



WEST AFRICAN DEMOCRACY AND RESILIENCE DIGEST

week 11



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West African Democracy and Resilience Digest



To support good governance, democracy and sustainable development in West Africa, The Abuja School of social and Political Thought takes a look at the activities in the region...

Here is a round up of your bi-weekly Democracy Digest, a quick summary of some important events from West African countries to note today

INTRO

NIGERIA



Amid squeezing hunger across the country, the Federal Government, Thursday, flagged off the sales of 30,000 metric tonnes of milled rice at N40,000 per 50kg bag to Nigerians as a measure to cushion the impact of high food prices that have persisted for over one year. The Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari, did the flag-off of the rice sale at the Ministry's headquarters in Abuja. Kyari said: "It is indeed my pleasure to welcome you all to this historical, all-important, and long-awaited flag-off of the sales of 30,000 MT of FGN milled rice to Nigerians at a subsidised rate of N40,000 per 50 kg. "This kind gesture was made possible at the expense and directives of the President and Commander in Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, who does not want Nigerian citizens to go to bed hungry and, in his wisdom, deemed it important to initiate this food intervention "We are all aware that in the recent past, precisely aftermath of COVID-19, and due to the Russian-Ukraine war, the climate change, amidst other localized factors/challenges, food prices, farm yields, and food chains, were distorted globally, and Nigeria is not an exception. (<https://shorturl.at/HuMtc>)

Troops fighting against insecurity and other national threats across the country during the last one week killed 152 terrorists, arrested 109 terrorists, Bandit's and rescued 91 hostages. Troops carried out surgical operations against two prominent terrorist commanders and decimated their strongholds, namely, Sadiku Enclave in Tsora Hill in Safana LGA of Katsina State and Alhaji Yusuf Enclave at Yadi Forest in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State. Troops also apprehended 2 female terrorist's collaborators responsible for negotiations with relatives of victims for ransom. In the Niger Delta, troops discovered and destroyed 58 illegal refinery sites. Troops denied the oil theft of the estimated sum of N795,68million (Seven Hundred and Ninety-Five Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-Three Thousand Three Hundred and Ninety-Five Naira only. Troops crippled crude oil theft activities through air interdiction at Bugama, Idama, Cawtorne Channel and

Krakrama, all in Rivers State. Troops also foiled the stealing of 725,920 litres of crude oil and 475,250 litres of illegally refined AGO amongst other items. Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Edward Buba said that during the various encounters, troops recovered 183 weapons and 4,443 ammunitions comprising 95 AK47 rifles, 35 locally fabricated guns, 76 Dane guns, One GPMG, 2 PKT guns, 4,131 rounds of 7.62mm special ammo, 165 rounds of 7.62mm NATO, 115 rounds of 7.62 by 54mm ammo, 28 cartridges, 53 assorted arms and 197 assorted ammunitions. (<https://shorturl.at/n0CKG>)

Members of the Tricycle Owners Association of Nigeria (TOAN) in Kwara state yesterday staged a protest over the recent increase in the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), also known as petrol. Similarly, members of the Okada Riders Association joined the protest to condemn the increase in the pump price of petrol The members who are popularly called "Keke Marwa" started their protest from the Sango junction of Ilorin through Estate junction, Moraba, Post office, Taiwo, Offa garage areas of Ilorin. Security operatives, including the police, were later deployed to the scene to restore order and disperse the protesters with tear gas. The group expressed their displeasure with the federal government over the rise in petrol prices, which they said had surged to N1,250 per litre. They argued that, the ugly development has prevented them of doing their businesses and this also making life increasingly difficult for them. One of the protesters, Mr. Isiaka Bellp Isiaka, said that the increase in fuel prices had made it challenging for them to meet basic needs. According to him, after purchasing fuel at the inflated price, the little profit they make from their work is barely enough to sustain their families. The protest caused significant disruption in the area, as several roads were blocked, leaving many commuters stranded. Passengers also shared their grievances, noting that the hike in transportation costs has triggered a ripple

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effect on the prices of food and other essential commodities, further exacerbating the economic situation. They urged the government to take immediate action to address the hardship caused by the rising fuel prices. As of the time of this report, no official statement had been released by the state or federal government regarding the protest. Meanwhile, Kwara State Governor and Chairman Nigeria's Governors Forum (NGF) Alhaji AbdulRazaq has directed the immediate deployment of free buses to different parts of the metropolis to ease the movement of commuters. (<https://shorturl.at/baSID>)

To boost the quality of basic and secondary education delivery in the country, the federal government yesterday unveiled an electronic quality assurance system, Federal Education Quality Assurance Service Cloud Server - FEQAS-collect. Minister of State for Education, Dr. Yusuf Sununu, who formally launched the platform at a ceremony held at the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) Digital Resource Centre Abuja, said the innovative system is designed to streamline the collection, analysis and reporting of data related to the quality of education in schools across the nation. He noted that the automation of the Federal Education Quality Assurance Service Department with the establishment of the cloud server, the Federal Ministry of Education would be better equipped to monitor, evaluate, and improve education quality assurance processes and practices across the nation. Sununu, who was represented by the Director, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Abubakar Isa, said the cloud server would revolutionise the operations of the FEQAS Department to enable it: enhance data capturing and management, streamline processes and improve efficiency, boost collaboration, networking and efficient reporting, ensure scalability and flexibility; and fortify security and data protection." Executive Secretary of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Dr. Hamid Bobboyi, said the manual conduct of school quality assurance evaluation and reporting was fraught with many challenges including delay and human errors,

hence the need to automate the system. Bobboyi disclosed that the commission adopted the use of digital technology for the school quality assurance evaluation activities, with a view to promoting flexibility, accuracy, timely reporting and reduction in human errors. (<https://shorturl.at/fj05f>)

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) yesterday said it was working hard to resolve the current petrol scarcity being experienced across the country, Executive Vice President, Downstream Operations, at NNPC, Dapo Segun also blamed the present shortages on foreign exchange illiquidity, distribution challenges, and the need to balance imports with existing debts. Although he stated that NNPC was actively working to resolve the supply shortfall, Segun did not provide a specific timeline for ending the long fuel queues. He emphasised that a significant challenge in the market was the reluctance to allow prices to be determined by market forces. Segun said, "First, we have conditions that affect our ability to distribute fuel efficiently. We do have a constraint of FX illiquidity. And when you have that situation, you have to strike a very fine balance between the size of your debts and the volume of products that you import. "It wouldn't make sense to import so much more than you can reasonably and create a situation where your debts become unserviceable. So it's a fine balance that we have to draw between those two, between those two - the size of the volume of PMS that we import and the size of our payables that's mainly driven by FX liquidity." He added that even with debts owed, the suppliers trust that they would pay, insisting that NNPC has a good business relationship with all its foreign customers. Segun stated, "We have a good relationship with our suppliers. And as we speak, we don't have a problem with the supplies coming in. We do have a challenge with payments, and that's largely due to the fact that there is some FX illiquidity, as it's obvious, and that's really is the challenge. "As much as we are able to, we are making payments to them and talking about the debts. I wouldn't want to go into that issue, but yes, there is a debt. There may have been a denial of the exact amount that was posted in the media.

GHANA



The Office of the President has denied its involvement in any land dispute with the Ghana International School (GIS) and has urged the public to disregard any such information. A statement issued in Accra, yesterday and signed by the Director of Communications at the Presidency, Mr Eugene Arhin, the President had no interest whatsoever in the said land which had become the subject of dispute. Furthermore, it said no officer, agent or assign had been directed by the Presidency to secure and/or interfere in any matter pertaining to GIS land within Cantonments. The statement said "attention of the Office of the President has been drawn to an allegation that the office, acting through the Head of the Very Very Important Personality (VVIP) unit has been involved in a dispute over a piece of land belonging to Ghana International School," it said. The statement explained that Chief Superintendent Ibrahim Opoku of the VVIP unit whose name had been mentioned was not directly involved in the said land dispute, but only performed his professional duty by handing over alleged encroachers and suspects involved in the land dispute to the Cantonments Police Station, upon chancing on an altercation between some individuals at the Cantonments barrier on his way from work. It said in line with his professional duties and standard protocols, Chief Superintendent Opoku after handing over the suspects to the Cantonments Police Station also submitted his credentials to the police as he was enjoined to do. "In light of the above, the Office of the President has made a formal complaint to the Inspector General of Police to investigate the entire matter," the statement said. (<https://shorturl.at/GkFJx>)

The Majority Leader, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, has called for the depoliticisation of the fight against illegal mining popularly known as galamsey. "I am saddened by what is happening. It is very sad. As a country, we have to know when to do partisan politics and when to act in the national interest," he said on the floor of Parliament in Accra on Tuesday. Mr Afenyo-Markin was responding to

concerns of his colleagues on recent reports of illegal mining when he presented the business statement to the House for the two-day extraordinary session which ended on Wednesday. The concerns of the MPs stem from the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL)'s attribution of water crisis in the Central Region to galamsey which has left the Pra River heavily polluted. "About 60 per cent of the catchment capacity is silted as a result of galamsey, compromising the quality of raw water. We are currently recording an average turbidity of 14,000 NTU instead of 2000 NTU designed for adequate treatment," the GWCL said in a statement on August 30. Warning that the country was headed for national water crisis in the nearest future, the Majority Leader said the politicisation of the fight against the menace which has seen water bodies polluted, fertile lands degraded and forests depleted, would only exacerbate the current situation. "It may not even be up to three years for Ghana to start importing water," Mr Afenyo-Markin, a former Board Chairman of the GWCL, warned. A national approach, he said, was needed to nib the situation in the bud and avoid the unpleasant situation of importing water or relying on sea water for drinking and other domestic chores. "I am happy that today we are talking about it on the floor of parliament and we must not have it on partisan lines. When the effects of galamsey is having its toll, it will not identify who is NDC or NPP. I will want to urge all of us to pursue this matter (with a national approach). We (should not continue) to play politics with this". (<https://shorturl.at/Lr69d>)

Former President John Dramani Mahama, the flagbearer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), has blamed Ghana's decline on the West African economic table to what he described as mismanagement by the government. Ghana, which has long been West Africa's second biggest economy, according to data from the

GHANA



International Monetary Fund, has slipped a step down to third in the region with US\$75 billion behind Côte d'Ivoire, US\$87 billion and Nigeria, US\$253 billion. At a rally in Yeji in the Bono East Region on his campaign tour of the area, the former president said the current managers of the economy lack the gravitas to manage it out of the ditch they've driven it. "Ghana was the second-largest economy after Nigeria, but this position has now been cheaply given away to neighboring Ivory Coast. "Ivory Coast has taken Ghana's second-largest economy position due to gross mismanagement and a lack of vision from the current regime," he said. In his view the decline is down to corruption, mismanagement, and incompetence exhibited by the New Patriotic Party government. Mr Mahama said his would-be government would revive the economy to create jobs for young people and competently manage the economy to place it back on the path of growth and prosperity. "We will restore the country's economic strength to ensure it remains competitive and appealing for investment," Mr Mahama assured. (<https://shorturl.at/yKVFc>)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Gender and Development Centre yesterday began a three-day workshop in Accra. It is aimed at building the capacity of focal persons to manage and operationalise the Gender Observatory Centre to be established in member countries. The three-day event is also expected to equip the participants with the necessary skills in digital platform usage, design, generation and development, data collection, data analysis and reporting as well as methods in gender statistics reporting and E-learning. Speaking at the ceremony, the Director of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, Mrs Sandra Oulate Fattoh, indicated that the workshop would go a long way to empower gender equality aimed at promoting the sustainability and periodisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. According to her, in spite of the gender equality and women's empowerment, the continent is still faced with widespread disparities and

inequalities characterised by the marginalisation of women and the absence of adequate opportunities for women to participate effectively in the development processes and to share equitably in the gains of development. It was to address these challenges that the Centre was organizing this training workshop to have a robust database system to provide the necessary gender statistics necessary for decision making. Ms Fattoh commended the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), African Union and other stakeholders whose contribution has brought the centre to fruition. The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Dakoa Newman, said data analysis and management was vital in the discharge of work as gender experts and advocates in order to effectively help in proper planning towards taking informed decisions. The essence of the training she explained, cannot be underestimated as it recognizes the sub-region as a just and secure society in which men and women have equal opportunities to participate, decide, control and benefit from all development initiatives, thus ensuring that no one is left behind in the developmental process in Member States. (<https://shorturl.at/El8Jl>)

SENEGAL



On a trip to China as part of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) which is being held from September 4 to 6, the President of the Republic intends to address the Senegalese people upon his return. According to the national television, which gives the information, Bassirou Diomaye FAYE will discuss several subjects with his fellow citizens, according to our colleagues from the national channel, who did not give details on the said subjects. (<https://shorturl.at/BrZTe>)

Senegalese lawmakers rejected late Monday a proposed revision of the constitution put forward by the country's new administration. 83 Mps voted to maintain two consultative bodies whose future hung in the balance, 80 voted to dissolve the bodies. The ruling coalition doesn't hold the majority in parliament. The revision outlined the dissolution of the High Council of regional governments and the Economic, Social and Environmental Council. It was a key campaign pledge by President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and his Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko. The bodies have been criticized for being too costly. About \$24 million USD are allocated to them. The president said the vote showed the deep divide between the opposition coalition and the aspirations of the Senegalese people. The lawmakers of former president Macky Sall have announced they'll lodge a vote of no-confidence against the government of Ousmane Sonko. The president could also choose to dissolve the assembly or hold a referendum. (<https://shorturl.at/1RxrL>)

The name of the Director of General Resources at the Presidency of the Republic has been at the center of a heated controversy since his statements on Senegalese religious leaders, Cheikh Ahmadou BAMBA, El Malick Sy, Cheikh Ibrahima NIASSE... The collective "Convergence Taxawu Ndonoy Mag Gni", headed by Serigne Modou Mbacké Bara Dolly, filed a complaint with the public prosecutor against Cheikh Oumar DIAGNE. According to the group, the latter's remarks are extremely serious and could undermine the social and religious stability of the

country. In this regard, the marabout and his comrades do not intend to limit themselves to just a complaint. According to them, a march is planned for this Friday, September 6 in Massalikoul Djinane. Furthermore, a petition has been launched against the Director of General Resources to remove him from his post as President of the Republic. (<https://shorturl.at/hUx5y>) Senegal's parliament has rejected a draft revision of the constitution put forward by the country's new leaders and seen as paving the way for the dissolution of the opposition-dominated chamber. Lawmakers narrowly opposed the plan to suppress two consultative bodies by three votes after a heated debate late on Monday and broadcast on social media. President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who was elected in March, and his Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko do not have a majority in the national assembly. Presenting a draft constitutional revision that was likely to be voted down was widely viewed as a precursor to dissolving the national assembly. (<https://shorturl.at/Qa4wV>)

IVORY COAST



Maitre Habiba Touré, the spokesperson for former Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo, said in a statement consulted on Friday, September 6, 2024 by Abidjan.net, that former Ivorian first lady Simone Ehivet Gbagbo should no longer bear the surname Gbagbo. Indeed, Mr. Gbagbo's spokesperson expressed this position after the broadcast of an interview with the former Ivorian first lady on a French television channel entitled "Simone Gbagbo wants Laurent Gbagbo to step down if she is in the lead in the Ivorian presidential election." she said she wonders about the intentions of the said media which continues to "wrongly" call the former first lady "Simone Gbagbo" instead of "Simone Ehivet". (<https://shorturl.at/KYHFz>)

On the sidelines of the 4th Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in China, the Embassy of Côte d'Ivoire in Beijing, the Chinese capital, in collaboration with the Investment Promotion Center in Côte d'Ivoire (CEPICI) organized, on September 4, 2024, an "Ivorian-Chinese" Economic Forum, focusing on cooperation between the two countries. According to Ivorian authorities, this event aims to strengthen economic ties between Côte d'Ivoire and China, while promoting investment opportunities available in Côte d'Ivoire. Under the chairmanship of Tiémoko Meyliet Koné, Vice-President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the forum brought together members of the Ivorian government, Chinese authorities, as well as representatives of the private sector from both countries. The Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire to China, Dosso Adama, presenting the context of the meeting, recalled that it is a continuation of the previous forum which took place in 2018 with the presence of the President of the Republic His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara within the framework of the execution of the current PND, in particular for the mobilization of private investments. In his inaugural speech, the Vice President stressed the importance of this meeting, recalling the decades of fruitful cooperation between the two nations. In his speech, the Vice President, representing the

President of the Republic His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, expressed his gratitude to the Chinese authorities, in particular the President of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr. Xi Jinping, for organizing the FOCAC, which brought together many personalities. He stressed the importance of diversifying cooperation beyond infrastructure, by investing in sectors of the future such as the digital economy, technological innovation, and renewable energy. "We must transform our resilience into opportunities for sustainable and inclusive growth," he said. He also highlighted Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030, by accelerating the structural transformation of the economy, in particular through infrastructure projects, the promotion of renewable energy, and the strengthening of strategic industrial sectors such as agro-industry and green industry. CEPICI, represented by its Director General, Mrs. Solange Amichia, highlighted the vast investment opportunities in Côte d'Ivoire. To this end, Mrs. Amichia presented the Ivorian business climate, recalling the measures and provisions taken by the government to support, facilitate and secure investments, with a view to strengthening the country's economic growth. (<https://shorturl.at/iGXDc>)

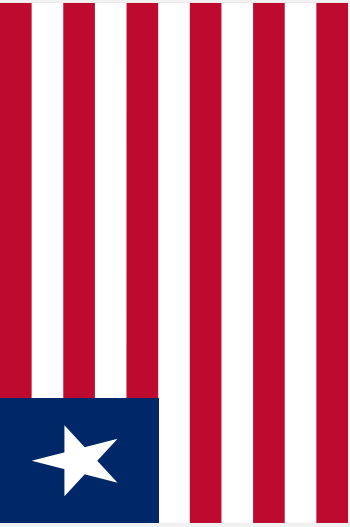
On Thursday, September 5, 2024, a Council of Ministers was held from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Presidential Palace in Abidjan, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Alassane OUATTARA, President of the Republic, Head of State. This meeting consisted essentially of an exchange between His Excellency the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, Head of Government. In his speech, the Prime Minister, Head of Government, expressed his admiration and that of the members of the Government to the President of the Republic for his winning leadership in the conduct of state affairs. He assured the Head of State of the Government's commitment to continue the ongoing

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projects, particularly at the socio-economic level, with a view to improving the living conditions of the population, in accordance with his address to the Nation on August 6, 2024. The Prime Minister also reassured the Head of State of the Government's commitment to continue its efforts to maintain a security environment, accelerate social projects, continuously improve the health and education systems, as well as the deployment of the Government's social program (PSGouv-2) and the Government's Youth Program (PJGouv). The Head of Government also stressed the continuation of efforts in technical training for the employability of young people, the fight against corruption and also the acceleration of the implementation of projects by improving the disbursement rates of funding. In response, the President of the Republic wished all members of the Government a good recovery, and praised the performance and visible progress. The President of the Republic welcomed, in particular, the implementation of the National Development Plan (PND 2021-2025) and instructed the Prime Minister and the Government to take appropriate measures for the development of the PND 2026-2030. (<https://shorturl.at/U2GEA>)

LIBERIA



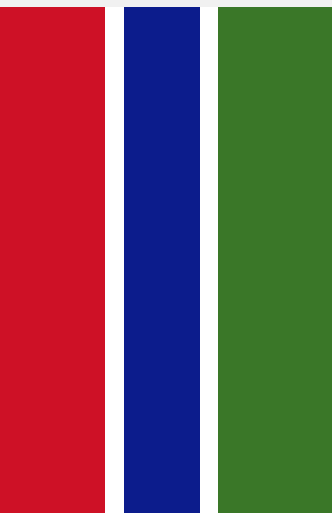
For nearly 10 years, residents of Wieh Town have endured a pattern of pollution associated with a Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL) palm oil mill. The hillside neighborhood in the Tarjuwon District of Sinoe is in the middle of palm wastes produced by the giant-sized mill. At the front of the town stands the mill itself. On the left are three large ponds of the mill-generated effluent or wastewater. On the right and rear are thousands of palm bunches whose nuts the facility turns into crude palm oil. The smoke from the mill fogs the town, according to locals. The wastewater from the facility pollutes creeks residents once used for drinking, turning a large stream green. The ponds holding wastewater ooze a foul odor like a septic tank. Swarms of flies buzz across the community, attracted by the empty palm husks whose foul odor overwhelms locals. "No more safe drinking water for us here," said Levi Jarteh, General Town Chief of Lower Kulu Clan, where Wieh Town is located. "The chemical GVL is using is going into the creeks polluting them and because of that, we no longer use them to drink." (<https://shorturl.at/HZWol>)

In a highly anticipated Senate confirmation hearing, Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan, President Joseph Nyuma Boakai's nominee for Minister of Finance and Development Planning, presented an extensive and ambitious plan for Liberia's economic future. Addressing the Ways, Means, Finance, and Budget Committee, Ngafuan outlined his vision to tackle the country's fiscal challenges and steer Liberia towards sustainable development. Ngafuan, who spoke on Thursday, September 5 during his confirmation hearing at the Liberian Senate, commenced his testimony with a heartfelt acknowledgment of his nomination. "I come in genuflection (bow) to the Almighty God, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, and the Omnipresent, who has made this day possible," he said. He expressed profound gratitude to President Boakai for his trust and to the Senate for the opportunity to present his vision. "I thank President Boakai for nominating me to lead our nation's fiscal house," Ngafuan added. Ngafuan likened his nomination to a call to duty, comparable to a veteran summoned back to the

battlefield. "My nomination by President Boakai can be likened to a Commanding-In-Chief summoning a reservist, an old soldier back to the battlefield," he remarked. With humility and dedication, he pledged to prioritize Liberia's needs above all else. "I solemnly pledge to use all the fibers of my being in the noble mission of defending our nation's cause and putting Liberia first," he assured. (<https://shorturl.at/KxAaB>)

The Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) on Thursday named Senate Pro-Tempore, Nyonblee Karnga-Lawrence, among over a dozen senators who are yet to declare their assets as required by law. The commission's disclosure revealed that the Grand Bassa County Senator is the most senior official of government who is non-compliant in asset declaration — as President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Vice President Jeremiah Kpan Koung, and Speaker J. Fonati Koffa are on record for declaring publicly. Senator Karnga-Lawrence has, however, refuted these claims, asserting that she has indeed submitted her asset declaration documents in compliance with regulations. In a statement released immediately Thursday after the LACC's declaration, the Senate Pro-Tempore's office expressed concerns over the inclusion of her name on the non-compliance list and has formally requested the LACC to review the asset declaration files that she submitted. "Since the commencement of the 54th Legislature, Senator Karnga-Lawrence has been among the few senators who took the initiative to publicly declare and submit their assets to the LACC," the statement said. "On January 25, 2024, in full compliance with the National Code of Conduct, Senator Karnga-Lawrence submitted her asset declaration documents. These documents were notarized and handed over to Mr. Nanbolor Singbeh, the Secretary of the Liberian Senate, with explicit instructions to publish the information as mandated by law. This action reaffirms her commitment to transparency and accountability—a cornerstone of her leadership." In response to an oversight issue, the release noted that the Pro Tempore formally requested the LACC to review the asset declaration files submitted and to make the necessary corrections to their public records." (<https://shorturl.at/qSYdT>)

GAMBIA



Presiding over the recent joint commemoration of World Action Week for Transport Workers, Omar Ceesay, the president of the Gambia Transport Union, said available statistics have revealed that annually road accidents claim 115 lives in The Gambia. "And the saddest part to learn is that most of these unnecessary road carnages and injuries can be prevented," Ceesay lamented. He added that road traffic fatalities are the leading cause of death for young people aged 5 to 29, while injuries from such accidents are the eighth leading cause of death globally. "It is about time we pay serious attention to the plight of commercial drivers who are mostly victims of road accidents on our road networks. Research has established some correlation between road accidents and the decent pay for commercial drivers. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) studies show that a 10% pay increase can reduce road crashes by up to 30%," Ceesay said. He also called on the relevant authorities to recognize that the contributions of commercial drivers in the country should be rewarded equally to commensurate with their important role in promoting the Gambia's socioeconomic growth. There is a need to come up with appropriate policies, laws, and regulations that fully protect the rights of commercial drivers and their operations. We would like to use this opportunity to advocate for decent pay for drivers, no overtime, and legislating laws promoting decent working conditions for commercial drivers," he said. Mr Ceesay said his union remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting the welfare of transporters within the country and beyond. (<https://shorturl.at/kuv9U>)

In a commendable show of solidarity and commitment to the environment, ChildFund- The Gambia, in collaboration with the LEAP initiative and local partners, organised a series of activities to commemorate Youth Day of Service (YDOS). The commemoration is aimed at ensuring a sustainable environment for all. The event, which brought together young people from various communities, focused on environmental protection and preservation, highlighting the role of youth in safeguarding the planet

for future generations. Held at Brikama in WCR, under the theme "protect the environment; no action is too small," featured a range of activities designed to engage and empower young people in environmental stewardship. Participants took part in a cleansing exercise and other environmental preservation initiatives, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a clean and sustainable environment. The occasion was graced by several notable figures, including a representative from the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), youth leaders, and the Chairperson of the Intergenerational Dialogue. The cleansing exercise, which marked the beginning of the day's activities, saw enthusiastic participation from the youth, who cleaned from Brikama district hospital to Saama Kairo youth friendly centre in Kabafita and removed plastic waste from those areas in the community. The activity aimed to not only beautify the surroundings but also to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of littering and improper waste disposal. Speaking on behalf of ChildFund-TThe Gambia, Samba Keita expressed gratitude to all participants and partners for their active involvement in the day's activities. "ChildFund has done numerous efforts, both locally and internationally, to find out what are the causes of global warming that we are experiencing and what are the key factors that contribute to the emission of carbon to the environment," he said. He encouraged young people to take ownership of their environment. He stressed the importance of intergenerational cooperation in addressing environmental challenges, noting that the wisdom of older generations combined with the energy and innovation of youth can lead to sustainable solutions. (<https://shorturl.at/2RXqJ>)

The 2024 draft constitution has reduced the age of Gambians from 21 to 18 years old to contest for the National Assembly election. In the explanatory note, the government justified the lowering of the eligibility age, saying it would enable better representation of younger citizens and ensure their concerns and perspectives are included in the legislative process. "Younger generations often have

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unique insights and innovative ideas that can greatly contribute to national policy-making,” the draft states. According to the explanatory note, since the legal voting age is already set at 18, it is therefore reasonable to allow 18-year-olds to also run for office which aligns with the principle that individuals old enough to vote and participate in the political process should also have the right to stand for some elections. “Reducing the age limit would likely stimulate greater political involvement among young people,” the government justified, stating that youth involvement in contesting elections may motivate more youth to engage with politics, increasing their participation in community issues and fostering a more active civil society. Globally, the draft indicates, many countries have already reduced the age requirement for legislative positions, reflecting an international recognition of the valuable contributions young leaders can make. (<https://shorturl.at/Cq7hP>)

SIERRA LEONE



After the opening of the Focac proceedings at the People's Palace in Beijing, the President of the Transition, Colonel Assimi Goïta, spoke at a high-level panel on governance. Mali, through the voice of the Head of State, reaffirms with conviction its commitment to deepening cooperation ties with China. These relations between our two nations are based on immutable principles of mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefits. Colonel Assimi Goïta particularly praised the sincerity and stability of these ties, built on respect for each other's sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. For him, the values shared by Mali and China, particularly in terms of respect for sovereignty and human rights, constitute the foundation of the theme: "Strengthening exchanges of experiences in governance. Furthermore, the Head of State indicated that true governance can only be achieved in a framework where the authorities and the people fully exercise their sovereignty, without external interference. It is in this spirit of national responsibility that governance in Mali is guided by three principles now enshrined in our Constitution: respect for the sovereignty of the State, respect for the sovereign choices of the people and the defense of the interests of the people. (<https://feji.us/n145gu>)

Colonel Assimi Goïta, President of the Transition in Mali, strongly denounced neocolonialism and the terrorist threat in the Sahel region at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which is being held in Beijing from September 4 to 6, 2024. In his speech, he paid tribute to Xi Jinping, the Chinese President, reaffirming the solid relations between Mali and China, based on the principles of mutual respect and mutual benefit. "The ties between Mali and China are continuously strengthening, in a global context where challenges are numerous," said Colonel Goïta, adding that relations between the two countries are based on respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The Malian president also took advantage of this international platform to denounce neocolonialism in its new forms. "Under the pretext of promoting good governance, our States have been subjected to dictates that

aim of the Digital Village Project is to provide farmers and community members with access to vital online information that will improve agricultural yield and expand market opportunities. (<https://feji.us/l3hvhb>) The recent surge in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) cases in Sierra Leone has pushed the nation to a tipping point, with citizens and advocacy groups alike demanding urgent and robust government action. In the wake of multiple tragic incidents, there is a growing consensus that the crisis has reached such alarming levels that only a state of emergency can effectively address the situation. The deaths of Sia Kamara and Monica Yealia Ghaliwa are the latest in a string of horrifying cases that have shaken the nation to its core. Sia Kamara, allegedly killed by her boyfriend, and Monica Yealia Ghaliwa, a young mother reportedly subjected to brutal abuse, have become tragic symbols of the wider epidemic of domestic violence that continues to plague Sierra Leone. These cases follow on the heels of other equally disturbing incidents, such as the murder of 14-year-old Adama Bendu, who was raped and killed by her uncle, and the brutal assault on Aminata Kargbo, a university student left in critical condition after a violent attack by her partner. These violent attacks against women and girls have not only fuelled public anger but have also highlighted the dire need for immediate and decisive action from the highest levels of government. The Rainbow Initiative, one of the leading organizations combating SGBV in Sierra Leone, has reported a staggering 2,561 cases of sexual and gender-based violence in 2023 alone. These numbers, while shocking, likely represent just the tip of the iceberg, given the significant underreporting that often accompanies cases of domestic violence. Despite previous efforts to address the issue, the persistent rise in cases suggests that current measures are insufficient to stem the tide of SGB violence. The public outcry has been swift and resolute. Across Sierra Leone, citizens and activists are demanding that the government take more aggressive steps to protect vulnerable population, particularly women and children, from the scourge of domestic abuse. (<https://feji.us/fl8pmg>)

MALI



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have facilitated the unrestrained exploitation of our resources. These practices have exacerbated inequalities and slowed our development," he insisted. He recalled the importance for African nations to free themselves from these neocolonial dynamics and consolidate their own levers of sovereignty. Citing examples, Colonel Goïta referred to the recent attack in Tinzaouatene, in northern Mali, to illustrate "how international terrorism is manipulated by external forces". He said: "The recent events in Tinzaouatene clearly show that terrorism is cynically maintained, even encouraged, by neocolonial forces seeking to perpetuate their domination over our region in new forms". He stressed that this situation demonstrates the need for African countries to take charge of their own security, notably through regional alliances such as the Confederation of Sahel States (AES), formed in July 2024 with Burkina Faso and Niger. (<https://feji.us/x677mt>)

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BURKINA FASO



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, a non-profit organization ***Institutions (MJDHRI)*** organized a press conference to inform about the Extension of the eCriminal Record throughout the national territory, this Friday, September 6, 2024 in Ouagadougou. On December 19, 2023, 19 jurisdictions were concerned by the establishment of the online criminal record. Today, the Minister in charge of justice, Edasso Rodrigue Bayala announced the extension of the possibility of making the online record in all jurisdictions of the country. The consequence is that regardless of your place of birth, it is now possible to request a criminal record online. And this, reassures the director of information systems, Moustapha Compaoré, in complete security. You will remember that for the old Central Criminal Record called in legal jargon Bulletin No. 3, you had to go to your place of birth to see the local jurisdiction in order to obtain your criminal record. This exercise is simplified by the eCriminal Record. In a few clicks on www.ecasier-judiciaire.gov.bf, you obtain your criminal record after processing your personal data. (<https://feji.us/d2nhxw>)

manufactured nationally, it is a question of setting up a framework of significant support for national production through the establishment of outlets for products manufactured nationally," specified Minister Serge Gnaniodem PODA. (<https://feji.us/cmk4c3>)

The President of Faso, Captain Ibrahim TRAORE chaired the weekly Council of Ministers this Wednesday, September 4, 2024. According to the Minister of State, Government Spokesperson, Jean Emmanuel OUEDRAOGO, the Council examined several reports and made important decisions for the smooth running of the Nation. Under the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Council adopted a decree establishing quotas for the removal of imports of similar products manufactured or produced at the national level. According to the Minister in charge of Industry, Serge Gnaniodem PODA, the adoption of this decree is in line with the vision of the President of Faso, who wants national production and the industrial transformation of national raw materials to be priorities. This decree, he said, strengthens national sovereignty in terms of production, processing and availability of products, and constitutes clear support for the industry at the national level. " Through the adoption of this decree which establishes quotas for imported products, which are also

WEST AFRICAN DIGEST



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