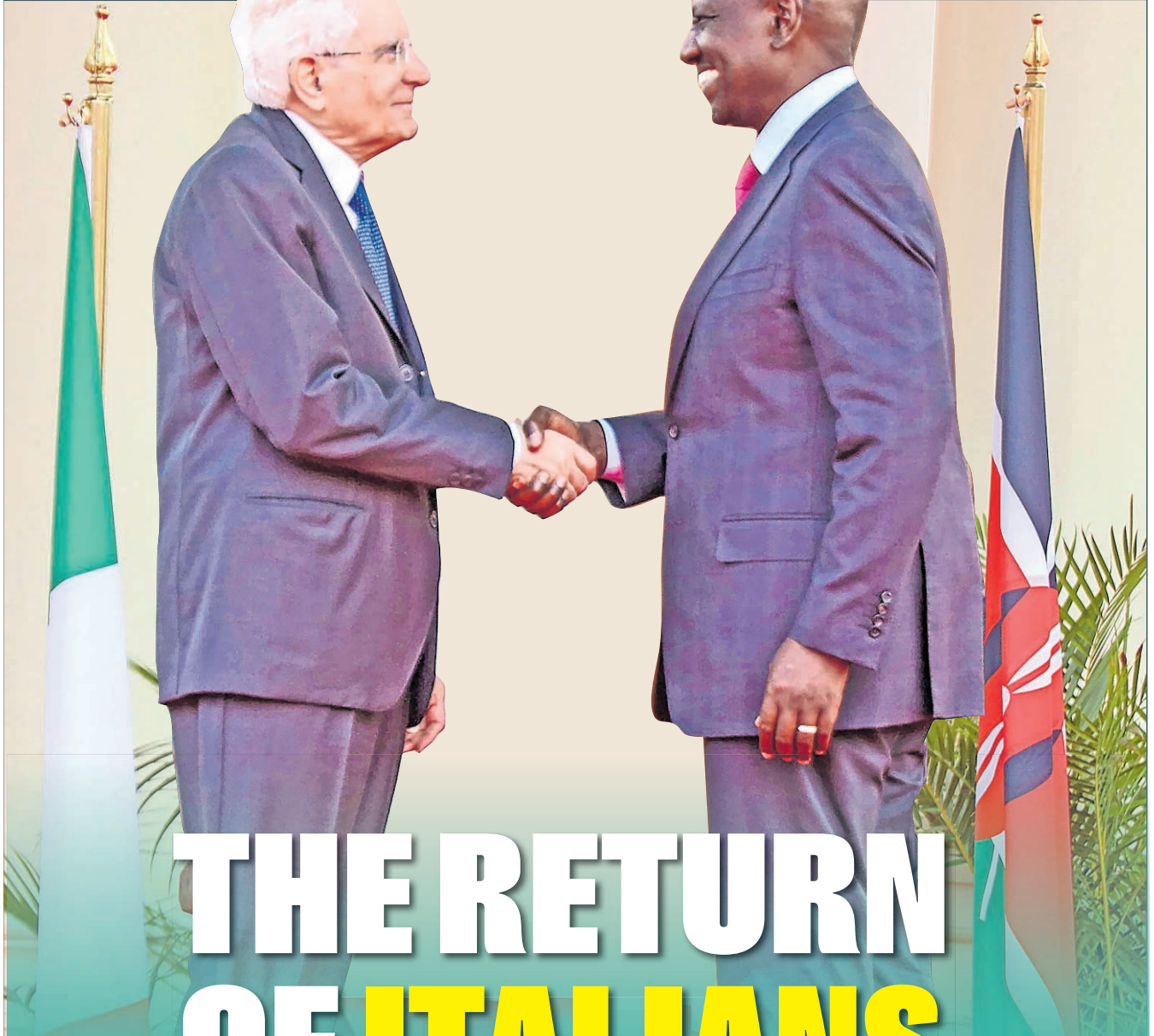


Weekly ^{THE} Review

For the Thinking Person

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THE RETURN OF ITALIANS

From the Malindi space station to billionaire playboys, scandals have always haunted Italian escapades in Kenya. As Nairobi and Rome seal a multibillion-shilling deal for the construction of the controversial Aror and Kimwarer dams, this is the big question: What are the Romans up to?

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letter from the editor

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We are grateful for the goodies, but what is in it for the Italians?

I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse." This famous movie one-liner was spoken by Marlon Brando, playing Don Corleone in the blockbuster *The Godfather*, written by Mario Puzzo.

More than half-a-century since its release, it is still regarded as one of the greatest movies of all time. *The Godfather II* often ranks just as high among fans and *The Godfather III* has even gained more appreciation over the years.

And so, when Italian President Sergio Mattarella came to town last week with a basket of goodies – including Sh14 billion in grants and soft loans to cover agriculture, housing and urban settlement, and the digital super highway – we wondered what the Italians were up to.

It was clearly an offer that President William Ruto could not resist, given his heavy appetite for loans and the present economic quagmire that only serves to whet an even greater craving for lends. The Italian certainly picked the right time to dangle some carrots at the government.

The Roman knows what we want and pats our back like a buddy. It thus begs the question: What's in it for the Italians?

The government committed to re-establishing cooperation on the construction of Aror, Kimwarer and Itare dams, and other water and sanitation projects.

These are projects that we considered white elephants, surrounded by a scam stinking to high heavens. We are still in the dark about the billions that were earmarked for their construction, and all we know is that the Italian leader has finally cleared it with President Ruto.

Kenya and Italy agreed to re-



Allan Buluku

It was clearly an offer that President William Ruto could not resist, given his heavy appetite for loans and the present economic quagmire that only serves to whet an even greater craving for lends. The Italian certainly picked the right time to dangle some carrots at the government. The Roman knows what we want and pats our back like a buddy.

move non-tariff barriers, and promote greater trade.

This includes negotiating avoidance of a double-taxation agreement, which will usher in significantly higher levels of direct foreign investments by Italian companies. All these sound quite good for us and it tickles our ear to perceive that these installations may bring some growth to the economy.

President Ruto noted that Italian investors had shown great interest in the Konza Technopolis. This grand

project was mooted over a decade ago, but it has yet to pick up and grow to its envisaged potential. An infusion of further investment is bound to awaken this slow coach and let it breathe a better life and prospects for Kenyans.

Italy has been close to Kenya, especially in terms of investment and faith in our stability. The easiest evidence of that faith can be easily discerned from Malindi town in Kilifi County, which is now like a province of Rome. The Italians first used it as a base for their space engineering in the 1970s.

The Luigi Broglie Space Centre at Ngomeni is a perfect example of Italo-Kenyan cooperation. Any satellite launched at the San Marco platform is Italian but puts Kenya in the map of space exploration.

Many Italians consider Malindi their second home. As early as the '60s, ordinary Italians, the rich, the famous, and the wealthy poured into the resort town like a pilgrimage site.

The *Chicago Outfit*, which got membership of the Nanyuki-based Mt Kenya Safari Club and killed its owner, and was once led by the infamous American gangster Al Capone, also found drug outlets in Malindi's casino business. But it is the scandals that have always haunted Italian escapades in Kenya.

We have catalogued all that we may gain from this heightened cooperation, but we still grope for comprehension of what the Romans must get to give us this deal.

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the telescope

■ Ruto picks his cronies and election losers

Parliament to vet CAS nominees

The National Assembly will this week begin vetting Chief Administrative Secretary nominees. President Ruto last week mostly nominated his cronies and election losers to serve as CASs, positions considered to be similar to the role of assistant Cabinet Secretaries.

The nominations come three weeks after the High Court threw out a case filed by the Law Society of Kenya challenging the establishment of the CAS position in the public service. The nominations

have been received with scrutiny and criticism by the public, coming not only against President Ruto's pre-election promise to maintain a lean Cabinet that includes the common mwananchi, but also at a time when taxpayers are struggling to finance government operations and grappling with the high cost of living.

Budget estimates tabled in Parliament last week show the government intends to borrow up to Sh700 billion of its Sh3.6 trillion budget.



Former Nominated Senator Millicent Omanga has been nominated for the position of Chief Administrative Secretary.

■ iHub set for 'women breaking boundaries'

Nairobi date for Kenyan women



The iHub in Nairobi will celebrate women who are 'breaking boundaries' in their fields on March 25. The International Women's Day, which is usually marked on March 8, encourages people to celebrate women's

achievement, raise awareness about discrimination and take action to drive gender parity. In humanitarian crises, women frequently experience more adverse effects than men, such as gender-based violence or an impact on their sexual and reproductive health.

Research and innovation have a key role to play in contributing towards advancement in gender equity in humanitarian settings.

■ Leclerc is 25 points adrift of Red Bull's Verstappen



Ferrari's Charles Leclerc during the Bahrain Grand Prix in Sakhir on March 5. He's been hit with a 10-place penalty for the Saudi Arabia GP.

Ferrari driver hit with grid penalty

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc has been hit with a 10-place grid penalty for this weekend's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. The sanction was meted out by Formula One's rulers, the FIA, after Ferrari were forced to change the power unit twice in Leclerc's car at the season-opening race in Bahrain.

Ferrari then moved to use a third power unit for the race in Saudi Arabia, breaking the rules that only permit two changes in an entire season. Leclerc, who is already 25 points adrift of double world champion Max Verstappen's Red Bull after he failed to finish in Bahrain, faces further penalties if more parts need to be changed on his car ahead of Sunday's race in Jeddah.

Ferrari's new team principal, Fred

Vasseur, explained what had gone wrong for the scuderia in Bahrain.

"On Sunday, we had two different issues," he told *Formula1.com*.

"The first one was on the Sunday morning, when we did the fire up, and the second one was in the race. Unfortunately, it was two times the control unit, the ECU.

"It's something that we never experienced in the past. I hope now it's under control, but we have a deep analysis on this."

The former Alfa Romeo chief, who took over from Matteo Binotti after last year's reliability-hit campaign, added: "Unfortunately, we'll have to take the penalty in Jeddah, because we have only a pool of two control units for the season."

■ It works with a small robot to deliver packages

New drone model for city deliveries



Drone maker Zipline has introduced a new model that works with a small robot to deliver packages with precision in dense cities. The tech firm, based in the city of South San Francisco, said its product provides quiet, fast delivery to

homes in cities as well as suburbs. "It's an opportunity for us to really precisely make deliveries, even in high winds," Zipline head of engineering Joseph Mardall told *AFP*. Zipline spent several years refining its new platform, in which an electric-powered drone flies along more than 300 feet above the ground to its destination, then releases a "delivery droid" to take packages the final distance. The droid manoeuvres down a tether, dropping off packages in different locations.

kenya lens

■ THIS IS THE AFRICAN RIVIERA

THE ROMAN INVASION



President William Ruto and his Italian counterpart, Sergio Mattarella, inspect a guard of honour at State House on March 14. PHOTO | PCS

The saga surrounding Aror and Kimwarer dams in Elgeyo Marakwet — the scandal we co-share with Rome — is the continuing story of Italians in Kenya. And as JOHN KAMAU reports, it all began with the resort town of Malindi in Kilifi, from where they thought they could launch into space

Italians were determined to go to the moon – and in 1962, they wanted to go through Kenya. In Malindi, off the coast near Ngomeni, they had found three old oil rig platforms that were still usable.

By then, only three nations had launched anything into space: the Soviet Union, the US and Can-

ada. The dash to be the fourth, they hoped, would start on any of the three platforms, which they named San Marco, Santa Rita and Santa Rita I.

As scientists poured into Malindi, so did the playboys, the Mafia, and investors – and the drug dealers. The Chicago Outfit, which was once led by infamous Ameri-

can gangster Al Capone, got membership of the Nanyuki-based Mt Kenya Safari Club (and killed its owner) and also found drug outlets in Malindi's casino business.

Malindi was a favourite Italian tourist destination, and some streets still bear Italian names. Villas emerged in the colonised spaces – and besides Italian pro-

fessor Luigi Broglio's dream of having an Italian space station near the equator, Malindi was becoming the base of sleaze, drugs and sex.

Here, and as they escaped the European winter, Malindi would receive upwards of 20,000 Italian tourists every year. The investors

Continued on Page 6

kenya lens

The Italian Job, the Sicilian Mafia, and the playboys

Continued from Page 5

followed them and created comforts: hotels, villas, guesthouses, car and helicopter rentals, and escorts. They bought plots and properties and established a network that saw Malindi get the moniker African Riviera. Silvio Berlusconi, one of the most controversial Italian Prime Ministers, has a home here too.

Back to the main business: Italian space scientists had always insisted that the launch of a satellite near the equator, with its heavy payloads, made Malindi the ideal site. They had sought the assistance of Nasa – which agreed to train the Italian scientists in satellite engineering but not in the making of the satellite.

Just before Independence, Kenya signed an agreement with Italy that saw the University of Rome La Sapienza and the Royal Technical College (now the University of Nairobi) become the operators of what was to be known as Broglio Space Centre.

Under Broglio's direction, the Italians used Malindi as the base for their space engineering. To Italians, Malindi became a second home. It was the place where they could marvel at their progress – at a time when global power was determined by space entry. Ordinary Italians, the rich, the famous, and the wealthy poured into Malindi like a pilgrimage site.

On December 12, 1970, as Kenya celebrated Jamhuri Day, the small town was awash with thousands of Italian tourists as they watched their country launch its first satellite, named Uhuru into orbit.

While the Malindi space programme came a cropper, the once quiet town of Malindi became the playground of Italian investors, playboys and tourists eager to sample the best of the eastern coast of Africa. More so, the Italian government continued to renew the bilateral agreement of cooperation, which allowed them to have an intelligence base in Africa.

But it is the

With the Italians, Malindi always got bad press. One of the major scandals, which the tabloids minted millions out of, was when the heir to the Agnelli Fiat empire, Edoardo Agnelli, was arrested and charged with possession of drugs. The Agnelli family were majority shareholders of Juventus FC, the Italian Serie A football club, and owned Italy's largest bank. It was in Malindi that Agnelli always took cover to seek happiness. But ten years later, as he was set to inherit the \$15 billion fortune that was his family's business empire, which included the Fiat car manufacturing company, a considerable stake in Alfa Romeo, and the high-end Ferrari and Chrysler vehicles, he committed suicide. Tabloids claimed he was killed.

scandals that have always haunted Italian escapades in Kenya – including the scam of Ar-ror and Kimwarer dams – eliciting a chain of bad press reports.

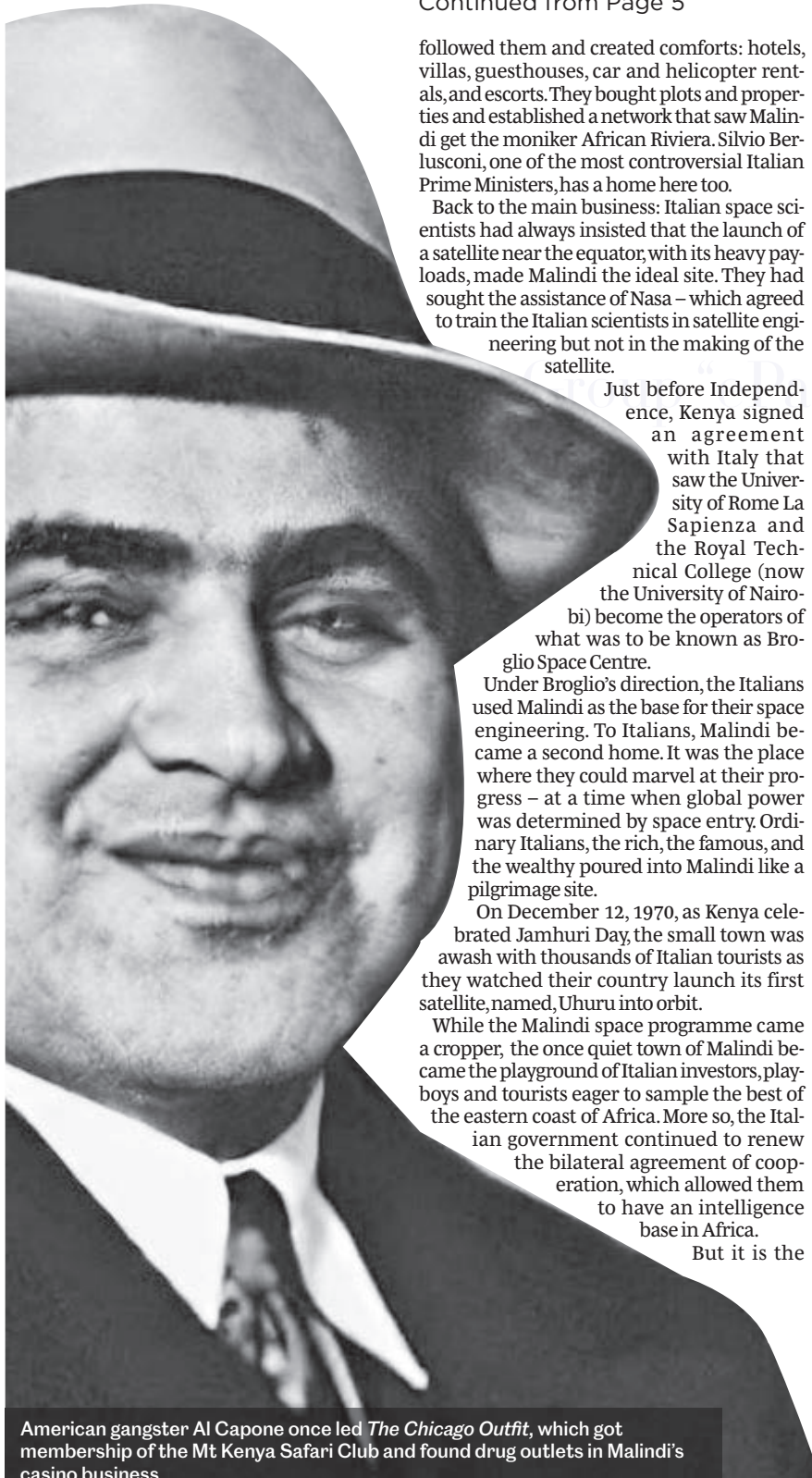
The first stories were of Italian drug dealers and criminals with mafia connections using Malindi as their hideout. Italians long resident in Malindi protested these allegations, which they claimed were propaganda by Germans who were “jealous of our prosperity”, one investor told *London Observer*.

It was true, then, that rivalry between Germans and Italians on who was to control the tourism sector at the coast had reached a crescendo. The Italian wheeler dealers, aggressive and corrupt, had the upper hand. One Italian investor, according to the *London Observer* article, accused Germans of visiting Malindi “only for cheap sex and beer”.

By then, the Germans were fronted by the powerful Coast Provincial Commissioner Eliud Mahihu, while the Italians had always relied on the goodwill of the Kenyatta family – tied to Italy by their Roman Catholic faith. Mahihu's African Safari Club, co-owned with some German investors, was part of this tussle. It was said that he got his shares without paying a penny. There were several court battles over properties – and some are still ongoing – between the Italians and Germans in Malindi.

In one interesting case, a German, Hans-Jürgen, armed with what looked like a decree from a Milan Court, arrived in Malindi in 2009, seeking to enforce the Italian court order and seeking “to take over the ownership, management, running, operation and control of (Salama Beach Hotel) for such period and time as shall be sufficient to satisfy the judgment and decree of the court of Milan dated December 14, 2001”.

It took years of research, and misuse of Malindi police for an Italian lawyer, Taglioret-ti Farese Cicerchia Capua, to dig up the details. He found that the said judgment was a



American gangster Al Capone once led *The Chicago Outfit*, which got membership of the Mt Kenya Safari Club and found drug outlets in Malindi's casino business.

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creation of a German company and that “the case number indicated on the appellants’ purported judgment pertained to unconcluded proceedings”. At one point in this saga, Senior Counsel Ahmednasir Abdullahi dragged then Nairobi Governor Mike Mbuvi Sonko into the case, accusing the governor of conspiring to defraud the German of the luxurious hotel valued at about Sh1 billion.

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Eduardo’s escapades in Malindi were well known. He would arrive at the Kenyan coastal town with an entourage of carefree hookers and Italian scofflaws who had earned the

The government of Italy has committed to advance Sh14 billion in grants and soft loans covering projects in agriculture, development of MSMEs, housing and urban settlement, health, the digital super highway and creative economy. This will be done through the Kenya-Italy multi-annual five-year cooperation strategy on sustainable development.

President William Ruto



President William Ruto (centre) and his Italian counterpart Sergio Mattarella (third left) at State House, Nairobi, on March 14. Kenya and Italy agreed to remove non-tariff barriers to stimulate trade and investment. DENNIS ONSONGO | NATION

town the notorious tag, the ‘mafia paradise’, just like in Fulgencio Batista’s Havana. Eduardo’s father, Gianni, was no better and, according to his wife, Marella, he had a series of women who included Swedish actress Anita Ekberg, former US First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and Italian actress Silvia Monti.

When news broke that Kenyan police had raided a private villa in Malindi and arrested Edoardo for possessing drugs, it did not surprise anyone in Italy, or those who followed his family’s escapades. The billionaire was called, and he sent his lawyers to Malindi. The short of it is that the case collapsed, but not before conspiracy theorists argued that the arrest was plotted to deny Edoardo a chance to inherit the leadership of the multi-billion Fiat empire after his father turned 70.

His Malindi friends had told Italian newspapers that Eduardo was set up by drug traffickers who were using the town as the conduit between drug hubs in Pakistan and Europe, while then Italian ambassador to Kenya, Renato Volpini, thought there was much more to the story.

By then, Malindi used to be the playground of Casanovas, drug lords and tycoons – a triumvirate structure that also earned it the title Riviera of Kenya, thanks to the cash flows from sleaze and tourism. The Mafia, which originated from Sicily, had become the prime investors in the casino business.

There was also talk that since Eduardo had started a drug rehab project in Malindi, he became the target of traffickers who were worried that this son of a billionaire might out them. Then, on the morning of November 15, 2000, news broke that Edoardo’s body had been found at the bottom of a viaduct. His car, the engine still running, was parked at the side. The question that arose was whether he, indeed, committed suicide or was pushed to his death.

The saga surrounding Error and Kimwarer dams – the scandal we co-share with Italians – is the continuing story of Italians in Kenya. And it all started with the Malindi station when they thought they could go to the moon.

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Former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and billionaire Flavio Briatore at the Malindi Airport before their departure to Italy after a one-week holiday on November 12, 2012.

kenya lens

■ HE DISCOVERED HOW TOUGH IT CAN BE WHEN THE BOOT IS ON THE OTHER FOOT

The sudden twists and turns as the former Interior Cabinet Secretary escaped the threat of jail, and in return shifted support to President Ruto and by implication abandoned Raila, marked a dramatic and turbulent week for the once all-powerful minister

● BY MACHARIA GAIITHO

If the narratives spun by President William Ruto's acolytes in Kisii politics and the social media propaganda machinery are anything to go by, it was total and craven capitulation on the part of former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i, leading to dropping of criminal charges over the alleged police raid on his residence.

The sudden twists and turns as Matiang'i escaped the threat of jail, and in return apparently shifted support to President Ruto and by implication abandoned opposition leader Raila Odinga, marked a dramatic and turbulent week for the once all-powerful minister. As Matiang'i discovered how tough it can be when the boot is on the other foot, he retreated into silence, leaving Education CS Ezekiel Machogu and other Kisii establishment figures to happily take credit for what appears to be a major coup for Ruto's Kenya Kwanza brigade.

But it was also clear that while a deal appears to have been struck, there are deep divisions within the Kisii leadership. Machogu and other pro-government figures are eager to demonstrate that they have tamed Matiang'i and forced him to toe the line. However, a crop of opposition legislators claim, in fact, that the devel-

opment was a victory for the former CS who they insist is the recognised community leader.

The MPs also insist that it was their direct intervention at a meeting with President Ruto, rather than strong-arm tactics, that led to softening of positions. The immediate background is that on return from an overseas visit made in the midst of police seeking him to answer questions on the alleged raid at his house, Matiang'i presented himself to the Directorate of Criminal Investigations, where he was kept for over seven hours.

His lawyers advised him to exercise his right to silence as the questions he was being asked had little to do with the alleged raid, but were more of a fishing expedition about his wealth. A few days later, the Director of Criminal Investigations, Mohammed Ali, presented the Director of Public Prosecutions, Noordin Haji, with an inquiry file recommending that Matiang'i and his lawyer, Dunstan Omari, be charged with publishing false information and conspiracy to commit a felony.

Timelines here are important. Matiang'i appeared at the DCI on March 6. The file recommending prosecution was presented to the DPP the following day, March 7. On March 8, a small group of MPs, mostly from Mr Odinga's ODM, visited President Ruto. They cautioned him that anything interpreted as harassing Matiang'i was playing out nega-

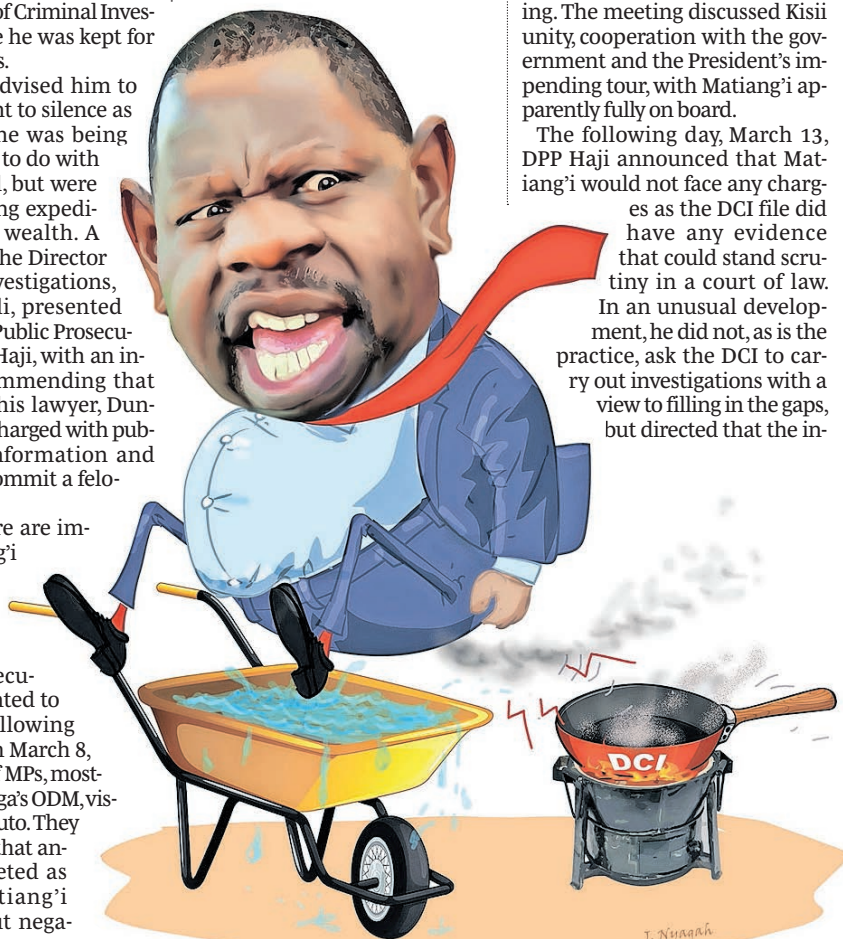
tively within the Gusii community. It was complicating their own efforts to seek cooperation with the government, and would also impact badly on the president's tour of the region planned for later this week, which would also include his attendance of a 'homecoming' fete for Machogu.

Separately, Machogu was also warning that the issue was stoking anger within the community. It was with those cautions in mind, say those involved, that the

president gave the go-ahead for Machogu and other local leaders to seek a truce. On March 12, Machogu chaired a meeting of Kisii leaders where Matiang'i was prominently seated next to him at the high table. Under ordinary circumstances, any leader in Kenya having trouble with the government, facing the threat of criminal charges and generally typified as an enemy and troublemaker, would be persona-non-grata at such a gathering. The meeting discussed Kisii unity, cooperation with the government and the President's impending tour, with Matiang'i apparently fully on board.

The following day, March 13, DPP Haji announced that Matiang'i would not face any charges as the DCI file did not have any evidence that could stand scrutiny in a court of law. In an unusual development, he did not, as is the practice, ask the DCI to carry out investigations with a view to filling in the gaps, but directed that the in-

HOW MATIANG'I SURRENDERED



kenya lens

vestigations be closed all-together and no further action taken. It could all have been a co-incident, but chances are that the flurry of activity and 'freedom' for Matiang'i could not have been unrelated.

It could be seen as a wise move in regard to easing tensions, denying Odinga a cause to exploit and nipping in the bud the emerging alliance with Matiang'i. The opposition chief was the first person on the scene when the former minister raised the alarm about a police siege at his residence. He also turned up in a show of solidarity when Matiang'i was undergoing interrogation at the DCI headquarters, making a lot of noise for the cameras when denied entry.

But it also again raises questions about whether both DCI Amin and DPP Haji are taking directions from the political leadership. Haji has raised plenty of eyebrows since the new government took power over the large number of criminal cases facing Ruto allies he has suddenly dropped, citing lack of evidence in the files presented to him by ousted DCI George Kinoti. He has never satisfactorily explained why he agreed to press the charges in the first place if the evidence was deficient. Then there is Amin, who succeeded a director widely seen to have abused his office by filing fake criminal cases against Ruto allies. Kinoti was one of the first casualties of the Ruto regime that came into office vowing to end the culture of politically-inspired prosecutions. If the enthusiasm with which his successor, Amin, goes after those in bad books with the administration is any guide, nothing has changed. The woefully deficient file recommending Matiang'i's prosecution is a case in point.

The big question now is, what next for Matiang'i? Talking to *The Weekly Review*, MP Patrick Osero disclosed that it was 'soft diplomacy' that won the day. He was part of the ODM delegation that visited Ruto and asked him to call off the attack dogs on the former minister, arguing that persecuting Matiang'i was playing badly on the ground. Osero is well-placed to intercede with Ruto, having been a colleague in the infamous Youth for Kanu '92 group that sought to counter the campaign for a multi-party system in the early 1990's. He has also been the President's business

partner, a few years ago coming out to shield him by claiming that he was the actual owner of West-on Hotel on Lang'ata Road when questions were raised about how the land on which the facility stands was 'grabbed' from Kenya Civil Aviation Authority.

Another MP who spoke to *The Weekly Review* was Richard Onyonka, who poured cold water on reports that Matiang'i would be shifting allegiance to President Ruto's Kenya Kwanza. He said that the priority for the ex-CS at the moment might be to take a sabbatical, but at the appropriate time he would be releasing a detailed statement explaining his position and also providing guidance for his supporters.

Although he cautioned that he does not speak for Matiang'i,

the MP pointed out three scenarios that could come into play. One is that he folds his tail between his legs, shuns politics and holds his peace for the foreseeable future.

The other is that he declares his loyalty to Ruto and works from within the system to assert his primacy in Kisii politics. That might not go down well with Machogu, who is eager to claim that mantle, as well as other Kenya Kwanza leaders in the region who stuck with Ruto when the going was tough and will not want to be shoved aside. Machogu did not pick calls from *WR* or respond to messages. Other leaders in Kenya Kwanza jostling for positions, such as Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, might also see a threat to their own ambitions if Matiang'i wins a place by President Ruto's side. The third option,

which Onyonka favours, is that Matiang'i lies low for now and weighs the developing situation before making any moves. "But if he crosses (to the Ruto side) he will be seen as a coward and will never be forgiven by the Kisii community," he warned.

As *The Weekly Review* went to press, we learnt that Matiang'i was preparing a comprehensive statement to be released

by the end of the week. In the meantime, dropping of the police siege charges was not the only thing on his mind. Before Matiang'i faced the DCI, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission had asked for his wealth declaration files as part of a lifestyle audit that seemed to tie in with some of the allegations Kenya Kwanza politicians and social media have made against him.

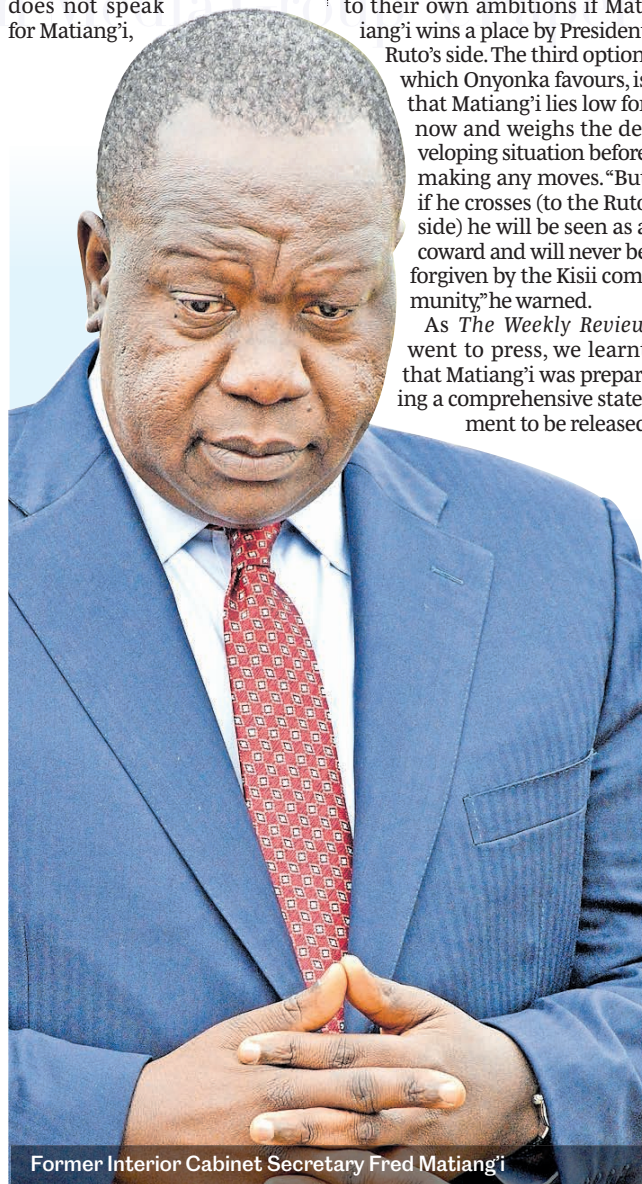
Although EACC boss Noordin Twalib had insisted in a conversation last week with *The Weekly Review* that it was a routine request made to all exiting cabinet secretaries and other high-ranking officials, the timing was interesting. Then there is the private prosecution sought by President Ruto's social media propagandist, Dennis Itumbi. Last week, the controversial blogger, who is highly topped for appointment as a Cabinet Administrative Secretary, wrote to DPP Haji and EACC boss Twalib demanding that Matiang'i be charged over the Ruara-ka land scandal dating back to his time as Education CS. It is unlikely that Haji would accede to such a demand, especially one with little evidence that can be presented in court, but rejection will then provide the grounds for Itumbi to proceed to court on private prosecution.

A similar attempt in 2020 was thrown out when the courts deemed that the evidence presented did not meet the required threshold, but the change of guard at State House might give Itumbi confidence to try again.

Ruto's propaganda outfit has also played up reports that Matiang'i and other powerful figures from President Uhuru Kenyatta's administration are under investigation by the Kenya Revenue Authority, which would also be of worry, besides raising concern that the such agencies are sharing privileged information with political players.

If the DCI file on the alleged police siege was a non-starter, there might well be other more serious matters hanging over Matiang'i's head that forced him to capitulate. Whatever statement he comes out with will provide clearer direction on whether he was beaten into meek submission, or he is the one playing a clever game that lets him off the hook for now as he girds up for future battles.

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Former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i

kenya lens

■ ELECTORAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

● BY OSCAR OBONYO

Gem MP Elisha Odhiambo likens opposition chief Raila Odinga to a police officer who went loitering downtown Nairobi, along River Road, and was robbed of his cell phone by an unarmed young man who incapacitated him by gripping the old man's neck tightly with his arm, an attack known as *kupigwa ngeta* in street parlance.

In the captivating imagery, the MP from Odinga's rural county of Siaya then asks whether it serves any purpose for a police officer – armed with a gun and teargas – to report such an incident to the relevant authorities. Alternatively, he asks, “shouldn't we just accept and move on, since we appear to have run out of luck?”

The tale, told by the second-term MP to his constituents at a public event last month, vividly captures the frustrations and dilemma of Odinga's supporters in the face of nationwide mass action that he has called to protest his “stolen victory” in last year's presidential poll, and the rising cost of living.

The former Prime Minister, who was largely tipped to pip his key challenger, then Deputy President William Ruto, to the top seat, was declared first runner-up in the race.

Raila enjoyed momentous support countrywide ahead of the August polls, including the backing of the so-called Deep State, courtesy of President Uhuru Kenyatta, as well as financial support from wealthy friends and the Mt Kenya business community.

It is against this backdrop – of waning faith and fatigue among some of his supporters and heavy criticism from forces allied to the government – that the Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya Alliance leader spearheads what is billed by his backers as the final push against President Ruto's administration from tomorrow, Monday, March 20.

RAILA RALLIES A REVOLUTION

As mass action to protest his ‘stolen victory’ and the high cost of living peaks this week, opinion is divided about the Azimio leader's motivation and chances of success



Despite being mocked by critics for refusing to accept poll defeats and engineering post-poll mayhem to seek the attention of sitting presidents and work out ‘handshake’ deals, Odinga is at it again. From tomorrow, he will be pushing for what he refers to as electoral and economic justice.

Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua leads the pack of those poking holes at Odinga's reform credentials. He has lately claimed – repeatedly – that the Azimio leader's ongoing rallies and planned march to State House, Nairobi, are blackmail for a forced symbolic handshake with President Ruto. In a statement on Monday, Nandi Senator Samson Cherargei concurred, adding that this time round, “we will not allow the former PM anywhere near the President”.

The DP and Senator from the ruling United Democratic Alliance (UDA) party are referring to previous instances in 1997, 2007 and 2017, when Odinga was declared loser in presidential elections but eventually reached out to incumbents Daniel arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta respectively to end political hostility “for the country's sake”.

Now, however, Raila denies any plans of a “handshake” with Dr Ruto. He maintains that the push for mass action is driven by the desire to guard against erosion by the Ruto administration of democratic gains realised over the years.

Owing to sustained post-poll agitation and presidential election petitions, there is no denying that Odinga's activities have over the years contributed immensely to legal learning in the electioneering process, or jurisprudence as it is referred to within the legal profession.

His lawyer, Mr Paul Mwangi, singles out the 2017 petition, which overturned a presidential poll outcome, as the most significant and profound legal landmark.

Before the historic ruling – the first in Africa – Mwangi says Kenyans, and particularly members of the legal fraternity, were accustomed to the notion that petitions relating to presidential polls were a mere formality, meaning that the electoral body could conduct

kenya lens



Opposition supporters in Kisumu stage protests over the high cost of living on March 15. RUSHDIE OUDIA | NATION

the exercise in the most messy and opaque manner possible yet once a winner was declared, that was final.

The constitutional lawyer observes that the perception that declaration of a victor in presidential polls is final and that the winner can do whatever they wish, including bringing whomsoever they wish into government to the exclusion of the rest, needs to be addressed. “We (Azimio) are bringing alive the powers of picketing as enshrined in our Constitution as a way of ensuring that this government and successive ones become sensitive to people’s needs and interests.”

Mwangi argues that this is presently the only avenue available to the people after what he regards as failure by other arms of the government – the judiciary and legislature – to check the excesses of the President.

The establishment of the Supreme Court of Kenya in 2010 following the promulgation of a new Constitution was the product of a push for electoral justice by Odinga and other progressive forces. The Azimio leader’s interest in the apex court is understandable, considering that he declined to petition Mwai Kibaki’s controversial win in 2007 for lack of an independent senior court.

Since its establishment, Odinga has been a constant figure in its administration of justice. And over the years, the court has set

precedence around poll matters with regards to “spoilt and rejected votes” in 2013, and nullification of elections in 2017 on account of “non-compliance to the Constitution with regards to electronic transmission methods as required by the law”.

And last year, the court bought into the argument advanced by petition lawyers that commissioners of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) must always act in consultation, and that the powers of the body reside in all the commissioners and not in the individual that is referred to as the Chairman.

The quest for electoral fairness has been on cards for years, peaking in 1992, when Kenya embraced the second phase of multi-partyism. At that time, a petition by Kenneth Matiba, the incumbent’s (Daniel arap Moi) main challenger, was dismissed on a technicality.

Consequently, an Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group arrangement was mooted in 1997 to improve poll management by including representatives of all parties in the then Electoral Commission of Kenya.

This was further boosted by recommendations of a commission headed by former South African judge, Johann Kriegler, following the 2007/8 post-election.

Even though he is credited for helping to improve the integrity

of Kenya’s elections, Odinga’s failure to capture the top seat is partly believed to be the drive behind his endless push for reforms. It is a factor that his main rival in last year’s poll, Ruto, has repeatedly alluded to.

According to Ruto, electoral justice can only be done for Odinga if the opposition leader is declared the victor in a presidential poll. And, he hypothesises, the “violent protests” called by Raila will continue until he is handed the win.

Going by the chain of events every election year, it is difficult to wholly discount the UDA party leader’s assertions. The situation has not been helped either by Odinga’s personal – perceived or real – weaknesses. His allies accuse him of allegedly sitting on his laurels once he was endorsed by President Uhuru Kenyatta.

His failure to build on Kenyatta’s support and the influence of the incumbency has irked a good number of his supporters. Some even allege that the former premier underestimated the influence of his challenger and that he declined to employ “forceful and persuasive methods” to run away with the victory.

“This energy, time and money that we are exerting and using now in the countrywide rallies is what we could have spent then to kill off this game at Bomas of Kenya (IEBC’s national tallying centre). We are operating in reverse gear. It is silly, defeatist and

a waste of time,” an agitated politician from Kisumu County, who requested anonymity for fear of political reprisal, confided in *The Weekly Review*.

And with Odinga exposed, questions have also been raised about the absence of his political contemporaries, Anyang Nyong’o and James Orengo, the governors of Kisumu and Siaya respectively, as well as his elder brother, Siaya senator Oburu Odinga, at his crucial hour of need.

“Why did they desert him by choosing to instead preoccupy themselves with personal political pursuits? Is there anything they know that we do not? Did they anticipate this flop by Raila? In such a tight, high-profile competition, who, other than an elder brother andagemates or political buddies, should one surround oneself with? Who else, other than the three, could openly look Raila in the eye and reprimand or advise him accordingly when he went wrong?” asks another senior ODM-allied politician from the Gusii region.

The Azimio leader’s running-mate in last year’s poll, Ms Martha Karua, insists, though, that Odinga’s mass action drive is not about redeeming his personal political career, but a move for the benefit of the ordinary Kenyan now choking under the high cost of living.

It is about electoral and economic justice for all, she stresses.

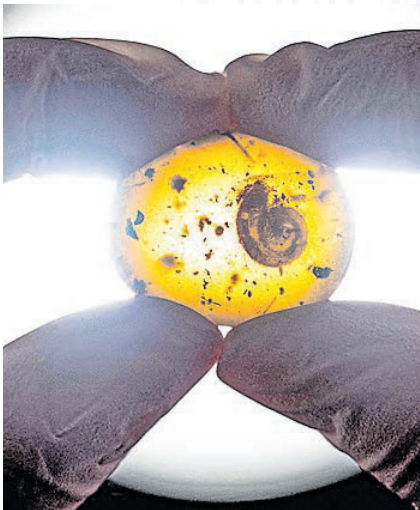
the limelight



This handout picture released by El Salvador's presidency shows police officers keeping watch during the arrival of inmates belonging to the MS-13 and 18 gangs to the country's new "Terrorist Confinement Centre" on March 15. The mega-prison is equipped with high-tech surveillance and designed to house 40,000 criminals. PHOTO | AFP



A dummy was symbolically hanged as employees of the sugar and ethanol group, Tereos, blocked access to the factory to protest against its announced closure in Escaudoeuvres, northern France, on March 15. PHOTO | AFP



A woman holds a 99 million year old fossilised snail trapped in amber named "Archaeocyclotus Brevivillosus" at the Colmar Museum of Natural History in Eastern France on March 14. PHOTO | AFP



Opposition supporters in Kisumu stage protests in the streets over the high cost of living on March 15. RUSHDIE OUDIA | NATION



A pilot demonstrates an aircraft manufactured by US-based LIFT Aircraft in front of Osaka Castle in Japan on March 14. PHOTO | AFP



Soldiers participate in a South Korea-US drill at a military training field in the border city of Paju on March 16 as part of the Freedom Shield joint military exercise. PHOTO | AFP



A protestor holds an umbrella to protect himself from teargas on March 15, the eighth day of strikes and protests across France against the government's proposed pensions overhaul. PHOTO | AFP



The
Aron

THE WINE CONNOISSEUR

Kelvin Wachera is determined to make a mark in the nation's relatively new world of sommeliers

OPEN SPACE

Why police officers should work closely with the youth

It's the yoke of corruption they put on young people that brings out the devil of such revulsion of traffic marshals

• BY MOSES OJUANG'

A ghastly accident happened in Mombasa about three weeks ago, and the victim was a traffic police officer. The accident occurred at the Buxton junction on the Mombasa-Malindi road at around 4.30pm. Video footage of how the whole incident unfolded has since gone viral.

Here's a brief background. A report filed at Makupa Police Station stated that a man was stopped at the Buxton Junction for a traffic check. He was driving a Silver Toyota Ractis.

"The driver was asked to turn off the engine to allow the traffic officer to conduct a check, but he declined, prompting the officer to open the door of the car with the intent of turning off the ignition."

Instead, the driver grabbed the officer's hand and attempted to pull him into the vehicle.

The suspect then drove off at high speed, dragging the officer's feet on the tarmac for about 200 meters before pushing him out.

"The traffic officer was run over by the rear right wheel of the vehicle, sustaining serious head injury and multiple pelvic fractures," the police report stated.

A fellow traffic police officer called for emergency help and his colleagues rushed to the victim's aid. But it was the reaction of members of the public that left many in shock. Here was an officer requiring emergency assistance to get to a hospital but all the pleas of his fellow officers fell on deaf ears.

Motorists sped off when they were beseeched to help lift the injured man to the Coast General Hospital, just a few metres away, while the largely youthful crowd of pedestrians were all busy on their phones, recording the man's agony and even commenting as they watched him bleed his life out.

After a long while, which seemed like an eternity, he was finally taken to hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

It is a dark and horrid tale that should

have made us think hard about how to react to such situations that require altruism on our part as citizens. But worse was to follow that revealed the depth of our inhumanity.

A couple of days later, videos of the dead policeman and what happened to him were doing the rounds on social media, all painting a picture of him as a bad officer, with celebration of his death in high gear.

The death of a person has never been the harbinger of proper change in society. And if there have been cases of maltreatment of young people by police officers, then this is not the end of such incidents.

It shall only end when some form of understanding develops between the two antagonists.

It is strange that fellow officers were also talking to the press on 'condition of anonymity' as they just couldn't pull themselves

up and face the cameras to say what they really felt. All the same, they were quite shocked by the public hostility towards their ilk.

Last year, another rogue driver knocked down a traffic police officer in Mombasa.

The police force must try to comprehend the depth of hatred directed towards it by Kenyans.

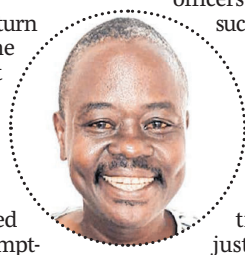
They must know what sins they commit against the people daily that would cause them to rejoice over the death of an officer. It is not easy to celebrate a fellow man's death, nor is it easy to pretend to mourn every dead person.

The police need not look far for this information and they need not pretend to investigate. It needs no charade of inquiry.

It is the yoke of corruption that is burdening the youth during these hard times that brings out the devil of such revulsion of traffic police.

Mr Ojuang' is a teacher in Mombasa. majuang@gmail.com

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



MIND SPEAK



Dennis Ndichu

Turning the economy around requires strategic investment in sectors delivering the most development dividends. The Vision 2030 project seeks to transform the country into an industrialising middle-income state. To achieve this, the government must focus on long-term adoption of prudent macroeconomic policies that will boost economic performance. We expect growth should the country promote investment and fight graft.

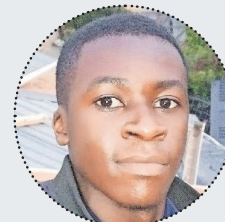
— A statistician practising in Nairobi



Rosemary Ngatia

Kenya should encourage economic diversification by focusing on investing in manufacturing, technology and renewable energy. The government should also upgrade infrastructure – roads, railway, ports – to promote commerce and investment, improve the trade climate by streamlining rules, cut back on red tape, and lower the cost of doing business. This will promote entrepreneurship and attract investment.

— A student at Zetech College in Nairobi



Ian Switsler

The best way to boost a country's Gross Domestic Product is by supporting small and medium enterprises to grow by offering financial support, providing knowledge sharing opportunities, formulating new laws to govern these enterprises and providing a better working environment. SMEs contribute to the overall economy of the country and support a majority of the population.

— An architect with Brookman Limited



Scholastica Nyawira

The government should boost agriculture, which contributes the biggest share of the gross domestic product. We should also stop importing goods that can be produced locally to protect our industries. The government should also put in place good infrastructure to ease movement of goods and services and formulate policies to reduce bureaucracy.

— An administrative assistant at NIPS college



• BY WAGA ODONGO

The American senate last week introduced a bill that would make it easier for the government to ban social media website TikTok. This comes a week after the White House gave all Federal agencies a month to delete the app from government devices. TikTok has already been booted out of India and Afghanistan, and is banned in government-issued phones in Belgium, Canada, Denmark and the European Union executive branch, as well as its parliament.

The move to ban TikTok comes after the platform moved to impose a 60-minute time limit for users below 18 as an attempt to mitigate against the addictive nature of the platform. America is considering banning the app but this has precious little to do with the actual app. TikTok owner ByteDance, like any large enough Chinese company, must by law have members of the Chinese Communist Party on its board. That is expected and should not be an issue, otherwise other Chinese-owned companies like fast fashion brand Shein would similarly be in trouble.

It is also inconceivable that TikTok would be able to collect information that would not be available through other apps on your phone in more copious quantities. The world's smartphone market is split into an American duopoly. TikTok, by its design, is all about entertainment; you probably do not follow anyone you know unlike, say, Facebook, so it is very unlikely that you will be sharing any sensitive information on the app. The worst you can do is run a scam and that happens across the web.

The only information that TikTok has more than any other is what videos on the platform you like. And between you and me, the fact that your 'For You' Page on TikTok is filled with #UsheratiKE isn't worth much, to be honest.

The fear that TikTok could somehow be used to conduct disinformation and propaganda campaigns is similarly ludicrous. TikTok has made users' attention skittish; any attempt after a while to introduce a new video outside my likes is met with an immediate disapproving swipe. The time I watched the video before dismissing is logged to reduce my discomfort. In such an environment, it is extremely difficult to spread propaganda, unless I am of the propaganda-loving variety.

The app acts as an entertainment platform. As I have said, it is very hard to go from enjoying #UsheratiKE to listening to Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung. The recommendation algorithm isn't that good.

The fear of TikTok is driven by America's fear of the loss of its place as an undisputed glob-

MY TAKE

USA IS TELLING TALL TALES ABOUT TIKTOK

America's fear that TikTok could somehow be used for disinformation and propaganda campaigns is ludicrous



al superpower. The American military is the stuff of legends. No country has ever been so strong, so rich and so present in every corner of the globe. Its military spending dwarfs the next seven countries.

Notice how America sees itself as such a pre-eminent empire that its foreign affairs minister is called Secretary of State. There is no need to put the word "foreign" in the title when dealing with non-Americans, because America considers the world as an extension of itself. Not everyone, though, agrees that only one State's affairs matter.

It was long thought that the US had unrivalled industrial capacity, but we know that the steel mills of Pittsburgh have long shuttered. Toyota has long outsold GM cars, Airbus outsells Boeing and semiconductor manufacturing long left on a slow boat to China. During the Covid pandemic, it was a struggle to get protective equipment because China makes everything.

Its one shining gem was its military industry. This idea has been tested by Ukraine. America couldn't supply Ukraine with enough shells to fight off the Russians. This is after several claims were made that the Russian army was itself a shell of itself. Javelins couldn't be hurled at Ukraine fast enough and it ran out of Stingers trying to stock Kyiv.

The US had to rouse Germany from its vow of non-violence to send Leopard tanks to

Ukraine because they didn't have enough M1 Abrams tanks to go around.

American allies now know that as strong as the dollar is, the country no longer has the steely backbone to furnish a bruising conflict against an equally industrialised enemy.

It's not hard to figure out who would win an ordinance war fought in the Pacific over disputed territory like, say, Taiwan.

America's only saving grace was their technology industry. The world's most valuable companies are American, forged in the white heat of a competitive capitalistic technology market and nothing could beat them. Except TikTok did. They built a better mouse trap and built it so well that the company is now making moves to make its product less addictive.

And then a Chinese balloon showed up over Alaska which Americans claimed was spying on military installations. It seemed almost like a challenge, an upstart challenging the one and only State, a dare just begging for an overreaction. America can hear China running up behind her and knows that she probably doesn't have the legs to maintain her lead.

In the struggle for the 21st century between the US and China, I wouldn't have expected that a dancing app liked by teenage girls would be ground zero. TikTok is only collateral damage in this competition.

*Mr Odongo is a Software Engineer
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UNIQUE CAREER PATH

Kelvin Wachera has worked his way up and is determined to make a mark in Kenya's relatively new world of sommeliers

• BY EDDY ASHIOYA

His ascent has not been swift, not the typical magic carpet ride, but a steady locomotive trip that is only just gathering momentum. Just when you think it's time to embark from the Kelvin Wachera train, you end up staying for another stop.

A few things about Kelvin Wachera, then: he is a self-taught sommelier, in other words, some sort of wine Jedi. He could have, but didn't, go to university. He can no longer flirt with the allure of alcohol; it almost sunk him into depression. Oh, wait, he has sunk into depression. He can't stand laxity. And Wachera has never been the type of man who was defined by what he couldn't do.

Which is why, at 17, — “it was a month before my 18th birthday” — he insists, he plunged into learning the art of wine. Thirteen years later, he could hardly be happier, having just recently hosted the Washoku & Sake tasting event to celebrate 60 years of Japanese and Kenyan relations that was attended by the Ambassador of Japan to Kenya, Okaniwa Ken.

Wine is bottled poetry, I think. He hates this particular question, which is precisely why I ask it: how does one know good wine? “Well, what does good mean to you? Taste is subjective and you have to understand your palate. Nonetheless, in regards to taste and competitive wine, the finish is important, crucial even.”

Wachera is the unlikely of everyman. It is, of course, supposed to be essential to his influence that he is not a giant, that he is inspirational because he is relatable. Think of the greatest wine sommeliers — you probably don't know any — but you talk to Wachera for a few minutes and you want to become one. There is no doubt he loves his job. Nothing about him feels like affectation.

THE WINE WIZARD



Kelvin Wachera samples red wine at The Market Cellar on March 14. FRANCIS NDERITU | NATION

With his boy-band looks and impish charm, he fashions the air of a born outsider who has willed himself into the very centre of things. We are at The Market Cellar, surrounded by possibly hundreds, maybe even thousands of wine bottles, each begging to be opened, or sampled, or both, here at Rhapta Square, West-of-Uhuru-Highway, where the city switches from seedy Nairobi to metropolitan NBO.

Sommeliers have only just recently begun making their mark in Kenya. How did he do it? “Traditionally you have to go to wine school and get certified. I took pretty much a different route — the apprentice path, mostly self-taught. It has been passion-driven.” He credits a “certain gentleman called Khalil Meghji” as his mentor. “He taught me the wine business and opened my eyes to the opportunities.”

He says the major highlight in his 12-year career so far has been sommelier-ing at Cottar's Safaris in the Maasai Mara, the top-shelf echelon of luxury safari. Cottar's Safaris has been in existence for over 100 years.

Featuring Mr Cottar himself for wine tasting was his chef's kiss. I prod for more names. “They span across government and business.” Journalism is an evidence-based business. So who? “Senior Counsel Phillip Murgor and former Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Najib Balala” who, he says, doesn't take alcohol but out of courtesy allowed himself to be served.

Was this his ultimate dream — Wachera's not Balala's? “Well for someone who hasn't gone to university, to see where I am at today, I can only say is God's blessing. There is room for more, because I do not like being comfortable.”

As a writer, I read a lot. It's the only way I can keep my mind fresh and steal new ideas. That said, as a sommelier, does he do a lot of drinking then? He laughs. “My line of work needs a lot of discipline. There is a fine line between being a sommelier and alcoholism. That is why I run an initiative, The Elite Chapman, which I started late last year. It advocates responsible drinking, how to present yourself during networking events, and how to present yourself as a sommelier.”

He who comes to equity must come with clean hands. What inspired Elite Chapman? “Depression. There was a moment in my life I turned to alcohol as an es-



Kelvin Wachera at The Market Cellar, a wine shop in Nairobi, on March 14. FRANCIS NDERITU | NATION

cape. As much as you like what you do, this can also be the end of you. Alcohol has ruined many men.”

He soon found out that the bottom of the bottle is always dry. Depression yanked out its tentacles and reeled him in. What’s depression like? Like urine, yellow, washed out, exhausted. He struggled with it, and for him, with access to alcohol, he was only ever a few shots away from sinking into the abyss.

How did he make it out? “I am very spiritual. It was at my lowest that I decided to seek God. This is now a cliché thing to say, but that is when I realised that society is structured for men not to be vulnerable. We have to be strong all the time, and that’s why many men break down from the inside and their biggest safe haven becomes alcohol, just to numb the pain. It’s not as easy as I am making it out to be, but where there is a will there is a way.”

He joined a self-help group, which supported him through the journey. Now, he knows that alcohol, though a wonderful servant, maketh a terrible master.

Wachera confesses that fatherhood has kept him grounded. He now lives for something bigger than himself, measuring twice and cutting once. “A lot of professionals in the industry are ruined, and for that reason I rue alcohol

THE ABC OF SOMMELIERS

Sommelier: This is commonly understood as a certified wine professional. The title is awarded by the Court of Master Sommeliers, a recognised educational body that awards all sommelier certifications.

Contrary to popular belief, a wine sommelier’s job involves a lot more than just sniffing wine and tasting grapes. In reality, they are also expected to sell wine in the restaurant.

There are three categories in the sommelier business: Sommelier level, the Advanced Sommelier (for you to qualify, an applicant must be a certified Sommelier, have a minimum of two years of restaurant service experience) and Master Sommelier (the highest level that earns a candidate a Master Sommelier Diploma from the Court of Master Sommeliers.)

Since the inception of the Court of Master Sommeliers in 1977, less than 300 people have been awarded the Master Sommelier Diploma. The current list sits at 269. A labelled red pin is awarded to each graduate.

“Alcohol in Kenya is what people do for fun. For him it is work. What does he do for fun? “I live my life based on routine. I realised if you have a routine it becomes a habit. I don’t have days for fun; my fun has to be part of myself”

What has wine taught him about himself? “You can learn anything in this world if you put the time and dedication into it.”

He tells me when it comes to wines, Kenyans move with the wave. There is a time they were into champagne; now it’s Prosecco, Italian sparkling wine. We are status people; we want to be with the ‘it crowd.

“My biggest challenge has been getting paid my worth. People do

not understand the time, knowledge and input you bring to the table. They want to negotiate to suit their budget, and not the kind of work a sommelier does. Globally, a sommelier is a guru, a master of his craft. Here in Kenya, it is just, you know, whatever. But until you accept what you are worth and believe you are worth it, then you will not get paid what you deserve – and demand.”

His advice, then? Package yourself. Different strokes for different folks. When it comes to ambition, he has paid his dues. And he is still paying.

“I am in competition with myself. I don’t want to be the same person in the previous tasting.

This year I am getting my wine certification.”

At 30 years old, life has been peaches and lemons. But he is not complaining. “I started as a sales rep, and here I am, doors opening. Plus, I am also a private sommelier for hire.”

But all this comes with sacrifices, especially time with family. I have had to draw the line and take care of Kelvin first.” It’s easy to crucify yourself, he says, but remember, falling and rising are part of life. Take care of yourself first.

Success, he says, is seeing his family happy. Running his own outfit has taught him that its success depends on the founder. “Self-discipline is a vital ingredient. The glamour masks the grit, and it takes time for the business to establish and for you to master your craft. You have to commit yourself to the craft.”

He leaves the future to God. “Only He knows where I will be.” God is important to him, so what does he think God says about Him? “I guess he says good things if I am sat in a cellar serving wine.”

I tell him, that may be true. There is a reason Jesus’s first miracle was turning water into wine at Cana of Galilee. Methinks wine is God’s favourite drink. Therefore, through deductive reasoning, that makes Wachera one of God’s favourite sommeliers.

eddieashioya@gmail.com

TEACHING AND TECHNOLOGY

TEACHER WHO BUILT AN APP

Gladys Kimani's App, Class Teacher Network, allows parents and teachers to communicate and keep tabs on learners' welfare in real time

• BY NDUGU ABISAI

Gladys Nelly Kimani wanted to be a lawyer while growing up, to appear before judges wearing wigs, bibs and gowns like she'd seen on TV, and to win cases. But her parents had other ideas. Both teachers, they thought law would interfere with her morals and belief system, which they placed above everything else. And so she joined Kenyatta University to study for a bachelor's degree in education.

Most teachers in training will take a combination of two subjects, but being an astute believer of thriving where you're planted, Gladys took English-Literature, History and Religious Education, the same subject combinations she would have needed had she studied law.

An obsessively organised person, Gladys found teaching in public schools chaotic. She was particularly concerned about lack of proper channels for parents and teachers to communicate with each other about the learners.

In 2018, she came up with the idea of building an application that would create an efficient mode of communication about a learner's all-round wellbeing. "Most schools rely on bulk SMS to reach out to parents.



The founder of Class Teacher Networks App and education entrepreneur, Gladys Nelly, in Nairobi on March 7.
WILFRED NYANGARESII | NATION

The information shared on these messages is mostly about academic performance and event dates, say parent's meetings or closing and opening days. But what happens when you need to know if your child is attending class? The general assumption is that children take part in all required school activities under the watch of a teacher. But most public schools have between 50-60 learners, so how humanly possible is it for a teacher to keep watch and observe the learners individually considering they may only have just a lesson a day with them?" Gladys asks.

Class Teacher Network, a subscription-based application that has teacher, parent and learner interfaces, was born out of this need and Gladys' desire to see things done more efficiently. Efficiency, she says, is technology's best promise.

But first, to fully equip herself and understand the chaos better, she went back to Kenyatta University for a master's degree in the Sociology of Education and Policy Studies to help her understand better the world she was getting into – ed-tech entrepreneurship.

There was one challenge, though: money. "The project was capital-intensive. To start us off, we needed about KSh2 million. This was when two million was still two million," she says, giggling. "I talked to family and friends, bootstrapped here and there, scraped through my bank accounts and took a bank loan to set this ball rolling." It was an act of courage and defiance. Courage because she didn't have any technological knowledge of what it takes to build applications; defiance because she was roughing the waters, introducing order where chaos reigned.

Class Teacher Network has reached more than 5,000 teachers and parents this far. In 2020, inspired by the long

school breaks occasioned by the pandemic, they remodelled it to include an interface for learners to access lessons and download notes and other reading material. This, she says, allowed her to think of posterity not just of the app, but school running as a whole.

"I receive real-time updates of my son's progress in school on the application while I go about my business. I don't have to call his class teacher or travel to school to see for myself. These constant updates are good especially for parents who are taking children to boarding schools for the first time," says Stephen Oketch, a parent in one of the schools that use the app.

Class Teacher Network is available on Google Play Store. Schools can lease the app for a period of five years with either a one-off payment or a yearly subscription.

The application allows day-to-day real time reporting of school-based activity, upload and download of photos and videos, and has a learner's health records and any ongoing treatment information. It allows teachers to upload class schedules that are accessible to parents as well. Parents can also access class attendance registers.

Gladys experienced her lowest moment at the same time as her



Class Teacher Network app is available on Google Play Store. Schools can lease the app for a period of five years.

highest. In 2019, she was declared the winner of The Best Ed-Tech Innovation Award organised by Women in Africa. She had beaten more than 2,000 women to bag the award, but when she

travelled to receive it, a small pot of trouble was simmering back home. Her boss wrote to the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), accusing her of absconding duty for personal gain.

"When I heard this, it broke my heart because I had gone to represent the country. The good thing is that the organisers had written to the TSC about my travel. That was my saving grace," says Gladys. Collecting the shards of her broken heart was easy as this level of validation meant she was doing the right thing. That same year, at the age of 32, she was declared one of Kenya's top 40 under 40 women by the *Business Daily-Africa*. This, she says, was a seal of confidence in her work.

The Women in Africa award came with a scholarship, and Gladys is now working towards her second master's degree – in Learning Design and Technology – at Georgetown University in Washington DC.

She looks forward to expanding the reach of the app to more towns in Kenya and later to other African countries. Unreliable internet connectivity is one of the challenges she faces in her expansion plans, but she is positive this will not be a problem in a few years' time. No longer teaching, Gladys spends all her time on consultancy and running her start-up, with a team of ten people.

Would she have developed this app if she had joined the legal profession? "No, I wouldn't have. Teaching and education are a perfect fit for me," she concludes.

The **FLIP** SIDE
With John Mwangi Nyagah

WOMAN POWER



SOUTH AFRICAN GRAMMY AWARD WINNING SINGER AND SONGWRITER NOMCEBO ZIKODE WAS RECENTLY AWARDED THE TOP ENTERTAINER AWARD BY FORBES WOMEN AFRICA. THE 'JERUSALEMA' HITMAKER PRAISED GOD FOR PUTTING HER ON TOP ONCE MORE AND SAID SHE COULD NOT BELIEVE HOW HER LIFE HAD CHANGED FROM JUST THREE YEARS AGO.

SHE SHARED A SERIES OF PICTURES FROM THE RED CARPET EVENT HELD FOR THE CEREMONY AND WROTE, "GOD IS SHOWING OFF ONCE AGAIN; IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME I'D BE HERE 3 YEARS AGO, I WOULD'VE LAUGHED IN THEIR FACE, BUT HERE WE ARE!

"I WAS AWARDED THE TOP ENTERTAINER AWARD BY FORBES WOMEN AFRICA TO TOP OFF AN AMAZING DAY SPENT WITH PHENOMENAL, SUCCESSFUL WOMEN," ZIKODE ADDED



STAR OF THE WEEK

SPANISH GOLFER JORGE CAMPILLO LAST WEEK BAGGED HIS THIRD CAREER DP WORLD TOUR WIN IN THE MAGICAL KENYA OPEN. IN WINNING THE COVETED TITLE AND THE RED JACKET, THE SPANIARD POCKETED KSH 43 MILLION AND ALSO MOVED TO 8TH PLACE IN THE DP WORLD TOUR STANDINGS BEHIND LEADER VICTOR PEREZ FROM FRANCE AND RORY MCILROY. HE ALSO RECEIVED THE ELEGANT RHINO TROPHY FROM PRIME CABINET SECRETARY MUSALIA MUDAVALI.

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opinion

MILKING THE FARMER

J. Nyagah

Nation Media Group ePaper Copy

■ Homosexuality is rampant and fashionable in many entertainment joints along Thika Superhighway

Justice for Jeff: Get to the bottom of the affair

The furore that greeted the death of a 23-year-old aspiring interior decorator on both social and mainstream media was unprecedented. It has been a roller-coaster of raw emotions, more so because the circumstances that led to the young man's death have not officially been established, yet everyone has an opinion on the matter, however ill-informed. For obvious reasons, the most common response has been a pervasive communal outrage at the waste of it all.

There has been public anger on the way the issue was handled, some even suggesting, albeit without evidence, a possible cover-up. Right now, it would be unfair to second-guess the findings of the detectives detailed to dig up the truth. They should be given a chance to piece together the evidence.

It is not enough for twerps and bloggers to prosecute a case which has not even been taken to court, establish the guilt of suspects and, figuratively speaking, hang them.

To get "justice for Jeff", the best thing to do is to trust the police to get to the bottom of the affair, while acknowledging the monumental hypocrisy permeating society.

Some people are shouting themselves hoarse in loud denunciation of an evolving lifestyle they do not understand, while others who are more aware are content to dish out knowing smirks, wondering quietly what the fuss is all about since it goes on all the time anyway.

This line of thinking was prompted by a series of fiery tweets posted by a few popular influencers who dared to go where angels fears to tread and dedicatedly brought this sordid issue to light.



MAGISHA
NGWIRI

They have been persistent in saying that Jeff Mwathi was brutalised, killed and then hurriedly buried to hide the evidence. The debate that such speculations aroused has come as a revelation to many.

It turns out that same-sex liaisons are thriving deep in the closet, yet society has chosen not to see a thing.

The ladies argue that one of the reasons many marriages are failing with such regularity is that too many men are hiding in fake wedlock and then indulging their true desires covertly, away from the matrimonial bed.

What is distressing women even more is that procreation is a biological function that requires the union of males and female. If too many men take a route that cannot produce offspring, where will the next generation come from?

They cannot be faulted for worrying, as the preservation of the tribe is a fundamental maternal issue.

There is a huge polarisation of views between those who believe that gayism is an unforgivable sin while others conclude that as long as they are not personally touched by

it, then it is of no concern to them. This live-and-let-live brigade is a lot less aggressive than those who believe in the biblical proscription that men should not love their fellow men literally.

Kenya is a deeply conservative society and stark differences in sexual orientation are still very difficult to accept.

The stigma associated with unorthodox sexual behaviour cannot allow them to behave in any other way.

It is said that homosexuality has become fashionable in many entertainment joints along Thika Superhighway and a few estates in the city.

Those who don't dwell near the hotspots would never know that such behaviour has been normalised, nor would they know that among some popular entertainers in those clubs, it has become a cult thing, especially with the groupies that shadow them everywhere.

To add to the litany of woes, some criminals have taken to drugging young people and then raping them. There is no end to depravity in this world.

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opinion

■ Raila will dismiss those abandoning him as sellouts crossing over for 30 pieces of silver

Matiang’i’s craven capitulation shows Ruto is a genius



MACHARIA
GAITHO

If the manner in which former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang’i has apparently been neutered is anything to go by, President William Ruto is a master of the game.

As the most powerful CS and de-facto Prime Minister in President Uhuru Kenyatta’s government, Matiang’i bestrode the land like a colossus. In many ways, he became the face and voice of overt attempts to contain, isolate and humiliate then-Deputy President Ruto.

With change of regime, Matiang’i was immediately in the cross-hairs, but it was expected that a man who exuded so much bravado and self-confidence when wielding untrammelled power would easily hold his own even from the opposition corner.

Instead, when push came to shove, what has been put on display is not just a tactical retreat, but craven capitulation and humiliating surrender, if the narratives spun by his foes are to be any guide.

A WhatsApp message in a community group reportedly posted by House Majority Whip Sylvanus Osore puts it very graphically. The MP, who is a key figure in Ruto’s constellation within the Kisii region, was describing how Matiang’i had reached out to him. He depicted a man thoroughly beaten, “very remorseful, looked weak and subdued and clearly sounded like one who needs HELP”. Osore detailed how a humbled Matiang’i readily accepted all suggestions he offered, including shunning opposition leader Raila Odinga’s protest rallies, and reaching out to Ruto and any others whose paths he may have crossed to apologise and beg forgiveness.

If the account is accurate, then Matiang’i may well have been a paper tiger, but it is also illustrative of the screws that Ruto may be turning to against all potential threats.

And in this case it might not be so much about neutralising — whose real political influence has never been tested outside the power he exercised under Uhuru — but about denying Odinga an ally with likely potential to mobilise the Kisii community into backing the Azimio coalition protest rallies.

Indeed, Ruto has been doing everything he can to isolate the opposition titan, luring many of his key supporters to break ranks and disown the ongoing protest rallies.

No one can doubt that he has made impressive gains, encroaching deep into Raila’s strongholds in western and coast regions. And beyond that he has even stolen into the Nyanza bastions, where in the past crossing Raila — and previous to that his father, Oginga Odinga — was a guaranteed kiss of death for any politician. That many serving MPs are now willing to take the risk and throw in their lot with Ruto is testament to his political skills.

Of course Raila will dismiss those abandoning him as sell-outs crossing over for 30 pieces of silver, but whether it is by bribery, coercion, blackmail or simple persuasion, the fact is that Ruto is hitting him where it hurts.

And what we are seeing is that when it comes to the basic of Kenyan politics, which is essentially about securing loyalty by any means necessary, Ruto is on top of his game. The ethics and morality of it all aside, he is proving himself a worthy successor to not just former President Daniel arap Moi in the dark arts of buying and manipulating people, but also Raila himself when it comes to political strategy and mobilisation.



A WhatsApp message in a community group reportedly posted by House Majority Whip Sylvanus Osore puts it very graphically. The MP, who is a key figure in Ruto’s constellation within the Kisii region, was describing how Matiang’i had reached out to him. He depicted a man thoroughly beaten, “very remorseful, looked weak and subdued and clearly sounded like one who needs HELP”. Osore detailed how a humbled Matiang’i readily accepted all suggestions he offered, including shunning opposition leader Raila Odinga’s protest rallies and reaching out to Ruto and any others whose paths he may have crossed to apologise and beg forgiveness.

The amazing thing is that Ruto is demonstrating his political dexterity at a point when he should be at his most vulnerable over very apparent failures in the area of his promises to mend a broken economy.

No one, of course, expected quick fixes and all realistic indications were that things would get worse before they got better. However, apart from the tired nonsense of blaming the former government, in which he served as Deputy President for ten years, no justification can be offered for the economy sliding into precipitous free fall. Mastery of the political arena will ultimately stand for nothing if the country crashes under the weight of an increasing debt burden, falling industrial and agricultural production, a collapsing shilling and growing unemployment.

It does not help matters that there is growing public perception that official corruption on an industrial scale is set for entrenchment under the Ruto presidency, especially with Cabinet and other strategic offices dominated by appointees with a verified reputation for graft, sleaze and outright thievery.

It is also disturbing that many of the innovative programmes launched by the government under the guise of crushing so-called business cartels, easing the burden of oil imports, tackling food deficits and lowering consumer prices have within them schemes to hit political rivals while also promoting a crop of buccaneers to profit handsomely in their roles as intermediaries. Many of these schemes are being driven in the most opaque manner, and in total disregard of and contempt for the transparency and openness demanded in stewardship of public funds.

Some of them are being rushed through as political projects rather than economic revival programmes. Ruto will be hailed if he succeeds in lowering the cost of fuel and food, but he will also be badly exposed at some point in the future if it turns out that public funds were pilfered by a select few merchants who claim proximity to the levers of power.

In the fullness of time, Ruto might find that it is one thing to successfully crush and neutralise political opponents, but quite another to build a legacy as a leader who left Kenya better than he found it.

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kenya lens

■ FIFA IS A TIGHTLY MANAGED, PROFIT-ORIENTED ENTERPRISE WHERE CRITICISM IS UNWELCOME

THE TROUBLE WITH FOOTBALL

Gianni Infantino, 52, a contentious figure in the football world, was handed his official second term as Fifa president via acclamation by representatives from all but a small number of Fifa's 211 national federations in Kigali, Rwanda, on March 16.
PHOTO | AFP



Controversial Fifa president Gianni Infantino has been re-elected for a third term, despite the scandals that have rocked the world football governing body. Infantino faces a probe for reportedly 'protecting' African Football Association bosses from scrutiny by governments and other stakeholders

● By DAVID KWALIMWA AND AGENCIES

Gianni Infantino was on Thursday last week handed a fresh four-year term as Fifa president amid increased scrutiny over corruption allegations levelled against him and the global governing body.

The Swiss-Italian, 52, a contentious figure in the football world, was handed his official second term via acclamation by representatives from all but a small number of Fifa's 211 national federations, who rose to applaud during the election at the Annual Congress in Rwanda's capital, Kigali.

With embattled Football Kenya Federation (FKF) president

Nick Mwendwa unable to attend the event as he battles economic crime in Nairobi, FKF was represented by Deputy President Doris Petra and Barry Otieno, the General Secretary.

The re-election "is a good thing for football. He is on a mission to make football truly global and the whole footballing world, Kenya included, is fully behind him", observed Otieno. He urged the government to learn from Rwanda's expansive sports infrastructure as Kenya prepares to bid for the hosting rights of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations.

"Rwanda has done well in terms of infrastructure development, which underpins both the quality of their leagues and their youth development agenda. I believe

that with the commitment and goodwill demonstrated by the new government, Kenya will soon overtake Rwanda in sports infrastructure development.

Fifa statutes limit a president's tenure to three terms of four years but Infantino, who incidentally ascended to power after corruption dealings swept his predecessor, Josep 'Sepp' Blatter, out of office in 2015, recently 'clarified' that his first three years in office did not count, allowing him potentially to remain in office until 2031.

"Those who love me, I know there are so many, and those who hate me, I know there are few. I love you all," he said moments after his re-election.

A former Legal officer and Gen-

eral Secretary at the Union of European Football Associations (Uefa) Infantino's fresh term at Fifa comes with a number of challenges.

Having tried and failed to switch the Fifa World Cup from a quadrennial to a biennial event amid protests from stakeholders, Infantino will oversee the increase in the number of teams competing at the 2026 Fifa World Cup in USA, Mexico and Canada from 32 to 48.

The move, he says, will offer 'fringe' footballing nations a chance to participate in the extravaganza. How the football boss navigates his term amid the probability of a criminal case, in which he is accused of "incitement to abuse of authority, violation of official secrecy and obstruction

kenya lens



A general view of the 73rd Fifa Congress in Kigali on March 16. Gianni Infantino was re-elected unopposed on a four-year term until 2027. PHOTO IAFP

of criminal action” remains to be seen. He was in January questioned by Swiss authorities over the allegation, for a second time in six months.

The prosecutors are investigating three alleged secret meetings that took place in 2016 and 2017 between Infantino and the former Swiss Attorney-General, Michael Lauber, who was in charge of investigations in connection with Fifa between 2015 and 2019, and who resigned in 2020 after he was implicated in the scandal. Infantino has always protested his innocence since the criminal case against him was initiated.

It has been alleged that during the secret meetings, Infantino was seeking information on investigations into Fifa and its former executives, potentially with the intention to influence the course of those investigations. This as Infantino and Fifa face scrutiny for reportedly ‘protecting’ African Football Association bosses from scrutiny by governments and other stakeholders.

Infantino confirmed Fifa’s income hit record levels in the last cycle from 2019-22, but promised to substantially raise this again on the back of expanded men’s and women’s World Cup tournaments and the introduction of a 32-team Club World Cup. “Revenues rose to a record \$7.5 billion (to 2022) in a period that was hit by Covid-19. When I arrived, Fifa reserves stood at around \$1 billion; today they are at almost \$4 billion,” Infantino said.

“We promise new record revenues for the next cycle of \$11 billion, and the new Club World Cup is not included in that figure, so it

could increase by a couple of billion (more).”

To the outside world, Fifa likes to sell itself as a non-profit, democratic organisation. In reality, however, it is a tightly managed, profit-oriented football business enterprise in which criticism is unwelcome.

Infantino has been at the helm of Fifa since 2016, appointed after a major corruption scandal that doomed his predecessor, Blatter. He had promised a “new era” where football would once again take centre-stage. Less commerce, more transparency.

The opposite has turned out to be the case. Unpopular investigators from his own ranks were removed. Fifa’s ethics regulations, adopted in 2018, no longer even include the term “corruption”. Instead, Fifa introduced statutes of limitations for ethics violations and deterred potential whistleblowers, who now could face fines or suspensions.

Since then, Infantino has little to fear from his own ranks. This is despite the fact that the Swiss judiciary is still breathing down his neck — because of, among other things, secret meetings with the former Swiss prosecutor investigating Fifa at the time. Infantino has denied all the accusations.

Most Fifa members don’t seem to care about any of this. The main thing is that the money is still rolling in, which Infantino is doing without a doubt. What’s more is that he regularly lures members with the prospect of even more money, such as his plan to hold future World Cups every two years. The idea has been shelved after fierce op-

position from Europe and South America.

Infantino will surely come up with another profitable plan after his reelection. That’s how Fifa still works: if pockets are full, the right man is in charge. Football is only a means to that end.

Infantino was born in 1970 in the Swiss town of Brig into a poor family of Italian immigrants. At school he played football, but by the age of 10 he decided his talents lay elsewhere and started organising tournaments between children from different countries.

This, he says in a short film about him produced for Qatar Airways, taught him about the power of football to bring people together. He trained as a lawyer and became part of the cadre of civil servants that Switzerland has long produced to fill the corridors of Fifa, the International Olympic Committee and other major sporting bodies domiciled there.

He joined Uefa, the governing body of European football, in 2000, rising to become its secretary-general in 2009. In 2015, the world of football was rocked by an FBI investigation which led to the indictment of several Fifa executives, with US prosecutors accusing the organisation of corruption and criminality. Sepp Blatter, the long-serving Fifa president (who is also Swiss), would later resign.

Following Blatter’s downfall, Uefa chief Michel Platini was Europe’s candidate to replace him. But then revelations emerged of payments between the two men (the pair were acquitted of fraud in July). Searching for a respect-

able alternative, Uefa’s decision makers put Infantino forward. After being elected president of Fifa in 2016, he promised to tackle the organisation’s rotten culture, and to give more cash to member federations. On both counts, he can claim to have delivered. Fifa’s governance was overhauled, as was the bidding process for future World Cups.

For many smaller members, who depend on Fifa’s money, Infantino’s tenure has been a boon. But critics say the old system of patronage has simply evolved rather than gone away. “He’s a gambler,” says one former associate. “He’s very aggressive in pushing new ideas. But he lacks critical voices around him. He brings in people who are loyal to him.”

The Qatar World Cup was a public relations slog for the world governing body, but Infantino’s defenders point out that it’s Fifa’s only real source of revenue, while engagement with undemocratic regimes is an unavoidable part of global sport. “There are elements of the president’s role that take him away from the pitch,” says former Arsenal manager Arsène Wenger, who is now Fifa’s chief of global football development.

“But fundamentally he is a real football fan.” Some who have worked with Infantino describe a demanding personality. Where his predecessor would deploy old-fashioned charm, the incumbent’s only currency is hard work. Blatter had a bed in a room attached to his office so he could take naps; Infantino replaced it with exercise machines. Blatter described his successor in 2020 as a “megalomaniac” on a mission to turn football into a “huge money machine”. “Nowadays we want a headline — everyone is either a hero or a villain,” says a former colleague. “The reality is sometimes in the middle”.

Meanwhile, Rwanda is banking on growing its tourism by positioning itself as Africa’s sports hub. The country eyes raising US\$800 million in sports tourism by next year. Besides the 2023 Fifa Congress, the country hosted the FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tours for both men and women in July 2021 and the Basketball Africa League in May of the same year. It was also the third African country to host the Ironman 70.3 Triathlon, attracting nearly 2,000 athletes from 20 countries.

SCIENCE & TECH

UK scientists track iceberg, big as London

British scientists are tracking two of the world's biggest icebergs as they drift towards areas where they could affect shipping, fishing and wildlife. These city-sized frozen blocks, which have broken away from Antarctica, can take decades to melt and wither away.

A group of researchers photographed one named A81 as they were flying off the UK's Halley base for the season. This berg is as large as Greater London.

Another team sailed around A76a, an even bigger one the size of Cornwall. This behemoth is not just similar to the English county in size, at over 3,000 sq km, but also in shape: it's long and thin. Some have likened its appearance to a giant ironing board. Prof Geraint Tarling was on board the Royal Research Ship Discovery, which took the opportunity to inspect the berg as it drifted out of Antarctica's Weddell Sea into the South Atlantic.

"It was directly in our path as we sailed home so we took 24 hours out to go around it," the biological oceanographer told *BBC News*.

"We got in quite close in some places, and had a really good view of it. We collected water from around the berg using special non-contaminated pipes under the ship, so we've got lots of samples to study." The British Antarctic Survey scientist said the huge flat-topped, or tabular, icebergs had a considerable influence on their environment, both disruptive and productive.

As they melt, they put prodigious volumes of fresh water into the sea, which can make it hard for some organisms to function. On the other hand, the melt also releases the mineral dust that was incorporated into the ice when it was part of a glacier scraping along the rockbed of Antarctica. This dust is a source of nutrients that will spur life in the open ocean.

A76a originated far to the south of its present position, having calved from the Filchner-Ronne Ice Shelf in May 2021.

MICROSOFT UTILISING OPENAI'S GPT-4 ON BING SEARCH ENGINE



ChatGPT, the advanced language model developed by OpenAI, is capable of generating natural and informative text responses in real time.

• WASHINGTON

Microsoft will integrate OpenAI's ChatGPT technology into its search engine, Bing. The new ChatGPT-powered Bing has now been confirmed to run on OpenAI's latest multimodal large language model, GPT-4 (Generative Pre-trained Transformer 4), which is the fourth such model created by OpenAI in the GPT series. OpenAI's generative text chatbot, which generates comprehensive and conversational answers to user queries, initially ran on a Natural Language Processing (NLP)-based autoregressive language model called GPT-3, a neural network trained using internet data of around 175 billion parameters to generate any type of text. OpenAI, however, has upgraded its technology to GPT-4, which is a hybrid training system trained with around 100 trillion parameters, making it more efficient and accurate.

The latest GPT-4 model is

claimed by the company to be "more creative and collaborative than ever before". Microsoft has now confirmed that its search engine, Bing, will now be powered by OpenAI's GPT-4 model, allowing users to make more efficient searches. The new AI-powered Bing uses ChatGPT's latest technology, GPT-4. However, several modifications have been made to the model to make it suitable for search and public use.

Users who wish to try out the new GPT-4 experience on Bing may do so by signing up for its preview. However, on preview mode, when asked what version of GPT it is currently utilising, Bing AI answered that "the new Bing AI uses ChatGPT version 3.5, but this variant is more capable, accurate, and capable than the version of ChatGPT that you can use in OpenAI". It remains to be seen whether this answer will change in the near future.

Ever since its free-for-all public prototype launch on November 30, 2022, ChatGPT and AI have

been the biggest talking point in the tech world. OpenAI just announced its latest product, GPT-4, currently being deployed by its ChatGPT chatbot. The latest multimodal large language model not only utilises much vaster data parameters of 100 trillion compared to GPT-3's 175 billion, but also brings in improved inputting methods, algorithms, parameterisation, and alignment.

Microsoft's multi-million-dollar investment into ChatGPT's parent company, OpenAI, is being seen as a bid to overtake Alphabet's Google as the most preferred search engine in the world. Much of this race towards search engine domination is touted to be led by AI-powered generative models like GPT, innovation on the server side of these models, and its applications. Last month, Google announced its own AI-powered chatbot called Bard to rival ChatGPT. Several other players in the industry are rushing to develop their own tools as the AI race heats up.

africa lens

■ WAR ON TERRORISM



Security forces patrol outside a building which was attacked by suspected Al Shabaab militants in Mogadishu on February 21. Local politicians are now raising fresh concerns over “armed strangers” who are “freely entering” the nation outside the United Nations or African Union structured protocol.

‘ARMED STRANGERS’ IN SOMALIA

The joining of non-ATMIS forces in the fight against al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa has elicited mixed reactions from local politicians and policy experts

● OSCAR OBONYO

Thirty-nine days after President William Ruto joined other leaders in the region in Mogadishu, Somalia, for a high-profile security meeting, non-ATMIS (African Transitional Mission in Somalia) forces have started streaming into Somalia in a move that has elicited mixed reaction.

Although primarily meant to help the host nation in vanquishing the al-Shabaab militia group, local politicians are now raising fresh concerns over “armed strangers” who are “freely entering” the Horn of Africa nation outside the structured protocols of the United Nations or African Union. The political class is particularly apprehensive, with one Federal Member of Parliament, Omar Hishi, publicly criticising the influx of non-ATMIS forces into the country. The Jubaland State legislator is interrogating the mandate and authority of the forces.

Pointing out the risks of bringing on board “armed strangers” whose code of conduct and budgetary sources he considers opaque, the MP is uncomfortable with the whole arrangement. And he is not alone, at least going by the tweets and other posts by Somali politicians flying around social media platforms.

Mogadishu-based human rights activist Abdishakur Ahmed concurs: “As much as Somalia is grateful for external help so far given towards controlling the al-Shabaab menace, we disapprove of the manner in which the insecurity situation is being used as an excuse for free entry of armed strangers.”

The vocal activist claims that the country is currently suffocating under a host of foreign countries, international agencies and entities “offering or purporting to offer one service or the other” to the people of Somalia. While appreciating help, Abdishakur advocates structured and streamlined assistance. Already, a

huge contingent of Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) soldiers entered Somalia on Monday, although it is not part of the ATMIS force. Details of funding, working or co-ordination agreements between the AU mission and the separate forces of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and the host country remain scanty.

ENDF’s entry into Somalia follows last month’s Mogadishu Summit attended by Ruto and his counterparts, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Ismail Omer Guelleh of the Federal Governments of Somalia and Djibouti respectively, as well Ethiopia’s Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali. President Mohamud asked his counterparts to deploy more troops to his country in order to boost the fight against terrorism. The push is aimed at liberating the entire Somalia from al-Shabaab to facilitate the drawdown of ATMIS troops and the gradual

...Continued on Page 26

africa lens

Continued from Page 25

handover of security responsibilities to the Somali military forces.

Kenya has opted to adopt a relatively proactive but cautious approach to the joint military offensive, with Defence Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale stating that the country will not be scaling up the number of troops on Somali soil.

Instead, he explained to *The Weekly Review*, Kenya will extend help from its side of the border by tightening security along the border with Somalia to ensure that “wrong and dangerous elements”, including members of the al-Shabaab militia group, do not cross over to Kenya and that they are dealt with accordingly. Kenya, according to Duale, is keen on keeping to its lane by adhering to Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides, in part, that member states respect the territorial integrity and political independence of other states. The CS observes that operations of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) will be confined to Kenyan territory and the farthest they might go will be 20 kilometres into Somalia “in pursuit of terror gangs or to repulse other armed invaders”.

While the CS remains cagey about Kenya's reluctance to fully deploy troops to Somalia as initially agreed in Mogadishu, the Director of the HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies, Dr Hassan Khannenje, attributes this stance to the “shaky status” of the joint military offensive. Noting that participating countries may initially have to foot their operational costs, Dr Khannenje believes that once the regional armies are fully formalised and recognised, the arrangement will attract funding from the international community.

The import of Dr Khannenje's observation is that the cost aspect could be a consideration in Kenya's vigilant approach to the latest military operation in Somalia. With 3,664 troops (from an initial 4,660 who were stationed there in 2011) engaged in the country under the aegis of ATMIS, and another slightly over 1,000 troops deployed to the Democratic Republic of Congo last December, the KDF is fairly pre-occupied.

The estimated cost of operations of the troops based in the eastern DRC region is about US\$37 million (Sh4.8 billion) in the first six months, which elapse in two months' time. In Somalia, Kenya's Treasury forks out an average US\$74.5 million (Sh9.6 billion) annually, although the government gets a refund from the African Union through the Defence Ministry. Duale is separately alive to repercussions of the security operations in Somalia, which are bound to drive local communities out of the country and into the Kenyan side. Coupled with the current humanitarian situation in Somalia, the Defence CS says the security forces have the added responsibility of securing the Kenya-Somalia border.

Internal responsibilities notwithstanding, Duale insists that Kenya is committed to the joint offensive against al-Shabaab by the fron-

Cheers and jeers over ‘foreign forces’ in streets of Mogadishu



Kenya Defence Forces patrol the port city of Kismayo on November 22, 2015.

line states, a stand buttressed by President Ru-to. Speaking in Mogadishu on February 1, Ru-to said that the war against terrorism will only be won through collective effort, including disruption of the terrorists' cash flow and weapons supply chains, and sanctioning of their sponsors in the region.

The move by the three nations that share a border with Somalia has raised eyebrows amongst security pundits. They are asking, for instance, whether or not the ATMIS mandate has failed in taming the al-Shabaab threat. Dr Gerald Majany, who heads the criminology department at the Kikuyu-based Presbyterian University of East Africa, questions whether the current arrangement is steered under the UN or AU peace mission protocol.

Majany also raises queries about the legal regime through which the operation will be funded, the *ad hoc* nature of the operation and whether the offensive specifically targets militia groups in Somalia or those based in the three other countries as well: “Either way, this particular arrangement must be ratified by the relevant bodies for it to hold or enjoy political goodwill and funding from the global community.”

Reacting to some of the concerns, Abdimalik Abdullahi, who is a presidential advisor on national security issues in Somalia, maintains that all significant issues relating to the latest operation have been discussed and ironed out, including “rules of engagement, C3 (command, control and coordination) and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures)”.

According to the plan, Abdullahi says, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya were accorded a window of eight weeks, from February 1, to deploy additional troops inside Somalia. Already,

there are about 22,000 soldiers serving under the aegis of ATMIS from the Troop Contributing Countries, including the three neighbours, as well as Burundi and Uganda.

Khannenje points out that the current operation is completely outside the ATMIS framework. It is the product of a plea by the Federal Government of Somalia, which has asked for help from neighbouring countries to help safeguard some of the gains made in the war against militia groups operating in the country. And happening as it has when the mandate of ATMIS is about to come to an end next year, the timing of the joint offensive by Djibouti, Ethiopian, Kenyan and Somali forces could not have been more appropriate.

As the clock ticks towards the transition period, Khannenje observes that the military arrangement of the frontline states is a prudent move geared at sealing security loopholes upon the exit of the ATMIS forces. The Mogadishu meeting in February aimed to address this anticipated vacuum. In other words, the countries in question have an interest in securing the region, especially at a time when funding priorities have changed the world over, with the big nations now focusing more on the Ukraine-Russia war. Khannenje opines that this scenario has persuaded the Horn of Africa leaders to come up with a coordinated army to protect their territories against terrorist activities. The Mogadishu meeting was largely held to discuss how to stabilise Somalia and appeal to neighbouring counties to forge a united front in the fight against terrorism.

“The time-sensitive campaign will prevent any future infiltrating elements into the wider region,” states an official communique shared with media outlets after the summit.

global lens

■ BEIJING SAYS AUKUS ALLIES ON 'PATH OF ERROR AND DANGER' WITH SUBS PACT

CHINA FIRES WARNING TO THE US



The US, UK and Australia have unveiled details of a plan to create a new fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, aimed at countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Under the Aukus pact, Australia is to get its first nuclear-powered subs – at least three – from the US. The allies will create the new fleet using cutting-edge tech, including UK-made Rolls-Royce reactors. PHOTO IAFP

Australia will buy five American nuclear-powered submarines, then build a new model with US and British technology under an ambitious plan to bulk up Western muscle across the Asia-Pacific in the face of a rising China

● BEIJING

China has warned that Australia, Britain and the United States were treading a “path of error and danger” after they unveiled a nuclear-powered submarines deal. Australia will buy up to five US nuclear-powered submarines, then build a new model with US and British technology under an ambitious plan to bulk up Western muscle across the Asia-Pacific in the face of a rising China.

US President Joe Biden has stressed that Australia, which

joined the alliance with Washington and London known as AUKUS 18 months ago, will not be getting nuclear weapons.

However, acquiring submarines powered by nuclear reactors puts Australia in an elite club and at the forefront of US-led efforts to push back against Chinese military expansion.

Wang Wenbin, China's foreign ministry spokesman, said: “The latest joint statement from the US, UK and Australia demonstrates that the three countries, for the sake of their own geopolitical interests, completely disre-

gard the concerns of the international communities and are walking further and further down the path of error and danger.”

Wang accused the three Western allies of inciting an arms race, saying the security deal was “a typical case of Cold War mentality”.

The sale of submarines “constitutes a severe nuclear proliferation risk, and violates the aims and objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty”, Wang said at a regular news conference in Beijing.

The UN nuclear watchdog said it had to ensure there were no proliferation risks from the deal.

“Ultimately, the Agency must ensure that no proliferation risks will emanate from this project,” International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi said.

Moscow, which has sought to shore up its ties with China, also accused the West of fomenting “years of confrontation” in the Asia-Pacific region.

“The Anglo-Saxon world, with the creation of structures like AUKUS and with the advancement of NATO military infrastructure into Asia, is making a se-

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China determined to thwart Aukus alliance

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rious bet on many years of confrontation,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in televised comments.

Monday’s announcement came at an event at a naval base in San Diego, California, where Biden hosted Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

With a US Virginia-class nuclear submarine moored behind the trio’s podium, Biden said the United States had “safeguarded stability in the Indo-Pacific for decades” and that the submarine alliance would bolster “the prospect of peace for decades to come”.

Albanese said the deal represents the biggest single investment in Australia’s defence capability “in all of our history”. The submarines are expected to be equipped with long-range cruise missiles, offering a potent deterrent. The Australian government estimates the multi-decade project will cost almost \$40 billion in the first 10 years, and create an estimated 20,000 jobs.

Albanese underlined that Australia was now only the second country, after Britain, to be granted access to US naval nuclear secrets. Three conventionally armed, nuclear-powered Virginia class vessels will be sold “over the course of the 2030s”, with the “possibility of going up to five if that is needed”, said Biden’s national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

Britain and Australia will then embark on building a new model, also nuclear-powered and carrying conventional weapons, dubbed the SSN-AUKUS. This will be a British design, with US technology, and with “significant investments in all three industrial bases”, Sullivan said.

While Australia has ruled out deploying atomic weapons, its submarine plan marks a significant new stage in the confrontation with China, which has built a sophisticated naval fleet and turned artificial islands into offshore bases in the Pacific.

In the face of the Chinese challenge – and Russia’s invasion of pro-Western Ukraine – Britain is also moving to beef up its military capabilities, Sunak’s office said Monday. More than \$6 billion



US President Joe Biden (centre) speaks alongside British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (right) and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese during the AUKUS summit at Naval Base Point Loma in San Diego, California, on March 13. AUKUS is a trilateral security pact announced on September 15, 2021, for the Indo-Pacific region. PHOTO | AFP

in additional funding over the next two years will “replenish and bolster vital ammunition stocks, modernise the UK’s nuclear enterprise and fund the next phase of the AUKUS submarine programme”, Downing Street said.

Australia had previously been on track to replace its ageing fleet of diesel-powered submarines with a \$66 billion package of French vessels, also conventionally powered.

The abrupt announcement by Canberra that it was backing out of that deal and entering the AUKUS project sparked a brief but unusually furious row between all three countries and their close ally, France. Compared with the Collins-class submarines due to be retired by Australia, the Virginia-class is almost twice as long and carries 132 crew members, not 48. However, the longer-term upgrade will require a long wait.

A senior US official said the British navy should get its “state of the art” SSN-AUKUS vessels in the late 2030s and Australia only in the early 2040s. Chinese President Xi Jinping made a fiery statement last week, accusing the United States of leading a Western effort at “all-round containment, encirclement and suppression of China”. But Washington says Beijing is alarming countries across the

Asia-Pacific with its threats to invade the self-governing democracy of Taiwan. “What we’ve seen is a series of provocative steps that China has undertaken under the leadership of Xi Jinping over the last five to 10 years,” the senior US official said. “This is an attempt to defend and secure the operating system of the Indo-Pacific.”

The submarine project

The allies will work to create a new fleet using cutting-edge tech, including UK-made Rolls-Royce reactors. Beijing has strongly criticised the significant naval deal. President Biden said the deal was aimed at bolstering peace in the region and stressed the submarines would be “nuclear-powered, not nuclear-armed”.

Biden said the deal would not jeopardise Australia’s commitment to being a nuclear-free country. For Australia, it is a major upgrade to the US ally’s military capabilities. The country becomes just the second after the UK to receive Washington’s elite nuclear propulsion technology.

The submarines will be able to operate further and faster than the country’s existing diesel-engine fleet and Australia will also be able to carry out long-range strikes against enemies for the first time. Under the deal, Austral-

ian navy sailors will be sent to US and UK submarine bases from this year to learn how to use the nuclear-powered submarines.

From 2027, the US and UK will also base a small number of nuclear submarines in Perth, Western Australia, before Canberra will buy three US-model Virginia-class submarines in the early 2030s, with options to purchase two more. After that, the plan is to design and build an entirely new nuclear-powered submarine for the UK and Australian navies – a model that is being called SSN-AUKUS. This attack craft will be built in Britain and Australia to a British design, but use technology from all three countries.

President Biden said all three countries were committed to ensuring the Indo-Pacific region would remain free and open.

“Forging this new partnership, we’re showing again how democracies can deliver our own security and prosperity...not just for us but for the entire world,” he said.

He pledged \$4.6bn to expanding the US’ submarine construction capacity and improving maintenance of its nuclear-powered submarines. Australia’s PM said the plan marked the “biggest single investment in Australia’s defence capability in all of its history”.

—AFP

global lens

■ FORMER PRESIDENT ZARDARI WAS GIFTED THREE BULLETPROOF VEHICLES

● ISLAMABAD

Pakistan politicians and government officials received a treasure trove of gifts from foreign dignitaries over the past two decades, including more than 150 Rolex watches, bullet-proof BMW cars and a 21-karat gold crown, newly released records show.

The South Asian nation, home to more than 220 million, has always been economically precarious and is currently gripped by a punishing downturn which has sent the cost-of-living soaring. But records reveal a staggering list of luxury products the political and administrative elite have acquired.

Under the rules governing Islamabad's "Toshakhana" – a Persian word meaning "treasure house" – politicians can keep official gifts if they have a low worth, while they must pay a dramatically reduced fee to the government for extravagant items.

Information minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said this week that the government would introduce a new limit, meaning gifts worth more than \$300 cannot be kept by officials. The ream of paperwork reveals former military dictator Pervez Musharraf – who died last month – kept a pearl necklace worth around \$250 by paying just 750 rupees in 2006, or around \$12 according to the exchange rate at the time.

In many countries, diplomatic gifts are intended as a symbolic exchange between cultures rather than tailored presents for specific individuals.

Former President Asif Ali Zardari – the husband of ex-premier Benazir Bhutto who was slain in a suicide attack on her convoy in 2007 – was gifted three bulletproof vehicles two years after her death. The Toyota SUV and two BMWs were worth around \$1.6 million but Zardari paid the equivalent of just \$240,000 to keep them in his personal fleet.

The 21-karat gold crown, worth around \$500, was bought by former prime minister Shaukat Aziz in 2005 for around a tenth of its value. And like dozens of others on the list, former prime minister Imran Khan took the opportunity to buy a Rolex watch at a vastly reduced rate.

LOTS OF BLING AND BEAMERS

Records reveal a staggering list of luxury products the political and administrative elite have acquired in Pakistan over the past two decades



Pakistan police have given up an attempt to arrest Khan, ending a siege of his residence after violent clashes with hundreds of his supporters.

In 2018, he paid the rupee equivalent of around \$6,000 for a watch appraised at around \$32,000.

Rolex watches were also bought by an Arabic interpreter, the prime minister's personal physician and a press secretary. The Swiss-made timepieces generally hold their value and there is a healthy resale market among the super-rich. The Toshakhana records do not detail which foreign states gave the gifts between 2002 and the present.

The papers were released at the weekend amid a spiralling row over Khan, who is facing allegations that he did not declare gifts received during his time in office from 2018 to 2022, nor the profit

he made from reselling them.

Khan surged into office on a promise to reform Pakistan's deeply corrupted politics. But since being ousted he has become tangled in allegations of his own double-dealings. Pakistan ranked 140 out of 180 governments on Transparency International's 2022 corruption perceptions index. Meanwhile, Pakistan police have given up an attempt to arrest Khan, ending a siege of his residence after violent clashes with hundreds of his supporters.

AFP correspondents and witnesses near Khan's home in the plush Zaman Park suburb of Lahore said police and paramilitary rangers had retreated after abandoning a series of roadblocks

and checkpoints. "The police and rangers sent to harm Imran Khan were pushed back by the people," his official Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party tweeted, along with video of supporters celebrating outside his house.

Police had fought pitched battles with Khan's supporters throughout the night, firing fusillades of teargas and dodging rocks thrown by angry crowds.

Groups of police were seen running in disarray from the direction of the house Wednesday afternoon. Khan was ousted from office by a no-confidence vote last year, and has been snarled in dozens of legal cases as he campaigns for early elections and a return to office. Official PTI social media accounts showed video of Khan greeting dozens of people inside his garden, and jubilant supporters celebrating outside.

"The reason why this is happening is not because I broke any law. They want me in jail so that I cannot contest elections," he told AFP in an interview at his home.

"This abduction had nothing to do with rule of law. It had everything against rule of law, the law of jungle to grab me and put me in jail and keep me in jail for months, because there were so many cases, they would have just kept me in jail. "And the whole idea was to miss the elections."

Police insist they have a warrant to arrest Khan following his failure to appear before an Islamabad court on graft charges, but the former premier and his lawyers say he has been granted bail on the charge. "The PTI leader does not have protective bail for this particular case," Muhammad Taqi Jawad, spokesman for Islamabad police, told AFP.

He said the arrest warrant would stand and denied police had retreated, adding: "Our actions will strictly adhere to the law, and we are committed to fulfilling our duty." On Wednesday morning, hundreds of PTI supporters had ringed Khan's residence in the plush neighbourhood, holding off fresh attempts by police to storm the premises. Video circulating on social media — much distributed by official PTI accounts — showed several bloodied supporters and others struggling to cope with tear gas.

— AFP

OBIT

■ THE MWAKIGWENA CHOIR ENTERTAINED THE HEAD OF STATE AT HIS LAST PUBLIC FUNCTION

THE CHORALIST KENYATTA LOVED

Ondego's choir sang for the President on every visit he made to the Coast

● BY BILL ODIDI

The final note has been sung for the choirmaster who composed some of the most poignant freedom songs in pre-independence Kenya. The death of Enock Ondego at the age of 93 in Mombasa on February 26 marks the end of a dramatic life of a man whose gift for song made his choir a favourite of the country's founding President, Jomo Kenyatta.

The Mwakigwena Choir from Kwale County that entertained the President at the last public function before his death in 1978 was the brainchild of primary school teacher Ondego. The choir's place in history is secured by two songs, *Wimbo wa Historia* and *Kenya Yetu*, both composed by Ondego in the 1960s and which have been the soundtrack of national day celebrations for more than 50 years.

Born in 1930 in Maziголо, South Maragoli, Vihiga, Ondego at-

tended Chongo School and then joined Kaimosi Teacher Training College in 1947, qualifying as a P3 teacher at the age of 17. His first job was at a small school in his village in 1948 and two years later he was posted to Bumale Primary School. He was promoted to become Headmaster of Mukingi Primary in 1952, earning a princely salary of Sh44 per month.

When he heard that Tom Mboya was employing people in Nairobi at a monthly pay of Sh200 in 1954, he boarded a lorry to Kisumu and then caught the train to Nairobi. However, his plan was thwarted, though, when four missionaries from the Friends Church (Quakers) who had trailed him from the village to Ziwani, Nairobi, forced him to return home. Within just three days of his forcible return, Ondego boarded the train to Voi and on to Tanga, Tanzania, and then back to Nairobi, where he arrived in 1956 during the State of Emergency. He

joined Tom Mboya's People's Convention Party, which eventually merged with the Kenya Africa Union to form the Kenya Africa National Union (Kanu) in 1960.

Ondego was among a group sent by Mboya to open the first Mombasa of-

fice of Kanu as the branch Assistant Secretary. It was during this time that he wrote his first songs to inspire the freedom fighters but was caught up in the heated politics against secessionist groups at the Coast. When I interviewed him in 2013, he displayed scars on his chest and feet that were sustained during battles with members of the Mwambao United Front, who were violently agitating for the Ten Mile Coastal Strip to join Zanzibar just before Independence.

After 1963, he was posted to teach at Samburu Primary School in Kwale. Ondego would organise for his school choir to sing by the side of the road whenever the President passed on his way to Mombasa. The first time Kenyatta heard the choir sing he was reportedly moved to tears and, according to Ondego, the President ordered that the 62 children be provided with choir uniforms.

"The President would come to the Coast every April, August and December and my choir would always be on the highway to welcome him with songs," he said. By 1966, Ondego and his choir were regulars at presidential functions and the following year, they were invited for the first time to sing at Kenyatta's home in Gatundu. A year later, he was transferred to Mwakigwena Primary School in Kwale, where he formed a choir of boys and girls and composed his two famous songs that were recorded in 1969 by Assanands and Son Company in Mombasa. "We squeezed into a studio no bigger than a telephone booth and recorded both songs, for which we were paid Sh60," he recalled.

Despite the choir's fame, he faced opposition from parents and the community: "The only place we could rehearse was in my house and anytime we got into a bus headed for a performance, there would be people throwing strange items at us and calling us *genies*." In 1971, Ondego returned to Vihiga, where he set up another choir that won an award at the Kenya Music Festival and was selected to entertain President Kenyatta at Gatundu. "Mzee recognised me and when he asked why I didn't sing at the Coast anymore, I explained that I had returned to Western Kenya to take care of my sick mother. The President was livid: "Shut Up! *Kwani, weve ni Mungu* (do you think you are God?)." Kenyatta ordered the Provincial Commission-

er to give Ondego money to enable him travel back to the Coast. Instead, Ondego spent the money on liquor. Come the next year and again, he led the choir to victory at the festival and met the President at Gatundu, but he sneaked back to village after agreeing to return to his old job. One morning in 1973, the Chief of his location turned up at his home, handcuffed the choirmaster, bundled him in a Land Rover and drove him straight to the Provincial Commissioner's office in Kakamega and from there to Mombasa.

Ondego was posted to Kwale Primary School and together with his choir entertained the President on all his visits to the Coast. In August 1978, the choir performed for Kenyatta on two consecutive days at Gombani, Tiwi, and at Bomani in Msambweni. By Ondego's account, the President kept motioning the choir to continue singing for longer than usual, and it was while they were on the ninth song that Kenyatta collapsed and was quickly whisked away. "That was the last time I saw Mzee alive. The next day we heard that he was dead."

The legacy of the choir grew in the years after Kenyatta's death as their music was a fixture on the *Voice of Kenya* TV and radio during national days. What started as a rumour — that all members of the Mwakigwena choir had died in a road crash — became part of urban folklore. In 1998, Ondego reassembled the old choir and entered the Kenya Music Festival as the Mwakigwena Previous Singers, performing some of their famous songs. He was bemused when one judge, who claimed to have known the "deceased" composer, dismissed the choir as lacking originality.

Ondego retired from teaching in 1990 after his last posting at Ramisi Primary School. His last major public function was when he led his choir to Nairobi to perform at the 50th Independence celebrations in 2013. *Wimbo Wa Historia* was introduced to a whole new generation in 2018 when Laila Mohammed, a teenage singer from Eastleigh, Nairobi, made her version an online hit.

Ondego was unwell for the better part of the past decade and had lost his eyesight. His death closes the chapter on an eventful life, but the legacy of the songs he composed will be a reference for a tumultuous era in Kenya's history.

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Mzee Enock Ondego died in Mombasa on February 26.

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