

Winter temperatures in the United Kingdom are plummeting to below freezing

Freezing Britain

Hot politics: The Sunak 'faction' won 313 in favour and 269 against:



Freezing Britain, hot politics - people struggle for survival as politicians battle it out on immigration: BRITAIN AIMS FOR A WHITE CHRISTMAS AMID BLEAK BLACK BLOT OF

HUNGER AND COST-LIVING-CRISIS

By: Shamlal Puri
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& Senior Editor - UK
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Did he do well as Prime Minister?... Not really, say the majority of Britons on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's progress report. File Photo Shamlal Puri

Winter temperatures in the United Kingdom are plummeting to below freezing, bringing snowfalls in parts of the country; there are high hopes of White Christmas. However, there is increased political heat as lawmakers fight on the migration crisis, holding the nation to ransom. Any talk of a crisis in this part of the world would inevitably lead your thoughts to the British Houses of Parliament, where a battle of strange sorts has been raging these past few weeks, pointing to a winter of discontent among the warring MPs.

On Tuesday, British MPs

voted on the Rwanda Policy with the central question - Is Rwanda a safe country to deport asylum seekers arriving in the UK?

This question arose because Rwanda has a bloodstained past where thousands were killed in the 1990s in the tribal war between the firebrand Hutus and the Tutsis, in which an estimated one million people were reportedly killed.

Official figures claim 800,000, mainly from the weaker tribe, were killed.

The weaker ones - men, women and children were slaughtered, and their skulls, some with deep gashes, lie in the Skulls Museum in Rwan-

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Sino-Kenya



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Africa must challenge the West's colonial game plan for Palestine

Old (colonial) habits die hard. After a two-day meeting of foreign ministers from the wealthy Group of Seven (G7) countries in the Japanese capital, Tokyo, in early November, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas

would no longer be allowed to rule Gaza. "Israel has repeatedly told us that there's no going back to October 6 before the barbaric attacks by Hamas," Blinken said, adding that Gaza - besieged and separated from the rest of the occupied Palestin-

ian territory - should eventually be unified with the West Bank but only "under the Palestinian Authority". Hence, the G7 nations - the United States, Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy - plus the European Union seemingly ignored what the rest of the

world and, most importantly Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere, may think or want and singlehandedly decided that Hamas is effectively

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GIFTED SCHOOLGIRL AUTHOR JAANYA RAISES CHRISTMAS CHEER WITH CHILDREN'S FANTASY

Reviewer: SHAMLAL PURI, Senior Editor in London

By: Shamlal Puri
Associate publisher
& Senior Editor – UK
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Title: THE MISSING SANTA

Author: Jaanya Bajwa, aged 9

Pages: 80

Published by: BriBooks

Price: USD 13.50

Talented Indian schoolgirl Jaanya Bajwa is not the one to miss out on penning her fantasies to share with the world, and what better time than the Yuletide season to raise much-needed cheer? Her second book, Missing Santa, has just rolled off the presses. She wrote it when she was eight years old.

Every child looks out for Santa Claus on Christmas day, rolling on his sleigh loaded with parcels and reindeer sweeping the sky across the moon and among the twinkling stars waiting to get in through the chimney to deliver their gifts of happiness and joy.

Dreamy children stay awake late on Christmas Eve for a knock on their chimney, singing ho ho ho and the sounds of jingle bell jingle bell...

The story starts with Tom on Christmas evening, who is asked by his parents to write that dream letter to Santa, giving a list of the gifts he wants.

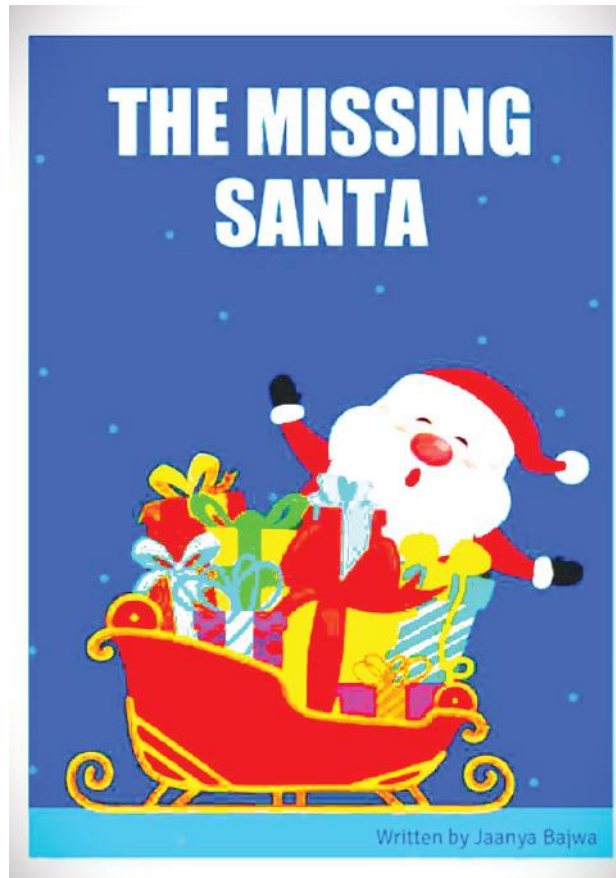
So far, so good.
But all hell gets loose when Santa goes missing, leaving his empty sleigh and reindeer Rudolph in confusion.

What happened? Has he been kidnapped? Who would want to harm an innocent-looking Santa, the harbinger of good news for children as the snow-blanketed hazy sun rises on Christmas Day?

This is when Tom finds the missing Santa with his pet dog, Fluffy.

The rest of it is adventure reading not to be missed. It builds loads of fantasies for young minds.

I asked Jaanya, a Standard Three pupil at Chatrabhuj Narsee School in Mumbai, where she got the idea for



Front Cover of Missing Santa by Jaanya Bajwa



All set for her adventure holiday with her mom Disha, Jaanya stops by her favourite toy stall at Mumbai Airport. Photo Disha Dhama

this fascinating book. "The Real story I had written in my English notebook because it was given as homework," she recalls, "and I decided to write a book by adding extra interesting points."

She spends her free time reading children's books and has lately diverted her attention to reading books about God. She has started writing her third book, mythology, adding her observations



Jaanya is a beautiful little schoolgirl with a treasure of ideas. Photo Disha Dhama



When Jaanya is free, like any growing child, she loves to dabble with her mobile phone. Photo Disha Dhama.

and thoughts. Jaanya says she playing with her friends and writing, according to her mood. Her dotting mother, Disha Dhama, is her inspiration and looks after her. Asked if she wishes to be a

full-time writer, Jaanya says, after a thought, "I'm going to choose a different profession, which I'm not aware of as of now, but writing would surely be a passion I would love to continue".

Worth Noting:

• Dreamy children stay awake late on Christmas Eve for a knock on their chimney, singing ho ho ho and the sounds of jingle bell jingle bell...

• The story starts with Tom on Christmas evening, who is asked by his parents to write that dream letter to Santa, giving a list of the gifts he wants.

• So far, so good.
• But all hell gets loose when Santa goes missing, leaving his empty sleigh and reindeer Rudolph in confusion.

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Commentary:

IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE A FRIEND OR FOE?

By: Maya Madkoriya
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

- This AI was invented to solve people's problems by machines. So that people's lives can become more manageable. The impossible had to be made possible with the help of science. Such as any disease being detected by machines and treated on time.
- Machines are a boon as they help farmers grow crops according to weather information.
- The humble typewriter evolved into an Amstrad dot the dot-matrix printer computer using floppy discs along its journey, giving entry to Apple, Samsung, and all manner of computers, laptops, and tablets, which people could handle were invented This was seen during its time as climbing the ladder of technical innovation.

The globe has gone gaga with Artificial Intelligence (AI), giving the impression that it has just woken from a long technical slumber.

Until now, we get the impression that our knowledge was clouded with comparatively low-level Acrobat, Windows, dictionary, and online searches on friends like Google, but now we get a different perspective of information using science and how to get it at the press of a button.

The message that seems to be coming out from the technically savvy people is that it is now or never using AI and that you are a technical pauper without it.

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Similarly, with the help of machines, the living standards of people worldwide

are improved, and they are employed so that humans complete tasks without hiccups.

Is AI a boon or a curse?

There is trepidation around the world that AI could be a monster hijacking every field, making human beings redundant.

The fear of AI is so prevalent in governments that in the first week of November, amidst the explosions of the Israel-Hamas war in the Middle East, heads of 28 countries, prominent leaders and technology giants gathered in Britain's Bletchley Park.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak hosted the meeting amid internal political turmoil. US Vice President Kamala Harris, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Elon Musk were also there.

It is known that governments are terrified of this new scientific discovery, i.e., machines with brains, leading to efforts to enshrine it in law and limit its usage. This is expected to happen at such lightning speed that it would be surprising.

Bletchley Park, located about 70 km from London, is a very exciting place. The AI, which the heads of governments are worried about while trying to control it, was born in this very place.

It is said that Hitler's defeat was because of a mathematician, Alan Turing. It was in this park's codebreaking centre that Turing created the machine for breaking the Enigma code, the powerhouse of Nazi communi-



Advocate Maya Madkoriya,,asks Artificial Intelligence a boon or curse?

cations.

After this, Hitler was defeated in three years. It was Turing who first showed the path to AI. His first research paper was published in 1950, in which he invented the Turing test to determine the parameters of intelli-

gence of machines.

A manifesto was issued in the same Bletchley Park in which it was written that before AI enslaves us, it must be controlled.

But the question is, can it be controlled? Only time will tell.

Maya Madkoriya is a practising Advocate at the Bhopal High Court in India. She is also a published author and popular community leader.

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The Current Generation Is The Basis Of Our Future!

By: **Oghiloy Aminova**
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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We will definitely build a new Uzbekistan together with the youth. 2024 will be a turning point in the youth policy.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev

The issue of educating our youth, who are the future of our country, as mature, knowledgeable, potential individuals, perfect human beings is being approached today in a unique way, on the basis of modern methods. .

All over the world, young people, their leadership skills, creative potential, unique energy and enthusiasm are an extremely important factor for the continuous development and progress of the world community.

In the path of historical development of any country, the rapid development of the country and the achievement of certain achievements, the well-being of the people is directly related to the level of attention paid to the education and future of the youth in that country. In this sense, it is no coincidence that the youth issue of Uzbekistan is considered one of the most priority

areas of state policy.

As President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated in his speech at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, "The future and well-being of our planet depends on how our children grow up to be human beings. Our main task is to create the necessary conditions for young people to show their potential."

When it comes to paying attention to the youth of our country, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of information technology and language skills in their development into educated and modern people. Taking this into account, our state pays great attention to the development of these areas. In particular, the head of our state paid a lot of attention to the youth, to the education of the youth, and also opened the door to many opportunities for them.

It is no exaggeration to say that the new generation will be the basis and foundation of our future. These days, we cannot count the number of opportunities available to young people. For example, you can now publish your creative work in foreign countries.

An example of this is Nafisa Ahmetjanova, a young designer from Karakalpakstan. Nafisa has been interested in painting since childhood. Therefore, it continues

its activities in this direction even now.

Apart from painting, Nafisa is also interested in design and media. To date, many covers prepared by Nafisa under her design, including Gulrukhsar Tahirjonova's book "Mysterious Ladies" and Mashhura Usmonova's book "Letter" in English, Nafisa can make good use of the opportunities.

As the head of our state said, young people are our future!

Oghiloy Aminova -Young poet. She is the ambassador of the UK SPSC organization, Pakistan "Iqra" Foundation, International "University of Wisdom" organizations in Uzbekistan.

The author's book was published in the European city of Moldova and is sold in the American Amazon online store in 26 countries of the world.

Coordinator of the "Intilish" Free Volunteer Movement, "We Are on One Side" project, Republic of Karakalpakstan.



Oghiloy Aminova -Young poet

AI

Its time to review Kenya's copyright laws to align to the AI age

By: **Susan Mute**
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

.....

Artificial Intelligence (AI), defined as the stimulation of human intelligence processes by machines through computer systems programmed to think like humans, suffers from intellectual property protection more so on the copyright protection in Kenya.

The Copyright Act, as amended in 2022, and the Copyright Regulations (2020), provide that copyright protections are only accorded to human work which constitute original authorship.

Since the adoption of artificial intelligence which serves to complement human innovation, copyright laws have maintained the status quo; only protecting original authorship by the humans.

The question of copyright protection on the use of artificial intelligence remains unanswered to date risking the protection of original authorship for published work.

Integrating AI poses mind-provok-

ing and one doesn't stop but wonder; Who between me and the AI owns the copyright? Who stands to be protected from copyright infringement?, and who has the right to seek redress in case of a violation? Until we resolve these concerns, innovation in the artificial intelligence era will face uncertainties in so far as copyright ownership/protection is concerned.

There is therefore need for amendments of the Kenyan laws to provide for the copyright ownership/protection where published work entails artificial intelligence.

Providing for these safeguards will help bridge the gap on the place of authorship through artificial intelligence and rights accorded to the copyright owner.

Susan Mute is a lawyer and legal researcher.



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Motivation

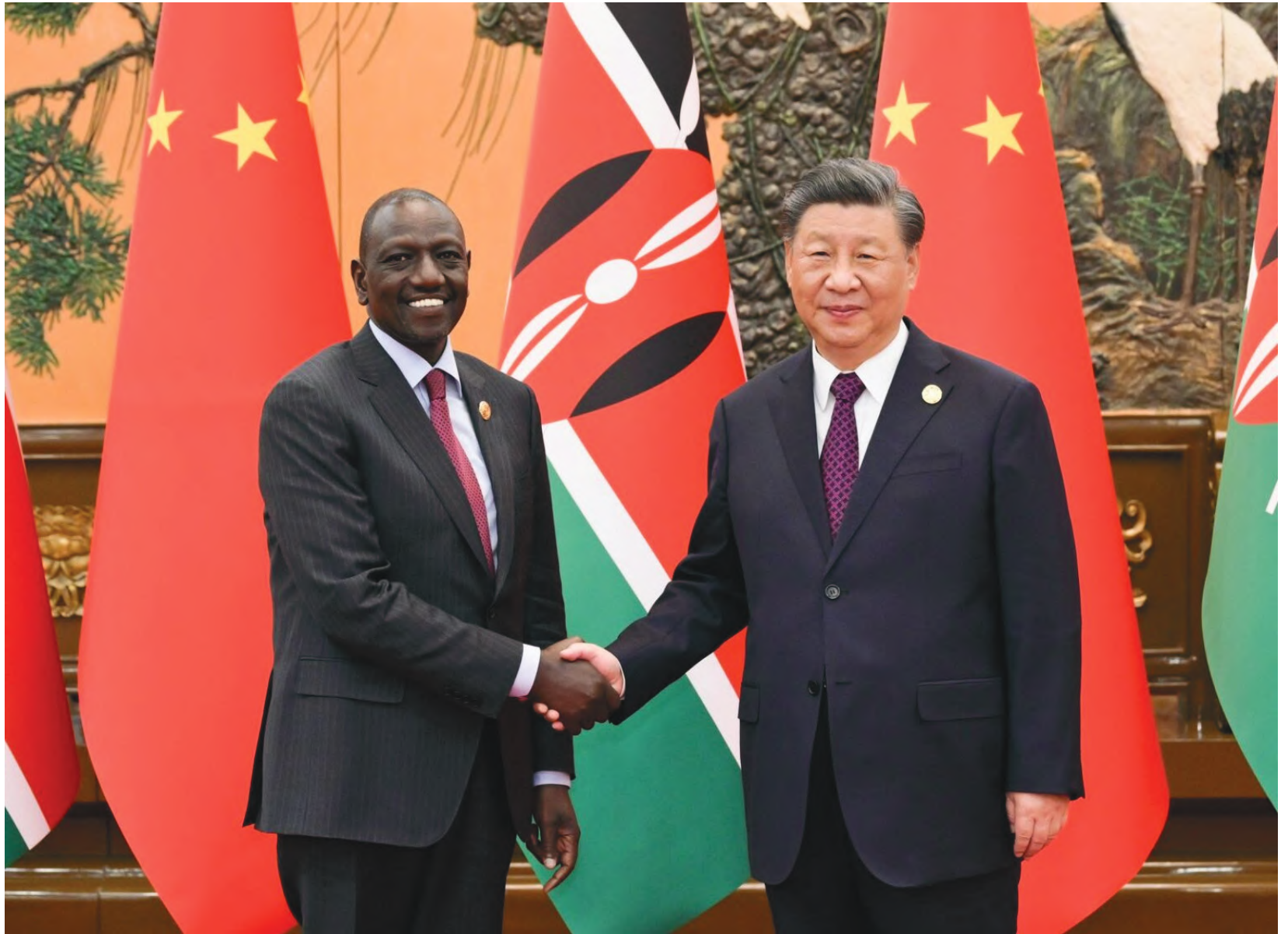
Celebrating 60 Years of Kenya-China Friendship: A Journey of Mutual Growth

By: Elijah Mwangi
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

Kenya's rapid development owes much to China, which has provided financing for major infrastructure projects. From the Nairobi-Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway to the Thika Superhighway and the new Expressway connecting the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to Westlands, Kenya is experiencing a remarkable transformation into modernity. These and other projects have been expedited through China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), initiated in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Elevating relations from a mutually beneficial comprehensive partnership in 2013 to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2017, Kenya has rightfully become China's leading trade partner in East Africa. Statistics indicate that China has consistently been Kenya's largest trade partner, with Sino-Kenyan trade reaching US\$8.52 billion in 2022, reflecting a 22.0 percent year-on-year increase. These tangible results are a testament to the strength of our bond.



Chinese leader Xi Jinping shakes hands with President William Ruto of Kenya after a bilateral meeting in Beijing, China on October 18, 2023. Kenya-China relations have been on an upward trajectory for over 60 years

Six decades have passed since Kenya and China established diplomatic relations, marking a profound milestone encompassing diplomacy, trade, and people-to-people exchanges.

This remarkable journey commenced on December 14, 1963, just two days after Kenya's historic attainment of independence from British colonial rule. The ensuing 60 years have witnessed the flourishing of a friendship rooted in mutual understanding, respect, and win-win cooperation.

Historians remind us that the roots of this enduring relationship trace back over 600 years, to the era of Admiral Zheng He's legendary voyages in the Indian Ocean during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Admiral Zheng He embarked on four voyages to Kenya between 1405 and 1433, fostering friendship and trust by exchanging Chinese goods and silk for exotic animals, including the cherished giraffe, symbolizing good fortune.

The foundation of this friendship was further solidified when Chen Yi, then Vice Premier and Foreign Minister of China, participated in the grand ceremony

marking Kenya's independence. On August 20, 1964, Chairman Mao Zedong received a Kenyan delegation at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. These pioneering efforts set the stage for enduring mutual ties.

So, what have these six decades of friendship meant for both nations? Successive governments from both sides have cultivated warm relations based on win-win cooperation, resulting in accelerated development in Kenya, the East African powerhouse.

Kenya's rapid development owes much to China, which has provided financing for major infrastructure projects. From the Nairobi-Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway to the Thika Superhighway and the new Expressway connecting the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to Westlands, Kenya is experiencing a remarkable transformation into modernity. These and other projects have been expedited through China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), initiated in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

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Today, thousands of Kenyan students are pursuing their education in China through various scholarships offered by the Chinese Embassy in Kenya, further enhancing knowledge exchange and fostering people-to-people ties.

As we celebrate 60 years of this enduring friendship between Kenya and China, let

us raise a toast to the future. May our relations continue to strengthen day by day. Cheers!

This milestone provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the significant strides made in various fields during this six-decade journey. The partnership between our nations has transcended economic cooperation; it has also touched the hearts of our people. The rich cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, and the warmth with which Kenyan students are welcomed in China have forged lasting connections.

Kenya's transformation into a modern nation with world-class infrastructure is a testament to the effectiveness of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI's impact on Kenya's infrastructure development is visible to all, and we must acknowledge the dedication and vision behind this transformative initiative.

Moreover, the success of our bilateral relationship is not confined to economic growth alone. It extends to the realm of diplomacy, where we have consistently supported each other on various international platforms. Our nations have

shared perspectives on global challenges, promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development.

The future holds great promise for Kenya-China relations. As we continue to deepen our friendship, there are exciting opportunities on the horizon. Collaboration in science, technology, and innovation will drive both nations toward greater prosperity. The exchange of ideas and expertise will further enhance our economic and social development.

In conclusion, as we mark this remarkable milestone, let us reaffirm our commitment to strengthening Kenya-China relations. The past 60 years have been a testament to what can be achieved through cooperation and mutual respect. As we toast to the next 60 years and beyond, may our friendship continue to flourish, benefiting both our great nations.

Long live Kenya, Long live China.

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

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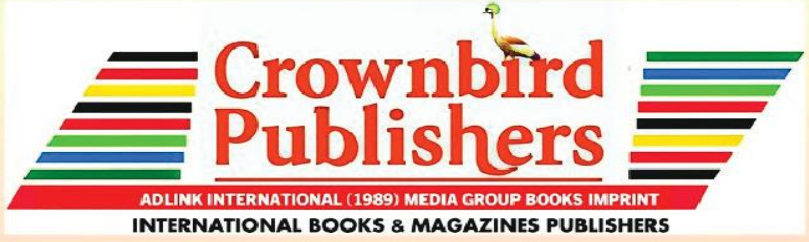
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UK News

Freezing Britain, hot politics - people struggle for survival as politicians battle it out on immigration:

BRITAIN AIMS FOR A WHITE CHRISTMAS AMID BLEAK BLACK BLOT OF HUNGER AND

COST-LIVING-CRISIS



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Worth Noting:

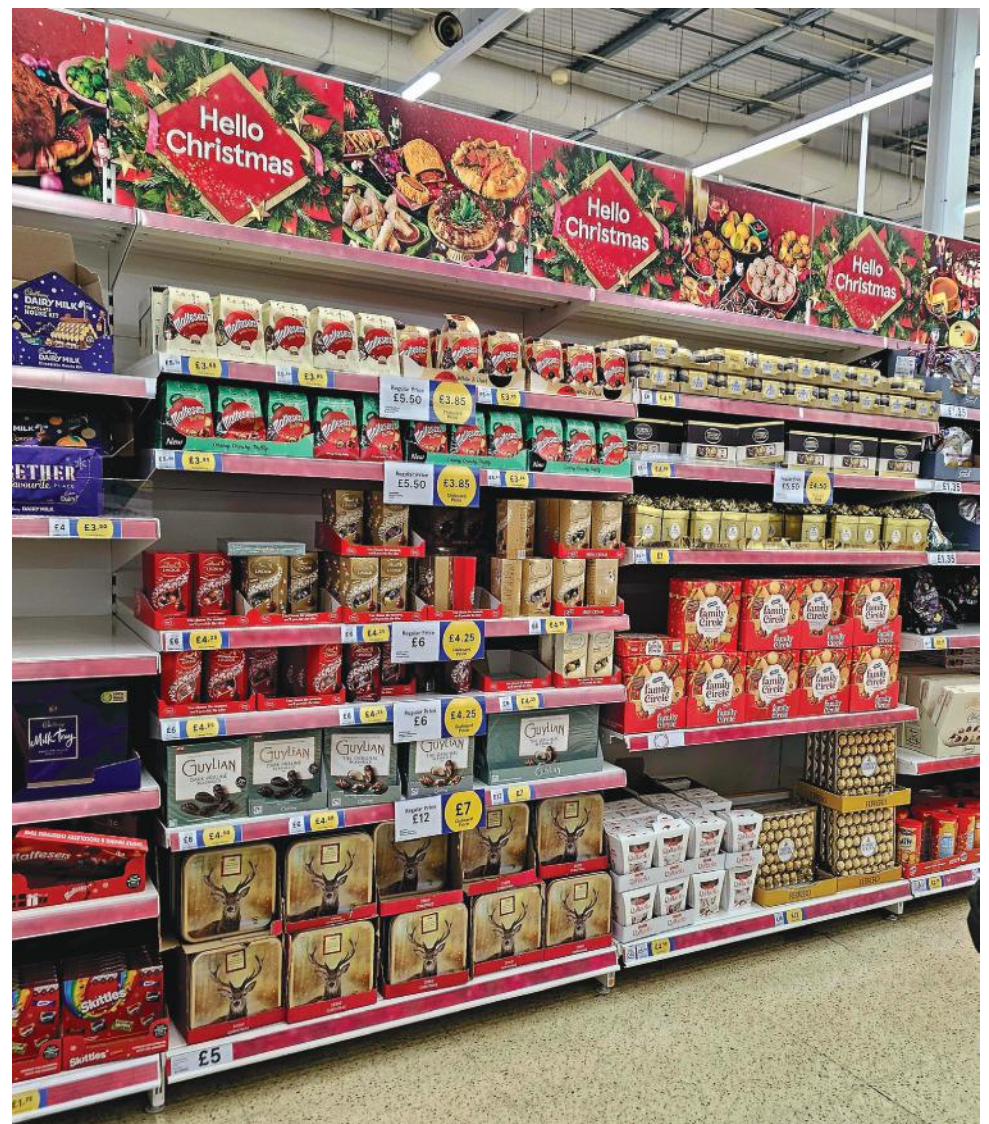
- As the British lawmakers debated their Rwanda Policy, there was rhetoric on both sides of the Tory Party. They were split into two groups – one against the Rwanda Asylum Agreement and those supporting Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his resurrected Rwanda Asylum policy, the original version of which had already seen one death after being declared illegal by the Supreme Court in London.
- During the crunch voting in the Commons, those supporting Sunak grouped and those against mainly right-wing Tories.
- The Sunak ‘faction’ won 313 in favour and 269 against. The government only won its vote in the Parliament, withdrawing some sections of Britain’s Human Rights Act. Still, it has yet to face challenges from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), from which some MPs demand this country pull out.

da as a stark reminder of its bloody past. As the British lawmakers debated their Rwanda Policy, there was rhetoric on both sides of the Tory Party. They were split into two groups – one against the Rwanda Asylum Agreement and those supporting Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his resurrected Rwanda Asylum policy, the original version of which had already seen one death after being declared illegal by the Supreme Court in London. During the crunch voting in the Commons, those supporting Sunak grouped and those against mainly right-wing Tories. The Sunak ‘faction’ won 313 in favour and 269 against. The government only won its vote in the Parliament, withdrawing some sections of Britain’s Human Rights Act. Still, it has yet to face challenges from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), from which some MPs demand this country pull out. The British Parliament agreed that Rwanda was a safe country to deport migrants. Really? Ask Rwanda diasporans living in the UK, who themselves had fled the genocide in their homeland. The Tories are determined to throw out illegal migrants even though it has crossed swords with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which blocked the earlier version of the Rwanda Policy, which the Supreme Court in London declared unlawful as it would breach British and international human rights. The Rwanda Asylum Pact has cost the British exchequer £240 million in the belief they would be able to deport thousands of migrants. Rwanda has, however, said it can accept only a few hundred. The Rwanda asylum exercise has drained much-needed cash resources that Britain can ill afford and could have been utilised for the welfare of Britons instead of what many critics see as a waste of funds. Amidst this political storm, these politicians have forgotten that there are people they have been elected to serve interests they have put on the back burner: they are British people to whom they owe loyalty. The UK is suffering from the credit crunch, cost of living

crisis, and spiralling energy costs with new tariffs coming into force in the New Year. Poverty is rife in the United Kingdom, with millions unable to buy food. The National Health Service is starved of money that could be used to beef up the crumbling system from which doctors and nurses are leaving in droves. New research from the Trussell Trust charity shows the extent of hunger in the UK is spiralling. Some 15% of all UK adults or their households have experienced food insecurity from June 2022 to June 2023. The research shows that certain groups of people are more at risk, the drivers pushing people towards hunger, and how this leads to further issues, including isolation, debt and health problems. The main driver of this curse of hunger is the lack of money. ‘Hunger in the UK’ is the most in-depth study on hunger, its causes, impacts, and who is affected in the UK to date, evidencing that the main driver is a lack of money. The research shows that certain groups of people are more at risk, the drivers of hunger, and how this leads to further issues, including isolation, debt and health problems. The research also finds that while around 7% of the UK population was supported by charitable food support, including food banks, most people facing hunger (71%) had not yet accessed any form of charitable food support. Paid work does not always protect people from having to use food banks. One in five people using food banks in the Trussell Trust network are in a working household. Just under a third (30%) of employed people who have had to use a food bank are in insecure work such as zero-hours contracts or agency work. Emma Revie, chief executive at the Trussell Trust, says: “Being forced to turn to a food bank to feed your family is a horrifying reality for too many people in the UK, but as Hunger in the UK shows, this is just the tip of



Life at the crossroads... Hungry and homeless on a London Street. Photo SHAMLAL PURI



Christmas cheer...Shop displays goodies that only the affluent will buy. Photo SHAMLAL PURI



Plenty of supplies and fewer shoppers at a supermarket around Christmas time in London. Photo SHAMLAL PURI

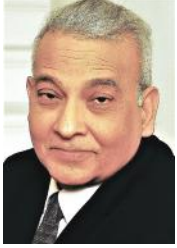
Contd Page 11.

UK News

Freezing Britain, hot politics - people struggle for survival as politicians battle it out on immigration:

BRITAIN AIMS FOR A WHITE CHRISTMAS AMID BLEAK BLACK BLOT OF HUNGER AND

COST-LIVING-CRISIS



By: Shamlal Puri
Associate publisher
& Senior Editor – UK
shamlalpuri4@gmail.com

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Worth Noting:

- The research shows that certain groups of people are more at risk, the drivers pushing people towards hunger, and how this leads to further issues, including isolation, debt and health problems.
- The main driver of this curse of hunger is the lack of money.
- ‘Hunger in the UK’ is the most in-depth study on hunger, its causes, impacts, and who is affected in the UK to date, evidencing that the main driver is a lack of money. The research shows that certain groups of people are more at risk, the drivers of hunger, and how this leads to further issues, including isolation, debt and health problems.
- The research also finds that while around 7% of the UK population was supported by charitable food support, including food banks, most people facing hunger (71%) had not yet accessed any form of charitable food support.

the iceberg. Millions more people are struggling with hunger. “This is not right. Food banks are not the answer when people are going without the essentials in one of the richest economies in the world. We need a social security system that provides protection and dignity for people to cover their essentials, such as food and bills.” Painfully, Trussell forecasts that more than 600,000 people will need the support of its food banks over three months from December 2023 to February 2024, Food banks across the Trussell Trust network expect to provide more than one million emergency food parcels between December 2023 and February. This equates to an average of one food parcel every eight seconds (11,500 daily) and 7,000 people seeking support daily.

Between December and February last year, these food banks supported more than 220,000 children with emergency food and 225,000 people who needed a food bank for the first time. It is anticipated these numbers will be even higher this year.

Most food given to Trussell Food banks is donated by the affluent in the local communities with little government help.

While donations levels have remained stable compared to last year, the continued increase in need is leading to the vast majority of food banks having to purchase stock to make up for a shortfall.

A recent survey of 282 food banks indicated that in the last three months, 93% had to purchase food when prices were higher than ever to keep up with the rising levels of need. These pressures have also led to one in three (32%) food banks reporting that they are concerned about being able to continue running at their current level in the coming months.

Natasha Copus, Project Manager at Southend Foodbank, said: “Our foodbank distribution centres have seen an unprecedented need in our community. We are committed to being there for our society’s most vulnerable and providing three days of food.” She fears the added pressure of heating and energy costs will cause hardships this

winter. Ms Revie, Trussell Trust Chief Executive, said, “One in seven people in the UK face hunger because they don’t have enough money to live on. That’s not the kind of society we want to live in, and we won’t stand by and let this continue. Every year, we see more and more people needing food banks, which is just not right. “We must end hunger across the UK so that no one needs a food bank to survive.”

Trussell Trust revealed that food banks provided 1.5 million emergency food parcels to people between April and September 2023. This is the most parcels the charity network has ever distributed at this point in the year, representing a 16% increase from the same period in 2022.

Low incomes, especially from social security, debt, health conditions and issues with social security payments such as delays or sanctions, were the main reasons people had no option but to turn to a food bank for help. A record 540,000 food parcels were provided for more than 265,000 children living in families who could not afford the essentials. This is an 11% increase compared to the same period last year, reflecting the continuing rise in the need for the support provided by food banks. Families with children were among the most recipients. An alarming 320,000 people



Big-hearted affluent people donate food, which is then distributed to food banks for those who cannot afford it. Photo SHAMLAL PURI



Crippling costs of energy are taking a toll on families who avoid heating their homes, Photo SHAMLAL PURI



Nothing to eat despite plenty of food. A beggar on London Street. Photo SHAMLAL PURI

said, “We are deeply concerned about the alarming rise in the number of children needing our support. Last month, 633 of the food parcels we provided were for children. Day after day, people tell us they don’t have

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Sino-Kenya

Making China-Kenya Partnership more Strategic

By: Zhou Pingjian
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Chinese Ambassador to Kenya Dr. Zhou Pingjian

Worth Noting:

- We have pursued fairness and justice. We both uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. We both oppose intervention in domestic affairs, racial discrimination, unilateral sanctions, and hegemonism. We are both committed to upholding the rights and interests of developing countries. China will never forget Kenya's invaluable support in the restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations back in 1971 and highly appreciates Kenya's firm commitment to the one-China principle.
- We have pursued progress with the times and openness and inclusiveness. At every critical juncture of China-Kenya relations, both sides have managed to identify new points of alignment and growth areas for mutually beneficial cooperation, enriching traditional friendship and promoting bilateral relations to new heights.

On December 14th, 1963, China and Kenya established diplomatic relationship.

Over the past 60 years, our two peoples have forged fraternity, our bilateral relations have yielded fruits, and our two countries have become good friends and good partners that trust each other, setting an example for China-Africa relations and South-South cooperation.

We have pursued sincere friendship and equality. We respect each other, see each other as equals, and get along well. When it comes to issues involving the other side's core interests and major concerns, we understand and support each other. China may do what it can to help Kenya's development, but China is truly grateful to the government and people of Kenya for the great support and selfless help given to China over the years.

We have pursued win-win for mutual benefit and common development. Major cooperation projects such as the Moi International Sports Center (MISC) Kasarani, the SGR, the Expressway and the GTC in Nairobi,

have benefited our two peoples.

We have pursued fairness and justice. We both uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. We both oppose intervention in domestic affairs, racial discrimination, unilateral sanctions, and hegemonism. We are both committed to upholding the rights and interests of developing countries. China will never forget Kenya's invaluable support in the restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations back in 1971 and highly appreciates Kenya's firm commitment to the one-China principle.

We have pursued progress with the times and openness and inclusiveness. At every critical juncture of China-Kenya relations, both sides have managed to identify new points of alignment and growth areas for mutually beneficial cooperation, enriching traditional friendship and promoting bilateral relations to new heights.

Last October, President Ruto attended the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

in China. President Xi and President Ruto had a friendly and in-depth exchange of views and reached important common understandings on the future development of our bilateral relations.

China stands ready to work with Kenya to implement the important common understandings reached between our Presidents, take the 60th anniversary as a new starting point to explore a distinctive path of cooperation in our respective pursuit of national development and rejuvenation, continuously enrich our comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and jointly build an even closer China-Kenya community with a shared future in the new era.

China is committed to forging a more comprehensive partnership with Kenya. China supports Kenya's independent exploration of its own path of modernization in line with the country's actual situation, and is ready to carry out exchanges of experience in governance with Kenya and step up support to each other. Kenya is welcome to make full use

of trade promotion initiatives and platforms such as the "green channel" for African agricultural product exports to China, share in China's market and the dividends of China's opening up, and increase the export of high-quality products of Kenyan features to China. China encourages more Chinese enterprises to invest in Kenya, expand cooperation in digital economy, new energy and other fields, and help Kenya realize green development.

China is committed to forging a more strategic partnership with Kenya. Both China and Kenya are important members of the Global South. China views and grows China-Kenya relations from a strategic height and supports Kenya in playing a greater role in regional and international affairs. China stands ready to strengthen communication and collaboration in multilateral settings with Kenya to jointly act on true multilateralism, defend the central role of the United Nations in international affairs, and safeguard the common interests of devel-

oping countries.

China is committed to forging a more cooperative partnership with Kenya. China will face squarely and sincerely the new developments and new problems that confront China-Kenya relations, handle as appropriate any problems that arise in a spirit of mutual respect and win-win cooperation, so as to enable Kenya to gain more from the cooperation. At the same time, we sincerely hope that Kenya will provide the corresponding conditions necessary for Chinese enterprises and citizens to engage in cooperation in Kenya.

A review of what we have achieved gives us more confidence in advancing our friendship at a new historical starting point. Let us work hand in hand to open up even more brighter prospects for China-Kenya relations.

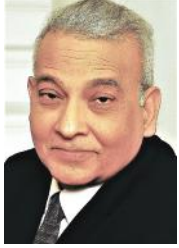
(Dr. Zhou Pingjian is Ambassador of China to Kenya)

UK News

Freezing Britain, hot politics - people struggle for survival as politicians battle it out on immigration:

BRITAIN AIMS FOR A WHITE CHRISTMAS AMID BLEAK BLACK BLOT OF HUNGER AND

COST-LIVING-CRISIS



By: Shamlal Puri
Associate publisher
& Senior Editor - UK
shamlalpuri4@gmail.com

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Worth Noting:

- Ms Revie, Trussell Trust Chief Executive, said, "One in seven people in the UK face hunger because they don't have enough money to live on. That's not the kind of society we want to live in, and we won't stand by and let this continue. Every year, we see more and more people needing food banks, which is just not right."
- "We must end hunger across the UK so that no one needs a food bank to survive."
- Trussell Trust revealed that food banks provided 1.5 million emergency food parcels to people between April and September 2023.
- This is the most parcels the charity network has ever distributed at this point in the year, representing a 16% increase from the same period in 2022.

enough money to buy the basics."

One resident said, "I have sold my car. I have sold everything and cut everything out. But that's still not enough. All I want is enough money to pay the basic bills and have some left to buy my own food."

Ms Revie, Trussell Trust's Chief Executive, says, "These statistics are extremely alarming. An increasing number of children are growing up in families facing hunger, forced to turn to food banks to survive. A generation is growing up believing that seeing a food bank in every community is normal.

She called on the UK government to build on its work to protect people from increasingly severe hardship and commit to putting an Essentials Guarantee into legislation to embed in our social security system the widely supported principle that, at a minimum, Universal Credit should protect people from going without essentials."

Another report commissioned by the Trussell Trust and conducted by the Scottish Centre for Social Research revealed that increasing hunger among disabled people is forcing them to use food banks.

The report proposes a range of evidence-based policy changes to help bring about a more compassionate, person-centred, and fairer disability benefits system that prevents disabled people from falling into financial hardship and needing to turn to a food bank.

Disabled people face significant additional costs and lower incomes that put them at greater risk of going without the essentials. This is the result of the barriers disabled people face to work and the low-paid and part-time nature of work, combined with the very low levels of income from the social security system.

Disability benefits should act as a lifeline that allows everyone to participate fully in society. However, 62% of people in disabled households referred to food banks are not receiving any benefits specifically related to their disability, and the figure in Scotland is even higher at 74%.

Disabled people suffer more because of a faulty, cash-strapped disability benefits system riddled with bureau-

cracy, which is damaging to people's mental and physical health and deepening exclusion.

The study urged the government to help disabled people with improved decision-making processes.

Where does all that leave the government of Rishi Sunak? Most Britons believe that Rishi Sunak's government has done a bad job on key public priorities such as the NHS and the cost of living.

The latest Ipsos Political Monitor, taken 1st - 7th December 2023, explores public attitudes to the job Rishi Sunak's government has done in critical areas, whether Labour would do a better job and what impact they think recent changes in the Autumn Statement will have on their finances next year.

Most of the public say Sunak's government has done a bad job in critical areas of importance to voters.

Ipsos's monthly Index shows that the economy, cost of living, NHS, and immigration are the most critical issues to the public. 80% think Sunak's government is doing a bad job improving the NHS, 79% on immigration, 77% on dealing with the cost of living and 68% on managing the economy. In most cases, scores are similar to those in July last year.

Conservative supporters are more sympathetic towards the government's record than the public overall. For example, 56% think the government has managed the economy well. However, by far, the issue that this group believe the government has done a bad job on most is immigration. 74% say the government has done a bad job here. A majority of Conservative backers are also critical of the NHS (53%), cost of living (55%), reducing regional inequalities (54%), and crime (56%).

Keiran Pedley, Director of Politics at Ipsos, said:

"With the current focus on immigration and the government's Rwanda bill, it is worth remembering that other issues are important to the public, too. It will concern the Conservatives that large majorities think Rishi Sunak's government has done a bad job managing the economy, improving the NHS and dealing with the cost of living."



The lucky ones who can afford to celebrate Christmas abroad enjoy their moments of fun. British expats in Dubai, Photo Courtesy.



Foodbank warehouse where food parcels are prepared for the hungry and the vulnerable who do not have money to buy their meals. Photo Trussell Trust.



Volunteers at a foodbank in UK prepare food parcels for distribution. Photo courtesy



Snow in Britain has led to hopes of white Christmas, but people are suffering because the Government has turned its attention away from their welfare. Photo SHAMLAL PURI

OPINION

Africa must challenge the West's colonial game plan for Palestine

Africans, who experienced similar oppression not too long ago, should not stand idly by as the West tries to put the entirety of occupied Palestinian territories under an Israel-friendly puppet government.

By: Tafi Mhaka
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Contd from Page 1

over and Palestine after this war will be shaped according to the wishes of Israel.

As an African, I find it extremely condescending and disturbing that the world's leading former colonial powers sat around a small table in Tokyo and developed a provisional blueprint for the sociopolitical future of Palestine, all without a clear mandate or significant input from the Palestinians.

And I couldn't help but notice the dubious convention in Tokyo bore a striking resemblance to the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, where Western powers met to stake their illegal claims to African territories.

Even though one of the Berlin Conference's alleged aims was to consider the interests of the Indigenous populations, Otto von Bismarck, the first chancellor of the German empire, did not invite Africans to the 104-day-long conference.

To my mind, the G7's exclusive rendezvous in Tokyo was Gaza's umpteenth Berlin 1884 moment in the past seven decades.

Why can Palestinians not exercise their democratic right to choose a government of their liking? Why does the G7 get to impose a new political arrangement and dispensation that will specifically exclude Hamas? Is democracy in Palestine only synonymous with the West's (and Israel's) demands?

To be clear, Blinken – the highest ranking diplomat of a country that has waged countless bloody wars across the world in the name of “democracy” and “human rights” – did not mention anything at all in this meeting, which included zero Palestinian representatives, about Palestinian self-determination. He did not make any plans to aid the surviving inhabitants of the besieged enclave, to hold a referendum on Gaza's political future or put forward a roadmap for them to hold democratic elections to choose a post-war leadership of their liking.

Far from establishing a viable peace in Gaza and the West Bank, the G7 countries want to obliterate the will of the Palestinian people, clearly in the vain hope it would facilitate a problematic return to an Israeli-friendly dispensation under Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, a deeply unpopular and ineffective leader who has long been eager to “cooperate” with Israel to keep his government in power and the Palestinian resistance to



High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, France's Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna and Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani attend a working dinner during G7 ministerial meetings, in Tokyo, Japan, Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023. [Jonathan Ernst/Pool Photo via AP]

apartheid and occupation in check. Hamas has been governing Gaza since it defeated Abbas's Fatah party in the January 2006 parliamentary elections. Since then, the Western countries conspired to topple the Hamas government and return Gaza to PA control at least one other time. In 2006, then-US President George W Bush and his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, reportedly approved a clandestine plan for Abbas's Fatah party to overthrow the Hamas government in Gaza. In the event the plot failed, the Bush administration had set aside \$1.27bn over five years to train 4,700 new Fatah troops that would try to disrupt and eventually oust the democratically elected government of Gaza. Although these plans failed and are now widely condemned as illegal, immoral and counterproductive, today the US and its powerful allies once again appear determined to get rid of Hamas and put the entirety of the occupied Palestinian territories under a docile, Israel-friendly puppet government.

This should not be allowed. Forcing Palestinians under the authority of a government that is only Palestinian in name and that is propped up by and indebted to colonial powers will not achieve sustainable peace or deliver justice.

As Africans, we know such neocolonial puppet governments either swiftly fail and trigger renewed bloodshed or remain in power for a prolonged time through violence, oppression and outside support while turning the land they govern

in the name of their colonial masters into a swamp of corruption, human rights abuses, extreme poverty and widespread unemployment – a swamp that takes consequent national government years, if not decades, to fully clean up.

I lived through the first scenario myself.

I was born in Rhodesia, a white settler colonial state in Southern Africa (present-day Zimbabwe), where Africans were discriminated against and had only a few, very limited land, socioeconomic, political and human rights.

Like most countries on our beautiful continent, freedom was not handed to us Zimbabweans on a silver platter. Thousands of men and women fought and died in the 1896-1897 First Chimurenga and the 1964-1979 Second Chimurenga (revolutionary liberation wars).

The nationalist successes in the Second Chimurenga and growing international pressure for a political resolution to the conflict led to the formation of a new Black government of supposed moderate African nationalist Bishop Abel T Muzorewa.

Rhodesia-Zimbabwe, however, was still a country controlled not by its Indigenous inhabitants but white settlers. Its short-lived constitution allowed the settlers to retain their ill-gotten farms and make all important government appointments and promotions. Muzorewa and his Black cabinet ministers were nothing but eloquent and well-educated political stooges who served to pro-

tect white supremacy and impede Zimbabweans' 89-year struggle for land and independence.

The people refused to support the puppet administration, and the Patriotic Front, a guerrilla alliance waging an armed struggle against settlers, continued its fight for a fully independent country.

The Organization of African Unity, the predecessor to the African Union, also refused to recognise Muzorewa's government.

The settlers' nefarious plans to co-opt a few Black moderate political elites and rule through a toothless front fell flat within a year, and Zimbabwe gained its independence in April 1980.

Elsewhere in Africa, some puppet regimes did endure, unfortunately.

In January 1960, France successfully installed a neocolonial government in Cameroon under Ahmadou Ahidjo, the West African country's founding president. As a consequence of a cooperation agreement signed by Ahidjo and then-French President Charles de Gaulle on December 26 1959, France had control over Cameroon's political, economic and sociocultural direction. It also provided Cameroon with the CFA franc, a currency guaranteed by France and pegged initially to the French franc and then to the euro, and continued exploiting Cameroon's strategic raw materials. French advisers even had the authority to overrule Cameroonian ministers on crucial policy decisions. Cameroon was effectively rendered a French imperial outpost, and Ahidjo went

along with it. It gained independence in 1960, but the principal beneficiaries of its freedom were the French treasury, French politicians, French businesses, and everyday Frenchmen and -women. To this day, Cameroon is still working to free itself fully from the suffocating grasp of its former colonial ruler.

As demonstrated in Zimbabwe, Cameroon and many other African countries, puppet regimes are a certain recipe for disaster.

It would be a colossal mistake to allow the West to get its way in Palestine and ensure that all of the occupied Palestinian territories are ruled by a puppet regime like that of Abbas, which in the end serves only the Israeli state, which keeps it in power. Sustainable peace in the region can be secured only after the formation of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders and nothing less.

Just like us Africans did some decades ago when we were living under colonial occupation, Palestinians today have the right to resist Israel in anyway they see fit and to choose their own political leaders, be they from Hamas, Fatah or any other political organisation. African countries and the African Union should oppose and not recognise any political dispensation or roadmap that smothers the democratic will of the Palestinian people.

As Israel makes clear its plans after the end of this war to occupy Gaza for an indefinite time, expand its illegal settlement enterprise in the West Bank and continue to deny the Palestinian right to self-determination, African states, which know such colonial abuse well, should not stand idly by.

They must sever diplomatic ties with Israel and pressure it to follow international law.

The time is ripe for the end of Western colonisation in Palestine, and Africa must do its part to put things right.

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

Tafi Mhaka : Al Jazeera columnist Mhaka, a social and political commentator, has a BA Honours degree from the University of Cape Town

Global coal use to reach record high in 2023, energy agency says

IEA report says demand is expected to grow in India, China but decline in United States, European Union.



An excavator sifts through dunes of low-grade coal near a coal mine in Pingdingshan, Henan province, China [File: Aly Song/Reuters]

Global coal use is expected to reach a record high in 2023 as demand in emerging and developing economies remains strong, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has said. The demand for coal is seen rising

1.4 percent in 2023, surpassing 8.5 billion tonnes for the first time as usage in India is expected to grow 8 percent and that in China up 5 percent due to rising electricity demand and weak hydropower output, IEA

said in a report released on Friday. Coal is the largest energy-related source of the CO₂ emissions responsible along with other greenhouse gases for global warming. Half of the world's coal use comes

from China, the agency said, so the outlook for coal will be significantly affected in the coming years by the pace of clean energy deployment, weather conditions, and structural shifts in the Chinese economy.

Coal use is set to drop by about 20 percent this year in both the European Union and the United States, the report said.

The agency said it was difficult to forecast demand in Russia, currently the fourth-largest coal consumer, because of the continuing conflict in Ukraine.

But the IEA noted that overall coal use is not expected to drop until 2026, when the major expansion of renewable capacity in the next three years should help lower usage by 2.3 percent compared with 2023 levels, even with the absence of stronger clean energy policies.

Global consumption is forecast to remain well over 8 billion tonnes in 2026, the report said. To reach goals set by the Paris climate agreement – reached in 2015 by governments who agreed to phase out fossil fuels in favour of renewable energy in the second half of the century – the use of unabated coal would need to fall significantly faster, it added.

At the United Nations COP28 climate talks in Dubai this week, world

leaders agreed to a deal that would, for the first time, push nations to transition away from fossil fuels to avert the worst effects of climate change.

However, the agreement did not go so far as to seek a “phase-out” of fossil fuels, for which more than 100 nations had pleaded. Rather, it called for “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade”.

“The absence of explicit ‘phase-out’ language in the draft is significant, as it is a more measurable and definitive term, sending a strong message globally about a total shift away from fossil fuels,” Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International, told Al Jazeera.

“The current terminology – ‘transitioning away’ – is somewhat ambiguous and allows for varying interpretations.”

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

Senegal

Senegal court orders reinstatement of Sonko on election list

The popular opposition leader has been in jail since July, when he was also struck off Senegal's electoral roll.

A Senegalese court has ordered the reinstatement of jailed opposition leader Ousmane Sonko on the electoral register, a ruling that could pave the way for him to run in a February presidential election, his lawyer Cire Cledor Ly said on Thursday. Sonko has faced multiple court cases over the past two years for charges including libel and rape, which he denies. The cases against him have triggered deadly violence in the West African nation.

The 49-year-old was cleared of rape in June, but sentenced to a two-year jail term after a court found him guilty of an offence described in the penal code as immoral behaviour towards individuals younger than 21.

He was arrested in July for insurrection and was struck off the electoral roll, a decision that potentially ruled him out of the February vote.

The court in the capital, Dakar, overturned that decision on Thursday, Ly told reporters outside the court. Sonko, who remains in jail, has previously gone on a hunger strike

during his imprisonment.

The politician, who came third in Senegal's 2019 presidential election, is popular with the youth. He is seen as a main opposition challenger in the race to succeed President Macky Sall who announced in July that he would not run for office next year.

“We have confidence in the justice system. This decision doesn't surprise us. We were just afraid that they might use force against us. But this country won't go anywhere if justice doesn't work,” Sonko said.

Another lawyer for the firebrand opposition leader, Bamba Cisse, told journalists that the court's decision would potentially enable Sonko to participate in the February 2024 presidential election.

A lawyer for the state said the government would appeal.

Source: News Agencies



Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko speaks during a news conference in Dakar, Senegal, on March 8, 2021 [Cooper Inveen/Reuters]

Africa

In a refugee camp in Chad, Sudanese women are running out of hope

A spontaneous settlement in Adré, a Chadian border town, has become a makeshift home for more than 100,000 Sudanese refugees

By: Alyona Synenko
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

• The residents of Adré have welcomed refugees, but Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world, and resources are scarce. “The number of people who arrived here with nothing is more than tenfold the size of the local population. Imagine something like this happening in a European town,” said Mirjana Spoljaric, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who visited Eastern Chad to raise awareness around the stark shortage of humanitarian funding for this crisis.

• Following the sharp increase in the population, food prices skyrocketed, and essential services like water and healthcare, which were in short supply even before the influx of refugees, came under enormous stress.



Kaltuma lives alone with her small granddaughters. The family survives on food given to them by neighbours and local people. [Alyona Synenko/ICRC]

Squatting on the sandy ground, a young girl is weaving grass stems into a roof. The tiny hut she is making is surrounded by tens of thousands of others like it, made hastily of sticks and leaves covered with tarps or plastic sacks. This spontaneous settlement in Adré, a Chadian border town of 12,000 inhabitants, has become a makeshift home to more than 100,000 Sudanese refugees. Almost 90 percent are women and children who crossed the border on foot, fleeing brutal violence that submerged their native Darfur soon after the conflict broke out in Sudan on April 15.

Kaltuma, a small woman with deep wrinkles and cloudy cataract eyes, had to summon all her strength to build her hut. She shares it with her two granddaughters, aged three and five. Kaltuma's daughter took her two other children and left in search of daily work in the agricultural fields out of town. Every morning, Kaltuma tours Adré's neighbourhoods, knocking on doors and asking people for food. Whatever she collects

on a given day, she uses it to prepare a meal for herself and her granddaughters. The residents of Adré have welcomed refugees, but Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world, and resources are scarce. “The number of people who arrived here with nothing is more than tenfold the size of the local population. Imagine something like this happening in a European town,” said Mirjana Spoljaric, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who visited Eastern Chad to raise awareness around the stark shortage of humanitarian funding for this crisis.

Following the sharp increase in the population, food prices skyrocketed, and essential services like water and healthcare, which were in short supply even before the influx of refugees, came under enormous stress. Someya, another refugee, was pregnant when she fled her village in Western Darfur with her children. “They killed my father in the mosque after the evening prayer,” she says, rocking her baby in the shadow of a tarp

stretched overhead. “When I heard what happened, I ran to the mosque. He died in my arms. My husband always away for work, he was like a father to my children.” When Someya and the children arrived in Adré, having walked for hours, she collapsed on the ground and was sick for several days from fear and exhaustion. A month later, she gave birth to a baby girl under the tarps and shortly after had to look for work to feed her four children.

“I tried working at a construction site, but it was physically hard, and they wouldn't let me breastfeed the baby,” Someya says. “Now, I do laundry in people's houses. They don't mind me coming with the baby.” She goes to work early in the morning and buys food for the day with her wages.

A henna artist, Someya says the family had a good life and enough food back in Darfur. The reality of the camp is different, and at one point, the new mother lost milk because she was not eating enough.

While Someya is at work,

her kids fetch water – a long, tedious task in a place that had known water scarcity long before its population exploded. A long line of jerrycans and plastic buckets stretches out at five in the morning. “I leave my jerrycan in line, then check on it every couple of hours so as not to miss my turn,” said Zuhail, Someya's 17-year-old neighbour in the camp.

The routine of everyday survival offers an escape from memories of the horrors of the past and questions about the future. Back home in the Sudanese town of el-Genena, Zuhail shared her time between school and helping her mother at their farm. Until she was forced to flee in search of safety. “We

came here in the middle of the night without shoes. On the way, I saw people killed,” Zuhail said.

The teenager hoped to move with her uncle, who lives in Gadarif, in eastern Sudan, and has been using Red Cross phone service to reach him, but her calls have not gone through.

Most women in the camp shrug their shoulders when asked what they hope for.

“I don't know what I want to do,” Someya says. “Life in the camp is tough, but I have nothing to return to. My house burned down. I lost everything I owned. Even if I could return, I would have to start life from scratch. It is not easy.”





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Opinion

Palestine's and Turtle Island's liberation are entwined

Palestinian-Indigenous solidarity must move beyond tokenism and mobilisation towards transformational solidarity and organisation.

Over the past two months, protest marches in solidarity with the Palestinian people have taken place all across the United States and Canada. They have attracted a diverse crowd of people, including many Indigenous nations and communities. Participants have denounced “US imperialism” for enabling Israeli aggression, ethnic cleansing and genocide while others have charged Israel itself with “settler colonialism”. However, many attendees – especially pro-Palestinian immigrants – have failed to comprehend their own relationship to settler colonialism. Many of us see the US and Canada as secular democracies that provide good economic opportunities and not as settler-colonial societies, serving as the blueprint for Israel. We have ignored our own complicity as settlers.

Muslims and South Asian, North African and Arab immigrant settlers must interrogate the legitimacy of America's and Canada's right to exist and the costly trade-off they make in taking on national identities in these countries that come at the expense of Indigenous peoples at “home” and imperialist adventurism abroad.

Settler-colonial history ignored

A significant number of migrant Muslims do not seem to comprehend that American societies are animated by white supremacist religious doctrines such as manifest destiny and doctrines of discovery and terra nullius, Protestant ethics, common law property rights, and Victorian notions of gender and sexuality.

Rather, Muslim “arrivants” to the US should consider the history of settler colonialism in the Americas – a history that sees Islamophobia and anti-Indigenous narratives as well as anti-Blackness and anti-Jewishness inextricably bound.

In the late 15th century, Christopher Columbus's conquistador invasion of the Americas commenced as the European Crusading eviction, murder and forced conversion of Muslims and Jews in Andalusia was coming to an end.

There, Muslims and Jews were racially and religiously cast as “enemies”, “savages” and “heathens”, an othering that tinted the lens through which Columbus and his successors saw Indigenous peoples in the Americas, describing them as “blood drinkers”, “cannibals” and “devils”.

As Alan Mikhail writes in his book *God's Shadow*, Columbus described the weapons used by the Indigenous Taíno people of the Caribbean as “alfanjes, the Spanish name for the scimitars used by Muslim soldiers”, while Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés identified 400 Aztec temples in Mexico as “mosques”, described “Aztec women” as “Moorish women” and referred to Montezuma, the Aztec leader, as a “sultan”.

Later, in the 16th century, as the transatlantic slave trade got under way, Africans – 20 to 30 percent of whom were Muslims – would be-



A Kuna Indigenous woman joins members of the Palestinian community in Panama protesting outside the Israeli embassy against Israel's military operations in Gaza and in support of the Palestinian people in Panama City on May 20, 2021 [File: Luis Acosta/AFP]

come the new “infidels” and “savages”.

These were not mere insults but Euro-American Christian religious and racial narratives of dehumanisation that eventually found their way into US religious doctrine, law and settler attitudes.

They were used to justify the expropriation of Indigenous land and resources as well as the enslavement and continued “after-life of slavery” projects targeting Black peoples. They also drove the Islamophobia that in recent years has resulted in Muslim bans, unmitigated US government support for Zionist settler colonialism as well as the death and destruction wrought as part of the “war on terror”.

Rather than question the US settler-colonial project root and branch, Muslim immigrants have taken it for granted and tried to entrench themselves as “good liberal settlers”, eliding their own settler-colonial complicity, even when they have come from countries ravaged by the effects of imperialist US foreign policy.

American nightmare

This love for the delusional promise of the “American dream” runs counter to what the selectively quoted anti-American Muslim Malcolm X, referred to as an “American nightmare” and exists despite a surge in recent years of Indigenous activism as well as a vast body of scholarship in Indigenous, Palestinian and comparative settler-colonial studies.

This activism and work help us understand that the US's imperial commitments abroad are informed by the violence it has wreaked against Black peoples and Indigenous peoples in North America – or what the latter refer to as Turtle Island.

As Eve Tuck, professor of critical race and Indigenous studies at the University of Toronto, and K Wayne Yang, professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, San Diego, wrote in a paper titled *Decolonization is not a Metaphor*: “Oil is the motor and motive for war and so was salt, so will be water. Settler sovereignty over the very pieces of

earth, air, and water is what makes possible these imperialisms. ... ‘Indian Country’ was/is the term used in Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Iraq by the U.S. military for ‘enemy territory’.”

A case in point is the Iraq war. Critics and some US officials were adamant that the war – spearheaded by Vice President Dick Cheney, a former CEO of oil giant Halliburton – was intended to benefit big oil. However, it was missed that US fighter jets, cruise missiles and armoured vehicles could not have descended on Iraq in 2003 without the fuel derived from abundant oil supplies tapped from Indigenous lands, which today makes the US the world's largest oil producer and, by far, the largest polluter.

Indigenous-led NoDAPL protests in 2016 against the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was set to run close to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation were a missed opportunity for Muslim and pro-Palestinian activists to centre and draw deeper connections between settler colonialism at home and abroad.

Another blatant instance of the relationship between settler colonialism at home and abroad is at Cornell University, the Ivy League institution where I was a visiting scholar last year and which has also been a hub of pro-Palestinian activism in recent weeks.

Set among the bucolic countryside of upstate New York and flush with waterfalls, gorges and evergreens, Cornell is regarded as the largest university land grab in US history and the single largest beneficiary of the 1862 Morrill Act, which saw 10.7 million acres (4.3 million hectares) stolen from 250 different Indigenous peoples in 15 states and handed over to universities.

In this, Cornell accrues benefits from the principal revenue and capital of the land as well as surface extraction rights involving minerals, resources, mining and water. Cornell University is also partnered with Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, founded in 1912, whose military research and development labs have pioneered the technologies of Pales-

tinian dispossession.

Muslims' special responsibility

Understanding our investment in settler colonialism should push us to oppose it in full. This goes further than pickets, teach-ins, Boycott-Divestment-Sanction (BDS) campaigns, blockading arms manufacturers premised on short-term crisis management, or the performative land acknowledgments that have become customary at land-grab universities like Cornell.

It means transformational solidarity, a long-term process grounded in shared spiritual, ethical and political commitments that demand a transformation of all our relations, including to the local, historical and material geographies of the land we are situated on.

As Palestinian scholar Dana Olwan wrote in an article titled *On Assumptive Solidarities in Comparative Settler Colonialisms*, incidents in which “Indigenous activists are invited to provide opening ceremonies for pro-Palestinian events” are many and are often animated by the lack of a deeper interrogation and challenging of the “Canadian and United States settler coloniality and thus normalize the violence of such states”.

This type of transformational solidarity is not new. For example, it has been customary in Chile, a country with the largest Palestinian population outside the Middle East, for Palestinians to march in solidarity with the Indigenous Mapuche people on the annual Indigenous People's Day parade and work on the land with them.

While these solidarity lines do take place in the US at the level of mobilisation, they are inconsistent at the level of organisation. Land acknowledgments are about intent, purpose and above all – action.

As Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), the spiritual pan-African revolutionary, put it: “What mobilisation does is, it mobilises people around issues. [But] those of us who are revolutionary are not concerned with issues. We are concerned with the system. ... Mobilisation usually leads to reform action, not to revo-

lutionary action.”

As I write in my book *Islam and Anarchism: Relationships and Resonances*, Muslim immigrant settlers bear a particular responsibility to act not only because of the geopolitical context of Islamophobia and Islam as a quintessential other relative to a Euro-American Christianity but also arguably because of Islam's founding upon, and relationship to, social justice.

Aligned appropriately and as a quintessential signifier in whose global Orientalist shadow others are cast – as with NoDAPL Indigenous water protectors, who were compared by US mercenary firms like TigerSwan to “jihadi movements”, and Black Lives Matter activists, who were designated by the FBI as “Black identity extremists” – Islam and Muslims are ideally positioned to geopolitically demystify the intimate intersections between imperialism and “settler colonialism” in Palestine and Turtle Island.

By reneging on this responsibility, particularly those of us who identify as immigrant South Asian and North African Muslims, we become Zionists on stolen land while we simultaneously expose our hypocritical fantasies of freeing Palestine – and ourselves.

That is why we immigrants in the US and Canada must seriously re-examine our ethical-political commitments when it comes to supporting Palestine, founding an abolitionist and decolonial Islam and forming alliances with Indigenous and Black peoples in their demands for Indigenous land rematriation as well as Black reparations. We need to move beyond reactionary paradigms of “survival” and “resistance” towards pro-active strategic movement objectives that centre our collective livingness, thriving and liberation. Palestine's freeing is simultaneously entwined with the freeing of Indigenous and Black people in Turtle Island. To end Palestinian occupation, the bewitched American/Canadian false dream must fall and be replaced by a genuinely decolonial enchanting else.

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

Mohamed Abdou

North African-Egyptian Muslim anarchist interdisciplinary activist-scholar

Dr Mohamed Abdou is a North African-Egyptian Muslim anarchist interdisciplinary activist-scholar. He is the Arcapita Visiting Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African studies (MESAAS) at Columbia University and recently completed his postdoctoral fellowship at Cornell University. He is author of *Islam & Anarchism: Relationships & Resonances* (Pluto Press, 2022). He wrote his transnational ethnographic and historical-archival PhD dissertation on *Islam & Queer-Muslims: Identity & Sexuality in the Contemporary* (2019).

Without The Lamp Of Knowledge - My Dear Teacher

By: Abdujabborova E'zoza
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There is only one profession in the world. Teaching and other professions are its derivatives. A teacher is like a burning candle. She is a great being who burns herself and spreads light around.

According to legends, the famous commander Alexander Rumi asked "Why do you honor Aristotle more than your father?" they asked. Alexander Rumi answered: "My father allegedly brought me down from the sky to the earth.

But my teacher Aristotle raised me from the earth to the sky. That is, my father caused me to come into the world. My teacher taught me knowledge and manners and contributed to the growth of my rank and honor." added. In fact, the teacher is the shining sun that leads us to success and the right path. Utayeva Shakhnoza is one of my tireless teachers who started me on my first successes.

She has been leading our class since the fifth grade. If they started over the years, we have become a flying pair and continue on our own paths, it is permissible to mention the work and knowledge of my teacher for us.

My first passion was awakened when I passed. I tried to be like my teacher. Our teachers not only taught our students about their knowledge, but also paid special attention to the educational aspect. We respect our teachers regardless of their age, position, or level. She teaches someone's child, he taught someone else's self.

Worth Noting:

- My first passion was awakened when I passed. I tried to be like my teacher. Our teachers not only taught our students about their knowledge, but also paid special attention to the educational aspect. We respect our teachers regardless of their age, position, or level. She teaches someone's child, he taught someone else's self.
- A highly educated pedagogue can become a teacher. But not everyone is lucky enough to be a teacher. As Hazrat Navoi said: The hard work of our teachers, who taught us a thousand hardships on the path of truth, cannot be measured with any wealth or treasure. The works of our teacher are incomparable and unique. Our teacher diligently gave us his knowledge.

A highly educated pedagogue can become a teacher. But not everyone is lucky enough to be a teacher. As Hazrat Navoi said: The hard work of our teachers, who taught us a thousand hardships on the path of truth, cannot be measured with any wealth or treasure. The works of our teacher are incomparable and unique. Our teacher diligently gave us his knowledge.

She polished us during the year. When we made mistakes, she explained to us the truth, encouraged us to accept the truth and acquire knowledge with patience. When our teacher's name and surname were mentioned, Utayeva Shakhnoza was called the teacher, standing tall, dressed like a teacher, sparing her time and giving her knowledge.

Dear and respected person is embodied before our eyes. Even though our teacher teaches chemistry, his speech is similar to that of literary scholars.

She used to speak so eloquently at the events and resembled our Philog teachers. The teaching abilities given to our teacher by God are very suitable for him. When our teachers really enter the classroom, they bring grace and zia.

They shower goodness on thousands of souls. She is a great person who can really teach his students the school of life. Including myself, I am proud to be a student of my teacher and I feel a sense of gratitude. I studied well in school.

When we moved to higher grades, our state issued a law on the establishment of a "Gold Medal" for students who get good and excellent grades. We were very happy to hear about it.

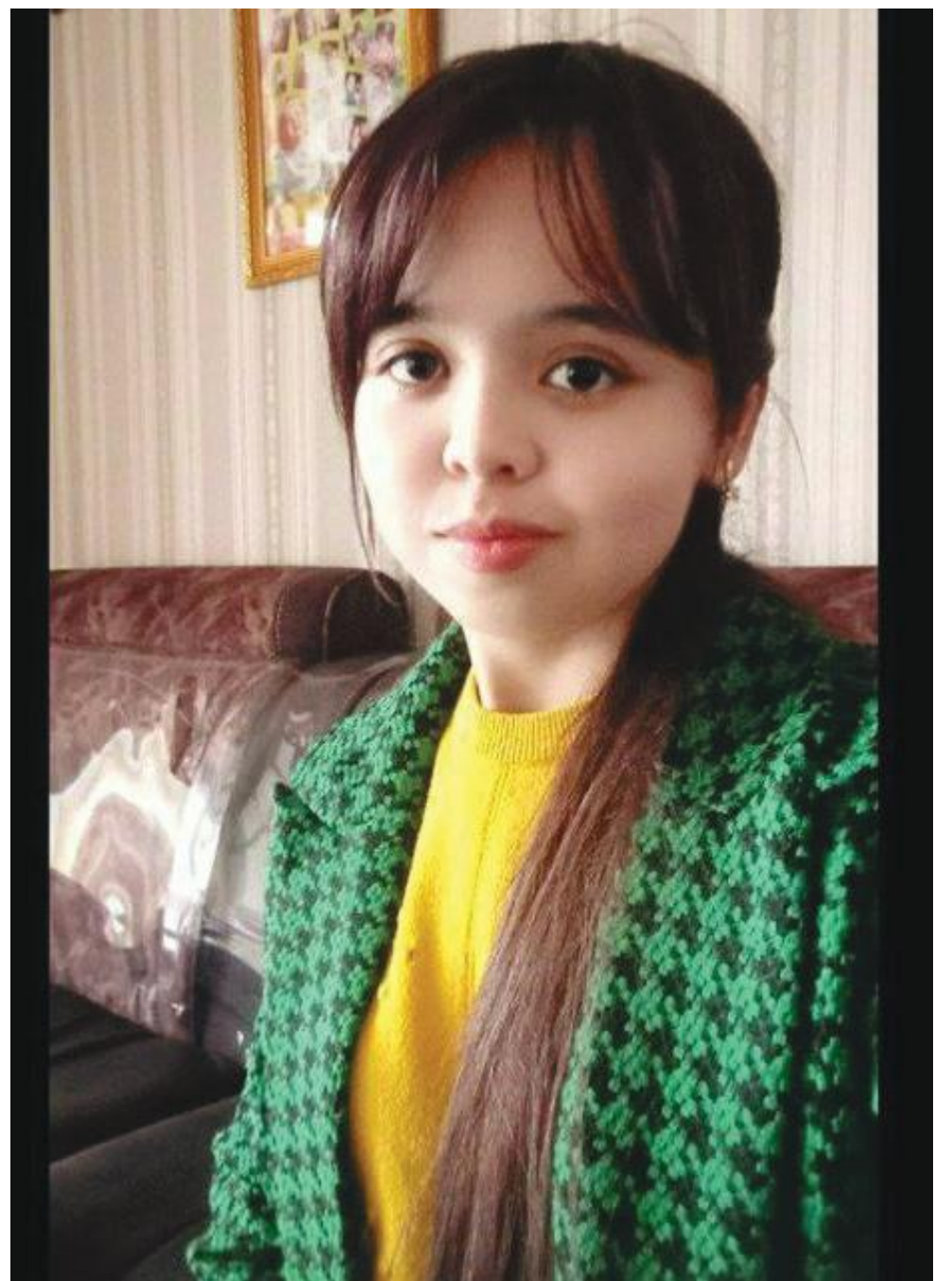
Not only us, but all good. It was a great incentive for eager readers. When the teacher said that I would also take it, my teacher said: "If you try, you will succeed." Her words made me want to read more. I studied and became the owner of "Gold Medal". My family and I, especially my teacher, were happy with this result. In conclusion, even though I am a student today, it is my teacher's education and knowledge that made me who I am.

At the root of our achievements and victories are the great figures whose knowledge of our teacher illuminates our path like the sun. Great and respectable teachers!

Abdujabborova E'zoza



Abdujabborova E'zoza's teacher



Lessons from an acquisition: why we need more M&A activity between emerging market businesses

By: Kaivan Sattar, CEO and founder, Asaak
xxxxxxxxxxxx



Worth Noting:

- That's had significant consequences for startups around the world, but particularly in emerging market countries where funding has always been low anyway. In their growth phase especially, many startups rely on funding and investment to fuel growth until they reach the point where they're profitable.

- For those startups, an acquisition may offer a lifeline to employees who would otherwise be out of work. It also means that, with the right acquisition partner, the ideas and vision behind the business stand a chance of living on. Small wonder then that there were significant increases in African M&A activity through 2022 and early 2023. But mergers and acquisitions, particularly between companies founded in emerging markets, have other significant benefits too.

In June 2023, my company Asaak did something unusual for an African tech startup: we acquired another company on another continent. More specifically, we acquired the operations of FlexClub Mexico, a company that offers car financing for ride-hailing drivers.

The acquisition, which came off the back of our turn to profitability, was massive for us. Just a few years earlier, we'd been weeks away from having to shut down before bridging finance and a pivot to a more focused business model set us on the path to success.

The acquisition, which was set up by a mutual investor, has also proven beneficial to both companies. It has allowed us to enter into a new asset class and FlexClub to focus on its South African operations. But it has also solidified for me why we need more mergers and acquisitions between emerging market companies, especially in an era of reduced funding.

M&A activity on the rise at a time of low funding With interest rates rising steadily since early 2022, startup investments around the globe have fallen dramatically. In fact, venture capital (VC) investments in African start-

ups in the first half of 2023 were down 43% compared to the first half of 2022.

In part, that's because the investors who back VCs have shifted a greater proportion of their funds to less risky vehicles, such as bonds. But it's also because some investors relied on cheap debt to make their investments. With borrowing more expensive, it's become more difficult to access the money they need to make investments.

That's had significant consequences for startups around the world, but particularly in emerging market countries where funding has always been low anyway. In their growth phase especially, many startups rely on funding and investment to fuel growth until they reach the point where they're profitable.

For those startups, an acquisition may offer a lifeline to employees who would otherwise be out of work. It also means that, with the right acquisition partner, the ideas and vision behind the business stand a chance of living on. Small wonder then that there were significant increases in African M&A activity through 2022 and early 2023. But mergers and acquisitions, particularly between companies founded in emerging mar-

kets, have other significant benefits too.

Geographic expansion made simpler

One of the big benefits we've seen is that an acquisition makes moving into a new territory much simpler. Had we tried to enter Mexico by raising equity capital to establish our own lending operations there from scratch, it would have cost us a lot of time and potentially millions of dollars.

That's to say nothing of the fact that hiring a team in a different country comes with its own set of challenges. It requires cofounders to relocate to that country for months or years to fully understand local market dynamics and hire the right people. For us, acquiring an existing team that had already been working together for four years and nearly achieved profitability was a huge value proposition as we were able to instantly launch our business on a new continent and hit the ground running.

An additional benefit is that unless you're acquiring an extremely distressed company, you're also going to get a nice revenue boost. In our case, revenues increased 33% overnight. There are very few things one can do to achieve such

rapid growth in a short amount of time and acquisitions are one of them. As a global asset manager, we are also now able to diversify currency and interest rate risk across two highly uncorrelated markets.

Emerging markets understanding

Another significant benefit of acquiring a company in another emerging market is that the challenges and opportunities are familiar. Like Uganda, Mexico remains a cash-dominant economy. In fact, World Bank figures show that just 37% of adults in Mexico have a formal bank account and as few as 32% have made a digital payment.

While the two markets are undoubtedly unique, there are at least enough similarities that we can apply lessons that worked in Uganda. I believe that those similarities also allow us to be a more understanding acquirer. That, in turn, means we won't look to offload or close the asset at the first sign of trouble, as might happen with a developed market acquisition. That's not to say that acquisitions of emerging market companies by their developed market counterparts and vice versa can't work. But having an understanding of emerging market challenges including cor-

ruption, weak institutions, and a lack of credit infrastructure makes the likelihood of success that much higher.

These kinds of acquisitions could also become increasingly important, particularly when it comes to ensuring the survival of good businesses in these markets. It'll be some time before interest rates go back down to the levels we saw in 2020 and 2021, meaning that alternatives will be critical.

Not a cure-all but still important

Of course, not every single merger and acquisition involving emerging market companies will work out smoothly. Even with thorough due diligence in place, things might just not work out. Nonetheless, I believe that the potential gains from emerging market mergers and acquisitions are too big to ignore. Before any company makes such an acquisition, however, it's important to remember that it takes time to fully understand the opportunities and risks of acquiring a company, and even before you have all the information you want you have to pull the trigger.

Looking at human rights through the West-East prism

By: Stephen Ndegwa
xxxxxxxxxxxx



Worth Noting:

• A good example is the dichotomy between the United States and China. Amid its pontifications and judgmentalism, the U.S. has weaponized the fight for human rights to attack its geopolitical nemesis, both diplomatically and economically. For instance, the superpower created a narrative of human rights abuse in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China's largest province.

• The U.S. rallied its Western allies to condemn the alleged oppression of the minority Muslim Uyghur population in the region, including the alleged use of forced labor of this demographic. Well, the narrative seems to have fizzled out the same way it appeared. While these accusations were totally unfounded, the U.S. forgot that its record of the torture and murder of thousands of Muslims in its so called war against terrorism is well documented, even by its own institutions of justice.

While human rights is a universal concept, it has been defined and practiced in different ways. In some societies, human rights is absolute, a license for unbridled freedom that oftentimes infringes on others' freedom. Other societies are more circumspect in their outlook, balancing the inalienable individual freedoms with the public good.

On December 10, the world marked the 75th annual edition of the United Nations Human Rights Day (UNHRD), under the theme "Freedom, Equality and Justice for All". The day marks adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. From its then narrow definition and outlook, human rights now include a wide array of aspects of human dignity.

Moreover, human rights do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of an overall mix of abstracts that comprise, among others, sound democratic principles, values and practices, justice and the rule of law. Critically, you cannot divorce human rights from the provision and satisfaction of basic needs like food, shelter and education.

If human rights are universal, there should be no

controversy about their satisfaction. Some major countries in the West have played double standards by deciding who is not meeting their human rights threshold, while on the other hand run roughshod over the rights of others, both within and away from their jurisdictions.

A good example is the dichotomy between the United States and China. Amid its pontifications and judgmentalism, the U.S. has weaponized the fight for human rights to attack its geopolitical nemesis, both diplomatically and economically. For instance, the superpower created a narrative of human rights abuse in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China's largest province.

The U.S. rallied its Western allies to condemn the alleged oppression of the minority Muslim Uyghur population in the region, including the alleged use of forced labor of this demographic. Well, the narrative seems to have fizzled out the same way it appeared. While these accusations were totally unfounded, the U.S. forgot that its record of the torture and murder of thousands of Muslims in its so called war against terrorism is well documented, even by

its own institutions of justice.

The U.S. has also forgotten how its refusal to enact strict gun laws on use and possession has led to wanton mass killings across the country, particularly of minorities and immigrants. The country has also ignored the often unprovoked, profiled and blatant police harassment and killing of Blacks. It makes matters worse that the perpetrators of many police killings are Whites. Overall, minorities in the U.S. are treated like second class citizens.

Child labor has also become rampant in the U.S., with findings in a recent report from the Economic Policy Institute noting that more than fourteen states have enacted or proposed laws rolling back child-labor protections. According to the report, the new laws have extended work hours for minors, lifted restrictions on hazardous work, lowered the age at which children can buss tables where alcohol is served, or introduced new sub-minimum wages.

Internationally, the U.S. human rights record is worse. From its vengeful Muslim-targeted war on terror to forced regime changes in unfriendly countries, the su-

perpower has wrought devastation in many societies, particularly in Asia and Africa. Basically, U.S. hegemony has led to massive human rights abuses globally. A survey undertaken by "U.S. News" shows that the U.S. does not rank among the top countries that care the most about human rights globally, coming in at number 21.

So much for the double standards. Now, in August 2021, China issued a white paper that put human rights in the context of a developing country. Titled "Moderate Prosperity in All Respects: Another Milestone Achieved in China's Human Rights," the white paper shows the perfect balance between China's practices and achievements in realizing moderate prosperity, and advancing human rights.

In the main, the white paper describes the country's holistic human rights track record comprising a mixture of ending extreme poverty and securing the right to an adequate standard of living for its citizens, protecting civil and political rights with law and governance, promoting social equality, and protecting the rights of disadvantaged groups.

For developing countries,

human rights and development are inseparable. Human rights is not an event, but a process that puts people's lives first by, among other measures, ensuring they are gainfully employed, their environment is clean, women are empowered, and the rights of minorities are protected.

The UN Development Program (UNDP) notes that China is one of only a handful of nations to have moved from a low to a high position on the human development index. UNDP underlines the country's eradication of extreme poverty through rapid economic growth, its dedication in fighting climate change and, leadership in science and technology as some of the strides that have made a positive impact in the country's human rights record.

True, as the white paper notes, poverty is the biggest obstacle to human rights. The right to subsistence – including the right to food, safe drinking water, essential medical services, safe housing for the poor, and compulsory education in poorer areas – is the top priority in human rights.

Analysis: Has DR Congo's Tshisekedi delivered enough to win a second term?

Thousands turn up at President Tshisekedi's campaign rallies. But what has his first five-year term delivered?

By: Shola Lawal
xxxxxxxxxxxx



Election campaign banners for President Felix Tshisekedi along a road in Kinshasa, December 13, 2023 [John Wessels/AFP]

Worth Noting:

As the December 20 election draws near, the polls, which could mark the second peaceful transition of power in DRC's 63 years of independence, will also be another test for Tshisekedi to see if he can again outsmart his rivals. Once a ballot favourite, Tshisekedi now faces stronger opposition candidates than in the 2018 election and is struggling to shore up popular support.

"[His] popularity has declined over time," Malukisa said, adding that his re-election is not a given with the likes of Moise Katumbi, a former Katanga province governor, in the picture. "It's probably one of them who will win," the professor added.

Whether he successfully leverages the powers of incumbency or is forced out after one term, "Fatshi" – as the president's supporters call him – has left a mark on the DRC. Some critics say his administration took several controversial decisions, but others say he scored significant economic wins for the Congolese.

He had little political experience when he first became president of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019. It was the death of his father – the iconic opposition figure who went head to head, first with the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko and then with the long running Kabila dynasty – that thrust Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo into the limelight, and then, to the Palais de la Nation in Kinshasa. Now, after a disputed five-year term that saw great economic and political upheaval, including the COVID-19 pandemic, two Ebola outbreaks, resurgent rebel groups and escalating tensions with neighbouring Rwanda, Tshisekedi is back on the ballot box. This time, he is vying for the presidency alongside a host of strong opposition figures, also campaigning with a lot more savviness than in his first go. Back then, Tshisekedi had to deal with a heavyweight like Joseph Kabila – the predecessor his father Etienne opposed, but whom Tshisekedi chose to work with in a coalition. That agreement was such a drag that the ruling faction had no majority in parliament for several months. "Tshisekedi was a weak president," Albert Malukisa, dean of the politics depart-

ment at the Catholic University of Congo, told Al Jazeera. "It was Kabila who controlled the situation."

A turning point soon came when Tshisekedi dealt a surprising card, edging out the former president's cronies from government or winning them over with political positions or financial packages, Malukisa said.

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eral controversial decisions, but others say he scored significant economic wins for the Congolese.

Insecurity, repression, and state of siege

Tshisekedi's administration is still grappling with ongoing violence in eastern DRC, resulting from more than 30 years of insecurity in the region.

Communities in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces have seen relentless attacks from a multitude of armed groups that have caused the deaths of thousands and the displacement of seven million people. Rebel group M23 – allegedly backed by Rwanda – controls swaths of territory in North Kivu, while the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) – an armed group that has been linked to ISIL (ISIS) – continues to launch brutal assaults on communities close to the Uganda border. Campaigning in Goma, the capital of North Kivu, this week, Tshisekedi fiercely accused Rwandan President Paul Kagame of backing M23 and promised to "liberate" the DRC from the group. But the president's push for the deployment of regional troops, following the DRC's ascension to the East African Community (EAC) bloc in 2022, has

yielded little results. That force, as well as MONUSCO, the United Nations peacekeeping operation in the country since 1999, have failed to contain the crises and are now pulling out of the country in phases.

Many criticise the state of emergency imposed on North Kivu and Ituri since May 2021. The order gives the military broad powers to mobilise against the armed group, but it has also enabled an army crackdown on civilians, rights activists say.

Steward Muhindo Kalyamughuma, an activist with the youth organisation Fight for Change (LUCHA), said the emergency decree simply marked a continuation of the conditions that the Congolese experienced under Kabila's 18-year rule.

"It was during this state of siege that repression against LUCHA was strongest," the activist told Al Jazeera. Three of his comrades have been shot dead by the Congolese army during peaceful demonstrations. Dozens also died in Goma in September after the army opened fire on protesters calling for the exit of the UN peacekeeping force many believe is toothless. "This never happened to us under Joseph Kabila," the activist added.

Poverty and corruption

Critics of the current administration also say Tshisekedi has barely reined in corruption in the country.

The DRC is one of the poorest countries on earth, despite the country's immense mineral wealth. It is the world's leading producer of cobalt and the third largest producer of copper – minerals used in manufacturing electronic gadgets and electric vehicles.

Yet, more than half of its 95 million people live on less than \$2.15 a day. Some 80 percent of Congolese youth are unemployed. Food prices are soaring – affected by COVID-19, the Ukraine war and a weakened currency. Poor infrastructure like bad roads and lack of electricity continue to cripple the country.

Meanwhile, sky-high levels of corruption, from petty bribes extorted daily from the Congolese people to huge embezzlement scandals rocking the DRC's state mining firms, have continued. Hopes that excesses documented under Kabila would be prosecuted have been dashed as the former

Analysis: Has DR Congo's Tshisekedi delivered enough to win a second term?

Thousands turn up at President Tshisekedi's campaign rallies. But what has his first five-year term delivered?

By: Shola Lawal
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Election campaign banners for President Felix Tshisekedi along a road in Kinshasa, December 13, 2023 [John Wessels/AFP]

Worth Noting:

- The DRC is one of the poorest countries on earth, despite the country's immense mineral wealth. It is the world's leading producer of cobalt and the third largest producer of copper – minerals used in manufacturing electronic gadgets and electric vehicles.
- Yet, more than half of its 95 million people live on less than \$2.15 a day. Some 80 percent of Congolese youth are unemployed. Food prices are soaring – affected by COVID-19, the Ukraine war and a weakened currency. Poor infrastructure like bad roads and lack of electricity continue to cripple the country.
- Meanwhile, sky-high levels of corruption, from petty bribes extorted daily from the Congolese people to huge embezzlement scandals rocking the DRC's state mining firms, have continued. Hopes that excesses documented under Kabila would be prosecuted have been dashed as the former leader continues to enjoy protection from the Tshisekedi administration despite their falling out.

leader continues to enjoy protection from the Tshisekedi administration despite their falling out. Tshisekedi himself has been accused of parlaying with some politicians specifically for their vote-wielding power, with some pointing fingers at Deputy Prime Minister Vital Kamerhe and Jean-Pierre Bemba, both respectively implicated in fraud and war crimes. In Goma, where M23 once conquered briefly, and where the president has managed to hold rallies, Bisimwa Bibasa Andre, a teacher, said he is not convinced. "I don't have a normal life," the 44-year-old said. "Since Tshisekedi came into power life has been getting worse. I don't have enough food to eat and there is no money at all. We have corruption, tribalism at high levels, nepotism, and lies. He lied to the Congolese people," Andre said.

Free education and a more prosperous economy
But Tshikedi's government has also scored major wins. The DRC now enjoys support from the World Bank for an \$800m education project that has seen chil-

dren attend primary schools for free, a first of its kind scheme in a country ranked 179th of 191 countries on the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index. Some 4.5 million children have been enrolled in the programme and at least 36,000 teachers have been employed. Tshisekedi, in his campaigns, has promised to extend the programme to secondary schools. Although challenges have arisen, including non-payment of teachers, embezzlement, and overcrowding in schools, experts like Malukisa say the project is still a positive development. Separately, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has disbursed millions of dollars to boost state coffers as part of a 2019 \$1.5bn credit facility deal meant to help cushion the harsh effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the import-dependent country. Analysts too are pleased with the increase in the state budget experienced under Tshisekedi. Higher oil prices as well as tax reforms, including the empowerment of the Inspectorate General of Finance (IGF), which acts as an anticorruption agency

and has sought to uncover financial fraud, saw the state budget go from about \$10bn to \$16bn in 2023. Badly negotiated mining contracts signed before Tshisekedi took office are getting a review. In 2021, the state pushed back against a minerals-for-infrastructure deal signed with China in 2008 that many say short-changed the DRC. Chinese firms were to build hospitals and roads worth \$3bn in exchange for a 68 percent stake in Sicominex, a joint copper and cobalt venture with the DRC-owned Gecamines, that was valued at a much higher price. This year, the IGF requested \$17bn more for the deal, and Congolese officials say a "50-50" agreement has now been reached, although details are scant. Stay or go? Despite his mixed record, some say there are benefits in seeing Tshisekedi return for a second term. Ituku Walassa Bernard is a 38-year-old living in Goma. Although unemployed, and even with M23 fighters being only miles from taking the city of one million, Bernard says he will vote for Tshisekedi. The president's feisty attitude towards Rwanda's Kagame whom he

recently compared with Hitler, has scored major points with Bernard. "We have some people in the opposition who are lying during this campaign saying that 'If I am elected I will finish this war within six months,'" Bernard said. But ending the war or seeing more economic prosperity in the DRC will take some time, he added. "We need to be patient because we have to deal with it methodically. Things are changing. I hope that he [Tshisekedi] can bring big changes if we give him a second mandate." Malukisa of the Catholic University of Congo is more sceptical. "Overall, the president's record is negative," he said. A Tshisekedi win, he added, could deepen tensions with Rwanda and breathe life into an old system of political elitism. "The leaders on whom Tshisekedi relies to win the elections are the same ones who have contributed to the destruction of the state since the days of Mobutu and Kabila," Malukisa said. "We cannot count on the current ruling class." As the vote closes in, the question of whether there will be a free and fair election hangs heavy in the air.

In 2018, rival candidate Martin Fayulu disputed the elections, saying it was rigged in favour of Tshisekedi. With voters already complaining of bad-quality voter cards and shoddy registration processes ahead of the poll, opposition figures say CENI, the electoral body, plans to rig the elections in favour of the president. Just this week, Moise Katumbi's rally in a Tshisekedi stronghold turned violent. But a rigged vote would only mar, rather than make Tshisekedi's legacy, experts warn. Yet, if the president loses, tensions in his home province of Kasai, and parts of Kinshasa, where he is well-loved, could be high as violence has routinely happened during Congolese elections. "The future of the DRC is truly unpredictable," said Malukisa.

Source: Al Jazeera

Nazir Jinnah: Where To Invest in Africa 2024

Amidst the global highs and lows, Africa emerges as a beacon of opportunity, inviting investors to explore a wealth of potential in the coming year.

By: Capital Correspondent

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Nazir Jinnah

Worth Noting:

- In Kenya, where over 80 percent of electricity comes from renewable sources, Jinnah notes the country's ambitious goal of transitioning to 100 percent clean energy by 2030, presenting an enticing prospect for those keen on sustainable investments.
- President William Ruto, who is pushing Kenya to become a green powerhouse, has since said the country will stop using fossil fuel by 2030.
- "We have slowed down any investments in fossil fuels in Kenya. We do not have any fossil fuel resources at the moment. All we have is fuel imported from everywhere else," he said.
- "But we are now starting a huge e-mobility program to make sure that we change all our transport that uses renewable energy. It is my commitment that by 2030 Kenya will be one hundred percent green."

Amidst the global highs and lows, Africa emerges as a beacon of opportunity, inviting investors to explore a wealth of potential in the coming year. Renowned Kenyan businessman and financial expert, Nazir Jinnah, shares insights on key areas ripe for investment, highlighting the continent's untapped potential. Jinnah emphasizes the growing momentum in Africa's embrace of sustainable practices, particularly in renewable energy projects. With solar and wind initiatives gaining traction, he points to a financially sound opportunity for investors seeking long-term growth. "Investing in renewable energy isn't just about financial returns; it's about powering a sustainable future for Africa. The continent's shift to clean energy is not just a choice; it's a necessity for long-term growth," Nazir

Jinnah says. In Kenya, where over 80 percent of electricity comes from renewable sources, Jinnah notes the country's ambitious goal of transitioning to 100 percent clean energy by 2030, presenting an enticing prospect for those keen on sustainable investments. President William Ruto, who is pushing Kenya to become a green powerhouse, has since said the country will stop using fossil fuel by 2030. "We have slowed down any investments in fossil fuels in Kenya. We do not have any fossil fuel resources at the moment. All we have is fuel imported from everywhere else," he said. "But we are now starting a huge e-mobility program to make sure that we change all our transport that uses renewable energy. It is my commitment that by 2030 Kenya will be one hundred

percent green." The President was speaking to CNN's Becky Anderson on December 5 when he maintained that Africa has the potential to lead the world in transitioning to the use of renewable energy. Technology: Riding the Digital Wave Fueled by a youthful population, Africa is experiencing a digital revolution, making the tech sector a goldmine for investors. From mobile technology to e-commerce, startups addressing local challenges are on the rise. Jinnah suggests that the tech sector offers a diverse array of investment opportunities, uniting innovation with practical solutions. "Africa's tech scene is more than just a trend; it's a seismic shift driven by a dynamic youth population. Investing in technology here isn't just about making money; it's about being part of a

transformative journey that shapes the continent's future," Jinnah said. Agriculture: Harvesting Potential With a booming population, Jinnah further underscores agriculture as a fundamental investment area. Agribusiness ventures integrating technological advancements not only promise financial returns but also contribute significantly to food security. The agriculture sector, according to Jinnah, stands as a fertile ground for exploration and potential growth. Healthcare: Building Resilience Recent global events highlight the vital role of robust healthcare systems. Jinnah observes a surge in investments in healthcare infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, and telemedicine services. Companies prioritizing accessibility and affordability

in healthcare are poised for substantial growth. Education Technology: Shaping Minds, Shaping Futures The persistent demand for quality education creates opportunities in educational technology, vocational training, and initiatives promoting access to education. Jinnah encourages investors to explore the education sector, emphasizing that aligning financial success with positive societal change is not only wise but impactful. As Africa evolves, Jinnah believes that strategic and informed investments hold the key to shaping the continent's economic trajectory in 2024 and beyond. For global investors seeking untapped potential, Africa awaits as a dynamic and promising destination for growth, he said.