

The Villager

wherever you are

75 cleaners left in the cold

...after 28 years of service at UNAM



Hertha Ekandjo

After 28 years of service at the University of Namibia's (UNAM) main campus, cleaners will be left with no bread on their tables following the end of their cleaning company's contract. The campus cleaners operating under Lizma Trading have said they were surprised after receiving news from their boss that they will be left without employment after 31 August 2022. The cleaners said that some of them have been working at UNAM for over 28 years and had "never heard such terrifying news before". The workers complained that all the years that they have worked for UNAM, they were always given a new cleaning company to work for after their previous company's contract came to an end. Mayori Haoses, a cleaner at the campus, told The Villager that it came as a shock to them when they heard the rumour about them

being left jobless. According to her, when they approached the UNAM head of support services, Irene van Wyk, she told them that she had nothing to do with this issue and there was nothing that she could do to help them. "She told us that the company that was going to take over the contract decided to come with its employees. Now, what about us? What will happen to us?" she cried. According to Haoses, they are approximately 75 employees. Haoses stated that they would be left with nothing as they had no pension or other benefits except for social security. She added that their only benefit was that they remained at UNAM every time a company's contract ended, adding "only bosses were supposed to change and not the employees, but this year everything has changed". "What will we be left with? Some of us are not even from Windhoek. We haven't even been told what the way forward is. All we were told is that the new boss is coming with her own workers. We did not even receive a three-month notice. What will we be left with? At least they were supposed to renew the contract for now until January, then from

there, we can move on with our lives," said Haoses. The 75 have expressed that the latest developments will not only harm them, but the many family members they take care of. "The new boss should at least take us, or UNAM must pay us out," she expressed. Lizma Trading's owner, Lizma van Wyk, said there was nothing that she could do, adding that she was not the one who awards contracts. "I told them that my contract was ending this month and that as they have seen in the newspapers, this tender was advertised and awarded to someone else," said van Wyk. According to her, she does not know what happened this year for the tender to go to someone else. Usually, the workers remained, and the bosses went. "These people are used to staying when companies leave, and now that is why they are complaining. The contractors were changing but not the employees," she said. According to her, this will be the first time the cleaners faced such a challenge. UNAM head of support services, Irene van Wyk, told The Villager that she was not allowed to comment regarding this issue.

Paratus boss fires shots at Amupanda

... ex-mayor describes telecoms big gun as arrogant



Staff Writer

Barney Harmse, Paratus Group Chief Executive Officer, has fired shots at a latest post by ex-mayor, Dr. Job Amupanda, who this week described him as an "arrogant" "white... Paratus CEO guy" fighting the city's telecommunications license. Amupanda told thousands of his Facebook followers that the Paratus big wig confronted him during the night hours of August the 10th 2022 claiming to be a police officer. He said this happened after the council passed a resolution to support its ownership of a Class Comprehensive Telecommunications Service License (ECNS and ECS). This was granted by the Communications Regularity Authority of Namibia (CRAN) mainly due to an envisaged smart city services that CoW intends to provide, which the city could not provide under a Class Network Facilities Service License that was initially applied for. Lately, CRAN went on record to say that in terms of regulation 11(9)(a) of the Procedure Regulations, they are authorised to issue the appropriate license category (in this case the Class Comprehensive Telecommunications Service License (ECNS and ECS)) without republishing the application. The move has not been met with enthusiasm by some players who see this as detrimental

to private business interests, and argue that the city must be confined to offering, land and water services. CRAN has submitted that the Communications Act does not prohibit local authorities from holding telecommunications service licenses. The regulator added that section 30 of the Local Authorities Act, 1992, provides a list of services that a local authority council shall provide to its residents, and that most of the services listed may only be provided efficiently through the establishment of communications network infrastructure. Amupanda said Harmse is one of those fighting the city's license. Taking to his Facebook page this week, Amupanda said, "At the council meeting today (10 August 2022), we passed an important resolution to support and affirm our Telecommunication License. This was a while ago. As I drove home there was a car behind me." "I stopped to see the movement, and a white guy got out of the car. This is at 23h30. I realized that it is the Paratus CEO guy. He got out with (a) police card claiming to be a police officer. I told him I know him as a Paratus Guy and not a police officer." "I also told him that I don't trust him and he must leave. As you know Paratus is fighting the City's license.

Continued on P2

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Paratus

An arrogant guy taking chances with a wrong person! Atyopokela lela!," said the firebrand activist councillor. However, taking to his Twitter account Friday afternoon, Harmse said there have been some unpleasant racial slurs that have been directed at Paratus. He then posted a picture of himself and the company's incoming Group CEO, hammering that they will continue to deliver jobs to 'all Africans'.

"Based on some recent unpleasant racial slurs associated with Paratus Group, let me introduce the "White Guys", Barney Harmse, Exec Chair, and Schalk Erasmus, new Group CEO, effective 1 Aug 2022, to continue building infrastructure and creating "Jobs" for all Africans," said Harmse.

The company is freshly coming from scoring a major Supreme Court victory whose ruling stamped that the city was wrong in confiscating Paratus' equipment and stopping its sub-contractor from laying fiber optic cable.

A fiber-optic cable, also known as an optical-fiber cable, is an assembly similar to an electrical cable, but containing one or more optical fibers that are used to carry light. It is used for long-distance and high-performance data networking.

However, despite the victory Harmse said the battle was yet from over as there were strategic executives at the city intent on coming after Paratus.

In the meantime, the city submitted an application for a Class Network Facilities Service License, and the application was first published in the Government Gazette on 22 February 2019 (General Notice No. 30), and re-published on 26 March 2019 (General Notice No. 67) to properly allow the public to provide comments.

As per rule making procedure, the public/stakeholders were provided with an opportunity to submit comments in writing to the Authority within a period of fourteen (14) days, from the date the notice is published in the Gazette.

Karas suspends two executives over "stolen" N\$10 million



■ **Staff Writer**

The Karasburg Town Council has suspended its finance manager, Mervin Amupolo, and chief executive officer in connection with N\$10 million allegedly diverted from the council's bank accounts into private pockets.

This has been confirmed by the town council's management committee chairperson Maria Christine Veldskoen who said investigations are under way. She said that Ampolo is currently on suspension without a salary while the chief executive officer faces charges of negligence and is on paid suspension.

"Yes, he is on suspension without payment. We have not finalized the investigations yet. I can inform you is that at the town council of Karasburg we suspended him on the 9th of June 2020 as the manager of finance due to the misappropriation of public funds from the town council bank accounts. That's all I can tell you now at this stage. We have not finalized the investigations yet. The CEO is suspended with payment. We suspended him for gross negligence. That's all I can say now," she said.

The LPM is in control of the town council. The party's second in command, Henny Seibeb said they were made aware of the suspensions, adding that the Amupolo stepped down after the alleged misappropriation was sniffed out.

"Indeed, as a political party and as you rightly put it, we are governing the Karasburg constituency. So, what we have done is that once our local authority councillors together with the Auditor General (AG) realised and discovered that N\$10 million was missing in 2018, we said this matter must be reported and people involved should be followed up on,

justice must be taken to apprehend them and look into the legal side and wait until the AG has exhausted whatever they have to do."

"But this is a matter that is worrisome, as you know it did not occur yesterday or last year, its coming since 2018. In fact, some councillors are saying it must have happened since 1016 already. So, this is a big matter. We do not tolerate such things and we are just going to urge our local authority councillors there in Karasburg to impose concomitant action," said Seibeb.

Part of that is to withhold Amupolo's pension funds and to pursue other avenues like criminal charges, Seibeb said.

Seibeb also said the suspension of the CEO is connected to the scandal.

"So, some are saying it's linked, that is why it's now time for investigators to come and investigate, but part from that its also a contract issue with the CEO. I am just saying thanks to the current councillors that have realised that N\$ has been missing," he said.

In the meantime, Karas regional coordinator for the Swapo party, Matthew Mumbala is on record decrying the status quo in the region saying the LPM is on a purging course of "hiring and firing".


But Seibeb shot back at Mumbala.

"The issue is that Mr. Matthew Mumbala, part of his failed administration is because of the mess that he has caused in Keetmanshoop and Karasburg but these things are happening. When Swapo was governing in Karasburg they would have detected the theft that was going on since 2018. If they are happy with corruption, people sneaking themselves in and not there to appoint the right people, then so be it, they are used to corruption, incompetence and all those things like fish-rot," he said.




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We never promised anyone laptops: NSFAF CEO

... UNAM students/NSFAF up in arms over laptops



■ **Justicia Shipena**

Kavango West University of Namibia (UNAM) campus students have expressed unhappiness over what they claim to be unfair distribution of laptops by the Namibia Students Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF).

Friday morning, third- and four-year UNAM students in Nkurenkuru staged a protest against NSFAF, led by the Namibia Africa Students' Association (NASA)'s secretary-general Gelladius Kandunda.

Kandunda said when NSFAF released the notice for students to apply for the laptops, they did not specify which category of students must apply.

"This year, NSFAF released a notice that every student can apply for a laptop. So, students applied for the laptops, signed contracts for them and in the city, they received their laptops, and now here in the villages and towns they only came in early August," he said.

Kandunda told The Villager that the students hoped to receive the laptops immediately after appending signatures to contracts.

"To our surprise, when the NSFAF agents came here, they told us that they are only giving first and second year (students), and they proudly said that third and fourth years were not going to (be) provided with laptops simply because 'you guys will be completing your studies soon'. That is why we are upset," he said.

Kandunda stressed that the agreement signed between the parties never stated that they would not give third and fourth-year students.

"The contract agreement was for the students to give NS\$3 000, and NSFAF (would) top-up the rest. They never released a notice that year students be excluded."

In May 2022, NSFAF announced the availability of student laptops and invited students to apply at a minimal cost of NS\$3 000.

This was to be paid either by cash or taking a loan with NSFAF.

A fourth-year student at UNAM, Mario Haufiku, said he feels left out.

"The portal showed that my approval was pending, but it never said I did not qualify for it. I feel left out," said Haufiku.

Meanwhile, another student who spoke on condition of anonymity said after some

third-year students engaged the NSFAF agency and wrote letters, the demonstration was called off.

"We started getting our laptops after that. I was left out, but I (later) received my laptop," he said.

In response, NSFAF's acting chief executive officer, Kennedy Kandume, said the state entity had purchased 10 500 laptops, and the distribution started last year.

Kandume said only a few laptops were left after the first application and distribution.

"Last year, many students did not apply, and we only distributed 2 000 laptops. If 7000 or so were left, those are the ones we are distributing," he said.

In 2020, students funded by NSFAF complained that they applied for these laptops, but the delivery was delayed.

They said this has negatively affected their studies since universities have shifted to online learning for many modules and courses after face-to-face learning and teaching were suspended due to Covid-19.

The fund budgeted NS\$6 000 for each laptop when NSFAF procured 32 000 laptops.

At the same time, the fund had placed an order for 10 500 Lenovo and HP laptops for NS\$9 million last year.

However, with the complaints of exclusion by students, Kandume said it does not make sense for the fund to offer laptops to third and four-year students as they would complete their studies in a few months.

"It also does not make sense for us to give laptops to someone in the third year. That is when students complete their studies. Logically it only makes sense to give to those in their first and second year because the number of available laptops can only accommodate those in the first and second years."

He lamented that the fund never promised anyone laptops, adding that he does not understand the narrative by the students.

"So, nobody promised them a laptop. We opened up applications for laptops. If those students applied last year, they would get because more laptops were available. I don't understand when they say they were promised because nobody promised them

anything. Laptops are tools for studying, and (they are) not somebody who will be done with studies and (end up) keep(ing) them at home for what," said the NSFAF boss.

Swapo conference set for Saturday in Kunene

■ **Uakutura Kambaekua**

The ruling Swapo Party will hold its regional conference this weekend at Opuwo to elect new regional leadership for the Kunene Region in a two-horse race for the regional coordinator position.

The elective conference was confirmed by the party's coordinator in the Kunene region, Tuarungua Kavari, who said that preparations are underway with all candidates' names already submitted to the headquarters for vetting and verification.

"We have started with the preparation for our regional conference. First of all, we started with the extraordinary district conference mandated by the Swapo party constitution to elect four delegates to the congress and four delegates to the regional conference, we have done it and we have also started already from sectional branches up to the district," stated Kavari.

"We have also started already from the sectional to the branches up to the district for the process of nomination of candidates for the central committee of the Swapo party and the top three positions in the region," he added.

The regional leadership concluded its Research Ethics Committee (REC) meeting last week at Khorixas during which the screening and verification of candidates for both the regional top three and central committee were conducted.

Kavari said that 15 candidates were vetted for the central committee, and amongst these, only four will be elected to the central committee come November 2022 for the national congress.

"On 05 August 2022, we conducted an REC meeting in Khorixas where we did the process of verification and screening of candidates for both the top three positions and the central committee. We came up with a list of candidates for the central committee and the candidates for the top three regional positions."

"Those names, we are going to take to the regional conference and out of those 15 names for the central committee candidates, we are going to elect four candidates for the central committee come November 2022 for the national congress," noted Kavari.

He said the coordinator position has come down to a two-horse race which will be contested by former Sesfontein constituency councillor and Kunene Regional Council chairperson, Julius "KK" Kaujova, who also currently serves as the party's regional treasurer and Thomas Adams, chairperson of Torra conservancy.

The position for Secretary for Information Publicity and Mobilization will be contested by an all-female affair.

"There are two candidates for the regional coordinator position, comrade Tommy Adams and Julius Kaujova, the regional treasurer. There are four females contesting for the information, publicity and mobilisation including four other candidates for the regional treasurer position," said Kavari.

Kavari, who is the incumbent coordinator, a position he held since 2006, will not be seeking another term this time around.

He decided to go on voluntary retirement, thus paving way for new blood to take charge.

Furthermore, the regional coordinator called on the youth to implement the party's program in order to achieve more in the region in terms of votes, regaining the voter's trust in the region and nationally.

"We have got a five years plan of mobilisation and recruitment process, the youth who are going to take over the region will also implement that program for us to achieve more in the region. We achieved more but we are targeting the 2024 and 2025 elections so that the SWAPO party can improve in terms of votes in the region and nationally," concluded Kavari.



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Ongoing Rising Food Prices Could Explode Unrest/Instability



Josef Kefas Sheehama

Crime has been constantly increasing, due principally to the level of poverty and inequality. Robbers broke into a Miracles Centre Church Thursday night and ransacked the church property looking for money and valuable items. As an Economics and Business research as well as local Pastor casted imagination beyond incident happened. We are very much concerned. It is not just Windhoek, perhaps all the urban towns in Namibia are at a situation where we might just have an economic crisis, which would mean the urban population that depends on markets, would not have purchasing power to even buy basic commodities, basic items for the household. In addition, prices are expected to rise further throughout 2022 due to energy crises and trade risks. Namibian consumers have imported N\$3,7 billion worth of goods resulted in the trade deficit at N\$2,5 billion which is 59,4% lower than the N\$6,1 billion recorded in May 2022. The cumulative trade activities continued to increase. Namibia informal sector has been ravaged by COVID-19, while fuel prices have risen. Moreover, governments lack the fiscal space to mitigate the impact. As they grapple with hunger, poverty and the pandemic, the risk of violent protest and political instability stemming from

rising food prices looms large. The Municipality of Windhoek threaten to formulate a new policy to prohibit home shops from operating in residential areas, escalates a further tension. As hunger rises, so too does the potential for socio-economic disruption aimed at government. Namibia's punitive set of social, environmental, economic and political challenges make it ripe for unrest. It is bad to see that political parties are interested in voters, but failed to address the economic inequality. Pressure on the country's food system has been worsened by drought in 2018. Farmers have also moderated harvests in light of uncertainty induced by ever-changing COVID-19 regulations. This is also driven by the global energy crisis and production risks due to supply disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine unrest. Unemployment rates in Namibia have been upward trending particularly among the youth, who have borne the brunt of ongoing jobless growth and economic marginalization. Young people across the country have become politically engaged, showing a willingness to punish incumbents who are unresponsive to their plight. Furthermore, overspending and debt accumulation have eroded public balance sheet while remaining fiscal buffers have been exhausted on external shock responses. This means government cannot cushion

civilians against rising food prices and food insecurity, and stave off associated political risks. A mixture of poverty, unemployment, inequality, bad politics and bad economics has kept the country on edge. Moreover, addressing systemic economic injustice is often a matter of economic reforms that give groups better access to jobs, health care, and education. In many cases, lack of access to basic services stems from enormous inequalities in resource distribution. Redistribution of benefits and resources can thus be an important component of social structural changes to remedy injustice. There are various institutional and economic development reforms that might be put in place to raise living standards and boost economic growth. In addition, by creating social and economic safety nets, can eliminate tension and instability caused by unfair resource allocation. Namibia need to stimulate productivity and investment in the broad food supply chain. Furthermore, innovation along the food supply chain should be strongly incentivized and rewarded. Namibia is home to myriad start-ups at the forefront of developing crops, creating high yield but sustainable agriculture and aquacultural produce, and reimagining the food supply chain. The transformative potential of start-ups SME's should be harnessed, and paths

opened that channel funding and capital to such businesses. Informal economy is associated with two major aspects, one is the growth of the economy and the other is related to poverty and inequality. Most people prefer to get into the sector because it became an avenue for their survival. The most informal economy workers in this country are youth, the population majorly affected by our country's unemployment rate. Street vendors, kapana vendors, domestic workers, wood-covers, men on the side of the roads, cattle herders amongst other things are the major operators in the informal industry. The Government must address the critical needs of the poorest and most marginalized as a matter of priority. The informal economy, one thing is sure, informality provides critical economic opportunities for the poor and the vulnerable. The key driver of the informal economy, however, is that such businesses in the sector do not need registration with any relevant government agencies. Overall, the informal economy is enduring; but suitable regulations and policies are required to improve the sector and introduce formalization. The decision for these businesses to formalize depends on the benefits that are derived from formalization over the risks of remaining in the informal economy.

Young people must be at the heart of government plans for the future. The need for leaders to see the value in creating an enabling environment for young people to tap into blue and green economic pathways to drive sustainable development and create jobs. Young people want to share their knowledge and be taken seriously as key partners and they need to have more opportunities like this. Economic reforms together with structural and technological change are bringing about new business opportunities and with them demand for new skills. Furthermore, the private sector's role in encouraging a growth and economic development cannot be overstated. Private investments by the corporate sector are critical to higher growth rates and economic development. Effective partnerships between the government and private sector in critical areas of infrastructure and long-term investments would expedite development. Corporates are integral to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship and ensuring the future progress of an economy. To this end, resolving the food price hike and associated insecurity is an economic, social and political imperative. Given the tenuous position facing global, food insecurity could be the spark that lights the tinderbox. To douse it, we must act fast.



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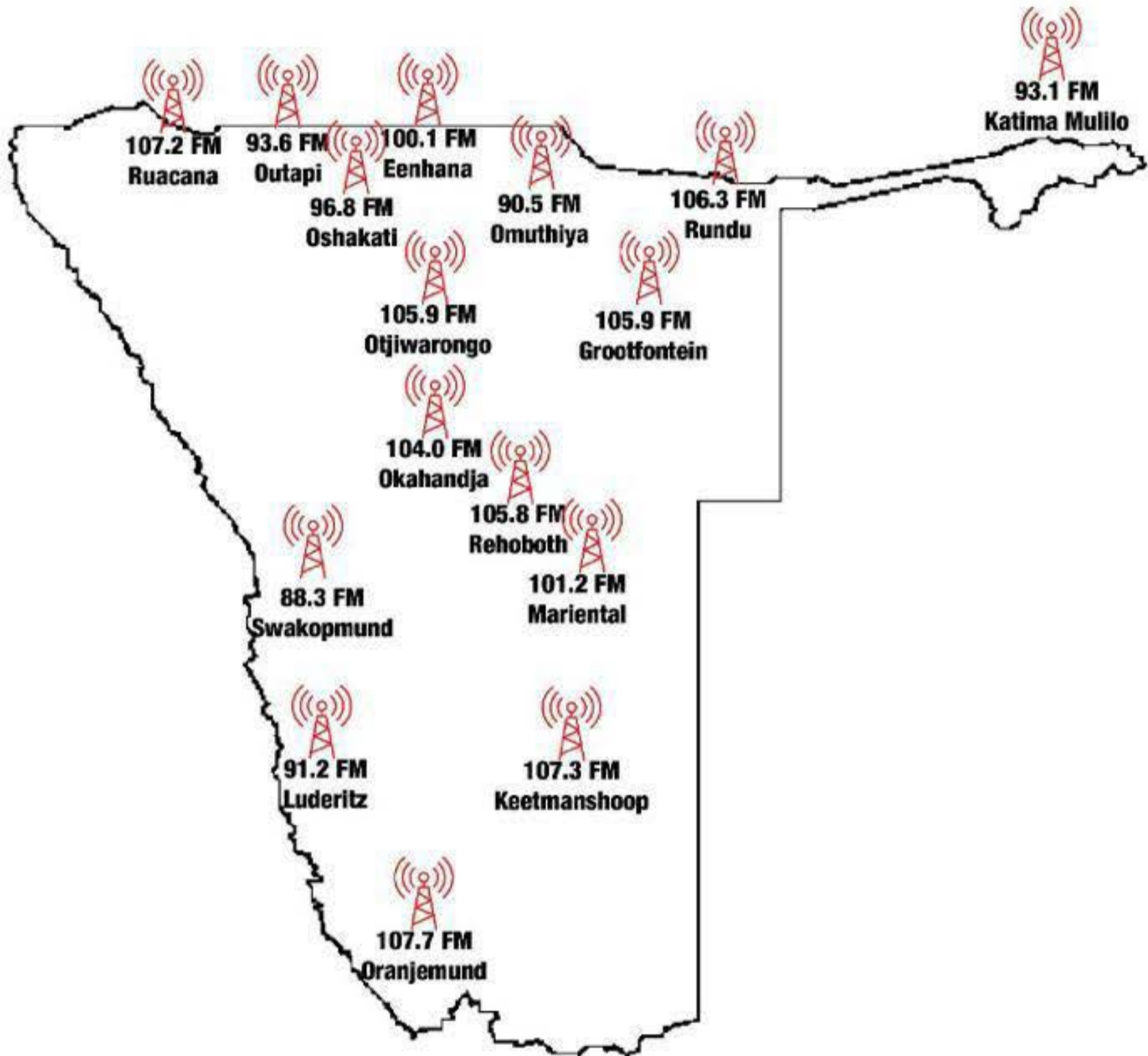


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Vehicle sales drop in July



Theo Klein

New vehicle sales dropped by 22.4% m/m in July 2022 to 677 units compared to 872 units sold in the prior month according to the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (NAAMSA). On an annual basis, vehicle sales declined by 15.3% y/y in July 2022, dipping below its 6-month moving average.

Passenger and light commercial vehicles had the largest share of units sold in July 2022 with a 56.4% and 39.3% share of all units sold respectively. On a monthly basis, extra-heavy and heavy commercial vehicles recorded the largest declines in sales. Vehicle sales during 2022 were trending above 2021's levels until June 2022. July's datapoint is the third monthly and annual decline in vehicle sales, and it is the first time that the number of units sold came in below levels seen in 2021.

We still see upward momentum to spare parts and accessories inflation rates, while prices charged for vehicle services and repairs remain muted. Motor car inflation rates have slowed to

lower single digits during 2022, averaging 4.2% YTD compared to 8.8% in 2021.

In previous reports, we mentioned that car prices are likely to rise by between 3% - 5% per quarter following our discussions with various brands in Windhoek.

As usual, Toyota and Volkswagen remain dominant brands in the local automotive market.

The 7 brands in Figure 5 accounted for 71% of total vehicle sales during July 2022.

Global perspectives European carmakers registered the lowest number of new vehicle sales during June 2022 since 1996 according to data released by the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association. Vehicle sales decreased by 17% y/y in June 2022, with Volkswagen incurring the largest decline of 24% y/y.

While manufacturers such as BMW AG, Volkswagen and Mercedes AG indicated in May 2022 that semiconductor shortages eased, it will take time for this to increase production and supply global dealers with stock.

Geopolitics could also be driving higher car prices as certain brands relocate their value chains. Following the war outbreak

in Ukraine, Renault sold its 68% stake in AvtoVaz (a state backed entity in Russia) for one Russian Ruble and Jeep announced in July 2022 to close its plant in China according to Bloomberg Intelligence.

Indeed, a potential war between Taiwan and China could see global supplies of semiconductors tumble.

Globally, car manufacturers are still facing high raw material and energy costs, which contribute to vehicle price increases.

Car prices have also increased across the world as carmakers focus their limited production on their most expensive and profitable models.

In addition, energy shortages and potential energy rationing in Germany are driving concerns of plant shutdowns, worsening stock shortages globally. All the above factors – together with a weak Rand exchange rate – risk seeing vehicle prices continue to rise in Namibia, making it more expensive to purchase and operate cars for Namibians.

Coupled with the rise in interest rates, we expect demand for new vehicles to start showing signs of a retreat in the vehicle sales data coming out in coming months.

July records highest annual inflation since April 2017



Staff Writer

July's annual inflation rate came in at 6.8% y/y, compared to 6.0% y/y recorded in the prior month, according to a latest Simonis Storm report.

"This is the highest monthly annual inflation rate recorded since April 2017 and is consistent with our view that inflation rates are likely to come in above 6% during 3Q2022," said the stockbroker's economist, Theo Klein.

Annual goods inflation has been recorded above 7% in the last four months, with the latest print coming in at 10.0% y/y in July 2022.

Year-To-Date (YTD), goods inflation averages 7.2% which is more in line with our headline inflation forecast of 7.1% for 2022. Services inflation on the other hand has averaged 2.8% YTD, dragging headline inflation rates lower.

Disaggregating July's data, the biggest contributors were Transport (↑ 20.9% y/y), Hotels and restaurants (↑ 9.8% y/y), Food and non-alcoholic beverages (↑ 8.4% y/y) and Furnishings, household equipment and maintenance (↑ 7.9% y/y).

YTD, annual inflation rates in the housing and utilities category has averaged a meagre 1.4%, compared to 16.5% for transport, 6.2% for food and 4.5% for alcoholic beverages and tobacco.

The housing and utilities category has the largest weight in the consumer price basket and is likely to support higher inflation rates in coming months due to the 7.3% increase in electricity tariffs that were effective from July 2022.

Indeed, the electricity, gas and other fuels sub-category recorded annual inflation of

2.3% in July 2022, compared to 0.6% in June 2022.

Soft commodity futures are in backwardation (when current prices are higher than futures prices) for a number of agricultural products, except wheat and sugar.

Futures prices have decreased by 13.6% on average for a select group of contracts (Figure 5).

Declines in global food prices are led by grains and is expected to apply downward pressure on producer prices in 3Q2022 in South Africa according to Investec.

"This could filter through to Namibia in the form of lower prices as we import a great deal of food from South Africa," said Klein.

With Namibia being a net food importer, local food prices will likely be impacted by the above global food price developments.

"With a weaker Rand exchange rate expected for 3Q2022, we expect local food prices to remain elevated and potentially only show signs of easing in the 4Q2022 going into 2023. However, local food prices might still be more expensive than what consumers were used to in recent years."

"Locally, Namibian companies in different sectors which we surveyed indicated that shipping costs from Asia and Europe have decreased considerably, but remain above pre-pandemic levels. Bloomberg consensus forecasts indicate that supply chain pressures are likely to ease to levels seen in the second half of 2020 by the end of 2022," said Klein.

This implies that global supply chain inflationary pressures might only fully subside during 2023 in Namibia.





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Big Lips

Will there ever be “a next time” for opposition at CoW?

■ Megameno Shinana

The City of Windhoek’s political management, at the behest of the amalgamation of opposition players, has been a tragic series of a comedy of errors, outright anarchical disunity and a blatant failure to drive the agenda for change.

From the time Amupanda rose to the helm as mayor, leading a coalition of unlikely bed-fellows sailed through to the throne by a disillusioned electorate intent on punishing the Swapo party, the city has been an arena of saber rattling and a dangerous cacophonous cat-and-mouse game between councilors.

Right up to the time that Sade Gawanas took over under the towering shadow of a domineering IPC-led Management Committee, nothing substantial has come forth for the electorate on fast-paced land and service delivery.

Whatever little progress has been attained, has been outpaced by avaricious greed, and an antagonistic power-game between council and the MC over the recruitment of a substantive CEO.

So disempowering and tasteless has been the political rancour such that the electorate has been left exasperated and uninspired to a point that chances of the City ever being retained by the opposition are now from slim to none.

The opposition has fired itself in the foot, and demonstrated to the masses on the ground that “the politics of anti-establishment anger” do not always result into an effective alternative government led by voices of dissent from the political fringe.

Competing selfish-partisan interests have held supreme, and taken from the councilors the momentum in the declaration of war against poverty and homelessness.

There is an old adage that says “Once beaten twice shy”, and if this is to hold any water, the opposition must begin to rethink their future relevance and legitimacy when it comes to governing the municipality.

The electorate is presently taking notes and learning, in bitter fashion, that sometimes it is better to trust an honest devil whose intended malice is clear than a saint whose intentions are clouded in colorful rhetoric and awkwardly manifested in chaotic deeds.

The voters will likely return the City to the Swapo party, which is fast showing itself to be the best devil the residents here have ever had.

This will not be out of any kind of trust in the ability of Swapo, but as punishment to these elementary politics, the Johnny Comes Late to town.

This is so because one editor of a prominent daily once exclaimed that under the Swapo municipal hegemony there was corruption “but at least things were done”.

While the city is collapsing on itself and the council and MC have drawn the lines in the sands over a vote of no confidence, mayor, Sade Gawanas, even had the audacity to insult our intelligence by declaring that she was “one of the best leaders” we have ever had. Sade, besides her recent activism within the fold of the LPM, what has she done so far that is so markedly watershed and progressively disruptive to back up her hollow twitter-rant?

For all we know, she has gone on to enjoy, with reckless abandon, the double convenience and comforts of transport allowance while using a municipal car but until this day, she is not ready to pay back that money.

She continues to glory in the splendour of fat salaries while the city is being dizzied by the iron-clad financial squeeze yet nothing in her gallant speeches says she and her lot are ready to take a pay cut and begin a massive financial redemption for this city.

Sade and her brood of councilors have done absolutely nothing to prove to us why we chose to elect them and why we should not consider re-investing our future in the Swapo party.

Their collective dismal failure to find common ground, and fight our common enemy of poverty and landlessness has cost us time and energy and this leadership slate is at risk of going down as one of the most tasteless and uninspiring pack of loud-sounding political minions.

Their hollowed ego, and unguided tenacity has refused them to listen to the likes of Jossy Kauandenge who was at least honest enough to tell them in their faces that they just can’t run the city, the way Swapo used to, even though that is not what we really needed.

We all know that they are there for their expanding bellies, as we begin to see them suddenly gaining weight and a sudden smooth luster of skin, globe trotting the world and moving to affluent neighborhoods.

So, tell us one reason, right here, right now, why we should vote you back in power next time.

Next time? There might be no next time, for you!

Bourguiba did a lot for Tunisian women. But was he their emancipator?



National Women’s Day is often associated with Habib Bourguiba, the country’s first president, who pursued the policy of state feminism. Bourguiba ruled the country for 30 years after its independence from France in 1957. In 1987 he was ousted in a coup d’etat by Zine El Abedine Ben Ali. Bourguiba’s state feminist policies earned him the moniker of the emancipator and liberator of Tunisian women.

But was he really their emancipator?

Like most Tunisian women, I grew up thinking this idea was true because this was the message the Tunisian educational system and media had communicated. When I started researching the history of the Tunisian feminist movement, however, I discovered that the reality was much more complex.

Bourguiba’s state feminism

State feminism refers to the government’s adoption of policies that foster women’s rights and improve women’s lives. Bourguiba was the pioneer of state feminism in Tunisia. He used his powers to pass reforms that vastly improved women’s legal status.

These reforms were imposed from the top down and promoted women’s rights in a number of areas.

A few months after the country’s independence from France, Bourguiba instated the Personal Status Code. This granted women unprecedented liberties and social autonomy. It eliminated men’s practice of immediate divorce and provided equal divorce rights for women and men. Women’s consent became required for marriage. The right of a guardian to marry off a woman without her permission was abolished. Polygamy was also outlawed. As a result of these changes, the labels “the father of feminism” and “Tunisian women’s liberator” were given to Bourguiba. The labels reflected the paternalistic and patriarchal aspect of the Bourguibist feminist policies. They also mirrored the state’s monopolisation of the feminist cause.

In reality, Bourguiba deliberately marginalised Tunisia’s autonomous feminism. Different women’s unions appeared in the pre-independence period. Yet, after independence, Bourguiba opposed, marginalised and dissolved them. He outlawed their activities in the name of “national unity” and replaced them with the National Union of Tunisian Women in 1958.

The result, according to Tunisian researcher Chouaib Elhajji, was that he killed the grassroots movement and turned it into a government sponsored one.

Bourguiba co-opted women’s rights by linking the National Union of Tunisian Women to his Socialist Destourian Party. He transformed the Women’s Union into a tool for his state feminism.

The result was an ambiguous policy. It presented itself as freeing and modernising, while maintaining a level of conservatism. This is what explains Bourguiba’s reinforcement of women’s traditional roles as wives, mothers and guardians of Islamic tradition in his speeches, despite his revolutionary ideas.

Co-opting women’s rights served his nationalist agenda, but not the feminist cause. The women’s union could not criticise the state’s gender politics.

My reading at Tunisia’s National Archives allowed me to notice the constant praise of Bourguiba in the publications of the Tunisian Women’s Union, particularly its journal *Femme* (Woman). The journal refers to Bourguiba repeatedly as the emancipator of Tunisian women. Indeed, the fact that he appointed the union’s first president, Radhia Haddad, reflects his hegemony over this female organisation.

Haddad herself would later criticise the lack of freedom of expression and association. Other feminist activists, like Amal Ben Aba and Zeineb Cherni, also joined in denouncing the state’s hold on feminism. The state cracked down on them.

This created a need for an independent form of activism capable of acting outside the state agenda. As a result, an autonomous feminist movement emerged in Tunisia in the 1980s.

Independent feminism

The independent groups signalled their divergence from the government’s official “feminist” structures. They allied themselves with opposition parties because they saw a link between the fight against sexism and the fight against authoritarianism.

Tunisian feminists chose to qualify their activism as “autonomous” to differentiate it from the state’s approach. For instance, in 1987, the Tahar Haddad cultural club was founded as part of the push for independent voices. Its growth was challenged by Bourguiba’s decision that only his women’s union could operate. This hindered the actual political representation of the autonomous women’s movement.

The Tunisian independent feminist movement wanted to end the patronage of Bourguiba over women’s rights. Activist Sana Ben Achour illustrates this in her comment on the determination of the independent feminists who founded the Tahar Haddad Club to achieve their goals in spite of Bourguiba:

Our relationship {with the National Union of Tunisian Women} was conflictual because the Tunisian feminist movement was born out of the will to break with tutelage, more particularly with the father figure, the figure of Bourguiba ... We no longer wanted to hear the discourse, which made Bourguiba know what was best for us, women.

Ben Achour throws light on the important problem of Bourguiba’s appropriation of achievements made in the women’s rights arena. This centralises the father cult. It also erases the role that Tunisian women’s rights activists played in advancing women’s rights. The most notorious example of this erasure is the Personal Status Code, which was celebrated as Bourguiba’s achievement.

As Elhajji explains, this has resulted in ignoring the female activists who fought for these laws. School history books rarely mention names such as Bchira Ben Mrad, Radhia Haddad and Manoubia Ouertani, but instead, it’s Bourguiba who is celebrated as the women’s ‘saviour’ and ‘liberator.’

Amira Mhadhbi, who exposes the oppressive aspect of Bourguiba’s state feminism, illustrates this further: President Bourguiba was declared the ‘liberator of Tunisian women.’ ... This initiated a culture of political patriarchy. By effectively outlawing other forms of political leadership, Bourguiba stalled the women’s movement in its broader fight for autonomy from male authority.

The evidence presented so far reflects the limitations of Bourguiba’s state feminism. It is undeniable that the state feminist policies he pursued have benefited Tunisian women and girls in multiple areas. But, if independent feminists were deliberately marginalised by this male figure, then can we continue to call him the emancipator of Tunisian women?

Jyhene Kebsi

Lecturer in Gender Studies, Macquarie University

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The 'traumatic experience' of US monkeypox patients



Sam Cabral

The US declared monkeypox a public health emergency late last week. It follows weeks of concern that more needs to be done to contain the virus.

On a private daily Zoom call, adult gay men who have contracted monkeypox compare notes.

They share their frustrations over trying to get tested or treated but being turned away by healthcare professionals.

They throw around tips on how to manage pain that gets worse with each new blister on your body and leaves you unable to do anything.

And, to keep from going stir-crazy as they wait for the lesions to heal, they bond over a shared experience none of them asked for.

The first US monkeypox case this year was detected on 18 May in the state of Massachusetts. Since then, more than 10,000 cases have been reported across the country, in every state except Wyoming.

Although anybody can contract the virus through direct contact with an infected person or surface, men in recent sexual contact with other men have accounted for the vast majority of cases.

Last Thursday, the federal government declared a public health emergency over the outbreak, a move that is expected to speed up the distribution of vaccines,

treatments and related federal resources.

Those who've already endured a bout of the virus wish the help had come a lot sooner.

"It's a very traumatic experience," said Jeffrey Galaise, who hosts the Zoom meetings. "I'm a different person having been through this."

"If you haven't lived through it, you have no idea the kind of pain that this is, and the red tape that's attached to trying to get help and support."

The New York native, 41, began feeling sick on the day he was supposed to get his vaccine.

Currently on day 25 of the illness, he has experienced practically every symptom, from the lesions and swollen lymph nodes to an extended high fever.

Although public awareness is rising, vaccines remain in short supply and the Biden administration has said it will stretch the limited number of jabs available by administering only a fifth of one full dose. But the virus is spreading quickly in larger states like New York, Florida and California. In San Francisco, one state senator said seeking out the vaccine feels "a little bit like the Hunger Games", a reference to the dystopian Hollywood movie trilogy in which people fight to the death for food and supplies.

Mr Galaise also claims that information on

how to treat the virus after you've got it is still sparse.

"People are really suffering and nobody knows what to do," he said.

Gay men from all over the country drop in to his hour-long Zoom conversations, which have become a de facto support group and shared space for resources.

Silver Steele, an adult entertainer from Texas, has joined a couple of sessions. His monkeypox ordeal lasted nearly a month. Lesions developed all around his mouth, making eating difficult, and he lost some 13lbs (5.8kg) in weight.

Aside from taking an oral anti-viral drug known as Tpoxx, which has been in short supply, "all you can really do is pain management", he said.

Yet the 42-year-old considers himself lucky, as he has heard "horror stories" from other patients - about anal lesions that make you feel like you're excreting needles and penile lesions that become bacterial infections of their own.

"Even though my face looked really disfigured, I didn't have anything below the waist," he said.

"I will gladly take it on the lip for the world to see as long as I don't have to deal with any of that garbage."

Monkeypox is not a new virus; in fact, it is endemic to parts of western and central Africa.

But the 2022 outbreak's prevalence in the

gay community has exposed public health flaws, as other demographics - including women and children - also now fall ill.

Yvonne Phan ran into roadblock after roadblock when she tried to get tested for monkeypox in Colorado three weeks ago. The first doctor she spoke to misdiagnosed the large red wheals on her skin as contact dermatitis.

A sexual health clinic declined to test her, sceptical that a woman, with no recent sexual history, could have contracted the virus.

Others redirected the 33-year-old to the state's department of public health or transferred her call to various specialists, with nobody taking an authoritative stance on what she should do.

"It was like trying to ask your mom for permission for something, and she says 'go ask your dad', and then your dad says 'go ask your mom'," said Ms Phan. "I couldn't seem to get an answer."

Ms Phan did test positive for monkeypox when she finally secured a swab test, but she does not know how. She still wears a mask in public and avoids large gatherings as a Covid-19 precaution. The only way she could have caught monkeypox, she claims, is from the clinic where she gets her allergy shots.

Public health experts have dragged their heels in explaining why this outbreak has

affected mostly gay and bisexual men - but it has led many to draw parallels with how the gay community felt abandoned during the AIDS crisis of the 1970s and 80s.

"There's a lot of layered issues that have come up that are very heavy," said Mr Galaise of his Zoom conversations.

"You have people who lived through AIDS suffering from PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], people that are in extended isolation for 25 to 30 days, people dealing with stigma from their community."

So patients who are already experiencing the immense pain caused by the virus have had their suffering compounded by the slow response of elected officials and public health experts, and a lack of financial and mental health resources, he said.

Silver Steele, the sex worker, documented his illness daily on social media. Many of his posts went viral, some attracting hateful and ignorant comments, he alleged.

"So many people just look at what we're going through and think 'oh look, its HIV part two.'"

"I noticed the emergency was declared after some children tested positive," he continued.

"It wasn't an emergency while it was just the gay guys."

-BBC

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Why South Korea just pardoned the Samsung 'prince'

■ Frances Mao

Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong - convicted of bribery and embezzlement in 2017 - has been granted a special presidential pardon. One of South Korea's most powerful white collar criminals, Lee was twice imprisoned for bribing a former president.

South Korea's government justified the move, saying the de-facto leader of the country's biggest company was needed back at the helm to spearhead economic recovery post-pandemic.

This marks another swing in a struggle over how the country is run that has raged since mass protests took over Seoul six years ago and ousted a president from office. Lee's crimes were directly tied up in the corruption scandal that led to the imprisonment of former president Park Geun-Hye, in office from 2013-2017.

The "Crown Prince of Samsung" - as he was dubbed by protesters - paid \$8 million (£6.6m) in bribes to President Park and her associate to secure support for a merger opposed by shareholders that would shore up his control of his family's empire.

When it was revealed, millions of South Koreans turned out at candlelit protests every weekend in the 2016/2017 winter, demanding an end to Park's government and the stitch-up between politics and business.

Korea's parliament impeached Park and she was imprisoned in 2017 for 25 years. Lee, who is also known as Jay Y Lee in the

West, was jailed a year later for offences including embezzling company funds to buy a \$800,000 (£650,000) horse for the president's friend's daughter.

A new president, Moon Jae-in swept into office with a mandate to clean up the mess. But he failed to make much headway. In his last days as president, he granted a pardon to his predecessor.

Now eight months later, under another new president, Samsung's chief has also received the same clemency.

For those who have been fighting against corruption, it's a dispiriting blow.

"It is a setback. And it means Korea retreats to the time before the candlelit demonstrations," said Sangin Park, an economics and industrial policy professor at Seoul National University.

'Octopus' influence
Lee's case reaffirms popular conception that business leaders are untouchable and above the law. In Korea, giant conglomerates dominate the economy, with the top 10 accounting for about 80% of GDP. Known as chaebols, they are family-controlled empires which provide a span of services. LG, Hyundai, Lotte, and SK are among them.

But Samsung is the biggest and most powerful of them all.

As the world's largest smartphone maker, it's a global electronics brand. But at home it does much more - hospitals, hotels, insurance plans, billboards, shipyards and even theme parks.

Samsung and other chaebols are so

omnipresent they're known as "octopus" firms, says Prof YoonKyung Lee, a political sociologist at the University of Toronto.

And those tentacles have long wormed their way into the highest levels of Korean politics. Prof Lee was at the 2016 protests and says most of the anger was directed at President Park's personal actions. But she said labour activists and others strove to highlight the chaebols' outsize influence on government. Chaebols were heavily supported by the government after the Korean War. They were given cheaper electricity and tax incentives, there was a "Buy-Korea" policy and even help in suppressing union movements. But the resulting monopolies also crushed competition, stifled labour movements and their practices spawned decades of bribery and corruption cases.

In many cases, Prof Lee said, executives were given light or suspended sentences. In some cases judges said the economy might suffer if a chaebol leader was taken out of action.

Mr Lee's own father, Lee Kun-hee was convicted of bribery and fraud in the 1990s when he was Samsung chairman. But he didn't serve a single day of jail time.

So in 2017, when his son was hauled away to a cell on a five-year sentence, activists hoped the case would mark a turning point. In and out of jail Celebration however was short lived. Lee's court battle dragged on for years with twists and turns worthy of

the most dramatic Korean serials.

An appeals court released him, a higher court then ordered a retrial at which he was again found guilty and jailed.

But just a few months into his second jail term, the Moon government released him on parole, saying it was in the national interest.

Since then, he has returned as the public face of Samsung - in May greeting US President Joe Biden on a trade visit to South Korea.

Lee still faces criminal allegations - of rigging company valuations, accounting fraud and making Samsung business decisions in breach of his sentence conditions. Clemency means he will be able to fully resume his executive responsibilities.

It follows a pattern of convicted chaebol leaders having their slates wiped clean.

"When it comes to formal power, there's the president's office and the National Assembly - they're making the laws," Prof Lee said. "But when it comes to political influence or cultural influence or even how people think about the importance of chaebol in Korean society, it's really down to a coalition of conservative political and business elites who all have interests with each other." Divided reaction

The government's pardon of Lee rests on the argument that chaebol leaders are needed for the economy. But numerous economists have pointed out this isn't backed up by hard proof.

"The pardoning of chaebol controllers has not contributed to economic growth or turnaround historically," said Prof Park.

Analysts say Samsung has fared perfectly well while Lee has been in and out of prison. Reform advocates say South Korea, where growth has been slowing for years, also needs to end its dependence on chaebols. "Several studies have shown that it's getting harder to get the 'trickle-down effect' - it's time to move away from the old notion that any illegal acts done by chaebols are 'forgivable' if they do their jobs," says Roh Jong-Hwa, a lawyer from an advocacy group Solidarity for Economic Reform.

Still the dismay among critics over Lee's pardoning is not shared among the broader South Korean public. A recent public poll recorded 70% support for the pardon.

How to explain that support?

The desire to tackle corruption and chaebol influence remains, experts say. But it is mingled with fear and concerns over a looming recession - and residual pride over Samsung representing Korea on the world stage. "There's a core belief that if Samsung does well, Korea does well. And Koreans have lived with this myth for so many decades, it's really hard for ordinary citizens to break out of it," says Prof Lee.

"Right now, amid an economic downturn, people want to see some concrete sign that we are moving forward and Lee's release is a sign of that."

-BBC



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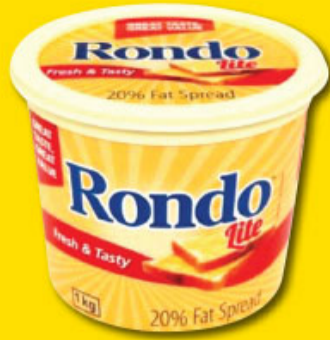

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Free Your Mind
 09h00-11h00
Tech Eagle with Frans
 11h00-12h00
Brand Conversation with Dwight
 12h00-13h00
On the Radar with Justicia
 13h00-14h30

Ookundana Dhangi pamwe na Eba
 14h30-16h30
The Home Run with Envaade
 16h30-18h30
Business Segment with Dwight
 18h30-19h30
Pulling Heart Strings with Elizabeth
 19h30-21h00
Omutumwa pamwe na Tate Fly
 21h00-23h00
Off the Hook
 23h00-02h00
Penge Omhito
 02h00-05h00

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Long wait for Raila Odinga and William Ruto in poll count

Dickens Olewe

Kenyan's electoral head has admitted he feels the process of verifying results from Tuesday's vote is taking too long. Wafula Chebukati's comments come nearly three days after polls closed, with the outcome of the presidential election still not known. He blamed party agents for slowing things down as results sent digitally are matched to paper originals. Media tallies show the two leading candidates - Raila Odinga and William Ruto - are neck and neck.

But it is only the electoral commission that can declare the winner - and it has seven days to do so.

Earlier the electoral chief emphasised there was no need to panic when seeing differences in tallying numbers as they would look similar in the end.

"The results are from the same public portal; the approach [of each broadcaster] is different," he explained.

What is happening at the main tallying centre?

This is based at a cultural centre called Bomas in the capital, Nairobi, where officials from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) are busy verifying results.

They are comparing photographs of result forms from more than 46,000 polling stations nationwide to physical forms being brought to centre by officials from each of the 290 constituencies.

This is to ensure that the results match.

This is witnessed by party agents from the main parties, who Mr Chebukati says keep stalling by turning a straightforward exercise into a "forensic" one.

He said officials should not take more than 15 minutes to verify a result.

Counting in some polling stations was also delayed and travel to Nairobi, especially by officials from far-flung areas, could be a further factor in slowing things down. Verification was also halted for a time on Friday after a scuffle broke out, allegedly involving someone without accreditation seen with a laptop.

How are the media tallies compiled?

Teams of journalists working for various outlets have been engaged in the laborious task of uploading the figures received from each of the polling stations one-by-one.

Each media house is doing it a different speed and choosing the polling stations in a different order.

By Friday morning, local media had slowed down their count - though the reason is not clear, some saying staff were exhausted.

Mr Chebukati said he had hoped media groups would have clubbed together to tally the results, but they had decided to each go it alone.

How are Kenyans feeling?

There is a sense of anxiety in the country as disputed elections in the past have led to violence or the whole process being cancelled.

Following the 2007 vote, at least 1,200 people were killed and 600,000 fled their homes following claims of a stolen election.

In 2017, huge logistical errors led the Supreme Court to annul the result and order the presidential poll to be re-run.

Officials are under pressure to get things right this time.

The country often grinds to a halt during elections, activities across the country have slowed and schools remain closed at least until next week on Monday. In Nairobi's central business district, the usually busy streets are mostly deserted.

Allegations of election rigging are as old as the country. It was part of politics even before multiparty elections were re-introduced in the 1990s, but the push for free and fair elections has never faltered.

After the violence that followed the 2007 election, political parties and activists



argued for the use of technology instead of physical registers, which could be easily manipulated, to verify voters.

This year's election is the third time technology has been used but it has yet to deliver an election that has not been challenged in the courts.

Meanwhile, a group of top civil servants told reporters on Friday that preparations for a smooth handover of power would get under way as soon as the electoral commission announced the president-elect. When will we know the result?

It's unclear when the final results will be known, but the electoral commission has

started announcing verified counts from the 290 constituencies.

If there is a clear leader of the race, celebrations are likely to break out - but only the IEBC can make it official.

To win the presidential race in the first round, a candidate needs:

- more than half of all the votes cast across the country
- at least 25% of the votes cast in a minimum of 24 counties.

Otherwise voting goes to a second round which by law has to happen by 8 September.

-BBC



Republic of Namibia
Ministry of Health and Social Services

NATIONAL INTEGRATED VACCINATION CAMPAIGN
8 – 19 AUGUST 2022





VACCINATION AND OTHER SERVICES

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Parents (mothers & fathers), guardians, and caregivers of children under the age of 5 are encouraged to bring their children to the nearest health facility, outreach point and mobile point for vaccination and other services. Every person from the age of 12 years and above can also receive their COVID-19 vaccination.

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We're kept at gunpoint by Russians

James Waterhouse

Staff at the occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant have described to the BBC being kept at gunpoint while Russian troops use it as a military base.

Invading forces have occupied the site, the biggest nuclear plant in Europe, since early March. However, it's still operated by Ukrainian technicians.

Moscow has recently been accused of using the plant "as a shield" while its troops launch rockets from there towards nearby locations.

And on Thursday, more shelling was reported - and the head of the UN issued a new warning about fighting near the nuclear site "leading to disaster".

Now two workers have told the BBC about the daily threat of kidnap, as well as their fears of either "radioactive contamination of the wider region" or a nuclear catastrophe. In the southern city of Nikopol is one of the most dangerous vantage points in Ukraine.

On the banks of the Dnipro River, it's possible to see the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant 10 miles across the water.

It's a place which has seen heavy shelling over the past couple of weeks, with up to 120 rockets being reported in a single night. They come from the direction of Enerhodar, the city where the plant is situated. In turn, Enerhodar - and the power station - have also come under heavy fire. The UN's nuclear watchdog claims there's a "real risk of nuclear disaster" unless the fighting stops and inspectors are allowed access. Ukraine and Russia blame each other. The picture is murky, but the risks are crystal clear. "My working day is a constant stress," says Svitlana, who's

contacting us over text.

She and fellow worker Mykola can only use Russian Sim cards now and signal is very limited. We're not using their real names for their safety.

"I can't work like I used to," says Svitlana. "The last week I haven't even been able to come to my workplace - it's dangerous."

"On Saturday, there was shelling of the nitrogen-oxygen station, which caused a fire. By some miracle, the people working there survived."

Another Enerhodar resident tells us that shop and pharmacy prices are now four times higher than in territory that Ukraine still controls, as well as there being a shortage of doctors. Most ATMs are closed, too.

Svitlana has worked at the plant for many years, and says shells have been landing close to it every day.

"The psychological situation is difficult," she adds. "Soldiers are walking everywhere with weapons and everyone is actually kept at gunpoint."

Russia is accused of basing about 500 soldiers there. Recent footage has showed military vehicles being driven inside, and Svitlana is in no doubt it's being used as a base. "Every day they drive back and forth in their military vehicles," she says.

"They positioned their military equipment right at the station buildings, to make it impossible for Ukrainian armed forces to strike."

A text comes in from Mykola: "The staff are now hostages of the Russians," it reads.

"They turned off the internet, left only landline phones, and food is available only in one single dining room. They turned the others into their bases."

Ukraine is concerned Russia has started shelling the area it occupies to try to create a false narrative, such as: "Ukraine is attacking you - so better vote to join Russia so we can take root and protect you."

Moscow-installed politicians for the Zaporizhzhia region have just signed an order for a referendum to be held soon. Russia has staged sham votes in the past, such as with Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

Mykola continues: "Access to all roofs is prohibited, they made their observation points there. The training building also became their barracks."

"Now, more and more often, staff are kidnapped just when leaving the shift at the security gate."

It's not known why the kidnapping takes place - but residents paint a picture of intimidation as Russians look to lay down law.

Svitlana and Mykola also describe rubbish being left everywhere by the Russians - but they say staff are still able to monitor the reactor properly. Hryhoriy Plachkov, former head of the State Nuclear Regulatory Inspectorate of Ukraine, tells us the risks are "great" as long as the Russians controls the Zaporizhzhia power plant. He admits it would take "two to three" months for the Russians to re-direct power back to their own grid, if that was their goal. Enerhodar is part of a southern front line which has seen more intense fighting in recent weeks.

There is, however, still very little movement - suggesting Europe's biggest nuclear power station will continue to slip from Ukraine's control.

-BBC

Drought hits Germany's Rhine River: 'We have 30cm of water left'



Jenny Hill

Captain Andre Kimpel casts an experienced, but worried, eye across the river Rhine, where water levels have dropped significantly in recent days.

Several ferry services in and around the town of Kaub have been forced to a standstill, but he's still carrying people and their cars across the water to the opposite bank - for now.

"It's no joke," he says as he navigates the water which sparkles in the summer sunshine. "We have 1.5m [5ft] of water and our boat sits 1.20m deep. So we have 30 centimetres of water left beneath us."

It's not unusual for water levels to drop here but, Captain Kimpel says, it's happening more frequently. "We used to have a lot of floods. Now we have a lot of low waters." On the riverbank nearby, there's an old measuring station. Any skipper wanting to enter the Upper Rhine will refer to the official water level recorded here.

The current level hasn't yet fallen below the lowest figure ever recorded here, in October of 2018. The measurement then was 25cm (the measurement is taken from the same reference point in the water, not the deepest point on the river bed).

It's currently 42cm - but is forecast to fall further in the coming days.

Travel a little further upstream and the challenge is obvious.

At the town of Bingen, great swathes of the riverbed are exposed, bleached stones powder dry in the baking sun. People from the nearby town pick their way over the rocks, take photographs. In normal times they'd be underwater. One man told me he'd never seen it like this.

A few commercial vessels slowly navigate the channel of water that's left here.

The Rhine is one of Europe's great working rivers and industry here relies on barges to fetch and carry raw materials and finished products to and from the power plants and factories that line the riverbank.

The water's already too low to allow some of the larger vessels through. Others have

been forced to reduce their cargo, lighten the load so that they sit higher in the water. And they're keeping a close eye on the river levels.

It's likely that the Upper Rhine will be closed to traffic completely, says Martina Becker from HGK shipping. Low water happens every year, she tells us, but it's not as extreme as this.

"It's quite extraordinary, particularly for this time of year. July and August are usually quite wet months with lots of rain and good water levels."

Low water normally happens later in the year, in October, she says.

"This is an unusual situation for us and the question is what happens in October, when the usually dry months arrive. We are already approaching the record low level we had in 2018. We could reach that level next week."

Experts have warned that the low water could significantly damage Germany's economy.

And there's an extra worry for the government. Since Russia reduced its gas supply to Germany, the ministers are relying more heavily on coal-fired power stations. But much of the coal that feeds them is transported by barge. Some of the load is being shifted to the railway network but there's limited capacity.

There's a far greater concern among those who live by or work on the river.

The government agency which monitors the levels say that the current low water may just be part of a normal pattern. But, they note, such events are becoming more intense as a result of climate change and they say the situation will worsen in the second half of this century.

At Bingen, the water has fallen low enough to expose an old stone bridge which leads to a little island. People laugh as they make their way across the rocks, enjoying the novelty of being able to reach it on foot. But, for many, in this new landscape, it's a warning.

-BBC



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2022 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Veloce First Test: Strong and Spirited

■ Miguel Cortina

Everything sounds better in Italian, and the badge applied to the 2022 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Veloce is no exception. "Veloce" means "quick" in English, but can you imagine a vehicle called, say, the Ford Quick or the Chevy Fast? Yeah, no. Yet in Italian, the same word sounds sexy. But best of all, the Stelvio Veloce is indeed fast, sporty, and spirited.

The Veloce trim came on board for the 2022 model year, replacing the Ti Sport trim. It's the highest available model with the standard turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder, which happens to be the most powerful base engine in the luxury compact SUV segment.

Veloce but Not Molto Veloce

With 280 hp and 306 lb-ft of torque, there's no doubt the Stelvio has guts. Step on the throttle, and the response is immediate, and full torque is on tap from just 2,000 rpm. That's among the ingredients that make the Stelvio one of the sportiest SUVs, as is the eight-speed automatic transmission that likes to hold gears when Dynamic mode is active. Even the default Natural mode is a delight, though; the transmission is relatively snappy, and the perfectly linear steering delivers a wealth of feedback. In all modes, it's possible the Stelvio might ride a little too stiffly for some, but excellent damping takes the edges off the harshest impacts, and we enjoy having a better feel for the road.

Unfortunately, there's a bit of un-veloce here: Despite that muscular turbo-four, at 5.9 seconds, the Stelvio Veloce is a little bit slower than some other compact luxury SUVs to 60 mph. The time is good overall, but in our testing it trails slightly behind the 2022 Porsche Macan (5.6 seconds), 2021 Audi Q5 (5.7 seconds), and even the last Stelvio we tested—a 2018 Ti Sport (5.4 seconds). But it's ahead of the 2022 Genesis GV70 2.5T (6.0 seconds), 2021 Acura RDX and 2022 BMW X3 xDrive 30i (6.4 seconds each). But the numbers aren't the full story. Combine its responsive powertrain with its capable, composed, and confidence-inspiring chassis, and the Stelvio Veloce is, in fact, perfectly veloce. Wherever you're driving it, the Stelvio behaves more like a lifted hot hatchback, feeling quick off the line and allowing drivers to attack back roads with a zeal that makes miles disappear faster than they might in a number of more appliance-like competitors. "I like that the steering is friction free and that the rim is thin," road test editor Chris Walton said. "This allows you to steer with your fingertips and not your palms."

Overall, the experience behind that wheel is engaging, and the Stelvio's personality and captivating experience are what distinguish it from the rest of the segment—and make it the target of discerning drivers who need an SUV.

Gorgeous Exterior, Subpar Interior

Despite being four years old, the 2022 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Veloce remains one of the best-looking SUVs in the segment. Like its Giulia sedan stablemate, the Stelvio has aged well and continues to look sharp even when newer models have entered the market. Unfortunately, that's not the case inside. Although there isn't anything wrong with the cabin, its plain layout lacks the attention to detail and sophistication of other SUVs in the segment.

The 8.8-inch touchscreen is quite small for today's standards, and although we like its functionality and placement in the center console, the infotainment system feels antiquated and lacks updated graphics. There is no wireless Apple CarPlay or Android Auto, and it's a bit hard to explore or find what you need given the limited menu buttons.

The rest of the cabin lacks the plushness we've seen in other SUVs, as well. There's nothing that will grab the attention of anyone getting into a Stelvio for the first time. The ergonomics are perfectly fine, with everything within reach of the driver, and there are hard buttons for the A/C and a volume knob, but designers missed an opportunity to make the interior more elegant and premium. In addition, interior space is a bit tight for those in the rear seats, with a big drivetrain hump that will make middle-seat passengers uncomfortable.

If Alfa was aiming for a simplistic, driver-focused cabin that wouldn't draw attention from the sensational driving experience, then

we suppose the layout, design, and technology make sense. But when compared against other compact luxury SUVs, the Stelvio stands out for lacking content important to buyers these days. Ventilated seats, for example, aren't an option on the Veloce, and some safety technologies standard in other SUVs (like lane keep assist) are part of a package here. Given the excellence permeating the segment from the likes of, say, Genesis, Alfa would do well to up its game.

Although lane keep assist is an option, the Veloce adds several driver assist features that were previously optional. Adaptive cruise control, blind-spot monitoring, lane departure warning, automatic high-beams, and front and rear parking sensors are now standard. Navigation, wireless charging, and heated front and rear seats are also included on all trims.

Should You Buy a 2022 Alfa Romeo Stelvio Veloce?

If you're looking for a sporty experience, an attractive design, and a cabin that delivers the basics, then the answer is *assolutamente sì*. But if you'd rather drive an SUV that focuses on comfort and interior amenities, there are better options.

And yet, for a model that's only received light updates since it came out in 2018, the Stelvio is aging gracefully. It falls short in many objective areas, but every opportunity to drive it is another opportunity for fun, and that's high on our list of priorities. If it's high on yours, too, you'll likely think the Stelvio is simply *spettacolare*.

—Motor Trend



Can Barcelona wrestle back the title from Real Madrid?

■ **Andy West**

With Real Madrid out to defend the crown they claimed so easily last season and Barcelona desperate to return to winning ways through an impressively restocked squad, a fascinating title race looks guaranteed in Spain.

Before this weekend's kick-off in La Liga, BBC Sport examines the main storylines of the leading contenders.

Real looking strong...but over-reliant on Benzema?

After cruising to last season's title by 13 points, Real Madrid head into the new campaign with high hopes of claiming consecutive league crowns for the first time since 2008.

Carlo Ancelotti has strengthened his squad with the capture of centre-back Antonio Rudiger from Chelsea and defensive midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni from Monaco.

And although Ancelotti has historically leaned towards fielding his favoured starting XI more often than not, those new arrivals - along with Eduardo Camavinga, Fede Valverde and Rodrygo - should receive plenty of playing time in a season where squad rotation will be more important than ever considering the interruption of the World Cup.

An exception, however, is Karim Benzema. Real's unexpected failure to land Kylian Mbappe means Benzema is the squad's only centre-forward - Luka Jovic has departed to Fiorentina and Ancelotti has

never trusted Mariano Diaz.

And the heavy goalscoring reliance on a player who turns 35 in December is the biggest question mark over Real's title ambitions.

There is, however, a potential X-factor. Eden Hazard has been a massive disappointment since his arrival from Chelsea, with a series of injuries restricting him to a paltry tally of just six goals in three seasons.

But now Hazard is fit, with a full pre-season under his belt and boosted by the endorsement of Ancelotti, who plans to use the Belgian in a false nine role.

If he can take that opportunity to finally become the free-scoring superstar we used to see at Stamford Bridge, it would provide valuable depth in the only area where Real look vulnerable.

Big-spending Barca back in business?

It has been a sensational summer at Barcelona, where club president Joan Laporta has taken a colossal gamble by selling off chunks of the club's commercial assets to finance a remarkable spending spree.

The arrival of Jules Kounde, Andreas Christensen, Franck Kessie, Raphinha and Robert Lewandowski - with Marcos Alonso and Bernardo Silva possibly still to come - plus the re-signing of Ousmane Dembele, means boss Xavi's request for two top-class players in every position has been granted to a greater extent than he could have realistically expected.

They are still to register any new players

before this weekend's opener with Rayo Vallecano, having been wrestling with severe financial issues which need to be addressed to comply with La Liga's strict financial regulations.

They are confident the issues will be resolved and now the pressure is on the coach to deliver. Barca's quest for an immediate return to glory hinges on a fundamental but currently largely unanswered question - how good a coach is Xavi?

They gained a decent tally of 56 points from their 26 league games under Xavi last season, with the notable high of a run of seven straight wins between February and April including a fantastic 4-0 thrashing of Real Madrid at the Bernabeu.

But there were also some poor performances - home losses to Cadiz and Rayo Vallecano, and a calamitous Europa League exit to Eintracht Frankfurt - and Xavi's immediate task is to cut out those inconsistencies which would derail their title challenge.

The former club captain certainly doesn't lack resources, and on the evidence so far he won't hesitate to use them.

Although Xavi's base formation is 4-3-3 he also occasionally opts for a three-man backline, and the versatility of an attack containing Lewandowski, Dembele, Raphinha, Ansu Fati, Ferran Torres and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang - most of whom can play in multiple positions - is arguably unrivalled anywhere.

This team should definitely deliver plenty



of goals, but can they stop them at the other end?

Vulnerability against rapid counter-attacks has been Barca's weak point for years, but Xavi will hope the pace of Kounde and Ronald Araujo allows his team to play high up the pitch without being excessively exposed on the break.

Can Joao Felix inspire Atletico?

A two-horse race? Maybe not, because Atletico Madrid shouldn't be ruled out. Diego Simeone's men provided a feeble title defence last season, often looking a shadow of their former selves and only securing a top-four berth thanks to a strong late surge.

But there have been encouraging signs for the forthcoming campaign. The arrival of

impressive Nahuel Molina from Udinese should fill the Kieran Trippier-shaped hole at right-back, while vastly-experienced Belgium international Axel Witsel will add calm authority in the centre of the field.

Atletico have been in free-scoring form during preseason, culminating in a 4-0 thumping of Juventus last weekend. Joao Felix has been particularly eye-catching, suggesting the gifted Portuguese forward is ready to finally fulfil his undoubted talent on a consistent basis.

If Felix continues to flourish, and Simeone can recapture the defensive solidity that has marked most of his 10-year reign, Atletico could go all the way.

-BBC

Rugby League World Cup organisers expect record ticket sales

■ **Dave Woods**

Rugby League World Cup organisers are expecting record-breaking ticket sales for this year's tournament, with a quarter of a million already sold.

The tournament will be staged at venues throughout England this autumn.

England's opening game against Samoa in Newcastle on 15 October is one of several matches heading for a sell-out.

"We are delighted to hit such a significant milestone for ticket sales at this stage," said the tournament's director of revenue, Mick Hogan.

"We are incredibly excited that this year's World Cup is going to be the best attended in the long history of our sport."

The tournament - postponed from last year - features men's, women's and wheelchair competitions, and every game will be shown live by the BBC.

Organisers believe more than half a million tickets will have been sold by the time the tournament takes place.

All of England's men's group games - at Sheffield and Bolton, as well as Newcastle - are on course to sell out, and all eight wheelchair games at Sheffield's English Institute of Sport arena have already done so.

The men's and women's double-header final at Old Trafford on Saturday, 19 November is also heading for a sell-out, which would make it the highest grossing rugby league match ever held in the northern hemisphere.

The opening women's double-header at Headingley is already guaranteed to be watched by a northern hemisphere record crowd for a women's stand-alone rugby league event.

"What has been particularly encouraging to see is the appetite for tickets across all three tournaments, with our opening fixtures for the men's, women's and wheelchair competitions all selling well," said Hogan.

"At RLWC21, we want to inspire the next generation of rugby league players and fans alike, which is why we have created a ticket pricing strategy that will make the tournament one of the most affordable and family friendly international sports events in history."

A major national television advertising campaign for the tournament is set to start later this month.

-BBC

We are delighted to hit such a significant milestone for ticket sales at this stage.

