'église viole non seulement les normes morales mais aussi la Constitution du Liberia, qui s'oppose fermement à de telles pratiques.

Malgré les tensions religieuses croissantes, le gouvernement libérien, dirigé par le Président Joseph Nyuma Boakai, n'a pas encore pris position publiquement sur la situation.

Lors des affrontements, plusieurs K. Manbah, en soutien au Dr. Kulah.

arrestations ont eu lieu, notamment celle du Dr. Kulah et de certains de ses partisans, qui ont ensuite été libérés. Un véhicule a également été endommagé au cours des heurts.Le Révérend Eblezener Belleh et le Révérend Jerry Kandea, responsables de la faction dissidente désormais connue sous le nom d'Église Méthodiste Globale, accusent le gouvernement de ne rien faire pour apaiser la crise. Selon eux, les autorités attendraient que la situation dégénère en violences plus graves.

Lors de l'office dominical à l'Église Méthodiste Miller McAllister de Ganta, désormais sous le contrôle des dissidents, les fidèles ont réaffirmé leur détermination à ne laisser personne les déloger.

Des policiers armés ont été déployés depuis Yekepa et Ganta pour protéger les biens de l'église.

Selon des informations recueillies par The New Dawn, les pasteurs Jerry Kandea et Eblezener Belleh, anciens membres influents du district de Gompa au sein de l'UMC, ont rejoint la GMC et promettent d'empêcher toute intrusion de l'UMC dans leurs locaux.

Les forces de sécurité sur place affirment avoir saisi une machette au Révérend Belleh, qu'ils accusent d'avoir tenté de les attaquer. Interrogé, ce dernier a reconnu être en possession d'une machette mais a nié toute intention aggressive envers les agents.

Par ailleurs, plusieurs églises, don't la Sanniquellie First United Methodist Church, ont été rebaptisées sous la nouvelle dénomination Sanniquellie Global Methodist Church par leur pasteur, le Révérend Stanley

La Cour rejette la requête de Starts from page 8

l'opportunité de prouver son de l'accusation cas. La requête en annulation De son côté, l'accusation est donc rejetée, et l'affaire affirme que les opérations du doit se poursuivre Conseil de Sécurité Nationale immédiatement », a déclaré (NSC), y compris les le juge Willie.Réaction de la transactions financières, défense

En réaction à cette décision, sécurité nationale. Elle se défense, Cllr. Johnson, a de la Sécurité Nationale et le affirmé que la cour n'avait Renseignement de 2011, qui pas compétence en la définit les pouvoirs des matière. Selon lui, le juge a institutions de sécurité, y outrepassé son rôle en compris le NSC, et impose des refusant la demande de systèmes indépendants de rejet.Cllr. Johnson a passation de marchés et de également soutenu que comptabilité. habilitée à interpréter la sécurité nationale. Constitution.

qu'il ne possède pas. En fait, enquête ou des poursuites

actes devant la Cour le gouvernement s'apprête à criminelle « C ».« Par dévoiler des opérations de conséquent, cette affaire ne sécurité nationale, peut être rejetée pour notamment sur les dépenses manque de compétence en liées aux élections pour raison des faits, des maintenir le pays en sécurité. circonstances et des lois Cette décision dépasse le invoqués. La partie cadre de sa compétence », apoursuivante doit avoir t-il déclaré.L'argumentation

relèvent des lois sur la

lorsque des dispositions Elle ajoute que la Commission spécifiques de la Constitution Générale d'Audit doit vérifier sont en jeu, seule la Cour annuellement les comptes du suprême du Liberia, et non NSC et que la loi exige une une juridiction de régulation législative des compétence limitée, est fonctions des agences de

L'accusation soutient que « Aujourd'hui, le juge a même si les actions du NSC commis une erreur. En relevaient de la sécurité rejetant notre requête, il nationale, cela ne confère pas s'est attribué une autorité une immunité contre une

criminelles si des actes illégaux ont été commis. Les prévenus ne peuvent donc pas invoquer l'immunité ou la protection du secret pour se soustraire à leurs responsabilités.Les arguments de la défense

En réponse, la défense affirme que l'acte d'accusation viole les principes de l'immunité statutaire et exécutive. Selon elle, les membres du NSC, en tant qu'agents et conseillers du président, ne peuvent être contraints de divulguer des informations sur les opérations de securite nationale.

l'un des avocats de la réfère à la loi sur la Réforme Elle soutient également qu'un examen judiciaire des actions du NSC pourrait compromettre les protocoles de sécurité nationale et que la cour n'a pas compétence sur les opérations du NSC. La défense réclame donc l'annulation des poursuites, estimant que les accusés agissaient dans le cadre de la loi de 2011 sur la sécurité nationale, qui protège les intérêts sécuritaires du pays.

Cllr. Johnson a conclu que la poursuite de Tweah et des anciens responsables gouvernementaux pourrait exposer dangereusement les opérations sensibles de sécurité nationale.

Les Députés Suspendus Saisissent la Cour Suprême

ept membres suspendus de la Chambre des représentants, proches du président contesté de l'Assemblée, J. Fonati Koffa, ont porté plainte contre le gouvernement libérien devant la Cour suprême. Ils dénoncent le gel de leurs salaires et prestations, qu'ils qualifient d'illégal et politiquement motivé.

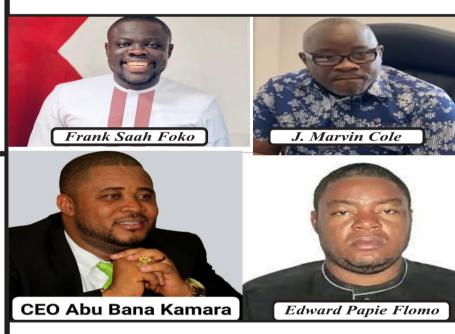
Les députés concernés sont Frank Saah Foko (Montserrado, District #9), Edward Papie Flomo (Montserrado, District #13), Abu Bana Kamara (Montserrado, District #15), J. Marvin Cole (Bong, District #3), Eugene Kollie (Bong, District #5), Alex Noah (Sinoe, District #3) et Zinnah Norman (Gbarpolu, District #1). Une Sanction Jugée Injustifiée

Ces parlementaires ont été suspendus par la direction actuelle de la Chambre des représentants, dirigée par le député Richard N. Koon, qui s'est autoproclamé "Président du Régime". Ils sont accusés d'avoir boycotté les sessions législatives et, en conséquence, l'exécutif a été sollicité pour suspendre leurs salaires.

Les députés suspendus dénoncent une décision injuste et réclament la restitution de leurs émoluments devant la Cour

« Nos salaires ont été bloqués sans raison légale, ce qui est contraire aux lois en vigueur. C'est pourquoi nous nous tournons vers la justice », a déclaré l'un des plaignants.

Ils estiment que le ministère des Finances et le comptable de la Chambre des représentants retiennent illégalement leurs salaires sous la pression du « Bloc Majoritaire », groupe de parlementaires ayant destitué J. Fonati Koffa dans des circonstances



controversées.

Un Conflit Politique Persistant

Les plaignants rappellent qu'ils ont été élus le 10 octobre 2023 et officiellement investis le 15 janvier 2024. À ce titre, ils doivent percevoir l'intégralité de leur rémunération, comme prévu par le budget national. Or, leurs paiements ont été interrompus sans justification légale.

Se sentant lésés, ils ont introduit une requête en mandamus auprès de la Cour suprême, demandant à celle-ci d'ordonner au ministère des Finances de débloquer leurs salaires. Ils insistent sur le fait que le ministre des Finances et le comptable du Législatif ont l'obligation légale de traiter les paiements de tous les députés, indépendamment de leurs affiliations politiques.

Un Bras de Fer Juridique

La Cour suprême du Liberia a déjà qualifié d'ultra vires (au-delà de ses pouvoirs légaux) la destitution du président Koffa, ordonnant un retour au status quo ante et le respect des procédures légales. Cependant, le Bloc Majoritaire, avec le soutien de l'exécutif dirigé par le président Joseph Boakai, continue d'ignorer cette décision.

Les tensions ont atteint un point critique avec l'intrusion forcée des partisans du Bloc Majoritaire dans le bureau du président Koffa, où ses effets personnels ont été jetés à l'extérieur, sans mandat judiciaire.

Face à cette situation, les députés suspendus persistent dans leur combat juridique, espérant obtenir justice devant la plus haute juridiction du pays.

ARTICLE ARTICLE

Liberia's 2025 Budget and the Dance of the Traditional Devil

By Seltue Karweaye Sr.

WEDNESDAY

raditional devil performances in Liberia are known for their distinctive and vibrant characteristics. The dancers fluidly move back and forth, leap exuberantly up and down, and create an enchanting yet chaotic atmosphere that captivates onlookers. These lively displays are rich in cultural significance, often blending storytelling, folklore, and community engagement. However, once the performances conclude, not much has changed, as both the dancers and the spectators understand one fundamental truth: it is all just drama.

If there is a metaphor that aptly captures the challenges surrounding Liberia's budget this year, it might be likened to the intricate dance of the traditional devil—navigating between the Presidency and the National Legislature, yet falling short in providing meaningful policies and programs aimed at job creation, economic stimulation, and poverty reduction. The Liberian public, who are left as little more than bewildered spectators, are confronted with a hefty budget of about US\$880.66 million for these meaningless efforts that yield no real benefit.

On November 18, 2024, Liberians breathed a sigh of relief as President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr. submitted the Fiscal Year 2025 Draft National Budget to the National Legislature. The proposed budget totals an ambitious \$851.8 million, reflecting a 15.3% increase over the 2024 Recast Budget of \$738.9 million.

Just days after the president's submission, the Majority bloc of the House of Representatives and the Senate approved the total expenditures of \$880.66 million, marking it the highest budget in Liberia's history. This budget includes the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), among other provisions.

On Thursday, February 20, the approved 2025
National Budget was officially published by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, one month after its approval. In our analysis of the budget, we must critically evaluate whether it, like its predecessors, takes meaningful steps to revitalize Liberia's struggling economy and set it on a trajectory of growth and sustainable development. What concrete provisions does it offer to the millions of unemployed Liberians who are grappling with hopelessness for a brighter future? How does it plan to uplift the 51% of our fellow citizens—approximately 2.3 million individuals—who are trapped in the depths of absolute poverty?

The approved budget for 2025 projects has a total expenditure of approximately US\$880.66 million. Within this budget, recurrent expenditures are earmarked at US\$773.95 million, which represents around 87.9% of the entire budget allocation. This recurrent expenditure encompasses a variety of costs, including debt servicing that totals US\$153 million (17.4% of the overall budget), high salaries and substantial benefits for public officials, as well as significant expenditures on fuel, extravagant foreign travel, luxury vehicles, entertainment, meals, home generators, and daily subsistence allowances (DSA). In addition, there are allocations for furniture allowances, scratch cards, foreign medical care, housing allowances, and private jet travel, along with expenses related to consultancies, workshops, and constituency visits.

On the other hand, capital expenditures are

projected at approximately US\$106.72 million, accounting for just 12.9% of the overall budget. This limited allocation indicates a worrying trend: a reduced investment in vital infrastructure projects and essential services such as road construction, bridge repairs, educational improvements, healthcare enhancement, and electricity provision.

For instance, despite the persistent claims that the cost of governance is on the decline, one would expect to see figures more in line with the internationally accepted standard of 25% for recurrent expenditure. Instead, the recurrent budget shockingly stands at approximately 87.9%, a staggering amount that is over six times greater than the allocations for capital expenditure. Even more concerning, the 2025 recurrent figures indicate a troubling trend, with an increase of 15.3% (US\$102.52 million) compared to 2024, contradicting any notions of fiscal restraint.

To gain a clearer perspective on the outcomes of the 2024 budget, it is important to thoughtfully assess its performance, particularly given that the economic team remains unchanged. While there were many hopes for improved timelines, it appears that the execution of the 2025 budget may encounter a similar delayed start as experienced with the 2024 budget. The implementation process for the 2024 budget has been marked by several challenges; by the mid-year report, the finance ministry



indicated that only 43.5% of the budget had been executed. Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive review of the 2024 budget's performance over all four quarters raises important considerations regarding accountability and transparency in our governance.

After reviewing the picture above, it is clear that, without significant government action, the implementation of the 2025 capital budget is likely to mirror that of 2024, leading to a continued expansion of the nation's infrastructure deficit. It is crucial to establish checks and balances to ensure that Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) effectively utilize the capital funds allocated to them. One would hope that the anticipated Presidential Directive regarding the New National Performance Management and Compliance System will play a pivotal role in strengthening these processes and fostering accountability.

An in-depth analysis of key ministries has uncovered a concerning budget structure. The health sector is allocated \$81.8 million, which constitutes approximately 10.4% of the overall national budget. Alarmingly, this entire sum is earmarked for recurrent expenditure, leaving little room for essential health initiatives. The recent decision by President Donald Trump to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization significantly endangers funding for crucial global health programs, particularly those targeting HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in regions like Liberia.

Public health in Liberia is grappling with severe challenges, including the persistent threats of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Malaria is especially distressing, with around 1.9 million cases reported in

2021. This resulted in an incidence rate of 358.5 cases per 1,000 inhabitants and nearly 3,548 deaths that year. The Malaria Indicator Survey of 2022 indicates that the prevalence of malaria among children under the age of five is a startling 10%. The HIV epidemic is equally alarming; prevalence rates among individuals aged 15 to 49 vary between 1.5% and 2.1%. In 2021 alone, there were 1,100 reported deaths related to HIV/AIDS, and the disease left approximately 35,000 children between the ages of 0 and 17 orphaned. Given these critical health issues, one must question how a progressive government can justify allocating a mere 10.4% of the budget to bolster the health sector.

In the realm of education, \$119.72 million has been designated, which represents 13.6% of the national budget. Unfortunately, as with health, a considerable portion of this budget is mismanaged, with the entirety consumed by recurrent expenditures, such as salaries and operational costs, rather than being invested in infrastructure or educational resources. According to UNICEF, an alarming 20% of children of primary school age (6-14 years) are not attending school. Furthermore, only about 48.3% of Liberia's population aged 15 and older can read and write. This lack of funding has dire consequences, as it limits the ability to recruit qualified teachers, construct new schools, and ultimately improve literacy rates across the

country. Without a significant reallocation of resources, the future of education in Liberia remains precarious.

The agriculture sector has received an allocation of approximately US\$16.75 million, representing merely 1.9% of the overall budget. This level of funding is insufficient to implement the targeted interventions necessary to revitalize a sector that once served as a vital source of employment for many Liberians but now provides jobs for only about 40% of the workforce.

To truly enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability, it is essential to invest in several key areas. This includes the acquisition of high-quality seedlings that are resilient to climate impacts, the provision of effective agrochemicals

to protect crops from pests and diseases, and the availability of fertilizers to improve soil fertility.

Additionally, expanding extension services will ensure that farmers receive the training and support they need to adopt modern farming techniques and best practices. Investing in modern farming equipment will increase efficiency and reduce the labor burden on farmers. Finally, developing robust farm-to-market infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, is critical to facilitate the timely and cost-effective transportation of produce to markets, thereby reducing post-harvest losses and improving farmers' income.

Ironically, a close examination of the budget for the Ministry of State and Presidential Affairs—totaling approximately US\$15,689,817—reveals that the lofty rhetoric surrounding the fight against corruption is largely superficial. Of this substantial budget, a mere \$3.1 million is earmarked for the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, which is far from sufficient given the scale of the corruption challenges the country faces.

Moreover, the allocation for the National Disaster Management Agency is particularly alarming; with just about US\$746,887, the agency is severely underfunded. This inadequate financing significantly hampers its ability to respond effectively to emergencies. As a result, when disasters occur and the agency finally mobilizes, it often finds itself illequipped and late to provide the necessary aid, leading to preventable suffering and loss.

beria: Even the dead are not spared

Even the dead are not spared. Ahead of Decoration Day here next morning, we met our week, more than fifty (50) graves have been destroyed, as bodies lie in open air after unknown men raided the Johnsonville Cemetery on Tuesday, March 4.

By: Emmanuel Wise Jipoh

ohnsonville, March 5. 2025/ Family members woke up early Tuesday morning to the horrible news of their loved ones' graves being

practically living in these graveyards, are being pointed at as potential suspects.

"We came here this morning to check on our grave, and we met our mother's body



damaged with corpses thrown in open as burial cloths and caskets for recent burial stripped off.

Our reporter who visited the cemetery disclosed that over 50 graves had been broken into, caskets, marvel tiles, and other valuable burial items stolen for sales, while dead bodies were left stripped naked.

The news comes ahead of National Decoration Day next week Wednesday, a day set aside to clean and decorate cemeteries across the country.

Zogos, a group of young men and women who largely live off drugs while lying down on the ground, no casket, and everything stolen," Tenneh Ruster, one of the affected family members, told our reporter.

"This is an unfortunate situation, and nobody can give account of it. But you can see here not only our mother's grave. Look at the other body lying there, which is sorrowful," she said while pointing.

Other grieving families described the situation as devasting while blaming community dwellers who live near the cemetery for the act, which has the propensity of erupting violence- next Wednesday.

"When we came here this

(relative) graves, ripped they ripped off the marvel stone, and took off the date of birth off the stone. And like this, it's difficult to identify. Tell me, when it was Decoration, Wednesday, this could be serious noise, between families." The grieving family member said.

Usually, Decoration Days here are marred by violence, with families fighting over graves due to lack of proper recognition of a deceased family member's grave.

"If I come to identify my father's grave and another person come, claiming the same grave, it will be 'war,'" Lorpu Johnson said.

Other family members who buried their loved ones in the cemetery complained that their decorations had been thrown in the trash.

The affected family members have called on authorities to immediately deploy security personnel at Johnsonville Cemetery to avoid a potential violent outbreak next Wednesday.

Efforts to reach authorities at the Cemetery and Township Commissioner John S. Randell proved futile as his phone rang endlessly. Edited by Othello B. Garblah

From Back Page

Srimex. Government agencies Limited, and others, is responsible for revenue contesting the amount collection and infrastructure development may be forced to take enforcement measures, including sanctions, asset seizures, or legal proceedings, to recover the outstanding amount.

Unresolved debts of this magnitude could undermine investor confidence in Liberia's business environment, particularly in the petroleum sector, which plays a vital role in the country's economy.

Efforts to obtain comments from Srimex Oil and Gas CEO and Nimba County Representative Musa Hassan Bility have so far been unsuccessful. It remains unclear whether the company has a structured repayment plan or intends to challenge the claims made by the NRF.

stakeholders are closely monitoring whether the Liberian government will take decisive action to recover the owed funds or if a negotiated settlement would be reached between the parties involved.

As the situation unfolds,

While some importers, including Conex and Aminata & Sons, have begun payments, Srimex, along with LPRC, Petro Trade, Kailondo, NEXIUM Petroleum assessed by the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA).

The total outstanding amount across all importers is approximately \$15,287,101.24.

Speaking to members of the House of Representatives Tuesday, the Chief Administrative Officer of the National Road Fund John H. Tokpah informed lawmakers that as of December 30, 2024, the arrears owed by the petroleum importers include CONEX (\$4.6 million), SRIMEX (\$3.7 million), LPRC (\$5.83 million), AMINATA & SONS (\$559,995), PETRO TRAD (\$575,235), KAILONDO (\$94,886), NEXIUM (\$17,075), NP (\$15,820), MAYOUBA & SONS (\$12,000), and WEST OIL (\$6,132), bringing the total arrears to \$15,503,190.

In light of the ongoing disputes, Plenary has decided that the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Works, and the National Road Fund reappear before the House next Tuesday, along with the importers and those contesting the amounts, to provide further clarity on the matter.

The purpose of the summoned

Notice of Intent

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the Kon Kweni Liberian Infrastructure Project

The general public and all concerned or interested parties are hereby informed that Ivanhoe Liberia Limited ("Applicant"), has hired Earthtime Inc. ("Consultant") to prepare an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the Kon Kweni Liberia Infrastructure Project.

Ivanhoe Liberia Limited hereby publishes its intention to commence work on the Liberian Transport Infrastructure project ("the Project") once an Agreement with the Government of Liberia is finalized. The project will involve the transportation of iron ore from the Kon Kweni mine site in the south-eastern Guinean forest region, across the Liberian-Guinean Border to the Port of Buchanan in Liberia.

The proposed project will include the following components:

- A Guinea-Liberia border crossing in Yekepa.
- A haul road between Yekepa and Tokadeh.
- A stockpiling and loadout area at Tokadeh.
- Transport of ore along the existing Tokadeh-Buchanan Railway.
- A stockpiling area and infrastructure at the Port of Buchanan, and Port operations for iron ore export, likely including transshipment.

In keeping with Section 11 of the Environmental Protection and Management Law of the Republic of Liberia (2003), the Consultant is preparing an ESIA. The ESIA process will help the Applicant manage any associated environmental and socio-economic issues in accordance with company policies, the laws of Liberia, International Finance Corporation (IFC) Environmental and Social Performance Standards, and good international industry practice.

In the process of identifying potential environmental and social impacts that may result from activities of the process, the Consultant and Applicant will request and receive input from the public, including interested and affected parties. All persons who have views, comments or concerns regarding the proposed project are encouraged to contact the Applicant or Consultant as follows:

Applicant's email:

infoLib@ivanhoeatlantic.com

Consultant's email:

info@earthtimegroup.com

Contact number:

0777 744 586

Your participation or input in this assessment will be highly appreciated in order to guide decision-making relevant to the proposed project.

Start From Page 6

Rep. Williams resigns

Meanwhile, his resignation could impact access to resources and statelevel support because representatives in the caucus often engage in collaborative efforts to secure funding and resources for their districts. Without Williams at the table, his constituents may be at a disadvantage regarding initiatives aimed at improving local infrastructure, education funding, and healthcare services.

Several citizens, including some of his

supporters say his resignation could lead to a shift in political dynamics within the district, noting that this move may set the stage for a potential shift in how voters view his loyalty and effectiveness representation.

It could also open doors for other candidates to gradually emerge, leading to a potential showdown in future elections. Editing by Jonathan Browne







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7m debt hangs over Srimex

Petroleum companies here are allegedly indebted to the Government of Liberia in the amount of over US\$15 Million in road tariffs.

By Stephen G. Fellajuah & Bridgett Milton

onrovia, Liberia, March 5, 2025 -Srimex Oil and Gas.

related to road fund tax on petroleum imports, which is mandated to support the country's infrastructure development, particularly

owned by Nimba County road maintenance and

legal action against

Liberia's road network and ensuring sustainable infrastructure growth. "The National Road Fund relies on petroleum import levies to finance crucial road projects across the country. When companies fail to meet their obligations, it directly impacts development efforts," he points out.

are critical to maintaining

Tokpah made the disclosure when officials from the NRF, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Public Works appeared before the House of Representatives following a communication from Bong County District 2 Representative James Kolleh. The hearing focused on fuel importers' arrears to the NRF, which funds road maintenance and infrastructure projects.

The failure to settle the \$3.7 million debt raises concerns about potential

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Representative Musa Hassan Bility, owes the Liberian government US\$3,762,803, National Road Fund (NRF) Chief Administrative Officer, John H. Tokpah, discloses

The debt reportedly stems from unpaid levies and fees

rehabilitation projects.

Tokpah further reveals that despite multiple engagements with Srimex regarding its financial obligations, the company has yet to make significant payments toward settling the outstanding amount. He emphasizes that these funds



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