

Some public commentators is the claim that this PAWO appointment could be a “backdoor mechanism” to facilitate state capture

Controversial

Wu and her family-controls business entities continue that holds significant economic interests across the country:



DBN DEMANDS PAYBACK OF N\$68 MILLION OWED BY STINA WU

PAWO Appointment, Business Record, and Controversy: A Full Analysis of Stina Wu’s Role

By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande

On 7–8 July 2026, the Pan African Women’s Organisation (PAWO) announced the appointment of Chinese-Namibian businesswoman Stina Wu (born Qiaoxia Wu) as its Special Economic Advisor. Within hours, the news has spread rapidly across Namibian social media, news platforms and business circles, sparking intense debate. Some have hailed the appointment as well-deserved recognition of Wu’s decades-long investment footprint and contribution to economic activity in northern Namibia. Others have raised immediate and



Chinese-Namibian businesswoman Stina Wu (born Qiaoxia Wu)

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Sudan’s war reaches a dangerous new front as El Obeid braces for onslaught

The Sudanese city of El Obeid has become the latest and most perilous flashpoint in a civil war now entering its fourth year, with United Nations officials warning that the window to prevent a catastrophe on the scale of last year’s massacre in El Fasher is closing by the day.

Repeated warnings of an imminent assault on the North Kordofan state capital have mounted for weeks, accompanied by reports of intensifying military movement in the surrounding countryside. The siege of El Obeid dates back to the earliest days of the war, when Rap-

id Support Forces fighters seized the city’s airport from Sudanese Army forces in April 2023, before the army spent February 2025 breaking a two-year encirclement. That respite has proved short-lived. By mid-June this year, the United Nations was again warning that the RSF was moving

against El Obeid, with more than half a million people in danger, and a drone strike on a fuel station in the city killed a civilian on 25 June.

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The beauty queen building peace for 2027

Miss Jungle Kenya and CNN Academy alumna Wendy Omanga

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A Crown Meets a Classroom:

Miss World Namibia 2026 Carries Her Advocacy to the Heart of Rural Ohangwena

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“ALL BUSINESSES
ONE PLATFORM”

Secretary to the Cabinet leads Kenya in celebrating National Reading Day 2026

By: Diaspora Times Team
xxxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

- The day began with a National Reading Day Book March, which saw hundreds of participants march through Nairobi in a symbolic call to embrace reading as a lifelong habit. The march was followed by cultural performances, storytelling sessions, school presentations, exhibitions, author engagements and the recognition of outstanding participants in the National Reading Day competitions.
- Speaking at the event, Wanjau said fostering a reading culture is fundamental to nurturing informed, innovative and productive citizens. "Reading is not simply an educational activity. It is a national investment in human capital," she said, adding that every child who develops strong reading skills is better equipped to succeed in school, participate in society and contribute to the country's social and economic development. She commended the Kenya National Library Service and its partners for championing literacy initiatives that continue to transform lives and expand access to knowledge across the country.

Kenya Friday marked National Reading Day 2026 with a national celebration at the Kenya National Library Service headquarters, Maktaba Kuu, reaffirming the country's commitment to building a stronger reading culture and promoting lifelong learning at a time when strengthening foundational literacy remains a national priority.

According to UNESCO, roughly seven in ten children in Sub-Saharan Africa are unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10, a statistic that underscores the urgency behind sustained investment in reading and literacy programmes.

This year's celebrations recorded a 23.5 per cent increase in participation compared with 2025, reflecting growing national momentum behind reading promotion. A total of 450 participants attended the main event, drawn from Nairobi and Nakuru counties.

Secretary to the Cabinet Mercy Wanjau represented the government at the event and underscored the role of reading in empowering citizens, strengthening education, preserving culture and driving national development. Held under the theme "Our Stories, Our Future: Empowering Minds Through Reading," the celebration brought together government institutions, development partners, publishers, authors, educators, librarians, learners and reading enthusiasts from across the country. Among the key partners present were the National Museums of Kenya, public and academic libraries, and publishers, alongside other stakeholders committed to advancing literacy and lifelong learning in Kenya.

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Kenya Friday marked National Reading Day 2026

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The celebration comes as

Kenya continues to implement the Competency-Based Curriculum, which places increased emphasis on literacy, critical thinking and independent learning. Education experts argue that cultivating reading habits both in and outside the classroom is essential to improving learning outcomes and preparing young people for a knowledge-driven economy. The continued expansion of digital library services has also widened access to information, with the KNLS digital library now serving 4,700 registered users, allowing more Kenyans to access books and educational resources online — a figure officials say reflects rising public demand for accessible learning resources.

Kenya National Library Service Director General Charles Nzivo reaffirmed the institution's commitment to ensuring every Kenyan has access to books, information and opportunities to read. "Libraries remain one of the most

powerful equalisers in society. By expanding access to books, digital resources and community learning spaces, we are helping build a generation of readers, innovators and informed citizens," Nzivo said. He added that KNLS continues to modernise its services to remain relevant in the digital age while preserving Kenya's literary and cultural heritage for future generations.

The week-long programme engaged more than 700 learners through storytelling sessions, reading engagements, competitions and other literacy activities designed to cultivate a lifelong love of reading among children and young people. Nine schools took part in the National Reading Day competitions and performances: Jonathan Gloag Academy, State House Primary School, Beacon of Hope School, Wanja & Kim School, St Juliet Primary School, Shelter Homes, Alliance High School, Upper Hill School and Heider Senior School. Organisers

said their participation showcased creativity, critical thinking and a shared passion for reading.

The celebrations also featured the exhibition and donation of more than 2,500 books, widening access to quality reading materials for learners and communities. Activities were coordinated through three KNLS branches — Maktaba Kuu, Buruburu Library and Nakuru Library — to ensure broader outreach and public participation. The event culminated in an awards ceremony recognising exceptional performance in the National Reading Day competitions, including reading quizzes, storytelling and creative writing, while honouring the schools, learners and partners who continue to champion literacy across the country.

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TRIBUTE

Tribute To Dr. Paula O.M.Otukile

By: Diaspora Times Team
xxxxxxxxxxxxxWorth
Noting:

• She has won so much awards, including Best Author Africa 2022-Zambia, Zikomo awards, 2023 She won best author Africa 2023: Shinning stars Africa awards in Sandton, South Africa.

• Dr. Otukile has been awarded best literature consultant Africa-Ghana, Accra in 2023. She is also a speaker and motivational speaker, having given talks in South Africa, Cape Town, Mfuleni recreation center, and locally in Botswana.

• She is a well recognized international Gender based violence activist who has won grants to donate more than 50, 000 books and give presentations in schools about GBV. Her outreaches has impacted more than 50 schools in Botswana. The highlight was her menstruation campaign giving pads and her book to kids at Mahalapye national Library in Botswana, indicating her close connection with her village.

We do not know whether to call this blessed day a Paulasmas, or an occasion to always remember.

Decades ago a hardworking queen was born in the dusty roads of Mahalapye village, we got blessed. Paula is a re-known author of more than sixty books, with several international collaborations with authors from around the world including, Henrique Sungo from Angola, but residing in the Uk, wh they wrote My clothes, my roots also known as "Minha raizes, Minha roupas."

She also collaborated with Joshua from Nigeria and Kevin Ochieng from Kenya to make a beautiful "Poetry Soup Anthology!" Her journey is beyond words as she simply saw it fit to build a literature stable to uplift and to promote other African authors.

She is the brain behind the

Mulher Forte African literature stable. They also hold annual literature awards and has been consistently successful for six years. On the 8th of April 2024, Paula founded the First Francistown international book festival, giving authors from the north an audience that included other African writers too.

She has won so much awards, including Best Author Africa 2022-Zambia, Zikomo awards, 2023 She won best author Africa 2023: Shinning stars Africa awards in Sandton, South Africa.

Dr. Otukile has been awarded best literature consultant Africa-Ghana, Accra in 2023. She is also a speaker and motivational speaker, having given talks in South Africa, Cape Town, Mfuleni recreation center, and locally in Botswana.



Dr. Paula O.M. Otukile

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close connection with her village.

Dr. Paula has had a courtesy call with UNICEF, European Union, Turkey embassy in Botswana, Germany embassy in Botswana, Indian consulate in Botswana to name but a few still on Gender based violence activism.

Today is not just a birthday but another milestone on the ink world to celebrate this amazing woman. Happy

birthday Paula.

*Dr. Paula O.M. Otukile
Founder
Mulher forte African Literature.*



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Education: A system that grants diplomas or a space that awakens thinking?



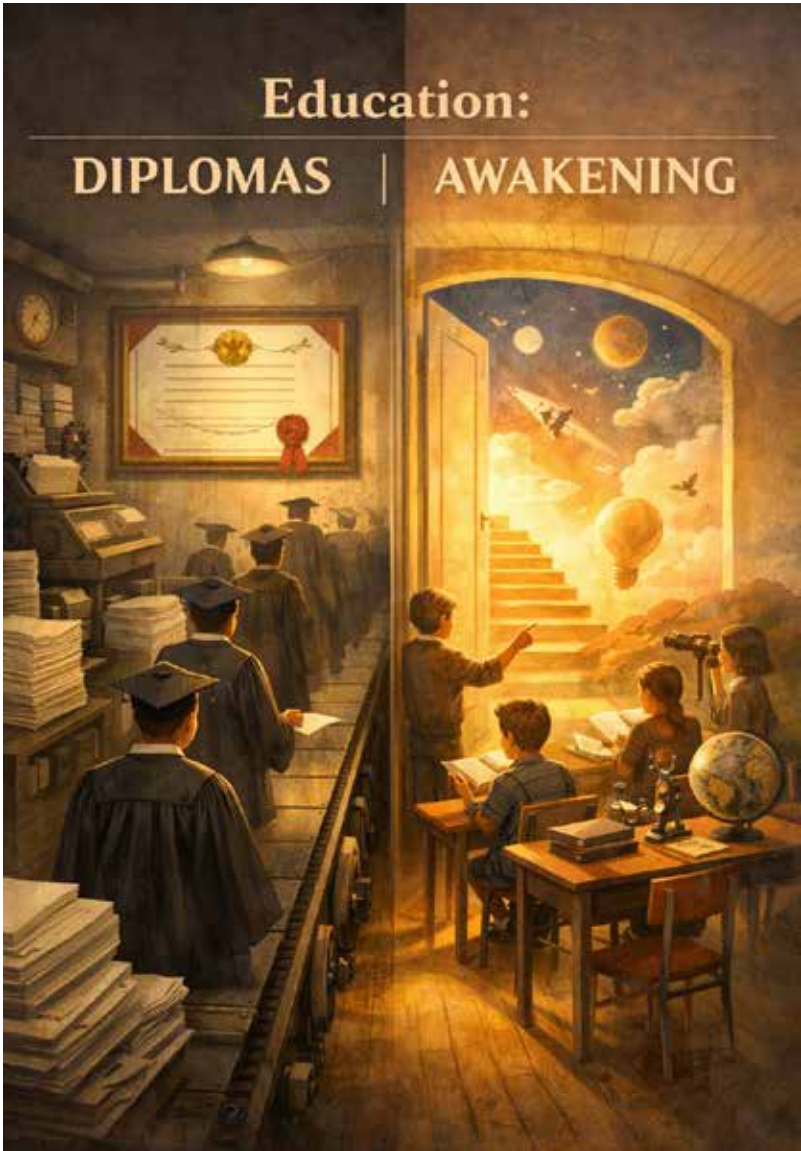
By: Abduqahhorova Gulhayo
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Today, when we talk about education, most people imagine a classroom, desks, textbooks, and grades. But the question is: are we truly imparting knowledge, or are we merely distributing certificates? In modern society, the issue of education should be a matter of conscience not only for educators but for the entire community. Today's students live in a rapidly changing world. The flow of information surpasses textbooks, and artificial intelligence is developing faster than some professions. In such times, schools and universities still seem to operate with molds designed for yesterday. We teach chil-

dren what to think, but are we teaching them how to think? The biggest problem in the education system is the weak culture of questioning. A student often receives a "good" grade not for asking questions, but for not asking them. This nurtures obedience rather than independent thinking. Yet, developed societies advance thanks to young people who can ask questions, doubt, and have the courage to debate. Another important aspect is the excessive focus on grades. Are grades a measure of knowledge or a psychological pressure? In many cases, they become the latter. Students study not to learn but to get grades. As a result, knowledge "ends" when the class ends. In life, however, grades are not asked for—solutions are. The issue of teachers also deserves special attention. A teacher should not only impart knowledge but also guide and inspire. However, if teachers are undervalued in society, expecting high results from them is unfair. The quality of education cannot be considered separately from the material and moral well-being of teachers. Education is a contract with the future. If we enter this contract superficially today, the price our society will pay tomorrow will be very high:

passive youth, irresponsible specialists, and a generation afraid to think. Therefore, reforming education does not only mean new subjects or textbooks, but understanding a new way of thinking. Only education that places the student at the center and considers their interests and potential yields genuine results. In conclusion, education is not about buildings or certificates. Education is a process that makes a person truly human. If we see education today merely as an obligation, tomorrow we will see its consequences as a problem. But if we see education today as an opportunity, tomorrow our society will be full of possibilities.

Abduqahhorova Gulhayo
Uzbekistan



Time

The Phone Is in Our Hands, But Who Controls Our Time?



By: Qudratova Zilola Nematulla
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Every morning, many of us reach for our phones before doing anything else. Notifications, messages, videos, and news seem to be waiting for us. Sometimes it feels as if our phones decide how we spend our day. This raises an important question: our phones are in our hands, but who really controls our time? Technology was created to make life easier. Today, smartphones help us communicate, study, work, and even learn new skills. However, instead of using technology as a tool, many people have become controlled by it. We often open social media for just a few minutes, but suddenly thirty minutes or even several hours have passed. The most disappointing part

is that we hardly notice where our time has gone. Time is the most valuable resource in life. Money can be earned again, and lost possessions can be replaced, but a single minute can never be recovered. Therefore, the way we use our time reflects the way we value our lives. Today's young generation has access to unlimited knowledge through technology. At the same time, they face endless distractions. Every notification and every short video can take attention away from important goals. The real problem is not the smartphone itself. A phone is simply a tool. Some people use it to read books, learn languages, develop professional skills, and build their future. Others spend hours scrolling without purpose. The difference lies in the choices we make. Successful people have one thing in common: they respect their time. They understand that managing time means managing life. Every minute invested wisely brings them closer to their dreams. We should all ask ourselves one simple question: Is the time I spend on my phone helping me achieve my goals, or is it taking me further away



from them? An honest answer can change our daily habits. In conclusion, our phones may be in our hands, but being the owner of our time is our own responsibility. If we use technology wisely, it becomes a powerful tool for growth. Otherwise, it quietly steals our most valuable treasure—our time. Our future depends on the choices we make today.

Qudratova Zilola Nematulla qizi was born on August 5, 1994, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. She graduated from the Academic Lyceum under Nizami Tashkent State Pedagogical University. She is currently working as an SMM specialist, Neurographica specialist, and active volunteer. Her professional interests include personal development, promoting reading culture, youth engagement,

and social projects. She is a member of the Uzbekistan Volunteers Association, Golden Wing Volunteers Academy, Girls Academy, Girls' Voice Project, Young Reformers Movement, Young Leaders Movement, and the Argentine creative association "Juntos Por Las Letras." Throughout her career, she has earned more than 20 international certificates and over 50 certific

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Motivation

The quiet spaces that would have stayed empty

What the world would miss if you were never born



By: Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza
mukphix@gmail.com

Worth Noting:

- The world would miss your particular kind of love. Love is not generic. It shows up in the way you notice when someone goes quiet and check on them anyway. It's in how you remember a small detail someone told you six months ago, because to you it mattered. It's in the tea you make for tired people, the "are you home safe?" text, the voice that says "I'm here" when someone is crying. If you weren't born, someone would have gone through their hardest day without that exact kind of comfort — someone would have needed you, and you wouldn't have been there to answer. The world would miss the way you love, because no one loves quite like you do.
- The world would also miss the problems only you can solve. You carry ideas no one else has thought of yet: a joke that would have made a stranger laugh on the worst day of their week, a way of explaining something that finally makes it click, a song, a meal, a drawing, a solution at work that only your mind could connect.

There are versions of this world we will never see: the one where your first laugh never echoed in a hospital room, the one where your name was never whispered in prayer, the one where a seat at a table, a reply to a text, or a hug at the right time simply never existed.

If you weren't born, the world wouldn't fall apart. The sun would still rise, people would still go to work, and the news would still scroll past. But it would be a world with holes in it — small, quiet, human-shaped holes that no one else could fill.

The world would miss your particular kind of love. Love is not generic. It shows up in the way you notice when someone goes quiet and check on them anyway. It's in how you remember a small detail someone told you six months ago, because to you it mattered. It's in the tea you make for tired people, the "are you home safe?" text, the voice that says "I'm here" when someone is crying. If you weren't born, someone would have gone through their hardest day without that exact kind of comfort — someone would have needed you, and you wouldn't have been there to answer. The world would miss the way you love, because no one loves quite like you do.

The world would also miss the problems only you can solve. You carry ideas no one else has thought of yet: a joke that would have made a stranger laugh on the worst day of their week, a way of explaining something that finally makes it click, a song, a meal, a drawing, a solution at work that only your mind could connect. History isn't written only by famous names. It is written by the nurse who was extra gentle, the teacher who stayed late, the friend who said "don't give up" and meant it. If you weren't born, those moments simply wouldn't have happened, and the world would be a little less healed because of it.

You would be missed in the futures you create in other people. We are all links in a chain, and your life pulls other lives forward — the younger sibling who watches how you handle pain, the colleague who learned confidence from watching you keep going, the child who will one day hear a story about you and feel braver



because of it. If you weren't born, the chain would break in places we can't even see. Someone's grandchild wouldn't exist. Someone's business wouldn't have started. Someone wouldn't have been invited into the room that changed everything for them. You are not just living your own life — you are making other people's lives possible.

The world would miss your perspective too. No one has seen life through your eyes. No one carries your exact mix of scars and joy, faith and doubt, and the small,

strange interests that make you who you are. When you speak, the room takes on a colour it didn't have before. When you stay silent, a truth goes unsaid. Without you, the world's conversation would be poorer — one voice, yours, missing from the choir, and we would all feel the silence even if we couldn't name it.

And the people who love you would miss everything. This is the hardest part, because grief is proof of love. Your mother would miss the baby she carried. Your friend would miss the per-

son who understands their humour without explanation. That one person would miss the particular way you say their name. The world would keep moving, but for them, a light would go out and never come back on.

Some days it may feel like you don't matter much, like you're easy to replace, like the world is too big and you are too small. But the truth is the opposite. The world is big, and that is exactly why you matter. Among eight billion people, there is only one you — only one set of fingerprints, only one way

you smile when you're trying not to cry, only one way you pray, cook, lead, listen, and forgive.

If you weren't born, a song wouldn't be written, a wound wouldn't be bandaged, a "thank you" wouldn't be said, a life wouldn't be changed.

So stay. Not because it's easy, but because the world is still waiting for the things only you can bring to it.

The quiet spaces are already full — because you are here.

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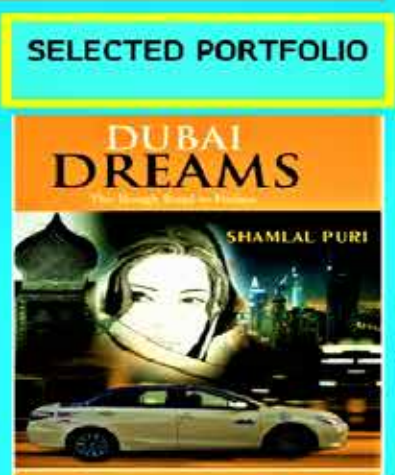
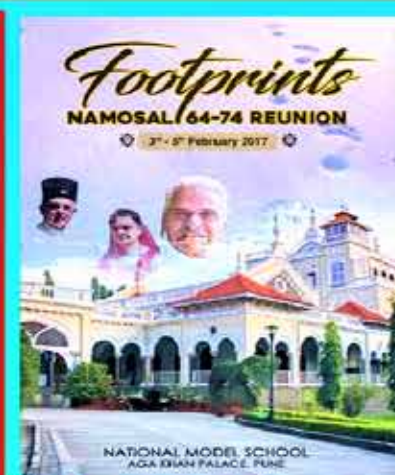
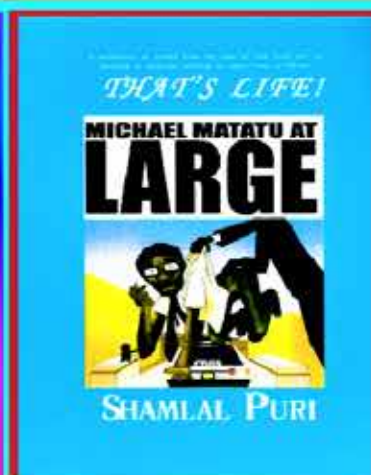
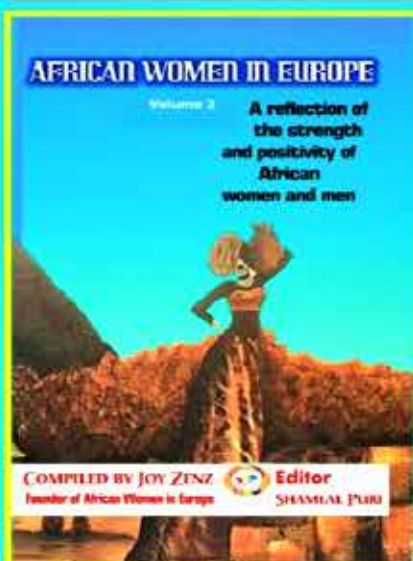
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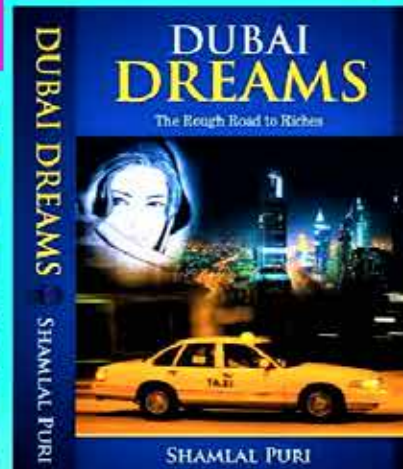
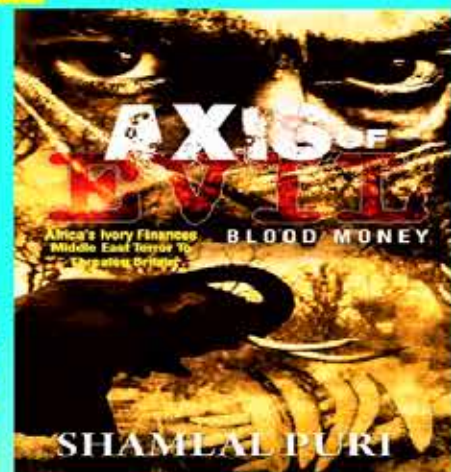
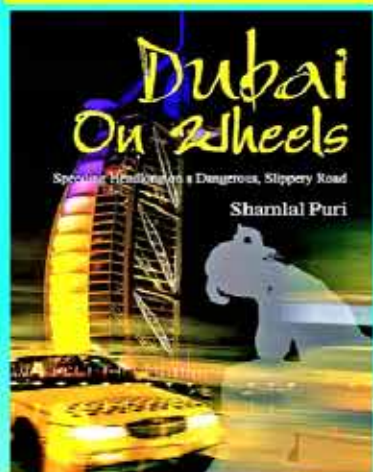
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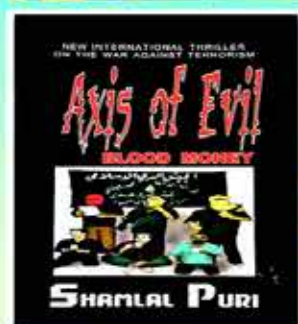
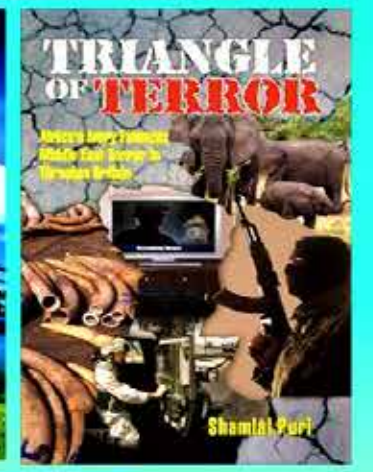
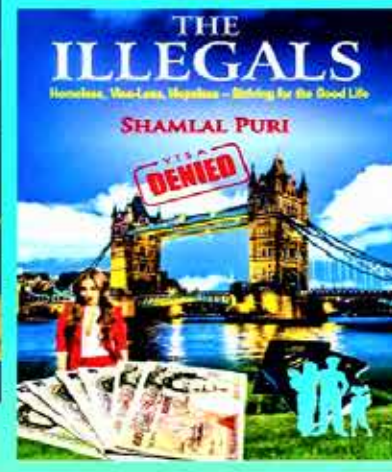
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African News

PAWO Appointment, Business Record, and Controversy:
A Full Analysis of Stina Wu's Role



By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande
@themtkenyatimes

Contd from Page 1

Worth Noting:

- Appointing authority: The Pan African Women's Organisation (PAWO), a continental women's rights and development body granted Specialized Agency status by the African Union in 2017. It is not an organ, department, or agency of the Government of Namibia.
- Appointee: Stina Wu, prominent businesswoman and investor active in Namibia since 1996.
- Official title: Special Economic Advisor to the President of PAWO
- Effective date: 7 July 2026
- Remuneration: Explicitly stated as honorary and unpaid. No public or state funds are allocated to this role.
- Core mandate: To provide strategic advice on economic development, cross-border investment promotion, inclusive entrepreneurship, and targeted strategies to advance women's economic empowerment across the African continent, with a specific initial focus on Namibia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.
- Terms of appointment: No fixed term of office; the appointment is revocable at any time by PAWO's executive board through its internal governance procedures.



Chinese-Namibian businesswoman Stina Wu (born Qiaoxia Wu)

searching questions: Was this a formal government appointment? Could this role become a channel for undue influence or even state capture, given her extensive local business interests? And given well-documented financial and legal challenges linked to her companies in recent years, does she have the credibility to hold an advisory position focused on economic development?

Misinformation and misunderstanding have clouded public discussion, with many incorrectly assuming Wu has been appointed to an official government post. This article sets out to clear the air, presenting verified facts, official documentation and balanced, evidence-based analysis. It explains the exact nature and scope of the appointment, draws a clear line between this civil society role and official government advisory positions, examines allegations of state capture, assesses her suitability against her business track record, and outlines the ethical safeguards needed to address legitimate public concerns.

The Appointment: Official Facts and Mandate

Verified Details of the Appointment

All information in this section is drawn directly from PAWO's official public statement dated 7 July 2026, and remarks by PAWO President Eunice Ipinge at the announcement ceremony in Windhoek:

Appointing authority: The Pan African Women's Organisation (PAWO), a continental women's rights and development body granted Specialized Agency status by the African Union in 2017. It is not an organ, department, or agency of the Government of Namibia.

Appointee: Stina Wu, prominent businesswoman and investor active in Namibia since 1996.

Official title: Special Economic Advisor to the President of PAWO

Effective date: 7 July 2026

Remuneration: Explicitly stated as honorary and unpaid. No public or state funds are allocated to this role.

Core mandate: To provide strategic advice on economic development, cross-border investment promotion, inclusive entrepreneurship, and targeted strategies to advance women's economic empowerment across

Table		
Comparison Dimension	PAWO Special Economic Advisor	Official Namibian Government Economic Advisor
Legal and Institutional Status	A role within a non-governmental civil society organization with AU consultative status; not part of the Namibian state, public service, or government structure	A formal public office established under Namibian law; part of the government structure, reporting to the President, Cabinet, or a designated Minister
Decision-Making Authority	No executive, legislative, regulatory, or policy-making power; advice is limited to PAWO leadership and internal organizational strategy only	May advise directly on national policy, economic planning, regulatory frameworks, and public spending; input can directly shape government decisions
Formal Powers and Access	No automatic or statutory access to state secrets, cabinet meetings, government procurement processes, or confidential official information	Entitled to official access to relevant government information, inter-ministerial forums, and policy discussions as required for their role
Accountability Framework	Reports solely to PAWO's executive board; subject only to PAWO's internal rules and ethics guidelines; no statutory public accountability requirements	Accountable to the President, Parliament, and the public; bound by the Public Service Act, Government Advisers Act, and rules of parliamentary oversight
Conflict of Interest Rules	No mandatory legal requirement to publicly declare assets, business interests, or potential conflicts; governed only by PAWO's internal policies	Legally required to make full public disclosure of all assets, business interests, and potential conflicts; subject to review by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)
Appointment and Removal	Appointed and removed by PAWO's executive leadership; no public process or parliamentary confirmation required	Appointed through official government procedures; removal follows formal legal processes that may be subject to public reporting
Scope of Work	Limited exclusively to PAWO's programs, projects, and organizational objectives	Defined by official government mandate, covering national economic policy and public interests

the African continent, with a specific initial focus on Namibia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Terms of appointment: No fixed term of office; the appointment is revocable at any time by PAWO's executive board through its internal governance procedures.

In her official remarks, PAWO President Eunice Ipinge confirmed the appointment was made under PAWO's constitutional rules, which do not restrict advisory positions to African nationals. She noted: "We selected Ms Wu in recognition of her long experience as an investor, her track record of building businesses in underserved regions of Namibia, and her stated

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PAWO Appointment, Business Record, and Controversy: A Full Analysis of Stina Wu's Role

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Worth Noting:

commitment to supporting women-led enterprises. This role is focused entirely on advancing PAWO's developmental goals, not on influencing government policy or commercial interests."

Stina Wu, in accepting the appointment, stated: "I am deeply honoured to take on this responsibility. My focus will be to bridge gaps between investors and local communities, open new markets for African women entrepreneurs, and work to create practical support systems that help women grow sustainable businesses. I understand the public scrutiny this role brings, and I commit to acting with integrity at all times."

Critical Distinction: PAWO Role vs. Official Government Advisory Posts

This is the single most misunderstood aspect of the appointment. Confusion between these two very different types of positions has fuelled much of the public debate. The table below provides a clear, fact-based comparison:

Key Conclusion: On the basis of official facts and legal definitions, Stina Wu has not been appointed as an economic advisor to the Government of Namibia, the Office of the President, or any state ministry or agency. This is an independent civil society advisory role, with no official authority, state powers, or public responsibilities attached. Misrepresentation of this role as a government appointment is factually incorrect.

Stina Wu's Economic Interests and Business Footprint in Namibia

To understand the context of the appointment and the concerns raised, it is necessary to outline Wu's established business presence and current economic interests in Namibia.

Background and Business Expansion

Stina Wu arrived in Namibia in 1996, starting with small-scale retail trade before steadily expanding her business interests into property development, hospitality, construction, and manufacturing. Over more than

two decades, she became one of the most visible foreign investors operating in northern Namibia, a region often overlooked by major domestic and international developers.

At the peak of her business growth around 2018, her portfolio included high-profile assets:

Etango Shopping Complex in Oshakati, valued at approximately N\$41 million at launch

Galaxy Shopping Mall in Rundu, the largest commercial centre in the Kavango East region, housing more than 50 local and national tenants

Rainbow Housing and Sunshine Village, large-scale residential development projects aimed at expanding affordable housing stock

Marigold Hotel Developer and AH Helmsman Group, her flagship entities operating in tourism infrastructure and civil construction

Stina Youth Growth Foundation, her philanthropic initiative focused on vocational training and youth enterprise support

Public estimates at the time placed the total value of her assets at over N\$1 billion, making her one of the most prominent private investors in northern Namibia.

Current Economic Interests (as of mid-2026)

Wu and her family-controlled business entities continue to hold significant economic interests across the country:

- Ownership and management of commercial land and property in Windhoek, Oshakati, Rundu, and Ondangwa
- Active operations in construction, hospitality, and property management sectors
- Ongoing commercial partnerships with local suppliers, contractors, and service providers
- Outstanding applications for municipal land allocation and development permits in several regional towns

All these businesses and assets are legally registered under Namibian company law, and her commercial activities are legitimate. However, these interests mean



Chinese-Namibian businesswoman Stina Wu (born Qiaoxia Wu)

her business success is closely linked to government decisions on land allocation, planning regulations, infrastructure investment, and economic policy – a fact that forms the basis of concerns about potential conflicts of interest.

State Capture Allegations: Fact, Speculation, and Risk

One of the most serious concerns raised by members of the public and some public commentators is the claim that this PAWO appointment could be a "backdoor mechanism" to facilitate state capture. For clarity, we use the definition formally adopted by the Namibian Anti-Corruption Commission: "the abuse of entrusted power or influence to shape state institutions, policies, or decisions for private gain, or to benefit a narrow group or individual rather than the public interest."

Arguments Put Forward by Critics

Those who raise concerns about state capture base their arguments on three main observations:

Established political and institutional proximity: Wu has well-documented personal and business relationships with senior figures in the ruling SWAPO Party, including former and current ministers, regional governors, and local municipal leaders. Critics argue the PAWO title will give her greater public standing and easier access to engage these decision-makers.

Potential for hidden influence: Even without official government powers, the title "Economic Advisor" carries

significant prestige. There is concern that public officials, business partners, and the public may incorrectly perceive the role as a sign of government endorsement, which could translate into preferential treatment in land applications, contract awards, or regulatory approvals.

Conflict of interest risk: As a major property developer and investor, Wu stands to gain financially from government policies that support infrastructure development, ease land access, or promote foreign investment. Her advisory role could give her a platform to advocate for positions that align with her own commercial interests, while appearing to speak in an independent advisory capacity.

Factual Assessment of the Claims

When measured against available evidence, these concerns require careful separation between proven facts and reasonable speculation: No legal or institutional link to state power: There is no evidence or legal basis to suggest PAWO has the authority to influence government decisions, award state contracts, or alter public policy. Its role is limited to advocacy, programming, and advisory work focused on women's empowerment. No official mandate to engage with government on policy: PAWO's appointment documentation explicitly restricts Wu's advisory work to internal organizational strategy and programming, not to providing advice to government or shaping national policy. No evidence of improper

er conduct: To date, there have been no formal investigations, charges, or prosecutions initiated by the Anti-Corruption Commission or any other authority against Wu related to bribery, corruption, or improper influence over state decisions. Allegations remain within the realm of public debate, not proven fact.

PAWO's independence: PAWO is funded primarily through grants from the African Union, international development partners, and contributions from its member organizations, not through financial support from the Government of Namibia. Its governance structure is continental, not national.

Balanced Conclusion on State Capture

On the basis of available facts, this appointment does not in itself constitute state capture, nor does it create a formal mechanism for state capture. There is no evidence to support claims that the role gives Wu power or access to manipulate state institutions for private gain. However, the risk of perceived influence and reputational harm is real. Even without improper actions, the combination of a high-profile advisory title, extensive business interests, and established political connections creates an environment where preferential treatment could be suspected. This perception itself erodes public trust, and carries real risks for both PAWO's reputation and public confidence in govern-

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POLITICS

A ‘Little Dictatorship’? Oburu Odinga’s remarks and the betrayal of a democratic legacy

The reported remarks by Oburu Odinga urging President William Ruto to “embrace a little dictatorship” have triggered one of the most thought-provoking political debates in recent months. Whether the statement was made in jest, frustration, or conviction, its implications cannot be dismissed lightly.

By: Simiyu S Stanford
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Worth Noting:

- Authoritarianism rarely arrives wearing military boots. It often begins with seemingly harmless suggestions that democracy should occasionally make room for strong-handed rule. It starts when leaders become impatient with criticism, when dissent is portrayed as sabotage, and when constitutional freedoms are treated as inconveniences rather than guarantees.
- The framers of Kenya’s Constitution understood this danger. That is why they entrenched freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and political participation as fundamental rights. These freedoms exist not to protect governments but to protect citizens from governments.
- Every administration, regardless of political persuasion, benefits from praise. Democracy, however, is measured by how governments respond to criticism.
- That is why the reported remarks have generated discomfort even among those who have historically admired the Odinga political tradition. They appear, at least on the surface, to contradict the democratic principles many ODM supporters defended for years.



Oburu Odinga

The reported remarks by Oburu Odinga urging President William Ruto to “embrace a little dictatorship” have triggered one of the most thought-provoking political debates in recent months. Whether the statement was made in jest, frustration, or conviction, its implications cannot be dismissed lightly. For many Kenyans, it sounded like an endorsement of a philosophy that generations of democracy advocates spent decades resisting. What makes the remarks particularly striking is not merely what was said, but who said it. The Odinga name occupies a unique place in Kenya’s political history. For decades, Raila Odinga became the face of resistance against authoritarianism, electoral injustice, and the abuse of state power. His political career inspired millions who believed that democracy flourishes only when citizens are free to criticize those in authority without intimidation or fear. One did not have to support Raila politically to acknowledge that his name became synonymous with the struggle for constitutionalism, political freedoms, and accountable governance. From the fight for multiparty democracy to the campaign for constitutional reforms, the Odinga political tradition came to symbolize resistance against dictatorship. It is against this historical background that Oburu Odinga’s reported call for “a little dictatorship” has unsettled many Kenyans. Can there really be such a thing as “a little dictatorship”? History answers that question with remarkable consistency. Authoritarianism rarely arrives wearing military boots. It often begins with seemingly harmless suggestions that democracy should occasionally make room for strong-handed rule. It starts when leaders become impatient with criticism, when dissent is portrayed as sabotage, and when constitutional freedoms are treated as inconveniences rather than guarantees. The framers of Kenya’s Constitution understood this danger. That is why they entrenched freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and political participation as fundamental rights. These freedoms exist not to protect governments but to protect citizens from governments. Every administration, regardless of political persuasion, benefits from praise. Democracy, however, is measured by how governments respond to criticism. That is why the reported remarks have generated discomfort even among those who have historically admired the Odinga political tradition. They appear, at least on the surface, to contradict the democratic principles many ODM supporters defended for years. Political loyalty should never supersede constitutional principle. Today’s opposition may become tomorrow’s government, just as today’s government may eventually find itself in opposition. The rights we defend when our allies are out of power are the same rights that protect us when our opponents govern. Perhaps the greatest consequence of Oburu Odinga’s reported remarks is not the controversy they have generated but the difficult questions they leave hanging over Kenya’s political landscape. Has the generation that fought authoritarianism begun to normalize it? Can leaders who once demanded democratic space now urge the government to embrace “a little dictatorship”? Has political expediency overtaken political principle? Beyond the familiar political slogans, what lasting contribution does Oburu Odinga himself wish history to remember? Leadership is not measured by proximity to power or longevity in politics. It is measured by ideas, public service, institution-building, and the courage to defend constitutional values even when doing so is politically inconvenient. The debate is therefore larger than Oburu Odinga. It is about Kenya. It is about whether constitutional freedoms remain sacred regardless of who occupies State House. It is about whether our democracy is strong enough to reject authoritarian language even when it comes from respected political veterans. History has little patience for leaders who compromise principles for political convenience. It remembers those who expanded freedom, strengthened institutions, and defended the rights of ordinary citizens. As Kenyans reflect on these remarks, one question remains impossible to ignore: Should democracy be defended only when one is in the opposition, or is it a principle that must remain constant regardless of who holds power? The answer to that question will define not only Oburu Odinga’s place in public memory but also the character of Kenya’s democracy for generations to come.

About the author
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African News

PAWO Appointment, Business Record, and Controversy:

A Full Analysis of Stina Wu's Role

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Business Performance and Challenges: Does She Merit the Appointment?

Another central question in public discussion is whether Wu's business track record justifies her appointment as an economic advisor. Supporters point to her investment and job creation record, while critics highlight significant financial difficulties and legal disputes in recent years. A balanced assessment requires consideration of both sides of the record.

Established Achievements

Supporters of the appointment highlight substantial contributions:

Significant investment in underserved regions: Wu has injected an estimated N\$600 million into Namibia's economy since 2007, primarily in northern regions where few developers were willing to invest. This has expanded commercial and residential infrastructure in historically underdeveloped areas.

Job creation: At peak operation, her businesses have provided hundreds of direct jobs in construction, retail, hospitality, and property management, alongside indirect employment for suppliers and service providers.

Market access and networks: Her international business connections have created opportunities to link Namibian producers and entrepreneurs with regional and global markets.

Support for women and youth: Through her foundation and direct business initiatives, she has provided scholarships, enterprise training, and market access support to women and young people in rural communities.

These achievements align closely with the criteria PAWO cited for her appointment: investment leadership, entrepreneurship experience, and commitment to community development.

Financial and Legal Challenges

Critics, however, point to well-documented financial setbacks and legal disputes reported in local media and recorded in the High Court of Namibia over recent years:

Outstanding debt and loan disputes: In October 2024, the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN) launched legal action against Wu-linked entity Marigold Hotel Developer to recover N\$68.4 million in unpaid

loans and accumulated interest, citing repeated breaches of repayment agreements. Mediation efforts failed in April 2026, and the case remains before the courts. Separately, First National Bank (FNB) initiated proceedings in early 2025 to recover N\$35 million from African New Era Investments, another company linked to Wu.

Commercial legal disputes: In 2023, private property owner Esmerelda Manahi launched legal action against Wu, claiming N\$24 million in unpaid property purchase instalments plus N\$2.1 million in outstanding rent, alongside allegations of property damage and devaluation. This civil dispute remains unresolved.

Delayed and abandoned projects: The high-profile Gala Square/Chinatown development in Windhoek was announced in 2018 as a N\$150 million mixed-use project, but remains incomplete and vacant as of mid-2026 with no confirmed completion timeline. Similarly, the 550-unit Sunshine Village housing project in Kaisosi faced repeated delays, contract disputes, and work stoppages, leaving more than 120 workers without employment in 2020.

Governance concerns: Court documents and business reports indicate repeated attempts to refinance debt obligations, with several loan applications rejected by commercial banks due to weak financial ratios and poor project performance. Small business associations have also raised concerns about alleged labor non-compliance, underpayment of workers, and preference for imported labor over local employees – allegations Wu has consistently denied.

It is important to note that Wu has never been convicted of any criminal offence, including fraud, theft, or tax evasion. All disputes are civil matters related to contracts, debt, and business performance, not criminal wrongdoing.

Assessment of Suitability

Evaluating whether Wu deserves this role requires applying two different sets of standards:

Against PAWO's selection criteria: PAWO explicitly selected her based on experience in investment, entrepreneurship, and commitment to women's empowerment. On these criteria, her track record is substantial and relevant. She has built businesses from scratch, mobilized significant capital, and operated in challenging environments – experience that brings practical value to the role.

Against public expectations: For many members of the public, an economic advisor should demonstrate consistent financial responsibility, accountability, and sound governance. Her history of large-scale debt defaults, stalled projects,



Chinese-Namibian businesswoman Stina Wu (born Qiaoxia Wu)

and ongoing legal disputes raises legitimate questions: Can someone who has faced significant challenges managing their own financial affairs provide credible advice to others on sustainable economic development? Balanced conclusion: Wu brings genuine, valuable practical experience to the role, but her recent financial and governance challenges are significant and valid grounds for scrutiny. She is not unqualified, but neither does she have an unblemished record. Her suitability will ultimately be judged on how she performs in the role, and how she manages potential conflicts between her business interests and her advisory responsibilities.

Ethical Risks and Recommended Safeguards

While the appointment is legal and legitimate, it carries clear ethical and reputational risks. To address public concerns and ensure the role delivers on its intended purpose, practical safeguards are needed:

Public conflict of interest disclosure: PAWO should require Wu to make a full public declaration of all her business interests, assets, and ongoing legal disputes, and update this declaration annually. She should formally recuse herself from any work, advice, or discussions that could directly or indirectly benefit her commercial interests.

Published terms of reference: PAWO should release a detailed, public document outlining exactly what the role entails, what activities are

permitted, and clear restrictions on using the title for commercial lobbying or personal benefit.

Independent oversight: Establish an independent ethics committee within PAWO to review potential conflicts of interest, monitor adherence to the role's mandate, and address public complaints.

Regular public reporting: Wu should publish a short public progress report every six months, outlining activities undertaken, outcomes achieved, and confirming no conflicts of interest have arisen.

Clear public communication: PAWO and Wu should consistently clarify the nature of the role in all public engagements, to prevent ongoing misunderstanding that it is a government position.

Conclusion

Stina Wu's appointment as Special Economic Advisor to the Pan African Women's Organisation is a legitimate, legal appointment within a civil society structure – not a government position, nor an official state role. Misrepresentation of this fact has been the source of much unnecessary confusion and concern.

On the question of state capture: There is no factual evidence to conclude the appointment enables or constitutes state capture. However, the perceived influence that could come with the title creates real reputational and governance risks that must be addressed through transparency and safeguards.

On the question of suitability: Wu

brings valuable experience as an investor and entrepreneur, particularly in underserved regions, and has contributed to economic activity and social development. But her significant financial challenges, debt disputes, and project failures are valid matters of public concern that cannot be dismissed. Her appointment is controversial precisely because her record is mixed – she has achieved much, but also faced significant difficulties.

Ultimately, this appointment will be judged not by the title, nor by past achievements or failures alone, but by actions and outcomes. If Wu uses her experience and networks to genuinely advance women's economic empowerment, deliver practical results, and maintain full transparency, public concern will fade. If she uses the role to advance her own commercial interests, or fails to demonstrate accountability, the concerns raised today will be confirmed.

For now, the facts show a legal but controversial appointment – one that deserves careful oversight, balanced scrutiny, and the opportunity to prove its value, rather than pre-emptive acceptance or condemnation.

Sources: PAWO official statement 7 July 2026; The Namibian; Namibian Sun; High Court of Namibia case records 2023–2026; Development Bank of Namibia public statements; African Union PAWO accreditation documents.

Africa

Sudan’s war reaches a dangerous new front as El Obeid braces for onslaught

By: Diaspora Times Team
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The scale of what is now at stake is difficult to overstate. The European Union has said a major military build-up by the RSF threatens a city sheltering roughly 500,000 civilians, including around 100,000 people already displaced from other parts of the country, while a coalition of nations including Britain, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway formally requested an urgent debate at the UN Human Rights Council, warning that approximately 500,000 civilians are at risk of being targeted in large-scale violence.

A city under relentless bombardment

The immediate crisis has been driven by an intensifying campaign of drone warfare. The UN’s human rights chief, Volker Türk, told the Human Rights Council in Geneva that his office documented 15 drone strikes on El Obeid and its surrounding areas in the space of just three weeks last month, killing at least 45 civilians. Describing the weapons involved, Türk said the strikes — launched by the former battlefield allies now locked in conflict, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the national Sudanese Armed Forces — have repeatedly struck markets, schools, fuel stations, water infrastructure and civilian vehicles.

The human cost of trying to escape has become as severe as the risk of staying. Türk said that some residents are selling their belongings simply to finance their escape from the city, while for many others the exorbitant cost of transport and constant attacks on vehicles along exit routes make leaving impossible. He added that his office had documented patterns of summary executions, abductions, torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence and looting along the routes taken by displaced people across the Kordofan region.



That account was echoed by Mona Rishmawi of the UN’s Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan, who addressed the same urgent debate. “We have spoken with residents of the city. Fear is pervasive,” Rishmawi said, describing how footage and statements circulating on social media accounts affiliated with the RSF showed military build-up around El Obeid and preparations to enter the city. She told the council that hospitals, markets, schools and residential areas had reportedly been struck, causing civilian casualties and disrupting essential services, with women and children among those killed and injured.

A separate joint statement from UN human rights experts, cited by Al Jazeera, put the toll starkly: “Ten consecutive days of drone strikes have killed at least 50 civilians across El Obeid and North Kordofan, and have caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure,” the experts

said, adding that “widespread credible reports of ethnically targeted violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, are deplorable.”

Encirclement and the fear of a second El Fasher

The pattern unfolding around El Obeid has drawn direct and repeated comparison to the fall of El Fasher, the North Darfur capital that endured an 18-month siege before RSF forces overran it last October. That assault led to a three-day rampage in which roughly 6,000 people were killed, according to UN accounts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and Amnesty International has since accused the RSF of committing crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing during the massacre.

Officials fear El Obeid is now following the same trajectory. Mohamed Refaat, the International Organization for Migration’s Chief of Mission

for Sudan, warned from Port Sudan that “there is concern that El Obeid could become the next El Fasher,” noting that residents there have been stranded for months and that, without action, there will be a repeat of what happened in El Fasher. In earlier remarks, Refaat said El Obeid is approaching a total siege that will soon leave civilians unable to leave or return safely, warning conditions could soon match those seen in El Fasher.

Latest information from the city indicates the RSF now controls all surrounding routes except towards the east, according to the UN Human Rights Council briefing, with residents describing growing military movement around the city and increasing insecurity from drone attacks along the remaining exit routes.

Türk himself framed the stakes for the international system as a whole, not just for Sudan. “El Obeid is a classic case that shows why the use of the veto should be limited, as proposed by France and Mexico more than 10 years ago,” he told the council, while stressing that accountability for crimes already committed must follow, and welcoming the continued engagement of the International Criminal Court in seeking justice for Sudan’s war victims.

Why El Obeid matters strategically

Beyond the immediate humanitarian toll, El Obeid’s fall would carry significant strategic weight. The city is the primary gateway linking Khartoum, some 550 kilometres to the northeast, with the vast Darfur region, and is a stronghold of the Sudanese Armed Forces’ 5th Infantry Division, known as Al-Hagana or the “Camel Corps.” It also hosts an airbase, a major oil pipeline and a

large gum arabic market.

Analysts say control of the city would reshape the balance of the wider war. Ahmed Ben Omer, an independent Sudan analyst, told Al Jazeera that the city sits at the heart of a network linking Darfur, Kordofan and central Sudan, and that control of it would give the RSF an opportunity to connect vast geographical areas and rebuild its political project after losing Khartoum — a reference to the RSF’s expulsion from the national capital in March 2025. Whoever holds El Obeid effectively controls a key gateway through which goods, people and supplies flow into central Sudan.

Kholood Khair, another Sudanese affairs researcher, offered a blunter assessment of the motives driving the battle, telling Al Jazeera that the fight for El Obeid is fundamentally about “power, land and money.” The siege has already driven food prices sharply higher; the encirclement has seen prices surge by up to 300 percent, leaving much of the population unable to afford rising costs or reach safety. One resident, 35-year-old Aqşam Mohammed, has been forced to walk long distances to secure murky, undrinkable water for her seven children after strikes crippled electricity and water services.

Civilians caught between rival narratives

Observers increasingly describe the contest for El Obeid as being fought as much through competing narratives as through military manoeuvre, with each side seeking to shape international opinion ahead of any major escalation on the ground. One



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Africa

Sudan's war reaches a dangerous new front as El Obeid braces for onslaught

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regional analysis argued that warnings of an “imminent attack” on El Obeid have coincided with military movements by the Sudanese army and allied militias in North Kordofan, which some observers believe are intended to divert attention from preparations under way in areas such as Jabra Al-Sheikh and Rahad Al-Nuba, while channelling international pressure toward a single narrative favouring the authorities based in Port Sudan.

That same analysis placed the protection of civilians squarely at the centre of the crisis, arguing that the presence of hundreds of thousands of civilians inside a city threatened by escalation must not be turned into a bargaining chip or a means of securing military or propaganda advantage for any party. According to field accounts cited in the report, the Sudanese army and allied militias — including groups linked to the Islamic Movement — have been preventing civilians from leaving El Obeid, raising fears that residents could be trapped or used as human shields should fighting intensify. For their part, the RSF and its political umbrella, the Sudan Founding Alliance, have sought to position themselves as willing to mitigate the humanitarian fallout. The two groups announced their readiness to open safe corridors for civilians wishing to leave El Obeid, in line with the principles of international humanitarian law, and said they were willing to coordinate with the United Nations and international and regional organisations to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the protection of civilians. Verifying claims from either side has proved difficult. Continued denial of access to Sudan for the UN's Fact-Finding Mission has undermined independent verification, fuelling competing narratives and giving warring parties greater scope to use the humanitarian file as a further weapon in the conflict. Compounding the danger, the same analysis noted that the drone campaign has been enabled by external supply lines, with the increasing use of Iranian- and Turkish-made drones by the Sudanese army and allied battalions expanding both the scope and nature of violations, including strikes on residential neighbourhoods, markets and civilian facilities in areas not necessarily witnessing direct confrontation.

Aid agencies sound the alarm

Humanitarian organisations operating in Sudan say the country's aid architecture is buckling under the strain of a war now well into its fourth year. The International Rescue Committee warned that



escalating RSF drone strikes on El Obeid are killing civilians, cutting off access to food, water and fuel, and paving the way for a ground offensive that would put hundreds of thousands of people at grave risk of a major humanitarian emergency. The charity said drone strikes on fuel depots and water stations have left residents facing acute shortages of both, and that civilians risk being trapped in the city if key evacuation routes toward Kosti are cut off, warning starkly that “El Obeid risks facing the same trajectory” as El Fasher “without sustained international action to halt the offensive.” The strain on humanitarian operations extends well beyond El Obeid itself. Zoe Brennan of the International Organization for Migration said the number of newly displaced people across the wider Kordofan region has surged by nearly two-thirds in just three months, with the agency documenting more than 100 displacement-triggering incidents in under nine months — an average of one major incident every two to three days. Refaat, speaking separately, said the IOM's resources are completely depleted, particularly for emergency shelter and food items, and criticised the international trend of reducing humanitarian funding even as global defence spending rises, calling instead for member states to invest clearly in peace. Attacks on humanitarian operations themselves have added to the toll. UNHCR spokesperson Eujin Byun confirmed that a driver survived an attack on a UN refugee agency vehicle, though the entire consignment it carried was lost — the second time this year a UNHCR vehicle has been struck in Sudan. “This reflects a deeply worrying trend of attacks affecting civilians,” Byun said, calling for guaranteed safe and secure humanitarian access across the

country. The UN has described Sudan as the second most deadly environment globally for humanitarian workers.

Amid the grim assessments, Sudan's own representative to the Human Rights Council struck a note of defiance on behalf of his home city. “For your information I am from El Obeid; this wounded city, it will never fall, as long as we are alive,” said Salim Ahmed Ibrahim, addressing fellow ambassadors during the council's proceedings.

Diplomatic manoeuvring continues

Efforts to broker a broader end to the conflict have so far struggled to gain traction. Sudan's foreign ministry recently denied it had rejected a US proposal to end the war, describing remarks by Massad Boulos,

an adviser to US President Donald Trump, as “inaccurate,” and insisting it had engaged constructively with the proposal while remaining committed to the May 2023 Jeddah declaration. The European Union, meanwhile, has said it is watching the situation with alarm as a member of the diplomatic Quintet monitoring Sudan, and has warned that any attack targeting the civilian population, obstruction of safe passage, or deliberate blocking of humanitarian access would constitute a violation of international humanitarian law. “El Obeid cannot become another El Fasher,” the bloc's statement said, warning that violations “will lead the EU to consider robust measures against those responsible.” There has been at least one incremental sign of movement on humanitarian access. The United Na-

tions has welcomed Sudan's decision to extend the opening of an aid corridor with neighbouring Chad, even as it continues to express concern over the ongoing escalation in El Obeid.

For now, though, the balance of evidence points toward a city standing on the edge of catastrophe, with rival forces still contesting not only its streets but the story the world is told about them. As the UN's senior officials have repeatedly stressed, the priority for the international community must be independently verified fact over competing claims — and above all, the safety of the roughly half a million people who remain inside El Obeid's shrinking perimeter, with fewer routes out by the day.



Diaspora

Indians Are Still Swamped By British Colonial Cultural Hangover: Time To Switch And Go Beyond Appearances?

By: Antara Roy Bhattacharjee
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Life is such an amazing thing that we take everything for granted. What we read and hear is of-ten taken at face value. Look at social media: What we read or see there is taken as the gospel truth. Often, what is told are facts twisted to suit the narrator, who may have an axe to grind.

It is a well-known fact that a story starts from an almost honest footing, but as it travels from one mouth to the other along the long line of people who have heard it from someone they know or someone they think that they know, it changes direction with added spices and half-baked truths, insinuations, allegations or what they think they should say: Call it gossip, call it tittle tat-tle, call it what you may – back biting? The biggest culprit is the rumour machine with half-baked truths. The face value of an honest comment is lost to the winds. Let's say some people make a mountain out of a molehill.

Politics is often about convincing the sceptics with outright lies, concocted facts, and promises that crumble like cookies. Politicians are pathological liars who will say anything to win votes and fool the public into believing they are there to look after the welfare of those people who voted for them and the public in general. Contrary to that, they have their own axe to grind. But not all of us are politicians, and many of us still have a conscience and the sincerity and goodwill to be good citizens.

Flip the other side of the coin, as we say, every story has another side.

Take life and let us search its meaning beyond appearances. Appearances can deceive. A stink-ing rich person flaunting his wealth with the motto: Money is not the problem, how to spend it is the problem, could be earning his wealth by breaking the law - a



British Colonial style Champagne-Lounge-style still lives on in modern India despite seven decades of independence. Photo Courtesy



English woman Krishna devotee from England who chose to stay in India Photo Courtesy

smuggler, a people trafficker, a pimp, a dealer in drugs. The well-meaning public, admiring his wealth, only finds out

the truth after his racket is smashed and the law steps in. Some people may not believe what is being said about this

person in public until they see him handcuffed in the media with screaming headlines and breaking news.

There are two sides to the coin, as we say. Let us look at the consequences of 'loose talk'.

We often jump to conclusions without considering the consequences or the outcomes they may have later. We should be more patient, observant, and persevering in our approach to what we see and hear around us, and make decisions accordingly.

Life is not a one-way street; rather, it is a point of intersection where many roads, highways, and pathways converge. For example, are all prisoners vindictive? Or might some of them be victims of false allegations or miscarriages of justice? Before judging others, we should remember that appearances and assumptions do not always reveal the complete truth.

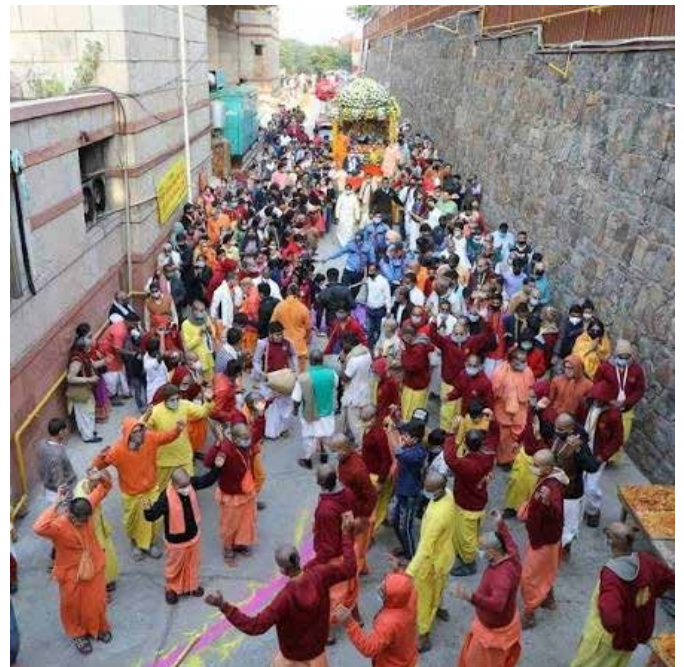
This contrast teaches us that patience, resilience, and forbearance are powerful virtues. My grandmother's reminder that true strength lies in self-restraint can inspire the audience to feel hopeful and confident in the power of peaceful perseverance.

This is a lesson for people who take to the streets at the drop of a hat. People have been seen joining protests just for the sake of it, to swell the crowds, or because they have nothing better to do with their lives and are unemployable or do not wish to work - why not spend a few hours complaining?

All this reminds me of the period when India was under British colonial rule. Although political co-lonialism ended in 1947, one may argue that many colonial patterns of thought-such as defer-ence to Western standards of success, dress, and education-continue to shape our social con-sciousness. In several ways, we have yet to free ourselves from the obsession with appearances, hierarchy, and the need for validation through Western standards. These attitudes were not accidental; they were carefully cultivated during the colonial period and became deeply embedded in our collective psyche. Consequently, Eurocentric ways of thinking continue to influence our per-ceptions, often without our even realising it.



Kasauli born British Indian Ruskin Bond, the legendary children's writer now 92, has made his home in Mussoories, India, despite having family links to England. Photo Courtesy



Shri Shri Krishna Balaram Rath Yatra Mahotsava at ISKCON Delhi has many native British devotees based in India.

This is precisely where Edward Said's concept of Orientalism becomes relevant. Said argues that the West did not merely study the East; it constructed and represented the East according to its own interests and imagination. The Orient was portrayed through a Western lens—as exotic, irrational, backwards, and in need of guidance—while the West positioned itself as rational, civilised, and superior. In other words, the West assumed the authority to define and speak for the East. Such representations were not innocent descriptions; they became instruments of power that justified colonial domination.

Although colonial rule has formally ended, many of these Eurocentric assumptions-such as per-ceptions

of beauty, language, and social hierarchy-remain deeply rooted in Indian society. They continue to shape our understanding of identity, culture, and social status. Therefore, when we discuss the importance of appearances, we must also recognise how colonial discourse has influenced how we see ourselves and how we believe others should see us.

Even though the British have long been gone, their influence still exists. Persistent British colonial cultural patterns among Indians include the emphasis on English fluency, reliance on English common law and parliamentary governance, a bu-

Diaspora

Indians Are Still Swamped By British Colonial Cultural Hangover: Time To Switch And Go Beyond Appearances?

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reaucratic 'babu' mentality, and an enduring passion for British-introduced sports like cricket. These patterns define institutional and social behaviours across the subcontinent.

Political independence marked the end of British rule in India. Still, an important question continues to demand attention: Did colonialism merely occupy our land, or did it also shape our ways of thinking? More importantly, have we truly decolonised our minds—our perceptions, values, and self-image—so that we can forge an authentic cultural identity?

This question becomes particularly relevant in contemporary India, where public discourse often oscillates between patience and polarisation, dialogue and confrontation. While one section of society believes in restraint, perseverance, and peaceful engagement, another increasingly views protest and aggression as the first response to disagreement. The challenge lies not merely in political differences but in understanding the historical forces that continue to influence our collective consciousness.

Edward Said's Orientalism offers an important framework for examining this legacy.



Affluent Indians turn up at the Mahalaxmi racecourse in Mumbai to enjoy horse racing and watch the derby live... a British colonial hangover that remains a popular pastime even today.

Said argued that colonialism was sustained not only through military and political domination but also through systems of knowledge that allowed the West to define and represent the East. The Orient was portrayed as irrational, backward, and dependent, while the West positioned itself as rational, progressive, and superior. These representations were not neutral; they became instruments of power that shaped how colonised societies came to perceive themselves.

Although colonial rule formally ended decades ago, many of these inherited assumptions persist. Eurocentric standards still influence

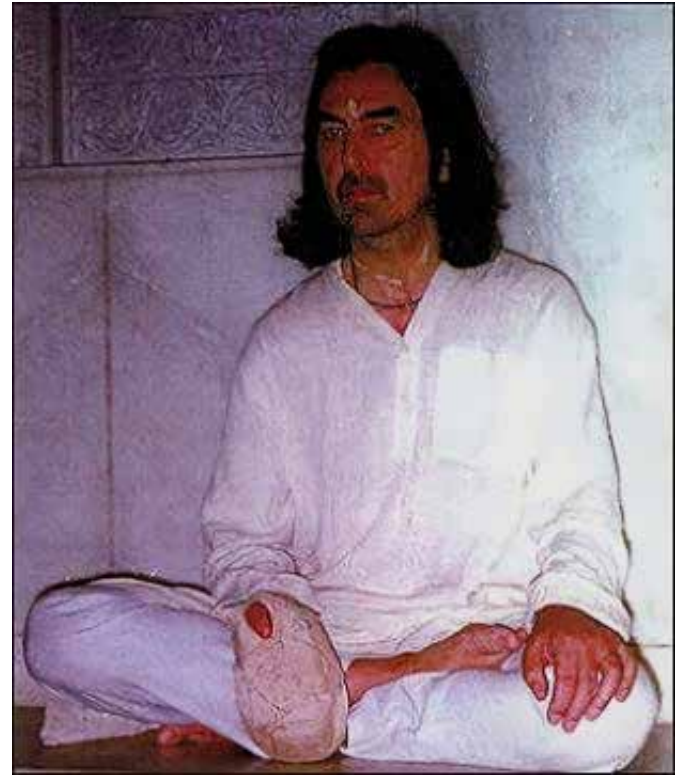
perceptions of language, education, beauty, social status, and even cultural legitimacy. In subtle ways, colonial patterns of thinking continue to shape social attitudes and everyday interactions. India's remarkable diversity of cultures, religions, castes, and communities should be a source of strength. Yet, social divisions are often reinforced by inherited prejudices and hierarchical ways

of thinking. In many instances, these divisions resemble a form of internal colonisation, in which people judge one another by rigid social categories rather than by shared humanity.

Casteism, not inherited from the British colonisers, has made a dent in the social classes and is used as a power leverage to keep the less powerful and poor under their thumb and suppress them. That has to be eradicated if India is to move into the league of modern nations. A nation's strength is known by the success of the people living there and not suppression.

The colour of blood of those in the lower castes is not any different from the blood of the 'high' priestly class—the Brahmins.

The British were racists and they looked down upon at all the Indians as 'coolies'. At least, merci-fully, that form of



British pop star George Harrison of the Beatles fame chanting Hare Krishna in Vrindavan, India. His move there attracted many white Britons who fall in love with Hinduism, Photo Courtesy

racism no longer exists in independent India. These days it's how rich and influential and politically connected you are that does the talking.

We have seen how, over the years, young white British people have come to India to follow Hinduism, live in the ashrams, and follow Hindu culture because of its uniqueness and the lure of the holy Ganges River settling in places like Haridwar, Kashi and other places with religious connections. They have learned how to play the sitar and harmonium and enjoy Indian culinary delights. The foundations of this were laid by the Hare Krishna Movement (ISKCON) and the Beatles pop group in Britain, who established bases in India.

We have not forgotten writers like the British-blood Ruskin Bond, the legendary children's writer who set up base in Mussoorie in the Himalayas. He is now in his 90s. The other name that comes to mind is the late Bollywood actor Tom Alter, who studied at Wynberg Allen School in Mussoorie. There are many white Britons like these two who refused to return to Britain after India's independence, choosing to stay in India. The famous BBC Radio and TV Broadcaster, the late Mark Tully, also lived in India until his death. He was fluent in Hindi like Bond and Alter. Indian cities like New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, still have small numbers of second and

third generation white British people living there whose parents refused to return to the United Kingdom, preferring to be Indian citizens.

Decolonisation, therefore, is not simply a historical event; it is an ongoing intellectual and cultural process. It requires questioning inherited assumptions, rejecting imposed hierarchies, and embracing a more inclusive understanding of identity. True freedom is achieved not only when political chains are broken but also when the mind is liberated from the structures of domination that colonialism leaves behind. Perhaps the most enduring lesson comes not from political theory alone but from the values that generations before us quietly practised—patience, self-restraint, resilience, and compassion. These virtues remind us that a truly decolonised society is built not on anger or division but on empathy, critical reflection, and mutual respect. Only then can India fully realise the promise of both political independence and intellectual freedom.

Our writer:

Antara Roy Bhattacharjee is an established Indian journalist, author and educationist based in Kolkata. Her articles have been published in various publications.

Editing: SHAMLAL PURI, Senior Editor, London



British colonialists used the strength of Indian soldiers to fight their wars for a handful of Rupees when they ruled India. Photo Courtesy BBC News.

Diaspora

The beauty queen building peace for 2027

Miss Jungle Kenya and CNN Academy alumna Wendy Omanga has turned her crown and her political science degree into a full-time campaign against electoral violence — and Kenya is beginning to listen



By: Ayesha Talib
@themkenyetimes

Worth Noting:

• Omanga won Miss Journalism World Kenya in 2018 and was crowned Miss Jungle Kenya in 2022, titles she has consistently used as platforms rather than pedestals. She studied political science and communication at the University of Nairobi, and went on to become a CNN Academy-trained climate storyteller — a credential that sharpened not only her technical media skills but her understanding of how narrative shapes public behaviour. She has applied both with increasing urgency as Kenya's political temperature has risen.

• Her peace caravan is the centrepiece of the current campaign. Traversing regions with histories of electoral tension, the initiative brings together young people, women, and local leaders through open forums and reconciliation workshops. The format is deliberate. Rather than delivering messages from a podium, Omanga convenes conversations — creating space for communities to name their fears, examine the anatomy of past violence, and imagine a different kind of election.

Wendy Omanga, the Kenyan beauty queen, political scientist, and CNN Academy-trained journalist, has launched a youth-led peace campaign aimed at countering electoral violence, hate speech, and political incitement ahead of the 2027 general election.

It is an unlikely combination on paper — a pageant crown, a political science degree, and a media fellowship — yet in practice, the 32-year-old from Nyando in Kisumu County has spent the better part of a decade demonstrating that the combination is not only coherent, but formidable. The 2027 campaign is, in many ways, the fullest expression yet of a life built deliberately at the intersection of visibility and substance.

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"The crown gives you a room," she has said. "The degree tells you what to do once you're in it." It is a formula she applies with discipline.

As a political scientist, Omanga is particularly focused on the dangers of ethnic mobilisation — the process by which political operatives exploit identity,

grievance, and community loyalty to manufacture division. She does not speak about this in abstract terms. She grew up in Nyando, a constituency in Kisumu County that has experienced some of Kenya's most devastating flood cycles and, during election years, some of its most painful communal tensions. "I come from Nyando in Kisumu County, where floods perennially cause loss of lives and property. In 2005, our home was washed away by floods," she has said. The experience of watching a community made vulnerable by both nature and politics has informed everything she does. Her media training has made her campaign unusually sophisticated in its execution. Where many peace initiatives rely on word of mouth and printed pamphlets, Omanga deploys digital storytelling, television appearances, and structured community dialogues in parallel. The CNN Academy fellowship, which recognised her as its best climate storyteller, gave her a toolkit that translates directly to electoral advocacy: how to frame a story, how to reach an audience that is not already convinced, and how to hold attention long enough to shift a mind.

The 2027 election context gives her work particular urgency. Kenya has a well-documented history of post-election violence, most devastatingly in 2007 and 2008, when more than 1,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced in the aftermath of a disputed presidential result. Subsequent elections have been accompanied by varying degrees of tension, intimidation, and localised violence. The wounds from those periods have not fully healed, and the approach of another highly competitive election cycle has prompted security agencies to begin monitoring political activity across the country.

Against this backdrop, Omanga's campaign occupies an important space. Formal peace messaging from government institutions is often received with scepticism, filtered through the lens of whichever political narrative audiences already hold. Omanga, by contrast, arrives with a pro-

file that cuts across conventional political allegiances — a young woman from western Kenya, educated in Nairobi, recognised internationally, and carrying a crown that signals neither party nor tribe. It is an unusual kind of credibility, and she has earned it.

She sits on the board of the Climate Students Movement organisation based in Sweden, serving on its communications committee, and was named to the North American Association for Environmental Education's Top 30 Under 30 class of 2023. Her international networks give the peace campaign access to frameworks and funding mechanisms that domestic initiatives often lack, and her digital fluency means that the campaign's reach extends well beyond the physical geography of the caravan's stops.

What distinguishes Omanga most clearly from other advocates working in the same space is the consistency of her underlying philosophy. She does not treat peace as a slogan or a season. She founded the Moonlight Initiative, a non-governmental organisation with a mission to make Africa climate-aware in adopting climate-smart practices — an organisation that at its core is about building community resilience, the same principle she is now applying to electoral preparedness. Whether she is planting bamboo along riparian land in Kakamega County or convening a dialogue forum in a volatile constituency, the animating question is the same: how do you build something durable in a place that has been made fragile?

Kenya has no shortage of voices calling for peace before elections. What it has in shorter supply are voices that can be heard across the lines that elections are designed to exploit — lines of ethnicity, class, geography, and gender. Omanga speaks across several of them simultaneously, and does so with the confidence of someone who has spent years learning, deliberately and under serious tutelage, how to communicate.

The 2027 election is still over a year away. But the work of shaping the environment in which it will be conducted has already begun, and few



Miss Jungle Kenya and CNN Academy alumna Wendy Omanga



people are doing it more thoughtfully than Wendy Omanga.

The crown, it turns out, was always a means. The peace was always the end.

YOUR OPINION IS INVALUABLE

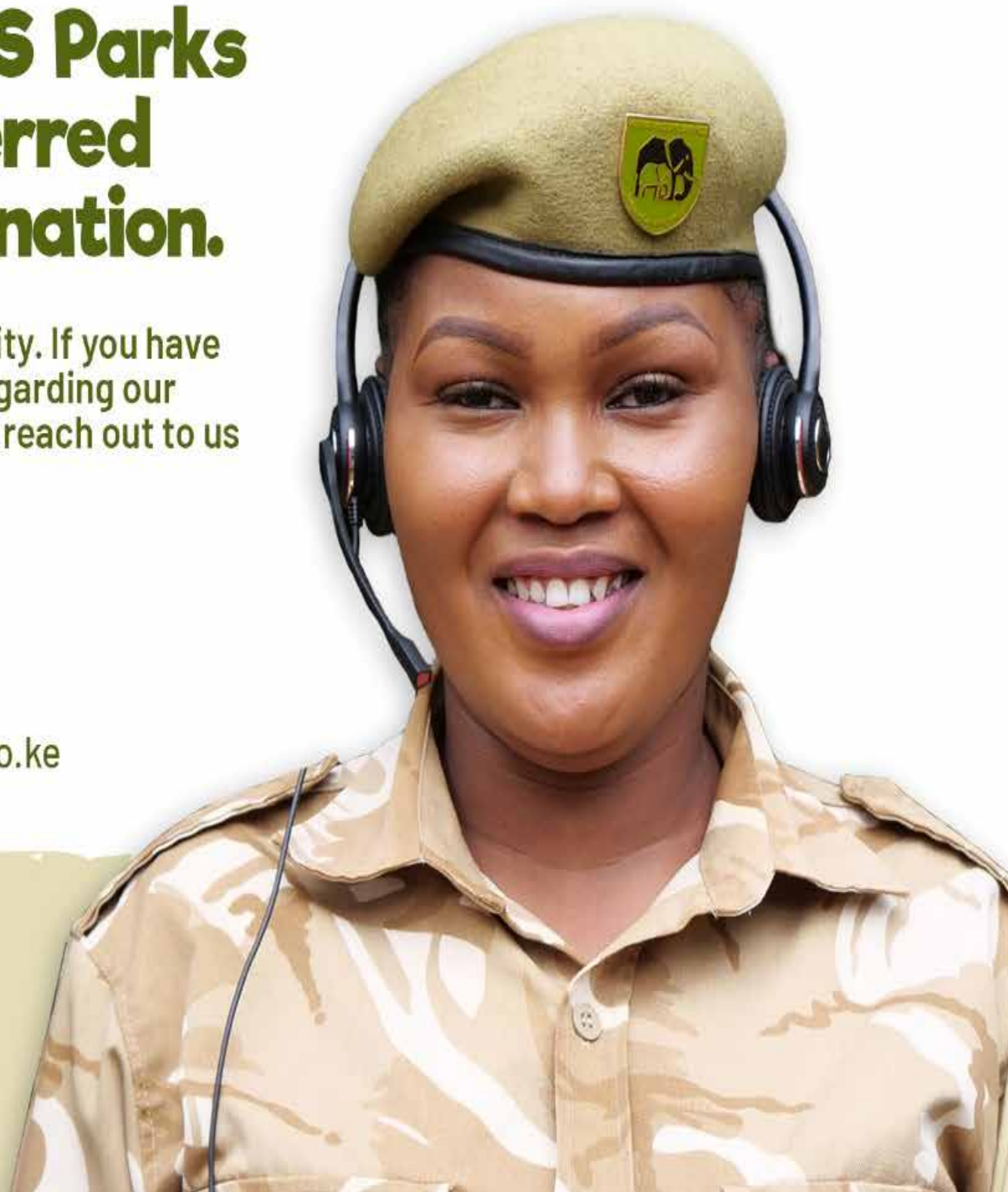
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A Crown Meets a Classroom: Miss World Namibia 2026 Carries Her Advocacy to the Heart of Rural Ohangwena

In an era when pageantry is being redefined by purpose and intellect, Miss World Namibia 2026, Elly Penomwene Aron, chose a rural school in the Ohangwena Region as the stage for a message that transcended beauty; a message about education, dignity, resilience, and the future of Africa's youth.



By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande
@themkenyatimes

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There is a moment, not uncommon in the best of classrooms, when a room of restless young people grows suddenly and entirely still. It is not the stillness of boredom or fear. It is the stillness of recognition, of a young person catching, perhaps for the first time, a vivid and credible reflection of what they might become. That moment descended upon Kornelius Combined School in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia on Wednesday, 2 July 2026, when Elly Penomwene Aron, Miss World Namibia 2026, walked through the school gate.

She did not arrive as a celebrity on a publicity tour. She arrived as an advocate with a mandate, a software development student with a national platform, and a young Namibian woman with something urgent to say to the children of one of the country's most underserved rural regions. That she chose Kornelius Combined School, a modest institution in the Ondobe Circuit of the Ohangwena Region, as the setting for her visit was itself a statement. It was a declaration that the rural child matters, that the rural school is worthy of national attention, and that the most meaningful advocacy is not the kind conducted in conference halls and hotel ballrooms, but the kind delivered face-to-face with the people it is meant to serve. She came accompanied by Mr. Robert Andreas, National Director of the Miss World Namibia Organisation and Executive Director of the Miss NGO Namibia pageant, a globally recognised youth mentor, author, and award-winning inclusive educator. Also in the delegation was Ms. Liina N. Mutilifa, a lecturer in Water and Environmental Engineering in the Department of Civil, Mining and Process Engineering (DCMPE) at the Namibia



Mr. Silas Mwaudasheni Nande

University of Science and Technology (NUST), who has additionally served in the aviation industry, as well as a media team that would ensure the day's proceedings reached a far wider audience than the several hundred learners and teachers gathered under the morning sun of Ohangwena. What unfolded over the course of the visit was, in the truest sense of the word, an intervention, not merely a programme item, but a sustained, multi-voiced engagement with some of the most pressing social and educational challenges confronting rural Namibia and, by extension, sub-Saharan Africa as a whole: teenage pregnancy, academic underperformance, the silent crisis of the boy-child, indiscipline, substance abuse, and the desperate need for young people to believe

that education is not a luxury but the most reliable instrument of liberation they will ever hold.

THE WELCOME: SETTING THE STAGE FOR HONEST CONVERSATION

The event was opened by the school's principal, Mr. Silas Mwaudasheni Nande, whose welcoming address was notable not merely for its cordiality but for its intellectual and moral seriousness. He extended a formal welcome to Miss World Namibia as the Guest of Honour and took the opportunity to situate her visit within a broader educational and social framework, one that the school itself has been navigating with considerable effort. In his remarks, Nande drew a direct and deliberate line between the advocacy work of

Miss Aron and the lived mission of Kornelius Combined School. He acknowledged her dual identity as both a national beauty queen and a student of software development, characterising this combination as emblematic of the new definition of achievement: one that prizes intellectual ambition alongside public representation. He stressed that her advocacy focus, centred on teenage pregnancy prevention, youth empowerment, and dignity for vulnerable and disadvantaged children, resonated deeply with the priorities of a school serving a predominantly rural, resource-constrained community. He reminded the assembled learners, drawn from multiple grades of 865 learners, that the opportunity to hear directly from a figure of Miss Aron's stature was rare and



Ms. Liina N. Mutilifa

precious. He urged them to listen not as passive recipients of a motivational address, but as young people capable of internalising the message and translating it into concrete choices about their lives. In thanking the Miss World Namibia Organisation for prioritising rural schools and rural communities in its advocacy agenda, the principal also issued a gentle but pointed challenge: that the visit should not be a one-day affair but the beginning of a sustained relationship between national institutions and rural schools that too often feel invisible on the national stage.

THE STRATEGIST SPEAKS: ROBERT ANDREAS AND THE REHABILITATION OF THE BOY-CHILD

Robert Andreas is a figure who defies easy categorisation. As National Director of the Miss World Namibia Organisation and Executive Director of the Miss NGO Namibia pageant, he is the chief architect of the advocacy platform upon which Miss Aron's national campaigns are built. But his influence extends well beyond the pageantry world. He is the author of the Boys' Club Manual: Re-Defining Manhood, a resource that has

gained traction in inclusive education circles across Africa. He was named the IFIP Educator of the Year for Boy-Child Inclusion by the International Forums of Inclusion Practitioners, a recognition that speaks to the seriousness and global resonance of his work.

When Andreas took the podium at Kornelius Combined School, he spoke with the directness of a man who has spent years working at the intersection of masculinity, youth development, and social dysfunction. His address was focused squarely on the boy-child, a constituency too often rendered invisible in conversations about youth vulnerability, and he did not soften the message for the sake of comfort.

He spoke candidly about the crisis of alcoholism among young men: how the bottle becomes, for too many boys in rural communities, a substitute for direction, for purpose, for belonging. He addressed the tragedy of early fatherhood, not as a moral failing to be condemned, but as a pattern to be understood and interrupted, rooted in a deficit of responsible male mentorship and a cultural

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silence around what it genuinely means to be a man. He spoke about drug abuse, about the culture of discipline that erodes not only academic performance but the internal architecture of self-belief, and about the profound responsibilities that come with education, responsibilities not only to oneself but to one's family and community.

Andreas was equally direct in his counsel to the girls in the audience. He asked them to choose their education above all else, not as a denial of their femininity or their social aspirations, but as the foundation upon which every other good thing in their lives would ultimately rest. He argued with quiet forcefulness that finishing school is not a delay of life, it is the beginning of it: the first and most important act of self-determination available to a young woman growing up in rural Africa.

What distinguished Andreas's address was not merely its content but its structural novelty. In a context where advocacy visits to schools tend to focus exclusively on girls and the prevention of teenage pregnancy, his insistence on centering the boy-child, on naming the specific vulnerabilities, temptations, and failures of young men with honesty and without contempt, was both rare and necessary. The implicit argument of his address was one that the global development community is only beginning to absorb in earnest: that you cannot protect girls without also transforming boys, and that comprehensive youth development is, by definition, inclusive youth development.

FROM LECTURE HALL TO COCKPIT: MS LIINA N MUTILIFA'S MESSAGE ON THE POWER OF EDUCATION

The third voice of the day belonged to Ms. Liina N. Mutilifa, a lecturer in engineering at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), whose biography is itself a compelling argument

for the boundlessness of educational ambition. Having worked in the aviation industry, a field that remains, globally and particularly in Africa, one of the most demanding and exclusive professional environments, Ms Mutilifa brought to Kornelius Combined School a perspective shaped by both academic rigour and real-world professional achievement.

Her address to learners and teachers was structured around several interlocking themes. She spoke about what it means to be a responsible learner: not merely a student who attends school and sits examinations, but one who understands that the habits of mind cultivated in a Grade 8 classroom will determine the quality of decisions made in a lecture hall, a boardroom, or a cockpit. She outlined, with practical specificity, what successful transition to university requires: not only academic competence, but the kind of self-discipline, curiosity, and intellectual resilience that cannot be improvised at the moment of departure from secondary school.

She addressed the relationship between indiscipline and academic performance with the directness that the data consistently support: learners who are unable to regulate their behaviour are learners who are unlikely to sustain the concentration, the effort, and the delayed gratification that academic achievement demands. The same logic applied, she argued, to alcoholism, not as a moral sermon but as a practical observation about cognitive function, attendance, and the gradual erosion of potential that substance abuse invariably produces.

But the centrepiece of Ms. Mutilifa's message was the power of education itself, not as an instrumental good measured in examination scores and employment statistics, but as a transformative force in the life of a community and a continent. She spoke with evident conviction about what education can unlock for a young person from rural Namibia: access to opportunities that geography and circumstance would otherwise foreclose, the ability to contribute to national development at the highest levels, and the capacity to give back to the communities that



Elly Penomwene Aron

shaped them. In a world increasingly defined by knowledge, she argued, the most dangerous form of poverty is not material but intellectual, the poverty of untapped potential, of minds that could have changed the world but were never given the tools to try.

THE CROWN IN THE CLASSROOM: MISS ELLY PENOMWENE ARON

When Elly Penomwene Aron rose to speak, the atmosphere in the school shifted perceptibly. Here was a young woman who looked not unlike the girls in the front rows, young, Namibian, from this part of the world, yet who occupied the national and international stage in a way that few of them had yet dared to imagine for themselves. The power of that proximity, that visible sameness, is difficult to overstate in a rural school context where role models tend to feel remote, fictional, or drawn from another social universe entirely.

Miss Aron's address was substantive, wide-ranging, and at times deliberately uncomfortable, the kind of speech that a school assembly rarely receives and often most needs. She addressed the crisis of teenage pregnancy with unflinching direct-



Robert Andreas

ness, articulating not only its personal consequences for the young women it claims, their interrupted education, their narrowed futures, the compounding weight of early motherhood in a low-resource environment, but its communal consequences: the signal it sends to younger learners, the burden it places on families, and the systemic educational loss it represents for a nation that cannot afford to squander the potential of its youth. She called for keeping girls in school as a non-negotia-

ble national priority, one that demands coordinated effort from schools, families, community leaders, NGOs, and government alike. She placed particular emphasis on the role of education, ICT, and innovation as instruments of empowerment, tools through which young women in rural Namibia can access economic opportunity, professional mobility, and the kind of agency that previous generations were structurally denied. As a student of software development herself, she spoke from a position of

lived conviction rather than theoretical advocacy: she is, in her own person, the argument she is making. Her vision of community collaboration was notably systemic. She spoke of the need for schools, NGOs, and parents to function not as separate institutions pursuing parallel agendas but as an integrated ecosystem of support around the young person. She acknowledged,

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with the kind of honesty that is rare among any public figure, her disappointment in Kornelius Combined School's academic performance, and she did so not to shame but to challenge. She named the interconnected factors that contribute to underperformance: teenage pregnancy, poor discipline, and ambiguity in the roles and strategic responsibilities of teachers and school leaders. Her call for improvement was not rhetorical; it was accompanied by a concrete, personal commitment. That commitment took the form of a pledge: she announced that she would sponsor, annually, the provision of a full school uniform set for the best academic performer in Grade 4, the best in Grade 7, and the best in Grade 8 at Kornelius Combined School. This pledge was not incidental. In a context where the cost of school uniforms is a genuine financial barrier for many families, the symbolic and material value of such a commitment cannot be dismissed. It says to learners: excellence is seen, excellence is rewarded, and someone who occupies the highest pinnacle of national youth recognition believes in you enough to invest in your success. She also spoke of charity and social responsibility with a particularity that elevated the conversation beyond the generic. She referenced her programme of providing shoes to vulnerable children, a seemingly simple act that carries enormous significance in communities where the absence of proper footwear is a literal obstacle to school attendance and a daily source of indignity. She spoke about health and dignity for disadvantaged youth with the same specificity, understanding that abstract commitments to justice mean little without the concrete, material interventions that make dignity operational. Perhaps most strikingly, Miss Aron addressed the relational architecture of the school itself. She spoke of teachers as parents of learners in the deepest sense. figures upon whom learners lean not only for academic guidance but for social support, emotional stability, and the kind of consistent human presence that family circumstances may not always provide. And she spoke of the school principal as the strategic centre of the institution: the figure to whom teachers look for direction, for vision, for the clarity of purpose that determines whether a school merely functions or genuinely transforms. In naming these roles explicitly, she was not flattering the adults in the

room. She was holding them accountable. Her implicit message was that the challenges facing the school, academic underperformance, teenage pregnancy, and disciplinary erosion are not inevitable features of rural education; they are, at least partly, leadership problems. And leadership problems admit of leadership solutions.

THE LEARNERS SPEAK: A GENERATION THAT REFUSES TO BE SILENT

What elevated the day beyond the ceremonial was the decision to give the floor to the learners themselves, a gesture of respect that produced some of the most arresting moments of the entire visit. The young people of Kornelius Combined School, it turned out, had a great deal to say. Nsimba Romeu, a Grade 9 learner, rose to address his peers with a composure and a moral clarity that belied his age. His message was direct to the point of starkness: he counselled both girls and boys to abstain from sexual activity while in school. "One will not die," he said, with the calm certainty of someone who has thought carefully about the arithmetic of sacrifice, "if they refrain from having sexual intercourse." It was a statement that drew both laughter and recognition from the assembled learners, the laughter of shared knowledge, the recognition of a truth that is rarely said plainly in public but is understood privately by many. Amon Ndilimeke, Tangeni Nghinyekwa, and Haunini Festus also took the opportunity to address their peers. Their messages built on Nsimba's foundation: they urged their fellow learners to protect themselves from the consequences of teenage pregnancy, to resist the social pressures that too often lead to premature sexual activity, and, with a pragmatism that perhaps surprised some of the adults in the room, to use condoms correctly if they chose to have sexual intercourse. This was not recklessness; it was honest harm reduction, of the kind that public health research consistently identifies as the most effective approach to adolescent sexual behaviour in high-prevalence contexts. The voices of these young men and women, for they were, predominantly, young men choosing to address a mixed audience on a topic that carries considerable social weight, were themselves a rebuttal to any narrative that positions rural African youth as passive recipients of education and advocacy. These were young people exercising moral agency, intellectual engagement, and the willingness to make themselves accountable to each other in a public forum. It was, in its way, the most genuinely educational mo-



Mr. Silas Mwaudasheni Nande and Elly Penomwene Aron

ment of the day. The final learner voice belonged to Ms. Nghiyaamene Penexupifo Kemutangeni, a Grade 11 learner who delivered the votes of thanks with poise and verbal dexterity that stopped the room. She thanked Miss World Namibia and her entire delegation, not with the formulaic gratitude of a school function, but with the eloquence of a young person who understood both the significance of the occasion and her own power to name it. She drew a distinction that is rarely made explicit in such settings: she said that having

Miss World at Kornelius Combined School was not merely an honour, a word that speaks to institutional recognition, but a privilege, a word that speaks to personal grace and undeserved gift. She closed her remarks with a wish and a commission: she asked Miss Aron to carry the strength and determination evident in her advocacy work all the way to the Miss World stage in Vietnam, to raise the Namibian flag with dignity and pride, and to know that Kornelius Combined School, and Namibia at large were watching and believing. It was

a moment of genuine eloquence from a young woman who, if the trajectory of this day means anything at all, is herself on her way somewhere. THE PLEDGE: A COVENANT, NOT A CEREMONY

The day did not conclude with applause alone. Miss Aron introduced what she described as a formal pledge, a commitment made in writing, signed individually by partici-

A Crown Meets a Classroom: Miss World Namibia 2026 Carries Her Advocacy to the Heart of Rural Ohangwena

In an era when pageantry is being redefined by purpose and intellect, Miss World Namibia 2026, Elly Penomwene Aron, chose a rural school in the Ohangwena Region as the stage for a message that transcended beauty; a message about education, dignity, resilience, and the future of Africa's youth.

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pating learners, in which they committed to not becoming pregnant and to remaining in school until the completion of their education. She was explicit about the nature of this pledge: it was not a bureaucratic form, not a school exercise, not a publicity gesture. It was, she said, a covenant, a binding commitment between herself as an advocate and each signatory as a young person with a future worth protecting. The language of covenant is deliberate and powerful. It invokes not merely obligation but relationship: the pledge creates a social bond between Miss Aron and the learners who signed it, a bond she made clear she intended to honour through her continued advocacy presence in their lives. In a social context where institutional commitments often arrive without consequence and depart without trace, the act of signing, of physically committing one's name to a statement of intent, carries considerable psychological weight. Research in behavioural science consistently demonstrates that public commitment increases follow-through. Miss Aron, whether by instinct or design, was deploying that insight in the service of a cause that demands it. Before the day was complete, she also convened a special meeting with the Kornelius Combined School team that would be participating in the Miss Kornelius 2026 pageant, scheduled for the following day, 3 July 2026. Her counsel to them was characteristically blunt and characteristically wise: beauty without brains, she told them, is useless. The modern pageant, she explained, is not a beauty contest in any traditional or superficial sense. It is an intelligence contest, a communication contest, a character contest, one in which intellectual engagement and personal vision are as determinative as physical presentation. She wished them well before taking photographs with the learners and teachers assembled on the school stage, a final moment of shared joy before the formal proceedings gave way to the festive

business of escorting the delegation to the school gate.

WHAT THE VISIT MEANS:
A REFLECTION FOR THE
LOCAL INTERNATIONAL
READER

For the local and international reader, the visit of Miss World Namibia 2026 to Kornelius Combined School might appear, at first glance, to be a local story, a notable community event at a small school in a remote region of southern Africa. It is worth pausing to consider why it is considerably more than that. Across sub-Saharan Africa, the challenge of keeping girls in school remains one of the most stubborn and consequential educational problems of our time. UNESCO data consistently show that adolescent pregnancy is among the leading causes of school dropout among girls in southern Africa, with Namibia's own statistics reflecting regional patterns that development economists and education researchers have identified as deeply linked to cycles of poverty, gender inequality, and constrained social mobility. The advocacy work that Elly Aron and her organisation are doing, taking the conversation about teenage pregnancy, youth empowerment, and the transformative potential of education directly into rural schools, is, in its structure and its intention, the kind of last-mile intervention that development literature repeatedly identifies as the most effective. The inclusion of a sustained focus on the boy-child, on male youth development, on the specific vulnerabilities that young men in resource-constrained communities face, on the social costs of absent male mentorship, reflects an intellectual evolution in the approach to youth advocacy that is globally significant. For too long, programmes addressing teenage pregnancy have been structured as exclusively female problems requiring exclusively female solutions. The work of Robert Andreas, and the platform that the Miss World Namibia Organisation has provided for that work, represents a more complete and more honest understanding of the social dynamics that produce the outcomes everyone is trying to prevent. The voices of the learners

themselves, particularly the young men who chose to speak publicly about abstinence, responsibility, and sexual health, are a reminder that young people in rural Africa are not problems to be solved but agents to be engaged. They possess moral seriousness, social intelligence, and the capacity for the kind of peer-to-peer influence that no teacher or celebrity advocate can fully replicate. When Nsimba Romeu told his classmates that one does not die from abstinence, he was doing something that no externally designed programme can manufacture: he was making a community's values audible in a community's own voice. And when Nghiyaamene Penexupifo drew the distinction between honour and privilege, when she sent Miss Aron to Vietnam with the commission of an entire school on her shoulders, she was practising exactly the kind of leadership, the kind of eloquence, and the kind of social consciousness that every education system in the world exists to cultivate. That she was doing so in a rural school in Ohangwena, with the dust of a Namibian dry-season morning still in the air, makes it neither less impressive nor less important. It makes it more so. Elly Penomwene Aron will compete at Miss World. She will carry Namibia's name to an international stage. But on 2 July 2026, the most important stage she occupied was a modest school hall in the Ondobe Circuit, where the children of a rural community looked up at someone who looked like them and heard, perhaps for the first time, that the future she represents is also available to them, if they choose it, protect it, and fight for it with everything they have. That is not a local story. That is the story of this generation



Nghiyaamene Penexupifo



Entertainers

France hosts South Africa's Ramaphosa for talks and war remembrance

Paris visit blends diplomacy, trade and a solemn tribute to South African war dead

By: Diaspora Times Team.
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Worth Noting:

- Ramaphosa held bilateral talks with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on Friday. According to a French diplomatic source, the two leaders found what was described as a “broad convergence of views” on the crises in the Middle East and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The source said the presidents shared the same assessment of the crisis in the Gulf and the economic fallout from disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, where shipping lanes have been affected by the ongoing confrontation between the United States and Iran.
- On the Congo, the two leaders agreed on the need to encourage regional efforts toward peace and security in the war-torn eastern provinces, where, the source said, South Africa continues to play a stabilising role. Macron and Ramaphosa also agreed to establish an annual bilateral dialogue at the level of foreign ministers, formalising a channel intended to sustain momentum on shared priorities between the two governments.

President Cyril Ramaphosa concluded a three-day official visit to France Saturday that combined high-level diplomacy with a solemn act of remembrance, as South Africa and France pledged to deepen cooperation on global crises ranging from the Middle East to the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

The visit, which ran from 10 to 12 July, took Ramaphosa from the corridors of UNESCO headquarters in Paris to the battlefields of northern France, where he led South Africa's delegation at the 110th commemoration of the Battle of Delville Wood — one of the deadliest engagements involving South African forces during the First World War.

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The Paris leg of the visit was anchored by education diplomacy. At the invitation of UNESCO Director-General Khaled El-Enany, Ramaphosa co-chaired the Leaders' Meeting of the UNESCO High-Level Steering Committee on Sustainable



(From L) South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's President's wife Tshepo Motsepe, France's President Emmanuel Macron and France's President's wife Brigitte Macron pose on the steps of The Elysee Presidential Palace ahead of an official state dinner in Paris on July 10, 2026. (Photo/Courtesy)

Development Goal 4, which focuses on quality education, followed by the Transforming Education Summit Stocktake. The gathering assessed global progress since the 2022 Transforming Education Summit and identified priority actions to accelerate progress toward the goal by 2030. According to the South African presidency, discussions centred on strengthening the teaching profession, advancing foundational and lifelong learning, promoting inclusive digital transformation and ensuring sustainable financing for education systems. Officials said South Africa's role as co-chair reflects the country's growing profile in global education governance and its bid to align its G20 presidency priorities with the wider international education agenda.

Macron hosted a dinner in Ramaphosa's honour at the Élysée Palace on Friday evening, attended by families connected to figures of the anti-apartheid struggle — a gesture officials on both sides framed as a marker of the historical ties binding the two countries beyond the immediate diplomatic agenda. On Saturday, Ramaphosa turned to the commercial dimension of the re-

lationship, meeting French business leaders for discussions expected to touch on energy, science and technology, trade and investment. The economic backdrop to the visit is substantial. Bilateral trade between South Africa and France grew by 7.7 per cent in 2025 to approximately \$2.7 billion, with South African exports to France rising by 42.2 per cent to about \$790 million. French companies have invested more than \$7 billion in South Africa since 2003, a figure officials say has helped create close to 16,000 jobs across sectors including renewable energy, business services, transport, and information and communications technology. France remains one of South Africa's principal economic partners in Europe, and officials on both sides described the relationship as comprehensive, spanning defence, health, tourism, arts and culture, and higher education alongside trade.

The visit's final and most symbolically weighted engagement came on Sunday, when Ramaphosa travelled to Longueval, roughly two hours from Paris, for the commemoration of the Battle of Delville Wood. The 1916 battle, fought

over the course of six days, was among the costliest engagements of the First World War for South African forces, with several hundred soldiers killed and thousands more wounded or missing amid some of the fiercest fighting on the Western Front. The ceremony at the South African National Memorial included a wreath-laying in honour of those who died, alongside the unveiling of a UNESCO commemorative plaque recognising the memorial's historical significance. The Delville Wood Museum, adjacent to the site, holds a Book of Remembrance recording the names of the fallen; the original memorial was unveiled in 1926, with the museum itself opened in 1986 to preserve the history of South Africa's role in the war.

Ramaphosa was accompanied on the visit by First Lady Tshepo Motsepe and a delegation of ministers, including the ministers responsible for international relations and cooperation, defence and military veterans, public works and infrastructure, sport, arts and culture, and higher education and training. The presidency said the commemoration was intended not only

to honour the fallen but to reaffirm South Africa's commitment to peace, reconciliation and international cooperation, and to pass the memory of that sacrifice on to younger generations.

The trip proceeded against a backdrop of recent friction between Pretoria and Paris. South Africa announced in March that Ramaphosa had not been invited to the G7 summit hosted by France in Évian in June, a decision Pretoria initially attributed to pressure from Washington. French officials rejected that characterisation, saying the guest list had simply been trimmed to improve the effectiveness of discussions and that no pressure from US President Donald Trump had been involved. Neither side dwelt publicly on the episode during this week's visit, with officials on both sides instead emphasising the breadth of the relationship and the new ministerial dialogue agreed in Paris.

With the commemoration at Longueval marking the close of the visit, attention now turns to how the newly agreed foreign-ministerial dialogue will translate into concrete coordination on the Gulf crisis and the Congo in the months ahead.