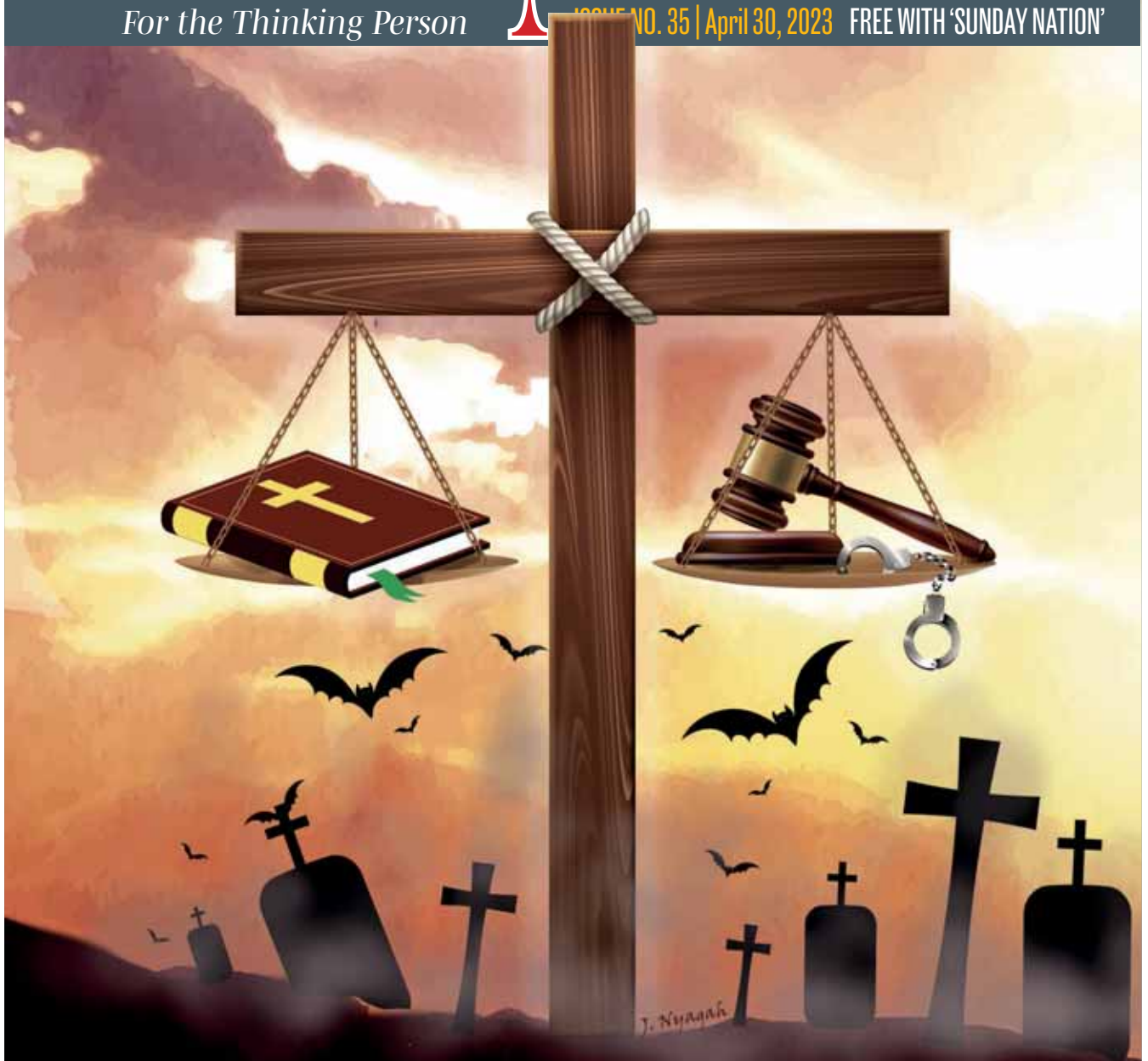


THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

ISSUE NO. 35 | April 30, 2023 FREE WITH 'SUNDAY NATION'



CHURCH ON THE CROSS

Kenya has become a Mecca for charlatans and fraudsters preying on the gullible and vulnerable, and making big money for themselves under the cover of Christianity. 'Shakahorror' in Kilifi County now provides reason for revival of stalled efforts at regulating churches.

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letter from the editor

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Millions of American voters may have misgivings about the next US presidential election, which looks increasingly likely to be a re-run of the 2020 contest, with the same characters in the leading roles.



We must shield M-Pesa from financial sector turbulence

A big percentage of Kenyan youth has grown up in the mobile payment system dominated by M-Pesa. They do not know the loops the older generation had to jump through just to send money to their parents in the rural areas, pay bills or school fees, or buy an asset such as land.

They take for granted the simple fact that one can pay for electricity bills even while perched on a toilet seat. Mobile phone transactions came as a revolution in Kenya and it is a marvel to other countries. We must be proud of this innovation. Some countries have adopted our model and it has worked wonders for them.

In 2009, the Afghan National Police unearthed a corruption scandal masterminded by its regional commanders when it started paying salaries by mobile money, popularly known as M-Paisa – a technology borrowed from Kenya’s M-Pesa.

When 53 officers checked their phones at the end of the month, they were dumbfounded. They thought they had received a 30 per cent pay raise. It turned out that their commanders had been skimming the money off their salaries, which had been paid in cash. That was not all. After further investigations, the ministry realised that one in 10 officers who were receiving salaries didn’t even exist.

Mobile money transfer is now common all over the world, even though most countries in the west are still playing catch-up. It is understandable since their greatest fear is to open up a leeway for money launders and drug pushers, who may take advantage of the easy transactions and dig their illicit trade even deeper underground.



Allan Buluku

M-Pesa has enabled Kenyans to access a menu of financial services from the comfort of their homes without having to queue at the bank. Across the country, there are many people who have not stepped in banking halls for the past decade even though they have their serviceable accounts therein.

When it was launched in Kenya in 2007, only 26 per cent of the population had access to formal banking. The remaining were either excluded from the banking system (38 per cent) or were using costly informal services, such as pawnbrokers (36 per cent).

Access to financial services is now one of the highest in Africa, at 75 per cent. M-Pesa has enabled Kenyans to access a menu of financial services from the comfort of their homes, or wherever they are, without having to queue at the bank.

Across the country, there are many people who have not stepped in banking halls for the past decade even though they have their serviceable accounts therein.

The Regional Economic Service of the French Embassy in Nairobi finds that “every second, around 900 transactions are conducted through M-Pesa. In total, the service conducts 68 per cent of all the monetary transactions, representing a value of seven per cent of all amounts transiting through all means of payment of the Kenyan banking and financial system. This represents US\$25 billion every year, equivalent to slightly more than a third of the GDP”.

Data from the Communications Authority shows that M-Pesa has 98.4 per cent of registered mobile money customers. M-Pesa is such a profitable service that Safaricom is under pressure to split their mobile money business into a separate entity from the rest of their telecoms operations. In 2021, M-Pesa accounted for 55.4 per cent (Sh6.7 trillion) of GDP (Sh12.1 trillion).

If payments distress were to put a spanner in the works, it would damage the economy, since 80 per cent of the informal sector relies on mobile payments.

How safe is the M-Pesa operating environment in the financial ecosystem? Is it protected from financial sector turmoil of the kind that sent chills through the global markets in the recent Silicon Valley Bank fallout in the USA and industrial countries?

These are legitimate concerns that must be addressed. This is a very important service to the nation and any sneeze may cause a dangerous cold that may cripple the country. Caution is paramount.

abuluku@ke.nationmedia.com

the telescope

■ It's time for Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

EA nations in bid to host Afcon

Kenyan football administrators will this week engage with their counterparts in Uganda and Tanzania to prepare a joint bid to host the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations.

This follows Thursday's announcement by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) confirming an expression of interest by the three East African countries to host the biannual continental sporting showpiece, which attracts the best players from 24 national teams.

The engagement will include cities and venues that will host

the matches alongside the cost and logistical opportunities that come with hosting the venture.

CAF announced that the three countries have until May 13, 2023 to submit their joint bid documents.

Presidents William Ruto, Samia Suluhu and Yoweri Museveni have separately given a thumbs up to the bid.

Kenya is hoping to be third time lucky with this bid, having been awarded hosting rights but failing to host the tournament in 1994 and 2018.



A Kenyan fan during an African Nations Cup qualifier between Harambee Stars and Uganda Cranes at the Nelson Mandela Stadium in Kampala on October 9, 2011.

■ Event seeks to empower devolved units

Climate Change Summit at KICC



The 2023 Climate Change Summit will be held at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi on May 4-5. The two-day event seeks to initiate plans and strategies towards the adoption of en-

hanced and locally led mechanisms to climate change in the counties through public-private partnership.

Environmental hazards and compounding resultant shocks are having a devastating impact on entire facets of life, posing a threat to the wellbeing and future of humanity, and with children and women being the most vulnerable. Climate Change threatens the security and stability of Kenya.

■ Circuit yet to receive green light for its events



Bryson DeChambeau plays a shot on the first day of the 2023 LIV Golf tournament in Adelaide on April 21.

LIV ace says rankings 'almost obsolete'

Bryson DeChambeau took renewed aim at golf's world rankings on Wednesday, describing them as "almost obsolete", after the LIV rebel slumped to a new low of 178.

The breakaway LIV circuit has yet to receive the green light for its tournaments to earn world-ranking points, adding to a slew of issues tearing golf apart.

Bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, LIV split the sport last year by luring away top stars from the US PGA Tour and DP World Tour (formerly the European Tour) with lucrative contracts.

LIV has triggered accusations of "sportswashing" - using sport to deflect from Saudi Arabia's human rights record, especially the brutal

killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. Speaking in Singapore, the latest stop in the LIV season, the American DeChambeau pointed out that Talor Gooch, who won the LIV tournament in Adelaide last week, dropped down two places in the rankings.

"They are going to run out of business pretty soon, as you should realise that the OWGR (golf rankings) is not accurate," said the 2020 US Open champion. "It's pretty much almost obsolete as of right now," added the 29-year-old, using the same description as his fellow LIV player, Cameron Smith, in February.

DeChambeau is embroiled in an anti-trust lawsuit with LIV against the PGA Tour.

■ Revenue in productivity unit increased 11 pc

AI, cloud computing lift Microsoft profit



Microsoft said that its cloud computing and artificial intelligence offerings lifted its revenue and profit in the first three months of this year.

Microsoft, which has made a huge bet on embracing AI technology from the makers of ChatGPT, re-

ported profit of \$18.3 billion on revenue of \$52.9 billion. "Across the Microsoft Cloud, we are the platform of choice to help customers get the most value out of their digital spend and innovate for this next generation of AI," said Microsoft chief executive Satya Nadella.

Revenue in a productivity and business unit that includes Office 365 increased 11 per cent to \$17.5 billion when compared to the same quarter last year, Microsoft reported.

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■ SPOTTING THE BLIND SPOTS TO AVOID A DIGITAL BANK RUN

M-PESA: THE PITFALLS

Hard-nosed monetary economics and regulations must insulate M-Pesa and bolster customer trust following the results of the latest CBK auction of Treasury bills and bonds. The reticence of investors on government securities could impact M-Pesa's complex linkages with banks.

M-Pesa accounted for a titanic 55.4 per cent (about Sh6.7 trillion) of GDP (about Sh12.1 trillion) in 2021. Risks of distress on the popular payment system would be earth-shattering to the economy. Regulatory firm-ups are crucial.



Launched in 2007, M-Pesa clocked transactions from Sh3.77 billion for December 2007 to Sh708.08 billion in December 2022. If payments distress were to put a spanner in the works, it would damage the economy, with nearly 80 per cent of the informal sector relying on mobile payments.

With reported tightening of liquidity by December 2022, and banks' resort to CBK for liquidity support framework, called lender of last resort, as well as the April 2023 investor standoff towards government securities, how safe is the M-Pesa operating environment in the financial ecosystem?

M-Pesa's e-float in Trust accounts changes money supply and sector prospects, etc., reducing money held outside banks (called in common parlance, money under the mattresses) and increases money in banks.

M-Pesa as a mobile money product has far-reaching store-send-and-receive capabilities, using the mobile phone. By February 2023 CBK statistics and a growing scholarship posed issues of how firmly it is coiled into the banking sector.

M-Pesa in Kenya faces unrelated ripples in the market for government securities whose uncertainties spike even the secondary market for government paper. The risks could be threatening.

The mobile money payment system accounted for a whopping 55.4pc of GDP in 2021. Risks of distress on M-Pesa would be earth-shattering for the economy as nearly 80pc of the informal sector relies on mobile payments. How safe is the M-Pesa operating environment in the financial ecosystem?

● BY MBUI WAGACHA

The most distressful comment ever heard from space was "Houston, we've had a problem". It was spoken on April 13, 1970, by Jim Lovell in a calmness and competence defying the explosion that had just occurred in the Apollo 13 Mission, and the

obstacles the expert crew faced to fly back to earth alive. The answer from earth was more frightening: "This is Houston. Say it again please. M-Pesa in Kenya faces unrelated ripples in the market for government securities whose uncertainties spike even the secondary markets for government paper. The risks could be threaten-

ing. M-Pesa often looks like a top 'creative' in Kenyan space. And creatives in this age brand and sell products, increasingly mainstreaming showmanship, with massive gains to those who buy their ideas and manage them — with Jim Lovell expertise — to land into wealth, alive and on

two feet. Yet, we rarely exploit our bragging rights even where highly deserved, in M-Pesa as in the athletic prowess of Kenya's world champions in the races. We also rarely assess our products for leakages and malfunctions. In place of calmness or expertise, we wait to be embarrassed. The

Continued on Page 6

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Is M-Pesa protected from financial sector turmoil?



As late as June 2022, the Central Bank of Kenya was still figuring out how to firm up mobile money regulation.

Continued from Page 5

public finance problems ruining our economy require us to observe a neglected rule of successful countries: a policy (as is space travel) is only as rewarding as the competence/expertise in the driver's seat. We are in a time of crisis. Every corner of public finance now requires extreme competence.

M-Pesa as money

In M-Pesa, hard-nosed monetary economics and regulations must insulate it and bolster customer trust following the results of the latest CBK auction of Treasury bills and bonds. The 15-year tenor had to be cancelled. KSh30 billion three-year Treasury bonds on offer re-opened to investors, attracting bids of only Sh7.33billion, of which only Sh1.76 billion was accepted at a weighted average interest rate of 13.47. The reticence of investors on government securities could impact M-Pesa's complex linkages with banks.

Advice from bankers could help avoid whipping up systemic effects while naysayers bury their heads in the sand over persisting regulatory challenges for M-Pesa. Funds operated from Trust accounts in banks (liabilities) could be exposed to losses or gains in asset portfolios. And one of those portfolios is government T-bills

and bonds. As late as June 2022, CBK was still figuring out how to firm up mobile money regulation.

As the current environment for government borrowing heats up debate, we should realise that risks of distress on M-Pesa would be earth-shattering for a product and game-changing service we treat offhand.

It accounted for a titanic 55.4 per cent (Sh6.7 trillion) of GDP (Sh12.1 trillion) in 2021. If payments distress were to put a spanner in the works, it would damage the economy, with nearly 80 per cent of the informal sector relying on mobile payments, not to say anything about global emulators of the model.

M-Pesa as a mobile money product has far-reaching store-send-and-receive capabilities, using the mobile phone. By February 2023, CBK statistics and a growing scholarship posed issues of how firmly it is coiled into the banking sector, whether by transformational regulations, adaptation to the growth of the industry, its social benefits, or the future of money. In tandem, a dedicated attentiveness on M-Pesa by central banks and telecommunications authorities in the world still left regulatory issues unattended in sealing the blind spots in banking sector turmoil that could spill to mobile money.

Launched in 2007, M-Pesa had by early 2023 clocked transactions from Sh3.77 billion for December 2007 to Sh708.08 billion in December 2022. Operated by Safaricom, a non-bank, the company is a non-financial institution, a telecom company offering basic financial services to customers, outside the full range of the prudential and regulatory mandate of the CBK for scheduled banks. In Tanzania, the equivalent, Tigo Pesa, pleases its customers by passing on interest rate income earned in banking to customers' phones. So do Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) in Ghana.

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Operators (MNOs) in Ghana.

Kenya's interest earned on MNOs' trust accounts is hidden in corporate social responsibility, elite activities that inequitably fund marathons in private conservatories, car shows, etc.

In the meantime, the product has leaped to India, Romania, Tanzania, West African Monetary Union etc., characterised by instantaneous statements of balances among transactors. It is the single institution in Kenya that succeeds where the government fails in tailoring financial services aligned to the nation's predominantly informal sector.

To its credit, initial CBK reckoning was that the leading MNO, keen on financing network infrastructure nationally to beat industry competition — investing in technology, masts, telecom facilitation etc. — could breach the equations needed to secure customer trust and mobile phone balances if it fell into litigated debt, pulling customers down with it. Safaricom's holding company, the M-Pesa Holding Company (MPHC) now receives, stores, transfers and pays out funds, called the electronic float — e-float.

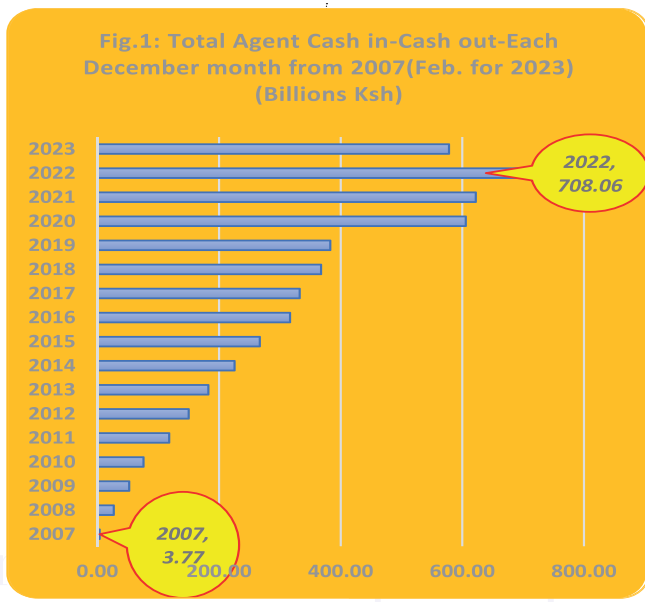
Vodacom in Tanzania and Globe Telecom in the Philippines are other examples of non-bank mobile money service providers. The MNO-led model of mobile

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money service provision features a mobile network operator, with the telephone number and a registered SIM card as the transactional account. Close to two thirds of mobile money services are provided under this model in sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East. This is distinct from the bank-led model where banks partner with MNOs to provide services, without requirements to open bank accounts.

In the bank-led model, banks do not directly trade e-float with customers. Yet, technically, use of banks to hold Trust accounts for e-float under the MNO-led model and in the bank-led model, links mobile money more or less directly with operations in money markets and banking liquidity. An explicit case is India.

Central bank requires that providers be registered, place a minimum of 75 per cent of their 'demand deposit balances' in government securities/Treasury bills with maturities of up to one year, and hold 25 per cent in current and time/fixed deposits with scheduled banks for operational, prudential and regulatory purposes. Thus, the two models link mobile money in mobile phones, the Trust accounts in banks, and monetary aggregates central banks calculate and observe in shaping monetary policy.



Challenge with 1:1 relationship

Safaricom never receives customers' funds and never operates the e-float. It controls the holding firm, MPHIC.

That should, in theory, alleviate the risks of loss of value, considering the existing limits (caps) on individual account e-float holdings in mobile accounts, which minimises risks of individual losses in a crisis but also facilitates widespread high volume-low value transactions in M-Pesa. In banking language and experience, the MPHIC with e-float has little obligation on industry practices like 'know your customer' guidelines.

Possible risks

With reported tightening of liquidity by December 2022, and banks' resort to CBK for liquidity support framework

called lender of last resort, as well as the April 2023 investor stand-off towards government securities, how safe is the M-Pesa operating environment in the financial ecosystem? Is it protected from financial sector turmoil of the kind that sent chills through the global markets in the recent Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) fallout in the USA and industrial countries?

Recall from WR 33, *CBK's Tough Choices*, that the crisis prompted by years of near-zero interest rates and stimulus, and a resurgent inflation in the West, sent shivers to bank clients and depleted customer trust and protection, triggering insolvency in SVB, which was caught overextended in 10-year holdings of debt stocks in US treasuries.

Yields had risen as the Fed increased interest rates to fight inflation. In the ensuing bank run, customer withdrawals and loan demands surged on both liabilities and assets sides, forcing SVB to liquidate securi-

ties on its asset portfolios to fund liabilities in the ensuing bank run. SVB incurred unrealised losses – paper losses – and went into insolvency.

Structure of money supply

Research shows M-Pesa's e-float in Trust accounts changes money supply and sector prospects, etc, reducing money held outside banks (called in common parlance 'money under the mattress') and increasing money in banks. This enhances the regulatory powers of the CBK. Yet, holding of e-float is entirely contingent on customers holding trust that the mobile phones receive and pay on the 1:1 rule.

If customers, nervous about safety and trust issues, or displeased with Kenya's use of e-float interest earnings, withdrew their money in a digital mobile money bank run, drawing down their balances and increasing money held outside banks, banks holding the e-float would have to reckon with an SVB-type conundrum, an e-float run, having to liquidate asset holdings, including government securities, to fund the e-float and maintain the 1:1 rule.

There would be an e-float decline on the liabilities side of their balance sheets.

The securities market, even in the secondary market, could exact discounts (unrealised losses or haircuts – so-called paper losses) on the redemptions of government securities liquidated to maintain the residual mobile money transactions.

The reticence on holdings of government debt could impact other major holders of the securities – such as Pension Funds, especially with reported failures in remitting contributions. Fund managers could trigger selloffs in custodial banks, causing banks to scramble to liquidate assets.

For M-Pesa, regulatory firm-ups could stave off an SVB-type bank run. Unattended, the crisis could deepen the tepid appetite in the secondary market or even future auctions. Worse, we have unstrategically announced a Eurobond issuance, just when the markets can gather all the pricing information needed to increase yields for Kenya's foreign borrowing.

Dr Wagacha, an economist, is a former Central Bank of Kenya chairman and adviser of the Presidency

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■ GOVERNMENT HAS LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO RESPOND TO PUBLIC DEMANDS FOR FIRM ACTION

REGULATING RELIGION

● BY MACHARIA GAITHO

The Shakahola massacre brought home the danger of doomsday cults and generated almost universal horror and revulsion.

At last count, over 90 bodies had been recovered from shallow graves in Shakahola village in Malindi County, followers of Pastor Paul Mackenzie Nthenge's Good Times International Church who had reportedly heeded his command to fast to death as their gateway to paradise.

Pastor Mackenzie is in police custody as officials mull over what charges to bring against him. Both the Cabinet Secretary for Interior and National Government Administration, Kithure Kindiki, and the Director of Public Prosecutions, Noordin Haji, visited the site last week where police were still exhuming bodies over a large expanse of land in the adjacent forest, and publicly mooted charges related to terrorism and radicalisation. Kindiki even broached the idea of surrendering the preacher to the International Criminal Court to face charges of genocide. And speaking elsewhere, President William Ruto equated the carnage at Shakahola to terrorism.

There is also the possibility of multiple murder charges, but that might depend on autopsy reports showing that the victims were killed, and actual evidence and witnesses linking Mackenzie to the killings. For now, what is sure is that the leader

The massacre in Kilifi brings to public scrutiny some of the outrageous activities in churches, particularly those of the noisy evangelical movements associated with domineering, charismatic individuals and the tendency for strange worship practices

of the Good News International Church will remain in custody for quite a while as the expansive area filled with graves is dug up, and investigators piece evidence together. The controversial preacher, who has been on the radar of authorities for a long time but always got away, will this time

face officials determined to ensure that he ends up behind bars for a long time.

Indeed, the government has little choice but to respond to public demands for very firm action. Mackenzie will likely be shunned and treated as a pariah by other churches keen to distance themselves from atrocities that shine an unfriendly spotlight on some of the strange happenings within religious organisations.

Satisfying public demand that Mackenzie faces the full force of the law and is put away for a very long time is one thing. But the horrendous crimes also bring to public scrutiny some of the outrageous activities associated with churches, particularly those of the noisy evangelical movements associated with domineering, charismatic individuals and the tendency for

strange worship practices.

As the nation was fixated on the horrors coming out of Kilifi, where police were daily exhuming more victims, videos started doing the rounds showing some of Kenya's more controversial preachers and their often bizarre practices.

There was one well-known preacher holding another man almost crotch-to-crotch, and announcing that he was transmitting his virility and strength to the believer, supposedly deficient in that regard. Another preacher was exhorting his congregation to wave their mobile phones up and down with the promise that their networks would be boosted for mobile money to flow in. And there was another one standing on the backs of kneeling parishioners because God supposedly would not allow him to soil his feet with sinful dirt.

The list could go on and on, and just confirms that Kenya has become a Mecca for charlatans and fraudsters preying on the gullible and vulnerable, and making big money for themselves under cover of Christianity. Kindiki's first statement on the massacre, as he termed it, alluded to the need for regulations governing the conduct of churches, mosques and other houses of worship, but past attempts in that regard have been abandoned under strident opposition from clergy claiming that the governments wants to interfere with freedom of worship.

He warned of "tighter regulation (including self-regulation) of every church, mosque, temple or synagogue going forward", and in a follow-up statement said: "We are going to tighten the laws governing religious organisations. Any preach-



Pastor Paul Mackenzie
Good News International Church Pastor

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er who preaches any message that is against the Constitution of Kenya or engages in criminal activity must be stopped. There must be accountability”

Religious organisations are currently only loosely monitored, with no laws in place specifically governing their registration and conduct. Almost any person or group can start a church under the normal laws governing registration of sports clubs, welfare groups, trading associations, professional groupings, community organisations and other such institutions through the Registrar of Societies.

There are specific registration regimes for groups such as Non-Governmental Organisations, trade unions, political parties and other groupings that the government wants to keep a close eye on, but none for religious groups, which arguably have more impact on society than all the others.

About the only requirements to gain registration are to have a constitution and to file annual returns, but there is little or nothing about accountability, transparency in raising and use of money, and good conduct in relation to doctrine, mode of worship and use of deceit, false teachings, exploitation of members and practices that veer towards dangerous extremism and radicalisation.

Mackenzie has been arrested in the past, but only for minor offenses such as keeping children away from school, and he has got away with minor sanctions, or acquittal for lack of evidence.

Previous efforts by the government to regulate religion have been abandoned in the face of strident opposition from both Christian and Muslim organisations. In July 2022, the Registrar of Societies, Maria Nyariki, issued new guidelines requiring religious leaders to have degrees or diplomas from recognised theological institutions.

The preachers registering a church were also required to present “a sworn affidavit by each officer indicating whether they are registered members or officers of other religious societies and the names of such societies”. The notice adds that they will also need “an introduction or recommendation letter from a registered religious society in good standing signed by any two officers of such society”. The registrar also listed



One of the 13 survivors rescued from Shakahola village in Kilifi County. WACHIRA MWANGI | NATION

mandatory documents, including a national identification card, Kenya Revenue Authority certificate, and a tax compliance or exemption certificate from each officer of the society as guided in section 23 of the Societies Act.

A news bulletin put out at the time by the Catholic Information Services Africa notes that as far as back as 2014, the office of the Attorney-General, then Githu Muigai, had imposed a ban on the registration of new Churches following “several reports indicating the officials of several religious institutions and societies of orchestrating certain unconscionable activities that left their congregants at a disadvantage”.

The report went on to note that Kenya was the second country in the Eastern African region to introduce such guidelines. In March 2018, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda ordered the closing of thousands of Churches and Mosques, citing unsafe conditions for worshippers. It was also directed that the clerics in Rwanda obtain a bachelor’s degree or a valid certificate in religious studies before opening a church.

The 2022 rules put out by the registrar were abandoned following strong opposition from churches. They had themselves been formulated to avoid taking the route of a new law that would require Parliamentary approval. Such an attempt was, in fact, launched by AG Muigai in 2014, but also abandoned.

The AG had specifically cited re-

ligious houses becoming breeding grounds for terrorism and extremism and exploitation of the faithful as justification for tough regulations.

Ruto, then Deputy President, also supported regulation, telling a congregation at Pastor Wilfred Lai’s Jesus Celebration Church in Mombasa that the government would not muzzle the church, but “we will do the necessary amendments to ensure only those who are misusing the word of God are dealt with”.

The Religious Societies Rules drafted by Muigai required clerics to submit Kenya Police Certificates of Good Conduct and evidence of theological training.

The rules for Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and other beliefs required all religious organisations to submit their constitutions showing statement of their doctrine of faith, programmes, ministries, charitable and education activities undertaken, as well as details of persons coordinating those activities.

The rules were mooted at a time of concern that Islamic institutions had become breeding grounds for radicalisation and recruitment into terrorism and violent extremism. But there was also concern that mushrooming Christian evangelical churches had gone overboard with the ‘prosperity gospel’ that enriched the church ‘owners’ at the expense of poor, gullible and vulnerable parishioners.

“Recent media reports on al-

leged illicit activities by certain religious institutions have necessitated us to take remedial action,” Muigai said in 2014, “The idea of religious freedom is fundamental. However, it cannot be left without oversight. People want the government to do more”.

The rules required that religious organisations be members of an umbrella religious body that would form the platform for self-regulation. It would develop a code of conduct for members, review doctrines and religious teachings of its membership, and review the qualifications of religious leaders.

Contacted by *The Weekly Review* on whether the government will consider reviving the stalled regulatory efforts in the wake of Shakahola, Attorney-General Justin Muturi pleaded for time to listen to various views before making his recommendations.

“I consider it inappropriate to make a rushed decision on such a matter”, he said. *The Weekly Review* also reached out to Kindiki, but the Interior CS had not responded to a set of questions by the time of going to press.

Questions were in the area of the regularity regime mooted, the nature of charges Pastor Mackenzie might face, what can be done to ensure there is no repeat, and what sanctions might apply to government security and administrative officials who might have slept on the job as the killing fields of Shakahola erupted.

gaiathomail@gmail.com

kenya lens

■ INDOCTRINATION AND EXTREMISM

OF SECTS AND DOOMSDAY CULTS

Legio Maria members at a church service in Nairobi on March 11, 1984. In 1957, Mathew Ajuoga established his Church of Christ in Africa, locally known as Johera, a breakaway from the Anglicans in western Kenya. Next door was the Catholic breakaway, Legio Maria.

Kenya has a long history with religious zealots who have led gullible members down treacherous paths in the multi-billion faith industry

● By JOHN KAMAU

They may not match the Malindi cult by doomsday perversion and standards, but religious zealots have long been with us, whipping their members into fasting sessions and fanaticism based on apocalypse and pseudo-prophecy. In the name of God, and without questioning, they have been the untouchables. In their prayer sessions and often on TV, the lame walk and the blind see.

They have healed cancer patients, conjured up 'miracle ba-

bies, purified dirty water, and sold magic anointing oils to the gullible. Conmen, tricksters, pseudo-theologians, cultural purists and charlatans have found space and followers, too, taking advantage of the unregulated and untaxed multi-billion-shilling faith industry. "Religion," said Karl Marx, "is the opium of the masses." And the religious craze has come in various forms.

Before the excesses of the Paul Mackenzie's Good News International Church were excavated, Kenyans were fixated on Yesu wa Bungoma – and had always joked about the disappearance of Bungoma's "Jehovah" Wanyonyi, the black 'messiah'. Beneath all these is the fact that Kenya has become a site of uncontrolled heretical sects, mainly radical branches of mainstream churches and evangelical teachings and practices.

In 1977, a sect emerged in Mahiga location Nyeri that would not allow its followers to remove jiggers, fleas or lice from their bodies, arguing that these were creatures of God, just like humans. The followers came to the attention of local chief, GG Gakaria, after they stopped taking their livestock for dipping, arguing that

"destroying ticks is a sin".

These sects are not only targeting the subalterns but also operate in urban areas. Between 2002 and 2004, Kenyans were taken through the Miracle Babies racket, engineered by 'Archbishop' Gilbert Deya and his wife 'Pastor' Mary. More than 20 years later, Deya's case is still pending in Court after he was deported from the UK, where he had started a massive ministry with an estimated membership of 34,000 followers there. Mary was jailed for three years after she was found guilty of stealing babies at Kenyatta National Hospital and selling them in a child smuggling syndicate. To date, nobody knows how many babies the 'church' sold and to where. Again, how a "church" operated a human trafficking syndicate without raising eyebrows is a mystery.

Kenyans' dalliance with such sects goes back to the breakaway Revivalists movement made up of a new generation of theologians who started aggressive Christian teachings in colonial Kenya. In the 1950s, they were known for opposing the Mau Mau in Central Kenya. They tacitly got the government's support as they grew

their *Tukutendereza* movement, which had originated from the Buganda teachings of William Nagenda. The Revivalists would inspire and later plant the seeds of alternative radical theology. In 1957 in western Kenya, Mathew Ajuoga established his Church of Christ in Africa, locally known as Johera, a breakaway from the Anglican church. Next door was the Catholic breakaway, Legio Maria, which had installed its own Pope.

Another radical sect that emerged was the Dini ya Msambwa led by Bungoma's Elijah Masinde, and unlike the pro-colonial Revivalists of Central Kenya, this was opposed to colonial rule and had started between 1935 and 1945 around Mt Elgon. The group preached a theology based on the Old Testament, triggering a wave of disorder. Its leader was arrested and incarcerated at Mathari Mental Hospital after a government psychiatrist claimed that Masinde suffered from schizophrenia. He was later exiled amidst accusations of causing "mass hysteria" among the Babukusu of Western Kenya.

After Independence, there were attempts to control the teachings of these churches – thanks

kenya lens

to Charles Njonjo, Kenya's Attorney-General from 1963 to 1979, who took it upon himself to maintain the purity of the Anglican and Catholic faiths.

On April 27, 1973, Njonjo banned Jehovah's Witness and six societies, declaring them "dangerous to the good government". He told Parliament that the sect was "subversive and anti-government". Njonjo accused Jehovah's Witness of telling its followers "not to vote in any elections and also not to join the ruling party". Others banned included Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, International Bible Students' Association, Zion Watchtower Tract Society, Millennial Dawnists, Russellites and Standfasters. Though he later lifted Jehovah's Witnesses' ban on August 20, 1973, Njonjo had sent a warning.

In 1978, a sect emerged in Wundanyi, Taita Taveta, whose members refused medical attention, believing that only God could cure them. At one point, the Wundanyi District Officer, Raphael Kiwara, forced a sickly woman to the hospital after prayers proved fruitless. The sect was by then operating in the Mwafunja Werugha Location.

A radical Akorino sect with similar teachings emerged in Kericho in 1982 and came to public attention after the death of a two-year-old baby in Sorget Location. The parents had refused to take the baby to hospital, believing she could recover through prayer. Ten members of the sect were arrested, and according to Musa Wamasakami, the local DO, "even at the time of the arrest the Akorino followers were still praying over the dead body, hoping that the child would come back to life".

When one of the first Kenyan TV evangelists, Bishop Evans Mrima, died in 1989, his Gospel Outreach Church members in Ngara were reluctant to bury him, expecting his resurrection. For ten days, they prayed for a miracle, fasted and held on to hope.

Even on the day of his burial, Mrima's grave was temporarily left open, and worshippers were given a chance to do last-minute resurrection prayers.

Mrima, who hailed from Kaloleni, Kilifi, was a pioneer lunch-time evangelist in Nairobi and had purchased the former Shan Cinema in Ngara. According to media reports, his church was once accused of radicalising stu-



Archbishop Gilbert Deya during a crusade at Tononoka grounds in Mombasa on March 23, 2001. Between 2002 and 2004, Kenyans were taken through the 'Miracle Babies' racket, engineered by Deya and his wife, 'Pastor' Mary.



Dini ya Musambwa leader Joseph Maloba Elima (left) with a member, Wekesa Namale, in 1993. It was started by Bungoma's Elijah Masinde in Mt Elgon in 1935, and unlike the pro-colonial revivalists of Central Kenya, it was opposed to colonial rule.

dents of Precious Blood Secondary in Riruta, discouraging them from taking their examinations. The girls were reported to have turned "hysterical and unruly" during prayers, and 25 were expelled from the hostels to become day scholars. The headmistress at the time told the media that the girls were wailing and becoming a nuisance to other students. They were arguing that everything in life was pre-determined and that the headmistress would be punished for "harassing the children of God".

In 1985, in North Imenti, and also in Embu, a group known as Kabonokia indoctrinated its members to reject modernism. They would not use vehicles, go to hospitals or spray their coffee with pesticides. Some Kabonokia members were arrested for opposing the national census and failing to carry identity cards.

In 1987, another sect mushroomed in Nakuru that advocated plucking out of fingernails and toenails. Said to have been a splinter of Seventh Day Adventists, the group was asking members to carry this out as part of a "second circumcision". The group came into the limelight when Mbogoini Division District Officer Ndumba Mbogoini vowed to crack down on its members.

In the same year, the government banned The Evangelistic Gospel Church of Holy Morning Star, which had indoctrinated its members to wait for a miracle on September 9, 1987, the day they were set "to have a conversation with God". They were to sacrifice two spotless lambs, one black and the other white. They believed the smoke offering would induce thunder, lightning and a heavy downpour after it reached heaven. In 1990, a quasi-political

anti-Christ sect, Tent of the Living God, emerged in Nairobi and Mt Kenya regions. Led by Ngonywa wa Gakonya, the group advocated wearing of dreadlocks and prayed while facing Mount Kenya. Maina Njenga's Mungiki sect would later appropriate their teaching practices, later metamorphosing from a sect into a gang of extortionists. Due to its prowess in youth mobilisation, the Mungiki sect was used by politicians to rally support.

Today, the ban on Mungiki has seen the emergence of new outfits in Central Kenya that follow Kikuyu traditional teachings. The most prominent is Gwata Ndai, which advocates female circumcision. Its members are easily identified by their green, black, and white regalia.

Kenyans thought they had been spared mass doomsday cult deaths, where believers sell their property in preparation for exit to heaven, until the Shakahora incident. However, signs of doomsday cults existed.

In 2006, for instance, a doomsday cult was reported in Nakuru. Known as House of Yahweh, the members believed that the world was ending and had dug bunkers, where they were taking cover in readiness for a 'nuclear war'. The sect followed Armageddon teachings of the Texas-based House of Yahweh, led by Yisryl Hawkins, who died in 2021. In preparation for the heavenly journey, members discarded their names and chose Hebrew ones.

But rather than tackle the Christian indoctrination and extremism, the government in 1994 focused on the diversionary rise of "devil worshipping". President Daniel arap Moi appointed a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the cult of devil worship in Kenya, chaired by Archbishop Nicodemus Kirima of the Nyeri Catholic Diocese. The Commission reported finding evidence of devil worshipping and identified tattoos, scars and other bodily marks as symbolic of the practice. Other symbols included "swastika, goat head, human skulls and figure 666".

Unfortunately, any effort to regulate religion has always earned a pushback from politicians – especially those who use the gullible masses as the bedrock of their politics.

jkmau@ke.nationmedia.com
[@johnkamau1](https://twitter.com/johnkamau1)

the limelight



County workers carry away some of the 18 bodies that were exhumed from a grave in the Shakahola area of Kilifi on April 23. WACHIRA MWANGI | NATION



A military paramedic treats an injured Ukrainian serviceman on a street in the frontline city of Bakhmut, Donetsk region, on April 23, during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. PHOTO | AFP



Technicians testing a new material at a company in Ningbo, in China's Zhejiang province, on April 20. PHOTO | AFP



Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Cabinet Secretary Alfred Mutua speaks alongside US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during a press conference in Washington, DC, on April 24. PHOTO | AFP



An indigenous woman participates in a protest march during the Terra Livre Indigenous camp in Brasilia on April 26. The aim is to raise awareness about indigenous rights. PHOTO | AFP



An inmate falls to the ground during bull riding at the Angola Prison Rodeo held at the Louisiana State Penitentiary on April 23. The event, which is in its 57th year, features inmates competing in rodeo and selling crafts they make at the prison. PHOTO | AFP



A worker walks by wheels of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese stored in the ripening department of the Casearia Castelli, member of Lactalis Group, in Reggio Emilia, Italy, on April 19. PHOTO | AFP

The Aren

GIFTED HANDS

*Dr Ruguru is passionate about arming
parents with information to enable them
to take proper care of their children*

OPEN SPACE

'Boy child' needs a voice

In many cases, he finds himself isolated by his own nuclear family, his grown-up children more inclined to support their mother

● BY SAMMY OJWANG

Only a few years ago, a child was simply a child irrespective of gender, until somebody came up with the word 'girl child'. This was at a time when girls were perceived to lag behind in education, careers, and human rights. It required purposed intervention, thus the renaming was followed by a raft of policy changes directed towards uplifting the girl.

Soon, the effort bore fruit. The media carried stories highlighting the plight of the girl child and ran profiles of career women. NGOs sprang up, distributing sanitary towels to schools while telling the girl to embrace science courses.

At some point, the then Joint Admissions Board lowered university entry points for girls, thereby absorbing thousands more. Girls' schools started competing very well with those for boys.

With time, the number of girls studying Mechatronics increased. A select team of high-ranking women went to Beijing for an emancipation conference. We had our first woman candidate for the presidency and constitutional changes creating a basis for women only seats in Parliament.

Meanwhile, the boy child became an orphan, trudging on with many gains but also major losses. The term "boy child" ceased to refer to children. It now encompassed the whole male gender, including adults. His hitherto unchallenged social dominance faced new competition, propelled by catchy phrases like "what a man can do, a woman can do better". It sounded selfish to educate a man since "when you educate a woman, you educate a whole family".

Nevertheless, his natural roles as defined by his gender remained the same. Despite now being expected to cook and change diapers to prove his strength as a real man, he was still required to provide for the family and fight off gangsters. Those inclined to amorous episodes still had to grudgingly respond to requests for an "ur-

gent 2K" from the girl child. The demand for bride price happily continued to present a normal curve.

The hen-pecked man has been with us since Adam but domestic violence is mostly attributed to the man as an obvious aggressor due to his physical strength and society's unwritten rules. The boy child found himself facing assault charges for such aggression, a normal, if not expected, occurrence during his grandfather's time.

Increasingly, he became a victim of domestic violence, suffering silently for fear of being thought weak. Recently, abused men have been viewed as deserving of it, the perpetrator seen as the no-nonsense woman, somehow revenging for the rest of the world.

The boy child, however, has had things going in his favour under inheritance practices. He was the heir. Even when the laws changed to allow the sister an equal share of ancestral land, the community still vouched for the man. He is not lucky, though, should he have an emancipated sister. Again, many a boy child has succumbed to alcohol abuse after going through a messy divorce, losing property, and sometimes child custody, to the spouse.

A new awakening confronts him in his sunset years. The boy child, in many cases, finds himself isolated by his own nuclear family, his grown-up children more inclined to support their mother. Mama gets all the gratitude, love and attention.

He discovers that there are hundreds of songs about "Dear Mama" and only a handful composed in praise of gallant Papa, despite his sacrifices for the family over time. No wonder some banks have been known to discover dormant accounts holding funds belonging to a departed boy child; a million secretly saved for self-defence. He, too, needs a voice.

samojwang7@gmail.com

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



MIND SPEAK



Victoria Wambugu

Awareness of the evils and dangers of "cultism" or self-serving doctrines should be done in schools. Parents should also be vigilant in training their children and keen on what they are taught. Great advantage is being taken of people due to ignorance and lack of knowledge therefore influencing beliefs. The government should elevate living standards and give the youth job opportunities, since the prosperity gospel targets the poor mostly.

— A student at Technical University of Kenya



Nelson Okumu

Following the deaths of dozens of people due to religious beliefs in Kilifi, strict measures should be put in place regarding the freedom to worship and guidelines for establishing a church so that only those who meet the measures put in place after a thorough assessment will be given the green light to be established. The society should also be sensitised on promoting moral behaviour rather than causing harm in the name of worship.

— A student at Kisii University



Kenrodgers Kobia

The assumption that pastors can provide them with prosperity, hope, and instant satisfaction for their challenges is the most pressing religious issue impacting many church followers. Because of this, congregants are now held captive by their pastors. We require a new set of ideals. In order to build societies based on trust, we must draw on both the resources of reason and faith.

— A student at Mt Kenya University



Master Tonny

I fail to understand how people starve to death to fulfill the word of a pastor. It's advisable to stand up for oneself if you feel you're being treated unfairly, when your rights are violated or when you're oppressed. Practice a life of no criticism, and no shortcuts. Accept things for what they are and look forward, knowing that you can make things better.

— A student at Kenyatta University

MAKING CHATGPT MULTI-LINGUAL



LONG LIVE KISWAHILI!

AI bots should be trained in more languages, including Swahili, which is spoken by over 150 million people

• BY WAGA ODONGO

Languages are almost inextricable from the cultures that birthed them. I was reminded of this recently while learning German on the Duolingo app. I noticed that I was introduced to the word for beer (*bier*) several months before being introduced to the word girl (*mädchen*). It seemed a curious choice considering that whole religions with billion-plus members are hostile to alcohol. I imagined that after learning the basic greetings next would come things like sex, since that is the primary way people are identified. No, *bier* was much more important. It makes you wonder how the more than a million Syrian refugees Berlin welcomed in 2015 are enjoying Oktoberfest.

Languages can serve as Trojan horses for values and ideas of the cultures that birthed them. I imagine the same would occur when dealing with language models used to programme AI chatbots.

If in the text analysed more people talk of wanting a *bier* as opposed to a *mädchen*, then that is the suggestion that will crop up more frequently when the bot is questioned.

I recently came across a repository containing the information and weights of the languages used to train a previous iteration of the all-singing and all-dancing chatbot ChatGPT.

I counted at least ten African languages, including Swahili, and went spelunking through the data to see how well ChatGPT deals with being addressed in our other national language.

Providing translations was easy enough for the bot. It always got them spot on. Providing proverbs and their translations was also a breeze, with the most common ones being suggested first. Where things did not go according to plan was when I asked for a Swahili poem, a *shairi*. A *shairi* has a format that could be thought of as a sort of rhyming quatrain. There is a skill to it and it is an art that goes back more than 400 years.

Asking ChatGPT to write a poem on marriage took an inordinate amount of time and the results were mixed.

Swahili is usually very finicky about the structure of *shairis*. Oftentimes the number of lines (*mishororo*) is equal across the stanza (*ubeti*), with an equal number of syllables on each line. Only the first two lines of the ChatGPT's *shairi* rhymed and the syllable count was off across the board. One stanza had five lines and others four. The refrain (*kibwagizo*) was also done away with.

The reason for this linguistic faux pas is because the model probably hasn't seen enough



Swahili would be a great language to use to train AI bots because it isn't saddled with all that diacritic baggage that plagues many European languages.

shairis to come up with a good one.

Interestingly, Swahili would be a great language to use to train AI bots because it isn't saddled with all that diacritic baggage that plagues many European languages. Since it doesn't have unintelligible squiggles it would be easier for machines to recognise patterns and would probably cost less to run for the owners of the bot than, say, French.

These structural inconsistencies weren't the only limitations. I asked it to write a summary of *Mabepari wa Venisi* (Merchant of Venice) which was translated into Swahili by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the former Tanzanian president.

In the summary, it sometimes forgets and uses the anglicisation "Venice" instead of "Venisi". More troublingly, it made up the entire book. Out goes the Shakespearean tragedy on mercy, love and justice and it imagines a story about a group of conniving merchants who are hell-bent on monopolising trade between the city state and Tunisia. I studied Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice in high school and I, unfortunately, think ChatGPT's made-up book sounds a great deal more interesting.

The hallucination does not occur when you repeat the instructions for a book summary in English.

The problem is obvious. Previously, over 93 per cent of the text ChatGPT was trained in English, with the next language that was close being French, at a paltry 1.8 per cent. Swahili is the 74th highest used language at 0.0003 per cent. I imagine even the latest iteration of

ChatGPT broadly reflects the same percentages. Swahili, which is spoken by over 150 million people, is behind tongues like Afrikaans, which has seven million speakers.

The bot hallucinates and sometimes responds in English, because it is more than nine-tenths English.

ChatGPT may speak all the languages of the tower of Babel but it is only ever fluent in one. The danger of this is obvious: a model trained in the US would have very different ideas on the correct number of assault rifles you should have in your home compared to a Swedish one. Or whether healthcare is a universal right. Using the bot in another language leads to markedly inferior results. As more AI products are embedded into search and word-processing software, we are moving into a two-speed system where those who do not speak the *lingua franca* are at a disadvantage.

Countries like Israel are already setting up organisations that will help to improve Hebrew speech recognition in computerised systems to ensure that they aren't left behind.

Apart from fighting the losing war of creating a neologism for every English word, Taasisi ya Taaluma za Kiswahili (Institute of Kiswahili Studies) in Dar es Salaam should be keen on ensuring that more Swahili writing is digitised. And OpenAI should end the digital apartheid. Swahili cannot lag behind languages like Afrikaans, whose appeal is dying in its own country. *Kiswahili kitukuzue!*

Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer
wagaodongo@gmail.com

THE TOURISM AND TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Despite her introverted personality, Jackline Cherop has built a successful tours company through sheer hard work, resilience and ambition

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

Of all the things Jackline Cherop would tell you she is, she would rather have you know what she is not: lazy. You can't afford to be lazy when your grandmother fed you on a daily diet of the principle of hard work while you were growing up in Cheptais, a small village on the slopes of Mt Elgon. You surely won't be lazy when you have to wake up at 4am to stay fit. You certainly cannot flirt with laziness when you are paying rent for your travel company, Densy Tours, at the Village Market, especially considering that Nairobi has one of the highest rent prices in Africa. Actually, the highest.

Jackline is just back from a trip to Tanzania — for pleasure because I know you want to know that — and she doesn't look at all tired, this mother of three with teenagers giving her the run-around at home.

She identifies as East African, weighted by the fact that her husband is currently working in Tanzania. She is one of very few people who do not get offended when people say 'Africa is a country.'

We are at the Village Market, and in our getting-to-know-you phase, she is feral and forthright, with a polite face that masks her seriousness. She has a knack for not looking bad, but I guess that comes with the job. An iron fist in a velvet glove, she doesn't seem to suffer fools gladly. She is the kind of girl who gets you thinking that you know exactly what kind of girl she is. She's like that, this one is.

What she is, also, is extremely shy. Little wonder, then, that she kicked to the curb her media dreams, electing instead to swim in the murky waters of travel. "I am extremely cautious so I couldn't handle the cameras. I would rather be behind the cameras, watching from afar but still in the thick of it."

What was the next best thing? Utalii College, where she earned a Higher Diploma in Tourism and Travel Services. "That's how I joined and stayed in this industry."

When it comes to corporate travel, she is, at the risk of hyperbole, top-shelf. Like a great tour guide, she beckons you into the inner sanctum, whispering in your ear with a comic and sometimes poignant voice that says this is just between us. "Many people start businesses in areas where they are not fluent. Maybe it is just peer pressure. For me, I worked ten years and only left while I was manager to start my own outfit. Oh, I was pregnant at that time."

She had done it all by the time she called it a day. *Vene, vidi, vici*. She wanted a break to raise her kids and it is while enjoying her time

WHEN THE TRAVEL BUG BITES

at home that the klaxon was sounded. Having already made inroads into the touring world, and with her former clients breathing down her neck to arrange travel itineraries, she decided to plunge right back in. Maybe it is true what they say. You don't leave a job; you leave the boss. Now, she sits on the iron throne. Now, she's the boss.

"It's the customers who have kept us here. We rely more on repeat clients, and I am blessed to have a staff that was willing to wait out the hard times with us, especially when Covid was ravaging the industry."

"For you to train a baby, you have to be consistent. That's the principle. You keep on keeping on until they grow up and become independent," Jackline observes that this works in business just as well as in motherhood. Does business present postpartum depression too? "I think during our time, starting a business was a bit easier. Tourism was doing well and I was not over-ambitious when starting. I didn't want to make ten million bob the next day. I didn't have rent or staff to pay and I already had a network [of clients]. There was no pressure on my shoulders. It took me three years to set up an office. The support system at home also doesn't hurt."

Densy Tours, she says, has taught her that she is a very resilient person.



Jackline Cherop runs Densy Tours, which is based at the Village Market in Nairobi.



Jackline Cherop believes that hard work and integrity are enough to propel a business forward. PHOTO | POOL

She hardly gives up, not even when tourism took a direct hit from the missile that was Covid. Now, she has a permanent staff of ten. The business is not doing badly at all. "This [Village Market] is a good location. We have walk-in customers whose business helps us pay the rent, but we have a Rolodex of repeat clients who keep the engine purring."

"What I appreciate about my business is that I have not received any complaint that we did not offer what we promised. We walk the talk. We have strived to make our brand premium."

As a shy introverted person, she confesses that when the rubber meets the road, and it comes to matters money, she quickly becomes an extrovert. "When it's business, it's business." Leadership comes easy to her, the work of a master choreographer, conductor of a symphony orchestra, different instruments brought together to play in perfect accord. "I don't give people pressure. I let you work and do your thing. It helps to have a great team. I make sure I employ only those who are qualified. If you can deliver, you get the job."

She is not agnostic about letting you know that starting and running Densy Tours has been her biggest achievement. But it is not without its challenges: "Competition, and finances. This business needs cash."

This has not stopped her from plotting her journey to the top. She wants to take Densy Tours global. "We decided to consolidate first, get stable, and take it from there."

She has some words of advice for the younger ones. "Do everything that comes your way," she says. "Legal things I mean. Sports, arts, etc. There are some things that can never be taken away from you."

What did she know when she was younger that has helped her now? "That working hard in everything will propel you. At one point it will all add up. Growing up, my grandma used

NUMBERS STILL below pre-pandemic levels

Jackline Cherop has a Higher Diploma in Tourism and Travel Services management as well as a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing degree from the Kenya Methodist University.

Tourism in Kenya is the second-largest source of foreign exchange revenue, following agriculture.

The sector is responsible for 5.5 per cent of the country's formal employment, and accounts for 10.4 per cent of Kenya's gross domestic product.

According to the Kenya Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report 2022, revenue from the industry surpassed \$2 billion in 2022, despite still being below pre-pandemic levels. It increased by 83 per cent from Sh146.51 billion in 2021 to Sh268.09 billion in 2022 as international tourist arrivals increased by 70.45 per cent from 870,465 in 2021 to stand at 1,483,752, with December 2022 recording the highest number of arrivals at 160,556.

to say, whatever you do, just work hard." What does money mean to her? "Money to me is as good as paying your bills. Anything beyond that is greed."

Presently she defines success as the ability to help when you can, if you can. Success is seeing the people close to you rising. And failure? "Failure is when you refuse to wake up from a defeat. When you rise again, it wasn't a failure, it was just a lesson."

She has just turned 37 years old (in March) and you can see her eyes search the corners of her brain about that. "I didn't expect things

to be relatively this easy. I know a lot of people who have gone through the wringer to get to where they are. I am grateful."

"Stand by what defines you, whether that is integrity or hard work." Ah, that word again. Hard work. Has she ever been lazy a day in her life? "No." Emphatic. "If there is something I want to do, I do it." Where does this burning ambition come from? "It is the thought of being poor. Or unfit. All these things will not let me just sit around. I play golf three times a week, and I am in the gym daily."

She is in the season of her life where she is 'focusing on her focus.' "Everything I do now has to have a reason. For instance, if I go out to party tonight, I must ask myself: was it worth it?"

This naturally brings us to that broken record question: what is she learning, unlearning and relearning? "I am learning to be a bit more out there, I am a low-key person. I am unlearning trusting people so much because I am one person who has unwavering faith in people. I trust easily. What I am relearning is how to have the social aspect of my life."

There is a price for this ambition. She is no exception. "I have made some sacrifices on family time. They would want me 24/7 but you can't have everything in life, eh?"

"People have a misconception about me," she says, "that I am a very harsh person. But to me, when I am correcting something is when I am tough. Even my friends complain that I am too serious!"

Which reminds me, who does she know that I should know? "Sara Blakely. That is one person you need to research and find; I love how she has balanced her family and business."

To Jackline, Sara painted the chapel. She is merely restoring it. That is definitely not something you do if you're lazy.

eddieashioya@gmail.com

CHILD WELFARE

Ruguru Kimani is passionate about arming parents with information and the tools to enable them to take proper care of their children

• BY MOSES AUMA

Parenting is a natural process, but according to Dr Ruguru Kimani, it takes much more to be a successful parent. “We do research in business and housing. Why not also look into ways of bringing up our children?” She emphasises the importance of researching and educating oneself on the topic and urges parents to take a hands-on and proactive approach when it comes to their children’s welfare, including health. “New parents always need a guide,” she says. “They should be aware of potential danger signs of illnesses and take children for treatment.” Children, she observes, are not small adults. “We need to pay attention to them.” Her message is clear: parenting is a crucial aspect of life and should not be taken lightly.

Ruguru is a parenting and child health expert whose work has impacted countless families in Kenya and beyond. She is the founder of Exciting Parenting, an organisation that advocates for child health and parenting that has received international recognition for its transformative work, including being named one of *Forbes Africa*’s top 30 under 30 in June last year and in the top 35 under 35 by Youth Agenda, Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs in 2020. In addition, she is the host of the weekly mental health show, *State of Mind*, which airs every Thursday on *Switch TV*.

Her devotion to creating change was inspired by her childhood

experiences and family values. The oldest of six siblings, she spent the better part of her formative years in Juja. Growing up with a father who is a Certified Public Accountant and a mother who is a teacher exposed her to the importance of education early. “School was my main focus, but whenever I was not in class, I was at home, lending a hand to my parents. They taught me the value of hard work and

PROPER PARENTING



Dr Ruguru Kimani is a parenting and child health expert whose work has impacted countless families in Kenya and beyond.
PHOTO | POOL

the importance of being self-sufficient," she fondly reminisces.

With her parents' guidance, she developed competence in household chores from an early age. By the time she was in Standard Five, she could cook and could also wash her younger siblings without supervision. This kind of upbringing instilled in her a sense of responsibility that provided her with a strong foundation for taking charge of her life.

One of her most captivating childhood memories is from her kindergarten days, where her creative mind conjured up a unique moniker for herself: Sidon Skippu. So convincing was she that her teacher struggled to discern her real identity, wondering if she was indeed Joan Ruguru Kimani or Sidon Skippu. Her imagination was matched by an inquisitive mind keen on finding solutions to problems. For instance, she recalls attempting to create her own insecticide using oxalis to eradicate insects. Moreover, she loved storytelling and was always eager to entertain visitors with fascinating tales. She would eagerly pull up a seat next to them and proceed to enthral them, leaving a lasting impression on their minds.

She remembers her parents buying her a book called *Joan*

Parents should be aware of potential danger signs of illnesses and take children for treatment... Every child's life lost due to preventable causes is an enormous tragedy that could have been avoided with proper intervention.

Dr Ruguru Kimani



about a woman in different professions. A chapter on Joan being a doctor resonated with her, setting her on a path towards a medical career. She excelled in her O Levels at Maryhill Girls' School, ranking 48th best girl in the country with straight As, then proceeded to Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology for medical training.

Ruguru found herself greatly interested in the field of paediatrics, but discovered a significant dearth of resources on parenting, which motivated her to share her knowledge on child health and parenting issues. She started a blog, with the intention of offering guidance and support to parents based on her own experiences of raising her siblings. As she advanced in her studies and conducted further research on the subject, her passion for educating others on the best ways to nurture and bring up children grew stronger. Her blog became a sustainable platform for disseminating her findings and insights.

Ruguru is deeply concerned about the distressing mortality rate of under-five children due to entirely preventable causes such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and neonatal complications. As a passionate advocate for children's welfare, she lauds former First

Lady Margaret Kenyatta's Beyond Zero initiative, which has significantly improved the survival chances of vulnerable women and children, providing them with the critical support they need to thrive. She believes that the government and non-profit organisations should support and strengthen such initiatives to achieve a significant reduction in child mortality rates by 2030, one of the Sustainable Development Goals. "Every child's life lost due to preventable causes is an enormous tragedy that could have been avoided with proper intervention."

A medical intern at the Karen Hospital in Nairobi, Ruguru also works with Afya Rekod, an innovative digital health platform that empowers individuals to securely store health information, connect with healthcare professionals, access verified health resources and tools, and proactively enhance their overall well-being.



If she were the president of Kenya, Ruguru says she would give more opportunities to young people. "The youth are frustrated out here. Despite being highly educated and qualified, they don't have an avenue to serve in various capacities and make a change in our society," she observes.

The SIDE
WOMAN POWER
With John Nyaganyaga
jnyaga@ke.nationmedia.com

TURKANA WOMAN REPRESENTATIVE CECILIA ASINYEN NG'ITIT IS BRAVELY TAKING BANDITRY IN KENYA'S NORTH HEAD ON.
MS ASINYEN, A MEMBER OF ENERGY AND PETROLEUM, AND SPECIAL FUNDS COMMITTEES IN PARLIAMENT, FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT 'OPERATION MALIZA LIHALIFU NORTH RIFT' AIMING AT FLUSHING OUT BANDITS FROM THEIR HIDEOUTS IS INEFFECTIVE. "BANDITRY HAS AFFECTED WOMEN AND CHILDREN. WE ARE LOSING LIVES AND PROPERTY. IT IS SAD THAT AFTER ALMOST 60 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, TURKANA WOMEN AND CHILDREN STILL SUFFER AT THE HANDS OF BANDITS, MS ASINYEN HAS DECLARED. WE WISH YOU WELL AS YOU FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, MHESHIMIWA.

STAR OF THE WEEK

KENYA'S KELVIN KIPTUM BROKE THE COURSE RECORD TO WIN THE MEN'S LONDON MARATHON LAST WEEK AND CAME EXTREMELY CLOSE TO BREAKING THE WORLD RECORD.
KIPTUM CROSSED THE LINE IN TWO HOURS, ONE MINUTE AND 25 SECONDS TO SMASH ELIUD KIPCHOGE'S TIME IN LONDON. THE 23-YEAR-OLD WAS JUST 16 SECONDS OUTSIDE KIPCHOGE'S WORLD RECORD, SET IN BERLIN LAST YEAR. THE 23-YEAR-OLD WAS ONE MINUTE AND 12 SECONDS QUICKER THAN KIPCHOGE'S PREVIOUS COURSE RECORD AS HE RACED CLEAR OF SECOND-PLACED COMPATRIOT GEOFFREY KAMWOROR BY ALMOST THREE MINUTES. WE CELEBRATE YOU, KELVIN.

opinion



■ Denying oneself food in order to die is not fasting. It is starvation. It is suicide by starvation

Why faithful should be protected from themselves

In Kenya, Holy Writ is called the good book, clergy spread the good word and the faithful are called imbibers of the good word. Best of all is the refrain, God is good all the time and all the time God is good. Little wonder, then, the new congregation on the block is called Good News International Church (GNIC).

So far, so good. There is, however, a misunderstanding about the preaching of the founder of GNIC Paul Mackenzie which has, so far, had massive consequences and implications for the security of those good people ready and willing to imbibe the good word. By popular repute, Mackenzie preaches to his flock to fast to death because that is the ticket to heaven.

So far, upwards of 80 bodies of GNIC faithful have been exhumed from mass graves found in an 800-acre spread said to be owned by Mackenzie in Kilifi County. The way I understand it, fasting is undertaken for a particular purpose, for a specific period, with the express objective of drawing closer to God and receiving His revelations and, or, instructions.

Fasting is deliberate self-denial of food, specific food in some contexts, and the denial or abstention may or may not include water. Witness this at *Daniel 10.3*: "I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." Denying oneself food in order to die is not fasting. It is starvation. It is suicide by starvation.

I know that Jesus or His disciples asked faithful to not eat or drink for a specific period



**KWENDO
OPANGA**

and to mourn and pray during the fasting to atone for their transgressions or commit themselves to the Lord. Here's *Acts 14:23*: "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

So, while faithful believe in God, they also believe in their pastor, reverend or evangelist. The GNIC congregation believes in Mackenzie. From his teachings, faithful hear the voice, and see the actions, from heaven. Call it a cult, call it what you will, Mackenzie, like the Rev Jim Jones of the People's Temple and David Koresh of the Branch Davidians before him, rules the GNIC roost.

Is he a danger to society? That goes without saying. So, why was he left to condemn so many people to death and untold suffering? One, because those who spread the good word are good men and women and if and when they do wrong, they confess and are forgiven, it is their business to keep the rest of us on the straight and narrow.

Two, because clergy, especially those who profess to perform miracles and prophecies, are visited, especially in private, and consulted by political leaders. Such leaders will always have an eye on the congregations of preachers such as Mackenzie.

If they believe in Mackenzie, surely, they will believe him when he places his hand on the one God has chosen to lead them.

Three, because the faithful cannot question what Mackenzie demands of them. They cannot doubt his word and are easily led down the garden path. How else would one explain how somebody would quit their job, sell their land and forsake everything they have worked for and starve to death?

Last, because security chiefs are either lethargic or apathetic to gathering information. People disappear into a forest and they aren't bothered? Tens are buried and not a whiff reaches these chiefs! Faithful should be protected from themselves. It's good for them.

kwendo58@gmail.com

opinion

■ You cannot have some sons of freedom fighters wallowing in obscene wealth while others are poor

Riggy G will share wealth with other sons of Mau Mau



MACHARIA
GAITHO

Our very own Riggy G has gone global. This week, some Nigerian comedian and social media influencer going by the handle @laffmayor released a TikTok video lampooning the Kenyan Deputy President for, allegedly, claiming that as a child he studied using the glow from his father's lit cigarette.

Never mind that Rigathi Gachagua probably never said any such thing given the outbreak of spoof Twitter accounts as Elon Musk, the controversial new owner of the social media platform, pushed to impose monthly payments for the 'blue tick' verification mark. In Riggy G's parallel universe anything goes so one doesn't need the hindrance of truth getting in the way of a good story.

He will appreciate that @laffmayor lauded him outdoing Nigeria's finest when it comes to politicians and their outlandish claims. That surely takes some doing. The comedian proposed that more African fathers take up smoking so that their children can rise to great heights after reading under the light from cigarettes. He said he would remove the studio lights used for his video shoot and replace them with lit cigarettes, hailing our DP as the new King of Africa. Hail to the King!

Even as he earns acclaim across the continental and global stage, Riggy G should also be up for some Nobel or other international awards for his contribution to the quest for peace, justice, social and economic equity in Kenya. He has proposed that the family of former President Uhuru Kenyatta, in essence the heirs of Kenya's first President Jomo Kenyatta, surrender part of their expansive land and commercial holdings to the dispossessed sons and daughters of the Mau Mau freedom fighters.

Having faithfully carried Uhuru's briefcase as his personal aide before the rancorous falling-out, Riggy G surely knows everything there is to know about the fabulous fortune of the two-time First Family. He knows the location, size, and value of each and every parcel of land from the Mt Kenya region, across to Eastern Kenya, on to the Rift Valley and down to the Coast. He can identify all the various commercial enterprise and bank accounts here and abroad, and therefore is the person best placed to lead noble efforts to seize all

that obscene wealth and redistribute it to the rightful owners.

Brilliant. The DP claims that he, too, is a son of the Mau Mau, so we might see where that is leading to. Now, we cannot impute improper motive on a just and honourable man motivated only by unselfish desire to ensure that the freedom fighters robbed of their inheritance at Independence are properly compensated. This is an obsession that is firmly rooted in the Bottom Up economic ideology, where the rich and powerful must surrender their wealth to the poor and helpless. Tables must be turned so that the Hustlers rise to the top of the food chain and Dynasties are brought tumbling down, as perfectly illustrated by Kenya Kwanza appointments to the Cabinet and other well-paying public offices.

Riggy G is not all mouth, so he will lead by example. His wealth will obviously pale in comparison to what the Kenyatta Dynasty controls, but in estimation of the typical Mathira peasant or town layabout, the billionaire DP is dynasty, neo-deep state and ruling cartel personified.

He comes from a very wealthy family with expansive land holdings and profitable farms in the constituency. He has also done very rewarding business with government entities, way before he became DP, it must be clarified. He did, during the campaigns, issue an open invitation for his constituents to come share



He comes from a very wealthy family with expansive land holdings and profitable farms in the constituency. He has also done very rewarding business with government entities, way before he became DP, it must be clarified. He did, during the campaigns, issue an open invitation for his constituents to come share in his good fortune once he was elected to the high office and was earning dividends of the 'Freedom is coming' slogan.

in his good fortune once he was elected to the high office and was earning dividends of the 'Freedom is coming' slogan.

The time is now. Unlike the mean and stingy Kenyatta family that jealously holds on to their wealth, the DP will not invite villagers merely to eat rice. He will invite them to become shareholders. He will open the gates to his expansive farms, send away the armed security guards and allow landless villagers entry to drink milk to their content, drive away the prize dairy cattle or slaughter them for celebratory barbecues on the scene, and of course sub-divide the land amongst themselves.

Yes, you cannot have some sons of the Mau Mau wallowing in obscene wealth while their neighbours suffer deprivation, hunger and poverty. As a strong, unshakable and unwavering proponent of Hustlereconomics, Riggy G knows fully well the determination and sacrifices required to bring about the brave new world. He will be in the frontline on the war to bring down the dynasties and forever change the unjust social and economic system imposed by colonialism, entrenched by Kenyatta I and reinforced by Kenyatta II.

He also knows that this country will not move forward into a bright future of equity and prosperity for all as long as it remains captive to the economic destruction wrought by 10 years of a ruinous Jubilee regime. The economy will not be revised until, first, the Kenyattas are crushed. But the former First Family was just the head of a ruling cartel with tentacles across all sectors of the economy, so the roots must be uprooted too.

Brave, fearless, indomitable Riggy G will lead this noble crusade. He will not be the general who leads from the rear, but will be the first one to climb over the ramparts. Therefore, over in his native Mathira Constituency and wherever else he has land and property in the wider Nyeri County, Mt Kenya region, Nairobi, Mombasa and elsewhere in Kenya, he will lead by example. He will open the gates for hustlers and other sons of Mau Mau to have a bite of his own relatively fabulous wealth. In fact, he will renounce wealth and take a vow of poverty. If that is not worth a Nobel Peace Prize and further recognition in Najaland, nothing is.

gaitomail@gmail.com

kenya lens

■ NO MONEY FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

DEVOLUTION UNDER THREAT

The storm over delayed disbursement of funds to counties rekindles post-Independence machinations that eventually killed the devolved system of government

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

Threats by the Council of Governors (COG) to shut down activity in the 47 county governments following delays in disbursement of funds may appear unrealistic and far-fetched, but they conjure up memories of manoeuvres in yesteryears that sounded the death knell for the devolved system of government.

The current threat to the 11-year-old devolved units is primarily a warning shot to President William Ruto's government, which had until April 24 not disbursed a total of KSh94.35 billion in a four-month delay "unprecedented in the history of devolution".



Chairperson of the Council of Governors, Kirinyaga County boss Anne Waiguru.

The Chairperson of the COG, Ms Ann Waiguru, has called upon the Cabinet Secretary in charge of the National Treasury to immediately release the funds owed to county governments without any further delay. The two-week ultimatum elapses on Monday, May 8.

The government, however, asserts that its hands are tied, with Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua crudely buttressing this fact by telling governors in February that, "if you want to hang us, we are helpless! If you want to remove our trousers and whip us on the buttocks, go ahead, we don't have the money!" The Treasury CS, Njuguna Ndung'u, has blamed the state of affairs on a shortfall in revenue collection as well as high public debt obligations.

While acknowledging the National Treasury's financial quagmire, Busia Deputy Governor Arthur Odera observes that counties must not be unduly placed on the backburner. Under the current circumstances, Odera argues that the plausible thing to do is for the government to reassure the nation and counties of its commitment to devolution, "which is through timely disbursement of funds".

He points out that the law has clear guidance on prioritising funding for counties and urges the central government to play its part towards fulfillment of the objectives of counties in accordance to Article 174 of the Constitution. The goals of the devolved governments include promotion of social and economic development, provision of proximate and easily accessible services, equitable sharing of national and local resources as well as the decentralisation of State organs, their functions and services from the capital of Kenya.

The storm raised by the governors rekindles the post-Independence machinations under founding President Jomo Kenyatta's leadership that eventually killed the devolved system of government. The script and timing may be different, but the fears and concerns over dilution of devolution are the

same. Public administration in Kenya has over the decades undergone several structural and operational changes – from the purely authoritarian indirect rule of the British under the last colonial governors (Sir Evelyn Barring, Sir Patrick Renison and Sir Malcom MacDonald) through to the one-party Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi administrations, followed by the multi-party era of Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta.

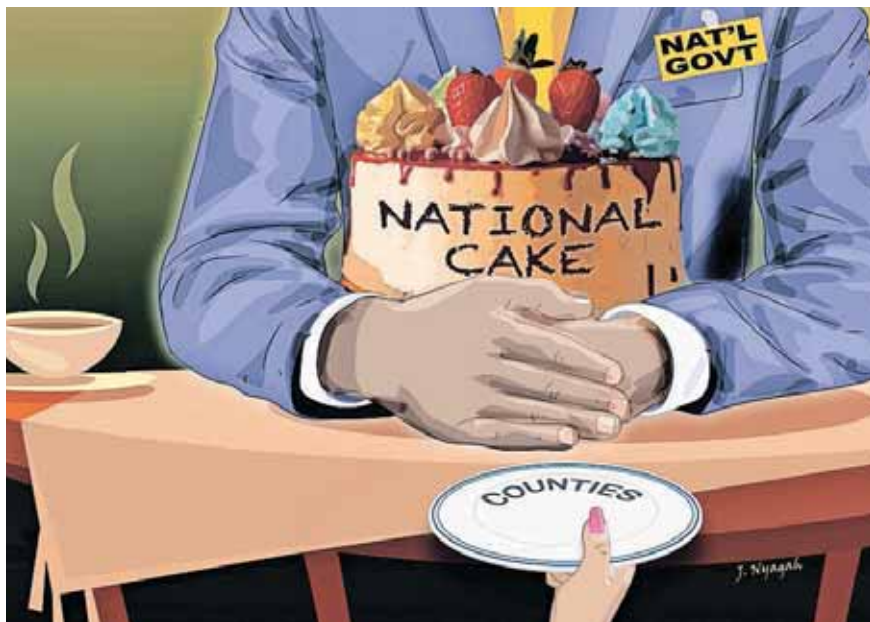
And owing to the enactment of a new Constitution in 2010, today Kenya has two levels of government – central and county – which has drastically changed the face of the country's administration. The introduction of devolved governments, whose objectives are spelt out in Chapter 11 of the Constitution, should have been the ultimate game changer in Kenya's public administration.

But the sweeping changes remain largely cosmetic. Successive Presidents of independent Kenya have not been very enthusiastic about changing the structure of public administration. Indeed, even where new legislation, including the Constitution, has been put in place, the country's leadership has done everything within its ability to undo any progress by centralising power, altering Constitutions, winning over the military and emasculating the judiciary.

This is true of the first government in the early 1960s under Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. Then, Kenya's first Vice-President, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, also Minister for Home Affairs in charge of the provincial administration, spearheaded manoeuvres that dealt a death blow to regional governments. Having reluctantly embraced the *majimbo* (federal) Constitution following negotiations at Lancaster House in Britain, Kanu undertook to frustrate the *majimbo* ideology once in power. Jaramogi justifies his actions in his autobiography, *Not Yet Uhuru*: "There could not be – and this is why *majimbo* was devised – effective central government with regional control and with regional financing enshrined in the Constitution."

He confesses in the book that Kanu only gave in to the demand for regional governments because of pressure from the British. Once in power, they improvised a way of keeping as much centralised control as possible, in preparation for the day when a strong central administration would be reinstated. Of course, Jaramogi had the full blessings of President

kenya lens



Kenyatta, who found in his V-P an appropriate and ardent fixer of the “*majimbo* threat”.

“It (*majimbo*) inevitably produced duplication of functions, erratic and uncoordinated planning. There was an additional danger that money would be spent not on essential administration and services, but on politics and prestige spending,” Jaramogi argues in his book.

Decades later, as Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister, Kiraitu Murungi appeared to borrow a leaf from Jomo Kenyatta’s Kanu government when he spearheaded the Narc government’s campaign to shoot down proposals to decentralise power. Then-President Kibaki was opposed to the creation of the office of Prime Minister as Head of Government.

Under the famed mantra of “we cannot create two centres of power”, Kiraitu discarded a proposed Constitution document prepared by a review commission led by lawyer Yash Pal Ghai and replaced it with totally new proposals. It is on the latter document that Kenyans voted in the 2005 constitutional referendum, dubbed the banana versus oranges contest. The desires of the proponents of a centralised government were not fulfilled.

The players in the 1963 power game spearheaded by Jaramogi and those in 2005 led by Kiraitu might be different, but the game is the same. To frustrate *majimbo*, for instance, Jaramogi posted to the regions parallel administrators answerable to his Home Affairs ministry in the same fashion as Kibaki, who appointed county commissioners in 2012 in an apparent move to water down the political influence of holders of the office of governor, constituted in 2010. Could the operatives under the Ruto administration be attempting a combined Jaramogi and Kiraitu move to bring back centralised power, which was substantially lost to any sitting President following the creation of a second layer of county government?

With nearly 30 per cent of the national

budget destined for county governments and leaders of the central government stripped of the mandate to oversee execution of most development programmes, it is understandable why any leader would want to claw back some of these powers. Dr Henry Wabwire, a commentator on socio-political and economic affairs, observes, however, that it is not possible to undo the devolved units because they are embedded in the current Constitution. Nonetheless, he observes that the ruling class can still navigate around this impediment by throttling operations of counties through denying or delaying funding.

There is a sense in which government indifference is creeping into the funding of devolved units. Whether it is out of deliberate disinterest or surrender owing to its handicap to address the situation, the central government is increasingly irking county bosses.

The feeling is mutual for governors of both the ruling Kenya Kwanza and Azimio La Umoja-One Kenya alliances. The only difference is that, while opposition county leaders are openly critical of the government, their Kenya Kwanza counterparts are not as vocal.

Kakamega’s Fernandez Baraza, who chairs the COG’s Finance and Economic Affairs Committee, has been the face of protest and defiance over the delays in the disbursement of county funds, which he stresses is crippling activities and operations in the devolved units.

Baraza, who is allied to the opposition Azimio coalition, has since January this year held several meetings with the Treasury CS, and is alarmed that the current situation could make the county chiefs unpopular for inability to fulfil their manifestos and campaign pledges.

And stressing the need for a long-lasting solution to the issue, Makeni Governor Mutula Kilonzo Jr, also of Azimio, advocates for legislative means to address the current hitch. Noting that the Constitution is explicit on disbursement of the shared revenue, the lawyer

wants legislators in Parliament to compel the Treasury CS to comply with the schedule set out by the Senate.

On the flip side, governors allied to President Ruto who spoke to *The Weekly Review* did so on condition of anonymity for fear of political victimisation. According to one county boss from the Mt Kenya region, the governors and their deputies have held a couple of meetings with the top leadership of government. In January, they were assured that funds would be disbursed to counties at least by March.

“But so far this has not happened. Why would the leaders of this country make such a hollow commitment to us? This is not right and we are beginning to ask about their seriousness in protecting devolution,” says the county chief.

Another pro-government governor thinks that the leadership of the COG does not seem committed to resolving the current financial impasse. Those who think so accuse Waiguru of confronting the Ruto administration with kid gloves: “Some of us sincerely think that even the 14-day ultimatum will come and go with ease. This is because we somewhat forced it on the COG leadership in the first place, and we believe if the government fails to act, the COG may lack the courage to execute the shutdown threat.”

Caught up in the middle of the standoff, governors and senators are now engaged in a blame game. The governors are dissatisfied with the manner in which the Senate voted on the Division of Revenue Bill, 2023, rejecting an amendment that would have seen the devolved units get a KSh.407 billion equitable share in the 2023/24 financial year. The senators, meanwhile, are bewildered by the COG chairperson’s inability to stand up for the counties.

Appearing before the Senate Public Accounts Committee in Nairobi barely four days before issuing the shutdown threat, the Kirinyaga Governor was taken to task for being “unusually silent” over the current crisis.

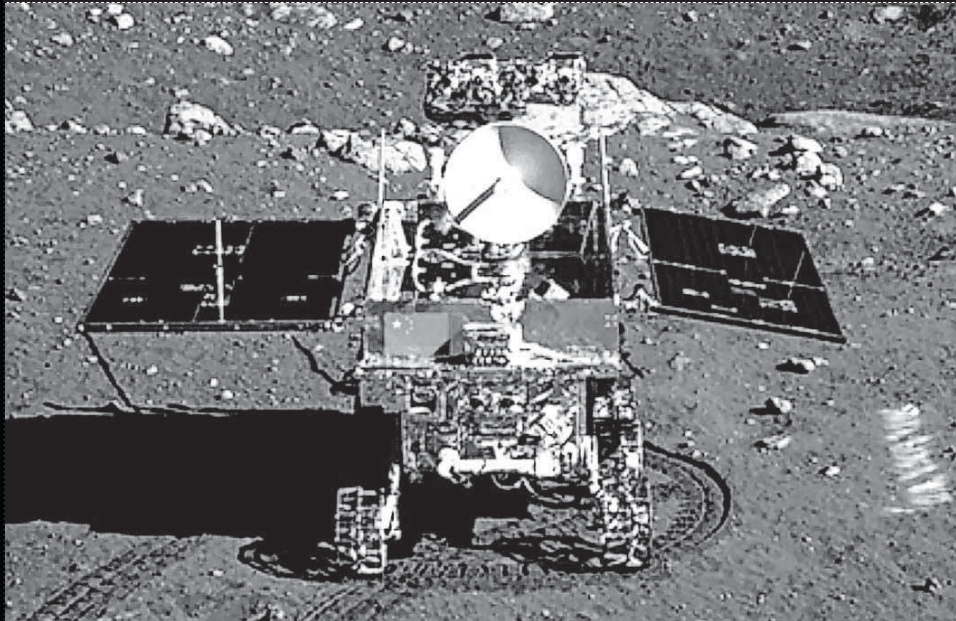
Committee chairman Moses Kajwang’ wondered why she was not championing the interests of the 47 counties. He accused the COG boss of being apologetic to the Kenya Kwanza administration, which Waiguru dismissed, explaining that she championed the interests of all counties irrespective of the political persuasion of their governors.

Clearly, the current scenario has placed the county chiefs in an awkward situation, where they have to play “the good boys” while also portraying their allegiance to the central government in order to impress the Ruto-Rigathi pair, who are technically the key holders of the national coffers. It is indeed a discomfiting situation which, Wabwire says, gives the Ruto administration the upper hand in this begging game. The President and his deputy may not be the authors of the country’s financial quagmire, observes Wabwire, but the situation accords them opportunity to play some politics to win fresh support and allegiance from governors.

oscar.tko@gmail.com

SCIENCE & TECH

FLY ME TO THE MOON: FIRMS LINING UP LUNAR LANDINGS



The Jade Rabbit moon rover taken by the Chang'e-3 probe lander on December 15, 2013. Japan's ispace last week became the latest company to try, and fail, at a historic bid to put a private lunar lander on the Moon.

• TOKYO

Japan's ispace last week became the latest company to try, and fail, at a historic bid to put a private lunar lander on the Moon.

Only Russia, the United States and China have made the 384,000-kilometre (239,000-mile) journey and landed safely on the Moon's surface. Here are some of the companies who have made the journey, or plan missions soon:

In February 2019, the 585-kilogram Beresheet lander launched from Earth on a Falcon 9 rocket belonging to Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

The lander was a joint project between Israeli non-profit SpaceIL and state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries.

Beresheet, meaning "Genesis" in Hebrew, was carrying an Israeli flag, a time capsule with Israeli historical and cultural data, and various instruments to collect data.

It was described as the world's

first spacecraft built in a "non-governmental mission" and successfully reached lunar orbit about six weeks after launch.

But the US\$100 million mission ended in disappointment in April 2019, when the craft crashed into the lunar surface.

"We are on the Moon, but not in the way we wanted," a staffer was heard saying during a live control room broadcast.

SpaceIL plans to launch Beresheet2 in 2025.

Japanese start-up ispace, like SpaceIL, grew from the Google Lunar XPrize, which in 2010 offered \$30 million in awards to encourage scientists and entrepreneurs to dream up low-cost Moon missions. The prize expired without a winner, but several contestants forged ahead, seeking private funding.

The company sent its Hakuto-R Mission 1 lander into space in December and reached lunar orbit in March. It was carrying two lunar rovers, one Japanese and one belonging

to the United Arab Emirates. It had been due to land on the lunar surface on Wednesday, but communications were lost after it began its descent and ispace later concluded it had likely crashed.

The company is already developing two further lunar missions, the first of which could launch as soon as next year. Texas-based Intuitive Machines, founded in 2013, aims to launch its Nova-C lander as soon as this June. The lander will carry five NASA payloads, as well as cargo from private companies, and is intended to gather data on subjects like the effect of space weather on the Moon.

On board will be sculptures by American pop artist Jeff Koons called "Moon Phases" that are intended to be left permanently on the lunar surface. It will also be equipped with an "EagleCam" that is designed to allow "the first-ever third-person picture of a spacecraft making an extraterrestrial landing" -- in other words, a lunar selfie.

Ocean warming ahead of El Niño alarms scientists

A recent, rapid heating of the world's oceans has alarmed scientists concerned that it will add to global warming.

This month, the global sea surface hit a new record high temperature. It has never warmed this much, this quickly.

Scientists don't fully understand why this has happened. But they worry that, combined with other weather events, the world's temperature could reach a concerning new level by the end of next year.

Experts believe that a strong El Niño weather event — a weather system that heats the ocean — will also set in over the next months. Warmer oceans can kill off marine life, lead to more extreme weather and raise sea levels.

They are also less efficient at absorbing planet-warming greenhouse gases. An important new study, published last week with little fanfare, highlights a worrying development.

Over the past 15 years, the Earth has accumulated almost as much heat as it did in the previous 45 years, with most of the extra energy going into the oceans.

This is having real world consequences — not only did the overall temperature of the oceans hit a new record in April this year, in some regions the difference from the long term was enormous.

In March, sea surface temperatures off the east coast of North America were as much as 13.8C higher than the 1981-2011 average.

"It's not yet well established, why such a rapid change, and such a huge change is happening," said Karina Von Schuckmann, the lead author of the new study and an oceanographer at the research group Mercator Ocean International.

"We have doubled the heat in the climate system the last 15 years, I don't want to say this is climate change, or natural variability or a mixture of both, we don't know yet. But we do see this change."

africa lens

■ FEARS MOUNT IN KHARTOUM AS FORMER REGIME MEMBERS ESCAPE

SHAKY CEASEFIRE IN SUDAN



A Saudi Navy sailor carries a child as evacuees arrive at King Faisal Navy Base in Jeddah on April 26 following a rescue operation from Sudan. A ship carrying 1,687 civilians from more than 50 countries fleeing violence in Sudan docked in Saudi Arabia on April 26.

The fighting between the rival generals, which has involved air strikes and artillery exchanges, has killed hundreds of people and left some neighbourhoods of greater Khartoum in ruins

● KHARTOUM

Awanted Sudanese war crimes suspect has confirmed that he and other members of the Islamist regime ousted in 2019 have escaped from prison during recent fighting, raising new fears for a fragile ceasefire that has enabled for-

eigners to flee.

The 72-hour ceasefire brokered by the United States was already struggling to hold after the regular army launched renewed air strikes against rival paramilitary forces in the capital last week. Anti-aircraft guns fired at fighter jets in the skies over Khartoum's sister city of Omdurman on Wednesday

witnesses told *AFP*. Armed clashes meanwhile continued in Soba on the outskirts of Khartoum, witnesses said.

The escape of leading figures from the ousted regime of Omar al-Bashir, at least one of whom is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity in

Darfur, has raised fears the conflict may take a turn for the worse.

Ahmed Harun, a top Bashir aide who led the regime's infamous counter-insurgency operations in Darfur in the mid-2000s, said that he and other regime members had escaped from Kober prison.

...Continued on Page 26

africa lens

Continued from Page 25

The ousted dictator had himself been held in the same prison but the army confirmed Wednesday that the 79-year-old had already been transferred to hospital before the current fighting erupted on April 15.

Members of Bashir's regime, including the strongman himself, had been moved to a military hospital "due to their health conditions...and remain in the hospital under the guard of the judicial police", the army said in a statement, without specifying when they had been moved.

It was the third reported jail break to have taken advantage of the fighting between forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and those backing his deputy turned rival, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

"We remained in our detention at Kober, under the crossfire of this current battle, for nine days," even after the jail was emptied of both guards and prisoners, Harun said in a recorded address to Sudanese television.

He said he and fellow jailed regime members "had now taken responsibility for our protection in our own hands" in another location. Security fears had already been raised when the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned of a "huge biological risk" after combatants occupied a Khartoum laboratory holding samples of cholera, measles, polio and other infectious diseases.

The fighting between the rival generals, which has involved air strikes and artillery exchanges, has killed hundreds of people and left some neighbourhoods of greater Khartoum in ruins. As the fighting eased on Tuesday in the city of five million people, foreign governments organised road convoys, aircraft and ships to get their nationals out.

A ship carrying nearly 1,700 civilians from more than 50 countries docked in Saudi Arabia early Wednesday, the kingdom's foreign ministry said. Sudanese workers meanwhile complained of being left in a state of desperation, unable to leave their homes during the fighting.

"I say to Hemeti, my brother, please, the war has destroyed the Sudanese people. My brother, Burhan, stop the war," Barir Hamad, a builder, told AFP.

"Why didn't the officials care

Tension as war crimes suspect free amid chaos



Evacuees arrive at King Faisal Navy Base in Jeddah on April 26, following a rescue operation from Sudan.

for the Sudanese people and their suffering?" said Alnour Mohamed Ahmed, another builder. "People can't leave their homes." Late Tuesday, witnesses reported renewed air strikes in Khartoum North, where they said fighter jets struck RSF vehicles.

The RSF posted a video in which it claimed to be in control of an oil refinery and the associated Garri power plant more than 70 kilometres (more than 40 miles) north of Khartoum.

Shortly before, the army had warned in a Facebook post of "heavy movement towards the re-

finery in order to take advantage of the truce by taking control of the refinery". The two sides have both made unverifiable claims to control key sites, adding to what experts call an overwhelming state of fear in the capital. A UN report warned that "shortages of food, water, medicines and fuel are becoming extremely acute, especially in Khartoum and surrounding areas". "In some places, humanitarian aid is all that is keeping famine at bay," UN chief Antonio Guterres said.

The UN said it was bracing for an exodus of up to 270,000 ref-

ugees to Sudan's even poorer neighbours Chad and South Sudan. The fighting has killed at least 459 people and wounded more than 4,000, according to UN agencies. A total of 14 hospitals have been shelled since fighting erupted, the doctors' union said, while 19 others are out of service. Sudan has a long history of military coups.

The RSF emerged from the Janjaweed militia that then-president Bashir unleashed in the Darfur region two decades ago. The military toppled Bashir in a palace coup in April 2019 following civilian mass protests that raised hopes for a transition to democracy. The two generals seized power in a 2021 coup, but later fell out, most recently over the planned integration of the RSF into the regular army.

Meanwhile, multiple nations have scrambled to evacuate embassy staff and citizens by road, air and sea from chaos-torn Sudan. Saudi Arabia led the first large-scale evacuations by sea. Hundreds of Saudis and foreigners from more than 20 countries have been taken to the port city of Jeddah.

The United Arab Emirates said it had "evacuated its citizens" to Port Sudan and was hosting people from 19 other countries who had been rescued. Jordan airlifted nearly 350 people, including Palestinians, Iraqis, Syrians and Germans, to a military airport in the kingdom, and on Monday announced "20 Jordanians arrived" aboard a German plane.

Egypt said 446 of its citizens left Sudan by land on Tuesday and another 189 were flown out, bringing to 1,539 the total number evacuated so far. More than 10,000 Egyptians were thought to live in Sudan. More than 200 Moroccans reached Port Sudan in convoys organised by their embassy, Rabat said last week. Mauritania said 101 citizens had also made it to the Red Sea port city. Algeria, Tunisia and South Africa have also announced rescue operations. Chad said it was sending planes to collect 438 citizens from Port Sudan.

Mali said that 55 citizens had arrived at Sudan's border with Ethiopia and another group of 14 people was on its way there. Nigeria plans to get nearly 3,000 nationals, mostly students, out by convoy to Egypt this week, an official said.

global lens

■ PRESIDENT CONFIRMS HE'S SIGNED UP TO STAR FOR THE DEMOCRATS

BIDEN VS TRUMP: THE SEQUEL



Millions of American voters may have misgivings about the next US presidential election, which looks increasingly likely to be a rerun of the 2020 contest, with the same characters in the leading roles

● WASHINGTON

Sequels are rarely as good as the original. We can all think of a few movie follow ups that should never have been made. American voters may have similar misgivings about the next US presidential election which looks increasingly likely to be a rerun of the 2020 contest, with the same characters in the leading roles.

Joe Biden has now confirmed

he's signed up to star for the Democrats, while Donald Trump remains the clear frontrunner for the Republican nomination.

It's a story we have seen before and only very few people seem eager to watch again. A recent poll found that only five per cent of Americans want both President Biden and former President Trump to run again and 38 per cent want neither to run. One of the reasons Biden is so determined to try to retain the White House is because he is

convinced he is the only one who can beat Mr Trump. We will see. What is true is that he is the only one who has beaten him.

Elections which feature an incumbent president are often seen as a referendum on the last four years. The Biden administration does have policy achievements it can point to, and its campaign slogan will be "let's finish the job". But it was striking that his official launch instead attempted to frame the election as a choice – a choice between

moderate and extreme, between competent and crazy, the same "battle for the soul of the nation" that was central to Biden's pitch last time. Donald Trump does not feature in the campaign video, but we do see scenes from the January 6th riots at the Capitol as Biden warns of MAGA (Make America Great Again) extremism and the threat he says it poses to American democracy. Over the past two years, we have

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global lens

Biden, Trump set for a rematch in 2024 US polls

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heard Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. If he becomes the Republican nominee in 2024, he will keep banging that drum. Yet, repeating lies about election fraud was clearly not a winning formula last year. Most of the high-profile election-denying candidates whom Trump backed in the 2022 mid-term elections fared pretty badly.

In contrast, the Democrats enjoyed much better-than-expected results in those Congressional elections – even keeping control of the US Senate. That performance helped to guarantee that President Biden won't face a major challenge from within his own party.

The biggest issue that played in the Democrats' favour was abortion. There has been a major voter backlash against the overturning of the constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy. Two-thirds of Americans consistently tell pollsters that they think abortion care should be legal and accessible.

President Biden will return to it again and again in the 18 months before election day. In the launch video, Biden accused Republican extremists of "dictating what healthcare decisions women can make" over footage of an abortion rights protester outside the Supreme Court.

Republicans look like the dog that finally caught up with the car it's been chasing. After decades when they could advance anti-abortion positions without having to offer too much detail, now candidates backing abortion bans are seeing that it could hurt them electorally. Republican-controlled state legislatures are pushing ahead with restrictive laws, but party strategists are worried about the impact at the national level.

But President Biden remains vulnerable. His approval numbers remain historically low – 42 per cent approve of his performance, while 52 per cent disapprove. The only other president since Ronald Reagan to be as unpopular at this point in his first term was Donald Trump.

Whichever Republican ends up



Former US president Donald Trump arrives ahead of his arraignment at the Manhattan Criminal Court in New York on April 4.

challenging Biden, it's obvious they will portray the 80-year-old president as a doddering old man (even if Trump is only four years younger). They will hope that a strenuous cross-country campaign leaves the president looking exhausted. He will not be able to campaign from his basement in Delaware as he did through the Covid election of 2020. Today's video features plenty of shots of the president looking deliberately vital and energetic – even running in one shot. But he cannot keep that up until polling day.

His opponents will also point to inflation (even if it is falling, that still means prices are rising) and to record numbers of migrants crossing the US's southern border, two issues guaranteed to get the Republican base riled up. The president does not excite Democrats in the way Trump – and his main rival, Florida governor Ron DeSantis – fire up the Republican base. But they have largely accepted that Biden may be their best bet in 2024.

And the Biden campaign seems to think that the prospect of Donald Trump returning to the White House is still the most effective way to drive up turnout among Democrats and independents. After all, it worked last time, and they will hope the result in a potential sequel is the same.

Elsewhere, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis met South Korea's prime minister in Seoul last week to discuss trade and North Korea's nuclear weapons on the second stop of his four-country trip before a possible presidential run.

DeSantis, who is widely expected to seek the Republican nomination in next year's White House race, is visiting Seoul while South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol is on a six-day state visit to Washington. He kicked off his international tour – widely seen as a bid to burnish his diplomatic and security credentials – in Japan this week.

In South Korea, he met Kim Dong-yeon, the governor of Gyeonggi Province, to discuss expanding economic cooperation, including in industries such as biotechnology. Samsung Electronics, social media giant NAVER and others have their headquarters in Gyeonggi.

DeSantis then met Prime Minister Han Duck-soo for talks, during which the Florida governor "emphasised the importance of the history and alliance between" Seoul and Washington, Han's office said in a statement. Han said he explained Seoul's "policies toward complete denuclearisation of North Korea" to DeSantis. Han and DeSantis also discussed regional and global issues that included north-east

Asia, Han's office said without giving details. Washington and its Asia allies, Tokyo and Seoul, are seeking closer military cooperation over North Korea's growing nuclear threats.

North Korea said last week its status as a nuclear power was "irreversible and final", slamming a G7 call for leader Kim Jong Un to give up his nuclear weapons entirely. Tensions have also flared recently between Washington and Beijing, with China staging three days of war games this month that simulated "sealing off" Taiwan. The drills followed a visit to Los Angeles by Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

China, Pyongyang's most important ally and economic benefactor, views democratic Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to bring the island under its control one day.

DeSantis stressed on Tuesday the importance of warding off conflict over Taiwan, telling a Japanese media outlet that "what China respects is strength".

He is also due to visit Israel, another traditional stop for US presidential candidates, particularly Republicans, and Britain on his trip. DeSantis has yet to officially announce his 2024 bid but is already the biggest threat to former president Donald Trump in both polls and media attention.

—AFP

global lens

■ BIDEN SUPPORTERS LUKEWARM ON CANDIDACY

OLD, BUT WHO ELSE IS THERE?



He's already the oldest-ever US president. He would be 86 by the end of a second stint in the job

● WASHINGTON

He won the most votes of any US presidential candidate ever last time around, but even many supporters feel unsure about sending the 80-year-old Joe Biden back to the White House for another term.

"He's just a little old," said Laura Miranda from New Jersey.

Biden is already the oldest-ever US president. He would be 86 by the end of a second stint in the job. "But I don't know who else it would be," the 31-year-old said, referring to the dearth of nationally popular Democratic Party possibles.

"He may be in good health now, but who knows, in six years' time how he's going to be," said voter Steven Hjupp from Connecticut.

"It's a very bleak situation," he said of Democrats' 2024 efforts against possible contenders such as former UN ambassador Nikki Haley, Florida governor Ron

DeSantis — and Donald Trump, who has already announced his own bid. Even voters who approve of Biden's job performance over the last two years — a period encompassing Covid, the war in Ukraine, inflation and abortion rows — expressed concerns about giving him another four years in the White House.

"Biden is, I don't know, 100, 120 years old," joked James Everett Newman, a firefighter in Houston, Texas. "I wish we could have a younger viable candidate for president."

"At the same time, we don't have that many younger alternatives because the Democratic Party has done a poor job cultivating younger leadership," the 34-year-old added. "I like what Biden's done. I think he's done a really good job," said 72-year-old Roger Tilton in Washington. Still, the retiree thinks it's time for Biden to move on.

"I personally wish he wouldn't run again," Tilton said.

"Mentally, I'm certainly not as acute as I was 20 years ago, and there's no way he is either."

First-time voter Avery Gonzales said Biden was "probably a little antiquated" for the job.

"Maybe we should have some younger blood running things, rather than just old people," the 19-year-old told *AFP* in Los

US President Joe Biden addresses the North America's Building Trades Unions Legislative Conference in Washington, DC on April 25. PHOTO | AFP

Angeles. Others say Biden's age should not disqualify him if voters think he is otherwise fit for the job. "As long as you are healthy, and you are able to comprehend and use your head like you're supposed to, age is not a factor," said New York Biden supporter Rodney Grimes, 59.

Aisha Smith, a 42-year-old in Houston, said she thinks Biden is brave to run for president again at his age, pointing out that there are elderly members of Congress and Supreme Court justices — some in their 70s and 80s.

"I think age is only a number," she said. For Jemima Homawoo, who was out walking near the White House Tuesday morning, if Biden "feels like he's able to do the job, then I think it's perfectly fine."

But the 33-year-old contractor still has reservations.

"I would prefer, honestly, if an opportunity was given to someone who is a bit younger

and may have fresh ideas for the country," she said.

Scott Shinderman, 52, told *AFP* in Los Angeles that the prospect of a Trump-Biden rematch showed there was a certain amount of what he called sclerosis in the US political system, but added he would pick Biden at the ballot box, despite concerns over his advancing years. "You can't be ageist, obviously. But...he's not as sharp as he used to be. That's evident in the way he speaks.

"I don't know if that affects his decision making. As long as you have good people around you, sometimes that's good enough."

For Republican supporters, feelings on Biden's candidacy are much more clear-cut.

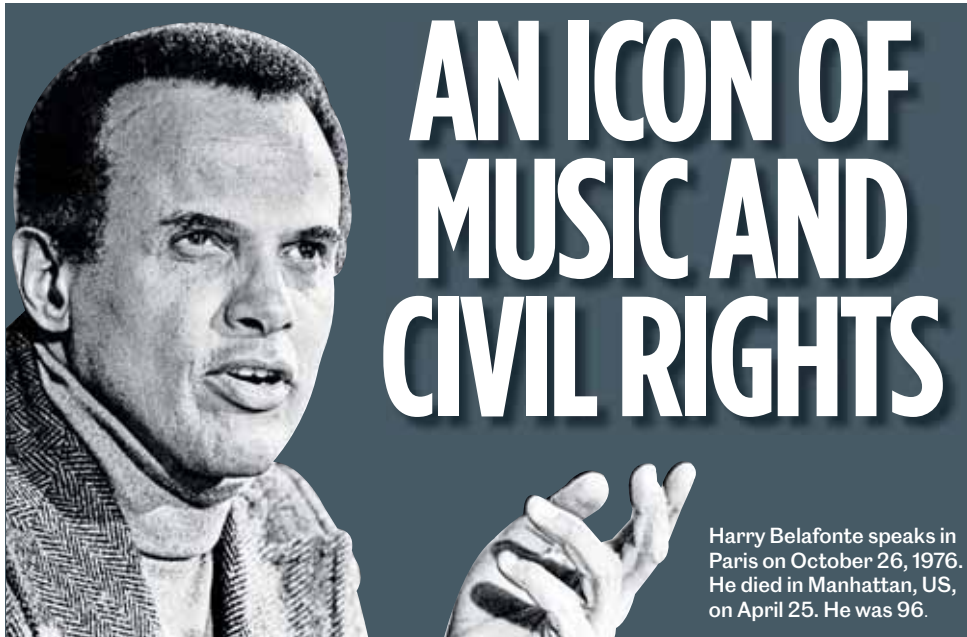
"I think it's a terrible idea," said Riva Fernandez, in the beach town of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

"I really hope DeSantis wins," the 54-year-old said. "He's the man."

— *AFP*

OBIT

■ THE ARTIST WHO GAVE THE WORLD THE FIRST ALBUM TO SELL A MILLION COPIES



AN ICON OF MUSIC AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Harry Belafonte speaks in Paris on October 26, 1976. He died in Manhattan, US, on April 25. He was 96.

He was a passionate civil rights activist who struggled to end segregation and a close confidant of Luther King and Mandela

● NEW YORK

Harry Belafonte, who has died at the age of 96, was far more than just the “Calypso King”. He was a passionate civil rights activist who struggled to end segregation and a close confidant of Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. He was also the star of films that challenged racist boundaries and dated stereotypes, an entertainer blacklisted in the savage, suspicious frenzy of McCarthyism.

When the US music industry needed a legend to bring its super-egos together for 1985 charity single *We Are The World*, it was Belafonte who had the credibility and the respect to make it happen.

Yet he remained charming and self-deprecating to a fault, fond of observing that he was the world’s

greatest actor “based on the fact I’ve convinced so many people I’m a singer”. This came from the man with an Oscar and a fistful of Grammys; the artist who gave the world the first album to sell a million copies; the performer who could turn his talent to blues, folk, jazz, gospel and, of course, calypso alike.

Born in Harlem on March 1, 1927, Harold George Bellanfanti Jr was the son of mixed-race West Indian immigrants. His racial lineage was complex. “On both sides of my family, my aunts and uncles intermarried,” he said. “If you could see my whole family congregated together, you would see every tonality of colour, from the darkest black, like my Uncle Hyne, to the ruddiest white, like my Uncle Eric – a Scotsman.”

His mother, Melvine, was a housekeeper who worked long days and made him promise never to let injustice go unchallenged. “It stayed with me forever,” he later recalled. “Whenever I came upon opportunities that were not offered to us because of race, because of poverty, I always remembered her counsel. She faced a life of endless rejection. I just marvelled at the way in which she seemed to endure.”

As a boy, he was sent to live with his grandmother in Jamaica to escape the grinding hardship of the Depression. There, he attended a British-style boarding school while back home his parents qui-

etly separated.

Belafonte returned to the US in his early teens and joined the US Navy in World War Two – although he never saw active service or left the American mainland. Demobbed, he married his first wife, Frances Margaret Byrd, scraped a living as a maintenance man, and began hanging round the American Negro Theatre in his native New York. At first, they gave him work shifting scenes. Then they threw him bit parts. Eventually, he was playing the lead.

He was given a part in a mixed race company alongside two other aspiring actors – Marlon Brando and Tony Curtis. The play included a song that caught the attention of local talent spotters and he was asked to do a set at a jazz club called the Royal Roost.

Thinking he’d be the only performer, he did a double take as he walked on stage and spotted the house band. Charlie Parker was waiting with saxophone. Miles Davis was dangling his trumpet. “I had to clear my throat about 90 times before I knew what key I was in,” Belafonte recalled.

Parker was a huge inspiration “playing in an incredible time for civilisation, when culture was leaping ahead”. Belafonte was hired on the spot but eventually decided jazz didn’t suit him. “There was little room for lyrics or story,” he said. “I had to think exclusively in terms of vocal gym-

nastics.” Soon he was picking up a Tony Award for his part in the musical revue John Murray Anderson’s *Almanac*. He also starred in the successful film musical *Carmen Jones*, although his voice was inexplicably overdubbed by an opera singer.

Then came *Calypso*. In 1956, the album became the first in US history to sell more than one million copies. It spent 31 weeks at the top of the Billboard charts and made Belafonte a household name.

The first track was *Banana Boat Song*, better known as Day-O in reference to its famous chorus. It is a traditional Jamaican folk tune – and thus not technically a calypso – sung from the point of view of dock workers loading fruit on to ships. “Daylight come and me wan’ go home” became his anthem. A string of successful albums followed. His Christmas hit *Mary’s Boy Child* sold a million copies in Britain alone, and Frank Sinatra recruited him to play at President John F Kennedy’s inauguration. A series of TV specials cemented his popular appeal and gave him the chance to introduce new acts to US audiences. They included a bright new star from Greece, Nana Mouskouri, and a shuffling harmonica player that Belafonte thought had talent – Bob Dylan.

As an actor, Belafonte turned down the lead in a film version of *Porgy and Bess* because he objected to what he considered to be the racial stereotyping of the role. In 1957, he did appear as an aspiring politician who threatens the white ruling class in *Island in the Sun*, a movie about interracial romance on a fictional Caribbean island. The relationship between Belafonte’s character and the film’s leading lady, Joan Fontaine, was hugely controversial in pre-civil rights America.

The film was a major success but Fontaine had to endure hate mail for her performance. Some of it was from the Ku Klux Klan.

Off screen, Belafonte fell for another of his co-stars, Joan Collins. The resulting affair coincided with the end of his marriage, but the relationship did not last. Soon after the film’s release, he got married for a second time, to former dancer Julie Robinson. The coming of The Beatles was a turning point. Belafonte’s style of music suddenly seemed dated and his record sales suffered.

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