

THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

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RUTO'S ECONOMIC FIXER

David Ndi, the controversial economist who gained prominence during former President Mwai Kibaki's regime, is calling all the shots at State House with his gospel of the Bottom-Up model

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letter from the editor

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In the shackles of IMF: It will take dogged discipline to free the economy

President William Ruto's administration is in a most unenviable situation on matters economy.

Public debts that have piled up over the past 10 years are gobbling up all tax revenue, and there's hardly any money left to sustain a bloated public service and pay for other State obligations such as security, health and education.

The cost of living has shot through the roof, thanks mainly to the searing drought and the Russian-Ukraine war that has raised the cost of food beyond the reach of a majority poor families.

Fuel prices are rising unabated, spreading inflation across all economic sectors through higher transportation costs. This has a knock-on effect on the cost of all other goods and services.

The shilling is weakening by the day, making imports more expensive and further inflating our dollar-denominated debts.

Public expectation, meanwhile, is at an all-time high; informed by lofty promises that the Kenya Kwanza stalwarts made on the campaign trail.

It will take a miracle to get the economy back on track and fulfil the blissful campaign promises.

As if to add salt to injury, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is in town to check the government's compliance with conditions set when it extended a 38-month, multibillion-shilling loan programme requiring the Treasury to implement politically unpopular reforms across several sectors.

The IMF, in April 2021, approved a \$2.3 billion financing package for Kenya that came with a stiff conditionality regime, including specific measures to enhance



Washington Gikunju

The Washington DC-based lender wants Kenya Power to increase electricity tariffs to cover a reported Sh26.3 billion annual financing gap in its books, which could prove hugely unpopular given that Kenyans are already paying some of the highest energy bills in Africa.

and improve public debt management. The Bretton Woods institution is demanding a downward adjustment on public debt ceiling, curbs on new domestic guarantees for county governments and parastatals and limits on the contracting of new external debt.

The Washington DC-based lender wants Kenya Power to increase electricity tariffs to cover a reported Sh26.3 billion annual financing gap in its books, which could prove hugely unpopular given that Kenyans are already paying some of the highest energy bills in Africa.

Further, IMF wants broader taxes and floors on tax revenues, ceilings on gross national reserves, elimination of fuel subsidies, re-

structuring of Kenya Airways, publication of a forensic audit on Covid-19 spending, publication of beneficial ownership of companies awarded public contracts and the overhauling of the anti-money laundering legal framework.

The Ruto administration has little choice in the short and perhaps medium term, other than to either comply or negotiate with the IMF as the weaker party.

It will take dogged fiscal discipline and creative economic policies to regain the economic independence that the late President Mwai Kibaki's administration worked considerably hard to bequeath the country.

Only tangible economic recovery could help the Ruto regime to disentangle itself from IMF's shackles if it wants real independence to implement its economic policies. Like any prudent lender, IMF is fixated on tough fiscal measures to guarantee repayment of its debts, but not necessarily to help the country out of the current economic rut.

But the government must never forget that it is ultimately answerable to the electorate. It must choose wisely the bitter economic pills to administer as recommended by IMF, but also see how to cushion the poor by avoiding unbearable tax increases, job cuts and other measures that could further raise the cost of living.

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the telescope

■ 27 names proposed for nine EALA slots

MPs sit to vet IG nominee Koome

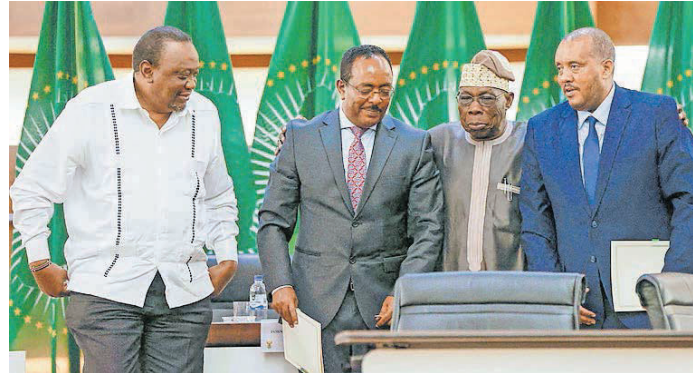
A joint parliamentary committee sitting will on Tuesday next week meet to vet Inspector-General of Police nominee Japhet Koome. This comes after the end of submission of memoranda by the public on Thursday last week. After the approval hearing the joint committee – the National Assembly's Committee on Administration and Internal Affairs and the Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Foreign Relations – will retreat to write a report, which will then be presented before Parliament for either approval or rejection of the nominee. President William Ruto had forwarded Koome's

name to Parliament mid-October. Further, a joint committee of Parliament is expected to begin vetting of nominees to the East Africa Legislative Assembly to fill nine slots to be shared out among parliamentary parties. The 14-member panel will go through 27 names proposed to the committee by different political parties between November 10 and 11. A vote will then be taken in both the Senate and the National Assembly to whittle down the list to nine names that will represent Kenya in the regional assembly. Only Kenya and DRC have yet to submit names of their representatives.



The National Assembly in session on October 6.

■ UN: Support the 'bold step' taken by the two sides



Former President Uhuru Kenyatta, Redwan Hussein, Representative of the Ethiopian government (second left), African Union Horn of Africa envoy and former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo (second right) and Getachew Reda, Representative of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), look on after the signing of a peace agreement in Pretoria on November 2. PHOTO | AFP

World leaders hail Ethiopia peace deal

World leaders have hailed the deal signed by the two sides in Ethiopia's civil war, ending hostilities in the two-year conflict. It was concluded on Wednesday in South Africa and brokered by the African Union.

Senegalese President and the current AU chairperson Macky Sall described the announcement as "excellent news". UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has welcomed the truce and has urged all Ethiopians and the international community to support the "bold step" taken by the two warring parties.

"The agreement is a critical first step towards ending the devastating two-year-old conflict in which the lives and livelihoods of so many Ethiopians have been lost," Mr Gu-

terres said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken hailed the momentous step and committed that his country would remain closely engaged to support the continued AU-led efforts in the weeks ahead.

Kenyan President William Ruto, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and the EU all applauded the efforts by the two parties towards restoring peace in Ethiopia.

But the mediators have warned that there is still work to do. "The lasting solution can only be through political engagement and being able to accommodate our differences, our diversity, while still remaining a united Ethiopia," Kenya's ex-president Uhuru Kenyatta, who helped broker the deal, said.

■ Family says she can't manage her life

Rehab for Egypt's 'Britney Spears'



In past weeks, the story of an Egyptian pop star admitted into a rehabilitation facility has spilled beyond celebrity gossip and sparked new debate on women's rights in the conservative country. Sherine

Abdel Wahab has long been a darling of Arab pop, but recent events have earned her the title of Egypt's Britney Spears — not for her musical talent but because of her family's efforts to portray her as unfit to manage her own affairs. Her fanbase was shocked when she appeared sporting a dramatic new buzzcut, but when she was admitted into a rehabilitation facility last month, it sparked a groundswell of debate.

■ She'll act alongside Bollywood star Priyanka

Céline Dion stars as herself in rom-com



International music icon Celine Dion will star in a romantic comedy called 'Love again', which will be released in theaters in 2023 — and in which she will play herself. "See you at the movies!" wrote the Quebecer on social networks, noting

that she will act alongside Indian Bollywood film star Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Scotland's Sam Heughan, known for his role in the drama series *Outlander*. Dion also said she will unveil new songs for the Sony-produced film, which will hit the big screen on May 12. The film, directed by Jim Strouse (*The Incredible Jessica James*) tells the story of a young woman who continues to text her fiancé after his death. A romance is born with the new owner of the phone number.

kenya lens

■ CONCEPT OF COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY

KINOTI, HAJI AND ICC GHOSTS

The DPP has vowed to reopen the Baby Pendo killing case and other violent actions by police during the 2017 elections under international crimes guidelines on command responsibility. Could the net go all the way up to the President?

● By MACHARIA GAI THO

It looks like the chickens have come home to roost for former Director of Criminal Investigations George Kinoti, but the net could spread much wider and higher as President William Ruto pushes investigations into widespread extrajudicial executions and other crimes allegedly committed under the watch of his predecessor, President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Focus so far has been on the abduction and suspected killing of two Indian nationals, Mohammed Said Sami and Zulfiqar Ahmed, who had been contracted by the Ruto campaign team, and their Kenyan taxi driver, Nicodemus Mwanzia, for which up to nine officers from the DCI's disbanded Special Services Unit have already been arrested.

In a case of such nature, it is likely that some of the suspects are ready to strike plea bargains with the investigators. According to informed sources who spoke to *The Weekly Review* in confidence, attempts are already underway to persuade some of those under arrest to spill the beans on what transpired and on whose instructions they acted, and also testify at trial against their colleagues and superiors in exchange for lenient treatment.

Kinoti is also under pressure after Director of Public Prosecutions Noordin Haji dropped a large number of corruption and other criminal cases against key Ruto allies, including Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, accusing the former DCI boss of having presented false evi-

dence. Last Sunday, Haji declared in an interview with *KTN* that Kinoti could be charged if found to have used forged evidence against Gachagua, claiming that the DCI had pressured him to prosecute the future DP on evidence now found to have been falsified.

This came after several investigating officers filed fresh affidavits claiming that they had been forced by Kinoti to concoct evidence against the then Mathira MP.

What really upped the stakes, however, was the declaration by Haji two days earlier that the Baby Pendo killing case and other violent actions by police during the 2017 elections will be re-opened under international crimes guidelines on command responsibility.

This is the principle where, on mass murder, crimes against humanity, genocide, forceful displacement of populations, torture and sex crimes during conflict, responsibility lies not only with the actual perpetrators, but their commanders, planners of the missions, financiers and even higher up to those deemed to exercise political responsibility. They are held culpable even if they were nowhere near the scene of crime.

Haji hinted that a large number of senior police officers within the affected area in the Nyanza region — including station, divisional, county and regional commanders — were already under sealed warrants of arrest. But the concept of superior or command responsibility also means that the net could spread a lot wider and higher.

Under this principle, it could extend beyond the field commanders to include the Director of DCI, the Deputy Inspectors-General responsible for the Kenya Police Service and Administration Police, the Inspector-General of Police and other senior officers in the hierarchy who could have been party to planning and execution of the crimes under investigation.

Also in the crosshairs under the ICC guidelines would be those re-

sponsible for civilian oversight of the security agencies, including the then Cabinet Secretary and the Principal Secretary for Interior, the State department in charge of the police. Ultimately, the net could go all the way up to the President himself as presumed beneficiary of any such violence meted out by police on civilians. However, Kinoti was not in office when the alleged atrocities were committed in the middle of August 2017. He was appointed by President Kenyatta in the first week of January 2018, succeeding Mr Ndegwa Muhoro, who was appointed Kenyan High Commissioner to Malaysia.

Inspector-General of Police Hillary Mutyambai who, like Kinoti, left the service when President Ruto took office in September, was also not in office at the time, having been appointed in April 2019 succeeding a fellow National Intelligence Service officer Joseph Boinett.

Mr Boinett's two deputies were Mr Joel Kitili (Kenya Police) and Mr Samuel Arachi (Administration Police) who have both since left.

In a statement released on October 28, Haji, said that continuing investigations into the August 8, 2017 killing of Baby Samantha Pendo, which caused a national outcry, had established a pattern of systematic and planned police violence which, for the first time in Kenyan history, merited recourse to crimes against humanity charges as domesticated under Kenyan law using the International Crimes Act.

Haji revealed that violence against civilians in the Nyalenda, Nyamasaria, Kondele and Obunga areas of Kisumu was carried out under a coordinated police operation nick-named 'Post-Election Mipango', with an organised command structure including heads of command and sector commanders.

It was established that the violence was not random, but planned and coordinated by un-named high-ranking officers who would

Continued on Page 6



Director of Public Prosecutions Noordin Haji

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Jitters over 'command responsibility' principle

Continued from Page 5



President William Ruto



Former President Uhuru Kenyatta



Former Interior CS Fred Matiang'i



Former Police boss Mohammed Hussein Ali



Radio journalist Joshua arap Sang

be charged with the offences of murder, rape and torture as crime against humanity.

The DPP's not disclosing the names of the officers to be charged is consistent with the ICC practice of sealed indictments, where charges may be filed in court and arrest warrants secured before the actual arrests.

However, he did not disclose if he had already moved to court in such fashion or whether arrests had been made.

What is important is that there is almost no limit to how high the prosecution can go under ICC practices in seeking criminal culpability. It probably is not incidental that, almost in tandem with Haji's statement, President Ruto's star social media propagandist, Dennis Itumbi, tweeted a derogatory reference he reserves for the former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i.

He left it at that without saying what the Matiang'i reference was in regard to, but the timing was suggestive. *The Weekly Review* reached out to Matiang'i for his comments, but he did not pick our calls.

It is instructive that Haji is proposing to apply the same command responsibility concept that the ICC used to indict Uhuru and Ruto over the 2007 post-election violence in which over 1,200 lost their lives and over 600,000 were forcibly displaced.

Others indicted on command responsibility were former Head of Public Service Francis Muthaura, former Police Commissioner Mohammed Hussein Ali and former Cabinet Minister Henry Kosgey. The sixth accused was *Kass FM* radio presenter Joshua Sang.

All six were discharged before conclusion of the trial for various reasons, but the ICC cases established a powerful lesson: that there could be no escape for the planners or perpetrators of violence.

Indeed, Ruto's defeated rival at the 2022 presidential elections, Raila Odinga, cited the ICC precedent as the reason he held off from organising public protests against the polls outcome and the Supreme Court dismissal of his petition. In mulling superi-

or and command charges, however, the DPP is treading on sensitive ground that has some in the Ruto camp urging caution.

One factor is that Kinoti's successor at the DCI, Mohammed Amin, the acting Inspector-General, Noor Gabow, and many other senior officers now at the helm were key figures in the police command structure in 2017 and could easily be implicated.

An even trickier element is that if Uhuru was the ultimate beneficiary of the police violence in Kisumu, so was his running-mate Ruto.

Also as DP and a member of the National Security Council, Ruto would almost certainly have been privy to any decisions at that level.

Then there is the fact that prosecutions either in regard to the 2017 police violence in Kisumu or extrajudicial executions by DCI's Special Services Unit during Kinoti's term are not committed by 'rogue' elements as is being reported.

In most cases, these operations by various special units are sanctioned at the very highest level of the police command, as well as the civilian oversight authorities at Cabinet level, the National Security Council and the National Security Advisory Committee.

Units such as the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit and various crime-fight-

ing formations including the Special Service Unit and its predecessors like the Special Crime Prevention Unit, the Flying Squad and others, are often authorised at the highest levels of government to terminate serious threats to national security such as the Mungiki criminal gang in Central Kenya, adjacent parts of Rift Valley and Nairobi, al Shabab terrorists cells in the Coast and North Eastern regions, and the February Eighteenth Freedom Army (Fera) in Bungoma and Trans Nzoia counties.

Before appointment as DPP in March 2018, Haji had served a long stint as a senior officer with the National Intelligence Service, where he no doubt gained invaluable experience on multi-agency operations targeting elimination al-Shabab terrorist command, recruitment and indoctrination cells across Kenya. The victims feature prominently in the list of extrajudicial execution cases investigated by the Independent Policing Oversight Authority and various human rights agencies only now coming to light with change of guard at State House.

Another complication for Haji is that he will be at pains to explain the timing of his sudden dropping of criminal cases involving Ruto allies and threats to prosecute Kinoti for falsified evidence, as well as reopening of charges on the 2017 violence.

Admitting that he filed criminal cases on false evidence under pressure to satisfy political forces of the day amounts to self-incrimination that could also open him to prosecution and impeachment.

It also sends worrying signals that if the chief prosecutor would succumb to political pressure under the Uhuru regime, he will do the same under the Ruto regime, calling into question the credibility of all decisions he is now making on the dropping or institution of criminal prosecutions.

Haji is likely to come under increasing pressure in coming days to resign, with various human rights groups and legal lobbies accusing him of betraying his oath of office. The office of the DPP is by law independent and insulated from pressure and direction by any other organ, but now seems to be singing the song of the Ruto government.



Former DCI boss George Kinoti

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■ OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

● By MACHARIA GAITHO

For a man smack in the middle of a public storm over his contentious decision to abandon criminal cases against key allies of President William Ruto soon after change of guard at State House, Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Noordin Haji looks remarkably relaxed and unfazed.

Flanked by a heavyweight cast of senior prosecutors in charge of various departments, Haji hosts *The Weekly Review* in his boardroom seemingly unconcerned by the maelstrom he has unleashed that has provoked calls for his resignation amidst accusations that he is turning the independent office into a willing tool of the new government.

Depending on which one way one looks at it, he could be extremely naive in ignoring concerns over the timing of the case withdrawals, or supremely confident in the soundness of his decisions irrespective of the political turbulence.

Ruto's Kenya Kwanza alliance campaigned on the slogan 'Freedom is Coming'. The withdrawal of criminal cases against Cabinet Secretaries Aisha Jumwa and Mithika Linturi, former Kenya Power executive Ben Chumo and others, as well as the signalled collapse of a corruption case against Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, naturally inspired 'Freedom has Come' headlines in the media.

Indeed, during the campaigns, Gachagua had openly boasted that the case facing him would be abandoned as soon as a Ruto assumed the presidency.

When this confluence of events is pointed out to Haji, he appears quite unconcerned, patiently explaining the history of each case and why it had to be withdrawn.

There was also the apparent revelation last Sunday that he had been pushed by the former Director of Criminal Investigations George Kinoti into prosecuting cases on falsified evidence, a factor that would make Haji culpable in the alleged misdeeds.

But according to him, his office never knowingly prosecuted anyone on false evidence. Rather, it was such action coming to light later as in the affidavit by an

CALM UNDER PRESSURE

Seemingly unfazed by the storm he has caused by abandoning high-profile criminal cases, Haji could be extremely naive in ignoring concerns over timing of the withdrawals, or supremely confident in the soundness of his decision

investigating officer in the Gachagua case who claimed to have acted under pressure from Kinoti. The case will obviously collapse even though it had not been formally withdrawn at the time of writing.

On the Aisha Jumwa case, prosecution proceeded after the DCI investigators presented evidence which met the threshold for initial filing, but they then reneged on promises to tie up loose ends identified by the ODPP. There is correspondence dating back to 2019 as the prosecution pressed the DCI to present the promised evidence to no avail. The same applied to the case against Chumo and other Kenya Power bosses.

In the Linturi sexual assault case, it was a matter of the victim withdrawing her complaint rather than the prosecution withdrawing the case. According to Haji, the prosecution takes in good faith information, evidence and exhibits presented by investigators. They review the evidence and determine whether it meets the set threshold for prosecution. Often the investigators will be directed to areas that need further probing.

Sometimes the prosecution will commence even as further investigations continue, as long as it has been determined that the case can stand up in a court of law once the identified gaps are filled.

If Kinoti and his officers indeed used fake evidence, will they be arrested and charged?

On that, Haji is non-committal, only stating that the matter is under investigation and only after that phase is concluded will the decision be made. However, he adds, any charges that may arise will be handled by independent prosecutors to avoid potential for conflict of interest.

Then there is the issue of disbandment of the DCI's Special Service Unit and investigations into extrajudicial executions, as well as prosecutions arising out of police killings in Kisumu following the 2017 elections.

Haji flatly denies that the dramatic developments have any political influence following Ruto's ascension to power, insisting that each case is treated in its own merit and the timing has nothing to do with politics but rather the conclusion of complex investigations, some of which have taken over five years.

It may well be a coincidence but the fact that some

of these matters are coming to light soon after President Ruto's ascension, it will be impossible to persuade sceptics that there is no connection.

While this may be out of Haji's hands, there is no secret that some of the key players in Ruto's inner circle are salivating at the prospect of using newly-acquired power and apparent control of key police organs to make life very uncomfortable for their foes in the departed Uhuru power structure.

In the impending charging of key police commanders facing prosecution on the 'Baby Pendo' case under International Crime guidelines, those to be arraigned were directly involved in the area of operation, but the command responsibility concept being applied could open the door to casting of the net much further to police headquarters in Nairobi and even the political leadership.

That the new police leadership has been taking directives from Ruto on how to proceed with some investigations could give some of his political foes sleepless nights.



Director of Public Prosecutions Noordin Haji

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■ POWERFUL COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS

THE PRESIDENT'S THINK TANK

David Ndi, the chair of the Presidential Council of Economic Advisers. SILA KIPLAGAT | NATION

Ndi leads a crack team of heavyweights with a blank cheque to run the economy by taking the lead in policy formulation and transformation. Like the Office of Management of Budget at the White House, the experts work from State House with unfettered access to the Head of State

● By JAINDI KISERO

There had been expectations that President William Ruto would appoint the prominent economist and academic Dr David Ndi to a key position in the management of the economy, with pundits predicting a top position at the apex institution of economic policy and financial management – the National Treasury.

The news that Ndi had been appointed chair of the Presidential Council of Economic Advisers confounding mainly because keen observers of the economic policy space were still unable to gauge the clout this new entity is likely to wield in the shaping of policy viz-a-viz

the powers of the National Treasury and the Central Bank of Kenya.

Was this going to be the same thing as the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) – a key and influential player in the economic policy making place under former President Mwai Kibaki that authored Vision 2030? Yet keen observers following the way the making of economic policy is shaping under the new administration must have noticed just how influential Ndi and the team of recently appointed State House-based technocrats have become.

The Weekly Review has learnt that Ndi and his team have been deeply involved in the recent decisions around the financial restructur-

ing of the Kenya Airways.

Last week, the team summoned the management of the company to brief it on the looming strike by pilots and the likely implications of measures that must be implemented under the ongoing IMF programme that include negotiating with international leasing companies to bring down leasing costs, staff rationalisation and the cost of fuel.

It is understood that the presidential council has been influential in the administration's new plans around issues such as reducing the budget deficit by Sh300 billion, increasing tax collection through the widening of the tax base, and introduction of a savings component in the proposed hustler fund. At the Na-

The Presidential Council of Economic Affairs alongside Office of Fiscal Affairs and Budget are part of the government’s goal to fully operationalise the presidential system.

David Ndi



tional Treasury, it is understood that the team has held robust discussions and pushed for change of direction by both the Directorate of Public Private Partnerships and the Debt Management Office.

Ndi is chair of the council, whose members are the prominent investment banker, Mohammed Hassan and Dr Nancy Laibuni of the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (Kippra).

Apart from the council, Dr Kamau Thugge, who has served at the National Treasury in the past both as Economic Secretary, and Principal Secretary, occupies the position of Senior Adviser and Head of the Office of Fiscal Affairs and Budget policy. Dr Augustine Cheruiyot is the senior adviser and head of economic transformation secretariat.

Last week, came out to clarify the new role of the State House-based and un-vetted technocrats and how their advent is likely to impact on management of the country’s economic affairs. In a tweet, Ndi explained that as opposed to NESCA under Kibaki, the council was an executive agency similar to what exists in the United States.

“The Presidential Council of Economic Affairs alongside Office of Fiscal Affairs and Budget are part of the government’s goal to fully operationalise the presidential system,” said Ndi.

Clearly, the idea would appear to have been borrowed from the US which has an Office of Management of Budget at the White House, the National Treasury, and a Congressional Budget Office. Having adopted a presidential system under the 2010 Constitution, creating an office of management of budget would appear to be a logical consequence.

The rationale is that in presidential systems, the President sits at the apex of economic policy-making, setting goals for standards and performance on budget execution while leaving the National Treasury with the responsibility of implementing the budget and managing the country’s finances.

In the earlier stages of President Kenyatta’s administration, there was muted talk



Then Deputy President William Ruto with economist David Ndi, MPs Kimani Ichungwah (Kikuyu), Rigathi Gachagua (Mathira, now Deputy President) and John Kiarie (Dagoretti South) after a campaign strategy meeting in Narok County on May 2. PHOTO | DPPS

about creation of the Office of Management of Budget at State House. But the idea was dropped. This is how the country ended up with a presidential system running largely on a public financial management architecture of a parliamentary system of government.

Whether the new bodies created at State House will create jurisdictional disputes and functional overlaps remain to be seen.

But depending on how quickly the State House based entities are able to acquire clout and influence economic management in Kenya is headed towards a system whereby, the President of the country will, for example, be giving the Treasury a budget deficit target while waiting to watch and judge performance against the set standards and targets.

Presidential systems allow the Head of State to be in charge of determining the resource envelop because he is the one who makes election promises and has the mandate of the people. If the new arrangements take off, the National Treasury will be left with the responsibility of raising taxes, borrowing money and managing the finances.

When Kenya adopted the 2010 constitution, close observers of the economic and financial management scene declared the end of the imperial Treasury. The evidence and experience, after 10 years of experimenting with a presidential system and devolution is that the emperor remains standing.

The National Treasury allocates budget for itself and other ministries, monitors expenditure against the budgets it has set, conducts internal audits for itself and other ministries, and is the overall parent of the external auditor — the Auditor General.

Thus, there is no independence between

Last week, the team summoned the management of the company to brief it on the looming strike by pilots and the likely implications of measures that must be implemented under the ongoing IMF programme that include negotiating with international leasing companies to bring down leasing costs, staff rationalisation and the cost of fuel.

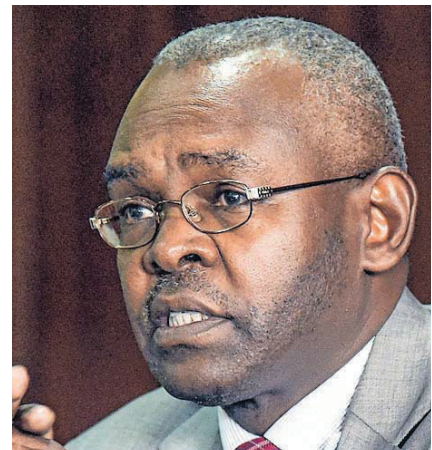
those who allocate resources, those who implement projects, and those who oversee.

Yet the creation of these State House-based institution is only the beginning of the transformation in fiscal and management that the country must grow through. The government still runs a primitive and antiquated cash-based accounting system that does not run on modern accrual-based double entry system.

The government does not keep an asset register, even as it buys more assets. And, while financial reports cover revenues, expenditure and financing, they are mostly on a cash basis.

There is no systematic reporting of expenditure arrears and pending bills are a permanent phenomenon.

And, although the government runs an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system known by the acronym – IFMIS – the system is not a fully-fledged integrated system where databases are linked in a general ledger. It is the reason regular financial reporting and disclosure remains a big challenge. Managing cash flow has also been a big headache.



Dr Kamau Thugge, who has served at the National Treasury in the past both as Economic Secretary, and Principal Secretary, occupies the position of Senior Adviser and Head of the Office of Fiscal Affairs and Budget policy.

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■ ECONOMIC REFORMS

IMF HEADACHE PERSISTS

The new administration under President William Ruto is in a straitjacket imposed by the 38-month IMF programme that is based on a stiff conditionality regime requiring politically unpopular reforms across several sectors

Restore Kenya Power's long-term financial viability

The discussion with the IMF is around improving the financial performance of Kenya Power. The view of the fund is that although an updated evaluation of the company in 2022 had revealed progress in reducing operating costs, a sustainable path to profitability has yet to be achieved.

Introduce broader taxes

The IMF has backed Kenya's recent taxation of essential goods and services like cooking gas and bank loan fees, arguing that additional cash raised has helped cushion against higher cost of fuel and fertiliser in the wake of the Ukraine war. The Fund says important tax policy measures have resulted in "strong" tax collections.



Publish a forensic audit on Covid-19 spending

In the wake of the pandemic, the IMF maintains its commitment to address governance and corruption vulnerabilities in member countries. In May 2020, the fund provided \$739 million in the form of an interest-free loan under the Rapid Credit Facility to help Kenya weather the initial shock of the Covid-19 pandemic. This helped to cover the cost of additional spending on health, social protection, and speeding up of payments to bolster the economy.

Publish owners of companies awarded public contracts

In 2018, the IMF adopted a Framework for Enhanced Engagement on Governance. An interim assessment of its implementation shows that, the IMF has had deeper and more candid discussions with member countries on reforms and issues related to governance and fighting corruption.



Eliminate fuel subsidies

The IMF this year set a fresh loan condition requiring Kenya to drop the fuel subsidy programme by October. The multilateral lender inserted the removal of the subsidy under the 38-month budget support scheme, in the list of reforms attached to a Sh270.2 billion (\$2.34 billion) loan package.



THE BITTER IMF PILL



Restructure Kenya Airways

Kenya Airways borrowed a total of a US\$841.6 million from Exim Bank of the US to purchase seven aircraft and one engine. Out of this amount, the national government guaranteed US\$525 million. Kenya Airways defaulted on both the guaranteed portion of the loan as well as the non-guaranteed portion.



Overhaul the anti-money laundering legal framework

Kenya has criminalised money laundering under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act, 1994.



International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva.

● By JAINDI KISERO

The International Monetary Fund wants Kenya to table a workable proposal on how it intends to repay huge US\$2 billion Eurobond maturities that will be crystallising in 18 months.

People close to discussions with a visiting IMF mission currently in Nairobi have told *The Weekly Review*

that the lenders are opposed to the government's idea of creating a sinking fund to settle the 2024 Eurobond maturities.

It is understood that IMF's position is that a sinking fund to specifically settle the Eurobonds that will be maturing in June 2024 would imply that Kenya is elevating the interest of one class of creditors above others and that

this would amount to a breach of the principle of comparability of treatment of creditors.

The 2024 Eurobond maturities remain a ticking time bomb and in the medium-term represent the biggest challenge for Kenya in the management of its external debt liabilities.

According to the latest official statistics on debt, the projection is

that as a consequence of the 2024 Eurobond maturities, total maturities on the country's stock of external debts will rise exponentially to nearly twice the annual average - a massive Sh475.5 billion within 18 months.

The circumstances may force the government to go back to the drawing board for a new approach of managing the big li-

kenya lens

Sh305 billion

According to the latest annual debt report published two weeks ago by the National Treasury, the total external debt service on government debt as at end of June 2022 amounted to Sh305.6 billion. External debt service paid to multilateral creditors was Sh51 billion, bilateral creditors Sh101.9 billion and commercial creditors Sh151.8 billion.

ability that will be acceptable to the Bretton Woods institution.

Last year, the National Treasury initiated engagements with holders of external commercial debts where it sought to negotiate a re-profiling of debts and major amendments to facility agreements. But the plans were rendered unfeasible following developments in the international marketplace that saw interest rates on sovereign debts rising exponentially following the eruption of the war in Ukraine. The National Treasury was forced to defer implementation of the initiative.

According to the latest annual debt report published two weeks ago by the National Treasury, the total external debt service – principal repayments and interest payments – on government debt as at end of June 2022 amounted to Sh305.6 billion, compared with Sh234.5 billion in June 2021.

External debt service paid to multilateral creditors was Sh51 billion, bilateral creditors Sh101.9 billion and commercial creditors Sh151.8 billion.

The increase in debt service payments due to bilateral debt is attributed to the end of Debt Service Suspension (DSSI) extended to Kenya at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In April 2021, the IMF approved a US\$2.3 billion financing package for Kenya that came with a stiff conditionality regime, including specific measures to enhance and improve public debt management.

The conditions on debt management under the programme include a downward adjustment on public debt ceiling, ceilings on new domestic guarantees for county governments and parastatals, and ceilings on the contracting of new external debts.

On on-lent loans or loans guaranteed to parastatals, perhaps the biggest headaches and sticking points are demands the lenders are making with regard to management of external liabilities of the national airline, Kenya Airways and the electricity utility, Kenya Power.

Last year, the National Treasury initiated engagements with holders of external commercial debts where it sought negotiate a re-profiling of debts and major amendments to facility agreements. But the plans were rendered unfeasible following developments in the international marketplace that saw interest rates on sovereign debts rising exponentially following the eruption of the war in Ukraine. The National Treasury was forced to defer implementation of the initiative.

Last year, the Cabinet decided to negotiate with lenders an arrangement where arrears on a Kenya Airways debt that had been guaranteed by the government were to be extinguished and replaced by a new deal under a process known as a novation.

Kenya Airways borrowed a total of a US\$841.6 million from Exim Bank of the US to purchase seven aircraft and one engine. Out of this amount, the national government guaranteed US\$525 million.

Kenya Airways defaulted on both the guaranteed portion of the loan amount as well as the non-guaranteed portion. The national government is in the process of novating.

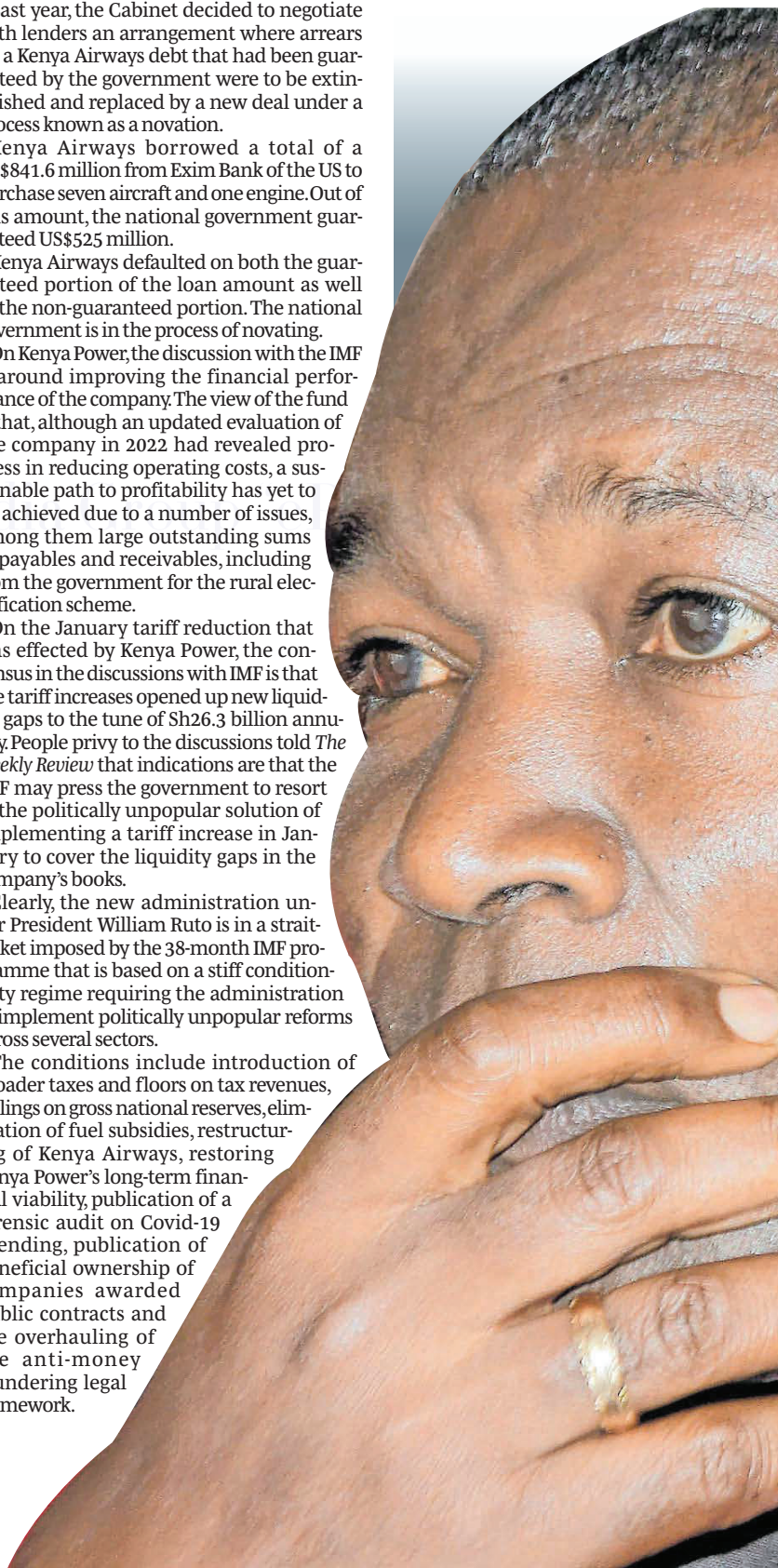
On Kenya Power, the discussion with the IMF is around improving the financial performance of the company. The view of the fund is that, although an updated evaluation of the company in 2022 had revealed progress in reducing operating costs, a sustainable path to profitability has yet to be achieved due to a number of issues, among them large outstanding sums of payables and receivables, including from the government for the rural electrification scheme.

On the January tariff reduction that was effected by Kenya Power, the consensus in the discussions with IMF is that the tariff increases opened up new liquidity gaps to the tune of Sh26.3 billion annually. People privy to the discussions told *The Weekly Review* that indications are that the IMF may press the government to resort to the politically unpopular solution of implementing a tariff increase in January to cover the liquidity gaps in the company's books.

Clearly, the new administration under President William Ruto is in a strait-jacket imposed by the 38-month IMF programme that is based on a stiff conditionality regime requiring the administration to implement politically unpopular reforms across several sectors.

The conditions include introduction of broader taxes and floors on tax revenues, ceilings on gross national reserves, elimination of fuel subsidies, restructuring of Kenya Airways, restoring Kenya Power's long-term financial viability, publication of a forensic audit on Covid-19 spending, publication of beneficial ownership of companies awarded public contracts and the overhauling of the anti-money laundering legal framework.

National Treasury Cabinet Secretary Njuguna Ndung'u.



the limelight



Former US President Barack Obama embraces Senator Catherine Cortez Masto during a campaign event in Las Vegas ahead of the midterm elections. PHOTO | AFP



President William Ruto, his deputy Rigathi Gachagua (second left) and Defence Cabinet Secretary Aden Dualle share a light moment with Kenya Defence Forces soldiers preparing to deploy to the Democratic Republic of Congo as part of the East Africa Community Regional Force at the Embakasi Garrison on November 2. PHOTO | AFP



A tractor decorated with pumpkins outside 'Ernas Haus', a student accommodation that was recently developed from an old building in Dornbirn, in the western Austrian federal state of Vorarlberg. PHOTO | AFP



Riot police take position to clear a blockade held by supporters of President Jair Bolsonaro on the Castelo Branco highway, on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, on November 2. PHOTO | AFP



A visitor experiments with a selection of immersive, interactive or contemplative artistic installations in Toulouse, France, on November 1.



Jowali Kitagenda casts his net to catch fish on River Nile in Jinja, Uganda, on October 7. A report published by the Nile Basin Initiative last year raised alarm bells over rising industrial pollution, with regulations allowing factory owners to set up shop within 100 metres of the river bank. PHOTO | AFP



Paris Saint-Germain defender Sergio Ramos (right) fights for the ball with Juventus' Arkadiusz Milik during their Champions League match in Turin on November 2. PSG won 2-1. PHOTO | AFP

The Arena



TECH FARMING

Taita Ngetich's agrotech start-up, Synnefa, uses smart greenhouses to provide irrigation and farming data to banks and savings and credit societies so that farmers can unlock capital for their ventures

OPEN SPACE

BOOST AGRICULTURE

Investment: Most of those involved are small-scale farmers using rudimentary implements lubricated with much sweat

● BY SAMMY OJWANG'

Touted as the backbone of Kenya's economy, agriculture has posted mixed results over the decades. Before the August elections, it became a pillar of one camp's campaign strategy, which fronted agriculture as the magic wand required to raise the economy from the dead.

All that is needed, we were told, is the restructuring of agricultural production as opposed to the other camp's bias towards manufacturing as the way to jumpstart the economy.

Most of the individuals involved in agriculture are small-scale farmers using rudimentary implements lubricated with much sweat. You find them in the countryside, where the climate is said to be favourable to particular crops. The bigger number consist of subsistence farmers who work hard on small pieces of land, producing the same crop all year round, in the same way their forefathers did before them. No crop rotation, no soil sampling, inferior seed and little use of fertiliser.

The next category constitutes large-scale farmers applying mechanisation and modern methods of yield improvement. Some have access to direct markets and avenues for value addition while others feed the ravenous brokers. The digital farmer is a new phenomenon. He cannot internalise the idea of farming while touching the soil, leave alone stepping on the farm, sometimes only knowing the location via Google map. We have seen digital farmers reaping big from wheat and barley in Narok County while sitting pretty in Nairobi offices.

The crazy part comes with the joy of a subsistence farmer suddenly graduating to cash crop farming without any meaningful expansion of land or application of machinery. A rural mind meets a marketing fellow from an agricultural company and a brilliant idea lights up in his head. The maize and bean crop sustaining the family table is replaced overnight with a money-maker.

Tobacco or sugarcane take over and the manual labour required triples, engulfing the entire family. For the first season or so, there is some money for school fees and the grass thatch gives way to iron

sheets. That is, until the farmer realises he has no food; his entire farm was taken over by the cash crop, whose maturity period is long.

The company, having recruited many small-scale farmers within the region, continues to enjoy the advantages derived from economies of scale while passing on their costs to the farmer through high interest funds, fertiliser and seed loans. Payment is based on harvest quality, which is determined by the company upon deduction of loans owed. Product losses during transportation are the farmer's worry.

The sad story of tobacco farming in Migori County is almost comical. The graduated subsistence farmer began experiencing the adverse effects of tobacco farming, many unknowingly succumbing to farmer's lung while others developed health conditions from sheer labour demanded by the crop.

From preparing the land and seedbed to planting, sucker removal, cutting down numerous trees for firewood, building the curing chamber, and the day and night curing work inside the fire chamber while absorbing tobacco smoke became hell on earth.

Soon the suffering graduate found himself in turf wars between two rival tobacco companies. The pioneer company in the region realised that a rival was in its backyard, reaping where it had not sowed.

The intruder was properly paying off farmers, offering better rates and asking them to clear any loans extended to them by the pioneer, if they so wished. The pioneer, getting wind of this development, reacted swiftly by invading the errant clients' homesteads with goons, and lashing out at a fleeing farmer's *gluteus maximus*, since the harvest money had already been spent.

This is how tobacco farming was literally caned out of Migori.

Mr Ojwang' is a social commentator.

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



MIND SPEAK



Margaret Wangui

Kazi Mtaani has been a success programme. Tree planting can't be done given the current drought conditions. For the housing programme, it's only suited for the heavily built, therefore the ladies may find it difficult to enrol. This will be unfair to them. I urge President William Ruto to maintain the Kazi Mtaani programme so that it can benefit more young people.

— Student, Kabete National Polytechnic



Metrine Magama

There's need to draft sustainable policies that will create jobs for the youth. The affordable housing plan and tree planting programmes, if implemented for the next five years, will create jobs and improve the socio-economic well-being of the youth. Given the high level of unemployment, President Ruto's programmes will uplift millions of our youth.

— Student, Moi University



Bonventure Oduor

I agree with the President for scrapping Kazi Mtaani and alternatively encouraging the youth to seek manual jobs at construction sites or wait for government-funded tree planting programmes. Most manual workers at construction sites grow gradually to become competent masons. This sector will absorb many who are struggling to make ends meet.

— Young Investors Africa



Ken Kajwang'

No matter how unsuitable Kazi Mtaani was for graduates, it absorbed many jobless young people. The tree planting programme and construction jobs are short-term employment opportunities that are not available everywhere. For instance, Nairobi has many jobless youth and little land for tree plantations.

— Mt Kenya University

MY TAKE



• BY WAGA ODONGO

TikTok is the world's most downloaded app and has been at that position for a while. It is also slated to take the crown as the social media platform that users spend most of their time on.

There have been fears about TikTok's Chinese parent company, ByteDance, and its world-conquering algorithm that seems to make the app so addictive.

The algorithm seems so finely tuned to users' interests that while other apps report reductions in the time users spend on them, TikTok users only seem to spend more time on it.

Intrigued, I downloaded the app to find out.

I was surprised at how quickly it was able to hone in on my interests: big guns and basketball. I got an endless stream of videos showing all manner of guns firing in ranges and NBA players celebrating impossible shots. I was able to do this in under 20 minutes, which is very impressive.

The key to TikTok's success has little to do with its algorithm. No one has more data on users than Google, being the makers of the world's most popular smartphone operating system, Android, and running the world's most popular search engine.

Machine learning recommendation algorithms are pretty much dependent on the data they are fed and no one collects more information than Google.

It is unlikely that ByteDance made a breakthrough in the field that has eluded Facebook and Google.

The reason TikTok is successful is in its format. When you log in for the first time you can skip telling it your interests but it will still end up figuring them out. Asking a user for their interests is an inefficient way of figuring out what they like. When you sign up for the first time on Twitter it usually gives you a list of pos-

THE TRICK BEHIND TIKTOK'S SUCCESS

Social media: The app's rise is causing American tech companies jitters because they thought the top of the global tech hierarchy was theirs by right



sible interests that you must select to proceed. Now, say you are a red-blooded male such as I, you are interested in videos of Vera Sidika dancing, Twitter seems keen to steer you to more high-brow pursuits suggesting politics, culture or software engineering.

After selecting these topics, none of which shows Vera, I mean the old Vera not this new, less callipygous imposter, you are bombarded by a slew of posts you are not interested in.

You have to curate your way out of that mess by following Vera, liking her photos and commenting on every one of her posts so that the algorithm knows to show you more of her photos.

Following users on Twitter also doesn't work. No one only ever

tweets what you like, but a collection of different views. You may follow the President for the "bottom up" but get endless prayer revival meetings at Statehouse.

On TikTok, a user's choice is constrained to just one video. It plays and you have a choice: if you don't like it you can flick up to dismiss it. If you don't do anything it plays in a loop. Other videos on related topics are also downloaded in the background as you are watching to stop you from having to suffer the indignity of buffering. By how quickly you decide to dismiss the video, the algorithm is able to learn how much you are interested in a topic.

Consider Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Their content is pre-

sented in scrollable feeds which feature multiple posts. Maybe the first is something I like and the other two are posts that don't feature Vera, which I don't like. The recourse is to scroll up and dismiss the entire list of visible posts to get to what I like.

The algorithm doesn't know which of the three posts I saw when I logged on I liked or disliked unless I explicitly interacted with a post. There is a less positive signal on which posts to show me in the future.

On TikTok, each video is a poll on my interests that I must vote on or else it loops endlessly. This minor change has led to its algorithm getting a lot better signals on what users like.

After letting a video loop tens of times the algorithm knows that I explicitly like Vera, and will show me more of her in the future.

This realisation is the reason Instagram is changing its feed to look more like TikTok.

The format of content also matters. The reason Twitter would struggle to reach TikTok is that a lot of the content there is text. Text is elitist; it requires you to be literate, and humans can interpret images a lot quicker. Videos, meanwhile, sit atop the content hierarchy.

Another problem that TikTok seems to solve is to silo people off into their own interest bubbles. Once it knows what you like, you only see Vera dancing.

Twitter's main problem is that you constantly have to wade through your timeline and see all your friends who think that Kenya has descended into a lower level of hell with the new government or how the current government, which was chosen by God, is building Singapore on the Savannah. As much as we would like to pretend, we don't want to listen to the other side's BS.

Twitter's inability to keep warring parties apart makes it terrible for your blood pressure.

TikTok's rise is causing American tech companies jitters because they thought the top of the global tech hierarchy was theirs by right. Its rise should be seen as proof that another company from a different culture that was not bred in Silicon Valley can rise and dominate a field.

Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer
wagaodongo@gmail.com

MODERN FARMING

CULTIVATING A FARM TECH CULTURE

FOOD BASKET: Synnefa, an agricultural technology start-up, has built smart greenhouses that provide irrigation and farming data to banks and saccoes so that farmers can unlock capital

● BY EDDY ASHIOYA

There are three things that make Kenyans Kenyan. One is that we descend on Mombasa in December, whether we had planned to or not because Mombasa equals raha (fun). Two, we downplay our success, even when our pockets are teeming with banknotes.

But, more precariously, we have a habit of replicating successes (or failures) by aping each others' formulas, whether it's in the latest fashion fad (or faux), cheating in exams (mwakenyas) or business. If one succeeds in opening a kiosk, we all open kiosks.

That's the stitching beneath the conversation fabric that I have with 29-year-old Taita Ngetich, founder of Synnefa. "Copying shows we are willing to take a shortcut to make things work. The problem is, we don't differentiate."

So, it's a case of imitation being the sincerest form of flattery? But flattery will only get you so far, I protest. "For us, how we continuously differentiate ourselves is by putting the farmer at the centre. Farming is complicated, so we make it simple. That is our guiding beacon."

Synnefa is an agrotech (agricultural technology) start-up that provides hardware and software solutions to enable farmers to become resilient. "I was tired of calling home for pocket money and started looking for problems to solve and make money," Taita recalls his early days. Turns out, the problem was staring him right in his face. His campus roommate was planting tomatoes at Oloitokitok. He, in Kenyan fashion, CTRL+C, CTRL+V.

They harvested once and felt they had something good going. The second harvest was destroyed by pests, however. The third, floods. The chickens had come home to roost.

Back to basics then? Not quite. He fell into the "greenhouses thingie", as he calls it. He went back home to Kericho, got a plot of land for a greenhouse, and was successful with the first harvest. One good turn deserves another and that's how his neighbours, too, got in on the act. The greenhouse had solved a list of problems: unpredictable weather, pests, and other acts of God.

But it was the farmer's lack of access to quality farm inputs and capital that became Taita's lightbulb moment. Now Synnefa has smart greenhouses providing irrigation and farming data to banks and saccoes so that farmers can unlock capital. "We had to build, from the ground up, a solar system

with satellite internet so we can collect data from the farm and use that to lend to farmers."

"The young people want to farm and still be cool. Agriculture then has to be modernised, which is why we are changing the narrative. Nowadays, we even have drones to scan farms and track plants. Tech is making farming a business. It has its risks but you have to learn how to manage those risks."

Flashing the data, he says Synnefa's average customer base oscillates between people who are in their 30s and 40s.

And rightly so. Taita Ngetich is a creature of

today. His yesterdays can be very briefly summarised. A childhood in Kericho, where he learned the patience of farming. The patience in farming. Then a spot at the University of Nairobi to study Mechanical Engineering was quickly followed by a leadership and innovation graduate course from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In between, a sandwiched 2016 Mandela Washington Fellowshipship.

Currently, he is studying for his MBA at the University of Warwick. A man who is adept at keeping his plates spinning. But it was while at the University of Nairobi that he was first mawed by the jaws of failure. To supplement his pocket money, he started growing tomatoes on campus and raised, then lost, a whooping Sh45,000. In student terms, that is a king's ransom. But while for some failure may be a stumbling block, for Taita it is a stepping stone.

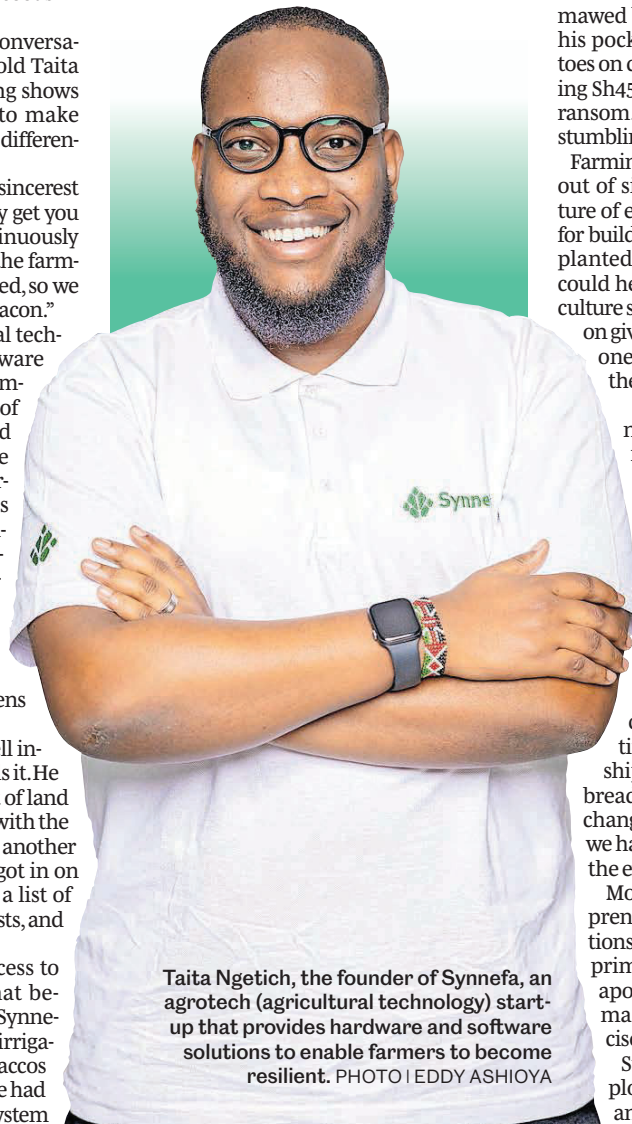
Farming, he says, almost made him quit. Four out of six of his friends did. "We have a culture of embracing failure; it's our foundation for building better." That's what he picked and planted in Synnefa. If only the government could help him prune, he says, then the agriculture sector would be a gift basket that keeps on giving. Taita, you get the impression, isn't one to take prisoners, and he could talk the hind leg off a donkey if you let him.

"The population is growing, and we need to eat but climate change is telling us we cannot." What we don't have, he says, is government intervention to drive policy-making on a market level. The biggest bottleneck is always the G-word: government. Government is the grease that oils the engine of agriculture. Would he then consider being a politician?

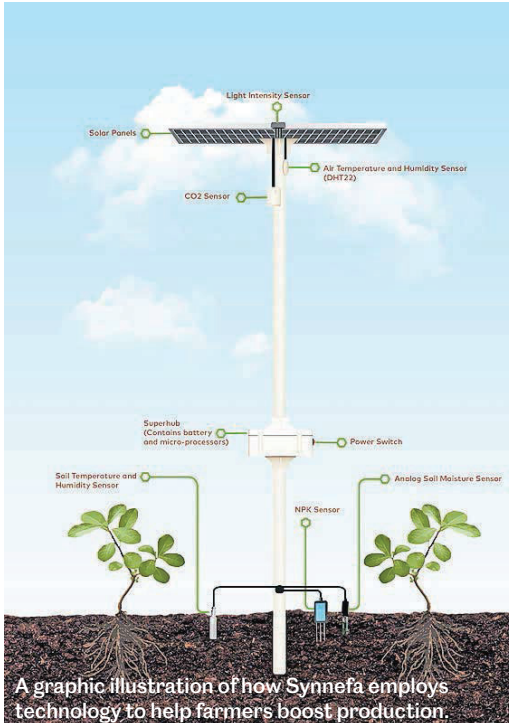
I mean, he already has the chutzpah to match the confidence of a shipping magnate. "No," he laughs, recalling the last time village elders petitioned him to vie for political leadership. "Politics and entrepreneurship are bread and butter; entrepreneurs actually change the world and make an impact but we have instead chosen to exalt Barabbas at the expense of Jesus."

Most of Taita's responses are not entrepreneurship bravado but rhapsodic reactions. "Ukulima sio ushamba (farming is not primitive). I am a straight shooter. Being apolitical is still political." That's his dogma, which is to be both elusive and precise, documentary and fabulous.

Synnefa, he tells me, currently employs 27 people, spread between Kenya and India (where they have outsourced



Taita Ngetich, the founder of Synnefa, an agrotech (agricultural technology) start-up that provides hardware and software solutions to enable farmers to become resilient. PHOTO | EDDY ASHIOYA



A graphic illustration of how Synnefa employs technology to help farmers boost production.



Workers plant seedlings at a farm supported by Synnefa. PHOTO | EDDY ASHIOYA



A Synnefa technician, Daniel Nduati, installs a solar panel to power a farm. PHOTO | EDDY ASHIOYA



A greenhouse in Isinya that's supported by Synnefa. PHOTO | EDDY ASHIOYA



A Synnefa engineer, Nessa Maina, at work. PHOTO | EDDY ASHIOYA

their tech development). With a market base of about 11,000 farmers (60 per cent located in rural areas), he must be proud of himself then, no?

"I am happier about the fact that we convinced lending institutions to loan capital to farmers without asking for collateral, by just looking at their farming history." Which naturally brings us to his personal life. At 25, Taita was already married. Yes, he chuckles. And, he tells me, there is no formula for marriage. Marriage, he insists, is an asset only if you look at it as such, but it requires investment.

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung is quoted to have once said, "The world will ask you who you are, and if you don't know, the world will tell you." Does he know who he is?

"Well to be me is to be a straight talker. I am a strong believer in God, and I ensure I tithe and do lots of philanthropy work, even in a small

way," he says. "I have a support system in my wife, because, let no one lie to you, entrepreneurship is difficult."

Digital marketer Janet Machuka also knows who Taita is. "He offers leadership by creating an environment in which others are able to self-actualise. He has perfected the art of letting you do your job as an expert and excelling in it. His greatness as a leader can be measured by the achievements of the teams he leads. Success is written all over Synnefa because of Taita."

"When I don't feel that I have done God's work, I feel like I have disappointed Him," Taita continues. He loves God — and in extension the church — and he credits Mamlaka Hill Chapel's SALT Movement for nurturing him.

"I lost my dad when I was ten and my mom stepped up. I think she lost the most money supporting my dreams."

The goal for Synnefa is to build a company that can be acquired. "I need to validate this business idea and sometimes the best way is through acquisition by a bigger company that can scale it up across the world."

This will also free up his time so he can execute the other ideas he is bubbling with. Recently, he secured funding from multiple organisations, including Founders Factory Africa, Water and Energy for Food and Google Black Founders Fund Africa.

While we are on the money topic, there is a question I have been itching to ask. Is it true that 75 per cent (ballpark figure) of start-up monies go to paying salaries? "Well, who is the founder?" he asks. "That is a western notion, where they try and compensate the risk of start-ups with exorbitant salaries. Sixty-two per cent of our raise went into research and development; we are really serious about building a project for the future."

Farming has taught Taita resilience. "I am that cockroach that never dies no matter how many times you slap it." But success has come at a cost. "I have lost relationships where my

[extended] family feels like I am never there. Relationships with people that you start with also suffer, like I had to buy out my co-founder because we had reached a fork-in-the-road moment."

Has it been worth it? "Well, being aggressive has made me a better person. And being very bold has contributed to my success. This journey is only for the brave." I read him a quote by Leo Tolstoy: 'All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.'

So, have things turned out the way he expected at 29? "Well yes. Am I married? Aha. Am I in a good place in the organisation? Yes, the rest is a mixed bag." His definition of success is counting the number of people you've helped lift out of poverty in a sustainable way.

"It's not me being on top of the hill, it's me sending rope down for everyone to climb up." Failure, then, is trying your best and someone thinking that's not enough. Taking yourself out of the business, he says, is what gives him fresh perspectives. Separate yourself and go do other stuff, like painting or drama. He loves drama. "All the world's a stage, and we are all actors," he seems to mirror Shakespeare.

If he was a plant then, what would he be? A cactus, he says, thorny on the outside to survive but giving off smooth vibes on the inside.

Does he ever take no for an answer? "The hardest no for me is raising capital. But you soon learn that no can be an opportunity. It simply means you go back and ask which part of the no can we turn into a yes."

As a deeply religious man, if ever there was a verse in the Bible to summarise his life, it would be *Romans 8:32*. "If He gave us His only son, would He not fully give us everything?"

I later learn he is expecting a child in December. Somewhat a lucky man, maybe a smart man, but truly a blessed man.

Are you a father? He asks.

No. I say.

Or at least, not yet.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS

RAISING THE BANNER OF MENTAL HEALTH

A HEALTHY NATION: Dr Dorcas Magai is on a mission to promote mental wellbeing and to ensure that all Kenyans have access to psychological services without stigmatisation

• BY HILARY KIMUYU

Growing up near Dunga Beach in Kisumu County, Dr Dorcas Magai thought her dream of becoming a doctor had vanished after she was forced to work as a babysitter for almost a year after dropping out of school for lack of fees while in Class Seven.

But when free primary education was introduced in the country in 2003 by former president Mwai Kibaki, she returned to school and excelled, going on to join Kisumu Girls' High School.

"I walked daily between my village and Kisumu Girls, a distance of 7.5 kilometres. I almost dropped out of school again in Form One due to lack of school fees but a well-wisher came to my rescue and paid for the rest of my secondary education."

The mother of two describes the pain she went through months before she joined secondary school after losing her father, giving her a strong desire to study medicine. "My dream was to become a medical doctor to save my ailing father. I never wished to lose another person close to me ever again."

Unfortunately, Dorcas did not attain the required points to study medicine in university, so she opted for study psychology.

"I graduated with First Class Honours and won a scholarship to study for my Master's degree in Clinical and Developmental Psychology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, in the Netherlands."

She enrolled for her PhD at the same university. "In the course of my studies, I realised the need to create mental health awareness."

Dr Magai, 33, coordinates research on child and maternal mental health, develops mental health materials, supervises and trains field assessors and ensures quality control in general data collection.

She is the founder of Communities Mental Wellness based in Malindi, where she writes newsletters and blogs on mental health. "My NGO aims to promote mental well-being among individuals, families and communities through meaningful and targeted interventions."

Her PhD project was on the long-term consequences of severe ill-health during the first 28 days of life on thinking and learning abilities, and mental health of school-aged

children.

"I am specifically interested in neonatal conditions such as yellow colouring of the skin (jaundice) and inadequate oxygen flow, which are likely to injure children's brains and affect their development. We hope to contribute to identifying salient points of intervention to enhance the quality of life of children who experience these neonatal insults."

Her research on long-term effects of neonatal jaundice won her the prestigious Initiative to Develop African Research Leaders Award. Dorcas found out that mothers with mental health problems are more likely to have children with mental health issues, but also that caring for mentally ill children may affect the mental well-being of the caregivers. There is therefore need for early mental health screening and psychosocial interven-

Dr Dorcas Magai is the founder of Communities Mental Wellness, an NGO based in Malindi.



I walked daily between my village and Kisumu Girls, a distance of 7.5 kilometres. I almost dropped out of school again in Form One due to lack of school fees but a well-wisher came to my rescue and paid for the rest of my secondary education.

Dr Dorgas Magai



tion for caregivers and their children to enhance both their mental health and quality of life.

Dr Magai says if the problems that show up during adolescence are not handled well, the risk later in life will be monumental. “The high number of emotional and behavioural problems in Kenyan children and adolescents have huge implications for the country’s future if not addressed,” she says. “They play a potential role in high school drop-out rates, criminal behaviour; the large number of children on the streets and school riots.”

Instead of full-time research, Dorcas decided to go into practice and opened a clinic through Communitas Mental Wellness.

“While interacting with parents, I could tell that there was something wrong with some of their children so I decided to open the clinic,” she explains.

“When I started the mental health clinic, however, I realised that people were not able to pay for the services, and also there was a lot of stigma towards those who came for help.” She sought to solve this by sharing information about mental health on her website.

What can parents do to ensure the mental health of their children?

“It is important for a parent to unplug and replenish. You cannot give what you do not have. Parents should also be aware that a toxic home will breed a toxic child. Exposure to violence can harm a child’s emotional, psychological and even physical development.”

She adds: “Child abuse and neglect may stunt the development of a child’s brain and lead to psychological problems, such as low self-esteem, which could lead to high-risk behaviour such as substance use. Parents should endeavour to spend quality time with their children. While at it, they should stimulate the child by engaging them in play, reading books and singing for

them.”

In a few years, Dorcas hopes to be an independent psychology researcher. “I intend to get into leadership positions that will allow me to influence mental health policies in our country, such as decriminalising suicide. I look forward to days when all Kenyans will have access to mental health services without stigmatisation.” Kilifi County Mental Health Clinical officer Elias Fondo says Dr Magai’s work has changed the community.

“I used to refer patients to her and within months the change was noticeable. We were able to minimise medical subscriptions because sometimes all one needs is not medicine but to talk to someone,” he says.


He adds that in the last few years that she was based in Kilifi, stigma towards mental health lessened. Instead, people stopped asking for medicine and wanted to talk to someone. Mr Peter Wanjohi, the founder of Brant Organisation, a community-based outfit working with persons living with a disability based in Malindi, says that accessing services such as psychiatric counselling in that part of the country is next to impossible but Dorcas has stepped in to fill the gap.

“We met at a community gathering and talked about some of the cases I was handling of children and adolescents with disability, the mental effects of neglect, and the burden on the parents. She said she would help, and everything changed after that,” says a grateful Wanjohi.

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Editor’s note: An earlier version of this story erroneously indicated that Dr Dorcas Magai won the ‘Royal Society Pfizer Award’, which she has clarified that she did not. We apologise to Dr Magai for any inconveniences caused.


The FLIP SIDE
With John Niyanganyaga
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WOMAN POWER

NANDI COUNTY DEPUTY GOVERNOR YULITA CHERUIYOT IS A WOMAN ON A NOBLE MISSION. SHE AMONG OTHER WOMEN LEADERS IN THE NORTH RIFT HAS LAUNCHED AN INITIATIVE AIMED AT TACKLING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, FEMALE GENITAL MLTILATION (FGM), EARLY MARRIAGES AND IMPROVED ACCESS TO EDUCATION. SHE IS ALSO PURSUING A WOMEN’S CHARTER UNDER THE NORTH RIFT ECONOMIC BLOC (NOREB) TO HELP FIGHT THE VICIOUS WAY TO GO, MADAM DEPUTY GOVERNOR.

STAR OF THE WEEK



REIGNING WORLD CROSS COUNTRY JUNIOR CHAMPION BEATRICE CHEBET HAS GRADUATED INTO THE SENIOR RANKS AND SHE HAS ALREADY SET HER FIRST TARGET AS WINNING NEXT YEAR’S WORLD TITLE. COMPETING IN HER FIRST RACE SINCE RUNNING IN BIRMINGHAM, CHEBET SAID SHE HAS JOINED THE BIG LEAGUE AND SHE IS READY TO TAKE ON THE WORLD. “I HOPE TO WIN GOLD AT NEXT YEAR’S WORLD CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS TO EXTEND MY GOOD RUN IN THE WILD. TODAY’S RACE WAS MY FIRST THIS SEASON AND I WANTED TO USE IT TO TEST MYSELF AHEAD OF THE GLOBAL SHOW,” SAID THE FORMER WORLD UNDER 20 5,000M CHAMPION. WE SAY GO FOR IT, CHAMP!!

opinion



■ The Flying Squad was a notorious killer unit. The SSU is in the crosshairs for the same reason

A weaponised service bad for rule of law

What a fine mess! The Director of Public Prosecutions Noordin Haji tells a TV station that he brought a case against the now Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua was based on fabricated evidence. He says the affidavit upon which he based his case was forged. And, he says, he was under pressure from then Director of Criminal Investigations George Kinoti to charge Gachagua.

Before this, a senior police officer who answered to Kinoti had claimed that the DCI gave strict instructions and timelines within which to arrest and charge Gachagua with embezzlement. The upshot of these revelations is that the DPP and the DCI bosses had a Kenyan politician arrested and arraigned because the fix was in.

Before this, several police officers had been arrested in connection to the bizarre and chilling case in which two Indian nationals were abducted and their remains later found on the slopes of Mount Kenya.

The Indian nationals were IT experts apparently flown into the country to work on then Deputy President, and now President, William Ruto's election campaign.

At about this time, the dreaded Special Service Unit (SSU), to which the arrested officers belonged, was disbanded. That brought back memories of the feared Flying Squad that was disbanded by Kinoti in 2018 and replaced with the SSU. Unsurprisingly, the reasons for which the Flying Squad was disbanded are not dis-



**KWENDO
OPANGA**

similar to the reasons why its successor has been disbanded.

What are the ramifications for the Kenya Police Service, the political establishment and the administration of justice of the implication of the DCI and the DPP in political competition and settling of scores? The ideal is that police and civil service are neutral in political competitions, their role being to serve the government and to serve the people.

When police frame a citizen, they violate the law and when police violate the law, then there is no law. When police break the law at the behest of the wielders of political power, then the police will, of their own accord, take the law into their own hands and lord it over innocent members of the public demanding, demeaning and dehumanising.

When those in power use police to slant the playing field, then, when they are out of power, those who were victims of weaponisation of the police may feel justified to also weaponise the service. Where will it end? The fix is in when police enter the competition on the side of those in power against those who wish

to take power from them through the ballot.

The weaponisation of the Kenya Police Service perpetuates the view that these officers exist to serve power and to subjugate the public and that they are a force of control and only a service in name.

It also purveys the view that there are *wakubwa* (men and women of power) and there is the public (*raia*) and police exist to keep the latter from the former.

The Flying Squad was a notorious killer unit. The SSU is in the crosshairs for the same reason. So, will the next squad, whatever its name or acronym, be different? Not if the bosses of the officers and the wielders of political power see the service as a force and, worse, a tool for settling political scores.

And it is a racing certainty that the public will be fearful of the men and women in uniform, and worse, the plain-clothed, who would want to be helped with info that may help them arrest criminals. In all the above scenarios, justice suffers. Therefore, a weaponised service does not serve the cause of justice.

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opinion

■ The creeping desert is a reality we can see, and we know what that means for our food production

Ruto's clean and green campaign laudable



MACHARIA
GAITHO

Unusual for a Kenyan leader, President William Ruto has made Climate Change a cornerstone of his domestic and international engagements.

Increasing the national tree cover as a strategy to counter the drought devastating the wider eastern Africa region features high on the Kenya Kwanza agenda.

He has appointed a senior adviser on climate change in his office, while the issue featured highly in his maiden address to the United Nations General Assembly in September, catching the attention of the venerable *New York Times*.

On the sidelines of the UNGA, he also caucused with other African leaders present in New York, where he stressed the existential threat climate change poses for the entire continent, especially in destruction of water catchments, drying up of rivers, reduced rainfall and ultimately destruction of agriculture, high food prices, drought and famine.

That was the 3rd Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), which was pushing for a united continental voice ahead of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) due in Egypt in later this month.

Kenya has taken the lead in drafting the common Africa paper for Cop27, which Ruto is expected to deliver, a side benefit of which will be to mark his arrival on the world stage as both an African and international statesman.

There is no gainsaying the impact of drought, as witnessed here at home with the famine stalking the landscape, crops drying in the farms, livestock dying for lack of water and pasture, and citizens reduced to begging for food handouts.

Ruto's interviews with foreign media outlets during his globe trotting soon after taking office earlier in September also saw Climate Change feature high on his list of priorities.

A government installed only in September has had to divert critical financial resources to purchase and distribute relief food, further affecting its ability to deliver on a raft of campaign promises.

Ruto, recognising Climate Change as one of the biggest threats facing Kenya and the rest of Africa, indicates a leader who can see beyond petty domestic issues, who has the capacity to

think and act globally, and who recognises that local issues are finely intertwined with events and happenings way across our borders.

However, there are many sceptics who think Ruto is preaching water and drinking wine. They point to his pledge to plant millions of trees against the fact that he was one of the leaders during the term of President Mwai Kibaki's Grand Coalition government who opposed plans spearheaded by then Prime Minister Raila Odinga for eviction of Mau Forest invaders and restoration of Easter Africa's most important water tower.

The resultant bad blood between Ruto and Raila, who had entered the Grand Coalition as allies under the ODM flag, remains to date.

A quick look at the Kenya Kwanza agenda also shows disturbing trends. One is the declaration by Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua that the 'shamba system', which allowed cultivation within forests, would be allowed.

Nobel Prize-winning environmentalist Wangari Maathai long ago exposed the practice as a major contributor to destruction of forests. Under the guise of allowing neighbouring peasant communities to plant food crops in forested areas and in return look after trees, it opened the way for creeping human invasion that was soon followed by wholesale annexation by the rich and powerful.

The Kenya Kwanza manifesto, far from emphasising protection of forests, actually dwells more on exploitation of forest produce.

This is not limited to harvesting of trees for timber from plantation forests, for instance, but opening the way to charcoal burning and unsupervised activities that have in the past wrought massive destruction within protected woodlands.

Kenya has taken the lead in drafting the common Africa paper for Cop27, which Ruto is expected to deliver, a side benefit of which will be to mark his arrival on the world stage as both an African and international statesman. There is no gainsaying the impact of drought, as witnessed here at home with the famine stalking the landscape, crops drying in the farms, livestock dying for lack of water and pasture, and citizens reduced to begging for food handouts.

Ruto has also been called out for paying scant attention to securing Kenya's ranking as a world leader on renewable energy, particularly geothermal, while moving towards increased investment in coal, oil and other thermal energy sources.

There is even in the works what many rightly see as a madcap, vendor and cartel-driven project to build a nuclear power plant. Those definitely are not the credentials of the Green President Ruto is promoting on the world stage while doing exactly the opposite at home.

This is where we must ask Ruto to put his money where his mouth is. Combating climate change and global warming and other necessary interventions may look like First World problems when seen against our minuscule greenhouse gas emissions.

Africa is nowhere near the United States, China, Russia, Germany, Japan, Britain, India and other industrialised regions when it comes to skies turned black by smoke from car exhausts, factories and power stations.

Indeed, there is debate over whether the drought presently ravaging our land is the outcome of climate change, or just the normal pattern of inclement weather cycles which will witness serious dry spells every decade or even every 50 years, alternating with floods that could rival Noah's deluge.

Academic and ideological wars aside, simple fact is that we can see the very real impact of environmental degradation within our backyards.

Opening forests to farming serves only to loosen fertile soil that is swept away when the rains fall, leaving bare, denuded landscapes that cannot support any cultivation.

The creeping desert is a reality that we can see, and we know what that means for our food production.

Therefore, let us all support Ruto's global crusade on Climate Change, while at home holding him accountable for some of the little things that really matter.

These will include protection and expansion of forests, protecting our wetlands and ocean fronts from the scourge of land grabbers, cleaning up polluted rivers and limiting unchecked use of pesticides and other chemicals that make our food produce unfit for human consumption.

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kenya lens

■ PEACE AND POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE REGION



Cabinet Secretary Alfred Mutua says the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs will work with banks to enable Kenyans overseas to bank their money at home so that they can increase their remittances, now standing at Sh400 billion annually. JEFF ANGOTE | NATION

KENYA READY FOR THE WORLD

Mutua opens up on the Ruto administration's foreign policy, says Nairobi wants to explore markets in Africa and beyond. Contrary to popular opinion, Mutua denies Nairobi is beholden to Beijing or that it may cede its assets especially because it is owing a lot of money

BY KWENDO OPANGA

“I am not exactly a freshman here,” says Dr Alfred Mutua, the new Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs. Buoyed by a nine-year stint as spokesperson for President Kibaki’s government and two terms as Governor of Machakos, he projects confidence. It is his first day at the office and as staff walk in, they are surprised to be told the CS was at his desk at 7am.

Shortly after 9am, Saudi Arabian Ambassador Khalid bin Abdullah Al-Salman is ushered into his office, thus becoming the first envoy to call on the new CS. As he settles down for this interview, Mutua reveals that by the time it is published, he will have been to Saudi Arabia and back.

Why is the Saudi ambassador his first visitor and Riyadh his first port of call? Because harrowing reports of mistreatment, suffering, and even deaths of Kenyan women domestic workers in Saudi Arabia have recently dominated local media and the government. Mutua wants to get to the bottom of the matter.

“It is a question of process and systems between here and Saudi Arabia. I am going on a fact-finding tour,” he tells *The Weekly Review*.

He goes deeper. “We have decided with the Ministry of Labour to hold meetings with agents here and in Saudi Arabia and then we will take a position. Bear in mind that Saudi Arabia is a friendly country and development partner which we need to tap for more employment opportunities for our professionals and not just domestic staff.”

Mutua, however, makes the point that while Nairobi wants to interest Riyadh is investing in Kenya and employing Kenyan professionals, it is his mandate to ensure the safety and welfare of Kenyans overseas.

“Once you take a *boda boda, tuk tuk*, bus or plane and cross the border, you become the business of the government and that is why, with regard to Saudi Arabia, “we need to know exactly what is happening and how do we sort it out. The welfare of Kenyans is paramount”.

Charity begins at home and so Mutua says he wants Kenya’s missions to respect Kenyans resident overseas. “I want this ministry to change its attitude towards Kenyans who are living overseas. They need to be treated with respect. When they go to a high commission or embassy, they should feel they have gone

kenya lens



Foreign and Diaspora Affairs CS Alfred Mutua during the interview with *The Weekly Review's* Kwendo Opanga at his office in Nairobi on October 28. JEFF ANGOTE | NATION

home by the way they are treated, sorted out, everything, including clarity”

One change Mutua intends to introduce regards passports. If a Kenyan wants a passport and is ready to wait for two weeks, Mutua says, that is okay, but if another wants a passport immediately and is ready to pay for it, a system should be put in place to cater for such cases “to provide a clear and predictable service to our people”.

The CS also wants in place “a better way for

We are taking Kenya to the world. We want to explore markets on the African continent and beyond. Our friends are our friends and your enemies are not necessarily our enemies. We can work with East, West, North because for us the issue is for Nairobi to be able to leverage Kenya forward.

Alfred Mutua



Kenyan in the diaspora to channel money to Kenya” and suggested that the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs will work with banks to enable Kenyans overseas to bank their money at home so that they can increase their remittances, “now standing at KSh400 billion annually”.

He wants the ministry to make available scholarships to as many Kenyans as possible to go and study abroad. “I want to rejig the system so that our people get scholarships to go and study and be empowered and get jobs overseas in a structured manner, the way they do it in the Philippines. We can easily send several thousand Kenyans to work overseas.”

Former president Mwai Kibaki and his successor, Uhuru Kenyatta, took Kenya to the East. Are President Ruto and Mutua taking Kenya back to the West?

“We are taking Kenya to the world. We want to explore markets on the African continent and beyond. Our friends are our friends and your enemies are not necessarily our enemies. We can work with East, West, North because for us the issue is for Nairobi to be able to leverage Kenya forward,” offers Mutua.

The focus for the ministry is two-track: combining diplomacy with trade. “We will retrain our ambassadors to think trade, retrain our diplomatic corps to think money, to think economic issues.

So, as we think harmony and peace, we must get our goods and products overseas and our goods and products must be of good quality and standards so that we can grow our economy,” Mutua told *The Weekly Review*.

Therefore, the ministry will play a leading role in selling Kenya as a hub of trade and industry in the East African region. The government’s plan is to attract manufacturing firms into Kenya so that they can use the country as their base and make Kenya a country that exports manufactured goods. “One of my roles is to ensure I smooth the way so that we can get investors coming to Kenya,” reveals Mutua.

He argues that Nairobi is keen to promote peace in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo because with peace and political stability in the region

Sh400 billion

Dispora remittances to Kenya annually

will come economic prosperity. It is why Nairobi, he says, is advocating a political and negotiated solution to the conflict in Ethiopia rather than a military solution because “there are no winners in military solutions”.

According to the CS, Nairobi is for an economically integrated region whose taxes are aligned, where doing business is seamless and where one doing business away from home is no different from when one is at home. That is why, he says, “the success of Congo DR, a country blessed with wood, potential for hydro-power, rich land, not to mention the minerals, would be a success for the region”.

Contrary to earlier reports, Mutua told *The Weekly Review* that Kenya’s military has been deployed as a peace keeping force, a role for which Nairobi has been known and respected since the 1980s. When asked for what duration the Kenyans would be in the Congo, Mutua responded that they would not be there any longer than is necessary because “it is not in our interest for our military to be based elsewhere. We want them to do their job and come back home”.

Further afield, the CS said Kenya is keen to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council because its credentials of a stable, peaceful and neutral country that is a member of the African Union’s Peace and Security Council and has held the presidency of the UN Security Council stand it in good stead for the role. Nairobi is likely to be challenged for the UN seat by Lagos, Cairo and Pretoria.

In reference to widespread opinion that Nairobi is beholden to Beijing or that it may cede its assets, especially because it is owing a lot of money, Mutua is categorical: “I have had conversations and looking at what we have with China, we have nothing to fear. Our debt is not monumental. It is not massive,” he says.

SCIENCE & TECH**SPACE FARMS TO BEAM ELECTRICITY TO EARTH**

LONDON

It sounds too good to be true: a plan to harvest solar energy from space and beam it down to Earth using microwaves.

But it's something that could be happening as soon as 2035, according to Martin Soltau, the co-chairman at Space Energy Initiative (SEI), a collaboration of industry and academics.

SEI is working on a project called Cassiopeia, which plans to place a constellation of very large satellites in a high Earth orbit. Once deployed the satellites would harvest solar energy and beam it back down to Earth. He says the potential is almost unlimited.

"In theory it could supply all of the world's energy in 2050," he says. "There's sufficient room in orbit for the solar power satellites, and the Sun's supply of energy is vast. A narrow strip around geostationary Earth orbit receives more than 100 times the amount of energy per year than all of humanity is forecast to use in 2050," Mr Soltau says.

Earlier this year, the UK government announced £3m in funding for space-based solar power (SBSP) projects, following

an engineering study conducted by consultancy Frazer-Nash that concluded the technology was viable. SEI is hoping to get a big chunk of that money.

Its satellites would be made up of hundreds of thousands of small, identical modules produced in factories on Earth, and assembled in space by autonomous robots, who would also carry out servicing and maintenance. The solar energy collected by the satellites would be converted into high frequency radio waves and beamed to a rectifying antenna on Earth, which would convert the radio waves into electricity.

Each satellite could deliver around 2GW of power into the grid, making each satellite comparable in power output to a nuclear power station.

Here on Earth, sunlight is diffused by the atmosphere, but in space it comes directly from the sun without interference.

So a space-based solar panel can collect a lot more energy than a similar sized one on Earth. Similar projects are under development elsewhere. In the US, for example, the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) is working on some of the critical technologies needed for such

a system, in a project known as Space Solar Power Incremental Demonstrations and Research (SSPIDR).

These include improving solar cell efficiencies, solar-to-radio frequency conversion and beam forming, as well as reducing the large temperature fluctuations on spacecraft components and creating designs for deployable structures. Late last year, the team successfully demonstrated new components for a so-called sandwich tile, which is used to convert solar energy into radio waves.

The microwave beams might sound alarming, but it has been demonstrated on Earth, and found to be effective and safe for both humans and wildlife.

"The beam is microwave, so it's just like the wi-fi that we have all the time, and it's low-intensity, at about a quarter of the intensity of the midday sun," says Mr Soltau. "If you were on the equator in the desert, you'd get about 1,000W per square metre, and this is about a quarter of that: about 240W per square metre. So it's inherently safe in that respect." While many of the biggest hurdles have already been cleared, there are still potential problems.

China's dream: A long march to the moon

China successfully launched the final module of its Tiangong space station this week, inching closer to completion by the end of the year and a landmark moment in the country's space ambitions.

The world's second-largest economy has put billions into its military-run space programme, with hopes of eventually sending humans to the Moon.

China has come a long way in catching up with the United States and Russia, whose astronauts and cosmonauts have decades of experience in space exploration.

Here is a look at the country's space programme, and where it is headed: Soon after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, Chairman Mao Zedong pronounced: "We too will make satellites."

It took more than a decade, but in 1970, China launched its first satellite on a Long March rocket.

Human spaceflight took decades longer, with Yang Liwei becoming the first Chinese "taikonaut" in 2003. As the launch approached, concerns over the viability of the mission caused Beijing to cancel a live television broadcast at the last minute.

But it went smoothly, with Yang orbiting the Earth 14 times during a 21-hour flight aboard the Shenzhou 5. China has launched seven crewed missions since.

Following in the footsteps of the United States and Russia, China began planning to build its own space station circling the planet.

The Tiangong-1 lab was launched in 2011. In 2013, the second Chinese woman in space, Wang Yaping, gave a video class from inside the space module to children across the world's most populous country.

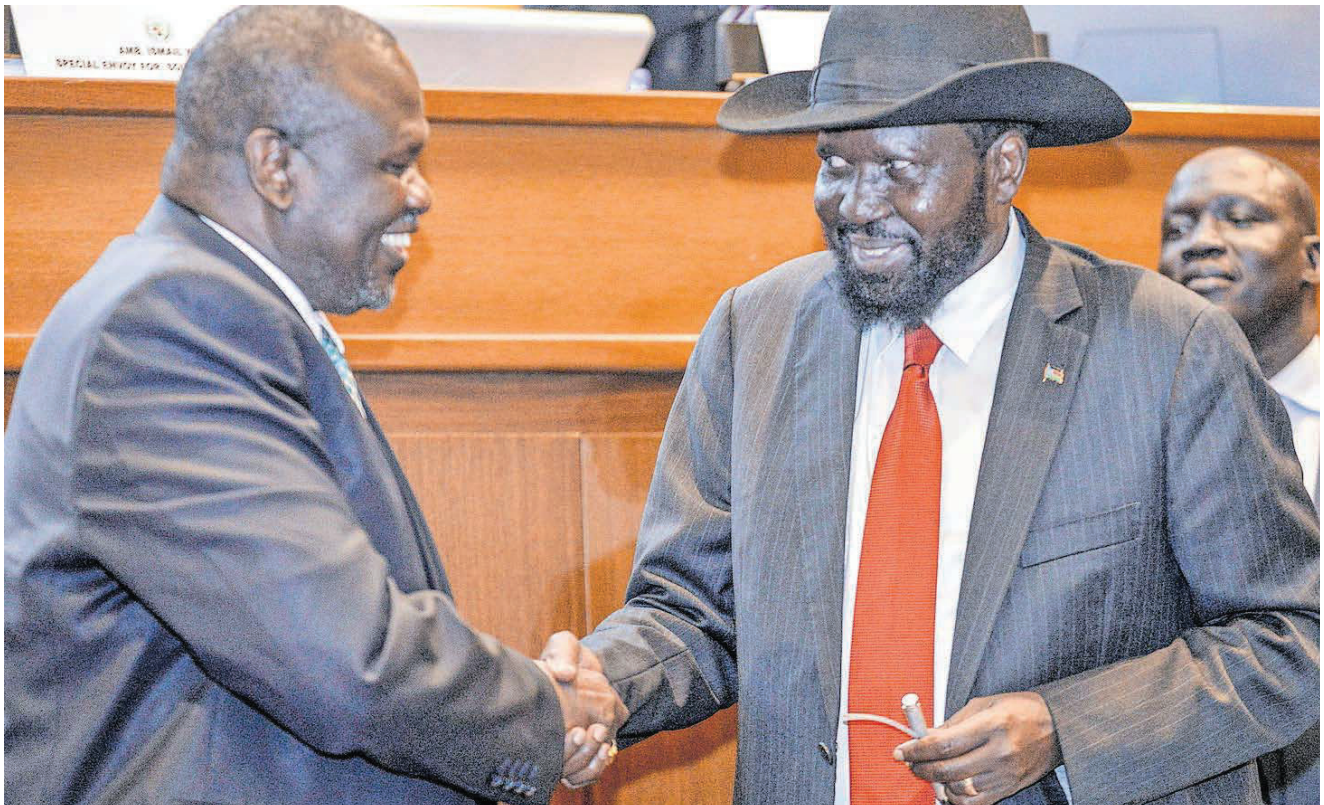
The craft was also used for medical experiments and, most importantly, tests intended to prepare for the construction of a space station.

That was followed by the "Jade Rabbit" lunar rover in 2013, which initially appeared a dud when it turned dormant and stopped sending signals back to Earth.

africa lens

■ SECTION 10 OF SPLM RULES OUT VP FROM PARTICIPATING IN PARTY'S ACTIVITIES

NO LONGER AT EASE



South Sudan President Salva Kiir (right) and his deputy Riek Machar shake hands as they make a peace deal at the 33rd Extraordinary Summit of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Addis Ababa on September 12, 2018.

Political temperatures rise in Juba following the expulsion of Vice-President Machar from the ruling Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement, in a move guided by President Kiir. Machar's allies argue that the expulsion goes against the Arusha Agreement signed on January 21, 2015, in which all parties committed themselves to the reunification of the SPLM

● LEVIN OPIYO

Efforts to achieve a peaceful and stable South Sudan are facing another hurdle after the country's vice-president Riek Machar was ousted as deputy chairperson of the ruling Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) in a meeting chaired by President Salvar Kiir Mayardit last week.

According to SPLM's secretary-general, Peter Lam Both, Machar was expelled from the party in accordance with Section 10 of the SPLM Constitution, which states that one automatically ceases to be a member upon forming or joining another political party.

At the centre of the current rift is Machar's

Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO), a political outfit he formed in 2013 after walking out of the SPLM following a power struggle between him and President Kiir. According to the government, Section 10 of the SPLM effectively rules out Machar from participating in the party's activities because of his association with the SPLM-IO.

"You cannot be a member here in SPLM and also you are a chairman of another party called SPLM-IO; it is impossible," said SPLM's Secretary for Political Affairs, Kuol Atem. However, Machar and his faction have insisted that "No faction can dismiss any member of the other factions from SPLM", and that if anything, the SPLM-IO is not a registered party.

They have further argued that their expulsion goes against the Arusha Agreement signed on January 21, 2015, in which both parties committed themselves to the reunification of the SPLM with all its splinter parties.

While the upcoming elections could be the spark behind the decision to expel Machar, the whole situation is rooted in the long-standing political and tribal rivalry within the SPLM that predates the country's independence. While on the surface the SPLM leaders, led by John Garang, appeared united in their fight for freedom from Khartoum, within the movement itself there were deep-seated eth-

...Continued on Page 26

africa lens

Continued from Page 25

nic divisions between the Dinka, the largest ethnic group, and the Nuer, the second largest group.

Both Garang and Salvar Kiir came from Dinka while Machar came from the Nuer. In 1991, the rivalry resulted in a group led by Machar and other commanders breaking away from the movement to launch a rival faction to challenge what they termed as dictatorship and lack of accountability within the SPLM.

For some time, Machar worked closely with the Khartoum government after signing an agreement with President Omar el-Bashir, who made him his assistant. Even though he later returned to the SPLM and was appointed vice-president, the Dinka still viewed him suspiciously. Nevertheless, they had to put up with him for the sake of peace.

The attainment of independence renewed the old rivalry as focus shifted from fighting Khartoum to fighting for power in South Sudan.

With the death of John Garang, who had been the unifying figure within the SPLM, ethnic and political rivalry began to drive Machar and Kiir even further apart.

President Kiir sought to consolidate his power against Machar, whom he has always viewed as the biggest threat to his grip on South Sudan. When Machar began showing signs of challenging him in the general election which was scheduled to take place in 2015, he fired him as vice-president and also sent his allies packing from the cabinet. The

VP Machar kicked out of ruling party

President's reason was that some of his political rivals were planning to revive divisions within the SPLM.

On December 6, 2013, Machar, buoyed by support that cut across ethnic lines and was made up of prominent personalities such as Garang's widow and son, held a press conference accusing Kiir of dictatorship, pointing out that "a one-man rule" was dangerous to the unity of South Sudan and publicly vowed to challenge him in the election.

In a country where political parties and security forces are conjoined, the tension spread to the military, where commanders took sides. The conflict spread quickly and on the early hours of 16 December 2013, forces loyal to Machar launched a military assault on Juba that almost deposed President Kiir had it not been for external support by president Museveni who sent soldiers and military helicopters to help the government. Machar, on the other hand, received secret support from Omar el-

Bashir.

"Uganda and Sudan each picked a side each. Uganda supplied troops to support Salvar Kiir and the government of South Sudan, while Sudan provided limited support to Machar and his faction, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition," says Ashley Quarcoco, a scholar at the Canergie Empowerment for International Peace

The rivalry between Kampala and Khartoum has always played out in South Sudan conflicts. For a very long time, Museveni supported the SPLM guerilla fighting for independence of South Sudan from Khartoum. In retaliation, President Bashir covertly supported Ugandan rebel groups, among them the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which were trying to overthrow Museveni.

This rivalry appeared to have ended with the overthrow of Bashir following a popular uprising. Faced with a serious economic crisis that followed the overthrow, Khartoum has been establishing and consolidating its economic interests in Juba, especially in the energy sector.

Just like Sudan, Uganda understands the impact of an unstable South Sudan on its economic and security interests. For instance, it would provide fertile ground for Joseph Kony's LRA to launch attacks apart from leading to an influx of refugees to Uganda.

Under the pacts they helped mediate alongside other IGAD members, Machar and Kiir agreed to unify their forces under one command. This was consequently achieved in August, when all the rebel forces were integrated in the South Sudanese Army, renewing hopes of a long-lasting peace. This had been one of the barriers in implementing the agreement signed by the two leaders.

Under an agreement signed in 2020, which resulted in the formation of the transitional government led by Kiir and Machar, elections were to be held in December 2022. However, this was pushed to 2024 based on mutual understanding by the two sides. The international community, however, has expressed scepticism over the postponement, insisting that the roadmap to peace and stability in South Sudan must be adhered to.

Nevertheless, in view of the current rift with the SPLM and the upcoming elections, some commentators have argued that Machar's expulsion is part of the strategy to discredit him before the voters ahead of the election.

SPLM is highly regarded as a party of liberation and anyone who vies on it will be more appealing to the electorate. The vice-chairman of the SPLM, Machar, was strategically placed to take over from Kiir in case he chooses not to run due to his poor health.

But with his expulsion, Machar may not be able to use the party's colours and symbols, thus disadvantaging him against Kiir or his anointed successor. According to Professor Kulo Nyuon of the University of Juba, this bickering will be more common as the country approaches election.

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Rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO), a South Sudanese anti-government force, patrol around their base on September 22, 2018, in Panyume, South Sudan, near the border with Uganda.

global lens

■ BATTLE FOR CONGRESS: REPUBLICANS AHEAD IN POLLS

AMERICA DECIDES 2022



Former US President Barack Obama shakes hands with supporters after speaking at a campaign rally in support of Nevada Democrats at Cheyenne High School on November 1, in North Las Vegas.

The Democrats' majority in Congress is razor-thin: The Senate is a 50-50 split (with Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote giving them the advantage) and Speaker Nancy Pelosi's control of the House rests on a slim margin. All 435 House seats and 35 of the 100 Senate seats are on the ballot. Additionally, 36 out of 50 states will elect governors

● WASHINGTON

The United States holds its mid-term elections on November 8. The outcome will have a major impact on the remaining two years of Joe Biden's presidency, and beyond.

An enthusiastic Republican base and persistent concerns about the state of the economy place the party in a strong position in the race for control of the US House of Representatives, according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS.

The survey shows that Democratic enthusiasm about voting is significantly lower than it was in 2018, when the Democratic Party took control of the House. Republican voters in the new poll express greater engagement with this year's mid-term election than Democrats across multiple questions gauging likelihood of vote.

Overall, 27 per cent of registered voters say they are extremely enthusiastic about voting this year, down from 37 per cent just ahead of the 2018 midterm elections, and the decline in enthusiasm comes almost entirely among

Democrats. Four years ago, 44 per cent of Democratic registered voters said they were extremely enthusiastic about voting; now, just 24 per cent say the same. Among Republicans, the number has dipped only narrowly, from 43 per cent to 38 per cent.

Although overall enthusiasm about voting now is lower than in October 2010, the Republican enthusiasm advantage now is similar to the partisan gap found in CNN polling then, ahead of a very strong GOP midterm perfor-

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global lens

Tight race for control of US congress

Continued from Page 27

mance. Back then, as now, Republican voters were 14 points more likely to say they were extremely enthusiastic about voting in the midterm (31 per cent of Republican voters were extremely enthusiastic vs 17 per cent of Democratic voters).

In the poll, Republicans top Democrats on a generic ballot question asking voters which party's candidate they would support in their own House district by 51 per cent to 47 per cent among likely voters, narrowly outside the poll's margin of sampling error. Among registered voters, the race is about even, with 47 per cent behind the Republicans and 46 per cent the Democrats. Closely divided generic ballot numbers have often translated into Republican gains in the House.

Republican standing in the battle for the House this year is bolstered by broad concerns about the state of the nation's economy.

The economy and inflation are far and away the top issue for likely voters in this final stretch, with about half of all likely voters (51 per cent) saying those will be the key issue determining their vote for Congress this year. Democratic likely voters are more split, with the economy and abortion the top issue for near-equal shares – 29 per cent say abortion, 27 per cent the economy and inflation.

Those likely voters who say the economy is their top concern break heavily in favour of Republicans in their House districts, 71 per cent to 26 per cent. By an even wider margin, they say they trust the Republicans more specifically to handle the economy and inflation (71 per cent Republicans vs. 18 per cent Democrats).

The poll finds a widespread and expanded perception that the economy is already in a recession, with a broad majority also saying things in the country are not going well generally.

What are the mid-terms and who's being elected? These elections are for Congress, which is made up of two parts — the House of Representatives and the Senate.

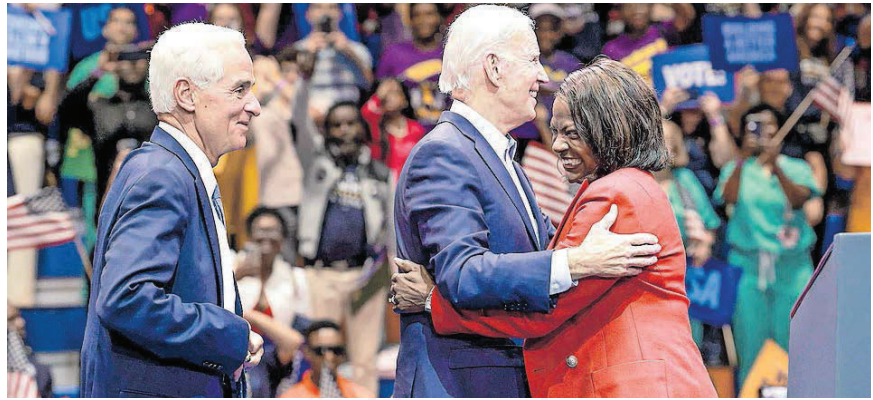
These votes are held every two years and when they fall in the middle of the president's four-year term of office. They are called the mid-terms.

Congress makes nationwide laws. The House decides which laws are voted on while the Senate can block or approve them, confirm appointments made by the president and, more rarely, conduct any investigations against him.

Each state has two senators, who sit for six-year terms. Representatives serve for two years, and represent smaller districts.

All the seats in the House of Representatives are up for election in November, alongside one-third of the Senate.

Several major states also have elections for



US President Joe Biden embraces Senate candidate, Rep Val Demings (D-Florida) as gubernatorial candidate Charlie Crist looks on at a rally at Florida Memorial University on November 1.

their governor and local officials.

Who might win? The Democratic Party has held the majority in both the House and the Senate for the past two years. That's been helpful for President Joe Biden to pass the laws he wanted.

But the Democrats hold that power over the Republicans by very narrow margins, which makes for a tight contest. Polling suggests the Republicans might take the House but the Democrats could hold on to the Senate.

Of the 435 seats in the House, most are safely held by either party, with just 30 currently a toss-up between the two. Suburban areas around cities in states like Pennsylvania, California, Ohio and North Carolina will be key.

In the Senate, it now looks like four of the 35 seats being contested realistically could go either way. The pivotal races here are in Nevada, Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania.

What are the big issues? At the start of 2022, it looked like the biggest issues were going to be immigration, crime and the cost of living, which are vote-winners for conservative Republicans. That changed in June when the US Supreme Court overturned national abortion protections, giving a boost to the Democrats, who support women having the right to choose and have made that central to many campaigns. But as the immediate impact of that decision fades, Republicans are trying to turn the focus back to inflation, immigration and violent crime.

What effect will the results have? Mid-terms often serve as a verdict on how the president is doing, and the party that holds the White House tends to lose seats.

That's a worry for President Biden, whose approval rating among voters has been running at less than 50 per cent since last August.

If the Democrats hang on, President Biden

will be able to keep going with his plans on climate change, to expand government-run healthcare programmes, protect abortion rights and tighten gun control.

If the Republicans take control of either chamber, they will be able to effectively grind that agenda to a halt.

They will also be able to control investigatory committees, so they could end the inquiry into the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol by supporters of former President Donald Trump — although its work is set to finish by the end of the year.

They might also launch new investigations into more conservative-interest topics — like the Chinese business dealings of Joe Biden's son or the sudden withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

It would be harder for Mr Biden to make new appointments, including to the US Supreme Court. Republican dominance would also hamper his foreign policy — particularly help for Ukraine, as it battles Russian invasion.

In return, President Biden could wield his veto pen and block conservative laws on abortion, immigration and taxes.

The result? Gridlock until the next presidential and congressional elections.

How does this shape the 2024 presidential race? The mid-terms could give us a clue as to who might be in the running to be the Republican presidential candidate for 2024.

If candidates backed by Mr Trump do badly, he's less likely to get backing from the Republican party to run for president again. In Florida and Texas, Republican governors Ron DeSantis and Greg Abbott hope re-election will spur them on to a bid for the White House.

If the Democrats can hold on to power in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, that should give them some confidence as they build their 2024 campaign to get President Biden re-elected.

global lens

■ FROM CHURCHILL TO LULA, HOW DO THEY DO IT?

● RIO DE JANEIRO

As Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva celebrates his spectacular comeback from jail to a third term as president, we look at other leaders who returned from the political wilderness — and those hoping to emulate them.

The politician who set the gold standard for wartime leadership stumbled badly in the First World War, when he sent tens of thousands of Allied troops to their death in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign.

Churchill resigned as minister of the navy in disgrace, but returned to lead Britain to victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, galvanising the nation with dozens of epic speeches.

In July 1945, the Conservatives were voted out but Churchill led them back to power in 1951 at the age of 76.

France's World War II Resistance leader was acclaimed as a hero at the Liberation of Paris in August 1944. But just two years later he resigned as head of France's provisional government after failing to win backing for his vision of a strong US-style presidency.

He was called back in 1958 to lead the country through Algeria's war for independence from France and used the opportunity to push through a new constitution that gave much more power to the head of state.

Argentina's president from 1946 to 1955 and his wife Eva founded a social justice movement dubbed "Peronism" that still inspires adulation on Argentina's left and abhorrence on the right.

But he was ousted in a coup and went into exile in Paraguay, then Madrid, before returning to Argentina to scenes of wild rejoicing in 1973. He served a further nine months as president before his death.

Deng Xiaoping, China's most powerful figure from the late 1970s until his death in 1997, was purged twice during the Cultural Revolution. Banished by revolutionary

THE ART OF THE COMEBACK

Lula's dramatic return from political wilderness to the presidency inspires many world leaders



Benjamin Netanyahu

Jacob Zuma

Donald Trump



Workers Party candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva greets supporters at the Paulista avenue after winning the presidential run-off election, in Sao Paulo, on October 30.

leader Mao Zedong in 1966 as a "capitalist roader," he worked in a tractor factory.

He was rehabilitated in 1973, purged again in 1976 by the pro-Mao "Gang of Four" radicals, but returned as de-facto leader after Mao's death later that year to oversee China's transformation into an economic superpower.

Myanmar's pro-democracy leader won elections in 1990 but the military government of the day refused to hand over control.

She spent most of the next two decades under house arrest before becoming prime minister in 2016 after her party's victory in the first openly contested election in a quarter of a century.

But the freedom was short-lived. The military ousted her government again in February 2021 and has since sentenced her to a total of 26 years in prison.

Italy's three-time former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi has made so many comebacks he's nicknamed "the immortal".

The 86-year-old billionaire did it again in the country's September 25 elections, when he returned to the Senate, nine years after being kicked out for tax fraud.

Berlusconi, who campaigned as a benevolent granddad, also survived an earlier scandal involving sex parties that he hosted as premier.

His party is in coalition with far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

Donald Trump

One of the most divisive presidents in US history has dropped strong hints he may run again in 2024 while continuing to falsely claim he was the rightful winner of the last vote.

Benjamin Netanyahu

Israel's longest-serving prime minister, who was ousted in June 2021, is hoping to reclaim the top job in November 1 elections, despite being charged with corruption.

Jacob Zuma

South Africa's 80-year-old ex-president, who was forced to step down in 2018 over corruption allegations, is eyeing a comeback in December, when the ruling African National Congress holds leadership elections.

OBIT

■ HE HAS ALWAYS TAKEN CREDIT FOR BRINGING UHURU INTO GATUNDU POLITICS

RELUCTANT POWER BROKER

Though he is not well known outside of Kiambu, David Kigochi played a central role in Uhuru Kenyatta's entry into politics

● BY JOHN KAMAU

Had David Kigochi, who died this week, not invited Uhuru Kenyatta to the Gatundu Professionals group, perhaps the former president would never have joined politics at the time he did. Uhuru, then 34, was content with his blasé existence. At the time, he was slender, fun-loving and cut the image of a struggling businessman. He sported an afro hairstyle that he would comb backwards. He was a chain smoker, too, a bit timid and disheveled.

Kigochi feared that the young Kenyatta – whom he had known for years – was wasting his life. “We had to get him into politics,” Kigochi once told me in one of our many meetings at his private office opposite Jevanjee Gardens. “I went and spoke to his mother.” Kigochi has always taken credit for bringing Uhuru into Gatundu politics. But, interestingly, he never sought to join the power brokers who surrounded the former president. “If he wants me, he has my number,” he would say.

Kigochi liked to stay late in his Nairobi office – and was a perfect storyteller. To a journalist, he was an ideal gossip mill. His constructed characters danced around his status. “Uhuru would sit where you are seated and drink wine – or get chicken downstairs.” Kigochi loved fine wine – thanks to his many years at the Ministry of Tourism, where he served as Inspector of Hotels.

As a civil servant, Kigochi was not supposed to play politics. But he did, and with gusto. He was in the excellent company of Central Province power brokers led by Kanu Secretary General Joseph Kamotho and permanent secretaries Chrispus Mutitu and Wamatu Njoroge, and would be found in some of their Harambee

meetings, where power play and political skulduggery had no limits. As Chairman of Gatundu Professionals, Kigochi led a constituency that gave him a front seat in the body politic.

After the introduction of multi-party democracy in 1991, Kigochi was in the small group of Kikuyu elite who supported the Kanu regime. And as former president Daniel arap Moi sought to rally Mt Kenya back to Kanu, Kigochi would become one of the members of the Central Province Development Group, which was mainly made up of parastatal heads and businessmen from the Mt Kenya region.

Kigochi and Njoroge wanted to get a member of the Kenyatta family into Kanu. By then, the former first family had no heir in politics, and extended family members were in the opposition. After Jomo Kenyatta's death in 1978, his eldest son, Peter Muigai, then Juja MP, had also died in 1979. His eldest daughter, Margaret Kenyatta, was contented with an ambassadorial post after having been edged out of civic elections in Nairobi. The Gatundu parliamentary seat that had been held by Jomo had gone to his nephew, Ngenji Muigai. Former first lady Mama Ngina Kenyatta's brother, George Muho-

ho, had taken the Juja seat and was in Mwai Kibaki's Democratic Party.

In August 1995, the Gatundu Professionals organised to take Uhuru to State House to meet with President Moi and get his blessings. At only 34, it was the first time he was leading such a delegation, and the focus was on coffee and politics. The Gatundu Kanu sub-branch was then led by Patrick Muiruri, who was fighting to save Gatukuyu Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Society from local politics. During the State House meeting, and as plotted by the Kigochi group, Moi dissolved the Gatundu Kanu sub-branch leadership held by Muiruri to prepare Uhuru's path into politics.

He also dissolved the Gatukuyu Society, which Muiruri had run until 1985, when political meddling saw it broken into 12 cooperative societies. This is what was used to launch Uhuru Kenyatta into Gatundu politics. Although Gatundu had four other societies – Kanyoni, Gatundu, Gathage and Kamwangi – only Gatukuyu was dismantled.

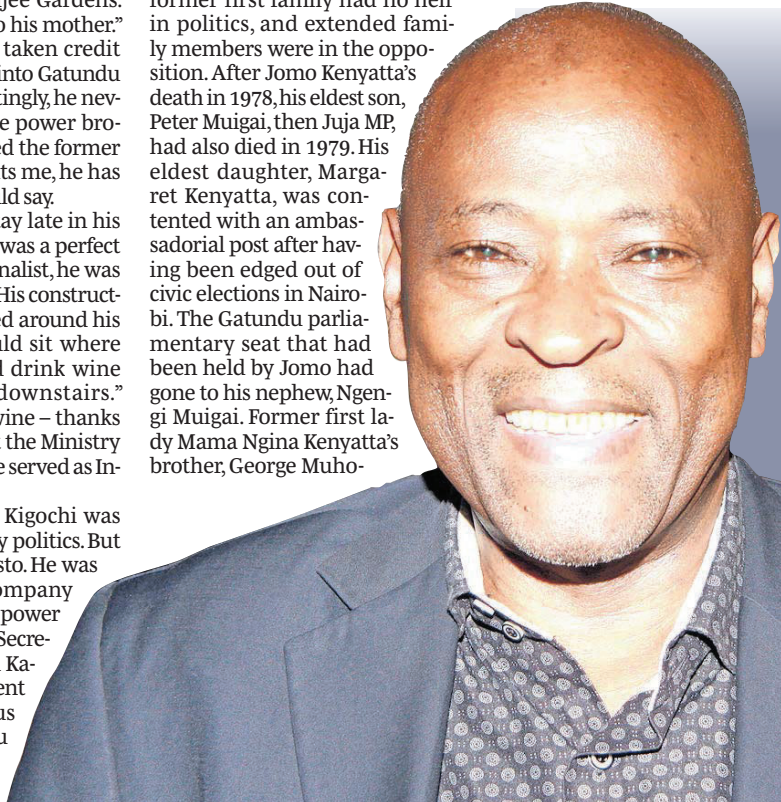
The previous month, Kigochi's role in the demise of Gatukuyu had emerged when he appeared as an observer, together with Uhuru, at the Society's elections, which the Muiruri group described as a sham and boycotted. Though Amos Gatoto had been elected chairman, the State House meeting asked for the society's dissolution. A row would emerge a few months later over a liquidator's non-payment of Sh13 million worth of coffee earnings.

The subsequent rise of Uhuru in Kiambu politics would put Kigochi in the front seat. In 1997, the Central Province Development Group agreed to sponsor Kigochi to run for the Gatundu North seat, while Uhuru vied in Gatundu South.

Kigochi was featured prominently as the man who would take on Patrick Muiruri, who had decamped to Charity Ngilu's Social Democratic Party, and Clement Gachanja, a Kiambu tycoon who was once Dagoretti MP. But he did not make it to the ballot. Instead, Kigochi registered his own party, Farmers' Party, now led by Irungu Nyakera.

Kigochi's last public appearance was when the Farmers' Party was joining the Kenya Kwanza in March this year. Though he is hardly known outside Gatundu politics his shaping of Uhuru Kenyatta's early political career is well known. Perhaps, Kigochi was a reluctant power broker.

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David Kigochi

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