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CONCORD TIMES NEWSPAPER

Vol. 17, No 140250923

Friday, June 30, 2023

Price: Le 2

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Freetown returns to normalcy



Vehicles, Keke, bikes, shops and traders spotted at Kroo Town market going about their businesses



Customers going to town to get some stuffs

Pan African Women Project urges ECSL to improve on modern technology



PAN African Women Project teams

By Yusufu S. Bangura

After the announcement of the presidential result on Tuesday, 27th June, in Freetown, life in Freetown is slowly returning to normalcy.

An increasing number of markets, shops, offices and several agencies are being opened to the public with people returning to work.

To know how the city looks like after the tense elections on Saturday, 24th June, Concord Times'

Yusufu S. Bangura took to the streets of Freetown and interviewed some pedestrians, business owners, and workers, to gauge the current atmosphere.

Speaking to this medium on Thursday, Juldeh Barrie, owner of Tarkan Enterprise at Kroo Town Market, thanked God for a peaceful election, stating that after the announcement of presidential result, there was no reported incidence of violence in the city.

Cont. Page 3

2023 Presidential elections: International Community questions transparency of tabulation process

The Power Game in Freetown

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J.E. Bangalie: It is your use of the words "ungrateful district" (meaning the low votes gotten by the SLPP's presidential candidate in Port Loko District in the June 24, 2023 presidential election, in spite of the Vice President, and Presidential Spokesman, Alpha Kanu, hailing from that district; and significant developmental projects of the Bio administration targeting that district) in THE OSWALD HANCILES COLUMN Whatsapp forum that I found particularly offensive - like I had described as "nauseous" those APC partisans who lampooned me as being an "ingrate" for resigning from the APC some months ago, in spite of my being a media adviser to former President Ernest Bai Koroma at State House for six years.

Too many of Northerners who are APC are often heard referring to all Northerners as "our people", implicitly saying that Southerners belong to the 'enemy people'; therefore, I appeal to the President to change this narrative. My public advice to my "Bonthe Brother Bio": establish a special group in the SLPP to understand the dynamic of the Temne-speaking people in the Northwest, especially those who live in urban centers in Freetown, and in every district in Sierra Leone, trading.

By a factor of about 95%, the

THE OSWALD HANCILES COLUMN

SLPP "People" Are Northerners Too

Temne-speaking people dominate the trading of non-edibles all over the country; and they dominate in the selling of fruits and vegetables in Freetown.

These Temne-speaking traders are entrepreneurs. They are risk takers. They manifest faith!! (They live the "faith" Jesus preaches about). They are courageous - as they dare to go into almost every chiefdom in the Southeast to settle to do their trading.

These Temne-speaking people are hardworking, most of them are admirable workaholics. Some of them are out to seek vegetables to buy at Dove Court in Freetown as early as 3a.m., and by 6a.m., the vegetables would be in markets all over Freetown. Vegetables are perishables, when not sold for a day or two, they get spoilt, since these traders do not have ways to preserve them. Yet, they take risks buying and selling them.

Others spread their wares on major thoroughfares of Freetown by 9a.m. - and under the burning sun they endure sweltering heat; when it rains, they shiver under shelters that drench their bodies with rain...Till about 8p.m.

The President, First Lady, and relevant ministers, ought to go in disguise and really watch these petty traders, and feel the pains they have to go through to earn their daily food.

These Temne-speaking traders are the ones daring into Guinea and Liberia in import and export ventures, a few to China and Dubai.

The SLPP should establish mechanisms to upgrade these Temne-speaking traders not only financially, but sociologically - there is a devastating toll on their families as parents leave home the whole day to hustle, with children left home to fend for themselves. Successive APC governments

from Siaka Stevens, Joseph Momoh, to Ernest Bai Koroma... have left too many of these petty traders to live just above the poverty levels, to wallow in slums in especially Freetown.

In 1998, I used my pen as a journalist to fight for these petty traders when my maternal uncle, internal affairs minister Charles Margai, was shoving them off the main thoroughfares of Freetown. I won. We won. President Tejan Kabbah (SLPP) had ordered Charles Margai to "go back to the drawing board".

Over the past five decades, a few APC elite would claim to be fighting for their Temne-speaking people in the Northwest. That is a demonic scam. With the exception of parts of Koinadugu, Falaba, and Kambia districts, the Northern Province has the worst situations of environmental degradation, and soil sterility - and this is spurring rural to urban migration, worsening youth unemployment in urban centers. There is need for Environmental Emergency in Sierra Leone, starting in the North.

The political class in the SLPP and APC must stop looking at people only as objects to vote for them during elections.

**I pause,
Oswald Hanciles, The Guru**

Pan African Women Project urges ECSL to improve on modern technology

By Ibrahim Kabba Turay

The PAN African Women Project (PAWP) has urged the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) to improve on modern technology in the next coming elections. They made the call on Thursday, 29th June, during a press conference at the Atlantic Lumley Hotel in Freetown. Head of Mission, Pan African Women Projects, Dr (Mrs) Eno Udensi, said they observed the long collation and tallying of data before the announcement of results, which she said should have been announced in less than 48 hours if a more modern technology was in place. She said they observed that materials arrived at polling stations in the Eastern, Northern and Southern regions early between the hours of 7:30am to 9:00am, while materials for the Western Region arrived late in many polling centres. She further states that in the Western Region, 75 percent of the materials didn't arrive on time and that majority of the voting materials arrived between the hours of 10:45am and 12:00noon, making the voters agitated and some elderly who



PAN African Women Project teams

were unable to wait left without casting their votes.

She advised the ECSL to improve in the recruitment of Adhoc staff for the next elections, adding that many electoral

officials didn't put on their tags for proper identification at some polling stations they visited.

She added that many ECSL staff were not also matured for the job as their

communication was poor especially in polling stations where materials arrived late with the tension on the field, adding that it was expected that the huge crowd who turned up early in many polling stations should have been addressed to reduce unnecessary tension and confusion.

"We observed at every polling station we visited huge turnout at this election. This shows the passion the electorates had in this election in electing a leader of their choice."

Pan African Women Projects (PAWP) is an international non-governmental organisation of African women from the fifty four (54) nations of Africa and the Diaspora.

She said they have a mission team comprising mainly of women from various African nations that were deployed to various regions in Sierra Leone for election observations.

"Our organisation observed both Presidential, Parliamentary Elections and Local Council Elections held on the 24th of June, 2023 across the various regions of Sierra Leone," she concluded.



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LOCAL NEWS

From cover

Freetown returns to normalcy

"As we have started doing business after the re-election of President Bio, we want to thank God because today we have a little turnout of customers. I want to wish President Bio good luck in his office for the second term and I hope prices of commodities will decrease soonest. President Bio should also make sure that he controls the economy because it is only when he controls the economy we will have price control," he said.

Trader at Abacha Street, Memunata Bla, thanked God for the peaceful outcome of the June 24th elections, adding that it is okay by her that President Bio was re-elected, but noted that everyone in the country is suffering from the economic hard-hit.

"As for me, the first five years of President Bio was not encouraging, but since they have given him another five years, let him assist us by bringing down the cost of living. I used to travel to Conakry to buy my business but since our Leones depreciated, my business went down the drain as I now buy business here at higher prices," she said.

She pleaded with the government not to remove her from where she is doing business as that is where she earns her living.

She further called on President Bio to bring



down the prices of food commodities and other needed items, and that he should work with everyone in the country no matter who the person is or which political party he or she belongs to.

Public Relations Officer for Moonlight Enterprise at Kroo Town Road, Bashira Conteh, said as business people they were praying for peaceful and transparent elections, adding that they believe that when there is peace in the country businesses will flow.

It has taken three days now since President Bio was declared winner of the presidential elections and businesses are going on smoothly although at a snail pace.

"As for now, things are not easy for us business people because every day prices are going up and people are finding it difficult to



come out and buy our goods. So, I want President Bio to know that inflation is the most important for us doing business; therefore he should help reduce taxes on most goods. I am expecting much from the government and political leaders to ask their supporters to continue maintaining peace in the country and we should all work together for the betterment of Sierra Leone," he said.

Balu Turay, a sim vendor for Africell Mobile Company, said she felt elated that the elections went on peacefully.

"I will like President Bio to work on the exchange rate of the United States Dollar, bring down the price of petroleum products, food commodities and we the people of this country will be very happy," she said.

Ibrahim Bah, a businessman at Siaka Steven



Street said before the June 24 elections, the atmosphere in the country, especially in Freetown, was not friendly because there were reported cases of violence and most people were afraid of going about their businesses, but noted that that was a different case after the elections.

He continued that some are saying that they will wait on the announcement of the mayoral result before they start business and that he believes that after that is done most people will come out to sell their products.

"I want President Bio to embark on agriculture by empowering farmers and encouraging them to cultivate more food, as we the people are crying for food. I also want to advise my fellow Sierra Leoneans to work with President Bio for the betterment of this country and they should be law abiding citizens," he advised.

ECOWAS congratulates President Julius Maada Bio

By Ibrahim Kabba Turay



Omar Aliou Touray ECOWAS

President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Omar Aliou Touray, has sent a congratulating message to President Julius Maada Bio on his re-election as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

"I have the pleasure and the honour to convey heartfelt congratulations to you on your victory at the recently concluded elections in Sierra Leone," the message reads.

President Touray said the victory signifies the trust that the people of Sierra Leone

2023 Presidential elections: International Community questions transparency of tabulation process

In a joint statement issued by the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, France and the EU Delegation to Sierra Leone, the league of international community has seriously questioned the tabulation process of the just concluded elections in which President Julius Maada Bio was declared winner.

Aside from the series of concerns raised by the main opposition candidate, Dr. Samura Kamara of the All People's Congress (APC) regarding the elections on June 24th, local and international observers queued in and raised several issues, including delay in the commencement of the elections, lack of clear communication from the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone and lack of transparency of the tabulations.

In their brief statement, the international community comprising the US, UK, Germany and the EU Delegation in Sierra Leone said: "We note that significant

logistical problems hampered voting on Election Day in certain areas. We share the concerns of national and international observation missions about the lack of transparency in the tabulation process.

Despite their gloom observation of the process, the international community applauded the Sierra Leonean people for their participation in the June 24th, 2023, general elections.

"We commend the commitment and dedication displayed by the citizens of Sierra Leone in exercising their democratic right to vote and engaging in the electoral process. Despite these difficulties, we remain committed to supporting democracy and the aspirations of the Sierra Leonean people. We urge everyone to exercise restraint, respect the rule of law, and engage in peaceful dialogue to resolve disputes," they note.

continue to have in his leadership, adding that he is confident that during this second term President Bio will consolidate the realizations he has made and chart a new pathway for peace and development.

"On behalf of ECOWAS Institutions, I renew our commitment to working with you and your colleagues for the attainment of our common regional objectives, please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration."

President Julius Maada Bio was announced

as winner on Tuesday by the Chief Electoral Commissioner. He won with 56.17% in the first round while his closest rival, Samura Kamara of the All Peoples' Congress (APC), came in second with 41.16%.

Guinea-Bissau President, Umaro Sissoco Embaló, who is the current chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has congratulated President Julius Maada Bio

LOCAL NEWS

By Hassan Gbassay Koroma

Liberian President, George Manneh Weah, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Liberia, has congratulated Julius Maada Bio for his re-election as president of Sierra Leone.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and has the honour to forward hereunder, a Congratulatory Message from His Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, addressed to His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, on his re-election as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone," the message reads.

The message continues that, it was with great pleasure President Weah and on behalf of his government and the people of Liberia, congratulates and sent sincere best wishes on President

Liberia President congratulates President Bio on his re-election



Bio's historic re-election as the President of Sierra Leone and that he entertains the hope that the People of Sierra Leone and his astute and visionary leadership will continue to enjoy the

blessings of peace, unity and prosperity.

The message reaffirmed that the excellent bilateral ties and bond of friendship and strategic cooperation subsisting between

the two countries will be further strengthened for the common interest and prosperity of both countries and people.

Francis Ben Kaifala re-appointed ACC Commissioner

By Hassan Gbassay Koroma



Francis Ben Kaifala has been re-appointed to serve another five-year term as Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission Sierra Leone (ACC-SL).

His appointment came shortly after the re-election of President Julius Maada Bio in the June 24th elections.

"Pursuant to Section 4(1) of the

Anti-Corruption Act, 2008 as amended in 2019, the renewal of tenure of the Commissioner was communicated by a re-appointment letter dated 19th June, 2023 and takes effect today, 29th June, 2023, following the expiration of the first term on the 28th June, 2023," the appointment letter stated.

According to press statement from the ACC Office signed by Director

of Public Education and Outreach, Patrick Sandi, the first five year-tenure of Commissioner Francis Ben Kaifala saw Sierra Leone make remarkable gains in the fight against corruption and recorded unprecedented progress in local and international corruption perception indexes and surveys including; the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Scorecard, the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, the Afro-

Barometer Report, the Public Financial Management (PFM) Consortium National Corruption Perception Survey Report.

He further stated that in the same vein, during the leadership of Commissioner Kaifala, the ACC and Sierra Leone received many local and international accolades, laurels, awards and recognitions for efforts in the fight against

corruption.

He also noted that the ACC made record convictions; recovered over Forty Five (45) Billion (Old) Leones cash; recovered vehicles, houses, and other immovable; and the period witnessed the construction and movement of the Commission into the Integrity House at Tower Hill; which now serves as the Commission's new Headquarters Building in Freetown.

"The Commissioner wishes to thank His Excellency Brig. (Rtd.) Dr. Julius Maada Bio for his unequivocal re-appointment and similarly congratulates him on his recent re-election as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for a Second term. The Commissioner also wishes to thank and continues to count on the Deputy Commissioner, the Board, Management and staff of the Commission; as well as the People of Sierra Leone for their continued belief and support.



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The Lungi International Airport in Sierra Leone is constructed across an estuary, so most passengers access the capital city of Freetown through the ocean in a journey that takes between 35 minutes to an hour. Seated by my side last Friday evening was the YIAGA Africa Executive Director, Samson Itodo, who married less than a month ago. Perhaps because it is a journey that he has undertaken several times in his sojourn across the continent, observing elections, Itodo seemed more amused than worried by what was happening around him. This despite his sensing that I was as troubled as many other passengers. Chuckling, Itodo said, "I bet most of the people here are worried because they are thinking about the OceanGate tragedy", in reference to the Titan submersible that claimed the lives of all onboard while on expedition to the Titanic. But we survived!

I arrived Freetown last Friday for the 2023 general election in Sierra Leone where the presidency, 135 parliamentary seats, 22 Mayor/Chairmen of Council and 493 councilors were to be contested. Not surprisingly, attention was mostly on the presidential election where the incumbent President Julius Maada Bio of the ruling Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) was seeking a second term. Standing in his way were 12 other candidates, including Dr Samura Kamara of the main opposition All People's Congress (APC).

Five years ago, President Ernest Bai Koroma was constitutionally ineligible, having served the maximum two-terms of ten years (plus an extraconstitutional year due to delay in conducting the election) in office. He endorsed his Foreign Affairs Minister, Kamara—who had also served as Finance Minister and Central Bank Governor—as candidate of the then ruling APC. No winner emerged at the end of the first round, although Bio led with 43.2 percent of the votes while Kamara secured 42.6 percent. The margin between them was just 14,734 votes. Kandeh Yumkella of the National Grand Coalition (NGC) came third with 6.86 percent of the votes. The remaining ten candidates made no significant impact at the poll. Since no candidate met the Constitutional provision of 55 percent votes to be declared elected in the first round, a runoff poll was subsequently held. Bio won with 51.8% of the votes.

With this year's election pitching Bio and Kamara against each other again, it was always going to be a grudge match. And it was. Problems began when the mid-term population and housing census was conducted in December 2021. Prior to the exercise, opposition parties in the country had ganged up to challenge the motivation behind it. They alleged that the real intention of President Bio was political, essentially to redraw constituency boundaries ahead of this year's general election. At the end, the outcome of the census left more questions than answers.

That was the background to the distrust of the electoral process that started long before the first ballot was cast last weekend. In his piece in the Sierra Leone Telegraph last September, Andrew Keili wrote that "There is little doubt that the SLPP prefers the use of the 2021 mid-term census results for delineating boundaries and constituencies. The APC prefers the 2015 census results." Keili then explained how a tool for planning became a weapon in the hands of Sierra Leonean politicians. "The census conducted during the tenure in governance of each party tends to give it an advantage in number of people in party strongholds and accusations of 'census fixing' have now become the norm. We don't seem to agree on how we should be counted and on our numbers."

I bet one can say the same thing about Nigeria. Like our country, there is a strong ethno-regional divide in Sierra Leone. The main base of the opposition APC is in the

The Power Game in Freetown

By Olusegun Adeniyi in Freetown

North-west while that of the ruling SLPP is in the Southeast. Going by figures from the 2015 census when the APC was in power, the Northwest had a population of 56.2 to 43.8 for the Southeast. That gap between the two geo-political regions has been closed by the controversial 2021 census figures conducted by the current SLPP government. The Northwest now has 50.01 of the population leaving the Southeast with 49.99 of the population.

The acrimony and mutual suspicions from the census were carried to the registration of voters and eventually to the general elections last Saturday. Two weeks ago, Kamara called on the international community to intervene. "Enough is enough; we need international commissioners to conduct June 24, 2023 elections," he said while calling for the resignation of the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) Chairman, Mohamed Kenewui Konneh. The main grievance of Kamara and his party was that in all previous elections in Sierra Leone, ECSL used to release a comprehensive disaggregated data to all political parties and other important election stakeholders for review. Not this time.

With the slogan, 'NO DATA, NO ELECTION', APC supporters demanded that voting with registration slips should be allowed as against the ECSL position that only those with voter ID card could vote. The allegation was that during the distribution exercise, numerous voters in the Northwest regions (the APC stronghold) could not collect their cards, which could leave them disenfranchised. The APC protesters also called for manual counting of results by districts. Both requests were eventually granted and on the eve of the election, Kamara told protesters who were essentially his supporters: "Go home and prepare to vote on Saturday but you have to protect your votes."

The election last Saturday had many of the logistical challenges we grapple with in Nigeria. It was largely peaceful, though the opposition complained about lack of transparency in the manner results were being processed by the ECSL and highhandedness by security officials. On Monday, a top Sierra Leonean official visited me and sought my opinion on the election. I knew it was a tricky question, but I refused to dissemble. "If you are interested in my honest opinion, let me say straightaway that I believe the president is likely to win this election based on my projections from the people I have spoken to. I think he will secure more than half the total votes cast. But I don't believe he can make the 55 percent mark so the election will go to a runoff..."

There was a sharp interjection of "No, no, no. We don't want a runoff and there will not be one. The president will win on the first ballot." I wasn't surprised by the reaction. On many of the campaign billboards in Freetown, the inscription was about 'No runoff poll'. Every government official I spoke to seemed obsessed about winning the election on the first ballot. It was just not about victory for the president, he had to do it without a runoff. Yet my projections tallied with that of the National Election Watch (NEW), a coalition of hundreds of registered civil society and non-governmental organisations, established in 2002 to observe and monitor the fairness, transparency, and credibility of public elections in the country.

For the 2023 elections, NEW claimed to have deployed 6,000 observers across the country, covering every polling centre. "Out of these observers, 750 were specially trained and deployed to a statistically representative sample of polling stations across all the 5 regions and 16 districts in Sierra Leone using the Process and Results Verification for Transparency (PRVT) methodology." After a disaggregation of the

results data by districts from both the 'partial' result released on Monday (which they confirmed to be credible) and the final one released on Tuesday, NEW made this point: "The total valid ballots cast as announced by the ECSL for the first batch of results (representing 60% of polling stations) shows an average of 269 valid voters per polling station, while the second batch (representing 40% of polling stations) has an average of only 188 valid votes per polling station."

Using all the parameters to crunch the numbers from the data provided by the ECSL in the two instances, the projection of NEW is that President Bio could not have secured more than 53 percent of the votes while Kamara could not have secured more than 49 percent. The implication therefore is that no candidate would meet the 55 percent threshold required to avoid a runoff. In fact, shortly before the president was declared re-elected on Tuesday, NEW released a statement saying, "Based on our PRVT findings and the ECSL data announced thus far, we are confident that once all votes are counted with integrity, voter turnout will be 77.3% +/- 1.7% (between 75.4% and 79%); and no candidate will reach the constitutional threshold of 55% of votes cast in the first round." But, going by the ECSL final tally, Bio secured 1,566,932 votes representing 56.17 percent of the total votes cast while Kamara secured 1,148,262 votes, representing 41.16 percent of total votes cast.

With 2,800,691 voters representing 83 percent national turnout, the total number of valid votes cast last Saturday was put at 2,789,808 while the total number of invalid votes was 10,883. But Kamara, who on Monday described the electoral process as 'daylight robbery', has rejected the declaration. "It is a sad day for our beloved country," he tweeted after the announcement. "It is a frontal attack on our fledgling democracy. These results are NOT credible, and I categorically reject the outcome so announced by the electoral commission. I will rise above this travesty, and I commit myself to continue the fight for a better Sierra Leone."

But the president has already been sworn-in for a second term. In his acceptance speech on Tuesday, he extended a hand of fellowship to his "brother and foremost opposition leader", asking Kamara to join him in the task of nation-building. While responding to the partial result 24 hours earlier he had spoken to the heart of the issue. "For our sakes, we must avoid all provocative and retaliatory actions", President Bio said while urging Sierra Leoneans to avoid any action capable of inciting violence. "We built our democracy from the embers of war. We should each be resolved to never go back to that dark chapter of our country's history."

Five Election Observation Missions in Sierra Leone played critical roles before, during and after the polls by meeting with stakeholders to ensure peace. President Goodluck Jonathan leads the West African Elders Forum, former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo chairs the Commonwealth Group, former Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegne Boshe, is head of the African Union (AU), former Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) president, Mohammed Ibn Chambas chairs its mission and Ms Evin Incir leads that of the European Union.

Before the release of partial results on Monday, President Jonathan had led these observers to meet with Konneh who assured them that he would release to the parties all disaggregated data before making his announcement. I confirmed that the ECSL chairman was true to his word. While announcing the winner on Tuesday, Konneh also provided the breakdown of results which

have been uploaded on the commission's website. "Any citizen who has lawfully voted in this election may challenge the validity of the said election of the president to the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone within seven days after the declaration of result pursuant to section 54 (1) of the Public Election Act, 2022", Konneh said. It is my hope that the aggrieved parties will take the legal path to seek redress.

Yesterday in Freetown, the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, France and the European Union (EU) Delegation issued a joint statement on the outcome of the election. "We note that significant logistical problems hampered voting on election day in certain areas. We share the concerns of national and international observation missions about the lack of transparency in the tabulation process," the ambassadors wrote. "Despite these difficulties, we remain committed to supporting democracy and the aspirations of the Sierra Leonean people. We urge everyone to exercise restraints, respect the rule of law and engage in peaceful dialogue to resolve disputes."

Meanwhile, I enjoyed my stay in Freetown, thanks to my brother, Anthony Navo Jr., President, and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Africa Young Voices. AYV is the biggest private media conglomerate in Sierra Leone. Not only did he put some of his senior editors at my service, but he also provided me a vehicle to move around and hosted me for lunch on Monday. With the Director General of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), Mr Joseph Egbenda Kapuna and an award-winning radio presenter, Ms Asmaa James joining us, I learnt a great deal about Sierra Leone and assured them that I would be back. As an aside, while ARISE Television is a 'baby' of THISDAY newspaper, I was confronted with the power of the visuals in Freetown. Navo and his editors chose to introduce me everywhere as "our friend from ARISE Television" which members of the Sierra Leonean elite evidently watch. At some point, I was almost tempted to impersonate Reuben Abati!

But perhaps the real highlight of my stay in Freetown was the extensive conversation I had with Professor Osinbajo on Monday evening at his hotel, without any prior appointment. Over a plate of chicken wings which we both shared and glasses of fresh pineapple juice, Osinbajo and I spent more than an hour discussing what he had observed in the elections as well as insights into many issues in the Nigerian administration he served and his presidential aspiration.

Ordinarily, the State House is the abode of secrets in any country. But when the hour of power is over, barriers are often lowered, and barricades disappear as history prepares a 'yesterday's man' for a new chapter. My Freetown conversations with Osinbajo were in strict confidence but as we bid each other goodbye, I could not but reflect on the fact that the encounter would not have happened just a month ago when he was still the number two man in Nigeria. Yes, Osinbajo has always been a very simple and down to earth person but a reporter eating from the same plate with the vice president is almost sacrilegious in a society where people worship power. And not when there are always overzealous security men and 'protocol' people around to shield high public officials from being real.

That encounter also reminded me of the transient nature of political office which, given our interactions, Osinbajo understands quite clearly. Yet, this is a lesson too few imbibe and explains the desperation that makes election for public office a matter of life and death, especially on the continent.

I wish all my Muslim readers Eid Mubarak!



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NEWS AROUND AFRICA COMPILED BY GABRIEL BENJAMIN

US horrified by conditions in Ethiopia after theft leads to food aid pause and deaths

The United States humanitarian agency is horrified by conditions in Ethiopia, where local officials have reported hundreds of hunger deaths in recent weeks after the U.S. and the United Nations paused food aid for one-sixth of the country's population over massive theft of the aid.

In an unusually strong statement emailed to the AP, the U.S. Agency for International Development called the aid suspension "wrenching" and a measure of last resort because of the "extreme scale and coordination of food aid diversion identified across the country."

U.S. officials have said in private that this could be the biggest-ever theft of aid in any country.

The U.S. and U.N. have not said who was involved in the theft, which was first discovered in March in the northern Tigray region when tons of food meant for needy people were instead found for sale in sacks branded with the U.S. flag.

Aid workers said Ethiopian government officials are deeply involved. The government, which largely controls the aid delivery process, dismisses as harmful propaganda the suggestion that it bears primary responsibility for the disappearance of aid. It has agreed to a joint investigation with the U.S. while the U.N.'s World Food Program carries out a separate probe.

"The theft of food from this highly vulnerable population is unconscionable," the USAID email said after the AP reported this week that local officials and university researchers had recorded over 700 starvation-related deaths in Tigray since the food pause started three months ago. The officials and researchers linked the deaths to the suspension.



The U.S. and U.N. first halted food aid to Tigray in March, and in early June they extended the ban to the rest of Ethiopia, where over 20 million people rely on such assistance.

Tigray was the epicenter of a two-year war that ended in November and killed an estimated hundreds of thousands of people. Aid access to Tigray was blocked or restricted for much of the conflict, and humanitarian supplies were only just returning to the region when the U.S. and U.N. halted food assistance.

The U.S. and U.N. are demanding the removal of Ethiopian government officials from the aid distribution process and seek the introduction of biometric checks before resuming food deliveries, which they hope to do as early as July.

"We are horrified by the ongoing suffering experienced by the people of Ethiopia and our focus is on resuming food assistance as quickly as possible once we can be confident it is going to the people in need," the USAID email said.

The U.S. and U.N. are still running nutrition and other programs in Ethiopia, but those are only reaching a fraction of people who need them because of funding gaps.

South African court rules against government over ending permits for nearly 200,000 Zimbabweans



South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa speaks to the media at State - Copyright © africanews Khalil Senosi/Copyright 2022 The AP. All rights reserved

A South African court on Wednesday ruled against the government and ordered it to reconsider its decision to terminate the special permits allowing nearly 200,000 Zimbabwe nationals to live and work in the country.

The government's decision was set to force Zimbabweans to return home if they didn't obtain regular work visas, even if they have children who were born in South Africa and are South African citizens.

In its ruling, the Gauteng High Court in Pretoria said the Department of Home Affairs' decision in 2022 to end the special exemption for citizens from neighboring Zimbabwe was "unlawful" and "unconstitutional" because it didn't follow "a fair process" of consultation.

The permits were extended until at least June 28 next year under the court ruling.

The department initially set a deadline of June 30 this year — Friday — for the termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit system. That deadline was recently extended to the end of the year.

Around 178,000 Zimbabwe nationals live in South Africa under the scheme. It was introduced in 2010 in an attempt to deal with a surge in migration by Zimbabweans escaping the economic woes of their home country, which have persisted.

The Helen Suzman Foundation NGO and a group advocating for the rights of migrants in South Africa took the government's Department of Home Affairs to court over its decision.

Beware of 'contaminated' Sprite, says Nigeria

Nigeria's food and drug regulator, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), has issued a recall order for a batch of Sprite glass bottles in circulation due to possible contamination with particles.

The recall was initiated following a consumer complaint, and subsequent investigations revealed that over five crates of the implicated batch of Sprite 50cl glass bottles were contaminated. The specific nature of the particles and their potential implications have not been disclosed by the authorities.

The Nigerian Bottling Company Limited, Abuja plant, has been instructed to recall the affected batch. The company has yet to comment on the decision. The regulator has urged retailers and consumers to exercise caution and refrain from consuming contaminated products. Individuals who have consumed the affected



Volunteers work to build the playground donated by Sprite Spark Parks to - Copyright © africanews Shea Walsh/2011 AP

items have been advised to seek immediate medical attention. Furthermore, an inspection of the manufacturing site will be conducted to determine the cause of the contamination.

This recall comes after the regulator previously launched an investigation into a popular brand of noodles in May, following recalls in Malaysia and Taiwan due to the detection of a potentially cancer-causing substance.

British court of appeal rules deporting migrants to Rwanda "illegal"

The controversial plan to deport migrants who arrived clandestinely in the UK to Rwanda was declared unlawful on Thursday by the British court of appeal due to safety concerns, much to the dismay of the government, which has announced that it will appeal to the supreme Court. The court explained that Rwanda cannot currently be considered a safe third country as there is a real threat that those sent to the east African country will be returned to their country of origin where they may have been subject to persecution and inhumane treatment.

"The deficiencies in the asylum system in Rwanda are such that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk that persons sent to Rwanda will be returned to their home countries where they faced persecution or other inhumane treatment, when in fact they have a good claim for asylum. In that sense, Rwanda is not a safe third country," said Lord Chief Justice, Lord Burnett.

"Unless and until the deficiencies in its asylum process are corrected, sending asylum seekers to Rwanda will be unlawful," the court stressed in a summary of the judgment.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he fundamentally disagreed with the decision and announced that his government would seek permission to refer the matter to the Supreme Court.

"The policy of this government is very simple, it is this country, and your government, that must decide who comes here, not criminal gangs," he said in a statement, claiming he would do "whatever is necessary" to implement it. "Rwanda is a safe country," he insisted.

Fears of persecution

The fight against illegal immigration is one of the priorities of Mr. Sunak's government.

Despite Brexit promises to "take back control" of borders, more than 45,000 migrants crossed the Channel from France in small boats in 2022, a record. And there are more than 11,000 this year to have done the same.

The Court of Appeal made it clear that its decision did not imply "any view whatsoever on the political merits" of this measure, and that its only concern was to judge whether this policy complied with the law.

Despite this decision, "Rwanda remains fully committed to making this partnership" with the UK "work", Kigali government spokeswoman Yolande Makolo explained.

"While this decision ultimately rests with the British judiciary, we dispute the fact that Rwanda is not considered a safe country for refugees and asylum seekers", she added.

In terms of human rights, however, Rwanda is regularly criticized for its harsh repression of political opposition and its lack of respect for freedom of expression.

Changing course

Hailing a "rare piece of good news in the UK's grim human rights landscape", the country director of Human Rights Watch, Yasmine Ahmed, urged Home Secretary Suella Braverman to "abandon this feverish, impractical and unethical dream".

This ruling "offers the government the opportunity to change course", she added. "Rather than treating human beings as cargo to be shipped elsewhere, it should focus on ending the hostile environment towards refugees and asylum seekers".

Last December, London's High Court gave the green light to the deportation of certain illegal migrants to Rwanda, deeming the scheme legal.

The project has since been put on hold due to legal challenges.

However, the judges agreed to consider an appeal by several applicants and Charity Aid, which provides legal support to asylum seekers. They denounce the project as "systemically unjust", and believe that asylum seekers who are expelled to Rwanda risk persecution there.

No expulsions have yet taken place. A first flight scheduled for June 2022 was cancelled after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) called for a thorough review of the policy.

The plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda was announced when Boris Johnson was Prime Minister, in a bid to discourage illegal crossings of the English Channel.

In 2021, 27 people lost their lives trying to cross this strait, one of the busiest in the world. At least four more died last year.

Credit: Rédaction africanews with AP

Nigeria's elections eroded public trust in voting, EU observers say



Nigeria's new President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, inspects honour - Copyright © africanews Olanikan Gbemiga/Copyright 2023 The AP. All rights reserved

The European Union (EU) observers have released a final report on Nigeria's recent elections, revealing significant problems that undermined public trust in the electoral processes.

The report emphasizes the need for reforms to enhance transparency and accountability in future elections. President Bola Tinubu emerged as the winner of the disputed February vote,

which is currently being challenged in court by his main rivals.

The EU mission identified six priority areas for improvement, including clarifying electoral laws, ensuring real-time publication and access to results, and cracking down on electoral offenses.

The report also points out that shortcomings in law and administration negatively impacted the conduct of well-run and inclusive elections, damaging trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The low voter turnout during the February vote, the lowest since the end of military rule in 1999, further highlighted the erosion of trust. The INEC, however, was not immediately available for comment.

While an INEC spokesman cited a system glitch as the reason for the delayed upload of presidential election results, the EU mission report was deemed "unfair" by the spokesperson in a statement made to local TV.

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Population Services International- Sierra Leone

Job Description

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (ME&L) Specialist (EpiC Sierra Leone)

Job Type: Consultancy/Independent Contractor

Location: Freetown, Sierra Leone

Start Date: To be determined.

End Date: To be determined.

Reports to: Country Project Manager- EpiC SL

Grade: TBD

Background Introduction

Population Services International (PSI) is a network of locally rooted, globally connected organizations working to achieve consumer-powered healthcare — people-centered health systems that ensure quality, affordable care wherever and whenever it is needed. Our origins in sexual and reproductive health have grown into a broader mission. Today, we work with the public and private sectors as well as local communities, prioritizing people's voice and choice and developing solutions to meet their essential health needs. Over the past five decades, we have helped push boundaries, break taboos, set trends, and develop innovative solutions to complex global health challenges.

There are over 9,000 "PSI'ers" around the world. It's a diverse group of entrepreneurs and professionals with an unusually wide range of backgrounds - from the medical industry to the music business - all with unique skills we bring to the job.

PSI Sierra Leone seeks to recruit, on an "independent contractor basis" the services of an M&E Specialist to assist with, amongst other pieces of work, data management for the Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) Project activities which are aimed at increasing the coverage of COVID-19 Vaccination in Sierra Leone.

Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) is a five-year global project funded by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). EpiC receives COVID-19 funding to bolster health systems necessary to address COVID-19 and reduce cases of reemergence.

Currently, EpiC and its consortium members implement COVID-19 activities in more than 45 countries worldwide. The project delivers high-quality technical assistance at the community, facility, district, regional and national levels and builds relationships with relevant partners working to address COVID-19.

In Sierra Leone, EpiC works hand in hand with Sierra Leone's Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) to identify and address gaps that are not currently covered by other partners throughout the country but more especially in the 7 districts that have the lowest COVID-19 vaccine uptake.

General Objective of the Position

Reporting to the EpiC Sierra Leone Country Project Manager and working closely with the M&E Coordinator for the organization, the MEL Specialist will take a leadership role in developing and supporting EpiC Sierra Leone project's data management, utilization and reporting through the EpiC Global Infolink's database platform. The support will include data collection, cleaning, validation and visualization, co-leading administration of the project's activity data base. The MEL Specialist will also work with the global EpiC M&E team on co-design and oversight of implementation of new components of routine data collection (by adding to existing database).

The MEL Specialist will lead the ongoing capacity building and skills maintenance in data management and utilization for program quality improvement among the EpiC Sierra Leone country project team. The position will contribute to consolidating and building EpiC project's evidence and knowledge resources and showcasing the impact of our covid-19 vaccination work both internally and externally. The MEL Specialist will also support the EpiC project team and its implementing partners in oversight and guidance on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) activities. The position will work very closely with the Impact Malaria program M&E team, and when needed, also provide guidance to other program colleagues within the country office.

The specific job functions are as follows:

Leadership on routine & periodic activity data collection and management

Provision of routine covid-19 vaccine management information system backstopping to the EpiC SL team

Technical ME&L assistance to the EpiC project team
Contribute to the learning agenda of the project.

Key Responsibilities

Work with the Project Manager (EpiC) and the M&E Coordinator to contribute to strengthening the EpiC Project MEL systems.

Manage routine data, including data cleaning and entry in the global EpiC Infolink's software platform to ensure timeliness, completeness, consistency and quality.

Leading the design and testing of data collection, data entry and supervision tools

Creating data analysis plans and effectively implementing them

Undertake critical review of existing data collection forms & reporting tool to identify gaps and feed this to the EPI M&E team for further action.

Liaise /coordinate with the central DHIS2 unit of the MOHS and other partners to share with them critical and relevant covid-19 vaccine data-related findings from the field aimed at strengthening the overall system.

Ensure timely and complete reporting and feedback of routine data system, including data quality review, relying on support from the EpiC program Team.

Provide technical leadership for the development, validation and implementation of data collection tools and processes, including the adaptation and improvement of the existing suite of quantitative monitoring tools for EpiC Sierra Leone.

Coordinate regular review of data at national and district levels to identify any trends, patterns or unexpected changes, and to support data for decision making with the rest of team.

Implement processes for tracking progress of routine monitoring (new data tracker detailing reporting elements and their periodicity for tracking, monthly deadlines for receiving data and estimated processing time at country level)

Coordinate EpiC Sierra Leone project team's ongoing skills building and provide in-house guidance on the appropriate use of the database.

Contribute to evidence generation, documentation and information-sharing on covid-19 vaccine integration by working with the EpiC Project Communications Officer to co-author articles and success/ change stories.

Presenting at conferences and meetings evidenced-based data for internal and external stakeholders.

Maintain active involvement/ participation in external technical MEL working groups, and other technical bodies, as appropriate, based on the project's needs.

Carry out additional tasks, as delegated by the Project Manager and PSI Sierra Leone Country Representative.

Qualification and experience

A Masters' degree in a relevant field mainly public health, epidemiology, statistics/demography, etc.

At least 3 years of proven experience in monitoring and evaluation in reproductive, maternal child health, or a related field

Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis management skills, specifically with database management (preferably in DHIS2) and survey instruments development (preferably in Kobo Toolbox or ODK)

Experience conducting monitoring, evaluation and research in a global public health setting.

Solid technical background in Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health and other related aspects.

Competence in qualitative and quantitative analysis software programs (SPSS, Epi-Info, SAS, etc.)

Ability to guide, coach and oversee others to produce accurate, timely results and products collaboratively.

Technical writing and strong presentation skills to both internal and external audiences

Willingness to travel to the field.

Must be able to work in a dynamic and complex environment.

Excellent written and verbal English language skills

Interested candidates should submit CV, professional certificates and cover letters indicating the position they are applying for and submit online to the email recruitment@psi-sl.org before the 30th June 2023.

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Request for Proposals UNICEF Sierra Leone Admin Services (Re-advertisement)

The United Nations Children's Fund invites individual tenders for the services listed below through a Long-Term Agreement for an initial period of 24 months with possible extension for another 12 months.

Please visit the United Nations Global Market (UNGM) Website and download the tender documents. ***The submission deadline for each Tender is Thursday 6th July at 10.am.***

1. Provision of Air Conditioners Maintenance Services for UNICEF Offices in Freetown and Kenema and the Warehouse at Ferry Junction, Freetown
2. Servicing of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) for Freetown CO, Ferry Junction Warehouse and Kenema Field Office and Biometrics for Freetown Country Office
3. Servicing of Fire extinguishers for Freetown Country Office, Warehouse at Ferry Junction, Freetown, and Kenema Field Office.

Thank you.



The advertisement features a woman with dark curly hair wearing a purple sweater, standing at an ATM and holding a smartphone to the screen. The background is a light blue wall with a large blue sign. The sign has a white header with the Union Trust Bank logo and name. Below this, a dark blue box contains four bullet points. To the right of the box, the words 'Cardless Withdrawal' are written in a white script font. At the bottom of the sign, the title 'ATM Cardless Transaction' is displayed in large, bold, yellow letters with a blue outline.

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Jose Mourinho 'turns down the chance to become the world's HIGHEST-PAID manager

Jose Mourinho reportedly declined a £26million-per-year net salary from Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal that would have made him football's best-paid manager.

The Roma manager is focused on his current project at the Stadio Olimpico, where he has prowled the touchline for two seasons.

Saudi Arabia's most successful club went to Mourinho earlier this month before approaching Juventus' Massimiliano Allegri. The Italian coach has since rejected a £17m-per-season proposal.

Mourinho is already handsomely compensated in Rome, receiving just over £8.1m each year for his expertise. Only seven managers worldwide earn more.

Behind Simeone, Pep Guardiola

rakes in £19.7m and Jurgen Klopp is paid £15.7m.

Mourinho led Roma to the inaugural Europa Conference League title in 2021-22 with a 1-0 win over Feyenoord before taking them to the Europa League final this season, where they lost on penalties to Sevilla.

In Serie A, he has taken them to consecutive sixth-place finishes.

PSG were revealed in May to be eyeing him as their new manager with relations between Mourinho and Roma's general manager, Tiago Pinto, reported to have become strained.



But a gesture to the fans at full-time on the final day of the Serie A season against La Spezia, in which he repeatedly pointed to the turf, hinted that the 60-year-old could be staying put.

He still has a year left on his contract and Italian media outlets, such as Football Italia, have been reporting that The Special One is negotiating a new deal with I Giallorossi.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football>

Tottenham confirm £45m capture of top target James Maddison, with £170,000-a-week

Kylian Mbappe to Liverpool is on?! £258m transfer claim made as PSG are left fuming by forward's contract decision



Liverpool may have emerged as shock contenders to sign Kylian Mbappe, with a £258 million (\$329m) transfer claim being made by a FIFA agent.

Marco Kirdemir says the Reds are willing to invest around €300m in a deal for World Cup winner Mbappe. His future is up in the air once again after informing Paris Saint-Germain that he will not be triggering an extension clause in his contract through to 2025. That decision has angered those at Parc des Princes, with a summer sale now seemingly on the cards.

Kirdemir has told Marca: "There will be news over the next week. We will have news from England and Germany. Liverpool is competing with Real Madrid and wants to pay a fortune for Mbappe, that fortune would be around 300 million."

Kirdemir recently spoke with Qatari executives regarding Mbappe's situation at PSG, with officials there "very angry" as they were "confident that he was going to renew". That is no longer the case and the Ligue 1 champions are aware that they will have to listen to offers before the 24-year-old forward begins to edge towards free agency in 2024.

Real Madrid, who have been long-standing suitors, were expected to lead the chase for Mbappe – with talk of more big-money bids from Santiago Bernabeu doing the rounds – but it may be that the likes of Liverpool join the hunt, with the France international having admitted to being an admirer of the Reds in the recent past.

<https://www.goal.com/en-gb/news>



James Maddison has completed his £45million to Tottenham as Ange Postecoglou makes his third signing of the summer.

Relegated Leicester have been resigned to losing star player Maddison, who was identified as Spurs' top target, ever since dropping out of the Premier League.

The initial fee is understood to be in the region of £40million, with add-ons taking the deal to £45m, as Mail Sport reported on Tuesday night.

Maddison agreed personal terms of £170,000-a-week and posed with his new shirt on Wednesday at the club's Enfield base after signing a five-year deal.

The 26-year-old made 19 goal contributions in 32 appearances last season and will now relish pairing up with fellow England team-mate Harry Kane in attack.

"I feel a hunger about the place and I'm ready to get going!" Maddison said.

Spurs teased his arrival by posting a

video of a mystery figure playing darts - with a Tottenham shirt hanging in the background - in a nod of Maddison's love of the sport.

They then posted another video showing it was Maddison who was throwing the darts at the board before the clip cuts to the midfielder wearing a Spurs shirt.

A follow-up Tweet showed him off holding up his new kit with the caption: "We are delighted to announce the signing of James Maddison! Let's go, Madders."

Newcastle were among the sides who were rivalling Tottenham for Maddison, but the Magpies ended up dropping out of the race as they began pursuing AC Milan's Sandro Tonali instead.

Maddison is the third signing through the door at a busy Tottenham Hotspur this summer - joining goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario and permanent buy Dejan Kulusevski at the club.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football>

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Published by Concord Times Communications, 44, Edwards Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone www.slconcordtimes.com

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