

THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

ISSUE NO. 8 | October 23, 2022 FREE WITH 'SUNDAY NATION'

THE KENYAN WAR IN DRC

Kenya has intensified its role in the protracted conflict against rebels in Congo that has sucked in soldiers from other African nations and stirred the interest of world powers. With Uganda and Rwanda heavily involved, will the KDF operation build or destroy delicate regional relations?



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letter from the editor

Inside

A stable DRC good for the region

8 SGR DEBT TRAP: Concerns are rising over likely implications of President William Ruto's radical changes at the port of Mombasa on Kenya's relationship with China Exim Bank, which is the largest lender to infrastructural projects in Kenya today.

10 THRIVING FAR AWAY FROM HOME: Changes in voter patterns in the August General Election occurred mostly at the lowest level of representation, where politicians interface with the electorate, with issues winning over tribal links.

13 MAN TALK: Podcasting is an emerging industry in Africa, but Eli Mwendwa is making a name for himself, and money, from online conversations.



25 TIGRAY'S LIVING HELL: The region that was once a tourist attraction is now the scene of a vicious war for control of the vast area, which has long been seen as the key to power in Ethiopia, or what was historically part of Abyssinia.

In 1960, as the country labelled Belgian Congo gained its independence from the traumatising grip of colonial rule, legendary rumba superstar Joseph 'Grand Kalle' Kabasele released the upbeat hit, *Indépendance Cha Cha*, which became the unofficial national anthem and stirred pan-African fervour across the continent. "*Indépendance Cha-cha to zuziye! Oh Kimpwanza cha-cha tubakidi...*" (Independence, cha-cha, we've won it! Oh, Independence cha-cha we've achieved it) went the optimistic opening lyrics infused with catchy guitar riffs by musicians from Grand Kalle's African Jazz and some members of OK Jazz band (later TPOK Jazz) of Franco Luambo Makiadi.

Today, 62 years later, the beats of Grand Kalle's iconic composition are a haunting reminder of a tragic post-independence history for a country that has variously been known as Congo, Zaire and now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

After years of perhaps the world's most unimaginable colonial brutality and looting — first as the personal property of Belgian's King Leopold II before being taken over by the Belgian state — the vast country hoped for a fresh start upon unshackling the chains. It was never to be.

DRC has for more than six decades been beset with coups and protracted violent conflict interspersed with the inevitable attendant instability, poor governance and economic stagnation. In other words, reading Michele Wrong's book, *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz*, which details the excesses of flamboyant dictator Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, triggers a similar depressing feeling as thumbing the pages of *King Leopold's Ghost* by Adam Hochschild on the stomach-churning colonial-era atrocities.

The promise of real change came to naught even after revo-



Mike Owuor

Apart from its poor political leadership and adventurism of its mostly inept military, DRC's troubles have been compounded by the covert and overt interference of world powers — including America, Belgium and France — and, in recent decades, neighbouring countries like Rwanda and Uganda.

lutionary rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997, and later under his son Joseph Kabila's 18-year rule. Yet, the DRC, a vast country with an incredibly creative and resourceful population of 90 million people, is easily one of the world's richest countries in terms of natural resources, particularly the incomparable mineral wealth.

Apart from its poor political leadership and adventurism of its mostly inept military, DRC's troubles have been compounded by the covert and overt interference of world powers — including America, Belgium and France — and, in recent decades, neighbouring countries like Rwanda and Uganda. The uncountable brutal rebel groups that have operated in the

country — especially in the East — since independence have caused thousands of deaths, displaced millions of people and triggered instability in a country that should ideally be Africa's undisputed superpower.

But now President Félix Tshisekedi, son of the late veteran opposition leader Étienne Tshisekedi, wants to change all this. He is talking tough, rebuilding the army and seems to have a reasonable economic plan. The President, who took over in 2019, has also made one of the most significant leaps by joining the East African Community.

Nonetheless, he has pointed out that insecurity remains the biggest hindrance to achieving any reasonable progress. The return of the ruthless M23 rebel group and fresh accusations of the involvement of neighbouring Rwanda — and not for the first time — should concern everyone who has the region's interests at heart.

That President Tshisekedi invited the Kenya Defence Forces to help in securing parts of DRC is a move that could pay off. Though regarded with suspicion, the involvement of Ugandan forces, whose interest is to wipe out the Allied Democratic Forces rebel group, has also brought in a new aspect to the security matrix. One hopes that these regional efforts, together with the DRC government's economic and social plans, will awaken Africa's sleeping giant to prosper and savour true independence.

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the telescope

■ MPs to debate challenges facing the nation

House resumes sittings this week



The 13th Parliament on September 29. SILA KIPLAGAT | NATION

Parliament resumes sittings on Tuesday after a two-week recess, with the legislators who were recently sworn in, settling down for business.

The initial business of the National Assembly and the Senate following the resumption will include receiving the report on the committee that has been vetting nominees for Cabinet positions.

The vetting was led by National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula. The committee has 28 days from the first sitting within which they are to

audit President Ruto's nominees and table a report in the House.

The House plenary will debate the report within seven days as it has until November 3 to conclude the process.

The House will discuss the report and vote on whether to adopt or reject it.

Besides, MPs are expected to discuss legislation that will help to improve the challenges facing the nation, including the high cost of living, and the skyrocketing petrol and electricity prices.

■ Firms will have to apply for licenses

SA paves way for crypto regulation



South Africa's financial watchdog has declared cryptocurrency a financial product, paving way for the regulation of the assets in the continent's most advanced economy. The announcement comes in the wake

of financial institutions around the world grappling with how to regulate digital currencies.

The decision by the Financial Sector Conduct Authority means financial firms dealing in cryptos will have to apply for licensing next year. "You cannot have a situation where you have entities operating outside the regulatory framework, it is not ideal, and certainly not in the public interest," said FSCA Commissioner Unathi Kamlanag.

■ Dutchman celebrates second driver's title



Red Bull's Max Verstappen drives in the pit lane during the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka, Mie prefecture, on October 9. PHOTO | AFP

Verstappen, Red Bull ready for Texas

Newly acclaimed double world champion Max Verstappen has every right to enjoy celebrating his second drivers' championship success in relaxed Texan style this weekend.

But, as he seeks to break another on-track individual record at the US Grand Prix two weeks after his title triumph in Japan, his Red Bull team boss Christian Horner will be fired by two more serious ambitions.

His first is to defend the Milton Keynes-based outfit's reputation amid claims that they 'cheated' on their way to powering Max Verstappen to his two consecutive drivers'

title successes in 2021 and 2022.

The accusation that has tarnished their recent achievements came after Red Bull were found to have been in breach of an official budget cap for 2021 — for which they have yet to learn their punishment, but which prompted one rival team to say they had been cheating.

Horner's second goal is to ensure that the team stay focussed and maintain the stunning form that has seen the Dutchman center to a runaway second championship by claiming the constructors' title for the first time since 2013 and fifth in all.

■ 'Francksters' preparing for 2025 elections

Biya's son lining up for Cameroon seat



In just a few weeks, Paul Biya will celebrate 40 years as president of Cameroon.

The 89-year-old has shown no sign of wanting to give up the role, though critics claim he spends

much of his time abroad, even as conflict in the English-speaking part of the country rages.

There is, however, a huge political debate in Cameroon about who should eventually replace Paul Biya. Among the apparent contenders in the presidential elections scheduled for 2025 is one Franck Biya, the president's son.

The man himself has not spoken much about his ambitions but several groups of 'Franckistes' - or supporters of Franck - have sprung up.

■ IS IT MISSION IMPOSSIBLE FOR KENYAN TROOPS?

THE CONGO EXPEDITION

The Kenya Defence Forces are in the middle of an enduring conflict that over the years has attracted attention from distant African countries such as South Africa and Angola, as well as major global powers like the United States, France, China, Belgium and Britain



● By MACHARIA GAITHO

Kenyan soldiers risk coming into direct conflict with M23 rebels allegedly supported by Rwanda as they deploy under the East African Community peace initiative in sectors controlled by the insurgents in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The rebels fighting the government of President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi are reportedly backed by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda — a claim Kigali denies. Military experts say Kagame’s battle-hardened troops have been permanently encamped in eastern DRC since ousting the government of late President Juvenal Habyarimana in 1994 and chasing his ar-

my across the border. Kagame’s Rwanda Patriotic Front forces also teamed up with troops from their sponsors of the time, Uganda President Yoweri Museveni’s National Resistance Army, to march deep into the then Zaire and topple long-serving dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who was replaced by a rebel leader, Laurent Kabila.

Eastern DRC, with its vast mineral deposits, has since been a playground for Rwandese and Ugandan troops, who have turned from bitter string allies to bitter foes.

Entering the fray as spearhead of the East African regional force puts the Kenya Defence Forces right in the middle of an enduring conflict that over the years has attracted attention from distant African countries such as

South Africa and Angola, as well as major global powers like the United States, France, China, Belgium and Britain. Kagame has used the M23 rebels to counter the remnants of Habyarimana’s forces, the so-called Interahamwe militia who are considered chief perpetrators of the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

They remained in eastern DRC from where they have threatened Kagame’s Rwanda Patriotic Front government, and he has countered the threat by stationing troops across the border. Initial expectations of a routine peace-keeping assignment have been dampened in recent days, however, over different interpretations of the role of the regional joint

Continued on Page 6

kenya lens

Bridge over the Congo: KDF's new battleground

Continued from Page 5

forces mission. It was initially envisaged that with both Tshisekedi and Kagame on board, things would go smoothly. However, the DRC President is still accusing his Rwandese counterpart of supporting M23 rebels who are still holding ground around Goma and attacking government military camps.

Tshisekedi also takes it that the mandate of the regional force is to support his army in fighting the rebels and their Rwandese sponsors, rather than keeping the peace while a political settlement is concluded.

This is a position that Kagame rejects and thus has delayed in pulling his troops out of the conflict zone.

Tshisekedi has ruled out bringing in Russian "mercenaries" to help quell a raging conflict in the east of the country. "I know it's fashionable now, but no, we don't need to use mercenaries," he told the *Financial Times* on Tuesday.

"I don't even know where to find them," he joked, referring to the Russian private security company Wagner Group, which has provided mercenaries to fight in countries from Mali and Central African Republic (CAR) to Ukraine. The M23 militia, which has been dormant for a decade, resumed fighting last November following the failure of a 2013 peace deal and has been waging an offensive in the resource-rich eastern Congo, causing deaths and mass displacements.

But the rebel group is one among more than 100 pillaging the area, which is rich in gold and coltan, an ore crucial for the manufacture of electronic devices. Following a visit to Moscow in late August by DRC defence minister Gilbert Kabanda, western diplomats based in Africa

expressed concern about a potential deployment of Wagner forces in Congo.

Wagner, a private military company founded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, an ally of Russian president Vladimir Putin, has been accused of human rights violations in Mali and CAR, which borders the DRC.

Tshisekedi said it was normal to keep dialogue open with Russia and pointed out that Emmanuel Macron, France's president, had maintained contact with Putin following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. "We are an independent country, respectful of international conventions and, believe me, we don't have any (Russian mercenaries)."

"We are not going to use a militia to support our actions," he said. "We will strengthen our security by increasing our defence and security capabilities," he added.

The DRC would rely on "our usual traditional partners", including Belgium, the former colonial power, "to train, to reinforce our capacities and the capacities of our army," he said.

Kenya has over the past year played a key role in brokering a peace settlement in eastern DRC driven by former President Uhuru Kenyatta who, on relinquishing office last month, was asked by his successor William Ruto to continue spearheading what has now been christened the Nairobi Conclave.

A senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nairobi downplayed the threat of Kenyan and Rwandese troops squaring off. He explained that the military intervention to bring peace and stability in eastern DRC was sanctioned by all the East African Community member states, including Rwanda, which he said had agreed to pull its army out of eastern DRC and focus on securing its side of the bor-

der. Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania are all contributing troops to the EAC Joint Regional Force, with Kenya shouldering the burden of overall command and also being deployed in the flashpoints around Goma where M23 rebels with Rwandan backing have been keeping the DRC army at bay.

The senior Foreign Ministry official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, explained that in his final term in office, Uhuru invested a lot of personal diplomacy in engaging Kagame and Tshisekedi on the value of a peace and stabilisation mission.

He worked hard, alongside other regional leaders, to assure Kagame that his security concerns would be taken care of if he ceased supporting the M23 rebels, pulled back his troops and allowed the regional force to move in. Kagame also agreed that as a protagonist state, he would not contribute troops to the regional force, but concentrate on securing the Rwanda border.

Uhuru also facilitated and helped fast-track DRC's membership of the East African Community, in one stroke catapulting the regional bloc into an African behemoth stretching across the middle belt of the African continent from the Indian Ocean coast to the Atlantic, a population of over 300 million and almost unlimited economic potential.

Beyond joining the scramble for Congo's riches, Kenya has deep and abiding interest in the peace dividend. The Port of Mombasa is a key gateway for goods to and from Eastern DRC, as well as Uganda, South Sudan and Rwanda.

Kenya also looks at intra-African trade, beginning with trade within the community, as a key area for economic growth. Uganda has for



Uganda People's Defence Force soldiers near the town of Goli in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Ituri region on May 19, 2003.

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The Kenya Quick Reaction Force (QRF) 01 Company at the Embakasi Garrison on June 15, 2021, before they were deployed to the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Monusco). FRANCIS NDERITU | NATION

many years been Kenya's biggest trading partner, and Kenyan manufacturers are also keen to push deep into the other countries in the region. Peace in the DRC would present an immediate boom in both enhanced access to a vast market extending from the eastern sector into the interior, as well as enhanced trade routes stretching from Mombasa deep into the mineral-rich giant.

Kenya itself has little in way of natural resources, but would be in prime position to cement its position as a regional transport, communications and service hub.

According to the official, the three Nairobi Conclaves hosted by Uhuru intend to bring a sense of normalcy, economic discipline and social stability to eastern DRC. Kenya invested in bringing various DRC rebel groups for the Nairobi 1 Conclave where the rebels indicated readiness to lay down their arms if Kinshasha listened to their demands.

Fighting thereafter subsided significantly in the region, around except around Boni, the area M23 is active. Uhuru was the only leader to attend President Tshisekedi's inauguration in January 2019, when he succeeded President Joseph Kabila in the DRC's first ever peaceful transfer of power. Kabila had assumed leadership in 2001 when his father, Laurent Desire Kabila, was assassinated by his palace guard.

According to sources, Uhuru and Tshisekedi struck an immediate rapport as the former sought to ease his country away from the ambit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and build new links with eastern Africa. He was also trying to move away from the 'transactional relationships' that his predecessor Kabila had built with the SADC powerhouse, the Republic of South Africa, whose military interventions in the country had borne no fruit.

International efforts under the United Nations and western powers were also making little progress. Uhuru played a key role in signalling to the world that Tshisekedi was a legitimate leader who needed support to stabilise a sleeping giant. It was from those initial contacts that the Nairobi process was born.

Last September, the East African Community kicked off its maiden mission to the DRC to sensitise the government on the EAC's integration pillars and governing instruments. A key participant at the meetings was Kenya's Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Macharia Kamau, attending as Uhuru's Special Envoy under the Nairobi Peace Process. He pointed out that the security situation in the Eastern DRC continues to be of great concern.

"As we welcome the Eastern Africa Regional Force to Eastern DRC, we must do so with the recognition that the threat posed by armed groups still remains, one that requires closer cooperation and collaboration with our regional and international partners to counter and eradicate," he said told senior DRC government officials. He explained how the Nairobi process would accelerate the political and military tracks of the search for peace.

"There is need for each and every one to redouble their efforts to pursue dialogue, de-escalation and the use of effective national, regional and international mechanisms to resolve disputes". He further assured both the EAC delegation and the DRC leadership that the incoming government of President Ruto was committed to continuing and strengthening the Nairobi initiative.

Earlier, in June, Uhuru had hosted the Nairobi 3 Conclave followed by an EAC Heads of State and Government summit. The presidents from the seven EAC countries were

briefed in the outcome of a strategic meeting of their Chiefs of Defence of all five countries. They agreed to commit troops for their assigned regions and sanctioned the strategy for security, deployment and logistics worked out by the military chiefs.

Kenya was put in command of the entire operation, providing the regional force commander while critical responsibilities were shared with the other militaries.

A communique issued after the Heads of State Summit endorsed the detailed brief on the military track Kenya Chief of Defence Forces of Kenya, General Robert Kibochi, who chairs the Committee of East African Community Chiefs of Defence. The brief defined the problem, highlighted the threat analysis, Concept of Operations (CONOPs), Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), Rules of Engagement (ROE) and other legal and technical regulations to facilitate the operationalisation of the Regional Force and its various operational arms. The Heads of State instructed that the Regional Force should, in cooperation with the military and administrative forces of the DRC, seek to stabilise and secure the peace in the DRC and cooperate in implementation of the disarmament and demobilisation process.

The Summit was attended by Presidents Tshisekedi, Museveni, Kagame, Salva Kiir of South Sudan and Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi. Tanzania President Samia Suluhu Hassan was represented by her High Commissioner in Nairobi, John Steven Simbachawene.

The Heads of State directed an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, alongside commencement of a political process to secure peace in the region. In September, Tshisekedi presided over the signing of an agreement giving green light to the deployment of the EAC Joint Regional Force.

EAC Secretary General Peter Mathuki and DRC's Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'Apala signed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) at the official residence of the President in Kinshasa. "The Agreement envisages an initial deployment of the EAC Joint Regional Force for a period of six months after which the deployment will be evaluated," the Secretary General noted.

The Force Headquarters has been established and key personnel appointed, led by Major General Jeff Nyagah, a highly decorated Kenyan military officer with valued experience in the KDF mission in Somalia. Even before signing of the formal agreement, *The Weekly Review* has learnt that deployment of forces had started, with Kenya and Burundi leading the way in their assigned regions.

Military and foreign ministry officials in Kenya remain tight-lipped on the number of troops deployed and specific operational areas. Queries to the Communications office at the EAC headquarters in Arusha got not response, but it is understood that even before the main body of Kenyan troops started to deploy, small teams of Army Special Forces were already on the ground in reconnaissance missions.

kenya lens

■ Chinese contractors rule the roost in the infrastructure space



SGR 'TAKE OR PAY' DEBT TRAP

Concerns are rising about likely implications of the President's radical changes at the port on relationships with the largest lender to infrastructure projects in Kenya today — The China Exim Bank

● By JAINDI KISERO

As the ramifications of President William Ruto's move to dismantle the monopoly that the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) has been enjoying over other transporters in hauling goods to Nairobi begin to sink in, questions are emerging over what the development means for Kenya's overall exposure to both the US\$5 billion SGR debts and the financial sustainability of the largest infrastructure project in decades.

Even more significant, concerns are rising about likely implications of the move by the President on relationships with what counts as the largest lender to infrastructure projects in Kenya today — The China Exim Bank. According to the latest external debt register, the outstanding amount owed to the China Exim Bank as of June 2021 was a whopping Sh759.6 billion.

The Weekly Review has seen a copy of the 'Delivery and Movement of Freight to the Embakasi Container Depot' agreement dated September 30, signed by the Kenya Ports Authority and Kenya Railways Corporation, whose objective was to oblige KPA to ensure that a set level of cargo between Mombasa and Nairobi was transported by the SGR.

This is what the agreement says: "KPA shall consign to KRC as a carrier for transport to its Embakasi ICD — on a take or pay basis — the minimum volume of freight and other cargo stipulated in this agreement." Better known as the "take or pay agreement", it is a crucial covenant in the SGR loan contracts. It comes complete with a schedule specifying clear performance benchmarks, including details such as minimum tonnage to cover loan repayment per day, minimum tonnage to cover loan repayment per year, number of wagons per day, and minimum volumes and turnaround time.

To tie the government's hand even faster, China Exim Bank also made sure that this agreement was part of the pledges and securities for repayment of the loan. This is what the agreement says: "The repayment of the principal and payment of the interest and fees of the loans are to be secured, inter alia, by a long-term service agreement with the aim of guaranteeing a minimum amount of freight throughout the term of the agreements to be charged and received by the operator for the project, which shall be used to secure the repayment of principle and interest."

Thus, in granting SGR the monopoly over freight to Nairobi, the government was merely implementing what it had signed in loan

agreements and collateralised as securities for the massive loan with this influential lender. Without prior warning, the President assigned a key provision in a critical agreement with the influential lender to the dustbin. How KPA deals with this situation remains to be seen. The agreement stipulates that if cargo on the SGR drops below the levels stipulated in the take or pay agreement, KPA must draw on its own revenues to make up the difference. Clearly, this covenant is a major contingent liability to the port authority.

But is there a chance that the circumstances may cause President Ruto to rescind the decision? With the immense influence of the road trucking lobby and considering the growing clout of operators of Mombasa-based container freight stations, an about-turn may prove politically unpalatable for the new administration.

The more interesting question keen followers of the China factor in infrastructure financing in Kenya will be asking is what President Ruto's stand might entail in terms of the fortunes of the clout that Chinese EPC contractors have been wielding in Kenya in the last 20 years. China Roads and Bridges Company, which negotiated the SGR loans on the country's behalf — is perhaps the most influ-

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ential Chinese EPC contractor in Kenya.

When the government of former President Mwai Kibaki ended, the Chinese EPC contractors that depended on the patronage of that regime found themselves exposed. Good examples are the tribulations and change of fortunes that surrounded the fate of the multibillion-shilling Greenfield Airport project, NSSF's Hazina Towers, the Mzima Spring Water project, Kenya Pipeline's new pipeline from Mombasa to Nairobi, the Eldoret Hospital Referral Expansion Project and the Police Service Communications and Surveillance project. Away from the limelight, the elite of the new regime that had taken over engaged in intense fights to inherit the patronage of Chinese EPC contractors. The battles to supplant Chinese contractors politically linked with the power men of the previous regime also became intense.

Chinese EPC contractors rule the roost in the infrastructure space. It the reason Kenya's external debt register is today cluttered with too many Chinese debts. In the last 10 years, the country has been on a spending spree, pouring hundreds of millions of US dollars and Chinese Yuan — sometimes billions — into everything: building road, railways, ports, transmission lines to buying equipment for the National Youth Services, drilling geothermal wells, buying surveillance cameras, to dam construction projects — many of which are incomplete.

They are adept at putting together and mobilising the so-called contractor-negotiated loans. Today, the typical Chinese contractor is a streetwise schemer who goes about town carrying an English name — Charlie, Lee, Tony, Lily, Sandra, Johnny. Flanked by a local fixer — most likely a politically well-connected operative with friends in high places — the Chinese will approach a Cabinet Secretary or a parastatal head with a proposal to implement a large infrastructure project, complete with the promise to arrange financing for it. The contractors even do a feasibility study for you.

During the initial stage, an MoU is hurriedly signed with the CS. That is followed by the signing of a commercial agreement by the ministry or parastatal. Finally, the National Treasury will be invited to sign a financing agreement with a Chinese bank, which will have been brought into the picture by the foreign contractor. That way, a new expensive Chinese loan will have been secretly introduced into our national debt register.

Kenya's *nouveau riche* prefers this type of deal for several reasons. First, it allows one to sign opaque commercial contracts and MoUs by circumventing oversight institutions such as Parliament, Controller of Budget and the Auditor-General. That way, one can conspire with their foreign cronies to push a project into the government's spending programme without having to wait for appropriations from Parliament.

Secondly, the deals can be procured and concluded without subjecting the project to international competitive bidding because they are arranged as government to government deals. The third reason why today's oligarch loves deals with Chinese EPC contractors is because debt service is a first charge on the Consolidated Fund and are therefore paid before appropriations. Thus, repayment of the money borrowed from China is almost guaranteed.

In 2015, the public got a rare glimpse of dealing with Chinese contractors when an aide of former Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, Mr Herbert Ojwang, presented before Parliament, tapes of conversations between himself and the Chinese ERPC contractor, China Wuyi, in which he disclosed details of agency agreements he had signed with the contractor.

The Chinese will recruit a local middleman today and drop him tomorrow, depending on where the political wind is blowing in Kenya. The Herbert Ojwang tapes also disclosed how being a broker or political godfather for a big Chinese contractor can be an extremely lucrative thing in Kenya.

Industrialisation remains a mirage in African nations



● By ALEX OWINO

Many African nations profess the intent to industrialise as part of general slogans like “industrialise Africa”.

However, I doubt that their leaders and ruling elite hold serious commitments or interest to industrialise their countries beyond empty slogans and occasionally paying lip service to the “goal” to industrialise, typically ventilated around election times.

First, let's go back to the future. The Kibaki Administration is widely acknowledged as Kenya's best and most transformative since Independence. He came to power while the “window to industrialise” using the labour intensive, export-led, industrial policy model had not closed totally. If any administration was well placed to industrialise Kenya, it was the Kibaki Administration.

But to do that it needed to adopt industrial policy. That entails picking winners to create national (industrial) champions, prioritising labour-intensive manufactures and embracing export-led growth. Some tariff and non-tariff measures would need to be thrown in, as well as directed credit policies in some form to finance the national champions due to low national savings. Similar policies enabled national industrial champions in South Korea (“Chaebols”) and Japan (“Keiretsu”) to enjoy virtually unlimited capital in the formative years as they made a dash for industrialisation. But alas! None of these measures was implemented.

The Kibaki team formulated the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation in June 2003 that many charge was no more than a glorified PRSP from the Bretton Woods Twins. It hosted Kenya's first International Investment Conference in March 2004 and established the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) to ensure the government received sound advice on economic policies. NESC would go on to develop Vision 2030.

EPZs as fore-runners of export-led industrial policy: I pause to mention export processing zones (EPZs) and spe-

...Continued on Page 11



An agreement signed by the Kenya Ports Authority and Kenya Railways Corporation on September 30 seeks to oblige KPA to ensure that a set volume of cargo between Mombasa and Nairobi is transported by the SGR. KEVIN ODIT I NATION

kenya lens

■ ISSUES WIN OVER TRIBAL LINKS

THRIVING FAR AWAY FROM HOME

Changes in voter patterns in the August elections occurred mostly at the lowest level of representation, where politicians interface with the electorate

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

One of the uplifting stories coming out of the new government President William Ruto is assembling is the nomination of Zachariah Mwangi Njeru as Cabinet Secretary for Lands. The former nominated councillor, who hails from Bondeni slums of Nakuru City, is on the verge of being only the second Cabinet Minister from the expansive Nakuru County after independence hero Achieng'Oneko. And as Nakuru residents anxiously wait to get a taste of the government flag, last flown in the region in 1966 by the man who was jailed alongside Kenya's first President, Jomo Kenyatta, the gesture by Ruto conjures sweet memories of this beautiful city as the political face of Kenya.

Besides Oneko, the first Nakuru Town MP who hailed from Rarieda in Luo Nyanza, Nakuru residents would – on the onset of re-introduction of multiparty politics in 1992 – elect Lwali Oyondi, the brother of outspoken politician Martin Shikuku, as Nakuru Town MP. Ever since, a handful of politicians from outside the wider Rift Valley have been elected as area MPs. This has been the trend countrywide, with voting taking a tribal pattern. However, the just concluded elections witnessed some shifts, with new faces emerging in very unlikely locations.

One of the political giant-slayers this year is John Bwire, the newly elected MP for Taveta. The newcomer, who traces his roots to Busia County, pulled one of the major shockers this year by trouncing Dr Naomi Shabaan, a seasoned politician and former Cabinet minister.

Admittedly, though, the MP is believed to have also been a beneficiary of tribal competition between the local Taveta communi-

ty and the Akamba, who have settled in the constituency in large numbers. With the many candidates from the two communities splitting their votes, Bwire gave meaning to his Wiper party leader Kalonzo Musyoka's political rider of "kupitia katikati yao" (pass between them and win).

This notwithstanding, Bwire rolled out programmes that resonated well with locals, including bursaries to students, distribution of water in hospitals and ambulance services. An advocate, Bwire, singles out his pro bono services to the people facing land disputes as having touched many people.

The MP, whose father hails from Sibale village in Funyula constituency, was born and raised in Taveta.

The Center for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-Kenya) reports that changes in the voter-patterns this time round have mostly occurred at the lowest level of representation –

ward level. This, according to the CMD Executive Director, Frank Mukwanja, is the point at which the politician interfaces with the electorate.

This, therefore, is precisely where realistic decisions are made depending on the interests of the voters. Having largely declined the so-called six piece suit, or rather the trend where key

presidential candidates appeal to the electorate to vote in individuals in all the six ballots from one specific party, it was clear that there were other considerations on the card apart from party affiliation, including qualities of individual candidates.

Mr Simon Maina, the newly elected Member of County Assembly (MCA) for Marachi West in Butula Constituency of Busia County, agrees that issues, rather than tribe, carried the day in his case. Maina, who hails from Nyandarua County, attributes his win to continuous investment of hard work and cooperation with local residents.

"Wuod Okuyu", or son from Kikuyu land as he is fondly referred to by some of his customers at his supermarket in the busy Bumala shopping center on the Kisumu-Busia highway, describes himself as a local boy who has always strived to give back to the society.

The MCA, who speaks local Luhya dialects and Dholuo fluently, is an active contributor towards devel-



Taveta MP
John Bwire

kenya lens

opment initiatives in local churches and schools. Apparently, the outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic presented a silver lining for him: he volunteered to distribute free food to locals and in neighbouring institutions – a gesture that won the hearts of many.

Not far off from Maina, who was elected on a Movement for Democracy and Growth (MDG) party ticket, is Peter Kipkoech Talam, who was elected as Bukhayo West MCA in Matayos constituency on an ODM party, which is the predominant political outfit in Busia County. Talam is a former Prisons Officer at Korinda.

And about 107 kilometres away in Lugari constituency, Kakamega County, is Charles Anyona Ogachi from Kisii in Nyanza region, who clinched the MCA seat in Mautuma Ward on a United Democratic Party (UDP) of former area MP and ex-Minister, Cyrus Jirongo.

Earlier, the 2017 elections produced the first civic leader from the Luo Nyanza region to serve in Central Kenya. Cyrus Omondi, who hailed from Siaya County, shocked many by clinching the Kahawa Wendani Ward seat in Ruiru constituency, Kiambu County, on a Jubilee Party ticket.

Based on previous studies by CMD, Mukwanja argues that voters in rural areas are more honest about their choices, which are mainly pegged on their primary needs. In other words, an “outsider” who stands out from the crowd and who best connects with the people will earn his or her rightful share of the vote.

The scenario is relatively different in urban constituencies, where tribal pride and alignments come into play. Here, it is a tribal contest as politicians mobilise members from their communities to register in specific constituencies, with a view to get advantage over opponents. It is the kind of game that seasoned Nairobi politicians, including former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, ex-Ministers Fred Gumo and Maina Kamanda, perfected from the 1990s.

And this explains why certain constituencies, including Kibra, Langata, Westlands and Starehe enjoy leadership from MPs from given communities.

This reality is alive even today. In the meantime, as Bwire aptly observes, the best way for a politician to survive the tribal wave is “to associate oneself with the people by addressing their plight”.

This “political survival” factor is best epitomised by Kisumu Town East MP Shakeel Shabbir, a member of the Asian community who is today the longest-serving elected MP from the entire Nyanza region. Shabbir’s record of four straight terms in Parliament is only equalled by ODM’s national chairman, John Mbadi, and Suba North MP Millie Odhiambo, except that the two have separately been nominated to Parliament for a single term each.

And except for 2007 and 2013, when he was elected on an ODM ticket, Shabbir has twice been elected as an independent candidate, meaning he has twice survived the wave of the Odinga-led party in Luo Nyanza.

That he is not Luo is a somewhat positive factor that allows him room to deliver services fairly devoid of favouritism, clanism, and nepotism.

In fact, this places him above the fray of petty clan rivalries. Being an independent politician, as he says, frees him from being subjected to rules from third parties – political parties and their leaders. “I was born in Kisumu, and I will die and be buried there. So I am technically a Luo, the only problem is the colour of my skin,” says Shabbir, who speaks fluent Dholuo.

Rahim Dawood and Swarup, also of Asian origin, had mixed fortunes in August, with Dawood retaining the Imenti North seat for the third time and Mishra succumbing to the strong wave of the President’s UDA party.

Separately, Junet Mohamed of Suna East managed to charm his way back to Parliament for the third time. But unlike Shabbir, the politician from the Somali community is still strongly allied to Mr Odinga’s party as he battles the political storm in Luo Nyanza.

Mukwanja, views this emerging trait as a case of voters gradually taking control of their political destiny. He observes that the results — particularly in County assemblies — show a clear shift away from the influence of political party leaders and cronies.

The apparent shift is of great interest to CMD-Kenya, a political parties-based membership organisation established in March 2004, whose mandate includes enhancing multiparty democracy and promoting social justice, as well as political governance.

There’s need to promote industrialisation in Africa

...Continued from Page 9

cial economic zones (SEZs) that developing countries have used as critical policy tools to industrialise their economies. In 2004 I prepared Kenya’s first-ever Survey of EPZs (through *Market Intelligence* magazine) with input from the EPZ Agency and Kenya’s Trade and Industry Ministry.

A key finding from the survey was that Kenya’s first-generation EPZs were set up as “enclave” developments with little backward or forward linkages to domestic value chains.

Nearly a decade later, as a consultant on a National Treasury Project, I would propose industrial policy and help to develop Kenya’s SEZ policy framework and draft SEZ Bill 2012. All three were not adopted and were effectively mothballed until 2015 when a “bland” SEZ law was enacted over the objections of Treasury to its tax giveaways and incentives. The SEZ agency provided for in the 2015 SEZ law has not been fully operationalised seven years after enactment.

A similar fate befell the Master Plan Study for Kenyan Industrial Development (Mapskid) that Japan’s JICA developed for Kenya in 2007. Mapskid remains the most comprehensive industrial blueprint ever developed in Kenya’s history. It was promptly consigned to the national policy “cemetery” or graveyard on the boulevard of broken dreams to “industrialise Kenya”.

Identifying the intent to industrialise: Vision 2030 Blueprint explicitly stated the “intent” to industrialise Kenya. It set the goal of establishing a “robust, diversified and competitive manufacturing sector” that grows at 10 per cent annually to account for 15 per cent of GDP. It identified manufacturing as a priority sector in the economy with the establishment of two special economic zone clusters and five SME industrial parks as flagship projects. None of these have been implemented.

Meanwhile the share of manufacturing in Kenya’s GDP continues to fall from 12.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent. Vision 2030’s professed intent to industrialise Kenya was still-born.

Reality of de-industrialisation: I see little public disagreements in Kenya on the intent to industrialise. Most leaders broadly agree on it and even on HOW to do it — for example by establishing SEZs.

The true binding constraint to industrialising Kenya, however, lies in the failure-to-implement, the inability to get things done. This is evident in the poorly designed EPZs with no forward or backward linkages to the domestic economy; the dithering over SEZs for years; and dumping comprehensive industrial masterplans like Mapskid.

The failure-to-implement stems fundamentally from a failure to invest in the requisite (state) capacity and capability to get things done with extreme competence in the apex institutions and ministries of finance, international trade and industry, and in economic planning, coordinating and monitoring units in the President’s or Prime Minister’s offices modelled, say, on Malaysia’s Permandu.

Kenya needs to concentrate significant capacities and capabilities to get things done in those apex institutions. It is not enough to merely profess the intent to industrialise.

Kenya’s long-term economic blueprint (Vision 2030) and its industrial masterplans like Mapskid lie forgotten in a policy-stagnation freezer, with only occasional motion but no meaningful movements. Like bystanders Kenyans watch “latecomers” like Malaysia (from 1978) and Vietnam (from 1994) adopt industrial policy and get on with industrialising at warp speed – dashing from third world to near-first world in little more than one generation.

Mr Owino is a consultant and financial sector specialist

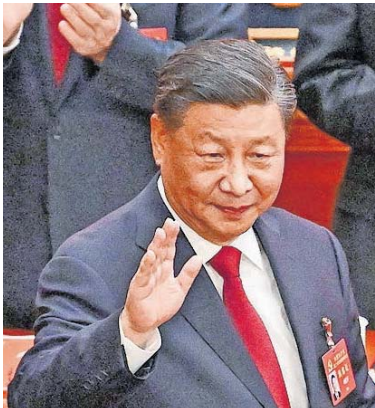
the limelight



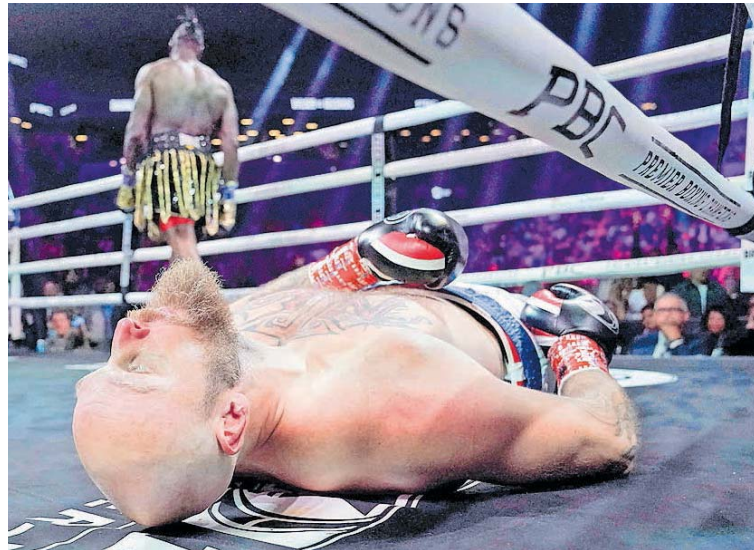
North Korea leader Kim Jong Un visits the Mangyongdae Revolutionary Academy in Pyongyang to watch live pistol shooting by alumni. PHOTO | AFP



Elephant keeper Kiapi Lakupanai plays with two calves at Reteti Elephant Sanctuary in Namunyak Wildlife Conservancy, Samburu on October 12. Reteti Elephant Sanctuary has been overwhelmed with rescue operations and an influx of orphaned and abandoned calves due to the current drought. Parched lands and dry wells cover the terrain. PHOTO | POOL



China's President Xi Jinping arrives for the opening session of the 20th Chinese Communist Party's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on October 16. PHOTO | AFP



US boxer Deontay Wilder (left) knocks out Swedish-Finnish boxer Robert Helenius in the 1st round of their 12-round WBC World Heavyweight Title Eliminator fight at Barclays Centre in Brooklyn, New York, on October 15. PHOTO | POOL



A Basotho jumps while being paraded with others by Lesotho horsemen before the start of the traditional horse race in Semonkong, a remote town in the Maluti mountains on October 15. PHOTO | AFP



Health workers carry a coffin during the mass burial of 27 protesters and six police officers at the Bolima cemetery in the Waterloo District in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on October 17. They were killed in August riots. PHOTO | AFP



The Arena

MAN TALK

Although podcasting is an emerging industry in Africa, Eli Mwendwa is making a name for himself, and money, from online conversations about issues that men face but do not discuss

OPEN SPACE

AIDS: NOT ALL DOOM

POSITIVES: Despite the fear brought about by this infection, there were many great changes it brought about in medicine

• BY MOSES OJUANG'

Distil good even from the devil... It is pain that sets thoughts to thinking; a state of undisturbed happiness would make reflection, inquiry and invention redundant.

Sometime in the mid-80s, a cheeky older neighbour asked me my year of birth; I quickly told him and he burst out laughing. He informed me quite artistically that in that year he was being treated for his third bout of gonorrhoea.

He must have meant that he was old enough to be my father since he was already sexually active at the time of my birth. Those were the days of free sex. Every Monday, hospitals were filled with those suffering from Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). They would line up before rude nurses who were boiling blunt injection needles ready to pump them up their rears; before the painful injection, they had to drink a packet of milk right in front of the nurse. Everybody knew what they were being treated for.

All this happened before the proper arrival of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Aids). It was that reckless time when people knew the worst that one could get from sex was a baby or gonorrhoea. It had a cure and those who contracted it wore their suffering as a badge of honour; you could get a high-five from your peers just because you were a 'man'. It was never a shameful thing.

Then entered HIV onto the scene and things just went haywire. The balance was toppled and things had to change painfully for many of this generation. The infection rate of HIV spread like bushfire. Those infected somehow did not know their status and thus went on spreading the virus unknowingly. By the early 90s, those who got Aids began dying very horrendous deaths sans care.

The lines at the gonorrhoea treatment clinics thinned out and the medical profession had to make radical changes in their systems of treatment. The kidney-shaped containers used to boil syringes and needles to be reused on other people were pushed aside; there would

hitherto be no more sharing of needles or syringes and thus only sharp needles would be used, once.

Things they used to do with bare hands had to be done in surgical gloves. Blood transfusion that had before then been done without much care was now anathema: the blood had to be screened for the virus before being accepted in the blood bank. Indeed, even the people donating blood decreased since they were afraid of being tested for Aids before giving blood.

Despite the gloom, fear and suspicion wrought by this new infection, there were many great changes it brought about on the medical scene, which the living enjoy today. Things had to change radical to stem new infections. Blunt

needles were gone, reused scalpels forgotten, medical waste collection and destruction became even more meticulous. All these came about due to the evil that was HIV and Aids.

On the social scene, painful corrections had to be made.

Outdated cultural practices like wife inheritance, traditions deeply ingrained into the psyches of the practitioners, was shaken to the core.

The die-hards who could not accept change became the horrid lessons for those that dared face the virus. It was a baptism of fire and death that slowly eroded the obsolete practices. A new discipline was taking over.

The holier-than-thou religious leaders who thought that the virus was only for sinners were shocked when it hit their congregations. The virus had moved deep into the family and hit even those insolent people who were burning condoms publicly to declare family planning immoral. Religion, science, culture and the whole government became one united front against Aids. This singular voice had never before been heard on one issue. It is amazing just what this infection made our country achieve.

Mr Ojuang' is a social commentator.

Are you young and ambitious? We would like to hear from you. Send your views and observations on topical issues to: weeklyreview@ke.nationmedia.com

MIND SPEAK



Ayub Yensis Adan

The disbandment of the Directorate of Criminal Investigations special unit amid allegations that its officers engaged in extra-judicial killings is not a surprise. I hope the killings and arbitrary arrests conducted by the team will be investigated and officers found to have abused power and authority be brought to book. Kenya needs an efficient and professional team of security officers.
— Student, Daystar University



Albert Maloba

President William Ruto knows what he is doing by disbanding the DCI special unit, having served as the second-in-command for the past decade. He has in the past accused the police of behaving in a brutal and unprofessional manner so it is his mandate to clean up the force and ensure that Kenya and Kenyans are protected from internal and external threats.
— Universities Council of Kenya leader



Cynthia Tanui

Insecurity is not a new thing in Kenya. Each day, we hear tales of missing persons, with some being found dead. It is the duty of the National Police Service to ensure Kenyans are safe. President William Ruto has a duty to ensure Kenyans have confidence in the security organs and vouch for justice for the families of victims of police brutality.
— Customer relations



Raisy Rono

I appreciate the President's directive to disband the DCI Special Service Unit. It is not pleasing to have people who are meant to be enhancers of security turning to perpetrators of violence and causers of agony in the state. I believe that is a short-term solution and I am anticipating the President and his team will roll out a good plan.
— University student

MY TAKE



● BY WAGA ODONGO

I had a look at last year's crime statistics with a particular interest in the drugs section.

The report, which is available on the Kenya Police website, shows that Kenya does not have a "dangerous drug" problem per se; it has a marijuana problem. In almost three-quarters of all counties, bhang is the only drug police busts have uncovered. Bhang arrests and discoveries were also widespread, with every single county recording an incident. The appendix also shows that over 95 per cent of all dangerous drug cases are due to bhang.

When it comes to bhang, drug enforcement has completely failed. If we instituted a zero-tolerance policy that saw the arrest of everyone who has been in possession of bhang we would empty all institutions of higher learning and the suspect numbers would bankrupt the Prison Service.

Marijuana is so common that there are numerous Facebook groups that connect sellers and users, depending on the location. For the more discrete, Snapchat, with its timed messages and its image-sharing limitations, is not only good for sharing raunchy photos, but perfect for drug dealers to advertise their wares while making it hard to leave a digital trail. I'd wager that over half of all adults under 35 do not think marijuana should be considered a dangerous drug.

With marijuana being so prevalent and demand being so high, we are asking the police to implement a law that has lost public consent.

The move towards legalising marijuana globally has been slow, but the tide is turning and it would be folly for Kenya to ignore this trend.

By my count, cannabis has been decriminalised wholly or in part in the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Portugal, South Africa, Spain and Uruguay.

Marijuana, it should be not-

SHOULD KENYA LEGALISE BHANG?

Medicine: Cannabis has been decriminalised wholly or in part in the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Portugal, South Africa, Spain and Uruguay



ed, has some medicinal uses. We have methadone clinics in two cities locally to help those addicted to heroin, a far more dangerous drug. In fact, those two clinics have been feted globally for their work, yet when it comes to bhang, a far more common and, compared to heroin, more innocuous drug, Kenya has been a laggard.

Bhang is currently classified as a narcotic drug under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act No 4 of 1994 and the fines involved can reach three times the value of the drugs nabbed. We were greeted with headlines earlier this year of peddlers getting 50 years for selling what in some countries amounts to government rations.

Meanwhile, the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (Naca-

da), has been more of a hindrance than a help when it comes to drugs. It still wants current penalties on drug possession enhanced rather than work towards decriminalisation of bhang.

Nacada is in the grip of religious zealots. A former boss of the organisation proudly claimed that bhang would be legalised in Kenya "over his dead body". It is sad when the head of a drug advisory body proudly and publicly declares himself impervious to scientific evidence. The board of Nacada currently has members whose primary qualification is in religious pursuits which, I think, is wholly inappropriate.

The spirits the board advises on are not the Holy kind. The religious establishment convulses into histrionics whenever the whiff of reefer blows their way. They are

the main impediment to any evidence based reform.

The menace of marijuana use comes from the fact that the government does not test and regulate the drug, just like alcohol and tobacco.

Drug addiction is a medical and social condition, so drug popularity will always remain unaffected by the length of prison sentences or government proscriptions.

You are unlikely to enforce abstinence through the law.

Drug use is stigmatised in a way that obesity is not, despite the two being related. It should be no more a crime to be hooked on heroin than it is to be an alcoholic or a binge eater.

Whatever ills the drug causes, they are better addressed through regulation rather than leaving the young to the chaos and self-interest of the market, where it can be adulterated. A study by Nacada last year found that in all cases of street-acquired heroin that the organisation tested, the product was adulterated.

It is easy to explain the presence of strains of cannabis that have been linked to psychiatric problems. We have a system in which the cannabis produced is untested, unregulated and untaxed, which is the source of all these problems.

The lesson from history is that prohibition leads to stronger strains of drugs. During alcohol prohibition in America in the 1920s, people began drinking formalin, which is used to preserve organisms, in lieu of alcohol. Cannabis must somehow be distributed under the ambit of government control if we are to guarantee its safety.

Alcohol is a more potent drug and has more deleterious social effects than cannabis. Go to a small town on a Friday night and see the social cost of alcohol. You will find fighting, vomiting, public urination and unprovoked aggression towards others.

Given the choice, would anyone rather have a child who is an alcoholic as opposed to a stoner? It seems even ridiculous to ask that out loud.

We must have a grown-up discussion on not just cannabis, but all drugs, based on science and harm reduction.

Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer
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MULTITASKING

A MAN OF MANY TALENTS

JACK OF ALL TRADES: Among the many hats that Pavraj wears are a mixologist's beanie, a tech bro's hoodie and a chef's toque

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

When I meet Pavraj Singh, he is enjoying a burger at The Oval in Westlands and is making that face that I too make in the fringes of the night when I am reading other writers' *magnum opus* and thinking: "That is a nice line; let me take it from you". Among the many hats that Pavraj wears are a mixologist's beanie, a tech bro's hoodie and a chef's toque. He also has that face that Nairobi gossip sites would kill to write headlines for: "Meet the Nairobi mixologist giving Kenyan ladies sleepless nights."

We are at ArtCaffe for an interview, one of those establishments frequented by all and sundry yet still manages to convey an air of exclusivity. My only misgiving would be the corporate pop in the form of soul-killing Muzak that the speakers are blurring out.

"I am a man of many talents," begins Pavraj, "a chef by profession but a mixologist by heart. But I have been in the tech industry all my life," he says, swirling down the words with a beer. When he says all his life, it is all of 27 years.

"I was poached by a Fintech company, moving to Nairobi from Canada. My first job was in customer experience and from there I rose to the top." He found himself treading the gossamer fine line — a fintech expert by day moonlighting as a mixologist. Sleep? Sleep is for the dead.

"Mixology started as a joke. I used to attend a lot of influencer events and every Wednesday they had bar culture at Tapas. The owners invited me to bartend for them, which I did once a week, then twice, and it slowly became something I was fond of."

Fintech, he says, is where he has grown professionally. Fintech is a portmanteau of "financial technology", which refers to firms using new technology to compete with traditional methods in the delivery of financial services. Think blockchains, Cloud Computing and Big Data. "We are not a bank. We do

Product financing is not a new thing in Kenya. On the contrary, with product financing, the company, in this case Aspira, finances the product for you and you pay them back in monthly instalments. It is risk-free for the vendor and gets you your product — sort of like borrowing from Peter to pay Paul. Win-win-win.



Pavraj Singh is a financial expert, a chef and a mixologist. JEFF ANGOTE | NATION

Mixology started as a joke. I used to attend a lot of influencer events and every Wednesday they had bar culture at Tapas. The owners invited me to bartend for them, which I did once a week, then twice, and it slowly became something I was fond of.

Pavraj Singh

”

product financing, which is unsecured loans or big investments with big returns. We only finance one out of ten applicants, making it very stringent and protective. We make it easier with unsecured financing, no need for collateral.”

That brings to mind the fact that Kenyans borrowed an average of Sh1.6 billion daily in Fuliza loans in the past half year. We are a heavily debt-leaning nation.

“That’s true but we do check your Credit Reference Bureau stats. We all have a credit score, whether you take loans or not. We do not finance those whose risk is very high.” Pavraj speaks as if he is the first person to look around and strip the world of pretence, leaving only the funny and the painful, which he magically makes the same.

“You see, at Aspira, we empower Kenyans by giving them a lot of financial knowledge. Once we have the customer it is up to them to choose, and thus build their credit history.” But not everyone has a smartphone, which is why they have brand ambassadors and field agents who sign you up “manually.”

Product financing is not a new thing in Kenya. On the contrary, with product financing, the company, in this case Aspira, finances the product for you and you pay them back in monthly instalments. It is risk-free for the vendor and gets you your product — sort of like borrowing from Peter to pay Paul. Win-win-win.

What has Fintech taught him about the financial habits of Kenyans? “It’s addictive but all for the right reasons. Start-up businesses don’t have the funding. Money is not easy to come by.” He says that his biggest fear when it comes to money is his bank account reading zero and him not knowing where it went. So far, so good. He defines a successful career as spending

your money smartly. “If I can invest in something that can generate more income for the future, then why not?”

Pavraj gives off the air of someone to whom money is very important. He talks it, breathes it, lives it. So, what’s the first thing he tells people with money who don’t know what to do with it? “I’d tell them to put it in a Sacco. Or put it down as a fixed deposit if the bank is giving you a good rate. If you don’t need the money, save it. I am passionate about mixology and I know what I want to invest in.”

“The more you chase money, the more it’s not going to come. I am telling you to work smart, not hard. If you are not budgeting, then you are going to stress yourself. Invest in something that will give you a return.” Warren Buffet would be proud. Or is it Aliko Dangote? Speaking of, who has had the most impact on his journey with money?

“Myself. I have been working for about nine years now. I started working in Fintech at 19. I have learned the hard way by making my own mistakes,” he says. You quickly tell that he walks around with self-confidence bordering on hubris.

“But if I were to change something for people coming after me it would be to lessen taxes.”

Let’s talk a bit about his other love — mixology. If he was a cocktail, what would he be? “I would be Two Oceans. It’s a gin and rum-based cocktail.” “Rum initially was used in the 1860s as a method of money. It was also used in hair products. Rum was everything. There is more to rum than meets the eye.”

So what’s underneath? “The sugar syrup.”

Atieno Otieno, a former colleague, chimes in. “Look, Pavraj makes me feel like I have not done anything with my life. This guy never sleeps, never complains and always shows up.” I want to tell them not sleeping is not a good thing but she cuts me short. “The one thing I know about Pavraj is that he will challenge you to work harder and smarter. Once he sets his mind to something, you are either with him or in his way. I’d advise you to be with him, or at least not in his way.”

With people like Atieno, who needs cheerleaders? Happiness is like a butterfly: the more you chase it, the faster it runs. Does he ever feel truly happy?

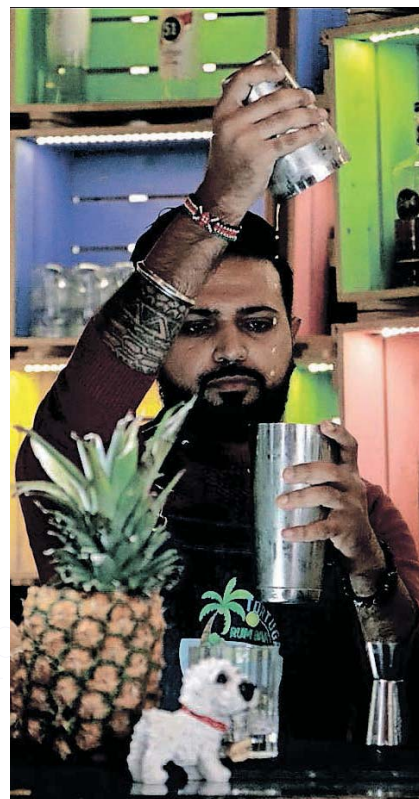
“If you are not happy with yourself you cannot be happy with anything. It’s all about self-acceptance.” And speaking of acceptance, he tells me he struggles with burning calories. He is preparing for the Stanchart marathon later this month. That burger that he was having earlier doesn’t seem like such a good decision after all.

Have things turned out well? “At 27 I thought would be at a desk job. Or a chef. I am at the peak of my career and things have turned out better. There is so much trial and error to do. I can’t wait for the future.”

As Wafula, our waiter, refills his glass, he tells

Sh1.6 billion

What Kenyans borrowed daily on Fuliza in the first half of 2022



Pavraj Singh at work in a Nairobi club.

PHOTO | POOL

me the one thing people keep getting wrong about drinks. “They think about how their drink should always be the strongest cocktail. Or how they can easily replicate it. (He is preparing for his first pool edition. He will be making his three signature cocktails.)

“Mixology has taught me discipline and patience. Being a party person and a consumer of alcohol, you want to maintain your professionalism. If you want the best whiskey sours, you have to go several hundreds of hours before you get your own perfect signature. So far, I have made three.”

But for all the good he is good at, the bad sticks out too. “I am terrible at keeping in touch. I am not consistent.” Even with God?

“If I am in trouble, I know God will be by my side.” When was the last time you failed God? “On my birthday. You see, my birthday was on the same day as the Westgate Attack. I had invited a couple of my friends over to the mall for a party. However, my car jammed. We spent almost three hours trying to get it to work. It is then that my mother called me and asked me to watch the news. That day, I lost two of my closest friends. If there was no God, would I still be here?”

For the first time, I can see that the emperor is naked. He takes a swig of his beer and I ask for my burger. Yes, he still drives the car. Yes, he still thinks about how lucky he is. “Things are going so well for me that I sometimes wonder, what’s the catch? It’s like making a deal with the devil.”

Have you made a deal with the devil? “No.”

My burger arrives. I bite. Tastes like heaven.

eddyashioya@gmail.com

NEW KID ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA BLOCK

PODCASTING: THE NEXT GOLDEN GOOSE

CONTENT CREATION: Though it is growing quickly in Africa, podcasting is still an emerging industry. To consistently produce quality episodes, maintain a revenue stream and build a community is no easy feat

● BY SINDA MATIKO

Picture this. When you are just two months old, your family relocates to the United Kingdom, only for you to return to Kenya by accident, 27 years later. That's right, by accident.

That accident marks the beginning of your journey as a podcaster in a third world country that has yet to fully embrace podcasting. Truth be told, podcasting in Kenya, or Africa for that matter, is not for the faint-hearted, especially when the end game is to commercialise it.

But even with this knowledge at your fingertips, you are not deterred. You believe, hope and soldier on. You invest millions to actualise this dream and suffer terrible losses. You inject hundreds of shillings into the venture again, but there is still no return on investment. Do you quit?

Content Creator Eli Mwendwa can afford to smile now. On this day, as we sit down for an interview, his face gleams with an infectious smile, a facial curve that sets everything straight as American comedian Phyllis Diller once observed. Finally, his podcasting career is shaping up.

It has been three years since his friendship with lawyer Oscar Koome culminated in the emergence of one of the top podcasts in Kenya, *Mantalk.ke*, which boasts an audience of 150,000.

Last month, *Mantalk.ke* emerged winners of the African Podcast and Voice Awards.

"Having lived most of my life in the UK, I came back to Kenya on holiday and fell in love with the country. I decided to set up an import-export business, which

picked up well, and that's when I decided I wouldn't be going back to the UK."

"Parallel to that, I ventured into digital content creation, quite by accident. I didn't have a social life, didn't know many people and wanted to connect with people here. That's how I started creating lifestyle content randomly, but also posting it online for my friends in the UK to see what it is like to be in this part of the world."

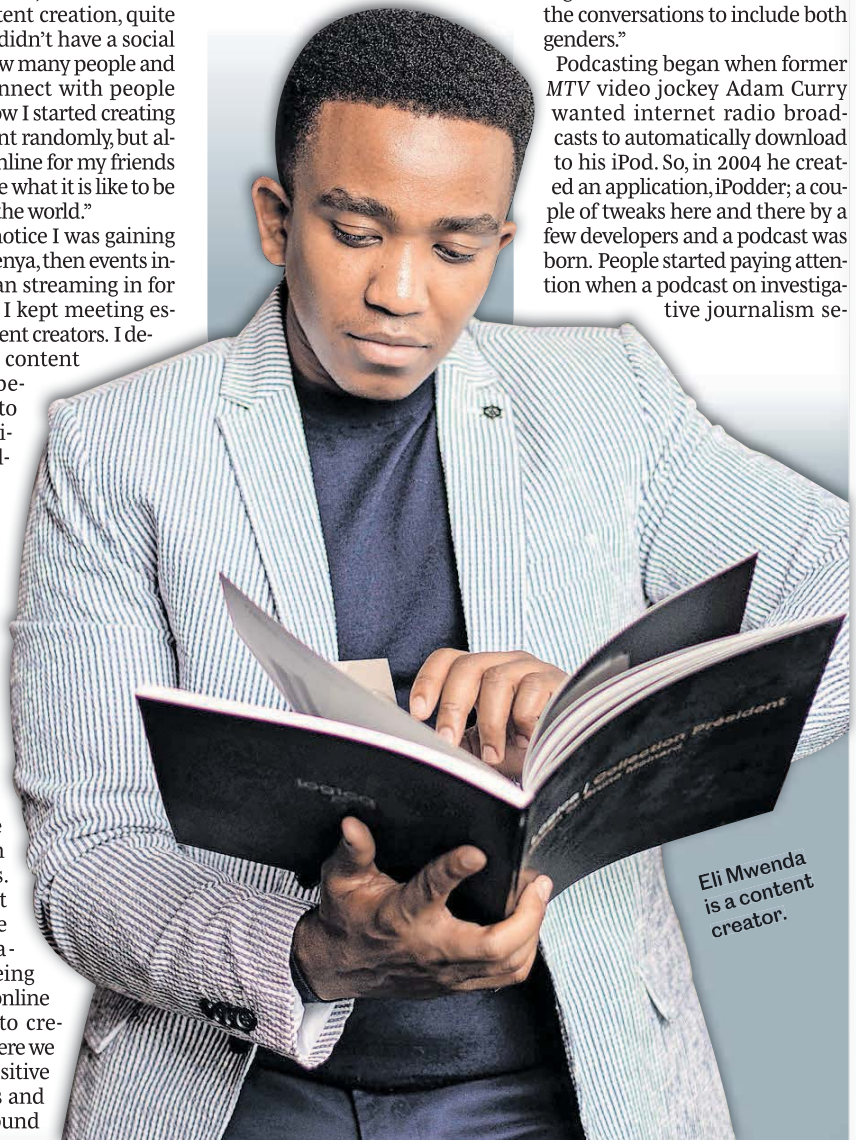
"I began to notice I was gaining followers in Kenya, then events invitations began streaming in for events where I kept meeting established content creators. I decided to be a content creator and began working to build to audience," Mwendwa, recalls.

Having been raised in a country where podcasts are very popular, he felt that this was a space that needed to be explored. He initially did not plan to make money from the podcasts. "I found that there were many negative things being talked about online and wanted to create a space where we could have positive conversations and especially around

men's issues. I was making a new group of friends and realised we were struggling with the same is-

ues offline. So far, it has gone really well. It was aimed at men but now we have lots of women listening in and we have had to elevate the conversations to include both genders."

Podcasting began when former MTV video jockey Adam Curry wanted internet radio broadcasts to automatically download to his iPod. So, in 2004 he created an application, iPodder; a couple of tweaks here and there by a few developers and a podcast was born. People started paying attention when a podcast on investigative journalism se-



Eli Mwendwa is a content creator.

came a worldwide hit. Though still not very popular here, podcasting is beginning to make inroads into the African market, especially in urban set-ups.

“Podcast audiences are largely concentrated in the capital cities of Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, according to our research, but there is an audience growing in other major urban centres in the three countries,” observes Josephine Karianjahi, Co-Director of Africa Podfest, a continental podcast platform. “Mobile phones are the major device used to access podcasts, aligning with Africa’s high mobile internet penetration and usage patterns,” she adds.

Despite its rising popularity, monetisation of podcasts remains a hard nut to crack in this part of the world. Is there money in African podcasting, was a question raised by Africa Podfest in a partnership summit with International Podcast Day.

“Mantalk.ke was self-funded for the first two years. Now we work with brands. Before that, we were always running at a loss, going into our pockets or getting money from elsewhere to fund the project. Since we began, we have forked out approximately Ksh2 million on Mantalk.ke.”

Simple as the set-up may seem, with two guys seated in front of microphones to discuss social issues, cost depends on the quality and format (audio, video or both) of the podcast produced.

“A quality podcast is relatively expensive to produce, but worth it,” Mwendwa explains. “The hosts are Oscar and I, but we outsource the production team. We recently hired our first employee, a social media manager.”

Consistency in quality and audience growth convinced the brands supporting them to pump money into the podcast.

“Mantalk.ke has created a unique ecosystem – an audio-visual podcast that is available on every single platform you can think of – from Apple, YouTube, TikTok and Spotify to Afripods, Castbox, Instagram and Facebook. This way, we are able to compete on all platforms and have a wider mass market, so when a brand comes to us and probably just wants a post on Instagram, we are able to demonstrate that we can offer much more than a post or mention on one platform,” Mwendwa explains.

Mantalk.ke has begun selling advertising space as well.

“As more brands become aware of the value of the podcast and the audience listenership, we are now able to sell advertising space, just like TV. We could sell ad space on YouTube, TikTok or Instagram.”

However, Mwendwa notes that Mantalk.ke is not yet making as much money as it should but he is thrilled with the progress.

“Most podcasts abroad are just audio and have less audience than Mantalk.ke but still make much more money because the industry is developed there. We are not

there yet in terms of making a lot of money from just audio ads so we have had to do audio-visual.”

Homeboyz radio presenter and Deejay Conrad Gray, popularly known as G Money, attests to this. His podcast, *Mics Are Open*, has been doing pretty well since inception in April 2019, bagging over 850,000 plays. Co-hosted by Andy Young and Calvin Wanguku, where they explore entertainment, comedy and life, the podcast has so far made over Sh250,000 in branded merchandise sale of the podcast such as hoodies, flasks and t-shirts.

And like Mwendwa’s Mantalk.ke, they have been fortunate to secure advertisement placements from brands such as Prudential Insurance, Safaricom and Adidas.

But this came with a hefty price. “The little success we are enjoying has come at a cost that includes investing in billboards and digital campaigns to publicise the podcast. Employing a full-time editor and videographer has been key,” G Money says. (Placement of a billboard in Nairobi cost between Ksh100,000 and Ksh150,000, depending on the location).

By December 2020, former Kiss 100 radio presenter Adelle Onyango’s podcast, *Legally Clueless*, launched in March 2019, had amassed over 1.2 million streams. *Legally Clueless* has over 112 episodes, averaging 10,000 plays per week. Just like Mantalk.ke and *Mics are Open*, it runs on multiple platforms including YouTube, Face-

book and IG TV, Apple, Soundcloud, Sticher, Tune-In and Spotify.

In 2020, Adelle managed to commercialise her podcast by syndicating the content with Trace FM, becoming the first podcast to achieve the fete in East Africa.

In addition, with the help of sponsors and partnerships, *Legally Clueless* has been able to push up its growth by extending into residences and tours, with stops in Senegal, Ghana, Ethiopia and Egypt. Even then, Adelle agrees that podcasting in Africa requires a lot of investment and patience to succeed.

“Podcasting is growing quickly in this part of the world, but it is still an emerging industry. To consistently produce quality episodes, maintain a revenue stream and build a community is no easy feat,” she says.

Nonetheless, Mwendwa is optimistic about the future of podcasting in Africa. In May this year, Mantalk.ke represented Kenya at the Sounds of Africa Summit by Spotify in South Africa, where a grant of Sh12 million for podcasters in Africa was launched by the streaming platform.

“We started slightly later than the rest of the world but there is lots of money being poured into podcasting in Africa now. Some organisations even have departments for podcasts. We are heading where America and the UK have been for a while,” he enthuses.

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The SIDE
With John Nyaganyaga
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WOMAN POWER



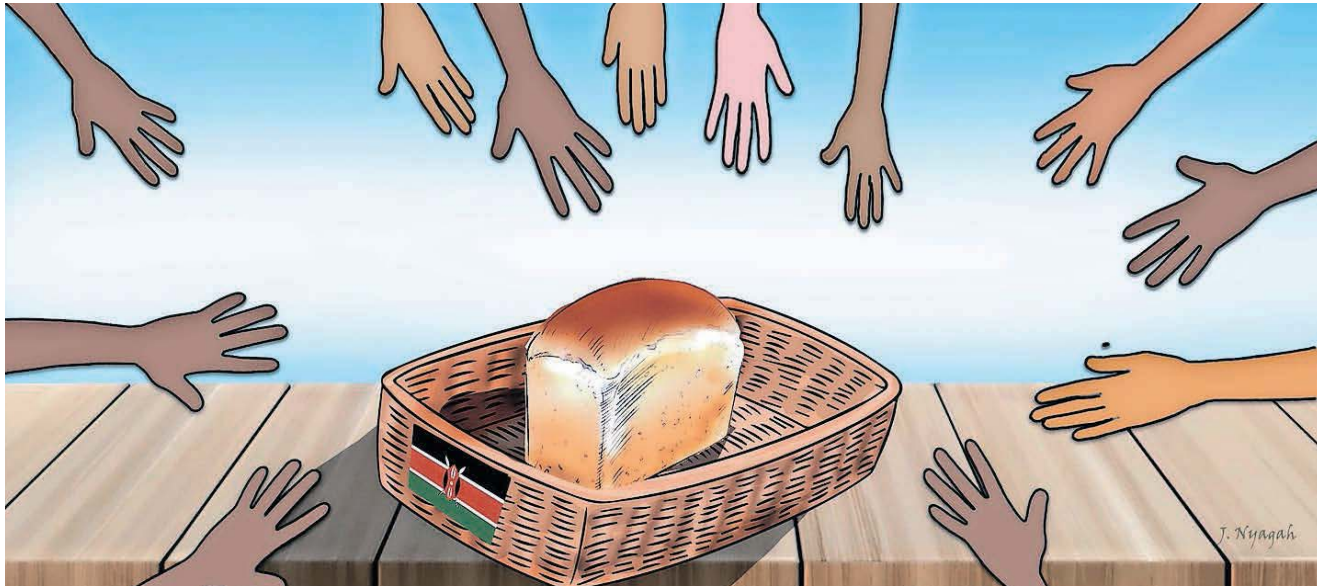
GLADYS WANGA OF HOMA BAY COUNTY IS ONE OF THE SEVEN FEMALE GOVERNORS WHO WERE ELECTED INTO OFFICE IN THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTION. “I COMMIT TO SATISFACTORY SERVICE DELIVERY, AN ALL-INCLUSIVE GOVERNMENT GEARED TOWARD REALISING REMARKABLE MILESTONES IN GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT,” GLADYS WANGA TWEETED AFTER HER SWEARING-IN. ALL THE BEST MADAM GOVERNOR.

STAR OF THE WEEK



KENYAS MARATHON SENSATION RUTH CHEPNG'ETICH RECENTLY WON HER SECOND CONSECUTIVE CHICAGO MARATHON WOMEN'S TITLE WITH AN UNOFFICIAL TIME OF 2 HOURS, 14 MINUTES AND 18 SECONDS. RUTH, 28, WAS ON PACE THROUGH 40 KILOMETRES OF THE 42.1-KILOMETRE RACE, TO BREAK THE WORLD RECORD OF 2:14:04 SET BY COUNTRYWOMAN BRIGID KOSGEI IN 2019, ALSO IN CHICAGO. “I WANTED TO BREAK THE WORLD RECORD ... BUT I'M HAPPY,” SHE SAID. “NEXT TIME, I WILL NOT MISS IT.” WE ARE STILL VERY PROUD OF YOU, CHAMP.

opinion



■ There are fears the President might circumvent the Constitution for personal political profit

Ruto centralising power at State House

Kenyans have seen President Ruto's frenetic domestic action, then off to London and Washington, followed by a run through three regional capitals. Killing the petrol subsidy and lowering fertiliser prices sent the message that a blunt and stark President will make quick and tough decisions.

And by lowering interest on mobile money loans, the President affirmed that he wants to incorporate his triple favourites, namely women vegetable vendors, hand cart-pushers and small businesses in hustler politics and bottom-up economics. But some mistakes the administration has made have aroused fear that President Ruto is rushing to centralise power in himself, pardon and reward the criminally culpable, and circumvent the Constitution for personal political profit.

The dust had not settled on the August General Election before he triggered defections from the rival Azimio coalition, swiftly moving his Kenya Kwanza coalition from minority to majority status. The gambit ensured his coalition won the speakership of the National Assembly.

Before Kenyans could digest this, the President manoeuvred Kenya Kwanza to grab the position of Majority Leader of the National Assembly from under the nose of a shell-shocked Azimio. Parliament in his pocket, he met a hapless holdover Cabinet unsure of his intentions, on its last legs, whose members were scared they were marked for retribution.

The meeting, excluding public participation, performed the last rites on the 2012 ban on importation of genetically modified organisms (GMO). The reversal galvanised civil so-



**KWENDO
OPANGA**

ciety and, most importantly, the oft-wavering Kalonzo Musyoka and ageless Raila Odinga, into action. Civil society adopted a more scientific and global approach, with the politicians going for the jugular, thus declaring open season on the President.

Remember candidate Ruto, a la 2013, promised change and happiness in double quick time. It is why his administration is already attracting a lot more scrutiny on its pledges and delivery than its predecessors under two months into office.

There is a lot more clamour for cheaper fuel, flour and cooking oil or, put another way, lowering of the cost of living, which is currently consigning many a Kenyan household to penury. Add to that the fact that the many opportunistic politicians who defected to Kenya Kwanza in what amounted to last minute job applications are still jobless, bitter and toxic.

But it is President Ruto's and Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua's handling of criminal investigations and of politicians facing criminal cases that takes the biscuit. Candidate Ruto laid into the Director of Criminal Investigations George Kinoti, calling him a failure at a campaign rally. Post-election, Gachagua accused Kinoti of overseeing a corrupt, coercive

and weaponised investigative agency. Nobody was surprised when Kinoti was reported to have resigned. Most believe he was forced out.

Suddenly, Cabinet nominees who faced serious criminal charges had their cases dropped days before their vetting by a parliamentary panel. Ms Aisha Jumwa, the pick for Public Service, faced murder and theft charges, and Mithika Linturi, marked for agriculture, was accused of rape and fraud.

They were rid of these charges in a flash, begging the question: What has befallen Noordin Haji, the Director of Public Prosecutions? He charged them, amid fanfare, presumably because he had enough evidence to sustain their prosecution and secure their conviction. Quietly, he withdrew their cases.

However, by taking the errant politicians out of the courts of law, Haji put the President in the clamorous court of public opinion.

Its verdict is simple and direct.

With friends such as Jumwa and Linturi, among other high-profile criminal suspects, the President does not need enemies.

But ultimately, after the Minority has its say, President Ruto, having constructed a majority, will have his way.

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opinion

■ The Tourism, Wildlife & Heritage nominee was totally clueless

Vetting reduced to a pro-forma charade



MACHARIA
GAITO

Our attentions have been rivetted on television screens over the past week with live proceedings from the National Assembly vetting of President William Ruto's Cabinet nominees.

Public vetting of nominees for Cabinet Secretary and other key officials, including the Judiciary, is an important constitutional requirement in fulfilment of transparency and accountability principles.

It opens up the nominees to scrutiny not just by interlocuters in Parliament, but also by members of the public, who are able to submit their queries and observations on the nominees, and also watch the proceedings on live television.

One big take home from the vetting is that it has been reduced to a pro-forma charade far removed from the purpose for which the process was instituted. I can bet my last penny that all the nominees will be cleared for formal appointment irrespective of clear unsuitability for high public office.

We saw some with suspect academic credentials and intellectual vacuity that would make them ineligible for minor clerical jobs, but they will soon be at the centre of policy making and execution.

There were those who are clear candidates for prison cells or otherwise in complete violation of ethical requirements and code of conduct for public office.

Some could also have been called out for clear conflict of interest in known business engagements with their assigned dockets. But they, too, will pass the vetting with flying colours.

All those miscreants will soon be earning obscene salaries and perks from our money. They will fly the national pendant on their official limousines, drive around with entire battalions of goons bullying other motorists off the road with chase cars exhibiting all the bells and whistles, in and complete disregard for traffic etiquette.

What matters in the vetting ritual is not the serious questions that may be posed of the nominees, but partisan politics.

National Assembly Speaker Moses Wamang'ula, Deputy Speaker Gladys Boss Shollei, Majority Leader Kimani Ichungwa and their Kenya Kwanza troops were more interested in being advocates and cheerleaders for the

nominees rather than subjecting them to serious scrutiny.

The Azimio coalition opposition troops, led by Minority Leader Opiyo Wandayi and Whip Junet Mohammed, tried gamely to interrogate the nominees, but theirs were lame efforts clearly hampered by lack of background information and unwillingness or inability to ask the tough questions or follow up on inconsistencies in replies and documentation submitted.

About the only thing that came to catch much attention during the vetting was the worth of nominees, all of them multi-millionaires amid a sprinkling of billionaires, which served to expose the lie of a hustler government.

There were some nominees who impressed with detailed knowledge of their dockets and clear ideas of what they want to do. Kipchumba Murkomen in Roads, Transport and Public Works and Davis Chirchir in Energy and Petroleum, particularly, stood out.

Both are in the strategic ministries that Kenyans usually refer to as 'lucrative' because of the huge budgets and opportunities to skim plenty off the top as demonstrated under previous regimes.

For some reason it has also been the practice that such ministries have historically been entrusted to loyal 'home boys'.

We will not dwell on the reasons whereof, but suffice to conclude that in demonstrating such clarity on what they want to do in their respective dockets, Murkomen and Chirchir also raised red flags on risks that they may try to micromanage, riding roughshod over existing governance structures and the institutions charged with policy and implementation.

About the only thing that came to catch much attention during the vetting was the worth of nominees, all of them multi-millionaires amid a sprinkling of billionaires, which served to expose the lie of a hustler government. There were some nominees who impressed with detailed knowledge of their dockets and clear ideas of what they want to do. Kipchumba Murkomen in Roads, Transport & Public Works and Davis Chirchir in Energy & Petroleum particularly stood out.

The other side of the coin from the bright whizzkids was exemplified in the nominee for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage, Peninah Malonza. To put to most charitably, she was totally clueless. She demonstrated grossly inadequate knowledge of a critical docket that used to be Kenya's top foreign exchange earner. It was also painfully evident that she is a very poor communicator and incapable of thinking on her feet.

No worry, she will still pass muster despite the glaring deficiencies, for ultimately it is will not be about competence and suitability for office, but the herd voting which will dictate.

And that is why we must give serious thought to the process witnessed from the National Assembly. If it does not serve the purpose envisaged by drafters of the Constitution, then we might as well do away with vetting and give the President a free hand to appoint whoever he wishes.

The other alternative would be to de-politicise vetting by removing the process from Parliament and entrusting it to a truly independent body that is not beholden to the President or to any political formation, whether government or opposition.

Finally, there is one little detail from the proceedings that cannot pass without mention: almost every nominee claimed to be from poor backgrounds, to have gone to school barefoot, suffered hunger and deprivation in childhood and to have constantly been out of school for lack of fees. Even multi-millionaires must concoct fictional hustler narratives to justify their existence in the Kenya Kwanza regime.

Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua's loose tongue is at it again. Last week he provoked another storm with his declaration that court orders on evictions, for instance, will not be enforced without concurrence of the local security committee.

Maybe that is important for maintenance of law and order, but the DP by the same token offered justification for the National Security Committee's illegal and foolish attempt to 'moderate' the outcome of the presidential election results that brought the present government to power. Logic.

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kenya lens

■ SEPARATION OF POWERS

MINISTERS IN PARLIAMENT

President Ruto will be banking on MPs to introduce amendments to the Standing Orders to allow Cabinet Secretaries to attend Parliament to communicate the position of the government as and when the need arises

BY HAMMERTON MALOBA

The desire expressed in President William Ruto's election campaign manifesto for amendments to the Parliamentary Standing Orders so that Cabinet Secretaries be required to appear for 'grilling' on the Floor of the House could turn out to be a political hot potato. Similar efforts in 2014 were shot down when then President Uhuru Kenyatta refused to give assent on grounds that they would offend the constitutional principle of separation of powers. The same issues will arise if the Kenya Kwanza government revisits the proposal, and further questions could also be raised about Ruto's commitment and respect for the basic principles.

Ruto, for instance, has indicated that ways will be found to allow MPs access to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), disbursement that the courts have declared unconstitutional because members of the Legislative branch cannot be in direct charge of expenditure they are supposed to oversee. Former President Uhuru Kenyatta's Jubilee government, which Ruto served as Deputy President, tried to get around the legal strictures by re-christening CDF as the National Government Constituency Development Fund, but the courts were not persuaded that anything had changed.

National Assembly Speaker Moses Wamang'ula has meanwhile been fronting defiance of a move by the Salaries and Remuneration Commission to curtail the allowance binges by which MPs manage to multiply their emoluments.

There is no indication that Ruto, who has called for belt-tightening and spending cuts all round in the midst of a budgetary crisis, is prepared to rein in the MPs. Instead, he is signalling support for creation of yet another fund for Members of the Senate, supposedly to be used in overseeing County government expenditure.

In the last government, Ruto led opposition to the Building Bridges Initiative constitutional amendments sponsored by President Kenya and Opposition leader Raila Odinga. The main grounds for rejecting the proposals included their being used to create room for political deal-making by bringing back the office of Prime Minister.

BBI was defeated, but Ruto still cut his own deals by creating the docket of Prime Cabinet Secretary within the Presidency for his Kenya Kwanza coalition partner Musalia Mudavadi. Questions have been raised about the legal-

ity of the office for the Constitution recognises only the President and the Deputy President within the Executive Office of the President.

Protests were mooted, however, because Opposition leader Odinga had also proposed the office of Chief Cabinet Secretary for his own coalition partner, Kalonzo Musyoka.

The BBI Ruto rejected had also proposed a system where Cabinet Secretaries could be drawn from sitting parliamentarians as was the case under the pre-2010 Constitution, again offending the separation of powers principle. Will CSs attend parliamentary sessions to answer questions? On June 11, 2014 and August 28, 2014, MPs adopted amendments to provide for CSs to report to the House, converting Parliament into a Committee on General Oversight to receive answers to questions. These amendments were short-lived, however, as President Kenyatta wrote to Parliament reminding it of the new constitutional

order that is based on the doctrine of separation of powers as enshrined in Article 153(3).

He said the new Standing Orders would upset the delicate balances between the executive and the legislative branches of government. The President then implored Parliament to stay implementation of the new Standing Orders and consider revision that emphasised the principle of separation of powers.

With that, the operations of the Committee on General Oversight were suspended. Parliament's saving grace was an addendum to the Standing Orders which provided an avenue for CSs to appear before House committees to respond to questions. It is through this arrangement that CSs appeared before the various House committees. According to President Ruto, time is ripe for a different approach.

For Parliament to properly function to check the Executive, it must be given powers to summon CSs to be "grilled" on the floor of the House. In doing this, the President will be banking on MPs to introduce amendments to the Standing Orders to allow CSs to attend Parliament to communicate the position of government as and when need arises.

The elephant in the room, however, would be how to achieve the delicate balance between the need for a united government amid constitutional demands for separation of powers between the Executive and Parliament. It is highly likely that MPs will re-introduce the amendments suspended by the 11th Parliament with a few modifications.

Amendments to the Standing Orders could be initiated either through the Procedure and House Rules Committee or by an individual member with the support of at least 50 members. In both instances, the Procedure and House Rules Committee considers the written request of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders. Such a request contains the text and justification of the proposed amendment, which must contain the name and signatures of members supporting the request. The request for amendment is lodged with the Speaker who, upon being satisfied that the request meets the aforesaid requirements, forwards the request to the Procedure and House Rules Committee for consideration. The Procedure and House Rules Committee has 21 days to consider the request and table its report in the House.



Cabinet Secretary nominee for the Ministry of Environment and Forestry Roselinda Soipan Tuya at Serena Hotel on October 1.

Mr Maloba is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya

kenya lens

■ WHEN FAME SUPERCEDES REALITY

● BY MAGESHA NGWIRI

For a very long time in this country's history as an independent nation, all roads were said to lead to Gatundu. This is simply because Kenya's first president, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, hailed from this division in Kiambu District, and anybody who desired any kind of audience, formal or informal, had to travel to his rural home when he was not on official duty in Nairobi. For reasons that have never been understood, he used to commute daily between State House and Ichaweri village, which is some 32 kilometres away from Nairobi.

Indeed, from 1964 or thereabouts, it was fun for school-children to line up on Kenyatta Road waiting for their President to go home in the evening escorted by blaring sirens and flashing lights. He would acknowledge their adulation with a wave of the famous fly-whisk, and then he would be gone. The chaps who waited in line to cheer are now respectable elders, but they would be hard-pressed to say what they were celebrating. Today, very few can say off-head what Mzee Kenyatta did for them when he was both their MP and President for all those years.

In the colonial times, Kiambu County at large was dominated by vast tea and coffee plantations owned by white settlers.

Apparently, many of the farmers became jittery at the onset of Independence, sold off their plantations, and left. That is why there are no longer any of them left in Gatundu South and North constituencies. It is rumoured that some of the farmers were coerced into selling their land but that is not easy to prove. Whatever the case, in less than five years, most of those plantations were in the hands of a few wealthy Kenyans while the lot of ordinary citizens remained unchanged.

Moreover, Mzee Kenyatta, unlike his successor President Moi, was not keen on encouraging the building of many primary or secondary schools. But to be fair, it emerges that he wanted a university built at Mutomo Village, a kilometre away from his home. Unfortunately, due to the recalcitrance of the community leaders, it didn't happen, and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology (JKUAT), was instead built at Juja. Now it turns out that the new Mama Ngina University is being built on the site. Since history tends to repeat itself, this move, too, is being contested in court by folks who do not want to cede their land.

Gatundu is a study in contradictions, for its fame far supersedes the reality. The two constituencies (now sub-counties in Kiambu) have no extraordinary development to boast about. They may, indeed, not be the poorest, for they belong to the second richest county in Kenya, but you cannot tell, judging from the fact that the gap between the very rich and the very poor seems to be widening inexorably.

With roughly 700,000 inhabitants, Gatundu is a highly-density population area, and the majority own very small parcels of land. At best,

GATUNDU: A STUDY IN CONTRADICTIONS

It is not as though the constituency that has produced two presidents — father and son 34 years apart — is inhabited by lazy folk; it is just that they have lacked leadership



Mzee Jomo Kenyatta

they rely on rain-fed agriculture to grow just enough for subsistence.

However, very few area leaders, ranging from the first President, their MCAs, MPs, governors to the fourth President, have advised them how to maximise on those small portions (the average is 0.7 acres) to make a decent living. It is not as though the constituency that has produced two presidents — father and son, 34 years apart — is inhabited by lazy folk; it is just that they have lacked leadership. There are no agro-processing factories of any description though the farmers grow enough bananas, pineapples, avocados and macadamia to sustain such enterprises with year-long supplies.

The Gatundu people who voted whole-heartedly for the new government are fervently hoping that there will be a change in their fortunes. According to one community leader, they did not vote for President William Ruto because they hated Mr Raila Odinga; they were voting against President Uhuru Kenyatta because he had neglected them for so long, and

then had the effrontery to tell them to vote for Raila.

This revolt has had a long history. When in 1997, Mr Kenyatta first ran for the Gatundu South MP seat, he was defeated by a little-known aspirant owing to a particularly odious trick played on him by his detractors. He became MP between 2002 and 2013, but it may as well have not mattered because his representation was not marked by any particular development project associated with him. Indeed, he habitually annoyed many for delegating the more tiresome duties of an MP to members of his family to represent him.

The second mistake he made, this time as President, was to shun counsel from community leaders, who would have told him what was cooking on the ground. If he had kept away as MP, as President he disappeared altogether and became inaccessible. As a result he failed to realise the people were moving away from him and pinning their hopes on someone who was promising change. As a man who is knowledgeable in many things, he should have remembered that the saying "charity begins at home" may be hackneyed, but it is true all the same.

The final blow was the Karimenu II dam that he commissioned just eight days before the end of his tenure. The Sh24 billion dam, located in Gatundu North should, by right, supply water to the constituents, but it turns out that the water is meant for towns on the pipeline's path, namely Juja, Ruiru, the Kenyatta family's Brookside Dairy Ltd, and on to the same family's Northlands City That, of course, did not sit well with Gatundu residents, who have for long gone without clean piped water.

As for those fellow countrymen who were told there is an office built by Jomo and renovated by Uhuru where money is dished out regularly to Gatundu residents, it is not true.

The majority of the area citizens are poor folks who depend on the sweat of their brows to survive, which is why the hustler message resonated so well with them. The result is that this final defeat may very well sound the death-knell for the Kenyatta family's dominance in Gatundu politics. But then again, you never know in politics.

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SCIENCE & TECH

Webb telescope solves dusty star mystery

It is one of the most striking images we have yet seen from the new super space telescope, James Webb. Many people were rather puzzled by it when it first popped up on social media late in August, but astronomers in the know were delighted with the insights they could draw. The picture shows WR 140. It is a double star system, or a binary, some 5,000 light-years from Earth. Those rings are dust shells that extend outwards over 10 trillion km. That is a distance that is hard to comprehend. Put another way, it is 70,000 times the distance between Earth and our Sun.

“Previous observations of WR 140 revealed the presence of up to three shells. To see 17 like this is amazing, and shows the power of James Webb,” said Dr Olivia Jones from the UK Astronomy Technology Centre in Edinburgh, which helped to build the telescope. The WR in the name of the system refers to “Wolf-Rayet”. It is a type of star, a big one that’s reaching the end of its life.

Wolf-Rayets are unwieldy. They billow huge gaseous winds into space. This one likely started out as big as its companion, an O-type star which is 30 times the mass of our Sun. The Wolf-Rayet, however, is probably now only 10 solar masses. But it is the binary’s properties and behaviour that explain the production of the dust shells. These are pumped out as the two objects come close together in their eight-year orbit around each other.

Their winds compress to create dust particles. Interestingly, this dust production is at its greatest when the two stars move towards and away from each other, not at closest approach. This explains the slight unevenness in the bull’s-eye pattern, but the angle at which Webb is viewing the scene also plays its part. Astronomers are fascinated by how stable the shells are. “We’re looking at over a century of dust production from this system,” said Dr Ryan Lau from the US National Science Foundation’s NOIRLab.

SOLAR HEADPHONES THE NEXT MUST-HAVE



LONDON

If you are the type of person who is forever forgetting to charge your wireless headphones, help may finally be on hand.

It comes as the first commercially available solar-powered headphones are now on sale. The models, by Swedish firm Urbanista and German sports giant Adidas, both have solar panels built into their headbands.

In each case the flexible panels are made by another Swedish company, Exeger, which has spent the past decade working to make them light, thin and powerful enough to do the job.

Exeger’s boss Giovanni Fili says it is both a matter of convenience and, more importantly, doing the right thing environmentally.

“Charging - everyone hates it,” he says. “But every time you don’t charge [using mains electricity] it is a good thing for the world.

“The new generation of young adults expect to be offered tools to do good (for the environment), and that is what we are offering.”

Exeger’s solar panels are called Powerfoyle, and they are just 1.3mm thick. The technology is based around strips of titanium dioxide covered in a natural dye. In very simple terms, the dye absorbs photons from light, which are then converted into electrons. Panels of the same size in full sunshine, the titanium dioxide panels are, in addition to being significantly thinner, much easier and cheaper to produce.

The solar-powered headphones still have a built-in battery that can power up to 80 hours of playback time. It is this that the Powerfoyle strip charges. Fili says that currently the tech can create one hour’s worth of power “from just 20 minutes of English or Swedish summer sunshine”.

Yet the panels can also create some power from artificial light, such as indoor lighting, so the idea is that the headphones are always charging unless it is the dead of night. And the headphones also still have a power socket if back-up power is required after heavy usage.

Fili adds that solar panels are unlikely to be added to mobile

phones any time soon, because so many of us keep our handset in a pocket, and therefore it doesn’t have access to light. Instead he envisages the panels being fitted to people’s clothing and bags, and phones to be charged from these.

Finnish company Planno is already making fabrics that have built-in solar panelling.

The firm is led by Elina Ilén, who is also a professor at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia’s Department of Textile and Paper Engineering, and a leading expert on wearable textile electronics.

Rather than producing clothing that can charge your mobile phone, the firm instead focuses on washable garments with built-in, solar-powered sensors. These can monitor various aspects of the wearer’s health, such as heart rate, temperature, posture, sleep quality and body fat levels.

“Although these solar cells do produce enough energy to power wearable devices, placing a solar cell behind a textile will never have the same efficiency of harvesting energy as a solar cell in direct sunlight,” says Ilén.

africa lens

■ ETHIOPIA CIVIL WAR: HYENAS SCAVENGE ON CORPSES



Ethiopian refugees who fled the fighting in the Tigray region transport jerrycans of water at Umm Rakuba camp in eastern Sudan's Gedaref State on August 11, 2021.

TIGRAY'S LIVING HELL

The region was once a tourist attraction, with visitors drawn to its rock-hewn churches, Muslim shrines and ancient scripts in the Ge'ez language. Now the vast land is the site of a vicious war, as the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies on the one side, and the army of the Tigray People's Liberation Front on the other, fight for control in a region that has long been seen as the key to power in Ethiopia — or what was historically part of Abyssinia

● ADDIS ABABA

Hyenias scavenging on the corpses of villagers, cities and towns hit in air strikes, elderly men and young women conscripted into armies — these are the horrific accounts emerging from a war that has left tens, if not hundreds, of thousands dead in Ethiopia's historic region of Tigray.

The region was once a tourist attraction, with visitors drawn to its rock-hewn churches, Muslim shrines and ancient scripts in the Ge'ez language. Now Tigray is the site of a vicious war, as the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies on the one side, and the army of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on the other, fight

for control in a region that has long been seen as the key to power in Ethiopia — or what was historically part of Abyssinia.

It has been under a blockade for 17 months — with no banking, telephone or internet services, and no media access.

Over the last two years, the fortunes of the two sides have constantly changed on the battlefield, with Ethiopian and Eritrean forces capturing the Tigray capital, Mekelle, in November 2020 after the TPLF was accused of launching a rebellion; the Tigrayans launching a counter-offensive in the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions, bringing them close to the federal capital, Addis Ababa, about a year later; the Ethiopian and Eritrean forc-

es regaining territory in Tigray — including the key city of Shire — in the latest round of fighting, raising the prospect of them trying to capture Mekelle once more. "There are at least 500,000 Eritrean and Ethiopian federal troops in active combat, plus 200,000 from the Tigrayan side," said Alex de Waal, the executive director of the US-based World Peace Foundation.

He added that after more than 50 days of non-stop fighting, this week the Tigrayan defence lines around Shire could no longer hold out because of a lack of ammunition.

"It's a big setback for the Tigrayans. It leaves

...Continued on Page 26

africa lens

Continued from Page 25

civilians exposed to massacre, rape and starvation,” de Waal said, though the Ethiopian government has promised aid and the restoration of services in Shire and other areas under its control. Shire reflects the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, with an aid worker saying that around 600,000 civilians were taking refuge in the city and its surrounding areas after earlier fleeing war-hit areas. “More than 120,000 were out in the open, sleeping under trees and bushes,” he said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Almost all humanitarian workers withdrew from Shire last week after it came under ferocious bombardment from Ethiopian forces.

Thousands of residents are also fleeing Shire amid fears that they could be subjected to atrocities — similar to those in other areas that fell under the control of Ethiopian and Eritrean troops. “Four witnesses reported that in the village of Shimblina in September, 46 people were rounded up and summarily executed. Other villagers found their bodies lying mixed with domestic animals, which had also been killed,” the aid worker said.

“Hyenas had eaten a few of the bodies, and they could be identified only by the remains of their clothing. The witnesses said they had no time to bury the bodies, and the hyenas must have finished them by now,” he added.

What made the atrocity stand out, he said, was the fact that most of the victims came from the small Kunama ethnic group, which has not been involved in the conflict.

“Both sides are losing soldiers, and when they come into a village they take out their anger on locals,” the aid worker added.

Tigrayan forces faced similar accusations, including of rape, extra-judicial killings and looting, during their advances into Amhara and Afar before being pushed back into Tigray. The region has a population of around seven million, a small number in a country with a pop-

Hyenas pick over the dead of Tigray war

ulation of more than 100 million. Apart from atrocities, all the armies have been accused of forcibly recruiting civilians to fight, and of using the “human wave” tactic to gain ground.

“People are drafted into the armies and, after only a few weeks of training, they are sent in large numbers through mined areas towards the trenches of the enemy,” said UK-based Horn of Africa analyst Abdurahman Sayed.

“The enemy opens fire and kills many of them, but they keep coming in waves until the enemy runs out of ammunition and they occupy their trenches. It is the old way of warfare. It was first used by the king of Abyssinia to defeat the Italian invaders in the 1890s. Despite their superior firepower, the Italians were overwhelmed by the sheer number of people who confronted them.” Abdurahman said that this tactic leads to massive casualties, with his estimate being that between 700,000 and 800,000 people have already lost their lives in almost two years of fighting.

“This is the most brutal war in the history of Ethiopia,” he added. Though US-based Horn of Africa analyst Faisal Roble disputed that the Tigrayans used human wave attacks, his estimate of the death toll was not very different.

“In the first two phases of the war, around 500,000 died in combat, and 100,000 have probably died in this third phase,” he said.

Roble added that the Tigrayan army was well trained, with “the heart” to fight, but the

Ethiopian army had two advantages: numbers and airpower.

“A general who is now an ambassador said they could enlist one million young men every year, and they have fighter jets and Turkish drones that have proved very effective. The Tigrayans have no air force.” The command of the Ethiopian air force had moved to Eritrea’s capital, Asmara, he explained, from where fighter jets were taking off as the city was much closer to Tigray than their usual base in Bishoftu in central Ethiopia. “The drones are still leaving from Bishoftu,” Roble said.

Eritrea intervened in the conflict as the TPLF is its sworn enemy. The TPLF dominated a coalition government in Ethiopia until current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed rose to power in 2018. Under the TPLF, Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a border war which claimed the lives of about 80,000 people. An international tribunal later ruled that Ethiopia should hand over territory to Eritrea, but the TPLF-controlled government failed to do so.

Eritrea regained the territory soon after the latest war started in November 2020, and its critics say that President Isaias Afwerki is determined to help Mr Abiy finish off the TPLF so that it does not threaten his nation again.

“Eritrea’s concern is that the TPLF wants to either regain power in Ethiopia, or it wants a satellite government in Asmara that will give it access to the Red Sea because Tigray is a landlocked, impoverished region,” Mr Abdurahman said.

As the war in Tigray escalated in recent weeks, Eritrea’s government intensified its military mobilisation and hunted down draft dodgers across the country, multiple sources in Eritrea said. In one instance in September, Eritrean troops raided a church in the southern town of Akurur, detaining a priest, young worshippers and choir members who had not heeded the military call-up, the sources said.

Prof de Waal said the call-up showed that Mr Isaias was “not taking any chances”, but he has not deployed conscripts to Tigray in large numbers. “Eritrea has units in Tigray, but most of the fighting is being done by Ethiopian forces. What Isaias is doing is running the war because he believes he can show Abiy how to win, but the Tigrayans will fight, even if it means with knives and stones because it is a matter of life and death for them,” he said.

According to Abdurahman, the war is being fought on four to six fronts, with tens of thousands of Ethiopian and Eritrean troops stationed near the Tigray town of Adigrat.

“They are ready to launch an attack on Adigrat and Mekelle,” he said. Sources on the battlefield told the BBC that the two armies were already advancing from Shire towards the historic city of Aksum, as well as Adwa and Adigrat, in an operation that has seen them move from west to east. While foreign powers have been urging the two sides to resolve the conflict peacefully, Abdurahman said this was unlikely to happen. “Historically, the ruling classes of Abyssinia, and now Ethiopia, always fought their way to power.”

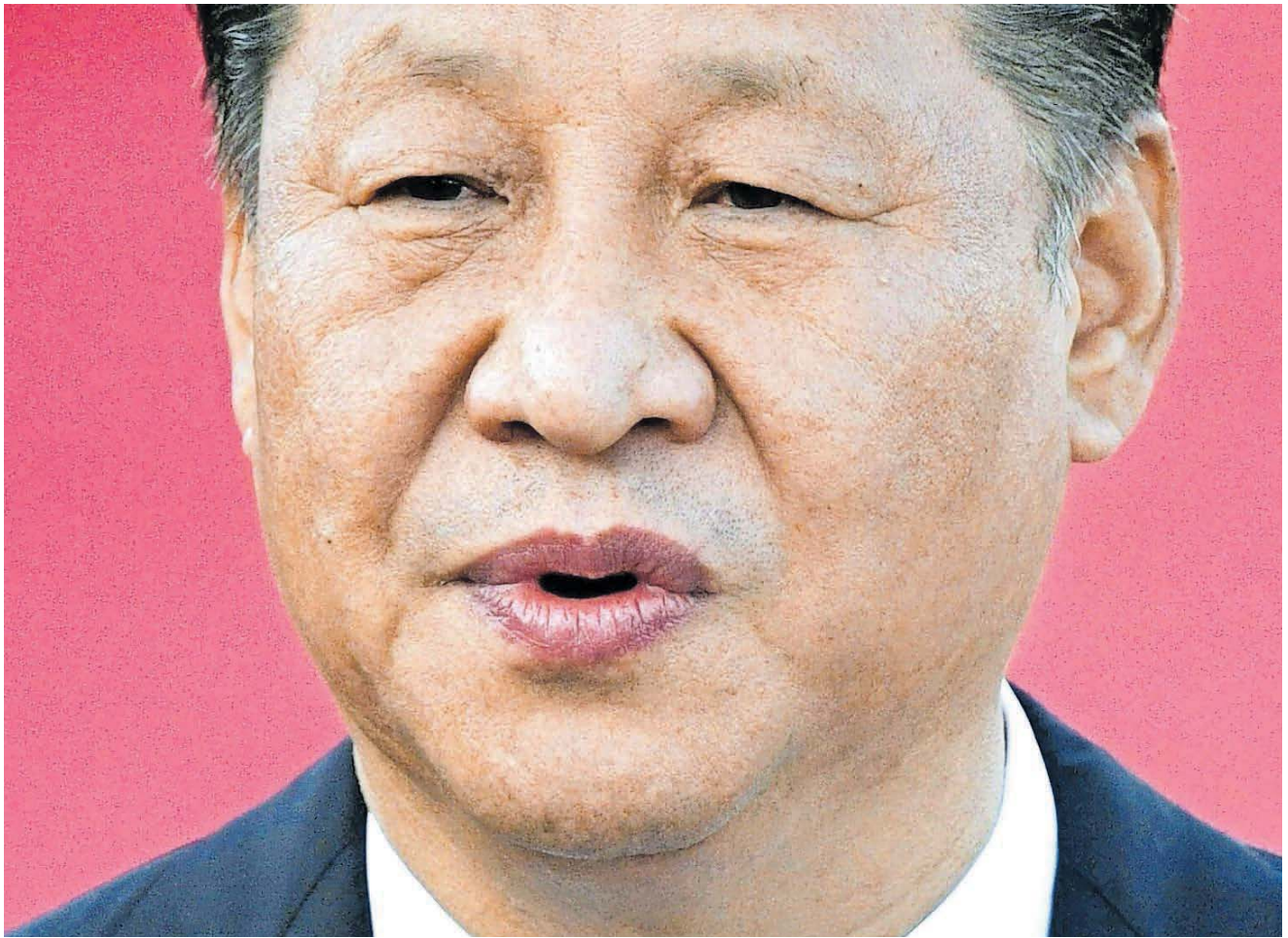


Amhara Fano militia fighter Eshete Zewudru (right) kisses a cross held by an Ethiopian Orthodox priest at a rock-hewn church in Lalibela on December 7, 2021.

global lens

■ HOW HE MADE HIMSELF UNCHALLENGEABLE

THE RISE OF XI JINPING



Two years after he came to power, authorities confirmed the arrest of a “tiger”, former domestic security chief Zhou Yongkang, for corruption. The investigation sent political shockwaves as it shattered the unspoken rule that members of the Politburo Standing Committee would not be subject to criminal punishment

● BEIJING

Few foresaw that Xi Jinping would become the most assertive Chinese leader in decades — he is now set for a third term in power.

A decade ago, little was known about Xi — apart from the fact that he was a “princeling” because his father was one of the country’s revolutionary leaders. His lineage helped him win the support of party elders, which was crucial to ascending power within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as these leaders of-

ten wielded political influence even after retirement. “Before his elevation, Xi Jinping was regarded as someone who could compromise with everyone,” said Joseph Fewsmith, an expert in Chinese elite politics at Boston University. But 10 years on, Xi’s authority appears to be unquestionable, and his power unrivalled. How did that happen?

The barrel of a gun

Mao Zedong, the founding father of Communist China, once famously said: “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”

After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Mao ensured it was the party, not the state, which controlled the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Since then, the CCP leader has also been Central Military Commission (CMC) chairman.

Xi was luckier than his predecessor, Hu Jintao, because he became the CMC chairman instantly — and wasted no time in weeding out opposition within the armed forces. The most shocking episode came in 2014 and 2015,

Continued on Page 28

global lens

How Xi crushed rivals in Communist Party

Continued from Page 27

when former CMC Vice-Chairman Xu Caihou and former PLA General Guo Boxiong were accused of corruption.

“They were already retired when the axe fell, but Xi’s ability to target them reduced the former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin’s lingering influence in the PLA,” said Joel Wuthnow, a senior fellow at the Pentagon-funded National Defense University.

“It also sent a powerful signal to current serving military officers that no one who resists Xi’s control is immune from harm,” he added.

In 2015, Xi also overhauled the structure of the military. He abolished the four military headquarters — staff, politics, logistics and armaments — and replaced them with 15 smaller agencies. The new structure allows the CMC to issue orders directly to the various branches of the military — extending as far as even financial auditors, who now have to report directly to the CMC, adds Mr Wuthnow. Above all this is the insistence upon absolute loyalty to Xi — something that is still being reiterated.

Last month the *People’s Liberation Army Daily*, the country’s official military newspaper, published an article emphasising that the CMC is in overall command. “The message helps counteract any tendency that might develop in the military to build loyalty towards senior PLA leaders who might someday oppose Xi,” said Timothy Heath, a senior international defence researcher at US think tank RAND corporation.

“Loyalty to the party means the PLA is expected to carry out any and all orders to keep the party, and Xi in particular, in power.”

Loyalty comes first

After securing the gun barrel, it is essential to bring the knife — the internal security apparatus — under total control. Two years after Xi came to power, authorities confirmed the arrest of a “tiger”, former domestic security chief Zhou Yongkang, for corruption. He was closely linked with Bo Xi-



Supporters wave national flags and Communist Party flags as they watch the opening session of the 20th Chinese Communist Party Congress in Huaibei, in China’s eastern Anhui province, on October 16. President Xi Jinping hailed China’s rise as a global power and demanded unity around his leadership.

lai, another “princeling” who was a rival of Xi’s.

The investigation sent political shockwaves as it shattered the unspoken rule that members of the Politburo Standing Committee, the most powerful decision-making body, would not be subject to criminal punishment. “Xi Jinping turned out to be a ruthlessly brilliant politician who patiently rose through the system before seizing his moment to rule,” said Neil Thomas, a senior China analyst of Eurasia Group.

“The communist party elders who supported Xi’s rise were likely surprised by the speed and scale of his power grab.” Observers say Xi’s signature anti-corruption campaign is also used to remove his political rivals and other factions within the party.

In the past decade, more than 4.7 million people have been investigated by anti-corruption authorities. “In the last two years, Xi further purged career security officials who supported his rise to power in the first place,” said Victor Shih, a political scientist at University of California, San Diego. “Now the security agencies are run almost exclusively by officials who shared a past history with Xi and who are presumably trusted by him.”

Xi has also stacked his loyalists at important regional posts, such as the party secretaries of key cit-

ies like Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing. These positions are important because they are responsible for “interpreting and implementing central directives in localities with millions of people”, said Thomas. At least 24 of the 31 provincial-level party secretaries are political associates of Xi, having previously known his family, studied with him, worked under him, or worked for one of his close allies, Thomas says.

Meanwhile, nearly all of the 281 standing committee members in provincial standing committees were promoted by Xi, according to data compiled by Wu Guoguang, a politics professor at the University of Victoria in Canada.

Crafting a personal brand

In 2018, “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” was enshrined in China’s constitution. It may sound like a mouthful, but having an ideology named after him was something that cemented Xi’s legacy.

Before Xi, only Chairman Mao achieved this. Even Deng Xiaoping, known as the architect of China’s modernisation, only had a “theory” under his name, while Xi’s immediate predecessors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, did not have any thought or theories attached to their names. PIts de-

batable what exactly Xi Jinping Thought means, but that’s not the point, analysts say — it’s a power move. “Xi’s thought is aimed primarily at strengthening Xi’s own legitimacy and power above anyone else in the CCP and the country.”

It is part of a new personality cult that links up Xi not only to Mao but to the most glorious and successful Chinese emperors of yesteryear,” says Jean-Pierre Cabestan, an emeritus professor of political science at Hong Kong Baptist University.

Dozens of universities and institutions, including the prestigious Peking University and Tsinghua University, have set up research centres under Mr Xi’s names, according to Hong Kong newspaper *Ming Pao*. In August, the Ministry of Education unveiled a plan to promote Xi Jinping Thought in the national curriculum.

In 2019, a mobile app called *Xuexi Qiangguo* — literally translated into “Learn from Xi, Strengthen the Country” — that includes quizzes on Xi Jinping Thought was launched. Xi believes “he has the correct ideology, and everybody must accept it,” says Andrew Nathan, a political science professor at Columbia University. “Whenever Mao took a policy position, everybody else had to fall in line, and that is also true of Xi.”

global lens

■ HER EXIT SETS OFF ANOTHER TORY LEADERSHIP RACE

● LONDON

Liz Truss's resignation as British prime minister this week triggered the second Tory leadership election in four months.

Truss said her successor would be elected by next week after a rebellion by Tory MPs forced her to quit. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said he would not run in the contest but other senior Tories are considering bids.

Tory MPs revolted against Truss after a series of U-turns on her economic plan sapped her of authority.

In a brief speech outside Downing Street, Truss said the Conservative Party had elected her on a mandate to cut taxes and boost economic growth.

But given the situation, Truss said: "I recognise that I cannot deliver the mandate on which I was elected by the Conservative Party."

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and other opposition parties called for an immediate general election following Ms Truss's resignation speech.

Truss said she would remain in post until a successor formally takes over as party leader and is appointed prime minister by King Charles III. Mr Hunt, who was appointed chancellor last week, has said he will not stand in the leadership contest to be the next prime minister, but none of the candidates who stood against Truss in the previous contest have indicated whether they will be standing.

Sir Graham Brady, chairman of the 1922 backbench committee of Conservative MPs, said it would be possible to conclude a leadership ballot by Friday next week.

He said he expected Conservative members to be given a say on who succeeds Truss, but would set out further details later.

And Sir Graham side-stepped questions about whether one or two candidates would be likely to run, telling reporters: "The party rules say there will be two candidates unless there is only one candidate."

Truss will become the shortest-serving PM in British history when she stands down. In her speech, Truss said she entered "office at a time of great economic

Truss steps down after only 45 days at 10 Downing Street. Sir Graham, chairman of the 1922 backbench committee of Conservative MPs, says it will be possible to conclude a leadership ballot by Friday next week

UK IN TURMOIL



British Prime Minister Liz Truss leaves No. 10 Downing Street in London for the House of Commons to announce her energy price plan on September 8.

and international instability", as war rages in Ukraine and living costs skyrocket. The prime minister said her government delivered on providing support for energy bills and reversing a rise in National Insurance, a tax on workers and companies.

But Truss's resignation comes after a period of political and economic turbulence, which forced her government to ditch tax cuts that sent financial markets into a tailspin.

The prime minister sacked close political ally Kwasi Kwarteng as chancellor and appointed Hunt as his successor as she attempted to calm the markets.

At Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday, Truss insisted she was a "fighter, not a quitter" after Labour's leader asked her why she had not resigned.

But more instability followed, when Suella Braverman quit as home secretary and a vote on fracking fell into disarray, with some Tory MPs accused of bullying.

Remarks made by 1922 Committee chairman Sir Graham Brady — that under current rules, the last two candidates from the leadership contest go to the membership unless there's only one left — suggest there is still a bit of wiggle room.

One of the wheezes that has been discussed in Parliament in the last few days is that MPs could set such a high threshold that only an MP with a lot of support would get there. It was not certain what was going to happen next, as this was an unprecedented situation.

Sir Graham will be conscious of spelling out how the next leader will be chosen.

There are a lot of MPs who do not want this to go to the Conservative Party membership — they think a new leader needs to be chosen as quickly as possible.

The logistics of trying to consult the membership in only a week are hard to figure out — unless it was a quick online ballot. But even that would be a hard task.

As for MPs, it will be interesting to see if they will end up choosing the next leader themselves, and whether they will coalesce around one person.

OBIT

■ SHE ALSO SERVED ON THE BOARDS OF SEVERAL SCHOOLS

BIRTH CONTROL CRUSADER BOWS OUT

Naysayers said she was misleading them to limit the number of children they had while her own family tree was flourishing

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

When Kenya became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to embrace family planning as a national policy, one woman opted to shift her teaching skills from the classroom to the public arena.

In 1970, Salome Auma Wamalwa embarked on a one-woman crusade to promote birth control in the present-day Busia County under the auspices of the Family Planning Association of Kenya (FPAK).

As she would later confess to friends and family, this was the most difficult job she had undertaken in life. And it did not help the situation that she had seven healthy children and a growing number of grandchildren, which naysayers used to counter her campaign, saying that she was misleading them to limit the number of children they had while her own family tree was flourishing.

It was a curious irony, but one that Salome did not shy away from. She laughed off the accusations, explaining that she was keener on ensuring people planned their families in order to effectively cater for the needs of their children.

Salome rested on October 8, aged 81. She had a distinct personality and imposing physique, which made her stand out in any crowd or event. Locals vividly recall her outreach programmes: she moved from one location to another on a motorbike, and then walked down the village paths in her distinctive green and yellow FPAK outreach uniform as she spread the family planning gospel.

Salome was the first female motorbike rider that many people had ever set their eyes on, and hers was the first scooter many had ever seen. Before she got the motorcycle, traversing the entire Busia District was one of her greatest challenges. She would wake up at 4am each day in order to catch the

only bus that passed by her matrimonial home in Bukiri village at 4.30am.

When she joined FPAK in 1971, Salome was the sole member of staff deployed to the field in the 1,678 square kilometre district, which is currently occupied by seven constituencies: Budalang'i, Butula, Funyula, Matayos, Nambale, Teso South and Teso North. The struggle was further compounded by the poor road network and scarcity of public transport vehicles.

These were hard times for the mother of seven, as her daughters, Nellie and Elizabeth, recall. Salome would sometimes walk long distances to get home because she could not find any means back, many times in the rain, returning to her husband and children late in the night. She would then have to sit up and write her field reports, sleeping for a few hours and then getting up again at 4am.

Little wonder, then, that when she was given a motorbike by her employer, Salome learnt how to ride it in four days.

But she still faced other challenges in the field, the biggest one being misconception about family planning. She initially faced hostility from men, who roundly accused her of wanting to ruin their families.

Some believed that family planning would make women promiscuous by enabling them to have sex with

strangers without the incriminating evidence of pregnancy. Others claimed that family planning made a woman 'cold' in bed.

Considering that Salome was a female talking to people about issues related to sex, the odds of success seemed stacked

against her, but the straight talking and humorous ex-teacher surprised many with her boldness.

Prof Julia Ojiambo, who was Assistant Minister for Housing and Social Services in the 1980s, when Salome spearheaded the family planning awareness drive in western Kenya, hails her as a bold health worker who conquered gender and cultural biases to deliver services to the community.

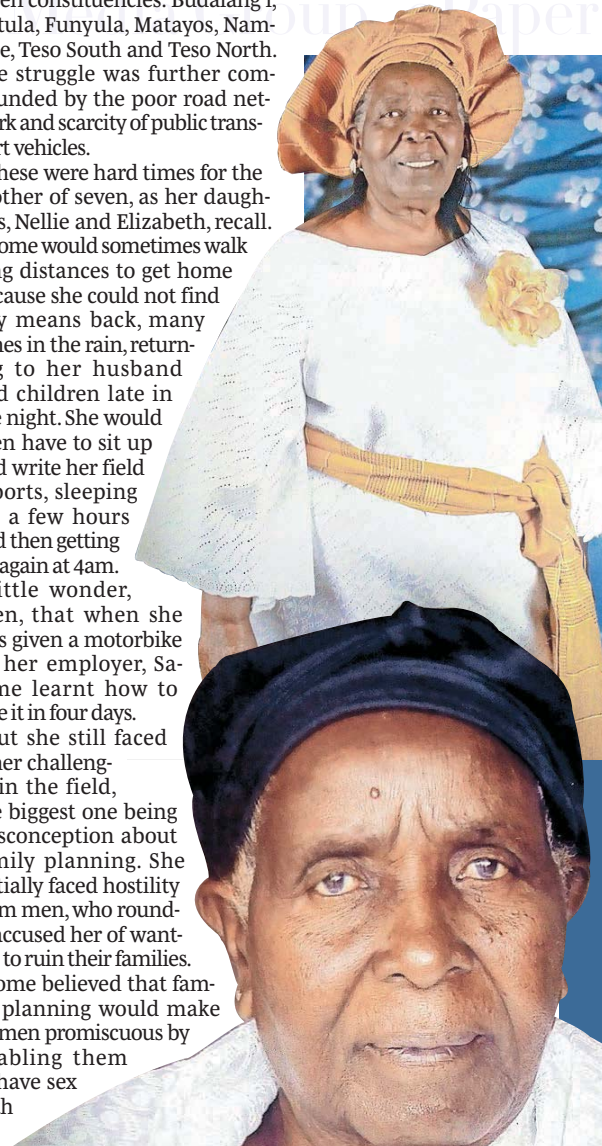
Family Planning was in Ojiambo's docket, and she recalls that the mere mention of "birth control" was considered taboo in most communities. She regards Salome as one of the gallant foot soldiers who helped to dispel myriad misleading perceptions of the issue.

When she returned from Colombo in 1979, where she had led a Kenyan delegation to the International Parliamentary Conference that asked parliaments to put in place friendly policies on population and development, Ojiambo recalls Salome hugging her and giving her a thumbs up for a job well done.

Incidentally, Ojiambo was also the MP for Funyula, where Salome hailed from, but they did not get along politically. Salome was allied to former Vice-President Moody Awori, who dethrone Ojiambo as area MP in 1983.

"My sister Salome was a great development partner, but when it came to politics, she plainly told me we were on different paths. She was an honest and straight-forward person and I respected her for that," Ojiambo told *The Weekly Review*.

The eighth child in a family of 14, Salome was married to Eli Augustine Namaindi, an economist who died in June 2014. Salome taught in several primary schools in Busia, Mombasa, Nairobi and Kakamega counties before joining FPAK as a social worker in 1970. Upon retirement in 1995, she served on the boards of several schools.



Salome Wamalwa was a family planning crusader. PHOTO/POOL

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