

Labour Party won a landslide victory not seen in recent history as the Conservatives suffered a crushing defeat

2024 UK Election

Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer is the new Prime Minister :



July 4 massacre as Tories trampled, several top political beasts are booted out:

HISTORIC LANDSLIDE WIN FOR LABOUR IN LANDMARK 2024 UK ELECTION, CRUSHING BLOW TO TORIES AS SUNAK BOWS OUT

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Labour Party won a landslide victory not seen in recent history as the Conservatives suffered a crushing defeat in what is being dubbed as the July 4 massacre as leading Tory Ministers lost their seats in the outgoing Rishi Sunak's Party, forcing the outgoing Prime Minister to concede defeat and apologise to the nation. Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer is the new Prime Minister. Labour won a record 412 seats, adding a whopping 214 seats from the Conservative, decimating its arch-rival, the now, opposition Conservative



Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer delivering his first speech outside the door of 10 Downing Street promising to serve the nation

Party, which lost its 2019 majority and was pipped to a wafer-thin 121 seats, losing 252 seats in the Parliament. Several top name Cabinet Ministers (called Secretary in UK politics) were ousted, including Defence Secretary Grant Shapps, Penny Mordaunt, Tory leader of the Commons, Alex Chalk, Justice Secretary, Gillian Keegan Education Secretary, Lucy Frazer Culture Secretary, Davies T C Davies Welsh Secretary responsible for Wales's affairs, Michelle Donelan Science Secretary, Mark Harper, Transport Secretary. Other Tories who lost their seats include Johnny Mercer, veteran minister; Simon

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Sangomas with ring lights: Zimbabwe's traditional healers take to TikTok

Wearing a stylish black leather jacket and a red blouse, a denim sun hat covering her dreadlocked head, Gogo Mafirakureva goes live on TikTok. In just the first few minutes of her livestream, almost 1,000 people join in.

A traditional song plays from a stereo while she puts on colourful beads and sniffs tobacco snuff – a grounded African tobacco that sangomas, or Southern African traditional healers like her, regularly use. "Gogo, I have a problem," a guest on the livestream says.

In Zimbabwe's Shona culture, when a person gets a spiritual calling from their ancestors to be a healer and accepts, they are initiated as a sangoma, taking on the honorific "Gogo" (grandmother) if they are female, or "Sekuru" (grandfather) if they are male.

"Gogo ... I am being forgetful and I have exams coming up. I want your help," the guest continues. But Mafirakureva, streaming from

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Nine in 10 top global companies failing to uphold human rights, report says

World Benchmarking Alliance says companies should take greater responsibility for UN Sustainable Development Goals.

By Erin Hale
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

- “Demonstrating leadership in creating an equal, inclusive, and just world could significantly aid governments in eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, and ensuring access to decent work for all. Regulation, guidance, and external pressure are necessary to steer businesses in the right direction,” Agarwal added.
- The WBA’s Social Benchmark assessed companies commitment to “act ethically, provide and promote decent work, and respect human rights”.
- At least 30 percent of companies scored between 0 and 2 out of a possible 20 points, with a clear “mismatch between what companies disclose on decent work and society’s expectation of them,” said the WBA, which receives funding from the European Union and the governments of Canada, the Netherlands and Denmark.



Nearly all of the world’s 2,000 top companies are failing to meet societal expectations towards human rights, working conditions and corporate ethics, according to the World Benchmarking Alliance [Bay Ismoyo/AFP]

More than 90 percent of the world’s 2,000 most influential companies, including Amazon, BMW, Nestle, Rio Tinto, Pfizer, Shein, and Standard Chartered, are failing to meet societal expectations towards human rights, working conditions and corporate ethics, a first-of-its-kind assessment has found. Despite commanding revenues equal to 45 percent of the global economy, the world’s top companies are missing the opportunity to positively affect the lives of hundreds of millions of people, the nonprofit World Benchmarking Alliance said in a report released on Tuesday. “The companies have resources and influence equivalent to some of the biggest countries, impacting more people than the populations of many nations. The fact that 90 percent of these

companies are failing to act on fundamental social expectations shows the state of play of the private sector,” said Namit Agarwal, social transformation lead at the WBA, which tracks companies’ commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. “Demonstrating leadership in creating an equal, inclusive, and just world could significantly aid governments in eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, and ensuring access to decent work for all. Regulation, guidance, and external pressure are necessary to steer businesses in the right direction,” Agarwal added. The WBA’s Social Benchmark assessed companies commitment to “act ethically, provide and promote decent work, and respect human rights”. At least 30 percent of companies scored between 0 and

2 out of a possible 20 points, with a clear “mismatch between what companies disclose on decent work and society’s expectation of them,” said the WBA, which receives funding from the European Union and the governments of Canada, the Netherlands and Denmark. While more than 60 percent of companies disclose some information about wages and at least 45 percent report some information about working hours, just 29 percent monitor the health and safety of supplier workplaces, according to the WBA. Only 20 percent carry out human rights due diligence on their supply chain partners and just 4 percent are committed to a living wage, according to the nonprofit. Most companies also fell short in the area of corporate responsibility, with just 10 percent disclosing their

tax payments and 9 percent outlining how they engage with stakeholders like employees and trade unions, according to the index. The WBA said just 5 percent of surveyed companies disclosed their spending on corporate lobbying despite their outsized economic influence. “The lobbying efforts of the world’s 2,000 most influential companies, representing \$45 trillion in revenue, can either drive or hinder sustainable development. Currently, however, there is no way to know which direction companies are pushing. Most companies are not transparent about their political engagement strategies or spending,” the nonprofit said. Of the 14 sectors surveyed, apparel and footwear, ICT and retail ranked the highest for meeting societal expectations, with scores of

between 28 percent and 33 percent, compared with the average score of 23 percent. The funds and financial services sector scored the lowest, with 11 percent, followed by the transportation industry at 14 percent, and real estate at 16 percent. By region, companies with headquarters in the Asia Pacific scored the highest, with an average score of 35 percent. However, the WBA said this was due to the outsize impact of Australia and its commitment to disclosing tax payments. The region was followed by Europe at 33 percent and North America at 24 percent. The Middle East scored the lowest at 11 percent, behind South Asia and East Asia with 14 percent each. The WBA said the private sector will need to take greater responsibility for the economic and social conditions they help to create if the world is to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including halving poverty by 2030. “Protest movements that have emerged around the world in the past decade are a visible indication that people want an economic system that works for the poorest majority rather than the richest few,” the nonprofit said. “Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires companies to engage in socially responsible business conduct, including respecting human rights, providing decent work with living wages and a fair and safe environment, and acting ethically by paying their fair share of taxes and lobbying responsibly.”

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Mauritania

Mauritania re-elects President Ghazouani for a second term

By: Diaspora Times Team
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Worth Noting:

- Ghazouani's other main rival, Hamadi Ould Sid' El Moctar, who heads the Tewassoul party, came third with 12.78 percent, according to CENI.
- Saturday's presidential election had an overall turnout of 55.39 percent, lower than in 2019.
- But opponent Abeid said he would not recognise the results of CENI, which he accused of being manipulated by the government.
- Some of Abeid's supporters demonstrated in the capital Nouakchott late on Sunday, burning tyres and disrupting traffic.
- "We did everything we could to prepare the conditions for a good election and we were relatively successful. I congratulate everyone," CENI chief Dah Ould Abdel Jelil told journalists.



President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani speaks to reporters after casting his vote at a polling station in Nouakchott, Mauritania [File: Michele Cattani/AFP]

Incumbent Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani has won Mauritania's presidential election, securing a second term, according to the country's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). Ghazouani, 67, won 56.12 percent of the votes in the first round of the presidential poll, well ahead of his main rival, anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid, who won 22.10 percent, CENI said on Monday. Ghazouani's other main ri-

val, Hamadi Ould Sid' El Moctar, who heads the Tewassoul party, came third with 12.78 percent, according to CENI. Saturday's presidential election had an overall turnout of 55.39 percent, lower than in 2019. But opponent Abeid said he would not recognise the results of CENI, which he accused of being manipulated by the government. Some of Abeid's supporters demonstrated in the capital Nouakchott late on Sunday,

burning tyres and disrupting traffic. "We did everything we could to prepare the conditions for a good election and we were relatively successful. I congratulate everyone," CENI chief Dah Ould Abdel Jelil told journalists. The election victory gives former army chief Ghazouani, 67, a second term as head of the vast desert country, seen as relatively stable in Africa's volatile Sahel region and set to become a gas producer.

He has presided over a period of relative stability since 2019, as Sahel neighbours, including Mali, struggle with violence with the rise of armed groups that have led to military coups. Mauritania has not recorded an attack on its soil in recent years and Ghazouani, who currently chairs the African Union, has promised to manage threats from such groups. Ghazouani has also made helping the young a key priority in a country with

a population of 4.9 million, where almost three-quarters of people are under age 35. After a first term hit by the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the incumbent says he hopes to make more reforms thanks to a favourable economic outlook. Ghazouani had also pledged to invest in renewable energy and expand gold, uranium and iron-ore mining.

Source: News Agencies

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Dozens killed in attack on village in central Mali

Mali has been plagued by al-Qaeda-linked and ethnically based armed groups, but forced out UN peacekeepers.

Unidentified armed men have killed approximately 40 people in an attack on a village in central Mali, local officials said.

The attack took place on Monday in Djiguibombo village in the Mopti region, one of several areas in Mali's north and centre where groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS) have been active for more than a decade.

"It was a very serious attack, armed men surrounded the village and shot at people," Moulaye Guindo, the mayor of Bankass town, told the Reuters news agency.

While he did not provide a death toll, two local officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said about 40 people were killed.

"It was carnage, they surrounded the village where there was a wedding ... There was panic, some people managed to flee, but many were killed, most of them men," said one of the officials.

A local youth representative told the AFP news agency that the attack



began before nightfall and "lasted around three hours".

"Many inhabitants fled towards Bandiagara [town]. Those who stayed were not even able to bury the dead

properly," he said.

The officials did not identify the attackers, and no group has claimed responsibility.

Groups aligned with al-Qaeda and

ISIL have operated in Mali since 2015, seizing territory and making swaths of the country ungovernable. The violence that started in the north spread to the country that

year, when Katiba Macina, an al-Qaeda-affiliated group, was established and led by Fulani preacher Amadou Kouffa.

A military government seized power after a 2020 coup, promising to tackle the rising insecurity, but attacks remain rife. The military has also been accused of rights abuses, according to international human rights groups.

In December, the United Nations mission in Mali – known as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) – officially ended a 10-year deployment in a pullout ordered by Mali's military government.

Since the 2020 coup, Mali's military rulers have broken off their alliances with France and European partners while turning politically and militarily towards Russia.

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

DRC

DRC tribunal sentences 25 soldiers to death for 'fleeing the enemy'

Military court in Butembo set up as part of crackdown on soldiers fleeing M23 rebels as fighting rages in the east.

Twenty-five soldiers accused of fleeing fighting against M23 rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been sentenced to death.

The Butembo military court in North Kivu province handed the sentences down on Wednesday, deeming them guilty of fleeing the enemy, dissipation of war munitions and violation of orders.

"I find them guilty and sentence each of them to death," said Colonel Kabeya Ya Hanu, president of the military court.

The tribunal was set up close to the scene of recent clashes between the Congolese army and M23 fighters with the aim of discouraging soldiers from fleeing the front line.

A total of 31 defendants, including 27 soldiers and four of their civilian wives, appeared before the military court during the one-day trial, said Jules Muvweko, one of the defence lawyers.

The four women were acquitted while one soldier was sentenced to 10 years' jail for robbery. The verdict for the last soldier was unclear.

'Weaken our military'

In early May, eight Congolese soldiers, including five officers, were sentenced to death in Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu, for "cowardice" and "fleeing the enemy". Moïse Hangi, a human rights activist, noted DRC's government only

recently lifted a moratorium on the death penalty that was in place since 2003.

"We are in danger of reaching the point where many military personnel are going to be candidates for this decision, rather than improving our security apparatus. This kind of decision will increasingly weaken our military and give more fear to those on all the front lines," Hangi said.

Last week, M23 – the March 23 movement, which the United Nations claims is backed by Rwanda – seized several towns on the northern front of the conflict. Rwanda denies any involvement.

Its recent gains include the strategic town of Kanyabayonga, which is seen as a gateway to the major commercial centres of Butembo and Beni.

Faced with the combined might of the Rwandan army and M23, Congolese troops have repeatedly retreated without a fight, news reports say.

"Many units have less than half the number of soldiers they are supposed to have due to desertions and casualties," said Jason Stearns, a former UN investigator who now runs the Congo Research Group at New York University. "Above all, there is a lack of accountability and morale." M23 has seized vast swaths of territory, almost completely encircling Goma, and killed scores of people.



DRC soldiers ride in a vehicle in Mirangi, close to the town of Kibirizi, now controlled by M23 rebels in North Kivu province [File: Alexis Huguet/AFP]

There are already 2.8 million displaced people in North Kivu, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

DR Congo's mineral-rich east has been racked by fighting between both local and foreign-based armed groups for the past three decades, the conflict having spilled over from the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s. Last March, the Congolese government lifted the moratorium on the death penalty that had been in force since 2003 in the country.

'Every officer is afraid'

Successive Congolese governments

and UN peacekeeping missions have struggled to quell violence in the east, where more than 100 armed groups are fighting over land and minerals, including rich deposits of gold and coltan, essential for making mobile phones.

Some have received backing from DRC's eastern neighbours, which have a history of intervening in the region.

The eight officers convicted at a well-publicised court martial in May stared blankly as a colonel in a black beret declared them guilty of cowardice for abandoning their posts.

Defence lawyer Alexis Olenga rejected the charge, saying the bat-

alion commander, Colonel Patient Mushengezi, was being treated in Goma for high blood pressure at the time, while his men left to replenish their ammunition when another unit failed to deliver the supplies.

A growing number of arrests is spreading fear and distrust in the military, army officers told Reuters news agency.

"Even our greatest fighters have been put in prison for mere rumours," an unnamed military intelligence officer was quoted as saying. "Every officer who comes in is afraid."

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

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Motivation

Beyond Vows: 23 Keys to Unlocking the Secrets of a Truly Fulfilling Marriage Today



1. Marriage is not for quitters: Marriage is not a sprint but a marathon. Embrace challenges and believe that perseverance is the key to a lasting relationship.

2. You will feel proud of yourself looking back knowing that you honored your vows: Through the highs and lows, you will look back on the years together with a sense of accomplishment. Take pride in the commitment that you make to each other on their wedding day.

3. If you do marriage right, it will bring out the best in you and in your spouse: A healthy marriage is a journey of mutual growth. You inspire each other to become better individuals, bringing out the best in themselves and each other.

4. Sex is important but not the only thing in marriage: While intimacy is an integral part of the relationship, you two understand the emotional connection, communication, and shared experiences are equally important.

5. When younger, make love as much as you can, enjoy it. A time is coming when all you have are memories: Embrace passion and enjoy the physical aspect of the relationship. As time passes, you cherish these memories, knowing that the intensity might change but the love could deepen.

6. Friends will come and go, you will know so many people as a married person, but keep your spouse your priority: You will encounter numerous people throughout the journey, but always make sure that the relationship remains the top priority amidst the comings and goings of friends.

7. Don't stay together for children, eventually they will leave you two. What will you have to hold? Recognizing that children will eventually build lives of their own, focus on maintaining a strong connection beyond parenthood.

8. Growing old doesn't mean you cannot make your spouse feel special, keep making his/her heart beat: Even as wrinkles etch on your faces and silver adorned the hair, continue to make each other feel cherished. Understand the importance of keeping the flame alive.

9. Do not harden your heart, otherwise marriage will be too great a burden: Do not let bitterness take root. Choose forgiveness over resentment, ensuring that the love remains resilient.

10. Do not hold grudges, otherwise stress will kill you: Understand the toll of unresolved conflicts, and learn to forgive and choose to let go of grievances, easing the

burdens that can otherwise weigh you down.

11. Even though you two are married, don't forget to build yourself, and work on your goals as an individual. Don't lose you: While prioritizing marriage, pursue also your own personal growth. Encourage each other to chase dreams, because a thriving partnership requires two fulfilled individuals.

12. Not every advice is good advice. Discern: Amidst the sea of opinions, learn to discern what advice is beneficial for your unique relationship. Acknowledge that not every piece of guidance applies to your journey.

13. Love your spouse the best way you can, not as a reward to your spouse for treating you right, but because you have personally chosen to: Love is not transactional; it is a choice. Love each other unconditionally, not as a response to actions but as a commitment you willingly embrace.

14. It is not for you to say you are a good husband/wife but for your spouse to say I have a good husband/wife: Understand that the true measure of your roles as husband and wife is to lay in the perception of the other. Aim to be the partners your spouse is proud to call their own.

15. Don't work too hard chasing

after money for your family that you lose your family: In the pursuit of providing, be mindful not to sacrifice the very essence of your union. Work to live rather than live to work, and understand that true wealth lay in the love you share.

16. Praying for your spouse is your personal responsibility that you cannot delegate to another person: Spirituality played a crucial role in their lives. Individually take the responsibility to pray for each other, fostering a connection that goes beyond

the physical and emotional realms.

17. Start each day with warm words and the tone of the day will be good: Every morning, begin the day with expressions of love and gratitude. Setting a positive tone early on paves the way for harmony throughout the day.

18. Don't be scared of aging, be scared of aging without a purpose or a legacy in mind: Embracing the inevitability of aging, focus on creating a meaningful legacy, ensuring that the wisdom and love you

cultivate will endure beyond your years.

19. As you work, think about retirement. Save, invest, plan. You will not always have the energy you have: Understanding the impermanence of youth, plan for the future, ensure financial stability and security in your golden years.

20. Mothers, don't hurt your children with words. Mommy wounds are difficult to heal from: Understood the weight of your words and chose them carefully, mindful of the lasting impact they could have on your children. Be a source of comfort rather than pain.

21. Remember what you sow in your younger years of marriage, you will reap in your older years: Sow seeds of love, respect, and commitment early in your marriage, reap the rewards as you navigate the later stages of life.

22. You may pretend to the outside world you two are happy but behind closed doors, you two know the true state of your union. Stop living a public lie, have true love: Be transparent with each other, ensuring that your love is genuine and not a facade for the outside world. Value authenticity over societal expectations.

23. If you feel like quitting; step back, breathe, be objective and most likely you will realize you don't have to quit. Don't always trust feelings, wait them out: In moments of doubt, give each other space to breathe. Understand the transient nature of emotions and chose patience over hasty decisions. (Last Photo by Samuel Rodriguez on Unsplash)



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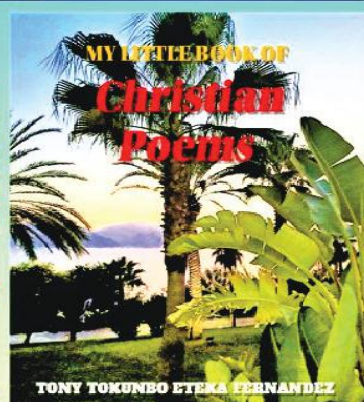
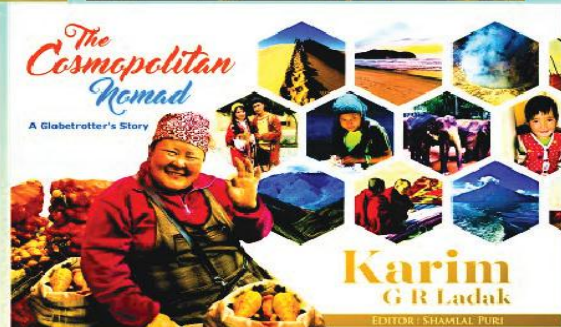
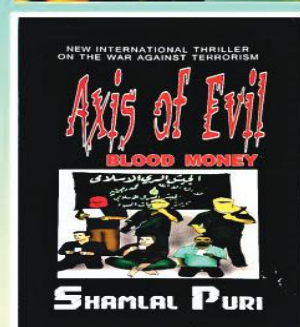
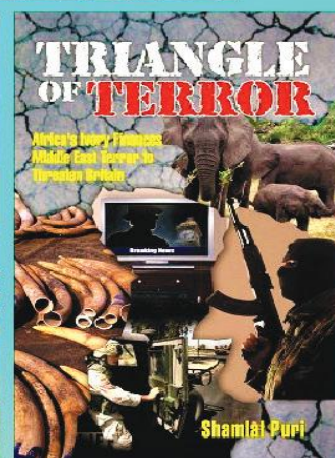
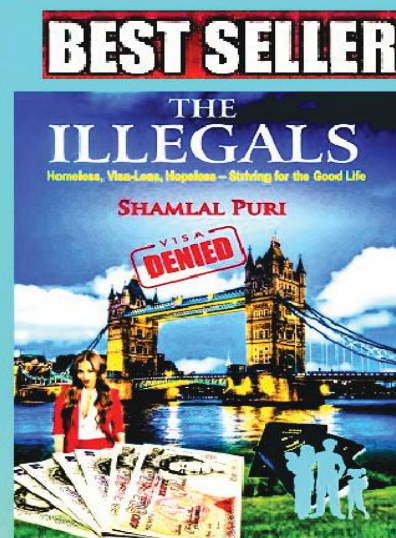
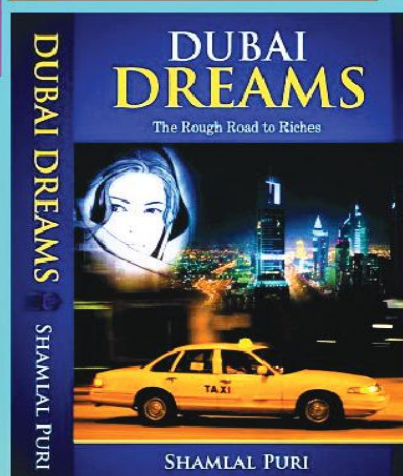
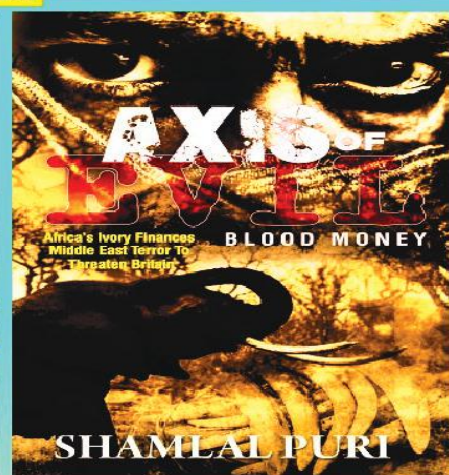
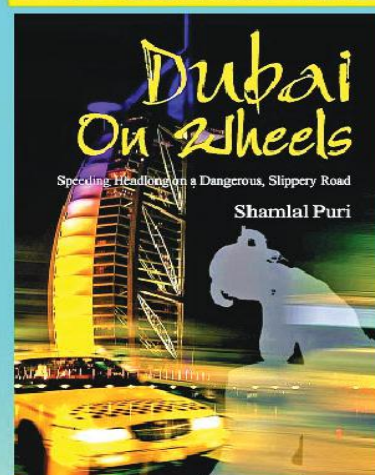
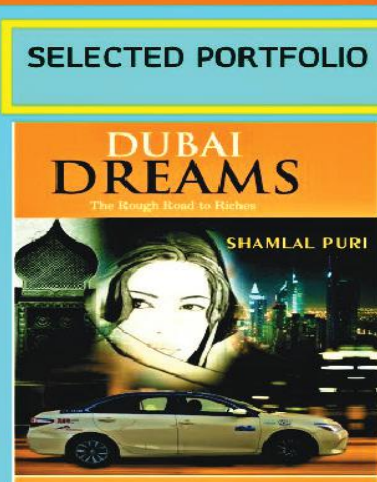
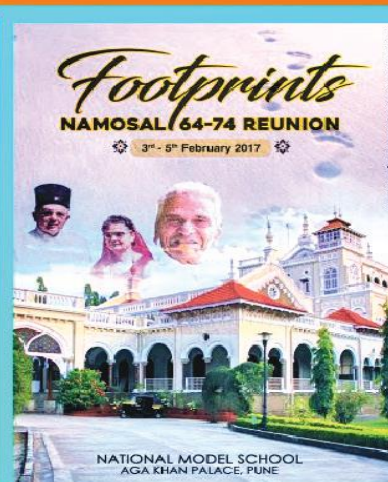
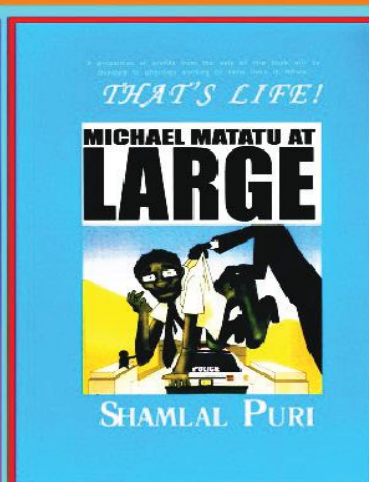
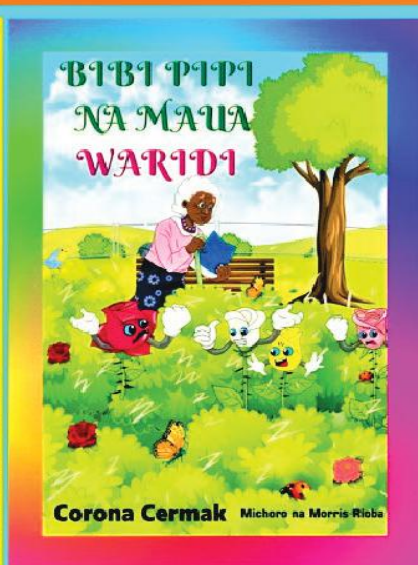
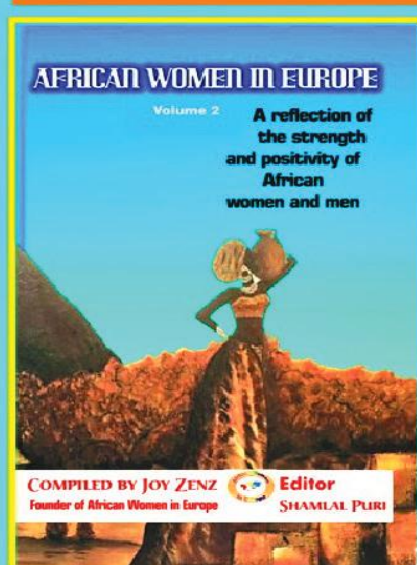
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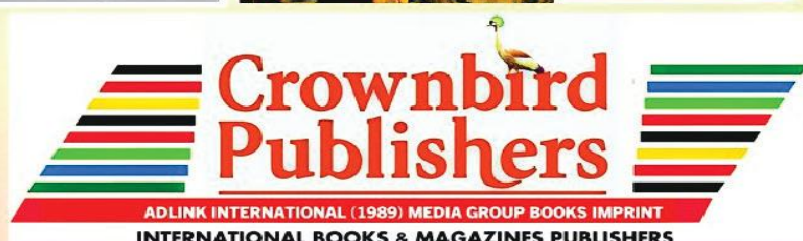
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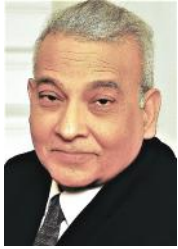
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UK News

July 4 massacre as Tories trampled, several top political beasts are booted out: HISTORIC LANDSLIDE WIN FOR LABOUR IN LANDMARK 2024 UK ELECTION, CRUSHING BLOW TO TORIES AS SUNAK BOWS OUT



By: Shamlal Puri
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& Senior Editor – UK
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Worth Noting:

- The election was largely peaceful except for a couple of incidents: an unprovoked attack on the offices of a Labour candidate in London just before the polls and intimidation of two female candidates in Birmingham, West Midlands, where mainly diaspora communities from Pakistan and India live.
- Rogues in London smashed the front window of Labour MP Stella Creasy, the long-serving parliamentarian's campaign headquarters in the north-east London suburb of Walthamstow, with a large diaspora population.
- Vandals smashed the front windows, but a former Shadow Minister Stella Creasy stood up defiantly to the brazen attack in the early hours of Sunday, June 23.
- She tweeted, "Message to whoever attacked my office last night: You don't intimidate me, and you don't belong in the political process."

Hart, the chief whip; Victoria Prentice, attorney general and Illegal Migration Minister Michael Tomlinson; and Jacob Rees-Mogg, a close confidante of former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, among several top Tories.

The most significant loss was former 45-day Tory Prime Minister Liz Truss in Southwest Norfolk, who Labour ousted.

Rishi Sunak retained his Richmond and Northallerton seat, polling 23,059 votes, with 12,185 majority. He defeated Labour's Tom Wilson, who polled 10,874 votes.

Sunak still holds the confidence of his electorate but had to concede defeat to Labour due to the overall number of seats captured by Labour.

Sunak announced that he was stepping down from the leadership of the Conservative Party but has the option to remain a back-bench Tory MP.

His supporters feel relieved that he has retained his seat and the confidence of a part of the British electorate.

He made history in October 2022 as the first Asian diaspora British Prime Minister, an honour no one can steal. The election was largely peaceful except for a couple of incidents: an unprovoked attack on the offices of a Labour candidate in London just before the polls and intimidation of two female candidates in Birmingham, West Midlands, where mainly diaspora communities from Pakistan and India live.

Rogues in London smashed the front window of Labour MP Stella Creasy, the long-serving parliamentarian's campaign headquarters in the north-east London suburb of Walthamstow, with a large diaspora population.

Vandals smashed the front windows, but a former Shadow Minister Stella Creasy stood up defiantly to the brazen attack in the early hours of Sunday, June 23.

She tweeted, "Message to whoever attacked my office last night: You don't intimidate me, and you don't belong in the political process. She added: "Police are already on this to find you – will press for the strongest penalties for such an anti-democratic attack... I know Walthamstow won't be cowed down or influenced

by your violence either."

She revealed that malicious and false" leaflets about her had been distributed.

Police said they are investigating the incident between 3.10 am and 3.30 am on Sunday, June 23.

Stella Creasy won her Walthamstow seat with a 59.3% share of the vote, polling 27,172 votes, winning by a massive 17,996 votes.

Of her win, she said, "We have rejected the hatred and division so many wish to foster, and I will do everything to stand up and speak up for the future of hope and change we need."

Before polling day in Birmingham, West Midlands, two female candidates who won the election complained of intimidation, which is a blot against British democracy.

Critics say that it appears members of the unruly diaspora community, who have imported these nasty habits of intimidation from their original countries, were allegedly suspected of this electoral intimidation during their campaign.

Labour candidate Shabana Mahmood used her victory speech to express her displeasure on how she, her family and supporters were harassed by some people who had sought to "deny" her Muslim faith. She said she is a proud Muslim.

She alleged that physical threats to her and her family had been reported to the Police, calling this an "assault on democracy itself."

Shabana Mahmood, who represents the Ladywood area of Birmingham, West Midlands, which has a predominantly Muslim community, felt intimidated when masked men disrupted a community meeting, terrifying people in attendance.

Another Labour candidate, Jess Philips, who also won in Birmingham, was heckled during her speech, causing serious concerns.

BBC reported that a spokesperson for West Midlands Police said a number of police officers were stationed at polling stations across Birmingham on Thursday to "offer reassurance and ensure public safety".

They said: "Our officers are



Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delivers his resignation speech with his wife, Akshata Murty, standing in the background



Rishi Sunak won his seat, but the Tories list time winning only 121 seats.

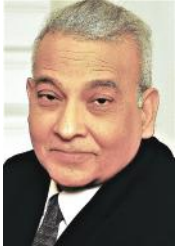


History being written... Sir Keir Starmer with First Lady Victoria on the steps of 10 Downing Street minutes before they entered the office of the Prime Minister.

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aware of a number of incidents leading up to the election where people have reported criminal damage and harassment, and we are carrying out inquiries to identify those responsible.”

Sadly, tragic events miles away in Gaza rubbed unfairly into the UK elections as some sections of the community raised Free Palestine slogans.

Several independent candidates who stood on the pro-Gaza platform also won the elections.

With that solid pro-Gaza bias, critics wonder what their contribution would be to the welfare of Britons who voted for them and how valuable their efforts would be other than concentrating on matters thousands of miles away in Gaza.

Without a doubt, the plight of the people of Gaza, as other suppressed communities abroad, such as in Ukraine, Myanmar, China and North Korea, need our compassion and support, but to contest an election on the sole criteria of Gaza leads to many questions from critics.

It was a battle between the blues, the colour of the Tories, and the reds, the Labour Party colour; other Parties were merely a side-show; call them spoilers whom only a few disgruntled voters chose.

There were breathless 24 hours in British politics as soon as the polls closed at 10 pm on July 4.

On Thursday night, Britons went to sleep under the Conservative rule of Rishi Sunak and woke up on Friday with Sir Keir Starmer of the Labour Party as the country's 58th Prime Minister and the first Labour Prime Minister since 2010.

Opinion polls had indicated a drubbing for the Tories and a landslide for Labour, but knowing opinion polls in other parts of the world could be corrupted and biased, a public relations exercise to bolster those desperately lagging and needing piggybacking, the British opinion polls were different and credible.

However, these polls kept their pace without allowing the Conservatives staring at a crushing defeat the slightest breathing space or even hope of survival.

The Conservatives were spared the ignominy of a wipeout, earning them the tag of serious losers. They will bounce back, as Labour



Warm welcome... The staff of 10 Downing Street welcome Prime Minister Keir Starmer and the First Lady, Victoria Starmer.

has done after years in the wilderness.

In the UK, general election defeats do not turn into insinuated threats, finger-wagging and defiant plots where politicians bark and use other shenanigans to overthrow the winning government as in countries across the oceans.

In the United Kingdom, outgoing Prime Ministers behave graciously in defeat. Kudos to Mr Sunak for accepting defeat like a true gentleman.

Rishi Sunak said of Prime Minister Sir Keir, “In this job, his successes will be all of our successes, and I wish him and his family well.

“Whatever our disagreements in this campaign, he is decent public-spirited man who I respect.”

While Mr Sunak was preparing his resignation speech outside 10 Downing Street to concede defeat and call in the removal vans to take his personal possessions from his flat in Downing Street to his private house, there was frantic activity in the Labour Party waiting the wings to lead the country.

As Mr Sunak delivered his resignation speech outside Downing Street on July 5, standing behind him was his crestfallen wife, millionaire Mrs Akshata Murty Sunak, wearing a predominantly blue dress with white arrow-like stripes at the top being symbolic of the Tory Party's 2024 general election results – facing downwards. The bottom section of her dress was red, symbolising Labour's colours.



Few moments of relaxation...Your tireless man, Photojournalist Shamlal Puri, reported and photographed the 2024 General Election for our newspaper throughout the campaign to finish. He is an old hand who has covered elections globally.



Her outfit drew a few snide remarks from idle eagle-eyed Britons on social media. Polling station in London where voters lined up to vote

Contd Page 13.

Chin

Sino-Tajik ties elevated to higher level

By: China Daily
xxxxxxxxxxxx

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Worth Noting:

- In Kenya, the youth-led protests against the Finance Bill are a microcosm of this global phenomenon. Young Kenyans are using social media platforms like TikTok to amplify their message, turning what started as online dissent into powerful street protests. This generation's adept use of digital tools has made their activism more visible and impactful, showcasing their ability to mobilize and influence public opinion.
- President Ruto's response to these protests is indicative of a government that is beginning to understand the importance of engaging with its youth. His promise to address their concerns and include them in discussions about the nation's future is a step in the right direction. The Finance Bill protests highlight that the youth are not just demanding change but are also offering to be part of the solution.



President Xi Jinping and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon attend a grand welcome ceremony for the Chinese president on Friday in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. A

President Xi Jinping, who is on a three-day state visit to the Central Asian country which started on Thursday, signed a joint statement with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon on developing the partnership after meetings at the presidential palace in Dushanbe. China and Tajikistan underlined on Friday their shared commitment to developing a comprehensive strategic partnership in the new era, as the two neighboring nations reached key consensus to build up cooperation on trade, connectivity, cross-border transport, critical minerals and new energy. President Xi Jinping, who is on a three-day state visit to the Central Asian country which started on Thursday, signed a joint statement with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon on developing the partnership after meetings at the presidential palace in Dushanbe. Rahmon held a grand welcoming ceremony for the Chinese president before the meetings, including a 21-gun salute, a red carpet and a guard of honor. The two presidents jointly witnessed the exchange of over 20 intergovernmental and interdepartmental documents covering cooperation in areas such as trade,

security and people-to-people exchanges. "China will always remain a trustworthy friend, a reliable partner, and a close brother to Tajikistan, regardless of the shifting dynamics of the international landscape," Xi said when jointly meeting the media with Rahmon. The two nations have agreed that high-quality Belt and Road cooperation will be the main focus in promoting the alignment of their development strategies to support each other's modernization efforts, he said. China is willing to expand imports of high-quality products from Tajikistan, continuously enhance the quality and scale of bilateral economic and trade cooperation, and deepen cooperation on connectivity, said the Chinese president. China was the second-largest trading partner of Tajikistan in 2023, with bilateral trade reaching \$3.92 billion, an increase of 53.5 percent year-on-year, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry. Among this, China's exports to Tajikistan amounted to \$3.68 billion, while imports from Tajikistan totaled \$249 million. According to Tajik authorities, the inflow of investment from China to Tajikistan totaled \$4.1 billion between 2007 and 2023, with over

700 Chinese companies now operating in the Central Asian country. "China will continue to unwaveringly advance friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation with Tajikistan. We firmly support Tajikistan in pursuing a development path that suits its national conditions, and we firmly support Tajikistan's efforts to safeguard its national independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity," Xi said. He stressed Beijing's readiness to build up people-to-people exchanges with Dushanbe, saying that greater official support will be extended to cooperation over youth, media, think tanks and education. "We are determined to further strengthen security cooperation, jointly combat the 'three forces' of terrorism, separatism, and extremism, safeguard the security of our borders, and firmly oppose any third-party interference in our internal affairs to jointly maintain regional security and stability." As for the Afghan issue, Xi said the two nations have agreed to continue enhancing communication and coordination, and to encourage the Afghan interim government to be inclusive and moderate in governance, focus on development, im-

prove livelihoods, resolutely combat terrorism-related criminal activities, and pursue good-neighborly relations. Addressing Xi as "my dear friend", Rahmon highlighted the visit by the Chinese president as "a key event and a milestone" in bilateral ties. "As the great Confucius believed, loyalty is the cornerstone of friendship. In you, we see a loyal friend and reliable partner of our people," he said. The Tajik president said he was gratified to see that the total value of business contracts and agreements signed at the Tajikistan-China trade and investment forum, held on the sidelines of Xi's visit, exceeded \$600 million. "Our transportation links and cultural and humanitarian exchanges are expanding. The number of Tajik students studying Chinese at Chinese higher education institutions has almost tripled," Rahmon said, adding that over 5,000 Tajik youths are now receiving an education in China. "Based on all these achievements, we can view Tajikistan-China relations as a model of relations between two friendly sovereign states," he said, expressing his belief that the visit will open up new horizons for

the long-term development of bilateral cooperation in the new era. Tajikistan firmly adheres to the one-China principle, opposes any form of "Taiwan independence", and steadfastly supports all efforts by China to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity and achieve national reunification, he emphasized. "Tajikistan hopes to attract more Chinese investment across various industrial sectors, especially in light industry, food, energy, agriculture, the digital economy and artificial intelligence," he continued. After their talks, Xi and Rahmon jointly inaugurated the new Tajik parliament building and government building, built with aid from China. The two buildings will be new landmarks symbolizing the friendly cooperation between China and Tajikistan, Xi said at the inauguration ceremony. "China is willing to continue working with Tajikistan based on the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, to carry out more cooperative projects in Tajikistan and make greater contributions to Tajikistan's economic and social development," said the Chinese president.

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- They said: "Our officers are aware of a number of incidents leading up to the election where people have reported criminal damage and harassment, and we are carrying out inquiries to identify those responsible."
- Sadly, tragic events miles away in Gaza rubbed unfairly into the UK elections as some sections of the community raised Free Palestine slogans.
- Several independent candidates who stood on the pro-Gaza platform also won the elections.

media with nothing else to do, saying her dress was a metaphor for how the election went for the Conservatives.

Her choice of dress that day may have been an unwittingly innocent move.

Speaking outside 10 Downing Street, Sunak said: "To the country, I would like to say first and foremost, I'm sorry."

"I have given this job my all, but you have sent a clear signal that the Government of the United Kingdom must change, and yours is the only judgment that matters. "I have heard your anger, your disappointment, and I take responsibility for this loss.

"Following this result, I will step down as party leader, not immediately, but once the formal arrangements for selecting my successor are in place.

"While he has been my political opponent, Sir Keir Starmer will shortly become our Prime Minister.

In this job, his successes will be all our successes, and I wish him and his family well.

"Whatever our disagreements in this campaign, he is a decent, public-spirited man who I respect."

To be fair to Sunak, he worked hard within his capacity to keep the country together and was on his toes most of the time he was in Downing Street – that one cannot deny.

He inherited a lot of baggage from the disastrous leadership of Boris Johnson and 46-day Prime Minister Liz Truss, who, after being ousted, is now an ordinary British citizen.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer is busy with a full in-tray and has many things to do. He did not waste time and got to work.

His first speech as the Prime Minister was held outside a crowded Downing Street area after his traditional meeting with King Charles III at Buckingham Palace to accept his invitation to form a new government.

He said that he was ready for his plans to serve the United Kingdom.

He pitched himself as a leader for "stability and moderation", and his mission was to rebuild Britain and get the country back to business.

He promised not to discriminate against anyone and would serve the whole country irrespective of who

Britons voted for.

Starmer said the elections had united the nation, adding, "Our country has voted decisively for a change, national renewal and a return to the politics of public service."

Prime Minister Sir Keir paid tribute to the "dedication and hard work" of the outgoing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, saying that his achievement in becoming the first British Asian leader of the UK had required "an extra effort that should not be underestimated by anyone."

Sir Keir said his Party's task is to turn around the lack of trust in politics and a lack of confidence under the previous governments.

He brought hope, saying, "This wound, this lack of trust in politics, can only be healed with actions, not words,"

"I know that, but we can make a start today with the simple acknowledgement that public service is a privilege, and your government should treat every single person with respect."

"Whether you voted Labour or not, especially if you did not, I say to you directly, my government will serve you. Politics can be a force for good. We will show that. We changed the Labour Party, returned it to service and that is how we will govern."

The prime minister also said the UK needed a "bigger reset, a rediscovery of who we are" but that he knew that "one of the great strengths of this nation has always been to navigate a way to calmer waters".

Starmer said he stood for "stability and moderation" and argued that for too long, governments had turned a blind eye as millions slid into greater insecurity, His first task was to appoint his Cabinet, including several senior ministers from the diaspora.

Labour and the Conservatives captured most of the 650 seats, while the smaller parties won the remainder.

Liberal Democrats – 72 (with one seat just in at the time of filing the report on Saturday); Scottish National Party 9, the surprise was the entry of Reform – UK 5, whose leader Nigel Farage



Counting time...Votes are being counted soon after the polls closed



All the roads led to polling stations in the country. Here a voter heads to cast her ballot.



Race against time... Ballot boxes had to be moved swiftly to counting centres to ensure security, and transparency

Contd Page 15

Zimbabwe

Sangomas with ring lights: Zimbabwe's traditional healers take to TikTok

As a new generation of healers shares sacred African spiritual practices on social media, critics say the two cannot mix.

By Chris Muronzi
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Contd from Page 1



A traditional healer does an online consultation with a client [File: Guillem Sartorio/AFP]

Worth Noting:

- Traditional healing has been a part of the culture of Southern Africa for centuries. Usually, sangomas will have a hut or special room where they attend to clients who pay consultation fees and other costs for additional services. The clients visit them for spiritual guidance and special prayers for various problems.
- According to belief, sangomas connect with their ancestors and sometimes the spirits of mermaids that aid them in their work – the spirit of a male mermaid called David connects with Mafirakureva later in her livestream. Some healers throw hakata, or bones, for divination, and some prescribe herbs and snuffs depending on their clients' problems. In in-person consultation, healers take cash; in the old days, they would accept tokens such as a chicken, maize, or a goat.
- Now, as some in this traditionally conservative community go digital, they are also adapting the way they work.

her living room in the United Kingdom where she currently lives, is awaiting the spirit of her late great-grandfather to arrive and speak to her.

"Let us wait for his arrival when he comes, he will attend to it," she says.

According to traditional beliefs, sangomas play a crucial role by acting as intermediaries between the spiritual and physical realms.

It is generally believed that when they connect with their ancestors, spirits or deities take control, allowing them to communicate messages, diagnose ailments, and perform healing practices. This spiritual possession is typically induced by rhythmic drumming, chanting, mbira music and dancing, which helps the healer enter a trance-like state.

In Zimbabwe, there are some 65,000 sangomas. Like neighbouring countries, including South Africa, traditional healers are often the first port of call for many seeking help with physical and spiritual ailments.

But now a newer generation of sangomas, like 37-year-old Mafirakureva, have taken to social media, specifically the popular Chinese app TikTok, to engage with clients and offer advice.

"I went on TikTok not so long ago. When I joined, I realised it was a good experience. From that experience, I have met a lot of people," she tells Al Jazeera.

'I will deliver you'

At 30 minutes into the livestream, Mafirakureva burps loudly – a spiritual harbinger that she will soon connect with an ancestor – and drapes a neatly folded red and white cloth synonymous with sangomas on her

shoulder.

Almost an hour in, the size of the audience has grown to 8,000.

At exactly 11pm, she bows her head for several minutes in total silence as if in a trance as she connects with the ancestors. Meanwhile, the message board is buzzing.

Mafirakureva's husband, also a healer, appears on screen and claps his hands in traditional African custom to welcome the spirit of her great-grandfather.

A guest on the livestream addresses Mafirakureva with a spiritual problem that she promptly addresses.

"There is a white smoke that I see rising and it is delaying good things in your life," she tells the user reassuringly. "Those who are evil will not win. Find sand from a river and I will help stop the problem. Have your tobacco snuffs too and I will deliver you, my daughter."

Traditional healing has been a part of the culture of Southern Africa for centuries. Usually, sangomas will have a hut or special room where they attend to clients who pay consultation fees and other costs for additional services. The clients visit them for spiritual guidance and special prayers for various problems.

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accept tokens such as a chicken, maize, or a goat.

Now, as some in this traditionally conservative community go digital, they are also adapting the way they work.

Several sangomas conduct consultations, healing sessions and cleansing ceremonies on TikTok and Facebook with live audiences from around the world.

On TikTok, they get gifts which they redeem for cash. Additionally, they also conduct virtual one-on-one sessions via Zoom or WhatsApp and receive payments via Paypal, Western Union and MoneyGram. At the same time, they continue in-person consultations in the areas where they live.

For Mafirakureva, who has been a sangoma since she was 24, going on social media to consult the spirits and give advice was initially anathema because she felt technology and African spirituality do not really mix.

"My husband is the one who first joined and encouraged me but I didn't warm up to the idea easily," she says.

She has since come to appreciate it and now says TikTok has made it easier to connect with people she would not ordinarily have been able to reach in person. The platform has also helped her connect with new real-life clients.

Pricey consultations

Mafirakureva is not the only Zimbabwean healer on TikTok.

Gogo Chihera, a healer from Harare, is another sangoma using social media.

"Vazukuru [my grandchildren], they are evil spirits that cause husbands and lovers to leave you. Those who just woke up one morning

and realised they have been dumped without warning when you thought you were in love, I want to help you today," Chihera announces in a TikTok video.

Others like Sekuru Kanengo and Sekuru Tasvu have achieved mild celebrity status on social media for tackling witchcraft and solving complex problems on video. Kanengo is a TikTok sensation with 104 million posts and 154 million views. On Facebook, he has 30,000 followers. He charges a significant amount for consultations.

"How are you Vazukuru? Sekuru Kanengo consultation fees, local \$200 and overseas \$300," he says in an automated message on his WhatsApp account.

An average in-person consultation with a regular sangoma in Zimbabwe would usually cost about \$10.

His main competitor, another TikTok and Facebook star with thousands of followers, Tasvu also charges a princely sum for consultations. On his WhatsApp catalogue, he charges \$80 for what he describes as "clean money" where clients do not have to "spill blood" to make covenants.

Although traditional healing is well accepted in communities, there is sometimes distrust of more shadowy healers who people fear could surreptitiously trick desperate clients into doing something that could bring misfortune.

Tasvu also offers gambling solutions to those who want to win when they place wagers in sports betting.

Just this year, he threw a lavish \$30,000 wedding party in Harare that "residents watched in awe as the cavalcade of luxury vehicles made its way to the venue", local newspaper The Sunday Mail reported.

'Oil and water'

Despite their popularity, critics of social media sangomas say they are profiteers driven by greed and the desire for money.

"There is no [legitimate] sangoma who uses a ring light," a Facebook user called Tendai Zenda Zinyama wrote in response to a post discussing sangomas and technology. "During 'matore' [spiritual sessions], I mean, people are not even allowed to wear shoes or

shiny things in there."

But Pride Shirichena, another commenter on the Facebook post, defended sangomas, saying they are just "moving with the times".

Prince Mutandi, the spokesman of the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association (Zinatha), discredited TikTok sangomas as greedy fakes bent on profiteering.

"Most of these TikTok and social media sangomas are thieves masquerading as traditional healers," Mutandi told Al Jazeera.

Like doctors, Mutandi said, members of Zinatha were bound by what he described as a "strict code of ethics" that barred them from advertising in either mainstream media or social media.

He said "most of them" were not part of the association's nationwide members. In his view, "spirituality and technology" are akin to "water and oil".

For Harare-based economic and social commentator Rashwit Mukundu, the switch to social media by sangomas was "African society innovating on technology".

"Technology affords easy access to services that people normally travel distances to access, and also affords anonymity, including payment of service fees using digital, online or mobile means," Mukundu told Al Jazeera.

"Essentially, the traditional African medicine and divinity issues have gone digital and this speaks to the future of society in terms of intersection of tradition, culture and technology."

Zimbabwe is in the throes of an economic crisis characterised by hyperinflation, soaring unemployment and a significant foreign currency shortage. And this could also be pushing people towards sangomas.

Mukundu said the economic challenges Zimbabwe faces "often lead to social challenges" and these "make people look for alternatives including guidance from ancestral spirits" – and a reinforcement of that culture within technology.

However, he also cautioned: "Some sangomas are, of course, scammers taking advantage of people's desperation to make a quick buck."

Source: Al Jazeera

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- "Whatever our disagreements in this campaign, he is decent public-spirited man who I respect."
- While Mr Sunak was preparing his resignation speech outside 10 Downing Street to concede defeat and call in the removal vans to take his personal possessions from his flat in Downing Street to his private house, there was frantic activity in the Labour Party waiting the wings to lead the country.

entered Parliament through his seat in Clacton in his eighth attempt.

Other winning parties include the Greens 4, SDLP 2, Alliance 1, DUP 3, PC 4, SP 7, UUP 1, and Independents 7.

It was a battle between the blues, the colour of the Tories, and the reds, the Labour Party colour; others were merely a sideshow, whom only fewer voters chose.

There were breathless 24 hours in British politics after the polls closed on July 4 at 10 pm.

The entry of Reform-UK on the British political scene, led by Nigel Farage, who had previously failed seven times before entering Parliament, took many Britons by surprise.

He won the seaside town of Clacton seat with 21,225 votes, earning a majority of 8,405.

Unsurprisingly, of the five Reform-UK MPs, all are white Britons, and no one from the diaspora communities hints towards a bias against non-whites in the minds of those who support this Party and voters' intentions.

Some diaspora candidates with Reform-UK tickets, such as Vinayak Malhotra (Croydon West), failed to make it, winning fewer votes.

Critics say disgruntled Britons who had lost confidence in the Labour and the Tories because of their present and past performances chose to vent their anger by turning away from the main parties to vote for Reform-UK.

Reform-UK is gaining the reputation of a right-wing outfit allegedly with primarily a direction of racism, misogyny, and some say even perception of a group that will sow the seeds of communal hatred in future: allegations that are vehemently denied.

Mr Farage is trying hard to give the impression that his Party is multicultural, but judging by his views and past records show clear hints in that direction.

Some political analysts believe Mr Farage wanted to enter the Parliament anyway because, at first, he had publicly shown reluctance to contest the polls, and then suddenly he changed his views and within days came forward to contest the general election, seeing an opportunity, he turned



Millions of young people registered to vote in the 2024 General Elections, which was a major national task for the authorities



Your vote is your vote. No one has the right to bribe you or induce you to vote against your will, this Electoral Commission poster warns

around and announced that he would be contesting from the seaside town of Clacton from where he won by 10,000 votes. That is his democratic right to change his mind.

Reform UK fielded over 600 candidates nationwide and attracted opportunistic diaspora members who believed they would not get tickets from the bigger parties but wanted to make their presence felt in British politics. They were keen to dabble in politics, hoping to bolster their personal influence, but they did not necessarily agree with the Party's philosophy. They chose to stand as Reform UK candidates,

but no one won.

The diaspora's presence could have enhanced the multicultural credibility of the Reform-UK.

The UK General Election on July 4 was largely peaceful. Overall, there were hardly any Police or armed forces near the polling stations except in pre-poll incidents in Birmingham.

Once the polls closed, the next task was to count the paper votes, as Britons have no faith in electronic voting machines (EVMs), which could lead to tampering and mass rigging.

As night fell, there was frantic overnight activity, and volunteers, mainly students

and people from local organisations, worked frantically to deliver the sealed ballot boxes to the counting teams.

Media and journalists stayed awake overnight and observed the process during this process.

The elections were held on a single day from 7 to 10 pm when the polls closed.

The UK election was delivered in sincerity and honesty.

There are severe punishments for booth capturing or bribing voters to cast their ballot against their wishes. Voters were allowed to express themselves freely in the UK on polling day.

As a career journalist, I have covered many elections worldwide, but I find that the UK polls are honest.

In other countries, voters are slapped, threatened and intimidated outside polling booths, and even their names deliberately go missing in voter's lists in a severely corrupted atmosphere and proxy voters, Party workers, instead vote for the ruling Party in the names of dead voters,

Apart from the nasty pre-election incidents in east London and Birmingham diaspora areas, the election was held peacefully on July 4.

America

Ramaphosa made practical choices for South Africa's multi-party cabinet – how this will help him down the line



President Cyril Ramaphosa

Worth Noting:

- The president could have offered ministries in portfolios that operate within the Presidency. This would have been akin to the old adage of keeping your friends close but keeping your enemies closer.
- He could have offered ministries overseeing departments that have traditionally been difficult to extract performance out of, which could make ANC ministers look comparatively good, or at least less bad.
- Closely related to this, he could have offered ministries to opposition parties that were previously overseen by weak ANC ministers who failed to exert control over their departments. He could have done so because he believes opposition ministers will be more successful at cracking the whip. Or equally inept at doing so.
- In my view Ramaphosa adopted a mix of mostly (but not exclusively) the first two motives in allocating ministerial portfolios to non-ANC members. This is unsurprising, given his astute but conciliatory nature.

Vinothan Naidoo, *University of Cape Town*

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa's multi-party cabinet of national unity has been sworn in. Much of the attention leading up to the announcement of ministerial portfolios focused on the acrimonious negotiations between the Democratic Alliance and the African National Congress over the allocation of these positions. This overshadowed the constitutional role that cabinet must play. It also forewarns of potential obstacles ahead for the president to create and sustain cohesion and cooperation between ministries. Cabinet is central to the ability of the president to effectively implement a coherent policy agenda. He has to be able to maintain internal cohesion and collective responsibility to "co-ordinate the functions of state departments". This is stipulated in section 85(2) of the constitution. Co-ordinating the work of cabinet departments has been a perennial challenge in South Africa, even during the 30 years of ANC majority rule. Intra-party factionalism and frequent reshuffles have pushed the limits of cohesion.

Ramaphosa's new cabinet, which consists of members from seven ideologically disparate political parties, will intensify the challenge

because the stakes are much higher. A parliamentary vote of no confidence in cabinet has never been triggered in South Africa's democratic history, but now there's a real risk. Various motives could have informed Ramaphosa's offers of ministerial portfolios to non-ANC members of the government.

Based on my research into the structure, policy coordination mechanisms and political-administrative relations in cabinet over the years, I believe his choices have been driven more (if not exclusively) by bona fides and pragmatism than by trying to neutralise the influence of opposition parties in cabinet. I think this augurs well for his ability to maintain cohesion and control.

Possible motives

Firstly, the president could have allocated ministries to non-ANC parties in areas with the highest degree of policy convergence with the ANC, or with the least amount of conflict with the ANC's policy direction. The other three motives are more calculating, and would be designed to shore up the ANC's continued grip on cabinet.

The president could have offered ministries in portfolios that operate within the Presidency. This would have been akin to the old adage of keeping your friends close

but keeping your enemies closer.

He could have offered ministries overseeing departments that have traditionally been difficult to extract performance out of, which could make ANC ministers look comparatively good, or at least less bad.

Closely related to this, he could have offered ministries to opposition parties that were previously overseen by weak ANC ministers who failed to exert control over their departments. He could have done so because he believes opposition ministers will be more successful at cracking the whip. Or equally inept at doing so.

In my view Ramaphosa adopted a mix of mostly (but not exclusively) the first two motives in allocating ministerial portfolios to non-ANC members. This is unsurprising, given his astute but conciliatory nature.

He didn't allocate any ministries that operate within the orbit of his office to other parties. This implies either that he trusts non-ANC ministers enough not to have them in his direct line of sight, or that he prefers to have fellow ANC colleagues in the inner sanctum.

Neither has he placed other parties in charge of recalcitrant departments that resisted control from weak ANC ministers. This motive would, however, be perverse for a generally risk-averse politician. A breakdown in

relations between an opposition party minister and a department could be harder to repair.

The allocations

The Democratic Alliance has been allocated the largest share of portfolios outside the ANC. It will oversee Agriculture; Basic Education; Communications and Digital Technologies; Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment; Home Affairs; and Public Works and Infrastructure.

Most of these, with the exception of Home Affairs and Basic Education, are associated with ancillary economic sectors. These give the Democratic Alliance its economic fix, without sacrificing the ANC's direct oversight of strategic economic ministries. But even here, Democratic Alliance members will deputise in ministries responsible for Trade and Industry, Small Business Development, Energy and Finance.

The Basic Education ministry oversees the crucial public education system. However, the department over which it presides performs a more limited policy planning, oversight and regulatory role. The biggest task for the incoming Democratic Alliance minister will be to forge constructive working relationships with the country's nine provinces, where the bulk of delivery resides.

Home Affairs is the outlier, and carries out a broad and administratively complex service delivery mandate in areas such as immigration, border control and civic services. It is a department that is notoriously difficult to extract performance from, and it is hard to see what quick gains the DA can make in this portfolio.

The Inkatha Freedom Party will oversee Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and Public Service and Administration. The party's longstanding advocacy of provincial autonomy and traditional leadership structures is directly relevant to the work of the former ministry.

Nevertheless, Public Service and Administration is an unusual choice for the Inkatha Freedom Party given that it has historically paid little attention to the issue.

Land Reform and Rural Development has been allocated to the Pan Africanist Congress, an issue which is core to that party's identity.

The Good party will run the ministry of Tourism. The Patriotic Alliance will oversee Sports, Arts and Culture, a relatively minor ministry. Finally, putting the Freedom Front Plus in charge of Correctional Services is the only other example of a portfolio that is very difficult to extract performance out of, and is less visible than Home Affairs.

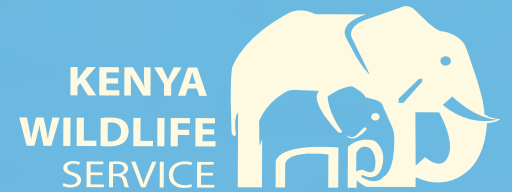
Real test lies ahead

As the new cabinet gets down to business, its immediate task will be to agree on a strategic programme of action for the next five years. This will be the first test to gauge whether Ramaphosa will be able to translate his pragmatic choices into constructive outcomes.

The road ahead will continue to call on the president's tact to ensure that the centre can hold.

Vinothan Naidoo, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Administration, University of Cape Town

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Diaspora

Indonesian band takes stand for Taiwan's migrant workers

Southern Riot mix poetry and punk to create songs that rail against the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers.

By: Diaspora Times Team
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Surrounded by his fellow band members, Rudi takes the stage in Taiwan's southern port city of Kaohsiung. As he looks out over the crowd, his bandmates begin to play, whipping the audience into a frenzy of excitement.

"Silenced by threats, here we stand against this system of slavery," Rudi sings, as the crowd forms a mosh pit, chanting along with him. Beside him, a banner strung between two microphones reads, "Migrant workers have the right to a voice".

Originally from the town of Indramayu in West Java, Rudi struggled to find work in his home country. "It's hard to find a job in Indonesia, almost impossible," he told Al Jazeera. "I didn't have any permanent job. I did everything I could."

Rudi moved to Taiwan in 2015 to operate heavy machinery in a factory. Like many of the island's 768,000-odd migrant workers, he was looking for employment and the chance to build a better life.

But the reality is often more complicated. While migrant workers earn more in Taiwan, many find themselves exploited, trapped in debt or facing physical and sexual abuse. In the face of this, many are pushing back, forming labour unions and NGOs, and engaging in protests varying from flash mob dances to musical performances.

Comprised of four workers from Indonesia, Rudi's band, Southern Riot, was formed just three years ago and is already performing at Taiwan's largest annual music festival, Mega-Port.

Mixing poetry and punk music, their protest songs rail against what they describe as the "systems of slavery" that they say trap migrants.

They provide a space for their audience, too – who are also mostly migrant workers – to express themselves and escape from working life. "On the stage, I feel happy," Rudi explained. "Our songs are like an expression of our feelings."

Facing exploitation

Almost all workers arrive in Taiwan through an employment agency or broker, which immediately opens them up to exploitation.

"We have to pay them to get us here," Rudi said, referring to the "placement fees" these brokers charge. "Then, when we get to Taiwan, we also need to pay. They cut our salary to pay for the monthly fees."

For many, these placement fees can be as much as \$9,000. That represents an almost insurmountable cost for the migrant workers who exclusively come from less wealthy Southeast Asian countries, ex-



Southern Riot was formed three years ago by a group of migrant workers from Indonesia [Jan Camenzind Broomby/Al Jazeera]

plained Lennon Wang from Serve the People Association (SPA), a local NGO that focuses on migrant worker rights.

Originally from a family of rural farmers in the north of the Philippines's Luzon Island, Ronalyn Asis had to pay some 120,000 Philippine pesos (\$2,035) to cover the costs of her training, plane tickets and placement fees before she started working as a domestic carer in Taiwan in 2014.

While Asis was able to borrow money from her extended family, Lennon said many others are forced to seek private loans. These are usually provided via the employment broker themselves and may come with high interest rates that can leave workers trapped in debt.

Their problems do not end when they arrive in Taiwan. Rudi explains that migrant workers are given more strenuous tasks and expected to work harder than their local counterparts, while others are not paid properly. "Every aspect of our work is full of injustice," he added.

Many are expected to work beyond the remits of their contract, or without proper time off, Lennon said.

Initially employed to look after an elderly member of a Taiwanese family, Asis found that she was expected to also act as a household maid, cooking and cleaning for her employers. She was given just 10 hours of free time a month.

"At first, I felt very disappointed about the situation but I felt like I was tied to my employer already and that I didn't have any choice but to accept," she said. "I had loans to pay, so I sucked it up."

Others are tricked into moving to Taiwan on entirely false pretences. When Asher and Jaali were first ap-

proached by an employment agent in Kenya, they were promised the opportunity to work as acrobats in a circus.

"The main reason I came to Taiwan was to perform, earn money, make myself and uplift my family," explained Asher. "But when I came here, things changed."

Rather than performing, both Asher and Jaali were told to work on a farm, operating heavy machinery and spraying chemicals. Their passports were taken by their employers so they were unable to leave and search for alternative work.

They are currently involved in ongoing legal cases and asked to be known only by pseudonyms so their families would not find out what was happening.

Asher and Jaali are not alone. "Most migrant workers in Taiwan have the risk of forced labour and human trafficking," Lennon said. In 2023, Walk Free, an NGO dedicated to the eradication of slavery, estimated some 40,000 people were living in modern slavery in Taiwan.

Feeling Powerless

Even if they have not been subject to human trafficking, migrant workers can be left feeling powerless at the hands of their employers.

Originally from a fishing community in Bulacan, on the outskirts of the Philippine capital of Manila, Liezel Bartolome was excited to begin work in Taiwan. As much as half of what she made, she sent home to pay for her mother's medical care.

But when Bartolome was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and began chemotherapy, her excitement faded. "I didn't want my mother to worry about my condition," she explained through tears. "I always pretended

that I was OK. That I was happy."

Although her employers initially agreed to help cover her medical care and promised she could continue to work for them, once she left the hospital, they tried to fire her.

"When I was discharged from hospital and went home, my broker was there to terminate my contract," she said.

While ending a contract in such a way is illegal, many migrant workers remain unaware of their rights, according to NGOs, adding to the power imbalance between employers and workers.

For domestic carers, who often live in their employer's house and therefore rely on them for income and a roof over their heads, the imbalance is even more pronounced.

When Asis told her employers that she was pregnant, they gave her 24 hours' notice, leaving her without a source of income and facing homelessness. At seven months pregnant she was forced to move into a shelter run by SPA. She now lives among a group of migrant workers, many of whom have escaped exploitation or abuse.

While employers regularly exercise control over migrants' living and working conditions, they can also attempt to exert control over their physical bodies. There have been cases of women being forced to sign contracts promising they will not have children, or even pressured into taking contraception, Lennon told Al Jazeera.

Physical and sexual abuse is also common, especially for the mostly female domestic carers who may even be forced to share a room with their employers. "There are hundreds of workers who have been raped during the past years," he said.

In research SPA commissioned in 2023, it found that one in six female migrant workers had faced gender-based violence including explicit or implied sexual demands.

Finding community

While migrants face difficult working conditions in Taiwan, many have a conflicted relationship with their adopted homeland.

For Asis, living in Taiwan has given her access to work and social services she would not have had at home. When her newborn baby boy fell ill, she said his treatment was cheaper than it would have been in the Philippines.

One year on, her son is back with her family, while Asis plans to continue earning money in Taiwan. The baby's name, Twain, is a "scramble of Taiwan", she explained.

Even Jaali and Asher, themselves victims of human trafficking, expressed a desire to stay. "We came here to earn money," Jaali said. "We can't go home without money, because we have no jobs back home."

For those who continue to work in Taiwan, finding a community can be an important source of autonomy. In cities around the island, there are now restaurants, cafes, hotels and even discos, as well as NGOs and labour unions, run by and for migrant workers.

As well as engaging in advocacy, groups such as Migrante Taiwan and SPA have organised protests and flashmob dances, hoping to draw attention to migrant worker issues in a creative way.

Back in Kaohsiung, Rudi steps towards the crowd, letting audience members sing with him as Southern Riot finishes their set.

Although they played music for fun, since forming the group, the band has taken on a distinct political dimension.

With tracks titled, "Love song from an Indonesian migrant worker" and "From the people for the people", they explain that they are motivated to give a voice to the suffering, troubles and dissatisfaction their fellow workers experience.

"We lack the voice to convey our thoughts to the Taiwanese authorities," Rudi explained. "Through this music, we hope we can convey some of our difficulties, our troubles."

"We want to boost the voices of our fellow migrant workers," he added. "I hope they will know that they are not alone here. We are here for them."

With reporting by Shanthi Levanita Tahmasebian

NEWS PAPER

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Diaspora

Can Senegal's Faye play peacemaker and help a splintered West Africa bloc?

Experts say ECOWAS's tensions with Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso could roll back years of regional diplomacy and affect security partnerships.

By: Shola Lawal.
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Nearly a year ago, West Africa seemed alarmingly on the verge of war. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was threatening "military intervention" in Niger if the leaders of the country's July 26 coup did not immediately relinquish power and free President Mohammed Bazoum.

After the military government in Niamey failed to respond, ECOWAS activated a standby force, raising alarm bells across the region as citizens began to protest the move. Burkina Faso and Mali – Niger's fellow military-led neighbours who were already suspended from the bloc – joined with Niamey to form the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and pledged to defend against any attacks, threatening to widen the conflict.

Tempers then calmed, but only slightly. ECOWAS backtracked, instead slapping crippling sanctions on Niger, blocking its land and air borders, cutting off electricity supply from neighbouring Nigeria, and freezing commercial transactions. On January 29, the AES states jointly declared their exit from the ECOWAS, sending shockwaves through the regional bloc that was already seen as weak.

Since, ECOWAS leaders have been scrambling to get the AES back into the bloc by lifting sanctions on Niger; but that has, thus far, failed to appease the alliance before a January 2025 deadline, when the divorce will be official. The bloc's fracturing, experts have said, could roll back more than five decades of regional diplomacy, disband military cooperation amid rising insecurity in the region, and cripple economic ties.

As both sides stand off, Senegal's recently elected President Bassirou Diomaye Faye has attempted to play a "soft" peacemaker, urging ECOWAS to respect states' sovereignty, and prompting military government leaders to accept dialogue.

"I am nobody's mediator," Faye, who does not have an official ECOWAS mandate to resolve the crisis, clarified during a tour of the AES countries in May. But the region's multiple crises, he pointed out, require collective effort. "We must join forces to tackle common challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and poverty," he said.

Faye is particularly well placed to reconcile the bloc because he was not yet in office last year when ECOWAS threatened to invade Niger and enjoys goodwill from the military trio, Olakounle Yabi Gilles, head of the West Africa Citizen think tank (WATHI), told Al Jazeera.

"He enjoys credibility already given



Senegal's Bassirou Diomaye Faye, left, is welcomed by Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara during a visit to Abidjan on May 7, 2024 [Sia Kambou/AFP]

the special circumstances around his election."

Faye's peace mission

Faye, 44, was sworn in on April 2, following one of Senegal's most tumultuous elections. Outgoing President Macky Sall had delayed general elections in a move widely seen as an attempt to cling to power, forcing ECOWAS to hold emergency meetings during which leaders pressured Sall to stick to a set election timetable. Faye and his ally Ousmane Sonko, who is now prime minister, won a landslide in the March elections.

In May, Faye paid respects to his much older counterparts in Nigeria, Ghana and Ivory Coast, and touched on the sore topic of ECOWAS's impending breakup, pointing out the need for unity to tackle mass immigration, insecurity and democratic rollbacks in the region as AES members have pushed back election dates.

"Your wisdom and your democratic values should be an asset ... and my youth and determination can also be an asset," Faye told President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of Nigeria, the current ECOWAS chair, in Abuja. "I am convinced we can open a window of opportunity to discuss."

Tinubu, who led the initial charge to invade Niger but met unexpectedly strong resistance domestically, urged Faye to "meet those other brothers to persuade them to come back to the fold".

However, experts have said there are significant challenges for Senegal's president, a new face in regional diplomacy. AES leaders have pledged to push ahead with their plans. In March, the countries' military chiefs said a joint force was in the works to combat armed groups in the tri-border region of Liptako-Gourma.

In April, after Faye touched down in Mali and held talks with the inter-

im president, Colonel Assimi Goita, he told reporters that Goita was rigid, but "not totally inflexible" on ECOWAS. He reported a similar atmosphere after speaking to Burkina Faso's military leader Captain Ibrahim Traore in Ouagadougou. "We must not be discouraged," Faye told reporters in Bamako.

Analysts have said the peace mission is important to Faye and his fiery Prime Minister Sonko because they share the same views on former colonial power, France.

"Sonko has personal relations with some AES leaders," said Alioune Tine, founder of Dakar-based think tank Afrikajom Center. "They are all of the same generation and also share sovereignist ideas."

Bamako, Niamey and Ouagadougou have already cut or downgraded ties with France since 2022, sending back more than 4,000 troops and recruiting Russian mercenaries amid a surge in violence by ISIL (ISIS) and Al Qaeda-linked groups that control swaths of territory. In May, Sonko also raised the possibility of shutting French army bases in Senegal which housed about 350 troops.

Senegal's historical peacemaker role is also a factor influencing Faye's push, Gilles of WATHI added.

"Senegal has always enjoyed a role of mediator, especially in 'The Gambia,'" he said, referring to when Dakar led the ECOWAS military mission that deposed Yahya Jammeh who refused to step down after his election loss in 2017.

It's that big brother role that Faye is trying to revive, Gilles said, as Abuja founders.

ECOWAS decline

When the 16-country ECOWAS was created in 1975, it aimed to boost economic integration. But as it strengthened, its mandate broadened to include peacekeeping and enforcing the rule of law. Mauritania's unexplained exit in 1999 makes

current membership 15.

In its heyday, ECOWAS proved a formidable force, experts note. Nigerian-led ECOWAS troops were pivotal in taking back rebel-held territories and ending the devastating civil wars that racked Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s, representing what is widely seen as the first effective regional security initiative on the continent.

But a recent wave of military coups in the region, internal insecurity and politico-economic instabilities in dominant member states like Nigeria have decimated ECOWAS's strength and shrunk its influence, experts have said.

It was that age-old glory, some speculate, that a then-newly elected President Tinubu of Nigeria appeared to want to revive last year when he led the charge to invade Niger.

Tinubu himself was a freedom fighter during Nigeria's coup era. When he accepted to chair ECOWAS on July 9, 2023 – days before the Niger coup – there had been five coups in the region since 2020. He promised to shed the bloc's "toothless bulldog" image, but his actions backfired.

Not only did Tinubu meet uproar on the homefront as Nigerians baulked at the thought of war amid a biting economic downturn, but the fact that ECOWAS eventually backtracked further made it look like a dog without bite, wrote Nnamdi Obasi of the International Crisis Group.

Analysts have said ECOWAS looks set to be on the back foot in the looming split. The AES countries combined contribute a small 8 percent of ECOWAS's \$761bn gross domestic product, but they have a population of more than 80 million – about a quarter of the bloc's total. Continuing transnational security pacts are also at risk, including the Multinational Joint Task Force of

Nigeria and Niger, which is fighting the armed group Boko Haram.

Nigeria, in particular, would be hit hard. Abuja is a lead contributor to ECOWAS's peacekeeping missions and hosts the ECOWAS Administrative headquarters, Parliament, and Court of Justice. For decades, Nigeria's power in ECOWAS has helped cement its influence not just in the region, but on the continent as a whole.

Economic and familial ties with AES member Niger means Nigerian border communities were some of the worst affected during last year's crisis and would be again if the split becomes permanent.

The AES, meanwhile, may suffer fewer economic consequences, analysts said. All three are part of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), a francophone community for countries that share the common CFA currency. Like ECOWAS, the countries – Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso – also enjoy low trade tariffs and free movement, meaning any visa or trade restrictions from ECOWAS could be bypassed fairly easily. Landlocked Niger, which is dependent on Nigeria for electricity and agriculture exports, could be the only exception.

Despite Faye's best intentions, the AES states have few incentives to rejoin ECOWAS, and thus, their bullish stance. In May, Mali and Burkina Faso extended their transitional governments by three and five years respectively. Already, the alliance has said it does not recognise ECOWAS's one-year policy for exits and claims its January withdrawal was immediate.

"But that should not be seen as a failure of Faye's mediation skills or as a lack in his leadership qualities," Gilles of WATHI pointed out, noting that the odds were not in Faye's favour.

The way forward would be for ECOWAS to keep the door open to the AES countries, especially in the long term, and anticipate when democratic transitions may happen, analysts said.

To do so, some have suggested ECOWAS keep staff who are AES nationals, and invite the alliance to important meetings. ECOWAS defence chiefs met in Abuja on June 27 to mull over plans for a region-wide "counterinsurgency" force but AES countries shunned invitations to the meeting.

"The position of ECOWAS now should be: Let's accept, let's keep the door open, and let's not confuse the politics of one temporary government with the larger interests of the citizens of those nations," Gilles said.

Source: Al Jazeera

A Kenyan tribe's search for its leader's stolen skull

In 1905, a colonial British officer killed Koitalel Arap Samoei, the supreme leader of the Nandi tribe. According to oral history, his severed head was taken to the UK. The Nandi have been

By Jaclynn Ashly
xxxxxxxxxx



Anne Machii Samoei, Koitalel Arap Samoei's granddaughter [Jaclynn Ashly/Al Jazeera]

Worth Noting:

- “I felt this disturbance inside me ever since my father told me about the British stealing Koitalel’s head,” Machii continued, glancing down at the cement floor. “Ever since I was a small girl until now, in my old age, I have never lost this disturbed feeling. It still affects me.”
- “I never understood how human beings could do things that are so cruel,” she said, shaking her head. “It made me very scared of the British. Any time I saw a white man I would run away very fast.”
- Now, nearly 120 years later, the Nandi are searching for their leader’s skull, which they believe is still in the UK, with the hopes that its repatriation can help them heal from brutal colonial-era atrocities carried out by the British.
- “The Nandi have never healed since Koitalel was killed,” Machii told Al Jazeera. “I don’t think I will ever feel peace inside of me until his skull is returned to us.”

As a child, Anne Machii Samoei, now 87, heard many stories about her grandfather Koitalel Arap Samoei, the orkoiyot or supreme leader of Kenya’s Nandi tribe who led a revolt against the British for more than a decade in the late 19th century. Wide-eyed and sitting around a fire flickering into the night, she would hang tightly onto each word her father spoke as he traced an image of his father as a powerful and majestic leader. Koitalel, dressed in clothes made from the skins of monkeys and grasping a sacred wooden staff - which symbolised his ultimate and indisputable leadership - would at about 25 years of age, command an army of thousands of loyal men who used spears and arrows to strike fear into the hearts of gun-wielding British soldiers and their African supporters. Koitalel’s fierce resistance was sparked by the construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railways in the 1890s, which started from the coastal city of Mombasa and cut through Nandi territory - pummeling deep into the country’s interior. Along with it came British colonial administrators and Christian missionaries. The Nandi are a subgroup of the larger Kalenjin tribes; their warriors responded by launching deadly ambushes on colonial convoys along the railway line.

“I loved hearing the tales of my grandfather,” said Machii, sitting on a couch in her dimly lit home in Nandi County, in the country’s North Rift. “He was the last true leader of the Nandi people. His legend has given us a lot of pride even though we lost our lands and grew up in so much poverty.” But there was one story of her grandfather that haunted her: in October 1905, Richard Meinertzhagen, a British military intelligence officer, killed Koitalel after inviting the leader to a truce meeting. According to Nandi oral history, Meinertzhagen decapitated Koitalel. Elders believe he transported the slain leader’s severed head, along with several of his possessions, back to the United Kingdom. “I felt this disturbance inside me ever since my father told me about the British stealing Koitalel’s head,” Machii continued, glancing down at the cement floor. “Ever since I was a small girl until now, in my old age, I have never lost this disturbed feeling. It still affects me.” “I never understood how human beings could do things that are so cruel,” she said, shaking her head. “It made me very scared of the British. Any time I saw a white man I would run away very fast.” Now, nearly 120 years later, the Nandi are searching for their leader’s skull, which

they believe is still in the UK, with the hopes that its repatriation can help them heal from brutal colonial-era atrocities carried out by the British. “The Nandi have never healed since Koitalel was killed,” Machii told Al Jazeera. “I don’t think I will ever feel peace inside of me until his skull is returned to us.” ‘Final campaign’ Meinertzhagen’s killing of Koitalel, who comes from the sacred Talai lineage - a clan the Nandi believe have supernatural and prophetic abilities and was chosen by God to lead and deliver God’s messages to the people - was just the beginning. According to Kipchoge arap Chomu, a Nandi historian and co-author of the book *Unyielding Hope: The Life and Times of Koitalel Somoei*, Meinertzhagen and his men also killed 25 Nandi warriors at the same meeting, which was held in the Nandi Hills - the tribe’s most fertile lands - before fleeing the scene and indiscriminately killing men, women and children along the way. On that day alone, at least 250 Nandi were killed. Elders say Koitalel’s headless corpse was found under a sacred fig tree, where he had staggered for almost 100 metres after being shot. Many Nandi believe Meinertzhagen or one of his men decapitated Koitalel.

Meinertzhagen, who died in 1967, admitted to killing Koitalel in his memoir, *Kenya Diary: 1902-1906*. He does not, however, mention severing his head. Meinertzhagen claimed that he removed “two stone-headed knobkerries” from Koitalel’s belt after murdering him. With their sacred leader no longer around to protect the Nandi, the British quickly unleashed devastation across the tribe’s territory. Two days after Koitalel’s killing, on October 19, the British launched the “final Nandi campaign”, said Chomu, in which they slaughtered hundreds of Nandi men of fighting age and expelled them from the Nandi Hills. Like other Africans in the colony, the Nandi were corralled onto a “native reserve” on the tribe’s drier pasture land. The lands of the Nandi Hills were then allocated exclusively for European settlement, with white settlers establishing large colonial farms and tea plantations. Africans were also forced into paying various taxes on the reserves that applied to only Africans. Therefore, many Nandi had no choice but to work on the same colonial farms established on their stolen lands.

No ‘true leader’ In 1919, the British rounded up all members of the Talai - Koitalel’s clan and the longstanding leaders of the Nandi - and banished them to an isolated island-like village called Kapsisiyo in the heart of Nandi territory. Situated between two rivers, which encircle the whole area of Kapsisiyo, about 30 Talai families, consisting of at least 150 people, were separated from the rest of their tribe for decades. “Along the edges of the river, the British made sure to place the homesteads of colonial chiefs [Nandi who were loyal to the British],” Chomu told Al Jazeera. “This prevented any Talai from leaving Kapsisiyo.” More than a century later, most Talai still live there. The British missionaries moved on to instil fear about the Talai into the rest of the Nandi population. Once revered for their supernatural and prophetic abilities, the missionaries spent decades convincing the Nandi that the Talai were evil with

doctors who were responsible for their state of misery under colonialism. Before the arrival of the British, the Talai were considered royalty. But once Koitalel took his last breath, their lives would transform into a never-ending nightmare. Immediately after Koitalel’s murder, the British hunted down the slain leader’s relatives; all of them were either killed, detained, or banished to Kapsisiyo. There was also a practical problem facing the Talai: the sacred leadership staffs, passed down for generations among the Talai that symbolised the transfer of leadership from one orkoiyot to the next, were missing. “Whoever Koitalel would have given those staffs to would have been our next leader,” explained Machii. “But without those staffs, we were left without any true leader, and we don’t know to whom Koitalel would have given them.” The British colonial administration appointed a known collaborator as the new Nandi leader, but he died just three years later, in 1912. Nandi elders were subsequently able to convince the colonial government to recognise Lelimo arap Samoei, Koitalel’s first-born son and Machii’s father, as leader of the tribe. But after only a few years, Lelimo was forced into hiding after killing one of his Nandi bodyguards who was spying for the British. “My father took over the leadership, but the British were so brutal and controlling he could not actually lead anything,” said Machii. “I remember my father being so bitter. He hated the white men. He never forgave them for killing his father - that’s why his leadership didn’t last long.” Koitalel’s second-born son Barsirian Manyei was chosen as leader of the Nandi in 1919, secretly and without the knowledge of the British. But in 1923, when colonial authorities caught wind of Manyei’s plans to restore a sacred Nandi ceremony in which power is handed over to successive age sets, he was arrested. For four

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A Kenyan tribe's search for its leader's stolen skull

Wide-eyed and sitting around a fire flickering into the night, she would hang tightly onto each word her father spoke as he traced an image of his father as a powerful and majestic leader.

By **Jaclynn Ashly**
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Worth Noting:

- According to Kipchoge araap Chomu, a Nandi historian and co-author of the book **Unyielding Hope: The Life and Times of Koitaleel Somoei, Meinertzhagen and his men also killed 25 Nandi warriors at the same meeting, which was held in the Nandi Hills - the tribe's most fertile lands - before fleeing the scene and indiscriminately killing men, women and children along the way. On that day alone, at least 250 Nandi were killed.**
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Kipchoge araap Chomu, a Nandi historian, shows the sacred staffs returned to the Nandi [Jaclynn Ashly/Al Jazeera]

decades, Manyei would be transferred between prisons and house arrests, making him Kenya's longest-serving political prisoner. At the time, the especially rowdy Talai leaders were banished to Mfangano Island, in the eastern part of Lake Victoria. Manyei would also end up there. Cheruiyot Barsirian, 76, was just eight years old when he was detained with Manyei, his father, on Mfangano Island. "We were always sick from malaria because of the mosquitoes," Cheruiyot recounted, cradling a portrait of a computer-generated image of what his grandfather Koitalel was believed to have looked like. "And there were so many snakes. I remember never being able to sleep because of the snakes and insects." "Life was very hard there," he continued. "We used to get food rations from the British. They monitored our every move to make sure no Talai escaped from

the island." The Talai were made to live in mud homes built in straight lines, making their movement easily observable to colonial officers. "The [colonial officers] would come each morning and count us to know that no one had fled." Artefacts returned When Kenya gained independence in 1963, the Talai were released from Mfangano Island. But 120 years after Koitalel was killed, little has changed for the Talai; most continue to live in abject poverty - secluded in Kapsisiywo. "We used to be powerful, but the British transformed us into the most miserable people," said Cheruiyot. To this day, other Nandi still fear the Talai, believing the clan has supernatural powers and can issue curses against them. But, in 2005, the Talai received a rare glimmer of hope. Kalenjin academics tracked down three of Koi-

tailel's sacred wooden staffs that were stolen by Meinertzhagen - the missing of which had paralysed the Talai for decades. They were found in Meinertzhagen's home in the UK. His son, a 78-year-old retired banker, graciously returned the artefacts to the Nandi. "These staffs were like the arms of the government, passed down from generation to generation among the Talai, until the time of Koitalel," explained Kibnyaanko Seroney, a Kalenjin translator and linguist residing in the UK who met Meinertzhagen and brought the staffs back to Kenya. "These staffs were the core symbol that held together the office of Koitalel and the previous leaders." The three staffs symbolised different roles assumed by the incumbent orkoiyot - military, spiritual, and administrative. One was especially important during times of war, according to Seroney, and was believed

to have divine powers that would inspire the warriors. Another was used for leading prayers for requesting rain, according to Kipkoech araap Sambu, a Kalenjin Egyptologist. The third was a more common rungu, or wooden club, but represented the leader's administrative role. According to Chomu, the meeting between Meinertzhagen and Koitalel in 1905 would not have fallen under the auspices of these royal staffs. This suggests, he said, that at some point after Meinertzhagen murdered Koitalel, he or a colonial agent sent by him ransacked Koitalel's homestead. To the cheers of thousands of people who gathered in the Nandi Hills, the sacred staffs, enclosed in a glass case, were returned to the Nandi in 2006, stored in a hut built at the site, beside the fig tree where Koitalel is said to have taken his last breath. This has since been built up into the Koitalel Samoei Museum, which continues to display the sacred staffs and various other traditional Nandi items. "People were reconnected with their identities from seeing these cultural symbols," explained Seroney. "They got a lot of pride from them. It was like returning a part of the body that was missing. These artefacts are not like pieces of art or toys; they are something real. People look to them as a testament to their values and history. "If you go to the Nandi today and they hold a traditional event, you really struggle to see them in their traditional attire because most of it was stolen from them," he continued. "Then you have these staffs returned to them that gave a people [the Talai] the power to the throne

- from one generation to the next. The community finally feels like they have a future because they now have the tools they need to build that future." The Nandi have since been imbued with optimism that Koitalel's skull, along with more of his stolen possessions believed to be in the UK - including a shield, a ceremonial gown, and traditional headgear - could also be located and returned. "It never crossed my mind that any of the items stolen from Koitalel would be returned to us," said Machii, the granddaughter of Koitalel. "I was shocked, but so happy. I had to go see them with my own eyes or else I wouldn't believe it. I feel like anything is possible now." Where is the skull? Seroney and Nandi leaders have for years attempted to locate Koitalel's skull. It was believed that it could be held in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, which has admitted to possessing other human remains - including skulls - from various continents to support academic studies that measured and compared brain sizes of different racial groups; this was to uphold theories of white racial supremacy. Museums in the UK often obtained these skulls through colonial officials or Christian missionaries. Pitt Rivers, however, has strongly denied that it possesses Koitalel's skull. Seroney told Al Jazeera that he was given access to the museum's collections and counted 102 artefacts from the Nandi. The British Museum and The Natural History Museum, both of which had connections to Meinertzhagen, have also denied possessing the head, as has the Imperial War Museum. According to Seroney, the British Museum is in possession of 4,000 artefacts from Kenya, half of which are from the Kalenjin. Some Nandi leaders believe the skull could be held at Cambridge University, which has 18,000 human remains - among the largest archive of human remains in the world. These skulls were brought to the UK as "trophies", Seroney explained, when colonial officials



The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, UK [Mockford & Bonetti/Eye Ubiquitous/Universal Images Group via Getty Images]

A Kenyan tribe's search for its leader's stolen skull

Wide-eyed and sitting around a fire flickering into the night, she would hang tightly onto each word her father spoke as he traced an image of his father as a powerful and majestic leader.

By Jaclynn Ashly
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A view of the Nandi Hills [Jaclynn Ashly/Al Jazeera]

Worth Noting:

- In the UK, general election defeats do not turn into insinuated threats, finger-wagging and defiant plots where politicians bark and use other shenanigans to overthrow the winning government as in countries across the oceans.
- In the United Kingdom, outgoing Prime Ministers behave graciously in defeat. Kudos to Mr Sunak for accepting defeat like a true gentleman.
- Rishi Sunak said of Prime Minister Sir Keir, "In this job, his successes will be all of our successes, and I wish him and his family well."
- "Whatever our disagreements in this campaign, he is decent public-spirited man who I respect."
- While Mr Sunak was preparing his resignation speech outside 10 Downing Street to concede defeat and call in the removal vans to take his personal possessions from his flat in Downing Street to his private house, there was frantic activity in the Labour Party waiting the wings to lead the country.

would behead leaders and collect their skulls as souvenirs of their war conquests. Seroney, however, believes the skull is in a private collection. Others, still, do not believe the skull was taken to the UK at all. Sambu, the Kalenjin Egyptologist, told Al Jazeera the Nubian colonial soldiers who were with Meinertzhagen at the time were known to cannibalise the body parts of those they killed, including their heads - a grim habit that even Meinertzhagen complained about in his diary. It is possible Koitalel's head met such a fate. However, Meinertzhagen had donated three skulls to the Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons, which was also supporting academic studies in eugenics and theories of white racial superiority at the time, according to George Juma Ondeng, who has worked for years with the National Museums of Kenya and is one of the founding members of the International Inventories Programme, a research and database project that investigates Kenyan objects held in museums and heritage institutions around the world. "In our conversation with the Hunterian Museum, the museum said it was bombed in 1941 during the second world war and they lost a significant part of their collections and records," Ondeng told Al Jazeera. "So the few human remains left in the museum were given to the Natural History Museum in London and none of them seems to be from Kenya. So the trail has gone cold."

The process of tracking down Koitalel's skull - if it was indeed brought to the UK nearly 120 years ago -

has been weighed down by financial and institutional shortcomings. While Seroney says the process of repatriation of artefacts and remains from private collections is more or less straightforward, initiating restitution claims with museums is much more complex and often necessitates government and institutional support.

'Decolonial act'

According to Chao Tayiana Maina, a Kenyan historian and digital heritage specialist, one of the biggest challenges around repatriation of stolen artefacts or remains is locating where exactly they are being held. Ondeng has so far identified slightly more than 32,000 artefacts originating from Kenya from only 33 museums in the UK - a country that has over 2,000 museums. However, not all of these items were stolen or acquired through unethical means. "Museum inventories in the West, even in the UK, are still quite closed off," Maina told Al Jazeera. "We need institutions to be more transparent and to say what they have and how they got it and for how long they have had it" - along with making these details easily accessible to the public, she said. "It becomes a big challenge for those in source communities who are seeking to repatriate or even wondering where do we start in the first place and who do we contact," Maina added. There is also a lack of institutional support to buttress local communities which have restitution claims, forcing communities or individuals into using their own limited resources and time to begin an inevitably exhausting endeavour.

Ondeng, however, told Al Jazeera that the UK museums have been very open to restitution claims. But there is a lack of action being taken on behalf of governments and local communities. "We don't currently have a single body that can handle restitution matters. So we have a lot of local discussions around restitution, but no one is putting pens to paper," Ondeng explained. "Many have not started the [official] process of approaching the museums."

Kimani Njogu, the director of Twaweza Communications, an arts and media institution in Kenya, believes civil society must assist the government in filling these gaps around the restitution of Kenya's cultural heritage; he has been developing a draft policy framework for eventual adoption into government.

"It's a question of how do we get a national framework that involves the state, communities, and researchers that can facilitate the return of that heritage from the Global North and other places, including Asia," Njogu explained. "The first thing the state would need to do would be to start providing sufficient information through research, on what is out there that belongs to communities [in Kenya] and where it could be. "It's very difficult for communities to know where their artefacts or ancestral remains ended up," Njogu added. "Even if they know it was the British who took it, they have no idea where in Britain. And that makes it very difficult for communities to start the [restitution] process."

But for communities which have grievances stemming back a century or more ago,

time is running out. Many of those with original memories of colonial atrocities have already passed on. "We are largely in a space where things are moving out of living history," explained Maina. "If you look at the [ending of the] colonial period being 60 or 70 years ago, the painful fact of the matter is that many people who experienced this colonialism firsthand are either in old age or have passed away. So it is also time-sensitive that they see justice in their lifetime. "Being able to connect the memory, which is the intangible aspect of our culture and history, to the tangible representations, which are the artefacts and the ancestral remains, is time-sensitive," she continued. "Restitution as a whole is a decolonial act. But it is not just the physical return that is the focus of restitution. It's an entire set of processes of people reconnecting, going into dialogue, and people coming to terms with painful losses and demanding justice."

'We want our leader back'

For the Talai, locating and repatriating Koitalel's skull would be a symbolic rejoining of a painful history in which their culture was ripped apart and their esteemed standing in their tribe was turned inside out. Samuel Ngetich Metto, 65, sits on a couch in his small home in Kapsisiyo, to where he and his family fled more than three decades ago. He is holding his father's death certificate in his hands. "He was killed for being a Talai," Metto said, shaking his head. Metto and his family had lived in the Nandi Hills since colonialism, working on a

white settler's tea farm. After independence, the family was able to buy a plot of land there. But in June 1989, Metto's brother, who was 22 at the time and is now deceased, had proposed to a girl who was suffering from tuberculosis. The girl rejected his proposal and, soon after, her condition worsened; she died a few months later. The girl's family accused the Talai family of using their supernatural abilities to put a curse on her. Charging towards Metto's family's home, a group of about 200 enraged Nandi men found Metto's father and attacked him with machetes and rocks, bludgeoning him to death. They continued to the family's homestead and burned all of it to the ground. "They were hunting for us, but I ran for my life and escaped into the bush," Metto told Al Jazeera. Metto fled until he reached Kapsisiyo, the island-like area in Nandi territory to where the Talai were banished more than a century ago. "I will never leave Kapsisiyo again," he said, dragging his palms across his face. "I'm scared someone will kill me. I don't even like to tell people I am a Talai. I tell them I am from another clan."

But, like other Talai, Metto blames his hardships entirely on the British. "All of this hatred of the Talai came because of them," he said. "All because our leader decided to resist them. And, to this day, we are still being punished for that."

"We want our leader back," Metto added, referring to Koitalel's skull. "It is only then that the Talai's dignity will be restored to how it was before the white men came. We have never had a strong leader like him since. We have so many conflicts and divisions among us - and even within ourselves. "It has felt like something is missing and we believe that the return of that skull can make us whole again," he added. "It would be the beginning of a longer journey to heal from this past."

Source: Al Jazeera

Generation Z: A Force That Cannot Be Ignored in Kenya

The UN Security Council adopted a presidential statement on Friday calling on member states to redouble efforts to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

By: BERNARD MOMANYI

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Worth Noting:

- It called on parties to armed conflict to “take all appropriate measures to actively search for persons reported missing, to enable the return of their remains, to account for persons reported missing without adverse distinction, and to put in place appropriate channels enabling response and communication with families on the search process,” emphasizing that “utmost attention” should be paid to cases of children reported missing in armed conflict.
- The council urged the parties to “collect, protect and manage all relevant data and documents on missing persons as a result of armed conflict,” and called on states to take appropriate measures to “ensure thorough, prompt, impartial and effective investigations and the prosecution of offenses linked to missing persons” under national and international law.



Thousands of youth, mainly GenZ's held massive demonstrations in Kenya's capital Nairobi and other major towns in June 2024 to protest against the Finance Bill 2024, with some saying “Ruto Must GO.”

In recent weeks, Kenya has witnessed a remarkable up-rising led by its youngest demographic, Generation Z, who have taken to the streets in mass protests against the Finance Bill 2024. These demonstrations have proven to be more than just fleeting moments of dissent; they are a clear message to the government that the voices of the youth cannot be dismissed. While some leaders initially underestimated their influence, President William Ruto has recognized their significance and has vowed to engage with them. This shift is not merely a reaction to protests but an acknowledgment of a broader societal transformation. Generation Z, now entering the workforce in significant numbers, is driving change not only in the political arena but also in the corporate world. Their so-called “unreasonable” demands are being met not out of obligation but necessity. The corporate world, understanding that it cannot afford to alienate an

entire generation, is adapting rapidly. Consulting firms like Edelman are stepping in as “Gen Z whisperers,” helping companies align with the values and expectations of young employees and customers. This shift is a testament to the power and influence of Generation Z. Companies today are under pressure from multiple fronts: young activists within their ranks, investor demands for ethical practices, and customer expectations for corporate social responsibility. The market has shown that firms which take a stand on social issues often fare better. For example, companies that quickly pulled out of Russia after its invasion of Ukraine saw better market performance compared to those that hesitated. This trend underscores a significant shift in corporate signaling that reflects broader societal changes. In Kenya, the youth-led protests against the Finance Bill are a microcosm of this global phenomenon. Young

Kenyans are using social media platforms like TikTok to amplify their message, turning what started as online dissent into powerful street protests. This generation's adept use of digital tools has made their activism more visible and impactful, showcasing their ability to mobilize and influence public opinion. President Ruto's response to these protests is indicative of a government that is beginning to understand the importance of engaging with its youth. His promise to address their concerns and include them in discussions about the nation's future is a step in the right direction. The Finance Bill protests highlight that the youth are not just demanding change but are also offering to be part of the solution. This movement is not isolated to Kenya. Across the world, Generation Z is pushing for social justice, environmental sustainability, and corporate accountability. Their activism is re-shaping how companies and

governments operate. The Financial Times recently reported on the rise of advisers who help businesses adapt to the values of young employees and customers. This adaptation is not just about meeting demands but about aligning with a significant cultural shift. Critics of “woke capitalism” argue from both ends of the spectrum. Some activists see corporate social responsibility as mere lip service, while others claim it detracts from business profitability. However, these criticisms miss the larger picture. The corporate world's shift towards more socially liberal practices is a reflection of changing societal values. Companies that align themselves with these values are more likely to attract both talent and customers. In the broader context, societal attitudes have shifted dramatically over the past few decades. Issues once considered controversial, such as homosexuality, casual sex, and gender roles, have become normalized.

This change is particularly evident among younger generations who are leading the charge for a more inclusive and just society. Generation Z's activism, whether in the streets of Nairobi or through global social media campaigns, is a powerful reminder that the youth are a force to be reckoned with. They are not just participants in the political process but are shaping the future of their countries. Their influence extends beyond protests and into the very fabric of society, driving change in corporate practices, governmental policies, and cultural norms. As Kenya navigates the challenges and opportunities of the future, it is clear that Generation Z will play a crucial role. Their voices, demanding justice, equality, and accountability, cannot be ignored. They are not just the future; they are the present, and their impact is already being felt across all sectors of society.