

# THE Weekly Review

*For the Thinking Person*

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A photograph of Rishi Sunak, the British Prime Minister, wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is smiling and waving his right hand. The background is a dark, out-of-focus architectural setting.

## RISHI'S KENYAN ROOTS

**The youngest British Prime Minister in more than two centuries has put Kenya, the land of his father's birth, on the global map just like Obama did before him. Will his premiership boost ties between Nairobi and London?**

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When a governor's husband is involved in the affairs of his spouse, he is accused of interference. The same judgement does not apply to First Ladies, who are deeply engaged in their husbands' activities.

# We must support the Obamas and Rishis among us to excel in politics

A YouTube video titled 'How this African Country is Taking Over the World' is causing a sensation on social media. It was released after Rishi Sunak was appointed leader of the Conservatives and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and lists a number of global figures who have Kenyan roots.

Mr Sunak's father is from Kitale, former US President Barack Obama's father is from K'Ogelo, then there is Hollywood star Lupita Nyong'o, Kisumu Governor Anyang'Nyong'o's daughter.

On that list, too, are Malaika Firth, the supermodel, Eddy Gathegi, Hollywood actor, Wangari Maathai, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Roger Whittaker, the musician, Victor Wanyama, the footballer, Richard Leakey, the paleontologist and Eliud Kipchoge, the world-beating marathoner.

The question is: If Kenya can produce all these great people who go on to successfully lead superpowers, professions and trades globally, how come leadership locally is mostly mediocre, and at worst terrible? It is certainly not a genetic fault; Kenyans' genes would appear to be among the very best. Did we possibly export the best and leave the dregs back home to run affairs of this cradle of humankind?

**Laziness is not tolerated**

It is probably the case that the environment created in this country nurtures mediocrity and corruption. A Kenyan driving in Nairobi will overlap, hoot, be churlish and rude on the road.

The same Kenyan driving in Germany will be the model of decorum on the road, obedient to traffic laws, patient and safe to self and other motorists.



Mutuma Mathiu

**If Kenya can produce all these great people who go on to successfully lead superpowers, professions and trades globally, how come leadership locally is mostly mediocre, and at worst terrible? It is certainly not a genetic fault; Kenyans' genes would appear to be among the very best. Did we possibly export the best and leave the dregs back home to run affairs of this cradle of humankind?**

When that same Kenyan comes back home, he becomes the demon yet again, bullying pedestrians and putting lives at risk. The difference is that in those other countries, corruption, venality, incompetence and laziness are not tolerated; hard work, good values and competitiveness are nurtured.

And so in those contexts, Kenyans and their offspring conform, and excel. It is the culture, expectations and standards that determine the excellent outcomes.

In contrast, the expectations at home are very low, if

any at all. Chapter Six of the Constitution attempts to establish some standards for leadership, but those are ignored at every turn.

Where standards exist, they are so low as to make little difference.

Thus, people suspected of serious offences, with a history of crime or facing serious charges in courts of law, are appointed to high office and approved by the National Assembly.

**Strong, positive values**

There is the presumption of innocence, of course. Every suspect is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

But at the same time, it is reasonable to assume that where an individual has been charged in a court of law, such an individual remains ineligible for appointment to high office until such a time as they are cleared by the courts and they can resume their normal lives.

Kenya needs to take the question of values seriously so that politics does not become the alfa and omega. Strong, positive values such as honesty, patriotism and hard work should be the accepted and expected measure of leadership rather than a capacity to accumulate ill-gotten wealth and throw around money. Kenyans have good genes but poor morals. That is why this is still a developing country.

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## the telescope

### ■ Legislators begin vetting of PS nominees

## New CSs to hit the ground running

With President William Ruto's 22-member Cabinet finally sworn into office after vetting and approval by the National Assembly, the CSs will this week be expected to hit the ground running in their respective ministries.

The cabinet secretaries spent Thursday and Friday last week being handed over to by their predecessors after they officially assumed office.

Also, all eyes will be on the Head of State to forward to Parliament names of principal secretary nominees who will head the different State de-

partments.

The President is expected to receive the names from the Public Service Commission, which has been carrying out interviews of the more than 500 shortlisted applicants to narrow down to only 49. The forwarded names will then be committed to the relevant National Assembly committees for vetting.

The House committees will be before then meet to elect their leadership, that is, chairpersons and vice-chairpersons, to pave the way for the vetting process.



Environment and Forestry Cabinet Secretary Soipan Tuya takes the oath of office at State House, Nairobi, on October 27. DENNIS ONSONGO | NATION

### ■ Her genealogy was done 'two years ago'

## Meghan says she is '43pc Nigerian'



The Duchess of Sussex says genealogical testing has revealed that she is "43 per cent Nigerian".

In the latest episode of her

Spotify original podcast, Archetypes, Meghan told Nigerian-American talk show host Ziwe Fumudoh that she "had my genealogy done a couple of years ago".

When Fumudoh asked "what are you?", Meghan replied that she was "43 per cent Nigerian".

"I'm going to start to dig deeper into all this because anybody that I've told, especially Nigerian women, are like 'What!'" she added.

### ■ World No.1 McIlroy fears 'irreparable' split



Phil Mickelson during the Pro-Am prior to the LIV Golf Invitational at The Oaks golf course in Massachusetts on September 1. PHOTO | AFP

## Mickelson says LIV not going away

Six-time major winner Phil Mickelson says the breakaway Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series is a "force in the game that is not going away" after world number one Rory McIlroy expressed fear of an "irreparable" split. The LIV season concludes at the Trump National club at Doral, near Miami, this weekend with a team championship featuring an eye-watering \$50 million purse.

The animosity LIV's breakaway has caused has left McIlroy worried for the game, but at the media launch for the event, Mickelson said LIV Golf had already defied expectations and was here to stay.

"I'm just looking at LIV Golf and where we are today to where we

were six, seven months ago and people are saying this is dead in the water, and we're past that, and here we are today, a force in the game that's not going away," he said.

Sitting on a platform with British Open winner Cameron Smith, former Masters winner Bubba Watson and English Ryder Cup favorite Ian Poulter, Mickelson said the quality of talent in the LIV series was "moving professional golf throughout the world and (creating an) excitement level in countries around the world. It's pretty remarkable how far LIV Golf has come in the last six, seven months. I don't think anybody can disagree with that," the American said.

### ■ Putin desperate to justify invasion of Ukraine

## World faces 'most dangerous decade'



The world faces "probably the most dangerous" decade since the end of World War Two, Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned.

In an address to the nation, Putin

sought to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a move that has left his country internationally isolated. Putin also accused the West of nuclear blackmail against Russia to force allies to turn away from Moscow. The West has denounced recent veiled nuclear threats by the Kremlin. Earlier this week, the Nato military alliance condemned unsubstantiated claims by Russia that Ukraine might use a "dirty bomb" - conventional explosives laced with radioactive material.



## kenya lens

■ SYMBOL OF FORTUNES OF ASIANS FROM EAST AFRICA

# RISHI: FROM KENYA TO THE UK

*British PM's parents were part of the 'stateless' Indians who had found themselves characterised as the 'undesirables' of the British Empire and struggled to reach London – where a quota system on British Asian migrants was in place*



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks during his first Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons in London on October 26.

● By JOHN KAMAU

**W**hen new British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's parents left Kenya in the 1960s, it was not of their own volition. The promise made by ruling party Kanu slightly before Independence that there would be "space for everyone" was only for those who took Kenyan citizenship.

In Kenya, British Asians were regarded as middle-class, but once in London, they were only allowed to take up low-income employment and were categorised as "coloured".

That move was supposed to deter those willing to relocate.

Rishi Sunak's parents were part of the "state-

less" Indians who had found themselves characterised as the "undesirables" of the British Empire and struggled to reach London, where a quota system on British Asian migrants was in place. Britain only allowed a limited number of arrivals yearly, and they had agreed with Jomo Kenyatta on the numbers allowed to leave Kenya, which had refused to allow dual nationality.

During the Lancaster conferences on Kenya's Constitution, Kanu opposed Kadu's proposal for dual citizenship. And therefore, after Independence, non-Africans in Kenya were given two years to make up their minds. After that, Asians found themselves in a dilemma. They could neither return to India – which

had closed doors on them – nor take up British citizenship easily after London came up with strict policies and a quota system.

As a medical practitioner, Sunak's father, Yashvir, who was born in Kenya, and his pharmacist mother, Usha, born in Tanzania, had careers in an area that had been targeted for Kenyanisation.

Though Kenya had only 38 African doctors at Independence, eight of whom were interns, the fate of foreign doctors was raised in Parliament in 1963 when MPs pressured the government to start Kenyanising the health sector. By then, the Ministry of Health had employed

...Continued on Page 6



## kenya lens

## How Rishi's family ended up in the UK



Kenya's first President, Jomo Kenyatta, signs the visitors' book at Parliament Buildings in February 1975. His government gave all businessmen and settlers in Kenya an ultimatum: to take up Kenyan citizenship or leave with their families.

Continued from Page 5

218 medical doctors.

To frustrate non-Kenyan Asians still in the country, the Kenyatta government confronted them with new laws that forced them to apply for work permits, as if they were fresh immigrant, and they were restricted in the nature of business they could undertake.

The government wanted companies to incorporate local directors to escape the purge, but most Asian-owned businesses were family enterprises and could not accommodate outsiders. Ironically, those Indians who were pushed out of the retail trade went into industrial production, which informed the community's domination of the sector.

Initially, the setting up of an African commercial class to replace the Indians who dominated the distribution sector faced some teething problems; it hurt most of those who were ordinary shopkeepers and they had to leave the retail sector.

This political tempo had been set in May 1960 by Tom Mboya, who told the Legislative Council that people seeking "double loyalties have a lot to fear because they are not Kenyans at heart. They want to exploit that position...If he wants to be an African, and there is room for Asian and Europeans to become Africans, then let him become African without qualification".

Thus, at Independence, the mo-

Kenyatta government gave all businessmen and settlers in Kenya an ultimatum: to either take on Kenyan citizenship or leave with their families.

Kenya was copying from India, which had in 1955 passed the Citizenship Act that abolished double nationality.

One had to either become an Indian subject or a British subject. Kenya then adopted an open anti-Asian policy on United Kingdom passport holders (it was only in July 2017 that they were finally gazetted as a new Kenyan tribe, ending 54 years of discrimination).

For Kenyatta, in order to implement the new policy, his government had set up the Kenyanisation of Personnel Bureau, whose purpose was to oversee the removal of various employees within the public and private sector of either British or Asian origin and recommend renewal of work permits.

Commercial and settler farmers were also given "quit notices" to give room for the Africanisation of the businesses and take-over of the settler farms, put in a Land Bank under the resettlement programme.

While the work permits and the Land Bank became avenues of corruption in the 1960s and 70s, the migration policy threw thousands of families out of the country, creating a new generation of Kenyan-born diasporic communities. Most of these were astute investors and traders, and some today are at the core of in-

dustry in the UK and Canada, where they settled. The move caused a lot of panic in the UK, leading the Labour Government to enact the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill to limit such entries. The idea was to restrict the inflow of Asians from East Africa and other holders of British passports in foreign countries.

Home Secretary James Callaghan told the House of Commons that the measures were necessary "in fairness to the people of this country and in the interests of equitable treatment for the citizens of the Commonwealth as a whole".

He proposed a special allocation of 1,500 employment vouchers a year for those holding British passports who had no substantial connection with Britain either by birth or paternal parentage. The problem was what to do with 35,000 Indians in Kenya holding British passports and another 105,000 Asians who could turn stateless.

With Kenyatta moving on with the Africanisation programme, Britain was always afraid that he might throw the Indians out rather than follow the quota system. Many Indian families lost their properties and businesses to the political elite through the programme. Others who had not denounced British citizenship after Independence, were squeezed out via rules that made it hard for them to get employment or do business.

Even as locals took over these Asian-owned businesses, there was entrepreneurial confusion since most of the locals had yet to make up their minds on what they wanted from all the opportunities on offer.

Francis Macharia, the National Chamber of Commerce chairman, put it aptly in the 1960s: "Many Africans are completely confused. They don't know whether they want to do business or farming or something else - and there is a tendency to look at business as a hobby."

The rise of Rishi Sunak as British Prime Minister ends as a beautiful story that started with lots of political rejection in East Africa.

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## New premier ruffling the political order

By OMULO OKOTH

Rishi Sunak's rise to the top evokes memories of the Land Rover take-over by Tata Motors in 2008.

Whether the unforgiving British tabloids like him or not and accept to move on, he will be the occupant of No. 10 Downing Street, one of the most prestigious addresses in the world.

Born of Indian parents, Sunak's rise to the helm of the Conservative Party is predictably ruffling the British socio-political order.

But away from the high-octane politics Sunak's rise is generating, the antennae (of the colony's take-over of the kingdom) was raised when Land Rover, a leading British brand, was bought by an Indian company in 2008.

The change of ownership stirred a hornet's nest in British business, social and cultural order.

"How can we lose Land Rover, more so to an Asian nation, to a colony?" Such questions dominated the (British) social discourse when news broke that a vehicle that was identified with the British global superpower and economic success sold to India's salt-to-software conglomerate.

Even in Kenya, where Land Rover was associated with the power of the government, the news disappointed many a *holloi polloi*, their disdain for anything Indian dating back to the colonial era, when grandsons of coolies showed utter contempt for their shamba boys.

They could not believe their ears when the news of Tata Motors's take-over of Land Rover and Range Rover hit the newsstands.

That Sunak is the son of a Kenyan-born father could be enough consolation, but many questions will be asked.

## kenya lens

THE UK SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS IN THE WAKE OF BREXIT

## WILL HE FAVOUR AFRICA?

While the new British PM's stand on trade is not yet clear, African leaders hope he will give the continent the necessary attention compared to his predecessors

By LEVIN OPIYO

This week, Rishi Sunak became the first British Prime Minister of colour and the youngest in 210 years at the age of 42. The Conservative politician, who boasts of multinational heritage, has now the main responsibility of bringing Britain out of the current economic turmoil caused by political uncertainty, and interest costs.

He did highlight this in his first speech on the steps of 10 Downing Street, when he stated: "Right now our country is facing a profound economic crisis. I will place economic stability confidence at the heart of this government."

To a great extent, Sunak is a traditional Conservative. He was born in a privileged family and attended Britain's elite schools. Winchester College, where he received his high school education, charges an annual fee of £45,000 and has produced more than six chancellors of the Exchequer. He then went to Oxford to study philosophy and economics, before proceeding to Stanford in the US for his MBA.

It was while working at the Silicon Valley in California after his MBA that he met his wife, Akshata Murthy, the daughter of Narayana Murthy, a billionaire who owns India's second largest Information Technology company, Infosys. She holds a stake of 0.93 per cent in the company, making her one of the richest women in the UK.

To the ordinary voters, this privileged background means that he is disproportionately affluent and out of touch with their lives. Consequently, he is incapable of forming a government that would serve their interests.

Indeed, in a 2001 BBC clip that was unearthed in July this year as he campaigned to replace Boris Johnson, he boasted: "I have friends who are aristocrats. I have friends who are upper class", but no working-class friends.

A couple of weeks later, in a publicity stunt aimed at wooing the ordinary folk after the embarrassing clip, he said during an ITV interview: "If I'm with my daughters, then we get the wrap." This proved to be a disaster when McDonald's restaurant stated that it had stopped selling the food in 2020, again confirming how detached he was from the common person.

Earlier on in the year, reports had emerged of how his wife had been claiming non-domiciled tax status in the UK, meaning she did not have to pay UK taxes on the money she earned



Britain's newly appointed Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delivers a speech outside No. 10 Downing Street in central London on October 25.



## kenya lens

■ EXPLORATION SLOWED DOWN LARGELY DUE TO THE SLUMP IN WORLD OIL PRICES

# OIL: MIRAGE OR REALITY?

The next stage involves the expensive downstreaming and pipeline project, which requires deep pockets and more than just exploratory skills. As things stand, the jury is still out on whether Tullow PLC will continue with the project, or whether it would like to partner with or sell outright to another entity



By ROBERT SHAW

The story of oil exploration in the Turkana Basin of Kenya is a long-winded affair that has yet to show any net monetary results in terms of barrels per day sold. However, the venture may well be picking up at last.

Oil in potentially viable quantities was first discovered 10 years ago in northern Kenya.

Tullow Oil is the main company behind the Kenyan exploration exploits. Like so many such projects, its progress has been tied to the cost of exploration and downstream processing, and in turn its viability vis-a-vis world prices.

Oil exploration can be an expensive capital project, which eats up a lot of money and is ultimately hostage to prevailing world prices. In this particular case, there is the issue of both extracting it and transporting it many hundreds of kilometres.

Tullow Oil has a 50 per cent operated interest in Blocks 10BA, 10BB and 13T, and 100 per cent in Block 12BB, and has been at various exploratory stages since 2012.

The geographical location of this operation in remote northern Turkana means that any oil would need to be transported and pumped 825 kilometres via a heated pipeline to the coastal port of Lamu.

That implies that on top of its cost of production at around \$22 per barrel must be added the



Ngamia 3 oil exploration site in Nakukulas village, Turkana South Sub-County. FILE | NATION

## kenya lens

## Hope for Africa as Rishi takes the reins in London

...Continued from Page 7

venient person not only because he had been the runner-up in the race to succeed Johnson but also due to his previous position as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. As Chancellor, he had been applauded because of his furlough scheme, which rescued many businesses, jobs and families during the pandemic.

On the flipside, he had frozen all tax thresholds, making many people pay high taxes. A report released this year by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs indicated that the number of people paying 40 per cent or 45 per cent tax had risen from 4.25 million to million to 6.1 million.

Even though he has not mentioned publicly how, as PM, he will solve the current economic situation, he is likely to use the same technique, introducing spending cuts and raising taxes. In doing so, he will stick to his party's austerity-infused manifesto. This will also help him avoid suffering the same fate as his predecessor, who had deviated from the manifesto with disastrous results.

On the global stage, his stand on trade, security and development is not yet clear. Some, especially in Africa, are hoping that he will give the continent the necessary attention compared to his predecessors. Before Theresa May visited Africa in 2018, UK's engagement in Africa was on the decline since the end of Cold War.

The visit was prompted by Brexit, which forced her to look for neglected relationships and new alliances as Britain prepared to walk out of the European Union. Her charm offensive would later come to an abrupt end after she was forced to resign for her failure to secure a Brexit deal with the EU.

Johnson had visited the continent championing its strategic importance. However,

when he succeeded May as PM, he became more focused with disengaging the UK from the EU, while taking steps to reduce aid to Africa. After a series of scandals, he was also forced to resign.

While it is a fact that Sunak's father was born in Kenya, at the moment, he will be more concerned with the issues of his country, Britain. Apart from the economic crisis, there is a raging civil war within the Conservative Party, which he will need to solve if they are to have serious prospects in the next general election.

If anything, as Chancellor, he was behind reduction of aid to African and other developing countries, on the premise that "spending 0.7 per cent of GDP on overseas aid is difficult to justify to the British people". This prompted the minister in charge to resign in protest.

Nevertheless, the UK has been signing new trade deals with African countries as it seeks new relations and strengthen old ones in the wake of Brexit. In December 2020, an agreement was signed in London allowing Kenya duty-free access to the UK market, while benefitting 2,500 British businesses exporting goods to Kenya. This was translated from terms of agreement, before Brexit, between the EU and East African Community.

According to Patrick Smith the, Editor-in-Chief of *Africa Report*, perhaps Sunak's stand on Africa will be manifested at the G20 summit in Bali, where the African Union, with the support of China, will be bidding to be included in the group. There will also be a submission by multilateral organisations such as the African Development Bank and IMF for the global powers to develop a debt relief plan for developing countries.

Mr Opiyo is a London-based Kenyan journalist and researcher



Ngamia 8 oil exploration site in Lokichar, Turkana South Sub-County. JARED NYATAYA | NATION

cost of transport to Lamu, a considerable logistical and financial exercise. It is estimated that these blocks can produce around 120,000 barrels per day for a period of 23 years.

The exploration process slowed down largely due to the slump in world oil prices, which hovered between \$40 and \$60 a barrel during the period from 2011 to 2021. Today they are at around \$110/\$120 per barrel.

It is not difficult to see the correlation between the slowdown in exploration efforts and slump in the price of oil.

With the price having risen considerably, the momentum to continue the exploration has picked up. There is also a perception that even if oil prices fell again they would not reach the lows seen in the last decade. Tullow had already spent US\$1 billion prospecting. In January it was estimated it would need US\$5 billion as it moves onto the next stage of gearing up for commercial oil exploration and transport. This would include around US\$3.4 billion for its upstream activities.

What comes out clearly is that Tullow's forte is in prospecting for oil and finding it. When it comes to actual development and commercialisation, it often looks for another partner or entity to take on that stage.

In August, talks were going on with two Indian oil companies, ONGC Videsh and Indian Oil Co, concerning partly or wholly investing in the relevant oil fields with the intention of getting the product extracted, transported, refined and sold.

Whether these negotiations have come to any fruition remains to be seen but what is clear now is that the commercial environment to develop the Turkana oil fields is much better. What is needed is a deeper pocketed investor or partner to take the project to the next stage.

There is arguably another factor that has delayed the process, which is the time it has taken for the government and the Ministry of Energy to give Tullow the relevant production licences.

This brings up the common complaint that whilst in theory government wants more investment it quite often can be one of the impediments to it.

As things stand, the jury is still out on whether Tullow PLC will continue with this project or whether it would like to partner with or sell outright to another entity. Bearing in mind that its strength is in the exploration side, the burning question now is how, if and with who it would do this next stage, which includes the construction and running of the pipeline to Lamu.

The commercial prospects for oil have certainly improved and on the face of it, the Turkana deposits look viable if the current world prices remain buoyant. The consideration now is that the next stage involves the expensive downstreaming and pipeline project, which requires deeper pockets and more than just exploratory skills.

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kenya lens

■ BEHIND POLICE DEATH SQUADS



The disbanded Special Services Unit of the DCI is just one of many elite squads that have brutalised Kenyans for decades. From the Flying Squad to Kwekwe, their brief is to eliminate suspected criminals and either frustrate or neutralise perceived enemies of the state. These battle-hardened officers operate with impunity and are a law unto themselves

• By DOMINIC WABALA

On January 27, 2005, one of the most notorious gangsters in the country was gunned down in a dawn raid on his hideout in Zimmerman Estate, Nairobi, after a five-hour standoff.

The reign of terror of former policeman Daniel Kiptum Cheruiyot, who had killed two officers, came to an end in a hail of bullets in an operation led by then police boss Maj-Gen Mohammed Hussein Ali and then Director of Criminal Investigations, Joseph Kamau.

Cheruiyot was eliminated by a combined team of officers from the Flying Squad and the Kanga Squad. During the standoff, police lobbed teargas into his house and fired many rounds, but he kept firing back. He engaged officers in a shoot-out before finally walking out with his Israeli-made Uzi sub-machine gun. Big mistake. A sniper shot him in the head.

The Flying Squad was then led by Musa Yego, while Kanga was under George Kinoti, who would later rise to become the DCI director. These are just two of many special police units that have been formed over the years to fight crime, particularly human and narcotics trafficking, theft of transit goods, bank robberies, carjacking and motor vehicle theft.

The operations of these squads were brought into question, however, following claims that they had been involved in extrajudicial killings instead of fighting criminals. When President Wil-



Then Police Commissioner Maj-Gen Mohammed Hussein Ali (centre) and then-DCI boss Joseph Kamau (behind him) lead other officers in the hunt for gangsters who had gunned down two policemen in Lunga Lunga slum, Nairobi, on April 22, 2004. FILE | NATION

liam Ruto took the reins of power, he ordered the disbandment of the Special Services Unit (SSU) over complaints of its involvement in enforced disappearances. In the 1990s, whenever a Peugeot 504 station wagon drove into an estate or shopping centre, all men would scatter to safety. Anyone bundled into the boot of the fast-driven vehicles would either end up dead or in prison. Those who experienced the wrath of the officers in those vehicles never lived to tell the story and if they did, were scarred for life.

The Flying Squad was known for its brutality; it operated above the law. Junior officers attached to the unit disregarded the Force Standing Orders (FSO), now Service Standing Orders (SSO), bypassing senior officers as they reported directly to the DCI boss.

Other than the Flying Squad and Kanga, other elite squads

were Kwekwe, Eagle, Rhino, Kanga, November and Spider. The Flying Squad team was set up by then DCI director Noah arap Too to stop carjacking, bank robberies, muggings and burglaries.

It had the dynamic duo of Chief Inspector Timothy Kamunde and Daniel Seroney. Kamunde regularly introduced himself by his name followed by his title (Timothy Kamunde, Chief Inspector). He would give suspected criminals unmarked police cars to go get their accomplices, which the suspects would do. In his car, Kamunde carried iron bars, machetes, ropes and firearms. It is reported that he preferred to torture suspects and rarely used firearms.

It is told how one time, while giving evidence in a Nakuru court, Kamunde was challenged by a suspect during cross-examination. While still before the magistrate, Kamunde dared the suspect

to repeat the questions outside the court. The suspect refused to leave thereafter and pleaded with the magistrate for protection.

Kamunde was feared even by senior officers to whom he never reported. After his retirement, he was at one time recalled by then President Daniel arap Moi to help stop armed robberies. He was given sweeping powers and was only answerable to the Director of Criminal Investigations. Even officers more senior than he would report to him. When the team was being disbanded, some of the members of the squad were reported to have been found with stolen car engines and were suspected of being accomplices to armed criminals.

To countercheck the rogue Flying Squad, the then DCI director, Francis Sang, set up the Special Crime Prevention Unit (SCPU) in 1999, led by Peter Kavila. The elite

kenya lens

Former Flying Squad commanders



Munga Nyale



Musa Yego



Francis Njiru



Francis Okonya

Former DCI directors



Francis Sang



Joseph Kamau



Noah arap Too



George Kinoti led Kanga Squad and later formed the Special Services Unit during his tenure as DCI boss.



Former SCPU boss Peter Kavila

unit, comprised of sharp-shooting commandos mostly drawn from the General Service Unit, was tasked with combating armed robberies, human and narcotics trafficking, theft of transit goods and bank robberies. The Flying Squad continued with its operations, though downscaled, under Sammy Githui, Francis Okonya, Sebastian Ndaru, Munga Nyale, Musa Yego and Said Kiprono. Yego, a sharpshooter, held forte at Flying Squad for several years until he was promoted to Provincial Criminal Investigations Officer in North-Eastern Province.

In his memoirs, Sang said that, due to a number of socio-economic factors like poverty and rural-urban migration, incidents of carjacking, bank robberies, muggings and burglaries increased during his tenure.

Then there was the Kwekwe squad, which was formed to neutralise the outlawed Mungiki sect that had been terrorising Kenyans for a long time. Soft-spoken and shy Chief Inspector Zebedio Maina led Kwekwe. Maina, who never looked you direct in the eye, was so brutal that anyone fingered as Mungiki chose to relocate rather than face his wrath. Maina preferred to work alone or with only trusted lieutenants. Following a public outcry, Kwekwe was renamed Eagle and its operations moved to Buru Police Station.

One of Maina's colleagues, Chief Inspector John Kariuki, died mysteriously a couple of years after he left the service. Kariuki had been among SCPU detectives who were accused of torturing suspects in the murder of University of Nairobi political science Professor Chrispin Odhiambo Mbai in 2003. He returned to the service but fell ill and later retired. He was later found dead in his house while working as a security office for Naivas supermarkets.

After Kavila exited the SCPU, it came under the leadership of Richard Katola, who was credited with cracking down on the infamous string of money heists by G4S Security cash-in-transit teams. The unit made partial recovery of the millions of shillings stolen by the G4S staff and brought a stop to what had become a trend. Katola was involved in the anti-Mungiki operation between 2007 and 2012, during which time the unit was accused of engaging in extrajudicial killings of suspected outlawed gangs. He suffered a stroke that left him bedridden for over three years before he died at the Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH). Maina and another Flying Squad boss, Reche Nyagah, suffered the same fate.

Several specialised unit members have disappeared. Bernard Kiriinya, a driver of the unit who made a video confession of involvement in extrajudicial killings and was expected to testify, was shot dead by his colleagues-turned-foes in Westlands, Nairobi, in 2010. This was despite the fact that he had been accommodated in a safe house by the Kenya Human Rights Commission, to whom

he had handed the confession.

So efficient was the SCPU that sometime in 2010, a Toyota Prado stolen from Nairobi was traced to Taveta and the four detectives who were dispatched to recover it brought back not just the suspect they found with the vehicle, but four others whom they picked up in Mwatate, Voi, Athi River and Mlolongo. It only took a bone-crunching strike from a detec-

tive with a soda bottle for the suspect to lead police to his accomplices.

Then there was the Track Unit that worked in collaboration with the Criminal Intelligence Unit and the SCPU, which became the SSU after Kinoti took over as DCI boss and disbanded the Flying Squad. The Parklands Police Station-based Track Unit, led by the no-nonsense Francis Njiru, was established to supplement the efforts of the SCPU and Criminal Intelligence Unit by following up the cases handled by the two units and preventing loss of evidence gathered. Njiru was not a quiet man and he made such an impact in the criminal justice system that the mention of his name caused shivers among criminals.

He dismantled a number of criminal syndicates in the country and would later be redeployed to DCI Headquarters. The Kanga Squad was involved in many cases, including investigations into the robbery case involving author Ngugi wa Thiong'o and his wife at the Norfolk Apartments in Nairobi. It was disbanded after the removal of Kamau as the DCI boss and the officers redeployed to various police stations.

Upon appointment as DCI director, Kinoti reassembled Kanga and redeployed the officers to DCI Parklands. They reported directly to him and carried out special assignments such as anti-counterfeit operations targeting sugar, rice, cooking oil and tyre imports into the country. The unit had sweeping powers and worked under the Multi-Agency Task Force that included the Kenya Revenue Authority, DCI and Kenya Bureau of Standards.

Earlier this month, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) announced that it had initiated investigations into many complaints of extrajudicial killings by police.

"Pursuant to sections 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the IPOA Act, IPOA has commenced investigations and audit of the recently disbanded SSU and other units and/or formations within the NPS [National Police Service] to establish the propriety of their operations and the level of professionalism. IPOA is further keenly investigating NPS action and/or inaction following numerous complaints received of enforced disappearances, abductions and murders," IPOA chairperson Anne Makori said in a statement.

In January, IPOA launched investigations into the incident of 25 bodies found in River Yala. Most of the suspects had criminal cases pending before the court. Amnesty International Kenya director, Irungu Houghton, urged NPS to investigate the disbanded SSU. "The NPS must bring to justice anyone responsible for enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings of many," said Houghton.



# the limelight



A worker adjusts Bernardo Cavallino's *Saint Bartholomew* during a press preview at Sotheby's on October 25. PHOTO | AFP



A Kenya Airways employee controls an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) as it spreads a pesticide over a tea farm at Kipkebe Tea Estate in Musereita on October 21. PHOTO | AFP



A protester takes part in a demonstration against the Italy-Libya memorandum of understanding in Rome on October 26. PHOTO | AFP



Women from the Turkana community wait under a makeshift shed with their children at a drought-intervention community outreach clinic organised by United Nations International Childrens Education Fund at Nadoto village on October 18. PHOTO | AFP



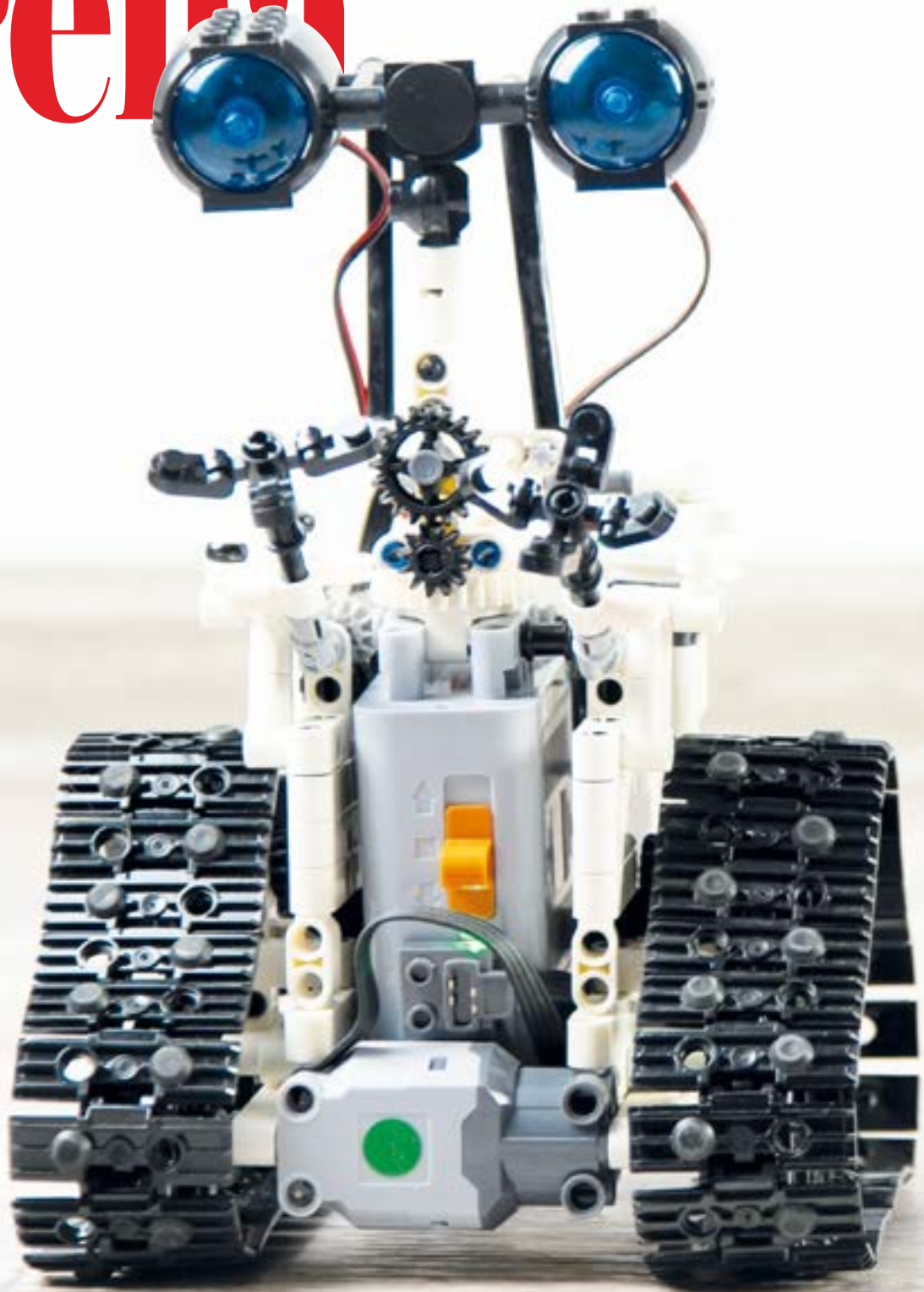
A girl sleeps at a public beach in Karachi, Pakistan, on October 25. Her parents believe that exposure to the sun will heal her illness. PHOTO | AFP



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates scoring against Brighton during their Premier League match at the Etihad Stadium on October 22. City won 3-1. PHOTO | AFP



# The Arena



## ROBOTS AND HUMANS

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*The robotics industry is expected to grow significantly over the coming years. Veno Autobotics, a Kenyan firm, seeks to transition Africa from being a consumer of technology to a key player in the industry*

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OPEN SPACE

# OPEN YOUR EYES IN THIS DIGITAL WORLD

**MARKETING:** When WhatsApp suffered a global outage for a couple of hours, many businesses were affected

• BY MUTHONI NJAKWE

For a couple of hours on Tuesday, the digital world came to a near standstill after WhatsApp, a Meta-owned messaging service, suffered a global outage. Users reported problems with sending and receiving messages. WhatsApp said a technical error caused the issue.

WhatsApp has become critical infrastructure in many markets, used by billions of people. As of 2020, it was being used to send over 100 billion messages a day, a figure that is unrivalled in the industry.

Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp together were used to exchange 60 billion messages a day as of early 2016.

This shows how critical the digital landscape has become in running businesses worldwide, especially when it comes to marketing. Digital marketing is no longer optional in today's technological age.

As the world further shifts towards the digital era, it becomes a natural transition for all businesses to be a part of the digital world. Digital marketing encompasses a wide range of activities, including search engine optimisation, pay-per-click, social media, content marketing, email marketing, mobile marketing, analytics and affiliate marketing.

Unlike other forms of marketing, where you take a shot in the dark that your messaging will reach its intended audience, digital marketing ensures the right consumers are viewing your content.

A decade ago, marketing was a luxury due to costly traditional mediums. It was reserved for big companies with big marketing budgets. Technology has redefined marketing: all types of businesses with varied budgets can now market their brands on one uniform platform.

With digital marketing, you can reach a larger audience than you could through traditional methods.

Additionally, it is often more cost-effective than traditional marketing and ena-

bles you to measure success daily.

However, before you jump into creating and distributing content or launching digital marketing campaigns, it is important to have a sound digital marketing strategy.

Defining your goals is the first step towards digital marketing success. The digital marketing strategy you will craft will be dependent on your goals. If your goal is to increase brand awareness, you might want to pay more attention to reaching new audiences via social media. Once you have defined your goals, the next step is to identify your target audience.

The other important component of digital marketing is content creation. Ensure the content you are creating and distributing across channels is valuable, relevant, and consistent. Great content is your ticket to capturing your audience's attention and continually reinforcing a positive brand impression.

Another key component is mobile marketing. The mobile era is well and truly upon us. An increasing number of people are using their smartphones to access the internet, make purchases and stay connected.

Finally, to create an effective digital marketing strategy for the long-term, it is vital that your team learns how to pivot based on analytics. With different analytical tools, you can track whether or not you are achieving your goals.

There are many benefits of digital marketing that can transform the way businesses reach and engage their target markets.

Businesses should therefore seize those opportunities.

*Ms Njakwe is a digital marketing specialist and chief executive of Stedcomm, a digital marketing agency.*

*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](mailto:weeklyreview@ke.nationmedia.com)*



MIND SPEAK



**Oluoch Akong'o**

The killing of Pakistani journalist Arshad Sharif was not an accident as Kenyan authorities would want us to believe. It adds to major violations of human rights in the country. Extra-judicial killings have long been an issue. Many young men from poor, marginalised communities have been killed by police or other security forces. The government must prosecute those responsible for extra-judicial killings.

— *KU student leader*



**Allan Achieng'**

Police always act on orders from their seniors. What mechanisms have been established to stop police brutality? Does it mean, when danger hasn't been established, one can shoot recklessly? They could have perhaps shot the vehicle tires, or continued the chase. This kind of brutality only destroys the image of the police. The government must stop this.

— *President, Pwani University students*



**Lucia Atieno**

It's heartbreaking for a journalist to lose his life owing to negligence despite all parameters in place to secure, enforce and protect innocent lives.

Aren't there tight enforcement rules on the channels and procedures used to handle such cases? As a nation, we need to do better and act according to the law. Things are getting out of hand.

— *Entrepreneur*



**Rachel Koome**

It's unfortunate that those we expected to protect us are the ones killing us. It's sad that elements in the police are doing the complete opposite of what is expected of them.

There's a legal way of dealing with suspects. We cannot condone such inhuman acts. The government should intervene and protect its people from rogue officers.

— *Social worker*



• BY WAGA ODONGO

Once, during a night out many years ago, we got lost. We were in Nakuru, a town not very familiar to me and we were trying to get to some club. This was before the era of taxi hailing apps so we had to ask around to find out where to go. My two friends came up with an idea: why not ask a police officer?

There was one in a dark trench coat carrying a gun close to a petrol station. They promptly walked up to the police officer and began talking to him, to the shock of the rest of the group.

Now, I don't need to tell you that my friends were foreigners, do I? They have no idea what things are like here. No Kenyan who is lost would ever consider asking a police officer for directions. The police are to be avoided where possible and endured when necessary. Only a foreigner would see a gun-totting police officer patrolling at night and not feel a quickening of the heart or clench his wallet harder.

First off, I know that being a police officer is the most dangerous job in Kenya. Last year, over 100 were killed, according to official statistics. (There is no breakdown to show the number who died by their own hand in the murder-suicide cases that are now common). Police also operate in challenging environments, with terrible pay. It is a thankless job. Nevertheless, the disbandment of the Special Services Unit (SSU) of the Directorate of Criminal Investigations and arrest of officers suspected to have been involved in criminal activities doesn't go far enough. The entire force needs to be reformed.

The police are still an alien institution out to extract value from society and have yet to stray from their colonial roots. The 2009 Report of the National Task Force On Police Reforms described the service as "a punitive citizen containment squad" which was created to keep colonial settlers safe from

MY TAKE

# REFORM THE POLICE SERVICE

**Operations:** The Kenyan officer is permanently divorced from the interests of the public and wholly unsuited for the task of general policing



Police officers on patrol in Nairobi, on May 7, 2020.

"the potential crime and disorder perceived to emanate from the Africans". Today, that ethos continues to be at the heart of policing, whether or not they don a new uniform.

We all have personal stories of police injustice. In 2017, I worked on a report for an NGO on victims of police violence and I saw up close the handiwork of Vigilance House at its finest. I saw a body fished out of Lake Victoria with what looked like bullet holes, the body of a 16-year-old clubbed to death at Sega in Siaya County (clubs are better than guns because they leave no cartridges behind). I also met with the family of bodaboda rider Zachary Otieno, who was shot dead, leav-

ing behind a pregnant wife. The family couldn't raise the Sh10,000 required for the government pathologist's autopsy to come to the conclusion that, indeed, the man was killed by a gun shot. The Independent Policing Oversight Authority couldn't begin investigating the case because there was no autopsy. Many families are forced to go into debt to fund autopsies that often will not end up in convictions.

Even when they are caught on camera shooting someone dead, nothing happens. You can't trust your own eyes. Eric Kirui was arrested for shooting dead two protesters in the 2007 elections but the case petered out for lack of evidence.

All laws against vice exist to service massive payouts to police. Alcoblow was a godsend to police officers. I remember once almost getting hit by a car driving the wrong way down Thika Road on a Friday evening, and wondering what drug the driver was on. A few metres ahead of us I saw the cause of his madness: a police roadblock with alcoblow. The Covid curfew was simply a stimulus package for the boys in blue, who used it to line their pockets.

Police vetting revealed how many senior police officers are actually business geniuses, with weekly multi-million shilling bank deposits; police work is simply a side-hustle. Still, these millionaires persevered in the force instead of concentrating their considerable acumen on commercial pursuits.

The Kenyan police is permanently divorced from the interests of the public and wholly unsuited for the task of general policing. With the murder of well-connected foreigners, the government is forced to feign shock and act as though extrajudicial killings are not standard practice.

The reason I think the entire force should be indicted is the conspiracy of silence. We have tens of bodies found in rivers, corpses found eaten by wild animals in forests and not a single police officer has come forward. Too many officers are silent in the face of their colleagues doing wrong. The only one I know of who came forward to report that he had witnessed the execution of over 50 people, Bernard Kirinya, was himself killed. To question extrajudicial killings is to risk adding yourself to the tally of the dead. Whenever a police officer is caught in the wrong, the instinct is to circle the wagons, close ranks and shut the hell up. Snitches end up in ditches. Loyalty to colleagues always trumps commitment to whatever professional standards are to be adhered to.

The police in Kenya are an unreformed law unto themselves. Consistent employment at the top from within the ranks means that a clean sweep of the stables is nearly impossible. It isn't a few rotten apples; the entire tree, from fruit to root, is rotten.

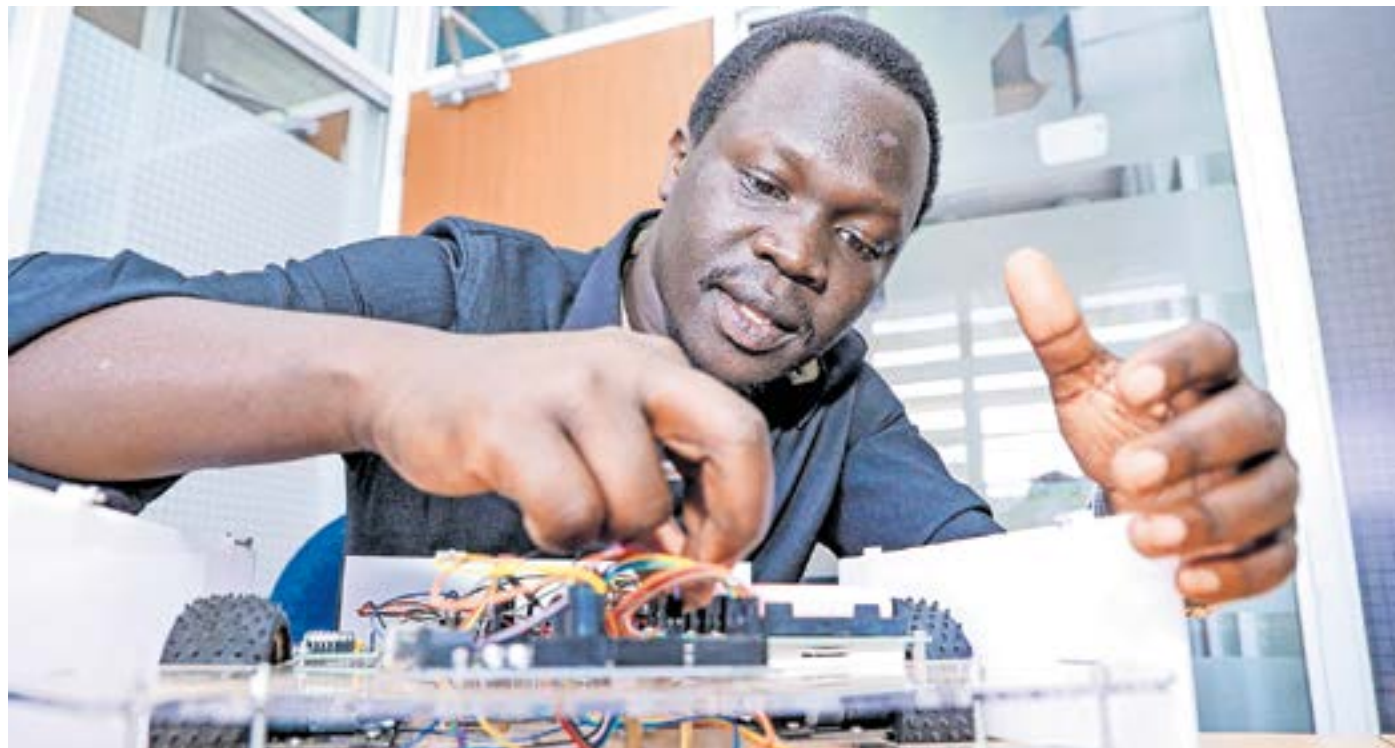
*Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer [wagaodongo@gmail.com](mailto:wagaodongo@gmail.com)*



## TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

# THE ROBOTICS OF THINGS

**BUSINESS OF MACHINES:** VENO Autobotics has built milk systems, payment systems and is in the process of developing a prototype for a parking system that involves installing sensors for occupancy statuses of malls and parks



Veno Autobotics' Victor Boit in Nairobi on October 27. JEFF ANGOTE | NATION

● BY EDDY ASHIOYA

If there is one regret that Victor Boit has, it is that he never opened up his mom's TV DVD player? Fair game. Microwave? Done. Radios? Easy peasy. In fact, make that two radios.

The only reason he never got to open a television is not that he didn't want to, but because they didn't own one for a long time. "We bought a TV quite late," he tells me as we settle down to talk about his engineering journey. He doesn't look like your typical nerd, you know the one: big bifocals, shaggy hair and lanky hoodie. He could pass for an everyman were it not for that restlessness in his eyes. He's seeing things I don't, like an artist living in the age of machines.

And why not? At 30, he is just from Geneva (Switzerland), where he was mentoring a young Kenyan team in robotics in the FIRST Global Challenge (a yearly robotics competition organised by the International First Committee Association. It promotes STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – education and careers for youth.) "It is like Olympics, but for robots," he says. "Or like

the World Cup but for robots," I offer.

That's besides his day job as the leader of VENO Autobotics, whose mission is to transition Africa from being a consumer of technology to a key player in the industry. Autobotics, for those at the back, is a combination of Automation and Robotics. It's not too far removed from its other sibling, software. If software is the blood of the tech industry, then autobotics is the heart that keeps the blood pumping.

"With autobotics, there is a bit of software and hardware engineering. Software is what has gotten the publicity, with Google and Amazon hiring most of the developers (in Kenya). The hardware is what we are trying to work on, the IoT (internet of things) with its more technical section, which is robotics."

I tell him that it's a case of the caterpillar doing all the work but the butterfly getting the publicity. He laughs.

"IoT is how things work," he explains to me like a five-year-old, on my request. "It is basically the communication channel of devices. The problem is that robotics needs a lot of funds, but our main business is mostly IoT. We build them to monitor businesses and provide plat-

forms for said businesses."

VENO boasts of having provided technology solutions for Baridi, Quepay, Kenya Revenue Authority, Institute of Primate Research, County Government of Elgeyo Marakwet, Cheche Electronics and Medcure Healthcare.

But where did it all start? "When I was younger, I was curious about how things work, hence my opening up of DVD players and radios. I grew up in the village and so all I could do is play around with things. I fell in love with dismantling and mantling them instantly."

The village he is speaking of is Elgeyo Marakwet, but if you want to be pedantic, Kapsowar, some 374 kilometres from Nairobi. He then went to the University of Nairobi, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. It's here where he was hit with a shocker, all pun intended: there was no real electrical work. "It was more theoretical than practical. If you wanted the hands-on thing, as I did, you had to start at the diploma level."

To achieve anything significant in life you have to back yourself up. Boit is schooling me on the art of betting on yourself, focusing on

**The ideal robot is actually a human being. With humans, there is the intuition part. That is not something you can programme unless you write every single part. The only thing we admire with robots is control, which is something we cannot get with humans.**

Victor Boit



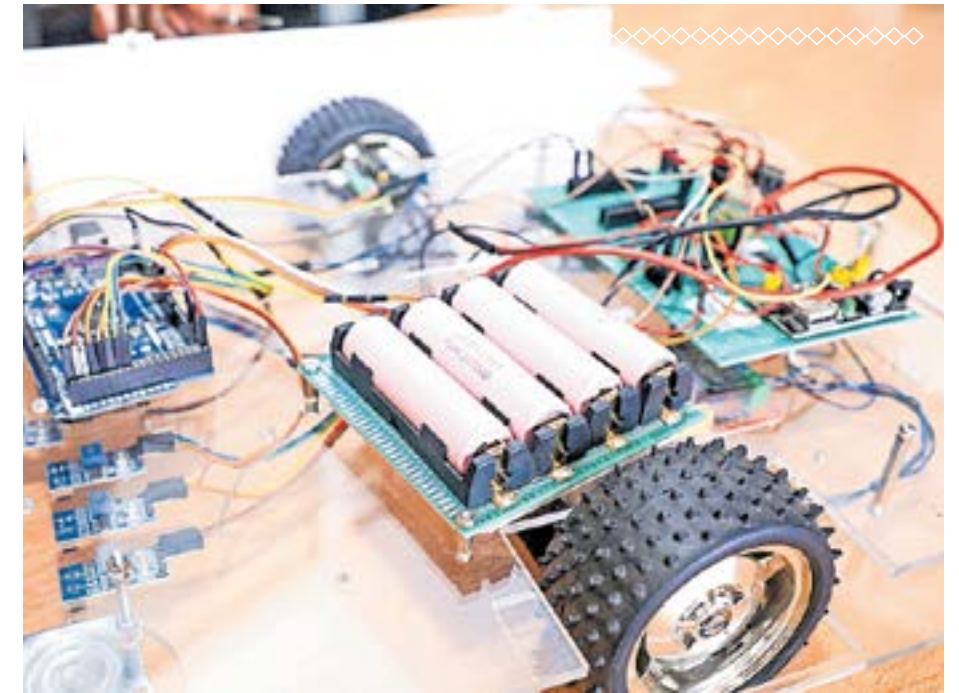
the long game and always controlling your own narrative. For him, success is about the long game and not the quick hits. It's the acerbic words of a sage distilled in quick bursts. Turns out when you believe in yourself, the world has little option but to bend to your will.

A quick look at the projects he has a hand in shows this. VENO Autobotics has built milk systems, payment systems and is in the process of developing a prototype for a parking system that involves installing sensors for occupancy statuses of malls and parks.

"We are also building an IOT management for a smart city solution; for example, if they have smart water meters, they can see which sections consume lots of water." This latest project, he whispers, is in collaboration with a certain government. I probe but he holds his cards close to his robotic chest.

Baridi was one of the first companies VENO Autobotics worked with. Baridi builds coldrooms as a form of value addition to the meat market, preventing the wastage of meat by serving as storage. It is a solar-powered engineering maverick with a complete IoT solution comprising temperature sensors, door sensors and data collection capability. He speaks of the Baridi Project with a father's pride, when that child that you had high hopes in not only fulfils but exceeds their potential.

VENO is also a portmanteau of three names, of three friends: Victor (himself), Enoch and Nobert. Only Victor remains. The thing with starting a business is that it is a jealous mistress; it demands your full attention. "People don't realise that when you leave a 9 to 5 to go into employment, you are going to work 24/7. There are no breaks when you own a business. You have to pay people, to satisfy clients, to



One of the robots designed by Veno Autobotics' Victor Boit. JEFF ANGOTE | NATION

keep the business running." Currently, VENO has six employees – three software engineers, one handling content and the other two hardware, where Victor himself feels at home while simultaneously running the business. What is it internet comedian Elsa Majimbo said? You can't build a legacy on rented land.

Does leadership come easy? "I am very choosy in terms of the people I hang out with. You are who you spend your time with. Leadership is easier when people believe you are leading them in the right direction."

Hillary Chesebe, a technical advisor and energy consultant at VENO, effuses nothing but silent admiration for Victor. "He is an inspiration. We met in Qatar while he was on his way from the mentorship session [in Geneva], and he gave me an opportunity to work with him. He believes in the young and trusts them with responsibility. He takes a chance on people, and he took a chance on me." Have you told him that, I ask. "No, but I hope he reads it here.

## MILESTONES

**KRA** – Built a tax-bot to guide users on how to file returns. It is a step-by-step guide on the documents required and the process of filing.

**IPR (Institute of Primate Research Karen)** - Built and installed for them a biometric time attendance system. Where employees can log in and out for work plus a management software where they can see the stats over a period and set what time is considered late or overtime.

**County Government of Elgeyo Marakwet** – Supplied computers at Sh1.4 million.

**Medcure Healthcare Ltd** - Built and did m-pesa integration for their e-commerce shop.

**Cheche Electronics** – Built them an e-commerce website.

If I were to describe him in one word, it would be 'brilliant'."

When it comes to brilliance, does Victor feel like he is competing against God, or consider himself a mini-god? "Never! In fact, there are things that even science itself cannot make sense of. Like the human brain; fantastic stuff."

"The ideal robot is actually a human being." He says this because I have asked him if humans are more like robots or if robots are more like humans. "With humans, there is the intuition part. That is not something you can programme unless you write every single part. The only thing we admire with robots is control, which is something we cannot get with humans."

He sounds like a head person. "Yes, I am a very logical thinker." When was the last time his logic failed him? "With employment, when you try to get someone to work for you and you fail to consider other factors that come into play. Until you realise that there is no reason for someone to do another thing and yet they do it." With the feel of a well-practised spiel, he confesses that he loves to be in control.

For a person who loves control, the only time he lets the wind lead him is when he can trust the people around him. Are there ghosts under his bed that keep him up at night? "Yes. Failure mostly. If I do everything I can, and it still doesn't work. That will depress me."

With Boit, you get a sense that he has always been methodical in his pursuits, making sure the 0s and 1s are in confluence, living off the mantra that if you don't define yourself, someone else will.

It's only fair then that I ask him that empty final question: does he harbour any regrets in his life? "Yes. There were businesses I started and left when they failed. If I had done them and kept doing them over and over again, I would be much farther. That is my major regret."

That, and the TV thing.  
eddyashioya@gmail.com



DIGITAL AUDIO STREAMING

# SWEET MUSIC TO ARTISTES' EARS

**DOWNLOADS:** Besides giving music lovers more options to enjoy local and international tunes, the expansion of streaming platforms means increased revenue for Kenyan musicians

• BY SINDA MATIKO

Since 2010, when digital music services were introduced in Africa through audio streaming platforms like Simfy Africa in South Africa, Iroking in Nigeria and Mdundo in Kenya, many more channels have sprung up across the continent, giving music lovers access to local and international music.

While many have closed shop over the years after struggling to make profits, there are others still grappling for a share of this young but expanding market, which has a huge growth potential in Kenya and Africa.

Global giants have begun flocking to the continent. In April 2020, Apple Music, which had been available in only 13 African nations, expanded to 25 more. Then just a year ago, Spotify, founded in 2006 and arguably the best-known streaming platform in the world, made the decision to launch in 40 African countries, including Kenya. "We took our time with the expansion to make sure we knew how we would connect with Kenyan music lovers and creators. Every market has different nuances and therefore customisation is key," Phiona Okumu, Spotify's Head of Music in sub-Saharan Africa, told *The Arena*.

Besides giving music lovers more options, the expansion of the streaming platforms has also meant increased revenue for local African artistes. But



Kenyan musician Vivian Wambui.

the development has come with challenges, including prohibitive mobile data costs. A report by market and consumer data specialists Statista says sub-Saharan Africa is home to the world's highest data prices, with Equatorial Guinea leading the pack.

East Africa enjoys the lowest mobile data prices on the continent: Tanzania is in the lead with an average of US\$0.17 (KSh20) for 1GB, according to *Cable.co.uk*, and Kenya follows with an average of US\$0.84 cents (KSh100) for 1GB. This explains why many streaming platforms have been targeting the two East African countries.

"The region has a population of 537 million, the majority 35 years old and under. In Nairobi, 80 per cent of people have smartphones. This is a demographic that consumes music," notes Cleopatra Mukula, Head of Trace TV's Music Business in East and Anglophone Africa.

These are the factors that drew Spotify and Apple Music to the East African market while TIDAL, founded by billionaire American rapper Jay Z, launched in South Africa and Uganda in 2018. Last year, TIDAL launched an African Music Hub. Disappointingly, few Kenyan artistes have subscribed to these well-paying international platforms.

"That is quite unfortunate because Spotify and Apple Music pay well and are now available here," observes, Camila Owora, who works for music distribution company Zikki Music.

"On-boarding of our artistes on these platforms is slow because the services were only recently launched in the region and most don't know how to go about it. Music distributors can



Phiona Okumu, Spotify's Head of Music in sub-Saharan Africa.

be the bridge that gets them onto the platforms and helps them maximise monetisation of their music," Owora adds.

Since January 2021, there has been an increase of 25 per cent in the number of Kenyan artiste on Spotify. "Over 8,000 songs have been added to the platform since our official launch in Kenya. I think it's safe to say our growth trajectory is very promising," says Okumu.

In April 2022, Spotify paid out US\$7 billion in royalties to rights holders, an increase of US\$2 billion over 2020 and more than double the amount paid out in 2017.

Meanwhile, African-based streaming platform Boomplay launched in August 2015 in Nigeria and Mdundo in 2012 in Kenya. The two have become formidable

contenders for the regional market, with impressive growth over the last few years.

With 60 million active users, the Chinese-owned Boomplay is the most popular music streaming service on the continent.

"Boomplay is a growing platform. The returns are not high but they add value by helping artistes with marketing," observes *Chum Chum* hit-maker Vivian Wambui.

Boomplay claims to have the best revenue sharing model in Africa. "The company is investor-funded and also generates money through advertising revenue, which is shared between the artiste and Boomplay. Artistes can negotiate a split of 70-30 per cent or 60-40 per cent, the higher percentage going to the artiste," a highly placed source disclosed to

*Arena*. Boomplay also pays royalties based on how often one's music is streamed.

Payment is made quarterly, but one has to meet a set target. "If you don't hit the target, then it's carried forward to the next quarter," the source added.

Boomplay's model is a bit different to that of Mdundo's, which recently announced it will pay Sh100 million in the current financial year to rights holders, the highest royalties paid since its inception 10 years ago. With 20.3 million active users across Africa by June 2022, 4.9 million from Kenya, Mdundo's primary source of revenue is advertising through display banners and audio ads embedded into its music tracks. It is also listed on the Danish stock exchange to help it accelerate its growth in sub-Saharan Africa.

Martin Nielsen, Co-founder and CEO, attributed Mdundo's growth to its capability to tap into the mass market. It has a unique artiste-centred financial model: 100,000 artistes, 20,000 being Kenyans, who have signed on to the platform, split in half with Mdundo all the revenue made as royalties. To determine payment, an artist's download share is calculated and then multiplied by the total royalties to determine how much one is going to receive.

"We look at how much the music is being consumed. Basically, we are paying per download and artistes have a back end where they can see the number of down-

loads and their earnings. It's purely based on numbers," Nielsen explains.

Gospel music leads in terms of consumption on Mdundo in Kenya and the entire African market, standing at 11 per cent, followed by Naija music at nine per cent.

"I was on Mdundo when I was part of Kelele Takatifu. It wasn't paying much considering we were really doing well at the time and the platform was still very new. They have a good idea that can be made better for the benefit of both parties," gospel musician MojiShort Baba offers.

Fellow gospel singer David Wonder agrees. "They paid me Sh4,000 for 14,000 downloads. But Boomplay are still way ahead. Over the same period I had over 800,000 downloads on Boomplay. It does a lot of marketing for musicians, which I think Mdundo can do as well."

Ohangla musician Prince Indah is a top performer on both Mdundo and Boomplay. "I'm impressed by Boomplay. Mdundo should borrow a few of their ideas."

Nielsen agrees with the observations but adds that in the meantime, as they work to improve the platform, the sensible thing is for musicians to be on the platform rather than not because they will still have something to take home rather than have their music downloaded for free on pirated sites.

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**The FLIP SIDE**  
WOMAN POWER  
jnyaga@ke.nationmedia.com

**MACHAKOS COUNTY'S WAINYIA NDETI IS A TRUE TRAILBLAZER, HAVING BEEN ELECTED AS ONE OF THE SEVEN FEMALE GOVERNORS IN THE COUNTRY. SHE WAS ALSO THE FIRST WOMAN TO HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN MACHAKOS SINCE INDEPENDENCE. CONGRATULATIONS, MADAM GOVERNOR.**

**STAR OF THE WEEK**

**18-YEAR-OLD ANSELA OKIOTIYI MADE HISTORY IN JULY WHEN SHE BECAME THE FIRST EVER KENYAN TO WIN A GRANDSLAM TITLE, FOLLOWING HER GIRLS' DOUBLE VICTORY AT WIMBLEDON ALONGSIDE DUTCH PARTNER ROSE MARIE NIJKAMP. OKIOTIYI AND NIJKAMP BEAT THE CANADIAN DUO OF KAYLA CROSS AND VICTORIA MBOKO BY TWO SETS TO ONE. ANSELA IS ONE OF THE 230 KENYANS WHO WERE FETED DURING THE MASHIJAA DAY CELEBRATIONS. MAY YOU KEEP FLYING THE KENYAN FLAG HIGHER AND HIGHER, ANSELA.**



## opinion



■ **The President is worried about street action against his administration**

## Why Ruto needs Kalonzo in his corner

President Ruto and his Deputy, Rigathi Gachagua, say they have asked Kalonzo Musyoka to join them in the government. But, says the President, Musyoka, a one-time vice-president, has declined the offer because he wants to be in the opposition. The DP, for his part, says they just don't understand the man.

However, Makeni MP Daniel Maanzo, an ally of Musyoka's, argues that the President and the DP want to enlist the support of Musyoka because they want his party MPs on their side to enable them muster the 65 per cent majority they need to change the Constitution.

Musyoka, in a brilliant analogy, with the Fifa World Cup coming up in Qatar, used the infamous 1986 'Hand of God' deception that gave Argentina an illicit first goal against England to accuse President Ruto of Maradona-isque theft of the August presidential poll.

Five scenarios emerge about President Ruto's post-election manoeuvring. One, he and his deputy are not comfortable in their skins yet, not even after constructing a majority that enabled them to consign their bemused rivals to Minority status and also snatch the speakership of the National Assembly from them.

That achieved, the business of complaining and keeping government accountable now belongs to the parliamentary minority and their

**The President campaigned against changing the Constitution to create jobs for the boys and for revamping the economy to create jobs for all. He wants to maradona his way out. Can erratic Musyoka play Makenaky to Ruto's Maradona?**



**KWENDO  
OPANGA**

party memberships. The President's and DP's role is governance and delivery, which they complained at great length about during the long electioneering period.

Two, in 2016, the President hilariously mocked Musyoka after he was tear-gassed and pictured seated on the tarmac when he and Mr Raila Odinga led protests against the government. But with the boot on the other foot, the President is worried about street action against his administration.

Street action birthed the rapprochement between Odinga and President Kenyatta, which ostracised him from government and, as the President tells it, forced him into opposing his own government and President, and sent his nemesis into the duvet with the President. Ruto is vulnerable because the populace is restive, labouring as it is under the weight of exorbitant food prices despite his pledge to bring down the cost of living upon taking power.

Three, Musyoka will run against the President in 2027 and, if backed by Odinga, will be a strong opponent. The President fears that, if the duo lead mass action against his administration, they will pose a substantial opposition which, if supported by MPs, would deflect attention from the government's agenda.

President Ruto has unfinished business with Ukambani, which is why he is keeping Musyoka on his radar. He wants him as part of his equation in the region. But Musyoka considers 2027 his best chance to become President and cultivating the profile image of a President-in-waiting is central to his plotting.

Four, President Ruto has signalled to Odinga that he bears an olive branch and brunch. But Odinga and his allies, especially in Homa Bay County, where Ruto went on an exploratory visit, derisively mocked this overture as they gave his visit a wide berth. This as Musyoka positions himself as a deserving heir to Odinga's vote vault courtesy of his support for the doyen since 2013. The President thinks it is easier to prise Musyoka away from Odinga than groom a replacement for the latter in Luo Nyanza.

Last, the President campaigned against changing the Constitution to create jobs for the boys and for revamping the economy to create jobs for all. He wants to maradona his way out. Can erratic Musyoka play Makenaky to Ruto's Maradona? He has talked of a Shadow Cabinet, which is at face value fine, but he hasn't set out his stall yet.

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## opinion

■ **Somewhere in the wilds of Samburu and Laikipia could be another heir to the British throne**

## Operation CBE: Our man is ruling the Empire



**MACHARIA  
GAITHO**

If he still retains that exquisite sense of timing, President William Ruto must move fast and plant the Kenyan flag on British soil.

The installation of our man, Rishi Sunak, at No 10 Downing Street, presents the final piece in a long plan to turn tables on our former colonial masters and rescue the desolate, cold, sad island from a collapsing economy and unstable politics.

The once mighty imperial power, which spread its tentacles across the globe, ruled over nations and extracted resources from much of Africa, Asia and across the Atlantic, has suffered terminal decline over the past few decades.

A growing insularity and capture by narrow-minded bigots and racists has turned it into a lonely, isolated nation that cannot even hold its head high in Europe, leave alone former dominions spread across the four corners of the world.

This is perfect time to complete Operation CBE (Conqueror of the British Empire).

Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister of Britain was not accident, but part of something that has been long in the works.

In a way, his rise can be compared to that of former US President Barack Obama, whose father was amongst hundreds of young Kenyans sent out in the late 1950s to study in America and while at it, plant seeds that eventually might lead to takeover of the mightiest country on earth.

It was all part of the plan when Rishi's father, Yashvir Sunak, and thousands of his Kenyan compatriots of South Asian descent, were persuaded to leave the warm, welcoming and comfortable climes of their familiar capital city haunts in Nairobi South C, Nairobi West, Ngara and Parklands to build their lives afresh in the cold, wintry, bleak and hostile environments of London, Birmingham, Southampton, Liverpool, Manchester and other English towns.

They were 'sleepers' detailed to insulate themselves into British society, grow their small corner dukas into significant players in commerce and industry, and finally venture into politics.

It is no coincidence, for instance, that Suella Braverman, whose resignation as Home Secretary precipitated the fall of short-lived Prime Minister Liz Truss, is herself of Kenyan

descent, also of South Asian and, specifically, Goan stock.

Her father, Christie Fernandes, earlier this year told the *Times of India* about a conversation while on a family holiday in the US: "I told her that if Obama, coming from Kenya, could do it in America, you too can do it in England".

Indeed, Suella went on to hold one of the UK's most powerful Cabinet dockets, the equivalent of our Interior Ministry, and when the time came, struck without hesitation to create the vacancy that fellow Kenyan Rishi Sunak promptly filled.

Operation CBE is not limited to Kenyan Asians. Across the UK are domiciled thousands of fellow Kenyans who have taken up citizenship and are quietly toiling away in the professions, local councils, transport, health, education, utilities, security and other private sector and public service assignments. Many of us have friends and relatives there just waiting to be given the signal.

Other than kin out there, I can also claim a connection to Suella going back to Dr Ribero Goan School (Parklands), which her father Christie attended and which is also the alma mater for me and most of my siblings.

It can also be revealed now that the Operation which has seen our Man in London rise to the very top of British power did not start with the 1960s and 1970s relocation of Kenyan Asians to Britain.

When one Johnstone Kamau wa Ngengi, aka Jomo Kenyatta, was in 1929 despatched to London by the Kikuyu Central Association, his brief was not just to fight the Kenyan cause against British colonialism, but like Obama and others after him, to 'plant a seed'.

The seed resulted in the birth of Peter Maga-

**Other than kin out there, I can also claim a connection to Suella going back to Dr Ribero Goan School (Parklands) which her father Christie attended and which is also the alma mater for me and most of my siblings. It can also be revealed now that the Operation which has seen our Man in London rise to the very top of British power did not start with the 1960s and 1970s relocation of Kenyan Asians to Britain.**

na from Kenyatta's union with Englishwoman Edna Clarke.

Magana, born in 1944 in West Sussex, and his mother remained in England when Kenyatta came back home in 1946 to lead the struggle for Independence, eventually secured in 1963.

Magana never went into politics, but rose in the media to become a senior producer with the *British Broadcasting Corporation*.

He is now retired.

Kenyatta's London digs, 95 Cambridge Street, Pimlico, London SW1V 4PY, City of Westminster, are today marked by a plaque put up by English Heritage, the institution that cares for historic and protected monuments, buildings and places.

With our man at the helm, we can now expect increased funding for preservation of the humble Council property, but more than that we know that the UK Premier will now be reporting to President Ruto, who is poised to become one of the first leaders to be invited for a State visit to Britain once King Charles III is coronated.

The story of how Charles' Mother, Queen Elizabeth II, ascended to the throne while on a visit to Kenya is well known.

Not as well known, however, is that as a young man, Prince Charles made a number of visits of to Kenya, and there are those who know the whereabouts of any seeds he planted, who at the opportune time will be unveiled as first in the line of succession.

Presently, first in line is Prince William who, too, has a Kenyan dalliance pre-dating his wife, Kate Middleton.

Somewhere in the wilds of Samburu and Laikipia could be another potential Kenyan heir to the British throne.

We often say that history repeats itself. In our engagement with the former colonial master, it has turned upside down.

10, Downing Street is just a start. Next will be Buckingham Palace. Just imagine what our private developers can do with all that magnificent and largely idle real estate starting from the City of London onto all those royal castle and historic buildings across the rest of England, onto Scotland and Wales.

And all those tax havens in Jersey and other places where the rich hide their money will be ours too! Blighty, here we come!

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## kenya lens

## ■ THE FIRST GENTLEMEN

**WHEN THE ROLES ARE REVERSED**

*When a governor's husband is involved in the affairs of his spouse, he is bound to be accused of interference. The same standard of judgment does not apply to First Ladies, who are deeply involved in their husbands' activities*



Kamotho Waiganjo shares a piece of meat with his wife, Anne Waiguru, during their traditional wedding at Kiamugumo Primary School in Kirinyaga County on July 13, 2019. JOSEPH KANYI | NATION

• By OSCAR OBONYO

It is fairly discomfoting for some men to play second fiddle to their spouses in the public arena, especially in a patriarchal society like ours. It is even more complicated in a scenario where they are the minority in a grouping of spouses of county governors, as is currently the case in Kenya.

Murega Baicu, Meru Governor Kawira Mwangaza's husband, who has lately featured prominently in the news for hanging around his wife, holds that he is a victim of "gender-based violence".

The Meru First Gentleman does not comprehend why people do not want to see him seated next to his wife in her office, at public functions or even in her official car, yet the public was comfortable with the past governors Peter Munya and Kiraitu Murungi parading their wives at public functions and sharing podiums and official cars with them without causing drama or protests.

"This is very confusing for me. I am only trying to emulate what Mrs Munya and Mrs Kiraitu have been doing yet people – especially Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) – do not want me anywhere near the governor. I guess my people of Meru are not used to, or comfortable with, the idea of a man being 'a First Lady,'" he says with a chuckle.

Murega has particularly been bashed for allegedly giving directives to MCAs, reprimanding county employees and acting as a whistle blower, action which, he explains, are geared at guarding against swindling of county coffers. The governor has appointed him as the Meru Youth Service Patron as well as the 'ambassador of Meru Hustlers'.

His Kirinyaga counterpart, Kamotho Waiganjo, Governor Anne Waiguru's husband, recalls with amusement an awkward situation he found himself in during his wife's first term in office. At some point, he was nearly denied access to an event for the governors' spouses when organizers who anticipated only women

participants.

He only gained entry after explaining to the receptionist – who had express directives not to allow males into the hall – that he was a victim of assumption by organisers that governors will always be men. Following the embarrassing experience, Kamotho is keen on proposing changes to the name of the County First Ladies' Association (CFLA) to accommodate both genders. Alternatively, the First Gentlemen may opt to fashion their own outfit.

Waiganjo attributes the discomfort and misunderstanding over the position to the patriarchal nature of society. "Our role here is to profile the reality that governance has no gender lens. We must demystify the position of governor, which is why some people are viewing us as unique beings."

But owing to the misogynistic nature of society, when a man is involved in the affairs of his wife, he is bound to be accused of interference. The same standard of judgement does not apply to First Ladies, who are often deeply

## kenya lens



Homa Bay Governor Gladys Wanga with her husband George Wanga. PHOTO | POOL



Kwale Governor Fatuma Achani with her husband Ali Kanga. SIAGO CECE | NATION



Meru Governor Kawira Mwangaza with her husband Murega Baicu. DAVID MUCHUI | NATION

involved in their husbands' programmes and activities. In fact, as Waiganjo and Murega aptly observe, it is regarded positively as supporting the governing spouse.

This perhaps explains why Murega has run into trouble with part of the electorate in Meru County for hanging around his wife, including in the office and at official meetings, and why on the other hand Waiganjo and Ali Kanga, who is married to Kwale Governor Fatuma Mohamed Achani, have opted to keep a low profile.

Waiganjo has deliberately taken a back seat to make his partner "feel complete" and demonstrate to the people of Kirinyaga that she can handle the affairs of the county "without a man hovering around her".

Instead, the lawyer informally offers help to the governor through legal services and occasional advice on governance and political strategy.

Kanga is similarly reluctant to take up any role in the county. He has a full-time teaching job and also feels the need to free his partner from what is likely to be misconstrued as "control and influence" over her.

Being a Muslim, the Clinical Virology lecturer at the Technical University of Mombasa has his role as First Husband well cut out for him.



Nakuru Governor Susan Kihika with her husband Sam Mburu. CHEBOITE KIGEN | NATION

inya Ndeti's husband, Dolamu Henry Oduwale, a Nigerian national, died in September 2016.

The official duties of First Ladies – and now First Gentlemen – are quite hazy. Holders of these positions ordinarily have ceremonial, rather than salaried, roles, which include attending official ceremonies and functions with or instead of the Governor, and promoting various causes within their counties.

The uncertainty that this position elicits is reflected at the national level as well, especially in countries where the president is female. Closer home in Tanzania, for instance, Mr Hafidh Ameir, an agricultural academic, lives quietly in the shadow of his wife, President Samia Suluhu Hassan, who assumed leadership of the country in 2021 following the death of her predecessor, John Pombe Magufuli. Unlike most First Gentlemen across the globe, Mr Ameir hardly accompanies his wife on international trips.

Malawi's retired Chief Justice, Richard Banda, was also absent from the public limelight when his wife, Joyce Banda, served as President between 2012 and 2014. Joyce variously celebrated her husband as her "best friend and cheer leader" who nonetheless kept away from her political affairs.

Ideally, the negative perceptions and attitudes towards holders of the office of First Gentleman are a product of the mindset that spouses of governors are mere 'flower girls', a rather discomfoting picture for most male spouses.

In a bid to avoid the 'flower girl' label, the female spouses of governors, under the aegis of the CFLA, have put in place a strategic plan with clearly defined objectives and strategies for rolling out socio-economic and political development programmes.

The plan stands on the four pillars of advocacy, empowerment, direct service provision and networking, and was officially launched by former First Lady Margaret Kenyatta in July 2015. But as gender parity in politics continues to improve, with more women securing elective seats, the number of First Gentlemen is also expected to rise.

The import of this reality is the need for redesigning the association of governors' spouses, including its name, objectives and programmes to reflect both genders.

As the man, he is traditionally viewed as head of the family and the main contact person for his wife's political and development engagements.

"When election time comes, I must take up the lead role of reaching out to fellow men in search of votes. Society also expects me to take charge of her personal safety and shield my family from any manner of attacks – verbal or otherwise – during the campaign. So ideally, my wife, my governor, is my responsibility," says Kanga.

But George Wanga, whose wife, Gladys, is Homa Bay Governor, is neither keen on visibility nor on commenting on the role he might play.

"Is there anything specific in the Constitution about First Ladies or Gentlemen?" Wanga asked while declining to engage in "a discourse over positions and roles that are not constitutionally stipulated".

Similarly, Dennis Apaa and Sam Mburu, the husbands of Embu County Governor Cecily Mbarire and her Nakuru counterpart, Susan Kihika, respectively, prefer staying in the background. The two businessmen declined to talk to *The Weekly Review* about their roles in the lives of their political heavyweight partners.

Of the seven counties led by female governors, Machakos has no First Gentleman. Wav-



## SCIENCE &amp; TECH

LED tech boosts  
saplings in UK

Surrounded by rows of healthy saplings grown using the latest LED technology, Scottish forestry researcher Kenny Hay has been left in little doubt that the science can boost Britain's net zero efforts.

The trays of young trees stacked nine metres (30 feet) high inside the James Hutton Institute near Dundee in eastern Scotland are budding proof for Hay and others that LED light can be relied on to speed up their growth.

The specimens housed in the vertical farm unit there grew six times faster than using traditional outdoor planting methods, according to Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), a government agency that manages the nation's forests.

Its growth trials — in partnership with indoor horticultural specialists Intelligent Growth Solutions (IGS) — could kickstart a transformation in the forestry sector and help the UK meet its net zero targets quicker.

"Initial results were astonishing," Hay, a manager at FLS, told *AFP* during a tour of the vertical farm, as a technician controlled a mechanical elevator accessing the stacks of shelves filled with seedling trays.

"We can grow a huge amount of trees in a very, very small area, which is obviously going to help climate mitigation. We will now look very carefully at how we might be able to integrate this into our normal processes."

The vertical farm project, which occupies just 300 square metres (360 square yards), has "tremendous potential" for tree production, according to Hay.

The trials found some saplings grew 40-50cm (16-20 inches) tall in 90 days. A similar rate of growth would take up to 18 months in an outdoor field. The air inside the unit is warm and moist, adjusted to the ideal temperature and humidity level for the plants.

Researchers can tailor the light, humidity, water, temperature and soil so that each plant has its own specific "recipe", Dave Scott, the founder of IGS, told *AFP*. Water and nutrition are computer-controlled and fed to plants through a network of plastic pipes.

FLYING CAR THAT COULD  
TURN INTO A BIPLANE

The "Pop.up next" concept flying car, a hybrid vehicle that blends a self-driving car and passenger drone by Audi, Italdesign and Airbus. A start-up in the US says its electric car will be capable of vertical take-off, and able to fly for 110km.

## CALIFORNIA

**A**t a launch event at Draper University in San Mateo, California, a start-up revealed how its flying car hopes to take off.

Alef bills its still-in-development electric vehicle, the Model A, as the first true flying car — a vehicle that it hopes will look like a sleek electric car but be capable of vertical take-off, and able to fly for 110km.

The firm hopes to compete in a market occupied by well-advanced rivals, such as AirCar and the Pal-V gyrocopter, that are already flying and driving.

But Jim Dukhovny, Alef's chief executive and co-founder, argues that most existing vehicles are not strictly flying cars in his opinion.

"A flying car has to be a car, which means it can drive on a regular street, park in a regular parking space. And it also should have vertical take-off," he said. "If you require an airport to take off, what problem are you solving? And why is this a flying car?" But flying any distance using these alone, without the assistance of

wings, would require prohibitive amounts of power. Alef's proposed solution is novel — for longer flights the Model A transforms into a biplane. After a vertical lift-off, the Model A will turn onto its side, the two-person cockpit swivels so the driver remains facing forward, and the car becomes a biplane with the long sides of the vehicle forming the top and bottom wings.

The classic biplane shape, with two wings, one on top of the other, is easier to see in the Model A if you imagine the mesh in-between the solid sides being removed.

Alef has also produced a video visualising the transition. Forbes observed that the way it would fly resembles the Opener Blackfly, an existing vertical take-off electric aircraft. It's an ingenious idea, but is it a practical one? Bringing flying and driving together adds weight, electric power also means heavy batteries.

"The design is right on the ragged edge of what the physics and technology can do, which is where you would expect it to be," says aeronautical engineer Professor Steve Wright of

the University of the West of England.

The mesh, as visualised, might also cause significant aerodynamic drag, he adds.

Alef says it has managed the transition to biplane in "scaled flights" since 2018. And it has large prototypes capable of vertical flight — though they don't yet resemble the polished appearance of the firm's mock-ups and concepts.

But Prof Wright warns that the jump from a prototype to a working product is easily underestimated. Technical hurdles are only one obstacle to building highways in the sky busy with flying cars. The regulation and certification of flying cars is likely to be rigorous, time-consuming and expensive, as it is for any aircraft.

To fly a biplane, even one that you can drive on the roads, will require a pilot's licence — though Mr Dukhovny envisions that for short, low-level hops over obstacles using vertical flight, a licence used for drone operators might suffice.

And authorities are likely to impose strict rules on where vehicles can be flown.



# africa lens

■ THE INDUSTRY HAS A DOCUMENTED HISTORY OF CORRUPTION



A woman walks along an oil pipeline near Shell's Utorogu flow station in Warri, Nigeria. Authorities say more than \$3.3 billion has been lost to crude oil theft since last year and at a time when other oil producers are having a petrodollars splurge, Nigeria can't even meet its production quota.

## NIGERIA'S STOLEN OIL

*In Delta State, thieves built their own 4km-long pipeline through the heavily guarded creeks to the Atlantic Ocean. There, barges and vessels blatantly loaded the stolen oil from a 24-foot rig visible from miles on the open waters*

### ● LAGOS

A network of illegal oil pipelines being unearthed in Nigeria's Niger Delta region has revealed the extent of oil theft in the country, astounding even the most cynical about Nigeria's obscure but hugely lucrative oil industry.

In Delta state, thieves built their own 4km- (2.5 mile) long pipeline through the heavily guarded creeks to the Atlantic Ocean. There, barges and vessels blatantly loaded the stolen oil from a 24-foot rig visible from miles on the open waters.

"It was a professional job," said the head of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company

Limited (NNPC), Mele Kyari, wading through the swamps as he retraced the slick path during a televised visit to the scene.

Crude oil is Nigeria's main export but production, and revenue, have been dwindling for years because of thieves, authorities say. Oil production fell from 2.5 million barrels per day in 2011 to just over a million in July 2022, according to the regulator.

Authorities say more than US\$3.3bn (£2.9bn) has been lost to crude oil theft since last year and at a time when other oil producers are having a petrodollars splurge, Nigeria can't even meet its production quota. And it is not that the country can afford to lose money to thieves; it is gripped by widespread pov-

erty and heavily indebted. Many are saying that the recent discovery of the illegal pipelines confirms long-held suspicions of massive corruption in the sector, where there is little transparency.

Nigeria's oil industry has a documented history of corruption, from an unending fuel subsidy scheme where no-one actually knows how much is imported, to the shadowy allotment of oil exploration blocks.

That the heist was discovered by a private security firm and not the authorities has also added to the anger.

But Government Ekpemupolo, known as

...Continued on Page 26



## africa lens

# Anger over illegal pipelines in oil-rich Nigeria

Continued from Page 25

Tompolo, is no ordinary private security contractor. The 51-year-old chief from Gbaramatu kingdom in oil-rich Delta state was in the past involved in blowing up the very oil pipelines he is now guarding after a controversial 48bn naira (\$110m) contract from the government at the end of August.

He is arguably Nigeria's richest ex oil militant, was once the country's most wanted man and at one point even sold the country a fleet of warships.

He also knows the geography of the Niger Delta, the oil wells and official pipelines, so many believe his comments about the identity of the thieves.

"Many of the security people are involved because there is no way you can load a vessel without settling (bribing) the security people in that region," he told *Channels TV*.

He also suggested that much of the oil was stolen from precisely those areas where there were army and navy checkpoints.

The military has not responded to these allegations, but it is unlikely they will openly contradict a man they have gone into partnership with to crack down on oil theft.

Lucky Irabor, Nigeria's defence chief, who was part of the retinue that toured the oily trail of the thieves, escorted by Tompolo's men, said it was an "eye-opener" and promised an investigation.

But it is not the first time Nigeria's security agencies, especially the top brass of the army and navy, are being fingered over oil theft.

In January, Nyesom Wike, the governor of neighbouring Rivers State, said a police superintendent was involved in oil theft in the Emuoha area of the state and wanted him kicked out.

In 2019, Mr Wike also accused a high-ranking army commander of engaging in massive oil



Two men stand beside local oil distillery mechanisms operated by oil thieves in Bayelsa State of the Niger Delta.

theft in the state, which was denied. That corruption on this scale happened directly under President Muhammadu Buhari, who also doubles as Nigeria's Petroleum Minister, has undermined his stance on fighting corruption, said Salaudeen Hashim of CLEEN Foundation, an anti-corruption NGO.

Mr Buhari was elected on a promise of fighting corruption in 2015, but many question how effective his administration has been.

"The extent of the ongoing oil theft might not even be fully known until this administration leaves office in May," one analyst told the *BBC*. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been ruled intermittently by military officers who seize power through coups, leaving behind a rot of corruption financed through

the vast oil and gas industry in the Niger Delta.

Postings to the region to protect oil installations are considered lucrative by both senior security figures and the rank and file, who lobby and pay bribes to get them, said Mr Hashim.

"Once there, it is a race to the bottom to accumulate illegal wealth," he added. The recent burning of a vessel seized on allegations of carrying 650,000 litres of stolen crude oil in Delta State has also raised eyebrows. Many questioned why security operatives were so swift to destroy the evidence — part of Tompolo's recent success — but Nigeria's defence chief said as the seized ship was smuggling stolen oil, no investigation was needed.

Tompolo's motivation for the crackdown on crude oil theft has left many bewildered. He is getting paid for it, and has spoken glowingly of his love for Nigeria and the Niger Delta environment, but this is the same Tompolo, many say, who blew up oil pipelines in the past.

As one expert pointed out, the illegal oil pipelines being unearthed by Mr Tompolo have so far been in Delta State, where he wields enormous power.

It is unlikely that anyone would have peacefully operated such facilities in his territory for years without his knowledge, they said.

In the past there have been deadly clashes between security forces and armed militants operating in the region but things have been relatively calm for years, and many say underneath that is an agreement by both sides not to interfere with the other's "business".

The only losers, it would seem, are law-abiding Nigerians and, perhaps, the oil firms. Not that they will get much sympathy in the country. — *BBC*



Shell Oil's oil and gas terminal on Bonny Island in southern Nigeria's Niger Delta.



# global lens

■ WILL NETANYAHU MAKE A COMEBACK IN ISRAEL'S VOTE?

## THE RETURN OF 'BIBI'



Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hopes to make a comeback in next month's General Election.

*Polls show he would likely need heavy backing from the country's rising extreme right to form a government -- a scenario which, one expert warned, would spell "disaster" for Israel's democracy*

### ● JERUSALEM

**A**head of Israel's fifth general election in less than four years, one question dominates: Will the hawkish ex-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu return to power?

Polls show he would likely need heavy backing from the country's rising extreme-right to form a government — a scenario which, one expert warned, would spell “disaster” for Israel's democracy.

Netanyahu served as premier for a total of

15 years, a record in Israel's 74-year history, before he was ousted in June 2021 by a motley alliance of ideologically divided parties united only by their opposition to him.

Widely known as “Bibi”, he was an ally of former US President Donald Trump and a dominant leader under whom Israeli politics shifted to the right and talks to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict all but stalled.

Despite being on trial for corruption and breach of trust, charges he denies, and undercut by his failure to secure a majority government in four straight elections, Netanyahu

has vowed to make a comeback.

As opposition leader and head of the right-wing Likud party, the largest in parliament, the 73-year-old with a reputation as a wily strategist has worked to exploit divisions in the coalition.

The unlikely post-Netanyahu government included religious nationalists, centrists, left-wingers and — for the first time in Israeli history — an independent Arab party.

Netanyahu brought them down by order-

Continued on Page 28



## Eyes on Netanyahu as Israel heads to polls



Supporters of Israel's Likud party leader and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu attend a campaign rally in the northern city of Tirat Carmel on October 25, ahead of the November General Election.

Continued from Page 27

ing his parliamentary allies to vote against a measure even though they all ideologically backed it: a bill ensuring that Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank could live under Israeli law.

The Likud chief correctly bet that the coalition, deeply divided over the occupation, would crack over the issue.

Naftali Bennett stepped down as premier in June, saying his government was no longer tenable. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid took over as caretaker premier, and elections were called for November 1.

While the coalition's collapse marked a clear tactical victory for Netanyahu, polls show that he and his allies may once more struggle to secure a 61-seat majority in the Knesset.

Crucially, there appears no path towards a Netanyahu-led government without support from an extreme-right alliance known as Religious Zionism.

That bloc includes Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has a history of using incendiary anti-Arab rhetoric and has voiced admiration for Baruch Goldstein, the mass murderer of Palestinians in the West Bank city of Hebron in 1994.

"This election is perhaps the most critical be-

cause Netanyahu has allied himself with a racist party, and this could be disaster for Israeli democracy," said Gayil Talshir, a political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"The result could be the most extreme, right-wing government that Israel has ever had," she told *AFP*.

Lapid, a 58-year-old former television presenter who leads the centrist Yesh Atid party, has seen signs of rising support during his brief tenure as interim prime minister.

He hosted US President Joe Biden, met France's Emmanuel Macron in Paris and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin, and clinched a maritime border deal with hostile northern neighbour Lebanon.

Lapid also oversaw a three-day army operation against Islamic Jihad militants in the blockaded Gaza Strip that, in the eyes of many Israelis, was successful.

"Lapid chose to observe this election from above, from the prime minister's bureau," wrote columnist Nahum Barnea in the leading daily *Yediot Achronot*.

"He chose to let everyone else scurry about, perspire, get their hands dirty and make mistakes, while he played the role of the responsible adult.

"That restrained stance helped boost Yesh

Atid in the polls, but it didn't help the anti-Bibi bloc."

Polls late last week showed Yesh Atid set to win 24 seats, which would be a record for the party as an individual list.

But the anti-Netanyahu bloc's path to 61 seats also remains cloudy and would almost certainly require another fragile agreement among ideological opponents.

Under Israel's system of proportional representation, lists need to cross a threshold of 3.25 percent of the vote to secure the minimum four seats — a hurdle that can derail coalition calculations.

Some surveys indicate that the three Arab-led parties, which have decided not to run as a united bloc, are each teetering around the cut-off point, which could see them thrown out of parliament.

Such a result could sway the balance of power in Netanyahu's favour.

A tireless campaigner, Netanyahu was rallying Likud supporters in a local theatre in the northern city of Migdal Haemek on Sunday.

Urging a strong Likud turnout on election day, he told his party faithful: "I ask you to go to all of your friends, all of your neighbours, all of your relatives, and tell them that nobody stays home." — *AFP*

### ■ LIVING UNDER OCCUPATION

## 'LIONS' PROWL THE WEST BANK

Violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has surged in recent months, notably in Nablus and Jenin, amid near daily West Bank raids by Israeli forces after a rise in anti-Israeli attacks

### ● NABLUS, PALESTINE

In the skies above Nablus, Israeli drones are watching; on the ground, Israeli soldiers block access to the West Bank city as tensions rise amid talk of a new "intifada".

Young Palestinians on scooters speed past sellers of everything from olive oil to bras, as they sport the colours of their new heroes — "Areen al-Ossoud", or "The Lions' Den" in English, and their late leader, Ibrahim al-Nabulsi.

Teenager Nabulsi, nicknamed "The Lion of Nablus", was known for galvanising the youth even before his death in August, and has since become a folk hero to Palestinians on social media.

But Nabulsi was also a stern critic of President Mahmud Abbas's Palestinian Authority, accused of cooperating with Israel.

In the aftermath of his death, young fighters affiliated with various factions such as Fatah, Islamic Jihad and Hamas formed a loose coalition dubbed "The Lions' Den".

Its popularity has spread like wildfire across the Palestinian territories via the encrypted Telegram messaging channel.

Why did one young fighter calling himself Abu Oday join Areen Al-Ossoud?

"Because the group has chosen to use arms to resist the occupation without splitting into factions, and because it stands for God and the nation," he told *AFP*.

"We're a relatively small group and in danger of being killed, so what happens next will depend on who joins us," he added.

This week, the Lions took to Telegram to urge their nearly 180,000 followers to take part in nightly protests across the West Bank.

The response was swift, with Palestinians gathering in different areas and clashes erupting with Israeli soldiers. Violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has surged in recent months, notably in Nablus and Jenin, amid near daily West Bank raids by Israeli forces after a rise in anti-Israeli attacks.

More than 115 Palestinian fighters and civilians have been killed this year, the heaviest toll in the West Bank for nearly seven years, according to the United Nations.

The toll is the second highest since the end of the second "intifada" or uprising of the early 2000s that followed the 1987-1993 intifada, which led to the Oslo Accords.

"This could be the start of a new intifada," said 44-year-old Khader Adnan, a leading figure of Islamic Jihad in the northern West Bank who has been jailed several times by Israel.



Palestinian militants attend the funeral of those killed in an overnight Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus on October 25. Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid said that Wadih Al Houh, a militant leader of a new coalition of Palestinian fighters dubbed "The Lions' Den", had been among those killed.

"Areen Al-Ossoud are uniting the resistance. These young men are not under the patronage of any faction. They are demonstrating that resistance is more important than any single movement," he told *AFP*.

Abu Mustafa, a fighter in the first intifada, said young Palestinians are "living under occupation" with "no hope and no work".

"For a third intifada to take place there has to be agreement among the factions," he said.

"But this is not the case: Hamas seeks international legitimacy, the left has grown weak, Fatah's clinging on to power and Islamic Jihad is Islamic Jihad — it was ready yesterday, is ready today and will be ready tomorrow."

Confrontations are taking place mostly in the northern West Bank. But Adnan believes they could spread across the territories if, for example, Israeli forces "assassinated Fathi Hazem". Hazem's son Raad killed three Israelis in a shooting spree in Tel Aviv's busy Dizengoff Street nightlife district on April 7 before being shot dead after a massive manhunt.

The elder Hazem "is more than a hero; he's a true icon," Adnan said. If he were to be killed, "then the intifada would be complete".

Hazem, who features on Israel's "Most Wanted" list, lost a second son during a raid on Jenin, where he occasionally ventures out surrounded by men toting M-16 assault rifles.

Palestinian prime minister Mohammad

Shtayyeh, whose government has come under fire amid backroom talks about the future of the PA in the post-Abbas era, made a recent rare visit to the Jenin camp. While there he appeared alongside Fathi Hazem and fighters more heavily armed than the Palestinian police. He said the fight would continue from "generation to generation, sacrifice to sacrifice", and accused Israel of not wanting peace and intensifying its occupation since 1967.

More than 475,000 Israelis now live in West Bank settlements that are illegal under international law. Tor Wennesland, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, has also visited Nablus and Jenin, seeking to ease growing tensions in the West Bank.

The territory has been eclipsed in recent years by wars in the Gaza Strip, the separate Palestinian enclave controlled by the Islamist movement Hamas. Since its most recent war with Israel, in 2021, Hamas "wants Gaza to remain relatively calm and allow the dynamic to play out in the West Bank", Wennesland told *AFP*. Armed groups there "seemingly have access to funding... Some of the money may be coming from outside," he said.

"I am not able to predict in which direction, for instance, the Nablus mobilisation or narrative will lead. The focus should be on calming the situation, alongside curbing the activities of radical settlers," he added. — *AFP*



## O B I T

■ HE LEAVES A LEGACY TRANSCENDING VARIOUS SPHERES OF PUBLIC SERVICE

## FINAL SONG PLAYS FOR 'LATE DATE' STAR

*George Opiyo's soothing baritone was exceptional and he would play wonderful ballads which he memorably said were 'hot like potato salad'*

● BY BILL ODIDI

**A**broadcaster, journalist, record producer, lawyer and diplomat. That sums up the life of George Opiyo, who died on October 19, leaving a legacy transcending various spheres of public service.

Opiyo became a household name early in the 1970s, when he presented popular radio shows on the General Service of the *Voice of Kenya (VOK)*, now *Kenya Broadcasting Corporation*, while studying law at the University of Nairobi. "George had a distinct style, always dressed in black from head to toe and carrying a black briefcase," recalls Abdul Haq, a colleague and friend on the General Service.

"He didn't just yap on air but he always had a message and did a lot of research into every track that he played," says Haq. "He loved Barry White, perhaps even aspired to have a baritone like the great American singer." Opiyo presented *Breakfast Club*, *Late Date* and *Yours for the Asking*. "His *Yours for the Asking* was different because he spoke directly to the listeners, as if having a one-on-one with them," Haq remembers. "We had a friendly rivalry for ratings."

John Sibi Okumu read news on the General Service in the 1970s and describes George Opiyo as "Mr Cool" of the era: "His soothing baritone on *Late Date* was exceptional and he would play wonderful ballads which he memorably said were 'hot like potato salad'."

Kazungu Katana, who joined the VOK in 1973, benefitted from Opiyo's mentorship. "He was very outgoing but also choosy about his friends and I was lucky to bond with him as a colleague and friend," says Katana.

"He used his legal knowledge and language to help many colleagues to respond to disciplinary letters, especially when he felt there was no justification such for action by the bosses," says Lenny Mwashegwa, another popular VOK presenter. Opiyo's love

for Congolese rumba was well known and he popularised the genre on the General Service, a departure from the station's format of Western pop, soul and country music.

From his personal reflections, titled *The Long Journey for Survival*, George Opiyo Obong'o was born in 1951 in Kamunda Village in Awasi, Kisumu, the third child in a family of eight. His father died when he was just seven years old and his ailing mother sent him and two brothers to Awasi Primary School. He had to juggle between classes and performing odd jobs to support the family.

At one point, he left school and went to live with his sister at Koru Sisal Estates, where he was to earn nine shillings a month. His mother would have none of it and sent him right back to school. Opiyo later joined Gendia Primary School while also working as housekeeper for a Ugandan national at Kendu Mission Publishing House. In 1966, he was admitted to The Prince of Wales School (now known as Nairobi School), where he made an extra shilling by washing cars for teachers over the weekends. His Housemaster at Rhodes House, Keith Harrington, was the first to take up the 'car wash facility'. Early in the 1970s, during recording sessions for the school programmes on VOK, a young George Opiyo attracted the attention of Peter Clare, who was the Head of the General Service, and who invited him back to the station to present entertainment programmes.

"My music collection on *Late Date* was well received and the feedback made me quite popular with my bosses," he wrote. "Before I knew it, I was a regular presenter at the VOK and this became the best paying assignment I had had

till then." He also wrote a column in the *Daily Nation* called Teen Time, "which earned me quite a bit of money... My poor mother's budget became quite healthy".

A fan from the University of Nairobi introduced him to the leader of the Congolese band, Les Mangelepa, which was performing at Garden Square, Nairobi. Band leader Evany Kabila wa Kabanze recalls first seeing Opiyo when he went to the Aquarius Club in Ngara to interview Baba Gaston Ilunga wa Ilunga.

"He became our manager when we broke off from Baba Gaston and formed Mangelepa. He helped us sign distribution deals with Phares Oluoch Kanindo (POK label), EMI Records and Polygram," Kabanze recalls.

By this time, Opiyo had launched his JoJo Productions, and in 1976, Mangelepa released a string of hit singles under the label, including *Ekubuku*, *Sakina*, *Aoko*, *Mangelepa Kamili* and *Naleli Papa*. He received a job offer from East African Records (Polygram), which he turned down because he had a year to go before graduating from the University of Nairobi. Once he got his law degree, Opiyo was formally employed

as a Programme Producer at the VOK. That same year, event promoter Sam Ngugi, who had just returned from Japan with some of the best disco equipment of the time, engaged Opiyo as a DJ for shows across the country. Abdul Haq and Opiyo were the joint hosts of the World Disco Dancing Championships (Kenya Chapter), an event that grabbed national attention in 1980.

Opiyo declined an opportunity to work for *Radio Broadcasting Services* in South Africa, which covered stations catering to the black community during the apartheid regime.

Instead, he joined the Africa Service of *Radio Deutsche Welle* in Cologne on a four-year contract.

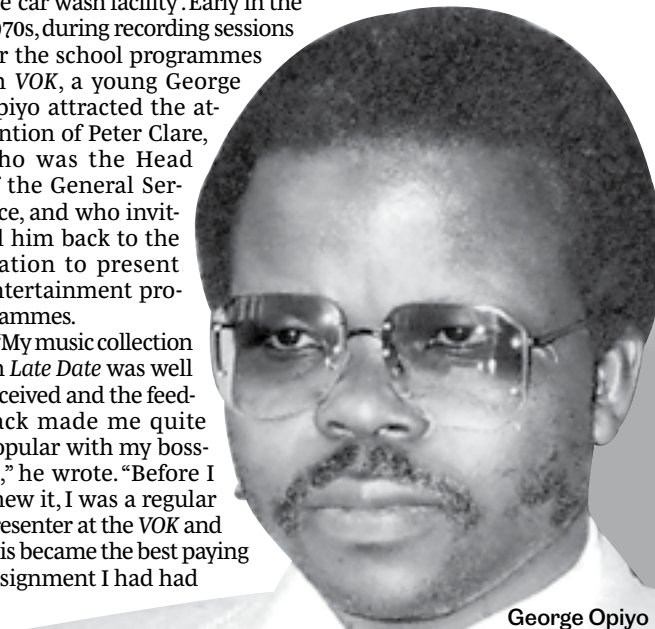
"I was in Germany in 1983 on an exchange programme and got to renew my friendship with George," says Mwashegwa.

When he returned to Kenya in 1987, Opiyo was appointed by the Ministry of Information to take charge of public relations for the Fourth All Africa Games in Nairobi, then posted as Press Attaché at the Kenyan Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden. He returned to the Ministry of Information after his diplomatic stint and subsequently rose to become Director of Information.

Upon retirement, he served at the Kenya Film Commission and his last public assignment was as Lead Consultant at the Kenya Yearbook Editorial Board. He relocated to Awasi towards the end of 2020, where he set up a legal practice. "He took up a lot of succession cases on *pro bono* basis as his way of giving back to the community," says his youngest son, Joash.

Opiyo died at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital in Kisumu, where he was being treated for pneumonia.

He reflected in his personal notes: "I thank God that the fatherless boy whose working life began at the sisal store at Awasi has spent the best years of his life struggling to stand on his feet but also to ensure that his family has a dignified existence."



George Opiyo



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