

Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

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FOR PRESIDENTS ONLY

A CIA file prepared for the White House offers fresh insights into the assassination of Tom Mboya. Described as 'articulate, brilliantly logical, and a masterful tactician', and regarded as the symbol of African nationalism to the West, a group of advisers around Jomo Kenyatta felt threatened by the young minister's 'growing stature and popularity'

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Letter from the editor

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Kenya is the most stable democracy in the region because of brave people who fought for good governance. They suffered lots of humiliation, torture, detentions and break-up of their families for the common good. Many paid the ultimate price: Death. During the days when even criticising the smallest issue earned one a sojourn in detention as a guest of the State, there were people who still stood up and asserted their freedom of speech.

These disjointed voices of reason started organising even long before the advent of multipartyism and they achieved the openness that we enjoy today. They became what was known as the civil society. Their actions trimmed the unnecessary egos that had bulged during the single-party rule; they brought back sanity slowly, and painfully.

In the tumultuous decade of the '90s, the civil society was the voice of the people. Courageous activists took on the dictatorial Kanu regime to defend democracy in a police-state era when the President was almost above the law. The courage and boldness of these people ensured that we kept the track towards getting a new Constitution to replace the mangled Lancaster independence document.

Remember Davinder Lamba, Dr Gibson Kamau Kuria, Rev Dr Timothy Njoya, Prof Kivutha Kibwana, Dr Willy Mutunga and the late Arch Dr David Gitari? They routinely led demos in the fight for reforms. They sacrificed their freedom for a better nation as their activism provided an objective voice to temper political extremism.

But when President Mwai Kibaki took power in 2002, things changed. That was the best election and most peaceful one Kenya had ever had, and can arguably be called the last election we ever



Allan Buluku

It is times like these that we need to refocus our energies towards our responsibilities as citizens and force a constructive dialogue on the state of the nation. The zeal of the '90s that pushed us to the 2010 Constitution must be reawakened and a new civil society must arise, sober and focused towards blunting government excesses.

had. Kenyans celebrated with the utmost joy; we were then referred to as the most optimistic nation in the world.

We were seeing a bright future after getting rid of Kanu that had become synonymous with oppression and the economic trauma which was felt. While Kibaki did his best to jumpstart the economy – moving the GDP from 0.5 per cent to 8.4 per cent, cutting both fiscal spending and borrowing of domestic debt – he mismanaged the politics.

He built his coterie around him and the narrow ethnic considerations started to become apparent. Those who campaigned the hardest for him were the first to be pushed aside and Kenya found herself on the brink of the precipice in 2007. A bungled election nearly tore the nation apart. We regrouped, repurposed and rein-

forced the pillars of our democracy with the promulgation of a progressive Constitution that devolved power.

Many former civil society members got into government and became cosy with the system. Some, like Pheroze Nowrojee, were denied public service employment because they were once activists. It was now becoming a negative term.

Today, the ghosts of the Moi era have subtly returned to haunt us. As the nation grapples with punitive taxes, extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances, the people are on their own. Not a single voice comes from the civil society. It is as if they closed shop and have already reached their utopia.

Although the veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga hopes to rekindle the spirit of Saba Saba to stop the Finance Act 2023, the civil society is eerily quiet, with support only coming from the brave Busia Senator Okiya Omtatah. We have dozens of bodies found floating in rivers; bodies of unknown Kenyans. We have suspects disappearing never to be seen again and the silence from those quarters remains deafening.

It is times like these that we need more Kenyan voices. There are few sober voices but they are too mild to bring any meaningful change. It is times like these that we need to refocus our energies towards our responsibilities as citizens and force a constructive dialogue on the state of the nation. The zeal of the '90s that pushed us to the 2010 Constitution must be reawakened and a new civil society must arise, sober and focused towards blunting government excesses. That shall be the only tonic to salvage our nation's joints.

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the telescope

■ Azimio chief urges supporters to stay firm

Demos will continue, says Raila

Demonstrations against the punitive Finance Act 2023 will continue on Wednesday, Azimio la Umoja One Kenya leaders said, even as they revealed plans to pursue legal action over attempts on their lives. In Nairobi, the demos will be preceded by a rally at Kamukunji grounds.

Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga hailed the Saba Saba Day demonstrations on July 7. "And come next week July 12 we're going to have more serious demonstrations across the country," he said.

"Today was simply but the beginning of this new wave of civil disobedience and mass action," Odinga said Friday was the beginning of a struggle that will "culminate in victory".

The former Prime Minister said the issues they had raised, including punitive taxes and

the high cost of living, were non-negotiable.

Kenyans, he added, had the right to picket, demonstrate and petition the government as enshrined in the Constitution. Former Murang'a Governor Mwangi Wa Iria said Friday's Saba Saba demos reminded him of what happened three decades ago.

"It was a long day and a good day for Kenyans. It reminds me of what happened 30 years ago. We thought we'd taken democratic steps. But seems we're stuck right there. We were treated just like 30 yrs ago," he said.

"We were peaceful. But we were teargassed." In the city centre, he said, they were confronted with live bullets.

"The police officer looked like a terrorist. We took videos and we're going to pursue justice," he said.



Azimio supporters walk to the city centre after attending the Saba Saba rally at Kamukunji grounds on July 7.

■ Journalists' role in shaping public opinion

Media conference set for Nairobi



Players in the communication industry will host a workshop on 'Media influence on Governance' at Cheche Bookshop and Cafe in Nairobi on July 13. Panelists will discuss the role of the media in shaping

policy making and public perception. They will explore journalists' role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy and fostering informed discourse. They will delve into the complexities of media's impact, examining whether they act as catalysts or conduits in shaping public sentiment and policy outcomes. Across the world, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing political outcomes.

■ Spaniard made his debut with Minardi in 2001



Aston Martin driver Fernando Alonso attends a press conference on the Red Bull race track in Spielberg, Austria, on June 29.

Alonso concerned about F1 growth

Two-time world champion Fernando Alonso expressed his concern that the massive growth of Formula One's calendar could become too stressful for the teams.

The sport this week announced a record 24-race calendar for 2024 to run from March to December, with testing taking place in February, ahead of the opening race.

The Aston Martin driver said he believed it was too much and was sure to be a strain on team members as the season stretched almost across most of the year.

When he made his debut with Minardi in 2001, the now 41-year-old driver embarked on a season of 17 races, mostly in Europe, running from March to October.

"I understand all the benefits of having 24 races and the reasons behind doing so many," he said. "It is difficult. There is a lot of interest in F1 and a big demand.

"So, it is good to go to new countries and have new races - this year it will be in Las Vegas and a few years ago it was Qatar. And it is great to open the sport to new countries.

"There is more revenue for everyone. I understand that, but I think that for team members, a good number of races is 18.

"More than 18, or 19, and you start stressing all the mechanics - and the media - and everyone is on the back foot from February to December.

"It is a lot to cope with and to have.... We, we drivers, have all the comforts and they take care of us as much as they can, so we cannot complain too much. "But really I understand it is hard for everyone else." The Spaniard spoke at Silverstone following the official unveiling of the first phase of his Aston Martin team's new technology campus across the road from the circuit's main entrance.

■ It will secure the long-term future of the airport

Gatwick unveils second runway plans



London Gatwick airport has submitted an application for a second runway, as part of a \$2.8-billion development project. The plan involves upgrading the existing Northern Runway, which is currently used as a taxiway, and only used

when the Main Runway is out of use. If approved, the Northern Runway would be used for departing flights only, the airport said in a statement. Construction could start in 2025 and be ready for use by the end of the decade, helping Gatwick to boost passenger numbers to some 75 million a year by the late 2030s, it added. Gatwick Airport chief executive Stewart Wingate said the plan would "help secure the long-term future of the airport" and boost the local economy.

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■ GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

CROSSHAIRS ON MUSALIA

The High Court's ruling on the unconstitutionality of CAS offices bolsters calls against the position of the PCS. A disbandment of the office by the courts would have dire political consequences, not just for Kenya Kwanza Alliance but for all political players in the years to come

• BY OSCAR OBONYO

Bouyed by Busia Senator Okiya Okiya Omtatah's legal exploits, and especially following the latest High Court declaration of the positions of Chief Administrative Secretaries (CAS) as unconstitutional, the human rights activist-turned-politician has been under increasing public pressure to turn his focus to other offices deemed "illegal and unconstitutional".

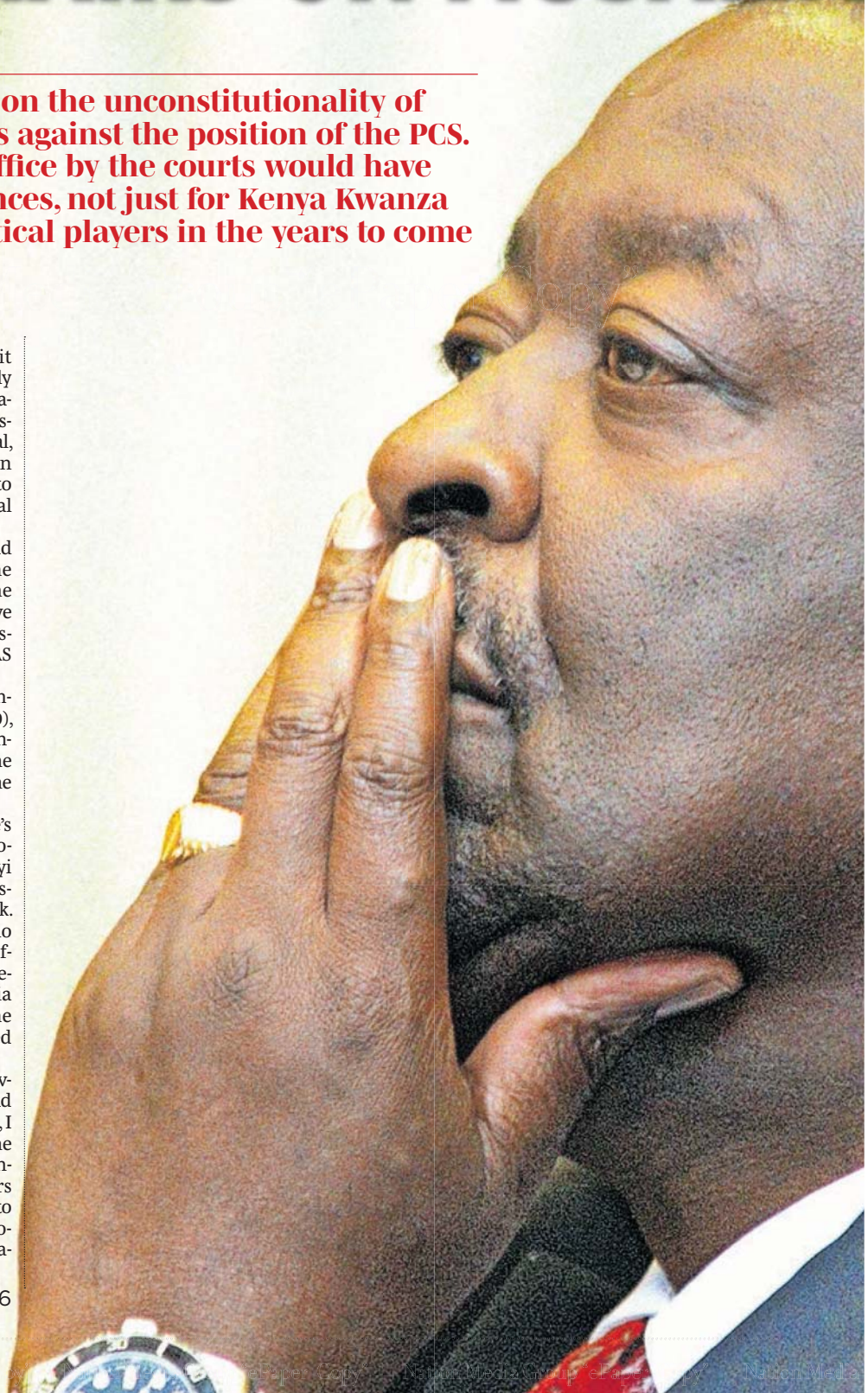
It matters not that Omtatah may have had little to do with the latest case filed by the Law Society of Kenya (LSK), apart from the fact that he set a precedent on the matter five years ago, when he challenged former President Uhuru Kenyatta's creation of the CAS positions.

But he did play a central role in another high-profile ruling last Friday (June 30), when the High Court suspended implementation of the Finance Act 2023, pending the hearing and determination of a petition he filed alongside six other activists.

Omtatah has quickly emerged as a people's defender, and since the ruling on the CAS positions delivered on Monday by judges Kanyi Kimondo, Hedwig Ong'udi and Aleem Visram, his phone has been ringing off the hook. Pressure is now being exerted on him "to do something about other unconstitutional offices" such as that of the Prime Cabinet Secretary, occupied by seasoned politician Musalia Mudavadi, and those of the spouses of the Prime CS and Deputy President – all funded by taxpayers' money.

Omtatah has his hands full for now, however. "I am glad about the people's response and their trust in me. However, at the moment, I want to concentrate on their case against the high cost of living. This is crucial for all Kenyans." Fellow legislators and even lawyers continue to reach out to the senator, asking to team up with him in pursuing fresh "pro-people cases". Curiously, despite his litigious na-

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The crackdown on unconstitutional offices

Continued from Page 5

ture, Omtatah is neither schooled in law nor a licensed lawyer. “I have been calling him for two days now so that I can share some crucial information with him or even get enjoined in some of his ongoing cases, but he is either too busy to pick my call or is not interested altogether. As you know, Omtatah is now a politician and politicians are generally slippery – I just hope he will not eventually slide into their typical mess,” a senior Nairobi-based constitutional lawyer told *The Weekly Review* with a chuckle.

The development on the legal status of the CAS positions appears to have given members of the political class allied to the opposition Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya coalition, who have particularly been critical of the Office of Prime Cabinet Secretary, impetus to launch fresh attacks.

The protests were stronger and louder in October last year, before Mudavadi was vetted by the National Assembly for the position. Then, the House’s Leader of the Minority, Opiyo Wandayi, stoked controversy by stating that “such a position is alien to the Constitution and can’t be considered as part of the Cabinet”.

On Thursday, however, Azimio, through Paul Mwangi, who is a personal lawyer of party leader Raila Odinga, showed no enthusiasm in pursuing the matter legally: “We are not interested in this one. However, I will consult with coalition authorities for direction before reverting to you,” the constitutional lawyer told this writer.

But others like Harun Ndubi are determined to trudge on to ensure that the constitutional question around public offices established by President William Ruto is addressed with finality.

Even as he picks up the gauntlet, the lawyer opines that the 13th Parliament is guilty of failing to exercise separation of powers by going to bed with the Executive, and should accordingly be disbanded.

Being married to the Deputy President or Prime CS, he argues, does not guarantee one an official office financed by taxpayers’ money. How the MPs cannot interrogate and correct such a “simple” wrong policy is something he cannot comprehend: “Clearly, the problem at hand emanates from a legislative arm that has elected to be cheerleaders of the Executive instead of playing an oversight role. Some of these anomalies could have been arrested by relevant house committees at the vetting stage.”

Article 152 of Chapter 9 of the Constitution on the Executive lists the President, Deputy President, Attorney-General and not fewer than 14 and not more than 22 Cabi-

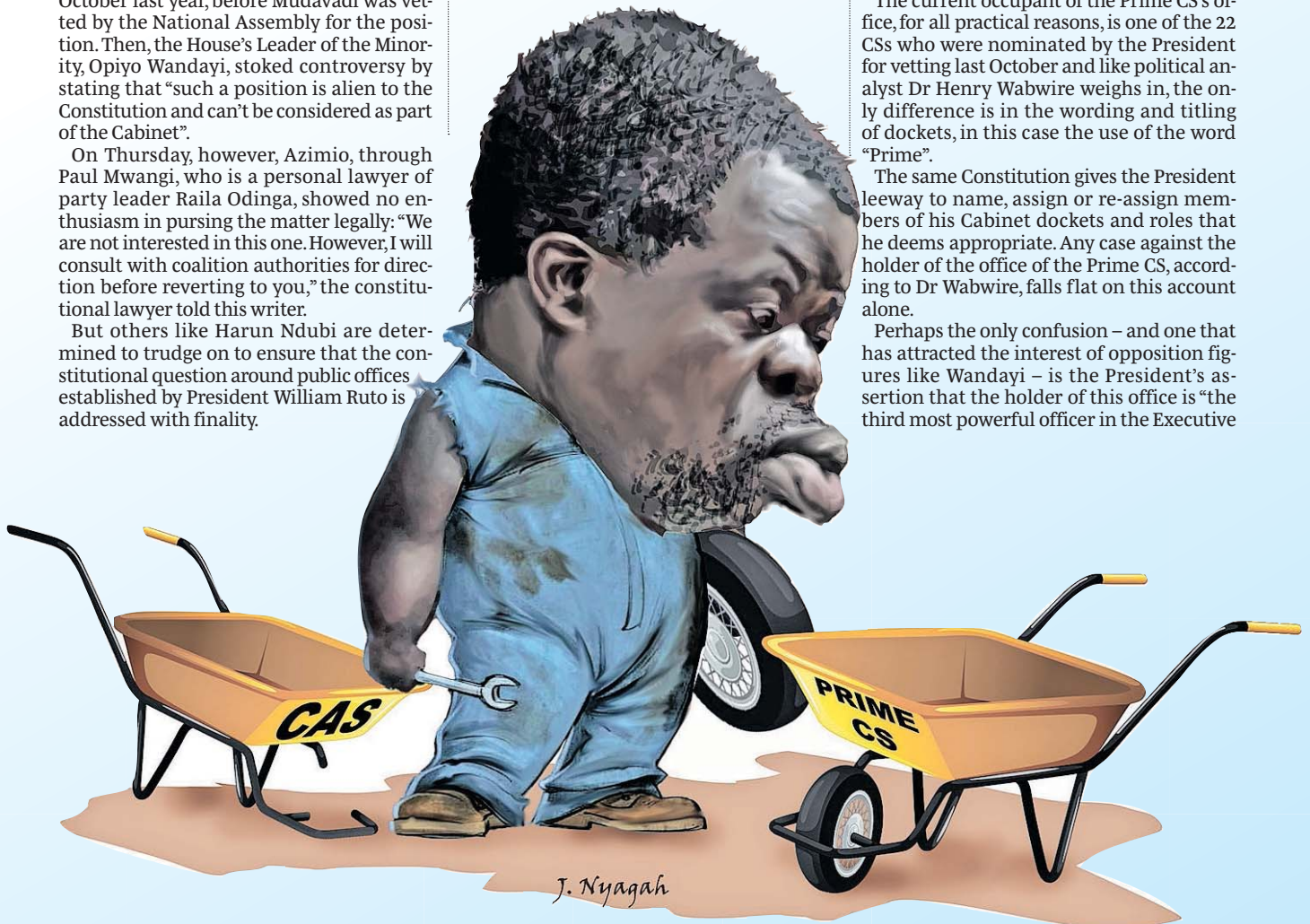
Perhaps the only confusion – and one that has attracted the interest of opposition figures like Wandayi – is the President’s assertion that the holder of this office is “the third most powerful officer in the Executive after the President and Deputy President”. Contrary to work-related roles, the governance expert argues that the “Prime” in Mudavadi’s title is a political and not a governmental title, meant to appeal to the political equation within the Kenya Kwanza brigade. Ideally, this arrangement captures the power structure of Dr Ruto’s team.

net Secretaries. Subsection (2) of the same states that, “the President shall nominate and, with the approval of the National Assembly, appoint Cabinet Secretaries”.

The current occupant of the Prime CS’s office, for all practical reasons, is one of the 22 CSs who were nominated by the President for vetting last October and like political analyst Dr Henry Wabwire weighs in, the only difference is in the wording and titling of dockets, in this case the use of the word “Prime”.

The same Constitution gives the President leeway to name, assign or re-assign members of his Cabinet dockets and roles that he deems appropriate. Any case against the holder of the office of the Prime CS, according to Dr Wabwire, falls flat on this account alone.

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In the event that the ruling on the positions of CAS – though not conclusive since the Attorney-General, Justin Muturi, has already filed a petition – inspires some to petition against the Office of Prime CS, a disbandment of the office by the courts would have dire political consequences, not just for Kenya Kwanza Alliance but for all political players in the years to come.

If the President’s powers are curtailed on creation of Cabinet offices and listing of ministries, the move would highly complicate future coalition pacts, including in 2027 – just four years away.

Under the current political arrangement, a successful petition against the office would totally change the political map within KKA and in the country, where the influence of Mudavadi’s office could either be watered down by the courts or it could be disbanded.

It would also influence perceptions and numbers in the Western Kenya region, and by extension also weaken the Kenya Kwanza coalition’s influence in the region. But more importantly, it would disorganise the President’s 2027 re-election bid.

The highly competitive nature of presidential polls since the reintroduction of multi-party politics in 1992 has gradually persuaded political competitors to coalesce around two major formations.

This arrangement, involving many key players, has naturally triggered a clamour for the position of premiership aimed at accommodating more political leaders in government. The premiership is technically a

I am glad about the people’s response and their trust in me. However, at the moment, I want to concentrate on their case against the high cost of living. This is crucial for all Kenyans.

Kikiya Omtatah, Busia Senator



campaign negotiation slot to be dished out to the third highest ranked political player in a given formation.

Ahead of last year’s elections, the positions were reserved for former vice-presidents Mudavadi and Kalonzo Musyoka in Kenya Kwanza and Azimio respectively.

Although Mudavadi is referred to as Prime CS, or Chief Cabinet Secretary as Odinga had designated the title for Musyoka, the title – by whatever name – is meant to imply the position of Prime Minister. It is only not stated plainly that way because of legal implications.

Odinga and former President, Uhuru Kenyatta, who unsuccessfully promoted the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) during the last Parliament, had hoped to have the office

legally in place by the time of going to the polls last August. The duo envisaged a scenario where the PM’s position would help achieve national cohesion and inclusivity in government.

They argued that the extra positions of PM and two deputies would expand the Executive and thereby accommodate more people at the top leadership of government. But the plot was dealt a major blow by the courts, which declared the process, via popular initiative, as driven unconstitutionally.

To date, only two individuals – Jomo Kenyatta and Odinga – have served as Prime Ministers of Kenya, in substantive capacity. Kenyatta Senior was sworn in on June 1, 1963, after Kenya won internal self-rule and served for one year while Odinga, who was sworn in on April 17, 2008, served for five years.

Odinga became Premier in a Grand Coalition Government with President Mwai Kibaki, in a power-sharing agreement brokered by the late Dr Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, following a highly disputed and discredited poll that triggered post-election violence.

And akin to the National Accord and Reconciliation Act (2008) that assigned immediate former PM Odinga the “authority to co-ordinate and supervise the execution of the functions and affairs of the Government, including those of Ministries”, subsequent posts caricatured around the PM’s office have similarly fashioned their roles around “coordination and supervision of government functions and ministries”.

Unveiling his Cabinet on September 27 last year, for instance, President Ruto fashioned Mudavadi’s roles around the National Accord, stating that his duties entailed assisting the President and Deputy President in “coordinating and supervising Government Ministries and State Departments”.



Jomo Kenyatta. On May 27, 1963, Kenyans voted for the first time in history for their own government. Winning a better than two-to-one majority of parliamentary seats was Kanu. As a result, 73-year-old Jomo Kenyatta, leader of Kenya’s independence movement and head of Kanu, was assured to become the nation’s first Prime Minister.



Attorney-General Justin Muturi In the event that the ruling on the positions of CAS – though not conclusive since the Attorney-General, Justin Muturi, has already filed a petition – inspires some to petition against the Office of Prime CS, a disbandment of the office by the courts would have dire political consequences for the Kenya Kwanza Alliance.



Azimio leader Raila Odinga. Following the disputed 2007 presidential election, fighting broke out between supporters of incumbent President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga. A February 2008 power-sharing agreement helped restore order. Under the terms negotiated, Odinga was named the Prime Minister.

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■ SHAME OF A NATION

THE KILLER HIGHWAYS

On July 1, an out-of-control truck hurtling down the Nakuru-Kisumu highway crashed at the busy Londiani junction market, killing 52 people and injuring scores of others.

The State must stop the talking and start the walking by building the proposed Rironi-Mau Summit superhighway to improve road safety

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

The brakes of a heavy vehicle – petrol tanker, truck or public transport bus – fail on a steep slope before ramming into people by the roadside or plunging into a river at a bend of the road, leaving in its trail death and tears.

This is the script that has over the last five decades characterised accidents on Kenya's highways, claiming multiple lives in a single smash. Last Friday, it happened again – at Londiani in Kericho County, along the Nakuru-Kisumu highway, after a truck carrying a shipping container veered out of control and

ploughed into multiple other vehicles and people – mostly traders – leaving 52 dead. The accident, so far the deadliest this year, attracted huge attention locally and internationally, courtesy of its impact, massive loss of life and widespread media coverage. President William Ruto led Kenyans in mourning the departed as world leaders, including the African Union Commission boss, Moussa Faki Mahamat, sent condolences to affected families.

Killer roads in Kenya, including the Kisumu-Muhoroni highway, Nairobi-Meru highway and Sagana-Karatina road in Kirinyaga County, have over the decades claimed hundreds of lives and

caused families untold suffering.

Only six days before the Londiani crash, five pupils from Ebenezer Academy in Busia County died under almost similar circumstances, when their school bus was hit from behind by a truck after its brakes failed on a slope at Kaburengu in Kakamega County. In July 2020, 10 traders were run over by a lorry at the Kaburengu junction, again after its brakes failed.

Like many black spots marked along highways across the country, the Kaburengu stretch, near Webuye town, is on steep and slippery terrain. It has a sharp bend that dips towards a bridge over River Sasala. Many speeding

motorists end up plunging into the river. The situation is further complicated by the high traffic of sugarcane tractors in this western Kenya sugar belt region.

Back in Kericho County, a bus crash five years ago, in October 2018, claimed the lives of 52 people – the same as in the Londiani accident – after a bus that was going downhill hit a guardrail and plunged into the valley at Fort Ternan. This stretch of the road has many steep slopes and bends.

The Sagana Bridge along the Sagana-Karatina road in Kirinyaga County, which has similar terrain, has been a death trap for road users for decades. Here, drivers struggle going downhill

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A Modern Coast bus that was involved in an accident at Sachangwan, Salгаа, on December 12, 2017.

at the marked black spot. Most accidents happen when brakes fail, often causing the vehicles to plunge into the river.

But it is the steep, two-kilometre slope that ends at the Nithi River in Tharaka-Nithi County that has claimed the largest number of lives of road users. It is here, in 2000, where the deadliest recorded road tragedy in Kenya's history occurred, when 158 passengers travelling in a Tawfiq bus from Maua to Mombasa perished when it plunged into the river after the driver lost control of it.

Alive to the fact that a host of these accidents are as a result of poor road engineering work – at the planning and design stages as well as workmanship thereafter – Transport Cabinet Secretary, Kipchumba Murkomen says his ministry is planning to introduce digital records to help monitor contractors on the road, and offenders as well. The ministry also hopes to increase inspection centres across the country from the current 30 to ensure quality service.

“In the long run, we hope that our highways will have speed cameras and those that can collect other information related to traffic offenses,” says the CS.

In an effort to curb increased road carnage and streamline the chaotic public transport sector, the late Transport minister John Michuki in 2004 came up with radical measures to restructure the industry. Popularly referred to as the ‘Michuki rules’, the guidelines included a ban on

overloading, installation of speed governors and mandatory use of safety belts in all Public Service Vehicles (PSVs). It was further demanded that public transport crew wear uniforms and that drivers display their photos on the dashboard.

Implementation of the rules – difficult as it was – coupled with a crackdown on un-roadworthy vehicles, reduced road accidents by 74 per cent nationally as of 2018. But when Michuki was transferred to the Internal Security docket, filling in his shoes proved difficult for his immediate successor, Chirau Ali Mwakwere. Over the years, execution of the Michuki rules has been relaxed to a point where they are hardly noticeable, let alone enforceable.

Even as Transport ministry officials try to the current situation, their efforts are partly compromised by a host of road construction projects that have been derailed by bureaucratic hitches or are stuck following change-over of government. The latter instance is due to the fact that the new administration of William Ruto may have changed its development priorities, which appears to be the case with the construction of the Mombasa-Nairobi expressway.

The project has not moved an inch four years after the State unveiled the firm that was to undertake it. Had the Sh300 billion worth project moved according to plan, some sections would have been in use today. The road would be near completion, as the

initial plan was to have it ready by 2024, which would greatly have decongested the busy highway.

Bechtel, the US firm contracted to build the expressway, is reportedly experiencing endless delays. In fact, sources at the Transport and Roads Ministry now indicate the project may not take off just yet. Quality roads and good transport network largely contribute to road safety. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report of September 2022, Africa has the highest road traffic fatality rate in the world, with more than 800 people killed every day. Of this number, Kenya has a fair share of the killer numbers.

National Transport and Safety Authority data indicates that 4,690 people lost their lives on Kenyan roads in 2022, up from 4,579 the previous year. The latest figures for 2023, which are available only up to March 23, show a reduction in fatalities, from 1,021 to 974, a 4.6 per cent drop from a similar period in 2022. However, the latest tragedy in Londiani, coupled with a few recent cases, could change this graph.

Accidents involving trucks and other heavy transport vehicles have proved particularly fatal. At least 111 people were killed in January 2009 at Sachangwan on the busy Nakuru-Eldoret highway after a fuel tanker rolled and exploded into flames. Many died as they tried to scoop and siphon the spilled fuel.

A similar catastrophe had happened earlier at Sidindi in Siaya County on the Kisumu-Busia highway when a petrol tanker overturned and burst into flames as villagers tried to siphon fuel. Thirty nine people perished and several others were left with severe burns.

That the Sachangwan accident occurred, with an even higher fa-

tality rate after the Sidindi one, is a pointer to the fact that the Ministry of Transport cannot solely address the problem at hand. As CS Murkomen aptly puts it, the crisis on Kenyan roads requires a multisectoral and multi-agency approach. Among a raft of measures proposed by the CS to address road carnage are re-introduction of instant fines, mounting of cameras on the roads to support the enforcement of traffic laws and regulations, setting up of a command centre to monitor rogue drivers, revoking of licences and fresh training for repeat offenders.



Kipchumba Murkomen, Transport Cabinet Secretary

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■ A DARLING OF THE WEST



THE PRESIDENT WHO NEVER WAS

A CIA file offers fresh insights into the assassination of Tom Mboya, one of Africa's brightest post-Independence politicians

● BY JOHN KAMAU

The US Central Intelligence Agency loved Tom Mboya. They not only kept tabs on him but also kept a closer look at his politics.

Three months before the 54th anniversary of Mboya's death, the CIA released one more file on Mboya. But that CIA files on Mboya are still being released with redacted passages is an indicator of the sensitive nature of the man who was billed as the President who never was. More so, apart from the positive adjectives used on Mboya, we know little about the intricate details of the CIA's thinking about Kenyatta succession and the place of Mboya.

However, two years before Mboya was gunned down on a Saturday afternoon, July 5, 1969, the CIA had filed reports of younger Kikuyus' attempts to "neutralise him" over the Kenyatta succession. They also acknowledged that his closeness to the US was being used "as a weapon against him" and that he had acquired many other enemies.

Whether Mboya knew of these attempts is unclear and doesn't explain why such a vulnerable personality was walking with no bodyguards in a Nairobi street

Two years before Tom Mboya was gunned down on a Saturday afternoon, July 5, 1969, the CIA had filed reports of younger Kikuyus' attempts to "neutralise him" over the Kenyatta succession.

on the day he was killed. That day, his white Mercedes Benz registration KME 627 was parked on the yellow line outside Channi's Pharmacy. The proprietors, Mr and Mrs Channi, were Mboya's family friends and although they were about to close for the weekend, the minister had called asking them to wait for him to purchase some drugs. How did the assassins know that Mboya was to go to the chemist? "In December

1967, he was involved in a shooting incident which was rumoured to have been an attempt to assassinate him," says the CIA without elaborating.

Historians regard the CIA files on African personalities as part of the records on the US involvement and meddling in African politics in the 1960s. It was a decade when the CIA was known to prop up leaders, engage in assassinations, and stage coups as they

had done in Congo. The CIA appear to have known that Mboya was always suspected of being their project. The CIA report mentions he was being derided as "the American Ambassador to Kenya" and attributed that to "jealousy".

Whether Mboya was aware of threats to his life was unknown – and it will never be known why he was walking alone without security in a Nairobi street on the day he was gunned down on the after-

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noon of July 5, 1969.

One question never answered was what Mboya was up to before he was killed. A CIA report prepared before his death says that Mboya “had surrounded himself with bright, moderate politicians and civil servants who look to him for leadership and guidance”. Whether this was considered part of his preparation for future leadership is unclear. But, the CIA reported that he had realised that he required a tribal base and appeared to have shifted his attention towards a future. Age was still on his side.

“He realises that having deliberately established his reputation as a non-tribal politician from a Nairobi constituency whose main interest was the problems of the urban worker, he now lacks any solid tribal political base. His recent efforts have been aimed at trying to build a new image of himself as a leader of the Luo tribe. . . and as one who is interested in the fate of the peasantry.” Ever since he was covered on the March 7, 1960, cover of *Time* magazine, the then 29-year-old Tom Mboya’s image had been elevated to continental status. He was being touted as part of the new generation of African leaders. Seven years after the *Time* coverage, the CIA reported that Mboya was “for a long time . . . better known abroad than any other Kenyan politician”. That could have sparked the “jealousy”.

A critical reading of the CIA records would mean that Kenyatta was not privy to Mboya’s death. “Kenyatta himself (redacted) is well aware of the skills and talents the minister brings to the government, and he is no averse to having Mboya do work in Parliament and elsewhere where intelligence and political skill are required,” said the CIA. “Mboya is by far the most able and most intelligent man in the Cabinet.”

For many, Mboya was the President that Kenya missed. He had surprised many people in Western circles with how he articulated complex political issues and the confidence exhibited in the speaking engagements he was invit-

ed to. So confident was Mboya that the 1960 *Time* magazine article they reported that Mboya “who used to be courted only by English left-wingers, now holds forth suavely as honour guest in the private dining rooms of London’s largest banks and casually keeps a colonial governor waiting while he takes a shower”. Apart from the ‘Kikuyu Establishment’, Mboya, according to the CIA, was also opposed “by many members of his tribe, the Luo, who support former Vice President Oginga Odinga, long Mboya’s arch-rival.”

He was described as personable and articulate – and “his answers in any interview are so well organised that they can be printed as spoken without any change”. In one of the dossiers made public in March this year, Mboya is described as “articulate, brilliantly logical, and a masterful tactician” whose only liability is “being too young (he was 37 then), too westernised and too detribalised”. “It is a reflection. . . of Mboya’s competence and resilience that he has been able to survive the jealousies and rivalries of Kenyan politics and remain an important political factor in the country”.

Another CIA biographical note on Mboya referred to him as the “symbol of African nationalism to the West”, and as “clever and shrewd”.

So important was Mboya that three days after he was killed, a briefing marked “Top Secret” dated July 8, 1969, was placed before President Richard Nixon and what Mboya’s death meant. It is marked “For Presidents Only”.

“Mboya had many enemies and several groups had a capability to pull off the assassination. . . the most likely suspects are a group of advisers around President Kenyatta called the ‘Kikuyu Establishment’. . . They felt increasingly threatened by Mboya’s growing stature and popularity.”

“Even if the Kikuyu leaders did not actually kill Mboya, they are the main beneficiaries of the new situation. Mboya’s death should assure the aging Kenyatta is succeeded by Vice President Daniel

arap Moi, who though not a Kikuyu is regarded as compliant to the tribe’s wishes.”

Nixon was told that Mboya was “one of the few government figures with nationwide appeal and had been expected to exert a moderating influence during the inevitable contest for succession when the unifying presence of 76-year-old Kenyatta is gone”. The CIA also dismissed the chances of the “pro-communist Oginga Odinga” from taking advantage of Mboya’s death since defections had weakened his Kenya People’s Union party.

In another briefing dated July 23, 1969, the CIA reported that Nahashon Njenga, the man charged with Mboya’s murder, was also arrested over the 1965 murder of opposition leader Oginga Odinga’s principal adviser but was never tried. “Although they do not name the Odinga adviser, the only 1965 death was the assassination of Pio Gama Pinto, a close ally of Jaramogi.

“The government may attempt to counteract any charges that it is involved in the assassination of Mboya by implicating the Communists,” said the CIA report. “The polarisation of politics along tribal lines will not necessarily lead to tribal violence. Most politicians both inside Kanu and out, although condemning blatant Kikuyu tribalism, are privately attempting to work out a political arrangement with Kenyatta. Kenyatta also provides a symbol of leadership to most Kenyans. . . Kenya may not survive his death without major disruption” – predicted the CIA.

Finally, the Moi group would take advantage of Mboya’s death and not the ‘Kikuyu Establishment’. Odinga would end up in detention and the 1969 elections reorganised the post-Mboya politics.

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the limelight



Cars burn in the street at the end of a commemoration march for a teenage driver shot dead by a policeman, in the Parisian suburb of Nanterre, on June 29. PHOTO | AFP



A traffic police officer drains water on a street during a rainfall in Nantong, in China's eastern Jiangsu province on July 7. PHOTO | AFP



Opposition supporters hold a poster with the face of Azimio leader Raila Odinga at a public rally at the Kamukunji grounds in Nairobi on July 7. PHOTO | AFP



A participant is overthrown by a young cow after the "encierro" (bull-run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona, Spain, on July 7. PHOTO | AFP



Mud-covered farmers play in a paddy field during "National Paddy Day", which marks the start of the annual rice planting season, in Tokha village on the outskirts of Kathmandu on June 30. PHOTO | AFP



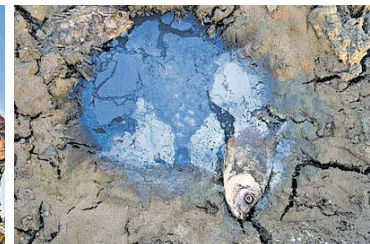
The European Ariane-5 heavy rocket lifts off from the Guyanese Space Center in Kourou, French Guyana on July 5. Europe's workhorse Ariane 5 rocket blasted off for a final time, with its farewell flight after 27 years of launches coming at a difficult time for European space efforts. PHOTO | AFP



A model presents a creation by Spanish designer Juana Martin during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris, on July 6. PHOTO | AFP



Volunteers of Espanola special force unit, a detachment of Russian football hooligans, pose during a training session at a training field in undisclosed location outside Mariupol on June 22. PHOTO | AFP



A dead fish lies on the cracking earth of a dry marsh in Chibayish in Iraq's southern Dhi Qar province on July 5, home to fabled marshes in the floodplain of the Tigris river, already suffering from the effects of global warming. PHOTO | AFP

The Aren

A portrait of Ramadhan Oluoch, a man with grey curly hair, wearing glasses, a grey sweater, and a watch. He is smiling and making a peace sign with his right hand. The background shows a building and greenery.

RAMAVERICK

One of the founders of Kenyans on Twitter, Ramadhan Oluoch has garnered a huge online following with his wit and humour

OPEN SPACE

Media freedom is critical for a robust democracy

Without it, Kenyan citizens cannot make informed decisions about how they are ruled

● BY VINCENT MAOSA

Thomas Jefferson, an American statesman, diplomat, lawyer, philosopher and Founding Father who served as the third president of the United States is often regarded as a champion of press freedoms. He is famously remembered for saying he would prefer newspapers without a government to a government without newspapers. That was in 1787, before he ran for President. After a heated campaign in 1800, during which newspapers published rumours about his personal life, he made a number of utterances in the other direction, including: "The man who reads nothing at all is better educated than the man who reads nothing but newspapers."

Jefferson's about-turn is emblematic of the love-hate relationship between the media and political leaders. Politicians are delighted when the media projects them positively in the eyes of the public but feel aggrieved and lash out when wrongdoing is exposed. The media serves several essential roles in a democratic and open society, including keeping citizens informed, setting the agenda for public discussion, providing a forum for political expression and acting as a watchdog to check government excesses and keep it accountable. However, the fundamental right to seek and disseminate information through a robust and independent press is under attack around the world. According to the Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2023, Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy, the number of countries that have a score of 0 out of 4 in the media freedom indicator has ballooned from 14 to 33 in the last 17 years.

In some of the most influential democracies in the world, large segments of the population no longer receive impartial news and information, not because journalists are being thrown to jail to silence them, but the media has fallen prey to more nuanced efforts to emasculate their independent conduct. Common methods include government-backed ownership changes, regulatory and financial pressure and public denunciation of honest journalists to discredit their work. The overall goal is to arm-twist the independent media to serve the interests of those in power rather than the public. Yet erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the break-

down of other democratic institutions and principles. Reporters Without Borders, an international non-profit organisation safeguarding the right to freedom of information, reveals that even in countries where the freedom of the media is guaranteed and in which journalists are usually free to report without physical harassment, they are exposed to many forms of pressure that fetter their freedom, including legal proceedings and intimidation.

In Guatemala, Jose Reuben Zamora, director of the newspaper El Periodico, was imprisoned for six years for 'money laundering' in an apparent bid to silence an outlet that has played a key role in unearthing high-level corruption in President Alejandro Giammattei's administration. Unrelenting persecution of El Periodico's journalists and harassment of its leading advertisers forced one of Guatemala's oldest newspapers to shut on May 15. Here at home, Trade Cabinet Secretary Moses Kuria last week found himself at the centre of a firestorm over a series of derogatory remarks against the Nation Media Group (NMG), and its journalists. In a move calculated at wounding the commercial interests of NMG, the trade minister threatened to sack any government official advertising with the leading media outlet. The tirade followed an expose by NMG of irregularities in an import scheme involving a state body in Kuria's ministry. Kuria's diatribe is part of a wider plot to intimidate and silence the media from reporting on malpractices in which the taxpayer will end up bleeding.

A free and independent fourth estate that not only keeps the population informed but also holds leaders to account is as critical for a vibrant and sustainable democracy as free and fair elections. Without it, Kenyan citizens cannot make informed decisions about how they are ruled, and abuse of power, which is all but inevitable in any society, cannot be exposed and corrected. The basic desire for democratic liberties, including access to uncensored and fact-based journalism, can never be extinguished, and all citizens of goodwill must never tire to renew the demand that these rights be granted in full.

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

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MIND SPEAK



Tonny Blaie

The Kenya Kwanza administration has no clear plans to improve the living standards of Kenyans. We have seen what they have done in the past eight months. The government recently increased fuel prices, which will have a direct effect on the prices of other goods. Oil price increases usually increase inflation and reduce economic growth. President William Ruto makes promises that are never fulfilled. There is no hope that this government is going to make life easier for the people.

— A student at the Technical University of Kenya



Davies Ameny

Ever since they took the reins last year, the Kenya Kwanza administration has only been taking care of politicians. They are always ready to allocate funds for political offices but not social welfare programmes. The Finance Act, for instance, punishes creativity by taxing the little income they earn online. They talk of 'digital content monetisation' to mean offering for payment entertainment, social, literal, artistic, educational or any material electronically.

— A social worker based in Narok



Barbara Ade

The government is not keen to improve the standards of living. The middle class and the poor are suffering. The prices of basic goods are soaring and more families are finding it difficult to put food on the table. This is a rich man's society. Although it's the Bottom Up regime, it's not helping the masses. The government should look for strategies that can support all citizens, irrespective of their social status. That's the spirit of the Bottom Up model.

— A Student at Utalii College



Caroline Kivyatu

During the campaigns last year, the Kenya Kwanza team led by then-Deputy President William Ruto pledged to lift living standards by creating a conducive environment for everyone to thrive economically. That is, sadly, not the case. Kenyans are fed up with endless talk on how the cost of living will be reduced without implementing practical solutions. This shows the government is out of touch with the people.

— A student at Cooperative University

PROPPING UP THE NEXT GENERATION



MAKE YOUTH A PRIORITY

They need purposed support by the government, the same way it would support a disadvantaged group in a hardship zone

• BY SAMMY OJWANG'

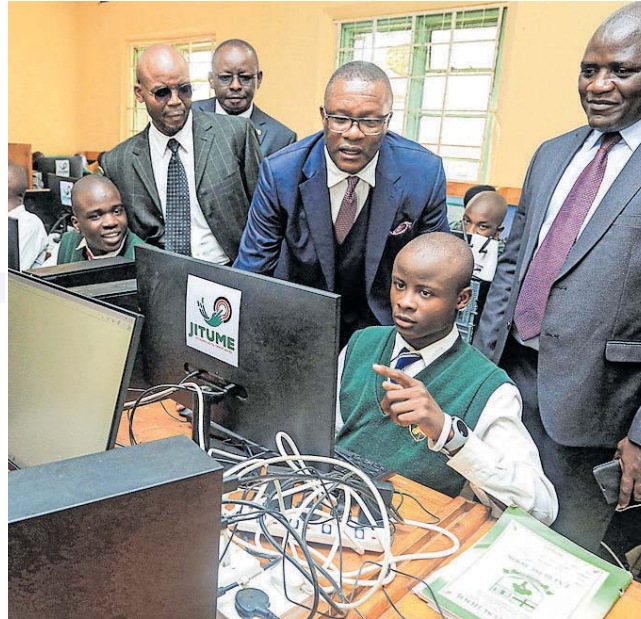
The youth should be categorised as people living in hardship areas. The millions of citizens in this age bracket (18-34 years) are currently battling relentless tidal waves impeding their paths towards personal growth in terms of education, skills development, material acquisition and social well-being. The country's stunted general economic growth has resulting in neglect of the youth, who form the bulk of the population and are expected to be the drivers of the country's affairs in the next generation.

All over the world, countries pay great attention to the nurturing of their youth, fully cognisant of the fact that the continued prosperity of any nation relies on the seamless transition between generations of their citizens – competent, fresh blood firmly taking over from their ageing stalwarts in all fields, from art and science, to sport and politics.

Since labour is the most important element of production, human resource development and job creation are key to a nation's stability and perpetuation.

Take Japan, for example, where government places deliberate emphasis on universal education from kindergarten to university by providing adequate funding and a policy framework that ensures quality education for all citizens, regardless of status. Schools offering basic education are actually set in a prescribed manner, ensuring a similar standard of delivery across the country, while multiple career paths are open to the youth through college, institutions of higher learning apprenticeship in many industries.

At 16 years, one is legally allowed to decide whether to continue with formal education or branch off into employment and independence from parents. There is always a surplus of job opportunities and the minimum



ICT Cabinet Secretary Eliud Owalo (centre) and Maseno School Principal Peter Otieno (right) interact with students in a digital lab on July 5.

wage set by law enables one to live comfortably.

The Kenyan youth are either a product of crowded public schools offering lip service to students or business-oriented private schools, some mainly coaching students on how to pass national examinations and inadvertently neglecting psycho-social development and problem-solving skills useful in adulthood. Many are trained to cheat in these examinations, mentally creating an early acceptance of short-cuts as a means to success in life. The toxic atmosphere of daily corruption created by government officials and the general adult population solidifies this perception, offering the country's youth a dented foundation on which to build their future.

The many diligent young people who remain focused on their studies eventually find themselves joining a long line of unemployed agemates due to the depressed economy. There have been cases where young peo-

ple are allowed to go through a whole course only to hear that it has been declared irrelevant in the market or that the college offering it is not an accredited institution. Many parents are forced to house and feed their unemployed offspring despite their own tribulations despite the skyrocketing cost of living coupled with stagnant incomes or redundancies.

Last week, during the graduation ceremony at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua bluntly told the young graduates not to expect employment despite completing their studies. Yet the DP is one of the country's principal leaders whom Kenyans are relying on to create avenues for development of the youth, and through them, the advancement of our nation.

One of the big waves that has hit Kenya's youth hard is the menace of drugs and alcohol. These normally thrive where hopelessness abound. Many find escape in these vices, which have derailed

many a promising young Kenyan. Those longing for instant riches get hooked to betting, an unregulated industry that the government only seems to consider as a fat source for tax collection. At the same time, the young man and woman in Kenya is currently left unprotected as a systematic LG-BTQ storm descends, its potential effect on the national fabric, personal relationships and filial matters only presumed.

A few years after Independence, young people benefitted from the many open work vacancies, government being the major employer in a country where even a primary school certificate had value. There were scholarships to study abroad, creating captains of industry who served the motherland upon their return.

Those excelling in sports were absorbed by parastatals in a bid to create formidable teams. Those admitted to public universities were sure of a bright future and were, in fact, 'paid to study'. Actually, the Government stipend received periodically enabled many students to pay school fees for their siblings. Conversely, today's youth find it difficult to even secure unpaid internships but are expected to confirm work experience when seeking employment.

It is encouraging, nevertheless, to see optimism exuded by the majority of young people, the fire to succeed burning in their hearts despite all the challenges they encounter on their turbulent journey towards self-actualisation. This energetic section of citizens needs purposed support by government, the same way it would offer support to a disadvantaged group located in a hardship zone.

Lukewarm initiatives like the National Industrial Training Authority, the Youth Development Fund or Vision 2030 must be reorganised to strongly promote the youth agenda. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by playing around with the lives of our children.

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ART AND DESIGN

CASHING IN ON ART

At just 29, Cyprian Kiswili is an award-winning international artist who is making a name – and money – from his unique mixed media creations

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

There are only so many adjectives you can use to describe someone's work. Creative. Awesome. Detailed.

The problem – from a journalist's point of view – is that you can only tell a similar story once (maybe twice if you're clever about it). And because writing is an unforgiving mistress, to keep the tongues of the flame that is your romance burning, one has to be discreet about it. Especially if you are writing about someone like Cyprian Kiswili, a 29-year-old with the Eye of Horus for art, who has won competitions such as Art Caffe's Nairobi 'Art of The City' Design Challenge and Bata's international art design competition.

Naturally, this is all interpreted as evidence of Kiswili's dogged talent. He must be a child prodigy, it was decided. Does his talking on the canvas. He was born for this, you know. His art is creative, awesome, detailed. (See, that's how you use it twice.)

Not that Kiswili will correct you, or disagree. He was earmarked for this, the unsullied chosen by the gods of art, painting straight from the realm of the heavens. "I realised I was good at art when I was about six years old," he



says. "I am an only child and I realised I could communicate more with my art than with words. In primary school, the teachers noticed that my drawings were very life-like. They would call me to draw charts for higher classes and that's when I knew I had a gift I could pursue passionately."

Since then, his mind has been the architect and his fingers the contractor that follows his designs, executed with relentless focus, gruelling attention to detail, and weathered determination to do better than the last project. "It has been a worthwhile journey. My highlight has been winning The Global Footwear Competition in the Czech Republic in 2019 facilitated by Bata's Young Designers' Challenge."

That only confirmed what the prophets had predicted: he was destined for greatness. A year later, in 2020, he won Art Caffe's Art of the City design competition, where his designs were featured in the takeaway cups as well as Art Caffe establishments. "My friends are actually the ones who pushed me to do the competition. Three days before it ended, I decided to do something around the theme, which was Nairobi." The rest, to borrow a hackneyed phrase, is history.

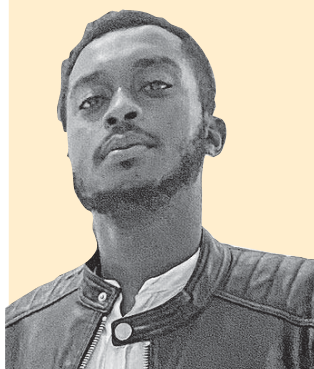
His art, he says, comes from his everyday life. "I travel quite a lot. Recently I was at the coast and I found it quite interesting, travelling long distances on tuk-tuk. I was fascinated by how colourful they were, inspiring me to come up with different pieces." He reminds us that a diabolical ideology gains strength not because devils propagate it, but because ordinary men embrace it. Testimony to effort as well as inspiration, the consistency is as absurd as the quality.

Forgive me then, when I try to limit to his canvas, when I take away an artist's only true superpower: carte blanche. He was having none of it. It is what those male fashion magazine writers would say: "I want men more free in their elegance, and more elegant in their freedom."

"My artwork for Art Caffe was a digital piece that involved a lot of colour. Colour is one of my strengths and you will find it in all my pieces. I love to mix media. Ninety-five per cent of my art is mixed, paper collages and recycled African fabrics. I would not point to a particular title but I

//////////
In school, teachers noticed that my drawings were good. They would call me to draw charts for higher classes and that's when I knew I had a gift I could pursue passionately.

Cyprian Kiswili



MAN UNITED PAGE

■ Kiswili is a graduate of the University of Nairobi's School of Art and Design, where he also pursued a Masters in Design.

■ An award-winning footwear designer, he created the shoe 'Blossm', designed for BATA after enrolling in Sneaker Essentials, a Fashion Institute of Technology online course.

■ His art has also appeared on Manchester United's official Instagram page. "Chevrolet, the official Manchester United shirt sponsor, got in touch and asked if they could share the image, a year after I posted it online. I said 'Yes!'"

then, is to limit. And why would anyone want to limit him when, clearly, his art has taken him places? He has an international collector in Vienna (Austria) who collects 20 of his pieces every year. He has exhibited at the Nairobi National Museum, the Polka Dot Gallery, and Ardhi Gallery (which is currently showcasing), and the most recent – McKinsey and Company.

He has given a lot to his art, but his art has also given back. He says that he has learned peace and general calmness through his craft. "I express myself well through my art. Art is how I speak."

So, art pays? He croaks like a well-feed crow and there, in between the he-hes and ha-has, I have my answer. The most he has made from a single piece of art, he offers, ranges between KSh100K and KSh300k. How long does it take him to create a piece of art?

"I believe when you do something you love, it becomes easy for you not only to create it but also to talk about it. I am very passionate about creating stuff and building things, seeing them from start to finish and putting in the hours. I like to create many pieces at a time, like four concurrently and as some dry, I space that out by working on other pieces."

It is at the height of one's success that humanity's goldfish memory, its faddishness, and its immediacy, are most clearly seen. The next thing is always the best thing. Potential is always more exciting than proof. He is a living exhibit that art pays, stopping short of labelling himself 'successful'.

"I never find my week boring since my days are never the same. Being able to do every day what I love and see people validate and appreciate your creations is one of my greatest fulfilments." Then can we put a label to failure? "Not really failures, per se, but more of challenges. It's not straightforward; nothing is successful without a bit of challenge, which makes up the success."

Every parent will tell you they don't have a favourite child but that's what the white man calls a little white lie. Does he have a favourite art piece? "I have a private collection of around eight pieces I created and decided were not for sale. It's not that they were really good-looking but the process and the journey

of creating them were personal. One of them is my first painting in campus. These are some of the works that I am most proud of and I hope to keep them for a few more years."

Does he fully depend on art? "Yes and no. I design footwear for brands as well." The footwear he is alluding to is Kenya's (and Africa's) running shoe brand, Enda, where he designed sports shoes between July 2019 and August 2022. He later joined Kitu Kali, where he presently designs sneakers and other items.

He is quick to mention, however, that it has not been a walk in the park. He has paid the price for this ambition.

"Time. I have had to sacrifice a lot of my time since I was very young. That does not mean it was a failure, no. For instance, I was fortunate to be in a high school that offered art as a subject. But I discovered you have to be a master in it and put in more work than what was scheduled... and I spent a lot of time on it at the expense of other subjects. Later, I also realised making art is quite pricy, especially when you are starting out. I never had a mentor and had to do twice as much to get half as much, the quintessential struggling artist."

The dream for Kharsh Art is to continue creating and connecting with people. "I want to travel all over the world with my art." Kharsh, by the way, was his nickname in high school, where he was the journalism club's designer. The art, like his name, stuck.

Have things turned out the way he expected at 29 years old? "As much as I am ambitious, I tend not to set very specific targets for myself. I want to enjoy the ride while working as hard as possible. But it's been great, especially in the last two years."

If there was an artist that would paint him, who would it be and why? "Locally would be Yegonizer, a master of his arts and, of course, Michael Soi. Internationally it would have to be Voka, whom I have been following for the last ten years."

Creative, awesome and detailed; perhaps you can actually use the same story three times. Perhaps there is a sense of man constructing a monument to himself with such fearless certainty it makes you wonder why people don't always just create art. What are we all doing with our lives anyway?

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SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCING

THE TWEET MASTER

Tweeting guru RaMaverick, one of the founders of Kenyans on Twitter, has garnered a huge online following with his wit and humour

• BY SINDA MATIKO

Ramadhan Oluoch thinks of himself as a maverick, hence his sobriquet RaMaverick.

“You call yourself a name you want to be called,” he says when I question his alias.

If you are to judge him by his social media accounts, particularly Twitter, Ramzzy, his other alias, is rather witty. His tweets are marked by clever humour.

In person, he sports an afro scattered with greyish strands and at just 37 years of age, it’s just a matter of time before his head is fully ashen. It’s hereditary, he explains.

Even in person Oluoch is vivacious as his tweets, smartly facetious if you like. “I like to think of myself as a dynamic creative. I am currently scripting visuals for a certain artist’s song. I’m a painter, drawing artist, marketer, content creator and everything in between,” he goes.

Long before he became all those things, he was a fresh graphic design graduate, then he learnt of Twitter and the bird App changed his life. “I got into Twitter in 2009 because my friends pushed me there,” he recalls. “They felt I was too loud on Facebook and wondered why I hadn’t jumped into the newest nest.”

At the time, Twitter was celebrating its fourth year since inception. It became available in Kenya in 2007. “They (friends) felt my interesting posts were best suited to Twitter than Facebook because the platform messaging was crisp and short, networking was easy and generally the engagement was high. I mean, getting 20 retweets was a huge thing at the time, so that’s how I got into the space.”

But Oluoch quickly grew bored of Twitter and took a ‘sabbatical’. “There was a time all you could do was write. You couldn’t do videos or photo content.



It was very professional, a journalists and blogger’s heaven, because it worked well with links. Blogging was really big then and for some reason I felt out of place. Actually, Twitter took off in Kenya because of blogs,” he remembers.

He went back to his first love, Facebook, as he worked as a freelance graphic designer. “I used to come to town (Nairobi CBD), pay 50 cents at the cybercafé and design posters, business cards and wedding cards, which would earn me about KSh1,000, enough for me to get by.”

But as he went about his business, Oluoch still wondered how he could get his own space on Twitter.

“I loved to joke a lot and so I thought I should bring my ice-breaking vibes to this serious lot on Twitter.” It wasn’t long before he realised that he was gaining traction among the masses and while at it, he had gained a huge following.

“Apart from the serious side of Twitter, with the community others and I had built over time, it became a fun space as well,” he recounts. “We started pushing to have a hashtag because there wasn’t that feature, and lobbied Twitter to provide tools that would make the platform interesting for regular guys like us who were not blogging. That’s how we got the hashtag. So before we became bullies of other countries, we bullied Twitter into giving us recognition as a country. They listened and gave us our own trend tab, and that’s how KOT (Kenyans on Twitter) was born. Subsequently, more and more Kenyans joined in.”

Making money on Twitter was by accident, Oluoch says: “We were the first influencers, long before even corporates understood what influencer marketing was all about. If I am not mistaken, at the time Twitter had about 300,000 subscribers in Kenya and I had amassed 12,000 followers (now 192,000). Corporates began to notice and take interest in the numbers I and other individuals were attracting yet we were not bloggers nor journalists.”

Oluoch and other Twitter machos had networked and expanded their community reach. The more they grew, the more the brands noticed. “With the networks we established,



With the community others and I had built over time, it became a fun space as well. We started pushing to have a hashtag because there wasn't that feature, and lobbied Twitter to provide tools that would make the platform interesting for regular guys.

Ramadhan Oluoch



we started organising meetups. Some of the guys who showed up at the first one worked for Scanad, one of the biggest marketing agencies in the country. This was around 2012, and influencer marketing

was a new concept being explored then. Seven of us were recruited by the agency for a digital marketing campaign just to gauge how that would work. I remember I was paid KSh25,000. That was huge amount."

The conversions were successful and it wasn't long before Scanad hired Rammzy to join its advertising and marketing department. "That's the biggest deal I ever landed on Twitter because with the job assured me of a salary."

Over time, he has been able to create a brand for himself and now charges what he deems his value. "Of course I charge much more at the moment. I know my worth, what I bring to the table."

He acknowledges that Twitter gigs no longer remunerate influencers as well as other social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok do. "I tend to blame the creators on Twitter for slacking and staying in some sort of comfort zone because back then, Instagram wasn't accessible to everybody, Facebook was just Facebook than really exciting monetary wise and TikTok wasn't there."

How did he survive? "I was able to see that there would be an evolution and so I opened a YouTube account with my ex-wife at the time. She was bigger on blogging and we had started to realise that numbers of readership and viewership were going down, so when we began doing videos we regained the numbers. We were among the first couple vloggers on YouTube, just showcasing our lifestyle."

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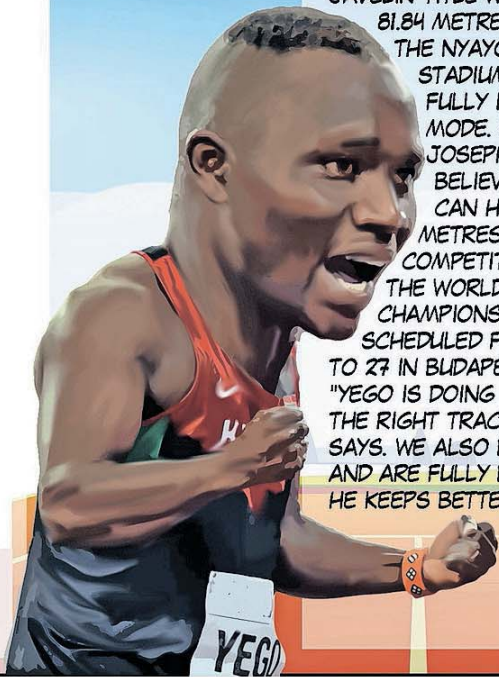
The **FLIP** SIDE



WOMAN POWER

WHILE KENYA'S HARAMBEE STARLETS WILL NOT FEATURE IN THE 2023 FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP, KENYANS HAVE A REASON TO FOLLOW THE TOURNAMENT KEENLY TO CHEER ON ONE OF THEIR OWN. THIS IS NONE OTHER THAN DECORATED FEMALE REFEREE MARY NJOROGE WHO WILL BE TAKING UP HER CRUCIAL REFEREEING ROLE IN THE FOOTBALL SPECTACLE. MARY IS AMONG A CONTINGENT OF AFRICAN REFEREES WHO WILL OFFICIATE IN THE BIG EVENT. WE SAY A BIG KUDOS TO YOU MARY AS YOU FLY THE KENYAN FLAG HIGH ON THE WORLD STAGE.

STAR OF THE WEEK



YOUTUBE MAN' JULIUS YEGO IS A MAN ON A MISSION. HAVING WON HIS RECORD 10TH NATIONAL JAVELIN TITLE WITH A THROW OF 81.84 METRES RECENTLY AT THE NYAYO NATIONAL STADIUM, HE SAYS HE IS FULLY IN COMPETITION MODE. HIS COACH JOSEPH MOSONIK NOW BELIEVES YEGO, 34, CAN HIT OVER 85 METRES WITH MORE COMPETITION BEFORE THE WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 19 TO 27 IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY. "YEGO IS DOING WELL AND ON THE RIGHT TRACK", MOSONIK SAYS. WE ALSO BELIEVE HE IS AND ARE FULLY BEHIND HIM AS HE KEEPS BETTERING HIS BEST.

opinion



■ Investigations should lead to changes in law, rules, norms and infrastructure

Police are complicit in the murders on our roads

Transport minister Kipchumba Murkomen has promised an investigation into the cause of the deadly crash in Kericho County in which upwards of 50 people lost their lives when a haulage truck rammed several parked passenger vehicles and ploughed into people buying and selling goods by the roadside.

Murkomen's team has its work cut out because buying and selling by the roadside or roadside markets are found all over Kenya. President Ruto says he sold chicken by the roadside before he made it big as a poultry farmer and before he became one of the big beasts of Kenya's politics. Many are the youth who see themselves rising from hawking by the roadside to greatness.

But, if you are going to sell your wares by a layby on a highway, you are courting danger and death. Vehicles veer off roads and crash into ditches, dwellings, other vehicles and human beings. If your vehicle breaks down and you park it by the roadside or on a hard shoulder, you are advised not to sit in the vehicle. Another vehicle could just ram into it with disastrous consequences.

If your vehicle breaks down and you cannot move it onto a hard shoulder, you are advised to use your warning triangle to alert other motorists of the obstacle ahead. The distance between the broken-down vehicle and triangle matters. If the triangle is two metres away from the stricken vehicle and it is at night or at a corner, another motorist will ram into the triangle and vehicle.

Just as it is important that the triangle is seen and therefore the better if it has LED



**KWENDO
OPANGA**

lighting, so also is it required that vehicles be seen, especially at night.

But in the sugarcane-growing areas, for instance, most of the trailers that ferry cane do not have rear lights. And there are broken-down lorries that have neither triangle before or behind them, nor lights. They cause many crashes.

In the UK, if a bus driver's working day is less than eight-and-a-half hours, he or she must take a break after five-and-a-half hours of driving. The break must last 30 minutes or longer. Again, he or she must take a rest of 10 hours before the first duty and immediately after the last duty in a working week. And every two weeks, the driver must take at least one period of 24 hours off duty.

Fatigued (tired) drivers, like drunk drivers, are a danger on roads. Speaker Moses Wetang'ula alluded to this when he wondered whether the Rwandese driver whose truck wreaked havoc in Londiani was thinking about his family.

In other words, was he distracted? Was he

fatigued? Shouldn't we have time limits for drivers on Kenya's roads?

Back to Murkomen's probe. Every time there is a crash on our roads, police declare they are investigating, but they never report back to the public with their findings. More importantly, an investigation makes a difference if as a result of it there are changes to the law, rules, norms and infrastructure to ensure crashes are avoided and roads and PSVs made better and safer.

Which brings us to the police. It is they who will enforce new laws brought about by Murkomen's probe.

They are not good at enforcing the obtaining law. By their acts of commission and omission, they are complicit in the murders and suicides, the carnage on our roads that everybody calls accidents.

If Murkomen's probe does not result in a root-and-branch reorganisation of traffic policing, which is not in the minister's remit, it is doomed to fail.

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opinion

■ Somebody somewhere was instructed to file a weak and incompetent defence

CAS: It was all part of Ruto's brilliant strategy



MACHARIA
GAIATHO

You just have to acknowledge that President William Ruto is a brilliant politician. The High Court decision annulling his appointment of 50 Chief Administrative Secretaries proves the point. He promised all those men and women jobs in his government, and duly delivered.

For opposition leader Raila Odinga, he is a man of his word. He does not leave his supporters in the lurch. He kept his promise to repay with government jobs the men and women who were frontline soldiers in his presidential election campaign, but for now his hands are tied by courts that must be suffering hangovers from the previous regime.

Be patient, he'll tell the fellows who'd already started styling themselves Deputy Cabinet Secretaries and even started carrying out official functions and claiming allowances. Very soon the judges will be whipped into line.

The entire judiciary will be taught that the Kenya Kwanza campaign manifesto promised jobs for all by the year 2023, and must not be the one to create hurdles in the way of employment creation and economic growth for the Hustlers.

Some of the noisier and more excitable fellows in the party brigade, like Nandi Senator Samson Cherargei, will be trotted out on social media and the political soapbox to hurl insults and threats at the judicial branch.

The fellows who were salivating on gaining admission to the feeding trough will also be encouraged to direct fire and brimstone at the courts. They will, off course, have been assured that soon and very soon, the High Court ruling will be reversed and they will get their chance to raid the public kitty in arrears.

All of them will be totally in the dark – even as they continuing ranting and raving at the courts while simultaneously perusing advertising brochures for new cars and houses – that they are in the dark.

They will have no clue that it was all part of Chess Grandmaster Ruto's brilliant political strategy. It will take forever until they come to realise that the case challenging their appointments was lost by design rather than through judicial malfeasance.

Somebody somewhere was instructed to

file a weak and incompetent defence, so the Judges actually had no choice but to rule in favour of the plaintiffs.

The matter, of course, will go to the Court of Appeal, moved by the very same State lawyers who handled the matter in the High Court. If necessary, it will go all the way up to the Supreme Court.

In the meantime, Cherargei and company, properly fuelled and egged on by State House, will have expended copious amounts of spittle, with the most vile of insults and threats directed at Chief Justice Martha Koome and her six colleagues on the apex bench.

The very same equal and independent Judicial arm of government that was hailed as properly KK-Compliant on upholding Ruto's presidential election victory will be the same one to make final determination on whether the likes of Millicent Omanga, Isaac Mwaura, Dennis Itumbi, Charles Njagua and Catherine Waruguru will be adequately compensated for their competence, drive, initiative and sacrifices for the campaign.

Unless you have a death wish, you don't insult and intimidate a judge just before appearing in court.

Lawyers can be detailed to put up a feeble case, but extra insurance can be provided by manoeuvres from outside the courtroom designed to catch the attention of the judges and make them very angry indeed.

They were promised the rank of Deputy CS, so they will be given opportunity to still assist CSs as special assistants. Even if not able to read official speeches or officiate at functions on behalf of CSs, nor head State departments or answer questions in Parliament, they will still be empowered to accompany the CSs to functions, carry briefcases, shuffle papers, open doors, uncork water bottles, and so on. Flunkies play a very important role in government, often as gatekeepers, sounding boards and intermediaries. They also have highly confidential functions, some of which are vital to national security.

This is not foolishness as would be assumed. It is actually a reflection of Ruto's brilliant plan. By the time his CAS nominees realise that they are not getting the jobs, they will not be blaming Ruto, who all along, they saw, tried his best.

They will direct their venom towards the 'rogue' judiciary, Raila, civil society, media, Uhuru, foreign powers, the IMF-World Bank twins, cartels, dynasties, witchcraft, unpatriotic elements, Bill Gates, 5G networks ...

In the short remaining time to the next elections, Ruto we still need to keep his faithful in line. They will be offered compensation in the form of appointments that do not require Constitutional definition or Parliamentary approval.

They were promised the rank of Deputy CS, so they will be given opportunity to still assist CSs as special assistants. Even if not able to read official speeches or officiate at functions on behalf of CSs, nor head State departments or answer questions in Parliament, they will still be empowered to accompany the CSs to functions, carry briefcases, shuffle papers, open doors, uncork water bottles, and so on.

Flunkies play a very important role in government, often as gatekeepers, sounding boards and intermediaries. They also have highly confidential functions, some of which are vital to national security.

A CS out on long assignment, locally or abroad, where there is threat of loneliness, needs a trusted assistant by his or her side to facilitate and vet any company that might be procured to provide some warmth.

In this era of unapparelled job creation, where results matter more than obstructive procurement laws and other bureaucratic hurdles, a trusted assistant is also vital for any CS who needs to receive and move the large amounts of cash pre-requisite to cutting out cartels from the government supply chains.

The fellows can take heart that all is not last, but they will still be scratching their heads wondering if they are very lucky to be at the service of such a kind, generous and thoughtful leader, or just victims of more broken promises.

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kenya lens

■ **NEW TAXES AND LEVIES WILL HURT BUSINESSES AND CONSUMERS**

THE TAX CONUNDRUM



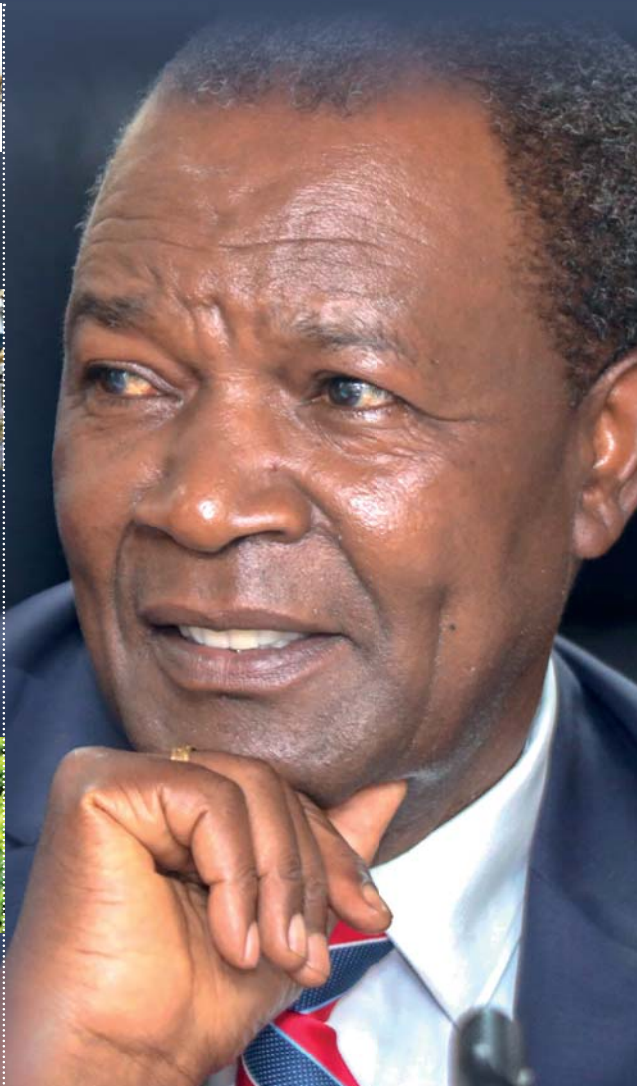
Economic experts have projected Kenya's real GDP to hit 5.0 per cent in 2023 and 5.2 per cent on average in 2024-25.



The 2023 Budget Policy Statement (BPS) revealed the government's ambitious plan of mobilising revenue of KSh3.6 trillion to revitalise the economy in the wake of the pandemic, strengthen social protection and security measures, and foster infrastructural development.



As per recommendations of the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security, Kenya needs to spend at least KSh360 billion, that is 10 per cent of the 2023/24 budget to develop and enhance the sector.



The World Bank has cautioned the government against introducing new taxes and levies that could hurt businesses and consumers.



Sufficient investment in key trade sectors will enhance our competitiveness through our ports, roads, railways, and airports and connect Kenya to regional and global markets.



Subjecting petroleum products to a VAT rate of 16 per cent will significantly affect transport prices and increase the cost of production, leading to inflationary pressures and negative consequences for the logistics sector and ultimately punish the end consumer.



Improved roads and highways, ports, railways, airports including dry ports, warehousing infrastructure and labs and testing facilities are necessary for sustainable and balanced economic development.

The soaring petrol prices could trigger a decline in the volume of goods transported with a ripple effect on Kenya's trade and business environment

● BY MESHACK KIPTURGO

The aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic has been a major hindrance to the economy, with the growth in real GDP – excluding agriculture – reaching 6.3 per cent in 2022. The nation continues to face development

challenges, compounded by the vulnerability of the economy to internal and external shocks.

Kenya continues to focus on maintaining macroeconomic stability to boost savings and investments, build the energy and transport infrastructure to ease costs of doing business and improve com-

petitiveness, ensuring efficiency in the public investment management process and better execution, tackling corruption and addressing security challenges.

The World Bank projects Kenya's real GDP to hit 5.0 per cent in 2023 and 5.2 per cent on average in 2024-25. While growth pros-

pects are bright, the projection presents a perfect opportunity for Kenya to focus on enhancing sectors that boost trade and logistics such as agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure, and private investment. These sectors play a vital role in Kenya's economy by creating employment opportunities,

kenya lens



An artist's impression of the Nairobi-Mau Summit Superhighway. Higher investments in infrastructure lead to an improvement in productivity, trade, connection, and economic inclusion.

generating revenue, and attracting foreign investment, ultimately contributing to the country's overall economic development.

In 2021, trade as a share of Kenya's GDP stood at 30.67 per cent, transportation and storage added KSh1.384 trillion to the GDP in 2021, while agriculture contributed 19.4 per cent of the GDP in 2019, followed by 21 per cent in 2020 and 22.4 per cent in 2021. These sectors have the potential to drive up economic growth significantly.

The 2023 Budget Policy Statement (BPS) revealed the government's ambitious plan of mobilising revenue of KSh3.6 trillion to revitalise the economy in the wake of the pandemic, strengthen social protection and security measures, and foster infrastructural development. The government aims to achieve this through reforms that minimise tax gaps, enhance revenue per unit, and boost the country's tax compliance rates.

In the budget, agriculture, rural and urban development sectors received KSh87.9 billion, energy, infrastructure and information communication technology (ICT) were allocated KSh468.2 billion, while the general economics and commercial affairs sector received KSh45.5 billion.

As per recommendations of the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security, Kenya needs to spend at least KSh360 billion, that is 10 per cent of the 2023/24 budget to develop and enhance the sector. This places ur-

gency on the case for the government to focus on value addition for its exports, improve the ease of doing business, ensure food security, create employment opportunities, and support rural livelihoods.

In the 2023/24 budget, the government allocated KSh37.4 billion for the expansion of railway transport, and KSh244.9 billion to support construction of roads and bridges as well as their rehabilitation and maintenance. Additional funds will still be needed when it comes to establishing private sector-led Inland Container Depots (ICDs) or dry ports along transportation routes which will facilitate connections between industries with bulk transport needs and specialised terminals.

It is worth noting that logistics plays a crucial role in facilitating trade globally. Improved roads and highways, ports, railways, airports including dry ports, warehousing infrastructure and labs and testing facilities are all necessary for the sustainable and balanced economic development of all parts of the country.

The 2023/24 budget comes with great wins for varied economic sectors with the government taking steps to support local manufacturing by introducing VAT exemptions for machinery and equipment purchased locally for use in the manufacture of pharmaceuticals thus supporting the health care and manufacturing sector. Additionally, the fisheries sector has gained government protection with the introduction

In the 2023/24 budget, the government allocated KSh37.4 billion for the expansion of railway transport, and KSh244.9 billion to support construction of roads and bridges as well as their rehabilitation and maintenance. Additional funds will still be needed when it comes to establishing private sector-led Inland Container Depots (ICDs) or dry ports along transportation routes which will facilitate connections between industries with bulk transport needs and specialised terminals.

of excise duty on imported fish, thus favouring the local fishing industry in Kenya.

While Kenya readies to implement reforms to finance the 2023/24 budget, the World Bank has cautioned the government against introducing new taxes and levies that could hurt businesses and consumers.

In the Finance Bill 2023, subjecting petroleum products (excluding Liquid Petroleum Gas) to a standard VAT rate of 16 per cent will significantly affect transport prices and increase the cost of goods production, leading to inflationary pressures and negative consequences for the logistics sector and ultimately punish the end consumer. The soaring fuel prices could trigger a decline in the volume of goods transported with a

ripple effect on Kenya's trade and business environment.

It is crucial to acknowledge the government's outlined priorities and its focus on stimulating economic activity through the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, a balanced approach to resource allocation which is equally important. Prioritising specific sectors at the expense of others may inadvertently impact the overall Kenyan economy and social well-being. The government at all times should prioritise sectors that enhance trade and boosts logistics to attract more revenue for the country.

More funding for agriculture, infrastructure, and trade facilitation will strengthen Kenya's aim of attaining food and nutrition security, agro-processing, employment creation, and the utilisation of the blue economy. It will also bolster the business sector, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), MSMEs, and the manufacturing sector, which plays a pivotal role in accelerating Kenya's economic growth.

Sufficient investment in key trade sectors will enhance our competitiveness through our ports, roads, railways, and airports and connect Kenya to regional and global markets. Strengthened regulatory and institutional frameworks that govern trade and transport will foster regional integration and cooperation with neighbouring countries and contribute to higher trade transactions and boost Kenya's competitiveness in the region.

SCIENCE & TECH

TECH TIANS: TWITTER RIVAL THREADS CHANGES THE GAME



● LONDON

More than 95 million have signed up for Meta's newly launched Threads app, but what do its users actually think?

Threads, pitched as a "friendly" rival to Twitter, has many similar features to the other social media platform. Its lead feature is allowing users to instantly create a network with people they follow on Instagram.

And Steven Bridges, a YouTuber with 448k followers, said he saw Threads as a "much-needed competitor" to Twitter. "Right now, there are a lot of people not happy at all with how Twitter's being run," he said.

"Threads gives them a potentially viable place to engage in the same way that they would use Twitter. People sort of know that Meta can run a social media company, so it gives a little bit of confidence that as it scales it will stick around and hopefully be well-moderated."

Steven said that he expected Threads to see an influx of content creators, who will

typically create profiles on new social media platforms to attract an audience. "Almost every influencer, whether they like it or not, or whether they want Threads to succeed or fail, will be hopping on Threads just in case it does succeed," he said.

"There is potentially a small advantage or a large advantage to being an early adopter of Threads — you certainly will have less people in the Threads ecosystem, so maybe you can get more followers quicker or something like that. Particularly, it's going to be relevant to new influencers that want to gain an audience... because if you post early and post regularly, perhaps you'll grow as the platform itself grows."

Dhruvi Shah, creative lead at consultancy Have You Thought About and a former BBC journalist, called Threads "really exciting" as a new platform, but said it might be hard for users to cut through the noise.

"Right now it honestly feels like you're at an ice skating rink, where everybody's jumping on and everyone's piling in," she

said. "Some people say they're going to be super amazing, because they've got a voice everywhere and a brand and a platform."

"Other people like me - because I'm not the best ice skater - are slipping and sliding and hoping that they don't get their fingers cut by falling over."

"That can be fun, but it does mean it's going to take a bit of time to understand what Threads is actually for, and when you're in a place that's really fast-paced, it can be quite overwhelming."

Meanwhile, Doug Brown, an artist and Edinburgh black cab driver, said he was interested in Threads as it brought together elements from Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. "If I was to create a social networking app, I'd definitely model my app with the best of what the top social media apps offers us," he said.

"Threads by Instagram for me has achieved that, the Threads app looks like Twitter, but the app has brought a lot of the easy-to-use features from Instagram and Facebook together."

Final Ariane 5 blasts off amid rocket crisis

Europe's workhorse Ariane 5 rocket blasted off for a final time last week, with its farewell flight after 27 years of launches coming at a difficult time for European space efforts.

Faced with soaring global competition, the continent has unexpectedly found itself without a way to independently launch heavy missions into space due to delays to the next-generation Ariane 6 and Russia withdrawing its rockets.

The 117th and final flight of the Ariane 5 rocket took place around 2200 GMT on Wednesday from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. The launch had been postponed twice. It was originally scheduled on June 16, but was called off because of problems with pyrotechnical lines in the rocket's booster, which have since been replaced.

Then Tuesday's launch was delayed by bad weather.

The flight went off without a hitch, watched by hundreds of spectators, including former French Justice Minister Christiane Taubira, and was greeted with applause. Marie-Anne Clair, the director of the Guiana Space Centre, said the final flight of Ariane 5 was "charged with emotion" for the teams in Kourou, where the rocket's launches have punctuated life for nearly three decades. The final payload on Ariane 5 is a French military communications satellite and a German communications satellite.

The satellite "marks a major turning point for our armed forces: better performance and greater resistance to jamming," French Minister of the Armed Forces Sebastien Lecornu tweeted. Though it would become a reliable rocket, Ariane 5 had a difficult start. Its maiden flight exploded moments after liftoff in 1996. Its only other such failure came in 2002. Herve Gilibert, an engineer who was working on Ariane 5 at the time, said the 2002 explosion was a "traumatic experience" that "left a deep impression on us."

africa lens

■ PRESIDENT DEFUSES A POLITICAL TIMEBOMB BY NOT SEEKING A THIRD TERM



THE SALL OF SENEGAL

Momentum had been building within his ruling party for him to seek re-election, with an overwhelming majority of its public representatives — including lawmakers and mayors — asking him to lead them into next poll

• DAKAR

Senegal's President Macky Sall appears to have saved his country from plunging into a deeper crisis by declaring that he will step down at the end of his two terms.

Political analyst Alioune Tine compared his decision to “deactivating a bomb”, pointing out that popular opposition politician Ousmane Sonko had threatened a new wave of mass protests if Sall ran for a controversial third term. The 61-year-old president's announcement caught many people by surprise.

Momentum had been building within his ruling party for him to seek re-election, with an overwhelming majority of its public representatives — including lawmakers and mayors — asking him to lead them into next year's poll.

Many of his supporters who were around the presidential palace in the capital, Dakar, were in tears when he announced his decision.

“I have a clear awareness and memory of what I have said, written and repeated, here and elsewhere, namely that the 2019

term was my second and final term. I have a code of honour and a sense of historical responsibility that compels me to stand by my dignity and my word,” Sall said.

But his critics hold a different view, pointing out that Sall had infamously said in French “ni oui, ni non” (neither yes nor no) when journalists asked him soon after the 2019 election whether or not he would run for office again in 2024.

This was highly controversial as Senegal's supreme law — the constitution — bars a president from running for more than two terms. But Sall's camp had been arguing — until just a few days ago — that his first term did not count as the current constitution was only adopted in his second term.

Sources close to the presidential palace said that some of Sall's advisers — as well as relatives, who had gained top posts in state companies under his rule — had urged him to seek re-election.

They feared a new president would remove them from their posts, and they would also lose

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africa lens

How Sall defused a political timebomb

Continued from Page 25

economic benefits at a time when Senegal's fledgling oil and gas industry was expected to grow, the sources said.

For the opposition, the thought of Sall, and his hangers-on, remaining in power was anathema, especially as they believed that his government was becoming increasingly authoritarian.

Sonko — who is currently under house arrest — rallied his mostly young supporters against Sall, resulting in the deaths of at least 16 people in clashes with the security forces since March. Ahead of Sall's address, Sonko made a new call on "all the Senegalese people to stand up, (and) to face him" if he ran for a third term.

Analysts say Sall appeared to have finally bowed to the pressure. The president said he wanted to "preserve the image of democracy, stability... that Senegal has internationally".

His decision is in sharp contrast to that of some of the other leaders in the region.

In Ivory Coast, President Alassane Ouattara won a controversial third term in 2020.

The poll was boycotted by the opposition, which argued that his candidacy violated the constitution.

In Togo, President Faure Gnassingbé is currently in his fourth term after the constitution was amended, dropping a two-term limit.

Against this backdrop, some analysts believe that Mr Sall has prevented democracy from sliding backwards in his country, with African Union Commission chairman Moussa Faki among those who praised his decision not to seek a third term.

But Senegal's former Prime Minister Aminata Touré said that Sall had not made a "heroic move".

"He is just applying the constitution. He should have said that the minute he got re-elected in 2019. This would have saved the country all the turmoil and the trouble we went through," she added.

Meanwhile, Rwandan President Paul Kagame has pushed for closer ties between Caribbean and



A Senegalese police officer patrols and clears the streets of Dakar after supporters of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko gathered and violent protests broke out in the capital, on March 3, 2021.



Supporters of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko throw stones while police fire tear gas in Dakar on June 1.

African countries at the 45th Caribbean Community (Caricom) conference in Trinidad and Tobago, and called on both regions to stop blaming others for their problems.

"We should not be comfortable blaming others for our problems, including the harm we inflict on ourselves," President Kagame said. "The starting point here is how we govern our own individual countries, striving to be the best we can be, with a culture of accountability," he added

in a statement.

"We need to come together in real terms and focus on concrete initiatives which address the challenges that nations like ours face today," Kagame said.

He highlighted that both regions need to advocate for more inclusive borrowing terms when countries need to take loans and greater cooperation on tackling climate change.

He also spoke about opportunities for both regions to improve connectivity when it comes to

"transport and telecommunications".

He also mentioned Haiti, which Rwanda has previously said it was willing to support in terms of security and peacekeeping. President Kagame said his country "cannot look away" and that Rwanda's own painful history shows that "nothing is beyond repair".

Haiti has descended into increasing lawlessness since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021.

global lens

RIOTS FUELLED BY EVERYDAY DISCRIMINATION

A French anti riot police officer walk past a burning truck in Nantes on July 1, four days after a 17-year-old man was killed by police in Nanterre, a western suburb of Paris.



FRANCE IS ON FIRE

In the weeks leading up to the shooting of a teenager, there were several examples of major media outlets and political elites making highly provocative statements about Muslims and Algerians in the country

• PARIS

The riots which spread countrywide after the killing by police of Nahel M, a 17-year-old boy of Algerian origin, have shaken French society to its very core. The unrest has been described as unprecedented in terms of scale and intensity.

In Marseille, an absurd routine settled into place. Afternoons

were for rushing to finish errands before shops and public transport prematurely shut down ahead of the impending chaos.

Evenings were characterised by a high-stakes game of cat-and-mouse between police and rioters, set to the pulsating soundtrack of car sirens, helicopters and fireworks. Mornings were for French talk-shows and the one-sided analysis they often platformed.

The same carousel of police union spokespersons, law analysts and politicians repeatedly attempted to explain the who, what, and - most notably — why the riots were taking place.

While there was almost unanimous condemnation of the police killing of Nahel, after the riots many were quick to raise the same-old question regarding immigration into France. There was the ever-present: “How have

third- and fourth-generation French citizens of immigrant descent failed to integrate into French society?”

And my personal favourite: “Don’t rioters understand that they are ruining their own property?” That such questions have yet to be answered decades after they were first raised makes me question whether those asking them were sincerely

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global lens

Nationwide riots paralyse businesses in France

Continued from Page 27

searching for answers.

In his famed commencement speech at Kenyon College in the US in 2005, late American novelist David Foster Wallace put forth the parable of two young fish swimming past an older fish, who says to them: “Morning, boys. How’s the water?” The two continue on their way and then one asks the other: “What the hell is water?” “The point of the fish story is merely that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about,” Wallace noted.

As a young, Algerian, Muslim man who grew up in Canada, my observation of day-to-day life in France over the past few months is that the water reeks of latent, banalised racism and Islamophobia.

In the weeks leading up to the shooting, there were several examples of major media outlets and political elites making highly provocative statements about Muslims and Algerians in France.

At the start of June, former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe gave a wide-ranging interview in which he called for immigration reform. He said that some French people don’t consider second- or third-generation immigrants French for purposes of “integration, education, civic-mindedness” - and that these views should be heard.

Philippe went on to say that another problem many French people have with immigration is Islam.

“It is a central subject, a disturbing subject, a haunting subject,” he said. Finally, he advocated revoking a bilateral treaty that makes it easier for Algerians to immigrate to France.

Later on in June, France’s most watched news channel, BFM TV, filmed the entrance of a middle school in Lyon so that they could count how many students walked in with an “abaya”, a loose robe worn by many Muslim women.

The report was meant to tell the French public that the open display of religion was creeping into schools, contravening the doctrine of *laïcité* - the French concept of strict secularism in the



A protester moves a metal barrier during a demonstration in Caen, north-western France on June 30, after the shooting of a teenage driver by police in a Paris suburb on June 27.



Firefighters extinguish a car that caught fire in Nantes, western France on July 1, four days after a 17-year-old man was killed by police in Nanterre, a western suburb of Paris.

public space.

The girls defiantly walked up to the entrance in their abayas and removed their headscarves, or hijabs, as French law requires, forcing the institution to acknowledge that it was actively undressing them.

The scenes were reminiscent of

Frantz Fanon’s *Algeria Unveiled* essay, in which he analyses the colonial apparatus’ obsessive gaze on Algerian women who covered their bodies.

The abaya controversy was followed by the story that a handful of Muslim children in Nice, between the ages of nine

and 11, had the audacity to pray in their school courtyard. The mayor of Nice, Christian Estrosi, the head of a right-wing political party, Eric Ciotti, and the Minister of Education, Pap Ndiaye, all publicly lambasted the children.

A few days later, and just a few weeks ahead of the 2023 Fifa Women’s World Cup, a French court upheld a ban on Muslim footballers wearing the hijab. While the officer who killed Nahel is in custody, right-wing personalities created a crowdfunding campaign for him, which received \$1.7 million in donations before it was closed.

Some left-leaning politicians condemned the campaign, but others on the right used it to symbolise their support for the police and it has become a highly divisive issue.

All of this fuels the feeling of many Muslims and North Africans living in France that they are not accepted by the state and society, and explains why many people reacted with such anger to the killing of Nahel.

Martin Luther King Jr once said that “a riot is the language of the unheard”. Last week, and perhaps for the very first time in their lives, troubled French youth made themselves heard.

global lens

■ FORMER ITALIAN PM'S ELDEST CHILDREN GET MAJORITY STAKE

BERLUSCONI BILLIONS

One of Europe's richest men, he had amassed a fortune that spanned real estate, television, cinema and sport

● ROME

It's been the object of much speculation for weeks: who would lead Silvio Berlusconi's empire after his death?

Now his will has been made public, it is clear he has handed a majority stake in the family's holding company Fininvest to his two eldest children, Marina and Pier Silvio.

They will jointly own 53 per cent of the family firm. The four-time prime minister died on June 12 from leukaemia. One of Italy's richest men, he had amassed a fortune that spanned real estate, television, cinema and sport. But he never publicly indicated who should lead his business empire.

It turns out he did not distribute his shares in an equal way among his five children, who automatically all receive 15.8 per cent.

Marina and Pier Silvio are his children from his first marriage and they will receive bigger shares than the three other children from his second wife - Barbara, Eleonora and Luigi.

The two eldest children have held management roles in the family business since the early 1990s. They earlier said in a statement that "no shareholder will exercise overall individual indirect control of Fininvest". Berlusconi also left €100 million to Marta Fascina, his partner at the time of his death and 53 years his junior.

They were not married, but on his deathbed, he referred to her as his wife. In a letter that was enclosed in his will, he wrote: "Whatever the amount, be prepared. They will say it's too much or not enough. Never that it's right."

Berlusconi's brother Paolo also receives €100 million, while the late prime minister's close aide Marcello Dell'Utri will have €30 million. It is not yet clear how Berlusconi's many other valuable assets will be passed on; his numerous luxurious villas could be tricky to give to his offspring in an equal way.

His Villa San Martino in Arcore, north-east of Milan, covers 3,500 sq m and dates back to the 18th Century. He also has homes at Lake Maggiore, in Rome, Cannes, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

The jewel in Berlusconi's crown of properties is Villa Certosa, a mansion in Sardinia that he bought in the 1970s. He hosted world leaders there, from Vladimir Putin to George W Bush. It has 126 rooms and looks like a theme park, including a fake volcano that erupts lava. Its value is estimated at €259 million.

Silvio Berlusconi was arguably one of the most influential men in Italy's history. For the past 50 years, his shadow has loomed large over parliament, the media, football and the man on the street. His will included a handwritten letter to his children, which ends with the words: "Thanks, so much love to all of you, your Dad." People close to the family have described Berlusconi as "the glue" who kept his children united.

The big question is whether that family unity can be maintained now that Berlusconi has gone, and what impact that might have on the future of his business empire.

For the past 50 years, Berlusconi's shadow has loomed large over parliament, the media, football and the man on the street.

At the height of his power, sporting colourful bandanas on board yachts in the Mediterranean, Berlusconi could have passed for a pirate. But he had an outsized impact on Italian society and politics, and was the subject of highly complex civil and criminal investigations.

He first enjoyed the thrill of an adoring audience as a cruise ship singer, and that experience of being centre stage was to define his adult life. As a media mogul inspired by the razzmatazz of American networks, he transformed Italian TV. Scantly-clad women would define many of his programmes, much as they would his private life. This led to a change of culture for Italians, who were suddenly able to watch TV programmes with politically incorrect jokes and "veline", an Italian word that means "show girls". For decades, Italian TV - led by public broadcaster RAI - had been rigorous and serious. Berlusconi decided to put audiences first, and single-handedly invented

commercial TV in Italy. Even today, if you channel-surf Italian TV, you will inevitably come across half-naked young women. Berlusconi's foray into politics was not driven by ideological zeal, as much as it was a desire to protect his growing business interests.

Elected prime minister four times, he appealed to a wide range of voters. The former entertainer cut a colourful figure, in stark contrast with the more reserved intellectual types who had previously charted Italy's course. But the man dubbed "Il Cavaliere" (The Knight) divided Italians, as much for his policies - including his controversial decision to join the US-led invasion of Iraq - as his entire approach to life.



OBIT

■ **PIONEER FEMINIST: DEC 12, 1942 - JUNE 30, 2023**

MICERE PENS LAST WORD

Mugo's activism was committed to resolving immediate lived problems rather than being elitist and theoretical

● BY TOM ODHIAMBO

Today, feminism often appears as a fashionable movement, as if one needs to have special characteristics to become a feminist by philosophy and deed, probably to have read the works of feminist critics and immersed oneself in certain beliefs and practices. Hardly do people ponder today what it would have taken to become or be a feminist in the 1960s and 1970s. Was it even possible for an African woman to describe herself as a feminist in those days?

What was the cost of being a woman who could take on men who believed that the political, economic, cultural and intellectual spaces were rightfully theirs, and that women belonged in the home, the house, the kitchen, being wives and mothers, taking care of the interests of the menfolk and their extended families? Where did a trailblazer like Micere Githae-Mugo get the guts to stand up and be counted as a human being, an equal among peers and a leader, not just a woman as many saw her in the 1960s, when she was a student, and the 1970s, when she was a lecturer and leader at the University of Nairobi?

What made Micere stand out among her peers, especially women, was her single-minded determination not to be counted only as a woman but as a scholar steeped in her society's realities. It is this conviction that made her a highly visible intellectual at the University of Nairobi, where she left two indelible marks – as the first woman Chairperson of the Department of Literature, and as the first woman Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

These two attainments were not accidental. Micere had built intellectual and social capital over a period of time at the university and in the community. As she says in her book, *Writing and Speaking*

from the Heart of My Mind (AWP: 2012), she had been an "active official of the Kenyan Writers' Union, an outspoken member of the University of Nairobi Academic Union and an activist in several groups and organisations organising against repression and abuse of human rights underground." Why had Micere become 'active' and an 'organiser'? Because both the state and the university were patriarchal systems that had turned repressive, brooking no alternative or contrary points of view.

Micere would test the tenacity of the male-dominated system when she chose to run for the seat of Dean of Faculty of Arts. How did she and fellow progressive intellectuals take on the state and the university? The progressives, Micere wrote, "unanimously agreed to field a woman candidate. The choice of a woman candidate was a deliberate statement in recognition of women intellectuals, who were a tiny minority in the faculty, most of them 'juniors.'" Micere would endure "intimidation, stalking and life-threatening anonymous telephone calls." She won the election and although the government ordered nullification of the results, she stood her ground.

The effect of her win and subsequent appointment as dean was to seriously unsettle the patriarchal system's assumptions and publicly proclaim a feminist agenda at a time

when feminism was probably a strange word in these parts of the world. To read Micere's words describing the moment is to realise that the 'feminist' struggle against masculine control often demands individual and collective interventions. "Witnessing the hysteria stirred by a woman's candidacy for the deanship was instructive of how viciously guarded the monopoly of male power and custodianship of knowledge had become in the academy. The conservatives regarded the protection of this monopoly as a matter of life and death. For them, allowing a woman to become dean was like standing by watching coup-makers overthrow them and their fiefdoms' niches of power they had in-

herited from colonialism which was patriarchal itself and they regarded as god-given. By seeking to dismantle patriarchal control and domination, the rebels were committing sacrilege. . ."

Micere's feminism and activism were committed to resolving immediate lived problems, such as described above, rather than being elitist and theoretical. So, as we mourn her, we remember her.

As we reflect on what her life, work and philosophy meant to us when she was alive and what it will mean now that she is in the land of the ancestors, we have to carefully revisit her legacy wherever and whenever she lived, taught and worked. For Kenyan universities, what kind of African intellectual histories are being taught there? Who are the pioneering progressive scholars that fill our curricula in areas such as history, pedagogy, literature and gender studies? Where does Micere's legacy sit in the humanities, arts and social sciences in Kenya?

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