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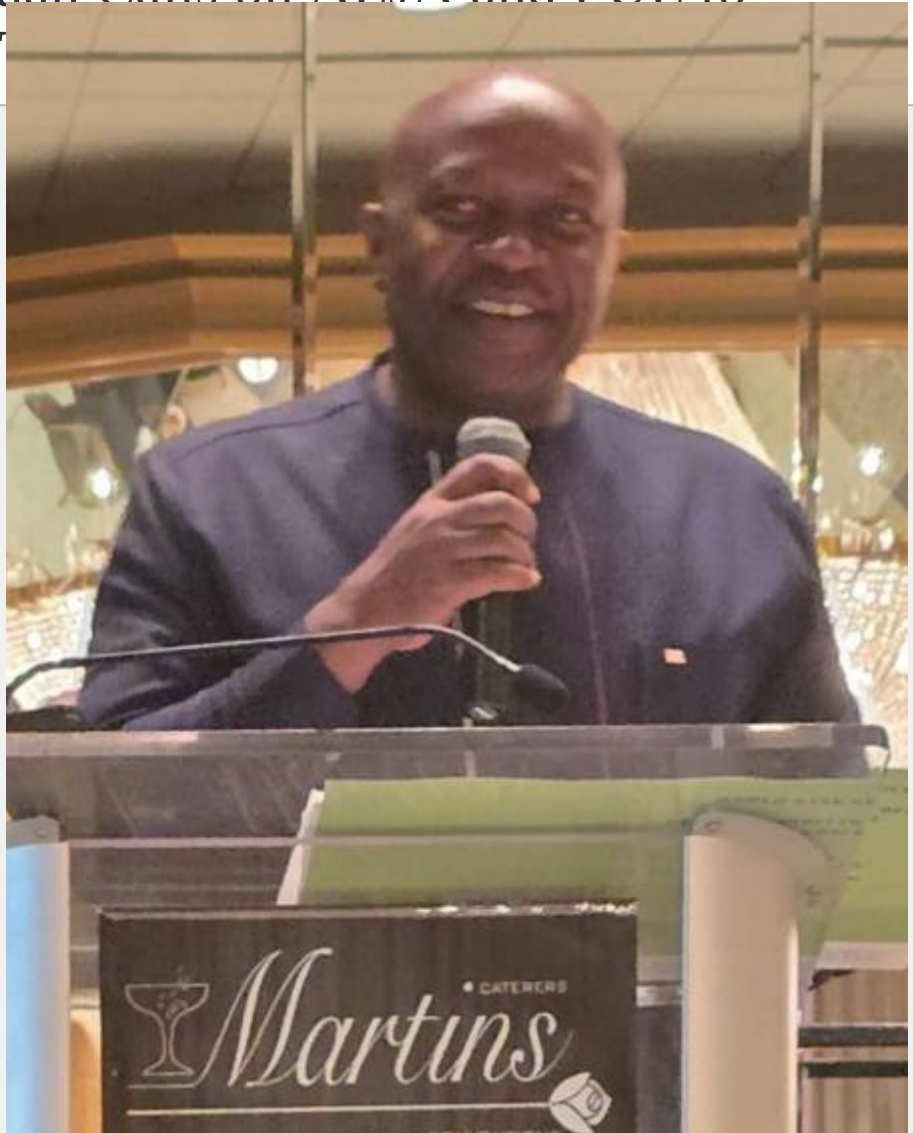
Wed, Oct 22, 2025

Washington D.C. October 20, 2025. Minister of Finance, Development, and Planning, Hon. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan, called on the Association of Liberian Journalists in the Americas (ALJA) and the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) to rise to the challenge of safeguarding the nation's public information space. Speaking recently at the 13th Annual Convention of ALJA in Maryland, USA, Minister Ngafuan urged both organizations to "reprimand quacks and pollutants" who undermine broadcasting integrity and public trust.

Ngafuan's remarks, delivered with the gravitas of a seasoned statesman and the passion of a media enthusiast, emphasized the urgent need for ethical recalibration in Liberia's evolving media landscape. "The media space is fast changing," he said, "and so too must the institutions that govern it. The rise of citizen journalism, social media

influencers, and AI-driven content creation has blurred the lines between fact and fiction. The PUL and ALJA must not remain static while the terrain shifts beneath them."

The Minister spent his formative years in Logan Town, Monrovia, where his father, the late Dennis Ngaima Ngafuan, despite limited means, invested daily in newspapers, a radio, and eventually a small black-and-white television. "My father's way of responding to my insatiable quest to understand Liberia's turbulent events was to use his last dime to buy newspapers and a radio receiver," Ngafuan recalled.



[1]

Al-Jerome Anasta Chede Sr.

Finance Minister Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan

He credited the Liberian media for shaping his intellectual development, citing journalists and broadcasters such as Rufus Darpoh, Stanton Peabody, Kenneth Y. Best, and Victoria Christopher as pivotal influences. “The Liberian media inscribed many good things on my tabula rasa,” he said, referencing philosopher John Locke’s concept of the blank slate. “I am what I am today because of the very positive impact the Liberian media had on me.”

Minister Ngafuan acknowledged the state’s responsibility in enabling media robustness and growth. He criticized the chronic delays in payments to media entities for services rendered to government institutions, calling such delays “a death blow” to small businesses. “If government fails or terribly delays paying for services rendered by the media, it suffocates the media and makes it very difficult for media entities to pay their workers, cater for other bills, and fully uphold their objectivity and independence,” he warned.

To address this, Ngafuan announced a new directive: the Communications Unit at the Ministry of Finance will liaise with media entities to compile outstanding payments and report directly to his office for prompt follow-up. “We are not just doing this for the media,” he said. “We are improving our systems and time budgeting various tasks in the payment review and approval chain so that those who render legitimate services for government can get their payments on time and are not at the mercy of any rent-seeking bureaucrats.”

The Finance boss acknowledged the existence of partisan media entities—both pro- and anti-government—and argued that while bias may compromise objectivity, transparency about such bias at least gives the public a framework for evaluating content. “Those who unabashedly declare their bias give their audience advance notice that balance may be compromised,” he said.

However, he reserved his strongest critique for those who claim to be independent, credible, and objective but fail to uphold those standards. “It is unfair for a business to advertise a white shirt but deliver a black one,” Ngafuan said, drawing a sharp analogy. “If you posture as independent, credible, and reliable, accountability to your audience demands that when the government does condemnable things, you condemn government; but when the government does commendable things, you commend government.”

He emphasized that true independence is not synonymous with anti-government sentiment. “You condemn or commend not because you like or hate government,” he said. “You do so because you like the truth, you like your audience, and above all else, you like your country.”

Ngafuan concluded with a challenge to ALJA and PUL: evolve or risk irrelevance. He urged both organizations to develop smart strategies for engaging with the growing community of influencers and citizen journalists who now occupy significant space in public discourse. “Without breaching or diluting membership standards,” he said, “you must forge stronger partnerships that can be mutually beneficial.”

He warned against allowing unethical actors to malign innocent personalities and distort public perception. “In every government, there are the good, the bad, and the ugly. Similarly, in the media, there are the good, the bad, and the ugly. What matters most is that the good people in government and the good people in the media must forge stronger partnerships for the good of the nation.”

Ngafuan’s speech was more than a policy statement—it was a moral appeal, a personal reflection, and a strategic roadmap. In calling on ALJA and PUL to protect the public trust and space, he reminded the nation that the media is not just a mirror of society, it is a molder of minds, a guardian of truth, and a cornerstone of democracy.

In a related development, The Minister of Information, Honorable Jerolinmek M. Piah called on the PUL to self-censor its members to always ensure their adherence to ethical and professional standards. He praised the current leadership of the Union for taking some concrete steps in that direction and promised his Ministry’s close collaboration. Minister Piah assured that press freedom will always be respected under the leadership of President Joseph Nyuma Boakai Sr.

In brief remarks, Charles Allen, the Minister Counselor for Political and Diaspora Affairs at the Embassy of Liberia in Washington D.C. who proxied for Ambassador Dr. Al-Hassan Conteh, urged members of ALJA to renew their passion for truth and service. “The future of Liberia is been written every day by your pens, cameras and platforms”, Minister Counselor Allen averred.

Al-Jerome Anastas Chede

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