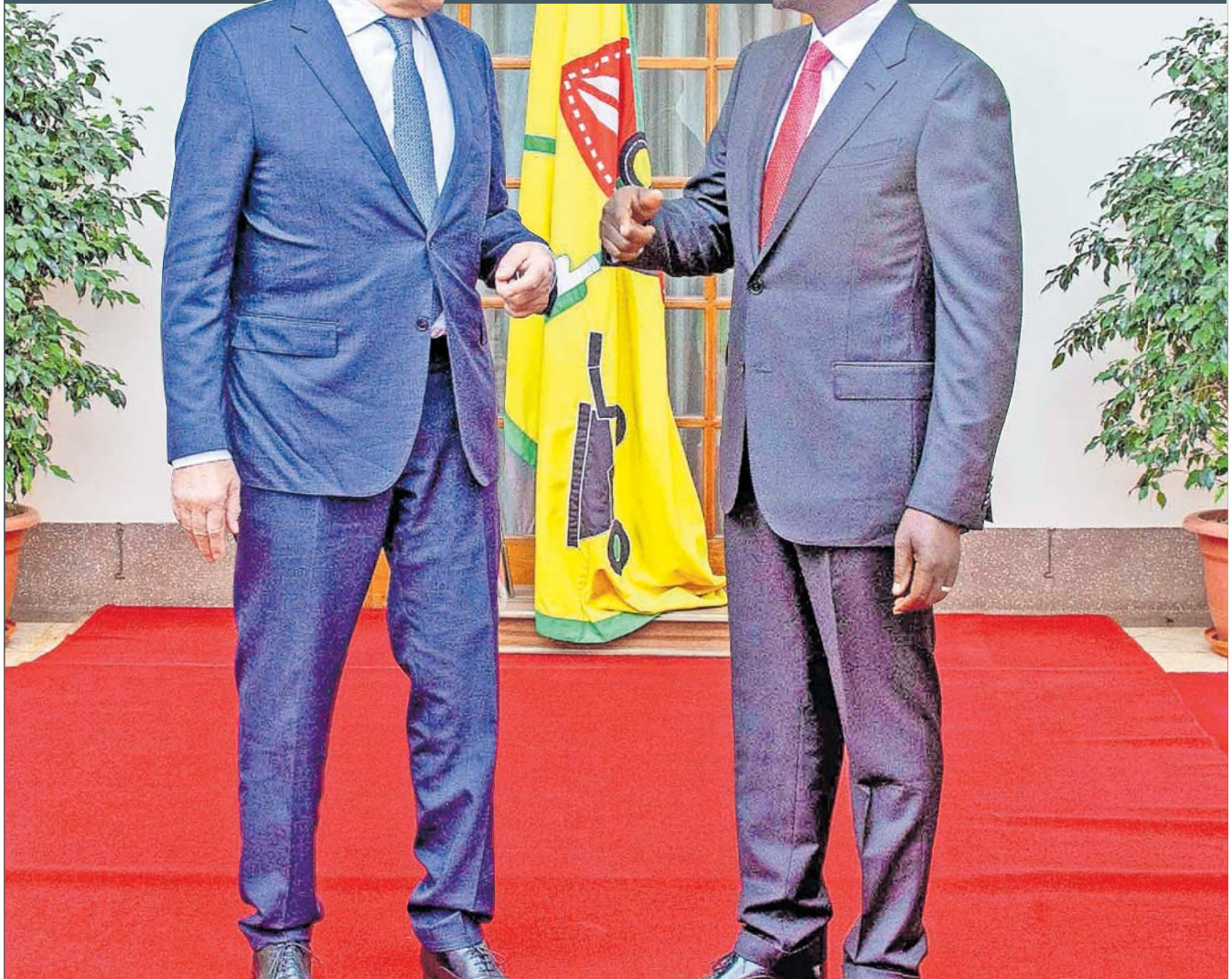


THE Weekly Review

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FREE WITH 'SUNDAY NATION'



RUSSIA'S CHARM OFFENSIVE

Moscow is putting together a coalition of nations that seeks to cut down the dominance of the US dollar on global trade. In Africa, Ruto wants states to end their dependence on the dollar in mutual trade and switch to local currencies. What's the future of the international currency financial system?

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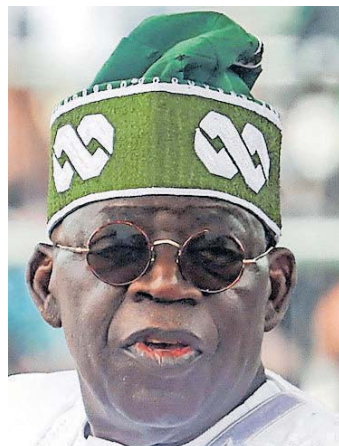
Digital skills instructor Stella Waithe runs an NGO that equips children and teenagers from across Africa with programming skills.

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The opposition's string of demands continues to pile pressure on the government, but pundits believe the coalition needs to focus its energy on a strategy for 2027.

25 TINUBU'S FIVE MAJOR TESTS:

As a two-time governor of Lagos, he revitalised Nigeria's commercial hub – no easy task – and is well aware of the issues in Abuja.



'Hustle' is a popular TV show in the UK premised on a group of con artists who specialise in 'long cons'. Once the con artists have a plan, they employ a 'convincer' to rope in their prey, and then hit them with the sting and take them for a sizeable amount of cash. They ensure that their victims will not come after them either because they would have to admit to conducting some illegal business, or because the team has convinced them it will be impossible to do so.

On August 9, 2022, the people of Kenya, as it seems now, fell for a similar trick, when a local band of hustlers somehow convinced the majority to vote them into power. The hustlers – just like the TV con artists – promised to end the people's suffering "within days". It was a well-orchestrated campaign that showed the poor, wide-eyed Kenyans the end of their suffering and gave them a glimpse of Valhalla. It was a simple message repeated so many times that it stuck in the suffering psyches. Schools were going to be free; small businesses were going to thrive because capital for their economic ventures would be provided free by the government – no interest charged. Boda-boda riders were going to be treated as kings.

It was the most radiant of pictures, painted in rosy hues and alluring tints, too enticing to ignore. It worked marvelously. The public fell for it like the walls of Jericho, and the resulting boom sounded like a revolution to the downtrodden of society. They exercised their rights to vote with the ultimate aim of making important changes to the skewed economics of the nation. Hope was in the air.

Promises had been poured out in bucketfuls; assurances had been dished out with short and rigid timelines; vows and declarations had been made, deliv-



Allan Buluku

We have reached the stretch where mere promises cannot work; where heaping the blame on past administrations won't help. We have reached a junction where this government must steer us in a different direction, with new ideas and real leadership, and put us back on the path of hope.

ered in attractive and convincing language, very sweet talk. The lead actor, William Ruto, pledged to create thousands of jobs and lower the cost of living. It was good music to ears that were used to dirges.

To apolitical observers, this is fast turning out to be a long con. Prices of basic food items like maize flour, sugar, bread and milk, have gone up sharply this year, making it difficult for millions of Kenyans to afford three meals a day; it is actually a luxury for many families to get three square meals a day.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, food accounts for about 36 per cent of total spending in poorer households. The economy is in a shambles, household income has dropped, and yet the government continues to suffocate the people with a barrage of tax rises.

The Finance Bill 2023 has a series of controversial proposals aimed at raising revenues, most of them at the direction of the International Monetary Fund. It seeks to increase VAT on petroleum products from eight per cent to 16 per cent, which will pile more pressure on families because energy and transport costs determine the cost of goods and services. The three per cent deduction on the salaries of all tax-paying Kenyans to fund an affordable housing programme remains a thorny issue. Social media influencers and content providers – a majority of whom voted for this government – face a 15 per cent tax. The hustler dream is rapidly becoming a nightmare.

The healthy colour of the campaign is slowly turning pale; assurances, reassurances and promises are still being made to the people but they are now met with fear and doubt. But empty bellies cannot be soothed by sweet talk. It is time for dirges, not love songs; gnashing of teeth, not merry-making. Fear of the future haunts the people. The poor Kenyan has sold his birth right to a smooth criminal.

We cannot overly blame the IMF for our predicament. We must lay our problems at the feet of our government, which is justifying the hard times and shifting blame when it ought to work for the betterment of all in both the short and the long term. We have reached the stretch where mere promises cannot work; where heaping the blame on past administrations won't help. We have reached a junction where this government must steer us in a different direction, with new ideas and real leadership, and put us back on the path of hope.

abuluku@ke.nationmedia.com

the telescope

■ The Nerazzurri are three-time winners

City, Inter clash in Istanbul final

Manchester City will finally look to get their hands on the Champions League trophy when they meet Inter Milan in the final this Saturday.

The Citizens have dominated English football since Pep Guardiola has taken charge but have never managed to win Europe's greatest prize.

City have reached the final and the semi-final in the tournament's last two iterations but now couldn't wish for a better opportunity.

The Etihad outfit thrashed reigning champions Real Madrid 5-1 on aggregate. The Italian giants overcame their in-

ner-city rivals AC Milan 3-0 over two legs to set up an intriguing clash.

The Nerazzurri are three-time Champions League winners - last winning the competition under Jose Mourinho in 2010.

"Great emotion. This group deserved this emotion," said Inter Milan vice-president Javier Zanetti, who played for Inter for 19 years and was in the side beaten by Milan in the 2003 semi-final.

"Now we wait for tomorrow to discover the opponent but it's already a lot to have arrived at this moment.



Manchester City's Erling Haaland poses with the Premier League trophy at the Etihad Stadium on May 21.

■ Many Kenyans prefer US, UK institutions

All set for Nairobi College Fair



The 2023 Nairobi International College Fair will be held at Ole Sereni Hotel on June 7. It will be a free education event for students who are planning to get pursue Undergraduate and Post-Graduate stud-

ies abroad. Academic directors from prestigious universities will present important information that students need to know about applying for and attending their institutions. Kenyan students prefer studies in the US, UK, China, Australia, Germany, South Korea, New Zealand, and Canada. The US and the UK have lately experienced a low number of Kenyan students due to the high cost of living there.

■ Diao, 95, delighted to be back home in Africa



Yoro Diao (centre), 95, former Senegalese tirailleur, with family during the baptism of his last great granddaughter in Kaolack on May 17. The Senegalese Tirailleurs were a colonial infantry, forced to fight in France's wars through the 19th and 20th centuries.

Senegal's colonial-era soldier returns

Elegantly clad in an immaculate white gown and matching cap, Yoro Diao, 95, was wreathed in smiles after officiating at the baptism of his brand-new great-grandson.

The ceremony was ripe with emotion for the old man, one of a dwindling band of Senegalese soldiers who fought in France's colonial-era wars. In the twilight of his life, he was delighted to be back home and among his extended family after years spent in bureaucratic limbo in France. "It's a huge joy. I never would have thought I would be here at this age close to all my grandchildren," Diao said, beaming.

"When you go home, when you have your children around you, your grandchildren, what else do people need?" The former soldier served in Indochina and Algeria as one of the "tirailleurs", a legendary unit of infantrymen that the French

army recruited in Senegal and trained for attacking the front lines.

Diao had longed to return to Senegal for good, but under French regulations he had to spend half the year in France to continue receiving his \$1,020 monthly pension. That requirement meant forking out a relative fortune in air fares – and whatever was left would be eaten up by the higher costs of living in France.

But everything changed this year when the six-months rule was scrapped – a move that coincided with a blockbuster movie about the tirailleurs starring Omar Sy, one of France's most popular stars.

Diao and nine other veterans have since returned home, without losing a centime of their coveted pension. Despite his great age, Diao exuded optimism and energy, frolicking from one room to another, voluble, radiant and inexhaustible.

■ His girlfriend, Alfallah, is eight months pregnant

Al Pacino, 83, expecting fourth child



Actor Al Pacino is expecting his fourth child at the age of 83, his representatives have confirmed. The Godfather star has announced his 29-year-old girlfriend Noor Alfallah is eight months pregnant. According to US media reports, Pacino and

Alfallah have been together since the Covid-19 pandemic. Pacino already has three children – two with Beverly D'Angelo and one with Jan Tarrant. In a career spanning more than five decades, Pacino has appeared in *The Irishman*, *The Godfather*, *Scarface* and *Scent of a Woman*, winning an Oscar for best actor for the latter. Alfallah works in the film industry and has produced films such as *Billy Knight*, *Little Death* and *Brosa Nostra*. She previously dated musician Mick Jagger.

kenya lens

■ DOLLAR IN THE CROSSHAIRS

DUMPING THE DOLLAR



Despite an aggressive de-dollarisation campaign, the greenback still controls the biggest share of global trade and foreign exchange transactions outside the US. Will an alternative international payment system succeed?

● BY JAINDI KISERO

The Nairobi visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov can only be interpreted in the context of Moscow's diplomatic offensive to rally Africa to stand aside on condemnations of Russian aggression in Ukraine. Moscow is also trying to

water down the Kenya position on the issue, which is influential and important in the UN."

That was how a top Kenyan envoy with first-hand knowledge of recent nuances of diplomatic activity between Nairobi and Moscow put it when asked about the significance of the Russian's visit on May 29. Lavrov was on his way

to Cape Town for a June 1 meeting of foreign ministers of the Brics group of emerging economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – that are on a campaign of cutting down the dominance of the US dollar on global trade, now popularly known as de-dollarisation.

With de-dollarisation having re-

cently emerged as a key foreign policy objective for Moscow, it did not surprise that Lavrov's visit fuelled chatter that the de-dollarisation push was part of his agenda in Nairobi. President William Ruto himself had recently been making very strong statements on what he described as the per-

Continued on Page 6

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Is the dollar under threat in international trade?



De-dollarisation emerged as a priority for Russia in 2014 in response to the imposition of Western sanctions following the annexation of Crimea that limited the ability of state firms and banks to raise financing in Western markets. China also began seeing value in this initiative after the onset of the US-China trade war in 2018 and the use of punitive financial measures by the US.

Continued from Page 5

ils of dominance of the US dollar in intra-Africa trade.

“Why are we bringing in the dollar in our trade? Why is it that Egypt must pay for our tea in dollars? Why must we pay Egypt for their cotton in dollars?” quipped President Ruto while addressing the opening of the African Continental Free Trade Area Council (ACTFA) of Ministers’ meeting in Nairobi. He lamented how recent movements on dollar interest rates had precipitated the “biggest interest rates spikes in Africa in recent years”.

There are other reasons fuelling the chatter that Ruto’s adminis-

tration was slowly – perhaps unwittingly – being sucked into the Russia- and China-led campaign against dollar dominance. First came the news early this year that Kenya was planning to buy tractors from Belarus in a transaction that was bound to trip Western sanctions against a country viewed as Russia’s strongest ally.

Secondly, Kenya has only recently signed oil for credit deals with Saudi Arabia and the United Emirates under payment arrangements that allow the use of local currencies.

Yet, on a closer look at the situation, the trends suggest that the needle has not moved for Kenya in terms of both diplomatic po-

sitioning in the Ukraine war and the de-dollarisation campaign. As a matter of fact, President Ruto’s strong remarks against dollar dominance in intra-Africa trade were uttered in the context of urging African governments to join the proposed Pan-African Payments Platform sponsored by the Cairo-based Afrixembank, which is being established to support intra-Africa trade by providing net settlement for trading between and among AU member states. Indeed, the ultimate aim of this platform is to clip the wings of the global primacy of the US dollar in international trade.

What is clear is that Kenya will have to employ dexterity in its

diplomatic footwork to navigate an increasingly complex international relations landscape. On the eve of Lavrov’s visit, Nairobi announced that it would sign a trade pact with Russia aimed at boosting cooperation between businesses.

Russia has launched a high-profile diplomatic offensive to boost commercial ties with Africa as it grapples to offset a big chill in relations with the West prompted by its invasion of Ukraine. Moscow plans to hold an Africa-Russia summit in St Petersburg in July.

The government has not said when the pact with Moscow might be sealed or spelt out how

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Why are we bringing in the dollar in our trade? Why is it that Egypt must pay for our tea in dollars? Why must we pay Egypt for their cotton in dollars?

President William Ruto



such a deal would sit with the incumbent Western sanctions on Russia and Belarus. Russia currently sells mostly grain and fertiliser to Kenya. Lavrov has visited Africa at least three times this year, while Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba travelled to several countries, including Ethiopia, Rwanda and Mozambique last week.

How diplomatic relations with Moscow will pan out in the coming months remains to be seen. As its critics accuse Kenya of swapping Russian fertiliser for a free pass on the war in Ukraine, it did not pass observers that Lavrov's visit was neatly timed to coincide with arrival in Mombasa of 30 tons of fertiliser that Moscow has contributed to Kenya under a memorandum signed with the United Nations. The deal allows Russia to give fertiliser and food to struggling countries. Malawi and Mozambique have also been beneficiaries. These donations from Moscow illustrate how Russia is employing exports of this commodity as a strategic lever of global influence.

Is the end of dollar dominance near? While such a prospect remains to be seen, recent development and statements by Bric suggest that the road to a clipping



of the winds of the dollar will be rocky. Russia, a key Bric member, recently said that it would not accept Indian rupees for its bilateral US\$48 billion trade surplus with India as it would have nothing to buy from India with the billions of rupees it would be holding.

For India to settle its trade deficit with Russia in yuan, it would need to run a trade surplus with China. Yet, India currently runs a massive bilateral trade deficit with Beijing. Hence trading and settlement in an agreed Bric bloc currency would require it to borrow from China, thus caging it in a Chinese debt trap.

South Africa's International Relations and Co-operation Minister, Naledi Pandor, recently warned that trading and settlement in local currencies, combined with settlement in an agreed common Bric currency (yuan, for example) would amount to exchanging dollar dominance with yuan dominance. South Africa is a prominent member of Bric.

With the Chinese yuan accounting for a paltry three per cent of global central bank reserves, leading Bric members – Russia, India and South Africa – are acknowledging the reality of the absence of a credible alternative to dollar dominance.

The dollar still controls and holds by far the biggest share of global trade, foreign exchange transactions, swift payments and debt issued outside the USA. India's share of global exports of goods also is just about 2 per cent and these factors reduce the necessity for other countries to hold rupees.

With the Chinese yuan (above) accounting for a paltry three per cent of global central bank reserves, leading Bric members – Russia, India and South Africa – are acknowledging the reality of the absence of a credible alternative to dollar dominance. Russia, a key Bric member, recently said that it would not accept Indian rupees for its bilateral US\$48 billion trade surplus with India as it would have nothing to buy from India with the billions of rupees it would be holding.

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■ KENYA-RUSSIA TIES

FERTILISER DIPLOMACY**Beyond the politics around the war with Ukraine and free fertiliser, Kenya has a colourful history with Russia – perhaps more than is known to the public**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov with Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Cabinet Secretary Alfred Mutua in Nairobi on May 29.

● BY JOHN KAMAU

The Russians were in town – and State House. In Mombasa, some free fertiliser arrived. In the old days of the Cold War, that would have raised eyebrows from Nairobi to Washington.

Coming as Russia continues with its war with Ukraine, the intention of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov Africa tour, diplomats say, is to get African countries to take a neutral stand over the conflict.

In all his stops, he has said that Russia is not the aggressor and is actually defending itself against Ukrainian aggression. He has al-

so claimed that Ukraine is conducting genocide against Russian speakers.

Lavrov is not your run-of-the-mill diplomat. He has held his position since 2004, making him the longest-serving foreign minister in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union.

His Nairobi visit coincided with the arrival in Mombasa of 30,000 tons of free Russian fertiliser. In line with the UN blockade, Latvia seized the fertiliser, and Moscow suggested that it be donated to impoverished African nations.

The fertiliser was then handed over to the United Nations' World Food Programme, which donated

it to Kenya. Interestingly, the same cargo now forms part of Russia's fertiliser diplomacy.

The fertiliser came from Uralchem-Uralkali, whose founder is the Russian oligarch, Dmitry Mazepin, the billionaire targeted by UN sanctions over his association with Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Mazepin was forced to sell his controlling stake in the fertiliser company to enable it to avoid sanctions. The fertiliser from his company informs part of Lavrov's Africa tour.

The Russian News Service, Tass, quoted Lavrov in Nairobi, saying that "several more countries will receive our fertilisers".

He blamed the European Union nations for "sabotage" over the "extremely slow" process of releasing the fertiliser. Other countries set to receive the free cargo include Malawi and Nigeria.

With rising fertiliser prices since 2020, Russia is now using the commodity as a geopolitical tool to entrench itself in various African nations. Whether that will pay dividends will be seen in the diplomatic circles when Kenya is asked to vote against Moscow.

Kenya has also been pursuing tractor deals with Belarus which, too, has faced sanctions over its support for Russia in the ongoing Ukraine crisis. After the sanc-

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tions affected about 70 per cent of its exports to the EU and about 17 per cent of its total exports, Belarus turned to African nations for business, explaining the proposed controversial tractor deal with Kenya.

But beyond the current Ukraine politics and fertiliser diplomacy, Kenya has a colourful history with Russia – perhaps more than is known to the public. Russia’s biggest imprint in Kenya remains the modern-day Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Referral and Teaching Hospital, previously known as New Nyanza General Hospital.

Brokered by Vice-President Oginga Odinga, the facility was one of the Russian satellite projects of the 1960s that were being informed by the Cold War. First President Jomo Kenyatta laid the foundation stone on July 28, 1965, accompanied by Soviet Ambassador V.S. Lavrov. But after the falling-out between Jaramogi and Kenyatta, the hospital would not be opened until 1969 – the day Kenyatta was stoned in Kisumu.

While the Soviet Union had agreed to finance several projects, including a hospital, a cotton mill, a radio station, a fish canning factory and a processing factory for fruit and vegetables, only the hospital project materialised. The others were caught up in Cold War politics, and no politician wanted to replace Odinga as the main broker on Russian ventures.

It is also said that the Kenya Government was dissatisfied with the conditions set by the Russians, that the local cost of the projects be financed via commodity credits. That meant that Russia would send its goods to Kenya National Trading Company and that they would be sold locally. Kenya would keep the cash to finance the local component of the project. Kenya rejected the proposal and asked for cash. When that was not forthcoming, it cancelled the projects.

Another early project financed by Russia was the Lumumba Institute to train Kanu officials. Located in Ruaraka – on the grounds of the current Pan Africa Christian University – the institute was also caught up in the wars between the East and West, and the two Russian “instructors”, Alexei Zdravomyslova and Andrei Bogdanov, who were teaching “Principles of Socialism” – the Leninist art of political action – were asked to leave. The institute, Jaramogi’s



A Russian delegation led by Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov in a meeting with a parliamentary team led by National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang’ula in Nairobi on May 29.



The Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital in Kisumu, which was funded by the Russian government.

brainchild, was built with donations from Eastern Europe.

In those days, dealing with Russians and Chinese drew suspicion in Western circles – even as Kenya claimed to be non-aligned. Thus, when former Kadu president Ronald Ngala, then Kilifi South MP, demanded the closure of the Lumumba Institute, Jaramogi’s loyal lieutenant, Mr Luke Obok, reacted: “If Mr Ngala is upset by the presence of some Russian teachers on the staff of the institute, as a good nationalist he should also demand and agitate the nationalisation of several other institutions in Kenya which are run and controlled by Americans, the British, Germans and Israelis.”

He meant the Kenya Institute of Administration, then under the Americans, and the National Youth Service, which was an Israeli project.

Another controversy arose

when Russia donated massive tanks to the Kenya army. The arrival of the arms in Kenya seemed to symbolise that Kenya had decided to shift to a new military ally – Russia. It was not surprising when the Minister of State, James Nyamweya, told Parliament that the government had rejected the offer because the tanks were old. This writer once asked former Attorney-General Charles Njonjo about those World War II tanks, and he told me that they were massive and “could not pass on any Kenyan bridge...we went to see them in Mombasa and could not allow them in.”

During that period, Odinga, who had asked for the donation, was accused by Nyamweya of “pulling the country to the East, while the Government was pulling to the centre”.

In his book, *Not Yet Uhuru*, Odinga says the consignment was or-

dered officially by the Kenya Government... the very government that had ordered the arms sent Ministers Njoroge Mungai, Bruce McKenzie and Joe Murumbi to Mombasa, where they examined the shipment and reported that the arms were second-hand. Tom Mboya said in Parliament that Soviet aid was not worth getting. The arms were turned back.”

Today, the Russians are no longer providing arms. Instead, it appears that fertiliser has become the biggest weapon the country can offer African nations. With the William Ruto government making bulk purchases as part of the subsidised fertiliser programme, this is a clear market for Russia, which is battling for space with the other major supplier, Morocco, that has also been sending its own diplomats.

jkamau@ke.nationmediia.com
@johnkamau1

kenya lens

■ NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

If Haji gets the nod to lead the NIS, questions linger over whether he will be the person to lead and offer independent intelligence analysis and advice

• BY MACHARIA GAI THO

While he was not the first prospective National Intelligence Service chief to be subjected to televised vetting by Parliament, Mr Noordin Haji became the first to attract intense public scrutiny on nomination, including court challenges and open objections by various interest groups questioning his suitability for the sensitive and powerful post.

That is a reflection of the fact that President William Ruto's choice to succeed Major General Philip Kameru was tapped from a high-profile assignment as Director of Public Prosecutions, from where he generated controversy since the change of guard of State House by abandoning a large number of criminal cases against politicians linked to the new regime.

It is also a fact that previous intelligence chiefs came from the secretive community where they had almost zero public profiles, while Haji was very much an open book during the five years he served in the justice, law and order establishment, where public and media engagements were part of the job description.

Yet when he was named by Ruto's predecessor, President Uhuru Kenyatta, as Director of Public Prosecutions in 2018, Haji was very much The Spy Who Came in From the Cold.

He was not just a lawyer who started out as State Counsel, but a career Intelligence officer who had served the spy agency for most of his working life, rising to the rank of Deputy Director in charge of the Counter-Organised Crime Unit.

SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD



On return to the State Law Office, Haji earned almost immediate plaudits as part of a team, alongside Director of Criminal Investigations George Kinoti, who had been appointed around the same time, tasked to drive a renewed war against corruption as President Kenyatta settled down into his second term.

However, after registering a significant number of high-profile cases, the prosecutor and the investigator eventually fell out in a manner that not merely reflected turf battles, but the raging succession war pitting President Kenyatta against Deputy President Ruto.

Reverberations from that falling-out were very much in evidence when Haji appeared before the National Assembly Departmental Committee on Defense and Foreign Affairs chaired by the Member for Belgut, Belson Koeh.

Questions around why he dropped so many prosecutions after Ruto came to power dominated the grilling, with the nom-

inee fending of charges that he was acting under pressure or moving to appease the new government by letting off the hook a large number of individuals who enjoyed proximity to power under the new dispensation.

While denying that he was in any way influenced by politics, Haji's main defence was to throw Kinoti under the bus. He claimed that all the cases were withdrawn because the DCI investigators had presented falsified evidence, which on second examination prosecutors had determined could not stand scrutiny in a court of law.

Haji, however, was put under pressure for reportedly having conceded that he had filed the original prosecutions under duress. He insisted that his office was misled by Kinoti's team, which presented forged documents in pursuit of malicious ends, but the investigators had since recanted and even written affidavits detailing how they were used to nail targeted individuals on fake evidence.

Ruto campaigned for President on the 'Freedom is Coming' slogan. Soon after he narrowly defeated veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga and assumed power, the slogan was turned on its head to indicate the large number of the new Head of State's associates being set free by Haji.

The most prominent beneficiaries of 'Freedom has Come' included Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, Cabinet Secretaries Aisha Jumwa and Mithika Linturi, former Kenya Power executives Ben Chumo and Ken Tarus, and Kenya Revenue Authority chairman Anthony Mwaura.

Haji admitted during the vetting that accusation around the withdrawal of charges had tarnished his image, but insisted that he had no apologies and no regrets as the decisions were made based only on professional considerations rather than extraneous pressure.

Indeed, one of the tricky questions he faced from the panel was whether, if approved as Director-General of the National Intelligence Service, he would be independent and politically neutral, seeing as his term as DPP was tarred by accusation of succumbing to pressure to both file and withdraw criminal cases.

He still denied that he ever acted under pressure, and went ahead to reveal that there is an active investigation into those who procured false evidence and

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Major General **Philip Kameru**



TI boss **Sheila Masinde**



Agriculture CS **Mithika Linturi**



Public Service CS **Aisha Jumwa**

ing a Deputy President who was under siege, with the criminal justice system being used to harass and intimidate his supporters.

Haji was aware as he walked into the interview room that he under a kind of scrutiny never experienced by any of his predecessors.

Shortly before his appointment with the National Assembly committee, Transparency International, Kenya, had announced withdrawal of the 2019 Leadership Integrity Award conferred for his role in the criminal justice process, particularly in prosecuting serious corruption cases.

He now stood accused of abdicating his responsibilities as DPP through withdrawal of those same cases.

“Regrettably, we have received public petitions and conducted an assessment based on concerns raised by the public and our integrity partners in Kenya. These petitions have raised serious allegations regarding the withdrawal of high-profile corruption cases, including those for which you were previously recognised, resulting in the loss of public funds,” read a letter by TI Executive Sheila Masinde asking Haji to return the plaque and certificate he received.

TI was also amongst a number of civil society organisations that petitioned the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission to deny Haji a clean bill of health at the Parliamentary vetting. Others were the Kenya Human Rights Commission, The Institute for Social Accountability and Inuka Kenya ni Sisi.

Several other groups, including the Kenya National Civil Society Centre and Civil Society Reference Group, released their own statements protesting Haji’s nomination, while a private citizen, Katherine Cherotich, moved to the High Court in an attempt block the vetting and possible appointment on grounds that Haji violated the Constitution by withdrawing cases involving senior government officials, failing to order investigations into extrajudicial killings, and eroding the independence of the office of DPP.

Haji, even so, had supporters who mounted a fightback on his behalf. The Pastoralist Parliamentary Group led by Adan Keynan came out in his defense, claiming that there was a plot to malign his character ahead of vetting for the

position of intelligence chief.

Separately, MPs and other leaders from his Garissa County and the wider North Eastern region also called press conferences in his defense.

While it is normal in Kenya for ethnic and regional groupings to be mobilised in defense of prominent community members under threat, it has never happened for one eyeing such a sensitive security post, where discretion and strict independence from political or other movements is key.

Indeed, appearances that he is captive to Kenya Kwanza political narratives or regional political forces could prove problematic.

The Garissa and wider North Eastern leaders rallying behind Haji might not have been sensitive to the fact that there is already disquiet being openly expressed over apparent domination of the security sector by their region.

On social media and even political platforms, this has become a point of conversation, as exemplified in a Tweeter post by Rashid Abdi, a prominent security analyst specialising in the Horn of Africa conflicts, including Kenya’s North Eastern region.

His social message post brought out the names of Defence Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale, Kinoti’s successor at DCI Mohammed Amin, Deputy Inspector-General of Police Noor Gabow and Director of Military Intelligence Abdulkadir Mohammed Burje.

It may well be a coincidence, rather than deliberate positioning, that so many key security jobs are held by one region. Issues being raised could amount to ethnic profiling, probably based on unfound fears and suspicion. Some will point out, correctly, that similar concerns were not aired when such jobs were dominated by Mt Kenya, the Rift Valley or other populous communities.

Going forward, however, it is almost certain that Haji will get the NIS job, but questions will linger that might present him an awkward dilemma as spy chiefs traditionally will not come out to publicly defend themselves.

On transiting from NSI to DPP, Haji came out of the shadows, becoming a darling of media and civil society, and a constant presence at conferences, workshops and other such gatherings, and cultivating links with key players in that sphere.

He regularly addressed press conferences to give updates on what his office was doing in terms of prosecutions, convictions and other issues around the justice system.

If confirmed he will almost certainly step back into the shadows, but he will not be able to erase the public profile already built, the issues towards the tail end of his tenure as DPP and perceptions that his was a political reward.

Late last year in the middle of a storm over contentious decisions to abandon criminal cases against key Ruto allies, Haji hosted *The Weekly Review* in his boardroom, and appeared unconcerned by the furore that had provoked calls for his resignation.

He patiently explained the history of each withdrawn case, pulling out volumes of prosecution guidelines that had apparently been drafted during the period he was engaged in titanic duels with Kinoti over who has the right to prosecute.

He insisted, even then, that his office never knowingly prosecuted anyone on false evidence, with the truth only coming out much later after investigating officers came clean on pressure that allegedly faced from Kinoti.

That interview in *The Weekly Review*, Issue No 10 of November 6, 2022, might in hindsight well have been a dress-rehearsal for his appearance before the Parliament vetting committee more than six months later.

Some of the issues raised then, such as whether Kinoti — who was drummed out of office as soon as Ruto took power — would be arrested and charged, remain germane.

Also still pending are issues arising from disbandment of the DCI’s Special Service Unit over allegations of extra-judicial executions, including the kidnapping and presumed killing of Ruto’s foreign campaign consultants.

Haji flatly denied then that those dramatic developments were influenced by Ruto’s ascension to power.

There is still also a big question over why some of these things were only uncovered after the change of guard, and those questions will linger into Haji’s reign at the NIS, presuming he gets the nod. And, crucially, whether he will be the person to lead and offer independent intelligence analysis and advice.

that prosecutions would soon follow.

He was at pain to point out that during his period in office, numerous attempts were launched in court or through administrative action to either run him out of office, or force him to cede prosecution powers to the DCI.

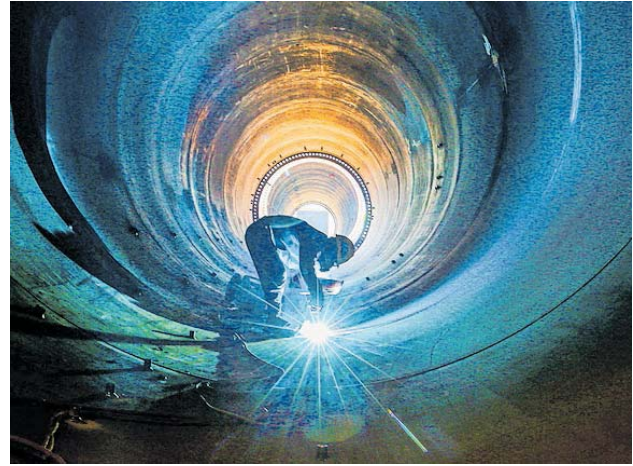
That would be a direct indictment of Kinoti, but could also be pointing fingers at Uhuru, former Cabinet Secretary for Interior Fred Matiang’i and other powerful figures in the previous administration who were supposedly out to cut Ruto to size.

Those assertions and any coming criminal charges against Kinoti and others would be quite tricky, however, as they fit neatly into the narrative spun by the Ruto campaign machinery depict-

the limelight



Indonesian Air Force's Jupiter aerobatic team (JAT) manoeuvre during a performance in Pekanbaru, Riau province on May 28. PHOTO | AFP



An employee works on a wind turbine tower at a factory in Lianyungang, in China's eastern Jiangsu province on May 31. PHOTO | AFP



Israeli soldiers take part in the annual general military exercise 'Firm Hand' in the northern Kibbutz of Yiftah near the border with Lebanon on May 30. PHOTO | AFP



Former President Uhuru Kenyatta with Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi in Abuja on May 29. The two leaders were in Nigeria to attend the inauguration of Bola Tinubu as the 16th President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



Owner of SSC Napoli football club, Aurelio De Laurentiis presents Pope Francis with a ball signed by his players during the Eco-Educational Cities conference at the Augustinian Patristic Pontifical Institute in Rome on May 25. PHOTO | AFP



An indigenous man takes part in a demonstration against the so-called legal thesis Marco Temporal (Temporal Milestone), a bill that stops the demarcation of indigenous territories, in Manaus, Amazonas State, Brazil, on May 30. PHOTO | AFP



A woman wades through a flooded street while Civil Protection personnel look for people to be evacuated after heavy rains caused by tropical waves affected several communities in Carabobo State, Venezuela, on May 30. PHOTO | AFP

The Aren



CODING FOR GLORY

Digital skills instructor Stella Waithera runs an NGO that equips children from across Africa with programming skills

OPEN SPACE

How energy contributes to job creation and growth

By ensuring affordable and reliable electricity for investors, Kenya can reclaim its position as an attractive destination

• BY ROSE HASSAN

The nostalgic lyrics of Baby Face's song sometimes sting my consciousness like a zinger; it soothes while reminds one of those days when things seem so fine and innocent, he sings, *'Didn't have much money, but we made do 'Cause Momma worked all day long, And daddy did too, Did all they could, Made sure we had clothes and food, Went to public schools and we, Followed public rules, We used second hand books, but oh I didn't mind the books, Momma taught us early in life, everybody's gotta, Struggle sometime.*

Going to the Agricultural Show at Jamhuri grounds was second only to Christmas and wow! how we loved collecting those freebies of paper caps, assorted fliers, calendars... anything branded. Those were days the economy made us equal. The companies presented their best. Sadly, I know 90 per cent of those companies are no longer there.

In recent years, multinational corporations and major businesses have been exiting, scaling down operations, or ceasing operations altogether. This has had a profound impact on the economic landscape and serves as a reminder of the challenges we face.

Many of these companies have sought refuge in countries such as South Africa and Egypt. These nations offer more favourable business environments. The consequences of this exodus have been significant, leading to job losses and exacerbating the country's unemployment crisis. Local medium-sized firms have also encountered financial difficulties, resulting in downsizing, closure, or relocation. The repercussions of these challenges have cast a shadow over the business landscape, intensifying the struggle for job opportunities and economic stability.

The closure and downsizing of companies have far-reaching implications for both the economy and society at large. As businesses shrink or vanish, the job market contracts, leading to re-

duced consumer spending and diminished demand for goods and services. This slowdown in economic activity stifles growth and creates an environment of uncertainty. Socially, communities suffer the consequences, experiencing decreased investment and disruption to local economies.

While the current circumstances present significant challenges, Kenya has an opportunity to revitalise its manufacturing sector and drive economic growth. Addressing the shortcomings in the energy sector, implementing policies that attract and retain manufacturing investments, and promoting local production are vital steps toward transforming the nation's economy. By ensuring affordable and reliable electricity for manufacturers, streamlining taxation processes, and fostering a supportive environment for local businesses, Kenya can rebuild its reputation as an attractive destination for both local and international companies. This, in turn, will create employment opportunities, stimulate economic activity, and pave the way for sustainable growth.

The manufacturing sector heavily relies on access to large quantities of affordable and reliable electricity. Electricity costs should be below Sh9 per Kilowatt hour. However, Kenya aims to go even further, targeting rates as low as Sh7. This aligns with the competitive pricing in successful manufacturing hubs worldwide, where electricity prices range from Sh3 to Sh5 per Kilowatt hour. Its Sh4 in Egypt, highlighting the level of competitiveness that Kenya should strive to achieve.

Manufacturing countries are steadily moving to solar power through grid tied arrangements this reduces their energy cost for in as much the grid power is high the daytime power they self-generate lower the total cost.

rose@solarnow.eu

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



MIND SPEAK



Samwel Ketchel

Former President Uhuru Kenyatta has been a darling of the people in Mt Kenya. His involvement in politics is to try and ensure that the Constitution is protected. He's free to politic. Just like the former US President Barack Obama who has always been on the campaign trail for Democrats. He knows that Mt Kenya doesn't have a kingmaker; hence, he is active, as he wants to remain relevant and influence power. He can make life unbearable for the Ruto administration.

— An agribusiness management expert



Lauren Oloo

Former President Uhuru Kenyatta should stay away from active politics. In so doing, he maintains his legacy. It's true he formed Jubilee party and he's obligated to keep it in good stead. However, this should be done behind boardrooms, away from the glaring eyes of the media. What we need to see is him being consulted not charing political meetings and finding himself at loggerheads with the police over venues. He should always remain calm.

— A student at the Kisumu Polytechnic



Janet Kilonzo

Former President Uhuru Kenyatta's continued involvement in politics after retirement raises concerns. It is crucial to allow new leaders to excel. His persistent engagement risks exacerbating ethnic divisions, hindering national unity. By stepping back from politics, President Kenyatta can facilitate progress and pave the way for fresh leadership, enabling Kenya to move forward.

— A student at Lukenya College



Mercy Akinyi

Former President Uhuru Kenyatta promised national cohesion. He made some progress before handing over power to President William Ruto. Kenyatta's political influence appears to be a problem for the Kenya Kwanza government. Jubilee is a big national party in the opposition. It needs a strong leader to keep the Ruto administration in check. I support his return.

— A student at Utalii College

TRICKY TIMES FOR THE YOUTH



WHY IT'S TIME TO TAME MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKERS

• BY MOSES OJUANG'

No work of poetry captures the present precarious economic conditions like Joe Mutiga's poem, 'In the city'. It was done many decades ago but its ringing truth in clever one liners makes it look like the most current work of art.

The poet bewails the conditions in an off-hand manner and even in the baby's humour, he notes: "The child laughs gaily, displaying its only four teeth, that show it grows to eat". It is a practical look of things even though dark. This is after we are informed that "the peasant, the pillar of the nation, has only to cope with prices that shift, like the waves that rock the ship. Africa was in a state of opportunity... and a little acquaintance or chance, rockets one to the highest office. The higher brackets are daily filled, by youths that will not retire, within this century.."

This is a very clear view of the situation we are in at the moment and is one of the most relevant descriptions of our predicament. There is no more proper employment with a view to a pension at the end of our youthful energy. Some motivational speakers seeking relevance keep bombarding the youth with the fact that they need not seek employment but rather be entrepreneurial, even when the speaker himself is already employed, just to speak.

These are tricky times for the youth and this is a generation that is facing tougher challenges than any other and those that lecture down at them to open up their eyes and see for themselves how confused and confusing these times are.

To become an entrepreneur without any idea, without any technical capacity or ability; sans training, without any educational background to sustain your ambition; without a sure capital that can help you weather the storms and stress of life as a business person is a real nightmare. There is no dream there; only anxiety and sure failure.

Yet, even when one fails, the chatterboxes are very fast to remind them that all those who rode the storm and became successful, experienced greater failures and got up again! They give examples and names of famous billionaires who did it that way. They never talk about those that miserably tried again and again only to nosedive with a greater thud. They do not recall those who tried many times in different fields, got disillusioned and

We must create employment for the youth to scale the ladder and create a conducive environment for business



The motivation-speaking charade has been there since the American Gilded Age when 'robber barons' arose.

ended up with ropes on their necks dangling from tree branches or sipping juice which they have laced with arsenic. Those are anathema. The few who made it suffice and even their moneyed background doesn't count.

In this manner, the sweet talking motivational speaker who sells the hot air from his chest take our wide eyed youth into a frenzy from which many do not fully recover.

We cannot ask why they themselves do not take up their own words and be practical with them and become like the rich people they bandy around.

The motivation-speaking charade has been there since the American Gilded Age when 'robber barons' arose. The 'Letter to Garcia', which extols the feats of a Cuban émigré being sent by President William McKinley to take a letter to the Cuban rebel Calixto Garcia behind the dangerous enemy lines sparked the whole era of these wild talkers.

Since then, millions of copies of books have

been sold to the poor people of the world whose sole goal in life is to dream of 'making it' in life. A dream that is mostly fleeting illusion of a defeated being.

The digital age has come with its solutions and the youth are taking up the challenge in coding, App creation, content creation and many other ways of earning a little from here and there; but that too is soon subject to taxation and the field too cannot accommodate all our youth.

We must create employment for them so that they get the primal accumulation that they can use to scale the ladder. We must create a conducive environment for business.

Without these prerequisites, we are a doomed country. Most of all we must reign in the motivational speaker since the damage he or she does to the youth hasn't been quantified. These are very dangerous creatures that need to be tamed.

mojuang@gmail.com

Something in me urged me to give back. Seeing that I was gaining these skills at 26 years old, I wondered how beneficial it would have been to receive them earlier? That's why I started to offer training to younger girls."

Armed with an idea and a willing heart, she began enrolling children between the ages of seven to 17, and researched about programmes they could use to learn, including Scratch, Blockly, Stencil and Minecraft. She narrowed down to Scratch because it was interactive and easy to use. "I was able to get kids from all over Africa, including Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and some parents were even requesting I take up a whole school. I couldn't because I was still studying. I trained 50 kids from May up to September that year. One of the things that stood out for me was the conversations I was having with them throughout the program and how they interacted in a positive manner. Some of them are still my good friends and we communicate to date."

Children's book writer and author of popular fable Stuart Little, Mr E B White, is famously quoted as saying: "Luck is not something you mention in the presence of self-made men." Or women. For Stella, the words could not be truer if they were lines of code from her computer. Her biggest achievement is seeing how technology is shaping, positively, the next generation. "Kids are ready to learn and they have the commitment to join platforms and build websites. Just understanding programming fundamentals has really been an overwhelming experience."

The difference between tacky and tasteful is usually the difference between a little money and a lot. So, how much do her programmes cost? "As an NGO, a lot of the programmes are free, but there are others where I charge just to get resources to meet the needs of the organisation. However, no programme is charged above KSh9,000, which could either be for a class every weekend or the same class offered daily for two weeks during the holiday period." At the moment, Africa Tech Girl has trained 300 children since inception. "I am targeting more this year because I have grounded myself in the business aspect of it. I am aiming for 1,000 kids by the end of year."

At 29, the young entrepreneur speaks fondly of a lesson that has



African Tech Girl Founder Stella Waithera in her office on June 1. FRANCIS NDERITU | NATION

kept her going: that she owes it all to God. "I am very spontaneous but I have been raised in a business background. My late grandmother worked in the jua kali sector, as does my mother. I have seen how women handle business and how in a way it made them have this persona. But God has been at the forefront – from the idea, to the name, to everything. It was God's voice. We are trying to nurture good skills and attributes at an age where kids are really influenced spiritually." What's that thing they say? Mtoto umleavyo ndivyo akuavyo (a child will grow up to be what you raised them to be).

In a world where it is easy to fall off the tracks, she wants to ensure that the good side of tech is illuminated. "The dream is to have a physical location in Kiambu where the main office will be, and where children can come over during school holidays and just experience tech. We want to affect kids in marginalised areas as well, for the African child to get opportunities as early as possible with the right skills."

Of course, just like there is no sun without a moon, business, too, has its shadows. "For the longest time my programmes have been free, but now that I am charging. We are a small organisation, and when volunteers leave, they can leave you hanging. Also, I was running a programme that I thought was failproof: I had a backup plan for every backup plan but it all came crumbling down." That's one of the things every entrepreneur eventually discovers. You can plan a pretty picnic, but you can't predict the weather.

Things are looking up, however. Business is picking. And she recently set up a board of directors. How does she define success? "Doing something that gives you fulfilment, that thing that comes naturally, giving you joy you cannot explain, when you can open a door for someone else. That is success to me."

It is no surprise that, if there was a billboard to describe Stella, it would say: "I am a go-getter. I am God-fearing."

Has life turned out the way she expected? "Well, it really has. I made some silly mistakes in my early 20s, but it has now come full circle. God has restored my time. Who would've thought that I would be a business lady, teaching in the school I was taught?"

Well, for starters Margaret Waithera did. And God. God did. eddieashioya@gmail.com

SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

African Tech Girl classes run for a minimum of three weeks depending on the student's learning pace. The curriculum has weekly projects for students to apply a specific topic provided by their technical mentors. Skills gained boost students' interest in programming, computational skills and logical thinking.

In 2014, Moringa School launched its maiden Software Development class in Kenya with a cohort of four students and a vision for "a world in which anyone can create their future". Through the introduction of its six-month Software Development and Data Science Bootcamps, Moringa School embarked on a journey that would integrate over 4,000 learners from diverse backgrounds and experiences while channelling their motivation to learn and grow through a market-aligned curriculum, a learning approach that simulates practical, on-the-job-experience and a vibrant community of employer partners, higher learning institutions, and other industry stakeholders.

Since its inception, Moringa School has enrolled over 6,000 students and graduated over 3,000. The school has scooped several awards including being named among the Top Technology Pioneers by the World Economic Forum in 2021, top 50 Edtech boot camps in Africa 2020-2022 by HolonIQ, and most recently receiving the LinkedIn award for best talent provider in sub-Saharan Africa 2023.

THE FUTURE OF WORK: HOW GEN Z, MILLENNIALS SEE KENYA AT 60

TICK, TOCK... TIME FLIES ON TIKTOK



Dennis Ombachi during the TikTok Top Creator 2022 Awards at Mövenpick Residences in Nairobi on January 14.
DENNIS ONSONGO | NATION

There are more than 10 million social media users in Kenya, a vibrant market for digital content creators

● BY SYLVIA MUIA

It is no secret that the current generation, made up of Millennials and Gen Z, is in many ways different from the baby boomers who were the young generation in 1963 when Kenya gained its independence.

From landlines to mobile phones, typewriters to laptops, six decades are more than enough to change the mindset and lifestyle of Kenyans.

But would the 'TikTok' generation have survived in 1963? Lemuel Abishua, 27, believes that he would have lived through it.

"As a country, we were transitioning from imperial oppression and had some hope of liberation but quickly transitioned to more

oppression. I appreciate that independence was a massive shift in the right direction but there were many oppressive structures that still existed. Our forefathers fought against those structures so I could enjoy the privilege of looking back without a sense of dissatisfaction," says Abishua.

Looking back to society back then, Esther Alma says that she would have probably been married with four children, which was the expectation for women in their early '30s.

"The independent woman and the go-getter in me would have been killed," says the investment and project manager.

As Kenya turns 60, the future of the nation is now in the hands of the Millennials and Gen Z, who believe Kenya is headed in the wrong direction. "I think it will be the same old Kenya except that corruption will be institutionalised and we will continue making memes and living in the metaverse world trying to escape reality," says Jimmie Kariuki, 25, a geopolitics and war studies researcher.

"We would have finally woken up from our cocoons and made significant progress towards a better future or be in a very bad deplorable state and place as a country if we

do not address the challenges we are currently facing," offers Meshack Kaburi, 26, a program executive.

A survey released by Deloitte earlier this month on Gen Z and Millennials shows that they are facing new setbacks that are impacting their ability to plan for their futures. Half of Gen Zs and Millennials say they live paycheck to paycheck. They are responding to financial pressures by taking on side jobs and postponing big life decisions like buying a house or starting a family. 50 per cent of Gen Zs and 47 per cent of Millennials expect starting a family to become harder or impossible in the coming years.

"It was easier to start a family 60 years ago. It was cheaper and our grandparents were able to buy so much land and property. Back then, they were offered jobs before they completed university studies. Soon, we will need two jobs to sustain ourselves," says Esther.

She also says that people no longer value relationships, which has made it harder for the youth to start families. The high cost of living is the top societal concern, with unemployment and climate change ranking second and third, according to the survey.

Many Kenyans expect the economic crisis to worsen in the next few years. Almost half of Gen Zs and Millennials think it will become harder or impossible to either get a new job, or a promotion. Despite this, interest in remote work is on the rise as flexibility is being seen as the solution to a good work-life balance.

“I would like to be able to travel and still run my side-hustle without being tied to a 9-to-5 kind of job,” says Awil Osman, who is in his early ‘30s. Some also believe that it saves on costs such as transport and saving time since there is no commute to and from work.

The pandemic forced employers into flexible work arrangements which have since then been adopted by several organisations with most Gen Zs and millennials opting to find jobs that offer hybrid schedules with some mandatory days in the office and the rest from home.

Those working with such schedules would consider looking for a new job if their employer asked them to go on-site full-time.

“I thrive without distractions and the freedom keeps me hyper-productive,” says Wangu Ngari. According to DataReportal, there were 10.55 million social media users in Kenya by January, 2023. The report shows that YouTube has the highest number of users at 9.44 million, Facebook at 9.25 million, Instagram at 2.20 million, LinkedIn at 3.50 million “members”, Snapchat had 2.45 million, and Twitter at 1.9 million.

TikTok was not among those analysed but users in Kenya are estimated to be about eight million. It is in the top 10 most downloaded apps in both Android and iOS software with most users spending an average of 52 minutes on the app, according to Search Logistics. “To



Azziad Nasenya
Digital creator

a large extent, it allows people to develop a different mindset at an early stage due to exposure to gatekept information and knowledge, and also learning new skills,” says Awil. Gen Zs and millennials have mixed feelings about social media’s impact on their mental health. The Deloitte survey reveals that almost half say it has a positive impact, yet more than four in 10 say it makes them feel lonely or inadequate and that they feel pressured to have an online presence.

Even though TikTok was launched in 2016, it has become one of the most popular for Gen Z and has launched several content creators into stardom, such as Azziad Nasenya.

Several Kenyans have become creators and influencers on the video-streaming app as some have made it their main source of income through brand marketing.

Out of 30 nominees, there were 27 Kenyans in TikTok’s Top Creator 2022 Awards in Sub-Saharan Awards held earlier this year.

Ex-rugby player Dennis Ombachi won the top creator award for his food content page @theroamingchef which he started in 2021 and now has over two million followers and 26 million likes. The World Economic Forum released the Future of Jobs 2023 report on May 1, predicting that technology-driven jobs are growing very fast in the world. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning specialists, for instance, are responsible for the creation of chatbots such as ChatGPT.

Global tech giants such as Google, Microsoft, and Amazon have made Kenya their hub. Nairobi is already home to 300 tech startups as it lives up to its tech label, the Silicon Savannah.

smuia@ke.nationmedia.com

The **911** SIDE
With John Nyaganyiaga
jnyaga@ke.nationmedia.com

WOMAN POWER

DR. VICTORIA KWAKWA IS ONE AMONG 3 GHANAIAAN WOMEN NAMED IN FORBES 2023 MOST INFLUENTIAL AFRICAN WOMEN LIST. AT THE WORLD BANK, DR. KWAKWA IS THE CURRENT REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (26 COUNTRIES) WHERE SHE OVERSEES AN ACTIVE PORTFOLIO OF 313 OPERATIONS TOTALING \$58 BILLION AND AN EXTENSIVE PROGRAM OF CUTTING-EDGE ANALYTIC WORK, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND POLICY ADVICE. THE FORBES AWARD RECOGNIZES AFRICANS WHO HAVE MADE AN IMPACT ON THE CONTINENT AND THE WORLD STAGE. THANKS FOR BEING A TRAILBLAZER ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, DR KWAKWA.



STAR OF THE WEEK

UPCOMING TRACK SENSATION NELLY CHEPCHIRCHIR OF KENYA GOT THE ATHLETICS WORLD’S TONGUES WAGGING WHEN SHE STORMED INTO VICTORY IN THE WOMEN’S 800M RACE AT THE GRIFONE MEETING IN ITALY WHERE SHE CLOCKED THE WORLD LEAD TIME THIS SEASON OF 1:58:23 A WEEK AGO. HER SUPERB PERFORMANCE GOT PEOPLE WONDERING WHETHER SHE IS THE NEXT BIG THING IN THE DISTANCE AND WHETHER SHE IS FITTING INTO HER COACH JANETH JEPKOSGEI’S SHOES ALREADY. ONLY TIME WILL TELL. IN THE MEANTIME, WE CAN ONLY WISH YOU THE VERY BEST AS YOU SET OFF TO FULFILL YOUR DREAMS, NELLY.



opinion



■ Raila Odinga, the indefatigable old man of our politics, has threatened a march on State House

Hapless Kenyans besieged by their own government

Never before has the political atmosphere in Kenya been this poisonous and pervasive. Never before has the air been this pregnant with toxicity. We endured weeks of fear late in 2007 and early in 2008 when Kenya teetered on the brink of an abyss. It reminded most of us of August, 1982, when Leonard Mambo Mbotela's voice on then Voice of Kenya told us the military had seized power.

It is different this time around. Kenya is rather like in a pressure cooker or sitting atop an active volcano. The pressure has been building since Wafula Chebukati as chairman of polls umpire, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), declared William Ruto the President-elect on August 15. Then the Supreme Court declared him validly elected. It has not stopped.

The opposition Azimio La Umoja One Kenya Coalition Party, standing up and speaking up for a populace weighed down by the high cost of living caused by high prices of staples and basic commodities as well as fuel and power and a non-performing economy, feels it has the government over a barrel. It recognises neither President Ruto nor his government.

Azimio's leading lights and opinion leaders say the President was not validly elected and is a creature of IEBC and the Supreme Court. Prof Makau Mutua has scornfully and repeatedly referred to the seven-person apex court, which is chaired by Chief Justice Martha Koome, as "the so-called Supreme Court". That brings into disrepute the IEBC and the Judiciary.

Emboldened like never before, Azimio openly asks the populace to force the



KWENDO OPANGA

government to bring down the cost of the basic commodities, staples and fuel or force it out of power.

Raila Odinga, the indefatigable old man of Kenya's politics, has threatened a march on State House and also typified the official presidential abode as an extension of a murderous sect.

A series of acts of commission and omission by an administration only in its ninth month of existence makes this the most besieged young government in Kenya's post-independence history.

Still, the government comes across as oblivious to public sentiment or opinion but in a hurry to force through its programmes as if it has no sentiment, morals or conscience.

While the government can define its housing policy it does not know what to call the money (3 per cent of their salaries) it is asking Kenyans to pay for it. The President says it is not a tax "because it is not a tax". Then it is called a levy, a mortgage, a saving. Then, unsurprisingly, government apparatchiks cannot explain why a saving or a mortgage would be compulsory.

The reason why the President says this tax is not a tax is that his government is taxing Kenyans like never before yet Kenyans have always held that they are among the most heavily taxed people in the world. The reason is that the government has introduced taxes on virtually everything. So, for the first time, Kenyans have christened their President Zacchaeus (Zakayo).

Nobody has denied the Kalenjinisation of the state. It is as blatant as it is rampant. Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua justifies the exclusion of some Kenyans from government on account of their vote share in putting Kenya Kwanza into office being miniscule in comparison to that of the Kalenjin and Kikuyu. That defines tribalism, despises inclusive government and deflates Kenyans.

With Kenyans feeling besieged by their own government, increasingly unable to fend for themselves and in agreement with an opposition that has smelt blood, President Ruto should revisit the meaning of the idiom of the last straw.

kwendo58@gmail.com

opinion

■ It is doubtful that Mungiki, though declared a proscribed movement, ever folded

Azimio scoring own goals with Mungiki alliance



MACHARIA
GAITHO

It is a hallmark of civilised society that any persons associated with violence, organised crime, murderous tendencies and activities that in general are a threat to peace and security are shunned.

Even if not in jail because they somehow manage to outwit the criminal justice system, they are still avoided and generally not allowed to mix in polite society.

All upright, self-respecting persons, particularly those in positions of leadership and conscious that they have reputations and images to protect, make special effort not to mix or otherwise associate with characters who are far from paragons of virtue.

A simple adage holds that you are the company you keep. If, therefore, you are seen to be in close partnership with known leaders of a notorious criminal gang, then your very own righteousness must be called into question.

That is the only conclusion one can draw when Raila Odinga, Martha Karua, Kalonzo Musyoka, Eugene Wamalwa, Jeremiah Kioni and other key leaders of the Azimio la Umoja coalition are seen to embrace the leader of the proscribed Mungiki gang.

Now, Maina Njenga may say that he long ago embraced new beginnings as a disciple of Christ and folded the murderous cult he founded and led for a long time.

The sins of Mungiki, however, cannot be easily forgotten and forgiven, especially for those who felt the fury of its violent rampages, extortion, murder, criminal cartels and sexual violence across most of the greater Mount Kenya region, extending to Nairobi and parts of the Rift Valley.

In any case, it is doubtful that Mungiki, though declared a proscribed movement, ever folded or otherwise ceased to exist.

Njenga simply declared that he was no longer the leader and ceased open promotion of the outfit, which also halted some of its more brazen public proselytisation of supposedly traditional religious beliefs.

However, the cartel that still runs protection and extortion rackets afflicting public transport systems, construction sites, land sales, commercial transport and other business operation is still very much active in

its traditional areas of operation.

The hordes that came out in support of Njenga when he was summoned to the Directorate of Criminal Investigations headquarters over last week and his subsequent appearance in court, bear testimony that Mungiki is very much alive.

We must presume that what we are seeing in expressions of solidarity with Njenga on his latest brushes with the law are by extension expressions of solidarity for Mungiki.

That is applied on the same principle that anyone today coming out to support Pastor Paul Mackenzie is by extension supporting the extremist preaching, brainwashing and zombification that has led to well over 200 of his followers starve themselves to death on false promise that they would meet Jesus.

It is the same as expressing support for the violent extremism espoused by a core of radical Islamic preachers whose Jihadist ideology feeds the indoctrination responsible for the US Embassy, Westgate, Garissa University and Dussit D2 terrorist attacks which killed hundreds of innocent Kenyans.

The Azimio movement may well be on a noble mission geared towards ensuring electoral justice and speaking up for the downtrodden and voiceless. If it is so desperate, however, that it must look to Mungiki for support, then it alienates many Kenyans who will want no association with a gang or cult forever tarred by a violent criminal past. In any case, it is difficult to see what value Njenga brings to Azimio. He, admittedly, does command a fanatical

The Azimio movement may well be on a noble mission geared towards ensuring electoral justice and speaking up for the downtrodden and voiceless. If it is so desperate, however, that it must look to Mungiki for support, then it alienates many Kenyans who will want no association with a gang or cult forever tarred by a violent criminal past. In any case, it is difficult to see what value Njenga brings to Azimio.

following, but successive failures in his quest for a parliamentary seat expose the fact that, politically, he is vastly overrated.

The only thing the strange association has achieved is present Kenya Kwanza leaders such as Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and Cabinet Secretary for Interior Kithure Kindiki the golden opportunity to depict Azimio as a movement promoting the resurgence of outlawed criminal gangs.

In fact, it is apparent that the criminal charges filed against Njenga—being a member of and hosting meetings of a proscribed movement—have no legs to stand on. They were filed not because of sudden discovery that he still leads Mungiki, but merely to place him in the spotlight and play up his new associations with the Raila group and, allegedly, former President Uhuru Kenyatta.

The usual diatribe coming out of Gachagua's mouth is very revealing. So was the status report issued last week by the Interior CS, fulminating against forces allegedly sponsoring revival of Mungiki. But he ignored, until questioned by journalists, that his Kenya Kwanza colleagues were also sponsoring the same misguided jobless youth to go on violent rampages against Azimio leaders, notably the invasion and stock theft on a Kenyatta family property.

If, indeed, the Kenya Kwanza youth wingers posing as the new Kenya Police leadership are directed to arrest and charge Uhuru, Ruto and anybody else over Mungiki links, they must also not spare Gachagua, National Assembly Majority Leader Kimani Ichungwa and other regime extremists who publicly incited violent attacks on political foes.

For now, however, Azimio is scoring own goals with linkages that would repel any self-respecting persons fed up with the government they so enthusiastically voted for, and now ready to listen to alternate voices.

And this at a time when all it has to do is smugly sit back and watch a clueless and planless government stew in its own lard over misguided economic recovery policies that will only sink the country deeper into the morass.

gaitomail@gmail.com

kenya lens

■ AT A CROSSROADS

WHICH WAY, AZIMIO?

Jubilee Party leader Uhuru Kenyatta together with ODM chief Raila Odinga, Wiper boss Kalonzo Musyoka and DAP-K's Eugene Wamalwa during the Jubilee National Delegates Conference at Ngong Racecourse on May 22. LUCY WANJIRU | NATION

The opposition's string of demands continues to pile pressure on the government, but pundits believe the coalition needs to focus its energy on a strategy for the 2027 General Election

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

The one-week ultimatum issued by Opposition leader Raila Odinga to President William Ruto on May 27 to reverse what he termed tribal state appointments, lest the Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya coalition party calls for secession from the rest of Kenya, elapses tomorrow.

And even before the President and his Kenya Kwanza Alliance administration fulfil this particular demand, there are several other ultimatums on the card. The very latest one was issued by the former Prime Minister on the

eve of Madaraka Day, which was marked last Thursday, demanding that Dr Ruto withdraw “the punitive Financial Bill” latest by June 5 or face unspecified action from the opposition.

Only a week ago, following a parliamentary group meeting, Azimio similarly released a statement with a raft of demands from their Kenya Kwanza counterparts, including withdrawal from the Joint Bipartisan Talks. They gave Kenya Kwanza an ultimatum to comply. Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua has also been asked to withdraw his government share-

holding remarks, otherwise the opposition would ask its supporters to stop channelling taxes to the Ruto administration and possibly form a parallel government.

While some of the conditions were quickly met – including withdrawal of Eldas MP Adan Keynan from the Joint Bipartisan Talks to avert collapse of the dialogue and the threat of resumption of mass action – Azimio's string of ultimatums seems to expose the opposition's apparent limitation of options.

But deputy Senate Minority Leader Enoch Wambua main-

tains that Azimio's demands are purposeful. He explains, for instance, that they suspended the street protests as a demonstration of goodwill after Ruto administration's request to give the bipartisan talks a chance. “But I can't guarantee that the suspension will hold for long because that decision is conditioned on the behaviour of the Kenya Kwanza leadership,” he added.

Describing the Financial Bill, for instance, as “a decree of mass destruction for millions of Kenyans and businesses”, Wambua observes that the Bill has taken on a

kenya lens

life of its own: "If the Kenya Kwanza administration pushes this Bill through Parliament on the strength of its purchased tyranny of numbers, that could well be the beginning of the end for this administration. Save my comment in a stable bank and thank me later". On the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the second-term Senator, who is also a member of the Joint Bipartisan Talks, explains that Azimio is firm that the recruitment panel for IEBC commissioners cannot produce a truly neutral outcome. Azimio members at the talks have accordingly drafted an alternative approach and are waiting for Kenya

Kwanza negotiators to bring their proposals to the table.

Either way, the ultimatum ping-pong presents a big dilemma for the opposition side. Political analyst Mark Bichachi likens Azimio to an individual with a hangover, still recovering from a state of drunkenness and asking – like Kenyan musician, Meija – "jana kulienda aje (what happened yesterday)?"

Bichachi attributes Azimio's rage and seeming lack of focus to its failure to appreciate the political reality of the moment. The Azimio leadership and its supporters, he argues, are still bamboozled at how victory in last year's presidential elections slipped through their fingers by a paltry 200,000 votes, when they were best placed to clinch the top prize. Besides enjoying the support of incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta, as well as financial muscle, Azimio boasted a galaxy of political heavyweights from across the country, including former Vice-President Kalonzo Musyoka, Narc-Kenya and Kanu party leaders Martha Karua and Gideon Moi respectively, former governors Kiraitu Murungi (Meru), Wycliffe Oparanya (Kakamega) and Hassan Joho (Mombasa) and former Cabinet Secretaries Peter Munya and Eugene Wamalwa.

And now Azimio's situation is further complicated by disillusioned voters who rejected Odinga and his running-mate, Karua, at the ballot, but are now warming up to the coalition: "Azimio is surprised that the electoral lover who dumped him is now regretting that the hustler has not delivered. And even as Azimio continues to nurse the emotional

pain of losing this lover, the lady is now seeking to be saved from this abusive marriage, which unfortunately can only be dissolved after five years," Bichachi allegorically captures the scenario.

This turn of events can indeed be very confusing for Azimio. Bichachi opines that, as it embraces those who rejected it at the ballot, the opposition needs to sober up, get rid of its anger over the last presidential poll and plot ahead of the 2027 elections. His views resonate with those of individuals within Azimio who believe the opposition outfit needs to spend more time, resources and energy strategising for the next elections instead of whining about Ruto's legitimacy as the fifth President.

Wiper Party leader Musyoka, who has supported Odinga's presidential bid three times, twice as running-mate, is among the Azimio bigwigs who subscribe to this school of thought. Besides criticising the government and keeping President Ruto in check, a task that the Azimio brigade has executed exceptionally, the former V-P believes the opposition should focus on Ruto's ouster.

Speaking at his Yatta home in Machakos County mid-last month, when he hosted political leaders from the wider Ukambani region as well as Azimio's top leadership, Musyoka stressed the need to "move with speed" to consolidate Azimio's secretariat "and be able to see whether going forward, we will give Azimio number one priority".

The revamping of the coalition's secretariat and the positioning of the outfit to unseat Ruto are key for the former V-P. For the Wiper Party fraternity, 'revamping of the secretariat' is a synonym for early identification of Azimio's flag bearer. Still, this pointed fo-

cus is a rather discomfiting area for some within coalition.

Although there are indications that he may not seek the top seat this time round, politicians allied to Odinga are not particularly enthusiastic about this approach. They fear that such a discourse will open up the coalition to unnecessary political friction and jostling, resulting in cracks within. National Assembly Minority Leader Opiyo Wandayi told *The Weekly Review* that the priority at the moment is to fight for the interests of the ordinary citizen against the excesses of Ruto's Kenya Kwanza administration. This, he points out, includes the current push to have the Financial Bill withdrawn. The Bill, which has attracted a lot of public interest, proposes, among other things, the introduction of a housing levy and increased taxation on a number of services and products.

While at it, pundits think the opposition has failed to onboard other players who are opposed to the Bill's enactment as law such as Reuben Kigame, a presidential hopeful in the last elections, and a host of non-politician players. Instead, Odinga and company have made the anti-government campaign a closed-door affair, fash-

ioned as a single coalition party with Odinga, Karua and Musyoka as senior partners.

Its apparent failure to harness political support across the country, coupled with the push for the reinstatement of commissioners of the electoral body, otherwise referred to as the Cherera Four, are among factors that portray Azimio as an outfit of "mixed focus". It is a situation that former Nairobi Governor, Evans Kidero, who has since defected from Azimio to Kenya Kwanza, describes as "deep fishing", implying that the Odinga-led outfit may be getting its priorities wrong.

Azimio's challenges notwithstanding, the very fact that they continue piling pressure on the government is agreeable to many. Amidst the high cost of living and increased taxation, the presence of a strong voice that checks the excesses of government is a welcome intervention. Vocal politician Kabando wa Kabando, for instance, believes that what Raila is advocating is for the good of all Kenyans and "can put Kenya on a new political threshold".

However, according to the former Mukurweini MP, the push by the Azimio brigade will only benefit Kenyans if Raila focuses not on his personal travails, "but on the broader agenda for the welfare of deceived, disenchanted and desperate hustlers". Kabando's position is informed by the general tendency by politicians to cloud otherwise noble missions geared towards benefitting the masses with narrow and personal political agendas.

Curiously, President Ruto claims to know what the possible endgame scenarios of Azimio's anti-governmental protests might be. Speaking in Njabini, Nyandarua County, during the burial on May 13 of freedom fighter Dedan Kimathi's widow, Mukami Kimathi, Ruto said that he understands Odinga's political manoeuvres only too well.

The former Premier concurred with the President, stating that because of their long-term association in politics, he understood Ruto "more than any other politician in this country". He maintained, therefore, that he knew exactly what he was doing. How the current political impasse pans out might seem clear to the two protagonists – Ruto and Raila. For now, however, Azimio's endgame remains rather hazy.



Opiyo Wandayi
Minority Leader

SCIENCE & TECH

ICY MOON OF SATURN NOW SPEWS MASSIVE WATER PLUME



Astronomers have detected a huge plume of water vapour spurting out into space from Enceladus, an icy moon of Saturn.

● LONDON

Astronomers have detected a huge plume of water vapour spurting out into space from Enceladus, an icy moon of Saturn. The 504km-wide moon is well known for its geysers, but this is a particularly big one.

The water stream spans some 9,600km – a distance equivalent to that of flying from the UK to Japan. Scientists are fascinated by Enceladus because its sub-surface salty ocean – the source of the water – could hold the basic conditions to support life. Nasa's Cassini mission (2004-2017) gathered tantalising evidence of the necessary chemistry by regularly flying through the geysers and sampling the water with its instruments – although it made no direct detection of biology.

The new super-plume was spied by the James Webb Space Telescope. Previous observations had tracked vapour emissions extending for hundreds of kilometres, but this geyser is on a different scale.

The European Space Agency (Esa) calculated the rate at which the water was gushing out at about 300 litres per second. This

would be sufficient to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool in just a few hours, Esa said.

Webb was able to map the plume's properties using its extremely sensitive Near-Infrared Spectrograph (NIRSpec) instrument. The instrument showed how much of the ejected vapour (about 30 per cent) feeds a fuzzy torus of water co-located with one of Saturn's famous rings – its so-called E-ring.

"The temperature on the surface of Enceladus is minus 200 degrees Celsius. It's freezing cold," commented Prof Catherine Heymans, Astronomer Royal for Scotland. "But at the core of the moon, we think it's hot enough to heat up this water. And that's what's causing these plumes to come out.

"We know deep in our own ocean on planet Earth, in these sort of conditions, life can survive. So that's why we're excited to see these big plumes at Enceladus. They will help us understand a bit more about what's going on, and how likely it is that life could exist, but it's not going to be life like you and me – it would be deep-sea bacteria," she said.

Scientists have proposed a Nasa mission called the Enceladus

Orbilander that would try to resolve the open question about life.

As the name suggests, this mission would both orbit the moon to sample the geysers like Cassini did – but with more advanced technology – and then land to sample materials on the surface. If ever approved, the Orbilander would not fly for several decades because of other priorities.

In the meantime, Nasa and Esa have probes heading to the ice-covered moons of Jupiter. These bodies also contain oceans of water at depth and could actually be better candidates in the search for extra-terrestrial life because they're much larger in size.

It's not known, for example, how long little Enceladus has held water in the all-important liquid state to support biology; the moon may have been frozen solid for a substantial portion of the history of the Solar System, denting its life credentials.

In contrast, Jupiter's bulkier moons, such as Europa (3,121km in diameter) and Ganymede (5,268km) have probably had the heat energy to maintain water in the liquid state over a much greater period of time.

AI could lead to extinction, experts warn

Artificial intelligence could lead to the extinction of humanity, experts – including the heads of OpenAI and Google Deepmind – have warned.

Dozens have supported a statement published on the webpage of the Centre for AI Safety. "Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war" it reads. But others say the fears are overblown.

Sam Altman, chief executive of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, Demis Hassabis, chief executive of Google DeepMind and Dario Amodei of Anthropic have all supported the statement.

The Centre for AI Safety website suggests a number of possible disaster scenarios:

- AIs could be weaponised – for example, drug-discovery tools could be used to build chemical weapons.
- AI-generated misinformation could destabilise society and "undermine collective decision-making".
- The power of AI could become increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, enabling "regimes to enforce narrow values through pervasive surveillance and oppressive censorship".
- Enfeeblement, where humans become dependent on AI "similar to the scenario portrayed in the film Wall-E". Dr Geoffrey Hinton, who issued an earlier warning about risks from super-intelligent AI, has also supported the Centre for AI Safety's call.

Yoshua Bengio, professor of computer science at the university of Montreal, also signed. Dr Hinton, Prof Bengio and NYU Professor Yann LeCun are often described as the "godfathers of AI" for their groundbreaking work in the field – for which they jointly won the 2018 Turing Award, which recognises outstanding contributions in computer science. But Prof LeCun, who also works at Meta, has said these apocalyptic warnings are overblown.

africa lens

■ THE COUNTRY IS UNABLE TO REFINER ENOUGH CRUDE TO MEET DEMANDS

TINUBU'S FIVE MAJOR TESTS



Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu (centre) waves at guests from a motorcade during his inauguration ceremony at the Eagle Square in Abuja on May 29.

As a two-time governor of Lagos, he revitalised Nigeria's commercial hub – no easy task – and is well aware of the issues in Abuja

● LAGOS

Nigeria is often referred to as the “giant of Africa”, given its huge population and economic potential, but it has some gigantic problems too – and these will confront President Bola Tinubu. The 71-year-old is unlikely to be fazed by the challenges.

As a two-time governor of Lagos, he revitalised Nigeria's commercial hub – no easy task – and is well aware of the issues. But Nigerians, even those who did not vote for him, will want to see early results from Tinubu.

Here are some of the major hurdles he faces and how he may tackle them.

Ending the fuel subsidy

This challenge has been kicked down the road by successive governments since its introduction in the 1970s. Despite its oil riches, Nigeria is unable to refine enough crude to meet local demands so it imports petroleum products, which are then sold at a government-set price.

As this is usually lower than the import price, the government pays the difference. But this subsidy is taking a huge toll on dwindling public finances. Last year it guzzled 4.3 trillion naira (\$9.3 billion) and for the first half of this year, 3.36 trillion naira was budgeted.

These payments come at the ex-

pense of development goals such as building schools or hospitals, but removing the subsidy will not be easy as it will lead to an increase in prices. The last attempt to do so in 2012 ended in widespread protests.

Many struggling Nigerians, used to seeing politicians mismanaging the country's oil wealth, believe cheap petrol is their share of what has been described as the “national cake”.

But Tinubu has firmly repeated that the subsidy has to go, and his associates insist he has the political will to do it. “He has a capacity to listen and to consult widely before making tough decisions,” Housing Minister Babatunde Fas-

hola, a close colleague who succeeded Tinubu as Lagos governor in 2007, said.

One area he may explore to lessen the impact is to subsidise and improve public transport – something he has experience in after implementing a massive public transport scheme in Lagos that put in place fast bus links.

The outgoing government has also managed to secure an \$800m World Bank loan, intended to beef up its welfare scheme for vulnerable Nigerians who will be most affected by the loss of the subsidy. However, lawmakers still have to approve the package — so it is not

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africa lens

Tinubu's tough balancing act in Africa's largest economy

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a done deal.

Lack of popular support

Only 37 per cent of voters backed Tinubu, making him the Nigerian president elected with the least vote-share since 1999.

He won a tightly contested election that was not only rancorous, but exposed ethnic and religious divisions that have lingered even in Nigeria's most cosmopolitan cities. He will have to perform a balancing act when it comes to choosing his government to build bridges across these divides.

There are signs he is already doing so, reportedly meeting two opposition politicians since winning February's vote:

- Musa Kwankwaso, a powerful rival from the north, who was third runner-up.
- Nyesom Wike, the influential and outgoing governor of Rivers state. As governor of Lagos, Tinubu probably had the most ethnically diverse cabinet in Nigeria, appointing non-Lagosians into key positions, which is still a rarity. "He is more interested in technocrats who are thinkers and researchers," his friend Seye Oyetade said.

But politicians, often with common interests, may be easier to placate than the millions of young Nigerians who did not vote for him – especially those who supported Peter Obi of the Labour Party. Many of them consider the vote flawed, though the electoral commission denies this – and an election challenge is still pending in court.

Close allies say by making jobs available and getting young people involved in governance, Tinubu may win over some of them. "You will see a government that will embrace new ideas and technology and by extension, you will see a lot of young people around him," Fashola said.

Fixing the economy

Most agree that as a trained accountant, this is Tinubu's area of expertise – but things have never looked worse for Nigeria:

- One in three are unemployed
- Inflation is at a record 22 per cent
- 96 million live below the pover-



President Bola Tinubu (right) takes the oath of office during his inauguration ceremony at the Eagle Square in Abuja on May 29.

ty line of \$1.90 per day

- GDP per head (the economic output produced in a year by the average person) was \$2,065 for 2021 (compared to \$70,248 for the US and \$46,510 for the UK)
- Low revenues from declining oil sales. Oyetade bats away such statistics: "These are not too dissimilar to what he met in Lagos in 1999." This may be hyperbole, but Tinubu's use of technology to improve tax collection in Lagos was remarkable, increasing revenue by more than 400 per cent in eight years.

He has spoken several times of his ambition to widen the tax net, but this might be harder to replicate at a national level given high inflation, rising poverty and widespread insecurity that often stops people from working.

Tinubu also favours a more private-sector led approach, in contrast to his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari, who aimed to bolster national welfare safety nets.

But it his relationship with Godwin Emefiele, the central bank governor, that will be key. The incoming president has criticised the bank's policy of using multiple exchange rates. This keeps the naira artificially high – the official exchange rate is 460 naira:

\$1, available to different categories of people who have to apply and wait till it is available. Everyone else who wants forex must use the parallel rate – currently 760 naira: \$1, meaning there is a widening gap between the official and black market.

For any review to happen, Tinubu will need to work with Emefiele, who has another year left to serve as governor.

The two have a fractious relationship following the central bank's move to redesign the local currency – leading to huge cash shortages – just before the election. This was seen by some as a ploy to scupper the ruling party's chances of winning the vote – allegations Emefiele denies.

Kidnapping and insecurity

Tinubu will want to get a grip on this quickly, given the scale of problem. His administration will be confronting armed criminals on motorcycles in the north-west, countrywide kidnapping and a violent secessionist group in the south-east. Deadly clashes between farmers and herders also continue in the central states.

During the election campaign, Tinubu's deputy, incoming Vice-President Kashim Shet-

tima, said this would be his remit – touting his experience as governor of north-eastern Borno state, home to many Islamist militant groups and the Boko Haram insurgency. But Nigeria's security challenges have evolved since he left office in 2019 and President Buhari, a former army general, failed dismally to find an answer during his eight years in power – instead insecurity has escalated nationwide. The Tinubu-Shetima plan includes using anti-terrorist battalions with special forces to go after the kidnapers and extremist groups. More importantly, they have proposed freeing police personnel from VIP security and guard duties, which could see more officers on the streets fighting crime.

Staying fit

Opponents of the incoming president say he has lost the vitality he used to forcefully modernise Lagos. Since the election, he has travelled abroad twice, raising questions about his health. In 2021 he spent months in London being treated for an undisclosed illness. He has brushed off the criticism, saying the job does not require the fitness of an Olympic athlete and his associates are quick to remind everyone that US President Joe Biden is older, at 80.

But Nigerians are weary of seeing presidents spend considerable time in hospitals abroad, leading to government in-fighting for control. This happened under both Buhari and Umaru Yar'Adua, who died in office in 2010. They are also worried about potential controversies. Before the vote Tinubu denied various allegations of links to narcotics and corruption.

Since his victory, it has been revealed that he was once issued with a Guinean diplomatic passport – which is not illegal but was not previously disclosed. While a Bloomberg investigation said his son owns an £11m mansion in London. Neither Tinubu, his son, nor his allies have commented on the report, and it has not been confirmed that Tinubu was involved in the purchase. Allies of Tinubu will be concerned that any further allegations could distract him from the massive job he is about to undertake.

global lens

■ VINICIUS JR CASE OPENS WIDER DEBATE

RACISM IN SPAIN



Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior confronts Valencia officials as he leaves after being sent off the pitch by the referee during their La Liga clash at the Mestalla Stadium on May 21.

Brazil leader Lula warns against allowing ‘fascism and racism’ to dominate football stadia around the world

● MADRID

Insults aimed at Real Madrid football player Vinicius Jr on May 21 have triggered a fierce debate about racism in sport and whether Spanish society has a problem with the issue.

Spanish police have arrested three people in connection with racist abuse directed at Vinicius Jr, who confronted fans of Valencia football club in the Mestalla

stadium who he accused of directing monkey chants at him. After the match, the Brazilian international said the Spanish football league “belongs to racists”.

The President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, warned against allowing “fascism and racism” to dominate football stadiums and his government issued a statement saying it “deeply regrets” the lack of action by Spanish authorities to fight the

problem.

As the lights illuminating the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro were dimmed as a show of solidarity with the player last week, the issue has transcended the borders of Spain and of sport.

Spain’s left-wing government and its sports institutions have been unanimous in condemning racism in football. However, claims that the insults at Vinicius Jr reflected

a broader malaise and have proved to be more contentious.

“La Liga has a problem,” Real Madrid’s Italian coach, Carlo Ancelotti, told an interviewer after the game. Vinicius Jr went further, saying that “in Brazil, Spain is known as a country of racists”. The president of La Liga, Javier Tebas, rejected such claims. He tweeted in Spanish, Portuguese and English: “Neither Spain nor La Liga are

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global lens

Racism in sport: Is it just a Spanish problem?

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racist, it is unfair to say this.”

He also said that La Liga has denounced nine cases of racist insults so far this season, eight of them against the Brazilian.

Others have taken a similar line, suggesting that Valencia, or even Spain, is also a victim because of the reputational damage this episode has caused.

While describing racism and sport as “incompatible”, the leader of the opposition Popular Party (PP), Alberto Núñez Feijóo, warned that the controversy was giving “a distorted image of a city like Valencia”. “Spain is in no way a racist country,” he said.

The Socialist president of the Valencia region, Ximo Puig, insisted that Valencia fans “are not at all racist”, while attributing the extremist attitudes of a few to the far right, which is the third-largest presence in Spain’s parliament in the form of the Vox party.

But Puig also seemed to apportion some blame to Vinicius Jr, who had appeared to taunt Valencia fans about the possibility their team might be relegated. “Players need to be good professionals and they shouldn’t behave in an arrogant way,” he said.

Others have also drawn Vinicius Jr’s character into the debate. Toni Freixa, a former member of the board of Barcelona football club, said that the Brazilian “provokes during every game” and wondered why Real Madrid’s other black players were not targeted with racist abuse in the same way.

The writer and social commentator Manuel Jaboís took issue with such analysis, warning that blaming the victim of the abuse was part of the problem. “Because he’s black... he doesn’t have the right to behave badly, to get angry or respond to a provocation without getting called a monkey,” he said.

The fallout from game echoes events in 2004, when many Spain fans in Real Madrid’s Bernabéu stadium aimed monkey chants at England’s black players during a friendly game. The ensuing international outrage triggered a national debate about the racism which had long been present on Spain’s football terraces.

In an editorial, *El País* newspaper



Spanish referee De Burgos Bengoetxea talks with Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior during their clash with Valencia CF at the Mestalla Stadium on May 21. PHOTO IAFP

underlined the fact that it had been necessary for a foreign leader, Lula, to denounce the issue in order for it to be discussed in depth. It also called for both La Liga and the Spanish Football Federation to take tougher action to stamp out racism in the sport.

“La Liga has a problem and that problem is not Vinicius,” it read.

Meanwhile, former Manchester City star Micah Richards said Tebas’ response to the racist abuse made his “blood boil”.

Tebas said Vinicius twice did not turn up for a meeting to discuss what it “can do in cases of racism”, adding: “Before you criticise and slander La Liga, you need to inform yourself properly.” Richards said: “Javier has tried to make himself the victim in all this, it’s absolutely embarrassing what he has come out with in his statement. It makes

my blood boil and that is part of the problem. It’s not just a football issue, it’s a life that people go through every single day.”

Real have reported the abuse towards the 22-year-old to the Spanish prosecutor’s office as a hate crime.

Richards said measures to try and curb racism in the game were “not working”.

“People don’t care enough and that is the problem,” he added. “If people cared they would do something about it. It’s not about taking the knee or wearing Kick it Out shirts because it’s not working. I’m tired of having to talk about the same things that happens over and over again.

“We have spoken enough. The people who need to sort themselves out are the ones who are being racist. Until harsher

ABUSE SUFFERED BY VINICIUS JR THIS SEASON

September 2022 - Some Atletico Madrid fans sang racist songs toward Vinicius outside their Wanda Metropolitano stadium before Real Madrid played them in September 2022. Atletico Madrid later condemned “unacceptable” chants by a “minority” of fans.

September 2022 - Some pundits in Spain criticise Vinicius’ goal celebration, in which he dances by corner flag. He responds by saying “the happiness of a black Brazilian in Europe” is behind the criticism.

December 2022 - Vinicius appeared to be subjected to racist abuse at Valladolid while he walked past fans after being substituted. La Liga said it has filed charges relating to the racist abuse of Vinicius to the “relevant judicial, administrative and sporting bodies”.

January 2023 - An effigy of the Real Madrid winger was hung from a bridge near the club’s training ground before a game against Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey. Atletico said the incident was “repugnant”.

February 2023 - Mallorca fans were filmed allegedly racially abusing the Brazilian during a game against Real.

March 2023 - La Liga said “intolerable racist behaviour was once again observed against Vinicius” in a game against Barcelona and it had reported the racist insults to the Barcelona Court of Instruction.

May 2023 - Vinicius suffers racist abuse against Valencia.

punishments are delivered it’s always going to be the same. If Javier thinks like that, what chance do we have?”

Fellow pundit and former Blackburn and Chelsea striker Chris Sutton called for Tebas to be removed from his position. “When you have someone in such a powerful position, to have a Twitter spat with Vinicius Jr, to tell him he is wrong, it’s glaringly obvious to everyone there needs to be change in that position,” he said. “That is a starting point.”

global lens

■ SYRIAN ELECTED TO LEAD A GERMAN VILLAGE

Ryvan Alshebl earned citizenship last year, a prerequisite for anyone who wants to stand in local elections

• BERLIN

Ryvan Alshebl fled war-torn Syria in 2015, arriving on the Greek island of Lesbos after a harrowing four-hour journey on a rubber boat. Eight years on, he is the mayor of a German village. "It was dark and cold and there was not a single light to be seen on Lesbos," he recalls.

"A few hours ago we had been in a normal Mediterranean town in Turkey. The environment had transformed with the cold and dark, and of course the feelings of fear that go with such a journey."

Alshebl, then barely 21, was among a huge wave of refugees who arrived in Europe that year. After landing in Greece, he made his way through Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia by public transport and on foot, taking 12 days in total to reach Germany.

He eventually ended up at a refugee centre at Althengstett, a rural region near the Black Forest. "In the shared accommodation, where you cannot expect more than a bed, a roof and some food, for which you are still thankful, you can only do one thing: get back on your feet quickly and invest rapidly in your own future," he said.

Alshebl soon learned to speak German fluently – "if you are in the countryside you have no other choice" – and landed a traineeship as an administrative assistant at Althengstett town hall.

He earned German citizenship in 2022, a prerequisite for anyone who wants to stand in local elections in Germany. Now 29, he will take up his post as mayor of Ostelsheim, a village near Althengstett, in June.

He is believed to be the first Syrian from the wave of refugees who arrived in Germany in 2015-16 to be elected to a political post.

Alshebl was joined by four friends on his journey to Europe. But he left behind his parents and one brother, though a second brother had already moved to Germany on a student visa.

He said his experience of fleeing Syria and having "to take responsibility not only for (myself) but also for the environment" had given him the drive to go into politics. "To take on this responsibility at such an age, you learn a lot. Of course, it creates a new person, a new personality," he said. Alshebl ran as an independent candidate in the election, winning 55.41 percent of the vote.

But he is also a member of the Greens, "because climate protection is very important" to him. His victory is all the more striking given that Ostelsheim, a village of 2,700 people, is a

FROM REFUGEE TO MAYOR

traditionally conservative community.

Situated among a cluster of hills, the village is surrounded by rolling fields lined with dry stone walls and hedges. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party harnessed anger over the influx of asylum seekers in 2015-16 to win votes and ultimately enter parliament for the first time.

But Alshebl said he has not seen right-wing extremism personally. Alshebl believes he was elected because he listened to the people's concerns -- from childcare to digitalisation issues. He admits to not really "feeling anything" on hearing he had won the election in March as he was "overwhelmed".

But as congratulations poured in from around the world, it became clear that his story was "bigger than a mayoral election in a small community".

Alshebl believes the fact he triumphed against two other local candidates who grew up in the area says a lot about the mentality of the voters.

"It is a sign that people did not count the origin, but the qualifications. It is a sign of openness to the world," he said. Alshebl's parents, a schoolteacher and an agricultural engineer, belong to Syria's Druze minority, but he describes himself as not religious.

He has "mixed feelings" about Syria, which he has not been able to visit since living in Germany. "It is the country where you were born and raised...

You long for the people you grew up with," he said. "But I am happy that I got this chance to live here at all" when others have not, he said.

— AFP



Ryvan Alshebl, mayor of the community of Ostelsheim in Baden-Wuerttemberg, southwestern Germany, addresses a press talk with the Association of the Foreign Press in Germany (VAP) in Berlin, on May 30.

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