

# THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

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## NDUNG'U'S GAMBLE

The CS's ambitious Sh3.68 trillion budget is based on probabilities, such as raising the debt ceiling. Yet, the ultimate responsibility over public debt rests with MPs, not the minister. The limit is not derived from complex anchors calculated on the basis of arithmetic formulae or algorithms. Is this the biggest budget gamble in the nation's history?

J. Niyagah

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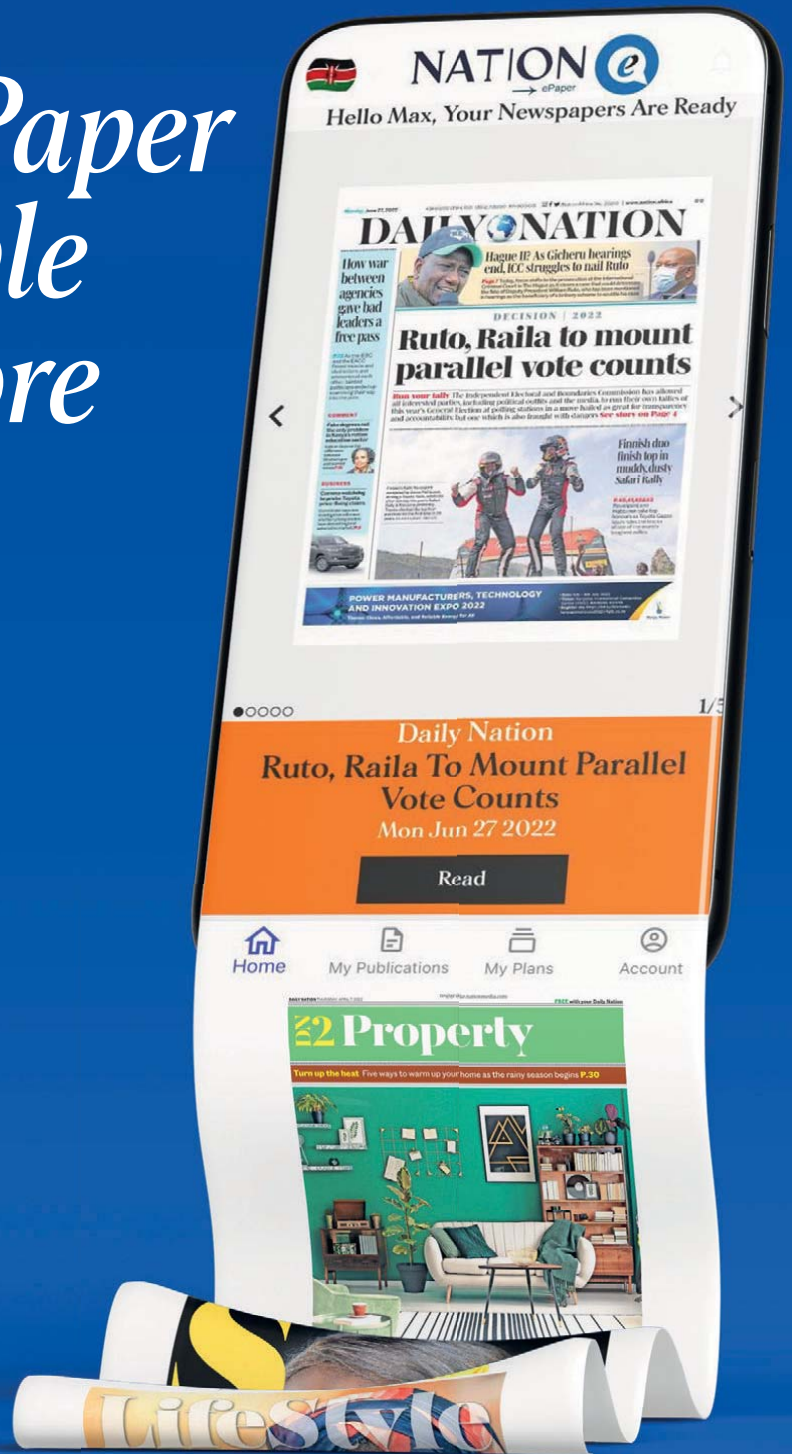
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The historic East Africa Pamoja Bid seeks to bring the Africa Cup of Nations to the region for the first time. We, however, don't know whether the three countries are serious about this bid or it's just a bad joke they are playing. Uganda and Tanzania maybe serious about it, but our knowledge of Kenya keeps us rather doubtful.

It is not the first time Kenya is bidding to host this tournament. We have done that before and managed to shame ourselves in the most spectacular manner. In 1996, we placed our bid and followed it through with loads of lies and future promises. We assured the Confederation of African Football (Caf) that we would embark on infrastructure development. We vowed – and with glossy diagrams – to show them how organised we were. We lobbied many countries and our talking team did a very good job at that; we swore seriousness until the continent fell in line. We were handed the hosting rights and just then we went on a shocking slumber.

We could not meet the timelines for readiness and any Caf delegation that came to inspect our readiness were met with sugary words, taken to bush game drives, urged to adopt poor orphaned cheetahs... we were screening them from our ineptitude. They finally saw through our veneer of 'civilisation'; they saw us for what we really were: despicable people. They had to rush and find another venue, and the newly independent South Africa filled in to save Caf the blushes. It was a real shame.

And we never learned from that. A few years ago, we bid again for hosting of Chan. We managed again to make fools of ourselves. Instead of giving up or putting our house in order, we are now dragging Tanzania and Uganda into our shameful excursion.

The Pamoja Bid will face compe-



Allan Buluku

The Moi International Sports Centre, Kasarani, is an embarrassing relic from the 1980s, while the Nyayo National Stadium qualifies for an historical monument. The City Stadium is an old ruin that seems to predate Fort Jesus, while the Mombasa Stadium is a wall that surrounds a jungle and even National Geographic could find some unknown species of amphibians.

tion from Algeria, Botswana and Egypt. These are nations with proper planning and their infrastructure is perfect. Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda have never hosted the Afcon before and will face a huge task to win over Caf due to lack of stadia and infrastructure. There's no any world-class facility in the region. Kenya, in particular, doesn't have a single stadium that fits Fifa and Caf specifications.

Despite the billions of shillings that have been pumped into stadia across the country, in spite of the political rhetoric that has verbally built several stadia in each county, we are in the sad reality that we have no proper stadium to sell to Caf as our marketing point.

The Moi International Sports Centre, Kasarani, is a 36-year-old relic, while the Nyayo National Stadium qualifies for

an historical monument. The City Stadium is an old ruin that seems to predate Fort Jesus, while the Mombasa Stadium is a wall that surrounds a jungle and even National Geographic could find some unknown species of amphibians.

Yet, in the 2023/24 Budget, the Treasury slashed the sports allocation by a half. The Treasury proposed the allocation of Sh12.5 billion to the tourism, sports, culture and recreational sector. Of this, Sh6.4 billion will go to the Sports, Culture and Social Development Fund. Interestingly, there was no mention of any allocation for the Afcon bid.

We only know how to reap where we do not sow. Last week, Faith Kipyegon did the country proud by smashing two world records in the Diamond League. Kenyans were extremely happy over this feat and the social media was awash with congratulations from fans.

When the young champion jetted back home, they could even find time in the 'busy' presidential schedule to fit her into the State House visit. The leaders wished to soak in the limelight from the athlete. New promises were doled out to sportsmen and women; financial rewards were dangled in the future for sports personalities.

It never even once bothered them just how the young lady got to where she is; who prepared her, how did she go to compete... that surely wasn't their problem. Reap where we do not sow is the mantra.

The American statesman Benjamin Franklin once observed, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." We are used to shaming ourselves, but please, we shouldn't drag in Tanzania and Uganda, who may not be as brazen and incorrigible like us.

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the telescope

■ MPs to propose amendments this week

## Finance Bill set for Third Reading

MPs are this week expected to propose amendments to the Finance Bill, 2023. The move comes days after the National Assembly passed the report at the Second Reading, with 176 MPs voting in favour against 81.

The Orange Democratic Movement has summoned 28 of its MPs who were absent during its voting. They include Dadaab MP Farah Maalim, Embakassi East's Babu Owino and Lang'ata's Felix Odiwuor.

According to the Constitution, once tabled in Parliament, a Bill goes through four main stages before it becomes law; First Reading, Second Reading, Third Reading, Presidential Assent, and lastly its enforcement.

The Bill has turned controversial due to the recommended tax measures to be im-

posed on Kenyans, with the proceeds to be channelled towards building of affordable homes. The Bill also proposes increased Value Added Tax on fuel. In the First Reading, a Bill is introduced to the House. The Bill is assigned to the House's Finance Committee for discussion and public participation.

In the Second Reading, a draft of the Bill is read a second time and members debate before voting to move the motion to the next stage.

In the Third Reading, the Bill is read with all amendments and given final approval by the legislative body. Here, any member is allowed to propose amendments, whose fate is also decided through voting. MPs have until June 30 to pass the Bill, which should take effect on July 1.



Once tabled in Parliament, a Bill goes through four main stages before it becomes law.

■ Leaders will network and share ideas

## Bank customer summit at KICC



Millennials and other digitally minded consumers are forcing financial institutions to rethink the way they do business. These consumers want to bank when and how it suits them — and to meet those ex-

pectations, banks are looking at technology solutions from around the world. In this vein, the 2023 Bank Customer Experience Summit will be held at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre on June 22 and 23. It will provide a unique opportunity for industry innovators and thought leaders to share ideas, and will also be an excellent way for peers to network and exchange best practices.

■ Defending champion ready for Canadian GP



Red Bull's Max Verstappen drives in the pit lane during the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka on October 9, 2022.

## Verstappen out to keep winning run

Refreshed by a Mediterranean break since winning in Spain, defending world champion Max Verstappen will be seeking to continue his dominant run and stretch his title-race lead in this weekend's Canadian Grand Prix.

The Red Bull driver, who won in Montreal last year, has reeled off successive victories in Miami, Monte Carlo and Barcelona to move 53 points clear of nearest rival and team-mate Sergio Perez in the drivers' championship. He has also led every lap since lap 48 in Florida, a total of 154, the longest unbroken run since 2012, when four-time champion Sebastian Vettel was equally supreme for the team.

Another win, in Sunday's 70-lap contest on the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, a high-speed semi-street track on the Ile Notre-Dame in the St Lawrence river, would be the team's

100th in Formula One — and 24th in 27 outings. Only four other teams have scored a century of GP wins — Ferrari, McLaren, Mercedes and Williams — and few individuals have relished such a coincidence of invincibility for man and machine.

Two-time champion Alberto Ascari of Italy led a record 305 laps between the 1952 Belgian GP and the Dutch event in 1953, a streak that three-time champion Ayrton Senna in 1988, with 264 consecutive laps in front, tried to match.

Briton Nigel Mansell, champion in 1987, and Vettel, are the only other drivers to have passed 200 laps as leader. "This track is unique," said Verstappen, 25.

"You get to ride some old-school kerbs and the scenery is quite cool, too. The car set-up has to be a balance between straight-line and running over the kerbs well."

■ They were allegedly assaulted between '79 and '92

## Nine accuse Cosby of sexual assault



Nine women accused Bill Cosby of sexually assaulting them decades ago in a lawsuit filed in Nevada last week, after the US state dropped its statute of limitations on civil sexual abuse cases. The lawsuit said the US comedian had used his "enormous

power, fame and prestige" to isolate and sexually assault the women.

The women were each allegedly assaulted between 1979 and 1992 in Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe, and Reno homes, hotels and dressing rooms.

They were able to sue after Nevada scrapped the civil statute of limitations for sexual abuse cases involving adults on May 31. The state had previously imposed a two-year limit for those over 18 to bring their cases to court. Cosby, 85, was a towering figure in late-20th century

kenya lens

■ ABABU NAMWAMBA'S HERCULEAN TASK

# THE MESS IN SPORTS

**ATHLETICS:** The government has committed Sh700 million annually for the next five years to fight doping in athletics. The plan is being implemented by a multi-agency team led by the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya, working closely with the World Anti-Doping Agency's Athletics Integrity Unit.



**THE MASTERPLAN:** The President asked me to use my global networks to rebuild the trust of international institutions like Fifa, CAF, the International Olympics Committee and World Athletics in Kenya, and to mobilise global partnerships around the promotion of the youth agenda, sports and the creative economy.

**MOTORSPORTS:** Claims of embezzlement of public funds in preparations for the Safari Rally, the most challenging leg of the World Rally Championship circuit. Strategies in place to ensure the race remains in the WRC.



**AFCON 2027:** Kenya does not have a single stadium that ticks the essential Fifa and Confederation of African Football boxes. The historic bid is inspired by the vision of deploying the power of sports for regional integration and shared prosperity of all the peoples of East Africa.



**CRICKET:** Kenya reached the semi-finals of the 2003 Cricket World Cup and was knocking on the doors of the Test-playing club, when things suddenly took a turn. Kenya were stripped of their ODI status in 2014 after failing to qualify for the 2015 World Cup.



**INFRASTRUCTURE:** Our stadia are certainly not in the best of shapes, the result of long-term neglect coupled with incoherent and haphazard attempts at development that have bequeathed the country more white elephants than international stadia.



**RUGBY:** The national Sevens team sparked in the World Series for many years, the highlight of which was the 2016 Main Cup victory in Singapore. Kenya Sevens was this year relegated from the series for the first time in 23 years.



During one of his most recent public appearances, Sports and Youth Affairs Cabinet Secretary Ababu Namwamba was sandwiched between President William Ruto and Opposition Chief Raila Odinga at the fourth edition of the Kip Keino Classic Athletics Continental Gold Tour at Moi International Sports Complex in Kasarani on May 13, and the following day at the Nyayo National Stadium, during a Mashemeji derby between AFC Leopards and Gor Mahia.

In an in-depth interview with OSCAR OBONYO, the CS lifts the lid on a wide range of issues, including preparations for Kenya's team to the Olympics, the country's joint bid with Tanzania and Uganda to host the

African Cup of Nations in 2027 (Afcon) and the doping crisis in athletics.

The CS discusses the recently launched "Talanta Hela" project, the fate of other sports including Safari Rally, rugby and cricket, and his ties with the two political bigwigs, President Ruto and opposition chief Raila Odinga. Below are excerpts of the interview.

**WR: Let us start with athletics, where we are world beaters. What is the status of things and how prepared are we for the Olympics?**

CS: Athletics is the jewel in Kenya's sporting crown. I applaud all our greats, both past and present, for maintaining our nation's incredible world conquer-

ing heritage, the latest being the mind-blowing heroics of Faith Kipyegon in Florence, Italy and Paris, France. As we say in Swahili, *safari ya kesho hupangwa leo*. To avoid pitfalls that have afflicted Team Kenya at key global events, this time we are on top of things in timely planning. I tasked the National Olympics Committee of Kenya (NOC-K) to get me a roadmap and budget, which they duly did. Three weeks ago we retreated to discuss the details, and today I can confidently tell Kenyans that our Roadmap to Paris 2024 is ready and shortly I will be gazetting the team that will lead the country to Paris.

**How rampant is the doping problem in athletics, and how are you addressing it?**

When I took office seven months ago, Kenya was actually on the verge of being banned by World Athletics for the unacceptably high number of cases. I had to move with haste to engage World Athletics President, Lord Sebastian Coe, who also visited Kenya in January. To forestall the ban, we agreed on a comprehensive plan to confront the doping menace. I hosted a national multi-agency stakeholders forum last November, where the plan was developed. We committed US\$5 million (KSh700 million) annually for the next five years to bankroll this plan, whose implementation we have handed over to a multi-agency team led by the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya working closely with the World An-

Continued on Page 6

## kenya lens

# Namwamba's mission to raise the game

Continued from Page 5

ti-Doping Agency's Athletics Integrity Unit. We are on track. This is a war we must win.

Kenya has established a long-standing heritage of competing and winning clean, from Wilson Kiprugut Chumo, winner of Kenya's first ever Olympics medal (bronze at Tokyo '64) to Kipchoge Keino, Paul Tergat, Catherine Ndereba, John Ngugi, Wilfred Bungei, David Rudisha... the list is endless. Our current stars like Faith Kipyegon, Emmanuel Wanyonyi and Ferdinand Omonia are continuing to demonstrate that we have what it takes to win clean. And for the criminal syndicate facilitating this vile practice, we are coming down on you like a brick wall. We will not allow a few criminal elements to soil Kenya's proud sporting pedigree and heritage.

**Besides Coe, you also met Fifa president Gianni Infantino over Kenya's ban. How did you manoeuvre through this one?**

The Fifa suspension put Kenyan football in limbo, destroying that whole economic ecosystem that supports a wide range of livelihoods. Players, coaches, referees, security, health personnel, support staff – the whole range of dependents on football activities were hit hard! And of course Kenya was locked out of the entire international football circuit, with devastating implications. Our referees also missed out on consideration for the Qatar World Cup as well as Afcon. This dire scenario headlined the total mess in sports and that is why I set the speedy lifting of the Fifa suspension as my number one priority, which I pulled off in exactly one month, 30 swift days upon assuming office. I took office on October 28, the suspension was lifted on November 28, 2022. How exactly did we do it? Quintessential diplomacy riding on deft balancing interspersed with hard-nosed negotiations. Steel in vel-

vet gloves! I directly engaged Fifa President Gianni Infantino, whom I met in Qatar, and made it clear to the local football mandarins that their business as usual must cede ground to my business unusual. Long story short, our football has returned, although badly tattered, bruised

and limping.

**Yet still, you have set in motion plans for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda's joint bid to host Afcon 2027. Are we really ready for Africa's biggest football festival?**

The historic East Africa Pamo-

ja bid, the official branding of the joint bid, is perfectly on track. I am actually talking to you now from Kampala, where we are gathered as part of our ongoing joint seamless coordination to ensure absolute coherence and synergy. This joint bid is inspired by our vision of deploying the power of sports for regional integration and shared prosperity of all the peoples of East Africa.

**Going by past experiences, though, including 1996, when we approached the bid rather casually, what is the level of our preparedness this time around?**

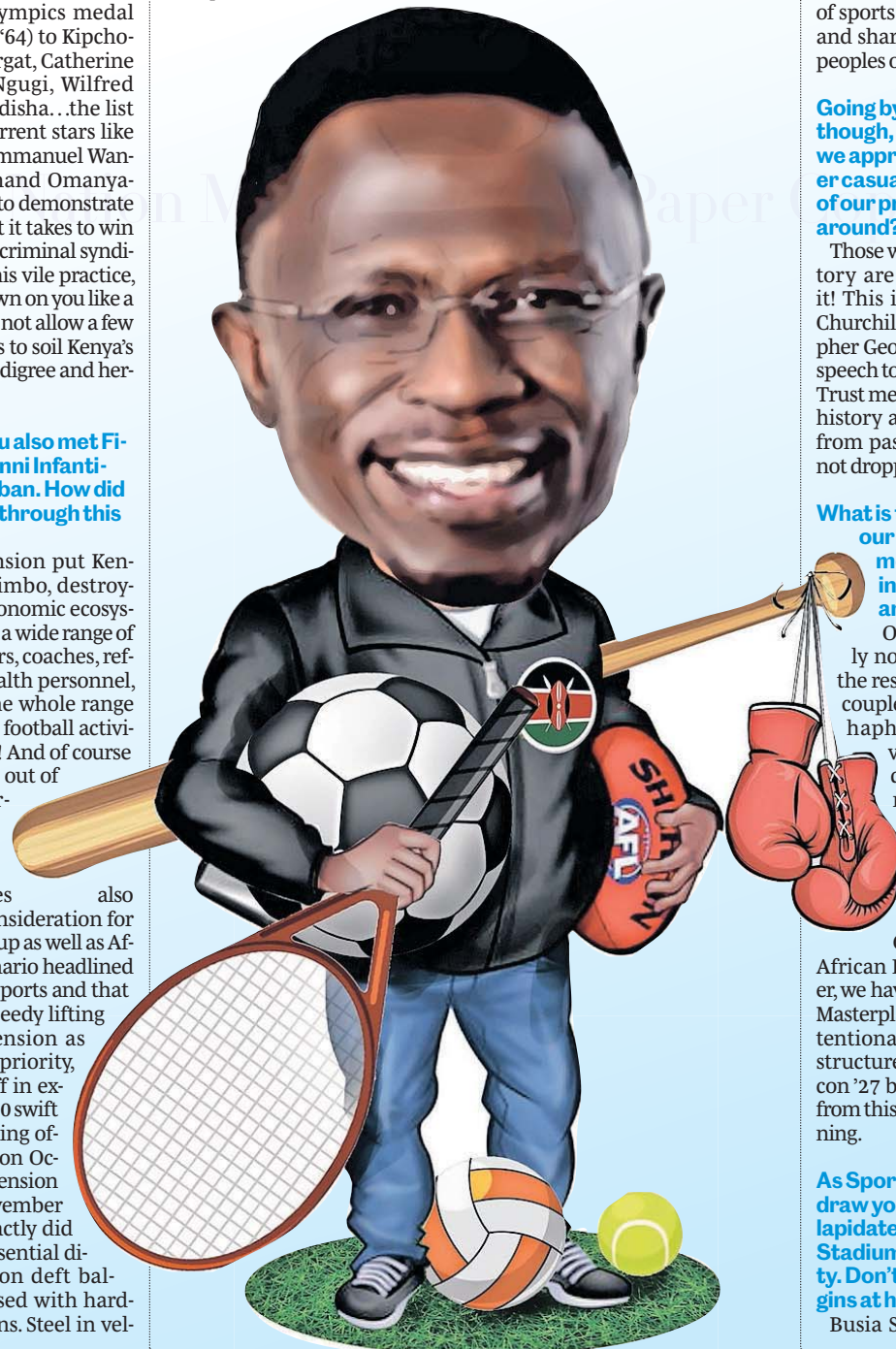
Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it! This is a refrain by Winston Churchill, paraphrasing philosopher George Santayana, in a 1948 speech to the House of Commons. Trust me, we are good students of history and we have learnt well from past Afcon foibles. We are not dropping this ball.

**What is the current status of our stadia, and do they meet the acceptable international standards?**

Our stadia are certainly not in the best of shapes, the result of long-term neglect coupled with incoherent and haphazard attempts at development that have bequeathed the country more white elephants than international stadia. As we speak, Kenya does not have a single stadium that ticks the essential Fifa and CAF (Confederation of African Football) boxes. However, we have developed a coherent Masterplan for deliberate and intentional sports and arts infrastructure development. Our Afcon '27 bid will benefit big time from this strategic visionary planning.

**As Sports CS, allow me to draw your attention to the dilapidated state of the Busia Stadium, in your home county. Don't you think charity begins at home?**

Busia Stadium is a county re-



J. Nygah

## kenya lens

sponsibility. And like many stadia across Kenya, the deplorable state of this facility is the result of years of neglect by those concerned, primarily the county government. But those are bygones. The good news is that Busia is included in our revolutionary Sports and Arts Infrastructure Masterplan, and transformation is coming. Busia is a fountain of talent, the county that has given Kenya a Uefa Champions League winner in McDonald Mariga, the only Kenyan player to grace the English Premier League in Victor Wanyama, and the only Kenyan, indeed African, winner of an Olympics boxing gold medal in Robert Wangila Napunyi. The list is long. Busia County certainly deserves a fitting sports arena to honour this great sporting pedigree.

**Victor Wanyama has set up a sports academy in the same county. How does your ministry plan to leverage on this?**

I am super proud of Victor and his family, whose patriarch, Noah Wanyama 'Landmawe' is himself a Kenyan football legend in his own right. I am in touch with Victor and his family and we fully support the academy, with which we want to synergise the development of talent in Busia County, western Kenya and indeed the whole country.

**President Ruto recently presided over the formal launch of "Talanta Hela". Is the project a panacea to young people's unemployment problem?**

Talanta Hela is the most revolutionary, no doubt most consequential policy frame for sports and the creatives in Kenyan history. In those two ordinary Swahili words *Talanta* (talent) and *Hela* (money) lies the antidote to what has ailed sports and the creative industry forever. Talanta Hela is already monetising and turning talent into sustainable livelihoods in a manner never seen before in this country. It started with winners of the Talanta Hela logo design competition, won by Job Ogwen. The creatives earned handsomely from that. Then there are the Kenya National Theatre (KNT) and the film (Kalasha) awards, which we have monetised. In sports, we now have a brand new reward scheme, with Faith Kipyegon and Ferdinand Omanyala as the first beneficiar-

ies. The Scheme will officially be unveiled soon by President William Ruto in a ceremony that will see us reward many more sportsmen and women, including team sport players.

**Why did you revoke the appointments of Carol Radull, Daniel Ndambuki, Dennis Itumbi and Azziad Nasenya and others in the Talanta Hela Council barely hours before the project's launch?**

Talanta Hela is too important to be undermined by negative energy, bile, malicious intent and frivolous litigation. They were placing a revolutionary initiative at the risk of being embroiled in endless vexatious and frivolous court battles. I moved to shield Talanta Hela from this whole brouhaha of hot air. Talanta Hela is rooted in The Plan (Kenya Kwanza Manifesto) and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, a pivotal legacy initiative.

**Fair enough. Let us switch focus to the Safari Rally, where there are claims that officials have embezzled public funds. What strategies are in place to ensure the sport remains in the World Rally Championships circuit?**

I inherited myriad pains and migraines in this sporting arena. But never mind, I am sorting them out one after the other. There is a new Sheriff in town, new order and fresh style. Just trust the process.

**Kenya played in the semi-finals of the 2003 Cricket World Cup and was knocking on the doors of the Test-playing club, when things suddenly took a turn. The national Sevens rugby team also sparkled in the World Series for more than a decade, the highlight of which was the 2016 Main Cup victory in Singapore. What are your plans for these sports?**

They are important games too that have suffered years of neglect and mismanagement. We are going back to the basics to get them back to elite level. We have fresh leadership. I have also held talks with Herbert Mensah, President of Rugby Africa. Kenya will bounce back stronger.

**You are a career politician, which is why I wish to ask you**

**about your closeness to the President and former Premier.**

I am privileged to share a very special connection and history with both President Ruto and former PM Raila. One sunny morning in April, 2003, William walked into my law firm office on State House Avenue and convinced me to get into politics. The rest is water under the bridge. This year we celebrate 20 long years of friendship, respect and comradeship that have extended across multiple political epochs, from going to battle side-by-side in the famous ODM formation of 2007, to serving together in the Kibaki-Raila coalition Cabinet, to now rolling out the pivotal Bottom Up Economic Transformation Agenda under his stewardship as Commander-in-Chief. In February 2022, I resigned from the Uhuru Kenyatta's government to fully support William Ruto's presidential bid. He is my beloved brother, respected comrade, venerated mentor and cherished President who enjoys my absolute and unequivocal support, respect, loyalty and fidelity.

And from 2004, when we first engaged politically, Raila Odinga has been a political mentor of immense impact and a living manifestation of the famous spirit of his father, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, which I first experienced as a young high school student when I read his stirring *Not Yet Uhuru* literary masterpiece. As a young man, I was elected to Parliament twice on his ODM Party ticket, and rose to serve as both Parliamentary Secretary and Secretary-General of the party. This gave me the opportunity to serve as co-chair of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitution Review that helped deliver the 2010 Constitution, a feat that earned me the national honour of Elder of the Golden Heart conferred by President Mwai Kibaki in December, 2012. Raila also nominated me for appointment by President Kibaki as Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs in the coalition government. I therefore have no hesitation acknowledging Raila as a political father whom I greatly respect and honour.

**Has it ever crossed your mind to get your two friends, who are now sworn political enemies, to the negotiation table?**

It would immeasurably gladden my heart, soul and mind to see my two great friends and mentors, true colossi of the Kenyan political landscape, close ranks on matters that are in the best interest of the people of Kenya, away from parochial jingoism. William Ruto and Raila Odinga in sync, playing tune Kenya in symphonic harmony, is one orchestra I believe every well-meaning Kenyan would enjoy and cheer. However, we must wean our politics off internecine wars in perpetuity. For this to happen, the government must be afforded the space to govern accountably, while the opposition must enjoy the constitutional liberty to robustly oversight responsibly.

**President Ruto recently mentioned that you wanted to be assigned a docket other than sports, but he maintained that he knew better where to place members of his team. What is your reaction?**

It is true the President talked to me before naming the Cabinet. He told me the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the Arts and Sports was a totally revamped space, with a new architecture. He then disclosed that he wanted me to head the Ministry because of three reasons. One, drawing on my diplomatic experience and global networks built over the years, to rebuild the trust of international institutions like Fifa, CAF, International Olympics Committee and World Athletics in Kenya, and to mobilise global partnerships around the promotion of the youth agenda, sports and the creative economy.

Two, he asked me to use my training and experience as an attorney to drive revolutionary legal and policy reforms across the three segments of the Ministry: youth, sports and the creative economy. Finally, he reminded me that I had served well in the same docket at the tail-end of the Kibaki-Raila coalition government, and during that brief stint, I had managed to get the Sports Act enacted, the National Youth Council actualised and reforms at the National Youth Service instituted. With humility and gratitude, I accepted the task my President placed before me. Looking back on the seven months since, I must say my boss was wise in his decision.

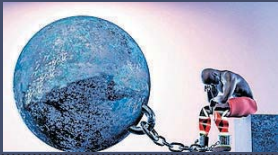
kenya lens

■ POWER OF PARLIAMENT

# THE GAMBLE OF A LIFETIME

**With the debt ceiling set at Sh10 trillion, it will be a rough ride for the National Treasury as the numbers in Ndung'u's budget don't add up. Unless the new amendment on the Public Finance Management Act is passed and approved, questions might arise about the legality of the whole spending programme**

The current limit as approved in 2022 in the House is Sh10 trillion. The government wants to change the public debt ceiling from a numerical number to a debt anchor in the form of ratio of public debt to GDP in present value terms.

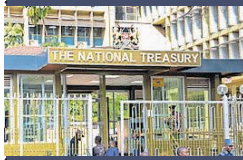


**Prof Njuguna Ndung'u was caught in a bind. With his budget factoring a deficit of Sh718 billion, he knew that this year's budget would bust the Sh10 trillion debt ceiling. Indeed, with the stock of debt at Sh8.6 trillion, the headroom was a mere Sh400 billion.**



The CS is hoping to collect a Sh2.9 trillion in revenues, which is approximately Sh1 trillion more than we collected this year. It is the biggest gamble in this year's budget.

In order to anchor the debt ceiling in a statute, the National Treasury has developed a Public Finance Amendments Bill, which has been submitted to this House. I urge members to prioritise and consider this Bill favourably.



The wage bill and salaries as a share of government expenditure, are significantly above the levels in most African countries. In the private sector, trends show that profits of our large and profitable banks have stagnated since 2014 - while non-performing loans are also on an upsurge.



Many readers are familiar with the recent debt ceiling shoot-out between the US Congress and President Biden over a fixed numerical debt ceiling of \$31.4 trillion. The fix the US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen found herself in was that she could not borrow a single dollar above the ceiling.



High government spending on infrastructure cannot compensate for an under performing private sector. While debt expansion - private as well as public - can keep the economy ticking and creating the appearance of recovery, debt financed growth has its limits.



● BY JAINDI KISERO

**B**y introducing a new arithmetic formula, Cabinet Secretary Njuguna Ndung'u is seeking to quietly force Parliament to cede the powers of set-

ting the public debt ceiling from its members - the elected representatives of the people - to armchair-sitting bureaucrats at the National Treasury.

Under the new formula, which his ministry has introduced un-

der an amendment of the Public Finance and Management Act, the public debt ceiling will no longer be fixed, but a moveable target calculated by number crunchers at the Treasury.

This is how the CS explained it

away during his budget speech on Thursday at Paragraph 89. "Mr Speaker, Sir, the current limit as approved in 2022 in the House is Sh10 trillion. The government wants to change the public debt ceiling from a numerical number



## kenya lens

**The government wants to change the public debt ceiling from a numerical number to a debt anchor in the form of ratio of public debt to GDP in present value terms. The proposed change to the public debt ceiling provides an appropriate guide for optimal levels of public debt based on the country's ability to pay.**

Treasury CS Njuguna Ndung'u



to a debt anchor in the form of ratio of public debt to GDP in present value terms. The proposed change to the public debt ceiling provides an appropriate guide for optimal levels of public debt based on the country's ability to pay. This is the debt carrying capacity that can be objectively assured as well as provide direction on information on debt accumulation or reduction from time to time."

He continued at Paragraph 90: "In order to anchor the debt ceiling in a statute, the National Treasury has developed a Public Finance Amendments Bill which has been submitted to this House.

I urge members to prioritise and consider this Bill favourably."

Why would the government want to remove this important check on profligate borrowing by the Executive and to give the National Treasury unfettered discretion to its heart's delights?

According to Prof Ndung'u, the new arithmetic formula and the anchor he has proposed is "best international best practice". Many readers are familiar with the recent debt ceiling shoot-out between the US Congress and President Biden over a fixed numerical debt ceiling of \$31.4 trillion. The fix the US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen found herself in was that she could not borrow a single dollar above the ceiling. The US risked defaulting on debt for the first time in its history. The President and the Republican majority in Congress had to trade concessions.

The lesson from the US is that the best practice is that the ultimate responsibility over debt ceiling rests with the people's elected representatives – and not a minister nor left to be derived from complex anchors calculated on the basis of arithmetic formulae or algorithms.

lae or algorithms.

In a sense, Prof Ndung'u had found himself between a rock and a hard place. He was caught in a bind. With his budget factoring a deficit of Sh718 billion, he knew that this year's budget would bust the Sh10 trillion debt ceiling. Indeed, with the stock of debt at Sh8.6 trillion, the headroom was a mere Sh400 billion.

With the opposition already making too much noise about the taxation proposals contained in the Finance Bill, a fight over the debt ceiling like we had recently witnessed between the US Congress and President Joe Biden is a prospect he had to avoid. And the prospect of the budget being held hostage by a stand-off over the debt ceiling had to be avoided.

The solution? Shift from a system where the debt ceiling is determined by a fixed numerical limit of Sh10 trillion to what he calls a debt anchor. Were some hawk-eyed MP to take the matter up, we must be brave for a stand-off. And the stakes are high indeed because unless the new amendment on the Public Finance Management Act is passed and approved, questions might

arise about the legality of the whole spending programme.

Which brings us to the second question about this year's budget. Do the numbers add up? The CS is hoping to collect a Sh2.9 trillion in revenues, which is approximately Sh1 trillion more than we collected this year. It is the biggest gamble in this year's budget.

In a context of shrinking revenues, without a comprehensive retrenchment programme and a strategy for pruning low priority projects across all ministries, the assumption by the minister that the budget deficit will come down to a level of 4.4 per cent of GDP is plainly unrealistic. The wage bill and salaries as a share of government expenditure, are significantly above the levels in most African countries.

In the private sector, trends show that profits of our large and profitable banks have stagnated since 2014 – while non-performing loans are also on an upsurge. Cement production is on the decline, while per capita consumption of electricity by industrial users, a key proxy for GDP growth – has also stagnated.

Indeed, Kenya is yet to return to the high growth rates of the early parts of former President Mwai Kibaki's administration. It remains a low-growth, low-private investment economy characterised by stagnant productivity and dwindling investment by the private sector. Corporate spending on new assets and accumulation of investment assets remained weak and stunted.

The enduring lesson we have learnt is that high government spending on infrastructure cannot compensate for an underperforming private sector. We are also learning that while debt expansion – private as well as public – can keep the economy ticking and creating the appearance of recovery, debt financed growth has its limits.

Kenya has stretched the tools of crisis management – fiscal restraint, expansion, monetary easing – to elastic limits. Until the government goes back to reviving the economy's traditional engines of production, namely, agriculture, agriculture and export sector, the economy will persistently remain on the stagnant growth mode.



Kenya is yet to return to the high growth rates of the early parts of former President Mwai Kibaki's administration. It remains a low-growth, low-private investment economy characterised by stagnant productivity and dwindling investment by the private sector.

## kenya lens

## ■ KENYA KWANZA'S FIRST BUDGET

**THE PLOT THICKENS**

**The passing of the controversial Finance Bill may come as a relief to Ruto, but it gives the opposition a potent weapon to mobilise angry masses against the government**

● BY MACHARIA GAI THO

**A**s a tense vote beckoned towards conclusion of debate on the second reading of the Finance Bill in the National Assembly last Wednesday, House orderlies, on a subtle signal from the Serjeant-at-Arms, moved to the front of the Chamber and placed themselves strategically around the Table.

It is apparent that their instructions were to protect the Mace in the event that opposition members, sensing defeat, tried to disrupt proceedings as has occasionally happened.

From the front benches of the opposition side to the left of the Speaker, Minority Whip Junet Mohammed rose on a point of order to protest that his view was being obstructed as Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah made his final pitch in support of the contentious Bill from across the aisle.

Speaker Moses Wetang'ula obliged, and instructed the offending orderly to move aside so as to give Junet a clear view, but the slight shift still did not break the protective cordon around the Table.

Extraordinary measures to secure the Mace illustrate perfectly what was at stake around a highly contentious Finance Bill that has split the country and made the first budget of President William Ruto's administration such a political hot potato.

The Mace is the overarching symbol of the authority and dignity of the House as well as the Speaker. According to a Kenya Parliamentary fact sheet, the Mace is an essential part of House regalia, rooted on traditions dating back to development of the English Parliament. It gives credence and legality to the Assembly and the proceedings, and without it no business can be transacted.

The fact sheet gives instances from across the world, including England, Australia, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Canada, Lesotho, Guyana and other Commonwealth jurisdictions, where interference with the Mace has halted Parliamentary proceedings.

In Kenya, it records June 1997, when oppo-

sition MPs repeatedly attempted to grab the Mace in order to disrupt the budget presentation by then Finance Minister Musalia Mudavadi, now the Prime Cabinet Secretary in the Kenya Kwanza government.

Another instance was in 2014 during debate

on the proposed Security Laws (Amendment) Bill, when Nyando MP Fred Outa had to be wrestled to the floor by the Serjeant-at-Arms when he tried to stop the resultant vote by seizing the Mace.

Offences relating to the Mace include attempting to or removing it from its place in the Chamber during a sitting of the House, as well as disrupting the Speaker's procession. These offences are considered to be grossly disorderly conduct and attract specified sanctions stipulated in the National Assembly Standing Orders.

But as it turned out, the fears were misplaced as no attempt was made to seize or remove the ornate wood, gold and ivory symbol of Parliamentary authority.

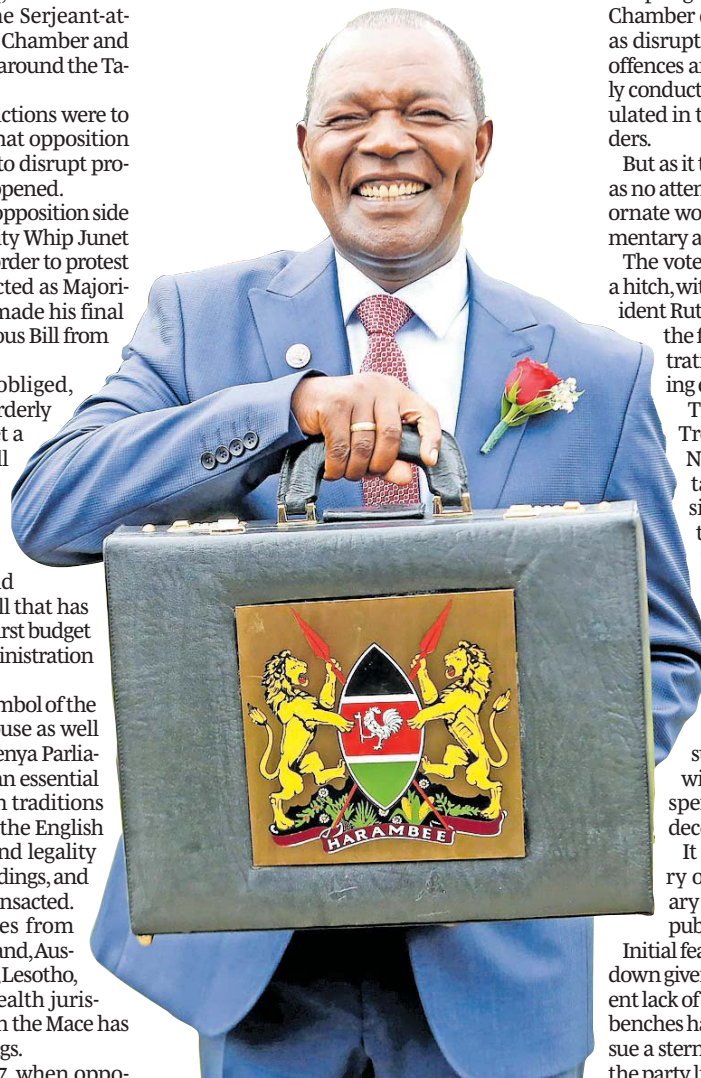
The vote proceeded peacefully and without a hitch, with 176 'Ayes' and 81 'Noes', giving President Ruto an important victory on the eve of the first budget proposals of his administration tabled in Parliament the following day.

The maiden budget speech from Treasury Cabinet Secretary Njuguna Ndung'u was all about economic data and projections, but it was also a significant political moment in Ruto's first opportunity to present development plans reflecting the programmes and policies on which he was elected in August last year.

During the 10 months he has been in office, Ruto has managed to shift budgetary allocations around to fund some of the priority items on his election manifesto, such as the Hustler Fund, but otherwise has largely had to work within the spending plans inherited from his predecessor, Uhuru Kenyatta.

It is probable that never in the history of Kenya have government budgetary proposals been subject to such close public scrutiny.

Initial fears that the Finance Bill could be shot down given fierce public opposition and apparent lack of enthusiasm from the Kenya Kwanza benches had a few days earlier forced Ruto to issue a stern warning to his MPs against defying the party line.



## kenya lens

In the end, all the Kenya Kwanza MPs present, save for the defiant Kiambu County Woman Rep Gathoni wa Muchomba, voted for the Bill. A number of opposition Azimio coalition MPs, beyond the Jubilee Party legislators who have long switched allegiance, also 'crossed the floor' to vote with the government side.

Given the political sensitivity of Ruto's first budget, there might well be an inquest within Kenya Kwanza on the MPs who seemingly defied instructions by staying away.

But in the meantime, Ruto will be satisfied that the Finance Bill vote last Wednesday showed he clearly has the numbers to secure handy passage in the rest of the budgetary process. What might still give him jitters, however, is that debate might simply move from Parliament to the streets.

In the wake of the defeat in Parliament, opposition leader Raila Odinga threatened to resume the public demonstrations that have made life difficult for the first months of the young government. Unpopular taxation measures – particularly the Housing Fund, the doubling of VAT on petroleum and other proposals that have fuelled perception of over-taxation and earned Ruto the moniker 'Zakayo' – present Raila a potent weapon to mobilise angry masses against the government.

The version of the Finance Bill passed after hearings of the National Assembly Finance and Planning Committee chaired by Molo MP Kimani Kuria contained changes to some of the more controversial proposals, but those were mostly cosmetic and unlikely to mollify those reading oppressive taxation.

On the contentious Housing Fund, for instance, employee and employer contribution was halved from 3 per cent to 1.5 per cent of salary, but with a major catch: the amount will no longer be a saving contributors can claim if they choose not to benefit from government-built housing, but effectively a new tax. The upper limit of Sh2,500 monthly deduction was also scrapped. There are still concerns around whether the government can be trusted to actually build the promised houses and also safeguard the money raised given the sad history of corruption and mismanagement around funds such as NSSF and NHIF.

Ruto is aware of these issues, and as Parliament was voting, was pledging to personally ensure nothing was stolen.

"I know very well as a politician that if something goes wrong, I will be held to account politically. I must make sure nothing goes wrong," he said during the launch of the Kenya Urban Forum, 2023 in Naivasha. He said he would make it his personal responsibility to ensure the monthly deductions from workers' salaries to the Housing Fund are accounted for.

"Parliament is going to discuss the Housing Levy fund and how it will be managed. The oversight board will be representative of both the government and private sector. We are going to ensure that there is a proper accountable mechanism. He added: "In the board, for instance, we are going to make sure we have pension funds, Federation of Kenyan Employers on board, representatives of public servants, trade unions,

government in its broader sense involved and counties to make sure this fund is accountable."

A pledge to take personal responsibility is one thing, but the fact is that even such a hands-on president as Ruto is will not sit on the oversight or the fund management team. He will have to depend on the honesty and competence of the those entrusted with the onerous responsibilities, and therefore will also have to deal with perception that he tends to appoint people of dubious integrity to public office. There will still be room for negotiations as the process in Parliament proceeds.

In fact, worth noting is that Raila did not schedule resumption of demonstrations, but demanded dialogue on the still contentious issues. It might therefore be instructive that one of the key insiders in the Ruto government, Roads and Transport Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen, had two days before the Finance Bill vote proposed a truce to resolve the impasse.

Murkomen, who spoke at the Kabunde Airstrip in Homa Bay County, recounted the history of Ruto and Raila previously working together, terming the president as a graduate of the opposition chief's political academy.

His offer may well have been tailored to placate a fiercely pro-Raila audience, but it is also recognition that the opposition boss still has the clout to disrupt the government agenda. It was this same reality that earlier forced Ruto at the beginning of April to offer Raila the olive branch. The outcome was that the latter suspended street protests and a bi-partisan parliamentary team was formed to seek a way around his grievances.

Talks jointly chaired by representatives from both sides proceeded in fits and starts, and are currently suspended as Raila added yet more demands, moving from initial issues around an audit of the 2022 presidential election he claims was stolen, to matters around the state of the economy, Taxation, inflation, petroleum, prices, cost of living, the depreciating shilling and may other issues round the economy and Ruto's development plans will not go away in the immediate future.

With the budget delivered at a time of economic crisis, Raila has the perfect opportunity to distract Ruto from the urgent task of delivering on ambitious campaign promises while balancing the books.

That is the politics that will pre-occupy the President for some time to come.



# the limelight



Former US President Donald Trump gestures after delivering remarks at Trump National Golf Club Bedminster in Bedminster, New Jersey, on June 13. Trump appeared in court in Miami for an arraignment regarding 37 federal charges. PHOTO | AFP



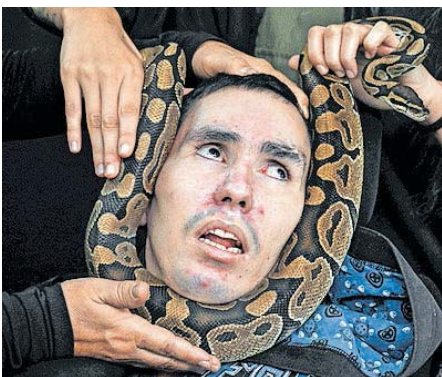
A cart stands next to a shelf of vegetables at a supermarket in Buenos Aires on June 12. Consumer price inflation in Argentina jumped 7.8 per cent in May 2023, with an annual inflation rate of 114.2 per cent for the 12 months ended May. PHOTO | AFP



A Georgian Orthodox priest baptises a child at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Tbilisi on June 11. PHOTO | AFP



Pallbearers carry the coffin of Italy's former prime minister and media mogul Silvio Berlusconi, outside the Duomo cathedral in Milan on June 14 following the state funeral. PHOTO | AFP



Paulo Henrique Palacio Santos attends a therapy session with reptiles at the Walking Equotherapy Clinic in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on May 30. In this clinic, patients with autism and other disorders receive an atypical reptile treatment that helps them to improve, for example, their comm skills. PHOTO | AFP

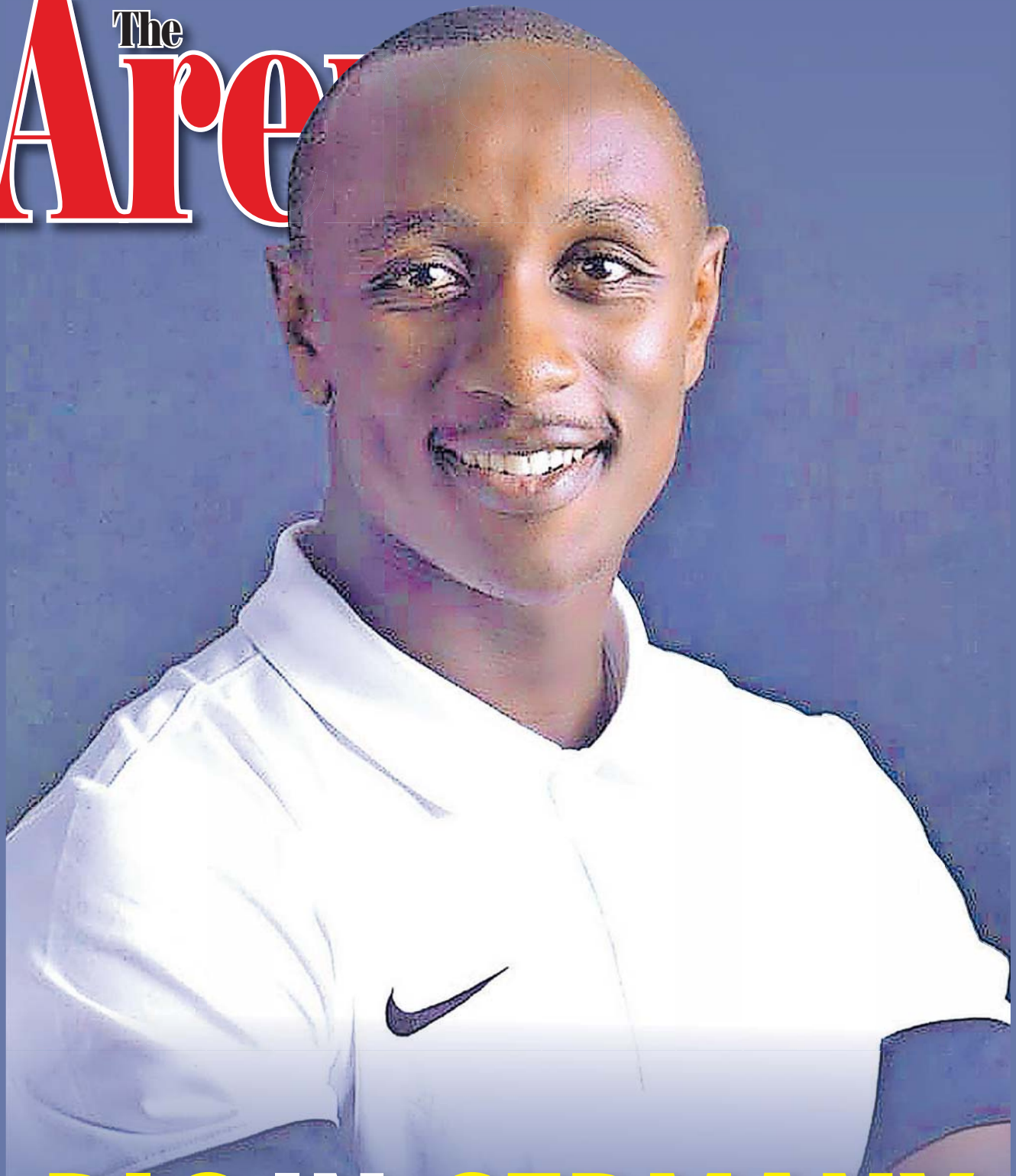


A person in a dinosaur costume makes an appearance at the Colombia Congress during a debate on climate change in Bogota on June 13. The demonstrator held a sign reading 'Don't Choose Extinction'. PHOTO | AFP



Kuwaitis gathering around a feast hosted by newly-elected MP Fahad bin Jamea to celebrate his victory in the National Assembly elections on June 7. PHOTO | AFP

The  
**Aren**



# **BIG IN GERMANY**

*Former national rugby star Ian Minjire is living the European dream. From the comfort of his office in Frankfurt, he manages Melanin Kapital, which connects start-ups with strategic partners*

OPEN SPACE

# Way out for broke counties

By tapping into their potential, devolved units can reduce their reliance on the National Treasury to fund their budgets

• BY VINCENT MAOSA

The peaceful choralling of Kenyans on August 4, 2010 for a constitutional referendum heralded a ground-breaking shift in our governance architecture. The subsequent promulgation of the 2010 Constitution ushered in a new era of decentralisation and devolution of power.

By establishing a devolved system, Kenyans hoped to realise enhanced delivery of services and improved management of public resources, effectively helping deliver the devolution dividend of rapid development and shared prosperity.

The Fourth Schedule of the Constitution outlines key functions that county governments should perform, including agriculture, health, cultural activities, transport, animal control and welfare, trade development and regulation, county planning and development, pre-primary education, environmental conservation, public works and disaster management.

For effective execution of their functions, county governments have two main sources of revenue: that which is collected directly from residents – referred to as own-source revenues (OSR) – and that which is channelled to counties from national level as intergovernmental transfers.

The revenue allocation formula for distribution of central revenues includes an equal share across all 47 counties and specific weightings based on factors such as poverty, population, land area and development needs. There is also a provision for ‘fiscal effort’, which could incentivise counties to enhance OSR performance. The Constitution prescribes that a minimum 15 per cent of national revenue be transferred annually from the national to county governments based on the most recent audited accounts.

The government has faced increasing fiscal deficit partly due to domestic revenue shortfalls and a high level of debt financing, which is consuming approximately 48 per cent of total revenues. Limited access to finance domestically and internationally has exacerbated the situation. Delay by the national government to disburse cash to county governments has in the past threatened to paralyse service delivery, demonstrating the extent to which devolved units rely on the National Treasury for funds to run their operations. Last month, Council of Governors’ Finance, Planning and

Economic Affairs Committee chairperson Fernandes Barasa hinted at the possibility of suspending operations as the devolved units could barely keep their heads above water.

According to the Commission on Revenue Allocation’s *County Own-Source Revenue Report 2019*, only 11 out of the 47 counties can finance more than 10 per cent of their budgets, which implies that the majority finance close to 90 per cent of their budgetary needs through transfers from national government. A study commissioned by the World Bank, titled *Own-Source Revenue Potential and Tax Gap Study of Kenya’s County Governments*, shows substantial unrealised potential ranging between KSh55 billion and KSh173 billion, compared with current collections of Sh35 billion. This suggests that counties can fund

an increasing share of their budgets from OSR if they are able to tap into their potential. There are a number of actions county governments can take to raise OSRs. Firstly, there is need to map out all revenue streams and broaden the tax base. They should also enhance enforcement mechanisms to eliminate tax evasion.

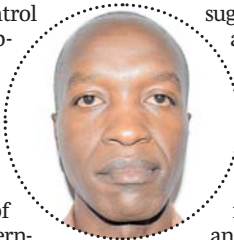
Secondly, the process of revenue collection and management should reflect transparency, accountability and good governance devoid of political meddling. Adherence to these values will result in improved collection through better recording, reporting and voluntary compliance. Thirdly, digitisation of revenue collection to replace the predominantly manual and semi-automated methods will go a long way in sealing loopholes for significant revenue leakages.

Fourthly, counties should invest in building expertise and upgrading equipment for key OSR mobilisation tasks such as revenue forecasting, collection, management and assessment of revenue collection cost. Next, improving service delivery and establishing an effective policy framework that harmonises tax administration will enhance OSR collection and reduce tax avoidance.

Finally, creating a favourable business and investment environment through adequate infrastructure development and regulatory reforms can enhance trade, creating more taxation opportunities for counties.

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Any feedback on topical issues? We would like to hear from you. Send your views to: [weeklyreview@ke.nationmedia.com](mailto:weeklyreview@ke.nationmedia.com)



**Michelle Ambasi**

The prohibition of maize exports to Kenya by the Tanzanian authorities should remind the government of its role of increasing agricultural productivity. This could be done through development and application of technology and strengthening of extension services, which includes supply of agricultural products such as fertiliser. Community-Based Organisations should also play a role in educating farmers on modern ways of farming, which are more efficient.

— A businesslady based in Nairobi



**Joel Ojuka**

In the past decade, maize farmers have been struggling to stay afloat, with their produce rotting in stores because of low prices. They blame the competition from cheap imported grain. Our farmers can sustain the country if their produce is well managed. Farmers from 40 counties have purchased more than 1.72 million bags of fertiliser under the Fertiliser Subsidy Programme. President William Ruto should stick to his policy to increase yield.

— A student at Technical University of Kenya



**Sammy Atuka**

Kenya should consider working towards improving crop production through irrigation and planting of trees to cut the reliance on imports from Tanzania and Uganda. Secondly, the government should improve existing agricultural programmes and reduce food wastage. Lastly, both national and county governments should improve trade policies to enable farmers get their produce to the market easily.

— An expert in tourism and hospitality



**Austin Rapemo**

The government should boost local production of food by subsidising fertiliser and other important inputs that are way too expensive. The Ministry of Agriculture should also ensure that farmers get access to these inputs easily by cutting off cartels and middlemen who exploit producers. This will eventually lower the cost of production and shelf prices, and also minimise imports.

— A financial expert with Patinum Credit

THE CREATIVE SECTOR



# CONTENT CREATORS BEWARE

Proposals in the Finance Bill to tax digital content creators could jeopardise young people's attempts to earn a living online

• BY SAMMY OJWANG'

**T**he steady advancement of technology in Kenya has placed the country on the global map as a tech powerhouse. Christened the Silicon Savannah in relation to the vibrant Silicon Valley in the US, Kenya's exploits on the technological front have grabbed international attention. In 2007, Safaricom launched M-Pesa, a digital money transfer system that operates on regular cell phones. The innovation was warmly embraced, introducing a wide population of users, including many in the rural areas, to digital banking. It went on to win international awards. Its contemporary, Ushahidi, a digital mapping and demographic tracking tool, is still hailed as a trendsetter globally.

In 2010, the government made commendable effort by launching an undersea fibre-optic cable in Mombasa, effectively increasing broadband in East Africa. Former Information, Communication and Technology Minister Biantange Ndemo enacted policies that seemed to elevate the ICT space, enabling Kenyans, primarily the youth, to become more engaged in technology. Among other avenues,

the world of content creation opened up, offering a life-line to young Kenyans, many of whom had been unable to find formal employment despite having gone to school. A huge percentage of youth remain unproductive due to the general stagnation of the country's economic growth and high unemployment. For many, self-employment is the only path for survival.

Not too long ago, a college certificate provided definite hope for employment and personal growth, and a platform to contribute to the economic development of the country. Sports, too, offered talented Kenyans an avenue for recruitment by companies and parastatals like the Kenya Posts and Telecommunications, Ken-

ya Breweries and Kenya Ports Authority. Many sporting personalities such as Bobby Ogolla, Douglas Mutua, Ambrose Ayoyi and Rose Tata Muya are successful products of that epoch. Today, however, such streams have run dry and many other avenues for job creation have closed, giving rise to a big population of idle youth across the country. Many parents continue to clothe and feed grown-up offspring, some of whom are still trying to figure out what career path to follow. Gradually, idleness leads them to alcohol and betting addiction.

It is in order, therefore, to salute enterprising Kenyans who have taken up digital content creation as a way of earning income. Content creation is the process of generating visual or written information and making it accessible to specific audiences in formats such as a video, blog or infographics, mainly in digital contexts. In marketing, it combines brand-specific messaging with industry educational material. With a majority of the population using cell phones, content creation has offered a ready means of entertainment and exploitation of the free democratic space (political satire has become quite popular).

Content creation has grown over the years. The creator earns a living through sponsored content, digital campaigns or advert revenue from platforms such as

TikTok, YouTube and Facebook. Monetisation of content relies on sponsorship and Cost Per 1000 Impressions (CPM), which refers to the number of views by the audience. Monetisation rates also depend on the creator's niche. Some content creators in Kenya are said to be making good money from this pursuit. Many have formed companies, employing other citizens and making content creation a profitable venture. The bustling sector has now attracted the attention of Government, which now intends to rope content creators into the widening tax circle.

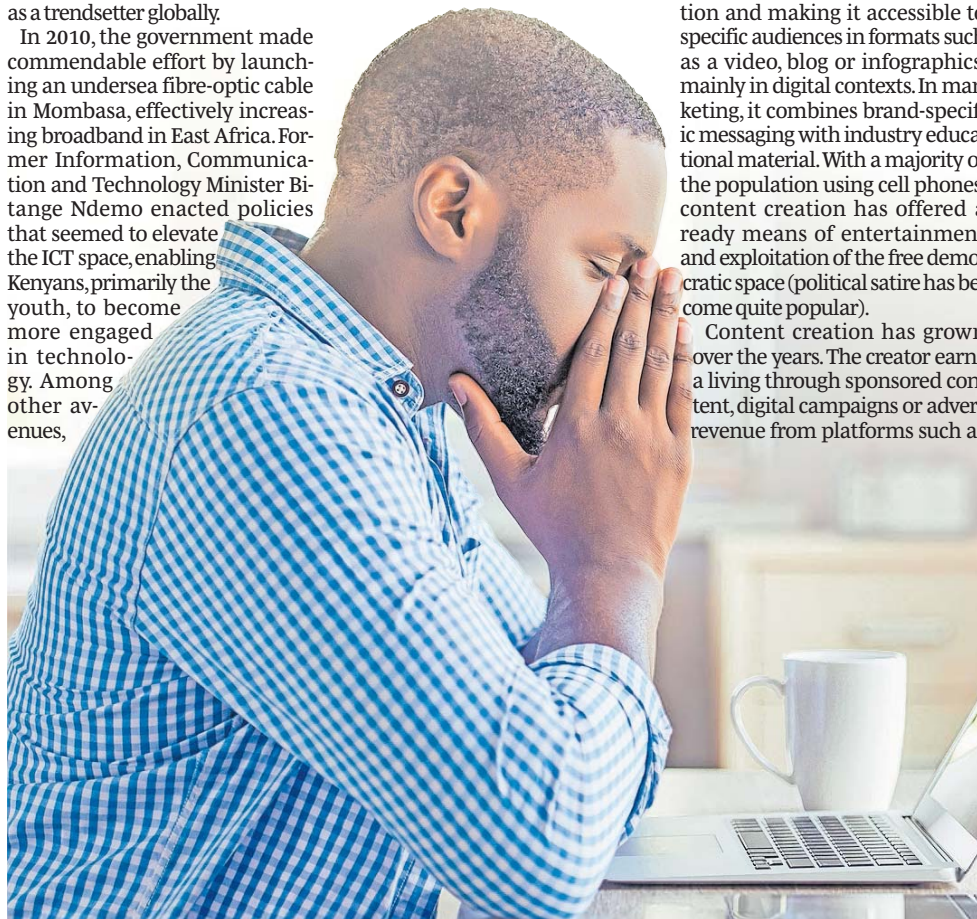
The Finance Bill of 2023 contains a raft of proposals meant to expand the tax bracket in a bid to meet a 4-5 trillion tax collection target. One controversial proposal is to subject income earned from digital content monetisation to a 15 per cent withholding tax, which has since been adjusted to 5 per cent by the Budget Committee. It remains to be seen whether this tax, together with the even more controversial proposed housing levy, were mere red herrings before the Bill is tabled in the lower house for debate.

Withholding tax on content creation is presumptive and assumes that the profit margin earned by the creator will be higher than 50 per cent. It may actually result in a perpetual credit tax position for a big portion of the targeted group. The sometimes fake display of high-end lifestyles by some of the creators is not helping government perception either. They are to face taxation together with

those citizens who purchase false beards, the latter being charged three per cent excise duty.

The Silicon Savannah is under threat. The proposed tax on content creation will be a body-blow to Kenya's growth as a global technology hub, with Rwanda, which has created a robust environment for ICT advancement, poised to overtake us.

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KEEPING OUR PLANET CLEAN

# GREEN SUCCESS

**Melanin Kapital has partnered with blue-chip government institutions such as GIZ, USAid and the Africa Guarantee Fund to provide affordable financing to SMEs in eastern Africa**

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

Is there anything Ian Minjire can't do? To answer that question, maybe let's start with the things he can do. For instance, he is the co-founder and Project Manager of Melanin Kapital, based in Frankfurt, Germany. Then, he is also a coach. He played rugby for Kenya, representing the country in the Hong Kong Finals in 2018, a moment he describes as his proudest, before going off in 2020 to get his coaching badges. He had the ability to play high-level rugby with a resting heart rate, so much so that he won the German Bundesliga with Frankfurt 1880 while pursuing his Master of Urban Planning degree at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences on a sports scholarship. He drew the curtain on his rugby career after the 2018 Commonwealth Games and turned to coaching.

Ian doesn't take credit for his mentees' performances. "A coach taking credit for a player is like a cockerel taking credit for the sun coming up." He is also a co-founder and the CEO of Tuungane Foundation, leading a team of 15 to build government and corporate partnerships in Germany and Kenya. In 2021, he was awarded the Forbes Top 30 Under 30 in Europe. He has just turned 31, and the fire in his belly burns with the verve of an Old Testament prophet.

So what's all the furore about Melanin Kapital? At Melanin, Ian supports start-ups to improve their business models and connects them with strategic partners to grow and achieve social impact. In addition, Melanin Kapital helps small businesses access solar equipment or electric mobility solutions in Kenya. It also leverages both blockchain and AI technologies to track financial and CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide) data, which it uses to provide

Ian Minjire, the co-founder and Project Manager of Melanin Kapital.

Nation Media Group



green loans and carbon credits in real time for small African businesses.

Ian says the venture has three verticals: Kijani Farm, which provides financing for solar irrigation, solar water pumps and solar greenhouses; Kijani Power, which focuses on small retail shops located outside urban areas, providing them with solar panels and fridges to help them store food and fresh produce; and Kijani Move Green Mobility, which focuses on e-logistics. The start-up has been UN-certified to lead green energy transition efforts. It calculates carbon credits through its AI algorithms “because all the equipment that we finance is IoT-connected”.

Since inception, Melanin Kapital has partnered with blue-chip government institutions such as GIZ, USAid and the Africa Guarantee Fund to provide affordable financing to SMEs in eastern Africa. “Currently,” says Ian, “we are working on a pilot with ABSA Bank Kenya to support 1,500 women-led SMEs to go green and \$1.5 million access green credit digitally.” Their pound of flesh? Melanin Kapital charges a monthly subscription fee of \$5 to \$15 per month per SME, and charges the financier a revenue share of 30 per cent to access its data and finance its SMEs.

Ian looks cosmopolitan but professional, business rather than glitz. Was it always like this for this civil engineer-turned-entrepreneur? “I realise I was a very impact-oriented individual. I had to help other people, and I wanted to know what I could do, thus my move to clean transportation and sustainability. I wrote a thesis on the efficacy of public transport for Nairobi and how we need to go green. The issue was financing. So, we decided to build a fintech company that gives business access to green finance. This was in 2020.”

Playing rugby at international level enabled him to build a wide network globally and in Kenya, both in the private and public sectors. Education added silk to his rugby silk, and why not? It is through rugby that he won his academic scholarships – first to Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology to study civil engineering through the Impala Saracens, then to Germany on a DAAD scholarship for his internship, and later, for his masters, the Frankfurt Rugby Club.

The dream, he says, is to be the largest private fintech platform in Africa with over one billion assets in management. “My background in engineering pushed me towards transport engineering, which led me to sustainable transportation, in other words, transport that emits little carbon,” he says. “If Nairobi used more public transport, we would use less cars; this which was at the crux of my thesis. My study was on how to get people to transform to more sustainable transport hoods. We want to be eco-warriors. But electric bikes are more expensive than fuel bikes, which is where we come in, offering finance for businesses for green assets. For anything that makes you go green or assets that require you to use less carbon, we will finance you – from solar irrigation to fridges.”

Ian’s co-founder is Melanie Keita. He brings the passion, Keita the finance expertise. He tells me their biggest achievement – apart from the numerous accolades – is the model

**FORBES 30 UNDER 30**

■ The carbon credit voluntary market is currently estimated to be worth more than US\$900 billion annually, and is projected to grow to match major commodity markets, according to Swiss-based private bank Lombard Odier.

■ Melanie Kapital, according to Keita, has already disbursed \$100,000 in SME climate financing so far, and now targets to finance between 500 and 1,000 SMEs, with disbursements totalling up to \$3 million.

■ The whole carbon credit process is done via a blockchain system. The startup is aiming to help e-bike and electric bus owners get carbon certification. It aggregates the data of all the players, captures all carbon offsets, calculates the money and pays everyone their carbon credits.

■ Melanie Kapital has eight employees, including five technology developers.

■ Ian’s accolades include Forbes 30 under 30 Europe 2021; Top Africa Awards at GITEX Dubai; Most Promising Entrepreneur Awards at Africa Arena South Africa and the \$100,000 HP Foundation Climate Justice Award.



Ian Minjire trains with the Kenya rugby 7s team at Impala grounds on July 11, 2018.

that they have come up with. “Our programme helps businesses come on board. There are donors who have funded businesses to go through it, like ABSA and the Africa Guarantee Fund, which provided financial support for 660 businesses. But this is not yet in the open market.” The open version, he says, will be released in the next five to six months.

He points out that Africa is not the biggest carbon emitter. “But that does not stop us from benefitting from the money the other big emitters make. There have been regulations all over the world to reduce it, and if you have to emit a certain level of carbon, you have to pay for it. This is called carbon offsetting – a certain amount of money that you have to pay. This money is collected in a pool of “green finance” to fund green projects that absorb carbon from the world. These are called carbon credits. You can be paid by carbon offset for your carbon credits through the carbon market.” It is what you would call an Uncle Monty deal: very expensive to those who can’t afford it; good business for those who can.

Pearls, they say, do not lie on the seashore. If you want one, you must dive in. Ian, seemingly, has been diving since he was born. “I was always training to buy things from outside [the country] to sell them in Kenya. I wanted to see how to get value out of something. One time, I was wearing some nice fresh boots and someone offered to buy them. I sold them, of course. It’s what a good businessman would do.”

Ian is always watching and observing. Even those who decry his laidback nature cannot deny the scale of his ambition. “My work as an engineer is to innovate. It burns within you, and you are designed to solve problems. The innovation led me to green financing and we built a tool, and what better way to do it than with tech? Plus, when I got to Germany every solution I heard about was based in Europe. Why were we as Africa being left out? As Kenya?”

What is the one lesson that guides him? “It’s more of a collection of lessons. Most people see failure as a reason to stop doing something. But failure is the journey toward success. It improves you. You have to try and be willing to fail and switch the parts that do not work.” But what is success? “Success [for me] is managing to get the last mile in the delivery of finance to people and give them the ability to reduce their carbon footprint.”

Have things turned out the way he expected at 31? “God has put me exactly where I was supposed to be. If my five-year plan does not work, I will re-strategise and get another plan. I do not take it as a problem, but more of a realignment. I am exactly where I am supposed to be.”

So, is he smart or lucky? “Actually, I am blessed. My life is a combination of hard work, resilience, discipline and great mentors. I believe in opportunity and hard work.” And he already knows what his epitaph will read: “Family man, lover of life, and traveller. The man who never gave up.”

Maybe that is why he fears not delivering on his promise. It is what drives him. Failure, like fear, fuels him. Green fuel, of course.

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## THE HOUSING SECTOR

**MAKING A MARK**

**At just 39, Ahmed Badawy's company, Buxton Point, is building thousands of affordable housing units in Mombasa and Nairobi**

● BY ISHAQ JUMBE

**T**he housing levy debate and conversations around the Finance Bill 2023 appear to be laced with divisive political poison. But as the arguments rage on, construction of affordable homes continues in some parts of the country. In Mombasa, the Buxton Point Apartments are nearing completion, while building of Starehe Point in Nairobi is well under way. Each project has 2,000 housing and commercial units, with prices ranging from Sh2.3 million for one-bedroom apartments to Sh4.7 million for three-bedroom ones.

Behind the two mega projects is 39-year-old investment analyst Ahmed Badawy, the Managing Director, Buxton Point, who does not seem at all fazed by the enormity of the tasks he has undertaken.

"After my KCSE in 2002 at Memon High School in Mombasa, I drifted towards finance and accounting," says Badawy. He was good with numbers and loved business education. He joined Oxford Brookes University (UK), where he got his Bachelor's degree in Applied Accounting and Finance, topping it up with a Master's degree in Business Administration at the Strathmore University.

Badawy believes in allowing people to own what they have been hired to do so that they engage fully. "I am always on the lookout for talent and drive. An open-minded, motivated workforce usually delivers the job. The team is what basically defines the company, diligently executing our commonly driven strategy. When the organisation wins, we all win," he offers.

The strategy has borne fruit and he regards among his achievements the fact that those who work under him take the initiative to make important decisions within the space management has created. As they are in the business of building lifestyles that will affect a large demographic, diverse inputs are paramount to achieving their goal.

"Our philosophy revolves around providing a lifestyle and not just an apartment, hence the focus on amenities such as a swimming pool, gym, sports facilities, community centre, Early Childhood Development centre, outdoor

communal recreational facilities and food courts," he says.

Badawy says that if his board were to add a miscellaneous one million dollars to his budget, he would use it to uplift the skillset of his staff. He encourages collaborative working between departments and has launched a programme to professionalise all his staff in their respective fields. "We call it role enrichment and it has yielded results. We are also training interns from local universities," he adds.

Amongst other ventures, Badawy has been the managing director of a food franchise, a regional weekly newspaper, and a company that generates electricity for off-grid areas.

His biggest mentor is former Mombasa gubernatorial candidate Suleiman Shahbal, with whom he has been working for the last 12 years. "I have been an apprentice of my chairman (Shahbal), who took me under his wing and introduced me to the world of global finance. Under





Uasin Gishu Governor Jonathan Bii (right) and the Managing Director, Buxton Point Limited, Ahmed Badawy, in Mombasa on April 2. KEVIN ODITI NATION

him, I have learnt invaluable skills which have played a big part in enhancing my career," he says.

Badawy served as head of finance and operations for the Suleiman Shahbal Campaign Secretariat and Suleiman Shahbal Foundation. "My work involved setting up the financial and operational processes for the 2013 and 2017 Mombasa gubernatorial campaigns, including fundraising activities," he says. "I also managed and coordinated the presidential campaigns for the Jubilee

Party in Mombasa County." His experience in international finance includes specialisation in the audit of banks and financial service companies while working for Ernst & Young in Dubai and as a financial analyst for the International Petroleum Investment Company in Abu Dhabi from 2009 to 2011.

If he had a chance to change anything in his life, Badawy says it would be getting into marriage earlier. "It would have settled me and made me focus early," he says.

Despite his seemingly impossible schedule,

Badawy works smart to get everything done. He wakes up at 5am to pray, do yoga and spend time with family before taking his children to school. He is in the office by 8am.

"I exercise in the evening and I am usually home by 7pm," he says. His parking shot? "Family is the only pillar you can rely on, so give them the time and attention they deserve. Keep relationships; they always matter. My policy on money is don't let money enslave you or define you."

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The **911** SIDE  
With John Nyaganyaga  
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**WOMAN POWER**

WHEN DIANA LUKOSI LOST HER HUSBAND THROUGH A TRAGIC ROAD ACCIDENT IN 2007, SHE NOT ONLY LOST THE FATHER OF HER TWO CHILDREN BUT ALSO ALL HIS PROPERTY INCLUDING LAND AND BUSINESSES. SHE WAS ALSO JOBLESS AT THE TIME. PEOPLE AROUND HER TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HER LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ON SUCCESSION TO DEPRIVE HER OF ALL SHE SHOULD HAVE INHERITED FROM HER HUSBAND. HER PAINFUL EXPERIENCE LED HER TO START 'WEZESHA MJANE', AN INITIATIVE THAT EMPOWERS WIDOWS AND EDUCATES THEM ON HOW TO UNDERTAKE SUCCESSION SUCCESSFULLY. IT CURRENTLY HAS 100 WIDOWS WHO ENGAGE IN TABLE-BANKING AND EVERY WEEK, FIVE MEMBERS GET SH10,000 EACH TO EITHER START OR EXPAND A BUSINESS. WE CELEBRATE YOU DIANA FOR YOUR FORTITUDE AND SELFLESSNESS.

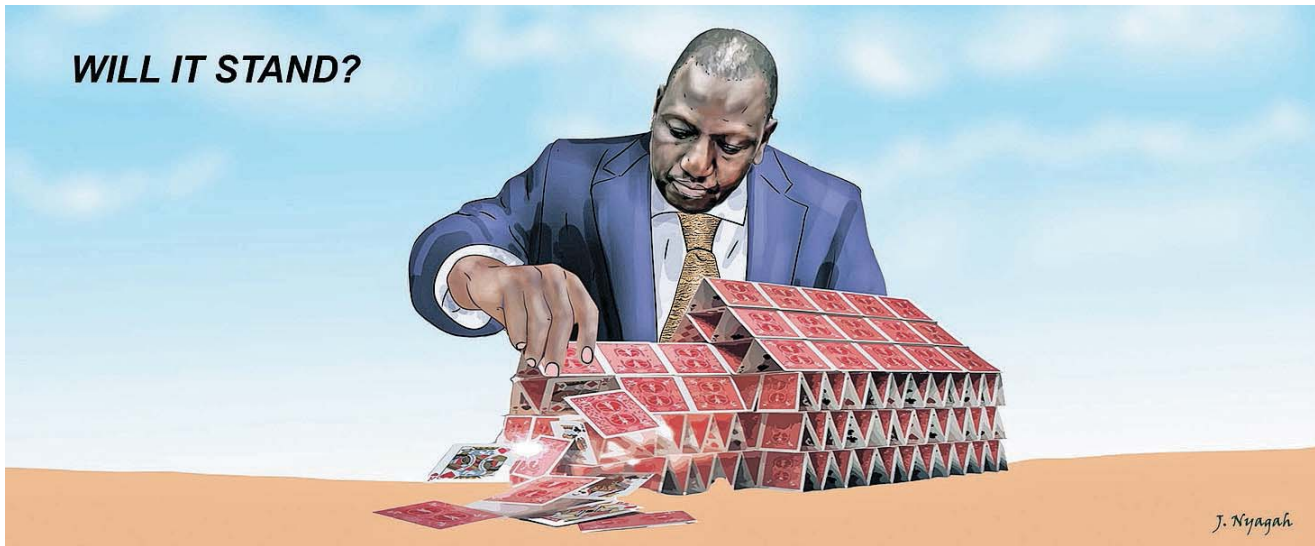
**STAR OF THE WEEK**

GEORGE NYAMORI ONYANCHA LED A KENYAN PODIUM SWEEP AT THE 18TH EDITION OF THE KIGALI INTERNATIONAL PEACE MARATHON HELD A WEEK AGO IN KIGALI, RWANDA. ONYANCHA LED A 1-2-3 KENYAN PODIUM FINISH IN A RACE THAT WAS DOMINATED BY HIS COMPATRIOTS AS HE TOOK THE HONOURS IN A TIME OF 2:17.41. HE WAS FOLLOWED BY SILAS KIPROTICH KURUI IN SECOND PLACE IN 2:18.11 WITH DAVID KIPKORIR WRAPPING UP THE KENYAN PODIUM THREE FINISHES IN A TIME OF 2:18.43. WE SAY 'HONGERA' TO THE KENYAN WORLD BEATERS.



## opinion

### WILL IT STAND?



■ Political parties should step up to the plate and educate their members on the issue at hand

# It seems public participation counts for naught

**A**s the National Assembly's Departmental Committee on Finance and National Planning took views from the public on the Finance Bill, MPs traded barbs as the proposals therein became both the focus of debate and the reason for widening the divide between the Majority Kenya Kwanza coalition and the Minority Azimio la Umoja team.

The meetings between the committee and the public passed for what is called “public participation”. This is the process by which agencies of the government, for example, allow for the public to make inputs or otherwise partake in a decision-making process and consideration for their contribution.

In this regard, because Kenyans were debating the Finance Bill, it can be argued that the public were participating in the legislative process, which is intended to make decisions about their budget or the spending by government, how it expects to raise revenues for the same and how these will affect the tax regime. Did Kenyans participate meaningfully in this process?

My view is that we must do better. First, as Kenyans went back-and-forth about this and that, attention seemed to focus on the proposed housing fund which, to Azimio, embodied all that was unacceptable about the Bill, and Kenya Kwanza, which saw the housing project as the embodiment of the best that the government has to offer.

When politicians fight, the public take sides. When politicians fight, they seek to influence the public. Political fights seldom



**KWENDO  
OPANGA**

ever bring clarity to the issues in question. Yet, if the public are to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, they need to have the right information to enable them make informed choices. John Mbadi brought this matter to the fore eloquently on television more than a week ago, when he talked about the difference between zero-rating and exemption. He told Kenyans that zero-rated commodities are cheaper and that exempt commodities cost more. Therefore, he hinted that the government was using semantics to hoodwink citizens into supporting a deadly Bill.

Public participation works when the public know the problem, when they are informed about the problem and the alternatives to the problem available to them. Public participation works when the views of the citizens help the decision-makers have a complete picture of the situation obtaining on the ground in regard to the problem (issues) at hand.

It is at time such as this that political parties should step up to the plate and in

the best ways possible, the most complete way possible, educate their members on the problem (issue) at hand and the alternatives available. At this time, the Minority party or parties, should go over the problem, in this case the Finance Bill, with a fine tooth comb for the benefit of the public.

The reason for, and benefit of, public participation is that as a result of what the citizens have said, the policy and decision makers will be better informed because they have the right information from all stakeholders and, most importantly, those who will be most affected by the problem (issue) at hand. Public participation works when the public understand the problem.

The Finance Bill was reduced to the proposed housing fund, which even the President said must pass and his MPs chorused back that it will pass without so much as deletion of a comma. This is tantamount to declaring that public participation counts for naught even if the Constitution provides for it in Articles 118 (1) (b) and 196 (1) (b).

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## opinion

■ We'll slash salaries of public officers, from the President downwards, to reflect our economic realities

# The CS read wrong budget; here's the right one



MACHARIA  
GAITHO

**T**he Cabinet Secretary, Treasury: Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all I must express my immense gratitude for your acceding to this very unique request for an opportunity to address the House again after the Budget Speech that I delivered from this very Despatch Box just a few days ago.

This is indeed a landmark sitting. Never before in the history of the Kenyan Parliament and history of the budget-making process has the National Treasury asked for and been granted a second audience to amend, make clarifications and pronounce on new policy guidelines after initial delivery of the Budget Policy Statement, as well as publication of the Finance Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am very grateful for your consideration, and also for the understanding of all Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff who have sacrificed their day off, a Sunday at that, to come back to the Chamber and listen to me again. This special session has been necessitated by long and careful consideration of the cries and pleas of our employers, the Kenyan citizens, who we serve and whose interests and welfare must take first priority.

We have had a second look at all the numbers that inform the Budget statement and come to the conclusion that a lot of our revenue projections and spending plans must be rationalised in line with the prevailing harsh realities. Mr Speaker, we have a tradition in this country of drawing up national budgets based on fanciful wish lists and populist political promises, rather than the base of available resources. In that regard, we are embarking on a key policy turnaround. Budgets will be based on what we can realistically expect in the kitty from taxation, borrowing and aid.

The same principles that apply to a household will apply to our national budget.

I do not intend, Mr Speaker, to at this time to go into detailed numbers, but just enunciate on the basic principles that will inform a radical revision of what was earlier presented.

A harsh reality we must first contend with is that taxation projections over the last decade, which then informed the spending proposals, were each financial year hopelessly ambitious. At this time of economic depression, it would amount to economic fraud to project increased tax revenue from the 2022-2023 fiscal year. We will thus reduce from the projections of last year by 25 per cent.

It follows, then, that it would be irresponsible to project increased spending, which must also

be proportionally reduced from the previous budget. Mr Speaker, Sir, we must drive the point home that we face a very serious risk of economic collapse, and all of us must make sacrifices so that we can steady the ship before imagining that there is money to splurge.

All this is in keeping with what was promised in the Kenya Kwanza manifesto, which stressed reduced spending, reduced borrowing and fiscal responsibility.

**An Hon Member:** Point of Order Mr Speaker, Sir! Is the Minister in order to...

**Mr Speaker:** Order, Hon Members, Order! The CS must be heard without interruption. Continue, *Bwana Waziri*.

**CS Treasury:** Thank you Mr Speaker, Sir. His Excellency the President is determined that we must remain faithful to the policies and principles enunciated in the Kenya Kwanza manifesto, and in that regard has indicated that he will lead by example in a national austerity campaign. Mr Speaker Sir, His Excellency is aware that he leads a bloated government. To lead the way in reducing an unsustainable wage bill, he is agreeable to a 50 per cent cut in the budget allocated to State House.

The Executive Office of the President will be the first to be trimmed of all fat in both personnel, as well as projects and departments that serve no useful purpose other than to keep people on the payroll. The trimming will then be extended to all government ministries.

While the number of Cabinet Secretaries will remain as at present, the number of Principal Secretaries will be reduced to one per ministry, who will remain the overall accounting office. State Departments within each ministry will be headed by an Under-secretary.

The offices of Chief Administrative Secretary, some of them already styling themselves Assistant Cabinet Secretary, will be abolished. *(Applause)*

The next step will be to slash the salaries of all senior public officers, from the President downwards, to rates that reflect our economic realities. Our President, Deputy President, Cabinet Secretaries, Members of Parliament, Judges, Principal Secretaries, County Governors and other senior public officers are amongst the highest paid in the world. *(Murmuring from the floor)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Proceed, Proceed, Mr CS.

**CS Treasury:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, we earn the same, or more, than our counterparts in the biggest economies such as the United

States, Germany, Japan, China, Russia, Qatar and Switzerland. At the same time, we resist wage increases for other salaried workers, citing a small and struggling economy.

This cannot be allowed to continue. Salaries of the aforementioned cadres will be cut by 50 per cent. In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, as public servants, we are already on the public payroll. We earn salaries that we must live within, and which we will no longer be allowed to supplement with all manner of allowances simply for going to the office and doing our jobs. We claim sitting allowances, standing allowances, responsibility allowances, commuter allowances, sleeping allowances, house allowances and all manner of other tax-free benefits that pad our pay packets.

*(Loud murmuring and heckling)*

**An unidentified Member:** No! No! Mr CS, we will impeach you! That is not what we were promised, that is not Kenya Kwanza agenda...

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order, Hon Members! Who was that? That is completely out of order.

**CS, Treasury:** Mr Speaker Sir, we even get allowances to pay for nannies, cooks, gardeners, personal aides, security guards and all other manner of domestic and office help, but I can assure you that at least 80 per cent of that money goes straight into our own pockets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are concluding a comprehensive review of terms and conditions for senior public officers, which will also include abolishing extraneous allowances.

The ultimate intention is to cut waste in government, and also underline the principle that public service is a calling, a service, rather than an opportunity to amass wealth and to wield power and influence. In that regard, senior officers who rate a government vehicle and security will be limited to one saloon car, locally assembled, of no more than 1,800cc, and one driver-cum bodyguard. There will be no chase cars or extra guards unless there is an established security threat. Neither will policemen be deployed to residences or farms... *(Murmuring from the floor)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order, Hon Members, Order!

**Hon Members:** *Haki yetu! Haki yetu! Mandamano!*

*(A group of Honourable Members rush to the Table, grab the budget briefcase and wrestle the CS to the floor. Some of them grab the Mace and smash it on the Despatch Box. The House is Adjourned)*

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## kenya lens

## ■ UGANDAN PRESIDENCY

**MUSEVENI CLINGING ON**

**Head of State temporarily gave the reins of power to his prime minister due to illness, but he still has his hands firmly on the country's controls**

● BY JOHN KAMAU

**W**hen Yoweri Museveni seized power in Uganda in 1986, few expected him to become the fourth longest-serving president in Africa after Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema (44 years in power since 1979), Cameroon's Paul Biya (41 years) and Congo's Denis Sassou Nguesso (39 years).

Now in the class of veterans who have held onto power by manipulating their local politics, Museveni is approaching 80 years, and in Uganda, all those under 40 have known no other leader.

It has been a long journey and apparently, no alternative power structure has ever emerged in Uganda, leading to accusations that Museveni is building a dynasty and that he controls the politics in a game of Russian roulette.

Museveni was defence minister in the interim period between the ouster of Idi Amin in April 1979 by Ugandan exiles and Tanzanian troops and the December 1980 elections that returned Milton Obote to power. But he claimed the polls were rigged in favour of Obote, and he began a guerilla campaign in 1981. He overran Kampala after an offensive that began on January 17 and was sworn in as President on January 29, 1986.

Ever since, he had held onto power until last week, when he temporarily handed over to the Prime Minister, Robinah Nabbanja, when he was down with Covid-19. "As everybody knows, I have been very cautious with corona. However, recently, I had to give up masks because they have been causing me allergic reactions in the eyes and also the throat," Museveni wrote. "I have, therefore, got the second forced leave in the last 53 years, ever since



1971, when we started fighting Idi Amin."

At 78, Museveni no longer has the energy of other regional leaders. More so, Covid-19 paranoia has thwarted his determination to serve as the regional king-maker, although he supported William Ruto's campaigns for the Kenyan presidency. At home, his democratic ideals have always been questioned. While he swore to protect democracy and respect for human rights, Museveni has been intolerant of any criticism. He started by banning, in 1986, the political parties that had for years been part of Uganda's political landscape, including the Uganda People's Congress, formerly led by Obote, and the Democratic Party of Paul Ssemogerere.

"The presence of an opposition would only serve to divide the people. I don't believe that creating divisions among the people has got anything to do with democracy; in a multi-ethnic state which embraces a large number of religious denominations, parties always tend to form around ethnicity and religion," Museveni said in one of his early interviews. Initially, he experimented with "no-party democracy": while he had not banned the political parties, they were not allowed to field candidates.

Museveni was at first thought to be Marxist, having trained at the Dar es Salaam University – a Marxist training ground which first Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere used to back and legitimise his *Ujamaa* experiment.

Between 1962 and 1986, in a span of 24 years, Uganda had been led by eight leaders. As the ninth leader, Museveni has clocked more years than all the others combined.

"Nobody should think that what is happening today is a mere change of guard. It is a fundamen-

# kenya lens

tal change in the politics of our country. The people should be able to hire and fire their government," said Museveni upon taking power, promising that the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government would only hold elections for an interim period.

But 37 years later, he is still in power – with no heir-apparent.

While he has been credited for bringing stability to a country that went through the dictatorships of Idi Amin and Milton Obote and eight military coups, Museveni's leadership has also not allowed the progression of democracy. During campaigns, two formidable challengers, Kizza Besigye and Bobi Wine of the National Unity Platform, became victims of police brutality – an indicator of the narrow space that opposition in Uganda can occupy. In the last general election in 2021, Bobi Wine (whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi) polled 34.8 per cent of the vote, with Museveni getting 58.6 per cent.

Scholars on Museveni's Uganda have described it as an "arbitrary state", where spaces of freedom are created and then become the operating ground for the police to hunt those seeking to destabilise the status quo.



Lt. Gen Yoweri Museveni with his troops along the Uganda-DRC border on November 21, 1996. Right: Yoweri Museveni in Bulemezi, 100km north of Kampala, in July 1984. Below: The President's son, Major-General Muhoozi Kainerugaba.

"Arbitrary" refers to a ruler's unchecked and unaccountable power, exercised in such a way that those affected cannot predict or understand how power is wielded and have no means of questioning or challenging it," writes Rebecca Tapscott in her book, *Arbitrary Power: Social Control and Modern Authoritarianism in Museveni's Uganda*.

Once hailed as a reformer, Museveni has entrenched his rule by abolishing the term limits initially set in the constitution to allow him to run for the presidency as long as possible. Uganda's political campaigns are replete with open violence and intimidation, demonstrating a regime's cunning and insecurity.

Always frightened by the loss of power, Museveni in 2003 admitted in a letter pub-

lished by *The Monitor* that he and his family always went abroad for treatment as part of "our survival strategy in still hostile circumstances. . . the issue is about security, given some of the hostile doctors we have in the medical system here. In spite of being in Kampala for 17 years now, I have never rushed into a clinic and had my veins pierced to draw my blood for examinations. Even abroad, we take precautions."

With such paranoia, Museveni has hardly allowed alternative leadership to emerge within the NRM. The only vocal person has been his son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, born in Tanzania when Museveni was penniless and relied on President Nyerere's handouts. Museveni described Muhoozi as a son who was "born in the resistance and grew up in it". Whether he would like Muhoozi to inherit his position is not known.

The outspoken military general loves to showcase himself as independent of his father. As Museveni's Senior Advisor for Special Operations, he has become the country's military envoy in the region. Last week, he was in Somali at a meeting with President Hassan Mohamud. Incidentally, Museveni's wife, Janet, is also a long-serving cabinet minister.

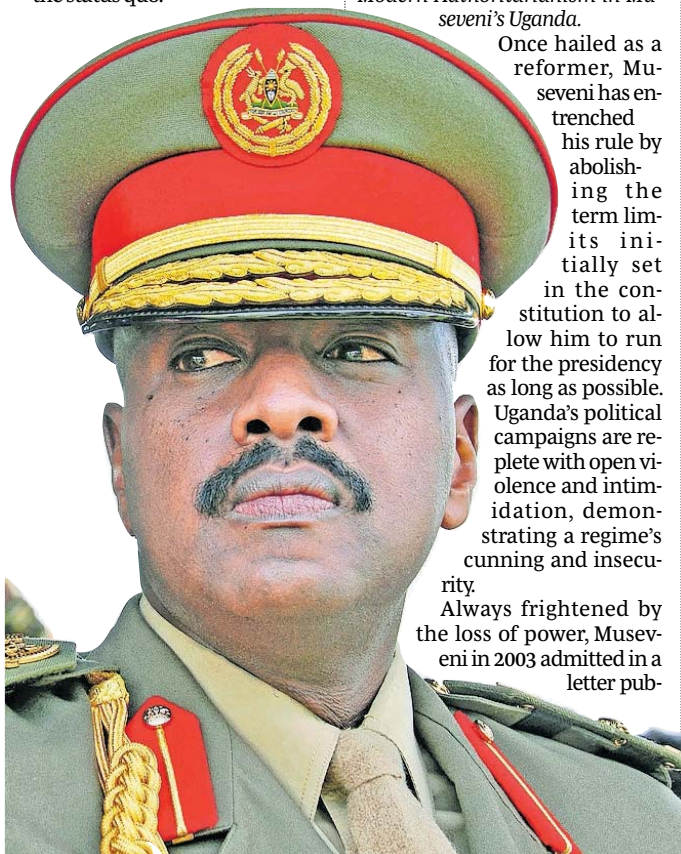
During his leadership, Museveni and his brother, Salim Saleh, have been accused of involvement in the Congo crisis. Uganda was indicted, too, of facilitating the smuggling of coltan, diamonds and gold from eastern



Congo, where 8,000 Uganda soldiers were stationed to ostensibly flush out Uganda rebels hiding there. An April 2001 UN Report alleged that Museveni's family had shares in mining companies in the region and were involved in the illicit trade. As a result of that accusation, Museveni withdrew his support for Congo's peace pact.

Museveni's other outside challenges have withered with time. The Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony, operating from the north, has gone quiet, while Prophetess Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement died with her.

In Uganda's power matrix, neither vice-president Jessica Alupo nor Prime Minister Nabbanja seem to hold sway. Power seems to rotate around Museveni's household and within the NRM, where Muhoozi and Saleh have closest proximity as the president's advisers.



## SCIENCE &amp; TECH

# FLIGHT TURBULENCE HIGH AS THE PLANET HEATS UP



Turbulent flights are not only uncomfortable, but can also cause injuries for those on board.

## ● LONDON

**F**light turbulence has increased as climate change has warmed the planet, researchers say. Scientists at Reading University in the UK studied clear-air turbulence, which is harder for pilots to avoid.

They found that severe turbulence had increased 55 per cent between 1979 and 2020 on a typically busy North Atlantic route. They put the increase down to changes in wind speed at high altitudes due to warmer air from carbon emissions.

“Following a decade of research showing that climate change will increase clear-air turbulence in the future, we now have evidence suggesting that the increase has already begun,” said Prof Paul Williams, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Reading who co-authored the study.

“We should be investing in improved turbulence

forecasting and detection systems to prevent the rougher air from translating into bumpier flights in the coming decades.”

Flight routes in the USA and North Atlantic saw the largest increases. Europe, the Middle East, and the South Atlantic also saw significant increases in turbulence.

Prof Williams said the increased turbulence was due to greater wind shear – or differences in wind speed – in the jet stream, a strong wind system blowing from west to east, about five to seven miles above the Earth’s surface. It exists largely due to a difference in temperature between the world’s equator and poles.

While satellites can’t see the turbulence, they can see the structure and the shape of the jet stream, allowing it to be analysed. Radar can pick up turbulence from storms, but clear-air turbulence is almost invisible and hard to detect.

Turbulent flights are not only uncomfortable, but can also cause injuries for those on board. Severe turbulence is very rare, but clear-air turbulence can come out of the blue, when passengers are not belted in.

“Nobody should stop flying because they’re afraid of turbulence, but it is sensible to keep your seat belt fastened all the time, unless you’re moving around, which is what the pilots do,” said Prof Williams.

“That is almost a guarantee that you will be safe even in the worst turbulence.”

There are also financial consequences. The aviation industry loses between \$150 million and \$500 million in the US alone annually due to effects of turbulence, including wear-and-tear on aircraft, said the researchers. It also has an environmental cost, as pilots burn up fuel avoiding it.

The study was published in the journal, *Geophysical Research Letters*.

## Doctors remove ‘world’s largest kidney stone’

Sri Lankan military doctors have removed what is now recorded as the world’s largest kidney stone from a 62-year-old retired soldier; the army said last week. The stone removed from ex-sergeant Canistus Coonge weighed 801 grams, more than five times the weight of an average male kidney, the army said. Coonge’s kidney stone measured 13.37 centimetres long, compared to an average kidney, which is about 10 to 12 centimetres long.

“The removal of the world’s largest and heaviest kidney stone through major surgery occurred on June 1 at the Colombo Army Hospital,” the military said in a statement. Coonge told the local *Swarnavahini TV* that he had abdominal pain since 2020 and oral medication had not helped.

“I was told to undergo surgery after a recent scan,” he said. “I feel normal now.”

The Sri Lankan case surpassed the largest kidney deposit previously recorded of 620 grams from a patient in Pakistan in 2008, according to Guinness World Records. Officials announced the finding on Wednesday after Guinness World Records recognised it. “The most important thing for us is that the kidney is functioning normally despite this stone,” army surgeon K. Sutharshan said. Stones are deposits made when minerals and salts crystallise in the kidney as it filters the blood. Passing the stones can cause excruciating pain, requiring surgery if they are too big and get stuck.

Meanwhile, French-Austrian drugmaker Valneva’s vaccine candidate against chikungunya, a mosquito-borne virus that causes occasional outbreaks across the world, showed promising results in a large new trial last week.

While the results were hailed as good news in the fight against chikungunya, the trial was carried out on people in the United States, where the virus is extremely rare, with experts saying more research was needed.



# africa lens

■ SEXUAL VIOLENCE RAMPANT IN SUDAN WAR

## NO WOMAN FEELS SAFE



A soldier talks to women on a street in Khartoum on June 6, as fighting continues in war-torn Sudan. Battles raged in Sudan's war-torn capital and the residents of an island in the Nile reported being "under siege" amid desperate shortages.

**The horrors of the conflict – which has claimed at least 1,800 lives and displaced over 1.5 million people – have been compounded by a wave of sexual violence, especially in the capital, Khartoum**

● KHARTOUM

**Z**einab was fleeing war-torn Sudan's capital to seek safety when she found herself pinned to the ground, a rifle to her chest, as a paramilitary fighter raped her. "I was sure we were about to die," she told *AFP*, recounting how she, her younger sister and two other women, one with an infant daughter, were all sexually violated.

Dozens of women have reported

similar attacks – in their homes, by the roadside and in commandeered hotels – since the war erupted in mid-April between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

A month into the war, the women were fleeing Khartoum when their minibus was stopped at an RSF checkpoint, said Zeinab. Terrified, they were marched into a warehouse where a man "in civilian clothes who seemed to be their commander" ordered Zein-

ab to the ground, she said.

"I was pinned down by one man while the other raped me," she said. "When he was done, they switched. "They wanted to keep my sister with them. I begged them on my hands and knees to let her go."

The women were eventually allowed to leave and escaped to Madani, 200 kilometres away, where they reported the attack to police and went to a hospital. When Zeinab later recounted

their ordeal, she had found refuge in another country. "We're not the first people this has happened to, or the last," she said.

Sudan's war has claimed at least 1,800 lives and displaced over 1.5 million people. The horrors of the conflict have been compounded by a wave of sexual violence, say survivors, medics and activists who spoke to *AFP*.

Most have requested anonymity

...Continued on Page 26

## africa lens

# Sexual violence rampant in Sudanese conflict

Continued from Page 25

or, like Zeinab, used a pseudonym for fear of reprisals against them and others. Both Sudan's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the RSF, led by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, have accused their enemies of such attacks.

And human rights lawyer Jehanne Henry said that indeed both sides have committed "notorious acts of sexual violence" in the past. The governmental Combating Violence Against Women and Children Unit documented 49 assaults in the first two weeks of the war.

In all but six cases, survivors identified perpetrators "in RSF uniform", said unit chief Sulaima Ishaq al-Khalifa, adding that there are "new reports night and day". "There is not a single woman in Khartoum now who feels safe, not even in her own home."

The worst fighting has raged in Khartoum and the Darfur region, where former dictator Omar al-Bashir once unleashed the notorious Janjaweed militia from which the RSF emerged. In their scorched-earth campaign since 2003, they committed genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape, according to the International Criminal Court.

Now "mass rapes" are again being reported in Darfur, said Adjaratou Ndiaye, the UN Women representative in Sudan. In one case, 12 women were stopped by gunmen in late April and ordered to join in looting a warehouse, said Amna, a local human rights defender.

Once they were inside, they heard the doors lock. "They were all raped," said Amna. "They had men with them, whom fighters in RSF uniforms forced to rape the women." Amna said she and other defenders have recorded more cases in Darfur, with the youngest victim aged 14.

"Women and girls are being abducted to a hotel the RSF has commandeered, where they're kept for two or three days, raped repeatedly." Documented cases, like wider casualty counts, are likely "the tip of the iceberg", said a Sudanese Women Rights Action (SUWRA) group researcher.

Medics say many victims receive

no care as hospitals have been ransacked or destroyed. Many cases have been reported by civil society groups known as resistance committees, which long campaigned for democracy.

In one attack in May, reported by one group and corroborated by multiple sources, RSF fighters raped a 15-year-old girl on a northern Khartoum street. In another case, a woman in her 30s in eastern Khartoum "was at home alone with her kids when she heard her downstairs neighbours screaming," said the SUWRA researcher.

Three women there were gang-raped before the fighters made their way upstairs, the survivor told SUWRA. "Four armed men broke the door down, and then one of them locked himself in a room with her."

Most survivors say they were assaulted by fighters of the RSF, who are embedded in residential

neighbourhoods. Khalifa said the unit had also received news "of assaults by perpetrators in army uniform" but had "not yet been able to confirm" these.

A resistance committee member said in another attack last month that three army soldiers stormed a northern Khartoum home, "beat the son and raped both mother and daughter". "Their neighbours heard them screaming for hours."

A lawyer who has long documented sexual assaults by security forces, said the scourge now impacts "every segment of Sudanese society".

"We have seen the rape of young girls and old women, mothers with their children," she said, adding that to the perpetrators "it doesn't matter". Amid dire shortages, health workers have struggled to provide HIV medication or emergency contraceptives.

"The situation is catastroph-

ic," said a member of the Central Committee of Sudanese Pharmacists. Activists and medics are trying to document every attack. The aim, said the lawyer, is "to ensure there is no impunity".

But the task is dangerous. "Every time you walk down the street, you could be stopped and accused of being an informant for either side," said one activist. After several colleagues were violently interrogated, Amna said that "they know what we're doing, and now the activists themselves are in danger".

Zeinab hopes the rapists will one day face justice, but voices resignation. "I shared my testimony to try and stop this happening to others, to tell them the road isn't safe," she said. "But even when I filed the police report, I knew nothing would come of it. They're never going to get the men who did this."

—AFP



People use flashlights of their phones to assist a woman stitching a man's head, in Khartoum's twin city Omdourman, on June 6.

# global lens

## ■ DRAMATIC RESCUE IN COLOMBIA

# CHILDREN OF THE JUNGLE



Colombian Army doctors checking one of the four Indigenous children who were found alive after being lost for 40 days in the Amazon rainforest following a plane crash in Bogota on June 10.

## Miracle, miracle, miracle... The moving story of how four indigenous children survived 40 days in the wilderness

### ● BOGOTA

**O**n June 9, in the dead of night at the heart of the Colombian jungle, army radios crackled to life with the message the nation had been praying for: “Miracle, miracle, miracle, miracle”.

The military code revealed that four children missing in the

jungle for 40 days had all been found – alive. The youngsters, all members of the indigenous Huitoto people, had been missing since the light plane they were travelling in crashed into the Amazon in the early hours of May 1.

The tragedy killed their mother and left the children – aged 13, nine, four and one – stranded alone in an area teeming with

snakes, jaguars and mosquitos. Rescuers initially feared the worst, but footprints, partially eaten wild fruit and other clues soon gave them hope that the children might be alive after they left the crash site looking for help.

Over the next six weeks, the children battled the elements – and the odds – in what Colombia’s President Gustavo Petro called “an example of total survival which

will remain in history”. If there were ever children well-prepared to tackle such an ordeal, the Mucutuy family were the ones.

Huitoto people learn hunting, fishing and gathering from an early age, and their grandfather, Fidencio Valencia, told reporters that the eldest children, Lesly and Soleiny, were well acquainted with the jungle. Speaking to

Continued on Page 28



## global lens

■ 'THE EVILLEST ABUSE OF POWER IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY'

## TRUMP'S POLITICS OF RAGE

**Analysts say that the former US president's strategy is to erode people's confidence in a non-partisan Department of Justice and non-partisan FBI**

● WASHINGTON

**D**onald Trump is reaching into his familiar playbook as he fights the first federal criminal charges ever lodged against a former US president.

Having undermined public trust in the democratic process by convincing many Americans the 2020 election was "stolen", Trump is now seeking to persuade them that the judicial process is equally broken.

Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, insists he is being targeted for prosecution by a Justice Department weaponised by Democratic President Joe Biden.

"When you arrest your leading political opponent we no longer have a democracy," Trump said last week after pleading not guilty to charges of mishandling highly sensitive

government documents.

"This is called election interference," the 77-year-old Republican leader said. "It's a political persecution like something straight out of a fascist or communist nation."

In fighting the classified documents charges, Trump is waging a battle on two fronts – in a Miami courtroom and in the court of public opinion, analysts said.

"It's a classic Trump move," said Thomas Holbrook, a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. "It helps to rally his supporters. Trump's attacks on the courts or on the Department of Justice just sort of further cement his supporters' distrust for those institutions," Holbrook said.

Shirley Warshaw, author of several books on the US presidency, agreed, saying Trump's strategy is to "erode people's confidence in a non-partisan Department of Justice and a non-partisan FBI".

Polls suggest that Trump's attacks on the Justice Department, like his efforts to discredit the 2020 election results, have paid off to some extent – at least with Republicans.

According to a CBS News YouGov poll, 76 per cent of likely Republican primary voters believe that the indictment was politically motivated. Sixty-one per cent said they would vote for Trump to be the 2024 Republican presidential nominee if the primary was held today. Several analysts expressed concern that Trump could rile up his loyal base and provoke violence such as that of January 6, 2021, when his supporters stormed the US Capitol in a bid to block Congress from certifying Biden's election victory.

Wendy Schiller, a professor of public and international affairs at Brown University, said it is not surprising that Trump is seeking to sway public opinion in his favour. "That's what politicians do," Schiller said. "You can argue that in a jury trial, a good lawyer is also trying to appeal to the public opinion on the jury."

"But the other thing he's doing that's more frightening is that he's not trying to appeal to a jury. He's trying to rouse up the people, the violent

forces that attacked the Capitol," she said. "He's trying to intimidate the legal system."

One of the main targets of Trump's ire has been special counsel Jack Smith, who brought the indictment against the former president in the classified documents case and is also looking at whether he should face charges for the attack on Congress. Smith, who was named by Attorney-General Merrick Garland to head the investigations into Trump, has been branded a "thug", a "lunatic" and other colourful epithets by the former president.

Edward Foley, a professor in constitutional law at Ohio State University, said the prosecution of Trump "puts the country in a very fraught situation". It also places two important principles in tension with each other, Foley said. "Principle number one is no person is above the law. We want even a former president to be accountable for misdeeds. But principle number two is you don't want the government in power to use the power of government to hobble its political opponents."

In this case, Foley said it is not credible to allege that the prosecution of Trump is Biden personally waging a preemptive strike on his leading opponent. But there is an "unavoidable" perception problem.

"The Justice Department is part of the executive branch and the president is the head of the executive branch," he said. "And Biden is the president running for reelection."

Trump appeared before a magistrate to be formally presented with 37 counts under seven charges brought by a special counsel probe that opened after an FBI raid of his Florida mansion 10 months ago.

"Today we witnessed the most evil and heinous abuse of power in the history of our country. Very sad thing to watch," Trump said after returning to his summer residence in New Jersey. The hearing – just weeks after Trump denied state level financial fraud charges in a separate case in Manhattan – came with the former reality TV star's mounting legal woes threatening to derail his bid to return to the Oval Office.

The US government – which has never before prosecuted a former president – accuses Trump of violating the Espionage Act and other laws when he removed classified documents upon leaving office in 2021 and failed to give them up to the National Archives.

– AFP



**OBIT**

■ ALL ATTEMPTS TO HAVE HIM USE COMPUTERS SIMPLY DID NOT WORK

# FRED NYONGESA'S MIC GOES SILENT

**He rose to become one of the most recognisable voices on radio at 'KBC' and its predecessor, 'Voice of Kenya'**

● By OMOLE ASIKO

**W**hen I joined the *Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC)* as an intern in 1989 with fellow trainees Elynah Shiveka and Martin King'asia, we were welcomed to the Sports Desk by a short, slender man who was introduced to us as Fred Nyongesa Ongalo. He was friendly as he took us through the basics of sports reporting. His specialties then were volleyball and handball, and apart from reporting on the two sports disciplines, he also served as the public relations officer for their federations.

Later, in 1991, when we joined the corporation as employees after our graduation, Fred was happy to share duties with us as his colleagues. It was well known in the newsroom and the sports desk in particular that on a day when one was rostered to work with Fred, woe unto you if you delayed with the day's scripts and inserts because he religiously wrapped up his work by 3.30pm to catch the 4pm Route 23 bus to Kangemi. Since we all respected the sports legend that he was, we made sure we adhered to his strict timelines.

After the 1992 General Election, *KBC* acquired computers (old model machines) which, we were told, were donated by the Central Bank of Kenya. We were all trained to use them since the instruction was that we were all to immediately discard the typewriters that had been our trusted tools of trade for many years. This did not go down well with Fred. All attempts to have him use the new machines simply did not work.

Truth be told, we all had challenges using them. They were nothing like the modern computers we use today. To make life easier for Fred, we

**Fred was one of a rare breed of sports journalists who made a commitment in their careers to report only on the action and not the controversies.**

opted to retain one typewriter that was set up for him at one corner of the office. Eventually, he did learn how to use computers and even trained others on how to use them.

Fred was one of a rare breed of sports journalists who made a commitment in their careers to report only on the action and not the controversies. Any attempt to draw him into controversial sports stories was quietly resisted. He would not even be drawn into the football banter among colleagues who were divided in their

support of the *Mashemeji* derby rivals, Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards.

Being a Luhya, many assumed that he was a Leopards fan. I once pressed him hard to tell me why he avoided the friendly jibing. Fred pulled me aside and said: "Do you know that my folks migrated from Ugenya in Siaya to Kamukuywa (in Western Kenya) many years ago? My surname, Ongalo, is from Ugenya even though now I am perceived to be a Luhya by assimilation."

People meeting Fred for the first time might have been dismissive of him due to his small stature and softspokenness, but once you got to know him, his strong willed, resolute and very assertive nature was revealed. He was a very generous person, and he invited us on many occasions to enjoy *nyama choma* in some of the best

**My folks migrated from Ugenya in Siaya to Kamukuywa (Western Kenya) many years ago. My surname, Ongalo, is from Ugenya, even though I am now perceived to be a Luhya by assimilation.**

Fred Nyongesa

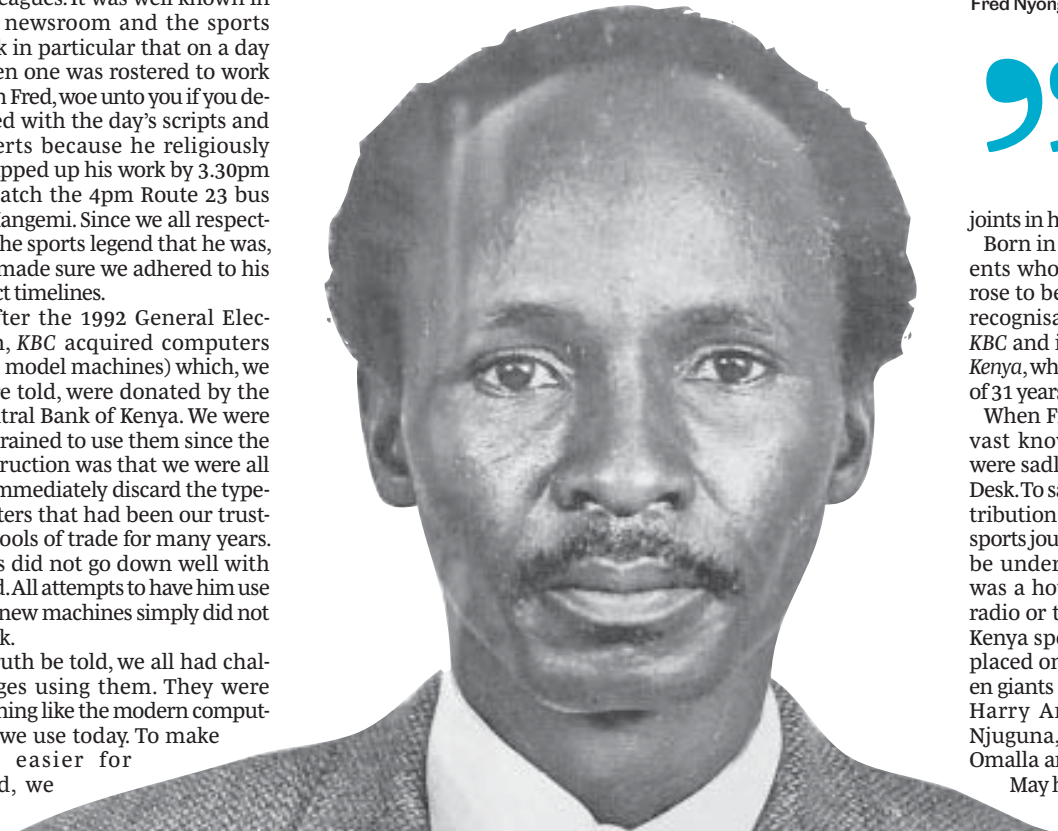


joints in his Kangemi backyard.

Born in 1952 in Nakuru to parents who were both medics, he rose to become one of the most recognisable voices on radio at *KBC* and its predecessor, *Voice of Kenya*, where he served for a total of 31 years.

When Fred retired in 2003, his vast knowledge and charisma were sadly missed on the Sports Desk. To say that he made his contribution to the development of sports journalism in Kenya would be understatement, since Fred was a household name on *KBC* radio or television. His status in Kenya sports journalism can be placed on the same level as fallen giants like James Ogoma King, Harry Amol, Mohamed Juma Njuguna, Ochieng Angela, Billy Omalla and Victor Odak Omalla.

May his soul rest in peace.



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