

“The Individual Shapes Greatness, Not the Title”

Ntumfor Nico Halle Asserts at Douala Book Launch



Microsoft Reports Delay in Resolving Massive Undersea Cable Outage

1st Global Tech Awards: UK Spotlights Promising Scale-Up Companies in Tech Industry

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The Audacity of Truth

Tues, March 19, 2024

Akere Muna Exposes Gov't's Hypocrisy in Witty Critique



“Citizens are bombarded with minor issues, from the banning of coalitions to false statements attributed to the Minister of Communication limiting freedom of speech. And if it’s not about the football federation, it’s about the trial of suspects supposed-

ly involved in the murder of journalist Martinez Zogo. “All these distractions overshadow the fact that our republic is on shaky ground. Two weeks after the Senate and National Assembly convened, they still haven’t started business because

their bureaus haven’t been elected. The Constitutional Council has yet to swear-in its new members. Trained magistrates have been stuck for three years, waiting to be transferred to their respective stations due to the Supreme Council of Magistracy not yet

convening. “Basic goods prices are on the rise, transportation costs are increasing due to fuel price hikes, and youth unemployment is alarmingly high. Meanwhile, dangerous journeys through the Sahara, over the Mediterranean,

or through treacherous jungles in Latin America seem strangely attractive to some. Reports of deaths from hardship and drowning fail to deter. Power and water shortages have devastated livelihoods in the informal sector, from welders and carpentry workshops to small fish retailers, all dependent on electricity.

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Unbelievably, Parliament Veterans Niat & Cavaye Seek Yet Another Reelection

CamCCUL Applauds ShesaCCU for Rapid Growth, Achieving Break-even Point in Just 3 Yrs



ShesaCCU Board President, Patrice Lumumba (M) Addressing Members

Story, Beng Humphrey Fang

The Sacred Heart Ex-Students Association Cooperative Credit Union (ShesaCCU) has been hailed for breaking records

in the world of credit unions in Cameroon for not just breaking even in three years, but crossing the break-even point with surpluses. The rapid growing young micro-finance institution was hailed by the Cameroon

Cooperative Credit Union League Limited, CamCCUL during the 2023 Annual General Assembly of ShesaCCU which held in Yaoundé Saturday, March 16, 2024.

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Journalist Henry Mekole's PhD Thesis Examines Social Media's Role in Cameroon's 2018 Election Violence

Mmockmbie Credit Union GM, Fortsomo Honoured for Excellent Services



Sen. Nfon Mukete Ekoko Recognized Globally for Exemplary Leadership, Humanitarian Service



Award - Lifetime Achievement by the Naija Diaspora Magazine. The award was handed over to the laureate recently at the Nfon's Palace in Kumba by the President of the Nigerian Union in Kumba, Akpu Mc-Millan, in the presence of the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the Naija Diaspora Magazine, Ismail Adegbola, of Nigerian nationality.

UNFPA Mobile Clinics Revolutionize Healthcare Access in Cameroon's Far North



The Nfon of Kumba and Paramount Ruler of the Bafaw, His Majesty Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko, has been presented with a Diaspora Excellence

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By Colbert Gwain

The Colbert Factor:

Il Y Avait Quoi Avant?

“How Can You Say That?” Mme Minister Celestine Courtes?



When Muteff opted to withdraw their children from the lone school in mainland Abuh in the Fundong subdivision of the Boyo division of the North West of Cameroon, they wasted no time in opening their community school. With little to no resources at the time and desperate to hit the road running, a certain Bobe Tela Sam offered his multipurpose parlor to be used for classroom space. Although there were no benches, children were advised to either sit on the bare floor or bring chairs from their homes. Those without books and/or hand boards freely used plantain leaves to start their handwriting and education journey. When the time came and the community mobilized some little resources, they initiated the construction of a few classrooms with purely local materials (bricks and roofing grass). As years went by and more energetic community leadership was constituted through the Muteff Village Development Union, MADU, more modern classrooms (that had nothing to admire from the old and dilapidated ones), were put in place with effortless ease. The same holds for the motorable

roads (once mere footpaths), that adorn the village kaleidoscope today. Although the leadership of the Muteff Village Development Union, MADU, continues to change hands, each new team builds on the building blocks of the previous and remains greatly to the earlier steps taken by their predecessors. They function with the understanding that if Bobe Tela Sam didn't offer his parlor in the first place for the school to begin, the school wouldn't have started in the first place, and the modern classrooms that we have there today, wouldn't have come into existence. Same with the fact that all the motorable roads there today follow the footfalls of the earlier footpaths. When Urban Development and Housing Minister stirred the wrath of Northerners and by extension, most Cameroons during last week's working visit that saw her receive some kilometers of urban roads constructed under the French relief fund, C2D, as seen in a video clip that has gone viral on social media, asking why inhabitants of Garoua city were not grateful given that there was “nothing” there before; she thought she was doing a service to

the regime she serves. Many wonder whether she was talking about the same northern regions that people used to grumble about during President Ahidjo's reign over the fact that many roads were tarred there and allowed for cows to use. But for the fact that after President Ahidjo's reign, many roads that were tarred up there were abandoned to themselves to degrade, there would not have been any need for new roads in urban Garoua today. Minister Celestine Ketcha Courtes' abracadabra question: 'Il y avait quoi avant', was an intentional attempt at indulging in revisionist history to downplay all the patriotic efforts of the former President, Amadou Ahidjo. The rhetorical question asked by President Biya's trusted minister to the people of Garoua and by extension, to all Cameroonians, goes beyond the issue of roads to that of humanity. And since the question (though rhetorical) must be answered, Biya's government must be told there was no Boko haram in the Far North and no war in the North West and South West regions, as has been aptly captured by the hundreds of Cameroonian influencers that took to the social media and, especially Richard Bona, whose musical clip on TikTok garnered over 8m views in less than 24 hours. About those living in the geographical expression called the North West and the South West, the government of President Biya must be reminded that before, there was a functional southern Cameroons government in Buea, a House of Chiefs, a flag with two stars, a federal Republic backed by a federal constitution, a Tiko airport, a Bali airstrip, a marketing Board, a Cameroon Bank, a Powercam, free potable water and, you name them. Pierre Peju in an article in the Philosophy Magazine titled: 'Questions Children Ask: Before Something Existed, What Was There', holds that such a metaphysical question smacks of the beginning of the end of what is. To gauge the difficulty in Minis-

ter Celestine Courtes's mind, you need to imagine the first photo of yourself taken when you were still in the crib. Even minuscule and tiny, you were already “you”: therefore, someone and therefore something. Minister Celestine Ketcha Courtes's question is not different from that of the 12-year-old Sophia in Stephanie Machal's work when she persistently asked the parents: 'Mom, Dad, before I was born, who was there?'. Minister Celestine Courtes might have asked the question: 'What was there before?' for purely ego-centric and political reasons. Yet, philosophers have grappled with the question of “What was there before” from time immemorial. Georges Lemaître (1894-1966), Belgian cosmologist and Catholic priest was the first to propose a systematic framework on how to begin understanding the thorny question from a philosophical standpoint. His Big Bang theory holds that the universe was first just a tiny dot some 15 million years ago and because of pressure and counter pressure, it exploded in different directions into the shape that the world has today. This implies that if the tiny dot wasn't there in the first place, there wouldn't have been any world as we have today. Other cosmologists, philosophers and theologians simply came to the conclusion that 'In the beginning was the “word” and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' This therefore implies that God was there before any other thing or humanity was created. Yet, to be fair with Celestine Ketcha Courtes, leaders who are not guided by God always have the temptation of arrogantly asking what was there before when the beneficiaries of a project think their 'best' is not good enough. Because of the pressure that he comes across from development enthusiasts, the President of the Muteff Village Development Union, would have long asked such a question to Muteffians. But from hindsight, he exercises caution because he has come to understand that it's the hallmark of

cooperative and bottom-up (rather than top-down) leadership. Apparently, Biya's Minister, Ketcha Courtes benefited from the Muslim culture of remaining silent even when unjustly provoked. In real democracies where accountability is the watchword, she would have since been pressured to apologize and do the needful by resigning. Unfortunately.... In such perilous times as we live in, communities need access to news that reflects their diverse lives and values and is responsive to their priorities and feedback. As part of our trusting news engagement, we are committed to comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comforted who are holding back social change. But this is not an easy, cheap, or profitable job. The Colbert Factor is a solution-oriented, independent non-profit content creation medium. It serves as the 'first draft' for newspapers, radio and TV stations, online news outlets, and blogs. We don't have ads and we are independent of corporate and government interests. You can help us continue creating more investigative, balanced, fair, reliable, credible, and educative content, by donating your widow's mite through MTN momo number: 677852476 ...And you would be contributing to a free press.

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Bar Akere Muna Exposes Gov't's Hypocrisy in Witty Critique

WEAPONS OF MASS DISTRACTION

"Citizens are bombarded with minor issues, from the banning of coalitions to false statements attributed to the Minister of Communication limiting freedom of speech. And if it's not about the football federation, it's about the trial of suspects supposedly involved in the murder of journalist Martinez Zogo.

"All these distractions overshadow the fact that our republic is on shaky ground. Two weeks after the Senate and National Assembly convened, they still haven't start-

ed business because their bureaus haven't been elected. The Constitutional Council has yet to swear-in its new members. Trained magistrates have been stuck for three years, waiting to be transferred to their respective stations due to the Supreme Council of Magistracy not yet convening.

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to some. Reports of deaths from hardship and drowning fail to deter. Power and water shortages have devastated livelihoods in the informal sector, from welders and carpentry workshops to small fish retailers, all dependent on electricity.

"Amidst all this, some are only focused on projecting a documentary about the President's successes. When we compare the vibrancy of Senegalese institutions providing checks and balances, how do we feel as Cameroonians? It's clear we're not a "continent" we're just incontinent and getting high on our own exhaust".



Microsoft Reports Delay in Resolving Massive Undersea Cable Outage

Microsoft has informed customers that repairs to four undersea cables that went offline around noon on Thursday have been delayed.

In the meantime, the company has re-routed traffic to restore functionality of its cloud platforms in South Africa.

This comes after a massive outage in Côte d'Ivoire near Abidjan took down the West Africa Cable System (WACS), the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE), MainOne, and SAT-3 cables. It is unclear what caused the disruption.

"Investigations are being undertaken on behalf of the subsea cable system owners and we are unable to confirm any further details," a WIOCC spokesperson told MyBroadband.

WIOCC is a major player in the African undersea cable space, with its history tracing back to the launch of the East coast cable system EASSy in 2010.

It has since significantly expanded its operations to cover

multiple cables and data centres on the continent.

"Our focus at this time is on restoring the clients we have using these systems onto other subsea systems on which we own capacity, including EASSy and Equiano."

Telkom's wholesale and networks division Openserve also couldn't comment on what caused the outage.

"No official statement has been communicated by the consortium," it said.

"Openserve can confirm the cable failures on the WACS and SAT-3 undersea cables. The impact on Openserve is limited to customers on the international private lease circuits (IPLC) services.

"The Openserve network remains robust due to our investment in other international cable capacity, hence traffic has been automatically re-routed, ensuring customers stay seamlessly connected."

Microsoft assured customers last night that it would have a

mitigation in place by midnight South African time.

"Efforts to re-route traffic to healthy infrastructure have been successful in providing service-side relief to many users," Microsoft said at 22:35.

Just before 01:00, Microsoft said its analysis indicates that users should no longer be experiencing service issues.

"Our remediation to ensure impact doesn't reoccur will be completed by March 15, 2024, at 2:00 AM UTC," it added.

However, at just before 05:00, Microsoft said there were delays to its plan to resolve the issue.

"We're experiencing delays in the West Africa fibre cables repair, which is preventing resolution of this issue," it said.

"As previously communicated, we are working to increase our ca-

capacity. However, our efforts have encountered some delays, and as a result, we are pushing back our estimated time of completion. We anticipate that these additional steps will help alleviate the ongoing capacity bottleneck."

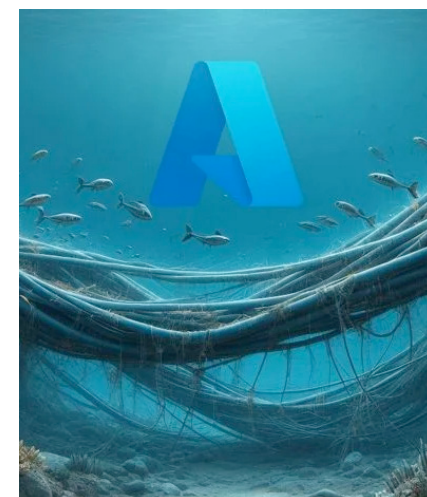
Microsoft said that in addition to the four cables going down in West Africa, ongoing cable cuts in the Red Sea — EIG, Seacom, AAE-1 — are also impacting overall capacity on the East Coast of Africa.

"These incidents together had reduced the total network capacity for most of Africa's regions," it explained.

However, Microsoft also said that the region's overall network health has been steadily improving.

"Many of the Azure Services that were affected earlier by this issue have now returned to their normal

levels. We are still validating for any remaining services, however the users for these would already notice considerable improvements."



Atanga Nji Deems 2 Opposition Groups 'Illegal', Issues Warning Ahead 2025 Election



A statement from the Territorial Administration Minister Paul Atanga Nji last week named "The Political Alliance for Change (APC) and the Alliance for Political Transition in Cameroon (ATP) and described them as no political parties under the law.

The statement also expressed concern over "pseudo-associations ahead of the 2025 presidential election". The minister recalled that only legally recognized political parties have the right to exercise political activities at the national level and ordered the ban on any demonstration associated with these associations.

Olivier Bile, spokesperson for the APT, took note of the decision while noting confusion and exaggerations in the

minister's comments while the APC dismissed the statement calling it "curious threat which indicates panic". The alliance said it was "ready to face the elections victoriously" next year.

Led by former deputy Jean Michel Nintcheu, the APC was set up in December at a congress of the leading opposition Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon (MRC), which backed Maurice Kamto for president in the 2018 ballot. Kamto came second and called Biya's re-election a fraud. He was jailed without trial the following year, after staging peaceful protests.

The movement boycotted legislative elections in 2018 and over the next two years saw 700 of its supporters imprisoned, including Kamto.

International NGOs accuse the regime of President Paul Biya, who has ruled with for more than 41 years, of systematically suppressing opposition.

1st Global Tech Awards: UK Spotlights Promising Scale-Up Companies in Tech Industry

PRESS RELEASE

CALLING ON TECHNOLOGY START-UP COMPANIES IN AFRICA TO APPLY FOR THE UK'S NEW GLOBAL TECH AWARDS

8th March 2024

- **The Unicorn Kingdom: Pathfinder Awards (UKPA)** are now open to start-up companies specialising in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Connected & Automated Mobility (CAM) Technology, Cyber Security and Digital Trade Solutions from across Africa.
- Winners will receive a tailor-made programme to help scale up and grow their business in the UK, including industry meetings, VIP events and expert business growth support.
- First announced by the UK's Business Secretary at London Tech Week in June 2023, it builds on the success of the UK's Tech Rocketship Awards and Global Entrepreneur Programme.

The UK's Department for Business and Trade (DBT) is on the hunt to unearth the most promising tech start-up companies across the world through the Unicorn Kingdom: Pathfinder Awards.

Building on the success of the UK's Tech Rocketship Awards, UKPA will be the UK's Department for Business and Trade's largest global awards for tech start-up companies ever.

Start-up companies with ambitions to grow globally in the AI, Connected & Automated Mobility (CAM) Technology, Cyber Security and Digital Trade Solutions sectors are eligible to apply for a chance to pave their way into the UK's thriving tech sector, valued at \$1 trillion.

UK Investment Minister, Dominic Johnson said:

"These awards are a fantastic opportunity for tech scale-up companies to join the UK's thriving \$1 trillion tech sector."

"The awards are part of our commitment across government to help more businesses scale up, and benefit from our highly skilled workforce and supportive regulatory system. The UK already has more unicorns than France and Germany combined, and our country continues to be a place where tech businesses from across the world come to thrive."

His Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Africa John Humphrey said:

"The African startup landscape is now front and centre as the world focusses on African know-how and innovation. From bustling tech-hubs across the continent from North to South and East to West, young businesses are changing the game by providing innovative solutions to African and global problems, while creating jobs and empowering their communities in the process."

"The launch of the **Unicorn Kingdom: Pathfinder Awards** across Africa, which offers tech start-ups from across this vibrant continent the opportunity to showcase their innovation and potential on a global scale, while opening up fascinating opportunities for the UK's already vibrant tech ecosystem, is an exciting journey of growth and success."

The UK offers endless opportunities, including a highly skilled workforce, fair regulatory system, and welcoming business environment.

Winners will receive a tailor-made programme in the UK that includes meetings with leading industry and government sector specialists, invites to VIP events and receptions - and expert support from DBT's Global Entrepreneur Programme, which supports ambitious businesses to scale and grow from a UK global headquarters. They'll also receive exposure and recognition through promotional activities run by DBT to accelerate their growth.

“The Individual Shapes Greatness, Not the Title”

Ntumfor Nico Halle Asserts at Douala Book Launch

*Condemns Vicious Attempts to Water-down Ntumfor Title

Distinguished international peace crusader and legal consultant, Ntumfor Barrister Nico Halle says “it is a man that makes a title great, and not vice versa”. Speaking at Starland Hotel in Douala, March 9, 2024 during the launch of a book written by Apostle Dr Ambe Valentine Ngwa, titled: THE SOCIO – ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SCIENTIFIC, MILITARY & SPIRITUAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, Bar Nico Halle was unequivocal when he said each individual has his talent that was given by God. The legal luminary was talking about the Ntumfor title that has been hijacked by ‘charlatans’ and ‘imposters’ with the aim of weakening the title given to him by fons of the North West region some years back.

Harping on the issue, he pointed out that the North West has over 1000 traditional titles, and thus questioned why a small group that met at the Bafmeng Palace in Menchum division went only after the Ntumfor title that the Northwest Fons had as a group given to him. He asserted that it is “it is an individual shapes greatness, not the title”.

He reiterated that each individual has his talent that was given by God, and so even if 1000 people are designated Ntumfors, they will not or will never become Nico Halle, just as he too will never become another person. Bar Nico Halle who is a very dedicated Christian, crusader against corruption, embezzlement, hate speech and xenophobia repeated what he often says that the title which he cherishes the most, that is, the title that is closest to his heart; the title that he has committed his life to maintain at all cost, is that of being a Christian. He said different people are good in different domains, professions or vocations.

He has pointed out that there are some people that God has given great talent in the medical field, great talent as lawyers, great talent in the teaching profession, great talent in engineering, great talent in sports, great talent in agriculture, great talent as motor mechanics, great talent as architects, great talent in music, great talent in journalism, great talent in driving, great talent in management, great talent in writing, great talent in building and construction, great talent in fishing, and so on, and so forth. He said that is why people belong to different professions or domains.



As for vocations, Nico Halle said there are people with special gifts from God to be pastors or priests, to be crusaders for peace and justice, to crusade against corruption, embezzlement, hate speech and xenophobia, discrimination and so on, all for the good of humanity and the society. He noted that there are people with special gifts from God to be civil society leaders or activists, all for the good of humanity and the society. In explaining that each individual has his own talent given by God, he strongly advised people to desist from trying to measure their steps with others, that is, trying to compare themselves with others, or trying to do something because they have seen somebody do it. He reiterated that God gives each individual a talent in a particular professional domain or vocation, and so for one to try to compare himself with another person, is a wrong thing to do. Professional wise, Ntumfor Halle noted that he is a lawyer, and has been in the field for many years.

“I am a lawyer by profession. I am not an engineer, a medical doctor, a journalist, an architect, a farmer, a historian, a biologist, an accountant, a physician, a pilot, and so on, and I cannot pretend to be one. The talent that God gave me is to be a lawyer, and I have the civic responsibility to use that to contribute to nation building”. As regard vocations, he asserted that: “I am a crusader for peace and justice. I am an anti – corruption crusader. I am a crusader against embezzlement, hate speech and xenophobia. This is a gift or calling from God; that I should be a crusader for peace, justice among others, to work for the interest or good of humanity and the society. I am for example not a pastor and cannot pretend to be one. I don’t have

that gift from God to be a preacher. My dear father was a preacher, but I am not. God gave him the gift to preach His words to the society for the good of humanity and the society. I cannot pretend to be a preacher or claim that I am a preacher, because my dear father, who is now of blessed memory, was a preacher or a Man of God. As far as vocation is concern, he had his own gift or calling from God, and God gave mine to be crusader for peace, justice etc.” Ntumfor Nico Halle explained.

Ntumfor Nico Halle who was the Chairman of the book launch, equally focused his speech in line with the major focus of the book, which is, Beyond Intellectualism. That is going beyond intellectualism; going beyond degrees or educational qualifications. In his speech thus reiterated his advice against people trying to measure their steps with others, for God has given each and every individual his or her own talent in one thing or the other.

“God has given all of us talents. What we need to do is to understand and make out our different talents, appreciate them, develop them, and exploit them for the good of humanity and the society or the nation. Use the talent that has given you to work and contribute to nation building. We all have the civic responsibility to contribute in our different ways to the building of our nation. That is what God expects of us. That is what society expects of us”, he asserted.

Bar Nico Halle said the problem with some people in the society is that they are often tempted to leave the talents or the gifts that God has given them, to instead run behind that given to their brothers or sisters.

“Why leave the talent that God has given to you, to run or go after

what has been given to others”, he questioned. He stressed that people should learn to appreciate and make good use of the talent God has given them as individuals, and not instead become envious of their brothers and sisters’ own talent or gift from God”.

Using his own case as an example, Barrister Nico Halle recalled that some years ago he was given the Ntumfor title by North West fons under the canopy of the North West Fons Union, NOWEFU. It should be noted that the Fons took into consideration all the several good things Nico Halle had done over the years for the North West region, including NOWEFU. Worth noting also that the several good things that Nico Halle did was not only material things like contributing generously to several development projects, but also included his peace crusading mission through which he helped reconciled many people and groups, including some Fons that were at logger heads with each other.

Also, the Ntumfor title given to Nico Halle by the fons was not just in appreciation of what he had done, but also as an encouragement to him to continue in his good work to humanity and the nation. Also worth noting that the fons, who presented Barrister Nico Halle at a number of big public events in some towns in the country as their one and only Ntumfor, stated that as their Ntumfor, Nico Halle was their spokesperson, messenger and ambassador. At the ceremony in Bamenda, the late Fon Angwafor of Mankon on behalf of his colleagues (fons), made the presentation of Barrister Nico Halle to the public, as the Ntumfor of North West fons.

Meanwhile, despite the fact that the North West fons as a group clearly stated that Barrister Nico Halle was their one and only Ntumfor, as Fon Fobuzie came out later to reiterate, it unfortunately happened that after Halle was given the title, a small group of North West politicians and fons, met at the Bafmeng palace and appointed eight North West elites as Ntumfors. HRH Francis Aneng was then Fon of Bafmeng.

There was no doubt that the vicious intention of this small group of people, was to try to water – down or down play the Ntumfor title given to Halle by the North West fons. But interestingly enough, seven out of the eight elite that were designated

Ntumfors by the small group of ill – intentioned persons, tacitly gave up the title a couple of weeks later. They probably realized the evil intention of those who gave them that title.

It should also be noted that after Nico Halle was given the title of Ntumfor by the fons, a few other Northwest-ers went to some palaces in small remote villages, and bought some counterfeited Ntumfor titles.

Lack of Core Moral Values

Meanwhile, looking again at one of the major missions of the book written by Apostle Ambe Valentine, Ntumfor Barrister Nico Halle asserted that Africa is a very blessed continent in terms of natural and human resources. But he said that paradoxically, Africa is the poorest of the continents in the world.

“The reason is not the lack of education, schools or intellectualism. Generally speaking, the problem is the absence of core moral values in our African society or countries”, Bar Nico Halle declared.

He said core moral values include love for humanity, incorruptibility, accountability, genuine patriotism, transparency, fairness, peace loving, consideration for others, ensuring justice for all, speaking and standing for the truth. Values that make somebody be a man of a high moral rectitude.

Ntumfor Halle regretted that that unfortunately corruption, embezzlement of public funds, looting and plundering of State resources by unscrupulous persons, are in general rift Africa. Thus a few in a society loot and plunder State resources with the complicity local or foreign accomplices, to the detriment of the population or masses of these countries that wallow in abject poverty or misery.

Halle thus asserted that while there are quite a number of good intellectuals in Africa or in African countries, many intellectuals in Africa are of no good to the continent or to their countries, because they lack core moral values; they are not people of high moral rectitude, they lack spiritualism. “INTELLECTUALISM WITHOUT SPIRITUALISM, IS EMPTINESS”, Halle insisted. He asserted that somebody imbued with core moral values, somebody who is of high moral rectitude, or somebody who is spiritually strong, will not indulge in ills like corruption, embezzlement of public funds, or the looting and plundering of the country’s resources.

Sen. Nfon Mukete Ekoko Recognized Globally for Exemplary Leadership, Humanitarian Service

Cont’d from Page 1

Speaking during the momentous occasion, the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Naija Diaspora Magazine, Ismail Adegbola said it was not just to celebrate a milestone but a decade of impactful storytelling with the Diaspora Magazine.

He said last year in November, they delved into meaningful discussions at their first annual edition symposium held in Douala under the theme: “Diaspora and Nation Building: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects, Engaging with Esteemed Government Dignitaries, Diplomats, CEOs, Industry Resource Persons and Visionary Business Owners”.

Introducing the award, he said they were proud on a new chapter in their journey - the First Annual Diaspora Excellence Awards.

“This Award stands as a testament to the individuals and groups who have not just treaded the path of excellence but have carved a lasting legacy,” he stated.

According to the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Naija Diaspora Magazine, their selection committee was meticulous in picking distinguished individuals and businesses that have been the architects of positive change, contributing significantly to the de-

velopment and promotion of ethical principles, enriching the tapestry of the society.

He stated: “As we recognize the outstanding efforts in leadership, mentorship, corporate social responsibility, government, public policy, and community improvement, we embark on a journey to celebrate those remarkable souls who have left an indelible mark on the diaspora narrative.”

It was on this note that Naija Diaspora Magazine took with great pleasure to present to HM Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko, the prestigious Diaspora Excellence Award-Lifetime Achievement 2023.

“This esteemed recognition is testament to your outstanding service over the years in public service, your inspirational mentoring of young people, and your commendable dedication to service of humanity,” Ismail Adegbola stated.

He noted that the Lifetime Achievement Award is reserved for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional contributions throughout their career, leaving a lasting impact in their fields.

Adegbola extended their heartfelt congratulations to Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko on the well-deserved award as a role model, father,

a crusader of peace, bridge builder, patriotic Cameroonian and above all, a highly committed servant of God.

He stated: “Your commitment to humanitarian causes and your acts of generosity have not gone unnoticed.” Handing over the award to Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko, the President of the Nigerian Union in Kumba, Akpu McMillan, noted that they have not made any mistake in the selection of the laureate for the outstanding award.

He reiterated on the bilateral relations between Nigeria and Cameroon.

Akpu said both countries are two friendly nations that would continuously live in peace.

On his part, while receiving the media award, Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko expressed joy and gratitude for the recognition.

He recounted the longtime friendship between Cameroonians and Nigerians right from his family when his father was a Minister of the Federal Government in Nigeria and also when his great-grandfather asked Nigerians in a part of the North West region to move over to Kumba when they had a challenge.

Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko said he has a lot of Nigerian friends and is the Chairman of the UBA Bank in Congo-Brazzaville after holding same



position in Cameroon; an establishment owned by a Nigerian entrepreneur.

To him, it is not your nationality that matters but your aptitude to deliver, also making reference to his position as honorary consul of Turkey in Cameroon.

The laureate promised to continue in his works in making the society a better place for humankind.

Talking to the press later, the Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Naija Diaspora Magazine, Ismail Adegbola, said only four Cameroonians have so far received the award.

These are the Minister of Communication, Rene Emmanuel Sadi; the Governor of the Littoral region, Samuel Dieudonné Ivaha Diboua; International Peace Crusader, Ntumfor Barrister Nico Halle, and now Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko.

The Nigerian delegation to the event constituted some executive members of the Nigerian Union in Kumba; the President of Nigerian Women in Kumba, Patience Obasi and her executive as well as a powerful team from

the media.

Meanwhile, those who accompanied the Nfon to the event were the Head of the Kumba Traditional Council, Shi Abwa Mbotana; Mayors of Kumba I, II & III subdivisional Councils, Prince Esem Moses Esembe, Chief Mbachu Jacob Kay and Dr. Isaac Mukwele Nguba, respectively, and; other Bafaw elites at home and abroad.

The Nigerian delegation was taken on a guided tour around the Nfon’s Palace to see the beauty of its esthetics and greenery. It will be part of a documentary on Kumba to be produced by Naija Diaspora Magazine in the days ahead as promised by its publisher.

In the meantime, the Nigerian Union in Kumba is about to construct a permanent Secretariat in the city.

The Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Naija Diaspora Magazine used the occasion to appeal to Senator Nfon Mukete IV Ekoko to allocate a land for this purpose; a thing the Nfon promised to look into in the days ahead.

2024 Most Courageous Man Award: Mmockmbie Credit Union GM, Fortsomo Honoured for Excellence, Sterling Performance

Story, Mua Patrick & Beng Humphrey



The General Manager of one of Cameroon's leading Category One Microfinance institutions, Mmockmbie Credit Union Cooperative Ltd, MmoCCUL, Ngezem Fortsomo Skyly, has been distinguished as the country's 2024 Most Courageous Man. Ngezem was singled out for his sterling performance at the helm of Mmockmbie Credit Union. The dynamic and results-oriented General Manager was honoured by the United Nations, UN-CISRI, a permanent Observatory Mission in Cameroon and the Grass 2 Grace Humanitarian Organisation. It was the Goodwill Ambassador of the UN-CISRI Cameroon, HRH Chief Thomas Fotang, who handed the coveted prize to the recipient Monday. This was during a reserved reception ceremony at the Yaounde office of the Mmockmbie Credit Union. The event was attended by close collaborators of the General Manager and some members of the credit union. The organisers said Ngezem was recognised for "his excellent services as nation builder and dependable senior corporate manager par

excellence in Cameroon". Chief Fotang said since becoming General Manager of MmoCCUL, Ngezem has shown demonstrable commitment in ensuring the growth of the credit union. He said the GM has put up a sterling performance, recording major breakthroughs in expanding the institution countrywide. While presenting the prestigious prize, amidst thunderous applause from attendees, Chief Fotang described the GM as a great servant of the nation "who has the heart of gold". "He falls amongst few Cameroonians and other nationals who are to be honoured for a job well done in this nation," he stated. The founder of the Grass2Grass humanitarian foundation, said his organisation was in Yaounde "to celebrate a mover and shaker who is an example of a veritable nation builder". While throwing accolades on the deserving recipient, Chief Fotang said the results-oriented and venerated Mmockmbie GM has decided to kill the brain drain syndrome of the western world. "He is an example to emulate. He

has proven that no matter the odds, we can still make it in Cameroon," Chief Fotang said of the awardee. He then noted that Ngezem is amongst few Cameroonians who have refused to ask what the nation has done for them but have decided to do something for the nation. "Our main celebrant of the G2G Courageous Men's Prize has stood the test of time. From humble beginnings with the Mmockmbie Cooperative Credit Union, which started with 14 members, he has since increased membership to 8,500 in all its branches," he stated. He said since 2016, Mmockmbie Credit Union, under the leadership of the super star community hope giver, members have been enjoying topnotch services. He said for over seven years under the leadership of Ngezem, the institution has been employing scores of Cameroonians, "thereby fighting unemployment, which is so alarming in the country". "Thanks to the savior fair of our recipient, Mmockmbie Credit Union is fast becoming Cameroon's prime digital microfinance institution. Dreams have become reality. Through the credit union, houses have been built and businesses created," he concluded. Speaking shortly after being decorated with a diamond-like medal, accompanied with a trophy, muffler and a certificate of honour, the youthful, yet top performing General Manager of the Mmockmbie Credit Union, said he was humbled by the distinction. While stating that the distinction will serve as an encouragement and a motivation to do more, Ngezem noted that the prize was a victory for the entire microfinance institution. "I am very happy to have been offered this distinction. Of course, we have been receiving awards as a

credit union and an institution, but this is the first time I am receiving an award as an individual," the GM said, while thanking the entire G2G team for the recognition. He then said he was dedicating the award to "our valued staff. Alone, I couldn't make. It is thanks to teamwork that we are where we are today". "We want to assure our very dear members that the future is pregnant. We are very determined to improve on our services," he quickly added, before boasting that: "Mmockmbie Credit Union is simply where dreams become reality".

Best Digital Services
Recalling the major outcomes of the credit union's Annual General Meeting, AGM, held in Douala, earlier this year, the GM noted that they "had a series of innovations unveiled to members". "From Monday, that is a week from now, we will be having two additional international services across all our branches-that is WorldRemit and RIA, just like we promised them. These services are coming to add to Western Union that has been existing," he said, stating that: "We are glad to say that MmoCCUL now has one of the best centralised

softwares. With this software, our members are able to practice mobile banking, through which they push and pull money from their accounts from the comfort of their homes". "This software is quite innovative. Once you are in any branch, the history of your account is with you because you can consult your account at any moment," he continued. Speaking further on other giant moves of the Credit Union, the GM disclosed that: "The Kumba branch that we announced at the start of the year is finally here. Kumba will be starting in exactly two weeks from now. The branch will be hosted in our centralised system, exactly two weeks from now. We are calling on the entire population of the South West Region and Meme Division in particular, to make use of this new branch at their disposal". "Today, we are heavily represented in five Regions of Cameroon. We just want to assure our valued members that progressively, we are going to cover the entire country; progressively, we are going to be the number one credit union in Cameroon. Our dream is simple; there are only two best credit unions in Cameroon, Mmockmbie Credit Union and the others," he concluded on a positive note.



CamCCUL Applauds ShesaCCU for Rapid Growth, Achieving Break-even Point in Just 3 Yrs

Cont'd from Page 1

In an interview granted The Voice, one of CamCCUL's staff guiding the credit union, Ngwabineh Moses Che, remarked that ShesaCCU is on a good footing in terms of growth rate and management. Being there to "make sure that they're in compliance with the policies and procedures put in place by the umbrella organization, CamCCUL, and the monitoring authorities; the Ministry of Finance and the Central African Banking Commission, COBAC, Ngwabineh said CamCCUL guided the young microfinance institution throughout the 2023 financial year from January up to December 31, 2023.

"Today, they have just presented the records of their performance for the whole year and I can say with certainty that they're on a good footing. ShesaCCU is about three years today and in this third year, they have broken even which means that they're on a good footing. The growth rate is encouraging. If you look at their assets; last year they had over a hundred and fifty million francs CFA, and this year they have gone up to 259 million francs CFA. That shows the rapid growth rate in which they are. So, we are there to guide and mentor them and to make sure that they comply with all the regulations put in place. In summary, they are on a good footing and doing well in terms of management. They have a solid board and a good supervisory board," Ng-



ShesaCCU Board President, Patrice Lumumba (M) Addressing Members

wabineh Moses further commended the credit union. Speaking to *The Voice*, the Board of Directors President, Mboh Patrick Lumumba, said the break-even point attained by ShesaCCU was the target of the credit union last year. "We had on target to break even and that would have been on our third full financial year. Thank God as you must have heard from our deliberations, ShesaCCU actually broke even by December 31, 2023. I will like to say this is a milestone because within the microfinance sector, especially with the credit unions, it is not easy to break even before the fifth year and moving on. So we are proud to say we have broken even this year 2023". After having broken even, the BOD President told *The Voice* that the management now has the challenge to "sustain profitability and this

will entail that all the members put hands on deck because in the cooperative credit union model, it is built on members". This he explained "is only when members participate economically, either in savings or loans taking that the credit union moves ahead. So we are very confident on that. But we want to move ahead. You know we are in the age of innovations and if we don't innovate, we might remain behind. So we're looking forward to very innovative products. We already told you about the Merchant Sim Card we acquired last year. This made it possible for our members in the diaspora to do business with us without incurring any overdue charges. We want to move and see how to create products that will enable members expand their businesses. We are even putting together a fund for young business-

men. We call them 'Startuppers'. We will put in place a fund for startuppers who have very innovative and progressive business projects. We will work together with them and see how to finance them. We also look in the domain of the youths. We have realised that the youths have very lofty ideas but their major problem is funding". He added "We are also putting together a scheme geared particularly to the youths who come to do business with us, to see how we can set conditions that are favourable to their business endeavours. These are some of the few innovations we're looking at. As you heard me say today, we're working on a ten-year visionary strategic plan that will be put forward in the next AGM and you will see all the panoply of innovations that we have put in place. Like you heard in our deliberations, we had a surplus of revenue over expenditure. That means that we have

broken even, and so the challenge like I said now is ensuring sustainability - how do we go forth from there and continue making profit and surpluses to plough back to our business expansion, or to redistribute to our members as dividend". Taking ShesaCCU to the break-even point was the commitment of the President of the Board of Directors of the young microfinance institution after his re-election for a second mandate in the 2022 General Assembly which held in Yaounde on April 15, 2023. The first mandate, he told *The Voice* "was essentially to implant ShesaCCUL both physically and in terms of organizational structures, and also in terms of administrative and regulatory instances. That having been done, this new mandate will be to render ShesaCCU profitable and sustainable. I can assure you ShesaCCU is about breaking even and start making profit by the end of 2023".



U.S. Global Malaria Coordinator, Dr. David Walton, Visits Cameroon to Reaffirm Joint Efforts in Fight Against Malaria

From March 5 to 14, the U.S. Global Malaria Coordinator, Dr. David Walton, visited Cameroon to underscore the U.S. Government's continued support in the fight against malaria and gain a deeper understanding of Cameroon's efforts to end malaria. Dr. Walton was joined on his visit by Dr. Meera Venkatesan, Agency Lead for the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In Yaoundé, Dr. Walton attended high-level meetings with the Director-General of Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Ministers of Health from "High Burden to High Impact" countries, representing the highest malaria burden countries that have committed to an intensified approach to reduce that burden. These meetings marked the in-



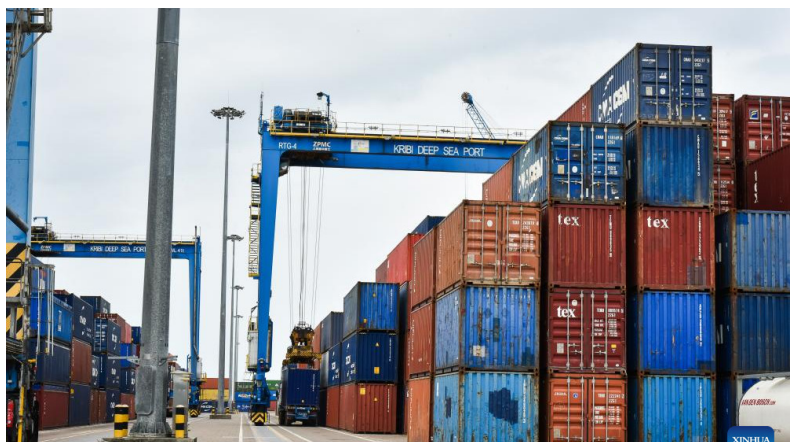
roduction of the malaria vaccine and included the 25th convening of the WHO Malaria Policy Advisory Group (MPAG) and the introduction of the malaria vaccine. During this trip, Dr. Walton met with the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) and partners funded by PMI. He also met with the Executive Board of the Global

Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) and discussed cross-sector health programs related to malaria. To gain a deeper appreciation for Cameroon's research capacities, Dr. Walton also visited the Center for Research in Infectious Diseases (CRID), which conducts cutting edge

entomological research on vector-borne diseases like malaria. Furthermore, Dr. Walton participated in a meeting with the Parliamentary Health Caucus to discuss domestic resource mobilization efforts in the fight against malaria. In Yaoundé, Dr. Walton launched the System to End the Malaria Burden Through Meaningful Engagement (SEMBE I) project with the participation of Minister of Public Health Dr. Manaouda Malachie, malaria partners, and local associations. SEMBE I is a CFA 18 billion (USD \$30 million) project funded by PMI and implemented by the Association Camerounaise pour le Marketing Social (ACMS). This project seeks to reduce malaria-related morbidity and mortality by improving the capacity of the National Malaria Control Program and other local entities to lead the prevention, control, and elimination of malaria in the Far

North Region of Cameroon. During Dr. Walton's visit to the Far North Region, he met with Governor Midjiyawa Bakary. Together with Minister of Public Health Dr. Manaouda Malachie, Dr. Walton visited the Mokolo integrated health center and immunization unit, where the new malaria vaccine is officially part of the routine immunization package in Cameroon for children six months of age. Dr. Walton expressed hope that the new malaria vaccine, which was made available to Cameroon with support from the U.S. government, would help eliminate malaria and give children a better chance at a malaria-free life. As a wrap-up of his visit to Cameroon, Dr. Walton met with the Prime Minister, Chief Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute and the Minister of External Relations, H.E. Lejeune Mbella Mbella.

China's Belt and Road Initiative Paves Way for Common Prosperity in Central Africa



Central African leaders met Saturday in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), a regional bloc, in hopes of highlighting past achievements and defining a roadmap for strengthening regional integration, while focusing on economic challenges and growth opportunities. When CEMAC was created in 1994, its members -- Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo and Chad -- aimed to enhance economic development through regional integration. Saturday's event also offered the leaders an opportunity to consider how regional integration and development can be achieved under the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Since its launch in 2013, the BRI has been welcomed by all CEMAC countries as a model for cooperation with China in infrastructure development and socioeconomic transformation, said Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, international relations expert and former Cameroon's former cabinet member. "Once you arrive in the CEMAC sub-region, you will see plenty of Chinese company investment projects," said Ngolle.

ROADS TO PROSPERITY

Thanks in large part to Chinese investments and expertise, CEMAC states have been blessed with the construction of some major mega-infrastructure projects in the

transport sector.

A good example is the Kribi Deep Sea Port, built by China Harbor Engineering Company Ltd (CHEC) in Cameroon's southern town of Kribi. While the new seaport, which is strategically positioned in the center of the Gulf of Guinea, has stimulated the country's economy, it has become a regional hub for the African Atlantic coast.

"With the coming of the Kribi port, Cameroon has once again placed herself as the port entry to the sub-region. This (the port) has added more value to certain industrial projects in Chad, the Central African Republic and Congo," said Alain Patrick Mpila Ayissi, manager of the Land Development and Environment Department of the Port Authority of Kribi.

Currently, CHEC is busy constructing the Kribi Deep Seaport Phase II. After the completion of the project, it is expected to become a large container transit port and comprehensive hub port in Central and West Africa.

As part of the project, CHEC also constructed the Kribi-Lolabe highway that will cater to the requirements of the port transportation and logistics and make a contribution to local prosperity just like the road linking Cameroon to Congo.

The Cameroon-Congo Road, constructed by contractors including Sinohydro, a Chinese civil engineering construction company, stretches 1,600 km from Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, to Brazzaville, the Congolese capital. It

has been nicknamed the "road of regional integration" by authorities.

James Essomba, who has been selling merchandise in the border town of Ntam, Cameroon's East Region, said that the new road is a game changer.

"At first, it was difficult to get goods from Congo. Now, both countries that have long traded with others outside the sub-region are trading with each other. We have seen a remarkable increase in trade and profit," said the 65-year-old.

CLEAN WATER AND ENERGY

Laurence Wandji, 41, is a primary school teacher in Bafoussam, Cameroon's third-largest city. A big water tower stands just a few meters from Wandji's home. The tower was contracted to the Chinese construction company CGCOC Group. In 2014, CGCOC Group arrived and set out to construct a water treatment plant and related facilities that could produce 10,000 cubic meters of water daily in the city. It was part of a project to provide water to nine cities in Cameroon.

Currently, residents can enjoy a round-the-clock water supply thanks to the project.

"We can now take good showers even in dry season thanks to China," said Wandji. "We can easily manage our daily activities which require water. Children no longer trek long distances to fetch water." China has emerged as a collaborator in furthering CEMAC energy generation goals too. The sub-region struggles with low energy generation and high tariff costs. Constructed by Sinohydro,



Limbe Omnisport Stadium



Lobe drinking water treatment plant, South region

Memvele Hydroelectric Power Station, a 211-megawatt hydroelectric power station in the Ntem Valley locality in Cameroon's South Region, could offer a sustainable solution.

"Once the dam is fully operational, the problem of electricity will be greatly reduced. It is also capable of supplying electricity to neighboring countries in CEMAC because of the strong flow of the river," said Augustine Mbah, an energy consultant.

FOOTBALL (SOCCER) UNITES

Every weekend, mammoth crowds gather at Limbe Omnisport Stadium and Bafoussam Omnisport Stadium in Cameroon to watch local league matches. Constructed by China Machinery Engineering Corporation, the stadiums have become a veritable unifier for young people in the sub-region.

"Those stadiums hosted very important matches when Cameroon hosted the Africa Cup of Nations and Under-17 Central African football tournament. They build links among youth from countries through football. They are extremely useful and we are grateful to China," said James Ndukong, a football analyst.

Critics, however, allege that China's BRI projects in the CEMAC zone are a "debt trap." Analysts insist China's investment is giving a much-needed boost to the economies of the countries otherwise largely ignored by Western investors.

"Unlike other countries, China is working to help Africa restore infrastructures that are essential for economic recovery. The projects also provide massive job opportunities for local residents," said Ngolle, the international relations expert and former cabinet member of the Cameroonian government.

Reacting to "debt trap" allegations, Cameroon's Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute said that Cameroon is a sovereign country conscious of its responsibilities and choices.

"We are not going to listen to all kinds of snide remarks by people who think they know better. We have a country we have to develop and that is our responsibility," said Ngute while visiting the construction site of a China-funded water plant in Yaounde, the Cameroonian capital.

Xu Huajiang, general manager of China Harbor Central Africa Division which designed and constructed some major projects in Cameroon including the Kribi Deep Seaport and Kribi-Lolabe Highway, said that globalization and regionalization have become a general trend of development and should be embraced by African countries.

"It is necessary to strengthen the 'hard connectivity' of infrastructure and 'soft connectivity' of system rules and promote the four-in-one interconnection of land, sea, sky, and network," Xu said.

FEATURE:

Cameroonian Dancer's Romance with Chinese Teacher Sparks Cultural Blending

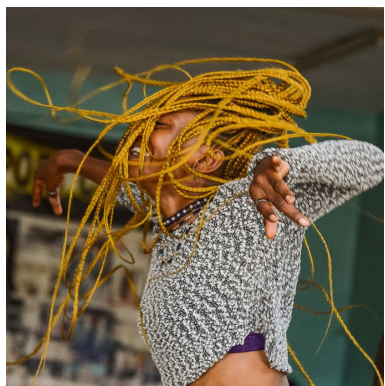
By Arison Tamfu, Wang Ze

Simon Abbe's smile was both nostalgic and bashful as he began to tell a tale of love in which his affection for his Chinese dance teacher not only blossomed but also became a catalyst, harmonizing Chinese and Cameroonian cultures.

"It's a long story," Abbe said. Abbe's passion for dance was ingrained in him from a young age. In 2000, he, along with his childhood friends Julio Dimitri and Joseph Mario Bayong, who shared his fervor for dance, founded a hip-hop dance group called Black Star. Together, they roamed from street to street and neighborhood to neighborhood, showcasing their freestyle moves.

"We danced for fun and to impress girls," recalled Bayong, now 42, reminiscing about the challenges of street life.

Despite their amateur status, the group aspired to a brighter future. Five years later, they joined the Cameroon National Ballet. Around the same time, the Cameroonian government initiated a cultural exchange with China, enabling Chinese professional choreographers to teach contemporary dance to Cameroonian



A young dancer practices dance steps

This partnership led to the arrival of Chinese dance teachers Naersi and Jiang Keyu in 2005, who came to train a new generation of Cameroonian dancers, including Abbe and his friends, and revitalize the Cameroon National Ballet. "Everything changed thanks to the Sino-Cameroonian cooperation training. Once I joined the national ballet, I started to learn to dance," emphasized Dimitri, now 43, noting that beyond dance techniques, the Chinese teachers imparted life skills, helping them mature quickly despite their youth.

"We are actually products of the (Sino-Cameroon) cooperation. It is the foundation of my career as a



Jiang Keyu (R, front) teaches dance steps to young dancers

dancer and choreographer," Abbe said.

"The rebuilding of the ballet was a great success; during those years, we choreographed 17 dances and traveled with the President to many countries for important occasions. We also performed in Beijing during the 2008 Beijing Olympics," Dimitri added.

Training these Cameroonian dancers, however, was no easy feat. "When we first tried to rebuild the Ballet, we started with modern dance training, then we added ballet training, and created choreography," Jiang said. "Back then, the actors and musicians who came to the auditions were quite similar, mostly with African dance or hip-hop elements."

As the training progressed, Jiang and Abbe's relationship blossomed. "We met when we were young," Abbe recalled. "We found out that we had a special connection."

They began dating, but Jiang's stay in Cameroon ended in 2009, and she returned to China. Around the same time, Abbe went to France to further his career.

"When I was in France, we realized how much we missed each other," Abbe said.

That's when they decided to get married. Today, they live in China with their two children, a boy and a girl.

"I have been with Simon for more than 10 years, and Chinese and African cultures have always been fermenting in our small family," Jiang said.

They now run a dance troupe called Body Boulevard Company, with branches in China and Cameroon.

Abbe and Jiang shared their story with Xinhua in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, where they were training a new generation of dancers for their troupe. "Now, we can see that the young dancers here are very diverse physically, and that diversity probably comes from the training we initially gave them," Jiang added.

Their training session proved fruitful. Dressed in various costumes, the young performers seamlessly transitioned between the spirited, energetic rhythms of Cameroonian traditional dance and modern music. Abbe, Jiang, Dimitri and Bayong watched closely and intervened when necessary to correct the trainees' steps.

Jiang described the performance

as "Children of the Sun." "Africans and Chinese both look to the sun; we all need to be warm and grow under its rays. From another perspective, I am also contemplating life through the lens of Chinese philosophy, 'from birth to death,' and I want to incorporate this into my work," said Jiang, now 43.

The troupe aims to tour the world not only to perform but also to bridge the gap between Chinese and African cultures, hoping for integration and mutual learning through the universal language of art and culture.

"We want to bring choreographers from China and send choreographers from Cameroon to China. Culture is a powerful tool for bringing people from different areas and countries together," said Abbe, now 42.

"It's been an important journey for me, moving from my 20s, where I had a deep interaction and growth with African culture, to this stage where I've moved from my personal growth to being able to eventually turn it into a production, spreading the idea of African culture and incorporating Eastern Chinese philosophy," Jiang said. She hoped that the members of the dance troupe would surpass expectations.

"I hope that their passion, energy and artistic flair can reach a wider audience, and I will do my best to help them be seen by the world," she said.

As the sun began to set, Abbe wrapped up the day's training session.

"Our story is beautiful, and our passion is beautiful," Abbe concluded of his love story with Jiang. "It's a story of civilizational exchange," Jiang added.



Photo shows young dancers practicing dance steps

Journalist Henry Mekole's PhD Thesis Examines Social Media's Role in Cameroon's 2018 Election Violence

By Kevin Ako Agbor

The Department of International Relations and Conflict Resolution in the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Buea can now boast of having produced another PhD holder in the person of Henry Ekpele Mekole, CRTV's South West Editor-in-Chief, after a successful venture with keyword social media, Electoral law, violation and presidential elections.

The PhD defense chaired by Prof. Atangcho Nji Akonumbo, and supervised by Prof. Nsoh Christopher, all of the University of Buea, praised Henry Mekole for the eyes opening thesis he chose to hammer on which to the chairperson is a document that may help a lot in the upcoming 2025 elections should the government pay attention to it. According to Henry Mekole, "The social media has come to stay as far as the election process is concern and the social media has got a lot of benefits. At the same time, there are a lot of challenges in handling and regulating the social media, and this is the more reason why the social media in sighted violence from the work. We found out that the social media in sighted violence during the 2018 presidential election through foreign interferences through users with a lot of photo-



Henry Mekole during the defense process

shop via Facebook, telegram, Twitter and other social media handles". "And so we thought that the researcher found out that there are things that can be done to better the situation. And in other to better the situation, the government should reinforce the capacity of our security as far as protecting our citizens and property from violence which may emanate during election period," Henry Ekpele, added.

On his part, Prof. Atangcho Nji Akonumbo said going by the candidate's thesis, which talks on the 2018 presidential election, and violence, "I'll say that the social media is gaining momentum, and its coverage is very wide. It's also very important to note that the number of users of the social media is increasing exponentially. And the social

media has therefore become an influential platform for election users and like the researcher did mention. In 2018, the social media was used to instrumentalized violence after the elections, and this instrumentalization didn't only happen from within the country but from communicators within and without".

"So, it shows you how social media span can seriously affect political settings beyond various boundaries. We are expecting elections in this country in 2025. This work is an anticipation of what may happen. If policymakers don't take the relevant measures put in place, the relevant strategies to avoid what happened in the post 2018 presidential elections, a similar situation or worst may occur and of course, he has mentioned the role of ANTIC that ANTIC should be reinforced. New strategy should be adopted".

Sighting ways in which the 2018 elections in sighted violence before and after the election, the researcher, now Dr. Henry Ekpele Mekole stated clearly that in 2018, James Agbor, wrote on *BarataNews* which read "As citizens of French Cameroon go to the polls tomorrow for an already rigged presidential election, the citizens of the sovereign state of Southern Cameroons/Ambazonia, which is witnessing an independence war declared by the colo-

nialist Paul Biya, shall be observing the deadliest ghost towns operation ever. There has been a total boycott of the electioneering process and a complete shutdown in the territory since Sunday, September 30, 2018". The social media was also used during and after the election. On October 7, 2018, the presidential election took place and according to the electoral code and the country's constitution, results were to be published only 15 days after voting. However, the next day October 8, 2018, results were announced on the social media. Even before results came out, the social media had published its own results. Social media was filled with unverified election results, many of which proclaimed various opposition leaders as winners of the election. For instance, *The Washington Post*, 2018, reads "Cameroon opposition candidate Maurice Kamto, has declared victory to himself in Sunday's presidential election but incumbent President Paul Biya's party dismissed his claim as fantasy and accused him of breaking the law by making it.

"I invite the outgoing president to organize a peaceful way to transfer power," Kamto, who leads the Movement for the Rebirth of Cameroon, MRC, has told a news conference on Monday in the capital Yaounde city written by McAllister and Kouagheu, 2018.

The deputy Secretary General of Paul Biya's Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, Labour



Dr. Henry Mekole and mother after defense

Minister, Gregoire Owona, accused Kamto of breaking the law.

"It is not right at all to announce this. He hasn't won anything at all. It's totally illegal, he said, adding that it was too early to say if anyone had won. Kamto was not even represented at all the polling stations, it was impossible for him to count all the votes," he added cited by *Reuters*, 2018.

Retaliating more to Kamto's verdict, then Cameroon's Government Spokesman, Issa Tchirroma Bakary, told *Reuters* without elaborating that the government would take measures against Kamto.

"The only body entitled to collect all tallies and publish results is the Constitutional Council, he said, adding they would be published within 15 days from the poll as required by law.

"Everyone must abide by the law," the Minister of Territorial Administration, Paul Atanga Nji, adding his voice to denounce Kamto's claim had said that any form of challenge to the verdict of the Constitutional Council would not be tolerated.

Cameroon Workers' Forum Issues General Strike Call for April 10th



Labour unions under the banner of the Cameroon Workers' Forum (CAWOF) have signed a call for a general strike by Cameroonian workers in all sec-

tors of activity. The strike is scheduled to begin on April 10th. With that strike, CAWOF members hope to achieve a 30% increase in public sector salaries, as well as an increase in the minimum wage to FCFA 100,000 per month in all public and private sectors.

In addition to these two main demands, CAWOF also hopes to obtain from the government the payment of severance packages to employees laid off from public and semi-public companies, as well as a 40% increase in old-age pensions in all sectors. To achieve this, CAWOF hopes to engage in immediate negotiations with the government for the implementation of all these demands. While waiting for the strike to

begin, CAWOF is preparing the ground. A meeting between Jean-Marc Bikoko (photo), president of the platform, and teachers' unions is announced for this week. CAWOF also wants to force the government to lift all sanctions imposed on certain teachers who responded to a strike call issued by the On a trop supporté (OTS) collective a few months ago. The trade union's demand for the signing of the special teacher status and for the organization of the National Education Forum (FNE) promised by the government will also be on the agenda of this meeting.

Modus Operandi

The modus operandi chosen by

the CAWOF remains to be seen. Jean-Marc Bikoko and his peers are expected to make a decision on this issue in the coming weeks. The call for a strike is the consequence of the increase in fuel prices. On February 8, the CAWOF sent a letter to the Minister of Labor and Social Security, Grégoire Owona, to request a suspension of this increase pending the adoption of social support measures, which were to be discussed between the government and the 12 unions pertaining to the CAWOF platform. But given the Minister's lack of response, CAWOF decided to go on a general strike, as confirmed by Benoît Essiga, the focal point of this union platform. On February 21, the President of

the Republic, Paul Biya, signed two decrees increasing family allowances and salaries for civil servants. In a first decree, the Head of State increased "to FCFA 4,500 per dependent child per month" the family allowances paid to workers by the National Social Security Fund and the Ministry of Finance. This represents an over 60% increase in family allowances compared to the 2800 previously paid. The second presidential decree increased "the basic monthly remuneration of civilian and military personnel by 5%." For the government, these measures, taken three weeks after the increase in fuel prices, are supposed to mitigate the consequences for the population.

Cameroon's Polio-Free Status Threatened by New Cases, Says Health Expert

Cameroon's status as a country that has eradicated the wild poliovirus, achieved in June 2020, is under threat due to a resurgence of new cases, reveals Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance on Tuesday, relaying the fears of Professor Tetanye Ekoe, chairman of the National Polio Eradication Certification Committee.

Last year, the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) reported 13 new cases of polio in Cameroon.

Notably, 12 of these cases were imported, primarily from neighboring countries. Chad alone reported 52 cases last year. The continuous importation of cases complicates the situation and poses a real threat to Cameroon's status, admits Ekoe.

In response, the Gavi alliance has encouraged Cameroon and its neighbors to synchronize their efforts. A large-scale vaccination campaign for children aged 0 to 5 was jointly organized from March 1

to 3, with a follow-up session. However, it is too early to comment on the effectiveness of the campaign, especially as some parents are reportedly against vaccinating their children.

"To contain the spread of the circulating polio virus, the scientific community is relying on the mobilization of parents and families to vaccinate all children under the age of 5," says Ekoe.



Ngaoundéré University Launches Center for Improved Knowledge Delivery

The University of Ngaoundéré, in partnership with Indiana's Ball State University, has launched the Center for Transformative Education (CET), a new initiative aimed at enhancing the professionalization and digitization of education. The center was officially inaugurated by the university's Rector, Mamoudou Abdoulmoumini, and U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon, Christopher J. Lamora.

The CET, established within the university's Faculty of Education, is committed to developing innovative teaching theories and techniques to improve knowledge



transmission. It will provide training for both students and educators,

focusing on basic, secondary, and non-conventional education.

"The center aims to professionalize and digitize training, aligning with the government's vision. It will develop teaching methods to enhance knowledge transfer for learners across basic, secondary, and non-traditional educational settings. The focus includes training students and educators," says Rector Mamoudou Abdoulmoumini. Established on September 14, 2023, by order of the Minister of Higher Education, the CET is a research and training center promoting transformative education. This approach, as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO), empowers learners to make informed decisions and take action at individual, community, and global levels for more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable societies.

"This center aims to pioneer transformative pedagogy, fostering collaborative discussions among teachers, lecturers, professionals, and students. The focus is on challenging established practices to improve educational outcomes for future generations," Ambassador Lamora said hailing the center.

MINEDUB Launches Crackdown on Phantom Workers in Ministry

Basic Education Minister, Laurent Serge Etoundi Ngoa, has ordered state employees working for other institutions while drawing salaries from his department to justify their positions by March 15th. Failure to comply will result in the suspension of their salaries, the minister warned in a statement issued on March 1st.

This move is part of Ngoa's initiative to streamline the ministry's

payroll in line with the President of the Republic's repeated calls for the government to rationalize public expenditure. As of June 30, 2023, the state payroll comprised 379,020 active employees and 157,717 pensioners, as per the 2024 Finance Law. The Ministry of Secondary Education employs the largest share of state civil servants at 26.1%, followed by the Ministry of Defense (17.9%) and the Ministry of Basic

Education (14.7%), which accounts for 16.25% of the state's wage bill. Since 2018, the government has been implementing measures to eliminate irregularities and undue salary collections by public employees, aiming to control the workforce and wage bill. An inter-ministerial committee has been established to maintain the process of updating the state's payroll file, ensuring it only includes duly recruited pub-

lic servants with appropriate administrative and salary situations. A physical count of government personnel conducted between April and June 2018 revealed over 10,000 fictitious civil servants costing Cameroon FCFA 30 billion annually, according to the Ministry of Finance.



Central African Appointed as New BEAC Governor Amidst Regional Challenges

Central African Yvon Sana Bangui has been appointed as the Governor of the Bank of Central African States (BEAC), following a video conference held by the Heads of State from the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) on February 9, 2024.

He was officially installed in his new role on March 1, 2024, in Yaoundé along with the five other members of the new central bank government representing the six CEMAC countries.

"The challenges are numerous. As you know, our sub-region faces many crises, including COVID-19,

the war in Ukraine, and numerous other international crises and challenges. Our priority is to consolidate monetary and financial stability to maintain growth. I believe it is achievable. We must combine our efforts to meet the challenges we face today. However, there is preliminary work to be done. We need to review the situation and address the strategic focus areas that we must rely on to overcome several challenges... It's about adjusting visions, programs, strategic approaches, and truly initiating the reforms needed to make our CEMAC zone resilient," stated Governor Sana Bangui, outlining the



priorities for his tenure. However, alongside these priorities, the team led by Yvon Sana Bangui

will face a pressing issue: the controversy surrounding the 2023 recruitment examination for senior

management agents, whose admitted candidates have been waiting nearly a year to begin their training. Despite irregularities and negligence identified in the recruitment process by the BEAC Board of Directors and the Central African Monetary Union (UMAC) Committee, which had instructed the then-governor to cancel the recruitment, Abbas Mahamat Tolli proceeded with the process until the results were announced. This stance was supported by the ruling of the Common Court of Justice of CEMAC, based in N'Djamena, Chad, which found no irregularities in the recruitment contest organization.

Cameroon's Rebels May Not Achieve Their Goal of Creating the Ambazonian State – But They're Still a Threat to Stability

By Manu Lekunze | The Conversation



Cameroon's separatist insurgency is an armed conflict in the country's North West (NW) and South West (SW) regions that began in 2017. It pits government forces against several non-state armed groups, locally known as "Amba rebels".

The rebels seek to create a state called Ambazonia out of Cameroon's English-speaking regions. The conflict has killed over 6,000 people and displaced 765,000. Over 70,000 are refugees in Nigeria. More than 2 million need humanitarian support and 600,000 children have been deprived of effective schooling.

As an international security scholar with an interest in small wars, I have been studying Cameroon's security for a decade. I recently published research on the factors that have contributed to the separatist insurgency. The factors include a protest by teachers and lawyers, colonial heritage, a history of insurgencies, and an internal geography conducive to group conflict and guerrilla warfare. Others are poor macroeconomic performance, ability to finance authoritarianism without relying on taxes, a turbulent regional neighbourhood and unfavourable international relations. I argue further that the conflict has stalled because the rebels lack the numbers, money and cohesion to move beyond an insurgency. This makes a rebel victory impossible. But multiple insurgencies can undermine the state and, therefore, continue to be national security threats. And Cameroon's strategic location between west and central Africa means insecurity in the country could destabilise the region.

Factors That Led to the Insurgency A major factor that led to the insurgency was the teachers' and lawyers' protests in 2016, arising from long-standing grievances of Cameroon's English-speaking minority. The English-speakers complained of the use of French in schools and courts in the NW and SW regions, marginalisation in high-level government appointments, neglect in public investment in infrastructure in their regions, and generally poor economic conditions. Another factor is the miscalculated application of force by the government and the rebels. The government, accustomed to the use of violence in repressing dissent, assumed it could silence the protests forcefully. The arrest of the protest leaders and brutal crackdown on protesters spurred on the insurgents. But the rebels also misread the situation. They saw the age of the president, Paul Biya (91), his longevity in office and pending elections in 2018 as indicating weakness. They assumed that a demonstration of concerted force would bring about the fall of the government. Cameroon has suffered from poor macroeconomic performance and authoritarianism with slow political development. I also discovered through my research that the increasing decay of traditional authority has reduced government capacity to provide social order in semi-urban and rural areas. Regional disorder in central and west Africa has contributed to the insurgency too. The disorder includes the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin, insurgencies in eastern Chad, separatist violence in the eastern part of Nigeria and resources-related violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The Central African Republic has been in a civil war since 2013. The different armed conflicts in the

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region create flows of military supplies and skills. Cameroon's position in the US-led political economy is another factor. Exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in world market prices and less able to provide for its citizens.

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Moving Forward

In my view, the rebels cannot turn the conflict into a larger war. This means the insurgency will remain stalled until the government is willing or able to decide the issue.

The rebels cannot achieve their objective of changing the form of the Cameroonian state or gaining independence.

My argument rests on the following reasons.

A larger form of war, which would make a rebel victory possible, requires a cause that unites a population large enough to form a military with tens of thousands of combatants. Ethnic divisions between the armed and political groups demonstrate that the independence cause is not strong enough to displace other interests.

Cameroon has over 20 ethnic groups in a population of 29 million. The "anglophone" identity has not displaced ethnic affiliation. Most armed groups are small and organised on ethnic lines. They are restricted to hit-and-run attacks and can't hold territory.

Rebel victory requires consistent funding. The insurgency has, thus far, sourced funding mainly from remittances from Cameroon's diaspora separatists and criminal activity in the region. The funding is intermittent. Corruption among the diaspora groups means that money raised rarely reaches the fighting groups. Criminal activity, like the distribution of contraband and drug networks, is periodically disrupted. The rebels have not succeeded in establishing reliable logistics. The sustained intensity necessary to win a war is impossible without reliable supplies. The three principal shortcomings mean the war cannot become anything more than a peripheral insurgency. The Cameroonian government can live with a peripheral insurgency.

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Implications of the Insurgency

Instability in Cameroon will have a negative impact on francophone central Africa. Cameroon is the region's second-largest country in population and economy. It accounted for about 40% of the GDP of central African countries using the CFA franc in 2022. Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon rely on Cameroon for agricultural products and infrastructure (ports, telecoms and roads).

The insurgency also affects Nigeria, Africa's economic and population giant, and thus the region. Nigeria's GDP accounts for well over 50% of the economies of Ecowas member states.

The conflict's potential destabilising effects is also of interest to foreign investors and policymakers further afield.

Manu Lekunze is a lecturer at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland.

The Cameroonian Women Tackling Gender-based Violence

By Regobert Manigha



Selma Ndi, CEO at DataGirl

About 48,800 women and girls were killed worldwide by their intimate partners or other family members. Here is how they tackle this crisis in Cameroon.

Gender-based violence, a long-standing issue in Cameroon, has been exacerbated by the ongoing crisis in the country's two English-speaking regions over the past eight years. But in the face of sluggish governmental action, aid organisations and legal advocates are stepping up efforts to reverse this trend.

A Bird's Eye-view of the Crisis

Cameroon is one of 186 countries out of 193 that have ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The Central African nation is among the 162 countries that have enacted laws against domestic violence globally. However, according to the UN Women's Facts and Figures on Ending Violence Against Women report, in 2022, roughly 48,800 women and girls across the world (including in Cameroon) were killed by their intimate partners or other family members.

Women at the Crossroads of Ongoing War

Article 12 of the preamble of Cameroon's 1972 Constitution, which was revised in 2008, "affirms to all citizens including women, a right to life, to physical and moral integrity and to humane treatment in all circumstances." Under no circumstances, the con-

stitution states, "shall any person be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment." Unfortunately, this does not reflect the reality on the ground.

In 2018, Arthur Mbida, a uniformed officer in the Cameroonian military, was reprimanded by the Bamenda Military Tribunal for raping a 17-year-old lactating mother whom he detained at a checkpoint for not having an identification document.

Meanwhile, four to six members of the military are currently serving 10-year sentences for fatally shooting two women and two children in Zelevet, a locality in Far North Cameroon, in 2015.

On 29 September, 2019, an amateur video went viral on Cameroonian social media depicting a gang of at least nine men torturing and subsequently murdering a woman.

The late Comfort Tumasang, aged 35, met a similar tragic fate when she was brutally murdered in Muyuka, South West Cameroon, in August 2020. Sources indicated to FairPlanet that separatist fighters accused her of collaborating with members of the regular army.

These incidents corroborate a 12 July, 2022 publication by the Nkafu Policy Institute, a Cameroon-based NGO that focuses on policy development, which states that "there has been a dramatic increase in sexual violence and assault cases towards women in the North and the Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon."

It further notes that "the main perpetrators of the attacks are armed separatists, military personnel and civilians."

Since 2016, children and women have been the primary victims of sexual violence amid the conflict in Cameroon, leading to widespread displacement and harm. The the Nkafu Policy Institute highlights, however, highlights that GBV existed in Cameroon prior to the eruption of this current crisis and occurs even in areas where "guns are silent."

Who Tackles GBV?

A legal aid clinic, operating as a hu-

manitarian branch of the International Federation for Female Lawyers (FIDA), is providing relief to some of the affected victims.

"We had long identified violence as the cradle of the developmental problems women and girls face, and that violence is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and unbalanced power relations," Barrister Gladys Fri Mbuya, Cameroon Country Vice National President of FIDA, told FairPlanet. The women's rights defender added, "Our offices in Bamenda and Mutengene in the Northwest and Southwest regions are open to all victims.

At the legal aid clinic, Mbuya said, FIDA educates victims about their rights, ensuring they understand that no one, including a husband, has the right to violate them. They proceed by filing a complaint against the perpetrator, lodging it either at the state counsel's chambers or with the Judicial Police. They then follow up on the complaint and represent the survivor in court.

The clinic also conducts media and community awareness campaigns on women's rights, emphasising the repercussions of violence and the critical need to end violence against women and girls.

Mbuya emphasised that despite the limitations present in Cameroon's legal texts, they urge prosecutors to leverage the numerous human rights laws ratified by the state of Cameroon when addressing cases of human rights abuse.

But navigating the law can be complex, she explained, due to discrepancies like the different legal marriage ages for girls and boys, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework for protecting victims of violence, the lack of a specific law on gender-based violence (GBV) and discriminatory clauses in the legislation. For instance, a husband is permitted to stop his wife from working if deemed in the family's interest, but the wife does not have a reciprocal right regarding her husband's employment.

The DataGirl Initiative, based in Buea, Southwest Cameroon, is another entity supporting GBV victims in the country by equipping them with vital digital skills.

"We started up in 2020 with the aim to reach out to at least 3,000 girls a

year, but have struggled to [do so]," said Selma Ndi Ekfvei, CEO of DataGirl.

They operate a scholarship scheme, she added, shaped by the grants they receive from their partners, which allows them to sponsor girls and offer subsidised training during periods of limited funding. They operate an application portal and utilise their social media channels to organise events, network with partners and invite Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and university girls to our Tech cohorts every six weeks, where they equip them with IT skills.

Ekfvei argued that the tech world "leads the girls to financial and economic independence and consequently keeps them safe from warlords and crime mongers in the crisis." Another notable local initiative confronting the crisis is the Buea-based Women's Guild for Empowerment and Development.

Beatrice Titang, the founder and CEO of the NGO, told FairPlanet: "We have been fighting for women since 2019 with a special attention on human trafficking and slavery, which has been accentuated by the crisis since 2017. We witnessed the return of the Cameroonian girls trafficked to Kuwait."

Since 2019, the NGO has been working to empowering returnees, IDPs and victims of GBV in their community by providing them with funds to launch small businesses for improved livelihoods, Titang said.

She further stated that they have supported over 200 women and girls, some of whom returned to school during the crisis, obtaining their FSLC and acquiring literacy skills. This effort reached its apex between 2018 and 2021, a period further intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Titang shared that her initiative operates on a community-led basis, functioning similarly to community caregivers, with onsite humanitarian training provided to volunteers.

What Stands in the Way of Women's Rights Activism?

Titang from the Women's Guild for Empowerment and Development shared that they face significant challenges in conducting case follow-ups



Gladys Fri Mbuya, Cameroon Country Vice National President of FIDA

with victims, as many individuals affected by rape, trafficking and slavery are hesitant to come forward because of stigma.

She added their efforts are further challenged by limited funding, which at the moment mostly depends on voluntary donations. But despite these obstacles, Titang said, she and her team remain committed to their cause and have no plans to stop their efforts.

Meanwhile, Mbuya from FIDA shared: "We are always ready to assist survivors to the logical end of prosecution, but, unfortunately [...] somewhere mid-stream family members will convince the survivor to withdraw the case, describing it as a family matter. We overcome these challenges by being very clear about our objectives and using best examples to convince communities about the importance of eradicating repugnant customs and ending violence."

Ekfvei from DataGirl also points to meager means and widespread stigma as some of the major obstacles to success. "Our vision is to train at least 3,000 girls in tech fields before the close of every year, [but] we can only manage to impact 500 due to poverty and gender-bias in the job world," she lamented.

But like her peers in the field, Ekfvei is determined to push on with their advocacy work.

"Our big Women in Tech Seminar ran from 26-28 February in Yaounde, and we gathered 5,000 young girls to raise awareness of their potential in this field. We will continue this fight."

Much of West and Central Africa Without Internet After Undersea Cable Failures

Cameroon; Ivory Coast, Liberia, Benin, Ghana and Burkina Faso among countries experiencing outages

Much of west and central Africa has been left without internet service, as operators of several subsea cables reported failures.

The cause of the cable failures on Thursday was not immediately clear.

The African subsea cable operator Seacom confirmed that services on its west African cable system were down and that customers who relied on that cable were being redirected to the Google Equiano cable, which Seacom uses.

"The redirection happens automatically when a route is impacted," it said by email.

Network disruptions caused by cable damage have occurred in Africa in recent years. However, to-

day's disruption "points to something larger [and] this is amongst the most severe," said Isik Mater, director of research at NetBlocks, a group that documents internet disruptions around the world.

NetBlocks said data transmission and measurement showed a major disruption to international transits, "likely at or near the subsea network cable landing points".

At least a dozen countries have been affected by the outage, and there were fears of disruption of essential services in worst-hit states such as Ivory Coast, where the disruption was severe.

Africa has a higher proportion of its internet traffic on mobile devices than any other continent, with many of its businesses rely-

ing on the internet to deliver services to their customers.

Cameroon, Liberia, Benin, Ghana and Burkina Faso were heavily affected, according to data from Netblocks, which monitors cybersecurity and the governance of the internet.

The internet infrastructure company Cloudflare said in a post on X that major internet disruption was continuing in the Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin and Niger.

Namibia and Lesotho were also affected.

"There seems to be a pattern in the timing of the disruptions, impacting from the north to the south of Africa," Cloudflare Radar said.

The South African telecoms oper-



ator Vodacom also blamed connectivity problems on undersea cable failures affecting South Africa's network providers.

The impact from such cable failures worsens as networks attempt to route around the damage, po-

tentially reducing the capacity available to other countries, said Mater.

"The initial disruption may be a physical cut, but subsequent issues could be of a technical nature," she added.

Niger Junta Repudiates Deal Allowing US Military Bases on Soil

Spokesman for coup government stops short of calling for American personnel to leave but says their presence violates sovereignty

Niger's ruling military junta says it has revoked with immediate effect a military accord that allows US military personnel and civilian staff on its soil.

As of 2023 there were about 1,100 US troops in Niger, where the US military operates out of two bases including a drone base known as airbase 201, built near Agadez in central Niger at a cost of more than US \$100m. Since 2018 the base has been used to target Islamic State militants and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslemeen (JNIM), an al-Qaida affiliate, in the Sahel region.

The junta's announcement follows a visit by US officials this week which was led by assistant secretary of state for African affairs Molly Phee and included Gen Michael Langley, commander of the US Africa command. Col Amadou Abdramane said on Niger television on Saturday that the US delegation did not follow diplomatic protocol, and that Ni-



Niger junta spokesman Col Amadou Abdramane said a visiting US delegation breached protocol and Niger's agreement to have US military personnel on its soil was revoked

ger was not informed about the composition of the delegation, the date of its arrival or the agenda. He added that the discussions were around the current military transition in Niger, military cooperation between the two countries and Niger's choice of partners in the fight against militants linked to al-Qaida and Islamic State.

Since seizing power in July 2023, the Niger junta, like the military rulers in neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso, have kicked out French and other European forces, and turned to Russia for support.

"Niger regrets the intention of the American delegation to deny the sovereign Nigerien people the

right to choose their partners and types of partnerships capable of truly helping them fight against terrorism," Abdramane said.

"Also, the government of Niger forcefully denounces the condescending attitude accompanied by the threat of retaliation from the head of the American delegation towards the Nigerien government and people."

Abdramane stopped short of saying US forces should leave. But he alleged their status and presence was illegal and violated constitutional and democratic rules because, he claimed, it was unilaterally imposed in 2012.

He said Niger was not aware of the number of US civilian and military personnel on its soil or the amount of equipment deployed and, according to the agreement, the US military had no obligation to respond to any request for help against militants.

"In light of all the above, the government of Niger, revokes with

immediate effect the agreement concerning the status of United States military personnel and civilian employees of the American department of defence on the territory of the Republic of Niger," Abdramane said.

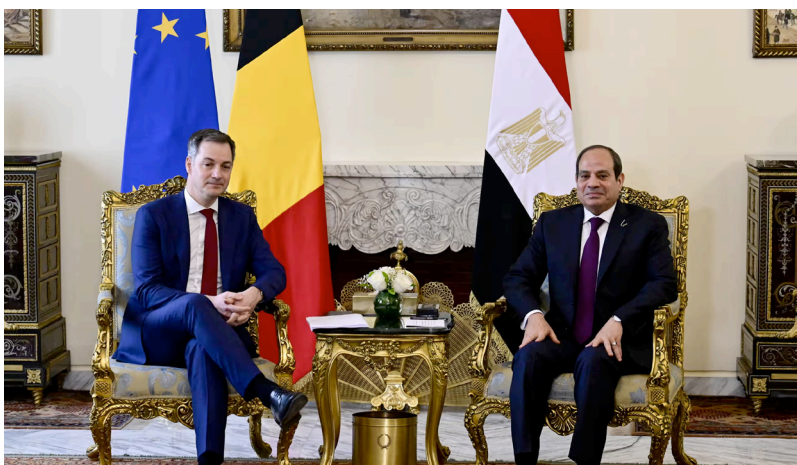
The US defence department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Apart from the Agadez airbase, the US has invested years and hundreds of millions of dollars in training Niger's military. Some of those forces were involved in the July overthrow of Niger's democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum.

In October, Washington officially designated the military takeover as a coup, which triggered US laws restricting the military support and aid that it can provide to Niger. But in December, Phee said the US was willing to restore aid and security ties if Niger met certain conditions.

EU Leaders Accused of 'Rewarding Repression' with €7.4bn Egypt Deal

Agreement to be signed off on Sunday is part of bloc's attempt to stop refugees crossing Mediterranean



The Belgian prime minister, Alexander De Croo, and the Egyptian president, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, meet in Cairo

European leaders are to sign off on a €7.4bn deal with Egypt just days after members of the European parliament accused Brussels of "bankrolling dictators".

The EU-Egypt strategic partnership agreement forms part of the bloc's latest attempt to stop refugees crossing the Mediterranean and comes less than a year after

it signed a controversial €150m (£128m) migration and economic pact with Tunisia.

It is understood the deal that leaders are expected to sign off on Sunday, which dwarfs that of Tunisia in value, will include €5bn in soft loans to support economic reforms with €1bn of that as urgent aid for 2024.

The agreement is designed to en-

hance cooperation in areas such as renewable energy, trade and security while delivering grants, loans and other funding over the next three years to support Egypt's faltering economy.

Along with the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, those meeting the Egyptian president, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, on Sunday were the Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, who led on the Tunisian deal, Alexander De Croo, the prime minister of Belgium, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU, and Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the prime minister of Greece.

European governments have long been worried about the risk of instability in Egypt, a country of 106 million people that has been struggling to raise foreign currency. Economic adversity and poverty have pushed increasing numbers to leave the country in recent years.

Greece and Italy are also concerned about the risk of another refugee crisis both from Gaza and in Egypt, which is hosting about 450,000 refugees from Sudan, ac-

ording to March data from the UN refugee agency, UNHCR.

It is understood a small portion of the €2.4bn that is not in the form of loans will be earmarked for support in securing the borders with Sudan and Libya with further aid for hosting refugees.

Another tranche of the package will be set aside for economic stimulus programmes to incentivise investment in business. Human Rights Watch said the expected deal would "reward Egypt's autocratic leader ... for preventing migrants' departures towards Europe".

It said that since Sisi took power in a 2013 coup and became president in 2014, his governments "have ruled Egypt with an iron fist", suppressing opposition, jailing critics and stifling media and civil society.

"Now this abysmal repression is being rewarded with fresh support from the EU," it said in a statement.

After being sharply criticised by MEPs on Wednesday, the EU said it strived to work with its neighbours and help improve democra-

cy and human rights compliance through partnerships rather than breaking off relations with them.

The four-page joint declaration to be issued on the deal is expected to include commitments on human rights.

A leak of the statement says: "Egypt and the EU will continue to work on their commitments to further promote democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights, gender equality and equal opportunities, as agreed in the partnership priorities. The EU stands ready to assist Egypt in the implementation of its national strategy for human rights in alignment with the provisions of the association agreement and the partnership priorities 2021-2027." Describing a "strategic and comprehensive partnership", the declaration also states that the "European Union acknowledges Egypt as a reliable partner, as well as Egypt's unique and vital geo-strategic role as a pillar of security, moderation and peace in the region of the Mediterranean, the Near East and Africa".

It also says that the deal is grounded in a commitment to the United Nations charter.

News Commentary

FECAFOOT and the Dance of the Wolves

By Julius Fondong

Sometimes in 2006, the then US Ambassador to the Cameroon Niels Marquardt and the then Cameroon Minister of Territorial Administration and Kansas University alum, Marafa Hamidou Yaya found themselves having a conversation at some nondescript social function in Yaoundé. In the course of their conversation, Mr Marafa told Ambassador Marquardt in confidence that he might be interested in running for president someday, if ever the incumbent president, Paul Biya, were to leave office. The Political Affairs Officer at the US Embassy at the time, Katherine Brucker, who was listening in, naturally reported Mr Marafa's comment in a Code Cable to Washington DC. The code cable was a speculative piece on succession scenarios in a post-Biya era, as seen by the US Mission in Yaoundé.

Four years later, in 2010, WIKILEAKS, leaked out thousands of US embassy dispatches from different embassies around the world to Washington, including the one that contained what Minister Marafa Yaya had told the Americans at that social event in 2006. It was immediately picked up and widely circulated by the local press. Shortly after, Mr Marafa was arrested, tried and jailed for 25 years for corruption. But everyone knew that his true crime was to have dared to harbor any presidential ambitions and for saying it out loud to an American Ambassador.

That is how the psychology of power works in Cameroon. It is a macabre dance of the wolves.

And it looks like the current Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT) president, Mr Samuel Eto'o, has wittingly or unwittingly, invited himself to that dance. He did so when he chose to become the head of one of the most strategic, delicate, highly coveted, but also very corrupt private voluntary organisation in Cameroon – FECAFOOT.

Mr Eto'o's exploits as a footballer are legendary and unquestionable. He is a global football icon with unimpeachable credentials. But as a leader he comes across as being narcissistic, vengeful, and power-hungry. He is undoubtedly drawn to public adulation and driven by (an over bloated?) sense of grandeur. Beyond his deliber-

ately constructed demeanor of humility lies naked arrogance. These character traits have all been typified in, i) his treatment of his former mistress Ms Natalie Koah (who published a book about it), ii) the period of his captaincy of the national team and currently, iii) his leadership of FECAFOOT. But most intriguing is how Mr Eto'o has inserted himself into the power play of Cameroon's murky political landscape. During a recent interview with a French TV network, he re-affirmed that he is very close to the Secretary General of the Presidency, but have a very poor relationship with his supervisory authority, the Minister in Charge of Sports. When asked if he nursed any presidential ambitions, or would like to follow in the footsteps of Mr George Weah, he was rather evasive and never gave a definite yes or no answer.

Now, it is an open secret that in the battle for the succession of President Paul Biya, two main camps have emerged. Both camps are currently engaged in a fierce, merciless, brutal dog-eat-dog fight that has so far seen a journalist brutally murdered; the powerful head of the intelligence service incarcerated; and a businessman who once thought of himself as untouchable and a self-styled 'bouclier du Président' jailed, with no prospects of ever getting out any time soon. As this fight rages on, each camp seeks to outwit and outplay the other by catching and 'frying a big fish' from the pond of the other camp so as to strike fear into their opponent's hearts. The FECAFOOT President has clearly chosen his own camp. By so doing, he has voluntarily inserted himself in this unfolding macabre dance of the wolves and I strongly suspect he may be the next big fish about to be fried.

Let Me Explain

I don't know if Mr Eto'o is aware but the fact of the matter is that during the period of his captaincy of the national team, his arrogance and over-bloated ego pushed him to do things that tarnished the image of the country and clearly embarrassed the government. For example, during the farewell match of the lions prior to their departure to Brazil for the 2014 World Cup, Mr Eto'o publicly humiliated the Prime Minister and Head of Government in front of 80,000 people at the Ahmadou Ahidjo stadium and millions of others watching on TV when he



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refused to receive the national flag from the PM as is the tradition. PM Philemon Yang ended up handing over the national flag to the German coach to go defend it in Brazil. It is important to remember that on that day, the Prime Minister was also the personal representative of the head of state at the farewell ceremony. So, by humiliating the PM, Mr Eto'o had effectively humiliated the President. A few years later, Mr Eto'o took upon himself to stop the national team from playing a friendly against Algeria, after FECAFOOT and the Government had given their assurances to the Algerians that the match will take place. To Cameroon's power holders, such crimes are never forgotten nor forgiven.

Since taking over FECAFOOT, Mr Eto'o has:

- Publicly humiliated Gen Semengue, Cameroon's most decorated military officer.
- Undermined the authority of the Sports Minister by going above his head to appoint Song Bahanack as the Senior National Team Manager.
- Arbitrarily terminated the contract of the French multinational giant Coq Sportif and arrogantly refused any amicable settlement even after supplications from Yannick Noah and senior French Government officials.
- Claimed to have signed a one-year sponsorship contract of one

billion francs CFA annually, with ONE ALL SPORT. No media coverage or videos of the signing ceremony have ever been made public, prompting suspicions that the whole thing might have been a scam.

The FECAFOOT president's arrogant and erratic management style is costing FECAFOOT millions of dollars in lawsuits and damages which are driving the association to bankruptcy. To make matters worse, under his leadership, and in spite his audacious promises, the performance of the national team has been far below expectation and not commensurate to the billions of francs CFA he has asked and received as subventions from the Government. In case Mr Eto'o doesn't know, the good performance of the national teams in international competitions is of strategic political and diplomatic importance to the Government. That is the one thing that projects Cameroon's power and respectability abroad. That is why the government pours in a lot of money in football and never tolerates any poor performances of the national teams.

But Mr Eto'o's problems from within the pack of wolves may come from his coziness with the military. You see, in most African countries, if you're remotely suspected of harboring ambitions of presidential power, getting close or cozying up to the military es-

tablishment does not help you. I cringed when I saw Mr Eto'o visiting elite, Special Forces troops around the country. In September 2022 he showed up for Brazil's 200th Independence celebrations and was seen onboard a Cameroon naval ship that was participating in the events. It is not clear in what capacity he was doing that. He has also been seen visiting with Burkina's young revolutionary military leader and received like a head of state. I can guarantee that none of this sits well with power holders in Yaoundé.

Any keen observer of what is happening within and around FECAFOOT immediately before and after the AFCON, should fear for Mr Eto'o. First, during the farewell ceremony organized for the indomitable lions prior to their departure for Cote d'Ivoire, the Personal Representative of the Head of State, at that ceremony, Mr Mvondo Ayolo (who is also the President's Director of Civil Cabinet) upon arriving at the venue, deliberately ignored Mr Eto'o and did not shake hands with him. Second, after the AFCON debacle and during his traditional Youth Day address to the nation, President Biya publicly said he has instructed the Minister of Sports to investigate the use of government funds remitted to FECAFOOT. With that kind of 'haute instruction' from 'la plus haute hierarchie' it will not be well for the FECAFOOT president. Those instructions have given Mr Eto'o's opponents in the other camp of the succession battle, all the ammunition they need to go after him.

Remember what I said about Marafa Hamidou Yaya? Harboring presidential ambitions in Cameroon while President Biya is still alive comes with great risk. Mr Eto'o is about to learn how high and how big the risk can be. First, they lured him with the FECAFOOT presidency. Like a true power-monger he could not resist the temptation. They pushed billions his way, knowing that in his arrogance he will misuse them. Then they gave him an illusion of power, and he fell for it. Now is he has been drawn deep into the dance of the wolves. Something tells me that by the end of this year, the FECAFOOT president might either be in jail, in exile or on the run. He might just be the next big fish to be fried.

But again, I could be wrong. And I sincerely hope I am.

Why Cameroon Could Be Banned from International Tournaments Due to 'Age Cheating'

Cameroon could be banned from international tournaments if Wilfried Nathan Doualla is proven guilty of 'age cheating'.

Cameroon's participation in international football tournaments hangs in the balance following allegations of age fraud involving Doualla. The Cameroonian Federation, known as FECAFOOT, has taken decisive action by suspending 62 other players including Doualla - who was the youngest member of the squad for January's Africa Cup of Nations.

The 17-year-old midfielder from Victoria United was a surprising addition to Rigobert Song's squad for the tournament held in Ivory Coast. However, FECAFOOT alleges that Doualla misrepresented his age, leading to his disqualification from participating in the Elite League's play-off games. Doualla's

true age still remains undisclosed, adding to the controversy surrounding the issue.

Meanwhile, Victoria United has vehemently denied allegations of double identities involving Doualla and his teammate Nji Richmond.

"We believe that this might be an error from the Fecafoot," a club statement read. "We call on our supporters to remain calm as we have submitted the necessary documents to justify that the players do not have a double identity."

This is not the first time Cameroon have faced scrutiny over age-related issues. In fact, it marks the third consecutive year that the nation has been embroiled in controversy surrounding age fraud.

The regulations set by the Nations Cup stipulate severe consequences for such violations. If fraud or forgery is proven, the national association in question faces suspension from participating in the following two editions of AFCON. If due to an administrative error, however, the suspension will be applicable just for one edition.

The latest information arises after French newspaper Le Monde conducted an investigation that uncovered the irregularities ahead of the 2023 Nations Cup. Despite inquiries from Le Monde, FECAFOOT has refrained from commenting on the matter, heightening suspicions surrounding the federation's handling of the situation.



Cameroon's Wilfried Nathan Doualla pictured at the Africa Cup of Nations in Ivory Coast.

Trump makes verbal gaffes at Ohio rally and predicts 'bloodbath' if defeated

President hits out at Trump's mental fitness as Republican candidate insists Biden had beaten 'Barack Hussein Obama' in elections that never took place



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures to the crowd at a campaign rally Saturday, in Vandalia, Ohio

Joe Biden tore into Donald Trump's mental stability at a dinner in Washington DC on Saturday – just as the former president was making verbal gaffes at a campaign rally in Ohio as well as predicting a “bloodbath” if he met defeat in November's election. Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, confused the crowd at an appearance in Vandalia by insisting that Biden had beaten “Barack Hussein Obama” in elections nationally that never took place. Freewheeling during a speech in which his teleprompters were seemingly disabled by high winds, Trump – a frequent critic of the 81-year-old Biden's age and mental acuity – struggled to pronounce the words “bite” and “largest”. And he left the crowd scratching their heads over the reference to Obama, whom Biden served as vice-president from 2009 to 2017 before taking the

Oval Office from Trump in 2020. “You know what's interesting? Joe Biden won against Barack Hussein Obama. Has anyone ever heard of him? Every swing state, Biden beat Obama but in every other state, he got killed,” Trump said. Biden joked about Trump's mental fitness at Saturday night's Gridiron club dinner, a traditional “roast” attended by politicians and journalists dating to the 1880s. “One candidate is too old and mentally unfit to be president. The other one is me,” the president said. “Don't tell him. He thinks he's running against Barack Obama, that's what he said,” Biden added, referring to several previous occasions when the 77-year-old Trump has confused the incumbent and presumptive 2024 opponent with his Democratic predecessor. Trump's Ohio address, ostensibly

in support of Bernie Moreno, his preferred candidate in the state's Republican Senate primary Tuesday, also saw the former president returning to darker, more apocalyptic themes.

The US, Trump insisted during comments about the auto workers and the car industry, was headed for “a bloodbath” if he was rejected again at the polls in favor of Biden.

“Now, if I don't get elected, it's gonna be a bloodbath. That's going to be the least of it. It's going to be a bloodbath for the country,” he said, without clarifying what he meant.

Later, he added: “I don't think you're going to have another election in this country, if we don't win this election... certainly not an election that's meaningful.”

His comments prompted a statement from Biden's re-election campaign that said “this is who Donald Trump is”.

A Biden campaign spokesperson James Singer said: “He wants another January 6, but the American people are going to give him another electoral defeat this November because they continue to reject his extremism, his affection for violence, and his thirst for revenge.”

Two Republicans who have been critical of Trump, however, came to his defense. Louisiana senator Bill Cassidy told NBC's Meet the Press on Sunday: “You could also look at the definition of bloodbath and it could be an economic disaster. And so if he's speaking about the auto industry, in particular in Ohio, then you can take it a little bit more context.”

Mike Pence, Trump's former vice-president who this week refused to endorse his candidacy,

made a similar argument. “[He] was clearly talking about the impact of imports devastating the American automotive industry,” Pence said on CBS's Face the Nation.

Also during his speech, repeating unsubstantiated claims that foreign countries were “emptying” their prisons and mental institutions into the US, Trump took a familiar swipe at immigrants, calling some of them “animals”.

“I don't know if you call them people. They're not people, in my opinion,” he said. “But I'm not allowed to say that because the radical left says that's a terrible thing to say.”

Moreno, a Colombian immigrant who made a fortune from his car dealerships, joined in the nationalistic rhetoric, demanding that anybody who comes to the US learned to speak English.

“We don't need to vote in five different languages. We learn the language,” he said. “It means you assimilate. You become part of America – America doesn't become part of you.”

At other times during an often wild 90-minute address, Trump tossed out personal insults at political opponents. He called Biden “stupid” several times; made a vulgar reference to the first name of Fani Willis, the Georgia prosecutor in his criminal case for trying to overturn his 2020 election defeat; called Democratic California governor Gavin Newsom “new-scum”; and attacked the personal appearance of JB Pritzker, the governor of Illinois, the New York Times reported.

He also attempted to blame the installation of the troublesome teleprompters on Biden, and he urged the event organizers not to

pay the contractors.

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic former US House speaker, condemned Trump's comments during a Sunday appearance on CNN's State of the Union.

“You wouldn't even allow him in your house, much less then the White House,” she said.

“We just have to win this election, because he's even predicting a bloodbath. What does that mean, he's going to exact a bloodbath? There's something wrong here. How respectful I am of the American people and their goodness, but how much more do they have to see from him to understand that this isn't what our country is about?”

Biden echoed the warnings during the non-comedic section of his address to the Gridiron dinner, attended by more than 650 guests, continuing to refuse to use Trump's name, and calling him only “my predecessor”.

“We live in an unprecedented moment in democracy,” Biden said. “An unprecedented moment for history. Democracy and freedom are literally under attack. [Russian president Vladimir] Putin's on the march in Europe. My predecessor bows down to him and says to him, ‘do whatever the hell you want.’”

“Freedom is under assault. The freedom to vote, the freedom to choose and so much more. The lies about the 2020 election, the plot to overturn it, to embrace the January 6 insurrection, pose the greatest threat to our democracy since the civil war.”

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Haiti healthcare system on verge of collapse as gang warfare rages on

Only a single hospital in Port-au-Prince remains open, with others devoid of staff as patients look for care and the dead pile up

Haiti's healthcare system has all but collapsed amid the ferocious gang insurrection which forced the resignation of the country's prime minister, leaving victims of the violence with little hope of medical attention, according to aid workers in the stricken Caribbean country. In the past two weeks hospitals have been set ablaze, doctors murdered and the most basic medical supplies have now dried up. Only a single public hospital in Haiti's capital now remains operational – and that too is expected to shut its doors soon. “The healthcare system in Port-au-Prince is basically nonexistent,” said Mackynzie Archer, a consultant advising leading medical NGOs in Haiti. “Things are deteriorating quickly.” Fighting between the heavily armed gangs and security forces has paralysed Haiti's capital in the worst episode of violence the Caribbean country has seen in decades. Armed bandits attacked police stations, government buildings and the international airport, achieving their stated goal on Monday when the prime minister, Ariel Henry, announced he would step down once a transitional council had been appointed. But as political factions jockey for position, the violence has continued. About half of the Haitian pop-

ulation is going hungry, water and electricity are scarce, and civilians are struck by stray bullets on a daily basis.

At least 15,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in the latest wave of gun battles, the UN estimates, bringing the total number of internally displaced people to more than 360,000.

“Residents of Port-au-Prince have been reduced to forced nomads, constantly moving between neighbourhoods, seeking refuge with relatives or strangers, or residing in temporary shelter,” said Laurent Uwumuremyi, director for Haiti at the American charity Mercy Corps. “Fear permeates every corner.”

The eruption of street warfare has caused a spike in emergency patient admissions for wounds just as most hospitals – unable to get the staff, power or basic medical supplies they need – are closing their doors. Several facilities, including St Francis de Sales, one of the capital's last remaining trauma care centres, and Jude-Anne Hospital, which treats emergency patients, have been set on fire and ransacked.

“They took everything – the operating rooms, the X-rays, everything from the labs and the pharmacies,” Dr Ronald V LaRoche told the New York Times. “Imagine! They are taking windows from hospitals! Doors!”

Even before the current unrest, gunmen controlled main roads and access to the city's port, choking supplies of anaesthetic, blood and oxygen.

“It was not uncommon for patients to wait in a hospital bed for routine surgeries for a month as there are no medical supplies to operate on them with,” Archer said.

Healthcare workers are staying home to avoid being caught in the crossfire of street skirmishes or assassinated by teenagers with assault rifles for giving medical treatment to police or rival gang members. Dr Nathalie Barthélémy Laurent became the latest fatality in the healthcare community on Tuesday when armed men sprayed her car with bullets near her home in Port-au-Prince.

At the State University of Haiti hospital, a general medical care center in the centre of Port-au-Prince, BBC reporters found no medical staff in a clinic full of patients – only a dead body covered with flies decomposing in the tropical heat.

“There are no doctors, they all fled last week,” one patient told the BBC. Haiti's people have faced enormous challenges in recent decades, including a deadly cholera outbreak and a 2010 earthquake which killed more than 200,000 people.

But the recent anarchy has eclipsed past episodes of desperation, said

Francesco Segoni, a spokesperson for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) who compared the current humanitarian situation to that of a war zone.

A recent MSF survey of the gang heartlands of Cite Soleil found that four in every 10 deaths were caused by violence – a figure comparable to those in Raqqa when the Syrian city was dominated by the Islamic State and blitzed by an international bombing campaign.

“Violence is virtually unchecked. There's no place in Port-au-Prince that is safe today,” Segoni said.

The crisis is also causing unnecessary deaths among pregnant women and elderly people, who are dying because they cannot find life-saving hospital or treatment medicine that would be deemed basic in most parts of the world.

“The gangs and the politicians can't find an agreement and the population is paying a price,” said Flavia Maurello, head of the Italian charity AVSI in Haiti.

Caribbean leaders and the US have backed a plan in which a transitional council will take over from Henry. But several key factions have refused to participate, while gang leader Jimmy “Barbeque” Chérizier – the apparent architect of the current unrest – has rejected any solution backed by the international community.

MSF and other NGOs have managed to open mobile clinics in some areas but it remains unclear how long they will be able to safely operate.

“We fear we will run out of medicines and medical supplies, which are absolutely essential to meet the enormous needs we are facing at the moment,” said Mumuza Muhindo Musubaho, who heads up MSF's Haiti operations.

At Bernard Mevs, a 50-bed critical care clinic in the north of the capital, nurses are desperately trying to keep patients alive with a barebones staff and without electricity, said Archer.

“It is likely that in the next week or so, they will also close, which will be the final blow to the healthcare system in Port-au-Prince.”



A gang member walks through Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on 11 March 2024