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Political and Presidential Affairs

SIERRA LEONE: Our Report Will Not Be Influenced By Political Parties or Any Other Interest - Hon. P.C Brewah

By Melvin Tejan-Mansaray

The Chairman of the Special Select Committee on the Investigation of the Violent Protest that claimed six lives on the 17th and 18th July 2020 in the Northern City of Makeni, Bombali District has said that the outcome of their findings will not be influenced by the numerous political parties and civil society publications already published on the issue.

Honourable Paramount Chief Saa Yongai Konthani Brewah 2nd said that: "Our report will be dependent on our mandate and will not



PCMP K. Brewah Chairman Special Select Committee on the Makeni Incident

be influenced by those already published reports by any political party or any other interest."

Hon. PC Brewah said that the incident of the 17th and 18th July 2020 in the Northern City of Makeni was unfortunate and sad.

The incident saw the shooting and killing of six people, wounding of scores of people and detention of many in the main opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) party stronghold. The incident also foreshadowed the late burial of the victims for reasons hinging on fear of further instability.

The 'Makeni Lives Matter' campaign gained momentum following pressure first by the APC's Bombali MP Caucus and later by the entire APC Parliamentary Caucus who were later joined by the NGC party. MPs held placards in the Well of the Sierra Leone Parliament demanding that Parliament establish a Committee to investigate the incident. Due to this pressure, the House Leadership agreed that a Special Select Committee headed by PCMP Brewah be constituted inclusive of MPs from other political parties.

The Chairman of the Special Parliamentary Select Committee said that their mandate is to investigate the recent violence that occurred in Makeni on the 17th and 18th July 2020.

"We have been given a specific mandate to carry out. Firstly,

our mandate is to investigate the inactions and actions of the Central and the Local Government; meaning that the people of this country are actually interested to know what the Central Government did or did not do that resulted into the violence that occurred in Makeni. Likewise, the Local Government was supposed to do certain things; whether they carried out certain things that they were expected to do or not, we are supposed to look into that as well. The second mandate is to investigate the actions of the youth on that occasion; whether the action they took was justifiable or not. Apart from that, we have the security forces who were key actors in the incident and we are also to investigate into the actions that they took – the forces they applied, whether it was appropriate and proportionate to the violence of the youth. We are also to look into the lessons to be learnt and what recommendations we will present to Parliament for onward forwarding to the Central Government for relevant actions," Hon. PC Brewah said.

The assignment of this Committee is time sensitive even if not time-bound on what is seen as an emotive issue. The Chairman said that the slated timeline of seven to ten days has been exhausted but because events interrupted them with some of the actors mentioned not being available on the ground upon their visit. He noted that some of the relevant players (Military, Energy Ministry, EDSA, EGTC) received their notifications late and were very busy with their duties in Freetown when they visited Makeni.

Asked if the absence of some of these players at the initial hearing was not a way of watering down the investigation of the Committee, the Chairman said no.

"That is why we invited them to come down to Parliament. We have seen them of course, today we saw the two parties that were left out and we have interviewed them. The Energy Minister and his team and also the Military have come to Parliament," He said.

The Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone has in the last three weeks been on its third session recess. This, observers fear will affect the effectiveness of this Special Select Committee's effectiveness.

"We have been proactive. Yes, the Parliament is on recess but it does not mean that the Parliament is not operating. We have Committees operating and in our case as a Special Committee, we can be called upon at any time and if there is anything to bring to the attention of the Leadership, you are free to come. That is why we are here. Even though other Members are away, we are here because we have this special assignment which is very important and in the interest of the nation," Hon. PC Brewah said.

He said that as things stand now, the Committee has collected its interviews and is expecting to go into debriefings, to analyze the situation, compile their findings and do their recommendations as well.

Giving an insight into his assessment on the political commitment on the issue and the investigation, Hon. PC Brewah said that they have been given a free hand from across the political divide.

He said: "I have been giving that freedom to chair the meetings and I enjoyed it because I work with all the political parties in Parliament who are all represented in the Committee. I enjoyed working with them, even the Independent MP. No political party is excluded from representation in this Committee. My job is just to facilitate. The report will be available upon the resumption of Parliament from recess, September hopefully."

Members of the Special Select Committee on the Makeni saga have been provided with a vehicle, fuel and per diem by the Sierra Leone Parliament to undertake their assignment.

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The 'Makeni Lives Matter' campaign gained momentum following pressure first by the APC's Bombali MP Caucus and later by the entire APC Parliamentary Caucus who were later joined by the NGC party. MPs held placards in the Well of the Sierra Leone Parliament demanding that Parliament establish a Committee to investigate the incident. Due to this pressure, the House Leadership agreed that a Special Select Committee headed by PCMP Brewah be constituted inclusive of MPs from other political parties.

Civil Society Relations

Adopt Modern Technology In Your Work -PMO To Parliaments

By: Emmanuella Dadugblor

The Executive Director of Mzalendo Trust, a leading Parliamentary Monitoring Organization in Kenya, Caroline Gaita has tasked parliaments across the world and particularly in Africa to adopt new and improved tech-



Mzalendo Trust Executive Director Caroline Gaita

nological means to ensure that their activities are not ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic as the world races to find a solution to the global canker. She noted that some parliaments have had to either suspend sittings or go on unplanned recess in a bid to comply with the safety protocols laid down by the World Health Organization, a situation which could have been handled better with appropriate technology. This, she said does not augur well for the progress of work of parliaments especially in a serious pandemic where laws and legislative instruments have to be proved to safeguard the health of citizens.

Madam Gaita, who was speaking in a virtual forum organized by her outfit and the Parliamentary Network Africa (PN Africa) from Ghana, with support from the Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy on Wednesday, September 15 2020, also intimated that there must be a deliberate effort by parliaments to strengthen their presence both in the mainstream media and social media to

give the public a chance to engage and interact with them. "I think going forward, across the continent, for those that have not, it is very important that the strengthening of media presence is invested in, including live coverage," she said.

The Mzalendo Trust boss also urged parliaments to make some modifications in their physical infrastructure in readiness for any future occurrences of a similar nature which will not bring about distractions in their work. She said parliaments should consider designing alternatives to accommodate eventualities that call for physical distancing.

She also urged parliaments to invest in the capacity building of both members of the house and parliamentary service workers in ensuring that they adapt to the new technological needs. Madam Gaita noted that a boost in technology literacy would be key if the undertaking of parliamentary business virtually is to safeguard the integrity of parliamentary pro-

ceedings.

According to her, "Investment in innovation should be mainstreamed in parliamentary operations. And budgetary allocation should be made towards enhancing the capacity of the Parliament to undertake research aimed at developing relevant innovations key in sustaining parliamentary operations".

Madam Caroline Gaita also called for different parliaments to copy best practices from each other in a bid to network all the parliaments across the globe. She also noted that "the objective would be to allow for peer learning and in the process allow identification and subsequent adoption of the latest measures vital in boosting uninterrupted parliamentary operations".

Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations were also entreated to leverage on the advantages of technology to entrench Parliamentary transparency and accountability as they continued to provide the link between Parliaments and Citizens, by facilitating citizen engagement in legislative processes.

For his part, Executive Director of

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By: Emmanuella Dadugblor

The Speaker of Ghana's parliament, Rt. Hon. Prof Mike Aaron Oquaye, and his Nigerian counterpart, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila has urged the relevant regulatory authorities including the GIPC and Trade Attaches of foreign missions to educate their citizens on the trade laws. This comes on the back of years of disquiet in the retail community about the engagement of foreigners in Ghana's retail space, a situation that has seen the closure of several Nigerian shops in Ghana.

This and other bilateral issues concerning the two countries were discussed in a meeting attended by a Twelve-Member Delegation from the Federal Republic of Nigeria led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila with the Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, and the Leadership of the Parliament of Ghana.

The meeting which took place on Wednesday, September 2, 2020, at the Speaker's Lounge, Parliament House,

GHANA: Trade Regulatory Authorities Urged To Educate Citizens On Trade Laws

Accra, also discussed the implementation of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre Act, 2013 (Act 865) which had resulted in the closure of some retail shops of foreigners including some Nigerians in Ghana.

Also present at the deliberations was the Minister for National Security, Hon. Kan Dapaah, the Minister for Trade and Industry, Hon. Alan Kyere-maten, the Minister for Information, Hon. Kojo Opong Nkrumah, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Hon. Mohammad Habibu Tijani. Others are the Chief Executive of the GIPC, Mr Yofi Grant, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Hon. Frank An-noh-Dompreh, the Ranking Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Hon. Alfred Okoh Vanderpuye and the Clerk to Parliament, Mr Cyril Kwabena Oteng Nsiah.

The Nigerian delegation comprised of the Head of Delegation, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila (Speaker, House of Rep-

resentatives); accompanied by Hon. Yusuf Buba (Committee Chairman, Foreign Affairs), Hon. Benjamin Kalu (Committee Chairman, Media and Public Affairs), Hon. Shehu Balarabe (Deputy Chairman, Federal Road Safety Commission), Hon. Adebayo Balogun (Deputy Chairman, Committee on Health & ECOWAS Parliament) Hon. Ephraim Nwuzi (Deputy Chairman, Committee on Diaspora) and Hon. Ikenna Elezieanya.

Both Speakers acknowledged the seeming lack of understanding of Ghana's trade laws by many stakeholders in the retail sector, particularly, Section 28 of the GIPC Act, 2013 (Act 865), which provides for the conditions under which non-Ghanaians can engage in trading activities and called on the relevant stakeholders including the GIPC and Trade Attaches of foreign missions to provide education on the trade laws to their citizens.

The speakers also urged the respective Trade Ministries and Regulatory Au-



Rt. Hon. Professor Aaron Mike Oquaye, Speaker of Parliament

thorities of countries in the sub-region to work out modalities that enable the traders to meet the capital requirement since economic circumstances of traders within the sub-region make it difficult for many of them to meet the

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Legal and Human Rights

SIERRA LEONE: SLPP Removed Me from Parliament but Not from My People - Ousted MP

By Melvin Tejan-Mansaray

One of Sierra Leone's ten ousted Members of Parliament (MP) formerly representing constituency 116 Western Area Urban, All Peoples Congress (APC) party, Honorable Hariatu Harriana Bangura has said she will not relent in meeting the needs of people in her constituency irrespective of the fact that the ruling Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) removed her from the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone through a High Court ruling following an injunction filed and won against her by the current or replaced Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), Legislator Hon. Gbekie on grounds of violation of electoral laws.

According to court papers, Hon. Bangura did not resign within the constitutionally stipulated twelve months ahead of the 2018 parliamentary elections that ushered her in Parliament and she received public money as a former worker of the country's anti-graft agency - the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC).

Speaking in a special interview with *Parliamentary News (PN)* in her Hastings Community home in the outskirts of the country's capital, Hon. Bangura reflected on the impact of her removal from Parliament, her undeterred commitment to serve her people within and outside the corridors of Parliament and amongst a



Hon. Hariatu Harriana Bangura, ousted MP

host of other nationally sensitive and political issues.

Speaking on what has changed or not changed some year and a half after she was removed from Parliament along with another female MP Hon. Kadie Davies and eight others one of whom (Hon. Sheriff Carew) have died from the APC party while they were actively serving as sitting MPs, Hon. Bangura said she was not at first petitioned and after a petition was filed against she went to Court with evidence which she said was not still enough to avert her ousting from the Parliament.

"We have appealed the ruling of the High Court but up till now, nothing has been done about our appeal petition. I served for a year and a month and we were removed. Since 31st May 2019, a year and three months now, the appeal matter has not got any head or tail," Hon. Bangura said.

The Court of Appeal has sat twice on the matters of appeal and this comes after a protracted pressure and delays for the matters to be first assigned for appeal by the Chief Justice Babatunde Edwards.

Hon. Bangura said: "In all the two appearances, I have not seen any progress."

"The impact of this case on me psychologically and financially have been enormous. I am jobless and we all know what it means to be jobless with kids and family.

I started working at a very early age (18) in my life. At the time that I resigned, I knew that I was working because I was busy with my campaign but this time around that I am being removed from Parliament, I have no work to do. It is really boring financially and mentally disturbing," Hon. Bangura said with an outpouring of emotion on her voice.

Hon. Bangura has refused to see the blight of plight and amidst this quandary of the political and legal quagmire; she has still kept on doing her interventions to people living in her constituency, where heavy rains of August 28th 2020 caused a landslide that wreaked serious havoc on properties leaving scores of people homeless but with no death.

The ousted MP said: "Constituency 116, Ward 409 Portee Community suffered a landslide leav-

ing over fifty people displaced. They could not retrieve anything thing. We only thank God that no child, or pregnant woman, aged and the young who were around but not affected. The victims are now housed in a school building with nothing left for them. Amidst all of this, I went to sympathize with them by donating bundles of water and bags of rice."

Asked what her motivation to do good in a time that can simply be described as politically and otherwise bad for her, Hon. Bangura said: "Helping people is part of me. I did not enter politics to make money. I had lucrative jobs.

I know the sufferings of my constituents. I know what they lack in terms of development. The people are also aware that I care about them that is why they gave me massive votes. Even before entering politics, I have been serving my community.

I have a niche to bring people together - the women, youth and children for all to embark on development. Before I was booted out of Parliament, I awarded one hundred and fifty scholarships to students. Even though the governing SLPP is trying to pull my hands off politics but unfortunately for them, I am also a part of the community. If any problem is hurting my people, I just have to show up."

Hon. Bangura embellished her sentiments saying: "In other words, the SLPP government can remove me from Parliament but they cannot remove me from my people. My people are my people."

She added with a maxim that, 'evil people triumph where good people do nothing underscoring that she will not sit, watch and do nothing while her people are suffering.

Hon. Bangura said that she was able to mobilize resources for the donation through her business and business mentees, family and friends at home and abroad.

"I have held lucrative jobs and I believe in savings, so I was able to garner resources to make the donation," she said.

Close to a year and half has gone by and Hon. Bangura said she missed doing the work as elected MP of her people.

"We have appealed the ruling of the High Court but up till now, nothing has been done about our appeal petition. I served for a year and a month and we were removed. Since 31st May 2019, a year and three months now, the appeal matter has not got any head or tail," Hon. Bangura said

"Oh, I really miss Parliament. Sometimes, when I think about it, I shed tears. We all know what it takes to be a parliamentarian. It is a serious and difficult task. I spent all what I have to go into politics. We all know that politics is a fight. It has sleepless nights and involves spending money. You will have to battle people both within and outside of your political party and all of that. I worked at the ACC for six years, all of my savings I invested into becoming a lawmaker, an occupation that I believe is my calling and I was just removed from Parliament like that. It is heart rendering and I missed Parliament so much. I missed Parliament. I was making meaningful contributions in Parliament.

I use to contribute to community development, national and international development issues. I was very vocal to speak the truth in Parliament and I believe it is for this reason they filed a petition against me, and that explained why I was removed unjustly.

I missed Parliament and the debates. I missed people of like-

minds. I miss the fun time. I wish to return with or without the conclusion of the ongoing court matter, by the willingness of God almighty."

She, however, urged all to read between the lines having said that she was a threat to Government policies, legislations and interventions adding that Parliament is her calling and, "it is just unfortunate that the wrong people are coming and are doing the wrong things."

The Judiciary of Sierra Leone has always been on the spotlight with even President Julius Maada Bio saying at the delivering of the first State of the Nation Address to Parliament that there was a need for an overhauling. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report nailed the judiciary of old as arbiters of injustice, a fueling factor for Sierra Leone's ten years brutal civil war.

Indeed, the Bio-led government has introduced some reforms in the appointment and promotion of judges, the establishment of special court on rape and sexual and gender-based violence, expediting of some matters involving high profile politicians although a barrage of backlog cases still piles on shelves. A huge downside that keeps recycling itself in the Judiciary of Sierra Leone is that of its political independence and impartiality wherein it is the President that appoints the Chief Justice and Judges in consultation with the Judicial and Legal Service Commission.

Does Hon. Bangura still have faith in the country's judiciary despite an ongoing and ever-protracted appeal matter that is dragging almost endlessly?

"Well, I do not want to say if I have faith or not in the judiciary. I do not want to go too much into that because our matters are still before them but, I want to say DFID and other international bodies that have been spending money on the judicial system, I want to say the result that is coming out of the judiciary is incommensurate to the money they are spending. Frankly speaking, my confidence in the judiciary is unpredictable," Hon. Bangura said.

In Sierra Leone, women and girl child rights protection advocacy

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Public Accounts

GHANA: PAC Disappointed Over Lands Commission's Failure To Collect Ground Rent

By: Emmanuella Dadugblor

Members of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) have expressed disappointment about the failure of the Lands Commission to collect over ₵1.6 million in ground rent from some 483 lessees/assignees who owe ground rent totalling ₵1.6 million between December 1975 to December 2015.

This was captured in the 2017 Auditor General's report which fingered lessees at East Legon who owed ₵251,344 from 1975 to 2015, as well as Airport Residential assignees who also owed ₵380,851 for the year 1979 to 2015.

Other areas include East Legon Ambassadorial area with an outstanding debt of ₵212,608 from 1988 to 2015, Osu with an amount of ₵369,546 for the year 1987 to 2015 as well as assignees at South Legon whose ground rent amounted to ₵441,491 between 1981 and 2015.

The Auditor-General stated that their interactions with the Head of the Ground Rent Management Unit of the Commission revealed that the laxity in the collection of the rent was due to the igno-

rance of the lessees/assignees of their obligation.

Chairman of the Committee James Klutse Avedzi, during deliberations at the Public Accounts Committee sitting Tuesday, September 8 2020, was in shock as to why prime areas such as East Legon and Osu owed the Commission.

Responding to the queries, the Executive Secretary at the Lands Commission, Sulemana Mahama told the Committee that his office is facing some difficulties.

He, however, stated that the Commission is currently in talks with consultants to assist them with the collection of the money. "We have a serious difficulty with collecting ground rents and we have devised several strategies to try to improve upon that and it is still difficult for us. What we have now decided to do is to get paid consultants to try to retrieve as much as we can", Mr Mahama told the Committee.

Ranking Member on the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, Kofi Okyere-Agyekum urged the Commission to privatize the collection of ground rents to generate the needed income for the commission.

The report further proposed a quick rectification of the situation to avoid the continuous revenue

loss which will adversely affect the Commission's financials. In light of this, the Rent Management Unit has been asked to organize education for lessees about their obligations under the law, so they can pay their ground rent. The unit was also tasked to devise strategies to retrieve the outstanding debt of GH₵1.6 million.

Responding to the issue, a Deputy Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Benito Owusu Bio who was in the company of the officials of the commission assured the Committee that the digitisation agenda by the government will help to solve these challenges as it will enhance the Commission's work to easily identify debtors to eliminate such practices.

Meanwhile, the Public Account Committee (PAC) has expressed astonishment over the sale of some vehicles belonging to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) for as low as ₵2,200. A pickup in the same auction was sold for ₵2,300.

This was disclosed when officials of CSIR took their turn before the committee to respond to questions on their financial activities as captured in the 2017 Auditor General's report.

According to the report, a 2014-registered Nissan pickup and a



Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee James Klutse Avedzi

2014-registered Toyota Hilux were both described as 'un-serviceable'. A Nissan Hardbody pick-up also described as unserviceable was sold for ₵4,800 while another was also auctioned for ₵4,600. The auction also witnessed the sale of two tractors belonging to the council for ₵4,500 and ₵8,100 each. The auctioneer was paid 7% of the total sum.

Chairman of the Committee James Klutse Avedzi, who was shocked by the revelation, expressed his displeasure with the details of the auction.

The Auditor General's report also recommended that the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research should seek a refund. "We noted that three (3) fairly good vehicles of the Institute which could have been repaired at a reasonable cost and put to use, had been abandoned and left to the mercy of the weather. We recommended that the Institute should seek funds to repair the vehicles. In the absence of funding, the institute should liaise with its Head Office to have these vehicles." The report said.

Continued from Page 3

minimum capital of not less than One Million United States Dollars (US\$1,000,000.00) in cash or goods and services relevant to the investments as prescribed in Section 28 of the GIPC Act, 2013 (Act 865).

The parties also stressed the need for an amicable resolution of trade disputes through a fair judicial process within the confines of ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Instruments and Protocols and free trade continental treaties including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which both countries are signatories.

They also acknowledged the

need to respect the sovereignty of the Member States of ECOWAS and their laws, stressing the importance of making efforts to ensure that the ECOWAS Agenda for free movement of people and goods in furtherance of a shared and prosperous future of citizens of the sub-region is not compromised.

Both Rt. Hon. Speakers also bemoaned the misrepresentation of facts in the media and utterances of senior officials of governments which tend to escalate tensions thereby undermining the friendship between the two nations.

They pledged to utilise every available platform in their respective countries to discour-

GHANA: Trade Regulatory Authorities Urged To Educate Citizens On Trade Laws

age such tendencies.

The deliberations also looked at a possible merger of the trade ventures of the two countries where a Joint Committee comprising of members of both Legislatures will be established to explore the possible passage of reciprocal legislation.

This, they say, could be potentially called the "Ghana-Nigeria Friendship Act" which shall propose "Ghana-Nigeria Business Council" to provide a framework to sustain the friendship and benefits to cit-

izens of the two nations.

The parties also resolved to adopt measures to support law-abiding traders to properly regularise their business operations to alleviate the trade challenges occasioned by the alleged closure of the retail stores given the ravaging impact of Covid-19 pandemic on businesses and families of both countries.

The Rt. Hon Speakers also resolved to facilitate a meeting between the Trade and Foreign Affairs Committees of both houses to deliberate on appli-

cations of Trade Laws, in particular, the GIPC Act, 2013 (Act 865) and make recommendations for appropriate solutions.

Rt. Hon. Prof Mike Aaron Oquaye and Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila also acknowledged the efforts of the executive arms of government of their respective countries in helping to stem the tide of the tension, taking cognisance of the meetings on-going in Abuja between the ministers of Trade and Industry and Foreign Affairs with their Nigerian counterparts.

Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

GAMBIA: Journalists denied Access to cover National Assembly Proceedings

By: Aji Fatou Faal

Gambia journalists Monday denied access to cover the Third Ordinary Session of the 2020 Legislative Year expect 3 media houses namely: Gambia Radio and Television Services, QTV and EyeAfrica TV. The Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Dawda Jallow who was about to Table the "Constitution Bill 2020" for the first reading.

The decision which came from the National Assembly top brass officials which brings mixed feelings of discrimination and segregation towards journalists.

Hon. Mariam Jack- Denton, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Gambia said that she does not think it is fair for Hon. Halifa Sallah, Lawmaker for Serekunda Constituency to force her to make a decision immediately.

Hon. Halifa Sallah who raised concern regarding the decision of the National Assembly said "Ho-



Hon. Mariam Jack- Denton is the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Gambia

nourable Speaker, the reason why I even entered just now is because outside we have journalists claiming that the National Assembly has discriminated them by giving a right to certain media houses to cover the session of the National Assembly especially the state media and discriminated against the private media", he opined.

He further revealed the National Human Rights Commission is

established precisely to eradicate violation of fundamental rights and freedom.

According to him, they should not allow this National Assembly to be associated with any history that would show that they are discriminating anyone.

"I want to make a motion that the decision that has been made to be annulled and another decision to be made by you right away to allow those media houses outside the gates to come in. We place them wherever they should, to be able to observe the necessary distancing'

He continued that if they fail to do that the integrity of the National Assembly would be questioned.

A few hours later the Union have sent a presser saying the leadership of Gambia Press Union is currently at the National Assembly premises engaging the authorities to give access to all the media houses interested in covering the proceedings. This is in reaction to the disturbing information from reporters on the

ground that only certain media outlets are allowed entry into the Assembly.

While that discussion is ongoing, we wish to make it clear that the GPU was not involved or aware of any plan or communication to limit the number of media outlets covering the such an important National Assembly proceeding today. We could not have been involved in any such discriminatory scheme.

We are of course aware that because of the physical distancing arrangements in the gallery at the National Assembly, the number of people to be admitted would be limited.

However, in such instances, what would have been the most ideal thing is to have a prior discussion with all media houses, particularly those that constantly cover the Assembly sessions, to make sure all are accommodated somehow.

Meanwhile, the outcome of the discussion with the Assembly authorities would be communicated in due course.

SIERRA LEONE: Our Report Will Not Be Influenced By Political Parties or Any Other Interest - Hon. P.C Brewah

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The work of Parliamentary Oversight Committees (POC) is mainly done through reports and resolutions which are mostly passed on to the Executive as recommendations for actions. This gives Parliament a limitation on what can be done or not done by the executive upon the completion of their final work.

"Our duty is to present the report to Parliament and it is up to Parliament to debate on it and the final findings will be submitted to the Executive arm of the Government as well as the recom-

mendations and the lessons learnt. I am sure the Executive will be interested in that. Of course, ours is an independent and impartial investigation that we have done. So we see no reason why they should not find our findings credible. It is an independent and impartial investigation that we have done. The credibility is the key thing," Hon. PC Brewah said.

Asked how credible is the outcome of the Special Parliamentary investigation report going to be on the Makeni issue, Hon. PC Brewah said: "Our report is going to be credible because all the political parties are represented on the Committee and they

are there representing people, so whatever they do, they will be doing it in the interest of their people. They will not seat by and see any game being played that will not be in the interest of the country and particularly their own political party. We are supposed to be a representative of our people. No matter what it is, it is the people that are actually important in this matter."

There have been several other reports on the said matter with the country's Human Right Commission, Civil Society Consortium and other institutions but what if the Parliamentary investigation is in variance with some of

these reports' findings, the Chairman said the mandate and profile of those reports will be a dependent factor.

"Our report will depend on our mandate and not being influenced by those already published reports by any political party or any other interest," Hon. PC Brewah explained.

In his message to the people of Makeni and the country as a whole, Hon. PC Brewah said: "In the first place, I extend my condolences to the people of Makeni on behalf of the Committee. It was sad and so far what we have found generally is that the incident was unfortunate and

very sad. It was unfortunate on the part of all the stakeholders involved. We have lost six lives, even one is too much for this country. We see it as unnecessary deaths. We can't condone this kind of thing in this country giving our past experience. It is sad. My message to the Makeni and people of Sierra Leone is to calm down and listen to advise because most of the people who have gone to do their investigation are doing it in the interest of the Makeni and people of Sierra Leone. We do not want the reoccurrence of this kind of thing in Makeni as much as in other areas as well. The lessons learnt will serve as a guide for everybody."

Public Accounts

By Emmanuella Dadugblor

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of parliament has urged the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) to pay back an amount of €10,000 wrongfully debited to the University of Cape Coast's (UCC) account a decade ago. Several attempts by the school's finance officials to get the bank to correct the anomaly have proved futile.

Director of Finance of UCC, Elizabeth Obese, who led the school's officials to the committee to answer questions regarding the 2017 Auditor's General's report, explained that the school has devised various strategies to get the bank to refund the money to the school to no avail. "We have written a series of

GHANA: ADB Urged To Pay Wrongfully Debited €10k Back To UCC

letters and we wrote the last one just last week but we still have not had any feedback."

She was responding to questions from the Member of Parliament for Komenda, Samuel Atta Mills during the PAC's sitting on September 3, 2020.

According to her, the school further refrained from engaging in transactions with the bank's account in a bid to register its displeasure, a move which has equally yielded no results. "The first step we took was to stop operating that account just to alert them that we are not satisfied with the services that they are offering us. But after all this, they didn't credit it. So I believe we have to take a firm decision after we have appeared before your honourable committee," she said.

The committee has therefore urged the bank to take the necessary steps to address the matter. Officials of the school were also questioned about the cost of a 10KV generator procured by the university at a cost of €73,000. Chairman of the Committee, James Klutse Avedzi who brought this to the attention of the committee, directed the registrar to run checks and return to furnish the committee with the accurate figures on the purchase

Meanwhile, the University of Ghana has asked for a 3 year grace



period from the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) to be able to pay €4 million in taxes on rent allowance for staff that was not paid in 2015.

The 2017 Auditor General's report observed that the school contravened the tax laws by the non-payment of tax on rent allowance to its staff.

Appearing before Public Accounts Committee, the Prof Ebenezer Oduro Owusu led-team pleaded for more time to pay the amount. "We are in talk with GRA to resolve the issue and indeed we have made some payment and we need to negotiate with GRA to have a payment plan and by the next three years we should be able to have it fully paid," he said.

Mr Avedzi, who interrogated uni-

versity officials, noted that "Any income received by the university is taxable; either from your employment or business investments. "They are receiving this by virtue of being in the employment of the university. You don't pay these allowances to anybody, but to people who work for you."

The Vice Chancellor, Prof Ebenezer Oduro Owusu said a new accommodation policy has been instituted which will enable the university to now withhold taxes on all allowances and remitted same to the GRA.

"We are ensuring that our staff members pay rates that are commensurate with others outside campus. In the new regime, we pay their allowances to them and they pay for rent and utilities," he said.

"The first step we took was to stop operating that account just to alert them that we are not satisfied with the services that they are offering us. But after all this, they didn't credit it. So I believe we have to take a firm decision after we have appeared before your honourable committee,"

Adopt Modern Technology In Your Work -PMO To Parliaments

Continued from Page 3

PN Africa, Sammy Obeng who moderated the event, noted that it is imperative for PMOs, Civil Society Organizations that are monitoring Parliaments to make a conscious effort to engage with Parliaments in the performance of their three traditional roles such as legislation, oversight and representation, since these roles have featured strongly in these times of COVID-19. "I always say that, if Parliament or the Legislative Assembly of every country is

expected to have an oversight role of the Executive branch, then the role that PMOs play is that role of watching the watchman. Because, if Parliaments play the role of the watchman over the Executive branch, then we as PMOs have that added responsibility in answering the question, 'who watches the watchman'. These three roles have come in strong because many laws have been passed over the months to regulate matters relating to COVID-19 emergency laws, health related laws, laws to manage the movement of people in the difficult periods of

lockdowns among others," he said.

Taking her turn to address participants, Programmes Manager of the Netherland Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, Femke Lee underscored the need for stronger advocacy and engagement around open governance and issues of access to information. She said it is important to build peoples trust in the political institutions as well as to protect their human rights. "I think one of the first things we came about was around trust and human rights in this country. Trust of course

is a very complex phenomenon and trust in political institutions of course refers to, citizens' relative confidence that governments are capable, they are reliable, they are impartial and they are efficient. And during this Corona Virus era, this trust was really tested around the world including my country," she observed.

She also charged PMOs to constantly engage with the Parliamentary system to identify the real issues which concern the people since in the Netherlands, it took quite a while for the opposition parties to start

picking up the arguments on the critical issues that needed to be addressed. "It was the public debates rather that asked far more critical questions than the opposition parties. And that took a while and I think that also shows that there is a critical role to play by Civil Society Organization and also for Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations in order to keep asking and raising those questions," she indicated.

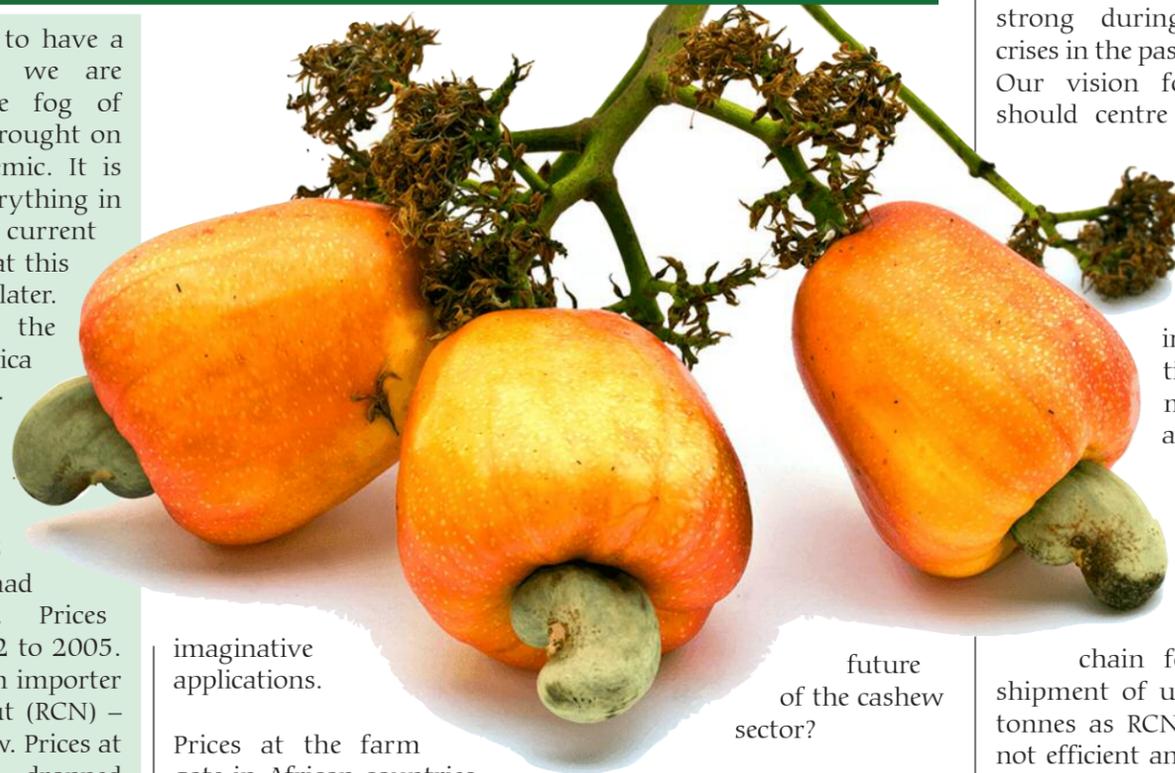
The forum was in commemoration of World democracy Day and had over 40 Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (PMOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Africa in attendance. It was on the theme: Parliaments and Pandemics: Which Way Forward for Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (PMOs)?

Special Report

Vision 2030: Moving ahead with lessons from 2020

It is not easy to have a vision when we are living in the fog of uncertainty brought on by the pandemic. It is tempting to see everything in the light of the current events, to forget that this will pass sooner or later. Fifteen years ago, the cashew sector in Africa was in crisis. Production had increased quickly in response to demand during the 1990's but by 2005 production had exceeded demand. Prices collapsed from 2002 to 2005. Vietnam was not an importer of Raw Cashew Nut (RCN) – hard to imagine now. Prices at the farm gate dropped occasionally to US\$100/t and rarely passed US\$200/t. There were virtually no processing plants in West Africa. The crop was almost never sold out in a season. Cashews were still controlled from Kerala and Singapore. Much has changed. Much has not.

At that time governments recognised that some regulation of the sector was desirable in order to protect farmers. They acted in Tanzania and Mozambique. Later, West African governments reacted with a range of measures: some effective, some not. Development agencies focussed on cashews. The African Cashew initiative (ACi), later to become the Competitive Cashew initiative (ComCashew), was born. So was the African Cashew Alliance (ACA) and a range of programmes funded by international aid programmes. Ten years later on-farm yield among supported farmers had doubled. At the same time demand started to grow quickly, in India and in Europe. World consumption quadrupled. Cashews changed from a luxury snack to the favourite nut for new and



imaginative applications.

Prices at the farm gate in African countries had trebled by 2016. Developments in processing technology had made access to fast effective peeling and shelling machines possible. Cashew factories on average became larger. Vietnam started to import and the RCN trade boomed. India turned inward, ceded its export market to Vietnam, and focusses now on its 1.4 billion domestic consumers.

How does the vision of a cashew sector where most nuts are processed at origin, where stakeholders are organised and fairly rewarded, where by-products are processed for reward and environmental risk mitigation measure up in the shadow of a pandemic? It would have been difficult to imagine many of the changes that we have seen in the past twenty years. It is difficult enough to forecast from one year to the next. It may be helpful though to focus on what the current crisis may be telling us about the future. Crises tend to magnify weaknesses in economies, in health care systems or in businesses. They can also bring out the best in people. What can we learn from this crisis about the

future of the cashew sector?

Firstly, experts tell us that we are only at the beginning of the crisis. To deal with it we should understand that it can change the future as well as the present. Vaccine or not the implications will echo for many years. Therefore, it seems important that we learn the lessons of the crisis well, especially the slower evacuation of raw material to processing plants and ports. The need for good post-harvest practices, local drying, warehousing facilities, and financing mechanisms to pay for them is made greater by a harvest in a crisis. It also underlines the need for good market information and analysis. As we have seen, countries that were well informed and listened to the scientific advice have done better than those that did not. It is not by accident that some African countries have done relatively well in the crisis. Understanding the fragility of life and experienced from past threats of dangerous diseases like Ebola, they acted earlier and faster than some richer nations.

The crisis has yet again demonstrated the robustness of demand for cashew kernels.

Early predictions of a collapse in demand could not have been more wrong. Later explanations that it was just panic buying have also turned out to be wrong. Demand for cashew nuts has remained strong during two major crises in the past twenty years. Our vision for the future should centre on how that demand can be met and how price volatility, created by opportunism in times of tightly balanced markets, can be avoided.

Some of us have pointed out the fragility of the cashew supply chain for years. The shipment of up to 2 million tonnes as RCN every year is not efficient and is not in line with market trends. By 2030 that figure could double if processing does not develop in West Africa. How would that fit with a vision of a short, efficient supply chain? In May 2020, the United States imported 93% of its cashew nut kernels from a single origin, Vietnam. In 2019, Vietnam imported approximately 84% of its raw cashew nuts for processing. The journey of some 28,000 km from Africa via Vietnam to the consumers in North America and Europe is too long, too risky, environmentally damaging, and unsustainable. The trade in "borma" kernels is a lost opportunity to build a brand. The pandemic of 2020 has demonstrated another aspect. The late arrival of buyers meant that prices fell, quality fell and incomes fell in West African cashew countries. This chain of high interdependence is an anachronism that creates unnecessary risk and encourages speculation. A sector vision built with these as foundations would only offer the prospects of perpetual crisis and enduring volatility.

One only has to visualise the debacle in the sector if Vietnamese cashew factories

Special Report

had closed due to the pandemic. Vietnam has reported less than 200 cases and no deaths, a remarkable feat. What if Vietnam had been as badly affected as the USA for example? What if cashew factories were closed? Worldwide there would be 80% fewer cashew kernels available for export and the demand for RCN would be lower by about 70%. What would the value of cashew nuts in Korhogo or Wenchu or Bissau have been then? Fortunately, it did not happen. Can there be a chance that it might in the future be part of our vision for 2030?

Processors have had a difficult time

circumstances. In the main they have been rewarded with more demand and better prices. We salute these processors. They are the vision of the future of African processing. What is it that makes them different? Good management, a long-term vision and concentration on processing as opposed to switching between processing and RCN export trading. Much of the negativity around processing in African countries is built on the preconception that African processors cannot operate successfully. In the pandemic, the operating factories help us envision that they can and they will.

However, the recent events have shown that regulation based on the realities of the marketplace is more effective than a poorly informed policy. They have shown us the importance of accurate, timely information. Our vision for 2030 might be that governments would not have to intervene. That the sector would reward stakeholders appropriately, capture value and promote sustainability. The crisis offers examples but does not change our minds on this.

this year without exception. In India stop/start lockdown, labour reduction regulations and a fall in demand for broken kernels reduced capacity and impacted profit margins and cash flow. In Vietnam large well-managed factories have managed to keep processing to record levels demonstrating the efficiency and resilience of the Vietnamese processors. In African countries some determined processors have kept operations going in extremely demanding

This is a difficult period for legislators and regulators. Some governments have decided to take a "light" approach. Others have taken strong measures to try to ensure that the sector functions during the crisis. Governments decide for themselves. However, the recent events have shown that regulation based on the realities of the marketplace is more effective than a poorly informed policy. They have shown us the importance of accurate, timely information. Our



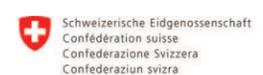
vision for 2030 might be that governments would not have to intervene. That the sector would reward stakeholders appropriately, capture value and promote sustainability. The crisis offers examples but does not change our minds on this.

News media like to use the phrase "the new reality" when discussing the pandemic. Apparently, we should adjust to it, live with it, embrace it, maybe invite it into our

homes and serve it snacks (cashews obviously). I do not believe in a "new reality". I just believe in reality. The reality for the cashew sector is that the pandemic has exposed our weaknesses, demonstrated the strength of demand, shown the resilience of some and the opportunism of others. The vision has not changed. The urgency and need to realise it have.

*Author: James Fitzpatrick –
The Cashew Club*

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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs FDEA
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Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

SIERRA LEONE: Parliamentary Transparency and Accountability Chairman Resigns

By Melvin Tejan-Mansaray

The Chairman of the Parliamentary Transparency and Accountability Committee, Honorable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh publicly tendered his resignation during a public hearing with the Information and Communications Minister, Mohamed Rahman Swaray.

They came during a public hearing held on Thursday 10th September 2020 public hearing of the Committee held at Committee Room No.1, Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown Sierra Leone.

The TAC was probing into the reason for the previous government's sale of the Sierra Leone Cable limited which some government officials say was just and unbundling.

It occurred during the meeting that a cabinet paper and an address delivered to parliament by the president showed mismatch over profitability and loss of the SALCAB.

The Minister in the cabinet paper said the SALCAB was on the brink of bankruptcy while the president told parliament that is one of the most profitable government entity at the moment.

The Minister of Information and Communication, when asked about the variance of information to cabinet and parliament, said he could not speak on it describing himself as a big boy in the room, provoking rage from an APC member calling him arrogant and misleading. This prompted several back and forth break in the meeting confirming what people al-

ready suspected as an attempt to massage the situation and averting further embarrassment for the minister.

The same TAC had earlier suspended the operation of a certain mining company, China Kingho, ordered the police invitation, escort and detention of two central bank officials. This many people in the public described as a move by parliament to launder its image following a damaging reporting ranking it as the second most corrupt institutions and MP third most corrupt persons led by the police and followed by ministers. Although the report did not capture any expert parliamentary opinion.

In an interview with PN, hours after his resignation, Hon. Tawa Conteh said his decision was necessary.

"No, this decision was not taken to quickly, it was good for the country," Hon. Tawa said, adding that, "If I could I have stayed beyond today it should have compromised the

committee immediately."

Hon. Tawa said although he had the opposition support, he never wanted it to be seen as if he is syndicating with the opposition to sabotage his very own SLPP governing party in parliament.

"To me, the best thing to do is for people to know that people in government are doing things, not transparently but when they come to public they talk all kinds of things, presenting themselves as the cleanest of the clean. When they come to public they want you to use political party umbrella to cover them and I cannot work like that. If we are a committee on transparency and accountability then we have to be transparent, accountable, fair to look at issues, not from a lense of tribalism, conclavism, cabalism but the lense of supporting government and the people of Sierra Leone. Free the premise I laid, the things I saw, and the document I examined is that the reasons

given to cabinet for unbundling SLACAB are all lies," Hon. Tawa said.

He said sincerity of purpose is what is needed if parliament wants to help the people of Sierra Leone, noting that attempts have been made not to give the comitte a free hand in investigating the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resoruces and China Kingho Compnay because of interst, and wanted to arm twist him on another interst of the people of Sierra Leone which is some peoples interest , for which he cannot succumbed.

"I have not taken any money from anybodys hands, I do not know anybody, I am not presuming that anybody is in bickering, even when I invited SLACAB, I was told that SALCAB should not make a presentation, that is not fair. SALCAB was brought in to explain what they understood about the unbundling and what have been given to them.



TAC before the Chairman and some members tendered their open resignation

Water Resources, Works and Housing

SIERRA LEONE: Parliament Determined to End Land Hostilities

By Melvin Tejan-Mansaray

Members of the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Lands, Housing and Country Planning (MLCP) said they will explore all options to ensure that hostilities around land acquisition, ownership and distribution is abated.

Land palaver has been an age-old problem in the country and many a time causing loss of lives, properties and fanning unrest in other parts of the country.

In an interview following a closed-door meeting held on Monday 7th September 2020 between Directors of the Ministry of Lands and Country Planning (MLCP) and other relevant parties of varying interests, Honorable Quinton Swaray Sallia Konneh Independent Member of Parliament (IMP) representing constituency 007, Kailahun District and also doubles as Chairman of the Parliamentary Oversight Com-

mittee (POC) on Lands, Housing and Country Planning Oversight Committee said that the issue has been a war-front one but added that his Committee will be fair and just to all sides as their role is to do what is best in the interest of the country.

He told Parliamentary News (PN) that in the third session of the Fifth Parliament, his Committee decided to probe further into the activities of the Ministry and relevant departments for their smooth operations.

"We want to actually see how best we can minimize the easiness facing people in their various communities with respect to land issues. We have realized that the land issue has become a war-front situation. Now and again communities and people are fighting each other, Ministry versus communities, a lot of topsy-turvy situation. I realized that as the Committee Chairperson, our work is so much sensitive. We need to change our operational pattern as opposed to the previous plan that we have been using.

This is the more reason that this time around we are engaging the Ministry of Lands, it is not going to be a one-off meeting but one that will last for three or more days because we have a lot of unsolved issues affecting the state and private citizens. We want to know what the Ministry is up to and how they are doing it. We also want to bring up issues around complaints that we have received in Parliament to see why those things are happening, whether the Ministry knows about some of these things or not and how we can support them in moving forward," Hon. Konneh said.

He said the Committee's meet-



Hon. Quinton S. Konneh Chairman Lands oversight committee

ing with the technocrats at the Lands Ministry was to ascertain the issues from a professional standpoint adding that they have received complaints between communities and few powerful people over allegations of land grabbing and encroachment among other things.

He said: "Land issues are very technical and a parameter to use in settle land issues is not that because you have a document with the signature of the Director of Lands and Survey means you are the authentic owner or a legal landowner. It just simply means that you are the first to contact the Ministry for signature and at that time there was no contest against your document. But should

there be any contest, in due cause, that does not mean that cannot be looked into by the Ministry, Committee or the Courts."

He said the that the Judiciary is always on the lookout for evidence in terms of who owns a particular parcel of land noting that most communities have huge parcels of land but do not have the money to document those lands by way of survey, mapping, etc, and this is where other people can come in, secure documents and grab such properties.

Dr Denise Sandy Minister of Lands, Housing and Country Planning said that when he took up office, the country

"We want to actually see how best we can minimize the easiness facing people in their various communities with respect to land issues. We have realized that the land issue has become a war-front situation. Now and again communities and people are fighting each other, Ministry versus communities, a lot of topsy-turvy situation..."

Continued on Page 15

Legal and Human Rights

SIERRA LEONE: SLPP Removed Me from Parliament but Not from My People - Ousted MP

Continued From Page 4

is elephantine with numerous women and feminist organizations existing but Hon. Bangura said their interventions and assistance have been in short supply for her.

She said: "No women's organization, nor the Parliamentary Female Caucus has ever contacted me in this current situation, for whatever reason, I do not know, but no women's group has called me."

Hon. Bangura said since she registered with the 50/50 one of the country's leading women's group before her election, she was called only once to participate in a certain function and ever since then, she has not received any call.

"Even the Parliamentary Female Caucus (PFC), since two of us (myself and Hon. Kadie Davies) were removed, I do not know for Hon. Davies, but for me, they have never called me as a Caucus except that individually someone checks on or pity my plight and call to talk individual talk but as a Caucus, they have never. I do not want to go into this issue of women that much but I am disappointed," the one-time honourable member of the PFC, Hon. Bangura said.

The ousted MP, Hon. Bangura, however, said that her APC party has been offering her legal support to fight her case for which she thanked and appreciates her party.

On her relationship with the Court-Imposed current MP, Hon. Bangura said that she will not speak ill about him but the people are resentful for the result of the election showed an over ten thousand vote margin.

"I don't want to talk about his personality but in terms of performance, the constituents are demotivated. They know that for now, nobody can carry on with my activities and plans.

Even the current MP lacks confidence because he knows that he is not the choice of the people," Hon. Bangura said.

She nonetheless encouraged her supporters to take solace in the fact that "all is not lost, continue to be calm and maintain the peace and if you love me, there will come another time for you to

demonstrate your love for me."

She, however, cautioned: "To the SLPP-led Government, I want you to know that God is not mocked, whatsoever you sow so shall you reap. What goes around comes around and the world is watching you as you dispense justice in the land that we love," Hon. Bangura said, calling on the ECOWAS and other international bodies to come and help Sierra Leone.

"Sierra Leone is part of the global village, they did it for the Gambia when Yahah Jameh was acting outside the constitution, and they intervened strongly to restore the country to constitutionality. Sierra Leone should not be an exception.

They must come to Sierra Leone and make sure that sanity is once more restored. The SLPP has contravened the constitution in so many ways but we are yet to see much of international interventions or pressure on the SLPP government under President Julius Maada Bio. We need the international community to come to our aid," Hon. Bangura said.

The APC is expected to hold its national delegate convention in October 2020, Hon. Bangura said it will be a moment to reflect on changes and reforms that are needed to take the party back to State House in 2023.

"I pray that my party's leaders be directed by the almighty God. May God guide their decisions and I also want to appeal that the party do not forget that we (ousted MPs) want to come back in 2023. The people of Sierra Leone are perishing. It is only the APC party that can make the vast majority feel like bonafide citizens of Sierra Leone and so they need the APC. Because of this, the APC will have to think very wisely. The grassroots are intact, the decision-makers must try so that we would be able to capture the grassroots once more."

Honourable Sirajin Munirr Rollings-Kamara former MP constituency 127, one of the removed MPs through a court decision.

On his court removal and its delay in the dispensing of justice by the court to hear the case of an appeal, Hon. Sirajin said that not much has been done even though the appealed against the High Court's decision because they taught the decision was unfair to remove ten of them, one of whom is now deceased.

"We have appealed and the matter comes up this September when the High court resumes. I don't know when it will be called anyway. It has been over a year (31st May 2019) since we were removed, nothing has changed and the sad thing is that the people are not adequately represented across all ten of the constituencies which is really a bad precedent for our democracy," he said.

Hon. Sirajin is also the chairman of a reformist movement (Nationaal Reformation Movement - NRM) with the main opposition All Peoples Congress Party (APC). He said he ascended the NRM leadership because some of the NRM members want to deviate from their original plan.

He said: "for us at NRM we talk about reforms and the principal thing we are advocating for is that every position within the APC- at constituency, district, regional and national should be electable. Nobody should handpick anybody to any executive position. This is our position that we

the executive should be disbanded and then we form an interim body wherein some of the NRM members will form part of the Executive. We said no, this can't work because we said we wanted all positions to be elected and not selective why re we now bargaining on negotiation so that is what brought about the fracas within the NRM and ushered me in as the Chairman of the movement. Eighty per cent of us believe that we need to come back to the party since the party is now toeing the line of accepting reforms, why do we need to have a matter in the court but we still want to see resolved from the side of the party and senior party stakeholders to serve as moral guarantors of acceptance and implementation on what we agreed on after we may have withdrawn the matter from court."

Hon. Sirajin, however, confirmed the possibility that the NRM will withdraw the matter from the court for the APC party to move forward.

As things stand only two former legislators (Hon. Sirajin and Hon. Robin Faley) are associated with the NRM prompting a question on what is the parliamentary support base of the NRM but Hon. Sirajin said majority of the Legislators are in reforms but refrained from naming names adding that, "the only thing is that most of them are averse to the court action." When put to him that the MPs that support NRM have not gone public, he said that they belong to several of their social media networks and contribute on regular basis including some leaders who support the NRM financially.

"I think the MPs that support NRM will come open shortly," Hon. Sirajin said adding that some MPs have already done that.

The fear factor of anti-party activity provisions in the national constitution, such as section 77.1.K.L has been described as an albatross on the necks of Legislators who might attempt to support party reforms within the APC. Hon. Sirajin said such laws as 77.1.K are laws that need to be abolished in a constitutional review process for MPs to have freedom to deliberate on national issues arguing that even at that it is not applicable in the case of the NRM as the current Executive are already heeding to the calls for reforms. "There will be no backlash on MPs is they come

public," Hon. Sirajin said.

The APC parliamentary leadership is a prototype of the status quo but Hon. Sirajin said that change is imminent although some member of the APC were not appreciative of the court action. He said that belling the cat takes the boldness of people like them in the NRM although everybody in the APC now believes in the need for reforms because the party lost some constituencies due to its selection over elections policy. The NRM Chairman said the APC parliamentary leadership post-reform will usher change from the present dispensation who are beneficiaries of the old order adding that "I am sure when reforms are in place there will always be changes. You cannot reform and be the same, we expect them to inculcate the changes and make a better presentation in parliament not just for the party but for the nation."

The APC party is expected to hold its national delegate conference on the 15th of October 2020, where it is expected that our new crop of national officers will be elected or selected as per the party's 1995 constitution but Sierra Leone like many other countries is under a state of public health emergency due to the outbreak the COVID-19 disease this might be an impending factor for the congress.

The Political Party Regulatory Commission has in a statement said that there is no ban on political party activities in the country. Hon. Sirajin said it is an optional situation that the party has an interim executive to take it to a convention noting that time has already closed on them to publish the national delegate list, the agenda and other things. "Maybe, one month is not enough to do all of that, maybe we could have an extension of the mandate of the Executive to lead us to the convention or an interim, it is a decision that the party will take," he said.

Hon. Sirajin said that he sympathises with the view that the APC in parliament has not been a serious checker on the governing SLPP adding that both parties are two sides of a coin.

"When APC is in power they did some mistakes and when the SLPP comes to power they also do the same thing and these are the two parties that have ruled this country but I petty the present APC it.

"I pray that my party's leaders be directed by the almighty God. May God guide their decisions and I also want to appeal that the party do not forget that we (ousted MPs) want to come back in 2023...."

presented to the party and they were very much slack in listening to us so we went to court. The court decision is on the offing because the court is also on recess but alongside that, we find out that some of our members have decided to say that the court should give a decision wherein

Finance

SIERRA LEONE: Central Bank Governor Explains What Went Wrong in Parliament

By Melvin Tejan-Mansaray

The Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL) Professor Kelfala Kallon has explained his side of the story following the Parliamentary Transparency and Accountability Committees (TAC) Tuesday 8th September 2020 ordered the escort and latter detention of two officials of the Central Bank of Sierra Leone for not honouring their summons.

The frog-matching of the Bank of Sierra Leone Head of Legal Office Sullay Mannah and Secretary to the Bank's Board Hawa Kallon for the failure of the Bank Governor and his two deputies to honour the TAC's summon letter dated 27th August 2020 for an appearance before the TAC on 8th September 2020.

Honourable Ibrahim Tawa Conteh, Chairman TAC said that it was dissatisfying for the Central Bank to send before the Committee officials that cannot explain how over five hundred billion Leones COVID-19 support to businesses were used, provide details on the auction of dollars from April 2018 to date, respond to issues of procurement and costumers service. He added that because the two officials were not capable to provide answers to the questions, the two officials were to be detained in Parliament until the Governor or any of his deputies face the Committee.

It was during the process of escorting the two officials from Committee Room No.1 Parliament Building, O.A.U Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown by the Sergeant-At-Arms and the Local Unit Commander deployed to Parliament, that



Bank Governor Prof. K. Kallon and team after their police invitation and detention in Parliament

the Governor of the Central Bank Professor Kelfala Kallon jet into the meeting tendering an apology saying that he did not receive any such invitation although the weigh book of the Committee Secretariat showed the signature of a certain Hassan Bangura, a messenger at the Central Bank receiving and signing for the letter.

"I did not see the summon letter of Parliament. I was actually at another inter-ministerial meeting at the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). My phone was turned off and when the meeting ended and I switched on my phone, then I saw text messages from my officers, so I had to come to Parliament," Dr Kelfala Kallon told *Parliamentary News (PN)*.

Explaining what it means for the Central Bank officials to have been frog-matched and later detained for a while by Parliament, Dr Kallon said: "Well, I just think it was a miscommunication thing.

I would have handled it differently. I like to give people the benefit of the doubt. I would not want Parliament to have seen this as contempt by the Bank of Sierra Leone on Parliament. I always try to give people the benefit of the doubt, say maybe something happened and therefore I give people a second chance

to try to understand why things happened."

The Central Bank Governor said that he does not know why the messenger did not forward the letter to him but promised to go to the bottom of it and undertake a review of what happened for him to know what has happened.

Governor Kallon said: "Because of COVID-19 we have been doing two weeks in the office and one week working from home and therefore probably in all of that, the summons did not meet me. I have not seen the summons and if I had seen it, I would have done the needful. Typically, on Tuesdays, we are busy with meetings at State House and I would have asked for an adjournment immediately had I receive the letter of summoning."

The Bank Governor also dispelled suspicion that he is not having a good and healthy working relationship with members of staff of the Bank, saying that such an issue is irrelevant to the discussion.

"We could be on the best of terms or on the worst of terms and letters can get misplaced, so that idea is not of relevance here," Prof. Kallon said.

At the end of the meeting, the TAC resolved that the Central

Bank must send in all requested documents and competent officials on Thursday 10th September, 2 pm. The Governor was also asked to submit a letter of excuse stating his inter-alia reason that he will not be able to attend because he will be chairing a West Africa Monetary Association (WAMA) meeting for the rest of the same Thursday.

Giving his impression about the action of Parliament to arrest two of his staff, Governor Kallon said: "Parliament is doing their job. Whether the decision they took was right or wrong, it is left with Parliament to tell me."

The Central Bank Governor concurred that the public might be right in saying that the Central Bank was embarrassed by Parliament.

"Well, this is an embarrassment. As I have said, I would have handled it differently but I am somebody who does not dwell in the past. It has happened; there is no need for the beating of a dead horse. We are moving on," he said but rejected the notion that the embarrassment is an indictment of ineffectiveness of his leadership as Bank Governor.

"No this incident is not an indictment on my leadership, because of at any time in any situation things may go wrong. Things may go wrong not because somebody either planned to make something go wrong or somebody was ineffectual in their duties. There are just times when things go wrong.

As I said, when I get to the Bank, I will try to understand what happened and thereafter decide what to do," Prof. Kallon told PN.

Parliamentary Practice & Procedures

SIERRA LEONE PARLIAMENT IN RETROSPECT

First and Second Week of September 2020

By Melvin Tejan-Mansaray

The opening weeks of September 2020 have been marvelous and scandalous for the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone colorized with flips and flops.

On the flip side, some Parliamentary Oversight Committees (POC) especially the Transparency and Accountability Committee (TAC) exerted unprecedented authority over certain state and multi-national mining institutions.

The TAC halted a mining company, China Kingho's operations for lack of clarity in the certification on its financial capability to do business. The TAC also ordered the Police to escort and subsequently detain in Parliament two Central Bank officials for treating the Committee's summon with levity.

The Central Bank Governor Professor Kelfala Kallon instantaneously appeared before Parliament with an apology but said that he was not in a position to explain the issues of COVID-19 business support among other things, thus they were stood down and asked to reappear before the Committee.

Also, during the period under review, the House's Leadership finally dragged Lands Minister Dr Denise Sandy in a close door hearing after media reports suggested that he would not appear.

On the flip side, the period under review witnessed widespread media attention on the popularization of a Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law



Parliament of the Republic of Sierra Leone

(CARL) DFID and partners funded 'Corruption Perceptions Survey, 2019 -Actions, Hopes, and Impediments in the fight against corruption in Sierra Leone.'

The authors said that the study was done between September and November 2019 and interviewed 2,619 persons. The report explained the methodology used disclosing that twenty-one (21) key informants were interviewed but none from Parliament. The report damns MPs as the second most corrupt group of persons after the Police and followed by the Ministers and ranks the Sierra Leone Parliament as the fourth most corrupt state institution. Speaker of Parliament Hon. Dr Abass C. Bundu and Leader of the House Hon. Mathew S. Nyuma refuted the claims asking for evidence but an MP Hon. Hindolo Moiwo Gavao, SLPP, Kailahun District told a local and an international media (BBC) that the report is true and monies change hands during appointment confirmations of presidential nominees and for the budget approval of government institutions.

On Friday 11th September 2020, the POC on Gender and Children's Affairs met with officials of the Ministry of Children and Gender Affairs during which the Minister Manty Tarawally informed Lawmakers that there are twenty thousand street children in the country, adding that there is a need to harmonize the disparity in the laws of the age of consent and age of marriage (16 and 18 years). She also nailed the need to have an orphanage policy that works because she said that the existing policy is not working disclosing that her Ministry is striving to empower women in businesses while they are working on a parenting policy. Minister Manty noted that the trend of children having children needs the intervention of the House to help them galvanize more budgetary resources now that the budgeting process is about to begin.

On this same day, the POC on Sports held an outdoor consultative meeting with the Minister of Sports Ibrahim Nyelenkeh and the team at the National Stadium Hostel.

"The meeting with the Sports Ministry officials was to discuss

the vision of the Ministry post-COVID-19, to know the state of affairs among sporting associations, the operations of the National Sports Authority Board, upcoming oversight visit to various sports facilities across the country and the Ministry's successes and challenges for the 2020 financial year," Hon. Alusine K. Alu-Conteh Chairman of the Committee said, adding that the Legislature and Executive arms of the Government are thinking alike with regards to all of the issues noting that he was indeed impressed with the efforts of the Ministry for particularly resolving the impasse within football and other sporting disciplines.

On Thursday 10th September 2020 a joint Information and Communications and Transparency and Accountability Committee had a showdown with the Minister of Information and Communication Mohamed Rahman Swaray when it uncovered that his presentation to cabinet on the need to unbundle the Sierra Leone Cable Limited Company (which is charged with control the internet) were inconsistent with what President Julius Maada Bio told Parliament in an address. The Minister refused to evaluate the question of true or false by the Committee saying that he is also a 'big boy' in the room who has a right to answer or not answer to parliamentarians' questions. Minister Swaray later told PN that the hearing was unfair, premeditated and tilted towards vested interests of the Committee members.

On this same day, officials of the Teacher's Union met with the POC on Higher and Tertiary Education to address issues of dispute over money and power.

On Wednesday 9th, the POC on Works and Housing probed the Ministry and Road Maintenance Fund Administration officials. The Committee Chairman and Deputy House Leader Hon. Bashiru Silikie said that they wanted to gauge the performance of companies and institutions with ongoing projects.

On this date, the Committee on Environment met and held deliberations with the factions in the ongoing Timber Association internal rift. Hon. Yusif Mackare

the Committee Chairman said that they had to intervene and reach a resolution that the association put its house in order with an election to put an end to the impasse.

Also, the POC on Finance left the capital for an oversight visit for which more detail is needed.

On the 8th, the POC on Trade and Industry held a very big meeting with all line institutions under the Trade Ministry with regards to familiarization and their status update and chatted the way forward amidst challenges. This meeting also marked the end of a bad-blood between the Committee's Chairperson Hon. Veronica Kadie Sesay and Dr James Vibbi head of the country's Produce Monitoring Board. Vibbi had asked the House to call Hon. Veronica to order for allegedly over-stepping her mandate by forcing him to reinstate a certain worker that he unilaterally sacked although Hon. Veronica argued that Vibbi had no right to do so because the Board of the institution was not by then constituted.

"We sometimes have hiccups, but nobody is perfect. Let us move on. Vibbi is a very young man but let us learn to respect one and other," Hon. Sesay said, adding that, "you are not here to be intimidated. Mr Vibbi you are now free to bring all your policies, the matter is resolved, feel free and make Parliament your friend and modernize your actions. Today you are free to call or discuss whatever thing of importance in your institution with us."

The period under review (8th) settled the dust on the appearance of the Minister of Lands, Housing and Country Planning Dr Denise Sandy before Parliament. He finally honoured the Leadership's summoning after the first was ignored to deliberate on numerous complaints by members of the public with regards to land ownership, acquisition and management in the country. The Press was however abhorred from covering the said meeting and no Leader except (Hon. Kandeh Yumkella who posted sketches on how the meeting went) reverted to brief the press of the public.

On the 7th September, Hon. Shikaka Musa Sama, Independent MP Pujehun District and a member of the ECOWAS Parliament was discharged from the COVID-

19 treatment centre having been there for twenty-three days.

On the 1st, Lands Housing and Country Planning Minister failed to honour a parliamentary summons. Also, on this day, officials of the Universal Access to Development Fund (UADF) faced the POC on Information and Communications with a status report.

Sources have it that during this period under review, certain MPs were invited at the Anti Corruption Commission for reasons that are not too clear but suspected to be around accountability.

Ousted MP, Hon. Harriatu Harriana Bangura spoke to PN about her plight accusing the governing SLPP of removing her from Parliament unjustly, a similar sentiment registered by Hon. Sirajin Rollings-Kamara who now chairs a reformation movement (NRM) within his APC party.

The House's Leadership also went to Makeni for an unreported session.

This period under review was perhaps one in which the House suffered its best and worst media publicity with headlines such as: "Analyst Newspaper- Municipal and District Councils in Trouble, Calabash - Over vague invitation of Parliament...Attorney General Oversteps His Duties, Freetong Post - Parliament Exposes Corruption in China Kingho's Deal, Nightwatch - Interference Hon. Tawa and others Resign, The Times -SL - 6 SLPP and 4 APC MPs Resign, Cleaner - Calls to Investigate Parliament Intensify, Sierra Express Media - Parliament Deepens Timber Association Crisis, AYV News - Parliament Ranked amongst Most Corrupt Institutions, Parliament Directorate of Information and Communications - Parliament is not a Corrupt Institution, The Indigene - As He is well known for pilling and dodging debts... APC Honorable Becomes Owe Monger, Gbla TV Online - Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara turns constituency 059 to works yard, Hon. Issac Tarawally Visits Flood Victims and a lot more."

The House is still on recess but the coming days and weeks have been described as parliament being on the crossroads with activities of POCs been energetic amidst controversies from within and outside.

Water Resources, Works and Housing

SIERRA LEONE: Parliament Determined to End Land Hostilities

Continued From Page 11

had no database of state or private lands but under his regime, this has now been done with the Government recovering huge hector of land.

"The truth of the matter is that we are just moving from a dark situation to a brighter situation. The truth is that before now there has been no database in terms of state lands, how many hectors, where they are situated," Hon. Konneh said, adding that, "I think what is happening now is that we have even though we are to have a meeting again with the Ministry and we have requested that they submit a full database of where we have state lands, what number of state land we have in total, where they are located and so once we go on our regular oversight, we would have the opportunity to say okay we have a state land here, let us see the facility.

This will help to protect such lands. For now, the previous interface we had with the Minister, he said, we have up to four thousand or more acres of land retrieved for the state. This is one thing that we need authentic documentation for and once we go on our oversight we are going to confirm whether those state lands are indeed," Hon. Konneh said.

The Minister of Lands is a controversial figure who is almost in a constant battle with alleged land grabbers and in some cases genuine landowners.

He has always argued that he has been operating within the confines of the law although in many cases he has been seen employing the services of armed security personnel to undertake his operations.

"I need security because land

issue is a matter of life and death," he once told this writer. Close parliamentary sources have it that on the 1st, September 2020 he was invited by the Leadership of Parliament but neither he nor his deputies showed promoting a raft of media blitz for and against him.

The Lands Committee Chairman said he would not want to say much on the relationship between Parliament and the Committee for now.

"Certain things are meant to be official until otherwise decided because the operations of Parliament is quite different from many other entities. There are certain things for which we have to go through processes as a Committee and as Parliament. I can't say that the Minister refused to appear before Parliament and cannot say otherwise either," he said. It was recently circulated that the Lands oversight Committee summoned the Minister and he refused to appear but when he finally appeared the meeting was held in close door.

"Well, I can't say that the Minister of Lands failed to appear because as I said earlier on, as Parliament we have processes that we follow. For us to say he has failed to appear before Parliament, that somebody must have been invited on three different occasions then at that time we would be able to confirm that yes, this person has outrightly said he is not going to appear before Parliament," Hon. Konneh said.

Pressed on how many times the Lands Minister has been invited or summoned by the POC on Lands, Hon. Konneh said: "No, the Committee has not invited him as yet. We have written a letter to him to meet with the Committee in terms of certain things that

we want to see."

He said that the reports about the Minister refusing to appear before the Committee was misconstrued, "I think the meeting that they are talking about is a meeting between the Ministry and the Leadership of Parliament, that I would not put a word on because the invitation did not come from me as the Chairman of that Committee. I think that particular invitation or summon is being headed by the Speaker. So he is in the position to say things on that. The invitation did not come from me, it is only now that we have sent in a letter of invitation for us to meet the Ministry."

Dr Sandy was recently on the news with a government bencher on a matter of land dispute at Lavuma Community, where the MP claimed that the Minister is terrorizing his people, a similar complaint of the sort had also come from another Western Area Urban MP.

Dr Sandy in an earlier interview said that he knows he is working within the remit of the power of his Ministry.

He said Parliament has the power to appoint and disapprove and he would not want to believe that things will reach that stage and the process is unfolding.

Commenting on the solution to the land problem in the capital and the provinces, Hon. Konneh emphasized that: "The truth is that land issue in the Western Area Rural and Urban of the city has become a war front situation."

He said: "We have potentially more land grabbers than those genuine owners, people come from different background and everywhere and say they own two or three hundred acres of

land just as individuals. It is becoming alarming. It is a situation that all of us have to put our hands on together to see how we can minimize if not eradicate this whole unfortunate situation."

Land disputes as a result of unequal distribution are not only accustomed to Sierra Leone, Hon. Konneh said, as long as Parliament is involved with capable people, tough heads, think tanks, etc that will not allow land disorder becomes normal.

"This is the more reason that in this third session, we are really going to put all our efforts in actually ensuring that we support the smooth operations of the Ministry of Lands and ensure that we are with them in every thick and thin of what they do just so that we try to see how we can minimize all of the hue and cries about land issues Sierra Leone. Remember that as MPs, we are voted for by the people. We are standing in the middle between the Government and the people, to ensure that there is a fair trial in terms of everything. Where the communities are right, we give them their right, and where the Ministry is right and working in the interest of the general public and state, we support the Ministry.

We are not going to be skewed to one area, all that we will be doing is to actually seat in the middle, that everybody has a fair bite on us, that the people know that we are here to help them, help the Ministry, individuals and everybody. As we are honourable members, we are under oath to do the right thing and that is what we are going to do. We are going to dispense our duty without any fear or favour to anybody no matter what, we just want to do the right thing."



2020
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OF THE NURSE AND
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MORE INVESTMENT
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