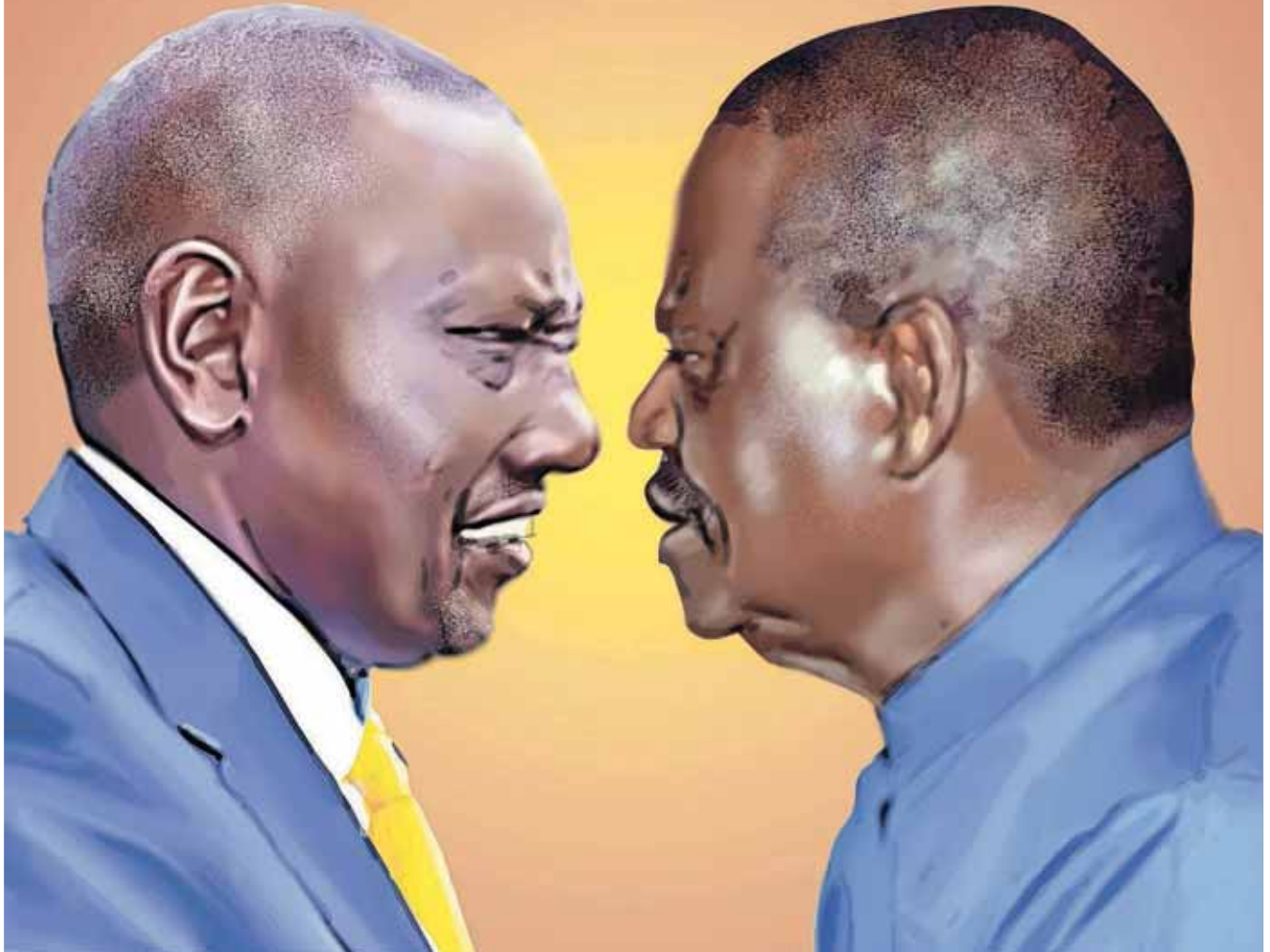


THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

ISSUE NO. 31 | April 2, 2023 FREE WITH 'SUNDAY NATION'

FACE OFF



The weekly demonstrations against the high cost of living and alleged electoral fraud called by veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga have plunged the country into intense uncertainty. With growing defiance by the Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya coalition brigade, and an uncompromising government stance fronted by President Ruto, the nation sits on the brink of Armageddon

The Nation ePaper NOW Available on the PlayStore anywhere, anytime.

Follow the link to subscribe

➤ epaper.nation.africa.

Scan to
Download



Or download from Google playstore



f Nation

▶ Nation

🐦 Nation Africa

For customer support Tel: 0790 111 111

Email: epaper@ke.nationmedia.com

NATION
→ ePaper



letter from the editor

Inside

5 RIVAL CAMPS DIG IN: The international community began to take notice of the political upheaval in Kenya in the wake of the attack on the Kenyatta family's property and the threat of escalation of violence.

10 RIDDLE OF THE SH300M FAKE POWER METRES: Differences between rival technical teams and engineers at Kenya Power over the quality of electricity metres from China leave customers at risk.

16 COOKING UP A STORM: Tedd Waweru, one of the biggest social media personalities in the food industry, has turned his hobby of making delicious meals into a lucrative online influencer business.

29 NO END TO GUN VIOLENCE: Americans are speaking out about their experiences, and the impact of multiple massacres, including the recent Nashville killing of three children and three adultsead.



We must take pride in ourselves and what we've given the world

Have Kenyan genes, or stay awhile in this country to become someone, somewhere else. To overcome the present qualms, to find sanity despite the ongoing chaos, to love ourselves and draw hope whenever we see a flicker of confusion, we must look outside for what we have given to the world and gain reassurance for the future.

There is this thing about our country that is impressive but which, somehow, we do not celebrate, considering it just coincidence. Somehow, our own children are capable of being respected leaders in other nations while at home we give them no chance; there lurks some mystery in the fact that those we seem to have rejected get invigorated and make us proud, especially when we seem directionless and are seething with sectarian stupidity.

It's a miracle that they do not turn away in shame and deny they were ever connected to us; they seem to take their Kenyan roots with so much pride and pronounce it for the entire world to hear. Let us take a simple look at our Kenyan darlings and beam with special pride.

The nation erupted with joy when Barack Obama wuod K'Ogelo – son of a Kenyan father and an American mother – became the first Black man to be elected the President of the United States on November 4, 2008.

Kenyans partied all night as Obama took the reins at the White House in front of his family members, led by grandmother Sarah. We did not expect anything from him, but the feel-good factor was there. The country even had a public holiday just to mark the depth of emotions we had for our son. In



Allan Buluku

There is this thing about our country that is impressive but which, somehow, we do not celebrate, considering it just a coincidence. Somehow, our own children are capable of being respected leaders in other nations while at home we give them no chance. There lurks some mystery in the fact that those we seem to have rejected get invigorated and make us proud, especially when we seem directionless and are seething with sectarian stupidity.

K'Ogelo, Siaya County, which was the epicentre of this euphoria, the concentration of the pride, cheers and shouts erupted in villages as women danced and men paraded around carrying tree branches. A Kenyan had become the most powerful man in the world.

In October last year, we joined the world in congratulating Rishi Sunak, a Briton with Kenyan roots, as he became the first UK Prime Minister of colour. Sunak's

father, Yashvir Sunak, was born and raised in Kenya. After living here for a while, Sunak's parents emigrated to the UK in the 1980s, where Yashvir worked as a physician and Rishi operated a pharmacy.

In November 2018, Ilhan Omar – a former refugee from Somalia who was partly raised in Kenya – was elected to the US Congress for Minnesota's fifth congressional district. Born in Somalia, Ilhan fled war with her family and grew up partly at the Daadab Refugee Camp. The family moved to the US in 1995, when she was 12. They settled in Virginia before moving to Minneapolis.

And last week, Humza Yousaf, yet another Western politician with Kenyan roots, was elected First Minister of Scotland. He represents a growing '80s generation that attests to the vibrancy of an expanding Kenyan diaspora.

His mother, Shaaista Bhutta, was born and grew up in Kenya – the place she once called home. But she and her parents became victims of post-Independence discrimination against the Asian community, who were forced to quit their jobs within the civil service and seek solace in the UK.

We cannot lose hope in our nation, despite our political divisions. Instead, this should inspire an epoch of introspection that opens our eyes to our greatness and stirs up pride. The mistakes we have made we must see and learn from. This nation shall not burn but must rise in intelligence and humility to further greatness here at home, and abroad.

abuluku@ke.nationmedia.com

the telescope

■ **Raila has termed the process a sham**

IEBC panel to shortlist candidates

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) Selection Panel will this week commence the shortlisting and interviews for the positions of the chairperson and six commissioners.

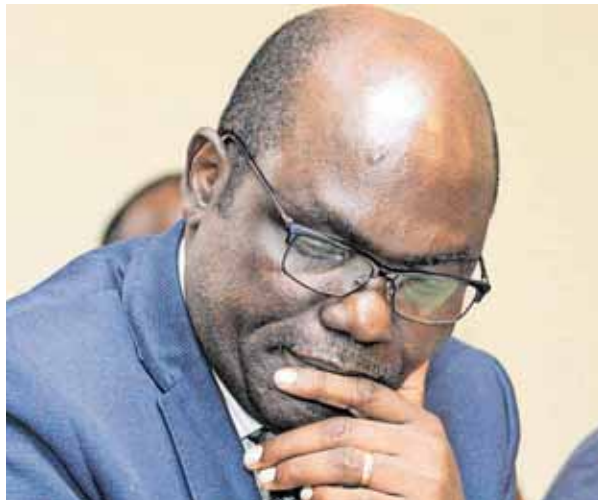
The Selection Panel chairman, Nelson Makanda, confirmed last week that 920 people had applied for the seven positions.

Of these applicants, 25 were for the IEBC chairman's position while the remaining 895 were for the commissioners' jobs.

The successful applicants will replace retired Chairman

Wafula Chebukati, who oversaw three contentious general elections in Kenya in 2017 and 2022. The 2017 polls, won by former President Uhuru Kenyatta, were nullified by the Supreme Court, while the 2022 election, won by William Ruto, has been disputed by the opposition.

The recruitment process is ongoing despite a demand by Azimio leader Raila Odinga's demands to stop it. Odinga has termed the process a sham and asked that the opposition be involved in the selection process through Parliament.



Former IEBC Chairman Wafula Chebukati when he appeared before the Constitutional Implementation and Oversight Committee on June 12, 2018.

■ **Entertainment spots ready for revellers**

Kenyans gear up for Easter hols



When most people leave work on Thursday, they will not be going back until Tuesday. The long Easter weekend is here with us, the most important holiday in the Christian calendar after Christmas. Kenyans

across the country will mark this holy weekend in various places, with many expected to travel out of major cities for fun and adventure.

Various entertainment spots in the country have lined up shows for revellers this weekend.

Holiday destinations have not been left behind as they have come up with packages offering an array of offers during this long holiday.

■ **A 2016 referendum legalised recreational use**



A sign with a green cross is seen outside an unlicensed cannabis dispensary in East Los Angeles, California, on December 17, 2022.

California's weed black market thrives

Omar Buddakey emerges from a nondescript building in Los Angeles with a joint in his hand.

Five years after cannabis was legalised in California, black market transactions like this one — where no one pays any taxes, and the product is not regulated — remain commonplace. "Legal shops are too expensive," the 27-year-old tells *AFP*, as he lights up his preroll.

Over the course of a year, Buddakey estimates he saves the equivalent of a paycheck from his patient transport job by avoiding the state-sanctioned outlets.

"I'd rather pay less for the same thing. And I know it's the same thing, because it gives me the same feeling." Buddakey's working-class

neighborhood in east Los Angeles is teeming with stores like this one, many marked by a green cross.

Although they are illegal, they openly advertise online, and many have their own websites.

Inside one of them, a man who gives his name only as "Joe" welcomes a steady stream of customers who are offered a selection of buds and leaves. Here, an ounce (30 grams) of weed sells for \$100 — \$35 less than at a state-regulated store.

"Cops have raided this shop probably eight to 10 times," he tells *AFP*. "They take the weed, our cameras and all the cash. We just re-open the next hour or the next day." A 2016 referendum legalised recreational use of cannabis in California.

■ **It will split its \$220bn empire into six businesses**

Alibaba's overhaul a 'smart' move



Alibaba, China's biggest e-commerce company, has announced plans to split its business into six groups in one of the most significant overhauls of a leading Chinese tech firm to date. Alibaba has said it will split its \$220 billion empire into

six businesses focusing on logistics, cloud computing, entertainment, e-commerce, and two others offering services to global businesses.

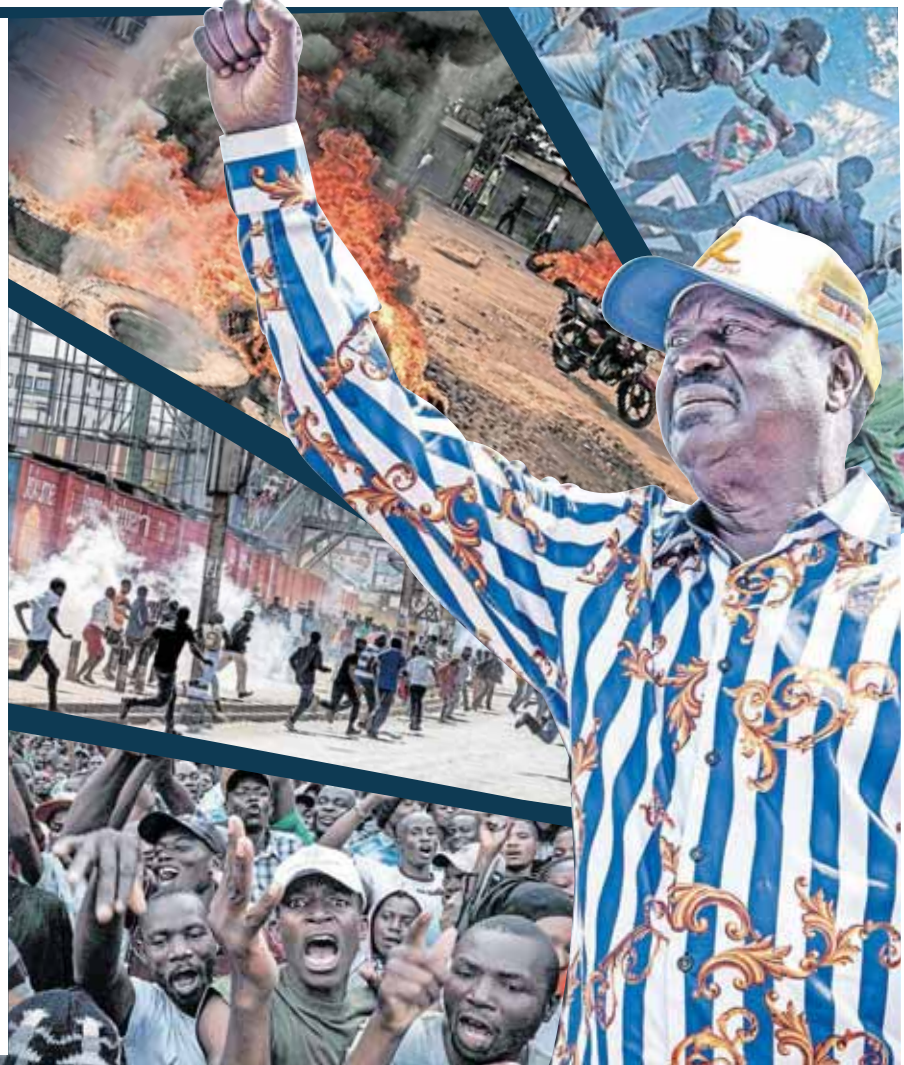
Its logistics arm, Cainiao, helped deliver Chinese vaccines around the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. Its cloud computing service was seen as a rival to Amazon until last year, when the Chinese government suspended a partnership with Alibaba, saying the company failed to quickly address cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

kenya lens

■ CALLS FOR AN END TO THE CONFRONTATION GO UNHEEDED

RIVAL CAMPS DIG IN

The international community began to take notice of the political upheaval in Kenya in the wake of the attack on the Kenyatta family's property and the threat of escalation



● BY MACHARIA GAI THO

The eyes of the world are once again on Kenya as the familiar cycle of post-election disturbances took an increasingly ominous turn last Monday with an unprecedented attack on a former president's property as police looked the other way.

It is almost certain that the destruction, stock theft, arson and attempted land grab on a vast tract on the outskirts of Nairobi owned by the family of ex-President Uhuru Kenyatta was planned and executed by elements high-up in President William Ruto's government.

By its scale, daring and level of impunity, it was the sort of event unlikely to have been mooted and implemented without the knowledge of the highest offices

in the land. And it appears to have been planned well in advance, if prior public statements from Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and National Assembly Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah are anything to go by.

There were also coded social media messages from Cabinet Secretary for Trade and Investment Moses Kuria and President Ruto's digital media propaganda lead, the Chief Administrative Secretary for Information Dennis Itumbi. The narratives spun by the government dwelt around claims, though no proof has ever been provided, that Mr Kenyatta was the financier of the protest rallies organised by opposition leader Raila Odinga.

There were clear threats that demonstrations which forced small businesses to shut down

would be countered by actions hitting the big enterprises owned by the protest organisers.

The demonstrations, also tapping into growing discontent around the cost of living, have managed to paralyse the capital city, Nairobi, and the lakeside town of Kisumu since they were launched on March 20 despite stern warnings that they were illegal and would be forcefully broken.

The weekly demonstrations had already wrought a level of devastation in the running battles between police and participants, destruction by stone-throwing mobs and shutting down of large parts of the city to regular commuter traffic and business activities. It was, however, the invasion of the 20,000-acre Kenyatta spread abutting the Eastern

Bypass, hosting the largest dairy plant in the region, Brookside, that raised the alarm. Images that went viral of attackers purporting to demarcate land parcels for themselves while others drove and carried away hundreds of prize sheep and goats became the big talking point last Monday.

On the same day there was also, on a much smaller scale, an attack by a stone-throwing mob on the East Africa Spectre Limited gas cylinder manufacturing factory owned by the Odinga family, presenting the picture of a coordinated assault targeting the two families. The events last Monday, for the first time since the protests began, presented the threat of a major escalation in growing defiance by Raila's Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya alliance brigade

Continued on Page 6

kenya lens

No let-up: Opposition supporters keep the fire burning

Continued from Page 5

and an uncompromising government stance fronted by Gachagua and Inspector-General of Police Japhet Koome.

There were also the narratives pushed by Mt Kenya politicians around Gachagua depicting the demonstrations as mostly affecting businesses owned by their kith and kin in Nairobi. Conflicts built around political-ethnic competition and the potential for class conflict out of the Kenya Kwanza Hustler vs Dynasty campaign will always make for a toxic mix. What might also have raised an alarm were indications of government employing criminal gangs to counter the opposition. Kenya is still not fully healed from the dark days of State-sponsored ethnic clashes of the one-party regime of President Daniel arap Moi that used irregular militia, supported by security agencies and the administration machinery, to drive campaigns of murder, arson, land grabs and mass evictions to counter the multi-party campaign in the early 1990s.

And still fresh in mind is the deadly post-election violence of 2007-08, in which more than 1,300 people were killed and half a million run out of their homes, mostly in the Rift Valley, when Odinga disputed President Mwai Kibaki's victory. In recent speeches, Ruto has talked proudly about the role he played resisting the Kibaki election and eventually helping Raila secure the post of Prime Minister in the Grand Coalition government negotiated by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

He has recounted how, for his efforts on behalf of Raila, he was hauled before the International Criminal Court (alongside Kenyatta, who was in the Kibaki camp) facing charges of crimes against humanity. The case was abandoned mid-stream for lack of evidence, but has never been closed.

It was in the wake of the Monday troubles and the threat of escalation that the international community began to take serious notice. The African Union, the United States and a large coalition of western nations all joined an increasing chorus calling on both sides to step back. While supporting the principle of the right to assembly



Opposition supporters light bonfires during clashes with police during protests against the high cost of living in Nairobi, on March 27. PHOTO | AFP

and procession enshrined in the Constitution, they all appealed to Raila to call off the demonstrations, noting that violence, destruction and interference with normal movement and commerce is badly impacting on peace and the economy. However, they also called on the authorities to respect the constitutional rights of protesters, refrain from using excessive force and, notably, also halt invasions and destruction of private property, a clear reference to the attacks on the Uhuru and Raila family properties. Notably, the statements, all couched in careful diplomatic jargon that could be interpreted various ways, acknowledged the outcome of the 2022 presidential election and the Supreme Court's upholding of the same. That was a clear rebuff of Raila's claims that the elections were stolen.

A visiting US congressional delegation called on both Gachagua and Raila, appealing for an end to the confrontational stances, but they might have run into brick walls on both sides. Going by his hardline rhetoric, the Deputy President would be the last man to back down, rejecting even calls for dialogue floated by religious leaders, the business community and other interest groups. Raila is also indicating that he is in for the long haul, with very little prospects of him abandoning the protests unless at least assured that some of his demands will be met.

He is unlikely to be satisfied just with the opportunity to present a memorandum to President Ruto outlining his demands and grievances. Raila's key grouse, beyond the issues he is exploiting on the cost of living that can hardly be re-

solved by street protests, is what he calls electoral justice. After losing the Supreme Court petition challenging Ruto's victory, Raila took a short break before coming up with sensational claims that a whistle blower from within the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) had provided evidence that he was the clear winner of the presidential election. He published data and copies of election result forms allegedly provided by the whistleblower, but they offered no concrete proof and could be dismissed just as easily as the suspect evidence presented at the Supreme Court. However, Odinga has continued to insist that truth will only be established if the IEBC servers are "opened" to reveal the original election results count from polling stations and constituency tallying centres before allegedly being tampered with at the Bomas of Kenya national tallying centre.

The IEBC has remained silent on the demand, leaving President Ruto to unwisely respond as if he controlled the electoral body. Raila is making much of that, as well as the fact that the Supreme Court never followed up on the IEBC's apparent defiance of a court order to "open the server".

Nobody has offered any cogent explanation of what "open the server" actually means and what might be found therein. But as long as the grey area remains and the faithful take it as gospel truth, Raila has something to hold on to in addition to crafty exploitation of discontent around the Ruto government's inability to offer instant fixes to economic travails. In the meantime, differences that

emerged after the 2017 polls, when Uhuru embraced opposition chief Raila and effectively discarded his DP, Ruto, will continue to reverberate. Ruto responded with an aggressive presidential campaign depicting the two as privileged scions of the political and business elite, while he represented the poor and neglected.

He came up with the Bottom Up economic policy out of the Hustler vs Dynasty narrative, and on taking office promised to dismantle historical monopoly of power and wealth by the so-called Deep State and entrenched cartels. Ruto's troops in Central Kenya, led by Gachagua, enthusiastically took up a campaign to fight the Kenyatta family's dominance in the region. They gave lists of enterprises and land holdings to be seized or broken up so that the poor, the landless and the dispossessed 'Children of Mau Mau' could have their share.

Once Raila started his protests, they came up with accusations that the veteran opposition leader was just a stooge being financed by the Kenyatta family to cause trouble as a way of protecting their wealth. Uhuru, indeed, supported Raila at the last election, had teamed up with him on the ill-fated Building Bridges Initiative and, post-elections, has publicly shown his support for the last campaign. However, no evidence has ever been provided that he is financing the protests or involved in their planning and organisation. There thus seems to be more at stake than just the claims of a stolen election or discontent over failed election promises and the cost of living.

kenya lens

■ Who will blink first? It is difficult to say at this stage

● BY MACHARIA GAITHO

The Bill of Rights in the Constitution clearly sets out that “every person has the right, peaceably and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket, and to present petitions to public authorities”.

However, Interior Cabinet Secretary Kithure Kindiki and Inspector-General of Police Japhet Koome stand accused of defying this clear constitutional provision by issuing blanket bans on the series of demonstrations called by opposition leader Raila Odinga. Even when the protest organisers have seemingly complied with the law relating to public processions by notifying Koome or his county police commanders of their intention to march on a specific day, the notifications have been seemingly thrown out of the window without a second glance.

Asked about this recently by *The Weekly Review*, Nairobi Police commander Adamson Bungei asserted that he was not aware of any such notifications by Odinga’s Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya coalition and as such cannot be in a position to consider providing security for any planned marches. He explained that any notifications of such nature are supposed to be presented to the police station commander within the specific precinct where the activity was set to take place.

But going by the very strong public warning issued by Kindiki and Koome declaring Azimio gatherings illegal and therefore set to be dispersed by force, it is obvious that no police station chief in Nairobi or elsewhere would consider giving assent to any such demonstrations.

It might also be presumed that the Azimio demonstration organisers are sending out notifications to the police chiefs as public relations exercises. They are general notices of protest marches on the specific date, but silent on time and duration, exact venue of assembly, procession route and other details. Those are the details by which the police can then draw up plans for security, crowd control, traffic management, road closures and so on. From the above it is evident that

Ruto, Raila prisoners of their bands of hardliners

the authorities are determined to ban the Azimio rallies even if they complied with all the provisions of the Public Order Act, citing threats to law and order even before there is any evidence of violence or unruly behaviour. These are probably political rather than security decisions.

By the same token, however, the Azimio rally organisers seem determined not to comply with the laws and regulations governing public assemblies and processions. They cite the constitutional rights, but ignore the fact that the same Constitution specifies “peaceably and unarmed”, and that enjoyment of such freedoms must not “prejudice the rights and fundamental freedoms of others”. This explanation is necessary to illustrate that it is not just about the constitutional rights and laws relating to public gatherings, but about two obdurate political forces engaging in a test of wills that presages a major showdown.

President William Ruto and Raila Odinga are, in many ways, birds of a feather. Both command dedicated followings. One has at his beck and call the State security and administrative as well as loyal political network ready to carry out his bidding. The other enjoys the command of near-fanatical followers who have for decades supported him through thick and thin, whether in office or out of office, ready to follow him to the gates of hell if need be. The president and the

opposition leader are both headstrong career politicians who devote their entire lives to politics above all else. Both are masters at planning and crafting political strategies for their dedicated faithful to wage battle on their behalf. The older Raila has always been the master of the game, but in the relatively youthful Ruto he seems to have found a worthy successor, and rival, in the politics of brinkmanship.

Who will blink first? It is difficult to say at this stage, but in building up such formidable political formations, Ruto and Raila have both also become prisoners of their respective bands of hardliners and fanatical followers.

In President Ruto’s camp, an inflexible grouping led by Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua has taken every opportunity to vow that they will never allow negotiations with Raila, whom they accuse of fomenting trouble so that he can eventually secure a ‘handshake’, and a settlement that wins him a seat at the table, as he presumably did following the 2007 and 2017 electoral defeats. Some of the harsh rhetoric delivered at Kenya Kwanza gatherings suggests that the President is being warned of an internal rebellion should he contemplate dialogue.

Then there is Raila, whose unyielding and seemingly untiring support base take at face value his promises to lead them to Canaan, at elections, or in this case to storm the gates of State

House and take his rightful place on the seat of power. If they cannot breach State House security, they will be content to brave police tear gas, water cannons and baton charges through the streets of Kibera, Kawangware, Eastleigh, Mathare and other teeming Nairobi slums, fortified by the belief that sooner or later he will prevail.

After all the effort they have put in and the risks they have taken, Raila’s supporters would rightfully feel betrayed if he gave up the fight. The two titans are thus hostage to their respective camps, and none of them will enter any settlement that does not come with proclamation of victory. Both Ruto and Raila know that sooner or later they must reach accommodation, or both come out losers when prolonged unrest brings the country, and specifically economic recovery programmes, to a halt.

Neither of them can afford that because they will then have failed their respective constituents. What is lacking right now is an honest broker, but going by the interest of the international community as well as local religious and civil society bodies are showing, both Raila and Ruto will be under pressure to abandon obdurate postures. What remains unclear is what shape or form a settlement could take. Ruto agreeing that he was not the rightful winner of the presidential election and handing over power to Raila is out of the question.

A power-sharing formula akin to the 2008 Grand Coalition between President Mwai Kibaki and Odinga that stilled a deadly bout of post-election violence might well be under consideration, but circumstances then and now are vastly different. That time Kenya seemed headed for civil war and complete disintegration into anarchy and lawlessness.

This time it is just cat-and-mouse games between police and demonstrators at regular intervals mainly in Nairobi and Kisumu, but in between, life proceeds at its normal sedate pace. Everything might eventually be determined by which of the two leaders has superior staying power in an environment where fatique will surely set in.



Interior CS Kithure Kindiki and Inspector-General of Police Japhet Koome (centre) stand accused of defying a clear constitutional provision by issuing blanket bans on the series of demonstrations called by opposition leader Raila Odinga. DENNIS ONSONGO | NATION

kenya lens

■ VICIOUS ATTACKS ON FORMER FIRST FAMILY

Former President may not have been on the ballot on August 9, but the polls partly revolved around him, which is why he is trapped in the political friction

• BY OSCAR OBONYO

He ascended to power in 2013 with five counts of crimes against humanity allegedly committed during the 2007/8 post-election mayhem hanging on his head, and now his exit from power ten years later is similarly tottering on the brink of chaos and bloodshed.

Former President Uhuru Kenya is understandably a disturbed soul over the latest turn of events. Only last Monday, the bedlam of the ongoing mass action was brought to his doorstep, when armed intruders entered the Northlands farm owned by his family in broad daylight and wreaked havoc, destroying property and making away with hundreds of sheep and goats.

As the country's immediate former Commander-in-Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces, and with the advantage of connections built in the security sector over the last decade, Kenyatta was undoubtedly privy to intelligence reports on the impending invasion of his farm in Kiambu County. But the former President reportedly opted to avert a bloody confrontation by not beefing up security at his farm or militarily fighting off the invasion.

The mood, emotions and reactions of the larger Kenyatta family following the latest development can be discerned from the disposition of Uhuru's first cousin, Ngengi Muigai. The former Gatundu MP is evidently low spirited and although the family has consulted over the Monday raid, he is tight-lipped on the details.

"We are touched and I personally have a heavy heart about this

THE UHURU FACTOR



development, but I am sorry that is as far as I can go. The (former) President would not like to have this matter discussed and I cannot indulge you further on this," he told this writer in a whispering tone.

Be that as it may, a number of questions still linger, especially how a former Head of State could be targeted – so viciously and crudely – for attack in his home county by individuals believed to be from the same locality. What is even more intriguing is the fact that, despite having teamed up with many throughout his political journey spanning two decades, few have publicly come up to his defence.

Despite Muigai's muted response regarding the situation, he is clearly shocked. The attack has been a major eye-opener for the Kenyattas, who might initially have underestimated the amount of bad blood between them and the William Ruto administration. The police force, which was conspicuously absent during the six-hour-plus daytime operation at the Northlands farm, has since undertaken to "carry out investigations".

Having had a brush with the International Criminal Court at The Hague, Netherlands, and been cleared of culpability in the 2007/8 post-election violence, which was triggered by highly disputed and discredited presidential elections, Kenyatta has reportedly strived to stay away from activities that could inflame violent conflict. This partly explains why, at the heat of the moment on January 30, 2018, he directed security forces to withdraw from Uhuru Park in Nairobi, where his main rival in the 2017 polls, Raila Odinga, was sworn in as "the People's President".

Kenyatta's former Cabinet Secretary and Secretary-General of his Jubilee Party, Raphael Tuju, would concede during a live televised interview last year that the President opted to climb down to avoid an ugly confrontation with opposition leaders and supporters, "which had the potential of resulting in a bloodbath in the country".

Known for embracing a contradictory political trajectory or doing exactly the opposite of what is anticipated, the notion of Uhuru supporting Raila's candida-

kenya lens

ture seems to have backfired badly; either that, or Kenyatta did not manage this political project too smartly.

Ahead of the 2007 General Election, for instance, he registered political history when, as Kanu party leader and Leader of the Official Opposition in the ninth Parliament, he dropped his presidential bid and supported Mwai Kibaki's re-election instead. Later, he entered into an unforeseen political marriage with Ruto in 2013 to form government. Members of Kenyatta's and Ruto's Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities had been consumed in a bloody ethnic war in the Rift Valley region five years earlier.

But it was the symbolic handshake with Raila on March 9, 2018, that took most people by surprise. Naturally, it was anticipated that Uhuru would front Ruto, his deputy of two terms, as his successor, or another senior politician from within the ruling Jubilee party in the event his differences with Ruto were irretrievable.

While David Murathe, a strong ally of the former President attributes his political contradictions to astuteness, Dr Henry Wabwire opines that some of Uhuru's moves border on political recklessness: "His tendency to ignore the rather obvious options and instead walk paths less travelled by counterparts is bravery that is laudable. However, some are high-risk experiments that have stalled mid-way," observes the political analyst.

Now, for his public support and financial backing of Raila, Uhuru, who served as Chairman of the Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya Council, has been targeted for attack by Ruto and his allies. Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua tore into the outgoing President for supporting Raila barely seconds after being sworn in on September 13 last year, and right before invited guests from foreign countries.

Members of the Kenya Kwanza Alliance, including National Assembly Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah, believe that Kenyatta is financing the protest rallies and mass action organised by Azimio. Kenyatta, therefore, is targeted for what government believes is a deliberate move to undermine its leadership and operations.

The Jubilee party leader may not have been on the ballot in the



Counting losses: Fire burns down a section of trees in Northlands City on March 27. Invaders forced their way into the land owned by the family of former President Uhuru Kenyatta and caused wanton destruction. The group stole livestock and destroyed boundary fences near Kamakis, along the Eastern Bypass. At least one journalist was injured as the invaders attacked anyone that attempted to cover the incident. DENNIS ONSONGO | NATION

August 9 presidential election, but the poll exercise partly revolved around him. And this precisely explains why he is trapped in the current political friction.

For teaming up with Raila and supporting his presidential campaign, Kenyatta has paid a heavy political price. His erstwhile deputy, whose presidential bid he disparaged, has coloured Uhuru's Mt Kenya backyard yellow (UDA colours), including in his own rural constituency of Gatundu South, where he served as area Member of Parliament between 2002 and 2013. He has been left with a string of political orphans, including former CSs Peter Munya (Agriculture), Joe Mucheru (Information), Dr Fred Matiang'i (Interior), James Macharia (Transport), Sicily Kariuki (formerly Water) and Tuju (CS without portfolio); former National Assembly Majority Leader Amos Kimunya and party Secretary-General Jeremiah Kiomi.

Although out of government, the former President has financial muscle and enjoys international connections as well goodwill from relatively influential partners – which explains the jitters in government and claims that Kenyatta is funding the ongoing opposition rallies, dubbed "The People's Public Barazas".

Nonetheless, except for his appearance in an open truck beside Raila in Kisumu, where he addressed residents after attending the burial of former Education CS Prof George Magoha in Gem, Siaya County, the former President has not been seen in any political forum or event since last year's elections.

With Uhuru now out of power and his cousins, Muigai and Beth Mugo (who served as Dagoretti South MP and later Nominated Senator), now out of elective seats, the larger Kenyatta family has slowly eased itself out of the 'dirty game'.

And courtesy of internal political rifts, especially involving Uhuru's elder cousin, Kung'u Muigai, at play, it will take a bit of hard work for the Kenyattas to reassert themselves politically again. Kung'u, who is allied to Ruto, was recently given a job in the government as chairman the Kenya Cultural Centre Council Board.

Ngengi Muigai, who took over the Gatundu parliamentary seat after the death of Founding President Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, is tight-lipped on the political fortunes of the Kenyattas going forward. He is personally no longer interested in politics, stating that he is keen on confining himself to business.

The senior Kenyatta served as President and MP for Gatundu alongside his first-born son, Peter Muigai Kenyatta, who was MP for Juja, and daughter Margaret, Nairobi City's first female mayor.

Separately, as President, Uhuru belonged to a small, elite group of Africans who ruled the same countries that their fathers presided over. The four other pairs are Omar Bongo and his son, Ali Bongo of Gabon, Laurent Kabila and Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Seretse Khama and Ian Khama of Botswana and Gnassingbé Eyadéma and son Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé of Togo.

Persuaded by the fact that members of his Kikuyu community are very enterprising, residing and working in all the corners of the country, Kenyatta has always held that his kinsmen and women are the most vulnerable in the event of a nationwide conflict.

The former president accordingly considers it an achievement that, by the time of his exit from office, he had created a friendly and enabling environment for members of his community to comfortably do business across the country, including in the heart of Kisumu City amongst the Luo community, who were previously hostile towards them.

kenya lens

■ LESSONS FROM PAST

As the opposition and government dig into their positions, history presents a number of avenues that can be used to break the deadlock

• By OSCAR OBONYO

When he presided over the 2022 Madaraka Day celebrations on June 1 – his last public national day function as President – Uhuru Kenyatta defied protocol by denying his then deputy, William Ruto, an opportunity to address the nation. It was an eerie signal of the acrimony that would characterise the approaching presidential contest, then just 68 days away, and Uhuru's own political succession.

But seizing the opportunity, an optimistic Kericho Senator Aaron Cheruiyot posted a picture of Ruto and Raila Odinga shaking hands at the event, with a rather cheeky caption: "The Nilotes size each other up. The Nilotes derby on August 9, 2022 will be like no other. Good thing, it will be home either way." Although accused of perpetuating tribal politics, the comments were made purely in jest, with the assumption that the polls would be a friendly contest between members of the same ethno-linguistic bloc. How wrong he was!

Like all other derbies, especially in football, there is never a conclusive end to such rivalry, even after the final whistle. And the central role played by Uhuru – who opted to make public his preferred side – has further poisoned and complicated the Ruto-Raila game.

Despite Kenyatta respecting the final outcome and handing over the instruments of power to Ruto, the standoff between the new President and Odinga still holds. It is the source of ongoing mass action declared by the opposition Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya coalition.

As the situation escalates, so does the grandstanding between Ru-

BREAKING THE IMPASSE



to and Raila, and their supporters. Those allied to the United Democratic Alliance leader have declared that this time round "the old man must be taught a lesson". Raila's backers, on the other hand, have vowed to "push some sense into the hard-headed Ruto". Only a fortnight ago, the President ruled out the possibility of caving in to pressure to engage his rival through what he refers to as "unconstitutional means". He said, however, that he was ready to engage with any leader provided it is within the confines of the Constitution. The Azimio leader has similarly rubbished claims by Ruto-allied politicians that his end game is to "enter government through the backdoor". The 77-year-old politician maintains he is only interested in pushing the case of poor Kenyans being subjected to high costs of living owing to government's "departure from its campaign promises".

The current hostilities have attracted the interest of many, including the African Union Commission. On Tuesday, the AU Commission chairperson Moussa Faki asked President Ruto and Raila to address their differences. Faki is fairly well-versed with the issues at hand and is known to the two protagonists.

The AU has since 2007 played a crucial role in calming Kenya's po-

litical and electoral heat. Following the 2007/8 post-election violence triggered by the highly disputed and discredited presidential poll, former Ghanaian President John Kuffor and later former United Nations Secretary General Dr Kofi Annan rushed in to rescue the country from bloodbath.

Besides overseeing a political settlement that created a Grand Coalition Government, with Mwai Kibaki as President and Raila as Prime Minister, the late UN chief also set up two key commissions – the Independent Review Committee and the Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence – led by retired South African judge Johann Kriegler and Kenyan judge Philip Waki. The Kriegler Commission made a raft of proposals to improve the electoral process, most of which were implemented.

Also pushing for a truce are the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and a group of religious leaders. The NCIC Chairperson, Dr Samuel Kobia, wants an immediate stop to the demonstrations and counter-demonstrations and adoption of dialogue instead.

However, the dialogue route is not acceptable to all. Those already in government, for instance, fear that dialogue could precipitate a scenario where some could be el-

bowed out to accommodate the opposition leader and his lieutenants. There is already a precedent to this effect: After he was controversially declared the victor in the December 2007 presidential poll, Kibaki appointed a 17-member Cabinet on January 8, 2008 that included Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya leader Kalonzo Musyoka as Vice-President and Ford-Kenya's Moses Wetang'ula as Foreign Affairs Minister.

The route of a Grand Coalition Government is one of the avenues that can be used to calm political temperatures, even though Ruto and Raila have separately expressed disinterest in a symbolic handshake, let alone forming a government of national unity. In any case, and unlike in 2007, petition mechanisms were put in place following the establishment of the Supreme Court – an avenue that the opposition has already exhausted.

The political class can also borrow from the Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group (IPPG) created in September 1997. Then, parliament adopted constitutional reforms intended to avert bloodshed ahead of elections expected to take place in December that year. Spearheaded by the then MP for Fafi, Jillo Falana of the ruling Kanu party, the IPPG sought to improve polls manage-

kenya lens

ment by including representatives of political parties in the then Electoral Commission of Kenya.

Other changes provided for the repeal of laws that gave room for detention without trial, as well as equal access to State media by the opposition and the ruling party.

But claiming that today the government has gone to bed with virtually all other arms of government, constitutional lawyer Paul Mwangi argues that picketing is the only available option for the people at the moment.

Mwangi, who is also Raila's lawyer,

states that the people have taken back their sovereign rights donated to their elected leaders "because they have no other plausible alternative to have their concerns addressed". The protests, in the viewpoint of the opposition, are occasioned by President Ruto's inability

to meet campaign promises, including lowering the cost of living. Another avenue for recourse is the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI). Projected as a tool to promote inclusivity and national cohesion, BBI aimed to cure the winner-takes-it-all rule in elections.

■ The 2007/8 post-election violence illustrated Kenya's uneasy ethnic relations

The elite engineer political violence, and it only ends when they agree on how to share the spoils of the State

• By JOHN KAMAU



The invasion of Mama Ngina's farm in Ruiru, the street violence, the mobilisation of goons and the frightening talk by elite political leaders have left the country at a crossroads. Unfortunately, history seems to be repeating itself as political violence straddles the country in what, historians say, has become Kenya's political elite's survival strategy.

What began as a push by the opposition leader, Raila Odinga, to demand lower costs of living has also turned out to be about the unfinished tussle over the 2022 presidential election, which Odinga claims to have won against President William Ruto. More so, it is blossoming into a "Ruto Must Go" campaign, igniting a defensive narrative from his supporters.

While the violence is rekindling old ethnic flames, the continued ethnic mobilisation around Mt Kenya region – disguised as protecting businesses – is arousing fear that it could lead to a new wave of counter-attacks, especially in Nairobi, where the anti-government demonstrations are concentrated. More so, senior government officials led by Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah have become hardliners and openly advocated for lawlessness against the "financiers" of the Odinga-led campaign.

Kenya has not witnessed cost-of-living demos before, and most of the clashes since Independence, either by civil society or politicians, have usually been about expand-

ing democratic space, protesting government excesses or demanding inclusion. How Kenya handles the current crisis will determine the fate of Ruto's government and, more so, the nation's stability. There are various lessons in place.

The first post-Independence political violence was tied to the secessionist bid by the Somali community in the former North Frontier District, which triggered the Shifta War crisis from 1963 to 1983. It was an expensive war that left a large swath of the country isolated.

Before that, some low-key political violence between 1964 and 1965, blamed on remnants of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA) demanding free land, was witnessed in the Rift Valley and Mt Kenya regions. While Jomo Kenyatta's government managed to bring down the final elements of the KLFA – some of whom had retreated to Mt Kenya forests – it left him exposed since he did not resolve the Mau Mau land demands. That has emerged to haunt his family and featured in the last election.

The second major test of Kenyatta's government was after the 1969 assassination of Tom Mboya, then Minister for Economic Planning, which led to political violence in both Nairobi and Kisumu as protests started. The Mboya crisis, as it came to be known, would lead to the stoning of Kenyatta's motorcade in Kisumu and the final falling-out between Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and Kenyatta. The crisis saw the government proscribe Odinga's Kenya People's Union and detention of its top leadership. It gave rise to bitterness between the Kikuyu and the Luo, with the former taking tribal oaths to protect the Presidency. That oath was cited by some UDA Mt Kenya hardliners as they tried to stop Raila's

penetration of the region. In a recent visit to Kisumu, Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua claimed that the Luo community has been enslaved by the Odingas, an argument that seemed to ethnicise Raila's demands for the lowering of living costs.

Jomo Kenyatta's death in 1978 and the excesses witnessed under the Moi regime saw the introduction of a *de jure* single-party rule, and Moi brought in a new group of elite to exploit state resources and replace the Kenyatta group. This led to a new political push that often turned violent as activists clashed with police. Moi reacted to these challenges by reintroducing detention without trial and curtailing civil liberties. Thus, the demands for pluralism in the late 1980s were countered by Kanu hardliners as a challenge to President Moi. This would lead to tribal clashes, especially in the Rift Valley and the Coast. Since the push for multi-party democracy was primarily identified with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and Kenneth Matiba, their ethnic communities became targets in the political violence in the 1990s. International human rights groups accused the police of failing to protect property.

Soon, hardliners such as Kipkalya arap Kones, Sharrif Nassir and William ole Ntimama emerged and openly called for the eviction of the Kikuyu from the Rift Valley and Coast provinces. The first land clashes took place as the debate for pluralism was in top gear. Though in July 1998 Moi announced a judicial inquiry (chaired by Justice Akilano Akiwumi) into all the clashes since 1991, the report was not released until 2002. The government also disowned the final report, and the police and attorney-general prosecuted no one. The per-

petrators, again, went unpunished – an indicator that political violence and impunity were birds of the same feather. Thus, the constitutional dispute was convoluted with demands for indigenous land rights – an underlying issue that has always been used as the political scarecrow and which continues to generate ethnic tension since it has not been solved.

Historians have noted that political violence in Kenya has been growing since 1969, "each time worse than the last", according to Charles Hornsby. While the election of Mwai Kibaki appeared to consolidate democratic gains, a falling-out within the Narc government, orchestrated by demands by Raila's wing which felt short-changed, saw the collapse of the dream of a united country. The 2007/8 post-election violence illustrated Kenya's uneasy ethnic relations and the level of elite capture that runs deep within various communities. The formation of a coalition between Uhuru Kenyatta and Ruto, brought together by their struggles at the International Criminal Court, confirmed what historians had always felt: that the elite engineer political violence in Kenya – and it only ends when they agree on how to share the spoils of the estate.

In their book, *Oxford Handbook of Kenyan Politics*, scholars Karuti Nanyanga, Nic Cheeseman and Gabriele Lynch argue that Kenya's peace – or the absence of political violence – is tied to cross-ethnic relationships between the elite. They have rightly observed that "it is when elite actors re-establish working relations, coming together to protect the system on which their own privileged positions depend, that political stability is at least temporarily restored".

the limelight



President William Ruto and his German counterpart Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier inspect a Guard of Honour at Schloss Bellevue, Berlin. PHOTO | PCS



Pope Francis is helped into the popemobile as he leaves the Vatican on March 29 at the end of the weekly general audience at St. Peter's square. PHOTO | AFP



Lightning flashes over Kuwait City during a thunderstorm on March 26. PHOTO | AFP



Residents walk past a burning barricade in Kibera, Nairobi, during protests called by the opposition Azimio la Umoja coalition on March 30. Police clashed with hundreds of protesters as a third round of demonstrations against the government and high food prices raised fears of further violence. PHOTO | AFP



A South Korean marine takes part in joint landing operations by US and South Korean Marines in the south-eastern port of Pohang on March 29. PHOTO | AFP



Activists lie on the dry ground near sheep during an environmental Global Climate Action demonstration in the La Vinuela reservoir in Malaga, Spain on March 22. PHOTO | AFP



One of the "Hwasal" strategic cruise missiles being launched in Hamhung City of the South Hamgyong Province, North Korea, on March 22. PHOTO | AFP

The Area



DO YOU SMELL WHAT WAWERU IS COOKING?

One of the biggest social media personalities in the food industry has turned his hobby of making delicious meals into a lucrative online business

OPEN SPACE

Need for continuous training of officers on human rights

Several opposition leaders, activists and student leaders were harassed, arrested and detained during the demos

● BY RAPHAEL OBONYO

For many Kenyans, the manner in which opposition protests have so far been handled has exposed hard truths about our police service. The way officers employed excessive force to quell the demos is chilling.

A Maseno University student was allegedly killed by police, as reported by various human rights institutions. This is a testimony that all is not well with the police. This must now open the debate on police reforms that we have grappled with since 2002. The circumstances in which the police found themselves during the protests cannot explain the brutality.

A number of opposition leaders, activists and student leaders were harassed, arrested and detained, only to be released in the evening with no charges preferred against them. Article 37 of the Constitution guarantees citizens the right to picket and present petitions to public authorities. That right can only be limited with justifiable reason.

Indeed, it is well within the right of any person or organisation to call on fellow Kenyans to freely join in picketing, as long as they are peaceful, and no one, including the police, should use force or threaten protesters.

The aftermath of the 2007 presidential election presented the country with an opportunity to reform the police force. The Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence recommended extensive reforms. The taskforce came up with over 200 recommendations and although some were embraced, the process lost steam at some point. The report can still today provide the roadmap needed to change the conduct of the police.

Initial reforms included training, restructuring of the force and vetting. The vetting of police officers by the National Police Service Commission, a process that was mooted as central to the police reform agenda, must be done in a more transparent manner than has hap-

pened so far. This is a constitutional requirement that is also well enshrined in the Police Act outlining vetting of police on competence and suitability, professionalism, performance, discipline, human rights record and qualifications in academia and training.

Security experts say the vetting panel should be broadened to bring on board more stakeholders with various backgrounds. This would create room for new opinions and ideas.

Corruption in the service is widespread and has been a problem for long. For many years, Transparency International Kenya has ranked the police as the most corrupt public institution in the country. It has also been evidently clear that the service lacks willingness and capacity to deal with graft.

A participatory approach, bringing on board various players, is needed for reforms. With a majority in parliament, the Kenya Kwanza government should initiate legislation on security laws that can create a responsive and accountable police service.

There is need for continuous training of police on human rights, good conduct and the need to adhere to the Constitution.

Use of firearms is only justified if the police, or an individual they are protecting, are facing imminent threat of death or serious injury. This has not been the case in most cases of police killings during protests. Some of the victims were not even in the protests and were hit by stray bullets shot indiscriminately.

If the actions of the police are to be reined in and brought in line with internationally recognised policing guidelines, it is essential that the perpetrators of such violations, and those who are in command, be brought to justice.

Mr Obonyo is a public policy analyst. raphojuma@hotmail.com

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



MIND SPEAK



Sidi Otieno

Demonstrations have been critical in improving governance in the country. That could be why the framers of our Constitution saw it necessary to protect the citizens' right to picket. Raila Odinga's call for weekly demonstrations is justified. Furthermore, the country's economy is on its deathbed, with citizens struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living. Someone needed to lead the demand for better governance.

— A law student at the University of Nairobi



Hosea Masiti

Whereas the majority have their way, the minority must also have their say in a democracy. Kenyans feel that they have been pressed to the corner regardless of which side of the political divide they are in. The skyrocketing cost of living, the expanded executive, students suffering, et al. When diplomacy fails like it has right now, we can resort to mass action. The demos are clearly justified.

— A law student at the University of Nairobi



Anne Michael

Many businesses are suffering because of the demonstrations. This is wrong. Opposition leader Raila Odinga should have organised the protests once. Weekly demos bring about violence across the country, which hurts the economy. It derails many small-scale businesses because no one will open up a business in the middle of a mass demonstration. In the end, we will all suffer.

— A student at Kenyatta University



Brigit Juma

Holding demonstrations is the right thing to do in this battered economy. As the chief opposition leader, Raila Odinga's role is to keep the government in check. Considering the fact that they have not fulfilled a number of their promises, as long as the demonstrations are peaceful and no one gets hurt, we are good to go. We need change in governance.

— A Nairobi-based lawyer



• BY WAGA ODONGO

I have been using the latest upgrade to ChatGPT for over an hour, trying to trip it up. So far, no good. Last time I wrote about it, I got it to hallucinate – make a bunch of random factoids that sound plausible but aren't – frequently. Pre-update, it consistently came up with half-truths and doubled down on whole lies with the confidence of a Kenyan politician. I dismissed it as only good for propaganda.

Its makers, OpenAI, have announced a major upgrade that fixes some of these niggles. The move is more revolutionary than iterative. Like on an earthquake Richter scale, each subsequent number is, in order of magnitude, better than the last. The problem with the last version was the bandwidth. ChatGPT couldn't understand a game like Wordle previously, but now it plays better than most. (Wordle is a word guessing game). It was a suboptimal chess player; now it's halfway towards being a grandmaster. It has also learnt humility; when you ask about a topic it knows little about it quickly fesses up to not knowing.

Most importantly, it can now see. Before it could only interpret text. Now you can take a photo of the contents of your fridge and it will give you a recipe. You can now give it half a novel's worth of instructions and set it on a task, and it will do it fairly well. This led me to thinking about industries that the latest version of the software could upend and I immediately thought of medicine.

Artificial intelligence conjures up the idea that machines can think. They can't, but they can be made to follow logical conclusions that could be done by a human. Where they beat us is the fact that they can hold a lot more information in their "minds" and reach conclusions faster. Medicine could be a great place to exploit this fact.

One branch of medical studies I expect will not survive AI is imaging. After four years of study a doctor who has done a masters in Radiology at the University of Nairobi will see thousands and hopefully tens of thousands of X-rays, PETs and CTIs. They will have studied medicine for at least ten years at that point. It is impressive, but pales in comparison to what a machine can do. An image can be fully represented as pixels that a machine can understand. Consuming all the medical imaging data generated in a year by a series of computers would be a stroll in the park for even a large American university. Day by day, a human radiologist will look like the inferior option when it comes to deciphering what is going on inside us.

There are also situations where a chatbot

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

CHATGPT GETTING BETTER, AND BIGGER

Latest version cannot only interpret texts, it can see and can be made to follow logical conclusions that could be done by a human



would be more suitable for collecting information. For example, users would be more forthcoming with information on embarrassing situations like impotence to a faceless AI. A chatbot would allow users to be as graphic as possible with descriptions of their symptoms without the fear of being judged by a human.

Many people would dismiss the idea, thinking that AI could never perform at the level of a Nobel Prize of Physiology or Medicine winner. It cannot and probably won't make breakthroughs of that scale for a long time.

But AI doesn't need to perform at superhuman levels to make most humans obsolete. That isn't the competition it is facing. The competition is the tired, overworked, absentee and underpaid doctor that can be found in numerous clinics across the world. Machines do not need to perform duties at a genius level because most professionals outside sport do not put in a superhuman effort every time they go to work.

When you go to a doctor you usually describe your ailments, and the doctor tries to make a diagnosis going on, at most, a couple of decades of experience. Why not get a second opinion from a repository of knowledge whose breadth will eventually encompass all of humanity?

There is, of course, need for caution. At the end of the day, ChatGPT is an amoral parrot repeating to us received knowledge with no working knowledge of the real world. It can be as bad as Googling your symptoms, which always leads you to the conclusion that you have a host of chronic illnesses. Unpoliced, AI

would be similarly disastrous.

There are tales of persons who have tricked previous iterations of the bot into giving eerily competent suggestions about making poisons more deadly, or in one hallucination it suggested that adding ground porcelain to breast milk can help reduce indigestion in children. This fact should always inform us of the need for guardrails of trained medical professionals in training the bot. For a start, it should be a second opinion, not the primary source.

Another cause for concern would be racial disparity in collected data. Many countries in Europe have well-structured public medical data from running national medical schemes that other countries don't. Models trained on such data would prioritise diseases that affect Europeans. Any such move to use AI will favour those who discovered that nothing beats socialised medicine over the fools who persist with privatised healthcare. This becomes a factor when you recall that (white) Europeans don't generally get Sickle Cell and (black) Africans don't tend to get Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease.

Artificial Intelligence can only be as good as the data it is fed and unfortunately, many African countries have creaking healthcare systems without proper collection of data.

This is part of the reason we should welcome the move to digitise and standardise healthcare data that President Ruto has championed. The first step to getting an AI doctor is collecting data.

Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer
wagaodongo@gmail.com

YOUNG AND ENTERPRISING

COOKING UP A STORM

Tedd Waweru has turned his hobby of making delicious food into a lucrative online influencer business

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

I don't know much about food, but that's where Tedd Waweru comes in. He does not have a classic chef origin story, though; his is more or less an act of rebellion, of going down the road less taken.

To get the bias out of the way, and in the spirit of full disclosure, Waweru is 23 years old. He's had a knack for the kitchen ever since he could tell his mother, "The *ndengu* (green grams) is oversalted," of course in much sweeter words. I wouldn't exactly describe him as Mozart, but Waweru is no charlatan either. (Was Mozart, who composed his first concert at five, a born genius, or was he the product of tutelage from his father?)

What we can quickly establish, however, is that Waweru knows his shtick. His is a things-falling-into-place anecdote of when cooking becomes a craft rather than a chore. Within a year of setting up his live cooking channels on social media à la international sensation (and former Kenya rugby sevens player) self-taught chef Dennis Ombachi aka "The Roaming Chef", he had already amassed over 100,000 followers – and that's just on Instagram alone. Have I mentioned that within that same period, he was already working with Category A brands – and I am not just talking about Coca-Cola?

If not quite a star yet, then a supernova maybe?

Maybe then it's only fair to give his story a background, a pastiche that can paint a picture of his meteoric rise. You know the usual backstory. He cooked for his friends and family, and they all



Within a year of setting up live cooking channels on social media, Tedd Waweru had 100,000 Instagram followers. PHOTO | POOL

knew there was something different about his meals. He had that Midas touch, every meal he touched turned to gold, well, at least edible gold.

"Funny thing," he says, "I studied Home Science in high school but one day, during a lesson, the teacher barred me from accessing the class. My crime? I had unkempt hair."

Begrudgingly he left. But the seed had already been planted, and he swore to teach himself cooking. The will was there. Soon enough, the way had to appear.

"I have been cooking and trying recipes since high school. But it was only last year [2022], around April that I started uploading my own content online. I set a goal that by December, I only wanted 10,000 followers [on IG]. By December I had more than 100,000. I think it is because my videos are very easy to follow and I don't complicate anything. These are meals that people relate to. I also know other people watch the videos and make the recipes at home." The proof of the pudding – so to speak – is in the eating.

His parents were not delighted when the kitchen became his choice of career.

"I told my mom after I had posted two videos and asked her to give me until the end of last year. If it didn't work out, I would look for a job in IT. At first she was sceptical but very understanding and when she found out I was nominated for Food Influencer of the Year, she was elated."

Oh, yes, about that. Held annually, the Pulse Influencer Awards recognise the most impactful and influential individuals

across a variety of disciplines. In the food category, Waweru Tedd was battling Kui's Kitchen and his own role model, Dennis Ombachi (who won). Despite losing out on the award, his work had been validated. Now he is in partnership with Coca-Cola.

"I think I got my first brand partnership when I was at 57K followers on Instagram. I grew so fast within a short period of time, and that's why I think I got my first deal."

(He tells me he got a few more brands but cannot mention them because a) of competition and b) it's a surprise.)

Coca-Cola saw his videos online and sent him an email requesting partnership. As with every young creator, he didn't have a manager then (but does now). "I didn't even think of it when I was starting. But when you create content consistently, brands will come and money will follow." In truth, he says, he'd like the food he cooks to be the thing that tells his story. "Cooking pays all my bills. I don't want to say I got lucky, but I am not not saying that either."

"Being your own brand and being able to control when and where you work has really changed my life. With popularity also comes money. I can comfortably say that I am living a better life now."

There is a friendly arrogance to Waweru. It's what happens when the stars align, when the cosmos are in order, when the gods have chosen you. The looks fit to a T, too: he is wide-eyed, smooth-faced, vibe-checked. Confidence with youth pastor swag.

Wealth, however, is like sea-water; the more we drink, the thirstier we become, and the same is true of fame. How does he keep his feet firmly planted on the ground? He tells me that he has skin in the game and has paid the price. He had to *Fuliza* (borrow money via MPesa) to be able to keep his content going.

"It took me two months to pay that loan." How much was it? "It was KSh15,000. Looking back, I am glad I did it." That was also his lowest moment, not having money to buy ingredients – like a cyclist without a bike to cycle, or a mime who can't keep quiet.

He confesses that he wants to be known everywhere for what he does. "I am not going to stop until I make that happen." What Mario Puzo was for murder, he wants to be for cooking. "I want people to recreate my recipes and tell me their experience. I started for fun but I stayed for the fulfilment."



Tedd Waweru's parents were not delighted when the kitchen became his choice of career. PHOTO | POOL

THE FIRST MEAL

Tedd Waweru holds a Diploma in IT. The first meal he ever prepared (online) was spaghetti and meatballs. "I didn't have lights or a good camera. It is still on my page, however, as a mark of the journey I am on."

Waweru's videos take him up to three hours to create. And this is all just for a 45 to 60-second video for IG and TikTok. "I made lasagna from 1pm to 8pm at night. There is so much content but you have to pick the best parts."

According to Business Collective research, food and beverage influencer marketing generates Instagram engagement at an average rate of 7.38 per cent. For context, that's five times the industry average. In 2021, the average business profile on Instagram only managed 0.83 per cent.

Seventy-one per cent of consumers say they are more likely to try a new product if they hear about it from an influencer.

Sixty-two per cent of consumers say they are more likely to purchase a product after seeing it recommended by an influencer.

Influencer marketing in the food industry has ten times higher Return on Investment than traditional advertising.

Ninety-two per cent of consumers trust recommendations from people they follow, even if they don't know them personally.

Sixty-four per cent of consumers say they have been influenced to purchase a product after seeing it recommended by an influencer on social media.

Waweru looks up to Dennis Ombachi and draws parallels with his own journey. "I thought to myself that if Dennis started just like that and kept on putting out videos, why not me? I look up to him and

I told him as much." Cooking, he says, is the one thing he is really good at. "It is like an escape for me because when I am doing it, there is nothing else I am thinking about. But it is also

a hobby because I enjoy it. And I like people to see and enjoy what I have created." But even the masters second-guess themselves. Does he? "I don't have any doubts about what I want to do. If within five months I noticed that I was not going to achieve my target, I would have spiralled and started looking for viable options. But I think this was meant to be."

And no, he does not think he will ever run out of content. "I think you only repeat meals if you want to. There are very many recipes out there that you can perfect and post. In my older videos, I didn't even talk, but now I do. Sometimes you read the comments and people have very good suggestions. I take them under advisement. Besides, one benefit of being a content creator is that you can work at any time you want.

You can shoot many videos for the month and simply schedule them. I post at least two videos a week, and I have been doing that since I started."

Worshippers of the god of consistency have killed more people than all of history's tyrants. But since the dead tell no tales, pick a spoon, scoop and have a bite of the wisdom that Waweru shares with those who want to embark on their own journey. "Just be consistent. That's what I always say. Whatever the obstacle, you have to be determined to achieve a certain goal before setting another one. For me, what worked was being authentic and consistent. No matter what."

So, what of the future? "Success for me is when I am able to pay my bills, eat comfortably and have money to enjoy myself. And more importantly, never lacking the money to create my content." But that, he adds, is still some way in the future.

He still has a lot more to give to his brand partnerships, to his followers, to himself. If he was to have a meal with anyone in the world, who would it be and what meal would that be? "A home-made cheeseburger with Juice WRLD. I related to his music when I was at a low point in my life."

It would not be fair if I let him go without knowing his favourite meal. "Chapati and ndengu," he says. "It's my favourite because my mom used to make that and the memories flood back whenever I'm having it. It's the nostalgia, like eating a piece of your history."

No, Tedd Waweru may not have a grandiose origin story, a place where he started, but he knows exactly where he is going.

eddieashioya@gmail.com

BEATING ALL ODDS

Njeri Wagacha has managed to build a successful legal career and is a leader at one of Africa's largest, full-service corporate and commercial law firms

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

It's not easy being Njeri Wagacha. Fabulous, yes. Fun, probably. Easy, no. See, she has the tireless focus of a painter, the ritualistic excellence of a carpenter, the rigorous precision of a glass blower, the relentless, fierce opinions of a lawyer. Ah, lawyer. Njeri always knew that she wanted to be a lawyer. "I knew that I wanted to be in law, specifically human rights law, but I ended up in corporate law, which in some circles is seen as the most aggressive type of law."

Not that she is complaining. On the contrary, she is a Partner and Head of East Africa for the Industrials, Manufacturing and Trade Sector at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr (CDH), one of Africa's largest, full-service corporate and commercial law firms, with over 350 lawyers in offices across Cape Town, Nairobi, Sandton and Stellenbosch.

We meet at CDH offices, third floor, Merchant Square, on Riverside Drive, the sort of sterile yet ostentatious place where only a law firm like CDH could be located and still not feel out of place. Here, Njeri has the ear of everyone who is anyone.

She has built her career like a chess master, patiently, her moves calculated. Nothing feels like it was handed to her.

You can tell that she's always had 'the audacity' (or in industry terms, the chutzpah) to bide her time and work her socks off. She doesn't need to convince me that she burns the midnight oil; I can feel it. For her, success is about the long game, not the quick hits. I mean, she was practicing law in London for the better part of 14 years before making the shift back home. There wasn't much ceiling there.

"It's a rat race and you are on your own. How do you make a life for yourself and define your own career? Training as a lawyer

NJERI'S LAW



Kieti Law LLP (CDH Kenya) Partner Njeri Wagacha at the firm's offices along Riverside Drive on March 28. FRANCIS NDERITU | NATION

in London got my first foot in the door. That has really given me a heads up in terms of building my career."

So, what's it like being Njeri Wagacha? "I think I have been very lucky to have been able to go to the schools I did and work in London and now work back home. But, I also believe luck is when opportunity meets preparation. At every stage I have been blessed enough to take up the opportunities that have been presented to me, which is what you need to do, and not just for women. I do appreciate that as a woman it has been a harder fight, but a

different fight for our generation."

Having been around the block, is there any advice she would encourage younger lawyers not to follow? A lot of people say follow your heart or do the things you love, she advises, but one also has to be practical and pragmatic. You may not enjoy every single stage but overall you have to look at what is going to give you the most balance.

"I love cooking but it is not going to give me overall balance and satisfaction, and financial security. It is very difficult to be motivated when you are financially pressured. There is some element

of doing the things you like, and just getting on with it."

When it comes to doing things she likes, Njeri does not shy away from showing her hand. She has a podcast, *NjeriTalks* and a cooking blog, *NjeriCooks*.

She admits that she wasn't exactly inventing the wheel in the naming choices, but as Shakespeare said, a rose by any other name would still smell as sweet.

"*NjeriCooks* is something that I do for myself. I don't have a great following but I don't mind that. I am not doing it full-time. The podcast, *NjeriTalks*, is me speaking to different guests in the legal sphere, documenting their careers and inspiring young people."

Has cooking added to her legal career? "It hasn't. It has just enriched my life, although I do bring food in sometimes when I have been inspired, which can make me friends. And yes, I can make a mean pastry."

What has been the chef's kiss of her career is becoming Partner while specialising in Mergers and Acquisitions, Private Equity, and Employment Law.

Also, in 2022, she won the Corporate Commercial Lawyer of the year at the Nairobi Legal Awards, with CDH coming in as second runner-up for the Law Firm of the Year award despite being just in its third year of operation. "Getting a new client doesn't hurt either," she adds.

What are the things that have been an exemplar of her career? "The deals that I have worked on have been career-defining, especially cross-border ones involving the whole of Africa because that demonstrates an ability to handle large transactions. And even clients coming back to us means they have appreciated the work that we have done."

As Partner, Njeri drives a hard bargain but confesses that her leadership style is more of arm-around-the-shoulder rather than carrot-and-stick. "I try to demonstrate why something is important, explaining and making sure people understand why we are doing what we are doing."

She notes that she is at a crossroads between two generations, at the nadir and zenith of one against the other. On one end she comes from a generation that worked its back off, and at the other she is confronted with a generation that stands up for itself. How does she merge the two? "There is no work-life balance.

JOURNEY TO THE TOP

Njeri started off as Trainee Solicitor at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe (Europe) LLP. She later joined a firm in Nairobi as an Associate. She was a Secondee at Anjarwalla, Collins & Haidermota, Dubai. In 2018 she was appointed as a Senior Associate at the firm in Nairobi. In 2020, Njeri joined Kieti Advocates LLP as a Partner.

She was awarded the East African Student Scholarship to Middlesex University, England.

Njeri was nominated in the Lawyer of the Year category in the fourth edition of the Nairobi Legal Awards – The Phoenix Edition.

She was also named Commercial/Conveyancing Practitioner of the Year at the Nairobi Legal Awards 2022 and was second runner-up for 2022 Lawyer of the Year.

Njeri has certification in Legal Practice, Nottingham Law School; a graduate diploma in Law, Nottingham Law School; LLM, University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies); and BA in Law and French, Middlesex University (1st Class Honours and East African Student Scholarship).

I like to live my life within the work and work within the life. You can mix the two worlds, whether it is working in the afternoon or past office hours to achieve your

goals. Besides, we are working in an environment where we also have overseas clients, which calls for flexibility rather than strong arming.” But don’t be fooled. Leadership is extremely difficult, she says. “You are trying to manage people’s emotions, which is something you cannot control while simultaneously being a good example.”

She questions herself regularly, but that’s why this business is a partnership. “Leadership is not necessarily about making decisions on your own; it is having the confidence to execute once you make a decision.

She is proud that what she knew then has helped her now, which is that things take time. “You also need to rely on your instincts.”

She knew this because she did not have any mentors whom she could see herself in, and that’s why she now mentors. “I realised very few people are willing to give their time to mentor young people, who really need it.” Her 12 mentees have learned to be their own persons, to do their own bidding, and to find their own voices.

What has she learned from them? “When I was a trainee, we didn’t have the voice to ask for things but this generation is ready to push back. They have taught me how to put myself first.”

She may not have had any mentors but she reserves some flowers for MaryAnn Ochola, the

head of Endeavour Kenya who, she says, has been a rock and is “just a fabulous person”. CDH, she says, supports and encourages women. But she notes that it is easy for women’s careers to be stalled by motherhood because of taking breaks due to shifting priorities, and coming back to work might be difficult. “There are many women who have done it successfully and come back to work. I, too, want to be a mother someday and I want to demonstrate you can be a mother and a lawyer, but the reality is that women take on the lion’s share of mothering.”

It’s only prudent, then, that we give the elephant in the room some attention. Does she, Njeri, feel that she may be breaking the glass ceiling and not having a crack at everything else? “Well as a woman, people tend to say you work too hard and you are always at the office, dedicating your life to one thing and not having time for, say, family. But I believe everything works out in its own way. Maybe no one can have it all, and even if you do, you have to make sacrifices. You have to remain happy in the things you are doing.” If you are wondering if she is happy, yes, she is.

How does she prevent the grass from growing under her feet? “You need to be in an environment where you feel challenged and have a goal to strive towards in order to have an impact. That’s part

of why building a law firm is one of the most significant things that I can do because it demonstrates that I can map my own path as opposed to staying on the trodden path.”

Success, she says, is contentment. “Being happy to come into the office, happy in my personal life. It’s not roses daily but if you are contented, then it’s okay.” And failure? “Not meeting your own expectations. But if I have done my best, then I can be disappointed but I know I haven’t failed.”

At the moment, she is learning that she can be carefree. “I like to go on holidays and love me a glass of wine. Take me to Paris anytime and I will go.” What has law given her? “So much. Confidence, ability to believe in myself, clients, my podcast and the ability to be a leader, so many things.”

Her superpower, she says is charm, intelligence and reading between the lines. And that’s how she knows that people think she is unwavering and never afraid, but most of the time, she says, you are only putting on a mask and trying your best to stay afloat.

Well, the grace also masks her assassin-like black belt in getting things done. So, if she was to go up against anyone in law, who would it be? “Actually that’s the wrong question,” she says. “The correct question should be ‘Who would go against me?’”

eddyashioya@gmail.com



WOMAN POWER

LIGANDAN INNOVATOR DR SHAMIM NABILIMA KALIISA IS ONE OF 50 AFRICAN WOMEN LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE CONTINENT WHO WERE RECENTLY RECOGNIZED BY FORBES WOMAN AFRICA IN HONOUR OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY, AT THE LEADING WOMEN SUMMIT WHICH TOOK PLACE AT SUN BET ARENA, TIME SQUARE IN PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA. DR NABILIMA RECEIVED THE YOUTH ICON AWARD. THE FEMALE TRAILBLAZERS RECEIVED ACCOLADES FOR THEIR REMARKABLE WORK IN DRIVING AFRICA INTO THE FUTURE.

STAR OF THE WEEK



RACE WALKER GRACE WANJIRU NJUE STRUCK GOLD AT THE WORLD INDOOR MASTERS ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS IN TORUN, POLAND LAST WEEK. IT WAS KENYA’S THIRD GOLD AND FOURTH MEDAL OVERALL. KENYA WAS MAKING ITS MAIDEN APPEARANCE AT THE CHAMPIONSHIPS. WANJIRU IS A THREE-TIME AFRICAN CHAMPION AND A COMMONWEALTH GAMES MEDALLIST. SHE SET A 20 KILOMETRES RACE WALK AFRICAN RECORD WHEN SHE WON THE EVENT AT THE 2010 AFRICAN CHAMPIONSHIPS CLOCKING 1:34:19 HOURS. KEEP FLYING THE KENYAN FLAG HIGH, WANJIRU.

nyansokie.nationmedia.com

opinion



■ Throughout the 1990s, the instability that preceded every poll was caused by political violence

Kimani, Kuria and Gachagua treading on a dangerous path

The more things change, the more they stay the same, so said French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr in 1849. Looking at the squabbling that was going on over the office of the prime minister as proposed in the draft constitution shaping up in 2005, the late Jane Kiano quizzically remarked: “The flies are different, the dung is the same”. Come let us see.

When the politically instigated violence of 1990 broke out, Majority Leader Kimani Ichung’wah was 12 years old, Trade and Industry Cabinet Secretary Moses Kuria was 19 and Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua was 25.

During the violence of 2007, they were respectively 29, 36 and 42 and in today’s violence, they are respectively 45, 52 and 58.

The troika must know that violence breeds violence. If they read Frantz Fanon at university then they know that violence can only be overcome when confronted by murderous violence.

They surely know that throughout the 1990s, the instability that preceded every election cycle was caused by political violence instigated by the governing Kenya African National Union (Kanu).

Because these men live in Kenya, they are degreed, follow the politics of the land, and are practising politicians, they will know that this was an election rigging strategy by Kanu. They will also know that both Kanu and the opposition parties perfected the politics of renting goons and hiring hoodlums. In 2014, a party hired goons in black suits to disrupt its own national internal poll.



**KWENDO
OPANGA**

Ichung’wah and Gachagua will be aware that Kuria publicly confessed to recruiting witnesses to go and bear false witness at the Justice Johann Kriegler-led Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of the 2007 General Election and the violence that followed the polls. The two will also know that in 2015, Kuria said he would arm youths to take on Raila Odinga for opposing the government.

The utterances of Ichung’wah, Kuria and Gachagua in the build-up to the invasion of the Kenyatta family land and the offices of Odinga’s East Africa Spectre Limited, mirror those of Kanu’s power men Kipkalya Kones, William Ntimama, Shariff Nassir (all deceased) and Wilson Leitich in the lead-up to the violence of 1990 to 1994 in the Rift Valley and in Likoni at the Coast in 1997.

And then, as now, the rented goons and hired hoodlums are young people. It was youth armed with crude weapons who wreaked havoc in the Rift Valley and at the Coast. It was young men who burnt houses and evicted so-called outsiders from Uasin Gishu in late 2007 and early 2008.

It is youth who led the invasion of the Kenyatta land in Ruiru and threw stones at the Spectre offices.

Then, as now, police were nowhere to be seen when the warriors or raiders struck or if they were present, seemed to be waiting for something or somebody to give the instruction to act, but that something or somebody never turned up. There were no policemen at Northlands as rampaging youth broke down fences, carried away pedigree sheep and set fire to prized trees.

Then, as now, police in riot gear were quick to clamp down on rallies or demonstrations of opposition politicians and arrest them rather than hunt down the raiders and put an end to the skirmishing. And then, as now, the cause of all the blood-letting, the commotion and confusion are the politicians — those in power against those who want power.

Now showing. Young guns Ichung’wah, Kuria and Gachagua, led by angry President Ruto, engaging old guard Martha Karua and Kalonzo Musyoka, led by an angry Odinga.

kwendo58@gmail.com

opinion

■ Once the genie of untrammelled violence is uncorked, it's impossible to put it back in the bottle

Those cheering goons will one day be on the receiving end



MACHARIA
GAITHO

It is no secret that Yours Truly has never been a fan of Uhuru Kenyatta. Indeed, for refusing to kneel before the 'Muthamaki' (loosely translatable as Saviour or Supreme Chief) as he sought ethnic paramourcy on the way to the 2013 General Election, I was condemned and targeted for vilification and threats to actual bodily harm by some of the more rabid sycophants and rent-seekers in Uhuru's camp. I was labelled a traitor to the Kikuyu community and even put on notice that a self-appointed bunch of elders feeding off his fat wallet would place a curse on me.

I ignored all that nonsense as I was brought up never to bow before another man, however wealthy and powerful. Neither was I hostage to the ethnic mobilisation or false promises of benefits to spread across the community if a 'mundu wa nyumba' rose to the highest office in the land.

My stance did not change once Uhuru became the President. I respected and recognised him as President of Kenya. I genuinely admired what he'd achieved against the odds in inheriting a near 100 per cent of the Kikuyu vote from his predecessor, Mwai Kibaki, and putting together the formidable 'Tyranny of Numbers' ethnic alliance with his deputy, William Ruto.

However, I refused to join the bandwagon of those short-sighted fellows paying homage to him as their undisputed, omniscient, infallible, all-powerful, all-knowing ethnic kingpin rather than just mere President of the Republic of Kenya. My tribe was journalism, and I was not going to elevate to some high pedestal a fellow human being, whether on base of ethnic loyalties or other shared affiliations around friendship, class, Mean Maroon Vs Mean Marines, reggae, the brown bottle or anything else.

In any case, whether it is Daniel arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki, Uhuru Kenyatta or even the present temporary tenant at State House, William Ruto, there must be somebody out there caring and honest enough to tell the King when he is naked. Ironically, the sycophants around Uhuru, the ones who waged the most rabid war against anybody who did not bow and scrape before their almighty, are now his biggest foes.

Now in the service of President Ruto, they have determined that Uhuru is a spoilt little rich kid who rose to wealth and power by inheritance of a legacy that entrenched itself by trampling on the Kikuyu peasantry. They are the calling themselves Children of the Mau Mau out to liberate the community from Kenyatta family domination and oppression, and reclaim the land rights and wealth founding President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta allegedly robbed them of.

Never mind that many of them push this narrative yet they are children of tyrannical colonial chiefs and homeguards, or themselves were quislings who oppressed their own people in service of the Kenyatta *pere* and Moi dictatorships. They are the ones sponsoring armed mobs to raid, loot and destroy Kenyatta family enterprises, justifying their criminal actions on the warped basis that children of Mau Mau are simply taking back what belonged to them.

Yes, it is true that the Kenyatta land and his business empire was built from the culture of those in power stealing public property. However, if the State has determined that property that may have been illegally acquired must be returned to public ownership or shared out amongst the selfsame politicians and their hirelings, there must be proper lawful mechanisms for such purpose. Kenya is a country of laws, not anarchy. Those mentally bankrupt fellows pretending to be doing Ruto a favour are in actual fact doing him a great disservice.

They are demonstrating in the most graphic

The criminal elements employed to raid the Kenyatta farm have smelt blood. Once they have had their share of stolen sheep, they will want more. They will go to the neighbouring farm. Then the next, and the next, until eventually they end up at the spreads owned by the wealthy politicians who deployed them on the murderous missions in the first place. We know that very well from the cycles of ethno-political violence unleashed in the Rift Valley by President Moi in 1991, culminating in the deadly episodes of 2007-2008 post-election violence.

and convincing way that the Ruto government is driven by hatred, uncontrolled anger and vendetta. They are showing that a government which came to power promising fealty to the Constitution and the rule of law will turn to criminal actions to fight its political battles, and will without a care for what is good, decent and just turn to seizure and destruction of private property.

Unwittingly or otherwise, they are also showing that President Ruto can employ the same old brutal tactics refined by President Moi in deploying criminal militias on orgies of arson, looting, plunder, destruction, forced evictions and forceful seizure of property. It is well-established that once the genie of untrammelled violence is uncorked, it becomes impossible to put it back in the bottle.

The criminal elements employed to raid the Kenyatta farm have smelt blood. Once they have had their share of stolen sheep, they will want more. They will go to the neighbouring farm. Then the next, and the next, until eventually they end up at the spreads owned by the wealthy politicians who deployed them on the murderous missions in the first place.

We know that very well from the cycles of ethno-political violence unleashed in the Rift Valley by President Moi in 1991, culminating in the deadly episodes of 2007-2008 post-election violence. Criminal gangs empowered by the government or powerful political formations do not disband once their mission is over. They go and on, morphing into dangerous outfits no longer dependent or on the payroll of the original sponsor.

This is proven by endemic banditry and cattle rustling in the northern Rift Valley, where the government has failed to restore security despite deploying the military; simmering political tensions lower down in the Rift Valley battlefields of 2007-2008, where the displaced have never reclaimed their land; or the continuing presence in Nairobi and parts of central Kenya of remnants of the Mungiki gang and their successors, who in places run parallel security organs. Those who organised or are cheering the use of criminal gangs for political purpose will one day be on the receiving end of their Frankensteins.

gaitomail@gmail.com

kenya lens

■ STATE CORPORATION UP AGAINST A CARTEL OF CHINESE MANUFACTURERS

Differences between rival technical teams and engineers at utility firm over the quality of electricity metres imported from China leave consumers at risk

RIDDLE OF SH300M 'FAKE' KP METRES



Kenya Power personnel from the Live Line Team near Pandya Memorial Hospital in Mombasa on November 10, 2022. Procurement of metres and transformers has been riddled with accusations of corruption.

● BY JAINDI KISERO

There was an explosive controversy between Kenya Power technical staff and engineers over the quality and accuracy of 60,000 electricity metres that were recently imported from China at an estimated cost of Sh300 million, *The Weekly Review* can reveal.

It is an episode that raises several pertinent questions, especially with regard to consumer protection. When different teams of technical staff and engineers arrive at different conclusions about the technical integrity of electricity metres, who between the two teams of technical staff and engineers should the consumer believe? Where is the as-

surance to the ordinary consumer that the metre is not faulty?

These questions are pertinent because Kenya Power itself recently made pleadings at the High Court, where it disclosed that it had been facing an unprecedentedly large number of cases of metre failure. In the court battle, the utility firm was pitted against a cartel of Chinese manufacturers and local entities that assemble the gadget from kits imported from China.

Indeed, procurement of metres and transformers has been riddled with accusations of corruption. Over-ambitious connection targets spawned unfettered purchase of Chinese metres, whose quality was questionable. In 2018, two managing directors of Ken-

ya Power and 19 procurement staff were arraigned in court to face prosecution for procuring low-quality metres and transformers and for outsourcing line construction and other related services to non-qualified, unregistered firms.

The details of the latest controversy are as follows: Last year, KPLC awarded a contract to Hexing Electricals Ltd of Hangzhou, China, to supply it with metres. The Chinese company successfully performed and delivered on January 27. As is customary, a three-person acceptance committee was appointed and tasked to conduct laboratory tests on the metres. The members of the team were James Ndegwa, Nancy Wairimu Mungai and John

Kinyua. Testing of the metres at KPLC's lab commenced immediately after delivery while inspection was conducted on February 3.

As it turned out, this technical team rejected the metres after finding that the 'customer interface unit' (CIU) and 'measuring control unit' were not functioning properly. With this development, the expectation was that the metres would be rejected.

It did not happen. Instead, the General Manager for Supply Chain and Logistics, Dr John Ng'eno, appointed a new four-person team to conduct separate tests on the metres. The new technical team consisted of Peter Wanyonyi, Benson Dianga, Patricia Nthenya and Vincent Hassauna. In a sur-

kenya lens

prising twist, it arrived at the conclusion that ‘the metres can be accepted and issued for use in metering customers’.

Still, a closer scrutiny of the recommendations of this second team shows clearly that their acceptance and endorsement of the metres from China was qualified. They said: “The monitoring of these metres should start soon after they are deployed for confirmation if behaviour is consistent with the samples we tested.”

The team also recommended that laboratory tests were not enough, suggesting that future tests for functionality features whose testing conditions cannot be fully simulated in the laboratory be authenticated by additional tests on site before they are accepted. This second recommendation flies in the face of reason because KPLC in 2019 went to the rooftop to announce how it had invested hundreds of millions of shillings in a new laboratory. The company touted the facility as the only accredited lab for testing energy metres in East and Central Africa.

In yet another twist, the KPLC management decided to disregard and ignore the findings of the four-person technical team that had rejected the metres from China as of low quality. Even more intriguing and in order to disguise the fact that a disagreement had emerged between technical teams over the integrity of the Chinese metres, the management decided to create a third acceptance committee, this time putting the two teams together.

Clearly, it was an arbitrary move made to give the impression and pretence that the technical integrity of the Chinese metres had been agreed upon by the majority and that differences of opinion arising from laboratory tests can be hidden by arbitrarily harmonising the findings.

This saga begs the following question: Whose responsibility is it to independently monitor accuracy of data and the proper functioning of metres? Whose job is it to ensure that the consumer is protected from faulty electricity metres? In a sense, it does not surprise that the metres from China turned out to have quality and technical integrity issues.

It has emerged that Hexing Electricals was allowed by KPLC to circumvent a key quality test and procedure right from the begin-

ning, at the manufacturing stage.

The Weekly Review has seen correspondence showing that KPLC wrote a letter to the Chinese company taking the unprecedented decision of granting a waiver for Factory Acceptance Tests. “We have granted you approval to manufacture metres and to invite a technical team from KPLC to conduct factory acceptance tests. However, due to acute shortage of metres, we are waiving the requirement for factory acceptance tests to shorten delivery times,” said a letter by Dr Ng’eno dated December 19, 2022.

Factory acceptance testing helps verify that newly manufactured and packaged equipment is of the required quality. Long-standing vulnerabilities in the supply chains of metres, transformers and poles has been identified as one of the reasons why KPLC is in financial straits.

An internal audit conducted in July 2021 could not even reconcile rudimentary data on the number of metres purchased, the number of installed metres that were not vending and metres that were recorded as faulty. Many ex-Kenya Power staffers who had been engaged by the company as contractors were found to be holding huge stockpiles of pre-paid metres, which they were selling directly to post-paid customers.

Many pre-paid metres could not be found in locations where they were validated within the ERP system, while illegal connections were found to have genuine Kenya Power metres that had been validated in the company’s ERP system. This messy situation spawned a bigger problem, namely excessive buying of metres. The total loss of control over supply chains of this critical product was happening in the context of entry into the space of plants assembling Chinese metres that are co-owned by the Chinese and politically influential locals.

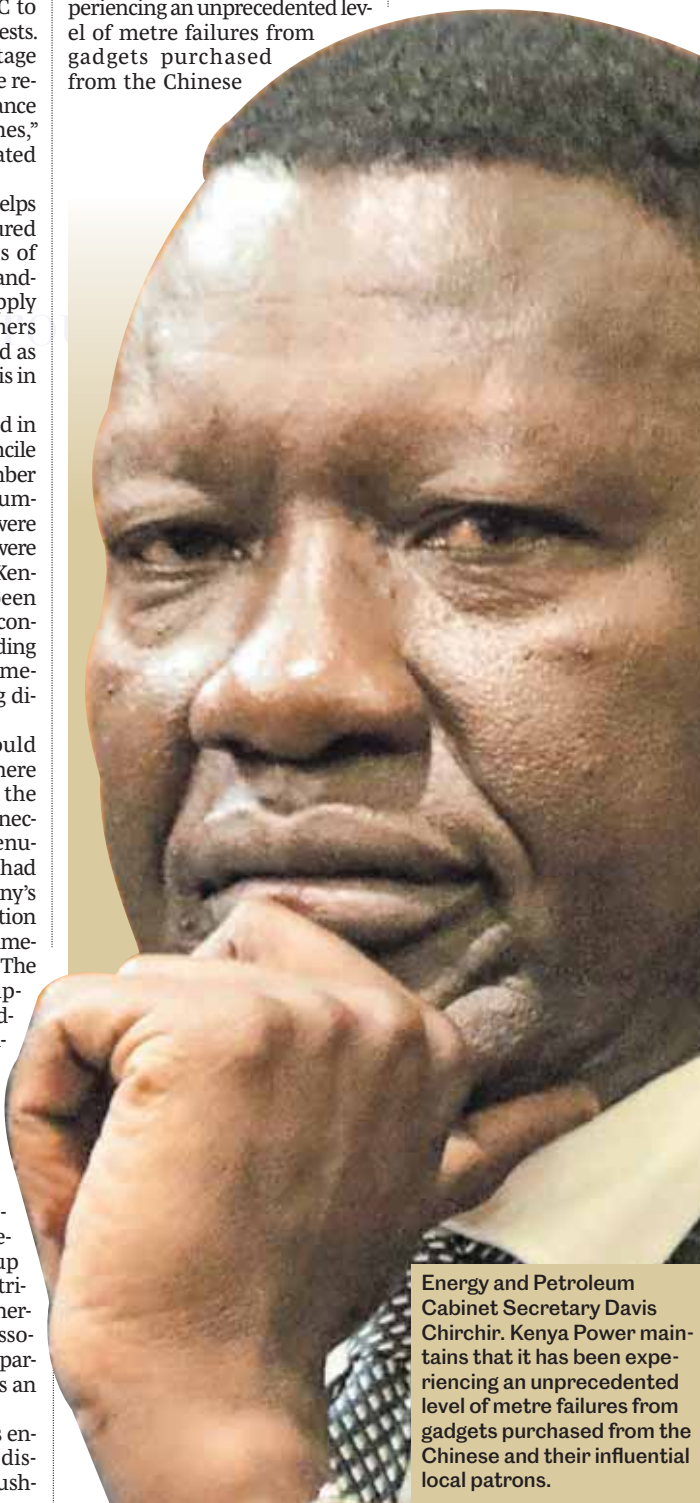
Over time, Kenya Power had become dangerously dependent on a little cartel of metre suppliers. Until the group lodged a case at the appeals tribunal under the name ‘The Energy Metres and Assemblers Association’, it had not become apparent that what was at play was an official cartel.

Last year, the company was engaged in an explosive legal dispute, with the petitioners push-

ing it to relax new stiffer rules on the quality of metres. The petitioners are arguing that the new rules amount to discrimination and are meant to lock local assemblers out of the lucrative contracts for metres.

On its part, Kenya Power has maintained that it has been experiencing an unprecedented level of metre failures from gadgets purchased from the Chinese

and their influential local patrons. Kenya Power suspended 59 senior staff in its supply chain division to pave the way for a forensic audit into their dealings and the company’s procurement systems. Many months later, the suspended staff were all allowed to resume duty.



Energy and Petroleum Cabinet Secretary Davis Chirchir. Kenya Power maintains that it has been experiencing an unprecedented level of metre failures from gadgets purchased from the Chinese and their influential local patrons.

SCIENCE & TECH

8,000 steps every week will save you

Walking 8,000 steps — about four miles (6.4 kilometres) — one or two days a week may significantly reduce the risk of an early death, according to a study released on Tuesday.

While regular exercise is known to lower mortality risk, the study published in the journal *JAMA Network Open* looked at the health benefits of walking intensively only a few days a week.

For the study, the researchers from Kyoto University and the University of California, Los Angeles analysed data from 3,100 American adults.

They found that those who walked 8,000 steps or more one or two days a week were 14.9 percent less likely to die over a 10-year period than those who never reached that mark.

For those who walked 8,000 steps or more three to seven days a week, the mortality risk was even lower — 16.5 per cent.

The health benefits of walking 8,000 steps or more one or two days a week appeared higher for participants aged 65 years and older.

“The number of days per week taking 8,000 steps or more was associated with a lower risk of all-cause and cardiovascular mortality,” the researchers said.

“These findings suggest that individuals may receive substantial health benefits by walking just a couple of days a week.” For the study, the researchers used daily step counts from the 3,100 participants in 2005 and 2006 and examined their mortality data 10 years later.

Among the participants, 632 took 8,000 steps or more zero days a week, 532 took 8,000 steps or more one to two days a week and 1,937 took 8,000 or more steps three to seven days a week.

The average American walks 3,000-4,000 steps a day, according to the Mayo Clinic, which says walking for regular activity can reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and depression.

FIRST 3D-PRINTED ROCKET LIFTS OFF, BUT FAILS TO REACH ORBIT



This screengrab provided by Relativity Space on March 22 shows the third launch attempt of the first 3D-printed rocket, Terran 1, from Launch Complex 16 in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

• SAN FRANCISCO

The world’s first 3D-printed rocket launched successfully on Wednesday, marking a step forward for the California company behind the innovative spacecraft, though it failed to reach orbit.

Billed as less costly to produce and fly, the unmanned Terran 1 rocket launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida but suffered an “anomaly” during second-stage separation as it streamed towards low Earth orbit, according to a livestream broadcast by aerospace start-up Relativity Space.

The company did not immediately give further details.

While it failed to reach orbit, Wednesday’s launch proved that the rocket — whose mass is 85 per cent 3D-printed — could withstand the rigours of lift-off.

The successful launch came on the third attempt. It had originally been scheduled to launch on March 8 but was postponed at the last minute because of propellant

temperature issues. A second attempt on March 11 was scrubbed due to fuel pressure problems. Had Terran 1 reached low Earth orbit, it would have been the first privately funded vehicle using methane fuel to do so on its first try, according to Relativity.

Terran 1 was not carrying a payload for its first flight, but the rocket will eventually be capable of putting up to 1,250 kg into low Earth orbit.

The rocket is 110 feet (33.5 metres) tall with a diameter of 7.5 feet (2.2 metres). Eighty-five per cent of its mass is 3D-printed with metal alloys, including the nine Aeon 1 engines used in its first stage and the one Aeon Vacuum engine employed in the second.

It is the largest ever 3D-printed object and was made using the world’s largest 3D metal printers, according to the Long Beach-based company. Relativity’s goal is to produce a rocket that is 95 per cent 3D-printed.

Terran 1 is powered by engines using liquid oxygen and liquid

natural gas — the “propellants of the future”, capable of eventually fuelling a voyage to Mars, Relativity says. SpaceX’s Starship and Vulcan rockets being developed by United Launch Alliance use the same fuel.

Relativity is also building a larger rocket, the Terran R, capable of putting a payload of 44,000 pounds (20,000 kg) into low Earth orbit.

The first launch of a Terran R, which is designed to be fully reusable, is scheduled for next year. A satellite operator can wait for years for a spot on an Arianespace or SpaceX rocket, and Relativity Space hopes to accelerate the timeline with its 3D-printed rockets.

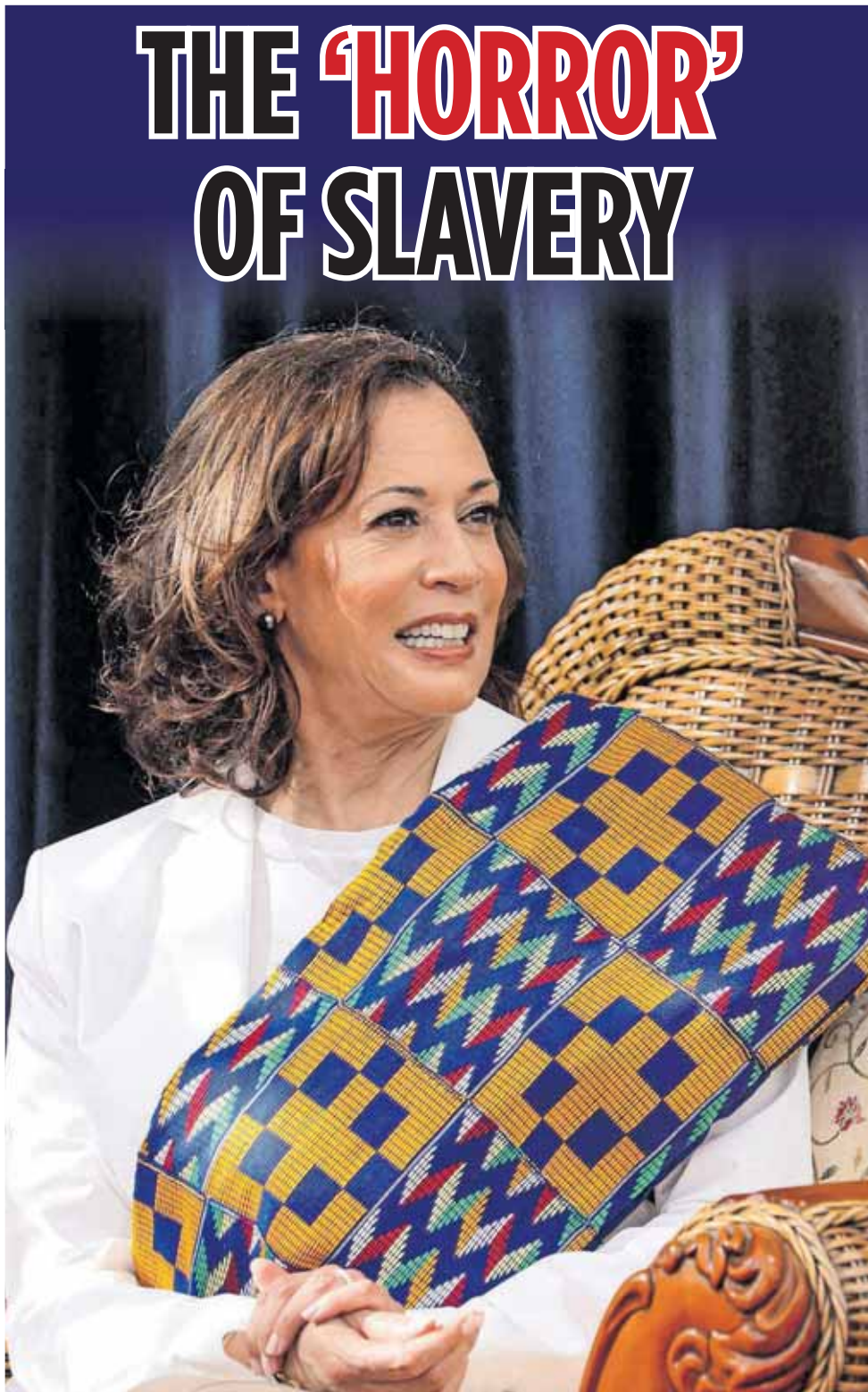
Relativity said its 3D-printed versions use 100 times fewer parts than traditional rockets and can be built from raw materials in just 60 days.

Relativity has signed commercial launch contracts worth \$1.65 billion, mostly for the Terran R, according to CEO Tim Ellis, who co-founded the company in 2015.

africa lens

■ WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, DIGITAL ECONOMY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

THE 'HORROR' OF SLAVERY



US Vice President Kamala Harris draped in a traditional Kente cloth at the Emintsimadze Palace in Cape Coast, Ghana, on March 28.

US Vice-President Harris given a guided tour of Cape Coast Castle, a Unesco World Heritage Site where slaves were shipped to North and South America and the Caribbean, shown the dungeons and the door of no return

● ACCRA

US Vice-President Kamala Harris last week visited the site in Ghana where slaves were shipped to the Americas, saying the horror of slavery should not be forgotten.

Her visit to Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia follows a December summit hosted by President Joe Biden in Washington with African leaders to balance the rising influence of China and Russia on the continent.

The US Vice-President was given a guided tour of Cape Coast Castle, a Unesco World Heritage Site where slaves were shipped to North and South America and the Caribbean, shown the dungeons and the door of no return.

She laid a wreath in honour of those who died during the slave trade. "The horror of what happened here must always be remembered," Harris said in solemn remarks, almost breaking into tears.

"It cannot be denied, it must be taught, history must be learned, and we must then be guided by what we know also to be the history of those who survived on the Americas," she said. Earlier in Accra, Harris called for more investments in innovation in Africa in a

...Continued on Page 26

africa lens

Harris calls for more investments in innovation

Continued from Page 25

speech underlining her optimism for the continent.

After a stop at a music recording studio in Ghana's capital, she addressed a crowd of young entrepreneurs and leaders gathered at the Black Star Gate landmark.

"African ideas and innovations will shape the future of the world, and so we must invest in African ingenuity and creativity, which will unlock incredible economic growth and opportunities," she said. Harris underlined three areas of focus that the United States believes could benefit from more investment: Women's empowerment, the digital economy and good governance and democracy.

While she noted some of the challenges facing the region, from insecurity to climate change and barriers to economic growth, Harris said the United States would remain "a steadfast partner for progress".

"We are 'all in' on Africa," she added, repeating what Biden said at the US-Africa leaders' summit last year. "It means that the United States is committed to strengthening our partnerships across the continent... based on openness, inclusiveness, candour, shared interests, and mutual benefits."

At a state banquet on Monday with President Nana Akufo-Addo, Harris praised his initiatives that have encouraged descendants of slaves to "come home" since 2019.

"Hundreds of thousands of Black Americans and members of the diaspora around the world came here four years ago... many more visit each year. Your vision, Mr President, made this possible," she said.

Harris is expected in Tanzania on Wednesday and Zambia later in the week, as part of a three-nation tour of the continent. On Monday, the United States said it "intends to provide \$139 million in bilateral assistance for Ghana" for economic, health, business and cultural initiatives. It also intends to invest more than \$100 million to "support conflict prevention and stabilisation efforts in coastal West Africa". Ghana, along with neighbouring Ivory



Chief Osabarima Kwesi Atta II (second left) looks on as US Vice President Kamala Harris (second right) and Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff react after receiving traditional Kente cloths at the Emintsimadze Palace in Cape Coast, Ghana, on March 28.

Coast, Benin and Togo, is at risk of jihadist violence spilling over its northern borders from the Sahel.

Akufo-Addo and Harris said the visit would strengthen ties and opportunities between Africa and the US. "This trip is motivated by the importance of the direct relationship between the United States and Ghana, and as I travel the continent, those countries as well," Harris told reporters.

Struggling with an economic crisis, burgeoning debt and inflation of over 50 per cent, Ghana has agreed on a \$3 billion loan deal with the International Monetary Fund.

Ghana's finance minister also returned this month from a trip to China, where the two governments discussed debt issues. "China is one of the many countries with whom Ghana is engaged," Akufo-Addo said, dismissing concerns over China's investments. "The relationship between America and Ghana is a relationship which has its own dynamic."

Harris' office said the US would provide Ghana with \$139 million (128 million euros) in bilateral assistance next year. This will go towards economic, business and cultural initiatives, as well as the health sector, with projects such as an anti-malaria programme.

Washington will also send a special resident advisor to Ghana to help Akufo-Addo's government with its debt profile management this year, it said.

Ghana is one of the Gulf of Guinea nations, along with Ivory Coast and neighbours Benin and Togo, suffering from the fallout from jihadist violence over their northern borders in Burkina Faso. Togo, Ivory Coast and Benin have all been hit by attacks blamed on gunmen crossing over their northern borders in the Sahel region, where Islamic State and al Qaeda-allied militants operate.

A French troop withdrawal from Mali after disputes with the ruling junta there and two coups and instability in Burkina Faso have helped refocus Western partners to aid Gulf of Guinea nations to counter the southward spillover of militant violence.

Ghana has pushed for more regional military cooperation among West African coastal states as well as initiatives to help development and aid in vulnerable northern border regions. Harris said the Biden administration would invest \$100 million as part of a plan to help Ghana, Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast in stabilisation, governance and countering the threat of jihadism. Russian

security company Wagner is also operating in several countries in Africa and has been sanctioned by the EU over rights abuse allegations there. "We made clear our concerns," the Ghanaian leader said about Wagner's presence over the border in the Sahel region.

"It raises the very real possibility... that, once again, our continent is going to become the playground for great power conflict."

Asked about a bill currently in Ghana's parliament that critics say will severely restrict LGBTQ rights, Harris said she had addressed the issue with Akufo-Addo and said the US considered it a matter of human rights.

Akufo-Addo said the bill was still under discussion in parliament and had been reviewed by the attorney-general, and that "substantial elements of the bill had already been modified".

"We will see what the final outcome will be." Other programmes announced by Harris' office will include small business development funds, especially for women and youth, financing to help combat child labour in Ghana's cocoa industry and investments in weather and climate early warning systems.

—AFP

global lens

■ BRITISH AND SCOTTISH NEWSPAPERS HAVE HAILED YOUSAF'S ELECTION AS 'HISTORIC'

FROM KENYA TO THE WORLD



Barack Obama, Ilhan Omar, Rishi Sunak and now Humza Yousaf... What do these global leaders have in common? They were all 'Made in Kenya'

● BY JOHN KAMAU

Humza Yousaf, the newly-elected First Minister of Scotland, is yet another Western politician with some Kenyan heritage. He represents a growing '80s generation that attests to the vibrancy of an expanding Kenyan diaspora – created by fate and chance and by post-independent political intolerance and migration.

The history of this emerging generation is also the story of Kenya's race relations – and how it has become a bridge to the world platform for some families.

The new Scottish First Minister's mother, Shaaista Bhutta, was born and grew up in Kenya – the place she once called home. But she and her parents became victims of post-independent discrimination against the Asian

community, who were forced to quit their jobs within the civil service and seek solace in the UK. They also lost their retail trading licenses and employment as the Jomo Kenyatta government began its Africanisation policy of business and the 78,000-strong public service.

Yousaf's father, Muzaffar, was born in the Pakistani city of Mian Channu before he migrated to Scotland in 1964 to join his father.

This was during a period that a new Indian-British identity was being constructed as more arrivals from the British Commonwealth established homes in the UK. Muzaffar arrived at a time that the conflict between India and Pakistan was reaching new status.

As East African nations started to get independence in the

Continued on Page 28

global lens

Why Kenya sits on top of the world

Continued from Page 27

1960s – and as the exodus of European settlers began – the fate of thousands of Asian families settled, or born, in the region turned into a nagging political problem. While they had prospered as a business community and owned property in Kenya, they were asked to choose citizenship: either become Kenya citizens within a given time-frame or sell their property and leave. Those who left early managed to take their wealth, with them but many families were impoverished as they were forced out.

Yousaf – and many other Asian families with Kenyan ties – are part of a generation entangled within a history that almost rendered their grandparents and parents stateless as Britain started a quota system for new migrants. Yet, ironically, the migrants have managed to rebuild their lives in the separate places they found solace – and are now emerging as new faces of a diaspora with Kenyan connections. Yousaf has always recounted his family's predicament in Kenya, which was unlike that of his father, who had smoothly arrived in the UK from Pakistan. "My mum's journey was slightly different," he once told a Scottish publication. "She grew up in Kenya but... for them it was difficult because with Idi Amin, Jomo Kenyatta and a few others coming through, life as an Asian in East Africa became very difficult because they were essentially seen as taking all the good jobs."

Yousaf's grandfather was working with East African Railways (EAR) as a train conductor, which was among the jobs earmarked for Kenyanisation after Independence. According to Yousaf, "he was seen as taking that job away from a black African, a black Kenyan, so life became very difficult." After Independence, the Asian community turned into East Africa's face of hate. Unable to deliver on their promises of *Uhuru*, politicians blamed their economic shortcomings on Indians, who became the scapegoats for Kenya's woes. Some of the Asians were prosperous business and property owners, while others were eking out a living as junior civil servants or as *duka wallahs*. Soon, they became targets of physical attacks.

"My family was attacked a few times and there was one incident in particular when my maternal grandmother was attacked with an axe in the back. She survived... but that was the last straw for my grandfather. It was time to get away and again, it made sense because there was a British call for people from the Commonwealth to come (to the UK) and take on industrial jobs."

It appears that Yousaf's parents were from the first wave of Indians who arrived in Britain before the migration quota was announced in 1968. Before that, the UK had in 1962 enacted the Commonwealth Immigration Act, which subjected Commonwealth citizens to immigration controls for the first time.



Newly appointed leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Humza Yousaf (third right), with his wife Nadia El-Nakla (centre left) and daughter Amal (centre), following the SNP Leadership election result announcement at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh on March 27. Humza Yousaf, the first Muslim leader of a major UK political party, faces an uphill battle to revive Scotland's drive for independence following the long tenure of his close ally Nicola Sturgeon. PHOTO IAFP

As the Kenyatta government made it impossible for Asians to operate in Kenya, an unprecedented exodus started from East Africa, forcing Britain to require that all East African Asians show a close connection with the UK before they were allowed in. After Idi Amin came to power in Uganda in 1971, he threw 50,000 Asians out of Uganda, creating yet another wave of migrants to the UK. London reacted in 1972 by demanding that the immigrants obtain work permits unless their parents or grandparents were born in the country.

In this group is Rishi Sunak, the 56th British Prime Minister, whose father also left Kenya in the 1960s. Sunak's father, Yashvir Sunak, was born and raised in colonial Kenya, while his mother, Usha Sunak, was born in mainland Tanzania, then Tanganyika.

He has also made history as the first British-Asian to become British Prime Minister. While Sunak was born on May 12, 1980, in Southampton, Yousaf was born on April 7, 1985, in Glasgow, Scotland – a millennial generation that is tech-savvy and is often described as the first global generation. They have swiftly followed the footsteps of Barack Obama, the former US President with a Kenyan father. But unlike Sunak and Yousaf, Obama's father was part of the first wave of Kenyans that went abroad seeking advanced education in western universities. This group broke race barriers and was multi-cultural.

Another fast-rising US politician with Kenyan ties is Ilhan Omar, the US representative for Minnesota, a former refugee at the Daadab Camp in Garissa. Though born in Mogadishu on October 4, 1982, she spent four years of her childhood in Kenya before her family settled

in the US when she was 13. By being elected the first Somali-American legislator in the United States, Omar set the same record as Obama, Sunak and Yousaf.

British and Scottish newspapers have hailed Yousaf's election as "historic". Press pictures captured his emotional parents shedding tears of joy as their son was announced the contest winner in Edinburgh. Yousaf becomes the first migrant, Muslim, and person of colour to be the First Minister of Scotland – an indicator of how migrants reshape UK politics.

The leading newspaper, *Scotsman*, said Yousaf faces "an uphill battle to unite a divided party". However, he has been accused by Douglass Ross, the leader of the Scottish Conservative Party, of running a "toxic campaign". Unperturbed, Yousaf described himself as "the luckiest man in the world" for becoming the youngest First Minister at 37.

Yousaf has not forgotten the tough road that his parents travelled to get him there. "I had a great childhood but I'm a typical son of immigrants, and they were typical of first-generation immigrants. Their parents worked incredibly hard; bus conductors, shopkeepers, went into the restaurant business and other things but both came here for quite different reasons, in one sense," Yousaf told *Holyrood*, a Scottish news website.

While most migrants who left Kenya for Britain are known to have lived in poor-quality housing and obtained low-paid work, they have managed to bring up a generation that is Kenya's export to the world.

jkamau@ke.nationmedia.com; [johnkamau1](https://www.johnkamau1.com)

global lens

■ LIVING THROUGH MULTIPLE SHOOTINGS

● NASHVILLE

The number of shootings continues to mount across the United States, resulting in more and more people living through multiple traumatic instances of gun violence.

Several Americans are speaking out about their experiences being impacted by more than one massacre, including the Nashville school shooting on Monday, in which the lives of three children and three adults were abruptly ended.

Joylyn Bukovac, a reporter for local TV station WSMV 4, was covering the Nashville shooting when she revealed to viewers that the event brought back painful memories. “This is something that hits very close to home for me. Many of you might not know this, but I’m actually a school shooting survivor,” she said.

When she was in the eighth grade, she said, a gunman opened fire in the hallway of her school.

She told viewers that she “wasn’t really ready to talk about it for two years,” and urged others to be “very gentle” with the students who experienced tragedy Monday at their school.

“Let them talk when they’re ready because the shock that they’re going to be feeling coming home is going to be unfathomable.” The video of Bukovac’s Nashville report went viral, prompting messages of support to flood in.

“I just want people to know they aren’t alone,” she said later in a tweet. “I don’t talk about it much, but I think about what happened on February 5, 2010 often,” she said, adding she also wants to “discuss solutions.”

“As a mom, I am worried for the future,” said Bukovac. Another video has also gone viral: that of a woman, herself the survivor of a previous mass shooting, bursting into a press conference in Nashville to make an impassioned plea against gun violence.

Ashbey Beasley and her son were attending a Fourth of July parade last year in Highland Park, a suburb of Chicago, when a gunman opened fire, killing seven. Beasley said in a tweet that she was “on a family vacation” in Nashville, when the school shooting occurred. “Aren’t you guys tired of being here and having

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY: NO END TO GUN VIOLENCE

Americans are speaking out about their experiences being impacted by more than one massacre, including the Nashville shooting, in which three children and three adults were killed



Girls embrace in front of a makeshift memorial for victims by the Covenant School building at the Covenant Presbyterian Church following a shooting, in Nashville, Tennessee, on March 28. A heavily armed former student killed three young children and three staff in what appeared to be a carefully planned attack, before being shot dead by police. Chief of Police John Drake named the suspect as Audrey Hale, 28, who the officer later said identified as transgender.

to cover all of these mass shootings?” she asked the press conference. “How is this still happening?” She later told CNN that she had been planning to have lunch with a friend on Monday who lost her son in a mass shooting at a restaurant five years ago.

But the friend told Beasley that another one of her children was in lockdown due to the Nashville school shooting. “This is where

we are at; we have children living through multiple mass shootings. What are we doing?” asked Beasley. Emma Riddle survived a deadly shooting at her high school in 2021 and hoped to never experience such a nightmare again. But just over a year later, she found herself locked down at Michigan State University as a gunman killed three other students.

“Fourteen months ago I had to

evacuate... when a 15-year-old opened fire and killed four of my classmates and injured seven more,” she tweeted the night of the February 13 attack.

“Tonight, I am sitting under my desk... once again texting everyone ‘I love you.’” “When will this end?” she added.

Her father, Matt Riddle, later said that because his daughter had experienced a prior school shooting, she knew what “she needs to do in these situations.” “I don’t like that she has those tools – I wish she didn’t – but she does,” he told ABC News. “Her safety and sense of peace have been ripped away twice in 14 months because America continues to choose guns over kids,” he later added on Twitter.

The 28-year-old who shot dead six people at an elementary school in Nashville was able to buy and conceal multiple weapons in the family home despite evidence of mental health issues.

Two nine-year-old girls, a nine-year-old boy, two teachers and a school custodian died in the Monday attack, which recharged the bitter debate over gun rights in the US. Parents with their children joined a steady stream of mourners in front of a makeshift memorial to the victims of the massacre at the Covenant School in Nashville as the sun set Tuesday, many of them in tears.

“It’s just unimaginable to think that these beautiful kids are not going to come home again,” Lisbeth Melgar, who brought her two children to see the memorial, told AFP as she gently tucked her daughter’s hair behind her ear.

Earlier, Nashville police chief John Drake told reporters that the shooter, Audrey Hale, had been receiving treatment for an “emotional disorder,” and that Hale’s parents believed their child had bought and later resold a single gun.

—AFP

OBIT

■ **I'M HEARTBROKEN... NO GIRL DESERVES THEIR DAD TO BE TAKEN AWAY, SAYS DAUGHTER**

Although Paul Grant appeared in major films, work dried up later in life and it was reported that he'd struggled after the collapse of his marriage

● LONDON

English actor Paul Grant, who appeared in *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* films, died on March 21 in London at the age of 56.

According to *The Independent*, Grant collapsed outside London's King's Cross train station on March 16 and was rushed to hospital, where he was pronounced brain dead. His family made the difficult decision to switch off his life support machine.

Paul – who was 4ft 4in tall – appeared in various films over the course of his career, including playing an Ewok in *Return of the Jedi* (1983), and a goblin in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001).

He appeared in the *Star Wars* film as robot R2-D2 in some scenes, saying that he stood in for co-star Kenny Baker, who played the role.

Paul's other credits are said to include working on *Labyrinth* (1986) and *Willow* (1988).

Paul shared three children, Sophie, Nicole and Robbie, with his ex-wife Janet Crowson. His daughter, Sophie Grant, 28, told *The Sun* that she's "devastated" after his life support machine was switched off.

"I'm heartbroken... No girl deserves their dad to be taken away... He was so well known and loved (for his work). He's gone too soon," she told *Sky News*.

She described her father as a "legend" and said that he always brought a smile to those around him. "He always brought a smile and laughter to everyone's face. He loved his daughters and son and his girlfriend, Maria, very much."

Paul's girlfriend, Maria Dwyer, 64, described him as the "love of (her) life" whilst speaking to the outlet. She further commented: "Life is

Paul – who was 4ft 4in tall – appeared in various films over the course of his career, including playing an Ewok in *Return of the Jedi* (1983), and a goblin in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001). He appeared in the *Star Wars* film as robot R2-D2 in some scenes, saying that he stood in for co-star Kenny Baker, who played the role. Paul's other credits are said to include working on *Labyrinth* (1986) and *Willow* (1988).

'STAR WARS' STAR EXITS THE SCENE



British actor Paul Grant died in London on March 21.

I'm heartbroken ... No girl deserves their dad to be taken away ... He was so well known and loved (for his work). He's gone too soon. He was a legend who always brought a smile to those around him. He always brought a smile and laughter to everyone's face. He loved his daughters and son and his girlfriend, Maria, very much.

Sophie Grant, daughter

”

never going to be the same without him."

Meanwhile, Paul's family have set up a Go Fund Me page to raise funds towards his funeral. The page reads: "He's going to be missed. If anyone could help would be much appreciated. Let's give him the best send-off, please".

The actor, who once shared the screen with Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill, told how his life had hit rock bottom following the collapse of his marriage and a conviction for common assault that left him in prison.

Although Paul appeared in major films, he told the *Mirror* in 2014 that work dried up later in life and it was reported that he'd struggled when his marriage ended.

Paul added in the interview, almost a decade ago: "I had a family, I was married, now I'm divorced. I've lost everything. I've not got anything, my things, pictures, clothes are all over the place. I don't know what I want at the moment. I had money, I blew it all. I spent it on drugs and prostitutes."

He went on: "My family has disowned me and work has dried up. I've been on cocaine and it has just got worse. I'm drinking and smoking what I can get. I'm all right but I do need help. I've got kids and a granddaughter."

He added: "I'm going to give it a crack. I do want to get back to where I was. I've not been to see anyone, but if someone did offer me help or brought me help I would take it."

— Agencies

GET YOUR FAVOURITE DAILIES DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME

Fresh and unbiased news delivered to your doorstep

NEWSPAPER
DELIVERY



SMS the word **GAZETI** to **20567**,
Share your preferred delivery location
and our agent will get in touch with you

FREE SMS text and **FREE** Delivery

DAILY NATION

Business
Daily

DAILY
LEO

The East African

Terms & Conditions apply*



SPORTS TV!

JAMES
WOKABI

BERNARD
NDONG

HOSTS



NATIONFM 96.3^{FM}
WHERE GOOD MUSIC LIVES

SATURDAYS 3PM