

THE Weekly Review

For the Thinking Person

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EUROBONDAGE

The nation is stuck on the external debt treadmill and is firmly in the grip of what is widely known as 'Eurobondage'. The debt situation is piling pressure on government finances in an unprecedented way. Will Kenya free itself from the chains of greedy and expensive European lenders?

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letter from the editor

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Let this Eid mark the end of marginalisation of Muslims

The holy month of Ramadan – a period of fasting and spiritual growth for Muslims – ended last week with Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It's one of the five 'pillars of Islam', the others being the declaration of faith (*shahada*), daily prayer (*salat*), alms-giving (*zakat*) and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), at least once in a lifetime.

We salute and congratulate our Muslim brothers and sisters who have successfully finished this year's holy month.

It behoves us to think about how Muslims appear to be kept in the periphery of society. They seem to be treated as an afterthought; some sort of minority that must be treated with suspicion. The fault of a single Muslim, the wickedness and crime of one who professes the faith in Kenya, is multiplied and treated as if the general Muslim community has committed the crime.

Even a simple thing like approving a public holiday for a great day like Eid-ul-Fitr took many months in Parliament with Christian chauvinists arguing back and forth to oppose such a move, while their own Christmas was fastened into law without a murmur from other faiths. The day was gazetted as a public holiday in 1974 with the backing of the then Mombasa Central MP Mohammed Jahazi. It need not have taken much time for this to be accepted.

Almost 60 years after Independence, is there anything for Muslims to celebrate beyond Eid? In Kenya, Muslims account for about 11 per cent of the population, but have been marginalised socially, economically and politically by successive governments since 1963. Many, sadly,



Allan Buluku

Muslims are building schools and universities; they are making the greatest strides in the economic front and are businessmen and women of repute; they are on the road to betterment and what they require is only a clasp of the hand by the government to pull them up.

are treated as second-class citizens in their own country. The Muslim-heavy North-Eastern Region, for instance, is 70 per cent worse off than other parts of the country in terms of development. While there is an average of one doctor per 20,000 people in Kenya, in the north, there is one doctor per 120,000 people!

Simple things that other Kenyans get very easily are a nightmare to access for Muslims. Those seeking vital documents like Identification cards and passports undergo a lot of scrutiny. They have to produce many more documents than other Kenyans to prove their citizenship. For a Kenyan to get a passport, all one needs are the ID cards of parents and other few things like birth

certificates; the Muslim, on the other hand, must also produce a great grandfather's birth certificate, something that millions of Kenyans cannot provide.

This systematic marginalisation has provoked widespread frustration within the community. In the war on terror, the pursuit of violent extremists linked to al-Shabaab in Somalia has resulted in human rights violations, which have intensified historical frictions between the government and the Muslim community. There have been disappearances of Islamic preachers and extra-judicial killings of 'radicalised youth'. These inhuman activities are taken for granted by the wider Kenyan public and they seem to agree with the oppressive anti-terror squads that reign terror without recourse to the judiciary.

It's a fact that the vast majority of Muslims are moderate and oppose extremism. At the Coast, Muslims account for more than 50 per cent of the population. Despite the challenges, they are making progress in education, underscored by the increasing numbers of Muslim intellectuals and journalists. They are building schools and universities; they are making the greatest strides in the economic front and are businessmen and women of repute; they are on the road to betterment and what they require is only a clasp of the hand by the government to pull them up.

The majority are sensible, liberal, and reasonable. Let this Eid jog the government into doing more for the Kenyan Muslim.

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the telescope

■ Talks with union officials set for this week

Health CS seeks to end impasse

The government will this week commence negotiations with representatives of the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union in a bid to solve a looming health crisis.

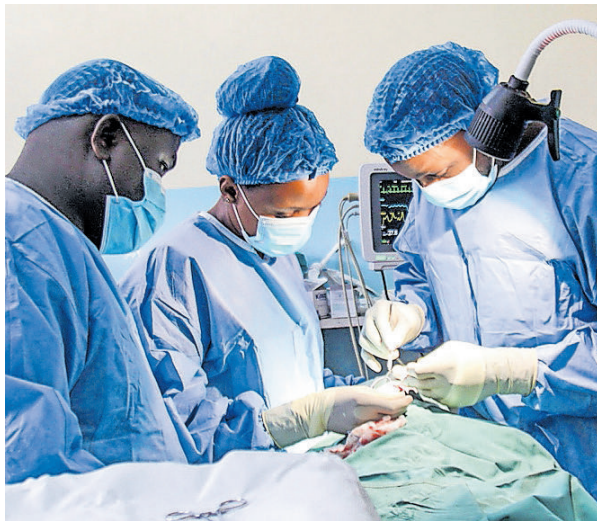
Health Cabinet Secretary Susan Nakhumicha confirmed the government's willingness to engage in a bid to arrest the deteriorating situation "even though health is constitutionally a devolved function".

Healthcare workers from six counties have downed their tools in a pay-dispute with county governments.

The workers are demanding their salary arrears from February and March as a condition for resuming work.

The workers, drawn from various unions, have accused the devolved units of deliberately frustrating healthcare workers by failing to pay salaries and remit their statutory deductions on time.

The unions say the health workers are in a difficult financial situation and "as a result, are unable to meet their daily needs, including transportation, food and accommodation expenses".



Doctors perform surgery at the Homa Bay County Teaching and Referral Hospital on March 31.

■ Professionals to converge on Sarit Centre

Premier Clean Expo in Nairobi



Thousands of professionals in the cleaning industry will gather at the Sarit Centre in Nairobi for the third East Africa Clean Expo & Summit between April 26 and April 28. The summit offers an excellent opportunity

for housekeeping, cleaning and laundry professionals to network and learn about the latest industry trends. Participants will meet with suppliers, network with their peers, exchange knowledge and share experiences.

The premier exhibition for the cleaning industry provides opportunities for international players to understand the regional market potential, and explore business opportunities.

■ LIV Golf has faced resistance from traditionalists



Brooks Koepka hits his tee shot on the fourth hole during round two of the LIV Golf Invitational at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club on July 1, 2022.

'Long list' of players to join rebel tour

LIV Golf boss Greg Norman says "a long list" of players want to join the rebel tour, as Brooks Koepka and Dustin Johnson last week conceded it would benefit from more depth. Norman, who is preparing for the Saudi-backed circuit's first event in his Australian homeland this week, said some of the names would "surprise" people.

"We've got a long list of players who want to come in, we just don't have the ability today because players are under contract," he told NewsCorp Australia, without giving names. "But we'll get to a position where there will be a relegation series and places will start opening up.

"It's incredible the amount of players who want to come on board," he

added. "It would surprise you how good those names are."

Bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, LIV split the golf world last year by luring away top stars from the US PGA Tour and DP World Tour (formerly the European Tour) with lucrative contracts to its 54-hole, no-cut experiment.

Now in its second season, it has faced resistance from traditionalists and struggled for credibility in the United States, in particular.

Campaigners accuse Saudi Arabia of "sportswashing" — using sport to deflect from its human rights record, including the murder and dismembering of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in its Istanbul consulate in 2018.

■ It will roll out options for paid password sharing

Netflix subscribers at record high



Netflix last week said that its number of subscribers hit a record 232.5 million high in the first quarter of the year and that its nascent ad-supported tier was faring well. The streaming television giant reported a quarterly profit of US\$1.3 billion,

in line with expectations, but said it had delayed a broad crackdown on sharing of account passwords "to improve the experience for members". Netflix said it expects to begin rolling out its options for paid password sharing this quarter instead.

"It's clear that the company wants to manage any fallout from the new strategy," said Third Bridge analyst Jamie Lumley.

That means some membership and revenue benefits resulting from the move were postponed.

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■ THE DEBT METRICS ARE DIRE, WITH PUBLIC DEBT TO GDP NOW AT 70 PER CENT

KENYA IN EUROBONDAGE



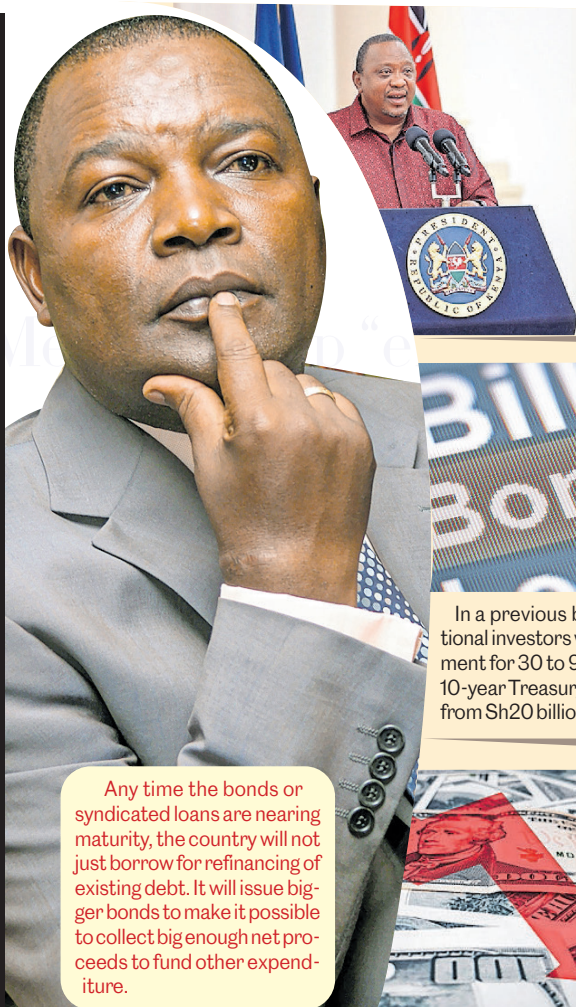
Kenya put out an advert inviting bids for transaction advisers to help it in two assignments: First, how to manage a massive US\$2 billion Eurobond bullet payment that is maturing in June 2024. Secondly, advisory services on a new Eurobond issuance between July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.



In recent auctions, domestic investors and bondholders have been voting with their wallets, sending a clear message that they are no longer willing to lend to the government beyond the 90-day T-bill tenors.



Last week, a reopened 15-year bond had to be cancelled. Neither was the performance of a re-opened three-year bond encouraging: Out of Sh30 billion bonds on offer, bids were received for Sh7.3 billion, of which only Sh1.7 billion were accepted at a weighted average interest rate of 13.47 per cent.



Any time the bonds or syndicated loans are nearing maturity, the country will not just borrow for refinancing of existing debt. It will issue bigger bonds to make it possible to collect big enough net proceeds to fund other expenditure.

Kenya's journey to the Eurobondage began in 2012, when the country went to the debt markets for a syndicated loan that was maturing in 2014. Come maturity in June 2014, Kenya faced clear blue skies, fresh leadership in the UhuRuto administration, and was touted as the one of the fastest growing economies in Africa.



In a previous bond auction, domestic and international investors were only willing to lend to the government for 30 to 90 days, and essentially refused to buy 10-year Treasury bonds as only Sh3.3 billion was taken from Sh20 billion on offer.



Are the bond auctions collapsing just because investors are demanding high rates that the government is unwilling to accept? Or, is it the case that investors and markets may have already factored in the spectre of a sovereign debt default?

Kenya's debt situation is piling pressure on government finances in an unprecedented way. The state has been struggling to raise money to meet ongoing debt repayment obligations and normal expenses, especially salaries and the constitutionally mandated transfer to the counties

● BY JAINDI KISERO

Kenya is clearly stuck on the external debt treadmill and is firmly in the grip of what is now popularly described as 'Eurobondage'. This is when, as an African country, you find yourself in a vicious circle in which you are permanently financing debt with debt, perennially negotiating ex-

tensions of redemption periods, and constantly dropping in credit ratings.

Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz could not have described the Eurobond borrowing craze and the phenomenon we are witnessing more aptly. He attributed the Eurobondage phenomenon to "short-sighted financial markets, working with short-sighted gov-

ernments, laying the groundwork for the world's next debt crisis".

Last week, Kenya put out an advert inviting bids for transaction advisers to help it in two assignments.

First, how to manage a massive US\$2 billion Eurobond bullet payment that is maturing in June 2024. Secondly, advisory services on a new Eurobond issuance

between July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. It is a gutsy move because the conditions in both the local and international debt marketplace are not so rosy. In recent auctions, domestic investors and bondholders have been voting with their wallets, sending a clear message that they are no longer willing to lend to the government

Continued on Page 6

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Euro banks engaged in selfish search for fat fees

Continued from Page 5

beyond the 90-day T-bill tenors.

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were accepted at a weighted average interest rate of 13.47 per cent.

In a previous bond auction, domestic and international investors were only willing to lend to the government for 30 to 90 days, and essentially refused to buy 10-year Treasury bonds as only Sh3.3 billion was taken from Sh20 billion on offer.

These developments beg the following questions: Are the bond auctions collapsing just because investors are demanding high rates that the government is unwilling to accept? Or, is it the case that investors and markets may have already factored the spectre of a sovereign debt default? The jury is out on this one.

What is clear, however, is that Kenya's debt situation is now piling pressure on government finances in an unprecedented way. Already, there is evidence that the government has been struggling to raise money to meet ongoing debt repayments obligations and normal expenses, especially salaries and the constitutionally mandated transfer to country governments.

Indeed, the debt metrics are dire, with public debt to GDP now at 70 per cent. But the gravity of the crisis is more accurately reflected in the statistics on what the government is currently spending on debt service: Total debt service has galloped to a level of 65 per cent of revenues collected by the Kenya Revenue Authority.

When you are in the grip of Eurobondage and at a high debt levels as Kenya is in, three things happen: First, what you spend on debt service is predominantly 'interest on inter-

Here is how the 'Eurobondage' game is played: First, an African country is approached by three or four commercial banks with a proposal to arrange or underwrite a syndicated multimillion-dollar loan, typically with a two- to three-year tenure. When the syndicated loan comes due three years later, the country will have no dollars to repay. But the stage will have been prepared for the same banks to come to you, offering to take you to international debt markets and support you in issuing a Eurobond so that you can get the money to repay the syndicated loan.

est. Secondly, most of the debt is incurred to pay debt — borrowing from Peter to pay Paul. Thirdly, debt markets start demanding higher interest rates as investors start factoring a sovereign default.

Mark you, the proceeds of the Eurobond Kenya is planning will not be used to build roads, bridges or ports. The government made it clear in the advert that they want money to make the Eurobond payment, maturing within 15 months.

Kenya's journey to the Eurobondage began in 2012, when the country went to the debt markets for a syndicated loan that was maturing in 2014.

Come maturity in June 2014, Kenya faced clear blue skies, fresh leadership in the UhuRuto administration, and was touted as the one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Kenya was more or less the poster child of the Africa rising narrative

In the circumstances, all it took was a road show in Chicago, London and New York to succeed. Yield-hungry fund managers in advanced debt markets in the

West found the paper attractive because dol-



President William Ruto

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TENOR (RE-OPENED 3-YEAR TREASURY BONDS)		FXD1/2022/03
Total Amount Offered	KSh.Mn	30,000.00
Total Bids Received at Cost	KSh.Mn	7,328.96
Performance Rate	(%)	24.43
Amount Accepted	KSh. Mn	1,757.09
Market Weighted Average Rate	(%)	13.839
Weighted Average Rate of Accepted Bids	(%)	13.471
New Borrowing/Net Repayment	KSh.Mn	1,757.09

lar interest rates were at a historic low. The fact that the market looked at the country favourably was demonstrated by the success of the tap sale in December that year, where we raised US\$850 million.

Clearly, the Eurobond Kenya is planning currently will be floated in totally different circumstances. Instead of blue skies, what you see in international debt markets is thunderstorms and lightning.

The world economy is still recovering from a once-in-a-century pandemic.

The Europeans are in a war that has adversely affected markets and supply chains of food, fuel and fertiliser. Indeed, Ukraine and Russia are among the biggest suppliers of tradable wheat, maize and exportable fertiliser in the World. Being net importers of both food and fuel, the hardest hit by the war in Europe have been countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Two other factors and happenings have combined to make the international debt markets precarious. First, rising interest rates in the North and the collapse of banks in Europe and the US, notably Credit Suisse. Rising interest rates are exerting pressures on exchange rates of African countries and increasing external debt repayments.

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range or underwrite a syndicated multimillion-dollar loan, typically with a two-to three-year tenure.

When the syndicated loan comes due three years later, the country will have no dollars to repay. But the stage will have been prepared for the same banks to come to you, offering to take you to international debt markets and support you in issuing a Eurobond so that you can get the money to repay the syndicated loan.

What you will observe is that any time the bonds or syndicated loans are nearing maturity, the country will not just borrow for refinancing of existing debt. It will issue bigger bonds to make it

possible to collect big enough net proceeds to fund other expenditure.

European banks and fund managers are hopping from one African country to the another, where they collude with corrupt officials to sad-

dle citizens with expensive dollar loans that are, in most cases, used to fund opaque security contracts padded with huge kickbacks and backhanders. The European banks are merely engaged in a selfish search for fat fees and commissions.



Former President Uhuru Kenyatta

kenya lens

■ THE CIVIL SERVICE

STATE OF POLITICAL ELITES

There are concerns that Kenya Kwanza's heavily political government irredeemably undermines the values and principles of public service

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

Mheshimiwa (Honourable), by the very nature of Kenyan politics, is a burdensome title. The electorate expects financial favours, free goodies, job placements and all manner of acts of kindness – whether or not one has been elected or faced rejection at the ballot. Which is why President William Ruto's move to saturate the Cabinet and other top government positions with politicians raises fresh concerns.

The opposition and members of civil society are fretful that individual politicians eyeing elective positions in 2027 could (mis)use their positions to benefit themselves politically. Owing to the nature of their trade, Suba Churchill, who is Chairman of the Kenya National Civil Society Centre (KNKSC), opines that politicians have had their outlook impaired by all manner of biases that make them see almost every facet of life through ethnic, clan and other lenses which, unfortunately, characterise Kenyan society today.

“Accountability and integrity levels among politicians are among the lowest, and those that have been appointed into government, including as chairpersons and CEOs of parastatals, are more likely than not to perpetuate the very ills that afflict the Kenyan society,” claims the KNKSC chair.

While they play a crucial role in mobilising voters, politicians admittedly have a huge appetite for money and resources – to support and appease their political bases and hangers-on or build a war chest for the next elections. This can greatly impede the running of government, especially where resources are limited.

But appreciating the fact that politicians are also Kenyans who deserve employment opportunities in government, considering that some are professionals in various fields, National Assem-

bly Minority Leader Opiyo Wandayi has beef with the encroachment of what he considers cronyism, nepotism and tribalism: “Nobody is saying that politicians should not be appointed to government because that would amount to discrimination of sorts. Our (the opposition's) concern is that civil servants whose only mistake is not having been on Ruto's campaign trail or team are being unfairly replaced by the President's political cronies and tribesmen and women.”

Since he came to power, Ruto has fully constituted his government with 22 Cabinet Secretaries, 51 Principal Secretaries (which is nine more than

the number appointed by his predecessor, Uhuru Kenyatta), and 50 Chief Administrative Secretaries (21 more than the ones Uhuru appointed) – and expanded the number of Kenyan embassies and consulates around the world from 61 to 66.

The increase in positions has created room for the appointment of politicians who were rejected by voters or opted out at party primaries, as well as those who were poached from the opposition. The net effect of the move is that the national budget will shoot up.

The emerging concern, though, is how a government saturated with politicians can independently operate and offer services devoid of favouritism.

Of the 22 CSs, for instance, only the Finance chief, Prof Njuguna Ndung'u, and his East African Community, Arid and Semi-Arid Lands counterpart, Rebecca Miano, have not vied in a general election, by-election or political party primary. Njuguna is a former Governor of the Central Bank of Kenya, while Miano is a former KenGen Chief Executive.

And although he has never sought an elective position, Energy CS Davis Chirchir is a long-serving political operative, previously leaning towards President Uhuru Kenyatta, whom he served as Elections Chief Agent, and later working as Chief of Staff for Ruto when he was DP.

Actually, some of Ruto's CSs had already secured seats in Parliament by the time he nominated them to the Cabinet. These include Garissa Town MP Aden Duale, Alice Wahome (Kandara), Kipchumba Murkomen (Elgeyo Marakwet Senator) and Sopian Tuya (nominated).

Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua explains that the Kenya Kwanza alliance leader has a duty to appoint people he believes will help implement his agenda for the country.

In making appointments of cabinet and principal secretaries, and lately CASS, the President has affirmed that he knows most of the appointees



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personally and expects them to deliver on his team's campaign pledges. This reinforces his preference for politicians. According to the DP, there is no way Ruto will appoint people who did not believe in his presidency, and who were calling him a thief, to work in his government: "There is no president anywhere in the world who will willingly invite people to his government who do not believe in him and his agenda."

Governance expert Dr James Wesonga considers Ruto's positioning of politicians in government a politically smart move aimed at affirming his reliability as a friendly ally. These are critical attributes that the President wishes to project to the political class, which is crucial in mobilising votes.

Soon, and for the next four years, there will be a buzz of activity across the country as politicians-turned-civil servants roll out development projects while pitching for their own election and that of their boss. In other words, a heavily politically-driven civil service means endless politicking. The only reason that the President has appointed politicians into his government, argues Wesonga, is to return political favours owed from last year's elections. The political analyst warns that the notion of dishing out positions on any account other than merit or competence is dangerous and undermines service delivery.

And now Wandayi claims that professionalism in the public service has clearly been relegated to the backburner. He argues that it seems to be official policy of Ruto's government to entrench individuals who were in his campaign team into government at the expense of competence.

The opposition's parliamentary leader is particularly touched by the case of career civil servants, whose lives have been "totally messed up" by the Ruto administration, after being fired or relegated to junior postings, presumably because of being sympathetic to the rival camp allied to former Prime Minister Raila Odinga. Such appointments, he contests, are largely motivated by political considerations and they only serve to demoralise

competent career civil servants.

The question of favouritism in government appointments notwithstanding, Wesonga lauds the President for changing the Kenyan political narrative from tribal and regional contests to issue-based politics: "Today, Kenyans are united in their concern for the rising cost of living, the skewed manner of dishing out employment, and the general audit of governance at national and county levels. This is a positive trend."

The domination of politicians in government remains a thorny issue, nevertheless. Civil society representatives argue that President Ruto's heavily political government irredeemably undermines the values and principles of public service as explicitly expressed under Article 232 of the Constitution. Having been part of Constitution-making and writing processes over the decades, Suba points out that part of the reason why the Constitution of 2010 was crafted to separate powers between the Executive and Legislature is because some Cabinet Ministers openly and deliberately favoured certain areas and segments of the population at the expense of others.

"Moving forward under this Constitution, CSs, PSs and more recently CASs ought to be individuals imbued with an innate desire and acumen to embrace such ideas as high stand-

ards of professional ethics, efficient, effective and economic use of resources, as well as transparency and fairness in the provision of services," says Suba.

If the Head of the Civil Service represents the face and aspirations of the government, then the current public service is more political in outlook than any other since Independence.

The current holder of that office, Felix Koskei, who was appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture in 2013, remained politically active – campaigning for Ruto's political wing, including for himself as Governor for Nandi. However, former Nandi Senator and current Governor of Nandi Stephen Sang beat Koskei to the Jubilee Party ticket in 2017.

There is a marked difference in perception – with regard to political linkage – between Koskei and most of his predecessors. Duncan Nderitu Ndegwa, who served as the first post-Independence Head of the Civil Service and Secretary to the Cabinet under Jomo Kenyatta was, for instance, a respected technocrat with a Masters of Arts degree in Economics and History from St Andrews University in Scotland.

Friends and colleagues described Ndegwa, who became the first African and longest serving Governor of the Central Bank of Kenya, as a man who was "allergic to politics".

Then there was Geoffrey Kariithi, who succeeded Ndegwa in 1967, and Jeremiah Kiereini and Fares Kuindwa, who served under President Daniel arap Moi. Although they were the most powerful officers in government in their time, they were known for operations and manoeuvres in the civil service and never hit the campaign trail or served in campaign teams. The same is true of Francis Muthaura and lately Joseph Kinyua, who worked under Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta respectively.

The only other holders of this position who were caught by the political bug are Simeon Nyachae, Sally Kosgei and Francis Kimemia. They joined elective politics only after exiting office in 1987, 2002 and 2013, respectively serving as Nyaribari Chache and Aldai MPs, and Governor of Nyandarua.

Renowned conservationist Richard Leakey, was hired in mid-1999 alongside six high-profile technocrats to "turn around the economy" after a brief stint in politics with the Safina Party, which is associated with prominent lawyer Paul Muite. But the so-called "Dream Team" was disbanded two years later.

That these previous heads of the civil service reflected the face and spirit of the Kenyan public workforce is not in doubt. Similarly, Koskei mirrors the type of civil service that President Ruto aspires to have. To date, however, there is no scientific comparative assessment of the performance of non-political vis-à-vis political-leaning civil service forces.

What is not in doubt is the fact that the current government is saturated with political players at the top level, and the jury will soon be back with a verdict on this new arrangement in the public service.

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Opiyo Wandayi

Minority Leader
in the National
Assembly

kenya lens

■ A BRILLIANT MANAGER WITH AN UNFLAPPABLE DEMEANOUR WHO REVIVED THE ECONOMY

WHAT KIBAKI WOULD HAVE DONE

Dealing with cash crunches and sealing off avenues of wastage were among the former President's areas of strength in economic management. Had he been alive today, Kibaki would have found a solution to pilferage of public funds

• By OSCAR OBONYO

Dr David Ndi's recent confession to the effect that the government is wasteful of public resources and that "there is absolutely nothing" that can be done to curb the situation, is not entirely accurate – at least in light of Former President Emilio Mwai Kibaki's economic manoeuvres.

The fears expressed by the Chairperson of the President's Economic Advisory Council on

April 10 during a live television interview, would have been assuaged with a quick fix from the late head of state's bag of tricks. Kibaki, who obtained a BSc in Public Finance with distinction at the prestigious London School of Economics, was consistently passionate about one thing – protection of public coffers.

Dealing with cash crunches and sealing off avenues of wastage of public funds were among Kibaki's areas of strength in economic management. Were Kibaki alive today, President William Ruto's chief economic adviser would have sought his counsel regarding pilferage of funds in government.

"Government is extremely

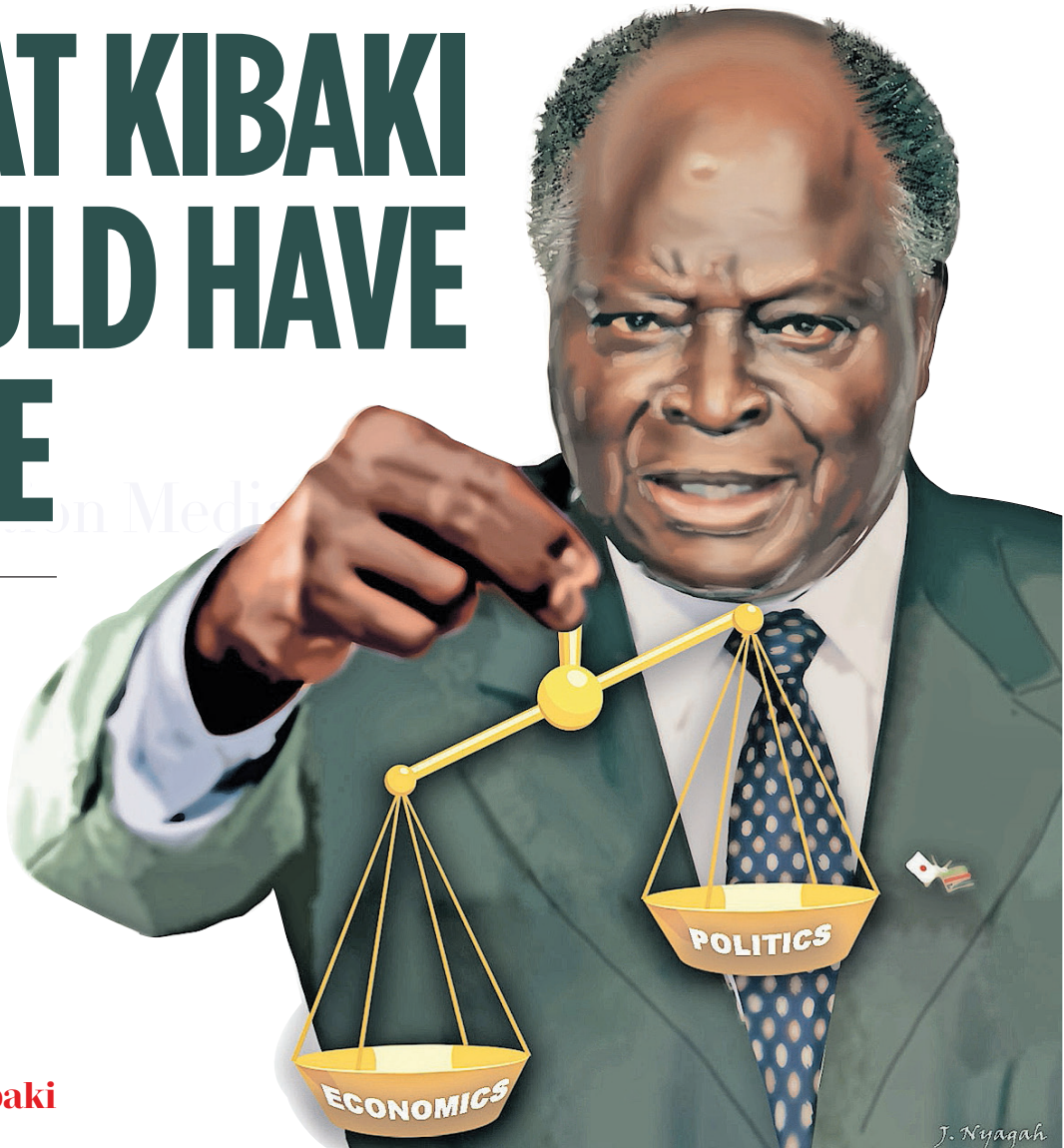
wasteful. There is not a single day, that I am not exasperated by not just how wasteful it is but by how deliberate it is and how unbothered people are. It is true we have a very extravagant government," said Ndi.

The President's economic adviser was likely venting his frustrations over the fact that Ruto's government was not demonstrating thriftiness consistent with the current tough economic realities. That in the face of its admission of financial difficulties, including inability to pay salaries to civil servants in time and disburse funds to counties, senior government officers were still engaged in varied expensive ventures.

Nonetheless, reflections on the

life and times of Kibaki – who passed on a year ago on April 21 – still offer a host of lessons on frugal expenditure of public resources and curbing of wastage. And going by observations of some of the renowned economist's aides, the lessons begin right from basic handling of his own budgeting at State House and at ministry level, having served in the Cabinet for more than three decades.

As President, his long-serving personal assistant, Alfred Getonga, observes that Kibaki's convoy was always lean – with few cars and government officers accompanying him to public functions. Before departing for a function, he would quickly assess the number of vehicles in his convoy, in-



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cluding chase cars, and order a reduction if he felt it was too large.

So obsessed was the President with this issue that, Getonga recalls with amusement, some senior government officers opted to circumvent this restriction by hiding by the roadsides and secretly joining the official convoy midway. Even then, when Kibaki eventually bumped into the said officers at the function, he confronted them, asking them loudly why they were “idling around, wasting valuable working time and resources”.

As a matter of principle, the President’s convoy ordinarily never involved a set of more than two Cabinet ministers. Kibaki reportedly travelled with only one designated minister, whose docket was relevant to his business of the day. Even as his PA, Getonga says the President rarely required his presence – or that of a number of his other aides and officers at his Harambee House office – on such trips.

And except for his annual holiday, preferably at the coastal city of Mombasa, Kibaki was not the type to frequently traverse the country. His foreign trips were equally minimal and his delegations thin.

Presidential trips are usually expensive, considering that the head of state is normally accompanied by large delegations, including his security detail and senior government officials who draw hefty sums in travel and daily out-of-pocket allowance, as government separately foots their food and accommodation bills.

By the end of his ten-year rule in 2013, Kibaki was no doubt the least travelled of Kenya’s presidents to foreign nations. In contrast, in two years of his presidency alone, Uhuru Kenyatta had by June 2015 been on 43 taxpayer-funded trips, compared with 33 that Kibaki made during his entire two-term tenure.

Meanwhile, between September 13, 2022 – when he was sworn into office – and January 23, 2023, President Ruto has made a total of 12 foreign trips in just 133 days, which is slightly under one-third of Kibaki’s trips in 3,650 days. Statistics on trips of pioneer President Jomo Kenyatta, who assumed power in 1963, and his predecessor Daniel arap Moi in 1978, are not readily available. However, the former reportedly had a phobia for air travel and was most-



President Mwai Kibaki, Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka (left), Prime Minister Raila Odinga (second right) and his deputy Musalia Mudavadi at State House, Nairobi, on April 15, 2008.

ly represented on foreign missions by Moi, his longest-serving Vice-President.

While foreign trips are not necessarily a redundant venture, considering that most development deals are negotiated, struck and signed on such visits, public concern has always been about the size of delegations accompanying the President, the accumulative cost to the tax-payer and the frequency of the trips.

Separately, Kibaki did not subscribe to the political culture of liberally dishing out money to people or groups of people for mere political expediency or otherwise. One had to genuinely earn his or her money from him or his government. Former Kitui Governor, Charity Ngilu, says the late President did not believe in giving out handouts or buying political favours. And she knows this all too well because she worked with Kibaki closely for 30 years, having first been elected to Parliament in 1992 on the ticket of his then Democratic Party of Kenya.

According to the ex-Cabinet minister, money was never a big issue for Kibaki even on the campaign trail. And even where he got sponsorship from well-wishers, that did not determine or change how he individually treated and valued members of his political team. In other words, Kibaki lacked acute persuasion to pursue cash for political activity, an attribute that Ngilu believes explains why he did not pilfer state

coffers for political activity.

But coming at a time when his predecessor, Moi, was publicly appreciated for his generous cash rewards, including hefty donations during funds drives across the country, Kibaki’s style was not an easy sell. Many frowned upon his frugal financial attitude and even considered him mean. In fact, during his reign, Kibaki banned Cabinet ministers from presiding over harambees through the Public Officers Ethics Act enacted in 2003. He believed then that the funds drives encouraged corruption and that in some cases politicians diverted the monies collected to fund their election campaigns.

Interestingly, Kibaki himself was not known to participate in harambees. The only moments the late President, a devout Catholic, was seen publicly reaching into his coat pocket for money was for the offertory basket during mass. So, while many misconstrued his ban as a way to propagate his “mean tendencies”, economic analysts are in agreement that it was meant to monitor corruption and misuse of public.

To partially cure the harambee culture, which had since Independence become an avenue for raising money from the public to fund various projects, the Constituency Development Fund was introduced in 2003, during the Kibaki presidency. The fund was designed to support grassroots development projects at constitu-

ency level., and served to give the “mean President” some breathing space and accolades.

In another successful drive to stop leakage of revenue, Kibaki instituted reforms in the revenue collection department which, in just a month’s time, enabled his government to fund the dream project of free primary education, which was one of the National Rainbow Coalition’s key campaign pledges in the 2002 campaigns.

The move boosted the confidence of global lenders in Kibaki, and they showed willingness to fund some of his major development projects. Summarily, between 2003 and December 2012, Kibaki increased the size of the Kenyan economy from slightly more than Ksh1 trillion to Ksh6.4 trillion, leaving behind an economy five times larger than when he assumed office.

Despite the impressive development record, the Kibakis do not stand out as a political family or dynasty. This is partly due to the fact that Kibaki was not overly enthusiastic about politics. His only politically active son, Jimmy, has fizzled out of the political scene after forming a political party, The National Democrats Party in 2021 but eventually abandoning his quest to vie for the position of Senator or Deputy Governor of Nyeri County. Kibaki’s predecessors, on the other hand, were succeeded by their sons in politics. Uhuru made it to the highest office in the land in 2013 and former Baringo Senator Gideon Moi took charge of the Independence party, Kanu, in 2012.

While acknowledging Kibaki’s economic brilliance, Dr Ndiu makes a jibe at the late President for failing to strike a good balance between politics and economics. And he likens the current political and economic instability in Kenya to “political mismanagement” that he claims happened during Kibaki’s era.

“I watched Mwai Kibaki mismanage politics from 2003 to 2005, and all that we did economically came to naught in 2007,” says Ndiu, in apparent approval of President Ruto’s delicate mix of pushing for economic reforms and playing politics at the same time. Although not a virtuous economic approach, it is a politically pragmatic tactic that few would censure.

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the limelight



French President Emmanuel Macron (centre) shakes hands with people during a visit to Selestat, eastern France, on April 19. Macron, whose reforms, including an increase of the pension age, have earned him widespread animosity in recent weeks. PHOTO | AFP



Horsemen take part in an equestrian show marking the 450th anniversary of the Real Maestranza de Caballeria cultural institution in Ronda, southern Spain, on April 19. PHOTO | AFP



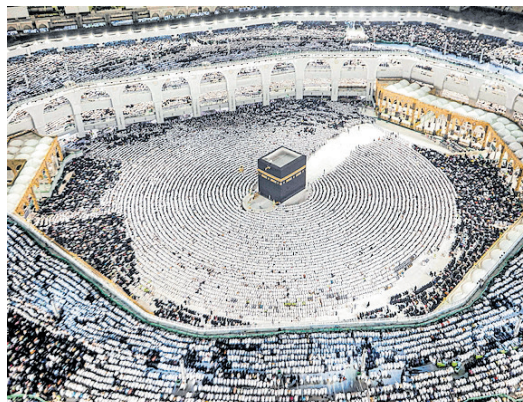
Orthodox Christians gather with lit candles around the Edicule, traditionally believed to be the burial site of Jesus Christ, during the Holy Fire ceremony at the Holy Sepulchre church in Jerusalem's Old City on April 15, on the eve of Easter Sunday. PHOTO | AFP



Evans Chebet (left) and Hellen Obiri pose with the trophy on the finish line after winning the 127th Boston Marathon in Massachusetts, US, on April 17. PHOTO | AFP



People celebrate the water festival, an important part of the Dai ethnic minority New Year celebration in Jinghong, in China's southwestern Yunnan Province, on April 15. PHOTO | AFP



Muslim worshippers pray around the Kaaba, Islam's holiest shrine, at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Mecca on April 17, on the night of 27 Ramadan, believed to be Laylat al-Qadr, one of the holiest nights during the holy fasting month of Ramadan. PHOTO | AFP



US journalist Evan Gershkovich, arrested on espionage charges, stands inside a defendants' cage before a hearing to consider his appeal at the Moscow City Court on April 18. PHOTO | AFP



The Arena

NADIA'S GOLDEN HEART

*Singer runs
a body that
supports
teenage
mothers to
get back to
school and
mentors
young girls*

OPEN SPACE

Important life lessons the youth must learn to excel

Make good use of the President's Award Kenya. Through this good programme, we developed our character and discipline; we felt a part of something useful to society

● BY MOSES OJUANG'

As a young boy in school in the 1980s, there were many co-curricular activities in school. Apart from sports, one could join the well-organised scouting movement and feel part of some order.

You looked forward to learning more than classroom grammar and mathematics. Your eyes were opened to nature and care for the environment and how to relate with your surroundings. You learnt the most important thing in life: discipline.

You could also join the Red Cross movement and discover simple ways to save life and give first aid before the arrival of medics. You felt safe and confident about handling simple accidents without panicking and running away.

You got to learn, sit exams and get certificates that made you proud and made one wish to learn even more.

After the transition to high school at the age of 13 or 14, you could still pursue these tasks and reach the highest echelons of these good organisations. At high school, a whole new world was opened up by the President's Award-Kenya.

This organisation was launched in 1966 by the Founding Father of the nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta.

The Award is a member of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Association, which oversees the Award Programme for young people in 120 countries.

This was the mother of them all due to its simple achievement scale, complete with a small book that I still keep to date.

Here we developed our character and discipline; here we felt a part of something useful to society.

We took up duties and earned points that were meticulously recorded in our books. We helped wash the

corridors of the Coast General Hospital in Mombasa for two weekends, just to complete a task and earn those marks.

They divided the stages into bronze, silver and gold, and each stage culminated in a long excursion and physical exertion requisite for own health. We trekked for kilometres for days, carrying our food in backpacks and cooking and sharing our meals at the predestined stations.

We were the unlucky generation of the turbulent 1990s.

Things were changing politically, and by the time of going to the university, there wasn't much to do and the organisation simply ceased to exist or went into hibernation.

There was a little stirring after the 2002 elections and somehow it seems attitudes

changed and schools, especially at the Coast Province, slumbered and cannot resurrect such activities. Most of my compatriots stopped at the Silver stage and youth slipped away from us.

There may be a lack of funds for the President's Award-Kenya but we know it does exist. The government must look into working hard for the programmes since it's what is required most at this time, when discipline of the youth has slumped to its lowest ever.

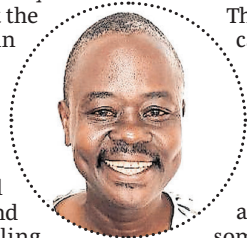
These activities may seem purposeless for those in power, but their hidden worth for the youth is immeasurable.

I write this as a concerned high school teacher who knows just how much this generation needs that purposeful organisation.

Awaken them all and we shall have focused youth.

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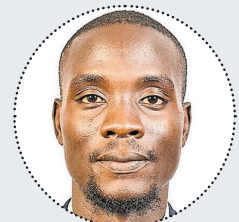
Any feedback on topical issues? We would like to hear from you. Send your views to: weeklyreview@ke.nationmedia.com



Pannuel Musyoka

Civil servants should seek assistance from labour unions to push the government to pay their salaries. Unions will negotiate with the government. It's the role of the unions to negotiate and push for better workers' rights, including better pay, safer working conditions, and better benefits. They can also reach out to other State agencies responsible for labour and employment issues for assistance.

— A content creator based in Nairobi



Samwel Ketchel

Successful civil servants who have worked in government until retirement have always had alternative sources of income. This is very important in a struggling economy such as ours. For example, civil servants can supplement their incomes with farming. Agribusiness is good because it pays well if you put effort into it. It can save families when there are salary delays such as what we are experiencing.

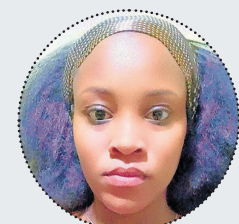
— An expert in Agribusiness



Mirriam Hassan

The government is facing an unprecedented cash-flow crisis that has resulted in delays in the payment of salaries for civil servants. I urge them to call for a probe into the Kenya Revenue Authority, because part of the problem is that the organisation collected less revenue. It did not meet its targets. The excuses that have been given are so far not convincing. More needs to be done.

— A student at Technical University of Kenya



Alicia Kanini

Civil servants have been warned to brace themselves for more salary delays amid a worsening economic situation in the country. I urge them to do the private work (side hustles) to sustain their families. This will be a good start for them to manage their financial problems. The government should also seek other means to pay salaries, such as short-term loans.

— A student at Technical University of Kenya

THE SUDANESE CRISIS



A MATTER OF SIZE?

Larger African countries need more time and stronger myths to sustain them; the smallest countries are also the most successful

• BY WAGA ODONGO

I didn't think much of the severity of the Sudanese conflict until I saw a fighter jet strafe a building in Khartoum. That was when I knew it was for real, for-real as the kids say. With modern artillery there is no need for a jet to fly that low to hit a target that close to the ground, particularly when you hold the city. Flying a military jet, with all the exotic virility of a sonic boom, costs a fortune. There isn't a faster way to set money on fire. Fighter jets are extra, extra as South Africans say. You break out the jets to flex on the other side, to show them there's levels to this.

The falling-out between the parties was inevitable. Ever since the army and a paramilitary unit called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) ousted Omar al-Bashir from power in 2019, they have shared uneasy power. They united shortly to defeat and reject civilian rule and now the thorny question of how to disarm the RSF came up.

The RSF is, of course, a reskinned Janjaweed that the former dictator used to butcher dark-skinned civilians in Darfur.

The two men at the centre of the war are now in open warfare. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the de facto ruler, wants a rapid disbanding of the RSF led by his deputy, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. He has branded Dagalo, aka Hemedti, "a criminal", while the latter has promised to kill al-Burhan "like a dog". At stake is not only power but also control of all the money that the entire country must pay as tribute to the army.

We have seen this story before – two millennia ago. After serving as governor of Gaul and commanding the best army on the continent, the Senate in Rome ordered Julius Caesar to disband his army and return to the capital. No general lays down his arms willingly if he thinks he can win the ensuing battle. Caesar refused to lay down his arms and with his soldiers crossed the river Rubicon (hence the saying) on his way to decimating the Republic.

One wonders whether the two generals were ever going to hand over power to civilians. It rarely happens – if ever – that generals with massive economies at their beck and call and million-man militaries hand over power to civilians. Look up north to Egypt, for example, where another General Abdel Fattah (this time al-Sisi) reigns. After agreeing to hand over power to civilians, General al-Sisi ditched the fatigues, became a civilian and got elected as President. Like al-Sisi, I am sure al-Burhan has no problem handing over power to civilians if he is the civilian in question.

The main failure of Sudan has been one



Sudan's Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan (right) and paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (centre) following the signing of an initial deal in the capital, Khartoum, on December 5, 2022, aimed at ending a deep crisis caused by last year's military coup.

brought about by size. Larger countries on the continent need more time and stronger myths to sustain them. The smallest countries in Africa are also the most successful.

Sudan is the size of five Germanys with half the population. This is even after South Sudan, itself larger than Kenya, left with more than three quarters of the oil. It is very hard to have a large, centralised state anywhere in the world, and particularly in Africa.

To the north of us, Ethiopia, the second most populous country on the continent, is an unwieldy federation. Its Premier has just concluded a bloody war in the North. Eritrea had to shoot its way out of the union. Nigeria, the most populous country on the continent, had for a while to settle on an unwritten agreement to share power between North and South.

It went well until a Northern President (Yar'Adua) died in power and his Southern deputy refused to move over. So, we got Boko Haram. All of Africa's successful countries are small: Cape Verde, Ghana, Mauritius. All its tragedies are large: Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. Beyond a certain size, either geographically or population-wise, states become hard to manage.

Small countries can make a huge contribution economically. For example, the Netherlands, which is the world's second largest exporter of agricultural produce in the world after the United States, is smaller than four counties in Kenya. Questions of viability are also overblown. Samoa is an island state smaller than Homa Bay County with a seat at the UN. Why can't the Bay similarly be considered a viable country? The Free State of Homa Bay has a nice ring to it.

The truth is that, for the sake of peace and prosperity, many African countries should consider breaking up. Nation states like to pretend that they are immutable works of gods whose boundaries can never be moved or altered. It is ridiculous. As bad as it was, who can say that the addition of Eritrea or South Sudan to the comity of nations hasn't been positive? If they were still locked inside the larger carcass of the previous states, bloodier battles would have been fought. When the USSR died, out sprung dozens of states and most are doing better now that they have broken free. Same with Yugoslavia. After the split parties seem to be doing better than ever.

Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer
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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

SELF-MADE CODING GURU

Kennedy Wangari during a past data workshop in Nairobi.
PHOTO | POOL

Kennedy Wangari has never stepped into a formal data science or AI class, but has built his craft through hard work, leveraging the resources around him

● BY EDDY ASHIOYA

Men are in crisis, whereas he is not. He does not know the meaning of crisis, or perhaps he pretends not to. His name is Kennedy Wangari, an award-winning Data Scientist at the United Nations Environment Programme’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). Why Wangari, a woman’s name? “Well, you see,” he explains, “the name Wangari is an insignia of my mother’s centrality to my life.”

His full name is Kennedy Kamande Wangari, having changed it in 2013 from Kennedy Kamande Thongori “even at the risk of losing my father’s inheritance”. It’s a proclivity in the Kikuyu community; if the musicians DK Kamau wa Maria, Jimmy Wayuni (for Eunice) and the late marathoner Samuel Wanjiru are anything to go by.

Wangari has confidence bordering on hubris. For good reason too. This year, in September, he will be joining the University of Edinburgh to

pursue an MSc in Artificial Intelligence. He is also a Developer Advocate at Deeplearning.AI. Previously, he worked at NVIDIA, Xetova and SafeBoda to deliver high-impact data products and services — from data strategy consulting to end-to-end project implementation across the marketing, supply chain, finance and environment fields. He also sits on the UN-HABITAT Youth Advisory Board.

He has been the prince and future king in the AI kingdom since he took his first Udemy and Coursera courses, working on projects in database management, data mining, data warehousing and business intelligence.

“I secured a data science internship at NCBA bank in 2018 and this exposed me to first-hand applications of AI in solving complex business problems. I also found a data science mentor in the bank who has guided and supported me throughout my journey. To gain experience, I have taken internships and participated in several data science hackathons such as the Oracle Student Hackathon.”

If you let him, he will ramble on and on. So, I let him. Thankfully, I am good listener. I don’t mind being talked to, just at. Or about. Thankfully, he doesn’t. Maybe to be in his position, you need to be a great talker, to enunciate, to elucidate. He leaves nothing to chance, mostly because in his industry, you need to be precise. That’s why he talks efficiently. He has a talking style that seems to reflect his personality: stubborn, and surprisingly crafty. He barrels forth, an unstoppable force meeting an immovable object that is time, but he possesses no airs. Likewise, his mind is so fleet and dexterous and artful in a private conversation that I am convinced he is not just 25 years old.

“I believe that we can apply AI to tackle and solve complex problems in numerous domains, thus providing fundamentally new approaches to every problem and situation in this data-driven world.”

“The AI-powered future looks promising, and I would love to be part of this radical

GIVING BACK TO SOCIETY

Singer Nadia Mukami runs a Foundation that supports teenage mothers to get back to school and mentors young girls to prevent them getting pregnant

• BY SINDA MATIKO

A make-up artist slouches on a comfy couch at the waiting lounge of the Seven Creative Hub, toying with her smartphone. I can tell she has been waiting for a while when I walk in at exactly 12:01pm. A two-drawer, heavy-duty steel make-up chest sits at her feet on the grey carpeted floor.

Wakesho Athumani, a Booking Manager and Executive Personal Assistant, offers me a glass of water as I sit down to join the wait on a separate couch, next to an open window. A soothing breeze breaks the mid-day heat wave.

"Where is she?" I ask.

"She is coming, kindly be patient. Give her a few minutes," Wakesho quickly replies. A sarcastic smile appears and fades on the make-up artist's face.

The few minutes turn into an hour and 30 minutes. As I finish my third glass of water, Nadia Mukami finally strides in, smiling.

The diminutive chanteuse is rocking a pair of black floral patterned palazzo pants paired with a baggy black t-shirt inscribed with #Kanadians. Guilt is written all over her face.

"I am sorry I kept you waiting longer than intended. I was meeting a potential investor at the airport for a project that couldn't await his return," she apologises, whisking me into her office.

"I am all yours now," she adds, sinking into a swinging black leather seat behind a black desk. Golden wallpaper covers the entire wall behind her. Her musical awards and streaming plaques compete for space on the wall shelves.

The sizable desk holds her office paraphernalia, neatly arranged: a leather bound notepad, three phones, car keys, a slick pen

CELEB WITH A MISSION



Kenyan artist
Nadia Mukami.
FILE | NATION

holder. This is Nadia Mukami's new office on Mombasa Road, her new command centre, from where she runs her four businesses, including her new foundation, Lola and Safari, launched last year to support teenage mothers.

"So many girls who are teenage mothers are really thirsty for education but come from poor backgrounds. This is one of the issues I am trying to find a solution to by taking at least 100 of them back to school by the end of 2024. This is why it was important that I meet the investor – such an ambition is capital-intensive," she explains.

Nadia is also working on a framework to have Lola and Safari clubs introduced in high schools to provide sex education.

According to research data released by the Ministry of Health in August, 2022, one in five Kenyan adolescent girls aged 15–19 is already a mother or pregnant with her first child. One out of every three mothers attending an antenatal clinic is an adolescent aged 10–19.

In 2021, 21 per cent – totalling 317,644 – of all pregnancies in the country were among adolescents aged 10–19.

"I am leveraging my fame, and I have also built a good brand through sheer hard work. Because of that, I have a good relationship with a number of corporates whom I want to bring on board," Mukami adds.

The *Wangu* hit maker is articulate and calculating. I am curious to know if the foundation is a money-making venture.

"Not at all, I'm already doing well. But I also know a lot of these young girls look up to me. For clarity purposes, I am a young mother too. I got pregnant when I wasn't prepared – just soon after suffering a miscarriage on April 12, 2021. I felt like I needed more time before trying again. I do understand what these young pregnant mothers are going through, as I am also learning my own motherhood journey. The majority of these girls' situations are dire; some have even been abused. I am trying my best to help and if I can use my fame for such a cause, then I will," she says firmly.

The onset of Covid-19 in the country saw a sharp rise in teenage pregnancies. But according to Nadia, this has been

a problem for ages because of lack of mentors and sex education in both rural and urban areas.

“It has only gotten worse but it has always been a menace. I have been sponsoring one girl from my own pocket long before I even started the foundation. She is currently in college,” she says, pulling out tuition receipts from a drawer as evidence.

On Saturday, April 15, Nadia partnered with the Global Youth Development Programme, an organisation dedicated to educating, engaging and empowering young people around the world, on a visit to AIC Girls’ School in Kitui. They distributed sanitary pads and gave a scholarship to a Form One student who dropped out of school when she got pregnant in 2021 but has now returned to school after the delivery of her baby.

Currently, Nadia is in the process of finalising a partnership contract with a bank in Kenya, whose name she won’t reveal yet, to support the project.

“The Lola and Safari team and I have also been giving a lot of mentorship talks in girls’ schools, telling them that life is expensive and that they don’t want to start feeding another mouth just yet. People say motherhood is beautiful but it needs a lot of

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I am a young mother. I got pregnant when I wasn’t prepared – just soon after suffering a miscarriage. I felt like I needed more time before trying again. I understand what these young mothers are going through.

Nadia Mukami



mental focus. There is a lot of pressure – I feel it myself, and it is harder when you are young,” she observes.

Nadia has also been working with several rescue centres for young mothers, and describes some of the stories she has come across as “horrifying”.

“Last year we had a case of a 14-year-old girl from Embu who was raped while she was heavily pregnant. We handled the case with RFH Health Centre, helped her get the medical attention she needed and took her to Wings of Compassion Rescue Centre in Marurui,” Nadia narrates.

A majority of the girls at the Centre are from the Samburu community, having escaped forced early marriages, female genital mutilation, gender-based violence or rape.

“We have been working hand in hand with the Centre. We have organised visiting days where I show up with a group of like-minded people and celebrities, and corporates such as Unga Limited. We cook for the girls, dance with them, perform for them and shower them with gifts and sanitary towels. It has always worked because the majority of girls become vulnerable and open up.”

For Nadia this is her way of giving back to society through a

foundation she hopes will outlive her. Lola and Safari was registered in June 2021 and she owns 52 per cent shares, with other partners splitting the balance. She speaks about it on her social media platforms but is careful not to share sensitive information for purposes of protecting the child victims.

Of the many cases she has been involved with, the case of the 14-year-old is the worst she has come across, and it drives her close to tears when narrating it.

“The girl was raped by her father and was living under intense threats should she ever reveal what had happened. She had a complicated delivery because her body not fully developed for childbirth. It was very scary.”

The teenager has since delivered and is taking care of her child at a different rescue centre before she returns to school.

“Having these girls get back to school will go a long way in helping them thrive. Many have been denounced by their families and some are really poor. They are still children who need to be in school.”

As the interview ends, Nadia invites the bored make-up artist to do what make-up artists do. “I have a show in the evening,” she explains.

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The **9117** SIDE
With John Nyaganyaga
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WOMAN POWER
JACKIE KATANA IS A SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ADVOCATE FROM UGANDA, WHO IS RALLYING RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO PROMOTE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ON ACCOUNT OF THE HUGE AUDIENCES THEY COMMAND AND THE REVERENCE ACCORDED TO THEM.
A CERTIFIED PROJECT MANAGER AND HEALTH ADVOCATE, KATANA IS ALSO THE FOUNDER OF FAITH FOR FAMILY HEALTH INITIATIVE (3FHI), AN INTER-FAITH NGO, THAT PROMOTES BETTER FAMILY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING. KEEP FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT, MADAM KATANA

STAR OF THE WEEK



HELLEN OBIRI OF KENYA IS THE NEW WOMEN’S BOSTON MARATHON CHAMPION. OBIRI CRUSHED THREE OF HER RIVALRY IN A THRILLING SPRINT FINISH TO CLAIM HER MAIDEN WORLD MARATHON MAJORS (WMM) SERIES IN A PERSONAL BEST OF TWO HOURS, 21 MINUTES AND 38 SECONDS LAST WEEK. HAVING FINISHED SIXTH IN THE NEW YORK CITY MARATHON LAST YEAR, HER FIRST WMM RACE, SHE EDGED OUT ETHIOPIA’S AMANE BERISO TO SECOND PLACE IN 2:21:50 AS ISRAELI LONAH SALPETER CAME THIRD IN 2:21:57. KEEP FLYING THE KENYAN FLAG HIGH, HELLEN!

opinion

WHEN OUR NEIGHBOUR'S IN TROUBLE...



J. Nyagah

■ We should not create governments so they tell us what to do, but so that they do what we want

Future of 50 million Kenyans can't be left to politicians

The financial doldrums bedeviling Kenya, the rank hypocrisy driving a topsy-turvy political arena, a government that lurches from fumble to blunder and then reverses this order, and the foreboding all these portend make irrefutable one fact: the future of 50 million Kenyans is far too important to be left to politicians.

The volatility in the country has been caused by the result of the presidential poll of the 2022 General Election. Raila Odinga believes he won the poll, but his victory was stolen from him and handed to President Ruto.

Therefore, Odinga & Co. want to reclaim their victory and the route to that end is a popular uprising against the government.

The reasons for a popular uprising abound. First, the government is broke. It cannot pay its workers, who constitute the largest employee group in the land and a member of which is found in every part of the land.

Second, the cost of living has shot through the roof, with the prices of the basics and staples, followed by fuel and power, burdening the majority of the people. A hungry people are an angry army.

Third, on the campaign trail, candidate Ruto made promise after great promise after grandiose promise. But President Ruto's government has no money. So, he is cutting spending, which means slashing some programmes, shelving others and finding new ways of raising revenue. That means new taxes, levies and duties.

Fourth, a hard-pressed people want to have more of the money they earn in



KWENDO
OPANGA

their pockets, but while the government is imposing austerity on them, it is coming across as spendthrift, creating new offices of questionable legality, and spending lavishly on them. And then there is sleaze.

Cabinet ministers were appointed because they were beaten at the polls. Then they were freed from the court cases — most of them criminal — that they were facing. When people are desperate, and jobless millions are; when people are despairing, and hungry millions are; when people are fearing for their jobs and livelihoods, and many Kenyans are because of a depressed economy, they will be ready to give the government a bloody nose.

So, Odinga & Co. will have huge and popular support when they call for a return to *maandamano* (street protests aka people power) after Ramadan.

But remember that while the agitprop is about the cost of living in a battered economy, the truth is that this is a struggle for power. It pits those wielding state power against those wanting power but fronting people power.

If those of us who voted for the President and Raila number 13 million, then those of us who voted for neither man are in the majority and it is time for us to be heard too.

If those of us who are for mass action are in the majority, those of us who are opposed may be in the minority, but we have a stake in this country and its future. The time has come for a national convention. There has to be a different way for us to resolve our differences and decide our future besides fighting over the results of presidential elections. We should not create governments so they tell us what to do, but so that they do what we want.

Politicians will have been here for 60 years come December 12, yet *maradhi* (diseases), *umaskini* (poverty) and *ujinga* (illiteracy), the three ills the founding politicians identified as inimical to Kenya's development, remain undefeated. The time for Kenyans to speak to each other about turning to each other has come. It's time for a national (people's) convention.

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opinion

■ Unless Raila has evidence that his victory was stolen, it's time he moved on to issues that really matter

Azimio's 'fungua server' campaign a waste of time



MACHARIA
GITHO

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry on hearing Martha Karua vow that if the government doesn't accede to 'Open the Server' demands, the Azimio la Umoja protesters will forcefully do it themselves.

Raila Odinga's 2022 presidential campaign running-mate is a politician I have long admired for sterling work in the eternal quest for political rights and social justice. Karua has also come across as intelligent, focused, decisive and unrelenting in pursuit of what is right.

But I just can't reconcile myself to a person of her stature publicly advocating that an unruly mob invades the headquarters of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission to seize and peer into the server that stores the 'real' election results, which presumably will prove that Raila actually got more votes than President William Ruto.

Karua should know very well that the uneducated and disciplined rabble will not be able to tell the server from the refrigerator. And also that if the mob does by some miracle locate anything resembling the election results database server or other electronic storage system, they will not know what to do with it.

They will be looking for a door to open so that they can retrieve whatever they are looking for, and that will really have them scratching their heads. It is not some cabinet that they can open or break into. And even if they can't find a door and resort to unscrewing some panel, what they will find is not the 'hardcopy' election results recording forms 34, 34B, 34C or anything like that, but just a spaghetti of wires, blinking light and electronic gizmos that they can't make head or tail of.

It might be more worthwhile for them to just raid the drinks cabinet and help themselves to whatever Scottish waters of life the then elections agency boss Wafula Chebukati lifted his spirits with during those very trying moments. But let us assume that they do locate the actual server and safely transport it to a location where the Azimio computer boffins can look into it.

Or, in the alternative, that the IEBC or its spokesmen in the Kenya Kwanza government relent and allow access to the server. Maybe we can even consider the possibility that the on-

off talks between the Ruto and Raila camps reach agreement on the demand.

It appears that Raila has already taken out an insurance policy in the event that scrutiny of the server does not result in the desired outcome. Last week he claimed that four Venezuelans working for Smartmatic — the company that supplied, installed and managed the IEBC electronic voter registration, voter identification and vote count transmission, tallying and storage system — were in the country on a mission to tamper with the 2022 elections database servers.

Raila claimed that one Jose Carmago, whose name featured adversely in the doomed Supreme Court petition challenging the declaration of Ruto's victory, had met Chebukati and bosses of the Communications Authority of Kenya, and even detailed the itinerary of his entourage in the Kileleshwa and Karen suburbs of Nairobi, and onto to the Maasai Mara Game Reserve.

There is no way of telling if the details given are accurate or just based on falsehoods, but they cannot be entirely dismissed. Raila does have a way of teasing out such information. He cannot be taken lightly if his revelation on the presence of the Artur Brothers, about the biggest blights of the Mwai Kibaki government back in 2006, is anything to go by.

As the faithful say, if Raila tells you that your wife is pregnant, you'd better start budgeting for diapers. This, however, is not about those of unquestionable loyalty but about the need to hold everyone to scrutiny.

Raila's 'fungua server' demands have always been based on extremely suspect grounds probably provided by the same fraudsters and connen who deceived him into believing that

Raila's 'fungua server' demands have always been based on extremely suspect grounds, probably provided by the same fraudsters and connen who deceived him into believing that the election was already won one day after close of the polling, the same incompetents who could not even establish an election count collection, collating and tallying system.

the election was already won one day after close of the polling — the same incompetents who could not even establish an election count collection, collating and tallying system.

He is still making 'fungua server' a key demand ahead of talks with the Ruto team, but at the same time devising an escape route in the event that the server is actually opened and then he will protest that Jose Carmago and colleagues tampered with the data.

Unless he has incontrovertible evidence that his election victory was stolen, in which case it will be vital that the truth is told and justice be done, perhaps it is time he moved on from narrow demands to issues that really matter to all Kenyans. One of them, which has hardly featured since Azimio started demonstrations to demand electoral justice and a lower cost of living, is tribalism.

Our politics and resource conflicts have always resolved around tribalism. Our political parties and alliances are not built around any defining policies, principles or ideologies but raw tribal mobilisation. And hence the government of Kenya in itself is just an assemblage of tribal chiefs.

This is nothing new; it has been the situation since Independence. That it why there was nothing really strange in the raw tribal narratives openly espoused when Ruto last week led a high-powered government delegation to Machakos County. Or, to put it in proper perspective, to the Ukambani stronghold of Wiper Party leader Kalonzo Musyoka, where the objective was to raid a region that over the past three elections has largely voted for Raila.

We saw undisguised ethnic politics at play, with Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, lowering himself to the extent of counting the number of Kamba people in senior government positions. Gachagua, who never hides the fact that he is Deputy President for the Kikuyu rather than Deputy President of Kenya, could not have put it clearer than he did. It is time we openly acknowledged that we are a conglomeration of competing tribal nations rather than one united nation. Once we acknowledge that, the upcoming dialogue should have the tribal question top on the agenda.

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kenya lens

■ THE STATE AND RELIGION

THE EID OF HOPE



Azimio la Umoja One Kenya leader Raila Odinga hosts Muslim leaders for Iftar at the Crowne plaza in Nairobi on April 19. PHOTO | POOL

Whether the current crop of Muslim leaders will manage to bargain effectively to prevent further marginalisation, especially within a regime that is highly evangelised, remains to be seen

● BY JOHN KAMAU

Last month, some members of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) sought audience with opposition leader Raila Odinga. Led by CIPK coordinator Salim Charo, they complained that the Kenya Kwanza administration was discriminating against Muslims and was leaning too much towards Christianity and ignoring other religious formations. Odinga has always relied on Muslims for support.

For the last six months, President William Ruto, his deputy Rigathi Gachagua, and their spouses have nurtured church-state relations – to the extent that the latter is now mute on government excesses – and the Muslims fear that their continued marginalisation could get worse. In February, the President was quoted as saying that the church would be at the centre of Kenya's politics in what analysts called “church cap-

ture” by the State. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa's top organ, the General Assembly, has said it will be “partisan in politics” and urged “all the church to remain within their prophetic role”. “I was worried that church leaders had been cowed after being told that the church does not matter. . . I am happy that the church has come back to the centre of politics,” Ruto said

That, besides various state-organised Christian rallies across the country and the invitation of foreign evangelists by the First Lady, was the closest hint that the church, especially the evangelicals, would find an open door to the State House. But, more so, the recent government appointments may have disappointed the Muslims, who had thought that the history of their marginalisation had come to an end.

With religion becoming increasingly politicised as an ideology of voter mobilisation (Ruto turned it into a perfect platform), how

the government will address perceived discrimination and marginalisation of Muslims will also determine the role their leaders will play within the country.

For years now, Muslims in Kenya have collectively faced marginalisation and discrimination, exacerbated by the fact that most inhabit some of the least developed parts of the country. At the moment, some of the top Muslim figureheads in the Ruto regime are Defence Minister Aden Du-

ale, whose portfolio, though lofty, makes him powerless in territory controlled by the military. As such, Duale plays a diminished role and remains removed from everyday national issues. He can hardly call press conferences or address public rallies on matters touching on the military.

Another figure in the current government set-up is the Director of Public Prosecutions, Noordin Haji, who has survived the Kenya Kwanza purge by creatively playing the victim and terminating corruption cases that touch President Ruto's allies.

The marginalisation of Muslims in Kenya has a deep-rooted history, and whether the current crop of leaders will manage to bargain effectively, especially within a regime that is highly evangelised, remains to be seen.

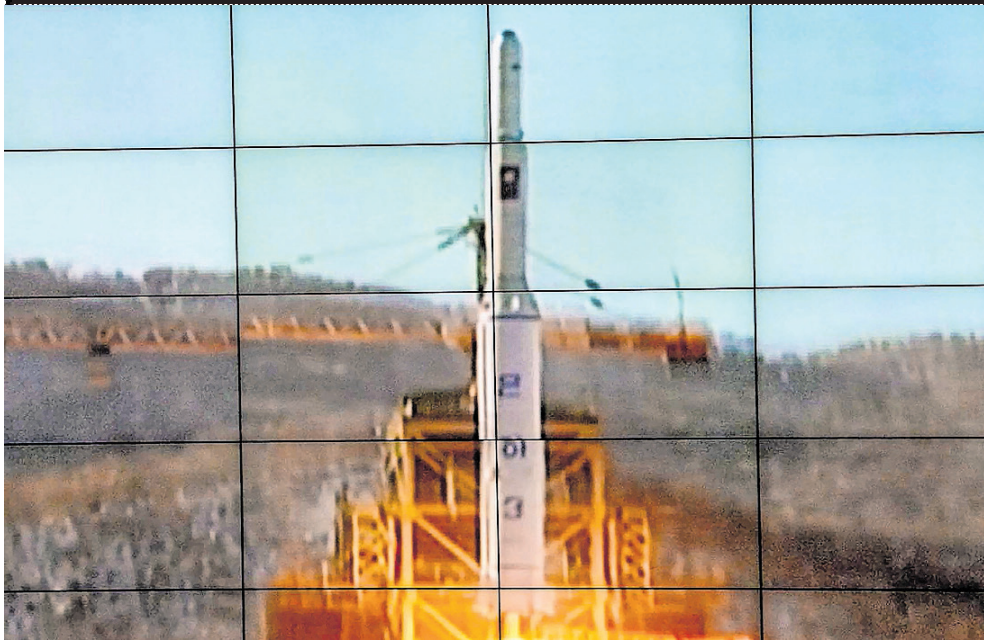
History has not been on the side of Muslims ever since Founding President Jomo Kenyatta's government waged war on the Somali community to crush a national-



Sheikh Khalid Balala.

SCIENCE & TECH

NOW KIM ORDERS LAUNCH OF N. KOREA'S FIRST SPY SATELLITE



North Korean rocket Unha-3, carrying the satellite Kwangmyongsong-3, being monitored on a large screen at a satellite control centre in Cholsan county, North Pyongan Province.

● PYONGYANG

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the country has finished building its first military spy satellite and gave the green light for its launch.

The report of its completion comes about a week after Pyongyang launched what it said was a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile, marking a major breakthrough in its banned weapons programmes.

Analysts have said there is significant technological overlap between the development of ICBMs and space launch capabilities.

Kim gave instructions on Tuesday to “make sure that the military reconnaissance satellite No. 1 completed as of April will be launched at the planned date”, the official *Korean Central News Agency* reported.

During a visit to North Korea’s National Aerospace Development Administration

on Tuesday, he also called on staff to “firmly establish the satellite intelligence-gathering capability by deploying several reconnaissance satellites on different orbits in succession”.

State media images showed Kim touring the space agency with his daughter. The items he was inspecting, as well as charts and other wall displays in some of the images, were blurred out.

The development of a military reconnaissance satellite was one of the key defence projects outlined by Kim in 2021.

On Tuesday, he said gaining this reconnaissance technology was a “primary task to be indispensably fulfilled” because of what he described as threats and aggression from the United States and South Korea.

In December 2022, North Korea said it had carried out an “important final-stage test” for the development of a spy satellite, which it said it would complete by April this year.

At the time, experts in South Korea quickly raised doubts

about the results, saying the quality of the black-and-white images released by North Korea – purportedly taken from a satellite – was poor.

Pyongyang has not provided a launch date, though on Tuesday Kim said the satellite would be sent up “at the planned date”.

“It looks like the North will launch its ‘symbolic’ satellite for now, and upgrade it gradually,” An Chan-il, a defector-turned-researcher who runs the World Institute for North Korea Studies, told *AFP*. “If China and Russia do not provide high-tech support, it will be difficult to carry out spying with North Korea’s own technology”

Even so, the latest announcement should be taken seriously, said Yang Moo-jin, president of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

“Since North Korea’s reconnaissance satellites are an important factor in the event of a nuclear pre-emptive strike, they pose a significant threat to the South,” he told *AFP*.

Twitter owner Musk amplifies false claims

Elon Musk promised to make Twitter the “most accurate source of information about the world,” but he has repeatedly used his own account to amplify false claims from some of the most notorious disinformers on the internet, according to an *AFP* analysis of his online activity.

The posts show Musk drawing attention to misinformation about everything from the war in Ukraine to the attack on US Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi’s husband. Last week, the billionaire boosted a tweet that wrongly suggested doctors misdiagnosed flu cases as Covid-19 deaths.

“One of the greatest mysteries of Covid-19: Where did the flu go in 2020 and 2021?” an account called “KanekoaTheGreat” said, to which Musk replied: “Good question.”

It was one of at least 40 times the billionaire replied to the profile, which has promoted the QAnon conspiracy theory, since purchasing Twitter for \$44 billion nearly six months ago. He has only replied to a handful of accounts more in that time. Using data from PolitiTweet, a website that tracked public figures’ posts until Twitter cut off its access, *AFP* reviewed thousands of replies Musk published between late October and March.

He shared a fabricated *CNN* segment, called a made-up quote “wise words” and falsely claimed police escorted a rioter through the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. He amplified a post blaming mass shootings on LGBTQ individuals and endorsed a fake casualty count from Ukraine.

Musk has also downplayed Covid-19 and promoted spurious claims about vaccines causing blood clots, miscarriages and heart problems. “We are running out of ‘conspiracies’ that turned out to be true!” the Twitter owner said in March, replying to a tweet that listed Covid-19 and vaccine safety among the “biggest media lies.” Days later, he tweeted that the “best way to fight misinformation is to respond with accurate information.”

global lens

■ IS BECOMING THE MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY IN THE WORLD A BOON OR CURSE?

INDIA OVERTAKES CHINA



People walk in a market in Jalandhar on October 23, 2022. India is set to overtake China as the world's most populous country by mid this year with almost three million more people.

It is a momentous change: China has generally been regarded as the world's most populous country since the fall of the Roman Empire, although pre-Partition British India may have overtaken it for a period

● NEW DELHI

India is set to overtake China to become the most populous country in the world by the middle of this year, data released by the United Nations shows.

India's population is expected to reach 1.4286 billion — 2.9 million more than its neighbour on 1.4257 billion. The Asian nations have accounted for more than a third of the global

population for over 70 years. China's birth rate has plunged recently, with its population shrinking last year for the first time since 1961.

India's population forecast provided in the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) *State of World Population* report is an estimate since there has been no census in the country since 2011.

Also, the UN says their estimate does not include the population of China's two Special Administrative Regions — Hong

Kong and Macau — or the island of Taiwan, which Beijing sees as a breakaway province to be unified with the mainland one day. Taiwan sees itself as distinct from the Chinese mainland, with its own constitution and democratically-elected leaders.

In November, the global population crossed 8 billion. But experts say growth is not as rapid as it used to be and is now at its slowest rate since 1950.

Both India and China have seen declines in their fertility

rates. This means in China, the population will start declining next year, despite the country abandoning its one-child policy in 2016 and introducing incentives for couples to have two or more children.

Soaring living costs and the growing number of women joining the workforce are among other factors being blamed for the slowdown in China.

In India, too, fertility rates have

Continued on Page 28

global lens

India to have more people than China this year

Continued from Page 27

fallen substantially in recent decades from 5.7 births per woman in 1950 to 2.2 births per woman today.

A survey commissioned by the UNFPA had a majority of Indians saying their population was too large and fertility rates too high. Almost two in three respondents identified economic issues as top concerns when thinking about population growth.

Demographers, however, say India's population overtaking China's shouldn't be seen as a matter of concern and caution against giving in to anxieties over the rising numbers.

"Instead, they should be seen as a symbol of progress, development and aspirations if individual rights and choices are being upheld," the UN report says.

China's population is likely to begin shrinking next year. Last year, 10.6 million people were born, a little more than the number of deaths, thanks to a rapid drop in fertility rate. Though India's fertility rate has also fallen substantially in recent decades, the rate of decline has been slower.

So what does India overtaking China as the most populous country in the world mean?

China reduced its population growth rate by about half from 2 per cent in 1973 to 1.1 per cent in 1983. Demographers say much of this was achieved by riding roughshod over human rights — two separate campaigns promoting just one child and then later marriages, longer gaps between children and fewer of them — in what was a predominantly rural and overwhelmingly uneducated and poor country.

India saw rapid population growth — almost 2 per cent annually — for much of the second half of the last century. Over time, death rates fell, life expectancy rose and incomes went up. More people — especially those living in cities — accessed clean drinking water and modern sewerage. "Yet the birth rate remained high," says Tim Dyson, a demographer at the London School of Economics.

India launched a family



People walk through a market in Bangalore on October 23, 2022.

planning programme in 1952 and laid out a national population policy for the first time only in 1976, around the time China was busy reducing its birth rate.

But forced sterilisations of millions of poor people in an overzealous family planning programme during the 1975 Emergency — when civil liberties were suspended — led to a social backlash against family planning. "Fertility decline would have been faster for India if the Emergency hadn't happened and if politicians had been more proactive. It also meant that all subsequent governments treaded cautiously when it came to family planning," Prof Dyson says.

East Asian countries such as Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Thailand, which launched population programmes much later than India, achieved lower fertility levels, cut infant and maternal mortality rates, raised incomes and improved human development earlier than India.

India has added more than a billion people since Independence in 1947, and its population is expected to grow for another 40 years. But its population growth rate has been declining for decades now, and the country has defied dire predictions about a "demographic disaster".

So, according to demographers, India having more people than China is no longer significant in a

"concerning" way.

Rising incomes and improved access to health and education have helped Indian women have fewer children than before, effectively flattening the growth curve. Fertility rates have dipped below replacement levels — two births per woman — in 17 out of 22 states and federally administered territories. (A replacement level is one at which new births are sufficient to maintain a steady population.)

The decline in birth rates has been faster in southern India than in the more populous north. "It is a pity that more of India could not have been like south India," says Prof Dyson. "All things being equal, rapid population growth in parts of north India have depressed living standards".

It could, for example, strengthen India's claim of getting a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, which has five permanent members, including China.

India is a founding member of the UN and has always insisted that its claim to a permanent seat is just. "I think you have certain claims on things (by being the country with largest population)," says John Wilmoth, director of the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The way India's demography is changing is also significant, according to KS James of the

Mumbai-based International Institute for Population Sciences.

Despite drawbacks, India deserves some credit for managing a "healthy demographic transition" by using family planning in a democracy which was both poor and largely uneducated, says Mr James. "Most countries did this after they had achieved higher literacy and living standards."

More good news. One in five people below 25 years in the world is from India and 47 per cent of Indians are below the age of 25. Two-thirds of Indians were born after India liberalised its economy in the early 1990s. This group of young Indians have some unique characteristics, says Shruti Rajagopalan, an economist, in a new paper. "This generation of young Indians will be the largest consumer and labour source in the knowledge and network goods economy. Indians will be the largest pool of global talent," she says.

India needs to create enough jobs for its young working age population to reap a demographic dividend. But only 40 per cent of India's working-age population works or wants to work, according to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

More women would need jobs as they spend less time in their working age giving birth and looking after children. The picture here is bleaker: only 10% per cent of working-age women were participating in the labour force in October, according to CMIE, compared with 69 per cent in China.

Then there's migration. Some 200 million Indians have migrated within the country — between states and districts — and their numbers are bound to grow. Most are workers who leave villages for cities to find work.

"Our cities will grow as migration increases because of lack of jobs and low wages in villages. Can they provide migrants a reasonable living standard? Otherwise, we will end up with more slums and disease," says Irudaya Rajan, a migration expert at Kerala's International Institute of Migration and Development.

global lens

■ THE NETWORK AVERTED A POTENTIALLY HUMILIATING DEFAMATION TRIAL

THE 'DISINFORMATION ENGINE'

Fox News, one of the most powerful and profitable broadcasters in the US, agreed to a \$787.5 million settlement in a lawsuit launched by voting technology company Dominion over its coverage of false rigging claims in the 2020 election

● WASHINGTON

Fox News averted a potentially humiliating defamation trial after a last-minute settlement last week, but it took a reputational beating that observers said was unlikely to spur the influential broadcaster to tame its “disinformation engine”.

The network, one of the most powerful and profitable in the United States, agreed to a \$787.5 million settlement in a lawsuit launched by voting technology company Dominion over its coverage of false rigging claims in the 2020 election.

While *Fox News* wriggled out of what was expected to be an explosive trial, analysts said the settlement was a rare example that showed there could be a heavy price for blatant disinformation – even for once-untouchable media giants.

“This can be seen as a wake-up call for live broadcasters and a reminder that there really is a difference between false factual statements, and knowingly broadcasting such false information, and protected speech,” Roy Guterman, a Syracuse University professor, told *AFP*. Dominion, which sued *Fox News* for \$1.6 billion, had alleged that the network promoted Donald Trump’s unfounded claim that its voting machines were used to rig the 2020 election in favour of Joe Biden.

The settlement meant that none of the broadcaster’s high-profile personalities – including Fox Corporation chairman Rupert Murdoch and hosts such as Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity – will have to testify.

“A loss – and the trial process itself – would have been much worse for *Fox*,” John Culhane, a professor at Delaware Law School at Widener University, told *AFP*.

“They were staring down the prospect of a parade of high-pro-



The News Corporation headquarters, home to *Fox News*, in New York City. Moments before opening arguments were set to begin last week, *Fox News* and Dominion Voting Systems said that they had reached a settlement of \$787 million in the voting machine company’s defamation lawsuit against *Fox*.

file witnesses having to try to defend their disinformation machinery to a jury. The audio would have been replayed a thousand times, forever.”

Dominion had released copious amounts of internal *Fox News* communications, including text messages and emails, showing that its executives dismissed Trump’s claims and even expressed a revulsion for the former president despite praising him on air.

“The stain this leaves on *Fox* can’t be wiped out with money,” said Angelo Carusone, president of the advocacy group Media Matters. “The network has been completely exposed as a partisan propaganda outlet that is willing to do anything for profit and power.” Under the terms of the settlement, the broadcaster will neither have to apologise for or admit to spreading falsehoods on network programming, according to US media.

Will the huge settlement be enough to stop the conservative

network from doing the same in the future? Many analysts were sceptical. “Will *Fox*’s disinformation engine be chastened? I doubt it,” Gregory Miller, the co-founder of the non-partisan non-profit OSET Institute, told *AFP*.

“It may bring about some cooling off, but I fear it will be in full gear” in the lead-up to the 2024 presidential election.

Experts predict a highly polarised 2024 race. Trump – whose false claim that the previous election was stolen from him incited a violent mob to attack the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 – is running for president for a third time and remains a front-runner for the Republican nomination.

Fox News’s legal troubles are hardly over. It faces another \$2.7 billion defamation lawsuit by another voting technology company, Smartmatic, which has similarly accused the network of false narratives that it played a role in Trump’s 2020 defeat.

“Dominion’s litigation exposed some of the misconduct and

damage caused by *Fox*’s disinformation campaign,” a Smartmatic attorney said in a statement reported by US media.

“Smartmatic will expose the rest.” Miller voiced concern that Tuesday’s settlement, which arguably reaffirms the high bar for media defamation, could provide “other networks with a legal roadmap for disseminating future falsehoods.”

And if the settlement is characterised by *Fox* or its supporters as a “victory” that could be even more disruptive, he added.

“*Fox* can basically flip this as being the victim,” Andrew Selepak, media professor at University of Florida, told *AFP*.

“I’m sure there are some people... who might be celebrating this result, but don’t recognise that once a precedent is set, it can be turned on anybody.”

“While *Fox* can survive a settlement this large, you know, there (are) a lot of news organisations that would not be able to.”

— AFP

OBIT

■ HE KEPT THE COUNTRY ABREAST OF THE CASES HE WAS HANDLING

FINDING JUSTICE FOR THE DEAD

Olumbe had an independent mind and was keen to ensure that the truth prevailed, especially in cases where foul play was suspected

• BY JOSEPH MBOYA

‘Welcome to my workshop,” Chief Government Pathologist Dr Kirasi Olumbe told me as he offered a cup of tea in his office at the City Mortuary. That was in 1998. I was following up the case of a woman who had died from what were said to be injuries sustained after years of domestic violence. It was a case that drew the attention of many, including NGOs and women’s rights bodies.

Gathering the courage to go to the mortuary was a big achievement. If I were a follower of old Greek religion, going further to take tea right inside there would have been a daring challenge to Ares, the Greek god of war and courage. This visit would form the basis of courage for entering funeral parlours in my work as a journalist and would later help me deal with a rogue morgue attendant, as you will soon see. Olumbe, the former Chief Government Pathologist whose death was reported on Friday 14, had established a name for himself among journalists as a thorough professional with an independent mind who was keen to ensure that the truth prevailed, especially in cases where foul play was suspected. Perhaps because of his exposure to the developed world, Olumbe had a penchant for involving the media in his work.

Journalist Chris Oyuga recalls: “He invited me to the morgue, after which he asked me to join him for a meal of *nyama choma*, together with a morgue attendant called Ngugi. I had wanted to write a story on why morgue attendants are rough and often drunk on duty. I didn’t eat that *choma*, nor did I write the story. The experience was enough!”

Olumbe’s easy manner and the way he kept the country abreast of cases he was handling – especially where the government and specifically the police were involved – endeared



Dr Kirasi Olumbe

him to many Kenyans. Many older Kenyans still remember the late Dr Jason Kaviti, who had occupied the same seat years earlier, and who is best remembered for his finding that Foreign Affairs minister Robert Ouko committed suicide in February 1990, despite his death having all hallmarks of a murder. Kaviti’s verdict suggested that Ouko had broken his own legs, shot himself, doused himself in something inflammable, then set himself alight!

When he appeared before a Commission of Inquiry into the minister’s death, Kaviti remained steadfast in his conviction, causing one of the Commissioners Justice (now retired) Richard Otieno Kwach to quip: “Kenyans are lucky you only deal with dead patients!”

When he was appointed to that position in 1998, Olumbe appeared determined to correct the poor image of the chief government

pathologist’s office. Evans Wafula worked as a programmes officer at the human rights NGO Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU), which established a name for itself by pursuing cases in which it felt there was an officially sanctioned cover-up.

He says of Olumbe: “He was very uncompromising on details, particularly on medico-legal investigations related to extra-judicial executions by law enforcement officers. He also worked with IMLU during the King’ong’o inmates’ death. A lot of his reports led to successful prosecution of police officers, especially in torture-related cases.” Wafula was referring to the macabre incident at the King’ong’o Maximum Prison in Nyeri in the year 2000, when prison warders bludgeoned six inmates to death. Strangely, prison authorities alleged that the six inmates had fallen off the prison’s high security fence in an escape gone awry.

However, another famous post-mortem he carried out — on Catholic priest Fr Anthony Kaiser in 2000 — stirred a lot of controversy. Olumbe stated that the gunshot wound on the outspoken priest was probably self-inflicted. His position was consistent with that of an America’s FBI probe, but Kenyans were non-plussed about the findings, considering that the Fr Kaiser had in life received many threats, especially from politicians he often rubbed up the wrong way.

In 2000, *The Sunday Herald* of Australia reported: “Smart killers can walk away scot-free in Kenya because of serious shortcomings in the country’s forensic medicine capability. That’s the disturbing conclusion reached by one of the few doctors (Olumbe) qualified to carry out autopsies in that part of East Africa.”

In a report he presented in Australia in January 2002, Olumbe disclosed that up to 90 per cent of people shot dead in Kenya the previous year were victims of police brutality, according to a report published in a Kenyan newspaper. Then-police spokesman Peter Kimanithi swiftly rejected the report and accused the authors of trying to malign hard-working officers.

Olumbe, who was born on February 4, 1963 in Vihiga County, held a Diploma in Medicine from London Society Apothecaries, a Diploma in Forensic Medicine from the Royal College of Pathologists from Australasia, a Bachelor of Science degree in Surgery and a Masters in Pathology, both from the University of Nairobi. He was well published in his field of practice. His works include *Handbook of Forensic Medicine and Medical Law in Kenya*, which he co-authored with Mahomed A Dada, and David J McQuoid-Mason; and *Management, Exhumation and Identification of Human Remains: A Viewpoint of the Developing World*, published with Dr Ahmed Kalebi.

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