

# THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

10.43 | June 25, 2023 FREE WITH 'SUNDAY NATION'



## BUDGET AFTERMATH

**BACK TO THE STEETS:** The high fuel and food prices, the cash crunch that for the first time in history saw the government delay payment of salaries, and a controversial Finance Bill that came with punitive taxes have all combined to convince Raila that he might have Ruto against the ropes on the public arena

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letter from the editor

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The mandatory vetting of public officials provided for in our Constitution comes about from our bad past, in which a President could appoint anyone he wished to fill a senior position, whether the person was capable of the task or not.

The previous Constitution was silent on this matter and that is how we ended up with a Central Bank governor whose field of study was history and who had no background at all in finance or economics. We had Cabinet ministers who had never attended school and the damage they did to the country has yet to be quantified.

The provision was put in place to save the nation from such types of people and that is why all Executive appointments have to be confirmed by Parliament. Sadly, this noble prerequisite is being made a mockery of. The UhuRuto administration vetted a proposed Cabinet Secretary who had only one certificate – a birth certificate. Somehow, however, the man passed the vetting process with flying colours and went ahead to murder the Sports docket. That, in itself, proved to all Kenyans just how low sports was rated in their agenda.

During the vetting of CSs last year, Kenyans were shocked by the sheer amount of wealth declared by the nominees, almost all of whom were multi-millionaires, with a sprinkling of billionaires. It is no secret that some of these individuals might have inflated their true worth so that no red flags would be raised when they acquired much more while in office.

A case in point is the controversial deal between Labour and Social Protection CS Florence Bore and Gatanga MP Edward Muriu over a multimillion-shilling home in the leafy suburb of Karen, which ended with the vacation of the minister after a week of



Allan Buluku

Partisan politics has taken over the existence of independent thinking by MPs. They are slowly throwing away parliamentary power to check on the Executive and thinning away the relevance of the Legislature. In the end, even bankrupt people will pass their tests with comic ease.

chest-thumping.

Bore claimed that she had entered into a contractual agreement with a firm associated with the MP to buy the house at a negotiated and agreed purchase price. The legislator stated, however, that no agreement had been reached on purchase price. While Bore is a CS, Muriu is the Legal Affairs Secretary of the United Democratic Alliance, one of the major partners in the Kenya Kwanza government led by President William Ruto.

When she was vetted, Bore said her net worth was KSh200 million. What shocked many Kenyans about the Karen house saga was her seeming dramatic turnaround in fortunes and the fact that she was still seeking a mortgage facility, that she had paid 10 per cent of the agreed price, that she still had 90 days to pay the rest, blah blah blah... Many people were even surprised that

such a CS existed, bringing to question the quality of vetting. Are MPs mere rubber-stamps? If so, this could end up being the weakest Parliament in the multiparty era, given the strong influence the Executive has over its roles.

Partisan politics has taken over the existence of independent thinking by MPs. They are slowly throwing away parliamentary power to check on the Executive and thinning away the relevance of the Legislature. In the end, even bankrupt people will pass their tests with comic ease. Kenyans will recall how poorly the nominee for the Tourism docket, Peninah Malonza, performed during vetting. Players in the industry called on MPs to reject her nomination. But the legislators were whipped into line and confirmed her. Soon after her appointment, she went AWOL, just disappeared below the radar and probably lives in a suburb where only peace reigns.

In the meantime, what is going on in the tourism sector? What is there to expect? What is being done to revitalise that stunned sector? Who has heard the cries of the hoteliers whose businesses are limping and workers who are losing their jobs? All this comes about because Parliament has abdicated its critical vetting role. All that's left are political party loyalists who are ready to roar for the President at the slightest command.

What's the need for MPs to vet nominees if the Executive will eventually have its way? The live interviews broadcast across the country, it turns out, have been reduced to TV comic shows. They stink to high heaven and we must find a way to sanitise them with integrity and independent thinking.

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## the telescope

### ■ Leaders call for 'consultations' in Nairobi

## Azimio returns to Kamukunji

Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya has invited Kenyans for a consultative rally at the historic Kamukunji grounds on Tuesday to discuss the way forward following what it terms "forceful passage of the Finance Bill, 2023".

Azimio deputy leader Martha Karua said Kenyans will now have an opportunity to make a decision on the matter.

"We have decided to invite Kenyans to a consultation at the Kamukunji Grounds next Tuesday, June 27, at 10am where the next course of action will be decided," Karua said.

"Whenever we have come together as a people, we have always found a solution to our worst problems. This time will not be different. The only time we have suffered longer than

we should; the only time we have allowed dictators to rule us longer than they should, is when we have been divided. But people can never be helpless in their own country, against their own leaders. Not in a democracy, not even in a dictatorship as they are trying to recreate," she added.

Karua said the government had ignored the feelings of the people. "That is what (President) Ruto and his Kenya Kwanza followers did with the passage of the Finance Bill, 2023. Ignoring the wishes of a majority of Kenyans signals the era of dictatorship. Kenyans beware," she offered.

"We say 'pole' to the millions of Kenyans who are struggling to come to terms with the harsh reality," she said.



Azimio leaders led by Martha Karua (centre) at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Foundation in Nairobi on June 22.

### ■ Most thrilling display of wildlife behaviour

## The Mara wildebeest migration



One of the most spectacular events that takes place in the Maasai Mara is the annual migration of wildebeest zebras and gazelles from late June to October. It's one of the world's most thrilling and intriguing

displays of wildlife behaviour. During this time, millions of animals move from Tanzania's Serengeti to the Mara in search of food and water, creating an incredible spectacle.

One of the events in the migration that attracts the greatest attention is the arrival crossing of the Mara River that occurs around late July to August with parts of September and again on their return south.

### ■ Royal couple accepted trophy from Duke of Kent



Queen Camilla (left) and King Charles III watch the races on the second day of the Royal Ascot horse racing meeting in London on June 21.

## Charles celebrates first Ascot winner

King Charles III along with his wife, Queen Camilla, recorded his first win at Royal Ascot since he succeeded his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, as Desert Hero won the King George V Stakes last week.

Both Charles and Camilla wiped tears away in the Royal Box as Tom Marquand got their horse past Valiant King to take the honours.

They descended from the box to the winner's enclosure, the king with a broad smile on his face as he shook hands with Marquand and trainer William Haggas.

The royal couple then accepted the trophy from the Duke of Kent, with Princess Anne and her daughter, Zara Tindall, looking on.

"I am thinking of how proud the Queen would have been for Charles and Camilla to have a winner and keep the dream alive," said Zara.

"It is a new excitement for them.

Like all those owners who have a horse here, they are living that dream and hope and fulfilling it is incredible."

For Haggas, who had lunch at Windsor Castle with Charles and Camilla on Wednesday, it was a wonderful experience.

"Absolutely fantastic! It is a great honour and I am thrilled they were here to see it," said Haggas.

Due to protocol, those conversing with the monarch are forbidden from relaying what is said but 62-year-old Haggas said the importance of the victory was immense.

"They have been looking forward to Ascot for a long time and wanted to have as many runners as possible and they will be absolutely delighted," he said.

"It is very important for them to have a winner and that they enjoy it."

### ■ Allegations against the voting system in last polls

## Bolsonaro faces political ban in Brazil



Ex-president Jair Bolsonaro faced an eight-year ban on running for office as Brazil's top electoral court began trying the far-right leader last week over his unproven allegations against the voting system during last year's elections. Bolsonaro,

68, was not in court as the Superior Electoral Tribunal opened his trial on charges he abused his office and misused state media when he convened foreign diplomats to warn of the alleged risk of large-scale fraud in the October elections, which he went on to lose to Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The proceedings in Brasilia began with Judge Benedito Goncalves reading a summary of the case against the former president, which was brought by the Democratic Labour Party.



## kenya lens

## ■ STANDARD GAUGE RAILWAY

## GET ON THE GRAVY TRAIN



Projects negotiated and procured in the same way as the SGR contract allow you to sign opaque commercial contracts and MOUs by circumventing oversight institutions, including Parliament and the Controller of Budget. As a powerful politician, it enables you to conspire with your Chinese cronies to push a project into the government's spending programme without having to wait for appropriations from Parliament.

## The Supreme Court's ruling on procurement of the SGR contract shines the spotlight on the contractor-negotiated financing model, which is favoured by elite wheeler-dealers

● BY JAINDI KISERO

**T**he Supreme Court's ruling this week that the KSh500 billion Standard Gauge Railway, the largest infrastructure project in Kenya's history, was procured legally has settled a matter in which the issues at stake had far-reaching implications for diplomatic relations

with China and Kenya's access to infrastructure financing from Beijing.

The highest court in the land was making a decision on a ruling by a Court of Appeal in June 2020 that had declared that the SGR contract was procured not only illegally, but unconstitutionally.

As expected, the 2020 Court of Appeal ruling had been received

with a deep sense of foreboding and concern in China, especially in the corridors of Exim Bank of China, which financed the SGR project.

China Road and Bridge Corporation, the entity that negotiated and signed the construction contracts and built the railway, had also been left legally exposed by the 2020 Court of Appeal decision.

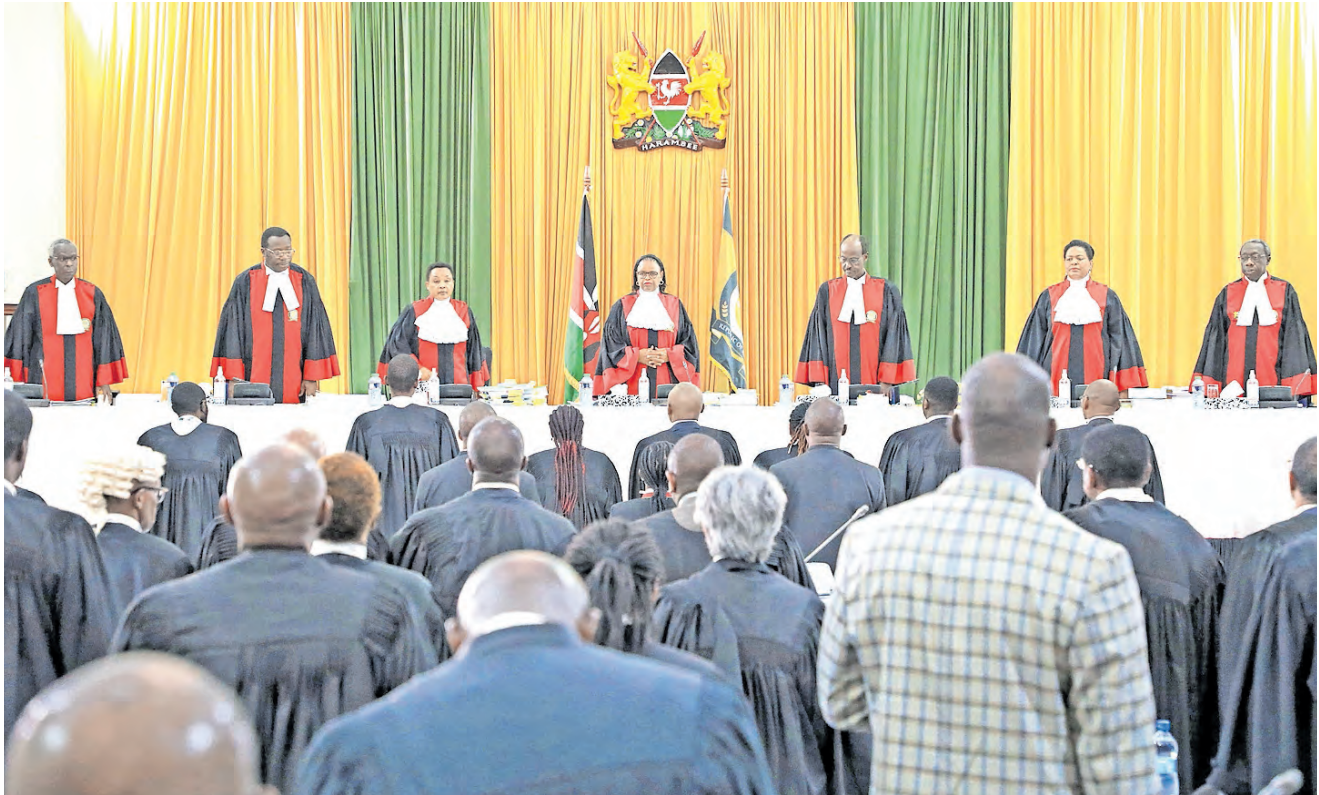
The Court of Appeal, composed of Martha Koome (now Chief Justice), Gatembu Kairu, and Jamilla Mohammed, had in a judgement delivered on June 19, 2020, found that the Kenya Railways Corporation failed to comply with and violated both the constitutional and procurement law. In setting aside the ruling, the Supreme

Continued on Page 6



## kenya lens

# Ruling plays into the hands of ‘deal makers’



The Supreme Court of Kenya on September 2, 2022. The Court of Appeal, composed of Martha Koome (now Chief Justice), Gatembu Kairu, and Jamilla Mohammed, had in a judgement delivered on June 19, 2020, found that the Kenya Railways Corporation failed to comply with and violated both the constitutional and procurement law. China Road and Bridge Corporation, the entity that negotiated and signed the construction contracts and built the railway, had been left legally exposed by the 2020 Court of Appeal decision.

Continued from Page 5

Court stated as follows: “It has not been demonstrated that KRC, acting not as a procurement entity but on the directive of the Executive, failed to comply with the Constitution.”

The court’s view was that the SGR project was procured under a ‘G-to-G’ arrangement between Kenya and China, which is permitted under the law.

Yet, it was not just the diplomatic relations between Kenya and China that were at stake in this high-stakes legal issue.

That matter raised the broader policy implications for and questions about the very popular arrangement of attracting foreign financing through what has become known as “contractor-negotiated loans”, where large infrastructure projects are award-

ed without being subjected to international competitive bidding.

The SGR contract was the typical contractor-negotiated loan. The scenario is all too familiar: In the first stage, an MOU is hurriedly signed with the Cabinet Secretary. This will be followed by the signing of a commercial agreement by the ministry or parastatal.

In the third stage, the National Treasury will be invited to sign a financing agreement with a Chinese bank that will have been brought into the picture by the foreign contractor. In this way, a new expensive commercial loan will have been introduced into our national debt register behind the back of Parliament.

This week’s ruling has major political implications because it has put the thumb of approval on a procurement method loved by to-

**Going through the external debt register, the sheer number and size of loans Kenya has taken from China under contractor-negotiated arrangement is mind-boggling, including billions for buying MRI equipment, procuring equipment for electricity projects, power materials, rehabilitation of technical institutes, modernisation of Kenya Power distribution systems and building of Kenyatta University.**

day’s *nouveau riche*.

The greedy elite like contractor-negotiated loans that invariably come through the so-called G-to-G arrangement for several reasons: First, projects negotiated and procured in the same way

as the SGR contract allow you to sign opaque commercial contracts and MOUs by circumventing oversight institutions, including Parliament and the Controller of Budget.

As a powerful politician, it enables you to conspire with your Chinese cronies to push a project into the government’s spending programme without having to wait for appropriations from Parliament.

Secondly, since the MOUs and commercial agreement can be procured and concluded without subjecting the project to international competitive bidding, you can pad it with as many back-handers and kick-backs as you choose.

It does not surprise that, in the majority of cases, contracts of this nature will invariably have provisions for huge advance payments



# kenya lens

It has not been demonstrated that KRC, acting not as a procurement entity but on the directive of the Executive, failed to comply with the Constitution. music.

Supreme Court



**Justice Gatumu Kairu**  
Court of Appeal



**Justice Jamilla Mohamed**  
Court of Appeal



**Transport Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen.** The SGR contract was the typical contractor-negotiated loan. The scenario is all too familiar: In the first stage, an MOU is hurriedly signed with the Cabinet Secretary. This will be followed by the signing of a commercial agreement by the ministry or parastatal. In the third stage, the National Treasury will be invited to sign a financing agreement with a Chinese bank that will have been brought into the picture by the foreign contractor.

that must be made even before a spade has been lifted.

The third reason why today's oligarch loves this type of deal is that debt service is a first charge on the consolidated fund and therefore has to be honoured before appropriations by Parliament are paid.

It means that repayment of the money borrowed from China is almost guaranteed.

The biggest problem is that Kenya has no register of the number of MOUs and commercial agreements signed until the details of the finance agreement have been disclosed by the National Treasury in the external debt register.

If the Court of Appeal judgement remained, several large infrastructure projects procured through the contractor-negotiat-

ed financing model would have remained legally exposed. Kenya has taken too many Chinese loans.

While the huge loans to finance the SGR are what hit the headlines, the government has also borrowed heavily for projects of little economic impact — such procurement of equipment for the National Youth Service (NYS) and drilling materials — from China.

Going through the external debt register, the sheer number and size of loans Kenya has taken from China under contractor-negotiated arrangement is mind-boggling, including billions for buying MRI equipment, procuring equipment for electricity projects, power materials, rehabilitation of technical institutes, modernisation of Kenya Power

distribution systems and building of Kenyatta University.

In the last 10 years, the country has been on a spending spree, pouring hundreds of millions, sometimes billions of US dollars and Chinese Yuan into everything from roads, railways, ports and transmission lines to geothermal wells, surveillance cameras and dam construction projects, many of which are incomplete.

The SGR procurement was also structured as 'tied aid', where only Chinese contractors could participate.

The 2020 Court of Appeal had put the legality of these type of procurements into question because tenders are closed to contractors from countries that have lent money to several large infrastructure project in the country.



## kenya lens

■ PUBLIC ANGER OVER THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY



# FANNING THE FIRE

**Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga could exploit the passage of unpopular taxation proposals in the highly contentious Finance Bill to excite public rebellion**

• BY MACHARIA GAITHO

President William Ruto should be savouring sweet victory after his Kenya Kwanza alliance troops in Parliament handily saw off the opposition challenge to pass the highly contentious Finance Bill with an overwhelming majority last week. But it could turn out to be Pyrrhic victory if the opposition is able to make good on threats to exploit passage of unpopular taxation proposals to excite public rebellion.

A series of public rallies is already in the pipeline intended to galvanise opposition to the government's economic programme.

In the meantime, the President should be looking forward to putting into place the key elements of his administration's first budget, after largely operating, since assuming office nearly ten months ago on the 2022-2023 spending plans inherited from his predecessor, Uhuru Kenyatta.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga, meanwhile, will be retreating to lick his wounds. Kenya Kwanza commands a handsome majority following aggressive poaching of opposition members, but a vote on the Finance Bill had presented Raila's Azimio la Umoja opposition contingent a golden opportunity to capitalise on what looked like widespread public rejection of Ruto's budget.

In the run-up to the debate, it

seemed like a good number of Kenya Kwanza MPs were reluctant to go on the stumps backing the contentious Bill. The Azimio brigade, by contrast, was out in full force, highlighting unpopular aspects such as the controversial Housing Fund, doubling of VAT on petroleum and other taxation measures that have earned Ruto the moniker 'Zakayo', the tax collector of the Bible.

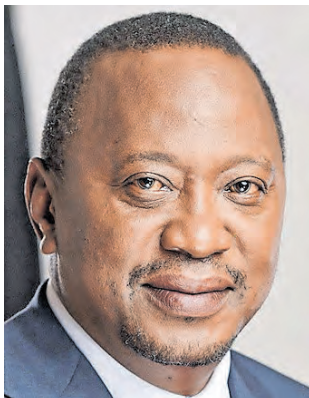
Public anger over the state of the economy and an administration deemed to have an insatiable appetite for tax collection was reflected even in surveys within the Kenya Kwanza strongholds of the Rift Valley and Mt Kenya.

Once Ruto laid down the law on party discipline, however, Kenya Kwanza, to the last man — save for only a lone woman, dissenting Kiambu County Woman Rep Gathoni wa Muchomba — lined up behind the revenue and spending proposals which, according to a survey, were opposed by 90 per cent of Kenyans.

Odinga's Azimio troops, by contrast, appeared disjointed and dispirited. Instead of turning up in large numbers to take advantage of any likely defections or abstentions from Kenya Kwanza MPs afraid of public backlash, it was the opposition benches that suffered significantly from no shows and defiance of the party line. How the vote was likely to go was evident from the First



# kenya lens



**Uhuru Kenyatta**  
Former President



**Gathoni wa Muchomba**  
Kiambu Woman Rep

Reading on the Bill, and from then on the pattern was set for the Second and Third Readings. By conclusion of debate and the final clause-by-clause votes on Wednesday, June 21, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. The opposition leadership in Parliament was resigned to resounding defeat, and already signalling that they would seek recourse outside the House.

On Thursday the Azimio leadership called a press conference to announce 'public consultations' at Nairobi's Kamukunji grounds on Tuesday.

That will be the first of what is planned as a series of public rallies kicking-off in Nairobi and spreading across the country intended to galvanise popular rejection of Ruto's budget. The intention is to take advantage of public sentiments and resume the streets protests launched earlier this year that were only halted after Ruto held out an olive

branch to Raila.

The two leaders agreed on bi-partisan talks under a committee of MPs from both sides, but Raila at some point decided that dialogue was distracting his team from the street agitation that had forced Ruto to reach out in the first place.

He suspended participation while increasing his list of demands from the initial reasons for demonstrations that included demands for scrutiny of the 2022 presidential election servers to determine the true winner, halting the recruitment of new Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commissioners until all stakeholders were included in the process, and reduction in the cost of living, particularly the price of basic foods.

He went on rafting up his demands to include discussion of a whole series of issues, many touching on government policy platforms and intended interventions as it appeared Kenya faced serious risk of economic collapse, including a risk of defaulting on debt.

The collapsing shilling, high fuel and food prices, the cash crunch that for the first time in history saw the government delay payment of salaries, and finally a Finance Bill that as expected came with what were seen as punitive taxes, have all combined to convince Raila that he might have Ruto against the ropes on the public arena as if the President bulldozes his will through in Parliament. The first rounds of Azimio demonstrations were successful in shutting down normal activity in parts of Nairobi and the Raila stronghold in Kisumu.

Projections now are that Azimio is poised to capitalise on

**Kenyans are watching out there. It is upon them to choose which side they want to side with. Do you want to side with the oppressors or the poor Kenyans? The mood out there is that the bill is a make-or-break point that can spark a serious revolution in Kenya.**

Opiyo Wandayi, Minority Leader



public discontent across many other parts of the country, including the Kenya Kwanza bastions, as well as contested spaces in the Coast and Western Kenya.

The tough talk from the Azimio Parliamentary leadership after defeat in the House vote indicates what might be at stake. Minority Leader Opiyo Wandayi and Whip Junet Mohamed warned Ruto to prepare for a popular uprising and collapse of his government.

"I promise you today that there will be a revolution in this country," Wandayi warned, in reference to the predicted rise in petrol prices once the VAT is doubled from 8 per cent to 16 per cent, and the spillover effect on matatu fares, electricity tariffs and essential foodstuffs and commodities across the board.

The opposition was called out in Parliament by Kenya Kwanza leaders for not initially raising objections when the Budget Estimates were approved at Committee stage and also not offering alternative proposals on how to bridge the deficit. However, once prices start shooting up, a restive public not seeing immediate gains from the extravagant Kenya Kwanza election promises will be ripe for agitation.

In usual fashion, the government is likely to ban the Kamukunji rally and respond with teargas and baton charges, tactics that often result in stone-throwing, riots and destruction of property. While the government will be determined to prevent any descent into violence, it will be in a Catch 22 situation at Kamukunji and future opposition protests because use of force by the police itself often becomes the trigger for chaos.

Ruto won the Finance Bill battle in Parliament, but the war ahead could be much more prolonged.

**Opposition leader Raila Odinga will be retreating to lick his wounds. Kenya Kwanza commands a handsome majority following aggressive poaching of opposition members, but a vote on the Finance Bill had presented Raila's Azimio la Umoja opposition contingent a golden opportunity to capitalise on what looked like widespread public rejection of Ruto's budget.**

kenya lens

■ IMPUNITY IN HIGH OFFICE

# RUTO'S CHAOTIC SYSTEM

**Senior government officials appear to have no qualms about public behaviour or utterances that bring their high offices into disrepute**

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

**R**emember Dr Nancy Baraza, Kenya's first Deputy Chief Justice who was forced to resign in 2012 after pinching the nose of a security guard? Well, today, compliance with the provisions of Chapter Six of the Constitution on the integrity of State officers seems to have been relaxed. In fact, contravention has become the norm.

Today, senior government officials appear to have no qualms about public behaviour or utterances that bring their high offices into disrepute. Trade Cabinet Secretary Moses Kuria, who is currently in the eye of a storm caused by his brazen attack on the media, is the latest senior officer in President William Ruto's administration whose words and action have attracted public ire.

Constitutional lawyer-turned-politician Dr Ekuro Aukot observes that the manner in which Kenya has journeyed from one end of an accountable and law-abiding society to the other of sheer impunity and disregard for law and order within a span of just 11 years – as portrayed by the instances of Baraza and Kuria – is difficult to fathom.

The first high-profile victim – and probably the only one so far – to bow to public pressure for contravening provisions of Chapter Six of the Constitution, promulgated only two years earlier, Baraza resigned following the incident at the Village Market Shopping Mall in Nairobi's Gigiri area on December 31, 2011, when

she attacked Rebecca Kerubo and pointed a gun at her.

Kerubo had sought to frisk the DCJ at the entrance of the mall but Baraza refused to comply. Kerubo stood her ground and in a fit of rage, Baraza struck out at the guard, pinching her nose and warning her: "You need to know people." The DCJ was later taken to court for exhibiting "utter disrespect" and "bringing her office to disrepute" among other charges.

The most humbling gesture, though, was her decision to resign and offer an apology to the security guard and Kenyans. This contrasts sharply with the current instance of the Trade CS, who has not only declined to succumb to calls for his resignation, but continues to fight off his accusers with offensive and vulgar language.

Baraza's boss then, Chief Justice Dr Willy Mutunga, kept out of the fray as his deputy was roasted in the court of public opinion. In Kuria's case, Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua brushed off the CS's threat to ban government advertising in Nation Media Group products, but agreed with him regarding the media's alleged rogue behaviour. Kuria had expressed disappointment in what he perceived as the NMG's "skewed reportage" of the Ruto administration.

Stressing the significance of integrity and good leadership, Aukot,

who served as Director of the Committee of Experts (CoE) that birthed the 2010 Constitution, says Chapter Six was deliberately designed to address such scenarios following many decades of betrayal of the Kenyan people by their leaders.

"The reasons why Kenya has – since Independence in 1963 – remained in a deplorable state with regards to governance is because we have experienced political leadership at all levels that does not care about the people, and for which servant leadership is an elusive factor," argues Aukot.

Article 73 of the Constitution on responsibilities of leadership demands that State officers demonstrate respect for the people, bring honour to the nation and dignity to the office and promote public confidence in the integrity of the of-





## kenya lens

fic. Subsection (ii)b of the said article further “vests in the State officer the responsibility to serve the people, rather than the power to rule them”. On the subject of “Conduct of State officers”, Article 75 of the Constitution stipulates thus: “A State officer shall behave, whether in public and official life, in private life, or in association with other persons, in a manner that avoids: (a) any conflict between personal interests and public or official duties; (b) compromising any public or official interest in favour of a personal interest; or (c) demeaning the office the officer holds”.

Dr Aukot explains that the clauses on integrity were deliberately introduced in response to Kenyans’ quest for true leadership transformation. Read alongside Chapter One, which partly states that “all sovereign power belongs to the people of Kenya and shall be exercised only in accordance with this Constitution”, the former CoE boss points out that the people are technically the employers of political leaders, which is why the leaders must be called out for their arrogance and demeaning behaviour towards their employer – the people.

Human rights lawyer Harun Ndubi regards as arrogance and impunity the fact that senior government officers do not exit office upon demand by the people for contravention of Chapter Six. Noting that William Ruto unsuccessfully campaigned against the current Constitution in 2010, Ndubi opines that the President “has no respect for the Constitution, and in particular provisions on integrity of the State officers”, and so Ruto is unlikely to prioritise the reprimand of errant officers.

President Ruto has weighed in on the current issue involving his Trade CS by asking the media to respect Kuria’s right to speak his mind freely in the same way he says his government will accord the media the freedom to exercise their trade. Gachagua has thrown his weight behind Kuria, stating that the two of them share a common enemy – the media.

The Kenya Kwanza administration’s protection of Kuria will not be the first case of its kind. Right from Independence, sitting presidents have tended to protect their blue-eyed boys from the ire of the masses.

Former influential Cabinet minister and Kiambaa MP Mbiyu Koinange, for instance, liberally unleashed verbal attacks on his constituents and when the enraged electorate threatened to vote him out in 1974, he arrogantly fired back that President Jomo Kenyatta’s and First Lady Mama Ngina’s votes were all he needed to retain his seat.

A political confidante and brother of the President’s third wife, Grace Wanjiku, Koinange reportedly enjoyed protection from the first family, his excesses and shortcomings – real and perceived – notwithstanding.

Kenyatta’s successor, Daniel arap Moi, was much stricter and there was a sizeable number of ministers who got fired – unceremoniously and by roadside pronouncements – for falling short of expectations in service delivery but mostly for not conforming to his political script and wavering in allegiance.



**Nicholas Biwott**

When the then Trade minister was caught up in an embarrassing incident in 1995 with a chambermaid in an Auckland hotel, the government moved in to cover up the ugly drama that nearly led to a diplomatic spat with New Zealand authorities.



**Mbiyu Koinange**

The former influential and Kiambaa MP Mbiyu Koinange liberally unleashed verbal attacks on his constituents and when the enraged electorate threatened to vote him out in 1974, he arrogantly fired back that President Jomo Kenyatta’s and First Lady Mama Ngina’s votes were all he needed to retain his seat.

Even then, the former school teacher, known for his disciplinary traits, had a soft spot for a few members of his Cabinet, including Nicholas Kipyator Biwott who was at the centre of power during Moi’s 24-year rule.

When the then Trade minister was caught up in an embarrassing incident in 1995 with a chambermaid in an Auckland hotel, for instance, the government moved in to cover up the ugly drama that nearly led to a diplomatic spat with New Zealand authorities. Despite Ugenya MP James Orenge’s demands for action against the minister, whom he cheekily referred to as “the bull of Auckland”, Moi snubbed Parliament’s concerns and retained Biwott in his Cabinet. He caved in to pressure, however, and relieved the former MP for Keiyo South of his cabinet post when his name featured prominently in the inquiry of the 1990 assassination of his Foreign Affairs colleague, Dr Robert Ouko.

The third President, Mwai Kibaki, on the other hand appeared to have no sacred cows. In fact, one of his closest friends and allies, David Mwiraria, resigned as Finance minister in a most exemplary gesture in 2006 after being named in a corruption scandal involving KSh600 million worth of contracts for a secure passport computer system and a forensic laboratory. The deal was to be financed by a company named Anglo Leasing and Finance.

During his ten years in office, Uhuru Kenyatta sent packing a set of cabinet ministers reportedly involved in corrupt deals. Three of them, Davis Chirchir, Felix Kiptarus Kosgey and Michael Kamau, have since returned to the fold as Energy CS, Head of Public Service and Chairman of National Housing Insurance Fund Board respectively, after Ruto took over the reins of power last year. The President’s lieutenants claim the three, and many others, were hounded out of office for political reasons.

Ndubi attributes the rise of impunity in government to the President, “who has elected to shield his appointees from public scrutiny”. The one-time Executive Director of Kituo Cha Sheria, a Legal Advice Centre established in 1973 to empower the poor and marginalised to access justice, accuses the President of appointing into government individuals who lack integrity, some with criminal cases “who benefitted from a choreographed clean-up by the office of DPP (Director of Public Prosecution) before appointment”.

While the Constitution demands of a person who contravenes sections of Chapter Six to be subjected to “disciplinary procedure for the relevant office” and may, in accordance with the disciplinary procedure “be dismissed or otherwise removed from office”, Ndubi is skeptical that such drastic action will be taken – not just yet, anyway.

Instead, the lawyer calls upon Kenyans to wake up and defend their space since “the Constitution is like an animal in the wild and we need to take care of it and ourselves”. And Dr Aukot lays the blame squarely on the people for the calibre of leaders they keep electing into office.



# the limelight



Kalle Rovanpera, navigated Jonne Halttunen in a Toyota Yaris, blow dust in Kedong during the 2023 WRC Safari Rally on June 22. SILA KIPLAGAT | NATION



Sebastian Ogier, navigated by Vincent Landais in a Toyota Yaris, conquer the African Savannah in Kedong during the 2023 WRC Safari Rally on June 23. SILA KIPLAGAT | NATION



Ott Tänak, navigated by Martin Jarveoja, power forward their Ford Puma in Kedong during the 2023 WRC Safari Rally on June 23. SILA KIPLAGAT | NATION



President William Ruto with Pierre-Louis Loubet of M-Sport Ford WRT during the WRC Safari Rally in Naivasha on June 21. "The experience is out of this world... I have never known something like this exists. I got into the rally car and it was quite something, my stomach almost gave way," the President said. PHOTO | PCS



A model presents creations for the Louis Vuitton Menswear Spring-Summer 2024 show as part of the Paris Fashion Week, on June 20. PHOTO | AFP



This photograph taken on June 18 shows the Volocopter air taxi 'Volocity' displayed during the International Paris Air Show at the Paris-Le Bourget Airport. PHOTO | AFP



Smoke billows from the rubble of a building at Place Alphonse-Laveran in Paris on June 21. A major fire of unknown origin broke out in the building, part of which collapsed. PHOTO | AFP



# The Arena

A portrait of Brian Kinoti, a man with short dark hair, wearing round sunglasses and a teal jacket. He is resting his chin on his hands, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. A watch is visible on his left wrist.

## MUSICAL GENIUS

*Brian Kinoti does not consider himself a celebrity, but his relatable and heartfelt music has fans and promoters swooning*











## THE KENYA MUSIC INDUSTRY

# THE NEXT BIG THING IN MUSIC

**Kinoti does not consider himself a celebrity, but his relatable and heartfelt music has fans and promoters swooning**

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

A great artist transforms our world, removes scales from our eyes, plugs from our ears and gloves from our fingers, and teaches us to perceive reality differently. Brian Kinoti Kinyua, mononymously known as Kinoti, is a great artist, or on his way there. For starters, we are doing this interview on the back of a fully booked week: he is playing at the KE Unwind event at the Beer District on June 20, and at The Manhattan bar and grill tavern a day later. "This week has been crazy. I have rehearsals during the day, and performances in the evenings," he tells me, needlessly.

Kinoti is a singer/songwriter who does a fusion of R&B and Afro-soul, drawing inspiration from daily occurrences around him. He seeks to make music that is relatable and heartfelt for all who listen to it, as exemplified by his album, *Heart to Hurt*, which he released in 2021.

At only 22, it feels like he has been around forever, and yet, perhaps crucially, he remains fresh. Really, how does it feel to be him? "I wouldn't say it is any different from being a regular human being. It's living life normally because I have been a student, just finished my A-levels in December [2022]. Music has been fun and life has been pretty normal."

Kinoti is the younger of two siblings. "My dad and brother aren't as musically inclined as my mum and I are. I'd say I got this mojo from her," he says. He



Brian Kinoti, 22, is a singer/songwriter who does a fusion of R&B and Afro-soul, drawing inspiration from daily occurrences around him.



moves smoothly and invisibly, with a diffident charm that belies his talent – that same talent that makes fans swoon and turns promoters into poets. His is a gift that demands centre stage. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that music chose him. “My childhood dream was to be an advocate (He is joining Kenya School of Law in 2024).” In his second year in law school, however, he realised that while he may be a lawyer on paper, he is a musician at heart. “In 2019, after releasing my first project and getting called to perform with Nviiri on stage, I realised I had something good going on.” That something never stopped. The gigs kept coming – first a performance at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, then appearances here that culminated in a sold-out self-organised show dubbed ‘Welcome to the Kingdom’.

Songs can become like teenage children: you take credit for them, but they are more or less responsible for themselves. “My first song, *Nitakungoja*, was a ‘character development’ song. I drew from that well and started writing, using music as an outlet.” He was broken, easily hurt and impressionable – all the hallmarks of a life still under construction. From this was born the album *Heart to Hurt*, from which his legion of fans emerged. Turns out, when you set yourself on fire, people love to watch you burn. When you write a song for your fans, perhaps the fear and longing you think you are expressing as theirs is your own.

Kinoti has as friends some of the biggest names in the industry, but he stresses that he is nothing without his fans. “That number of people loving what I am doing and responding to my music keeps me energised.” He says this with a smile plastered permanently on his face, like a man who has never had to pay taxes a day in his life.

And he has paid the price for that. What you see is not always what you get, Kinoti says. He confesses that the hardest part about being a songwriter-cum-musician is the self-critique. “You are always trying to do better than your last project. It is part of the human experience to always want to do better, but even doubly so with creatives. What if I never do go higher than this high peak?”

Does he consider himself a celebrity? “I don’t think I am famous, so it’s not something I need to handle. I get stopped in the streets from time to time but I try not to act awkward. I want to tell you that I know, but I don’t. At home, I am Brian, when I am on stage, I am Kinoti.”

He is disarmingly honest. Which gives me room to float a most pertinent question: What is the most amount of money he has made from his music so far? He laughs. I insist. He laughs some more. I insist some more. “Over 100K.”

“But I don’t think I’ll feel accomplished until I pull a Burna Boy and fill up a stadium. I won’t stop until the dream is fulfilled.” He also wants to be multifaceted. He wants to be all round, and expand the scope of what he plays. “The weight of the word musician is heavy on my soul. When you think of a perfect musician, I want to be the first name on that charge sheet.”

His definition of success is quite simple. “Doing better than I did yesterday. To add one

## WORLD BANK REPORT

• In December 2022, Kinoti released a debut EP dubbed *Green Room*. It is a six-track EP with fan favourite songs including *Nitakungoja*, *S.O.K.O.*, *FALL* and *Alone*.

• Kenya’s music industry has transformed significantly over the past 40 years to become one of the most established and competitive in the region, with an estimated worth of KShs 320 billion, according to a 2021 World Bank report.

**At only 22, it feels like he has been around forever, and yet, perhaps crucially, he remains fresh. Really, how does it feel to be him? Kinoti is the younger of two siblings. He moves smoothly and invisibly, with a diffident charm that belies his talent – that same talent that makes fans swoon and turns promoters into poets. His is a gift that demands centre stage. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that music chose him.**

**There is so much traction with the new sounds. Kenyans are actually listening to Kenyan music, spaces are opening up and people are investing in their crafts, going to school to learn the art and business of music. I don’t just want to hear myself playing the guitar. I want to keep going until I’m not playing the guitar anymore, but just playing music.**

Brian Kinoti



seat to that stadium. That is the goal. That is the dream.” Failure, on the other hand, is being comfortable with where you are at, replicating the same songs one has done. “Failure is not being open to exploring new horizons with my music. Stay open to ideas, because more knowledge is just a synonym for more success.”

“I am a very reserved person,” Kinoti says when I ask what he struggles with. “My people skills are not the best. In new spaces, I am not the most outgoing person.”

Sitting at the forefront of Kenyan music, and inspiring a whole new wave, where does he see it going? “The only way is up. There is so much traction with the new sounds. Kenyans are actually listening to Kenyan music, spaces are opening up and people are investing in their crafts, going to school to learn the art and business of music. I don’t just want to hear myself playing the guitar. I want to keep going until I’m not playing the guitar anymore, but just playing music.”

Does the prophet struggle with focus? “Compartmentalising and prioritising what exactly I need to do sorts me out on that. If I need to be a student then at that moment, I am a student and nothing more. If I need to be at home and do chores, then that is where I will be. It is about doing what I need to do and being there to do it.”

Wise words for such a young man. Which is no affectation, because when I put him on the stand, he does not let his tongue slip about his favourite song. “My favourite song is not yet released. Look out for my upcoming project.”

Having been there, and still doing that, it’s only fair I ask for a piece of advice for younger musicians to ignore: “Sometimes people say there is not enough space in this industry for everyone. Everyone has their space here, as long as you have the dream. That, and that music is not a sustainable career. I am Exhibit A, am I not?” Well, I can’t argue with the numbers there. He has the fire. Maybe he hasn’t read, or maybe he has, but poet Upile Chisala best captures that thought: “There is danger in letting people misname you. If you are a fire, do not answer when they call you a spark.”

He may not know it yet, but Kinoti is soon becoming Africa’s musician now. Listening to him speak, then sing, you rest easy that maybe there is hope for a Kenyan sound after all. Your own wish? To be 20 years younger. But against the backdrop of what’s happening in Kenya at the moment, the proposed taxes on the creative industry, would anyone want to be 20 years younger? And why, if you’re Peter Pan playing a game you love, getting adored and paid a fortune for it, and you can fly too, would you ever want to grow a minute older?

Not that those questions keep him up at night. Kinoti knows, he always knew, that everything good, every art, comes from the heart. He sings songs from experience. He knows.

But now, at this very moment, he knows that he needs to get back to rehearsal. Before he goes, though, what song would best summarise his life at the moment? “That’s a really tough question.” He scratches his head, lets out a wry, charming smile then sings: “I follow my dreams / You’d think they were nightmares the way they scream / I’ll make them believe (whoa) / Someday, someday I’m gonna be the next big thing!”

The song is called *Someday* by Rags Cast. Today, Kinoti may be just a big deal in Kenya and the region, but one day he will fill up a stadium, one seat at a time. *Someday*.

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Mihrab building located at the intersection of Lenana and Ring Road Kilimani in Nairobi, proof of growth, according to Mwelu.

"I wanted you to visit our offices at FC Mihrab to experience what our culture is all about. There is always free food and drinks as well as candies for everybody, members of staff or non-staff. The Director of Happiness ensures everybody feels welcome and appreciated," says Mwelu.

His journey to where he is today began in 2014, after secondary school. "My elder brother ran a small community-based foundation in Mathare and at a very young age I and some other children had been taught how to take photos. So after Form Four, we began documenting and showcasing the way of life in the slum through photos. The images were sold used in a book titled *Mwelu and The Mwelu Foundation*, and earned us a few shillings."

His mother had wanted him to train as a chef. "I loved cooking and my mother's wish was that I become a chef but after Form Four, I didn't want to continue with school; I just wanted to make money."

For that decision, he was sent away from home and went to live with a friend from the slum who had been adopted by foreign parents and, incidentally, was pursuing a course in culinary arts.

"I started doing street photography. I would camp at Nation Centre with borrowed equipment and take photos. Then I started meeting a few celebrities in the streets. I took their photos and the network kept expanding," Mwelu recalls. This was enough to raise pocket money for himself, and eventually he got a job

**In many companies, there is the belief that if you are the founder then you have to be the CEO. At Light Art we're running away from that narrative by playing to our strengths. I am very good at sourcing Partnerships and executing projects while someone else is better at overseeing the administrative functionality of the company.**

Antony Mwelu



as a photographer with *The Skin Therapy Show* that aired on KTN Home.

"I worked with the show for a long time and that's where I learnt production. Then one day the producer of the show introduced me to a honcho at Safaricom at the time, Samuel Karanja," says Mwelu.

"I remember it was on Women's Day and Safaricom was having an event to celebrate women. I produced audio-visual and stills content for the event and sent it to them on WhatsApp. That was a life-changing moment for me. They were very impressed because they had never encountered content that could be shared in a timely way via WhatsApp. The green App was still new to many at the time. Photographers would normally deliver their photos in print form but I provided a quick solution."

He got more calls to cover Safaricom events and kept learning on the job. "I started by charging KSh1,000 then KSh5,000. With time it got to KSh50,000 and my rate card kept growing."

Having noticed that many big brands were missing out on expert content production, Mwelu started sending proposals to organisations and companies.

"I would research their websites to see how they did their multimedia content and offer to do it my way pro bono. That's how I got into the good books of many brands that offer me jobs to date," Mwelu reveals. Other notable brands he has produced content for include Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, Blaze Be Your Own Boss, Dentsu, Red Rand Roses, Tecno and T - Card.

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**The FLIP SIDE**  
With John ...



**WOMAN POWER**

WHEN THE WORD 'BUTCHER' IS MENTIONED, THE PICTURE OF A SMARTLY DRESSED LADY DOES NOT ALWAYS COME TO MIND. KATHERINE KARIO IS AN EXCEPTION TO THIS UNWRITTEN RULE. OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, SHE HAS EASED INTO BUTCHERING AS A FULL-TIME JOB, WHICH SHE STARTED DOING AS A SIDE HUSTLE IN 2020 TO SURVIVE THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS, IN HER CASE A SALARY SLASH. THE SITUATION LED HER TO HER FATHER'S BUTCHERY IN DAGORETTI MARKET, POPULARLY KNOWN AS NDUNYU, A KIKUYU WORD FOR MARKET. KATHERINE HAS SINCE INVESTED IN ONLINE MARKETING ON FACEBOOK WHERE SHE BOASTS OVER 5,000 FOLLOWERS. SHE ALSO HAS A TIKTOK ACCOUNT WHERE SHE PROMOTES HER BUSINESS. WE SAY KUDOS TO YOU KATHERINE FOR PROVING TO OTHER WOMEN AND GIRLS THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE IF YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO IT.

[jnyaga@ke.nationmedia.com](mailto:jnyaga@ke.nationmedia.com)

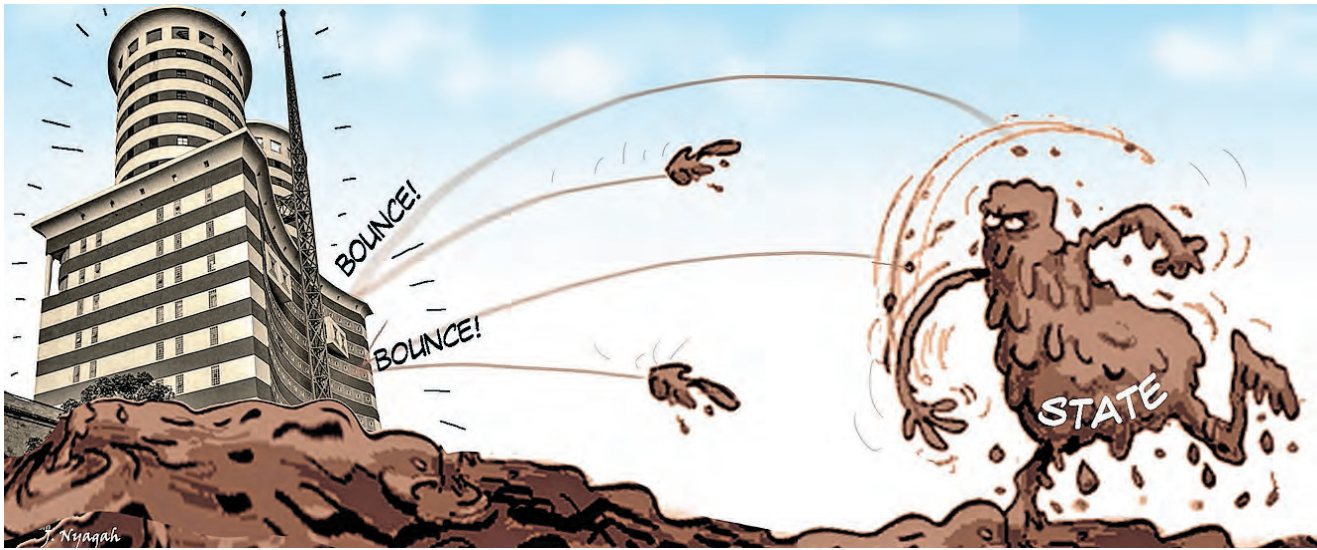
**STAR OF THE WEEK**

ARSENAL STAR BUKAYO SAKA SCORED THE FIRST HAT-TRICK OF HIS CAREER AS ENGLAND THRASHED NORTH MACEDONIA 7-0 AT OLD TRAFFORD LAST WEEK IN THE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFICATIONS. SAKA SCORED ENGLAND'S SECOND GOAL TOWARDS THE END OF THE FIRST HALF WITH A CLINICAL FINISH INTO THE ROOF OF THE NET. HIS SECOND, AND ENGLAND'S FOURTH, WAS ONE FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS AS HE FIRED A POWERFUL VOLLEY INTO GOALKEEPER DIMITRIEVSKI'S NET AFTER A LONG BALL FROM TRENT ALEXANDER ARNOLD IN MIDFIELD. MOMENTS LATER HE CLAIMED THE MATCH BALL WITH A COOL FINISH AFTER RACING CLEAR. AT ONLY 21 YEARS OF AGE, SAKA'S STAR WILL BE SHINING FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.





## opinion



■ While Kuria has as caustic a tongue as Mutisya's and Nabwera's, his mouth is a sewer

# You won't deter media from exposing scandals

**T**hirty-four years ago this month, Parliament indefinitely banned the Nation Newspaper Group, precursor of the Nation Media Group (NMG), from covering proceedings in Parliament. Among other accusations, MPs alleged the Group had initiated a campaign to create social disorder in Kenya, scandalised lawmakers, sowed discontent and division, belittled the achieving and popular government, and incited disobedience against it.

The Sixth Parliament, the creature of the massively rigged 1988 General Election, a House of sycophants, called the Nation Group unpatriotic. The previous year, Mr Burudi Nabwera, then a cabinet minister and former diplomat who was independent Kenya's first ambassador to the UN and Washington, had called Kenya's journalists stupid and unpatriotic. The 1989 onslaught on the Nation titles was led by then Deputy Speaker Kalonzo Musyoka, the eloquent lawyer and then rising star of Ukambani politics. He was also the blue-eyed boy of the Kanu barons of power led by the late Nicholas arap Biwott, the self-declared Total Man, and President Daniel arap Moi himself.

Musyoka had been held by the hand by the late Mulu Mutisya, the patriarch of Ukambani politics, as the star of Independence hero Paul Ngei dimmed. Mutisya had Moi's ear and he loved to amuse and make the President laugh. However, journalists did not amuse illiterate Mutisya, nor did he humour them. He dismissed them as issues of roadside trysts.

Enter Moses Kuria. Unlike Mutisya, he is young and educated. Like Mutisya he is regarded a leader of his community. Unlike



**KWENDO  
OPANGA**

Nabwera he is no diplomat, but his Trade cabinet portfolio demands diplomacy and decorum of him. Like Musyoka, he has the ear of the President. Like Nabwera, Mutisya and Musyoka before him, power has gone to his head.

While Kuria has as caustic a tongue as Mutisya's and Nabwera's, his mouth is a sewer. Last week he called NMG journalists *malaya wa Aga Khan*. That translates to whores of the Aga Khan. Still combative, in a good morning tweet to Kenyans, he signed off "from a brothel on Kimathi Street", a reference to Nation Centre, the home of NMG. It is not that Kuria does not know that the Aga Khan is the spiritual leader of the Ismailia community, the minority but economically powerful Asian African Muslims in Kenya. Kuria does not care about sensibilities and sensitivities. It is not that he does not know that his quarrel is with reporters he says have unfairly linked him to a scandal involving importation of edible oils.

Kuria knows journalists are fallible. The problem is that he has made a fetish of offending, and in the most scurrilous language possible. His vulgarity is on record

from the time he was elected MP for Gatundu South in 2014 and began attacking Mr Raila Odinga then, as now, the leading opposition chief. Indeed, Kuria at one time declared that he would arm youth in his constituency to violently counter Odinga, stirring memories of the 1969 oath administered to the Kikuyu ostensibly in defence of the Presidency and by which the community swore not to be led by an uncircumcised individual.

In 2017, Kuria did not spare a thought for a grieving family when he made insensitive comments about IT guru Chris Msando's death. Indeed, the Trade minister does not care about the effects of the statements he utters about individuals, institutions or communities. Everyone is fair game. But he is not alone in targeting the media; he is just the creepiest and most foul-mouthed yet.

From Moi to Ruto, every new regime has fought the media over revelations of scandalous goings-on in government. Unfortunately, as happened in 1989, the government today is backing Kuria against the NMG.

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opinion

■ Hey, the Housing tax will create millions of construction jobs and generate wealth

# Kenya Kwanza geniuses will lead us to prosperity



MACHARIA  
**GAITHO**

It is official. The highly contentious Housing Fund/tax/levy/collection/contribution/donation/charity/gift *whatchamacallit* is not about filling a critical gap in affordable housing. It is about creating jobs. This was brought clearly home by National Assembly Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah, speaking in support of the Finance Bill last week.

Ichung'wah told a captive House that provision of housing was only secondary to the millions of construction jobs created that will pull unemployed youth off the streets and crime into productive pursuits. There will also be the cement, doors, steel, window frames, concrete blocks, nails and other local inputs whose production will grow in leaps and bounds and catapult Kenya into an industrialised nation; and ultimately into a major economic power.

That was the gist of the government pitch in Parliament, meaning we can forget Kenya Breweries, Bidco, Chandaria, BAT, Keroche, Coca Cola and other major industrial concerns. Step aside Safaricom, Airtel, Zuku, Jamii and others in the infotech sector. Take a walk Equity, KCB, Co-op Bank, NCBA, Absa, StanChart and the rest of the banking giants. Move over tea, coffee, avocado, cut flowers, horticulture, milk, beef and other agriculture sector historicals. And you can remain in slumber tourism and the entire hospitality industry.

Our Kenya Kwanza geniuses have found the solution, a sure and guaranteed way to rapid wealth and prosperity that has eluded all other countries in the world. Not even the United States, Japan, China, Switzerland, India, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and other industrial and economic behemoths grew out of such a simple and brilliant solution.

Neither did Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Malaysia hit on such ingenuity in pulling themselves out of the Third World and into enviable prosperity. Also, we don't need the oil of the Middle East or the gold and diamonds of southern Africa. We might as well abandon that quest for oil riches in northern Kenya, because the unparalleled Hustler Nation Mensa-class eggheads will lead us into El Dorado faster than any other country in history.

Kenya will not only be the first nation on

earth to make the giant leap from poverty to superpower merely by building houses that are not needed, but will bequeath the world a revolutionary new development model and economic ideology that will render both capitalism and socialism redundant.

Using the same model as the Hustler Fund, we will soon impose a tax for construction of massive shipbuilding yards all over the country. We will start in densely-populated areas of high unemployment such as Kiambu, Eldoret, Kisii and Meru towns. Some anti-development opposition fellows will, of course, ask why are building ships in areas with no seas or even sizable lakes. They miss the point by the mile, for its not about satisfying any demand for seafaring vessels, or whether such vessels will ever take to water; it's about creating employment, stupid!

Idle youth from those towns and the large rural catchment areas will be employed to build ships. They will have money in their pockets to splurge on the local economy in meeting their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and entertainment. And of course they will be able to afford rents in the units put up by the Housing Fund. And let us not forget additional spinoffs in new steel industries in those towns, as well as factories producing turbines, gears, pipes, propellers and other requirements.

We will not stop there. We already have a small satellite launching pad in Kilifi. We will expand it a hundredfold, and also replicate it across the country, starting in towns such as Banisa, Sabarel, Loruth, Naitatikokin, El Wak and others in the previously ignored and marginalised regions of Kenya's far north.

**Everybody knows that our tea, coffee, maize, rice, sugar, horticulture and other agricultural products are controlled by cartels that collude to keep consumer prices out of reach for the ordinary Kenyan. Kenya Kwanza administration promised to lower prices. We will kill the cartels by giving trusted and loyal merchants exclusive permits for tax-free imports. The cartels will thus die a natural death. Kenya Kwanza ingenuity at work.**

It will not just be about building launchpads and all associated facilities, but about building giant space ships capable of reaching the Moon, Mars and the outer reaches of the solar system. We will also build dozens of space stations capable of lengthy human habitation. One can only imagine the high-tech job opportunities that will be available for our nomadic youth, who will be motivated to settle down and abandon the life of banditry and cattle rustling.

Like with the housing and the shipyards, we will ensure that the launch stations are built using labour-intensive methods so that our unskilled and uneducated youth have first priority on the available jobs. The spaceships, launchers, rockets, control systems, space stations and everything else will also be built largely using local technology and products from the *jua kali* industries that will grow around those towns. Opportunities for welders, plumbers, electricians, painters, sheet metal workers and other crafts will be limitless.

As Ichung'wah told Parliament, the future is urban. Our people must be moved from idleness in rural areas to occupy the hundreds of thousands of dwellings to rise like magic in the next few years under the affordable housing programme. Construction of the houses alone will itself create millions of jobs and act as a magnet for rapid rural-urban migration.

Those not working on house construction will, of course, take up employment in the other industries that will come up specifically to create employment; no matter that the craft will never float out to sea or shoot off to Mars. So, who will remain to work the fields in the rural agricultural areas that have been the mainstay of the Kenyan economy?

Everybody knows that our tea, coffee, maize, rice, sugar, horticulture and other agricultural products are controlled by cartels that collude to keep consumer prices out of reach for the ordinary Kenyan. Kenya Kwanza administration promised to lower prices. We will kill the cartels by giving trusted and loyal merchants exclusive permits for tax-free imports. The cartels will thus die a natural death. Kenya Kwanza ingenuity at work.

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## kenya lens

la. During that Mombasa meeting, they agreed in principle to cooperate and share power in a transitional Angolan government until Portugal granted it full Independence on November 11, 1975. The Kenyatta-brokered accord would form part of the Alvor Agreement in which Portugal agreed to give Angola freedom. The most important part of the agreement was that the leaders agreed that Cabinda, which wanted to secede, would be part of Angola.

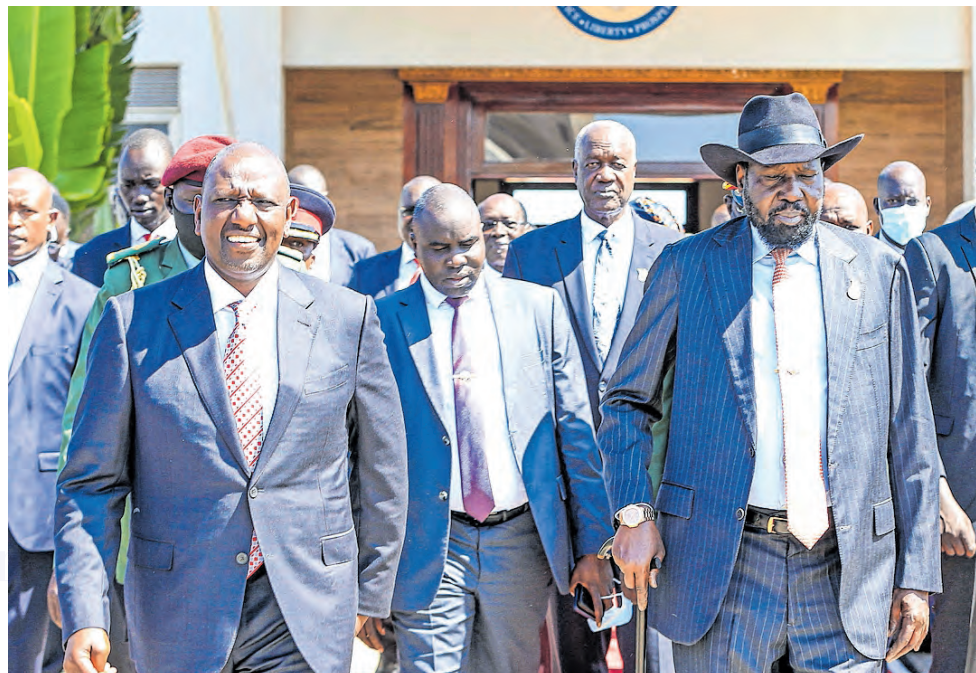
Some historians argue that Kenyatta summoned the meeting in his capacity as an African statesman and that this was before the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) stepped in in July 18, 1975, when it established a conciliation commission to reconcile the warring factions after the Alvor Agreement began to face implementation challenges.

A month before the OAU meeting, hosted by Uganda's Idi Amin, Kenyatta had summoned the three Angola leaders to a Nakuru meeting. Of importance were the integration of the previous liberation armies into a national army and the formation of a coalition government after the exit of Portugal.

Though the three leaders were divided along ethnic, ideological, and personal lines, Kenyatta got them to sit and discuss a ceasefire. "Despite the long history of extreme animosity between two of the leaders, Mr Neto and Mr Roberto, there was no open sign of acrimony today. The two men shook hands, called each other brother, and with Dr Savimbi, who has been a conciliatory figure throughout, worked late into the night at President Kenyatta's lodge," reported the *New York Times*.

After Milton Obote was overthrown in Uganda in July 1985, President Daniel arap Moi brought together rebel forces led by Yoweri Museveni and the military junta led by Basilio Okello and Tito Okello of the Uganda National Liberation Army. Kenya hosted marathon talks on Uganda, leading to the December 1985 Nairobi Agreement that boosted Moi's image internationally.

The agreement, Moi said, "heralded the new beginning for Uganda". The intention was to have a government that included Museveni, who had fought a four-year bush war against Obote, but excluded the post-Obote forma-



President William Ruto with President Salva Kiir of South Sudan at the Office of The President in Juba, in December, 2022.

tions. "Moi's foreign-policy initiatives were not wholly driven by national self-interest, but also by his belief that Africans should resolve their own problems," the former President's biographer, Andrew Morton, wrote.

Even after Museveni overthrew Tito Okello in 1986, Moi negotiated his return from exile in Sudan.

In May 1989, Moi was again involved in negotiating between the Mozambican government of Joaquim Chissano and the rebel Mozambique National Resistance Movement of Alfonso Dhlakama. To get Dhlakama on the table, Moi had sent a team led by Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat to Renamo-held territory to convince him to open the Beira Corridor – an important rail and road link to Malawi from the Beira port.

The team convinced Dhlakama that by opening the shut-down corridor, the international community would recognise his influence and ability to bring peace to Mozambique. After these contacts, Dhlakama – travelling on a Kenyan passport – was hosted by President Moi in State House, Nairobi before flying to Italy for peace talks with Chissano.

In the same year, Kenya hosted talks between the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front led by Isaias Afewerki. The talks would legitimise the Eritrean claim for se-

cession from Ethiopia, and Kenya had effectively played a significant role before the final referendum vote was taken. By 1993, Eritrea held a national referendum and got its independence from Ethiopia.

Kenya would also play a crucial role in settling the Sudan conflict under the auspices of Igad, when it helped to broker the January 1, 2005, Comprehensive Peace Agreements between the Sudan government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, which was representing the South Sudan people.

This was one of President Mwai Kibaki's initiatives, furthering the work done by his predecessor, Moi. The Machakos Protocol of July 2002 became a fundamental step towards the final Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 that finally saw the birth of a new nation. Kenya's then foreign minister, Kalonzo Musyoka, has been hailed as one of the significant players in that peace process.

When President Kibaki chaired Igad, he oversaw peace talks that led to the formation of President Abdullahi Yusuf's government in Somalia in 2004. Previously, the October 2002 Eldoret Peace Conference had been hailed as a most inclusive peace process, for it brought together 24 groupings to sign Declaration on Cessation of Hostilities. This was later followed

by the Nairobi Agreement, which led to the formation of a transitional government recognised by the international community. The government operated from Nairobi until the African Union agreed to deploy a peace support mission in Somalia.

Former President Uhuru Kenyatta is currently involved in finding a truce in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Goma region as the facilitator of the East African Community, and as African Union peace envoy. Kenya has also deployed troops to the eastern DRC to join an East African regional force tasked with ending decades of bloodshed.

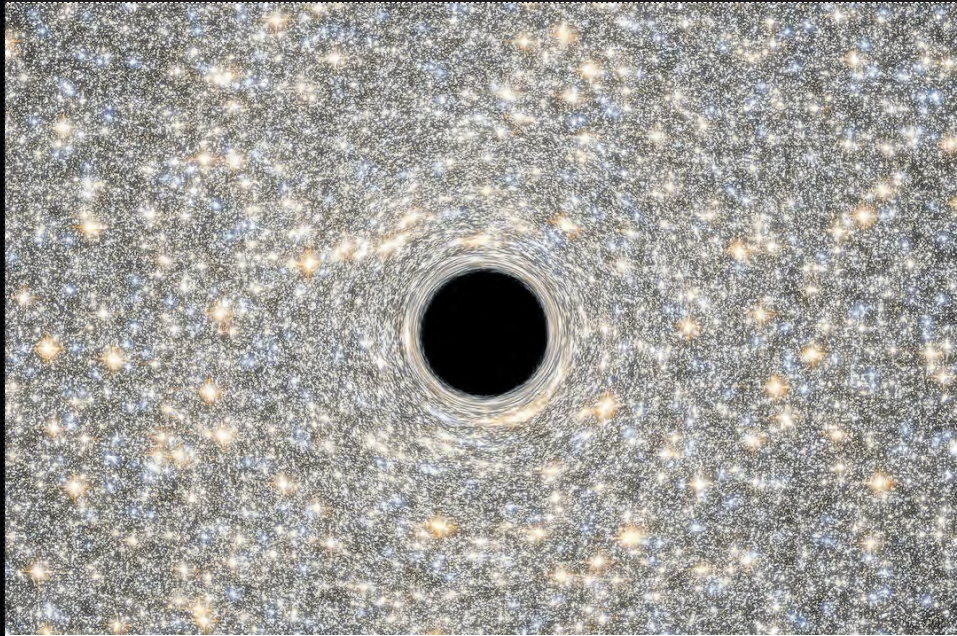
That there is some pushback on President Ruto's appointment as a negotiator in the Sudan crisis indicates how the various players in the conflict perceive him. For his part, Al-Burhan has suggested that he would favour South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit as chairman of the meeting with his rival, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo of the Rapid Support Forces. Al-Burhan claims that Kenya was politically conflicted. With such a rejection so early in his Presidency, it remains to be seen whether Ruto will manage what his predecessors achieved in the diplomatic space.

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## SCIENCE &amp; TECH

# OUR GALAXY'S BLACK HOLE NOT AS SLEEPY AS THOUGHT



An illustration of the supermassive black hole located in the middle of the very dense galaxy M60-UCD1. It weighs as much as 21 million times the mass of the Sun.

• LONDON

**T**he supermassive black hole lurking at the centre of our Milky Way galaxy is not as dormant as had been thought, a new study shows.

The slumbering giant woke up around 200 years ago to gobble up some nearby cosmic objects before going back to sleep, according to the study published in the journal *Nature* last week.

Nasa's IXPE space observatory spotted an x-ray echo of this powerful resurgence of activity, the researchers said. The supermassive black hole Sagittarius A\* — abbreviated to Sgr A\* — is four million times more massive than the Sun. It sits 27,000 light years from Earth at the centre of the Milky Way's spiral.

Last year astronomers revealed the first-ever image of the black hole — or rather, the glowing ring of gas that surrounds its blackness.

Sgr A\* has “always been seen

as a dormant black hole”, said Frederic Marin, a researcher at France's Strasbourg Astronomical Observatory and the study's first author.

Most supermassive black holes squatting at the middle of their galaxies go dormant after swallowing up all the nearby matter. “Imagine a bear going into hibernation after devouring everything around it,” Marin said.

But the international team of researchers discovered that at around the end of the 19th century, Sgr A\* came out of its slumber and consumed any gas and dust unlucky enough to be within its reach.

The feeding frenzy lasted from several months to a year, before the beast went back into hibernation.

When it was active, the black hole was “at least a million times brighter than it is today”, Marin said.

Its awakening was noticeable because nearby galactic molecular clouds started giving

off vastly more x-ray light. The surge in x-ray light was as “if a single glow-worm hidden in a forest suddenly became as bright as the Sun”, French research agency CNRS said in a statement.

Astronomers using Nasa's IXPE (Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer) space observatory managed to track the x-ray light and found that it pointed straight back at Sgr A\*. The black hole “emitted an echo of its past activity, which we managed to observe for the first time”, Marin said.

The pull of gravity from black holes is so intense that nothing can escape, including light. But when matter is sucked beyond the black hole's final boundary, known as the event horizon, it emits a massive amount of heat and light before disappearing into the darkness.

Exactly what caused Sgr A\* to briefly emerge from its dormant state remains unclear. Could a star or cloud of gas and dust have ventured too close?

## Airbus gives more control to autopilot

It's difficult not to be a bit overwhelmed by the Airbus campus in Toulouse.

It is a huge site and the workplace for 28,000 staff, plus hundreds of visitors eager to see the planes being built. The enormous Beluga cargo plane is parked at a loading dock, ready to transport vehicles and satellites around the world.

Close to where we conduct our interviews is the hangar where the supersonic passenger jet Concorde was developed. This site is also home to much Airbus research and development, including the recently finished Project Dragonfly — an experiment to extend the ability of the autopilot.

Over the past 50 years automation in aviation has transformed the role of the pilot. These days pilots have a lot more assistance from tech in the cockpit. Project Dragonfly, conducted on an Airbus A350-1000, extended the plane's autonomy even further.

The project focused on three areas: improved automatic landing, taxi assistance and automated emergency diversion. Perhaps the last of those is the most dramatic. Malcolm Ridley, Chief Test Pilot of Airbus's commercial aircraft, reassured us that the risk of being involved in an air accident is “vanishingly small”.

However, aircraft and crew need to be ready for any scenario, so Project Dragonfly tested an automatic emergency descent system. The idea is this technology will take over if the pilots need to focus on heavy decision-making or if they were to become incapacitated.

Under its own control, the plane can descend and land, while recognising other aircraft, weather and terrain. The system also allows the plane to speak to air traffic control over the radio with a synthetic voice created through the use of artificial intelligence.

It is a lot for the plane's systems to take on.



# africa lens

■ THEY CALLED FOR A DE-ESCALATION OF FIGHTING

## EUROPE'S AFRICAN SOLUTION



Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) with South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa following a meeting with a delegation of African leaders at the Constantine (Konstantinovsky) Palace in Strelna, outside Saint Petersburg, on June 17.

### African leaders put forward a 10-point proposal, including recognition of Russia and Ukraine's sovereignty and continued unhindered grain exports

#### ● JOHANNESBURG

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has hailed as “historic” the trip of African leaders to Ukraine and Russia, describing it as “the first time African leaders have embarked on a peace mission beyond” the continent.

However, with neither warring

sides agreeing to peace talks, did it make any difference, or was it just an attempt by Ramaphosa to secure attention on the global stage, amid mounting problems in South Africa?

An African contingent including leaders and representatives from seven countries met Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia's President

Vladimir Putin at the end of last week.

There had been hopes that the trip, which was announced last month and led by Ramaphosa, would work towards ending the war, which has badly affected living standards in Africa.

The delegation from South Africa, Egypt, Senegal, Congo-Brazzaville, Comoros, Zambia and Ugan-

da put forward a 10-point proposal, including a recognition of Russia and Ukraine's sovereignty and continued unhindered grain exports.

They also called for a de-escalation of fighting and for negotiations to commence with urgency, for the release of prisoners of war

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## africa lens

**African leaders push for Ukraine-Russia ceasefire**

From left: Egypt's Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, Senegal's President Macky Sall, Comoros President Azali Assoumani, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa and Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema walk to address media after their talks in Kyiv on June 16. President Ramaphosa called on Ukraine and Russia to de-escalate their conflict as he arrived in the war-torn country on a mission to broker peace.

Continued from Page 25

and for greater humanitarian support, among other requests.

Both Russia and Ukraine agreed to continue engagement, South Africa said, but on Saturday Russian President Vladimir Putin appeared to dismiss large chunks of the plan. Ukraine also appeared lukewarm.

The conflict has led to a shortage of grain and fertiliser in many African countries, which import the commodities from Ukraine and Russia respectively. This has led to a spike in food prices around the world, especially in Africa. The Africa Development Bank says the war is directly responsible for a shortage of about 30 million tonnes of grain on the continent.

President Putin has been threatening to not renew a deal to let Ukrainian grain ships headed for Africa pass through Russian-controlled ports on the Black Sea.

It's not the first time Putin has threatened to do this, but if he follows through this time, it could exacerbate food shortages on the continent — which Africa leaders are keen to avoid at all costs. Although it is thought unlikely Mr

Putin will deliver on his threat because he needs African countries on his side to avoid diplomatic isolation.

Alongside raising international awareness about the economic impact the war has had on the continent, African leaders were confronted by further calls to condemn the invasion.

Ukraine's leader argued that condemning Moscow was needed to send a clear message to the Russian people that their isolation on the international stage was a result of their president's invasion of Ukraine.

Both Uganda and South Africa, which formed part of the African delegation, are seen as aligned with Russia's position. Last month the US ambassador accused South Africa of violating neutrality and supplying weapons to Russia, violating its non-aligned status. South Africa denied this.

It is also unclear if South Africa would hand Putin over to the International Criminal Court, should he visit South Africa during the upcoming Brics summit in August. The key aim of the trip was to help strengthen the case for a negotiated diplomatic solu-

tion to the war in Ukraine, and in that respect, it has not been a success. Both Ukraine and Russia reiterated before and after the African peace mission that they would not come to the negotiating table without certain basic preconditions.

For Ukraine, it wants its borders as they were in 1991 to be reinstated. This would mean Russia withdrawing from all the territories it has seized from Ukraine in the past decade, including the Crimean Peninsula.

This is something the Kremlin is deeply opposed to, arguing instead that for negotiations to take place, Kyiv would have to accept its country's "new territorial reality". Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that talks with the Africa delegation would continue. Despite failing to bring the two sides of the conflict together, Ramaphosa argues that his delegation opened the door for future talks.

Given his problems at home, including crumbling infrastructure, regular blackouts and growing discontent with his government, Mr Ramaphosa may have been seeking to play up a win on the international stage.

Unfortunately for him, this peace mission has not delivered that win.

Earlier, Ukraine said it withstood a wave of Russian missiles including hypersonic Kinzhals, which were downed over the Kyiv region where African leaders were due to hold talks as part of a peace mission. "Russian missiles are a message to Africa: Russia wants more war, not peace," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

The Ukrainian Air Force said it destroyed six Kinzhals, six Kalibr cruise missiles and two reconnaissance drones. All were intercepted over the Kyiv region, the chief of the Kyiv military administration Sergiy Popko said.

The capital's mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said there was no damage in Kyiv and reported an explosion from air defence in the central Podil district. Russian President Vladimir "Putin 'builds confidence' by launching the largest missile attack on Kyiv in weeks, exactly amid the visit of African leaders to our capital," Kuleba said.

A part of the delegation visited Bucha, the site of an alleged massacre by Russian troops.



# global lens

■ RUSSIA'S JAILED VOCIFEROUS PUTIN CRITIC

# NAVALNY REMAINS DEFIANT



**In a new trial at a prison-court 240km from Moscow, he faces multiple charges that could add decades to his time behind bars. They include creating an extremist organisation and financing extremist activities**

● MOSCOW

**A**t Penal Colony No 6, they've made an effort. Outside the maximum-security prison, a giant Russian tricolour has been stretched across the ground. Planted on top in three strict lines are red, blue and white blooms

to mirror the national flag. A patriotic flowerbed for a Russian prison. Behind these walls, Alexei Navalny — Russia's most famous prisoner and the Kremlin's most vocal critic — is on trial.

Along with the other journalists who've made the journey here to Melekhovo, we're led into a building. We're not allowed into

the hall which has been turned into a temporary courtroom. Neither are Navalny's parents, who are here, too. Instead, for now, we can follow proceedings on a video screen in a separate room.

The signal's switched on and the picture appears. Navalny is visible, sitting at a table with his defence lawyers. He's clearly lost a

lot of weight in prison.

But Navalny is engaged and defiant as he rails against the judge and condemns the decision to try him here. On paper, it's a Moscow court that is hearing the case. But the trial is taking place 240km from the Russian capital.

That suggests the Russian

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## global lens

# Kremlin's most vocal critic vows to fight on

Continued from Page 27

authorities want to avoid the publicity that transporting Navalny to Moscow would inevitably bring. The picture on the screen doesn't last long. An hour and a half after the start of the trial, the prosecutor demands that proceedings are held behind closed doors.

The judge rules in favour. The video feed is cut. It will now be even harder to follow what's happening to Russia's most prominent opposition leader in his trial behind bars.

Jailed in 2021, Navalny is currently serving a nine-year prison term for parole violations, fraud and contempt of court — charges widely seen as politically motivated.

But that nine-year term is set to increase dramatically.

In this new trial, he faces multiple charges that could add decades to his time behind bars. They include creating an extremist organisation and financing extremist activities.

The authorities have already declared Navalny's network of campaign offices and his Anti-Corruption Foundation "extremist" and shut them down.

There may be worse to come. Navalny says investigators told him to expect another case, another trial, this time related to terrorism charges.

Why do the charges and trials keep coming? Why do the Russian authorities seem determined to pile on the pressure and keep Alexei Navalny behind bars? Over the years, Vladimir Putin's Kremlin has been busy removing all potential rivals to the president — clearing the Russian political landscape of any potential challengers. It will want to make sure that its loudest critic stays well away from Russia's political stage.

For more than a decade, Alexei Navalny has exposed corruption at the heart of Russian power. His video investigations have received tens of millions of views online. But even more than this, perhaps, it is his ability to mobilise the public, especially young Russians, to take to the streets in anti-government protests which makes the



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny is seen on a screen via a video link during the verdict in his embezzlement and contempt of court trial at the IK-2 prison colony in the town of Pokrov in Vladimir Region on March 22, 2022.

authorities nervous.

In recent years, he has been the only Russian opposition leader capable of organising anti-Putin street protests on a national scale. He had set up a network of regional campaign offices, having planned to run for president in 2018. He was barred from the vote.

In 2020, Navalny was poisoned in Siberia by what Western laboratories later confirmed to be a nerve agent. He accused the Kremlin of trying to kill him. The Russian authorities deny that.

After receiving urgent medical care in Germany, his decision to return to Russia in 2021 will have been viewed by those in power here as a direct challenge to the Kremlin. He was arrested on arrival.

Navalny has long been the most prominent face of Russian opposition to President Putin.

The 46-year-old blogger has survived poisoning with a nerve agent and is now behind bars. Even though he has been unable to challenge the president at the ballot box, his voice retains its power for many Russians and he remains a threat to the Kremlin.

He has millions of Russian

followers on social media — many in their early 20s or younger — and his campaign group's anti-corruption videos have reached millions.

Navalny, whose organisations have been banned as "extremist" in Russia, nearly died in August 2020 when he was attacked with a Novichok nerve agent in Siberia.

But his team had him flown to Berlin and he recovered over a period of months, returning to Moscow on January 17 and immediate detention.

His supporters staged mass protests across Russia and police responded with force, detaining thousands for attending the unauthorised rallies.

Although he and his anti-corruption team were banned from standing in parliamentary elections, they still managed to anger the Kremlin with a "smart voting" app that encouraged voters to back candidates who had a chance of defeating Putin's United Russia party.

Navalny's consistent message is that Putin's party is full of "crooks and thieves". He has accused the president of "sucking the blood out of Russia" through a "feudal state" concentrating power in the

Kremlin. That patronage system, he claims, is like tsarist Russia.

He speaks the street language of younger Russians and uses it to powerful effect on social media. His Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) has made detailed claims about official corruption.

After Navalny's arrest in January, his team published the "Putin's palace" video on YouTube which focused on a vast luxury Black Sea palace, allegedly gifted to Putin by rich associates.

The video has been viewed well over 100 million times. The Kremlin dismissed it as a "pseudo-investigation" and Putin called it "boring", denying the claims. Later billionaire businessman Arkady Rotenberg, one of Mr Putin's closest friends, said it was his own palace. After Navalny was given a jail term in February 2021, the European Court of Human Rights ruled he should be freed immediately because of the risk to his life, but Russia rejected the decision.

He went on hunger strike, protesting that authorities at the penal colony in Vladimir, 100km east of Moscow, were refusing to give him proper treatment for leg and back problems.



## global lens

■ LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING: IT WAS BORN FROM A BIRTHDAY PARTY

# THE BLACK AMERICAN ANTHEM

The 1900 song – originally written as a tribute to former US President Abraham Lincoln – has endured to become a powerful symbol

● WASHINGTON

Twice a day, the air surrounding Howard University's Washington, DC campus rings with a freedom song.

Tucked away on a hilltop, removed from DC's busy streets, sits Founders Library – an academic landmark home to the world's largest archive of records on the black experience. Around lunchtime, the melody of alma mater of the historically black college and university (HBCU) clangs from the library's bell tower. And if you stick around long enough, the twinkling and hopeful chimes of another tune follow: instantly recognisable to many as the US black national anthem.

Playing the song is a new tradition on the school's campus; it only became possible in recent years after the bell received upgrades to its system. However, the song, officially titled *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, has possessed the hearts of black people around the globe for over a century, speaking to the enduring faith and resilience of black Americans against racial oppression in the United States. When he wrote it in 1900, the scholar and poet James Weldon Johnson did not set out to create a cultural phenomenon.

That year, a group of men in Jacksonville, Florida wanted to honour former US President Abraham Lincoln with a birthday celebration. Johnson's contribution was a poem he asked his younger brother, John Rosamond Johnson, to write the accompanying score. When it was complete, James taught the song's lyrics to a choir of 500 black children, all students at the segregated school he was the principal of at the time. On the day of the event, the brothers brought printed copies of the words to share with the community so others could sing along. "The lines of this song repay me in an elation, almost of exquisite anguish," wrote James in an excerpt from a 1935 collection of poems.

By 1900, many of the efforts to rebuild the country more equitably than before the US Civil War were crumbling, and Jim Crow policies started to appear across the South. *Lift Every Voice and Sing* is a hopeful song, but the wounds of American chattel slavery were still fresh when it was written. Johnson's lyrics reference this history and explore imagery from the time ("Stony the road we trod/Bitter the chastening rod.") And while it is anthemic



The Fisk Jubilee Singers perform during a Juneteenth concert on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, on June 13.

in nature, the song is also reminiscent of the spirituals enslaved Africans sung to get them through the toil of the fields ("God of our weary years/God of our silent tears/Thou who has brought us thus far on the way/Thou who has by Thy might/Led us into the light/Keep us forever in the path, we pray.") In addition, the song declares that descendants of American chattel slavery are members of the country, too ("Shadowed beneath Thy hand/May we forever stand/True to our God/True to our native land.")

After Lincoln's birthday party, the Johnson brothers moved away from Jacksonville, Florida to Harlem, NY. They found themselves at the convergence of African-American art, literature and music, known as the Harlem Renaissance, which was emerging just as James believed the song he wrote back home to be fizzling out. "But the school children of Jacksonville kept singing it," he wrote. "They went off to other schools and sang it; they became teachers and taught it to other children. Within twenty years it was being sung over the South and in some other parts of the country."

*Lift Every Voice and Sing* reached all corners

of the nation and beyond. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People declared the song the "Negro National Anthem" in 1919, one year before James was chosen as the organisation's first black executive secretary and 12 years before the *Star-Spangled Banner* was adopted as the US national anthem.

Over the years, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* has been covered and remixed by artists such as Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, and Beyoncé. Most recently, Emmy-award-winning actress, Sheryl Lee Ralph sang the anthem at the Super Bowl this year, a move some found controversial after the National Football League's treatment of Colin Kaepernick, the former quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers who was fired after taking a knee during the *Star Bangled Banner* in protest of police brutality.

Though it might not have been his goal, Johnson's *Lift Every Voice and Sing* has become an anthem of hope for not only African Americans but marginalised people around the world. Its message endures, and will continue to live on for as long as we sing, and the clock strikes twelve.



## O B I T

■ **ACTRESS DIED AT HER HOME IN LOS ANGELES AT THE AGE OF 85**

# 'SANFORD AND SON' STAR BOWS OUT

**Marlene Clark is best known to many fans for playing Lamont's (Demond Wilson) girlfriend in the 1970s TV comedy show**

• LOS ANGELES

**M**arlene Clark, the actress best known for her role on the hit 1970s sitcoms *Sanford And Son* and the horror film *Ganja & Hess* (1973), has died at the age of 85.

The actress died at her home in Los Angeles, her friend Tamara Lynch confirmed. Lynch would go on to heap praise on her friend, describing her as 'an extraordinary woman' and someone with 'grit' despite being a small-statured woman.

"She almost looked like a Black Polynesian, she was just so exotic," her friend added. "Then she had this deep, cavernous voice. When she spoke, it was such a command of attention."

Clark reportedly maintained that grit and strong work ethic through her entire life. "She was tenacious in her love of art, film, and expression," her friend explained. "Really, to the day she died, if she had an audition, Marlene would've gone to the audition." Lynch went on to call Clark "one of those die-hard old-school actors, performers, Hollywood people. You do the work. You show up. You know your lines, and then you go home and you go back, and you do it the next day".

While she may have not been recognizable to fans of film and television, Clark leaves the world having made an impact on the entertainment industry.

"She's part of the people who kicked down these doors, and there was no predecessor to what she was doing. Everything was blind. So everything she's doing is the first," Lynch shared. "So she's being in these films with these Black filmmakers and these Black actors and these Black writers and creating this movement."

Raised in the Harlem section of New York City, she would kick off her career as a model and eventually transition to acting.



**She almost looked like a Black Polynesian, she was just so exotic.**

Tamara Lynch, friend

”

Clark also starred as a reptilian seductress in Roger Corman's *Night of the Cobra Woman* (1972) and as one of the suspected werewolves in the British horror film *The Beast Must Die* (1974). She was an early victim in the Larry Hagman-directed *Beware! The Blob*

(1972).

Clark played John Saxon's secretary in *Enter the Dragon* (1973), starring Bruce Lee, and her big-screen body of work also included *Black Mamba* (1974), *Newman's Law* (1974), *Lord Shango* (1975) and *The Baron* (1977), where she appeared opposite her *Beast Must Die* onscreen husband, Calvin Lockhart. In the surreal *Ganja & Hess* (1973), directed by Bill Gunn, Clark sparkled as a widow named Ganja who is turned into a vampire by Dr. Hess Green (Duane Jones), an anthropologist turned immortal bloodsucker. He eventually gives up that way of life, but she soldiers on. The movie played as the only American entry in the Critics Week sidebar at the Cannes Film Festival that year.

"There are so many levels to her personality," she said of her character in a 2000 *Temple of Schlock* interview. "She's such a collection

of contradictions. Playing that part was very rewarding."

Clark portrayed a government agent in the Jim Brown-starring *Slaughter* (1972) and Muff, the leader of an all-female Black gang aiming to derail murderous drug dealers, in *Switchblade Sisters* (1975), directed by Jack Hill.

She then recurred as Janet Lawson, the love interest of Demond Wilson's character, on six episodes of NBC's *Sanford and Son* from 1976-77. Lamont's pop, Fred Sanford (Redd Foxx), does not approve of them getting engaged at first, but he comes around.

Born in Harlem on Dec. 19, 1937, Clark often spent her summers in West Virginia, the birthplace of her mother. She attended Morristown Junior College in Tennessee and City College in New York and worked as a model before making her film debut in *For Love of Iuy* (1968), starring Sidney Poitier.



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