

# THE Weekly Review

*For the Thinking Person*

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## **BANKING CRISIS RAISES RED FLAG**

The collapse of three major banks in the US – Credit Suisse, Silicon Valley and Signature – has major implications on countries in Africa. As it happened in the 2007-2008 financial crisis, global ripples hit economies far-removed from the epicentres of the convulsions. Has the Central Bank put in place measures to withstand the global shocks?

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## letter from the editor

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# We must use all means possible to stall looming financial crisis

The memories of the turmoil caused by the economic recession of the early millennium are still with us. Those who lost big still feel the fear. Some never recovered, and their economic wounds are still sore.

It is true that the world economy in this capitalist era is all intertwined like some spider's web. And the tired phrase that 'when Wall Street sneezes, the whole world catches a cold' seems very true since it has been experienced many times.

There are many poor people who suddenly lose their life savings and income but do not even know just what happened to them. The easiest pointer is the war in far-off Ukraine and Russia that has affected our lives in the most devastating manner, and many may not know its repercussions on their lives.

The collapse of three banks in the United States – Credit Suisse, Silicon Valley and Signature – has raised concerns across the world. Financial analysts believe the turmoil will impact Kenya's debt-prone economy at some stage.

The mess began at SV Bank after losses emerged in sales of loss-making bonds to fund withdrawals, forcing regulators to close down the tech lender. The threat at SV came from the liabilities side of balance sheets, with traditional depositors threatening withdrawals in the face of valuation losses in assets.

In 2008, banks took excessive risks, holding poor or doubtful assets on the asset side of their balance sheets. Kenya was at the time struggling with the Grand Coalition Government between President Mwai Kibaki and veteran opposition lead-



Allan Buluku

**The causes of the present meltdown in the affected US banks may soon reach our shores, or are already rocking our canoe. Our political situation is in the same standoff and puffed egos are wrestling over our heads. Demonstrations are in the offing and the battered economy is still anchored in some raging storm. It's the worst time, indeed, for any recession or slump to ring home.**

er Raila Odinga. It was a difficult period. And politics is and must be the most concentrated economic movement. As the financial crisis reached its peak, millions of people lost their jobs. Stock markets recorded a sharp fall in the value of their investments and general financial net worth. Here, the immediate impact was the depreciation of the shilling.

Many banks around the world incurred huge losses and relied on government support to avoid bankruptcy. Financial experts traced

the crisis to a decade of low interest rates in the US, which spurred liberal lending practices by banks to clients that had no ability to repay loans.

We are still smarting from that debacle. The US government bailed out the financial institutions in a very unpopular but capitalistic manner to save the country from a total economic meltdown. The Kenyans who were victims of this offshore thing just disappeared to God-knows-where.

Well, we are in the same situation again. The causes of the present meltdown in the affected US banks may soon reach our shores or are already rocking our canoe. Our political situation is in the same standoff, and puffed egos are wrestling over our heads. Demonstrations are in the offing and the battered economy is still anchored in some raging storm. It is the worst time, indeed, for any recession or slump to ring home. It requires our financial and economic managers to react in the most versatile manner to counter any mess that may slide our way.

Should this snowball into a financial crisis; are we ready to withstand the global shocks? How will the domestic economy be affected? Through what channels will the crisis permeate our economy? What is the Central Bank doing to mitigate any of these effects? What policy actions is the Central Bank supposed to undertake when such a crisis occurs?

This is an unwanted calamity that must be stalled by any means necessary.

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## the telescope

### ■ Team resumes after lifting of a Fifa ban

## Harambee Stars back in action

The men's and women's national football teams are set to make a return to the international fold after 16 months in the cold. Harambee Stars will face Iran in Tehran in an international friendly on March 28. Harambee Starlets are, meanwhile, primed to face Albania away on March 30 in another international friendly. Harambee Stars' coach Engin Firat has assembled his best available squad for the assignment against a quality side in the frame of Iran, who are fresh from the 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar. The Stars squad includes Michael Olunga, who is

based in Qatar, Anthony Akumu (Japan) and Ian Otieno, who plies his trade in Zambia.

Kenya is making a return to the international fold after the lifting of a suspension by Fifa. The suspension was enforced in November 2021 after Fifa ruled that the government had interfered with the running of the game. This followed a move by then-Sports Cabinet Secretary, Amina Mohamed, to disband Football Kenya Federation and institute economic crimes against embattled football boss Nick Mwendwa. The ban led to Kenya missing out on a number of tournaments.



Harambee Stars defender Alfred Scriven trains with teammates at Kasarani on March 20. CHRIS OMOLLO | NATION

### ■ Committee meets after every two months

## CBK to review status of economy



The Central Bank of Kenya's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will hold its bi-monthly meeting this week to make critical monetary policy decisions, mainly on the Central Bank Rate (CBR).

The MPC meets every two months to review the status of the economy and issue monetary policy directions, including the CBR, which guides commercial banks on how to price loans. During the last meeting in January, the committee retained the CBR at 8.75 per cent, where it had been since November, when it was raised from 8.25 per cent. The MPC had before January raised the rate twice to counter inflation.

### ■ It denies sharing data with Chinese officials



China has urged the United States to stop "unreasonably suppressing" TikTok.

## TikTok says half of Americans use site

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew says that US user numbers had soared to 150 million – almost half the total population – as he prepared to fight at US Congress for the Chinese-owned site's future. The company has also confirmed reports that the White House gave TikTok an ultimatum to part ways with its Chinese owners or face a US ban.

"Today, I'm super excited to announce that more than 150 million Americans are on TikTok. That's almost half of the US coming to TikTok to connect, to create, to share, to learn or just to have some fun," Chew said in a TikTok post.

This was up from TikTok's previous measure in 2020 that 100 million users came to the video-shar-

ing site every month, which already made it one of the most popular.

Chew also asked the app's devoted users to "let me know in the comments what you want your elected representatives to know about what you love about TikTok."

"Some politicians have started talking about banning TikTok. Now this could take TikTok away from all 100 and 50 million of you," Chew said. The Singaporean CEO said he would share with Congress "all that we're doing to protect Americans using the app," in a reference to a proposal called Project Texas that would guarantee a special handling for the data of US users. TikTok has consistently denied sharing data with Chinese officials.

### ■ Senegalese opposition leader Sonko in trouble

## Politician claims assassination plot



Senegalese opposition leader Ousmane Sonko claimed Monday to have survived an assassination attempt during his appearance at a politically charged trial that sparked deadly unrest last week.

Sonko, a fierce opponent of Presi-

dent Macky Sall, has been receiving medical treatment since he was allegedly sprayed with tear gas and manhandled while authorities escorted him to a courthouse. In a Facebook post that evening, Sonko said he was suffering "terrible dizziness", lower abdominal pain and breathing difficulties. "We sent the product that was sprayed on me to France to find out what it was," Sonko said from a private clinic in the capital, Dakar. "It is an assassination attempt," he added.



kenya lens

■ IS THE CBK READY FOR SUCH A CRISIS?

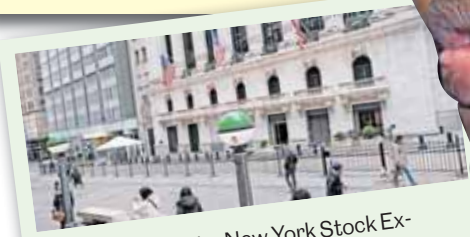
# THE BANKING WOES



Silicon Valley Bank was shut down by California regulators and was put in control of the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Prior to being shut down by regulators, shares of SVB were halted after falling more than 60 per cent.



Shares of First Republic Bank rose five per cent this week as they drew the attention of bargain-hunting retail investors, but still hovered near record-low levels on lingering fears about the future of the US regional lender.



Stocks fell at the New York Stock Exchange as investors continued to show concern over the stability of global banks following the collapse of three US lenders.

The banking turmoil in the US will affect Kenyan banks. The country already holds a ticking time bomb of default on the US Exim Bank loan of Sh57.8 billion, guaranteed to Kenya Airways.



The Federal Reserve Headquarters in the US. The Federal Open Market Committee met to decide on a possible interest rate hike in the middle of ongoing banking turmoil after the failures of Silicon Valley Bank, Signature Bank and Silvergate.



Federal Reserve Board Chair Jerome Powell. The Federal Reserve needs to "strengthen supervision and regulation" of banks, Powell said, following the swift collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and the contagion fears it triggered.



US President Biden reassured investors and depositors that the global banking system is safe as financial stocks lost billions of dollars in value since the collapse of three US banks.

**The biggest banking collapse in America since the 2007-2008 financial crisis is already causing ripples across the world. The financial turmoil could affect Kenyan lenders if the situation gets out of control**



● BY MBUI WAGACHA

In central banking and financial markets, tremors in industrial countries periodically ruffle both sides of the isle. Global ripples hit economies far removed from the epicentres of the convulsions. It is currently the fate of failed banks – Credit Suisse, Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank – sparking issues raised in

*The Weekly Review* of March 12, in an article under the headline, *The Interest Rate Conundrum*, on central bank oversight and regulations to stabilise banks. An emerging truce brings a degree of bank stabilisation, but the turmoil will still impact Kenya's debt-prone economy. One analysis ranks Kenya sixth out of 25

countries at highest default risks globally, as shown with partial data points in the table on Page 7. Incredibly, vulnerability to cherry-picking unreliable opinions just because it flows from Washington institutions seems legendary. Officials in government watch the economy lurch

Continued on Page 6

## kenya lens

**Kenya must engage extraordinary measures to stay afloat**

Continued from Page 5

through economic indicators blinking red and are still caught napping with assurances on debt sustainability. Yet, they drive economic mismanagement to a danger zone. Kenya already holds a ticking time bomb of default on the US Exim Bank loan of Sh57.8 billion guaranteed to KQ. It behooves policy makers to pause, examine their handiwork, and cease more damage, including the proposed car-boot sales of ransacked parastatals and other taxpayers' assets which were slated for reforms by the acclaimed Parastatal Reforms Implementation Committee nine years ago.

Ghana, ranking second, defaulted in December 2022 on most of its external debt after praises to the last minute by multilateral institutions avowing debt sustainability. It faces its worst economic crisis in a generation and terms it an "interim emergency measure". Recent debt defaults also include Sri Lanka (2021). Kenya must engage extraordinary measures not to sink into default. A rehearsal of common threads related to debt and threats thereof can be diagnosed with possible policy sides.

**Rebuild fiscal discipline**

The epicentre of our wobbly economy thematically is fiscal indiscipline and stealing of public wealth. It slashes the output effects of any borrowing or spending and keeps macro-indicators behind the curve. Leaders repeatedly speak fiscal reforms, but their actions cancel turnaround plans for development, exposing stark contradictions. After committing to cuts in spending to stabilise debt, we regularly spike the same with scandalous waste and new spending, for example the unprecedented addition to the taxpayer burden (in a time of wobbly revenues) of a historic layer of CAS appointments in the public wage never seen before, even during healthier public finances. As if to lump irrationality with an addiction to spending, not outcomes, appointments bypass the country's top expertise in vital areas of the economy.

**Twin threats**

The twin debt-related threats to the economy currently are the fiscal challenges of stabilising the debt burden, and dwindling reserves relative to expected debt repayments coming due. We spend roughly 30 per cent of our (declining) revenues on interest payments and will have little access to capital markets in the medium-term. Our bonds in main categories (2028-7.25 per cent, 2032- 8.25

**It behooves policy makers to pause, examine their handiwork, and cease more damage, including the proposed car-boot sales of ransacked parastatals and other taxpayers' assets which were slated for reforms by the acclaimed Parastatal Reforms Implementation Committee nine years ago.**

per cent and 2048-25 per cent) have lost almost half their value. I mention them because bond holders have taken the biggest knock from the current global banking turmoil and Kenya's segment of holders could, in any event of debt default, be arm-twisted for haircuts if government finances wobble, especially holders of TBs and bonds. The economic underpinnings for repayment of the up-coming \$2 billion bond due in 2024 also come into question. Even the proposed Budget for 2022-23 poses questions of fiscality.

No less than the Parliamentary Budget Office flags the Budget Policy Statement (BPS) 2023-2024 and the medium-term for lacking listed proposed projects and respective expenditure ceilings, reconcilable to the total proposed ceilings for development expenditure.

**Debt restructuring options**

Planned restructuring can ameliorate the specter of default. It is different from debt relief that creditor governments give to countries in debt crisis. Relief may be granted in the form of cancellation of some of the debt, removal of taxes involved or reinstatement of a new, more accommodating loan (called a haircut), usually designed as a new, longer-term loan with lower interest rates. In debt restructuring categories, term restructuring rather than reducing the actual amounts that must be repaid, may be negotiated. Interest payments may be ameliorated, and the term structure extended, giving more time to pay. Haircuts involve reduced debt to be repaid and/or review of the stream of interest payment. Debt exchange involves rewriting a longer-term loan with lower interest rates, while any restructuring may be partial (covering part and conditions of the loan) or complete, reviewing all parts of the loan. In the case of private debt, companies may even shift debt ownership.

**Voluntary vs involuntary restructuring**

Countries with high debt default risks can save themselves money and strife by making decisions pre-default rather than post-default. Pre-default debt restructuring implies a country starts the process (usually before missing a programmed payment) before missing the payment. A post-default process takes place when the debtor misses payments and at least one creditor forces repayment with default interest, penalties and fees that can be very high. An IMF bailout and repayment plan may be on



US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the nation's banking system is sound, adding that depositors in Silicon Valley Bank in California and Signature Bank in New York will be repaid in full after both banks collapsed.



# kenya lens

SOVEREIGN DEBT VULNERABILITY (SDV) RANKINGS-2022			
RANKING	GOV'T BOND YIELD	INTEREST EXP. (%GDP)	GOV'T DEBT (% GDP)
1. EL SALVADOR	31.8	4.9	82.6
2. GHANA	17.1	7.2	84.6
3. TUNISIA	32.1	3	87.3
4. PAKISTAN	16.8	4.8	71.3
5. EGYPT	13.2	8.2	94
6. KENYA	14.6	4.4	70.3

Source: Visual Capitalist via Bloomberg

the cards, while there is no consensus whether IMF worsens economic prospects or guarantees a return on growth trajectory.

### Post-Silicon Valley Bank collapse

Interesting repercussions will spread from the current turmoil in global banking. The wheels spun off SV Bank after losses emerged in SV sales of loss-making bonds to fund withdrawals, and regulators closed down the tech lender. In the 2008 global financial crisis, it was banks that took excessive risks, holding poor or doubtful assets on the asset side of their balance sheets – toxic assets from sub-prime mortgages, for example. This time in 2023, the threat emerged from the liabilities side of balance sheets, with traditional depositors threatening withdrawals in the face of valuation losses in banks' assets, especially digital and tech stocks. This is a textbook definition of a bank run. Some question why the banks in 2008 were bailed out with taxpayers' money on 'too big to fail' reasoning while in 2023, depositors receive merely moral suasion not to withdraw their money on the liabilities side. One US CEO went as far as to offer customers his cell-phone number – to cry on his shoulder – rather than withdraw deposits. The industry has a name – contagion – if bank runs spread.

### Causes of bank failures

A prolonged period of quantitative easing after the 2008 crisis saw interest rates fall to virtually zero in industrial countries, favouring an uptick in long-term, low-risk Treasuries. When inflation forced the Fed to hike interest rates aggressively in the past year, stock market prices and assets values retreated in a well-known inverse dynamic, where banks shift to lucrative lending and profitability on uptick in interest rates, while the values of assets held in securities and bonds decline. Banks currently are sitting on unrealised losses on their asset portfolios. Hence, facing the double jeopardy of falling asset prices and spiking interest rates, customers turned to withdrawals at SV Bank to fund operations. In slow-growing economies, however, loan repayments decelerate, and banks tighten even more. Paradoxically, if the main central banks (especially Fed, Bank of England European Central Bank) tracked the tightening trend to fight inflation (the expectations) they will enter a vicious circle where interest rates rise, real GDP growth is dampened, loan default rates increase, and

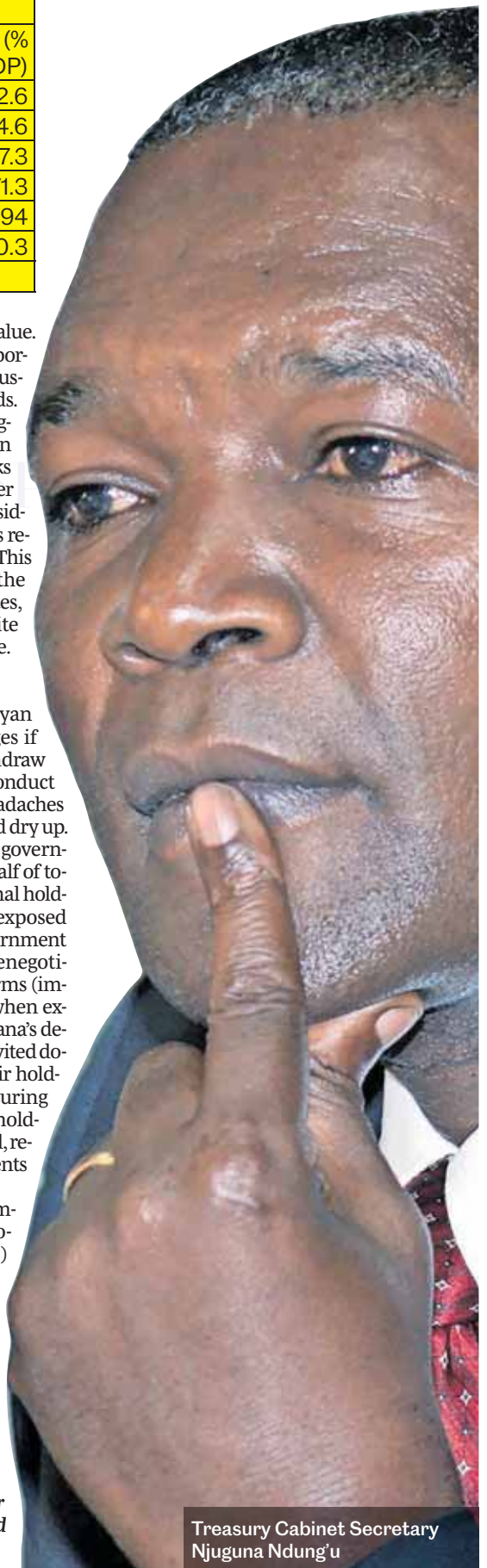
assets held by banks continue losing value. With high-cost credit less available to borrowers, and with bond yields rising, customers pile up to withdraw their funds. Fortunately, the fallout has already triggered some self-correction but thrown the can to the regulators. Central banks on a path to fight inflation with steeper interest rates are now forced to reconsider. Treasuries during the week of crisis retreated five per cent to four per cent. This is indication that despite inflation, the Fed could probably taper interest rates, or pause in its sitting in March, despite inflation, to allow the banks to stabilise.

### Threats if Kenya defaults

The banking turmoil will affect Kenyan banks. Expect more complex changes if Kenya defaults. Flows that techs withdraw from US banks to fund start-ups or conduct digital lending that has given CBK headaches with predatory lending in Kenya, could dry up. Further, banks hold about a fifth of government's total debt stock and about a half of total domestic debt. This includes external holders of domestic debt who would be exposed not just to a stock price rout, but government would find them sitting ducks to renegotiate securities and bond payment terms (imposing haircuts or double haircuts when exchange rate losses are factored in). Ghana's default presents a succinct example. It invited domestic bond holders to exchange their holdings for a new package of bonds, assuring new arrangements where investors holding Treasury Bills would be exempted, receiving the full value of their investments at maturity.

A promised minimisation of the impact of new arrangements (called Domestic Debt Exchange Programme) turned out to be illusionary when analysed. As in Kenya banks' losses on bond holdings, Ghana's banks had already lost significant values (63 per cent) in the inverse dynamic of interest rates and bonds. Other victims of a debt default in Kenya would be Pension Funds and individuals holding or trading their wealth in securities.

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



Treasury Cabinet Secretary Njuguna Ndung'u

## kenya lens

■ THE PLAN WAS TO BUY ASSETS FROM THE KENYA PETROLEUM REFINERIES LIMITED

# HOW A SH42BN KPC DEAL WAS STOPPED



Kenya Pipeline Company CEO Dr Irungu Macharia told the National Treasury that the assets at Kenya Petroleum Refineries Limited deemed useful from a business perspective were valued at a figure much lower than the government's Sh42 billion valuation.

## Towards the end of the Kenyatta regime, the National Treasury crafted a bizarre scheme to irregularly raise billions from the state-owned firm

● BY JAINDI KISERO

It's a gripping tale about the lengths to which greedy elites will go to squeeze money out of cash-rich parastatals, especially in the build-up to a general election when they are surrounded by uncertainty and prospects of imminent regime change.

*The Weekly Review* has seen documents showing how – towards the end of the regime of former President Uhuru Kenyatta – the National Treasury crafted a bizarre scheme to irregularly raise a whopping Sh42 billion from the state-owned Kenya Pipeline Company.

In a nutshell, the transaction was structured as follows: You force a parastatal that you own 100 per cent to borrow billions from a syndicate of banks to purchase another asset that you also own 100 per cent, and in the process, raise billions of shillings for the exchequer. Indeed, KPC was being forced by the National Treasury, its shareholder, into buying the Changamwe-based Kenya Petroleum Oil Refineries Ltd, whose facilities have been under its management under a lease arrangement since March 2017.

Documents seen by *The Weekly Review* show that stakes had been so high that former Na-

According to correspondence in our possession, the Sh42 billion valuation that the National Treasury was hurriedly forcing through was conducted by the Ministry of Lands and Housing. It begs the question: Where is transparency in a transaction where the government is buying an asset it already owns on the basis of a valuation conducted by itself? Where is arm's length and how do you buy an asset at a price you have decided by yourself?



## kenya lens



**Ukur Yatani**  
Former National Treasury  
Cabinet Secretary

tional Treasury Cabinet Secretary, Ukur Yatani, personally took charge of the transaction and would at some stages personally attend board meetings of KPC as he strenuously and laboriously scrambled to unlock the irregular transaction by forcing a board resolution. Cabinet Secretaries rarely attend board meetings of parastatals.

This was clearly an irregular transaction in many ways. Consider the following: You buy non-revenue generating assets that you already own with borrowed money, and dump a huge liability with third-party banks on the books of KPC, a company you owned at the beginning of the transaction.

But even more controversial was the valuation the National Treasury was scrambling to force through a resolution of the KPC board. According to correspondence in our possession, the Sh42 billion valuation that the National Treasury was hurriedly forcing through was conducted by the Ministry of Lands and Housing. It begs the question: Where is transparency in a transaction where the government is buying an asset it already owns on the basis of a valuation conducted by itself? Where is arm's length and how do you buy an asset at a price you have decided by yourself?

We have seen correspondence showing that the CEO of KPC, Dr Irungu Macharia, wrote to the National Treasury informing the company's sole shareholder that in the corporation's own assessment, the assets deemed useful from a business perspective were valued at a figure much lower than the government's Sh42 billion valuation.

KPC insisted on a valuation of Sh19 billion for KPRL's assets that it deemed useful for its business.

But the clearest indication that the transaction that the National Treasury was trying to force on KPC was dodgy and bizarre was to emerge in a report by the financial services advisory group, PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd



**Dr Irungu Macharia**  
Kenya Pipeline Company CEO

(PWC), a copy of which has been seen by *The Weekly Review*.

In brief, PWC's assessment of the transaction was as follows: This asset is yours and KPC can get it for free by transferring the shares at a paper con value. PWC's conclusion was sensational, considering that the National Treasury was almost succeeding in forcing KPC to take up a loan of US\$400 million to pay for the assets of KPRL.

PWC's valuation of land, buildings, tanks and pipe works, and a captive power plant also came to a mere Sh17.9 billion, which was a much lower figure when compared with the

**We are seeking to refinance the existing facility, which stands at a balance of US\$149.9 million as at December 2021, as well as raise additional funding of Sh42.6 billion to be utilised for acquisition of the Kenya Petroleum Refineries Limited.**

Kenya Pipeline Company



government's valuation of Sh42 billion.

What comes through from the correspondence is that the National Treasury was adamant about proceeding with the Sh42 billion valuation. Indeed, the National Treasury approval for KPC to borrow the large amount had been given as far back as December 1, 2021. "The purpose of this letter is to grant you approval to borrow Sh42.6 billion and to refinance the existing facility," said Yatani in a letter to KPC.

Is it not the height of irony that the National Treasury was planning to saddle KPC with this massive dollar loan despite the fact that the company was at that time still in the middle of servicing a massive US\$350 million loan it had borrowed in 2015 to construct a 20-inch diameter pipeline from Mombasa to Nairobi? As the pressure on KPC to borrow the money mounted, the company wrote to Standard Chartered Bank of the UK – the mandated lead arranger in the existing dollar loan – to ask for the money. "We are seeking to refinance the existing facility, which stands at a balance of US\$149.9 million as at December 2021, as well as raise additional funding of Sh42.6 billion to be utilised for acquisition of the KPRL facility," said the company in a letter dated December 17, 2021.

What saved KPC from this dodgy transaction that was going to saddle the company with massive loans? Clearly, the change of the regime following the advent of President William Ruto's administration in 2022 was a major factor. Pockets of resistance against the deal from within the board of the company were also an important contributory factor. Documents show how the board at one point insisted that the borrowing of the money be delayed until thorough due diligence of KPRL and a comprehensive business case for the acquisition had been conducted.

The board also insisted on an independent report by the PWC report on the best take-over options. As it turned out, term sheets from the financiers and lenders did not come through until January, 2021.

The lenders also spelt out conditions that included appointment of an independent transactions adviser. The procurement of an independent adviser did not happen until April 2022. With the General Election approaching in a few months and a change of regime imminent, the National Treasury found itself without the political muscle to push through the unpopular and dodgy transaction.

KPRL has 45 tanks with a total storage capacity of 484 million litres, out of which 254 million litres is reserved for refined products while the remaining 233 million litres is reserved for crude oil. The thinking was that these facilities would provide additional storage capacity for KPC, which would unlock supply chain bottlenecks in Mombasa and save oil marketing firms millions of dollars paid on demurrage charges to shipping companies.

KPRL also has about 370 acres of underutilised land at the port which KPC intended to use to construct storage facilities, including for LPG.

## kenya lens

■ MASS PROTESTS FOR 'ELECTORAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE'

**RAISING THE STAKES**

Opposition leader Raila Odinga addresses his supporters in Eastleigh, Nairobi, on March 20. DENNIS ONSONGO | NATION

● BY MACHARIA GAITHO

**F**rom demands for electoral justice and the campaign against bad governance and the high cost of living, the protests called by opposition leader Raila Odinga may be raising the stakes to contemplate exploiting what his camp calls a revolutionary moment.

"This is not just about Azimio; this is a revolution," Wiper Party leader Kalonzo Musyoka told *The Weekly Review*. "The people who came out onto the streets (during the protests last Monday) were not just Azimio followers, but all Kenyans."

That is surprisingly tough talk from Kalonzo, a former Vice-President who over the years has earned a reputation for indecisiveness.

Now he seems very clear and resolute in his mind that the Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya Coalition must go all the way with demonstrations and civil disobedience that will push the government of President William Ruto to the wall.

The justification he provides, beyond the initial demands for an accounting of the allegedly sto-

**The very fact of a sizeable turnout defying government warnings that the protests were illegal was justification enough that opposition leader Raila Odinga is on to something**

len 2022 presidential election and governance failures, is that President Ruto is bent on subverting the Constitution to bring back dictatorial rule.

He points out what he says is heavy-handed police action against peaceful demonstrations, insisting that last Monday it was the police, rather than protesters, who were responsible for most of the violence witnessed.

He added that ritual dismissal by police of Azimio notifications for public activities is in direct contravention of inalienable provisions in the Bill of Rights guaranteeing all Kenyans the rights to assemble, associate, march, picket and present petitions to public offices.

Kalonzo claimed that the government is already moving to suspend the Constitution through denial of basic freedoms, as well

as a host of activities designed to dilute democracy by ensuring that oversight institutions, including Parliament, are neutered and beholden to the ruling party. This is being achieved, he says, by the 'buying' of opposition legislators, starting from the very beginning of the current Parliament, when Azimio was denied a majority and leadership of key watchdog committees through defections.

Raila was sufficiently emboldened in the midst of the Monday, March 20, demonstrations to declare that the protests would be held every week. The following day he upped the ante by announcing an increase in the frequency of protests marches to twice a week, every Monday and Thursday.

It was clear by that time that Raila's camp was elated at the apparent success of the first in a series of

protests aimed at forcing the government to accede to demands for electoral justice and solutions to the rising cost of living.

Raila did have reason to see the Monday protests as a victory. Although he did not make good on the outrageous threat to storm State House, a triumphant procession through the streets of Nairobi's most populous areas, braving police tear gas and water cannons, served as proof that he still retains the clout to organise mass action and attract ecstatic crowds.

The lesson was that despite President Ruto's successful efforts to woo opposition figures into his Kenya Kwanza alliance camp, Raila is not weakened and isolated as might have been presumed.

The protests, largely confined to the capital city of Nairobi and the lakeside city of Kisumu, were hardly national in scope as advertised. Neither were they widespread, large-scale or vigorous enough to even remotely threaten a fall of government.

But the very fact of a sizeable turnout defying government warnings that the protests were illegal was justification enough that the veteran opposition leader is on to something.



## kenya lens



Chaotic scenes on Tom Mboya Street in Nairobi as Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya supporters protest against the high cost of living on March 20. WILFRED NYANGARESII | NATION

He is tapping into growing disillusionment over the six-month-old government's inability to meet the extravagant campaign promises of quick fixes to the country's economic travails.

He is also astutely exploiting government missteps around broken promises to achieve swift reductions in the cost of food and fuel. The opposition is also banking on indications that the so-called 'Hustler Nation', which voted for Ruto in big numbers expecting instant dividends from the Bottom-Up economic model, is growing disenchanted and disillusioned over the unfulfilled pledges.

The Kenya Kwanza administration is also shooting itself in the foot with a series of misguided pronouncements and policy decisions that seem to illustrate its closed cronyism nature favouring only a select few, and the hypocrisy around calls for austerity and belt-tightening while a spending spree benefits a tiny elite.

Gaffes range from Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua's controversial pronouncements, such as likening Kenya to a private company in which only shareholders stand to reap dividends, to appointments to public office heavily skewed in favour of loyal politicians, and on to appointment of a bloated cast of 50 Cabinet Administrative Secretaries.

There have also been percep-

tions that many policy decisions, including deals on direct petroleum imports and duty-free maize and rice imports, while geared towards lowering consumer prices, are being done in complete disregard of established procurement systems.

Latest was the Cabinet's approval of a controversial law intended to do away with public oversight, through Parliament, of sale of state corporations.

"They are preparing the country for plunder," charges Kalonzo.

The grey area here is that the cost of living, Kenya Kwanza's failure to meet election promises or even suspicion that grand corruption is on the comeback are governance issues quite removed from the original quest for electoral justice.

The latest round of post-poll agitation was centered around claims that an Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission whistleblower had provided a treasure trove of evidence that Odinga was the actual winner of the 2022 presidential poll despite then elections boss Wafu-la Chebukati declaring Ruto the victor.

Odinga lost a Supreme Court petition challenging Ruto's victory, but claimed that the new evidence, though time-barred, would show he was the winner.

The problem was that he did not have any real evidence, just a

set of numbers at variance with the official vote count, which he claimed would be proven correct once the IEBC election data servers were opened to show the actual results transmitted from the polling stations before the vote count was allegedly altered at the Bomas of Kenya National Tallying Centre.

The whistleblower numbers by themselves could not stand scrutiny, but the IEBC's refusal to 'open the servers', just like it refused before the Supreme Court, has played powerfully into Odinga's hands.

Even in the event that the servers were opened and Odinga was proved the actual winner of the elections, it is unclear what scenario would unfold beyond him winning in the court of public opinion.

The Supreme Court decision on the election petition was final and cannot be appealed or re-opened. Even in the unlikely event that Ruto was persuaded to resign, Odinga would still not become president as he is not in the line of succession. Deputy President Gachagua would take over, and if both in the Kenya Kwanza presidency pair quit, next in line would be National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetangula.

Kalonzo still insists that, in addition to an ever-growing list of governance failures, the quest for electoral justice remains key

to the Azimio protests. To that is added demands for a halt to recruitment of a new slate of electoral commissioners he says will create a compliant, Ruto-friendly electoral management body. Azimio is also demanding that the sacking of the 'Cherera Four', the IEBC majority who disowned the results announced by Chebukati, be reversed.

He insists, however, that the Azimio demands for electoral justice are not just about Raila's allegedly stolen election, but about entrenching constitutionalism and the rule of law which, he warns, is endangered under the present government.

He also dismisses claims by Ruto supporters that Raila is just angling for negotiations that would earn him a place at the table as he supposedly did on losing elections in 1997, 2007 and 2017.

"Nobody wants to be part of government by 'handshake'," he asserts, saying that those making such allegations just don't understand the motivation and what is at stake.

What is unclear, however, is how the end game will play out. The very word 'revolution' conjures up images of a violent or at least forceful ejection of the incumbent regime.

Ruto controls the government security agencies and would have virtual monopoly of violence if push came to shove.

While there has so far been little sign of a settlement, both Ruto and Raila have hinted that they could be amenable to softening of positions.

A day ahead of the first demos last Sunday, Ruto declared that he was open to dialogue, but not under blackmail and threats. The previous day, Raila had walked back on threats to lead a mass invasion of State House, saying he would be content with the opportunity for him and a few leaders to present a memorandum.

While hardliners on both sides will want to hang tough, calls from influential quarters – including religious leaders and business lobbies – for Ruto and Raila to meet are picking up.

*The Weekly Review* understands that there has already been some shuttle diplomacy, with emissaries engaging both sides, but so far there has been little progress as no one wants to cede ground.

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# the limelight



Police officers take cover from fireworks during a demonstration a few days after the French government pushed a pensions reform through parliament without a vote, using the Article 49.3 of the Constitution in Nantes, western France, on March 21. PHOTO | AFP



Russian President Vladimir Putin and China's President Xi Jinping make a toast during a reception following their talks at the Kremlin in Moscow on March 21. PHOTO | AFP



An employee of the French aeronautics, space and defense research lab (ONERA) walks in a wind tunnel at Modane-Avrieux ONERA's centre in Modane, on March 17. PHOTO | AFP



Azimio la Umoja supporters light fires during demonstrations to protest the high cost of living in Kaloleni, Nairobi, on March 20. SILA KIPLAGAT | NATION



Protestors clash with riot police during a demonstration against the regulations of the Management of Maritime Affairs in Rennes, western France, on March 22. PHOTO | AFP



This aerial view shows workers cleaning solar panels at the 15MW Sheikh Zayed Solar Power Plant in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on March 21. PHOTO | AFP



Ukrainian servicemen fire with a S60 anti-aircraft gun at Russian positions near Bachmut amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine on March 20. PHOTO | AFP





# The Arena

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

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*Hollywood calling... Caroline Wambui has produced some of Kenya's most renowned reality shows*

OPEN SPACE

# Tame the high cost of living

The chain of food production is awash with unregulated sweaty-palmed brokers undercutting suffering farmers

• BY SAMMY OJWANG'

**W**hen a Kenyan tells you that "life is difficult", it means he is hungry and finds immediate financial hurdles in the quest for assuaging the pangs. This is a country where the character of many people would be largely transformed by the mere availability of regular meals.

In such a lopsided economy, where the means of production are in the hands of a selfish minority while the rest of the population struggles to find food, clothing and decent shelter, the United Nations' listing of copulation as a basic human need is laughable.

The famished Kenyan is not lazy. He does not lack ideas for personal progress or making money. He is generally a victim of circumstances, working hard but getting little in return due to the environment he is thrown into.

The chain of food production is awash with unregulated, sweaty-palmed brokers criminally undercutting suffering farmers while inflating market prices and pushing the consumer to a one-meal-a-day diet. His water supply is deliberately messed up so that cartels can exploit his helplessness.

Given the chaos in the building and construction sector that forces him to pay unfair rents, one can pardon him for being surprised to hear there has been a Ministry in charge of Physical Planning and Housing Development in the country since Independence. The crowds of small-time traders along the streets hustling late into the night, some with babies strapped on their backs, is actually the sign of an ailing economy.

Naturally, the so-called common man rarely understands what brings him to such a pass, even admiring the opulence of the oppressor, praising him for his craftiness. The injury to himself is invisible, the pain sadly accepted as normal. In his book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney lays bare the elaborate system put up by Europe and North America to drain resources from Africa while keeping the populations in check through installed puppet leaders, who are actually watchdogs of the plunder. The economic wounds are dressed

with grants and crazy loans from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Only a radical Messiah can save such a strangled people.

Libya was lucky at some point. Muammar Gaddafi took over power after a coup. The youthful Colonel had a clear vision for his country, a desire to place his people on the pedestal of human beings by greatly improving their social welfare. In his mind, the Libyan was struggling in a country endowed with resources simply due to poor governance and theft by the puppet ruling elite. The corruption-riddled Government would siphon revenue from Libyan oil for the external Master and for individual gain, greed and entitlement acting as blinkers to the poverty around them. Within a few years, Gaddafi transformed Libya into an African Dream, with free education for all citizens from kindergarten to college, the Government even paying for those pursuing courses abroad. Healthcare was radically revamped, quality treatment offered for free and decent housing provided for each citizen.

The provision of water in such a dry climate was like a miracle. It also promoted food production, with prices under Government control, thereby eliminating hunger. National projects were completed without external borrowing. Employment became easily available, the Government enacting policies promoting local manufacturing while paying all citizens a regular stipend from the oil revenue. Life expectancy increased.

There could be a Messiah somewhere in our midst, one who shall bring down the cost of living, take Kenyans off the famous "Baba Otonglo" household budget, at least back to the days when they could afford the 4 O'clock tea and annual family visits to grandmother. Kenyans are only crying for a Government that will rein in corruption and formulate policies that will make life a little less difficult for them.

*Mr Ojwang' comments on social issues. samojwang7@gmail.com*

*Any feedback on topical issues? We would like to hear from you. Send your views to:*

[weeklyreview@ke.nationmedia.com](mailto:weeklyreview@ke.nationmedia.com)



**Michael Wachira**

Tourism industry players are complaining about the protests, saying they are affecting their businesses. They even share old corona-era videos of tourists leaving the country. Well, the thing is, those Kenyans are protesting and demonstrating because they are also being affected directly. They sleep hungry because they cannot afford *unga* and are sleeping in the dark because they can't afford the crazy bills Kenya Power charges them.

— A marketing executive based in Nyahururu



**Lemerey Lokpunya**

I strongly support these demonstrations as 100 days in office have lapsed and there's still nothing good coming from the Kenya Kwanza government. President William Ruto is overburdening us by rewarding political rejects as Chief Administrative Secretaries. The cost of living is unbearable and nothing has been done to change the situation. This government is only determined to suffocate the common mwananchi.

— A livestock breeder in Kajiado



**Clarine Gesare**

I wish the demos were daily to push this government to lower the cost of basic goods. They said immediately after swearing-in that the price of fuel would go down, but that didn't happen. The common *mwananchi* can only afford one meal a day. Bandits in the north are still killing Kenyans, making pastoralist communities refugees in their own country. We must pile pressure on the state.

— A student at Kenya Methodist University



**Lyneus Situma**

When Kenya Kwanza were campaigning, they promised Kenyans that they will be the priority; they condemned the previous government for creating positions only for us to realise that they are wolves in the sheep's skin. They have created 50 positions of CASs to burden the common mwananchi. They have increased taxes, making life unbearable.

— A teacher at Star of the Sea School in Mombasa



## MY TAKE



• BY WAGA ODONGO

In one short year, image generation technology has achieved multiple breakthroughs and revolutionised the world of creativity and art. In April 2022, Open AI launched Dall-E 2. Dall-E (a portmanteau of the eponymous lead character in the Disney cartoon, Wall-E, and surrealist painter Salvador Dali) was brilliant but tightly controlled by its makers to prevent its misuse. You couldn't, for example, create realistic human faces for a while. A few months later, Stability AI came up with Stable Diffusion, a version that got rid of a lot of these speed bumps in Dall-E.

The result of this was a wave of creativity that has led many to question the very nature of art itself. Images are the perfect candidate for an AI makeover. An image can be fully ingested by a machine, as it is entirely made up of pixels. The internet is filled with images and captions. All that was left was for someone with a bottomless pit of money to buy the computing power to analyse all the images and birth a revolution. Since then, artificial image generation has scaled faster than almost any technology in human history.

A picture may be worth a thousand words but with just three words you can create the image you see accompanying this piece. There are several ways to get into the thick of things and try it out for yourself. There are versions you can download on your computer or phone (both had better be powerful) that you can use to create images offline. I tried one version running Stable Diffusion offline on a fairly powerful computer but it took too long and the results were subpar. The faces didn't quite look human.

A few websites offer great experiences of this digital art but the one I have found most satisfying, quick and brilliant was Midjourney. Midjourney creates surrealist paintings that allow for a level of granularity that would please many pedants. It allows amateurs in the field to create great pieces and also gives Art majors freedom to express themselves.

I was astonished at how even limited commands did such heavy lifting. I was able to come up with a very beautiful Statue of Liberty with the phrase "African Lady Liberty". It is also not a palette swap of a white woman; it gets the broad African nose and full lips just right, an upgrade, in my opinion, on the French mannequin overlooking New York. Midjourney gives you four variations of the image and you can make further improve-

# THE SHEER DELIGHT OF DIGITAL ART

Artificial image generation has scaled faster than almost any technology in human history and now provides an enjoyable experience for creation of artistic pictures

ments or upscale it and use. (It also solicits feedback that I imagine is essential in improving the process.)

Of course there are a few issues. Firstly, because the model is constantly being fine-tuned, there is no guarantee that the prompt for the masterpiece you create today will yield the same result tomorrow.

The system is always learning; perfection is a moving target and the result of this is that every image you make is a sort of a snapshot of the capabilities of AI that day. There is a feeling of impermanence with every effort. No matter how good the result is, come back tomorrow and it promises you it will be better. I imagine for the pros this isn't a concern if you know your Cubism and Degas and can get fairly consistent results by simply spelling

out exactly the art style you would like the image in.

There are also a number of times imperfections creep in. You get the odd sixth finger lurking, while post-processing of the images using prompts has proven notoriously hard for me. Also, while the results can surprise, we should remember that you are looking at a refraction of what already exists. Creativity doesn't exist in the system.

The system works like this: it has access to lots of photos with, say the caption 'dog', from the Internet. With these numerous images of dogs it can approximate an image of another dog. So you could ask, for example, for a dog made of carrots and you will get a solid enough effort.

The problem is when you ask it to do something that a human can imagine but it has next to no image to go off on. For example, I asked for an elephant riding a guitarist. It makes no sense, a human can, with a bit of head scratching, think that up, but Midjourney falters. One is of an elephant with fingers playing a guitar, a guitarist atop an elephant and an elephant and a guitarist standing on what looks like a guitar case.

So is there any art in this artificial intelligence? Art is a subjective thing. Artists are similarly split on the topic, since these systems have been trained on existing artwork and are generating approximations of all the hundreds of millions of images and captions they have digested. The debates on whether art generated by AI is art mirrors the fears sparked by painters when photography was invented. There is scope for both to exist simultaneously. A machine already won a painting competition and to our better, future selves it might seem childish that we actually cared that music or art was produced by machines.

While I do not think text can be easily replaced by GPT-3, I think images may be a different experience. Most of us are comfortable writing text, but very few people can draw, let alone create, these masterful digital images.

I was honestly surprised at how satisfying it was. There is so much experimentation, play, curiosity and attempts at refinement you can descend into.

Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer  
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An image generated by Midjourney prompt, 'African Lady Liberty'.PHOTOPOOL



## FUN AND ADVENTURE

**Alex Kamau and his partner have made a successful business from hosting hiking tours out of Nairobi to some of the country's most scenic destinations**

● BY EDDY ASHIOYA

In 2017, 26-year-old Alex Kamau had just graduated from university and was experiencing a severe bout of quarter-life crisis. "I didn't know what I wanted to, but I knew what I didn't want to do," he says. What he did not want to do was become a corporate schmuck.

They say youth is wasted on the young but frankly speaking, youth isn't what it used to be anymore. Thus, confronted with a life-altering decision, he chose to make none. Indecision is still a decision, right? He packed up his stuff and left Nairobi for his rural home in Githunguri, Kiambu. In 2018, he began toying with photography. "A friend introduced me to Instagram, where I started posting my nature pictures." 2018? Instagram? As if reading my mind, he says, "I am a late bloomer."

Destiny took a deep breath and considered its options. "People started taking notice of my work, asking me to take them to these places that I photograph. I thought why not? So every Sunday, I'd invite some of them to the trips, later graduating to a WhatsApp group for alerts. That's when I began thinking about how I could make this a sustainable business."

Destiny breathed out, nodded, and set off decisively along the path it had chosen. "My business partner [Daniel Njuguna], with whom I had tried several failed businesses, and I liked to call what we were doing 'drifting'. We thought, why not just call this one 'Let's Drift'?" and voila! A business was born and christened.

Maybe there is no such thing as fate but there was a sense of inevitability about it all. "You couldn't write this script" is a line often dished out by pundits and com-

# LET'S DRIFT OUT



mentators but you really could write this one. Let's Drift is now Kenya's largest community of people who love adventure. At the time of writing, Alex tells me they have organised over 800 hikes and other experiences since their inception in 2018.

It has not always been a walk in the park. Before they could put a finger to their business nerve, Alex had toyed with the idea of evolving into a tour company, sort of waving a red flag at the raging bull that is fate. "As a young businessman, I couldn't get my eyes off Bonfire [Adventures]. At some point we started advertising tours to Maasai Mara and Lamu. But that was not my niche."

The Covid19 lockdown centered them. With everyone nestled in their houses, people naturally wanted to go back out. As the restrictions eased, appetite for Let's Drift's services whetted. "Before Covid, we had ten people; after it, we have an average of 50 people on a hike. The demand forced us to scale up."

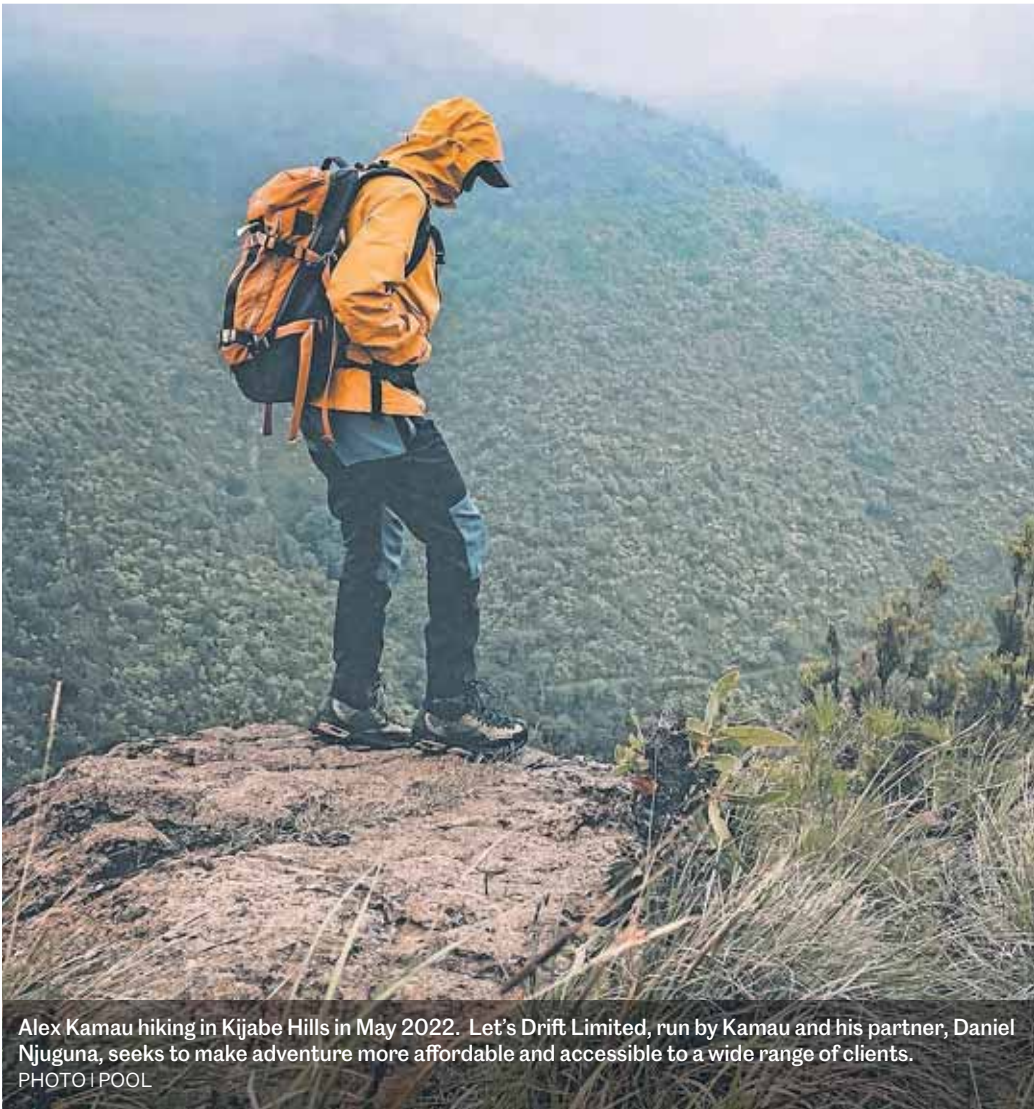
"Currently, our main selling point is our membership model for KSh1,000 a month, which is unlimited and takes care of experience only; you have to pay your own fare and get your own food. We charge our experiences based on several factors. For instance, a trip to the Aberdares would go for up to KSh5,000 but if you are a member, it is discounted at KSh3,000."

Let's Drift has now expanded to cycling trips. In the year 2022, they served around 5,400 hikers, an average of five hundred hikers monthly, with up to 60 per cent of them signed up on the membership model. "In a month we are doing between 40 to 50 trips, with up to 13 trips on a weekend." Besides, he adds, we are the only company doing weekday trips. "We don't have permanent employees, just people working in regular jobs during the week who act as guides during the weekend." Let's Drift boasts 25 guides, with six of them being women.

Which is the most challenging

Alex Kamau at Chola Pass, Everest Base Camp, in April 2022.  
PHOTO | POOL





Alex Kamau hiking in Kijabe Hills in May 2022. Let's Drift Limited, run by Kamau and his partner, Daniel Njuguna, seeks to make adventure more affordable and accessible to a wide range of clients. PHOTO: POOL

hike he has gone to? “A hikeathon. That’s a 42-kilometre hike, the latest one from Mai Mahiu to Ngong. “That is one of the most challenging because you are dealing with distance, about ten hours of hiking, and you are also fighting the heat, needing so much water.”

His favourite place to hike would have to be Kijabe. There is a huge forest with scenic views there. “Almost every week I am in Kijabe doing solo or group hikes.” Why Kijabe? “When I first went there we didn’t know it is gazetted under the Kenya Forest Service. We were roaming and got arrested! After we were released, I went for a licence and that’s how we became friends with the rangers.”

The uptake in hiking was like a hypodermic needle as young people sought an alternative to partying. “Unlike our parents, who saved up for major holidays, our generation prefers taking mini-escapes, long walks over the weekends, or camping and hiking. Plus, Nairobi is quite central: you can access many parts of the country through here. People are clam-

**HOW IT ALL STARTED**

In 2011, Alex Kamau joined an incubation programme run by Parklands SDA Church, where entrepreneurs would meet daily to flesh out ideas. The church encouraged him to create a poster and charge people for drifting to make the business sustainable. The first official hikers paid KSh300 each, with five people showing up.

Some of the most popular places to hike in Kenya are the Karura Forest, Arboretum, Paradise Gardens and Paradise Lost. Others are Hell’s Gate and Mt Longonot in Naivasha, and Ngare Ndare in Laikipia.

Hiking activities include bike riding, picnics, paragliding, ziplining and exploring waterfalls.

It is important to pick an experienced group of guides. If the guides haven’t been there before you may end up getting lost or not finishing the trek.

ouring for experience- and activity-driven travel adventures. How about I go ride a bike? A horse? Hike up a mountain? With that I can hit many birds with one stone: fitness, mental wellness and fulfilling the social aspect of meeting new friends.”

“Our clients are very adventurous,” he observes. “Our clientele has diversified and each of them has an identity. Coming up with new experiences is not as easy as it looks. A 60-year-old will not hike like a 26-year-old,” he says. “We have changed the way people

access the outside. Our mission statement is simple: to make adventure more affordable and accessible. I believe we have served the biggest number of hikers to date by bringing in the element of access. You don’t need a car, or a lot of money, just a willing heart and a kindred spirit. We have had a hiker as old as 76 years old and kids as young as four. If that is not diversification, tell me what is?”

Nothing is guaranteed in life, which is why Alex is rolling the die, supplementing his hiking with his knack for painting. Ac-

tually, he holds a Bachelor of Arts in Design (Kenyatta University). With the precision of a carpenter and the tireless focus of an artist, he has set aside Mondays to his mistress — painting. “My photography has always been nature-based. I try to use art to tell stories of the places I have been.”

He has been to a lot of places. What has drifting taught him about Kenya and himself? “Kenya is underrated in terms of the offerings we have. Every time I travel with my camera, I see how picturesque a country we have. I think more people should see and experience this. It has given me a new sense of pride that I get to do this for a living.”

In April 2022, he hiked Mt Everest, the highest mountain in the world. “And it was still not as majestic as hiking Kenya.” As to the question where he wants to take Let’s Drift: “I don’t know is the most honest answer I can give you. But what I know is the adventure space in Kenya is growing. I know we have a lot of carbon copies — even if imitation is, indeed, the best form of flattery. It gives me such immense comfort that there is enough cake for everyone. Our vision is to make Let’s Drift a powerhouse of adventure and experiences. When someone asks who our competitors are, I say we compete with Netflix. It’s not who you hike with, but the competition, what you are doing when you are not hiking?”

If he could drift with one person in the world, who would it be and where would they go? “I am a fan of Virgin Group of Companies founder Richard Branson. Last year he climbed Mt Kenya. He is always doing adventurous stuff, always outdoors. I wish there were more entrepreneurs and leaders taking up adventures because it humanises them. When they ask you for help, or you guide them, even in our private hiking events, you see the soft human behind the thick leadership carapace.”

What did he know before that has helped him now? “Coming from art school to the world of adventure has been a blessing. Adventure is very visual. You try to show an experience, and coming from a school as an artist teaches your eyes to see. I am very intuitive and I am very good at observing things.”

Maybe that’s true. Maybe our fates are predetermined at birth. Maybe it’s all written. Maybe you can be good at observing things, but I wager, even Alex didn’t see this coming.

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## CAREER CHOICES

# FLYING HIGH IN THE FILM WORLD

**Caroline Wambui Ngunjiri's first love was flying, but she has found a new object of her affection in film, producing some of Kenya's most renowned reality shows**

• BY SINDA MATIKO

**F**rom the very beginning, she has been doing what she wasn't supposed to be doing. She wasn't even trained for what she does. It all happened by accident.

"For a long time, Captain Koki Mutungi was my role model. I was supposed to be a pilot; I had begun my classes then I deferred, but when I was ready to go back, life happened," says Caroline Wambui Ngunjiri, head of Media Production at Documentary and Reality TV studios (D&R Studios)

As you read this she might be on the set of popular reality show *The Real Housewives of Nairobi (RHON)* or directing a cast on yet another celebrity reality show.

Caroline produced her first celebrity reality show, *Sol Family*, spotlighting the lives of members of top Kenyan band Sauti Sol and their record label Sol Generation signees Nviiri The Story Teller and Bensoul.

*Kyallo Kulture* is another of her productions, a reality show featuring Kenyan media personality-turned-entrepreneur Betty Kyallo. While all the celebrities of the reality show she has been involved with swim in fame, however, Wambui is relatively unknown, the unsung hero. It is clear that the 26-year-old wouldn't mind some attention coming her



Carol Wambui Ngunjiri, the Head of Media Production at D&R Studios. PHOTO: POOL

way too, if her celebration of attaining 9,000 followers on Instagram is anything to go by.

Wambui justifies why she, too, needs to be celebrated.

"Watching this show is fun, but making *RHON* is not all that fun. It's a lot of work. I mean, we just added another housewife, Dr Catherine Masitsa."

Were it not for her traditional father, Caroline would probably be flying a Boeing 30,000 feet above the Indian Ocean.

"When I finished high school, my passion was aviation. My dad enrolled me in flying school at Wilson airport and I began my journey towards becoming a pilot. I was 17 when I started and obtained my private standard licence when I was 18. I trained on a Cessna 172 at Standards Aviations," she narrates.

Caroline had just completed passed her flying radio exams when results of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education were released. She found out that she had been called to study International Relations at Maseno University but wanted instead to focus on her ambitions to become the next Koki Mutungi, Africa's first female pilot to be certified captain of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

"I wasn't interested in going to university at this point but according to my dad, who is very traditional, when you get called to university you have to go." Moreover, he did not have the money to keep her in flying school, which is quite costly. He promised to take her back to aviation class once she graduated university.

It's in Maseno that she accidentally stumbled on film.

"I engaged in a lot of co-curricula activities at the university. I joined UN clubs, modelled and did brand activations. That's actually how I managed to network with one of our directors at D&R, Mwaniki Mageria," she recalls.

Caroline met Mageria, an actor who is the secretary-general of Kenya's Riverwood film industry, at the premier of an Imax movie in Kisumu. She had told Imax team that she was happy to volunteer should they have any marketing jobs, hence her presence there. Mwaniki was impressed with Caroline's work ethic and personality and would later help her secure a job at her current station.

Without any formal training in film production, Caroline had to learn on the job and in doing so, made a lot of mistakes, but the management was patient with her. "I think they could see that I really wanted to learn and understand. They saw the passion in me and I am grateful that they were patient enough," she says.

She had been with the company for a while when she was offered the opportunity to produce *Sol Family*. She confesses that it was a difficult task but the celebrity singers made it easy for her. "To even imagine that I was going to be their boss, telling them what to do, was scary. I mean, these are superstars and I am a nobody. But they were kind and understood that we were all professionals."

While *Sol Family* gave her a footing in



Carol Wambui Ngunjiri, Head of Media Production at D&R Studios, on the set of *Real Housewives of Nairobi* with cast member Minnie Kariuki. PHOTOPOOL



producing reality shows, it is *RHON* that has been her most challenging production.

“*RHON* was a show like no other,” she declares, adding: “This is a franchise, an international show that has been going on for years around the world. It had never been done before in Kenya. There were attempts before but they flopped.”

She watched what franchises in other parts of the world had done with the *Real Housewives* shows to help her create a solid

concept. “It was capital-intensive, more than any other show I had done before. It took us four months to do the casting and to put together a crew of not less than 60 people, including directors, managers and vendors.”

Wambui would love to go back to aviation and become a commercial pilot, but that means she has to work on her finances.

“Besides finances, the bigger problem is that is I have also fallen in love with film production. It’s quite a dilemma that I’ve got,

but we’ll see,” she says pragmatically.

Caroline has just rewarded herself with a brand new car, which is parked outside the café where we are meeting. Her cellphone rings and she reaches for her purse and car keys on the table.

“I’ve got to get to the office – its work. Let’s catch up some other time,” she says as she departs.

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**The FLIP SIDE**  
With John Njoroge



**WOMAN POWER**

FAITH NASHIPAE IS A GENDER CHAMPION WHO IS PUSHING FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF MEN AND BOYS IN INCREASING POSITIVE MASCULINITY, ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT. THE BRAINS BEHIND 'NITASIMAMA IMARA' BOYS' AND MEN'S PROGRAMME, FAITH WANTS THE UNITED NATIONS TO FULLY INVOLVE MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER EQUALITY CAMPAIGNS, SAYING THEY HOLD THE KEY TO ITS REALISATION AND ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND WOMEN. KUDOS TO YOU, MADAM FAITH

**STAR OF THE WEEK**




PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN FORWARD KYLIAN MBAPPE WILL TAKE OVER AS CAPTAIN OF FRANCE AFTER HUGO LLOUIS, WHO HAD BEEN SKIPPER FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, STEPPED DOWN FOLLOWING THE WORLD CUP FINAL DEFEAT TO ARGENTINA, A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE TEAM HAS TOLD AFP. MBAPPE, 24, ACCEPTED THE ROLE AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH COACH DIDIER DESCHAMPS. BEST WISHES IN YOUR NEW ROLE, MONSIEUR KYLIAN.

[jnyaya@ke.nationmedia.com](mailto:jnyaya@ke.nationmedia.com)

## opinion



■ Let them put aside their enmity and planet-sized egos, walk the talk and meet each other half way

# A hungry people form an angry and motivated army

**T**omorrow is protest Monday. Fasten your seat belts. If the events of last week are any guide, a young government under siege by an energised opposition feeding off of a restive population reeling under the high cost of living will come under increasing pressure to shape up or ship out. But even the most unpopular of governments prefer shaping up, or pretending to, to the ignominy of public ejection.

Still some governments, as did Ferdinand Marcos's in the Philippines in 1986, would rather tough it out against a determined opposition and populace and be ejected than surrender. And here at home when his own allies were adamant he should stay put and force President Kibaki out of office, Raila Odinga relented and went into a coalition government in 2008.

Then as now, the argument was that Odinga won the presidential poll, but was cheated out of victory. The culprit in 2007 was the defunct polls umpire, the Electoral Commission of Kenya. Its chairman, the late Samuel Kivuitu, confessed on live television to not having an idea what his officers, whom he could not reach on phone, were cooking.

The cheating poll chefs served Kenyans a bitter desert of Tharaka-Nithi that churns stomachs to this day for sneaking Kibaki over the line. Holed up in State House, Nairobi, Kibaki turned silence and absence from public view into weapons of wearing down a frightened populace, keeping Odinga guessing and then forcing his hand.

But in 2007, the economy had been robust under Kibaki's steady hand. This time around Kenya's economy is depressed and drought-



### KWENDO OPANGA

ravaged. Prices of basic commodities have shot through the roof and the government's unrelenting push to extract more taxes from Kenyans is turning the Kenya Revenue Authority into a symbol of revulsion and the President into Zacchaeus of Jericho.

Odinga, the old fox of Kenya's politics, is crafty enough to know that a hungry people form an angry and motivated army. He is cunning enough to ground his search for power in the multiple grouses the people have against a government that promised them instant happiness on the stump, but has so far not delivered. As they would say in tennis, advantage Mr Odinga.

How can President Ruto reverse this trend? Last Monday, the police had clear instructions to demonstrate they were ready to use force, prevent a march on the capital's CBD and, most crucially, on State House. But Odinga & Co., prevented from entering the CBD, went to the people in the populous Eastlands. The people came out in spontaneous demonstration of support.

It should have been clear to the President

& Co. that the people only need Odinga to lead them; they have enough reasons to demonstrate against the government. Therefore, the government needs to address the immediate needs of the people. The government needs a big win in this department to enable it to drive a wedge between the populace and an inspired opposition.

Therefore, the government should not contemplate arresting Odinga & Co. If this was the nuclear option in 2017, when then Attorney-General Githu Muigai accused Odinga of treason for swearing himself in as "president of the people", then the danger of escalating people vs police confrontation will be multiplied many times over.

My take is that it is not enough for the President and Odinga to preach that Kenya is bigger than anyone of us, that their fight is not personal or that they are agents of prosperity for all of us. Let them put aside their enmity and planet-sized egos, walk the talk and meet each other half way.

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## opinion

■ CA might clock signals transmitted by international TV stations such as CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera

# Raila, Ruto find a meeting of minds to attack the media



MACHARIA  
GAI THO

In the midst of a titanic political battle, the two protagonists, President William Ruto and Opposition leader Raila Odinga, have found a meeting of minds in identifying the independent media as a common foe to be shunned and silenced.

The media is finding itself under siege from all sides. When Raila called on Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya coalition supporters to boycott corporate entities he alleges were supportive of Ruto's government, a curious inclusion in the list was *The Star*, a daily newspaper of modest circulation which is part of Radio Africa Group.

Raila's beef with *The Star* was an editorial critical of his mass action campaign – a series of protest marches, civil disobedience, picketing and consumer boycotts – intended to pressure the government to bow down to his demand for an accounting of the allegedly stolen 2022 presidential elections. For a man whose biggest ally ever since he began political agitation 40 years ago was a free and independent media, it was surprising that Raila took issue with an editorial position in a small and hardly influential outlet that would otherwise have garnered little attention.

*The Star's* position, though critical, was hardly outrageous or particularly hard-hitting, and was, in fact, much milder than editorials and op-ed pieces previously published in media channels with much wider reach.

Raila's comments were rightly dismissed as uncalled-for threats to media freedom. They also posed direct danger to *The Star* reporters who may be targeted by his often unruly bands of supporters while covering his protest rallies. The opposition leader's comments were a throw-back to the dark old days of dictatorial rule, when regime sycophants the likes of Kariuki Chotara and Mulu Mutisya were obsessed with demonising the media, civil society and other independent society watchdogs as enemies that ought to be crushed and destroyed.

Ironically, Raila, in targeting the media, found himself on the same page with the Ruto government, which followed by issuing a warning to television broadcast stations on coverage of his demonstrations. The patently illegal and unconstitutional threats against

free and unbiased broadcast were issued by Communications Authority of Kenya Director-General Ezra Chiloba. However, it is instructive that it followed a meeting attended by media owners and managers with the CS for Information Eliud Owalo, who cautioned that continued airing of violent demonstrations could have consequences.

Those who attended the meeting described it as cordial and friendly, but were under no illusion as to the menace contained in the cautions which, without stating so specifically, was that the government was ready to withdraw broadcast licenses and frequencies for TV stations that did not toe the straight and narrow Kenya Kwanza path.

It also could not have been accidental that Chiloba's letter seemed synchronised with telephone calls reportedly made by government agents directly to some media houses warning that their broadcasts would be shut down if they did not give Raila rallies the blackout. Chiloba's letter to broadcast stations that aired live the demonstrations last Monday did not cite specific violations of the broadcast programming code, just a general reference to footage that could cause panic, incite the public, threaten peace and cohesion.

It was couched as an advisory rather than a specific threats to shut down live broadcasts, but the intent was clear coming ahead of the next round of Raila's demonstrations. It seems the government – and specifically the Office of the President, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy – is looking for ways to halt live broadcasts. And they might be confident that in the current leadership of the Communications Authority, they have a willing and pliable tool.

In 2018, when the government sought to employ dubious national security grounds to disable live transmission of Raila's mock swearing-in as 'People's President', the then Communications Authority DG Francis Wangusi flatly refused to comply, citing the independence of his regulatory functions.

The then Interior Cabinet Secretary, Fred Matiang'i, was thus forced to deploy the police for an assignment they were ill-equipped to handle. They descended on sites

hosting transmission towers, employing crude weapons to disable the equipment, with little regard as to whether what they were destroying belonged to a particular broadcaster, or to other entities such as mobile telephone services, short-wave radio or weather monitoring.

That shutdown incidentally ranks as one of the most shameful episodes in Kenyan media history as it was preceded by carefully selected media owners, managers and editors who could be trusted to be compliant being invited to President Uhuru Kenyatta's State House, where they effectively rubber-stamped their own gagging. After having assured the nation that Raila's demos were illegal and would not be countenanced, the Ruto government was forced to watch impotently last Monday as the revolution, if it could be termed so, was broadcast live globally. It seems there is renewed determination that, if Raila goes ahead with episode two of 'Maandamano Monday', Kenyans and the world will be denied live coverage. Apart from the threats issued to local broadcasters, it might follow that the Communications Authority will move to clock the signals transmitted by international TV stations such as *Al Jazeera*, *BBC*, *CNN*, *SABC* and others, and could even go to the extent of an Internet shut down.

Media stakeholder groups, civil society and human rights lobbies were quick to react to the Chiloba letter, warning of grave threats to media freedom and the entire democratic foundation stone. Acquiescent media owners, as in 2018, might again be the weak link when it comes to fighting for media freedom.

Apart from attracting general condemnation, the threat letter spurred renewed urgency for judicial interpretation of the media regulatory framework to entrench the role of the Media Council of Kenya as the independent content regulatory body envisaged by the Constitution. Government-controlled Communications Authority is only competent in management of the technical aspects of frequencies.

Meanwhile, Raila must have found himself in an uncomfortable position if he needed to take government to task on the illegal directives, while himself threatening media freedom.

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## kenya lens

## ■ TAMING THE LION

**RUTO'S PLOT TO CAGE RAILA**

**The President views Odinga's hold on residents of Western Kenya as political and economic enslavement from which they need emancipation**

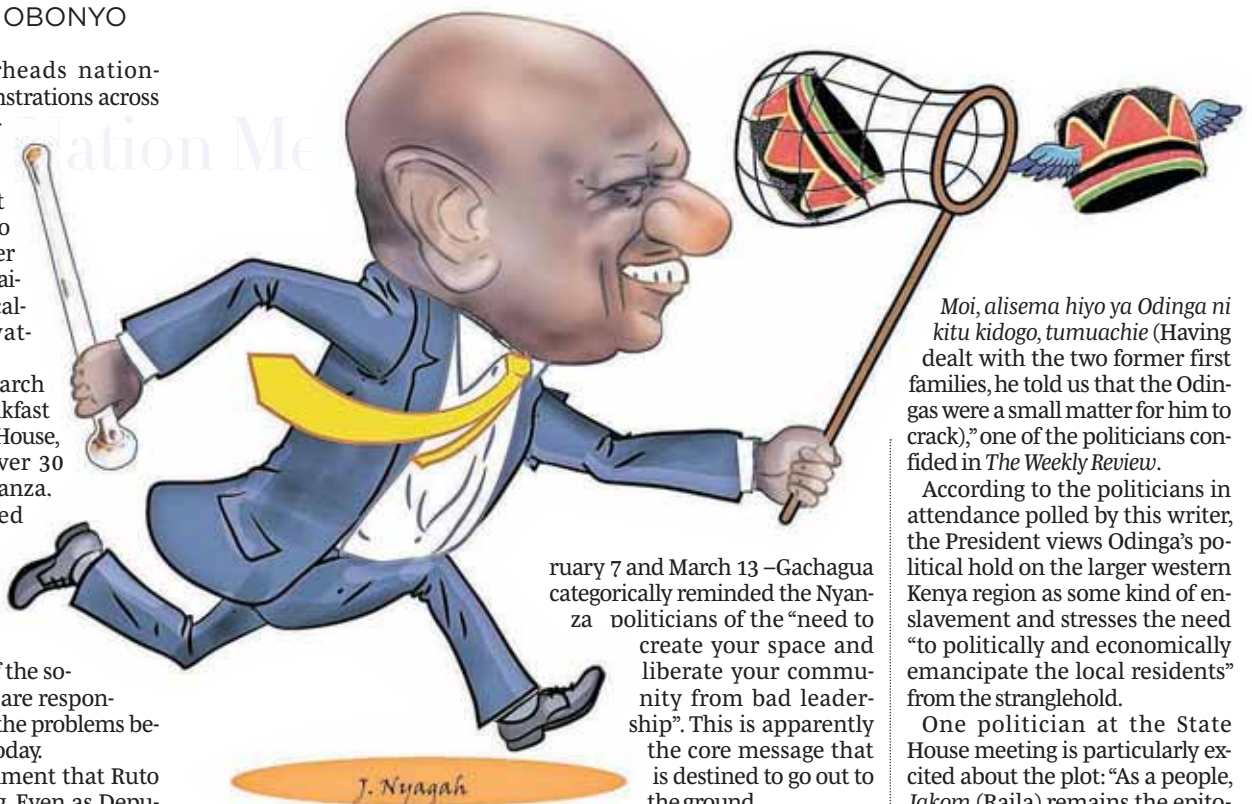
• By OSCAR OBONYO

As he spearheads nationwide demonstrations across the country against the Ruto administration, a plot is thickening to neutralise former Prime Minister Raila Odinga politically, Uhuru Kenyatta-style.

Unveiled on March 13 during a breakfast meeting at State House, Nairobi, with over 30 leaders from Nyanza, the plot is aimed at caging Odinga politically based on President Ruto's apparent belief that members of the so-called dynasties are responsible for most of the problems bedevilling Kenya today.

This is an argument that Ruto has held for long. Even as Deputy President, he attributed to the Kenyattas, Moises and Odingas – rightly or wrongly – the uneven distribution of national resources, inequality in employment opportunities and domination of business contracts in government. The narrative was evidently well received by voters.

Ruto's move targeting Odinga is probably buoyed by his successful manoeuvres in the Mt Kenya region in the last five years that enabled him to turn the crowds in his favour and against his then boss, Kenyatta. And if Monday's tweet by National Assembly Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah is anything to go by, then the same script that ran Kenyatta out of town is being rolled out against Odinga: "As we condemn the anarchists



(of Monday's mass action), we encourage Nyanza people to rescue themselves from this enslavement. We shall offer free lessons from our Mt Kenya rescue experience," stated the Kikuyu MP.

That this plot has always been on the cards is a fact that politicians allied to Ruto have variously attested to. Only last week, Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua alluded to this fact, rather abrasively, stating that Odinga and his late father, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, had troubled Kenya for the last 60 years and that this time around they were determined to stop him – "na ataenda akiendanga (he will go for good)".

During the two consultative meetings at State House – on Feb-

ruary 7 and March 13 – Gachagua categorically reminded the Nyanza politicians of the "need to create your space and liberate your community from bad leadership". This is apparently the core message that is destined to go out to the ground.

According to those who attended the last meeting, the President reported that he and his deputy had over the last four years worked overdrive in Mt Kenya region to erode Uhuru Kenyatta's political stature. He happily reported that the duo had registered over 90 per cent success and that most of those who are politically associated with the Jubilee party leader were handed defeat at the ballot by local residents.

With the political side of issues sorted, Ruto is reported to have assured his audience that he would "fix" the Kenyattas and the Moises economically, sooner or later. He reportedly reassured them that it was a "matter of time" before the Odingas followed suit: "Baada ya kuangusha familia za Kenyatta na

Moi, alisema hiyo ya Odinga ni kitu kidogo, tumuachie (Having dealt with the two former first families, he told us that the Odingas were a small matter for him to crack)," one of the politicians confided in *The Weekly Review*.

According to the politicians in attendance polled by this writer, the President views Odinga's political hold on the larger western Kenya region as some kind of enslavement and stresses the need "to politically and economically emancipate the local residents" from the stranglehold.

One politician at the State House meeting is particularly excited about the plot: "As a people, *Jakom* (Raila) remains the epitome of our political history and as long as nobody is plotting to eliminate him physically, we shall happily support this latest move by the President. Our brief is only to weaken him politically, while at the same time giving our people a chance to access the national kitty for development of our region."

With the President having swept the board in last year's elections in the Mt Kenya region, his predecessor's political backyard, and having brought political bigwigs Musalia Mudavadi and Moses Wetag'ula under his wing, Odinga's planned caging makes political sense. Besides Wiper Party leader Kalonzo Musyoka and his Narc-Kenya counterpart, Martha Karua, Raila is presently Ruto's most potent political rival.



## kenya lens



Then-Deputy President William Ruto greets opposition leader Raila Odinga during the Global Entrepreneurship Summit delegates' dinner at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi on July 24, 2015. He represented President Kenyatta. FILE | NATION

The best approach to caging the ODM leader, according to the President, is not for him to personally lead the charges against Raila as this would expose him to hostility and resistance from Nyanza residents. Instead, Ruto reportedly tasked the local politicians to be on the frontline of whittling down the opposition chief's political dominance and influence. To effectively execute this plot, the Ruto-allied politicians – most of whom were rejected by the people at the ballot – have been encouraged to immediately initiate development projects. They will supposedly have state resources at their disposal, as long as they attribute the initiatives to the Ruto administration.

The import of this is that the politicians must instantaneously embark on grassroots mobilisation. To best achieve their goals and project the face of government in their undertakings, they are expected to invite Cabinet and Principal Secretaries and other top government officials to launch the projects in question.

“The whole idea is to ensure that the government's presence is seen on the ground, and that each week we must have one activity or another,” observes one of the politicians who attended the March 13 meeting at State House.

Former governors Evans Kide-

ro (Nairobi), Okoth Obado (Migori) and Jack Ranguma (Kisumu) as well as Kisumu Senator Tom Ojienda and a host of former MPs were among those in attendance.

Going by the operational plan, whose inner details our sources could not divulge, the plot is strategic and covers all the four counties of Luo Nyanza – Homa Bay, Kisumu, Siaya and Migori – with focal leadership structures. Nominations to the positions of Chief Administrative Secretary are carefully selected, for instance, to cover each county; they include Kidero from Homa Bay, former Rarienda MP Nicholas Gumbo of Siaya and former Kisumu Senator Fred Outa. Only Migori, where the president already enjoys sizeable support from the Kuria community, is not covered.

Instructively, the Kidero-Gumbo-Outa trio, who unsuccessfully vied for gubernatorial seats, have been allocated responsibilities in the lucrative ministries of Trade and Industry, Roads and Transport as well as Mining, Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs. According to our sources, the three will steer the anti-Odinga project with Information and ICT Cabinet Secretary, Eliud Owalo, serving as the linkman between the local leadership and government.

Owalo, who has since emerged as the President's right hand man

in the region, coordinated and attended the two meetings at State House. The CS did not respond to our calls or text messages when reached for comment.

Undeniably, though, the plot to politically uproot Odinga from his Nyanza backyard is a tall order, one that even politicians allied to the President confess will not be easy to realise in the next five years – the timeframe within which the said goal has to be achieved. Unlike other regions, including Mt Kenya, where several politicians such as Kenya's first President, Jomo Kenyatta, founding Ford-Asili party leader Kenneth Matiba and former presidents Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta have held sway, the situation in Luo Nyanza over the decades has been different.

Except for a brief period at Independence, when Jaramogi, the country's first Vice-President, and Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister Tom Mboya, enjoyed a huge following from the region, political support has since 1970 coalesced around the Odingas. The family has not only dominated Luo Nyanza but Kenyan politics as well since Independence. Jaramogi, for instance, served in the seventh Parliament at the same time as his second son, Raila. Thereafter, the Odinga brothers, Oburu Odinga and Raila, rep-

resented Bondo and Lang'ata constituencies respectively in the eighth to 10th parliaments. Today, the Odingas are represented in all parliaments: Oburu in the Senate, his younger sister, Ruth, in the National Assembly and Raila's daughter, Winnie, at the Arusha-based East African Legislative Assembly.

Interestingly, Ruto also has a stranglehold on the Rift Valley, having inherited former President Daniel arap Moi's support base in 2007, and by elbowing out Moi's sons, Gideon and Raymond, as Baringo Senator and Rongai MP respectively in last August's elections. Gideon's political outfit, Kanu, still has a presence, though, in the Rift Valley and other parts of the country, including northern Kenya.

The President and former Prime Minister have come a long way, having first teamed up politically in 2005 ahead of the constitutional plebiscite that year. Two years later, Ruto was a steadfast lieutenant of Odinga's and a member of the Pentagon, an elite club of ODM's key political leaders, whose attempt to unseat President Mwai Kibaki in 2007 turned chaotic.

Owing to the poll impasse, the then Eldoret North MP was one of the four members who represented the ODM side in reconciliation talks with Kibaki's Party of National Unity, under the stewardship of former United Nations Secretary-General, the late Dr Kofi Annan.

In the resultant creation of a Grand Coalition Government and installation of Odinga as Prime Minister, the ODM leader appointed Ruto as Cabinet minister to the plum docket of agriculture. Their relationship turned toxic, however, when the two started pulling apart owing to conflicting political interests. Ruto bolted out of the Orange party and the two have engaged from opposing sides of the political ring ever since.

Dr Henry Wabwire, a commentator on political affairs, observes that the hostilities between Ruto and Odinga have little to do with the so-called “political enslavement” but everything to do with political economy. The two, according to Wabwire, are hunters from opposing sides locked in a vicious competition for resources and votes. Any narrative plausible enough to undercut a rival, therefore, goes.

**SCIENCE & TECH****WhatsApp gives admins greater control**

WhatsApp group admins will get more control over their group privacy. These changes follow some updates made over the last few months, including making groups larger and giving admins the ability to delete messages sent in the groups they manage.

“Groups continue to be an essential part of WhatsApp, and we’re excited to give people even more tools to get the most out of groups. Today, we’re excited to roll out a few new changes we’ve made to make these more manageable for admins and easier to navigate for everyone,” Meta’s statement read.

With the growth of Communities and their larger groups, WhatsApp wants to make it easy to know which groups users have in common with someone. Whether you’re trying to remember the name of a group you know you share with someone or you want to see the groups you’re both in, you can now easily search a contact’s name to see your groups in common.

At the same time, WhatsApp has rolled out updates for iOS users that add new features to the popular messaging application. One of the features allows users to post voice status updates for contacts customised with privacy settings.

Meanwhile, an update has added support for detecting text directly from images on WhatsApp for iOS. Even though both of these features have started rolling out to iOS users after the company tested the feature with users on the beta channel, some might have to wait after installing these updates to be able to use these features.

Spotted by WhatsApp feature tracker WABetaInfo, WhatsApp now allows iOS users to record a voice note and share it as a Status. To record, users must go to the Status tab, tap the pencil icon, and then long press the microphone icon to begin recording. Voice notes shared as status updates are limited to 30 seconds in length.

**GOOGLE NOW LAUNCHES CHATGPT RIVAL IN US, UK**

Bard, ChatGPT and other similar artificial intelligence apps churn out essays, poems or computing code on command and have taken the world by storm as the biggest new thing in tech.

- SAN FRANCISCO

**G**oogle has invited people in the United States and Britain to test its AI chatbot, known as Bard, as it continues on its gradual path to catch up with Microsoft-backed ChatGPT.

Bard, ChatGPT and other similar artificial intelligence apps churn out essays, poems or computing code on command and have taken the world by storm as the biggest new thing in tech since the advent of the iPhone.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai told staff that after testing Bard with 80,000 Google employees, the chatbot would be tested with the public in the United States and Britain as a “first step” before going out to more countries in other languages.

“As more people start to use Bard and test its capabilities, they’ll surprise us,” Pichai said in a memo to staff seen by *AFP*.

“Things will go wrong. But the user feedback is critical to improving the product and the

underlying technology,” added Pichai, who had faced some criticism within the company for rushing to catch up with Microsoft.

In the launch, people wishing to play with Bard can sign up on a waiting list at [bard.google.com](http://bard.google.com) website, distinctly separate from the tech giant’s search engine.

“We’ve learned a lot so far by testing Bard, and the next critical step in improving it is to get feedback from more people,” Google vice-presidents Sissie Hsiao and Eli Collins said in a blog post. As exciting as chatbots can be, they have their faults, Hsiao and Collins cautioned.

Google has so far proceeded more carefully in its rollout of generative AI to consumers, in contrast to Microsoft’s choice to swiftly make the products available despite reports of problems. ChatGPT’s OpenAI is backed by Microsoft, which earlier this year said it would finance the research company to the tune of billions of dollars.

Asked by *AFP* how its product was different from ChatGPT,

Bard said that unlike its Microsoft-backed rival, it was “able to access and process information from the real world through Google Search and keep my response consistent with search results”.

The bot also underlined that it was still “under development, while ChatGPT has been released to the public. This means that I am constantly learning and improving, while ChatGPT is likely to remain relatively unchanged”. OpenAI recently released a long-awaited update of its AI technology that it said would be safer and more accurate than its predecessor.

Much of the new model’s firepower, known as GPT-4, is now available to the general public via ChatGPT Plus, OpenAI’s paid subscription plan and on an AI-powered version of Microsoft’s Bing search engine.

Microsoft has said that its quick adoption of generative AI has seen usage of its Bing search engine increase in recent weeks, but it is still a clear underdog to Google.



# africa lens

■ HE IS AWARE OF THE DANGER HE IS IN, BUT CHARACTERISTICALLY, HE DOESN'T CARE



Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema addresses supporters before marching to the Presidential Guest House with EFF supporters in Pretoria during a "national shut-down" called by their party on March 20. PHOTO | AFP. Right: Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga addresses demonstrators in Eastleigh, Nairobi, on March 20. DENNIS ONSONGO | NATION

## RAILAMANIA AND MALEMAMANIA

**The Economic Freedom Fighters party leader is a man with very impressive credentials as a revolutionary, Pan-Africanist and supreme agitator for the economic emancipation of his fellow black Africans. Like Odinga, he has his eyes firmly fixed on the presidency of his extremely wealthy motherland**

● By MAGESHA NGWIRI

Two events that took place almost 4,000 kilometres apart on the same continent on the same day and for virtually the same reasons must have galvanised the world's attention, giving conspiracy theorists a field day. In Kenya, veteran politician Raila Odinga organised a demonstration against the rising cost of living, alleged stolen elections and the proposed reconstitution of the electoral commission without the input of all political stakeholders. Whether the demonstrations were successful depends on whom you asked. However, one thing was clear; they were certainly disruptive.

In South Africa, protest demonstrations were also held, organised by Julius Malema, a man who has for a long time been a gadfly on the flanks of the ruling Africa National Congress and entrenched economic elite in one of the continent's most unequal societies, in what was dubbed a 'national shutdown'. Again, it was hard to tell just what impact the agitation will have on the common people of that land, but it certainly cannot be ignored. Nor can Malema and his Economic Freedom Fighters party be wished away, for he has proved to be a consummate revolutionary whose demands are anathema to the establishment.

What these two men have in common is that they have proved they do not compromise in

their political convictions, and they are not afraid to vent them to anyone who would listen, and even to those whose ears are deliberately closed. Nor do they fear to offend the powers-that-be even if this means rattling them out of their comfort zones. Of the two men, Odinga is a veteran of the struggle and he has the scars to show for it, while Malema is a relative "newbie" who started his activities against the apartheid regime by joining the ANC at the tender age of nine, when most of his countrymen and women were still sucking thumbs. Although there is no record of Odinga fighting colonialism, probably because he was

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## africa lens

# Raila and Malema: Two of a kind in Africa

Continued from Page 25

relatively young, a role his father took up with relish, it is clear that politics was always in his blood. One does not have to agree with his brand of politics to recognise that he has turned out to be an institution, almost a force of nature that cannot be denied and must, instead, be accommodated in one way or the other. As three past presidents have discovered, no one can expect to rule this country with tranquility unless Odinga's views are taken into account, for he will impose them on the rulers anyway.

Despite a long struggle, Odinga has never been accorded a chance to run the affairs of this country as president, and his loyal followers believe he has been rigged out multiple times in his long political career. Yet, he will not give up.

History will probably be much kinder to him, for it is still too early to write his political epitaph. Indeed, he does not show any signs of hanging up his boots despite his advancing age. What no one should ever try to do is to ignore him; those who have attempted to do so have eventually come to realise their folly, sometimes at a high cost.

How do you categorise a man who, after every five years in the past two-and-a-half decades, has carried half the country's voting public with him but never won the ultimate prize? It is unfortunate that ethnic chauvinism has regularly conspired to deny him the presidency. Until Kenyans change the way they elect their leaders, they will always have to settle for people who are unfit to tie his shoelaces.

Odinga has always professed to fight for the underdog, which endears him to millions, but since he has never been entrusted with the power to shape the country's destiny, Kenyans will probably never know what he is capable of. However, a couple of events in his life may give a clue as the kind of politician Odinga is, for his political journey has been quite eventful. Not only has he vied for the presidency five times and allegedly lost five times, he has also sac-



Economic Freedom Fighters leader Julius Malema (centre) along expelled African National Congress member Carl Niehaus (C-R) march to the Presidential Guest House along with EFF supporters in Pretoria during a "national shut-down" called by their party on March 20.

rificed a great deal of his personal liberties over his views which have almost always diverged from those of political rivals and their minions. One thing you can say about him is that he has never shied away from speaking truth to power, nor is he likely to stop.

Therefore, when a group of neophyte politicians suffering from an exaggerated sense of hubris call a press conference to urge the Inspector-General of Police to arrest Odinga for leading demonstrations, they do not seem to know what they are saying. After all, he has been there and done that in his long career, and he is not likely to be fazed by demands whose only outcome can be to plunge this country into chaos greater than any demonstration can probably cause.

Lest the MPs have forgotten, in his time, Odinga has been to hell and back. In 1982, he was jailed for six years for his alleged role in that year's abortive coup against the intolerant Kanu juggernaut, and later that year, detained for seven months. In 1990, he joined Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia in detention, where

he languished for 11 months, after which he fled to Norway, fearing assassination. This, then, is not the kind of person to threaten with arrest. Quite obviously, a way will have to be found to seek a consensus with the man otherwise he will continue to make this country ungovernable.

As for Malema, here is a man with very impressive credentials as a revolutionary, pan-Africanist, and supreme agitator for the economic emancipation of his fellow black Africans. Like Odinga, he has his eyes firmly fixed on the presidency of his extremely wealthy motherland, and luckily for him, at 45 years of age, time is on his side. He has been quoted as saying during a TV interview that "they can call you all kinds of names and hurl insults, but as long as you have an appointment with the future, you don't care what anyone says". Those are certainly not the sentiments of a modest man.

He is a driven man, a rabble-rouser with brains, and a master tactician who does not give quarter within Parliament or without. His arguments are

impeccable. South Africa is a wealthy country with huge swathes of cultivable land but 80 per cent it is owned by 10 per cent of white farmers while 80 per cent of the population is black. So he wants the government to seize this land without compensation and re-distribute it. He also wants the government to take over the mines and give shares to the miners themselves. While political apartheid was de-legalised, he argues, economic apartheid persists. What African can argue with such noble ideas?

Who else, indeed, can dare tell his people that the reason why they are poor is not because fellow Africans from other countries have taken their jobs – resulting in the periodic orgies of xenophobia – except Malema, who admits that he risks losing votes over his unpopular 'open border' views but doesn't give a hoot? This is a brave man, a man who will change the country's destiny if they let him live long enough. He is aware of the danger he is in, but characteristically, he doesn't care.

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# global lens

■ WHY ASYLUM SEEKERS ARE CHOOSING CANADA IN RECORD NUMBERS

## LIVING THE CANADIAN DREAM



A woman and three children go on a cooling bike ride on a scorching hot day, in Vancouver, British Columbia. Migrants in Quebec said they increasingly view the US as not a viable country for refuge, where asylum claims can often take years before they are heard, and where they feel they are not welcomed. PHOTO | AFP

**Going to America? It's no longer paradise. There has been a surge of people arriving from Haiti, Latin American countries like Venezuela and Colombia, or from as far away as Afghanistan, all dealing with their own domestic turmoil**

### ● WASHINGTON

Last year, nearly 40,000 migrants crossed into Canada at an unofficial border crossing at the end of a remote rural road in upstate New York – a record number – to seek asylum. Many are driven by the belief that the country is more welcoming than the US. But can Canada handle the influx?

On a snowy winter day, Roxham Road is cold and quiet. The silence is interrupted by the sound of wheels approaching the end of the path, or the crunching of footsteps on snow. Around 150 migrants are dropped off here each day, determined to step foot into Canada. Many began their journey as far away as Brazil, with this road in New York state as their finish line. Roxham Road is not an official border point. There are no

border agents at the end of it, only police officers who arrest those who cross. But it has become known as an accessible spot to enter Canada from the US in order to claim asylum.

Last year marked the highest influx of migrants into Canada via that pathway – with thousands lured by the country's reputation for helping those fleeing war and conflict. The influx has led to growing frustration on both sides

of the border about the path, increasing concerns about its safety, and questions about what the future holds for those who make the journey. Roxham Road rose to national attention in 2017, when migrants, fleeing displacement and conflict, began crossing there in large numbers.

Some pinned its sudden popularity to fears of deportation from

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## global lens

# Canada now the most preferred destination

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the US under the Trump administration, others to a tweet by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that read: "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you".

The influx caught Canadian officials off guard. Montreal's Olympic Stadium was briefly converted into housing for newly-arriving migrants. The federal government tried to stem the tide with warnings that arrival in Canada was not an automatic ticket to stay. The Covid-19 pandemic closed the route under emergency health measures enacted by the federal government but demand for a safe haven never dissipated. Thousands of asylum seekers came again when those measures were lifted some 16 months ago. Many come from Haiti, a country rocked in recent months by political and gang violence. There has also been a surge of people arriving from Latin American countries like Venezuela and Colombia, or from as far away as Afghanistan, all dealing with their own domestic turmoil.

At the same time, the Biden administration has extended some Trump-era pandemic policies like Title 42, which has been used to block land entry at the US-Mexico border for some migrants.

Migrants who spoke to the *BBC* in Quebec said they increasingly view the US as not a viable country for refuge, where asylum claims can often take years before they are heard, and where they feel they are not welcomed.

Joshua arrived in Montreal two days after Christmas and now shares a rented flat with other migrants as he awaits for his claim to be heard.

A native Venezuelan, he had been living in exile in Chile for five years without travel documents when he decided to make the trek up to Canada, he told the *BBC*. "Other countries, they're not so friendly with irregular immigrants," said Joshua, whose name has been changed to protect his identity as someone fleeing political persecution. But Canada, he said, has welcomed him.

Behind the influx is a nearly two-decade old agreement with the US – the Safe Third Country



A man walks past a gloved fist painted on a wall at Graffiti Alley in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. PHOTO | AFP

Agreement – which requires migrants to file for asylum in the first 'safe' country they step foot in. A migrant coming from the US would be turned away at a Canadian border point but Roxham Road, an unofficial path, is a loophole. Trudeau has dismissed calls to close the crossing, suggesting it would be futile given the thousands of kilometres of undefended border with the US and that migrants would dangerously attempt to cross elsewhere.

He has focused instead on renegotiating the agreement – an issue he is expected to raise with Joe Biden when the president visits Ottawa later this week. But the prime minister is facing pressure to take action as the new arrivals strain social services, especially in Quebec, where many of the migrants settle.

Quebec Premier Francois Legault has called the situation in the province untenable, saying services have been "pushed to the brink" and that some migrants are facing homelessness as a result. "It is becoming increasingly difficult to receive asylum seekers with dignity," he said in February.

Migrants also face a growing backlog of refugee claims, which grew from 56,300 in January to almost 71,000 by December – a 26 per cent increase. Claims can now take up to two years to process. Around 28 per cent of all claims were rejected last year, meaning success is not guaranteed. There are also lengthy waits for work

permits. It used to take a week to get the documents necessary to apply for work as a new asylum seeker. Now the wait is nearly two years, said Maryse Poisson, who works at the Welcome Collective, an organisation assisting newcomers in Montreal. Many migrants have struggled to make ends meet as a result, and some have resorted to accessing food banks and other social supports as they wait.

"Some of them are in a situation where they have to accept work under the table," said Suzanne Taffot, an immigration lawyer based in Montreal who helps asylum seekers with their claims. Ms Poisson said she fears some of them are falling through the cracks without additional government support. "We're really worried that the most vulnerable, those that have trauma, those that have a lot of barriers of language, don't get the help they need at all," she said.

US border agents have noted an uptick of people crossing back from Canada. In January, US Border Patrol apprehended 367 people attempting to cross north to south – more than the number of such crossings in the last 12 years combined. Republican lawmakers have since spoken out about a "crisis" brewing at the northern border.

Some of those who cross back have done so from frustration with being unable to find work in Canada, or to reunite with fami-

ly, people who work with asylum seekers in Montreal said. Despite the growing challenges in Canada, migrants continue to cross Roxham Road in record numbers, undeterred even in the midst of the bitter Canadian winter.

On the New York side of the crossing, taxi drivers Terry Provost and Tyler Tambini said they often drive people to the border from the Plattsburgh bus station – sometimes for free as some migrants run out of money towards the end of their journey.

"This guy had no money. He's been waiting and waiting at a motel," said Provost as he dropped off an asylum seeker from Afghanistan. Once the migrants cross, they are greeted by members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who warn them that they will be placed under arrest if they step forward.

Once a ditch with some brush and trees, since 2017 the Canadian side of the border has turned into a small police compound, complete with trailers to process those who cross and buses that wait to bring the newcomers to hotels nearby. Provost said he sees people hesitate before they make the final step, unsure of what awaits them on the other side. But for migrants like Joshua, Canada is the last safe place on the line. "The American dream died many years ago," he said. "Montreal is my new home. The only home I have."

— **BBC**



## global lens

■ IT FOLLOWS SICILY'S COSA NOSTRA, CALABRIA'S 'NDRANGHETA AND NAPLES' CAMORRA

## ● FOGGIA

It took a loaded pistol pointed at Lazzaro D'Auria's head for the Italian landowner to finally say yes to the country's newest and most violent mafia.

The Puglia farmer had resisted their extortion attempts in the past – the threats, the fires, the damage to his crops and property.

But surprised by the early morning visit of a dozen men, including a boss with a gun, he agreed to their demand for 150,000 euros a year. Instead of paying up the next day, D'Auria went to the police, making him one of the few people to ever denounce Foggia's little-known mafia, Italy's long-ignored and today its most violent organised crime syndicate.

"If more citizens pressed charges, the local mafia could be weakened," D'Auria, who has lived under police protection since 2017, told AFP.

"Citizens, speak out!" implored the 57-year-old, who sees recent crackdowns by authorities as a sign the mafia can be weakened if locals overcome their fears. Its bloody clan wars were once dismissed as farmers' feuds, but the so-called "Fourth Mafia" – after Sicily's Cosa Nostra, Calabria's 'Ndrangheta and Naples' Camorra – is finally setting off alarm bells inside the Italian state.

But it has come late. Italy's youngest mafia already has a stranglehold on the vast south-eastern province, filling its coffers and cementing its control through drug trafficking, extortion, armed robberies and the theft of vehicles and livestock for ransom.

"It's a rudimentary, primitive mafia. Very violent, very aggressive," said Ludovico Vaccaro, Foggia's public prosecutor.

While the other main mafias have graduated to less visible, more profitable activities, including infiltrating the legitimate economy, the Foggia mafia is still in a nascent phase. "Today the mafias have evolved, so they shoot less, seeking a strategy of silence to stay unnoticed," Vaccaro said, "whereas this is still a mafia that, to show its power over the territory, shoots and kills."

The "Foggia mafia" is a catch-all label for a syndicate comprised of different groups involved in a

# ITALY'S DREADED 'FOURTH MAFIA'

The nation's youngest mafia has a stranglehold on the vast south-eastern province, filling its coffers and cementing its control through drug trafficking and extortion



People take part in a demonstration at Piazza Duomo in central Milan on March 21, to mark the 28th Memorial and Commitment Day in memory of the innocent victims of mafias, an initiative organised by the Libera association.

wide array of crimes.

The province of Foggia has Italy's third-highest homicide rate, and five of the 16 murders last year were mafia-related.

Family-based "battalions" from different areas often cooperate, dividing extortion money that pays associates and prisoners.

"When conflicts sometimes arise over the division of the illicit proceeds, there are quarrels and the battalions clash and start killing each other," said deputy police chief Mario Grassia. Each

group has its speciality, from the military-style armed robberies of freight trucks in Cerignola to the old-school tactics used in the city of Foggia, where nighttime bombings of storefronts and cars persuade hesitating shopkeepers to pay up.

Farmers in San Severo like D'Auria often find their olive trees felled, their harvests torched or tractors or livestock stolen.

In Gargano, whose spectacular coast welcomes tourists as well as Albanian drug shipments, the

mafia is particularly violent. Four years ago, a human skull was left outside a municipal building for the mayor of Monte Sant'Angelo. The skinned head of a goat with a dagger through it was left the same year for the lawyer of a disappeared mafia victim's mother.

The Gargano mafia's calling card, authorities say, is shooting victims in the face, or dumping them in caves. "It's easy to hide things. Every once in a while we find something serious, stolen cars, bodies of missing people," prosecutor Vaccaro said.

During a recent drive with police through the city of Foggia, AFP saw countless reminders of the bloodshed that has terrorised the population for decades.

There is the spot where builder Giovanni Panunzio was shot in 1992 for being the first to denounce the mafia, the abandoned farmhouse where police thwarted an ambush of a local businessman last year and the cafe whose owner died after being stabbed in the eye during a 2020 robbery.

"Right now there's no mafia war, but there's a settling of accounts," said a detective who requested anonymity. In November, Nicola Di Rienzo, 21, lay dead for hours in a public park after being shot five times before his 17-year-old killer turned himself in. In the meantime, "no one said anything, no one heard anything, no one spoke up", said the detective. Deputy chief Grassia said he was particularly concerned by three of last year's murders being committed by minors. "Those participating in these 'baby gangs' have kinship ties with subjects linked to organised crime," he said.

The newest danger posed by the mafia is infiltrating public institutions. Foggia's city council was dissolved in 2021 due to mafia infiltration and its mayor arrested on corruption charges, one of five local governments in the province dissolved since 2015.

In recent years a number of top bosses, including Rocco Moretti and Roberto Sinesi, have been jailed as authorities try to wrest control of the territory from the mafia. But the upcoming release of one of their rivals, Raffaele Tolonese, and last month's prison escape of Gargano boss Marco Raduano, underscore the challenges.

— AFP

# OBIT

■ **THE NRM LEADER BENEFITTED FROM THE KINDNESS OF MANY FAMILIES ON THE BORDER**

• BY OSCAR OBONYO

## MUSEVENI'S KENYAN SPY

**Although Opeta and his family supported the Ugandan guerilla war in the '70s and '80s, he died poor and neglected**

**A**t the peak of his career in Kampala in the 1970s, George Opah Oteba was a most valued ally and spymaster of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's – then a leader of a guerilla movement. The former undercover agent was recently interred at a colourless ceremony at his rural home in Busia County before a small crowd.

Neither Museveni nor any senior official from his office was at the burial in Kamuriai village, Amagoro Division, in Teso North. Perhaps because of his famed military exploits in Uganda, there were no Kenyan government officials. There is a possibility, however, that the Ugandan leader may be unaware of the demise of his former comrade, whose father, the late Lawi Karani Oteba, hosted Museveni, who was on the run, for three weeks at their rural home on the Kenyan side of the border in 1971.

During his 16 years in the bush, from where he waged a guerilla war against the governments of Idi Amin Dada, Milton Obote and Tito Okello, Museveni benefitted from the kindness of many families residing on the Kenya-Uganda border. Kenya's ninth Vice-President, Moody Awori, and Mzee Oteba, are among those who, at one point or another, hosted Museveni.

George's younger brother, David Imara Oteba, who was 16 when Museveni visited their home, recalls the mysterious activities of the then 27-year-old: "They lived in one of my brother's mud-walled and grass-thatched cottages. They stayed indoors most of the day, like prisoners, and only stepped out at night to run some errands before returning in the wee hours of the morning."

According to David, now 65, Museveni's presence was a heavily guarded secret. "Our father only informed us who the man was, and his mission, after he had departed."

Museveni left for Tanzania accompanied by George's two brothers, and a cousin. The three never returned home, and are believed to have been killed in the course of the military struggle to overthrow the Kampala government. The Chairman of Uganda's ruling National Resistance Movement's Malaba-Uganda branch, Abu Akileng, notes that Museveni has made efforts to reach out to and reward all those who played a role in his

military and political struggle in the 1970s and 1980s. Akileng recalls, for instance, Museveni singling him out at State House, Kampala, where he had joined other leaders from Tororo District in a crisis meeting in 2018 following violent conflict between members of the Teso and Jopadhola communities. "The President tasked me to locate a tall, slender, and generous man who hosted him around the border in the 1970s," he told *The Weekly Review*.

The President's desire to reunite with his comrade was hampered, however, by what Akileng refers to as "challenges of bureaucracy" and "administrative impediments" from both the Kenya and Uganda governments. He explains that George's nationality and his geographical location partly complicated efforts to find him.

Akileng explains that poor coordination between Kenyan and Ugandan officers, as well as the initial assumption that George and his father, Oteba, were Ugandans, must have led to the delay in identifying them. There is also the likelihood of the duo lying low for fear of victimisation by Kenyan authorities.

Claims of existence of individuals in Uganda who deliberately frustrated Museveni's efforts to reach out to the Oteba family are also widespread. Noting that Museveni has a history of hand-

somely rewarding former comrades, including building houses for them and giving lucrative state jobs to family members, Akileng does not rule out foul play against the Kenyan family.

Nonetheless, high-profile individuals like Moody Awori were easily located and rewarded. In July 2007, President Museveni travelled by road to the former VP's rural home in Funyula, where he awarded him and his wife, Rose, with "Nalubaale medals" for their contribution to the liberation of Uganda from the Idi Amin regime.

Addressing guests in Gulumwoyo village, Museveni revealed that Moody's family accommodated him several times. On a light note, he poked fun at Moody's younger brother, the late Aggrey Awori, who contested against him for presidency in 2001, describing him as "the bad one" and Moody as "the good one".

George, who missed out on Museveni's medals, worked in Kampala from the mid '60s, where he gathered and shared information with his cousin, Rait Omong'in, who had introduced Museveni to the Kenyan family. Any time things got hot in his home country, Omong'in and Museveni would dash to the border for refuge in friendly homes, including Oteba's. George's son, Elias Wandera, says the

family has over the years tried in vain to get Museveni's ear. Elias believes that some powerful individuals connived to prevent his grandfather and father from accessing Museveni.

Born in 1940, George was the second born in Oteba and Flora Nasike's family of five. He went to Kamuriai Primary up to Standard Five before proceeding to Kolanya Intermediate School, from where he left to look for work in Uganda. He secured employment with the Rayon Textile Factory in Kawempe and rose through the ranks to a fairly senior position.

It is while at this textile factory, where he served as shift supervisor, that Omong'in, who was a soldier attached to the office of then Prime Minister Apollo Milton Obote, invited George to live with him in Kampala.

But when Obote was overthrown by Amin, Omong'in fled to his Malaba home in Kenya and then to Tanzania, teaming up with Museveni, a young political science university graduate keen to "rescue" his home country. George also left his job and volunteered to offer intelligence information and other logistical support to Museveni.

From the safety of his Kampala house, George gathered intelligence using his cousin's contacts and delivered the information to Museveni and Omong'in, who were in Kenya and Tanzania.

When Museveni eventually became President, George was conflicted on whether to reach out to his comrade to celebrate and enjoy the fruits of his labour or go into hiding. He opted for the latter after failing to secure appointment in the government, hoping that the new leader would reach out to him. He never did, or his efforts were sabotaged.

Like his father, who housed Museveni when he was in the bush, the father of 16, who had three wives – two Ugandan and one Kenyan – has died poor. George's is a unique tale of an unsung hero of a foreign country, within his home country.



George Opah Oteba was the most valued ally and spymaster of the National Resistance Movement in the 1970s. PHOTO | POOL



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