

THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

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RUTO'S 'A' TEAM

To many Kenyans, the President is a virtually omniscient political chess master who plots his course several moves in advance. His hybrid Cabinet of allies and technocrats is viewed as a brilliant move that could deliver the 'hustler' dream. The limping nation is pregnant with expectation



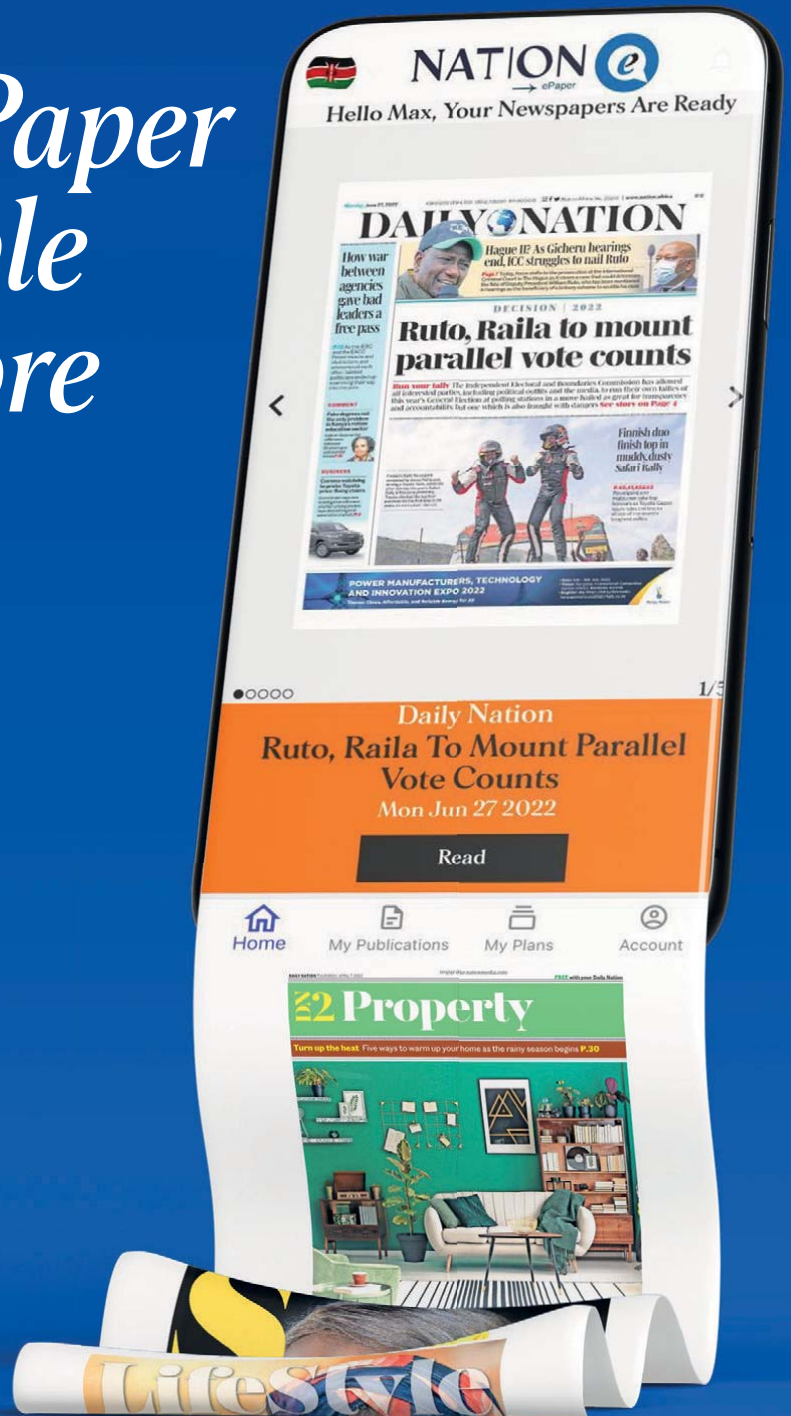
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letter from the editor

Why Ruto's Cabinet must hit the ground running



Mutuma Mathiu

President William Ruto this week named his long-awaited Cabinet, sadly under the cloud of the mysterious death of International Criminal Court suspect Paul Gicheru, completing his takeover of government after the August 9 election and subsequent Supreme Court battle that confirmed his victory.

Time is Dr Ruto's greatest enemy. The country — and his body of fans — is boiling with expectation. The President won on the back of various election promises and the country is waiting for him to start delivering. Yes, he and his deputy, Mr Rigathi Gachagua, say they found the economy in poor shape and this perhaps buys him a little honeymoon. But this will not last forever.

When the cost of living gets too high, when the people cannot afford bread, it ceases to be a matter of economics and threatens social order. The cost of basic commodities in Kenya is very high, driven by energy costs and the peculiar, debt-fuelled profligate style of the previous administration in which, it may be added, the President served for 10 years.

The pain that the people are feeling is not all the product of the war in Ukraine, and the people know it. The President promised to address it ur-

The President won on the back of various election promises and the country is waiting for him to start delivering. Yes, he and his deputy, Mr Rigathi Gachagua, say they found the economy in poor shape and this perhaps buys him a little honeymoon. But this will not last forever.

gently and the people are graciously allowing him the time to do so, but they will not wait forever.

Kenya is one of the most unequal societies in the world. The haves really have while the have-nots scrounge for a living in small businesses and all manner of hustles.

A central pillar of the Kenya Kwanza promise was that it would not pour more wealth into the so-called dynasties in the hope that it would percolate down to the mass, but that they would tackle inequality from the bottom. There was a promise to invest large amounts of money in small enterprises and so on.

What makes inequality sensitive in Kenya and a potential flashpoint is that some of the wealth is not honestly earned; it follows the contours of power. There is no enterprise

or plausible explanation behind many of Kenya's great personal fortunes. They are either the product of direct theft of public funds or the corrupt exploitation of access to power to accumulate personal wealth.

There was a promise to look into this with a view to reclaiming these ill-gotten riches. While such a promise was popular on the campaign trail and is certainly the right thing to do from a moral and legal point of view, it is a course fraught with political and legal risk. Where does one start in a crowded field of apprehensive thieves, some with the capacity to cause serious trouble today or down the road?

Yet, failure to act may cause public resentment, is unfair and will only cause future grand theft.

Kenya Kwanza promised a fairer, better managed country, more sensitive to the needs of the poor and ordinary citizens. The benefits of better economic management take some time to be felt: the pressure is on the president to act now, decisively and with clarity of vision.

Sound management of public affairs is what good Cabinets are for. The clock is ticking.

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the telescope

■ A rallying cry to denounce sexual violence



Hollywood actresses and others, part of a group of Silence Breakers who have fought for justice by speaking out about Harvey Weinstein's sexual misconduct in Los Angeles on February 25, 2020. PHOTO | AFP

What #MeToo changed for women

The birth of #MeToo in the United States in October 2017 gave millions of women around the world a powerful rallying cry to denounce sexual violence. The movement led to an outpouring of survivors' accounts. Before #MeToo, rape was "not something we could just talk about", says Nazreen Ally, 43, who lives in Durban, South Africa. The manager of a security company went public about being raped at 13. "Many women opened up to me once I started talking about my story. And I realised there were other women suffering as well, who were violated and abused but they just didn't talk about it," Ally told

AFP. A 36-year-old US woman said that shortly after she began an internship with a congressman in Washington in the early 2000s, a staff member invited her to dinner. She refused but maintained a friendship with the man, despite his "inappropriate comments". "I would just shrug it off and make excuses," she said, declining to give her name. "Fast forward and the #MeToo movement happens, then allegations come out against him," she said, adding it "really made me reassess my younger years. The experience was very eye-opening for me. I'm so used to men making inappropriate comments".

■ Citizens ignore Putin's mobilisation order

Now Russians flee into Mongolia



On a bright morning in Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, a young Russian fleeing Moscow's first military call-up since World War II had a stark answer for why he had left: "I don't want to kill people." He was among thousands of Rus-

sians who have streamed across the land border into Mongolia over the past week since President Vladimir Putin issued a mobilisation order for the war in Ukraine. The announcement sent shock waves across the vast nation and triggered an international exodus, with tens of thousands leaving the country since the mobilisation. Finland, Norway, Turkey and Georgia have, like Mongolia, reported an increase in Russian arrivals in recent days.

■ There is a solution to everything

McIlroy calls for unity in men's golf

Rory McIlroy believes it is still possible for men's professional golf to become "cohesive again" after an "ugly year" beset by bitter rows between the established US and European tours and the insurgent LIV Series. LIV has caused turmoil since its June debut, with record purses and financial guarantees luring several top players away from the US PGA Tour. Dustin Johnson, Cameron Smith, Patrick Reed, Bryson DeChambeau, Bubba Watson, Sergio Garcia and Phil Mickelson were among the players who joined LIV Golf. The PGA Tour gave them indefinite bans, with LIV and some of the play-

ers involved filing an anti-trust lawsuit in response. McIlroy, the world number two, has been severely critical of LIV's impact on golf. But McIlroy believes a way out of the current impasse is possible. "Right now, with two lawsuits going on and how heightened the rhetoric has been, I think we just need to let it cool off a little bit," the 33-year-old said. "It has been an ugly year but there is a solution to everything. If we can send rockets to the moon and bring them back again and have them land on their own, I'm sure we can figure out how to make professional golf cohesive again."



Rory McIlroy says it's still possible for men's professional golf to become "cohesive again" after an "ugly year". PHOTO | AFP

■ Millionaires rub shoulders with migrants

In wealthy Dubai, poor get free bread



With the cost of living surging, free hot bread distribution for the poor has been introduced in Dubai, a rich Gulf emirate where millionaires rub shoulders with hard-working migrants.

The city of skyscrapers soaring above the desert, which imports almost all of its food, has been impacted by rapidly rising consumer prices, a global trend exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ten vending machines were installed last week in supermarkets, with a computer touch screen allowing people to select different types: loaves for sandwiches, pitta bread or flat Indian-style chapatis.



■ RUTO'S DREAM TEAM

IT'S TIME TO WALK THE TALK

While it is still too early to assess President Ruto's leadership style from his first Cabinet, it is easy to see that he values loyalty and is keen on making good on promises to key politicians who supported his campaign

● By MACHARIA GAITHO

President William Ruto loved pushing the narrative that his estrangement from President Uhuru Kenyatta while serving as Deputy President came about because his boss suffered an inferiority complex and was nervous having bright and hard-working people around him.

That was not entirely accurate as President Kenyatta actually encouraged his cabinet ministers to work independently and make decisions without having to refer to him. While it is still too early to assess President Ruto's leadership style from the Cabinet he named on Tuesday, it is easy to see that he values loyalty and he is also keen on making good on promises to key politicians who supported him. More than half the Cabinet is composed of familiar faces in politicians who earned their slots as pay-back for backing Ruto, with only a sprinkling

of technocrats and professionals.

How Ruto relates to his Cabinet will indicate whether he is the board chairman who delegates responsibility and trusts his appointees to deliver without looking over their shoulders like President Mwai Kibaki did, or whether he will be a control freak like President Daniel arap Moi who wants to make every decision himself and is paranoid about being overshadowed by his juniors. From those who have worked closely with Ruto over the years, he lies halfway between the two.

He sets tasks, delegates responsibility and expects results. But he also pays close attention to detail, is a master of facts and figures and might also have a tendency to interfere in the workings of dockets that catch his attention. This was evidenced just two days after appointment of the Cabinet when, in an unusual move, President Ruto personally attended a press briefing called by Safaricom

and partner banks KCB and NCBA on reduction of Fuliza tariffs. During the election campaigns, Ruto was harshly critical of the 'Fuliza economy', a reference to the Safaricom and other mobile phone lending Apps that have trapped millions of Kenyans in debt cycles with their usurious interest rates and fees.

A reduction in the fees was actually out of a court order, but it seems that President Ruto, like Moi, was keen to take the credit. Underlying everything is the fact that Fuliza is associated with the Kenyatta family's NCBA, and that raging in the background is a vicious fight for a share of the proceeds. Of much interest in coming days and weeks is how President Ruto's creation of two competing power structures will play out.

Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudava-

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kenya lens

Cabinet shoulders weight of campaign promises

...Continued from Page 5

di do not have specific ministerial dockets, but both have a range of supervisory, implementation and delivery roles on a range of functions cutting across different ministries and departments.

For instance, Gachagua is tasked to “oversee implementation of Cabinet decisions across all Ministries and State Departments”, while Mudavadi is assigned to “oversee the implementation of National Government policies, programmes and projects”.

That is just one example of jurisdiction overlaps that could place the two ambitious leaders, both eyeing the presidency in future, on a collision course.

President Ruto is a stickler for detail. It might have been an oversight that he gave Gachagua and Mudavadi responsibilities that will force them to clash, but for a keen student of political warfare, it may also have been very deliberate. While naming his cabinet, Ruto threw in a casual observation that his DP will be a very busy man.

That could be taken as a positive in that he is keeping to his word and entrusting Gachagua with important responsibilities, unlike during his own second term as DP, when President Kenyatta stripped him of all functions.

Devolved governance

But it could also have been a warning that the DP has a real job to do and will have no excuse to abandon his office and roam the country playing politics.

While the full list of government reorganisation had yet to be published as the Cabinet was unveiled, there seemed to be a glaring omission in lack of a devolution ministry.

However, Rigathi was specifically tasked with coordinating relations between national and county governments, including chairing the Inter-Governmental Budget and Economic Council (IBEC).

Still, it remains to be seen, where the devolution function will be domiciled, especially in regard to budgetary allocation and staffing.

The Kenya Kwanza manifesto has elaborate provisions for strengthening devolution, which might call for a specific State Department.

Ruto has pledged to complete transfer of all functions constitutionally earmarked as devolved functions to counties within six months and to develop a framework for ensuring that state-owned firms carrying out devolved or shared functions adhere to the principles of devolved governance while ensuring that the principle of “funding follows functions” is adhered to with respect to all devolved functions.

He has also committed to ensuring that county governments generate their own income in order to reduce over-reliance on transfers from the national government.



Rigathi Gachagua
Deputy President

- Deputise for the President in execution of his functions
- Chair Cabinet committees
- Oversee implementation of Cabinet decisions across all ministries and state departments
- Coordinate relations between the national and county governments. This includes chairing the Inter-governmental Budget and Economic Council (IBEC)
- Liaison with constitutional commissions and independent offices in matters that require intervention by the government, including budgets, policy formulation and implementation of their recommendations
- Oversee public sector reforms



Kithure Kindiki
Interior & National Administration

The former Tharaka Nithi senator will hold one of the most powerful Cabinet posts. He will retain responsibility for the National Police Service and the entire security edifice, as well as that behemoth of what used to be called the Provincial Administration. The Kenya Kwanza manifesto commits to establishment of a benevolent fund for families of fallen and terminally ill police officers; affordable housing mortgage; insurance cover for loss of life on duty; continuing police reform; and within the first 100 days ‘consider’ improvement of pay and terms of service for all officers to be commensurate with the cost of living.



Aisha Jumwa
Public Service, Gender & Affirmative Action

In between sojourns to the courts, where she is facing charges of murder and corruption, the former Malindi MP will have a lot on her shoulders. An early issue that the abrasive politician, who now finds herself in the Executive branch, may have to contend with is that on naming his Cabinet, President Ruto clearly reneged on the public pledge to make at least half of his appointees women. An almost immediate litmus test for Jumwa will be making good on the campaign pledge for realisation of the two-thirds gender rule in elective and appointive positions in the public sector.



Musalia Mudavadi
Prime Cabinet Secretary

- Assist the President and the Deputy President in the coordination and supervision of government ministries and state departments
- In liaison with the Ministry for Interior and National Administration, oversee the implementation of government policies and projects
- Chair and coordinate government legislative agenda across all ministries and state departments in consultation with and for transmission to the Party/Coalition leaders in Parliament
- Facilitate inter-ministerial coordination of cross-functional initiatives and programmes
- Supervise the technical monitoring and evaluation of government policies



Alice Wahome
Water, Sanitation & Irrigation

The Kandara MP was one of the early and most outspoken converts to the Ruto campaign, and the anti-Kenyatta crusade, in the Mt Kenya region. This is an understated but critical docket, especially insofar as it is related to food security goals. In the mid-1970s, the Jomo Kenyatta government promised water for all by the year 2000. The self-imposed deadline passed unnoticed under a different regime, and now the Ruto administration is promising attainment of the same goal by 2027. His election manifesto proposes shifting focus from large dams to household and community water projects, with emphasis on harvesting and recycling.



Moses Kuria
Trade Investment & Industry

To the public, the former Gatundu South MP might come across as a loud and garrulous politician in the fashion of Moiera semi-illiterate rabble-rousers such as Kariuki Chotara or Mulu Mutisya. However, Kuria is a very sharp mind and well respected for his acumen in the finance, trade and investment fields. Though his appointment to the Cabinet is obviously political reward for another Mt Kenya politician who took the battle to President Kenyatta, this should be a suitable docket given Kuria’s field of expertise. The challenge might be whether he is capable of making the transition from noisy politician to a sober and level-headed Cabinet Secretary.

kenya lens



Kipchumba Murkomen
Roads, Transport & Public Works

It took a lucrative slot to persuade one of Ruto's most faithful acolytes to surrender his Elgeyo Marakwet Senate seat and join the Cabinet. Murkomen will oversee a vast and cash-rich ministry that to many was the exemplar of State Capture under Uhuru Kenyatta. He takes over a giant docket responsible for road networks across the country including the proposed Nairobi-Mombasa highway, the Standard Gauge Railway, the Lamu Port development and Lapsset corridor, airports and Kenya Airways. The Kenya Kwanza manifesto does not capture even a fraction of the task facing the new CS.



Roselinda Soipan Tuya
Environment & Forestry

It might be a baptism by fire as the former Narok County Woman Rep takes charge of the ministry shortly after Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua's controversial declaration that the 'shamba' system of cultivation in forests will be allowed. This will fall on the new CS to oversee regulation that will not lead to decimation of forest cover, or take the blame if things go horribly wrong. That she is between a rock and a hard place is illustrated by the fact that the contentious pronouncement was opposed even by some Kenya Kwanza diehards such as Kakamega Senator Boni Khalwale and outspoken lawyer-blogger Ahmednassir Abdullahi.



Zacharia Mwangi Njeru
Lands, Housing & Urban Development

Being catapulted from an unknown ward administrator in Nakuru County to a CS should be a daunting prospect for anyone. The previous government was widely lampooned for setting itself a target of a half million new houses per year, achieving barely a tenth of that. Kenya Kwanza has reduced the target to 250,000 houses, but that will still be a major challenge for Njeru. He has to balance the actual need for affordable housing with the Kenya Kwanza manifesto emphasis on job creation and economic opportunities. He will have to confront historical issues of land grabbing, which many senior figures will be uncomfortable with.



Peninah Malonza
Tourism, Wildlife & Heritage

Kenya has over the years discouraged backpackers and other low-budget tourists, preferring to market itself as an exclusive, high-end destination. That has not worked and now the new CS for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage, Peninah Malonza, takes office as Ruto's administration shifts focus to mass and niche-market tourism. According to his party's campaign manifesto, the government commits to supporting independent travel, particularly for young people, including quality secure budget hotels and bed and breakfast facilities, as well as affordable budget air travel to all parts of the country and safe road travel.



Alfred Mutua
Foreign & Diaspora Affairs

The Kenya Kwanza manifesto contains hardly any radical departure on the foreign docket, so it will be continuation rather than change. The former Machakos governor is tasked to deliver on a creative and robust foreign policy built on key pillars of economic and commercial diplomacy, strengthening Kenya's role as an anchor state in regional, continental and global affairs. A key promise was creating a Diaspora Ministry, which has now been realised in the Foreign docket. An interesting task for Mutua will be to engage sports stars and other eminent Kenyans to promote the Kenyan brand across the globe. President Ruto's recent speech at the United Nations General Assembly, which bore the imprints of Ambassador to the UN Martin Kimani and long-time speechwriter Eric Ng'eno, projected an assertive Kenya willing to push the African campaign for a bigger say.



Susan Nakumicha Wafula
Health

Another relatively unknown person getting such a key docket is a major vote of confidence in a newcomer who nevertheless comes with a stellar CV. Susan Nakumicha Wafula has been thrown into the deep end and tasked with delivering a Universal Health Coverage system that includes fully publicly financed primary healthcare, universal health insurance, and a national fund for chronic and catastrophic illness and injury costs not adequately covered by insurance (cancer, diabetes, strokes, accident rehabilitation, pandemics). The Kenya Kwanza manifesto projects an ambitious health programme, and it falls on Wafula to figure out what is feasible and affordable, and what was just cobbled together as political promises to counter Raila Odinga's 'BabaCare' proposals.



Eliud Owalo
Information, Communication & Digital Economy

The former Raila Odinga strategist takes a key docket that has a media component, which many in the new government view with barely-disguised disdain. Although independence of media is anchored as an inalienable constitutional right, there was evidence almost from Day One that the Ruto regime is keen to put independent media in its place through withdrawal of public sector advertising and denial of coverage rights from important national functions. The Kenya Kwanza manifesto is silent on media, but Owalo is tasked with delivering on universal broadband availability throughout the country within five years. The government promises to construct 100,000km of national fibre optic connectivity network, enhance government service delivery through digitisation and automation of all processes, and make available 80 per cent of public services online.



Ezekiel Machogu
Education

The former Nyaribari Masaba MP has the difficult task of addressing inequities in the education system so as to level the playing field for all children irrespective of background and circumstances. The Kenya Kwanza pledge is informed by the growing gap in the quality of education between public schools and the expensive private schools that are only accessible to the wealthy. An early challenge for Machogu will be in determining the fate of the CBC system implemented by the previous government. During the electioneering period, Ruto's team was harshly critical and promised to abandon the system once elected. But as soon as he took office, the President walked back on that somewhat by announcing that he would appoint a task force to hear the views of stakeholders. Another key task for Machogu will be to bridge the current teacher shortage gap of 116,000 within two financial years.

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Ababu Namwamba
Youth Affairs, Sports & Arts

Mr Namwamba's first major task will be to oversee Kenya's return to international football, which will mean installation of a federation leadership recognised by the global confederation, Fifa. The Kenya Kwanza manifesto also demands a task force to identify sustainable sources of sports funding and a dedicated function within the Tourism Promotion Council to attract international sporting events. On entertainment, the new government seems to recognise the stultifying bureaucracy of the Kenya Film Commission that discourages international film makers from shooting in Kenya.



Simon Chelugui
Cooperatives & MSME Development

The only CS retained from the former government, Mr Chelugui will play a crucial role as the face of Kenya Kwanza's support for the Hustler Economy. The much touted Sh50 billion-a-year Hustler Fund will be under his control. It is supposed to provide 100 per cent access to affordable finance through saccos, venture capital, equity funds and long-term debt for start-ups and growth-oriented SMEs, reads the Kenya Kwanza manifesto. The lofty description aside, a major challenge will be to ensure that it does not become just a source of handouts or a political slush fund.



Salim Mvurya
Mining, Blue Economy & Maritime Affairs

The former Kwale governor is another political appointee earning his reward in a docket close to his heart. One of his first tasks will be to ensure that billions of shillings held by the national government since enactment of the Mining Act of 2016 and the Petroleum Act of 2019 are transferred to the beneficiary county governments and communities as their share of royalties from exploitation of extractive resources. Kwale County will be a major beneficiary from the revenues generated by titanium mining.



Florence Bore
Labour & Social Protection

The Cabinet newcomer has a difficult task in designing a universal social security system encompassing pension, occupational hazard and unemployment insurance. Bore will be in charge of the much-abused National Social Security Fund, which has over the years been diverted to line the pockets of influential individuals through dubious projects. President Ruto's manifesto also commits to 100 per cent National Health Insurance Fund coverage for senior citizens within three years and to revamp the cash transfer programmes for elderly and vulnerable households.



Njuguna Ndung'u
Treasury & Planning

The former Central Bank of Kenya governor might take some credit for the economic recovery witnessed under President Kibaki, but the truth is that he was more of a keeper of the purse rather than a driver of economic policy. CBK calls for caution and prudence, and in that regard the new Treasury CS will be well placed to temper expectations of Kenya Kwanza loyalists who might expect instant results. Ndung'u's immediate challenge will not be doling out cash for the Hustler Fund and numerous other grandiose pledges, but simply in keeping Kenya running by meeting the government wage bill.



Aden Duale
Defence

The Garissa Town MP will not only command one of the best resourced dockets but will also become a key person in Kenya's security infrastructure. The Kenya Kwanza manifesto is largely silent on defence policy, an indication that not much change is expected, but Duale will be central in making critical decisions around involvement in the Somali military mission. There are indications that Kenya is keen to pull out of an adventure that began 11 years ago as Operation Linda Nchi, but that presents practical difficulties, particularly the risk of abandoning the entire southern Somalia to al-Shabaab terrorist groups.



Rebecca Miano
East African Community & ASAL Development

Another newcomer to public leadership, Ms Miano takes over an often understated docket that sometimes seems to exist only because the East African Community Treaty demands that all member states have a dedicated community ministry. Development of arid and semi-arid lands should be a key responsibility under the Kenya Kwanza pledge to pay adequate attention to historically marginalised and neglected regions. However, bundling that with East African affairs could have the effect of neglecting the ASAL docket.



Mithika Linturi
Agriculture & Livestock Development

Key in the Kenya Kwanza manifesto is return of the Guaranteed Minimum Returns scheme for farmers, crop and livestock insurance and price stabilisation schemes. It pledges to transform two million poor farmers from food deficit to surplus producers through input finance and intensive agricultural extension support. It also promises to raise farm productivity, reduce dependence on basic food imports and revamp underperforming or collapsed export crops such as coffee, cashew nuts, pyrethrum, avocado and macadamia nuts.



Davis Chirchir Energy & Petroleum

In many ways President Ruto's trusted 'Mr Fixit' on the technology front, Mr Chirchir makes a Cabinet comeback in a docket that is often a cash cow for well-connected politicians. Even before Ruto took office, his social media propaganda brigades had been unleashed in a clear effort to block ongoing procurement of electricity meters by Kenya Power. That could have been a well-meaning effort to forestall dubious deals in a sector where corruption is legendary, but the way in which it was done, through Twitter warnings instead of formal channels, means that influence peddlers might have been lining up their own preferred vendors. That is the environment under which Chirchir takes over the expanded Energy docket that now includes Petroleum. One of his first tasks as detailed in the Kenya Kwanza manifesto will be to turn around the struggling national electricity distribution monopoly.

kenya lens

■ FINE BLEND FOR A 'HUSTLER ADMINISTRATION'

TECHNOCRATS VS POLITICIANS

Ruto is probably alive to the challenges of stuffing a Cabinet with boardroom experts, whose interaction with the people is relatively minimal, instead appointing politicians who can quickly connect with the people

● By OSCAR OBONYO

Four of President William Ruto's nominees to the Cabinet are Members of Parliament who will have to vacate their seats upon successful vetting, while another six are candidates rejected at the ballot in the recent elections – a pointer to the central role of politicians in the new government.

The appointment of seven additional seasoned politicians, including Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi, former National Assembly Speaker Justin Muturi and others who have served as governors and MPs, further solidifies the political makeup of Ruto's Cabinet to levels higher than those of his predecessor, Uhuru Kenyatta, in 2013.

Having experimented with technocrats in the Cabinet as Uhuru's deputy, Ruto is well placed to comprehend the impediments and strengths of that particular arrangement, hence his current decision.

In the team appointed in 2013, the President, his deputy and coalition partners Charity Ngilu and Najib Balala were the only career politicians on board. But probably in the face of practical reality, other politicians, including Eugene Wamalwa and Kazungu Kambi, later came on board.

The one non-politician Cabinet Secretary who made a mark during his ten-year stint is Dr Fred Matiang'i, who was easily the most visible and probable most effective CS in the Uhuru administration.

However, as former Water and Sanitation CS Sicily Kariuki aptly puts it, Ruto is probably alive to the challenges of stuffing a Cabinet with boardroom experts, whose interaction with the people is relatively minimal. Because he wants to move fast to execute his policies, Kariuki opines that Ruto is keen on politicians who can quickly connect with the people while communicating his government's messages effectively.

This, indeed, ties in with the Kenya Kwanza coalition's political mantra of 'hustler nation', which seeks to connect with and address the plight of ordinary citizens struggling to earn a living. This approach, however, does not exclude those with technical and professional experience who, according to Kariuki, operate behind the scenes as principal secretaries and in other capacities.

Former Central Bank Governor Njuguna Ndung'u leads the pack of technocrats in Ruto's Cabinet, who include Rebecca Miano, a lawyer and Managing Director of KenGen, David

Chirchir, a former minister and practising IT specialist, Eliud Owalo, who is an economist and strategy expert, as well Simon Chelugui, the only CS from the previous government retained in the same capacity. The last two have also had a brush with politics, making unsuccessful bids for Kibra parliamentary and Baringo senatorial seats respectively.

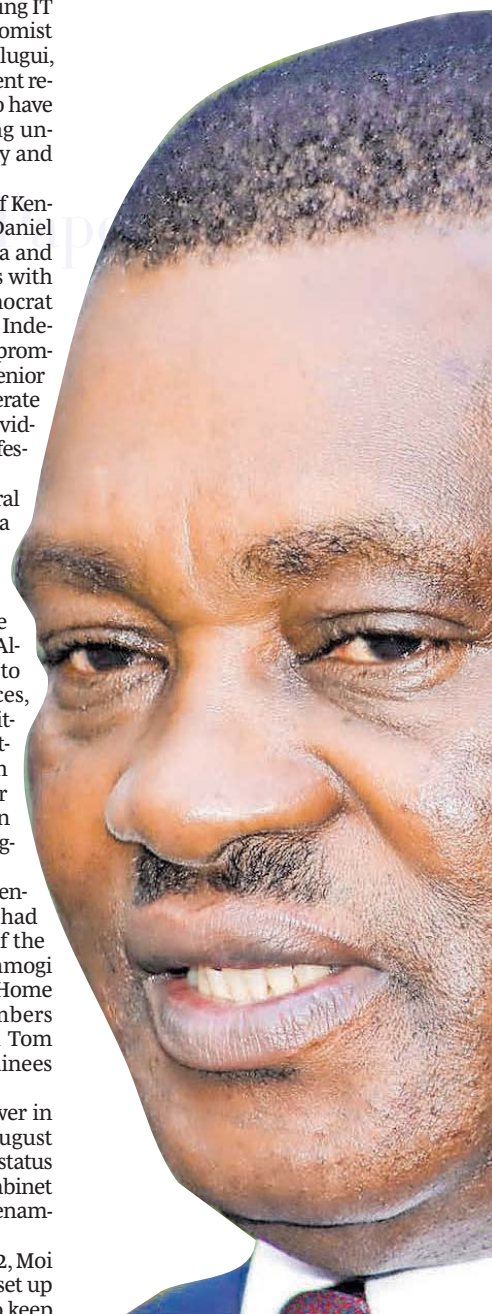
A quick look at the first Cabinet lists of Kenya's five presidents – Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki, Uhuru Kenyatta and now Ruto – offers interesting contrasts with regard to the politician vis-à-vis technocrat factor. While ministers were MPs from Independence through to 2007 and before promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, the senior Kenyatta appears to have made a deliberate effort to rope into his government individuals with impressive academic and professional credentials.

One of those in the country's inaugural Cabinet was the first Kenyan to earn a PhD degree, Dr Gikonyo Kiano, who was named Commerce and Industry minister. The president similarly appointed Lawrence Sagini, who had a degree in sociology and political science from Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, USA, to head the Ministry of Natural Resources, while settling on South African-and-British-trained lawyer Charles Njonjo as attorney-general. Kenyatta's dream team also included his personal doctor, Dr Njoroge Mungai, and South African-born Bruce McKenzie, whom he appointed Agriculture minister.

But just as Ruto has done, the senior Kenyatta presented a mixed grill that also had senior political players and loyalists of the ruling party, Kanu. They included Jaramogi Oginga Odinga as Vice-President and Home Affairs Minister, Kanu founder members James Gichuru, Mbiyu Koinange and Tom Mboya, as well as fellow political detainees Paul Ngei and Achieng' Onoko.

When Moi took over the reins of power in 1998 following Kenyatta's death on August 22, he was cautious about upsetting the status quo, making minimal changes to the Cabinet and mainly reorganising dockets and renaming some ministries.

But following a coup attempt in 1982, Moi called elections the following year and set up the first new Cabinet under his rule. To keep his grip on government, Moi largely appoint-



Former National Assembly Speaker Justin Muturi is set to be the new Attorney-General.

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kenya lens

■ BUMPER HARVEST

WHY MT KENYA SCORED BIG

The region that propelled Ruto to the presidency got the lion's share in his first Cabinet. In a country of 42 ethnic communities, the vote of the Gema "nation" is so crucial that no serious presidential contender can hope to clinch the seat without the approval of the majority voters in Central Kenya



Kenya Kwanza presidential candidate William Ruto campaigns at Kimuchu grounds in Thika Town, Kiambu County, on July 17.

• By MAGESHA NGWIRI

One of the lessons that the 2022 presidential elections taught Kenyans is that where the mountain vote goes, there goes the presidency. Although this may not be an ideal situation in a country of 42 ethnic communities, the vote of the Gema "nation" is so crucial that no serious presidential contender can hope to clinch the seat without the approval of the majority voters in the region. This may sound condescendingly chauvinistic, but election results in the past four decades go a long way to prove just that point. And now we have this year's election results.

To his credit, the uncommonly shrewd Dr William Ruto long ago recognised this reality and played

his cards right to sway this community to his side, which is why he is the President today.

Call it the tyranny of numbers, but at eight million strong, this community is bound to have an influence on who becomes president for the foreseeable future, until the way Kenyans elect their president is reformed to reflect the diversity of this country's population in a way that every community stands a chance of producing a president. At the moment, however, that is a rather tall order.

In an election marked by a relatively low turnout of 14 million out of 22.1 million registered voters, Ruto was elected by 7,176,141, beating his main opponent, Raila Odinga, by 233,211 votes. In terms of presidential elections, this

was a narrow squeak, but it was enough.

Pundits had predicted all manner of outcome that would deny Ruto the victory, including a low turnout in his strongholds and the full weight of the "Deep State" being brought to bear, but he beat the odds through adroit measures that included consolidating the undivided support of his Rift Valley home base, and then that of the entire Mt Kenya region. This strategy worked wonderfully well, and he gained for himself the opportunity to raid Mr Odinga's tra-

ditional strongholds.

How did Ruto manage to do these things? It was not by mere luck; a great deal of hard work and money did the trick. First of all, he had enough time to put it all together. It is said he started campaigning the minute he and President Uhuru Kenyatta won a second term in office. That could be true because even before he parted ways with his former boss, he was all over the place and his generosity was noted by its recipients. As Odinga bid his time, ostensibly waiting for the official campaign

Historically, former President Moi knew instinctively that you cannot hope to run this country successfully without Gema support unless you found ways to suppress them. He did so for most of the 24 years he ruled, but only by containing those among its leaders who dared challenge his excesses.

kenya lens

period to be announced, Ruto endeared himself to influential clerics and church groups in the region, and they played a significant, if understated, role in swaying the views of the faithful to his side.

Even more significant was his messaging. An eloquent orator, Ruto managed to convince a huge number of youth from the former Central Province of the virtues of the bottom-up model of economic development, a brilliant propaganda ploy that he used to maximum effect among hordes of unemployed and under-employed. Using carefully selected political henchmen in every county, he spread the word that the Jubilee government, specifically former President Uhuru Kenyatta, had neglected them in development matters and instead opted to support Odinga, their traditional bogeyman, to become president.

The revolt was not only instantaneous, it was tinged with deep resentment. There was, of course, an element of entitlement in this resentment because, for some reason, the Gema community concluded that their 'son', who had neglected them, was purporting to tell them who to elect president.

There could be some truth in this because for sure, Uhuru rarely visited the mountain to tell the people who had elected him thrice what he had done for them. When he did occasionally venture into the area, it was to lecture those "rebels" who had identified with Ruto's aspirations. That, as he must have come to realise too late, was a huge mistake.

On his part, Odinga and his supporters made the mistake of believing that since the government was on their side, there was no way they could lose. They therefore failed to do enough to counter all the propaganda making the rounds – that Uhuru was intent on destroying the livelihoods of Kikuyu "hustlers", that he had taken development to all corners of the Republic except Central Kenya, and that he was responsible for the escalating prices of goods. They were also told that he wasted the country's resources propping up the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) so that he could hang on to power through Odinga. How they came to believe such blatant blather is a story for another day. But propaganda or not,

these tactics were effective.

There is no taking away the fact that Ruto would not have clinched the presidency had he not been voted for by these communities overwhelmingly. After all, from the ancestral Kikuyu counties of Nyeri, Murang'a, Kiambu, Kirinyaga and Nyandarua, he received a combined 1,630,770 votes. When you add these to those garnered from the rest of the Gema communities and the diaspora, it all added up to 3,480,812 votes. This means that of the votes that allowed him to clinch the presidency, almost half came from the Mt Kenya region, Nairobi and Nakuru.

Historically, former President Moi knew instinctively that you cannot hope to run this country successfully without Gema support unless you found ways to suppress them. He did so for most of the 24 years he ruled, but only by containing those among its leaders who dared challenge his excesses.

What happened to the late Kenneth Matiba, Charles Rubia, a sizeable number of academics, lawyers and even student leaders agitating for political pluralism is a case in point. Of course, nobody sensible looks forward to a resumption of measures like detention without trial, imprisonment on trumped-up charges, and enforced flight into exile for dissenters, for such a policy would be both short-sighted and self-defeatist.

Nevertheless, that the folks of the Mt Kenya region have effectively become king-makers whether they have a candidate for the presidency or not is in no doubt, for it is backed by history. That is why former President Kibaki could win two terms in office, followed by retired President Kenyatta.

However, there is a caveat on this one which should give members of this community pause should they be tempted to gloat; it will never be certain whether Kibaki really won the 2007 re-election race after the rest of the country had ganged up against the perceived Gema hegemony. There is no reason to believe it cannot happen again in the future should members of this community continue believing in their exceptionalism.

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Delicate balancing act in Executive branch

...Continued from Page 9

ed his trusted allies and political friends to his Cabinet. New faces emerged from his Rift Valley backyard that would become influential in his government, including Henry Kosgey, Jonathan arap Ng'eno and later Nicholas Biwott, the self-proclaimed 'total man'.

And Ruto, who has been cited for rewarding political lieutenants Aisha Jumwa, Moses Kuria, Susan Nakhumicha Wafula, Ezekiel Machogu, Mithika Linturi and Florence Bore with cabinet positions after they lost at the August polls, may well have learnt one or two things from Moi.

Unveiling his 1983 Cabinet, Moi rewarded those who had supported him during his trying moments as Kenyatta's V-P, especially those who stood with him against the controversial 1976 change-the-constitution movement led by Kihika Kimani (Nakuru Governor Susan Kihika's father).

They included Godfrey Githahi (GG) Kariuki and Joseph Kamotho.

Kihika's movement was aimed at stopping Moi from automatically taking over from Kenyatta, who was ailing and likely to die soon.

A young man, 34-year-old Hussein Maalim Mohamed, became a surprise Cabinet beneficiary when Moi appointed him Minister of State in the President's office.

Mohamed, the first member of the Somali community to be appointed minister, was the younger brother of Lt Gen Mahmoud Mohamed, an army leader who crushed the 1982 coup attempt by dissident Air Force officers.

Moi nonetheless retained and appointed into government some respected technocrats including Dr Robert

Ouko, who had just returned to the country from Arusha following the collapse of the East African Community in 1977 and been named Minister for Economic Planning and Community Affairs. He also named renowned economist Mwai Kibaki as Vice-President and Minister for Finance.

When he ascended to power in 2003, Kibaki himself tried to make his Cabinet professional by aligning his appointees' credentials with the assigned dockets.

David Mwiraria, an economist and Kibaki's college-mate at Makerere University, for instance, was assigned the Finance docket, Raila Odinga, a German-schooled engineer, became Roads and Public Works minister, while Harvard-trained lawyer Kiraitu Murungi was appointed Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister.

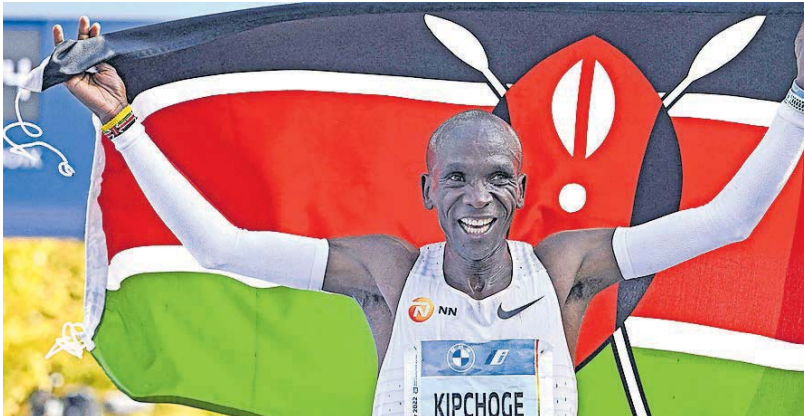
George Saitoti, a professor of mathematics and former University of Nairobi lecturer, was handed the Education docket, with renowned environmentalist and Nobel Laureate Prof Wangari Maathai, being assigned assistant Environment minister. This pattern was replicated in virtually all ministries.

Admittedly, it was a tough balancing job considering that Kibaki was elected on a ticket of the National Rainbow Coalition, comprising various political entities.

This is precisely the scenario that Ruto finds himself in, with over 10 member parties in Kenya Kwanza. In Kibaki's case, competing interests compelled him to reconstitute his Cabinet in 2005.

Ruto, too, has a delicate balancing game at hand and might need to reshuffle his team at some point to reflect the reality on the ground and his personal goals.

the limelight



Eliud Kipchoge celebrates after winning the Berlin Marathon race on September 25. Kipchoge broke his own world record by 29 seconds, running 2:01:10. PHOTO | AFP



Spanish bullfighter Pablo Aguado performs a pass to a bull with a capote during the San Miguel festival in Seville on September 25. PHOTO | AFP



A man demands the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry after he put up road barricades during a strike in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, September 28. PHOTO | AFP



A firefighter walks through rubble at a railway yard of the freight railway station in Kharkiv, which was partially destroyed by a missile strike, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine on September 28. PHOTO | AFP



This hand-out photo taken on September 28, from an aircraft of the Swedish Coast Guard, shows the release of gas emanating from a leak on the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline, in the Baltic Sea. PHOTO | AFP



A man rides a motorbike in a flooded street following the passage of typhoon Noru in Hoi An city, Quang Nam province in Vietnam, on September 28. PHOTO | AFP

The Arena



ZURI AWARDS 2020
Jackline Odhiambo
PUBLIC SERVICE CATEGORY
GAGGGA ZURI AWARDS

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

Altruistic sacrifice: Jackline Odhiambo supports widows and other vulnerable women to rise against all odds and succeed in life.

OPEN SPACE

PLUG YOUTH INTO CLIMATE TALK

SAVE THE EARTH: With the largest young population on earth, our continent has the ancestral knowledge, workforce and vivacity to help solve the world's biggest problem – the climate crisis

• BY KENNETH KIGUNDA

In the last few months, Kenyans have experienced a drastic change in weather patterns in the country, including extreme events like prolonged cold and dry seasons, long-drawn-out drought, irregular and unpredictable rainfall, flooding and increasing temperatures.

The effects of these changes are evident everywhere and can be felt by every single person. The question is whether Kenyans, and especially young people, can fully comprehend the ramifications of climate change and whether they are taking or willing to take action. This is a conversation that my colleagues and I have been engaging in as we plan for the second edition of the Climate Story Lab Africa 2022 (CSL Africa) this September.

It is clear that many young people are anxious about their future, considering that they will be bearing the brunt of the impact of climate change.

Hence, understanding their views on the issue is important as they are more likely to be alive to experience its worst potential effects.

Although they might lack the formal jargon to express their experience of climate change and the actions they are already taking, the youth are using colloquial language



in their daily street talk to express their concerns and worries. In fact, young people in Kenya and Africa at large do understand and have experienced the effects of climate change. Many have been involved in climate activism, debates and conversations, as well as activities such as environmental clean-up and tree planting across the country.

As the world gears up for the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27) in Egypt next month, it is pivotal to understand the role that African youth play in amplifying visibility to global audiences and policymakers of African perspectives, experiences and solutions to pressing climate issues. Africa is potentially the strongest liberator of the world with regard to climate change.

With the largest young population on earth, our continent has the ancestral knowledge, the workforce and the vivacity to help solve the world's biggest problem – the climate crisis.

With the Kenyan society, and young people in particular, becoming increasingly aware of and involved in climate change management, we have the responsibility to continue creating space for their engagement and participation. As peers in the climate sphere, we must ensure that their voices are heard and their needs reflected in decisions made regarding our world.

Mr Kigunda is a Communication Specialist at Climate Story Lab Africa.

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

It is clear that many young people are anxious about their future, considering that they will be bearing the brunt of the impact of climate change.

MIND SPEAK



Maxwell Anekea

The government should make it easier for graduates to access internship programmes. This can be done by giving tax exemptions on apprentice emoluments to employers who train a particular number of graduates. This will motivate employers to invest in graduates.
—Photographer



Grace Wangeci

The biggest problem with our country is that we are not updated with how the world works. We are trying to force the past into the present and future. We should evolve with the times and capitalise on technology. There are new opportunities in IT.
—Marketing expert



Harry Sisswa

Stop rewarding political cronies with jobs and appointments and consider professional qualifications in appointments. Create business-friendly policies for the youth and vulnerable populations to enable them to have competitive business opportunities.
—Writer



John Mwaniki

The government should set specific numbers or percentages of people they can absorb into the public sector for a given financial year. They can then assess and draft the way forward. I believe the private sector also thrives with a more inclusive public sector.
—Influencer

MY TAKE



● BY WAGA ODONGO

President William Ruto was recently abroad looking for funds to finance his ambitious social programmes. He needn't have gone too far. He should have started at home. He has a new mandate to rule untethered to the last and can afford to reimagine how Kenya spends its money. The question, though, is what department can absorb the greatest budget reduction without a concomitant drop in service delivery? Health is underfunded and so is education. Those are off the table.

Foreign Affairs is too minuscule to matter, but I have a suggestion for a once-in-a-generation budget readjustment: Cut the Kenya Defence Forces' (KDF) Sh128.4 billion budget. I don't mean giving it a haircut like the single-digit percentage reduction they made last year. I mean shear it to the bone. Under President Uhuru Kenyatta's administration, the army's budget almost doubled and the Ministry of Defence went on a spending spree.

Looking back, I understand why Kenyatta did it. Five months into his presidency, Westgate happened. With the whole world watching, the security response was shambolic, characterised by cases of friendly fire, claims that the security services were involved in looting and finally a double-digit death toll. The next year, the Mpeketoni attacks occurred. A year later, the attack on Garissa University left over 140 people dead. It was a baptism of fire and he had barely settled into the role.

You can imagine in the aftermath of these attacks the grizzled generals standing before him, the front of their uniforms reinforced so as not to collapse under the weight of all the medals, asking him for the keys to the Treasury to end the menace.

KDF, I read to great amazement, is now getting kitted out with the same battle rifle as the United

KEEP KDF IN THE BARRACKS

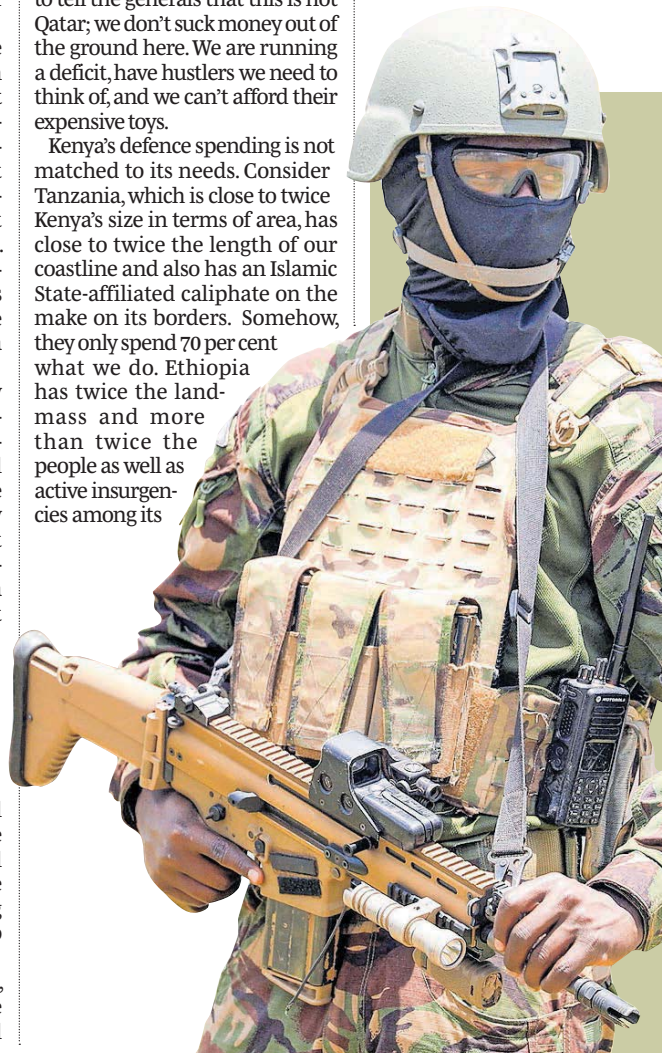
PRIORITIES: We need fewer generals and more general hospitals, and considering we run an annual deficit, we have to choose between the two. I vote for the hospitals

States army. The FN Scar has already been rolled out to the elite forces in KDF and will become the standard battle rifle for the army. Only 20 nations use this elite gun, and it costs north of US\$3,500 by most estimates. Two of these guns can build you a classroom. It is sheer madness. Someone needs to tell the generals that this is not Qatar; we don't suck money out of the ground here. We are running a deficit, have hustlers we need to think of, and we can't afford their expensive toys.

Kenya's defence spending is not matched to its needs. Consider Tanzania, which is close to twice Kenya's size in terms of area, has close to twice the length of our coastline and also has an Islamic State-affiliated caliphate on the make on its borders. Somehow, they only spend 70 per cent what we do. Ethiopia has twice the landmass and more than twice the people as well as active insurgencies among its

population, yet it somehow manages to spend less than half what we do.

I know defence spending is an insurance against what might occur but there are no armies massing at our borders, no blockade on our coastline and no one is imple-



menting a no-fly-zone on our airspace. We cannot predict the future and I know rearming would take time. In fact re-arming during war time can risk the total destruction of a country. But we must ask why Ethiopia, with its martial history, having fought wars against Somalia involving the largest tank battles since Kursk in World War II, having been ruled by a military council and with an ongoing conflict, somehow manages to spend half what Kenya does.

The war in Somalia does not factor into this because the soldiers there are partly paid for by the EU through Amisom. All insurance spending must be based on an assessment of risk and there is no way I can be convinced that Kenya faces twice as many risks to its borders as does Ethiopia. We should also concern ourselves with the military's mission creep. We see and feel the growing vice grip of the military on the state. The military has an academy which even government employees attend to receive "leadership training". They now have a TV and radio station so that they can "communicate effectively with the public".

Why do we need KDF communicating with the public? I thought it was up to the military's civilian handlers to talk to the people. Did I wake up in Pakistan or Egypt, where the military runs everything? Nairobi, meanwhile, was encircled in a pincer manoeuvre by the soldiers. Soldiers, we were told, are more efficient, especially in times of crises like the pandemic.

Nairobi Metropolitan Services's signature success in the city was to build boreholes. Close inspection of documents indicates that the actual building was done by private constructors. We got no tangible benefit from the military occupation of City Hall, and I am unconvinced that the changes could not have happened under a civilian. I am all for being defended, but at the present price and considering the challenges we face with education and healthcare, we must ask what we are defending ourselves from.

We need fewer generals and more general hospitals, and considering we run an annual deficit, we have to choose between the two. I vote for the hospitals.

Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer

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DIGITAL MARKETING

MAKING YOUR FOLLOWERS COUNT

SOCIAL MEDIA: Janet Machuka is changing the way social media is used by individuals, especially to create brands for themselves and to build businesses and audiences out of people who are willing to help

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

You have to be willing to say no. That is Janet Machuka's welcoming note of grace, which is paradoxical considering that she is currently under the weather but will not accept my offer to reschedule the interview. It's just flu, she says. Besides, she adds, flu has been known to keep men down, not women. Ah, a feisty one! She trades in aphorisms, the kind of memorable nuggets of inspiration that could provide equal comfort to lorry drivers as to international businessmen: "Eat it, but you don't have to tweet it." "Class is simple." "Slowly is the fastest way to get where you want to be."

There is another famous maxim, rejigged to fit the zeitgeist don't-miss-a-moment society: "If you are not on Twitter you are uninformed; if you are on Twitter you are misinformed." In this high-octane, click-a-minute, and impressionable universe of social media, Janet is unexpectedly mundane.

That, however, is a red herring. Her resume deserves its own social media account: she is co-founder of Africa Tweet Chat — a digital marketing institution with an audience footprint of 500+ million in the last four years and with representation in East, West and Southern Africa; a teacher at Platzi — a Latin American educational platform; and co-founder of Sparks Corporate, which is a multi-faceted creative agency.

She was recently named one of the Top 100 Twitter Women (2020) in Africa by Semrush, an American public company dealing in keyword research and online ranking data, and one of the Top 100 Digital Marketing Influencers 2022 by Browse Media Agency. She is, to use the hackneyed phrase, an outlier. The icing on the cake, rather than the cake itself. And all this at the ripe old age of 27.

"I thought after campus I'd be a journalist and eventually venture into broadcasting," she says. Is that wistfulness in her voice?

"I discovered digital marketing while working as a social media manager. It piqued my interest. I was still in school and started doing research on this relatively new niche. I built a network and teamed up with a colleague (Barrack Onyango) to set up Sparks Corporate, our creative agency, which specialises in corporate digital marketing. We currently have seven employees."

The campus she is referring to is Moi University, from where she is a graduate

of Media Science and Mass Communication. Come to think of it, she isn't way off the mark: she is somewhat into broadcasting, just a different type of broadcast. And if anything, she was cut out to deal with multitudes: at the time of writing she has 174,000 followers on Twitter. Across her social media platforms, the number is pushing 300,000-plus. Does she consider herself an influencer? Who is an influencer anyway?

"An influencer marketer directly helps individuals to a point where people can make decisions about products. A thought leader is an expert that people can learn and gain from. A thought leader can be an influencer but an influencer is not necessarily a thought leader." Can



JEFF ANGOTE INATION

An influencer marketer directly helps individuals to a point where people can make decisions about products. A thought leader is an expert that people can learn and gain from.

Janet Machuka



you influence everything — what I like to call “hawkers”? “Well, if your target is money, you will do anything to get it. But if your goal is to stay in the industry, to make a mark, leave a dent, you will know what to say no to. It’s a business. You gotta know what ticks, and what sticks.”

Shakespeare, writing in Julius Caesar, observed that it’s far easier to be remembered for doing evil than doing good. Think about this: how many will leave a mark in their families — much less the country — for their contributions rather than their crimes? Subsequently, does the end justify the means, especially when it comes to publicity?

“I think sometimes bad publicity works when you turn it into productivity or use it to change the narrative. However, businesses have a predilection for working with those with good publicity. *Kizuri chaji* (a good product sells itself).”

Defining herself comes easily. She is a woman changing the way social media is used by individuals, especially to create brands for themselves and to build businesses and audiences out of people who are willing to help. That gets my tail up. How can I indulge my audience of, give or take, a few thousand, other than with periodical cat videos? “First find communities. Look for various mentors. Critics and trolls help you look at life differently. Be part of a community. In communities people don’t compete with each other; they complement.”

Machuka’s moxie, according to her business partner, Onyango, lies in her never-say-die attitude. “Janet has the Midas touch. She can see an ordinary idea and turn it into something huge. She has a calm exterior but her mind is always running, always thinking of the next move, the next frontier,” he says.

His sentiments are echoed by Eglie Samoei, co-founder of Brand Moran, a social listening and digital media monitoring tool. “I met Janet in 2018 while she was giving a talk on personal branding at Strathmore (University). She is the one who opened my digital doors by giving me an opportunity to network at Africa Tweet Chat,” Samoei says. “What makes Janet



Janet Machuka is the co-founder of Africa Tweet Chat—a digital marketing institution with an audience footprint of 500+ million in the last four years and with representation in East, West and Southern Africa.

unique is her resourcefulness in the digital industry checkered by her hard-working ethos.”

In truth, Janet is a less operatic, behind-the-scenes puppeteer. She is all understatement, relaxation, wit and ease. She is well-intentioned but alive to the fact that honest intentions do not negate the principle of the situation. Besides, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. And no hell burneth hotter than being on the wrong side of KOT (Kenyans On Twitter), which has waged online wars against countries à la #KenyaVsUganda, marshalled support for various causes such as #KenyansForKenya, and driven a president out of Twitter, a proper cause célèbre. KOT takes no prisoners.

How does she rise above the fray? “That was my first challenge on Twitter. However, I was intentional in building proper networks, and through that, I formed a community of people I want to be in the room with for meaningful conversations. Sometimes you could be on the receiving end of trolls but it comes with

In truth, Janet is a less operatic, behind-the-scenes puppeteer. She is all understatement, relaxation, wit and ease. She is well-intentioned but alive to the fact that honest intentions do not negate the principle of the situation.

the territory. You can read them but you do not have to tweet them. At the end of the day, what do you want to say?” I know that money makes everything easier. How does she make hers? “From conducting training programmes, content creation for brands, influencer marketing, social media management, content writing and ultimately, I have an agency (Sparks Corps) that offers consultation services for corporates.” She charges no less than \$150 (Sh18,204) for an Instagram story. “If you think about money, money will evade you. If you think about people, people will help you get money. They will mention your name in rooms where you are not.”

What keeps Janet ahead of her peers is her expertise? “She keeps reinventing herself to meet and anticipate market needs. That’s her superpower,” adds Barrack.

Aptly so. Machuka’s foot is still on the pedal. Rest, but don’t stop, she insists. From all the documentaries that she shares, which would best summarise her life? “Minimalism.” It’s a documentary about the “important things”. And one of the important things she struggles with, she confesses, is keeping dates.

This naturally leads us to the question of family: She is big on family. Why? Because she questions herself a lot — about business, about her relationships, about her future family. She starts talking about kids and murmuring softly, before breaking into a long, monotone laugh. If God laughed, that’s how it would sound.

“Can I ask you a very personal question?” she says.

“Right now?”

“Yes.”

She then proceeds to ask me a very personal question.

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MILESTONES

Top 25 digital women in Kenya in 2019

Top 20 content marketing influencers in 2020 by Semrush

Top 100 digital marketing influencers on Twitter in 2020 by AndyWood

Top 200 of the most influential African women on Twitter in 2021 by Smart Data Power

Top 20 content marketing influencers in 2022 by Semrush

Top 100 digital marketing influencers in 2022 by Buzzsumo

Africa’s Top 10 marketing influencers in 2022 based on engagements ranked by Talkwalker.

Top 36 digital marketing experts to follow on social media by Social Pilot

CORRECTING SOCIAL INJUSTICE

• BY HILARY KIMUYU

Jackline Odhiambo was 10 in the year 2000, when she and her three siblings were forced to relocate from Nairobi's Dandora estate to her father's rural home in Kisumu after he became ill and could no longer work. As the family's sole bread winner, her mother remained in Nairobi so that she could continue to work as a nurse assistant.

Sadly, Jackline's father died a year later. "As the child of a widow, I saw how much she had to labour, how much she sacrificed to send me and my siblings to school and to feed us," says Jackline. "And yet she always found a way to take care of our needs."

"Growing up, I used to walk for almost an hour to school and another hour back as there was no school near where we lived. I could not afford to go back home for lunch and my classmates would sometimes bring me something to eat when they returned from their homes," she says.

Her first-hand experience with widowhood informs her current work as the founder and director of Nyanam International, an organisation that "prepares widows to lead positive social transformation in their communities".

When she finished school, Jackline, now 33, got a scholarship to study at the Williams College in Williamstown in the United States. As she flew out of Kenya, she prayed that she would find a way to make her mother proud. Although she had gone to study medicine, she changed course and majored in international studies with a focus on global health. After her graduation, she joined the Global Health Research Core at Harvard Medical School, where she supported research initiatives in Rwanda. She later earned a master's degree in international public health at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

Jackline also enrolled in a history class called Movers and Shakers in the Middle East with Magnús Bernhardtsson. "I realised history was more than just dates that had to be memorised, and I fell in love with it," she says. In addition, she conducted health education research on the

A BIG HEART FOR WIDOWS

SERVICE TO THE NATION:

As a result of her personal experiences, Jackline Odhiambo helps widows to tackle oppressive cultural, economic and social practices that undermine their dignity and limit their agency

college's Robert G Wilmers Jr 1990 Memorial Student Travel Abroad Fellowship. "I began to understand that health is not just a function of medical care but of socio-economic status, social relationships and so much more."

In her sophomore year, Jackline was involved in a fundraiser, called the Alternative Gift Fair, in which students donated to various charitable causes and received a small gift in return. This event, and her new perspectives on health, motivated her to help her rural community in Kisumu West sub-county to start Mboto Sunrise Primary School with support from the Alternative Gift Fair. The school was taken over by the government and has more than 300 pupils.

Jackline also partnered with Kenya Water for Health Organisation to drill a community borehole that serves the school and 3,000 households.

"Throughout this engagement with the community, I saw how widows were mistreated," she says, recalling one poor woman who was scapegoated when something went wrong with the borehole project. "She was vulnerable to that mistreatment because she was a widow, and people knew she couldn't protect herself."

She describes other challenges widows face in rural Kenya. Property rights are traditionally held by men. When husbands die, their brothers or fathers inherit the land, not their wives. "Oftentimes, women maintain the land, growing vegetables and keeping cattle, but their ownership is disputed," she observes. Widows are often forced to marry their deceased husbands' relatives, and when



Ms Jackline Odhiambo, founder and director of Nyanam International, which is based in Kisumu. The organisation prepares widows to lead positive social transformation in their communities. PHOTO: POOL



Jackline Odhiambo, who founded Mboti Sunrise Primary School in Seme, Kisumu County, shares a light moment with pupils when she visited the institution on September 28. Ms Odhiambo is also the founder of Nyanam International, an NGO based in Nyanza that empowers widows. TONNY OMONDII

that doesn't happen, they're seen as a threat.

"They are thought of as people who are trying to steal other women's husbands, or they're perceived as helpless, people who are coming to beg, not to offer."

In 2017, she founded Nyanam International (Nyanam means 'daughter of the lake') to give widows in the Lake Victoria region leadership education and help them in their personal and professional development. The organisation has helped 200 widows to start small businesses and educated 30 of them about property rights, helping them to

reclaim assets that were rightly theirs.

Nyanam built a home for a widow whose safety was threatened, and nearly 1,000 children have benefitted from youth camps and mentoring programmes run by the organisation. Hundreds of widows gather for monthly meetings, providing them with a sense of community.

"When we started, we thought we would only get a few women walking in, but to our surprise more than 80 showed up, wanting to learn. We were shocked. Next year we expect to train and

educate more than 500 women."

"The women we work with are able to tackle oppressive cultural, economic and social practices that undermine their dignity and limit their agency," she says. "We have partnered with organisations such as Transparency International to train them on property rights and conduct legal clinics."

Nyanam is currently working with three women groups in Kisumu and Siaya.

Africa, Jackline observes, is under-represented in health research. Studying the health of our population so that our

policies and programmes are informed by evidence is our responsibility, and an area we need to improve upon nationally.

"In 2014, I designed and implemented a research project that assessed the barriers to the uptake of voluntary medical male circumcision in Nyanza, which was later adopted by the government in controlling the spread of HIV in the region," she reveals.

For her master's thesis, she studied health systems resilience, which looks at the ability of a health system to respond to crises such as disease outbreak without collapsing or disrupting normal functions.

One of the lessons Jackline has learnt from Nyanam is that, to curb the spread of infectious diseases, rural communities need disease information disseminated in their local languages and through known and trusted health promotion channels. In April 2021, for instance, Nyanam developed a kit containing Covid-19 educational leaflets, a face mask, vegetable seeds and soap for its members.

In 2020, Jackline won the Zuri Award for Public Service for her work with the community. But for her, the best award is her mother's joy in her accomplishments. "She recently told me that she is proud to be my mother. At that point, I felt I had accomplished my goal."

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The **911** SIDE
With John Nyaganjyaga
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WOMAN POWER

HISTORY WAS MADE IN THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTIONS WHEN 7 WOMEN WERE ELECTED GOVERNORS, COMPARED WITH ONLY THREE IN THE PREVIOUS ELECTIONS. ONE OF THE VICTORIOUS WOMEN WAS CECILY MLITITU MBARIRE WHO WAS SWORN IN AS GOVERNOR OF EMBU COUNTY AFTER GETTING 108,610 VOTES THROUGH THE LIDA PARTY. MBARIRE DEFEATED THE OUTGOING SENATOR OF THE COUNTY LENNY KIVUTI OF THE DEP PARTY WHO GOT 105,246 VOTES AMONG OTHERS. SHE HAS SINCE HIT THE GROUND RUNNING, PLEDGING TO SERVE THE PEOPLE OF EMBU DILIGENTLY BY TRANSFORMING THE HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE SECTORS AS HER KEY PRIORITIES. CONGRATULATIONS YOUR EXCELLENCY



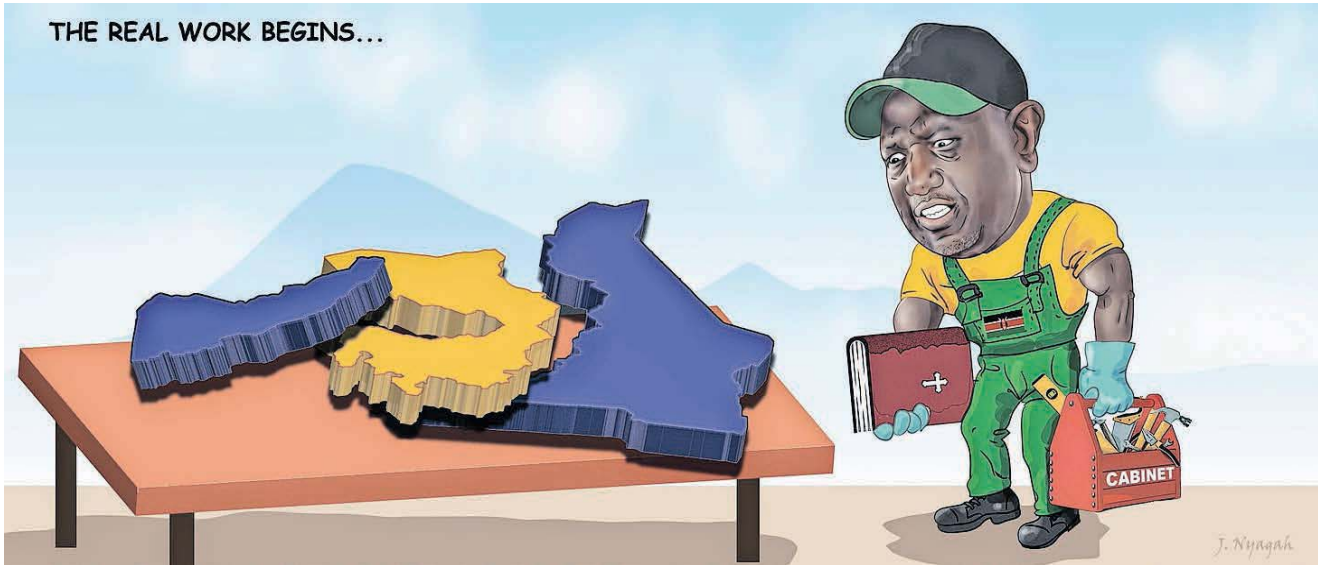
STAR OF THE WEEK

TIMOTHY MLITWIRI IS REPORTEDLY KENYA'S YOUNGEST POLITICIAN AT THE AGE OF 21 AFTER BEING ELECTED MCA FOR KIEGEOI/ANTUBOCHILU WARD IN IGEEMBE SOUTH, MERU COUNTY. IN THE JUST-CONCLUDED 2022 GENERAL ELECTION, THE YOUNG POLITICIAN OVERCAME FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES TO GARNER 2,901 VOTES, BEATING 20 RENOWNED POLITICIANS WHO WERE CONTESTING FOR THE SAME SEAT IN THE PROCESS. THE FORMER LEAVER'S VENTURE INTO POLITICS WAS UNSTOPPABLE DESPITE HIS VILLAGE MATES DISCOURAGING HIM FROM CONTESTING. THEY CLAIMED HE LACKED THE FINANCES TO FUND HIS CAMPAIGNS. HE WAS SO DETERMINED TO PURSUE HIS POLITICAL DREAMS THAT HE STARTED CAMPAIGNING WHILE IN CLASS 8 AT THE AGE OF 16. HE EVEN FOREWENT SEEKING BLESSINGS FROM HIS MOTHER FEARING SHE WOULDN'T OBLIGE. "I STARTED ATTENDING PUBLIC FUNCTIONS, WHERE I WOULD SOLICIT VOTES. MY PARENTS WERE SHOCKED TO SEE ME SHARING PLATFORMS WITH OTHER POLITICIANS," HE RECOLLECTED. BEFORE HIS TRIUMPH, HE DID MENIAL JOBS INCLUDING WORKING AS A CONSTRUCTION LABOURER IN MERU COUNTY. IF DETERMINATION HAD A FACE, THIS WOULD BE IT!!



opinion

THE REAL WORK BEGINS...



■ Kenyans are mourning the deaths of loved ones mowed down by bullets from the guns of bandits

What Ruto should do to rebuild economy

These five factors must make it clear to President Ruto that Kenya needs to shift from the trajectories of the last 59 years and reposition its policies to grow the economy, feed its citizenry and guarantee security within its borders.

The first is that for the umpteenth time, the President, assorted government officials and development partners are flagging off trucks ferrying donated foodstuffs to millions of people on the verge of starvation in six arid and semi-arid counties of Kenya.

The second is that for the umpteenth time, Kenyans are mourning the deaths of loved ones mowed down by bullets from the guns of bandits who indiscriminately attack police and public in pursuit of livestock to steal and in protection of their booty.

The third is that Kenyans, who are decrying the high cost of living are, for the umpteenth time, being told they have never had it this good. Why? Because Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown exponentially and exceeded the expectations of experts, bureaucrats and technocrats.

The fourth is that government, the business of government, business with government and the benefits of doing business with government have forever been the preserve of a few. This monstrosity has unfortunately been

Every economic success the government claims is meaningless if it does not make it easier for the majority to put food on the table, clothes on their backs, shelter over their heads and children in school and college.



**KWENDO
OPANGA**

replicated in the counties.

Last, Kenya will next year celebrate 60 years of Independence. If the President takes stock of the last six decades, he will realise that the issues of insecurity, famine, little-felt GDP growth and government by the few for the few have been the fare of Kenya since before he was born. Four issues should therefore preoccupy his mind if he wants his presidency to make a difference by embarking on the transformation of Kenya.

One, the criticality of food, security and the growth of the economy to the development of Kenya and attainment of industrialising status in 2030 cannot be gainsaid. Therefore, persistent lack of food and insecurity scream failure of past governments and policies.

Two, while to err is human, persistence in error and therefore failure for six decades is a catastrophe that has doomed generations to misery, deprivation and death. To people who starve in season and out of it, the first, second or third liberation mean nothing and government means zilch.

Three, the politics of unity so beloved of politicians on the stump count for nothing in terms of bringing people together until and unless this is replaced, or followed up, by the

policy of levelling up. This will give meaning to the election campaign pledge that no person and no region will be left behind.

Levelling up does not mean that the development of the advantaged areas be put on hold so that the disadvantaged catch up. It is a deliberate and determined policy of reducing economic and infrastructural imbalances, for example, between the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) and the better endowed regions.

And four, candidate Ruto gave young people, mama mbogas, wheelbarrow-pushing construction site workers and handcart-pushers hope that they would be enabled to work, earn, produce, purchase, save and invest to help grow the economy.

GDP will make sense when these Kenyans know that the economy is only as strong as the numbers of people involved in the production of goods and services. They will understand GDP when they enjoy their role in Kenya's growth via the amount of money in their pockets. Every economic success the government claims is meaningless if it does not make it easier for the majority to put food on their tables, clothes on their backs, shelter over their heads and children in schools and colleges.

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opinion

■ If that lost business is to be revived, KPA must reverse all the advances and slow down the processes

Whimsical port decree takes us one step forward, two back



MACHARIA
GITHO

President William Ruto moved with admirable speed in meeting one of his key campaign pledges. The ink was hardly dry on his signing of the Oath of Office before he made good on his promise to ensure that port and ancillary services revert to the port of Mombasa.

With one stroke of the pen, President Uhuru Kenyatta's directive that all cargo destined for Nairobi and other inland destinations be transported from Mombasa aboard the SGR trains was reversed. The particularly foolish order that denied importers and freight companies the right to choose for themselves the preferred mode of transport made no sense and had to go.

It may have been well-intentioned as a measure to guarantee Kenya Railways Corporation and operators of the SGR revenue that is critical to meeting operational costs and paying back Chinese loans, but it made no sense and was probably unconstitutional. In no way should the government interfere with decisions that should be made by private enterprise.

Once it loses the government shield, the SGR management will have to get out of its comfort zone and devise innovative marketing strategies to lure back the cargo business. With the right tariffs and incentives, importers and cargo companies would be out of their minds if they preferred the arduous transportation of goods containers by road instead of the faster and safer train.

For now, anyway, trucks that had been lying idle around the port are roaring back to life, and the owners, drivers, loaders and other staff are back in business.

It is not only truckers smiling all the way to the bank. Reverting port operations back to Kilindini means also that all services such as customs inspection and payments also go back to Mombasa.

This, of necessity, means that the Inland Con-

The thousands of lost jobs must be brought back. This will be even easier than reverting operations to the port of Mombasa, as all it will take is an executive order banning mobile phones and e-mail. And within government, every ministry used to have a large typing pool staffed, mostly by eager young women labouring away on typewriters.

tainer Depots in Nairobi and Naivasha that had taken a lot of business from Mombasa will have to shut down. While Mombasa politicians are celebrating a great victory and upping their private investments in warehousing and trucking businesses, Nairobi Governor Johnson Sakaja and Nakuru counterpart Susan Kihika have remained decidedly mum on the impending destruction of emerging industries in their counties. Kenya Kwanza is a disciplined movement where no one will challenge the boss.

And this leads to an interesting element of Rutonomics. In Mombasa, transportation of goods by truck rather than train is preferred not because it is cheaper and more efficient, but because all the jobs that had been lost in the truck haulage industry must be restored.

The logical next step, obviously, is to restore to their rightful place all the container freight stations and warehouses that had closed, with loss of thousands of jobs.

Those services had not closed down by presidential decree, but because of an almost revolutionary enhancement of efficiency by the Kenya Ports Authority. It used to take two or three weeks for goods to be offloaded from ships, verified, levied import and port charges and finally released. During that long period, the goods had to be stored somewhere, and hence the lucrative investment in warehousing and associated services.

If that lost business is to be revived, it follows that KPA must reverse all the advances and slow down the processes so that import and export cargo lies around the port for weeks before finally being cleared.

This brand of economics and job creation will not be limited to the port of Mombasa. The logical next step is to move to other key sectors of the economy where jobs have been lost due to technology and adoption of new processes.

The former Kenya Posts and Telecommunications Corporation, for instance, was once about the biggest and best employer around. Now it is a pale shadow of its former self as the advent of mobile telephony killed the land line, while the Internet killed postal services.

The thousands of lost jobs must be brought back. This will be even easier than reverting operations to the port of Mombasa, as all it will take is an executive order banning mobile

phones and e-mail.

And within government, every ministry used to have a large typing pool staffed mostly by eager young women labouring away on typewriters. Now every executive does his own letters or relies on one secretary.

All those typing pools were shut down and the young women made redundant by the personal computer and laptop. That act of economic sabotage wrought by Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and other foreign devils must be aggressively countered. The Hustler economy demands that the government equip every government ministry with enough manual typewriters and set all laptops and desktop computers ablaze.

Ditto the banking industry. In eons past, banking halls were beehives of activity. They were teeming with customers lining up in endless queues, while a peep behind the tellers revealed dozens of employees very busy verifying cheques and documents, filling in waste and clearing ledgers, and performing all the other tasks manually on a daily basis.

Now, banking halls are idle, ghostly places. There are very few customers as most transactions can be performed remotely or on ATMs.

Even where one must require to go to the bank, it is now evident that a single teller with a few strokes of the keyboard can initiate and complete transactions that in the past required backroom support staff of at least half a dozen. These lost jobs must be recovered, and the solution is so obvious it doesn't need repeating.

Even in the media, we used to have paste-up artists, proofreaders, dark room operators, copy-takers, colour separators, typesetters and other essential staff who were forced out of work. Those jobs will be brought back.

The Hustler economy will not allow technology and innovative new processes to enforce efficiencies and speeds that ultimately force Kenyans out of work.

What you have seen at the port of Mombasa is just the beginning. Take a close look at the Kenya Kwanza manifesto, and you will see a proposal on support for the charcoal burning industry. This of course ties in with Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua's call for exploitation of forests.

Yu ain't seen nuthin' yet!

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kenya lens

■ NOMINATION POLITICS

PUSHING BOUNDARIES

While some beneficiaries of affirmative action have used their nominations as a springboard to climb the political career ladder after learning the ropes of the trade first-hand, the quality of some appointees leaves a lot to be desired



NARC-Kenya Party leader Martha Karua (right) with Prof Julia Ojiambo at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa on July 8. Ojiambo, Kenya's first female assistant minister, looks back today with a sense of nostalgia and fulfillment. JEFF ANGOTE | NATION

● By OSCAR OBONYO

Newly-elected Embu Governor Cecily Mbarire is an elated woman and it is not difficult to figure out why. She is a proud product of affirmative action, which gave her free passage to Parliament, rising competitively thereafter to the powerful seat of county boss.

In her own words, she would probably never have kicked off her political career and realised her potential to govern and serve the people had she not received a helping hand to bypass the ballot process. Declaring her experience a success story, a thrilled Mbarire says it is confirmation that “affirmative action is real and it works”.

Now at the pinnacle of the country's second tier of government, Mbarire is presently the highest ranked former nominated MP on the political scene. Before her, there was the late Prof George Saitoti, who joined politics as a nominated MP and Minister for Finance in 1983, rising to become Kenya's longest-serving Vice-President.

Other high-profile beneficiaries of this elec-

toral gesture today include Justice Njoki Ndung'u of the Supreme Court of Kenya, who joined Parliament in 2002 alongside Mbarire, and former Makeni Deputy Governor Adeline Mwau courtesy of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC).

Admittedly, nominations have given women a necessary boost and confidence to pursue their political goals, even though NARC party leader Charity Ngilu now argues that some women leaders are neither appreciative of affirmative action nor alive to the tough realities that brought about such reformative policies.

Ngilu is particularly unhappy with Chief Justice Martha Koome for giving an initial summary ruling on the presidential petition challenging President William Ruto's election in “rather derogatory and dismissive language” that she considers uncouth and not judicial.

“We have come a long way with Martha on this reforms journey and endured a lot of impediments under previous dictatorial regimes. I find it unacceptable – not just because I supported Raila [Odinga's] bid for the presidency – that in this case she appeared to

erode some of the gains we have made,” the former Kitui Governor told *The Weekly Review*.

Her views – right or wrong – notwithstanding, the import of the ex-minister's sentiments is that the push for gender equity is not necessarily a silver bullet for the many problems afflicting Kenyans. Despite her disappointment, Ngilu concedes that Martha is CJ on account of her credentials and experience.

Nominations to the two houses of Parliament – National Assembly and Senate – and to county assemblies are aimed at bridging the gender gap and ensuring inclusivity in representation in terms of region, and other considerations. Over time, though, the quality of nominated leaders in some instances has been wanting, raising eyebrows about what other considerations, besides competence, are at play.

Last week, for instance, Kenyans were treated to some hilarious but sorry moments of Members of County Assemblies, in particular, fumbling through their swearing-in ceremonies, unable to read their oaths smoothly. Since the establishment of county governments in 2010, hundreds of people have been nominated across the 47 counties to represent various interest groups as well as fill the gender gap in accordance with the new political dispensation.

Constitutional lawyer Harun Ndubi opines that this set of legislators does not always live up to its billing and advocates for criteria of identifying the nominees “that goes beyond one's party affiliation, disability or gender”. This, he argues, is because some among those nominated do not necessarily comprehend their legislative roles.

“This is not about faulting our leaders but rather improving their legislative work because if we do not address this anomaly, then we shall only be engaging in an exercise of filling up statistics and not identifying quality leadership,” he argues.

While some nominated MPs, representing gender and other interest groups have, for instance, left a mark, scores of others cannot be remembered for anything. During her one-term stint, Njoki Ndung'u consistently pushed the gender agenda, specifically culminating in passing of the Sexual Offences Act. Amina Abdalla, too, is credited for creation of the Delegated Legislation Committee, while Josephine Sinyo, a Safina party nominee in the eighth Parliament, consistently pushed the case of visually and physically challenged individuals.

The idea behind affirmative action was to accord women compensatory support to ascend to political office owing to the fact that they faced myriad unique barriers. This was further concretised legally in the 2010 Constitution, requiring that all elected positions and appointments to public office adhere to the two-third gender rule.

Indeed, some like Mbarire and Njoki used that opportunity well as a springboard to climb the career ladder after learning the

kenya lens



Anne Waiguru
Kirinyaga Governor



Fatuma Achani
Kwale Governor



Susan Kihika
Nakuru Governor



Gladys Wangwa
Homa Bay Governor



Kawira Mwangaza
Meru Governor

ropes of the trade first-hand. Other fast learners include 2007 nominees Millie Odhiambo, Rachel Shebesh and Maison Leshomo, who switched to and clinched elective seats as Suba North, Nairobi and Samburu County MPs respectively. Naisula Lesuuda and Martha Wangari, who were nominated to the Senate in 2013, similarly upgraded to elected MPs in Samburu West and Gilgil respectively and are now serving second terms.

But not all the women leaders have taken advantage of nominations to develop their own political feet and move on. One such politician is Abdalla, who did not try her hand at competitive politics despite her commendable legislative accomplishment and benefitting from nominations slots a record three times – twice in 2002 and 2007 by Independence party Kanu and once by former President Uhuru Kenyatta's The National Alliance (TNA) in 2013.

Understandably, the temptation for nominated MPs to stick to that comfort zone is high, considering the risks and cost of seeking elective seats. This tendency, however, defeats the inherent purpose of affirmative action to equip beneficiaries with skills and finances to stand on their own and open nomination opportunities to new players.

It is courtesy of the aforementioned factors that Mbarire – while serving as Chairperson of the Kenya Women Parliamentarians Association – proposed a sunset clause in the defunct Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) giving a time limit within which one can serve as a nominated MP.

The Embu Governor, who first joined Parliament at 30 as a youth representative, best understands this journey. As MP for Runyenjes between 2007 and 2017, she personally encouraged nominated female legislators to try their luck in elective politics. Today, Mbarire is particularly happy with Lesuuda and Wangari for their gradual maturity in politics.

There are many faces and heroes behind the affirmative action enjoyed by women today. Former Karachuonyo MP Phoebe Asiyu, for instance, was the first to move a motion to this effect in 1977, but it was defeated, only to be implemented in 2000 – 23 years later – after being returned and moved by then Dagoretti MP Beth Mugo.

Asiyu actually kicked off the pro-women campaigns much earlier in the prisons service, where she served as senior superintendent in the mid-1960s. She pushed for women prisoners to be issued with sanitary towels, a



Cecily Mbarire
Embu Governor



Wavinya Ndeti
Machakos Governor

campaign that government authorities found odd and unacceptable, but she persisted until it succeeded.

As Assistant Education Minister way back in 1975, Prof Julia Ojiambo recalls being dispatched to Kapenguria town in the present-day West Pokot County to hold public awareness meetings with members of the Pokot community and encourage the locals to

take their children to school.

For a young woman, then aged 39, Ojiambo confesses that the task, which was personally assigned to her by President Jomo Kenyatta, was a difficult one. Amid jeers and disbelief from the local male leaders, she sat through the sessions under trees in both West Pokot and Turkana and in the end reported back to Kenyatta.

Ojiambo, Kenya's first female assistant minister, looks back today with a sense of nostalgia and fulfillment. It was never easy, she says, but the journey of gender inclusivity was rolled out nonetheless with gradual success. What seemed taboo then – like women addressing men – has become the norm, with every county now having to elect a woman representative.

The former MP for Funyula in Busia County savours her success as one of the pioneer female politicians who outfoxed and outsmarted men at the ballot. She is humble about her achievements, though, and maintains that women still need help.

Ngilu, who made history alongside 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, now deceased, as Kenya's first female presidential candidates in 1997, observes that the country is ripe for a female President. She is hopeful this will happen “not very far from now”.

There is certainly progress, from no election of a female governor at the onset of the devolved government system in 2013 to three – Ngilu, Anne Waiguru (Kirinyaga) and the late Joyce Laboso (Bomet) – in 2017 and seven this year: Waiguru, Mbarire, Gladys Wangwa (Homa Bay), Wavinya Ndeti (Machakos), Susan Kihika (Nakuru), Kawira Mwangaza (Meru) and Fatuma Achani (Kwale).

Reflecting on her personal experience, Ngilu, who is also a former Kitui Central MP, points out the need for more than free seats in Parliament for women to stay relevant and active in the male-dominated game of politics. She advocates for capacity building of women through financial support and training in the sheer art of politicking.

In 2015, Mbarire proposed that Kenyans elect an extra woman MP in each county to bring their total number to 94 from the current 47 women representatives. The proposal was meant to cure the two-third gender rule puzzle. However, the gender agenda has gained traction fast and Ojiambo believes that the desired gender ratios will “naturally” and progressively be realised over time.



Charity Ngilu
Former Kitui Governor

SCIENCE & TECH

Streaming: Netflix and Disney+ poised to shake up TV ad world

With the launch of cheaper, ad-supported subscriptions, Netflix and Disney+ are expected to bite into the revenue of traditional television channels as the streaming services look toward continued expansion.

After having long-shunned the notion of advertising on its platform, Netflix this year

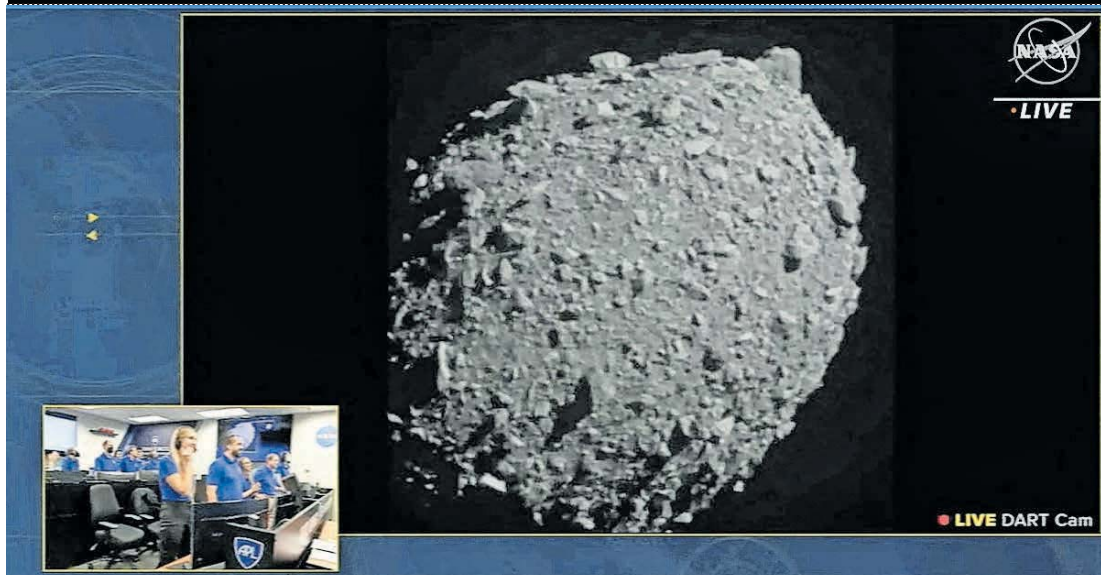
accelerated work on just such an offering as inflation prompts consumers to spend less and competition in the streaming television market intensifies.

Netflix is expected to launch an ad-supported subscription tier early in November, about a month before rival Disney+ does the same, according to US media reports.

“These launches are going to create the biggest premium advertising space in more than a generation,” said analytics company Samba TV senior vice-president Dallas Lawrence. “It’s going to be a major moment for advertisers.” The windfall for Netflix and Disney+ could be considerable. Market tracker Statista forecasts that

spending on television ads globally will hit \$159 billion this year. Insider Intelligence analyst Ross Benes estimates that advertising revenues from streaming could reach \$30 billion in two years in the United States alone. Global video sharing and online television platform YouTube saw \$28.8 billion in ad revenue in 2021.

NASA TEST FOR EARTH DEFENCE



This screengrab made from Nasa live feed shows Dimorphos just before the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) made impact with the asteroid, as watched by the Nasa team (bottom left) at DART headquarters in Laurel, Maryland. DART spaceship struck the moonlet asteroid Dimorphos in a historic test of humanity’s ability to prevent a cosmic object devastating life on Earth. PHOTO | AFP

WASHINGTON

Bullseye: A Nasa spaceship this week struck an asteroid seven million miles away in order to deflect its orbit, succeeding in a historic test of humanity’s ability to prevent a celestial object from devastating life on Earth.

The Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) impactor hit its target, the space rock Dimorphos, 10 months after blasting off from California on its pioneering mission.

“We’re embarking on a new era, an era in which we potentially have the capability to protect ourselves from something like a dangerous hazardous asteroid impact,” said Lori Glaze, director of Nasa’s planetary science division.

Dimorphos — a 530-foot

(160-meter) asteroid roughly comparable in size to an Egyptian pyramid — orbits a half-mile long big brother called Didymos. Never seen before, the “moonlet” appeared as a speck of light around an hour before the collision.

Its egg-like shape and craggy, boulder-dotted surface finally came into clear view in the last few minutes, as DART raced toward it at roughly 23,500 kilometers per hour.

Nasa scientists and engineers erupted in applause as the screen froze on a final image, indicating that signal had been lost and impact had taken place. To be sure, the pair of asteroids pose no threat to our planet as they loop the Sun every two of our years. But Nasa has deemed the experiment important

to carry out before an actual need is discovered. By striking Dimorphos head-on, Nasa hopes to push it into a smaller orbit, shaving 10 minutes off the time it takes to encircle Didymos, which is currently 11 hours and 55 minutes.

Ground telescopes — which can’t see the asteroid system directly but can detect a shift in patterns of light coming from it — should provide a definitive orbital period in the coming days and weeks.

The proof-of-concept has made a reality of what has before only been attempted in science fiction — notably in films such as “Armageddon” and “Don’t Look Up”.

Minutes after impact, a toaster-sized satellite called LICIACube, which already separated from

DART a few weeks ago, was expected to make a close pass of the site to capture images of the collision and the ejecta — the pulverised rock thrown off by the strike. LICIACube’s pictures will be sent back in the next weeks and months.

Also watching the event: an array of telescopes, both on Earth and in space — including the recently operational James Webb — which might be able to see a brightening cloud of dust.

The mission has set the global astronomy community abuzz, with more than three dozen ground telescopes participating, including optical, radio and radar. “There’s a lot of them, and it’s incredibly exciting to have lost count,” said DART mission planetary astronomer Christina Thomas.

africa lens

■ THE AFRICA WE WANT

‘UNITED STATES OF AFRICA’

Decades after Nkrumah floated the idea of a united Africa – with a single US-style government – at a conference in Accra, the political unification of the continent is still a distant prospect. Will the African Continental Free Trade Area keep this dream alive?



● BY LEVIN OPIYO

It is almost 64 years since Ghana’s founding father, Kwame Nkrumah, convened the All African Peoples Conference (AAPC) in Accra in December 1958 to discuss Pan-Africanist issues, among them a United States of Africa. The conference, which was chaired by Tom Mboya, the Secretary-General of Kenya Federation of Labour, was the first one of its kind on African soil and it brought together Black delegates from all over the world.

Nkrumah used it as a platform to outline his bold and passionate vision of one powerful United States of Africa. In his opening speech, he stated that there was a burning desire among African people to establish a community of their own. “We further hope that this

coming together will evolve eventually to a union of African states, just as the original 13 American colonies developed into 49 states constituting the American society,” he said

One of the resolutions passed at the end of the conference called upon the independent nations to lead the people towards achieving a United States of Africa. According to Nkrumah, it was only through Africans coming together in a union that they could guard their freedom and avert the greed and avarice of imperialist powers. During the period, the push for one united Africa was met with

ly in-

mixed results. The formation of the Organisation of African Union in 1963 appeared to be a step in the right direction. In his address at the inaugural meeting in May 1963, Kwame urged for a union and warned: “If we let this grand and historic opportunity slip by then we shall give way to greater dissension and division among us for which the people of Africa will never forgive us.”

Still, nothing was achieved as many newly independent African states were wary of losing their sovereignty and ability to act independently in a union. Suspicions, political and ideological differences also hampered these efforts. This was evident in the collapse

...Continued on Page 26

africa lens

...Continued from Page 25

of East Africa Community in the 1970s and of the OAU in 2002.

This, however, did not kill this noble idea, which still remains a constant theme. The African Union, the successor to the OAU, has even made it one of its main goals. To some commentators, it is a pipe dream because of the continent's wide ethnic and cultural diversities. "It is a dream of totalitarian fantasists, not the people. I'm in Kenya at the moment and the 2022 election was all about ethnic arithmetic," said Richard Dowden, the director of the Royal African Society in 2017.

But there are others who believe that it is achievable, especially the young Pan-Africanists who are leading the current agitation. In 2019, South African politician Julius Malema declared: "We want a United States of Africa with one currency, one economy, one Parliament, one President, one Judiciary." He said this was the only way global powers could be stopped from dominating, exploiting and interfering in African affairs.

This call has been necessitated by the renewed interest in Africa by global powers in what has been described as "new Cold War", or "new scramble for Africa". Russia, China, UK, US, and France have turned to the continent for raw material and markets and for projecting their influence and soliciting for support especially in multilateral organisations such as the United Nations.

This renewed interest in Africa presents an opportunity that the continent can capitalise on. It has boosted its strategic value, some-

Egypt is making great efforts to achieve economic integration with all African countries.

Navine Gamea, Minister for Trade and Industry

thing it can leverage on to influence world agenda, and to promote peace and development. Further, strengthening Africa's position is crucial because it is a rich continent that holds a huge percentage of the world's natural resources: about 30 per cent of the world's mineral reserves, eight per cent of all natural gas and 12 per cent of the globe's oil reserves. Unfortunately, Africa is so balkanised and no one country has the capacity to challenge the ambitions of global powers on the continent. With each country acting independently, the continent still remains vul-

nerable to exploitation and manipulation.

The hope among some pan-Africanists is that the elusive union will be achieved through economic means. The only problem here is that African countries do not trade much with each other. This is because of poor infrastructure, trade barriers, and economies that depend too much on raw material while manufacturing very little. By July 2021, the intra-African trade stood at 12 per cent, compared with 47 per cent, 53 per cent and 69 per cent for North America, Asia and Europe, respectively.

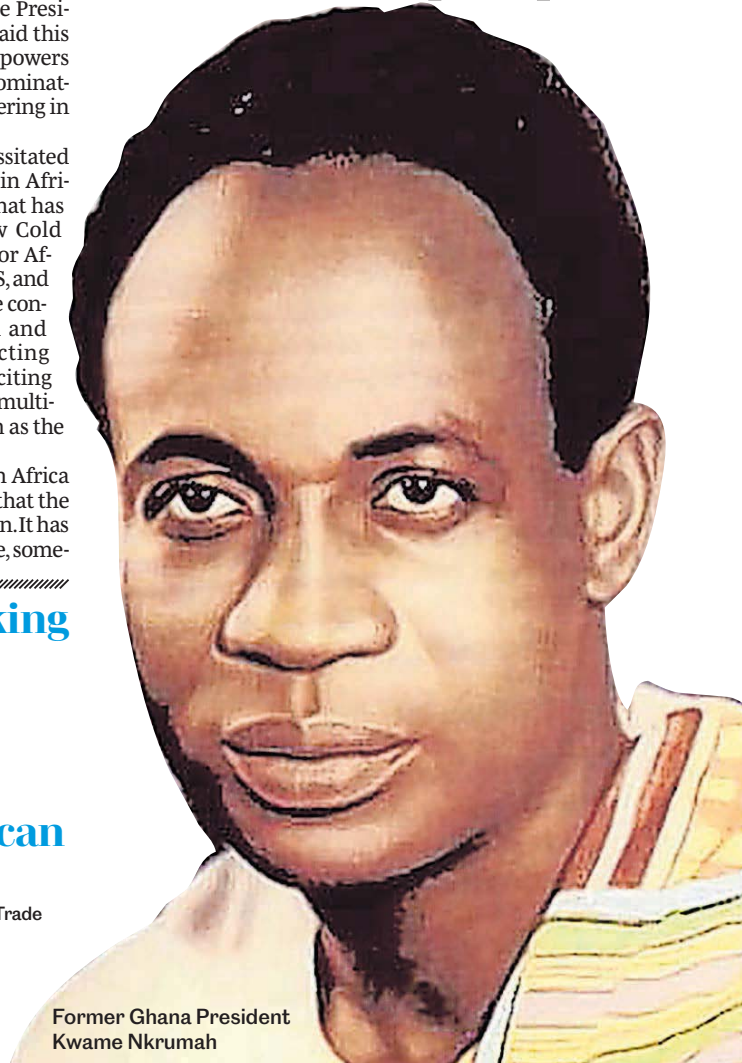
Being a developing continent does not mean that individual African countries lack their own strengths which they can capitalise on to boost trade among themselves. Making it even easier is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a pan-Africanist project launched by the African Union to facilitate intra-African trade in a manner that is beneficial to member states.

Egypt, for instance, has capitalised on its strength to build a competitive manufacturing industry. In just seven years, the country has built over 10,000 factories, reinforcing its place as one of Africa's top industrial heavyweights. One notable thing that many African countries can borrow from Egypt is that its current industrial surge was initiated by the government. Apart from the legislative environment that has stimulated investment in the industrial sector, President Fatah El-Sisi also directed a strong partnership with the private sector with regards to infrastructure and national projects.

The competitive manufacturing sector coupled with trade links it has established and strengthened with many African countries through the free trade agreements have resulted in many of its products reaching millions of consumers all over the continent. In 2019, Egypt's exports to African countries stood at \$4.8 billion, equivalent to 16 per cent of its total exports, and by 2021 rose to \$5 billion in 2021. Earlier this year, the Egyptian government launched an ambitious plan to double its exports to African countries to \$10 billion in 2025.

Egypt is a good example of how African countries can use their own strengths to contribute towards building a self-sufficient African superpower that can influence international agenda. As its Minister for Trade and Industry, Navine Gamea, puts it: "Egypt is making great efforts to achieve economic integration with all African countries and lay the foundation for comprehensive and sustainable development for African peoples in light of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement." After all the ambition of a United Africa is not only motivated by development based on self-determination, but also on self-reliance.

The making of an African superpower



Former Ghana President Kwame Nkrumah



global lens

■ THE MASTER OF MASS MOBILISATION

WHO IS MOQTADA AL-SADR?

Influential Shia cleric rose to prominence after the US-led invasion, when his fearsome Mehdi Army militia fought foreign troops and was blamed for running sectarian “death squads”



Iraqi radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr is the youngest son of the eminent Shia Muslim cleric Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, who was assassinated in 1999, reportedly by agents of Saddam Hussein's regime. PHOTO | AFP

● BAGHDAD

Moqtada al-Sadr has been a powerful figure in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003. The Shia Muslim cleric rose to prominence after the US-led invasion, when his fearsome Mehdi Army militia fought foreign troops and was blamed for running sectarian “death squads”.

Over the past decade he reinvented himself as a nationalist and an anti-corruption campaigner, emerging as a political kingmaker.

But a stand-off between him and his Iran-backed rivals following inconclusive parlia-

mentary elections in October 2021 left the country without a new government and triggered deadly unrest 10 months later.

Moqtada al-Sadr is the youngest son of the eminent Shia Muslim cleric Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr – who was assassinated in 1999, reportedly by agents of Saddam Hussein's regime.

He was virtually unknown outside Iraq before the March 2003 invasion. But in the upheaval that followed, Sadr emerged as the champion of disadvantaged and disenfranchised Shia, who did not feel represented by the quietist clerical establishment or previous-

ly exiled politicians. He harnessed the charitable institutions founded by his father to distribute food, provide healthcare and take on many of the functions of local government in Baghdad's Shia suburbs.

Despite having few religious credentials, Sadr followed in his father's footsteps by holding Friday prayers to address a wider audience – a practice that also undermined the traditional system of seniority in Iraqi Shiism. He used his sermons to express his opposition to the foreign occupation. In June 2003, Sadr estab-

...Continued on Page 28

global lens

Understanding influential cleric al-Sadr



Iraqi followers of Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr demonstrate in Baghdad's Tahrir Square on May 24, 2019, against involvement in any conflict between Iran and the United States. PHOTO | AFP

...Continued from Page 27

lished a militia – the Mehdi Army – which began challenging the US-led coalition.

At the end of March 2004, fierce clashes erupted between the Mehdi Army and coalition troops after a Sadrist newspaper was banned for inciting anti-US violence and an arrest warrant was issued for Sadr in connection with the murder of the moderate Shia cleric Abdul Majid al-Khoei.

The fighting lasted for about six months and caused significant damage to the Shia holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. His followers suffered heavy losses, but the confrontation cemented Sadr's standing as a force to be reckoned with. In 2005, he decided to engage in the political process and allied himself with other Shia parties for that year's two parliamentary elections. After winning 32 seats in the second election, his movement was given control of several ministries in the new Shia-dominated government.

In 2006, a bomb attack on a revered Shia shrine by Sunni militants from al-Qaeda in Iraq sparked a surge in sectarian violence in which hundreds of thousands of people were killed. The Mehdi Army provided protec-

tion for Shia civilians living in its strongholds. But it was also accused of operating "death squads" that targeted Sunni Arab civilians in revenge for jihadist attacks.

Sadr reportedly fled to Iran in early 2007 after the US military sent thousands of extra troops to Iraq in an effort to stabilise the country. He also pulled out of the government over its refusal to set a timetable for a US withdrawal from Iraq.

Stormed Baghdad's Green Zone

The following year, then-Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki ordered a major army operation in Basra to counter Shia militias. Several hundred Mehdi Army members were killed before Sadr told them to stop fighting. He later ordered a halt to armed operations by the militia and declared that it would be transformed into a cultural and social organisation.

Sadr returned to Iraq from self-imposed exile in early 2011 after his supporters made gains in the previous year's election and joined a new governing coalition headed by Maliki. Following the US military's withdrawal at the end of 2011 Maliki became an increasingly divisive figure and sectarian violence increased. He was blamed for the endemic

corruption that plagued Iraq and the divisive policies that alienated the minority Sunni Arab community, both of which contributed to the rise of the jihadist group Islamic State (IS). In 2014, IS militants defeated the Iraqi army and seized control of large swathes of northern and western Iraq. Mr Sadr was among those who forced Mr Maliki to resign over the fiasco. He also resurrected the Mehdi Army under a new name – the Peace Brigades – to help battle IS.

In 2016, Sadr led an anti-corruption protest movement that supported new Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's plan to tackle political patronage by appointing a cabinet of independent technocrats. His supporters twice stormed Baghdad's Green Zone, the heavily-fortified area that houses many government buildings and foreign embassies, hampering parliament's activities for

Sadr reportedly fled to Iran in early 2007 after the US military sent thousands of extra troops to Iraq in an effort to stabilise the country. He also pulled out of the government over its refusal to set a timetable for a US withdrawal from Iraq.

weeks and causing several deaths.

There were further bloody protests in 2017, as the cleric's followers demanded an overhaul of the election commission.

Sadr formed an unlikely alliance with six mostly secular groups for the 2018 polls. Saeroun (Marching Towards Reform), which pledged to fight corruption and reject foreign interference in Iraq, emerged as the surprise winner, securing 54 of the 329 seats in Parliament.

After several months of deadlock, Sadr agreed to nominate the veteran Shia Islamist politician Adel Abdul Mahdi as prime minister. In return, his supporters were appointed to top posts in ministries and state bodies.

In October 2019, thousands of young Iraqis who were angered by high unemployment, endemic corruption, dire public services and foreign interference took to the streets of Baghdad and predominantly Shia southern cities to demand the end of the political establishment. More than 550 protesters were shot dead by security forces and gunmen suspected of links to Iran-backed militias during five months of unrest.

Despite his supporters' roles in the government, Mr Sadr backed calls for Abdul Mahdi's resignation. He then oversaw the appointment of Mustafa al-Kadhimi, a former intelligence chief seen as politically weak, as prime minister and reinforced his control over government ministries.

He also helped push through a new election law before early polls were held in October 2021.

Saeroun played the new electoral system effectively and ended up winning 73 seats. The Fatah (Conquest) alliance, which comprises the political wings of Iran-backed militias in the Popular Mobilisation Forces, meanwhile got only 17 seats, while Nouri Maliki's State of Law alliance won 33.

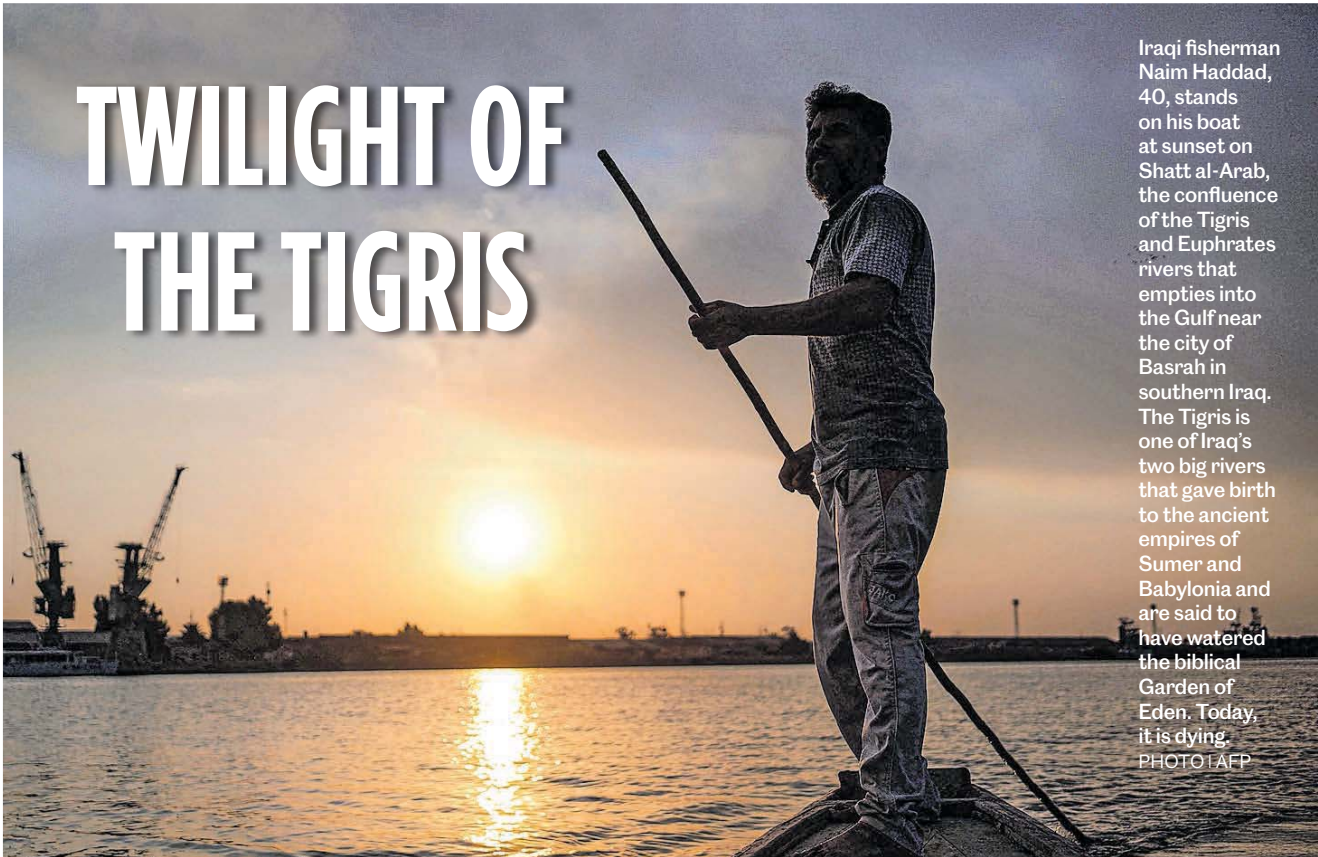
Sadr attempted to exclude his Shia rivals' bloc, the Co-ordination Framework, from the new government by joining forces with Sunni Arab and Kurdish blocs in parliament. But months of deadlock followed, as he was unable to secure enough votes for his choices of president and prime minister.

— BBC

global lens

■ IRAQ'S MIGHTY RIVER DRYING UP

TWILIGHT OF THE TIGRIS



Iraqi fisherman Naim Haddad, 40, stands on his boat at sunset on Shatt al-Arab, the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that empties into the Gulf near the city of Basrah in southern Iraq. The Tigris is one of Iraq's two big rivers that gave birth to the ancient empires of Sumer and Babylonia and are said to have watered the biblical Garden of Eden. Today, it is dying. PHOTO: AFP

Human activity and climate change have choked its once mighty flow through Iraq, where — with its twin river the Euphrates — it made Mesopotamia a cradle of civilisation thousands of years ago

● BAGHDAD

It was the river that is said to have watered the biblical Garden of Eden and helped give birth to civilisation itself.

But today the Tigris is dying. Human activity and climate change have choked its once mighty flow through Iraq, where — with its twin river the Euphrates — it made Mesopotamia a cradle of civilisation thousands of years ago.

Iraq may be oil-rich but the country is plagued by poverty after decades of war and by droughts and desertification.

Battered by one natural disaster

Years of war have destroyed much of Iraq's water infrastructure, with many cities, factories, farms and even hospitals left to dump their waste straight into the river.

after another, it is one of the five countries most exposed to climate change, according to the UN.

From April on, temperatures exceed 35 degrees Celsius and intense sandstorms often turn the sky orange, covering the country in a film of dust. Hellish summers see the mercury top a blistering 50 degrees Celsius — near the limit of human endurance — with frequent power cuts shutting down air-conditioning for millions.

The Tigris, the lifeline connecting the storied cities of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, has been choked by dams, most of them upstream in Turkey, and falling rainfall. An AFP video journalist travelled along the river's 1,500-kilometre course through Iraq, from the rugged Kurdish north to the Gulf in the south, to document the

ecological disaster that is forcing people to change their ancient way of life.

The Tigris' journey through Iraq begins in the mountains of autonomous Kurdistan, near the borders of Turkey and Syria, where local people raise sheep and grow potatoes.

"Our life depends on the Tigris," said farmer Pibo Hassan Dolmassa, 41, wearing a dusty coat, in the town of Faysh Khabur. "All our work, our agriculture, depends on it. "Before, the water was pouring in torrents," he said, but over the last two or three years "there is less water every day".

Iraq's government and Kurdish farmers accuse Turkey, where the Tigris has its source, of withholding water in its dams, dramatically reducing the flow into Iraq.

According to Iraqi official statistics, the level of the Tigris entering Iraq has dropped to just 35 percent of its average over the past century. Baghdad regularly asks Ankara to release more water. But Turkey's ambassador

to Iraq, Ali Riza Guney, urged Iraq to "use the available water more efficiently", tweeting in July that "water is largely wasted in Iraq".

He may have a point, say experts. Iraqi farmers tend to flood their fields, as they have done since ancient Sumerian times, rather than irrigate them, resulting in huge water losses.

All that is left of the River Diyala, a tributary that meets the Tigris near the capital Baghdad in the central plains, are puddles of stagnant water dotting its parched bed. Drought has dried up the watercourse that is crucial to the region's agriculture.

This year authorities have been forced to reduce Iraq's cultivated areas by half, meaning no crops will be grown in the badly-hit Diyala Governorate. "We will be forced to give up farming and sell our animals," said Abu Mehdi, 42, who wears a white djellaba robe.

"We were displaced by the war" against Iran in the 1980s, he said, "and now we are going to be displaced because of water. Without water, we can't live in these areas at all." — AFP

OBIT

■ **COOLIO: 1963 - 2022**

A 'GANGSTA' RESTS IN PARADISE

The American touched the world with his talent and was among hip-hop's biggest names of the 1990s with hits, including 'Gangsta's Paradise' and 'CU when you get there.' The height of his popularity came in 1996 amid a fierce feud between the hip-hop communities of the two US coasts, which would take the lives of Tupac Shakur and The Notorious BIG soon after

• LOS ANGELES

Stars including Michelle Pfeiffer and Snoop Dogg paid tribute to the US rapper Coolio who died this week at the age of 59.

Coolio, whose real name is Artis Leon Ivey Jr, won a Grammy for the 1995 track 'Gangsta's Paradise', which led the soundtrack for Dangerous Minds.

Coolio's manager at Trinity Artists International, Sheila Finegan, said they were "saddened... he touched the world with the gift of his talent and will be missed profoundly".

Pfeiffer said she thought Coolio's track was the "reason our film saw so much success" and that she still gets "chills" whenever she hears it.

"Heartbroken to hear of the passing of the gifted artist Coolio," she wrote on Instagram, sharing a clip from the famous music video, which sees her sitting across the table from Coolio as he raps.

"A life cut entirely too short," she continued. "I remember him being nothing but gracious."

Coolio's haunting track from it, which samples the Stevie Wonder song Pastime Paradise, continues to be widely listened to and has just passed a billion streams on Spotify, according to his official website.

It begins with Coolio reciting a line from the bible - "As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" - before spinning off into a wide-ranging rap which finds him questioning the actions of those around him and wondering if he will "live to see 24".

The film grossed nearly £85m worldwide and the track became the biggest-selling record of the year in the US, in 1995, and Coolio was awarded the Grammy for best rap solo performance.

'Gangster's Paradise' went on to become one of the most successful rap songs of all-

time, helping to bring the genre into the mainstream.

Snoop Dogg referenced the track while sharing a picture of himself and Coolio posing on the set of the music video for 'Gangsta Walk', a track they collaborated on in 2006.

Fellow rapper and actor Ice Cube said: "This is sad news. I witness first hand this man's grind to the top of the industry," while Vanilla Ice tweeted: "I'm freaking out I just heard my good friend Coolio passed away."

Rapper MC Hammer described Coolio as "one of the nicest dudes I've known". "Good people. RIP Coolio," he wrote, sharing a black and white picture of the rapper, and later posting a second picture of the pair together, along with Tupac and Snoop Dogg.

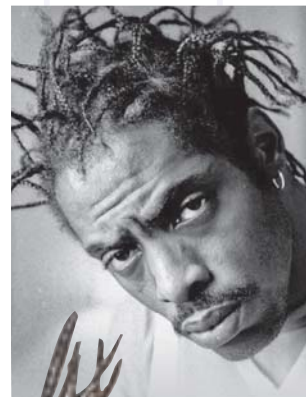
Oscar-winning musician and director Questlove simply tweeted: "Peaceful Journey Brother."

Rapper Flavor Flav said he and Coolio had been due to "perform together this Tuesday", saying his friend was "the West Coast Flavor Flav... He loved telling every-

one that."

Singer Debbie Harry paid tribute by saying: "Rest in power", while rapper LL Cool J wrote the same message, along with "Love & Respect". Musician Al Yankovic posted a picture of himself with the late rapper.

Coolio started making music in



the 80s, but he cemented his place in hip-hop history when he recorded Gangsta's Paradise, which went on to become one of the most successful rap songs of all time.

A leading figure in the US West Coast rap music scene in the 90s, Coolio was born in Pennsylvania, but grew up in the LA suburb of Compton, where his career flourished.

The name Coolio came from a friend who asked him, "Who do you think you are, Coolio Iglesias?", according to The Black Names Project website.

He worked as a volunteer firefighter in the San Jose area before dedicated himself full-time to hip-hop. He told the Los Angeles Times in a 1994 interview he did so as "a way to clean up".

"In firefighting training was discipline I needed," he said. "We ran every day. I wasn't drinking or smoking or doing the stuff I usually did."

He rejected the label gangster rapper, and instead embraced the role of an all-round entertainer.

A talented producer and actor, he appeared in dozens of films and TV shows, including Celebrity Big Brother in the UK in 2009.

And he even found an outlet for his love of food with a book and internet series, Cooking with Coolio.

Over a career spanning four decades he recorded eight studio albums and won an American Music Award and three MTV Video Music Awards.

His other hits included Fantastic Voyage, Rollin' With My Homies, 1, 2, 3, 4 (Sumpin' New), and Too Hot.

He was active right up until his death — Coolio was in the middle of a tour with other 90s stars including Vanilla Ice and Young MC, and they performed in Texas just a few days ago.

Coolio had four children with ex-wife Josefa Salinas, whom he married in 1996 and later divorced. A complete list of his family was not immediately available.

— BBC

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