

What the European Union needs to grasp is that the automotive industry is a complex

Electric Vehicle Market

China's electric vehicle industry is setting the pace at both the European and global levels:



China's Unstoppable Rise as the Electric Vehicle Market Leader

By: Elijah Mwangi

Hey! The future of transportation is electric, and China is playing a leading role in shaping that future. I hardly write on technology, but because this has to do with Electric Vehicles, I have taken time to grasp it well because we are living in the 'future'. In the rapidly evolving landscape of the global electric vehicle (EV) market, China stands out as a shining beacon of growth, innovation, and unrelenting commitment to sustainable transportation. As the European Union contemplates measures to curtail the rapid introduction of Chi-



Kenya's President William Ruto arrives for the 2023 Africa Climate Summit at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi. September 2023/X.

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Tyson Fury knocked down but beats Francis Ngannou on a split decision



Pro-Palestinian protest in London sees thousands call for bombing to stop

Tens of thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters have marched in London and across the UK to urge an end to Israel's attacks in Gaza. Demonstrators gathered on the streets of the capital holding flags and banners as they demanded an end to the bombing.

There have been nine arrests, some of which are being treated as suspected hate crimes. Protests also took place in Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast and other cities. It follows the recent upsurge in conflict between Hamas and Israel. Israel has expanded its strikes,

three weeks after Hamas launched a cross-border attack that killed 1,400 people and saw 229 people kidnapped as hostages. Since then, the Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza says more than 7,500 Palestinians have been killed as Israel carried out retaliatory strikes.

Over the past three weekends huge protests have taken place in major UK cities. On Saturday afternoon, crowds

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Palestinian people deserve right to Self- Determination, Ambassador Hazem Shabat says of Gaza crisis
Palestine



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Kenya To Lift Visa Requirements For All Africans

No African will need a visa to Kenya
Kenya



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Inspiration



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UK Embassy In Kenya Rebrands Vehicles With 'Nairobi Matatu' Graffiti Ahead Of Royal Visit
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Why Kenya Evokes a Profound Emotional Bond with Its Visitors

Worth Noting:

- One of the most remarkable findings was the discovery of Turkana Boy in 1984. This extraordinary find, brought to light by Kenyan paleontologist Mr. Kamoya Kimeu, in collaboration with Dr. Richard Leakey, is believed to have existed some 1.6 million years ago. This young boy, aged approximately 9 to 12 years and standing at a height of 1.6 meters, represents the most complete human-related fossil skeleton ever found.
- This discovery unequivocally positions Kenya as the cradle of humankind, opening up the possibility of hosting pilgrimages from all corners of the globe.
- The resurgence of the Lake Turkana cultural festival, following a three-year hiatus, serves as another milestone in reclaiming Kenya's status as the birthplace of humanity.



Nairobi National Park.

In Kenya, a nation renowned for its breathtaking wildlife and pristine beaches, lies an often overlooked gem – its rich culture and heritage. Despite its immense potential, this cultural tapestry remains largely untapped.

As Kenya's tourism marketing agency, we are embarking on a mission to diversify our tourism offerings, catering to the diverse needs of our visitors. Our focus on culture and heritage is particularly timely as we endeavor to reposition our country as the cradle of humankind.

It is no secret that Kenya enjoys global recognition among paleontologists as a veritable hotbed of archaeological discoveries, contributing significantly to the history of human evolution through the countless fossils unearthed within our borders.

One of the most remarkable findings was the discovery of Turkana Boy in 1984. This extraordinary find, brought to light by Kenyan paleontologist Mr. Kamoya Kimeu, in collaboration with Dr. Richard Leakey, is believed to have existed some 1.6

million years ago. This young boy, aged approximately 9 to 12 years and standing at a height of 1.6 meters, represents the most complete human-related fossil skeleton ever found.

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The resurgence of the Lake Turkana cultural festival, following a three-year hiatus, serves as another milestone in reclaiming Kenya's status as the birthplace of humanity.

The seventh edition of this three-day festival, aptly named "Tobung'u Lore," signifying "Welcome Back Home" in the Turkana language, attracted visitors from neighboring countries, including Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, as well as international tourists from the United Kingdom, the USA, and various other nations.

During the festival, our Head of State, William Samoe Ruto, emphasized that "Tobung'u Lore is not a local or national celebration but

a global celebration of culture and humanity." These words encapsulate the essence of our rich heritage.

This narrative unfolds as Kenya strives to make the dream of accessing the country visa-free a reality for as many African and international nations as possible. This move aligns with our mission to leverage the wealth of our history and diversify the tourism industry, fostering economic benefits for local communities and raising awareness of each community's historical treasures. It also positions Kenya as Africa's foremost cultural destination.

The Turkana fossils offer every global visitor an opportunity to connect with Kenya, an experience further enriched by cultural immersion that allows tourists to explore their roots and delve into the history of humanity and the discoveries made in this part of the world.

As the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), we are committed to promoting community participation by involving local ethnic communities in tourism development, ensuring that these cultural events directly benefit

these communities.

Our investment in these people-centered initiatives will undoubtedly attract more tourists. We will collaborate with both national and county governments to retain their interest in developing Kenya's tourism industry.

To further enhance cultural tourism, we will work closely with our partners and product owners to map out cultural trails showcasing our unique historical and cultural sites. These trails will guide tourists along predefined paths, exposing them to our nation's landmarks that enrich the story of Kenya and its people.

Kenya's deep human heritage and the emotional connection it fosters with tourists form an integral part of our country's tourism industry. This connection forms the bedrock of Kenya's magnetic appeal to tourists as we explore unconventional products that promote tourism in our nation.

The writer is the Chairperson of the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB).

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Walking the last mile with every child until polio is no more

By: Stella Anyangwe
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

- The ongoing End Polio Now campaign in pivotal regions is not just an initiative—it's a collective journey. As the saying goes, "It always seems impossible until it's done." My personal commitment to this cause was ignited during my time with the World Health Organization in 1996, where I aided WHO/AFRO in large-scale immunization drives against polio in Africa.
- Vaccines are our beacon of hope. With polio, our resolve must remain unyielding, ensuring every child is reached, for a single case of polio anywhere in the world is one too many. The persistence of this virus has proven its resilience, reinforcing the need to amplify both routine and supplementary immunizations until its global eradication.



Prof Stella Anyangwe is a Physician, Epidemiologist, and a Past District Governor of Rotary's D9400. She currently spearheads the End Polio Now campaign for Rotary's Region 28, overseeing seven Districts across 15 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.

While strides have been made in combating polio worldwide, it remains crucial to remember that as long as there are pockets of unvaccinated children anywhere, all children, everywhere, are potentially at risk of this paralyzing disease. Every child aged five years and below should be fully vaccinated against all vaccine-preventable childhood diseases, including polio, ensuring their robust immunity against such ailments.

Polio eradication stands as one of history's most ambi-

tious global health endeavors. Once eradicated, polio will join smallpox as only the second human disease ever to be completely eliminated.

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Vaccines are our beacon of hope. With polio, our resolve must remain unyielding, ensuring every child is reached, for a single case of polio anywhere in the world is one too many. The persistence of this virus has proven its resilience, reinforcing the need to amplify both routine and supplementary immunizations until its global eradication. Even after 17 fulfilling years at WHO, my passion only intensified, finding solidarity and support in a global community: Rotary International.

Engaging with polio survivors

has given me firsthand insights into the lifelong challenges they face, exacerbated by complications arising from their childhood infections. The Post Polio Syndrome (PPS) Advocacy Group, a commendable initiative, serves as a platform to unite polio survivors and shed light on their struggles.

PPS Advocacy group members are unwavering in their endorsement of mass vaccination for vulnerable children and the importance of robust global surveillance. Presently, wild polio remains endemic only Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it's essential to understand that unvaccinated populations are at risk. These individuals are vulnerable to all forms of polio, be it wild or rare variant strains. The importance of comprehensive immunization cannot be overstated, especially in regions where the risk remains.

Our collective responsibility can be summed up in three points: comprehending the current status of polio, raising awareness of the efforts and progress made by organizations like Rotary and its allies, and contributing to the eradication mission, ensuring continued vaccination and surveillance.

Rotary's PolioPlus program, launched in 1985, envisioned a polio-free world through the mass vaccination of children. Then, this dream was bolstered in 1988 when Rotary and its partners formed the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), which now leads the global eradication charge.

Thanks to the efforts of Rotary and its partners, the incidence of wild polio cases has decreased by 99.9 percent, and more than 20 million cases of paralysis have been averted through the global effort to eradicate polio.

However, our work is not yet done, and our shared vision is clear: 'Make Polio History.'

A polio-free Africa hinges on robust health systems. All children must have unhindered access to primary health care, nutritious meals, clean water, sanitation, and essential vaccines. Meticulous disease surveillance is imperative to promptly identify and address any polio resurgence. Embracing advancements in immunization techniques, including the adoption of the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2), can further bolster our fight against polio. It's essential to recognize that until every child is immunized, the global community remains interconnected in this battle.

Let's harness our resources and determination. Together, we march forward with a united goal: End Polio Now.

Prof Stella Anyangwe is a Physician, Epidemiologist, and a Past District Governor of Rotary's D9400. She currently spearheads the End Polio Now campaign for Rotary's Region 28, overseeing seven Districts across 15 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.

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Nigeria

How a certificate scandal almost upset Tinubu's presidential win in Nigeria

Thursday's court ruling puts to rest the most intense election battle the West African country has seen in decades.

By Shola Lawal

A Nigerian court ruling on Thursday cemented Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's election victory, ending a hotly contested and drawn-out election trial that put Africa's largest democracy on the threshold of a constitutional crisis.

Tinubu had been declared winner of February's vote by the country's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), despite international observers saying the process was marred by irregularities.

Opposition candidates, led by Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) who was runner-up in the election, challenged the results on the grounds of electoral malpractice and ineligibility. In September, the Presidential Elections Petitions Tribunal (PEPT) dismissed the opposition's case, prompting Abubakar's team to immediately file an appeal at Nigeria's apex court, the final recourse on electoral issues.

In Thursday's ruling, judges of the Supreme Court shut down that appeal and upheld the lower court's decision. Presiding judge John Okoro said the court could not accept new evidence that Abubakar's team had doggedly obtained in a widely followed deposition of a Chicago State University official in a US court earlier this month.

The evidence, analysts said, cast doubts on Tinubu's educational qualifications and Abubakar's lawyers had sought to use it as proof that the president presented a forged certificate to INEC, a crime under Nigerian law if established.

But, experts said, it was a card pulled too late.

"You can't bring fresh evidence in a case that has already been decided at first instance," Martin Obono, a lawyer and political commentator told Al Jazeera, referring to the initial decision of the lower election tribunal. The opposition, Obono added, was also unable to strongly prove that Tinubu had lost the elections.

"You have to prove that you won and either your votes did not count, or there was overvoting somewhere," Obono said. "That is the only way that elections have



Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu waves at a crowd, during his swearing-in ceremony in Abuja, Nigeria May 29, 2023 [Temilade Adelaja/Reuters]

been upturned in Nigeria, not through these technical issues."

Thursday's decision was not unexpected. Nigeria's Supreme Court has never overturned a presidential election result in the country's six-decade history. But with thousands of Nigerians avidly following the case of President Tinubu's missing credentials, enthralled by the drama it invoked, this case appeared close to being a first.

Mystery certificate

President Tinubu's political career has long been mired in controversy. Inconsistencies in his credentials were first spotted after he became governor of Lagos in 1999. In a Supreme Court hearing in 2002, Tinubu's team blamed the discrepancies on a clerical error and invoked his immunity as governor from prosecution.

Following his exit from the governor's office in 2007, the noise died down while his political standing blossomed. But claims about Tinubu's eligibility resurfaced last year as he announced that he would run for president.

Some allege that he has adopted someone else's identity. Numerous allegations of corruption during and after

his two-term governorship, as well as questions around the true source of his wealth, which some tie to narcotics, have also been raised.

His opponents earlier argued that Tinubu was ineligible to run in the February election because he had been indicted for drug trafficking while living in Chicago. US government statements confirm that Tinubu forfeited \$460,000 in 1993 over links to a drug trafficking syndicate, but he was not indicted or convicted.

It was not originally part of the appeal, but following the election tribunal's decision last month to discard the opposition's malpractice claims, Abubakar, a former vice president, filed a lawsuit in Chicago to get the Chicago State University (CSU), where Tinubu claimed to have received a degree, to release original copies of Tinubu's diploma and other documents from its archive. CSU registrar Caleb Westberg in a hearing confirmed that Tinubu attended the institution between 1977 and 1979. However, Westberg said the school could not authenticate or divorce the certificate Tinubu submitted to INEC.

Tinubu did not need a university degree to be president. Under Nigerian law,

the minimum required educational qualification for a presidential candidate is a school leaving certificate, the equivalent of a high school diploma. But President Tinubu never submitted one.

What now?

Under Nigerian law, the Supreme Court's decision is final and cannot be overturned.

Hours after the ruling, President Tinubu hailed the decision as a "victory," saying it "strengthen[s] my resolve to do more."

But opposition parties are unsurprisingly not happy. Supporters of Peter Obi – the Labour Party (LP) candidate who had garnered a huge following among Nigeria's young, but who came third after the vote counts in February – had accused the top court of not taking enough time to come up with a judgement date, even before the decision was announced.

"Bola Ahmed Tinubu is not my president," one supporter posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, after the ruling.

Abubakar's PDP in a statement late Thursday said it was "disappointed and gravely concerned with the reasoning of the Supreme

Court." Kalu Kalu, a lawyer in Abubakar's camp, told Al Jazeera earlier that his team would not take further action.

"The Supreme Court is the highest court of law in Nigeria and its judgement is final," Kalu had said. "Anyone not satisfied with it will live with it."

Neither Abubakar nor Obi have personally reacted to the court's judgement. Both opposition candidates are likely to challenge President Tinubu again in the next elections due in 2027, Obono said.

With the election case decidedly put to rest, President Tinubu faces another, ever-growing challenge: a worsening economic outlook.

Since he took office in May, the naira has dipped to historic levels, despite biting economic reforms Tinubu announced on the first day of his presidency.

Fuel prices skyrocketed after a subsidy was removed, despite Nigeria being a major oil producer. Food prices too, have soared, reaching a peak not seen since 2007, according to the World Bank.

Source: Al Jazeera

Worth Noting:

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Motivation

Political Lessons from My Maasai Uncles – The Bank Account

By:Albert Ross
xxxxxxxxxxxx

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Worth Noting:

- Our new manager set about growing the bank’s client base. He reached out to the local community in the native languages of the area, he also spoke Kikuyu and Kamba which endeared him to the people. He sold the virtues of banking instead of the unspeakable places we kept our monies.
- Slowly, diligently, after many outreaches in public barazas, at school meetings and in churches, he started to get customers form the local community. My Uncle Kashorda was one of the converts. He was not fully sold, but every Maasai man his age with a few coins put money in the bank. They would in typical Maasai pride bid goodbye to each other with, “... I don’t have much time to chat right now, I’ll swing by later, I have some business at the bank”



When I was a young lad in Loitoktok, there was only one bank. A green bank, right next to Ilkisonko Secondary School and behind it was the town’s public cemetery. Back in the day, Loitoktok was a tiny dust bowl of a town, two days drive from Nairobi if the rains were merciful. But our story today is about the bank. This bank only served school teachers, civil servants and the police. The locals had no business nor any inclinations towards it. The staff were all Baluya, Kisii, Embu, and even Borana. All alien to the locals. One day, the bank got a Maasai manager. A tall and skinny chap from Narok, he had charm and the sort of handsome Maasai man face that made our women blush and our men call him intelligent. It’s a funny quirk of Maa culture, physically attractive people are also thought to be intelligent. Because, how would they be good looking if they’re not also smart? The Maasai word for beautiful is also the word for good, so you can see where the confusion arises. Our new manager set about

growing the bank’s client base. He reached out to the local community in the native languages of the area, he also spoke Kikuyu and Kamba which endeared him to the people. He sold the virtues of banking instead of the unspeakable places we kept our monies. Slowly, diligently, after many outreaches in public barazas, at school meetings and in churches, he started to get customers form the local community. My Uncle Kashorda was one of the converts. He was not fully sold, but every Maasai man his age with a few coins put money in the bank. They would in typical Maasai pride bid goodbye to each other with, “... I don’t have much time to chat right now, I’ll swing by later, I have some business at the bank” Uncle Kahsorda was not going to be left out of this. He couldn’t be the only one without business at the bank; but still he did not trust it. He didn’t know what the Baluyas at the bank do with his money at night. What if our Maasai brother who manages the bank is

not watchful and they steal our money? One day Uncle Kashorda went in to deposit some money. This wasn’t his first time. But he decided to hang around, see what they do with his money. He did not trust that Baluya bank teller. So he hang around the banking hall. The next person steps up to the teller and, Uncle Kashorda will tell you, he saw it with his own eyes! That godforsaken teller took his money and gave it to the next customer! The war cry that Uncle let out made every Moran in Kajiado stand erect and grip their spears tighter! A travesty had just been committed and Uncle was going to get his pound of flesh! They cannot rob him while he stands idly by. He hurled his rungu at the teller, sending it flying with the business end pointed squarely at the teller. He lunged at the neck of the customer who was in the process of putting away the stolen money, thankfully, he got him just in time! Pinned the thief to the floor and continued to ululate in war cries punctuated by blows. It is back before banks had

to have police officers guard them, but thankfully there was an officer close by. The security guards and the police managed to pry away uncle Kashorda, but thankfully he had already retrieved the money. They drag out uncle. He continues to let out war cries, at this point his blood is boiling and his heart can be heard pounding away. He screams that the police are also stealing from him. A crowd gathers outside the bank. The teller comes over. Uncle is unscathed, just upset. Uncle Kashorda tells what just happened, the crowd looks at the Baluyah teller in disbelief. The Baluyah attempts to explain that uncle’s money is still safe in his account. To which Uncle says: “Sawa, if my money is in my account, open my account let me count my money” Teller: attempts to say it does not work that way. Uncle: (to the crowd): “Isn’t that a reasonable request? Just open my account let me count my money if it’s all there!”

Teller: unable to speak Uncle “Give me the keys to my account I see!” Teller: Dumbfounded The crowd is getting riled up, and now even the police are asking that uncle’s account be opened so they count the money together. Since that day, our kin are not allowed to carry runguns into banking halls. Something similar happened in August of last year. One of our Maasai brothers threw a ruckus because they didn’t give him the keys to the server so that he can count the votes himself. Thank fully, the police were close by and by his own admission, “Thank god I’m a big guy, they would have f*#k@d me up!” If you are still buying this open the server narrative, I am not sure who’s fooling, who is uncle Kashorda, but I know who the Baluya who refused to open the account. It will take acceptance to move on, the side shows won’t help, lakini mnangoja mzungu awaambie.

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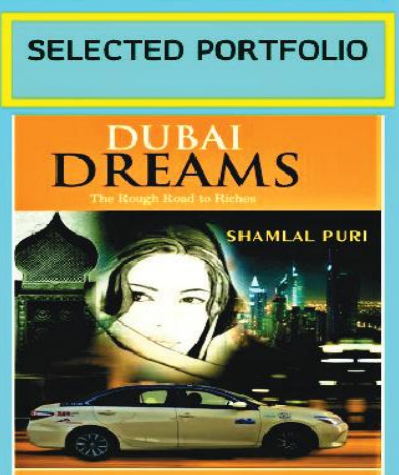
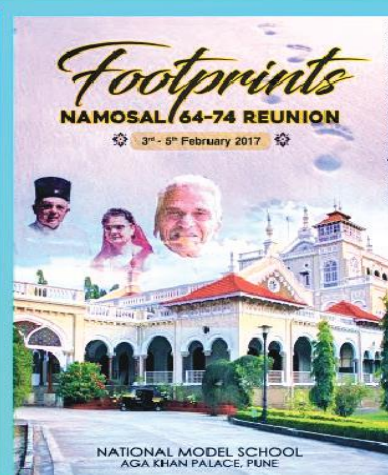
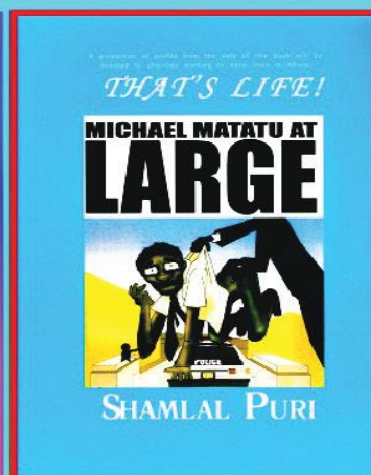
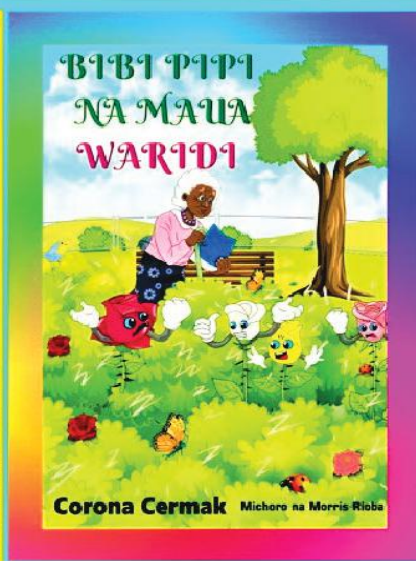
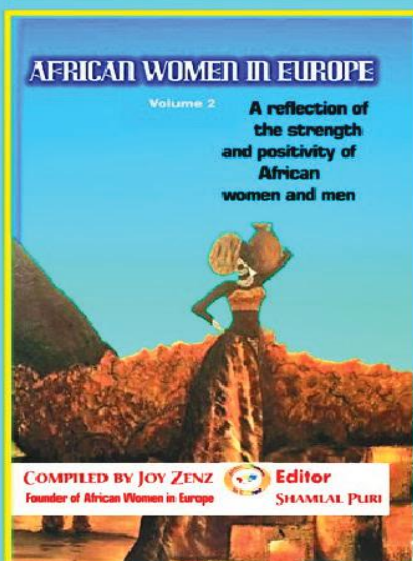
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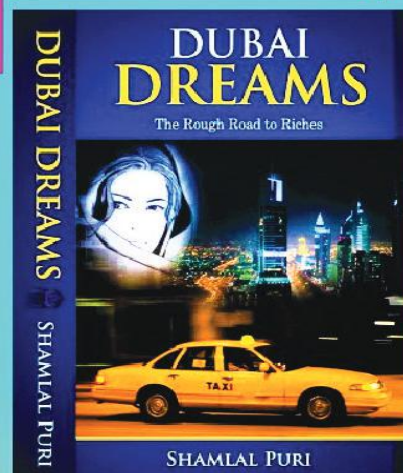
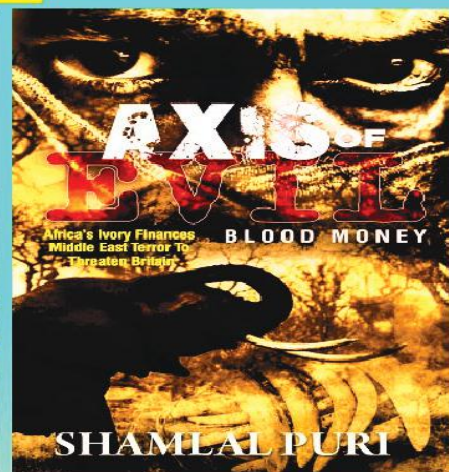
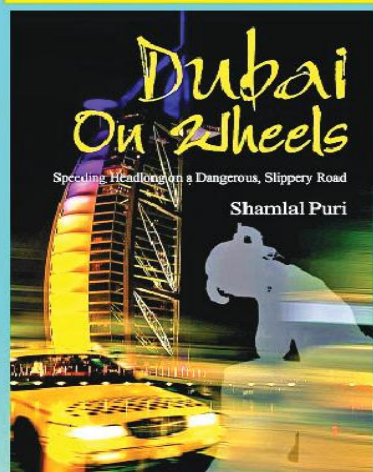
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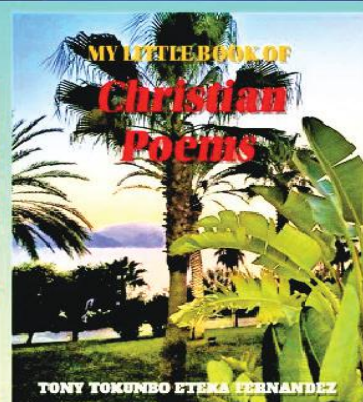
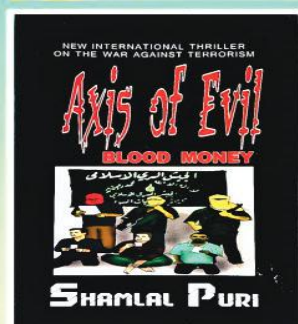
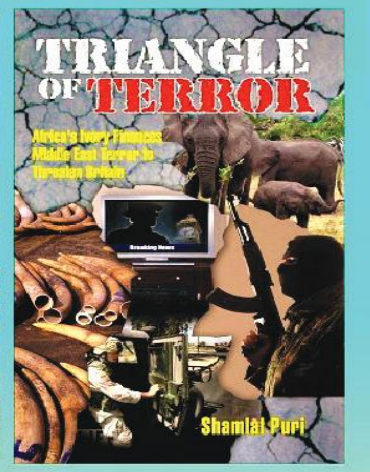
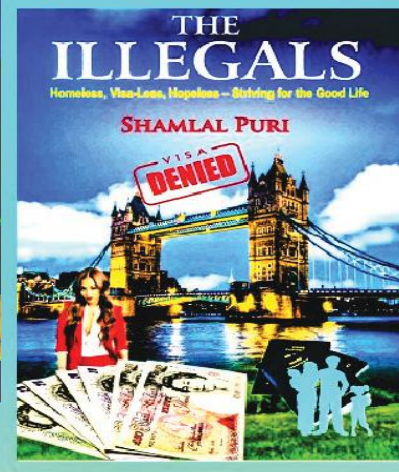
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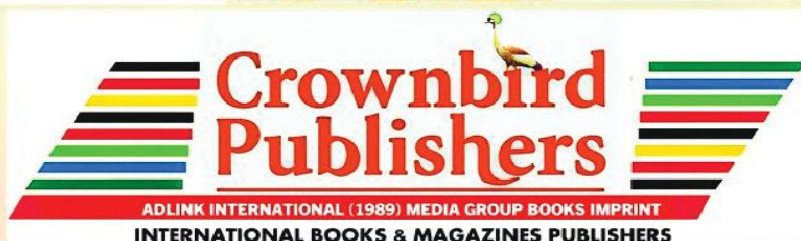


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Diaspora News

China's Unstoppable Rise as the Electric Vehicle Market Leader:

The future of transportation is electric, and China is playing a leading role in shaping that future

By: Elijah Mwangi

Contd from Page 1

Worth Noting:

China's electric vehicle market is experiencing explosive growth, with an estimated revenue of \$292.1 billion in 2023, if latest statistics is anything to go by. The market is expected to continue its upward trajectory, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.38% from 2023 to 2028. Several factors are propelling this remarkable growth, chief among them being China's commitment to the 2060 carbon neutrality plan. As a result, the government's generous subsidies and incentives are instrumental in encouraging consumers and manufacturers to embrace electric mobility and contribute to the expansion of the EV market.

It's essential to recognize that technology knows no boundaries. Attempts to stifle its progress or limit its reach are ultimately futile. The global automotive industry is a testament to this. In its journey to becoming a dominant force in the auto industry, China is displaying the same trajectory that Japanese and South Korean automakers followed. These countries initially introduced less impressive cars but progressively improved their offerings, leading to widespread popularity.



nese cars and technology, it is essential to recognize that China's EV industry is on an unstoppable trajectory, poised to become the market leader. Attempts to restrict its progress not only hinder technological advancement but also curtail the immense opportunities for cooperation in a rapidly changing industry.

China's electric vehicle market is experiencing explosive growth, with an estimated revenue of \$292.1 billion in 2023, if latest statistics is anything to go by. The market is expected to continue its upward trajectory, with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.38% from 2023 to 2028. Several factors are propelling this remarkable growth, chief among them being China's commitment to the 2060 carbon neutrality plan. As a result, the government's generous subsidies and incentives are instrumental in encouraging consumers and manufacturers to embrace electric mobility and contribute to the expansion of the EV market.

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What the European Union needs to grasp is that the automotive industry is a complex, interdependent ecosystem that thrives on cooperation. Instead of curtailing the advancement of Chinese-developed technologies, the EU should seek collaborative opportunities that benefit all parties. Oliver Zipse, the Chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG, aptly states that it's impossible to decouple from China. China's significance in terms of raw materials, manufacturing competence, and economic size makes it a critical player in the global auto industry. China's electric vehicle industry is setting the pace at both the European and global levels, driven by its cutting-edge technology,

innovative marketing models, and competitive pricing. Brands like BYD, NIO, Xpeng, Hongqi, and Lynk & Co are making significant inroads into the European market. According to auto consultancy Inovev, Chinese EVs accounted for 8% of new EVs sold in Europe in the current year, up from 6% in 2022 and 4% in 2021. This rapid growth is not solely attributable to competitive pricing but is a testament to the quality and appeal of Chinese EVs.

This year's International Motor Show (IAA) in Munich, Germany, witnessed a strong Chinese presence, with over 70 Chinese car-makers and suppliers showcasing their products and services. This impressive showing underscored Chi-

na's global ambitions in the EV market and highlighted the growing acceptance of Chinese EVs on the international stage.

China's ascendancy in the EV sector is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part of a broader trend in the global automotive industry's transformation. As the world moves toward sustainable transportation, cooperation and collaboration between regions and nations become imperative. China's progress should be seen as an opportunity for mutual cooperation, learning, and growth. The European Union should leverage China's experience to further accelerate its own electric vehicle transition, making it a win-win situation for both.

It is therefore, imperative for

the world to recognize that China's electric vehicle market is unstoppable, driven by innovation, government support, and an unyielding commitment to sustainability. Attempts to restrict or slow down its growth will not deter China's rise to becoming a global leader in the EV industry.

Instead, a cooperative approach, with a focus on shared learning and growth, can benefit not only China and the European Union but the entire world as we collectively strive for a greener and more sustainable automotive future.

Elijah Mwangi is a scholar based in Nairobi; he comments on local and global matters.



The war in Sudan is a consequence of a derailed transition

Sudan's transition should have focused on stabilising the economy and convening elections, not dismantling the ancien regime.



Drone footage shows black smoke over Khartoum North on May 1, 2023 [Reuters]

By: **Dirdeiry M Ahmed**

Two hundred days into the war in Sudan, the Sudanese people remain trapped in a conflict not of their own making. More than 9,000 civilians have been killed and 5.6 million forced to flee their homes, while the capital, Khartoum, continues to be ravaged by savage internecine warfare. Meanwhile, the world's attention is gradually shifting elsewhere. When the war erupted on April 15, the story circulated by international media outlets was that this is a typical power struggle between two generals who were once allies: Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the commander-in-chief of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and Mohamed Hamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, the commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Nothing is further from the truth. Recently, in a statement marking the six months of the war, United Nations Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths said this is "one of the worst humanitarian nightmares in recent history". He emphasised the horrific reports of rape and sexual violence and asserted that the country has been engulfed in chaos. Yet, he said nothing as to why the war is being fought. If the media have mischaracterised the reason behind the eruption of the war, high-level statements from the international community, like the one above, have been completely silent about it. Neither have tried to envision Sudan's path forward. On April 11, 2019, an uprising triggered by the deteriorating economic situation toppled President Omar al-Bashir, ending his three-decade-long rule. Sudan formerly experienced two uprisings that brought down military regimes – in 1964 and 1985. Given their experience with past uprisings, in 2019, the Sudanese people widely expected a brief political transition that would address economic issues – with the help of the international community – and prepare the country for multiparty elections within a year or two. However, that was not to be. This time around, two factors that were nonexistent in 1964 and 1985 came into play and proved to be paramount. First, because of the "Islamist" comportment of al-Bashir's regime, regional and international players

were more focused on "dismantling" it so the elections would not end up bringing Islamists back to power. For this purpose, the international community had to start a project to remake the country. Dissolving the former ruling NCP and hunting its leaders outside the purview of the law became the main objective of the transition. A commission that was not accountable to the attorney general or subjected to judicial review was formed for this purpose. The comprehensive overhaul of the country included calls for Sudan to join the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to rush into convening pride parades even before homosexuality is decriminalised, and to normalise relations with Israel by joining the Abraham Accords. These controversial issues were imposed on the schedule of the transition, even though they are the business of an elected parliament. Second, uninitiated neoliberals – mostly former communists and Baathists – were anointed by the international community as the legitimate heirs of al-Bashir. As soon as they became comfortable in their new positions, they completely forgot about the economic woes of the country and failed to produce any programme for reform. Additionally, they did not want to hold any elections, bearing in mind the narrowness of their support base. Soon enough, they locked horns for power, each wanting to have a larger piece of the cake in this exceptionally long transition. As a matter of fact, the entire transition was transformed into an exercise in fielding the neoliberals as the newfound political elite of the country. When the Constitutional Charter of August 2019, which sealed a marriage of convenience between the military component (both SAF and RSF) on one the hand and the neoliberals on the other, frayed in October 2021, the international community pushed another deal down the throat of the two sides. That was the Framework Agreement of December 2022. Eventually, Hemedti – already beleaguered and fearing international sanctions for launching a bloody crackdown on a sit-in in Khartoum in June 2019 – threw in his lot with the neoliberals in a bid to improve

his political fortunes. Allegedly, he was also on a mission "to restore democracy and civilian rule". By then, it was clear to diplomats in Khartoum that an eventual showdown between SAF and RSF was inevitable. Yet, nobody was willing to call for ending the faltering transition and convening elections. Sudan sits at the intersection of the Middle East, North Africa, East Africa, and the Sahel. As such, it is very much in the throes of all ills of these regions. In this accursed quarter, if you profess a position tolerating the possible return of Islamists to power, you are grabbing the third rail with both hands. That is mainly because some groups and countries in this region are very quick to attack anyone who questions whatever they are doing to exclude Islamists. For them, any Islamist is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and a likely operative of ISIL (ISIS), al-Shabab or Boko Haram. In Sudan, in particular, such conversation takes place in the shadow of three decades of government that the West abhorred and always accused of doing something nefarious. This had been the case even though that government went to great lengths to gain Western acceptance, including by agreeing to the secession of South Sudan, adopting the 2005 constitution, and opening unprecedented avenues for women in education, employment, and leadership. Yet, in this part of the world, it is the past rather than the present that shapes how current events are seen. It is the stereotype and the cliché rather than the reality that matters. When CNN asked the RSF spokesperson on April 26 about their objective, he said the group was "seeking to capture" al-Burhan and bring him to justice for "many treasons acts against the Sudanese people". Because RSF was fighting at the beginning of the war for the cause of the neoliberals – namely, to rid the country of the Islamists – international think tanks, the likes of the International Crisis Group (ICG), have not hesitated to wish it well. In a report released in July 2023, the ICG stated: "The RSF has held the upper hand in Khartoum since the early days of the war, but that advantage is only growing more apparent. Even some army backers suggest the

RSF is on the cusp of decisive military victory in the capital, especially if it can soon overrun the compound where army leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and some of his key lieutenants are sheltering. The RSF has besieged the headquarters almost since the conflict began; it has now tightened its grip." Calling the SAF's claim to the title of national army "dubious", the report went on to assert: "Given internal fissures and the deep hostility toward the RSF, any settlement raises the risk of a split in the army, including the possibility that hardliners team up with Bashir-era Islamists to fight on. An RSF victory would likely leave no place for those Islamists, who might then face a difficult choice among negotiating surrender terms, battling on in a losing cause or seeking safe passage to a third country." The sidelining of Islamists in Sudan is clearly a top item on foreign agendas for Sudan. Apart from failing to see the military progress made by SAF, courtesy of its air superiority, the ICG also did not register the change in RSF's goals for the war. While RSF needed the neoliberals for the purposes of winning international legitimacy, talk of "restoring civilian rule" figured prominently in its rhetoric. But as the war scales tipped in favour of SAF, RSF was more in need of a source of fighters to join the war. The neoliberals were of little help in this regard. As a result, the RSF spokespeople started to claim that their goal is to end "the 1956 state" controlled by riverine communities of central and northern Sudan and to replace it with one controlled by Junaid tribes, the ethnic groups of Arab origin that live in the Kordofan and Darfur regions of Sudan, as well as Chad and Niger. The involvement of fighters from these tribes, be they Sudanese or non-Sudanese, is now a prominent feature of this war. Of course, this has momentous implications for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sudan and for the peace and security of the region. As Rosalind Marsden, the former UK ambassador to Sudan and associate fellow at Chatham House, has warned: there is a risk of a "de facto partition, in which Hemedti controls Darfur and much of Khartoum, SAF controls much of the rest of the country, especially the east and the north, and an armed movement led by Abdel Aziz Al Hilu contests South Kordofan and southern Blue Nile. Indeed, in an audio recording released on September 14, Hemedti suggests for the first time that, if Burhan establishes a government in Port Sudan, he will form a government in Khartoum". Yet this dimension is not taken seriously enough by the international community. For the United States, for instance, the most urgent concerns in Sudan shifted from the exclusion of Islamists to addressing humanitarian needs, not putting the country's transition back on track. Being Sudan's largest contributor of humanitarian aid, the US has expressed its support for a ceasefire and peace negotiations to make delivering aid possible.

Indeed, providing humanitarian assistance to displaced Sudanese people should be the top priority, particularly in the Chadian border town of Adre, where many have fled from neighbouring Darfur. Nonetheless, if the transition is not fixed, the humanitarian crisis will persist for years to come. Last week, it was announced that SAF and RSF have resumed talks in Jeddah with the hope of agreeing on a ceasefire, and possibly a deal to end the war. With SAF gaining the upper hand on the main battlefield and RSF losing military momentum, it is expected that the latter will sue for peace. This is particularly so because the meandering lines of tribal fighters from Western Sudan to Khartoum started to dwindle. About two weeks ago, mediators from the African Union and the subregional Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) visited Cairo to consult with politicians on how to start an all-inclusive process to restore the Sudan transition to its path. Perhaps there is a ray of hope after all. The Sudanese people are hardwired for freedom. A call for elections will resonate with many. Sudan is not new to multiparty elections which were held even during al-Bashir's regime. In 2010, the polls that were convened at the end of the transition period following the second Sudanese civil war were monitored by the Carter Center and were seen as highly credible. It is not true that the Sudan war is a fight between two generals. Nor is it a war that was "decades in the making", as the ICG report would have us believe. To be sure, this is a war that was triggered by a derailed political transition. The parties who caused that to happen still do not see the need for the country to pivot to the path of its transition. For them, a return to the transition implies the vanquishing of RSF and, even worse, the return of Islamists. If that is the likely outcome, for some, it is better to see the country disintegrate. Yet, many active players are now convinced that there is no viable alternative for this country other than to restore the transition to its path. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily our editorial stance. Former foreign minister of Sudan Dirdeiry M Ahmed studied law at the universities of Khartoum, London, Oxford and Leicester, where he obtained his PhD. In addition to his scholarly books, published by Cambridge University Press and Al Jazeera Centre for Research and Study, he writes articles in international law journals and is a prolific writer of Arabic language op-eds on international affairs of Sudan and its region. He held the position of Foreign Minister of Sudan for a brief period. Currently he teaches international law at the University of Khartoum and practices law.

Palestiniane

Palestinian people deserve right to Self- Determination, Ambassador Hazem Shabat says of Gaza crisis

By: Hazem Shabat
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Worth Noting:

- According to B'TSELEM, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, at the end of June 2023, the Israel Prison Service (IPS) was holding 4,499 Palestinians in detention or in prison on what it defined as “security” grounds, those prisoners include children and Women, furthermore, 1117 of those prisoners are held under what is called “administrative detention”, which is incarceration without trial or charge, alleging that a person plans to commit a future offense.
- As stated by the United Nation’s Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in his remarks to the Security Council on 24 October 2023, “Polarization and dehumanization are being fueled by a tsunami of disinformation”, adding, “it is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum”. That being said, it is important to shed light on some claims that have been put forward by some media outlets and others, to only be reclaimed later by the Prime Minister of Israel.



A dove flies over the debris of houses destroyed in strikes in the southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. [Photo/Agencies]

A little more than 56 years have passed since the occupation of the Palestinian Territory by the Israeli Authorities, it is important to realize, and acknowledge every fact when it comes to addressing how things have unfolded since October 7, 2023. According to the United Nations’ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), since 2008, until August of 2023, 6,407 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli Occupation Forces throughout the Palestinian Occupied Territory, of which 1,437 are children, and 626 Women.[1] Since the beginning of the recent escalation that took place on October 7, 2023, the number of Palestinian casualties and prisoners have almost doubled. As of today, the number of Palestinians that have been killed since October 7, has reached over 5000, including over 1,100 women, 2,000 children as well as journalists, medical workers and first responders, with more than

15,000 injured. According to B’TSELEM, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, at the end of June 2023, the Israel Prison Service (IPS) was holding 4,499 Palestinians in detention or in prison on what it defined as “security” grounds, those prisoners include children and Women, furthermore, 1117 of those prisoners are held under what is called “administrative detention”, which is incarceration without trial or charge, alleging that a person plans to commit a future offense. As stated by the United Nations’ Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in his remarks to the Security Council on 24 October 2023, “Polarization and dehumanization are being fueled by a tsunami of disinformation”, adding, “it is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum”. That being said, it is important to shed light on some claims that have been

put forward by some media outlets and others, to only be reclaimed later by the Prime Minister of Israel. While it is of crucial importance to note that any loss of life, regardless of where, is tragic, and must be condemned. Yet, we fail to uphold International Law in a just and equitable manner. Terrorism does not have an agreed-upon universal definition, but General Assembly Resolution 49/60, which seeks to criminalize a number of armed activities considered to be “terrorist” in nature defines it as follows: Acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them. Reflecting on this definition, which focuses on in-

tent rather than the perpetrator, and given the facts listed previously, Israel’s, the Occupying Power actions, through the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, targeting of Hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, house demolitions, ceasing of land, complete blockade of Gaza, collective punishment, unlawful detention of Palestinians, denial of the right of Self Determination of the Palestinian people, denial of the Right of Return enshrined in General Assembly Resolution 194, and countless other breaches of International Law, does in fact account to terrorism. Moreover, for Palestinians, the 1948 and 1967 massive expulsions meant families took what they could carry or was shipped in trucks, from their homes to areas outside the new State of Israel, thus making them not just displaced peoples, but rather refugees, and as of now 5.9 million Palestinians are registered as refugees under the UN agency cre-

ated to serve the displaced population (UNRWA). Gaza’s population of over 2 million people, the majority of which are refugees, and as of the October 7 2023, 1.4 million of them have been displaced, with nowhere to go back to. Finally, the lesson that must be learned after October 7 2023, is that managing the occupation is not the answer, ending it is. What is needed from Humanity as a whole is to put an end to this never-ending cycle of violence, achieving a just, comprehensive, long-lasting peace, which can only be achieved through upholding International Law, and all relevant United Nations resolutions without discrimination, giving the Palestinian people their right to Self-Determination, safe and dignified livelihood in their independent, sovereign state on the 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its Capital. Hazem Shabat is the Palestinian Ambassador to Kenya.

OPINION

Hamas's attack on Israel has changed the Middle East

The US regional strategy lays in shambles, as its allies face pressure and its foes seek to take advantage.



Smoke and debris ascend over the northern Gaza Strip following Israeli bombardment on October 23, 2023 [Jack Guez/AFP]

Worth Noting:

- Over the past three years, the Biden administration has been trying to limit its involvement in the Middle East and focus on China, as part of its “pivot to Asia”.
- To do that, the US hoped to “cool off” tensions in the region by facilitating the normalisation of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel and de-escalating with Iran. It also hoped to challenge Chinese influence in the region and boost India's by establishing an economic corridor that would link India, the Middle East and Europe.
- The proposed project had two parts: an eastern corridor, which would connect India to the Arab Gulf states, and a northern corridor, which would link the Gulf states to Europe via Jordan and Israel. It was supposed to be the US response to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

On October 7, the Palestinian armed resistance group Hamas launched an attack that took Israel by surprise. Its fighters overran Israeli military installations and settlements, which led to the death of some 1,400 Israelis. Israel responded by launching another war on Gaza, imposing a complete blockade and relentlessly bombing civilian buildings and infrastructure. More than 6,500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli bombardment, including more than 2,000 children.

The Hamas attack has not only changed the path of the Palestine-Israel conflict, but also the dynamics of the whole Middle East. It has left the US strategy of de-escalation in the region in shambles, put Arab governments and Iran in a difficult position and opened the door for greater Chinese and Russian involvement. US strategy undermined Over the past three years, the Biden administration has been trying to limit its involvement in the Middle East and focus on China, as part of its “pivot to Asia”. To do that, the US hoped to “cool off” tensions in the region by facilitating the normalisation of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel and de-escalating with Iran. It also hoped to challenge Chinese influence in the region and boost India's by establishing an economic corridor that would link India, the Middle East and Europe.

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tative.

The Hamas attack has put an abrupt end to these plans. First, it has effectively frozen the normalisation process between Israel and Saudi Arabia, thwarting the conclusion of a regional security arrangement.

Second, the attacks also compelled the US to reverse its policy of diminished military presence in the region by ordering the biggest military buildup since the war on ISIL. The Pentagon deployed one aircraft carrier in the Eastern Mediterranean, while another one has been sent to the Gulf. Together, they provide more than 100 aircraft with attack capabilities, as well as cruisers, destroyers and submarines equipped with Tomahawk missiles. Washington says that this buildup is to prevent a third party from opening another front against Israel.

Third, US efforts to de-escalate tensions with Iran have also come to an end. Just a month ago, the two countries reached an agreement on a prisoner swap and the release of \$6bn worth of frozen Iranian assets. It was hoped the deal would encourage Iran to restrain its militias in Syria and Iraq from launching further attacks against US forces.

Developments of the past week demonstrate that this arrangement has not held. Pro-Iran armed groups in Syria and Iraq have launched attacks on US military bases, wounding a number of US personnel. The US officials have also claimed that US forces in the northern Red Sea have intercepted drones and missiles launched by the Houthis in Yemen.

Arab and Iranian dilemmas The Hamas attack and the Israeli war on Gaza have also put regional govern-

ments in difficult positions. On one hand, the US has been pressuring its Arab allies, a number of whom had normalised relations with Israel, to condemn Hamas. Only the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain issued such statements.

On the other hand, Israel's indiscriminate killing of Palestinian civilians has angered the Arab public and also put pressure on Arab governments to take action in solidarity with the Palestinians. There are already signs that the weight of public opinion is pushing Arab leaders to go against US wishes.

The massacre in al-Ahli Baptist Hospital on October 17 prompted sharp condemnations from Arab states, including from the UAE and Bahrain. At the Cairo Peace Summit on October 21, King Abdullah II of Jordan, whose country signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, delivered his strongest speech so far in condemnation of Israeli policies.

During a UNSC session on October 24 to debate the situation in Gaza the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia – all close US allies – strongly condemned Israel and called for an immediate ceasefire. A day later, the UAE, along with China and Russia vetoed a US resolution that did not call for a cessation of fighting.

For the time being, pro-US Arab governments are resorting to strong rhetoric to quell public anger. But if Israel continues its deadly assault on Gaza, words will not be enough – they will have to take action by reversing normalisation with Israel, which could anger the US.

A lack of action by Arab leaders to protect Pales-

tinians could lead to a new wave of regional instability. The Arab public is already angered by failed economic policies and the indiscriminate killing of Palestinians will just further infuriate it. Once again, US support for Israeli atrocities in Gaza is undermining the Arab regimes it supports.

Iran also finds itself in a difficult position, albeit for different reasons. The Iranian leadership praised Hamas's October 7 attack while denying any involvement in it. Tehran is threading carefully trying not to be dragged into a direct confrontation with Israel or its ally, the US, while at the same time supporting Hamas.

Israel has declared that the goal of its war on Gaza is to dismantle the Palestinian resistance group – ie, carry out regime change in the strip. This means Tehran could lose an important ally in the region.

It, thus, faces a difficult choice between standing idle and watching Hamas being weakened or eliminated by Israel or encouraging its Lebanon-based Hezbollah to enter the fray and put pressure on Israel in the north, which could have grave consequences for its ally.

Both Israel and the US warned that Hezbollah would face dire consequences if it attacked Israel. Having secured full US support, Israel might use this opportunity to attack the Lebanese group. This would certainly destabilise Lebanon, which is not in the interest of Iran. Russian and Chinese calculus

The involvement of the US in another conflict in the Middle East and the weakening of its alliances with Arab states would be a welcome development for Moscow and Beijing.

Both countries benefited from Washington's bloody interventions in the Greater Middle East over the past two decades. The US-led “war on terror” hurt US standing in the region, encouraging positive perceptions of Russia and China among Muslim nations. It also kept the US busy in the Middle East, giving space for the two great powers to solidify their influence in their neighbourhoods.

Russia and China started to feel US pressure only after it pulled out of the Greater Middle East, allowing it to

undertake a “pivot to Asia” and focus more on its NATO alliance. That might now change, as the US dragged again into the region it wanted so badly to disengage from.

A US military buildup in the Middle East, more aid for the Israeli army and a US diplomatic corps focused on supporting Israel mean there are fewer military, financial and diplomatic resources available to aid the war effort in Ukraine and support allies in Asia that are trying to stand up to Chinese pressure.

In addition, the unconditional US support for Israel's massacres of Palestinian civilians in Gaza is further undermining its position in the Islamic world, allowing Russia and China to gain ground. The two countries have been calling for an immediate ceasefire in the war on Gaza, blaming the US for the “destructive” conflict. It appears that the US is shooting itself in the foot: instead of containing China and Russia in the Middle East, it is helping them strengthen their positions and thwart its plans for the region, including the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor.

Indeed, Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel has triggered a shift of dynamics in the Middle East. The extent of this shift will be determined by the US's ability and willingness to rein in Israel. Unless it puts pressure on the Israeli government to stop the war on Gaza, lift the siege, and start negotiating with the Palestinians, the whole region might end up in flames.

There is a real possibility that the conflict will widen to include Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq and trigger mass upheaval in the rest of the Arab world. This would not only hurt the US's regional alliances but also leave the door wide open for much deeper involvement of Russia and China in the region.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect our editorial stance.

Marwan Kabalan is a Syrian academic and writer. He holds a PhD degree in International Relations. He is the Director of Policy Analysis at the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies.

Pro-Palestinian protest

Pro-Palestinian protest in London sees thousands call for bombing to stop

By:thomas Mackintosh & Victoria Bourne in central London
BBC News

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Contd from Page 1

Worth Noting:

- A sound system led people to chant “Stop arming Israel. Stop bombing Gaza” and “We are all Palestinian”.
- Some in the crowd chanted “from the river to the sea”, referring to the land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean - a chant UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman had previously urged police chiefs to consider interpreting as an “expression of a violent desire to see Israel erased from the world”. Israel and most Jewish groups agree.
- The Palestinian Solidarity Campaign and other activists contest this, saying the slogan refers to “the right of all Palestinians to freedom, equality and justice”.
- During the march in London, an emotional Chrif El Amraoui told the BBC: “Just now marching, I’m crying because children are killed daily. Why? Why do they want more to be killed?”



Protesters carried a large Palestinian flag during the rally in London

gathered near the Golden Jubilee Bridge holding signs saying “Gaza, stop the massacre” and “Free Palestine, end Israeli occupation”. A sound system led people to chant “Stop arming Israel. Stop bombing Gaza” and “We are all Palestinian”. Some in the crowd chanted “from the river to the sea”, referring to the land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean - a chant UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman had previously urged police chiefs to consider interpreting as an “expression of a violent desire to see Israel erased from the world”. Israel and most Jewish groups agree. The Palestinian Solidarity

Campaign and other activists contest this, saying the slogan refers to “the right of all Palestinians to freedom, equality and justice”. During the march in London, an emotional Chrif El Amraoui told the BBC: “Just now marching, I’m crying because children are killed daily. Why? Why do they want more to be killed?” Abdul Mahfuudi attended the protest with his children and said: “The most important thing for us is for them to stop killing kids. They need to stop.” More than 1,000 Metropolitan Police officers were deployed across London. Of the nine arrests made, seven were for alleged pub-

lic order offences, a number of which were being treated as hate crimes, and two were for suspected assaults on officers. Earlier, the Met Police said one person had been arrested in Whitehall for assaulting an officer. The officer remains in hospital with a laceration to the head, but “is in good spirits & appreciates all your wishes”, the Met added, posting a photo of the officer with his head bandaged and doing a thumbs up. Another man was arrested in Waterloo Road on suspicion of a racially aggravated public order offence and making threats to kill. Close to Downing Street, of-

ficers appeared to be detaining someone before scuffles broke out with demonstrators, with punches thrown and kicks. Officers ordered the demonstrators to move away, and one person was carried away to chants of “let him go” from other protesters. Scotland Yard also issued an appeal to identify two women in connection with an alleged hate crime incident in Trafalgar Square. Throughout Saturday, the force used public order powers to prevent protesters from gathering outside the Israeli embassy. It also has put in place extra powers until midnight allowing officers to search a

person or vehicle for weapons or dangerous instruments and to require people to remove an item they are wearing “for the purposes of wholly or mainly concealing their identity”. These powers apply across the City of Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. On Saturday evening the force said on X, formerly known as Twitter, that officers were monitoring a group gathered at Piccadilly Circus and would use separate powers to disperse anyone causing anti-social behaviour. Elsewhere in the UK, thousands attended a pro-Palestinian rally outside Manchester’s Central Library at St Peter’s Square. On Friday, the region’s mayor Andy Burnham joined international calls for “a ceasefire by all sides and for the hostages to be released unharmed”. About 3,000 protesters gathered in Belfast City Centre for a rally which walked along Royal Avenue to City Hall. A sea of Palestinian flags could be seen in Glasgow, with thousands gathering in George Square in the heart of the city calling for an immediate ceasefire. Some of the crowd clambered onto statues and monuments. Last weekend, similar numbers of officers were involved in policing demonstrations in London and 10 people were arrested on the day. A video later emerged online of a pro-Palestinian protester chanting “jihad” at a smaller protest near the main march last weekend, but the Met said it “had not identified any offences arising from the specific clip”. It prompted Suella Braverman to question Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley over why arrests had not been made. Ahead of this weekend’s demonstrations, the force said officers would be expected to intervene if protesters use the word “jihad” in chants. “Jihad” literally means “effort” or “struggle” in Arabic. In Islam the main meaning is an internal struggle, such as a believer’s struggle to live in accordance with their faith. It can also be an outward struggle or war, which in Islamic teaching must be in self defence and within prescribed limits.



A number of demonstrations are planned this weekend across London, Westminster Council said

Africa

Democracy in Africa is not a Western imposition

The likes of Kagame and Doumbouya are not being honest – Africans love democracy and want to see it work.

ByTafi Mhaka
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Worth Noting:

- Rwanda has certainly made significant socio-economic strides since the 1994 genocide that killed at least 800,000 mainly ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutu civilians, with many observers describing the country as an African success story.
- However, this commendable progress does not erase the fact that Kagame is a ruthless despot and a major obstacle to true democratic progress.
- Indeed, elections in Rwanda have been marred by extensive government crackdowns on free speech, independent media, and political opposition since the very beginning. And it is highly suspect whether Kagame would have been able to secure the support of almost all Rwandan voters repeatedly over the years if he had faced his rivals in truly free and fair elections.
- The Rwandan government, under Kagame's guidance, has long engaged in reprehensible lawfare to eliminate those who have sought to challenge Kagame at the polls. Authorities thwarted attempts by presidential hopefuls Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza and Diane Rwigara to stand against Kagame in 2010 and 2017 respectively, for example.



Kagame is a ruthless despot and a major obstacle to true democratic progress, writes Mhaka [Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images]

On September 19, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame confirmed that he would stand for re-election in his country's August 2024 presidential election, and attempt to win an unprecedented fourth term in office. "I am pleased with the confidence that Rwandans have placed in me. I will always serve them, as long as I can," the 66-year-old was quoted as saying in an interview with Jeune Afrique, a French-language news magazine. It is not surprising that Kagame is gearing up for another presidential contest. After all, it appears that, over the years, Rwanda's president has developed an effective blueprint not only for winning elections, but also for doing so with seemingly universal public approval. Indeed, the former army general, who has led Rwanda since June 2000, won the 2010 and 2017 presidential elections with 93 percent and 98.6 percent of the votes respectively. And before that, in his first presidential election in 2003, he had gained the support of 95.05 percent of Rwandan voters. According to constitutional amendments approved via a referendum in December 2015, Kagame can seek a third seven-year term next year, and has the right to run for further two five-year terms thereafter, meaning he can theoretically remain in power till 2034. On the face of it, seeking another term in office seems to be a reasonable way forward

for an incredibly popular and successful head of state. Rwanda has certainly made significant socio-economic strides since the 1994 genocide that killed at least 800,000 mainly ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutu civilians, with many observers describing the country as an African success story. However, this commendable progress does not erase the fact that Kagame is a ruthless despot and a major obstacle to true democratic progress. Indeed, elections in Rwanda have been marred by extensive government crackdowns on free speech, independent media, and political opposition since the very beginning. And it is highly suspect whether Kagame would have been able to secure the support of almost all Rwandan voters repeatedly over the years if he had faced his rivals in truly free and fair elections. The Rwandan government, under Kagame's guidance, has long engaged in reprehensible lawfare to eliminate those who have sought to challenge Kagame at the polls. Authorities thwarted attempts by presidential hopefuls Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza and Diane Rwigara to stand against Kagame in 2010 and 2017 respectively, for example. Kigali has also reportedly abducted and assassinated dissidents and opposition leaders, both at home and abroad. Suspected state agents allegedly murdered Patrick Karegeya, the for-

mer external intelligence chief and co-founder of the Rwandan National Congress, in South Africa in January 2014. So, as proven time and again, Kagame is not a true democrat. Thus, it's impossible to determine with any degree of certainty whether a significant percentage of Rwandans really have "confidence" in his leadership and want to see him run for office once again next year. Rwanda, after all, is not really a democracy. Sure, it has all the elementary structures of a democracy and it seems to be able to hold elections on a regular basis. Under this democratic facade, however, Kagame is actually ruling Rwanda like his personal fiefdom. His is an undisputedly authoritarian, anti-democratic regime – and one that many other despots in the region look up to. In April, for example, while hosting Kagame for a two-day visit in Conakry, Guinea's military ruler, Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya – who overthrew former president Alpha Conde in a September 2021 military coup – expressed great admiration for Kagame's de facto dictatorship and even said he "draws inspiration from the Rwandan model" describing it in a presidential statement as an "African reference". Fast-forward to September 21, it wasn't surprising to hear Doumbouya criticise democratic governance as a Western imposition at the 78th United Nations Gener-

al Assembly. "Africa is suffering from a governance model that has been imposed on it ... a model that is good and effective for the West but is difficult to adapt to our realities, our customs and environment," he told world leaders gathered in New York. This is an old trope that Kagame himself has long been using to deflect attention away from his atrocious human rights record. At his inauguration ceremony in September 2010, for instance, he slammed "the self-proclaimed critics of Rwanda," and claimed that the "lack of democracy" was not "Africa's biggest problem". More than a decade later, Kagame is still in power, and is still arguing that Africa does not really have a democracy problem. This, despite unelected military governments being in power in Sudan, Gabon, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea. And supposedly "democratic leaders" like Kagame himself, who remain in power on the back of bogus elections, presiding over many others. Sure, it is the right and duty of any African leader to condemn and resist any colonial and neo-colonial transgression. This continent has suffered more than enough from Western impositions. But democracy is no longer an exclusively Western model or aspiration. And it is not a Western imposition – in fact, these days Western powers seem to prefer dealing with friendly dictators rather than independently minded and democratically elected African leaders. Today, the West is not imposing democracy on unwilling African nations. It is Africans themselves, who long for true democracy on the continent. A study published by Afrobarometer in January 2023 revealed that most Africans – including 77 percent of Guineans – support democracy and would like to see stronger democratic institutions in their countries. In the same study, 74 percent said they reject military governments and 82 percent voiced their dislike for the type of strongman rule with a democratic facade that Kagame has established in Rwanda. This is the unspoken truth: Africans love democracy and want to see it work. Of course, democracy is not a

perfect governance model – no system is. That being said, it's the ideal vehicle for peaceful socioeconomic development, and Africans know this. The large-scale adoption of democracy across Africa in the 20th century was essentially a homegrown response to the social injustices inflicted on Africans by colonial and settler regimes. It wasn't, as Doumbouya sought to underhandedly suggest at the UN, predicated on Western impositions alone. Look at South Africa's 1995 Freedom Charter – it advocated for a multi-racial democracy as a remedy to apartheid rule. African democracies are laden with locally agreed standards that are also universally acclaimed values (PDF). They include principles that Kagame, Doumbouya and many other leaders have routinely chosen to disregard: the unhindered participation of citizens, equality, accountability, the rule of law, political tolerance, free and fair elections, and human rights. Most Africans – myself included – have simply never experienced the true and expansive fabric of democracy, as African leaders have mostly refused to fully embrace or implement it. In this sense, Kagame's Rwanda is not an "African success story", or the "African reference" for successful governance as Doumbouya hypocritically claimed, but a guidebook for newly empowered despots across the continent on how to create an illusion of democracy. Africans, and Rwandans, deserve and demand better. Kagame should reconsider his ill-advised decision to run for office again. Rwanda can become a real African success story – a genuine reference for other African nations – but only if Kagame allows democracy to prosper. The views expressed in this article are the author's own

Mhaka, IS a social and political commentator, has a BA Honours degree from the University of Cape Town

Kenya To Lift Visa Requirements For All Africans

By: XINHUA

Kenyan President William Ruto said on Saturday that Kenya will lift visa requirements for all Africans by the end of 2023 with the aim of boosting trade with African countries.

“By the end of this year, no African will need a visa to enter Kenya. The time has come to understand the importance of doing trade between us,” said Ruto, while speaking at the summit of the world’s three major forest basins, namely the Amazon, Congo, and Borneo-Mekong Forest Basins, in Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo.

Ruto noted the low rate of intra-African trade and urged to reduce customs tariffs within the African continent to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

“It is time we realize the importance of trading among ourselves and allowing goods, services, people and ideas to move freely across the continent,” he said, adding that trade among East African Community countries had grown significantly due to the removal of visa requirements and tariffs.

Ruto said that acknowledging and providing incentives to countries in tropical forest basins for forest protection is a smart climate action.

The Amazon basin in South America, the Congo basin in Central Africa, and the Borneo-Mekong basin in Southeast Asia collectively constitute 80 percent of the world’s rainforests and contain approximately two-thirds of its biodiversity.

These rainforests are not only vital for their local ecosystems but also play a global role in regulating the planet’s climate and sustaining life on Earth.

Kenya passport/COURTESY



Mozambique

2 dead in protests over Mozambique election results, says watchdog

By VOA

Protests in Mozambique over disputed local election results resulted in the deaths of a police officer and a civilian Friday, a corruption watchdog group said.

Police reported a total of 70 arrests in four cities but not any fatalities. The unrest followed Thursday’s official validation of the election results, which gave the ruling Frelimo party victory in 64 out of 65 municipalities.

A consortium of election observers had reported widespread ballot stuffing, voter intimidation and falsification of results in favor of Frelimo in the October 11 elections.

Demonstrators barricaded streets during the protests, which were concentrated in Mozambique’s capital, Maputo, and the northern cities of Nampula and Nacala.

In Maputo, the main opposition party, Renamo, led its supporters in a march. Other groups of protesters blocked main avenues with piles of burning tires and trash.

Riot police and plainclothes officers dispersed crowds with tear gas and

bursts of AK-47 gunfire into the air. The police officer was killed in Nampula and the civilian in Nacala, according to the Center for Public Integrity, a Mozambican anti-corruption organization.

At least two other people in Nampula were seriously injured by tear gas grenades, including a 6-year-old child, local television channel TV Sucesso reported.

Police spokesperson Orlando Mudomane said 60 people were arrested in Nampula, four in Maputo, and the remainder in Nacala and the central city of Quelimane.

Police were seen arresting several people inside the headquarters of Renamo’s Maputo branch.

Mudomane said 10 people were injured during Friday’s protests, but he did not confirm any deaths.

Peaceful Renamo-led demonstrations have taken place across the southern African nation of 32 million since the elections.

The election results reduced the number of municipalities under Renamo control from eight to zero.

A parallel count of the vote by the consortium of election observers



concluded that Renamo beat Frelimo in the major cities of Quelimane, Nampula, Matola and Maputo. This would have put an opposition party in control of the capital for the first time since Mozambique’s independence from Portugal in 1975.

Frelimo and Renamo fought a bloody civil war between 1977 and 1992 in which over 1 million people are estimated to have died. Following a peace settlement, Mozambique held its first democratic elections in 1994.

A dispute over the results of the 2014 general election resulted in more hostility between the parties, and a new peace agreement was signed in 2019.

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Book

One On One With The Very Young Stars In Nigeria

By The Name Of Ayodeji Ajagbe Interview



Ayodeji Ajagbe

Worth Noting:

- I used my experiences and observations to create stories that reflected my unique perspective and worldview. I felt that my story was a way to connect with others and to express the thoughts and emotions that I couldn't share in any other way.
- My identity as a Nigerian writer shapes my perspective and approach to writing in a number of ways. First and foremost, my experiences growing up in Nigeria have informed my worldview and the way I view the world around me.
- I also feel a strong responsibility to represent the diverse and multifaceted experiences of the people of my country. While I'm free to write about whatever inspires me, I also feel a sense of duty to use my writing to shed light on the stories and experiences of those who are often overlooked or underrepresented.

Book Title: Living in Ibadan, Writing for the World

You recently revealed the cover of your debut poetry anthology, and it's truly stunning. The creative process behind the book cover design started with a lot of brainstorming and sketching. I wanted to create a cover that would represent the themes of the anthology in a visually striking way. I worked with my art illustrator to explore different ideas and concepts, and eventually we landed on the final design.

Can you share some of the creative process behind the cover design, and what it represents?

My art illustrator was able to bring my vision to life in a way that exceeded my expectations. I'm so happy with the final result, and I hope readers will be too.

What was the thought process behind the imagery and color scheme?

The imagery is meant to evoke a sense of wonder and possibility, while the color scheme is meant to be warm

and inviting. I wanted the cover to feel like a welcoming invitation to enter the world of the poems.

Pidgin English is a unique and fascinating language. What made you decide to write your poetry anthology in Pidgin English, and how did you approach the process of writing in this language? I wanted to do something entirely different from what I've been doing before. I was drawn to the expressive power and cultural significance of Pidgin English, and I wanted to explore the possibilities of writing poetry in this language.

Were there any particular challenges or surprises along the way?

It was both a challenging and rewarding experience, as I had to find new ways to express myself and to convey the essence of my poetry. The biggest surprise was the emotional impact that writing in Pidgin English had on me. I felt a deep connection to the words and a sense of uniqueness that I had not experienced before. It was an unforgettable and

transformative experience.

Your poetry anthology is set in Nigeria, a country with a rich and complex history. How has living in Nigeria influenced your writing and your perspective as a poet? My experiences living in Nigeria have had a profound impact on my writing. The hardships faced by the people of Nigeria have had a deep impact on my writing. The struggles of everyday life, the lack of opportunity, and the inequality that many people face have all shaped my perspective and influenced the themes of my poetry.

How do you think your experiences in Nigeria have shaped the themes and ideas explored in your poetry?

I've tried to give voice to the experiences of the people of Nigeria, and to express the hope and resilience that I've witnessed in the face of hardship. My poetry is a reflection of the human spirit, and I hope it conveys the strength and dignity of the Nigerian people.

Many poetry anthologies

are written in standard English. Why did you choose to write your anthology in Pidgin English, and what do you think the advantages are of writing in this language?

I chose to write in Pidgin English because I felt that the vibrant and expressive nature of Pidgin English would lend itself well to poetry. It has a musicality and rhythm that is quite unique and powerful.

Do you feel that Pidgin English lends itself well to poetry, and why? How does it differ from writing in standard English?

The flexibility of the language allows for a more free and creative expression of ideas. I also felt that writing in Pidgin English would be a way to bring this language and its speakers to the forefront, and to celebrate the beauty of Nigerian culture.

How does the Pidgin English used in your anthology differ from the dialects used in other parts of the world?

I think it is very important to understand that Pidgin English is a dialect that has evolved over time, and it varies from place to place.

English is a universal language that can be understood by people from all cultures, or is it more specific to Nigeria and West Africa?

I think it is very important to understand that Pidgin English is a dialect that has evolved over time, and it varies from place to place. While some of the words and expressions used in my anthology may be understood by people from other parts of the world, I think the language itself is specific to Nigeria and other West African Countries.

How do you think using Pidgin English will affect the reception of your poetry anthology?

I also think that the use of Pidgin English in my poetry will give it a unique voice and perspective that will be appreciated by readers who are interested in Nigerian culture and history. I'm excited to see how my poetry is received by people from different cultures and backgrounds.

What was your experience growing up as a writer in

Nigeria?

As a writer growing up in Nigeria, I didn't have access to a rich literary community. In fact, I felt isolated from other writers and it was difficult to find a place where I could express myself freely.

Did you have access to a rich literary community, or did you feel isolated from other writers?

However, this lack of access to a literary community also forced me to find my own voice and style as a writer. I used my experiences and observations to create stories that reflected my unique perspective and worldview.

How did you find your voice as a writer, and what role did the Nigerian literary scene play in that process?

I used my experiences and observations to create stories that reflected my unique perspective and worldview. I felt that my story was a way to connect with others and to express the thoughts and emotions that I couldn't share in any other way.

How does your identity as a Nigerian writer shape your perspective and approach to writing?

My identity as a Nigerian writer shapes my perspective and approach to writing in a number of ways. First and foremost, my experiences growing up in Nigeria have informed my worldview and the way I view the world around me.

Do you feel a responsibility to represent the Nigerian experience in your work, or do you feel free to write about whatever inspires you?

I also feel a strong responsibility to represent the diverse and multifaceted experiences of the people of my country. While I'm free to write about whatever inspires me, I also feel a sense of duty to use my writing to shed light on the stories and experiences of those who are often overlooked or underrepresented.

How do you balance your personal experiences and observations with your responsibilities as a writer?

I believe that it's possible to

One On One With The Very Young Stars In Nigeria

By The Name Of Ayodeji Ajagbe Interview

Contd from Page 18

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balance my personal experiences and observations with my responsibilities as a writer by remaining authentic and true to myself while also using my platform to share the stories of others. In this way, I hope to create a dialogue that is both personal and universal.

What do you hope readers will take away from your poetry anthology?
I hope that readers of my poetry anthology will take away a sense of connection and understanding of the human experience.

What kind of experience do you hope they will have when reading your work?
My ultimate goal as a writer is to use my words to create a space where people can feel seen and heard, and where they can explore their own identities and perspectives.

Are you hoping to evoke certain emotions or inspire particular thoughts and ideas?
I hope to evoke a wide range of emotions in my readers, from joy and laughter to sadness and introspection.

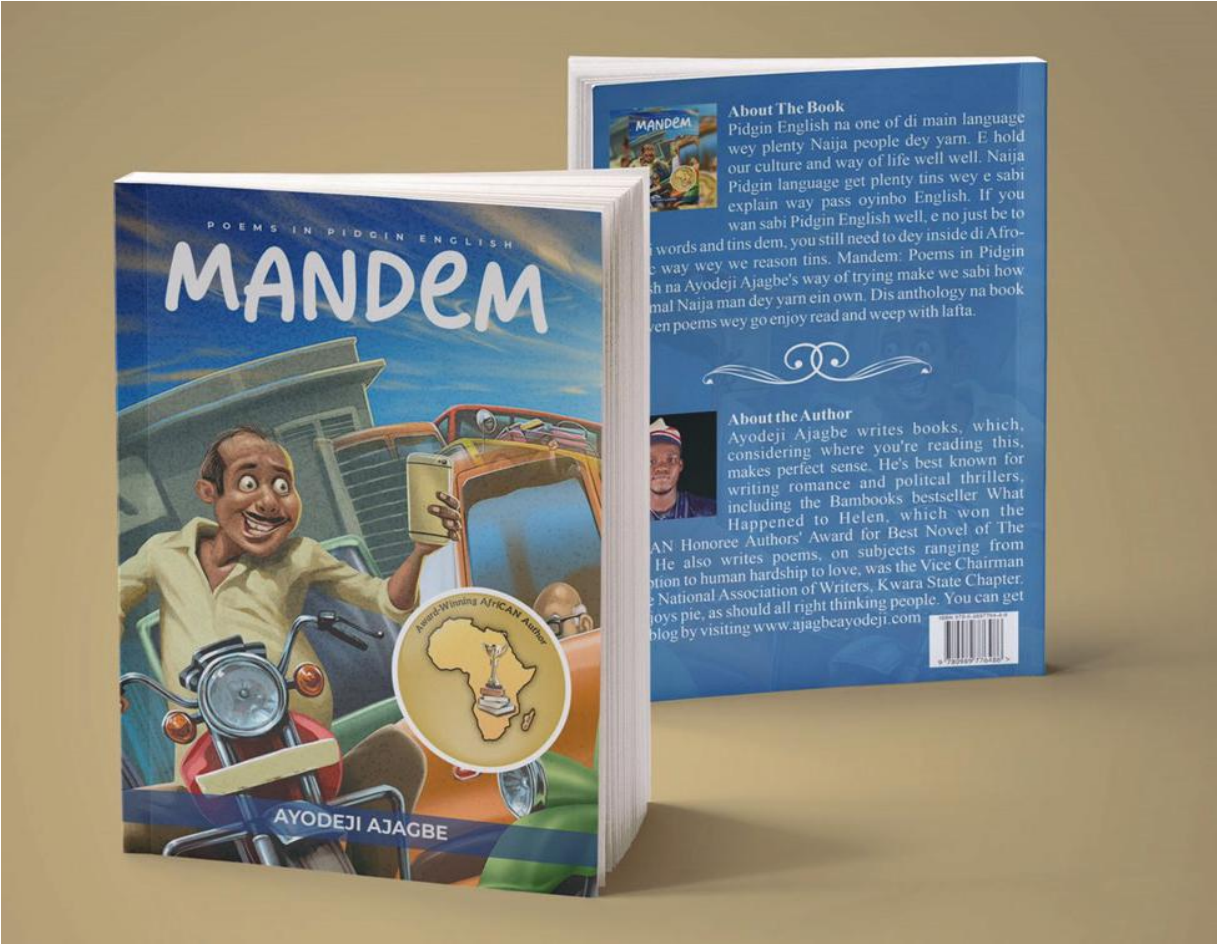
What's your ultimate goal as a

writer?
I also hope to inspire a sense of curiosity and wonder, and to encourage readers to reflect on their own lives and experiences.

What's the most rewarding part of the writing process for you?
Is it the initial spark of inspiration, the feeling of flow as the words come together, or the sense of satisfaction.

When the poem is finally complete, What do you find most satisfying about the creative process?
For me, the most rewarding part of the writing process is the feeling of satisfaction when the poem is finally complete. There's something so special about looking at a piece of writing and knowing that it came from you, and that you created something beautiful and meaningful. It's a sense of pride and accomplishment that is difficult to describe. It's not about the initial spark of inspiration, or the feeling of flow as the words come together. Those are important parts of the process, but the true satisfaction comes from seeing the finished product and knowing that you've created something that will last beyond you.

What do you do when you're not writing?
When I'm not writing, I enjoy spending time indoors, reading, listening to music and spending time



with friends and family.

Do you have other creative outlets, or do you find that writing takes up most of your creative energy?
I find that having other creative outlets, like photography and singing, helps to keep my mind active and inspired.

Do you think having other creative pursuits helps or hinders your writing, or does it not make a difference?
I don't think these pursuits hinder my writing, but rather they help me to recharge my batteries and come back to my writing with a fresh per-

spective.

Do you think it's important for writers to have other interests besides writing?
I do think it's important for writers to have other interests besides writing, as it can help to prevent burnout and keep the creative juices flowing.

India

Explosion hits Jehovah's Witnesses prayer meeting in India's Kerala

The blast takes place as hundreds gather for Sunday prayer in the southern town of Kalamassery in Kerala state.



People gather outside at the Zamra convention centre in Kalamassery, India on Sunday, October 2023 after an explosion that authorities say killed one and injured more than 20 [AP Photo]

The blast takes place as hundreds gather for Sunday prayer in the southern town of Kalamassery in Kerala state. An explosion at a Christian prayer meeting in the southern Indian state of Kerala has killed one person and wounded at least 36, according to authorities. The blast took place as hundreds of

followers of the Jehovah's Witnesses denomination gathered for prayer on Sunday morning at a convention centre in Kalamassery town in Ernakulam district. "At about 9:40am [04:10 GMT], there was an explosion in Zamra International Convention Centre in which one person died and 36 are undergoing treatment," Kerala's

Director General of Police Darvesh Saheb told reporters. "We will find out who is behind this and take stringent action ... preliminary investigation shows it was an IED [improvised explosive device] blast," he said. Videos filmed shortly after the explosion and posted online showed flames inside the building and res-

cuers helping people clear out. "We are examining all angles and will find out who is behind this," Saheb added. Meanwhile, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) law and order, MR Ajith Kumar, said during a news conference that a person named Dominic Martin, who claimed responsibility for the explosion, had surrendered at a police station in Thrissur district about 65km (40 miles) north from the site of the incident. The suspect is "claiming that he has done it", saying that "he belonged to the same group of sabha", Kumar told reporters, adding that police is "verifying" the claims.

Jehovah's Witnesses
The Jehovah's Witnesses sect of Christianity is known for its worldwide practice of door-to-door evangelism. The movement teaches non-violence and stays politically neutral, with members refusing to vote or serve in the military. India, with a population of 1.4 billion, has only about 60,000 Jehovah's Witnesses followers, its adher-

ents say. There are about 28 million Christians in India, as per the 2011 census. A section of local media reported that there were three separate blasts at the prayer gathering, each hitting different areas of the convention hall. "The explosions occurred seconds after the end of a prayer as part of the day's event. The first blast took place in the middle of the hall. Seconds later, two more explosions rocked simultaneously on either side of the hall," TA Sreekumar, regional spokesperson for the Jehovah's Witnesses, told mathrubhumi.com. The Jehovah's Witnesses sect, founded in the United States in the 1870s, has frequently been the victim of persecution around the world. In Russia, the movement has been branded as an "extremist" group despite its pacifist views, and hundreds of its followers have been arrested in recent years. In March, an armed man killed seven people in Hamburg, Germany at a Jehovah's Witnesses prayer hall.

Source: news agencies

UK-Kenya

UK Embassy In Kenya Rebrands Vehicles With ‘Nairobi Matatu’ Graffiti Ahead Of Royal Visit

Worth Noting:

- On Monday, President William Ruto met with Wigan and other senior officials to discuss royal visit.
- Speaking following the meeting, President Ruto said the visit is a significant opportunity to enhance the collaboration between Kenya and UK in various areas of shared interest.
- “Kenya is honoured that King Charles III and Queen Camilla have chosen our country for their first visit to a Commonwealth nation. This choice is testament to the depth of our relations and the mutual beneficial nature of our partnership,” President Ruto said.
- On October 11, the British High Commission in Nairobi said the visit serves as a “celebration of the enduring and warm relationship between Kenya and the United Kingdom highlighting the strong and dynamic partnership they continue to forge.”



The British High Commission in Nairobi has rebranded some of its vehicles with the Nairobi matatus graffiti art style ahead of the visit of King Charles III and Queen Camilla to Kenya slated next week.

King Charles III and the Queen are set to visit Kenya from Tuesday next week to Friday in a historic visit tracing back in 1952 when Queen Elizabeth II acceded to the throne in the country. The UK embassy in Kenya said that it collaborated with Nairobi's matatu graffiti artists Matwana Matatu Culture in the branding.

“For RoyalVisitKenya, we have branded our vans in the style of Nairobi matatus graffiti art, collaborating with the legendary matatu graffiti artists Matwana Matatu Culture,” the embassy said.

Commenting on the branding, the British High Commissioner to Kenya Neil Wigan described the branded vehicles as “cool.”

“These must be the coolest cars that Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office has?”

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and other senior officials to discuss royal visit.

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During their visit, the King and Queen will explore Nairobi City County, Mombasa County, and surrounding areas, with a program that reflects the collaborative efforts of Kenya and the United Kingdom.

The visit will focus on areas such as mutual prosperity,



climate change mitigation, youth opportunity and employment promotion, sustainable development, and regional stability.

While in Kenya, their Majesties will meet with President Ruto, the First Lady, and various members of the Kenyan Government, as well as engage with UN staff, CEOs, faith leaders, young people, future leaders, and Kenyan Marines training alongside UK Royal Marines.

The King will also participate in an event honoring the life and work of the late

Nobel Laureate, Professor Wangari Maathai, alongside Wangari's daughter, Wanjira Mathai.

The visit will underscore the close connections between the British and Kenyan people, particularly in areas such as the creative arts, technology, enterprise, education, and innovation. Additionally, it will acknowledge the more complex aspects of the shared history of the UK and Kenya, including the period of the Emergency (1952-1960). His Majesty will take the opportunity during the visit to

deepen his understanding of the challenges faced by the people of Kenya during this period.

Together, Their Majesties will tour a new museum dedicated to Kenya's history and lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior at Uhuru Gardens, paying their respects to the site of Kenya's declaration of independence in 1963.

Capital News

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Pakistan must not collectively punish Afghan refugees

Ordinary Afghans are not responsible for the perceived faults of a government they did not elect.

By: Obaidullah Baheer
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Worth Noting:

- Over the past few years, the Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban, has ramped up its attacks on security personnel and civilians. The Pakistani security apparatus and army have struggled to contain its terrorist activities, and government officials have repeatedly accused the Afghan Taliban of harbouring the group.
- It is important to put these developments in context. Pakistan played a key role in creating and bringing to power the Afghan Taliban in the 1990s. During the 20-year US occupation of Afghanistan, the Pakistani establishment gave refuge to the group. The TTP is a byproduct of this relationship. The leaders of the TTP all trained and developed bonds with the leaders of the Taliban during their time in the tribal areas of Pakistan.



Afghan people wait to apply for asylum from UNHCR outside the Islamabad Press Club in Islamabad on May 9, 2022 [File: AP/Rahmat Gul]

On October 3, Pakistan’s interim government announced it was giving “illegal immigrants” 28 days to leave the country. Those who do not do so would be forcefully deported starting on November 1. This unprecedented measure is directed specifically at the 1.73 million Afghans who have fled to Pakistan and who have not been able to attain formal refugee status. The announcement was made after the Pakistani government alleged that 14 out of 24 suicide bombings this year had been carried out by individuals holding Afghan citizenship. It has not put forward any evidence to support this claim yet. The threat of deportation has been condemned by multiple international organisations and governments. I, and many other Afghans, would attest to the warm hospitality Pakistan has shown Afghan people through the years. Afghans have had significantly better opportunities to study, live and work in Pakistan compared with other countries in the region. This long history of friendship should not be poisoned

by short-sighted and reactionary decisions. The treatment of Afghan refugees has already deteriorated significantly in Pakistan in recent years as they have been persistently blamed for security failures within the country. Over the past few years, the Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban, has ramped up its attacks on security personnel and civilians. The Pakistani security apparatus and army have struggled to contain its terrorist activities, and government officials have repeatedly accused the Afghan Taliban of harbouring the group. It is important to put these developments in context. Pakistan played a key role in creating and bringing to power the Afghan Taliban in the 1990s. During the 20-year US occupation of Afghanistan, the Pakistani establishment gave refuge to the group. The TTP is a byproduct of this relationship. The leaders of the TTP all trained and developed bonds with the leaders of the Taliban during their time in the tribal areas of Pakistan. But the TTP was formed in Pakistan and has operated for most of its existence from within the country.

Even if one were to accept the claim that today the Afghan Taliban allows the TTP’s leadership to operate from eastern Afghanistan, let us remember that the Afghan people did not choose the Taliban to rule them and they should not be punished for its decisions. Let us also recall that the elected Pakistani government was among the first to congratulate the Taliban on taking over Kabul and then Prime Minister Imran Khan even called it “breaking the chains of slavery”. It is important to note that the Afghan Taliban has made concrete progress in fighting terrorist groups, which has been acknowledged by the United States, China, Russia and countries in Afghanistan’s immediate neighbourhood. It has systematically attacked cells of the Islamic State-Khorasan Province, which claimed a deadly suicide bombing in July in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Its government in Kabul has also made an effort to address Pakistan’s security concerns regarding the TTP. In 2022, the Taliban hosted negotiations between Pakistan and the TTP that resulted in a ceasefire lasting five months. When the Pa-

kistani military carried out air raids in April last year on Afghan territory, violating Afghanistan’s sovereignty and killing civilians, the Taliban government had a rather mellow reaction, issuing a statement condemning the attacks as “cruelty”, a response that was quite unpopular among Afghans. Then in August, the Taliban’s supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, issued a decree forbidding cross-border attacks. In late September, Taliban government forces detained about 200 TTP fighters on Afghan territory. Against the backdrop of all these events, it is unfortunate that the Pakistani government decided to ignore the potential for meaningful security cooperation and take a populist and inhumane decision to expel Afghans. Pakistan is a nation born during the biggest migration of people in modern history. Its people know what seeking safe haven means. They also know the trauma of collective punishment. Today as Pakistanis are standing up to denounce Israel’s collective punishment of Palestinians, they should not close their eyes and stay silent about the decision to

expel an Afghan population almost as large as that of Gaza. I call upon our friends in Pakistan to appeal to their government and demand that they respect the Afghan refugees’ basic rights to dignity and safety. African American poet Maya Angelou once said: “No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.” Pakistanis should not let those who need kindness the most become the victims of ill-conceived foreign policies. If carried out, this cruel act of deportation would negatively affect relations between both countries for years to come. The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect our editorial stance.

Obaidullah Baheer is a lecturer of Transitional Justice at the American University in Afghanistan. He holds a postgraduate degree in International Relations from the University of New South Wales, Australia. His research was titled “A Study of the Ideational and Structural Factors Hindering Negotiations with the Taliban”.

Revealed: Ex-Nigerian gov't official to share in \$11bn gas scandal damages

Grace Taiga, who received money from P&ID before the signing, is one of three Nigerians who will get a share of the landmark award if the court orders Nigeria to pay.



A gas flare burns at the Batan flow station operated by Chevron under a joint-venture arrangement with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) for the onshore and offshore assets in the Niger Delta region on March 26, 2018 [Pius Utomi Ekpei/AFP]

By Olivier Holmey

A former Nigerian civil servant could receive a portion of an enormous sum of damages if a British court rules against the West African nation, in a landmark case centred on a multi-billion dollar gas deal.

As part of an arrangement that Nigeria's government calls "extraordinary" and "corrupt", Grace Taiga, the petroleum ministry's former head lawyer, hopes to share in the record-breaking \$11.4bn awarded to the offshore company Process & Industrial Developments (P&ID) before England's High Court.

Court filings and testimonies seen by Al Jazeera show that Taiga is one of three Nigerians who stand to make money if the court orders Nigeria to pay the award – an outcome that could severely damage the country's economy. The other two are the businessmen Adetunji Adebayo and Mohammed Kuchazi.

In January 2017, a London-based arbitration panel ruled that Nigeria pay \$6.6bn to P&ID as compensation for breaching the contract awarded in 2010. That amount has since ballooned to \$11.4bn with interest. But Nigeria has refused to pay, claiming P&ID bribed officials including Taiga to secure the gas contract.

In an eight-week trial that ended in March this year, the government petitioned the High Court to invalidate the arbitration award. The court's decision is expected within weeks.

Analysts say if Nigeria is ordered to pay the damages, its

economy could be severely damaged.

"The negative shock would be monumental," Olusegun Vincent, associate professor of finance at Pan-Atlantic University in Lagos State, told Al Jazeera. "It may take us back to the pre-1999 military era, when Nigeria wasn't creditworthy," he said, pointing to the risk that the government would be unable to pay its debt.

'The P&ID scam'

This scandal began in the late 2000s when the administration of then-President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua planned to address Nigeria's energy supply crisis by exploiting vast untapped gas reserves in its mineral-rich Niger Delta region.

Seizing the opportunity, P&ID pitched an ambitious project to the petroleum ministry, to build and operate a gas-processing plant near the southern city of Calabar despite having never undertaken a project like that before.

Taiga was at the centre of negotiations: She worked on the contract wording, recommended to the late Rilwanu Lukman, the petroleum minister then, that he sign a memorandum of understanding with P&ID in 2009, and witnessed his signing of the gas contract the following year.

Under the terms of the agreement, the government would provide wet gas to P&ID for free over 20 years. The two parties would then split the processed resource, with the government using its share to help power the country's energy grid.

But the project never got off the ground. P&ID never

built the plant and Nigeria never provided the company with any gas. P&ID blamed the government for the failure and convinced an arbitration panel it had been wronged.

The panel awarded the company damages equivalent to the total hypothetical profit the company would have made over the lifespan of the contract – \$ 6.6bn plus interest of \$1.3m per day from the time the contract was breached.

Evidence later emerged that Taiga had received close to \$10,000 from individuals and companies linked to P&ID ahead of the contract signing. Before the High Court, Taiga acknowledged having received money but said that these payments were merely gifts from a family friend, P&ID co-founder Michael Quinn. P&ID said it had done everything in its power to make the project work. However, its inexperience and Taiga's receipt of undisclosed funds eventually led the Nigerian government to believe that it had been the victim of an elaborate fraud.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, then-President Muhammadu Buhari vowed to confront "the P&ID scam", which he said was "attempting to cheat Nigeria of billions of dollars".

Anticorruption campaigners seem to agree with him.

"The story of how a small offshore company with no meaningful track record, no website, and only a handful of employees managed to win a multibillion-dollar gas contract raises red flags for corruption that call for careful scrutiny," Helen Taylor,

senior legal researcher at the British NGO Spotlight on Corruption, told Al Jazeera. The High Court will adjudicate these points. If Nigeria loses the case, the country would be legally bound to pay P&ID what amounts to eight times its 2023 federal health budget.

'Part of the family'

How the proceeds would be divided, meanwhile, has long remained confidential. Taiga, who had previously denied in affidavits that she would receive any money from the award, finally told the High Court under oath on February 16: "I do have expectations." Asked by Nigeria's lawyer how much she expected P&ID co-founder Brendan Cahill to share with her, she said: "I did not put my mind on a particular ceiling."

In one document dated October 2017, Cahill recorded a "commitment" of \$200,000 to Taiga; in another, dated May 2019, the figure was put at \$500,000. Al Jazeera has seen both documents, which form part of the evidence before the High Court. Cahill, an Irish businessman who founded P&ID alongside the now-deceased Michael Quinn, said that these were not firm commitments. "I sought to reassure her that she would be looked after to some degree," he told the court. "I didn't specify how or when."

In court, Taiga denied having secretly helped Quinn and Cahill when she handled the gas contract at the petroleum ministry. But she added that she now saw herself as "part of the family" that is P&ID.

"It's remarkable that this Nigerian government official who helped broker the controversial gas deal with P&ID now belongs to the close-knit beneficiaries of this opaque offshore company," said Taylor. "Far from clearing up this conflict of interest, the obscure arrangements for paying her a cut of P&ID's profits are deeply compromising to her credibility as a former public official."

A billion-dollar promise and 'lots of uncertainty' For his part, Adetunji Adebayo, executive chairman of Nigerian gas company GFD Energy and middleman for P&ID during settlement negotiations with the government, could be entitled to \$1.4bn. In an affidavit dated May 2022, Cahill wrote that "Mr Adebayo was promised 10 percent of the income from the arbitration" but added that there was still "a lot of uncertainty around the amount, if any, that will be paid out."

Adebayo did not appear before the High Court.

Mohammed Kuchazi, who as P&ID's commercial director assisted the firm in its relationship with the petroleum ministry, told the court that he believes himself to be entitled to 3 percent of the award – some \$340m – as per an agreement he said he reached with Quinn. Cahill confirmed the existence of that deal in his affidavit.

In his own affidavit, Kuchazi wrote that he had been friends with Lukman, the minister, since the 1960s. Before entering business, Kuchazi had been a Nigerian politician.

Asked for further comment, Kuchazi's lawyer Eric Ifere told Al Jazeera that his client's entitlement to "a 3 percent commission" was supported by a written agreement with P&ID. He declined to share that document.

The Nigerian government has accused Adebayo and Kuchazi of having bribed Nigerian officials on P&ID's behalf. The company and Kuchazi denied the accusations before the High Court. Adebayo, Taiga, and P&ID did not respond to Al Jazeera's requests for comment.

Source: Al Jazeera

Worth Noting:

- This scandal began in the late 2000s when the administration of then-President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua planned to address Nigeria's energy supply crisis by exploiting vast untapped gas reserves in its mineral-rich Niger Delta region.
- Seizing the opportunity, P&ID pitched an ambitious project to the petroleum ministry, to build and operate a gas-processing plant near the southern city of Calabar despite having never undertaken a project like that before.
- Taiga was at the centre of negotiations: She worked on the contract wording, recommended to the late Rilwanu Lukman, the petroleum minister then, that he sign a memorandum of understanding with P&ID in 2009, and witnessed his signing of the gas contract the following year.
- Under the terms of the agreement, the government would provide wet gas to P&ID for free over 20 years. The two parties would then split the processed resource, with the government using its share to help power the country's energy grid.

Tyson Fury knocked down but beats Francis Ngannou on a split decision

Former UFC fighter Ngannou almost delivers one of boxing’s biggest upsets as he gives the heavyweight champion a scare.

Worth Noting:

- Fury said there was no rematch clause but he would like to fight Ngannou again “down the line” after an undisputed title fight with Ukraine’s IBF, IBO, WBO and WBA champion Oleksandr Usyk.
- The pair are set to meet in Riyadh at a date yet to be announced officially but which both champions said will be December 23.
- Ngannou said he felt “fantastic”, despite the loss.
- “I’m very happy. It didn’t go my way, but I want to thank ... the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [for] the opportunity to prove people wrong one more time.”
- The fight was inside 26,000-seat Kingdom Arena, Riyadh, and the preliminary bouts were in a nearby outside venue constructed for the event.



Tyson Fury, left, fights Francis Ngannou in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia [Ahmed Yosri/Reuters]

WBC heavyweight world champion Tyson Fury has beaten former UFC fighter Francis Ngannou on a split decision in a non-title fight in Saudi Arabia that almost delivered one of boxing’s biggest upsets. Fury, the unbeaten holder of one of the sport’s most prestigious belts, narrowly avoided a first defeat on Sunday at the hands of a 37-year-old opponent who had never boxed professionally before but went through the full 10 rounds with some swagger. Ngannou, whose UFC record was 17-3, knocked down the Briton in the third round with a left hook, although the 35-year-old self-styled “Gypsy King” was able to see out the round.

But this was a missed opportunity at a major upset. Ngannou landed only six of 38 punches in the final two rounds, according to CompuBox, compared with 14 of 37 for Fury. Fury landed more punches overall (71-59), but Ngannou hit the mark with more power shots (37-32). Fury remained undefeated at 34-0-1 with 24 knockouts but was under no illusions about the near-upset. “That definitely wasn’t in the script,” said Fury after two of the judges gave him the win 96-93 and 95-94. The third judge scored it 95-94 in favour of his Cameroon-French opponent. “He’s a hell of a fighter and a hell of a lot better boxer than we thought he would be.

He’s an awkward man and a good puncher and I respect him a lot. “He’s given me one of my toughest fights of the last 10 years.” Fury said there was no rematch clause but he would like to fight Ngannou again “down the line” after an undisputed title fight with Ukraine’s IBF, IBO, WBO and WBA champion Oleksandr Usyk. The pair are set to meet in Riyadh at a date yet to be announced officially but which both champions said will be December 23. Ngannou said he felt “fantastic”, despite the loss. “I’m very happy. It didn’t go my way, but I want to thank ... the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [for] the opportunity

to prove people wrong one more time.” The fight was inside 26,000-seat Kingdom Arena, Riyadh, and the preliminary bouts were in a nearby outside venue constructed for the event. This not only was his first boxing match, but Ngannou had not competed at all since beating Ciryil Gane in UFC 270 in January 2022. Ngannou, 37, had a falling out with the UFC earlier this year. UFC President Dana White stripped him of his belt in January, and in May, Ngannou signed with the rival Professional Fighters League. His first fight for the PFL is expected to take place early next year. “I know I’ve come up short, but I’m going to go back and

work harder with a little more experience this time, a little more feeling of the game and come back stronger,” Ngannou said. “This is a new sport that I never did, that I never fit. Now I know I can do this ... get ready. The wolf is in the house.”

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies