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One Africa boss slapped with criminal charges

.. accuses journalist of seeking to harm his company



Staff Swriter

One Africa TV's owner and Namibia Revenue Agency (NAMRA) board member, Stefan Hugo, faces the prospect of being dragged to court by an ex-employee after criminal charges were opened against him over a labour issue gone wrong. The matter has been brought to the fore by One Africa TV's ex-senior journalist, Leston Wohler, who has claimed that he was dismissed on flimsy charges after he refused to take a N\$40 000 voluntary separation package in 2021. "The offer was then increased to N\$42 000 after I got suspended to entice me to take the money and leave but I said no. That was on the 29th of October 2021. Hugo walked me out as if I had stolen something, he made me pack my things in front of everyone, it was embarrassing to be honest," the disgruntled

journalist narrates.

Wohler says that soon after this, the broadcaster brought against him a litany of accusations including insubordination, disrespect, and late submission of content. He also claims that the N\$40 000 offer he rejected was then given over to controversial human rights activist, August Maletzky, who was brought in as an independent chairperson of the disciplinary hearing which later unfolded.

Hugo has in the meantime told The Villager that he was aware of all the accusations against him, but insisted that Wohler is seeking to bring his company down.

"What can I send you the police statement or the disciplinary process, what would you like? I can send you the statement, it is in the police statement as well. We started this disciplinary process after they were complaints from his co-workers and there

were complaints from his managers."

"There was a whole process to try and reconcile and get him to apologize and fix the relationship which he refused to do and insisted that we begin disciplinary process which we had an independent chairperson (Maletzky). It cost us a lot of money and the person was independent. Yea, he wants to pick a fight," he said.

Maletzky owns Rainbow Legal Services, The Villager has been informed. This was despite Wohler objecting to his involvement three times due to his outstanding legal issues at court for alleged corruption and defrauding. "The hearing happened but then he was given information seven days before the hearing of the witness statement and all background on the matter which is not allowed by the Law because as the

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Four medical interns kicked out of Onandjokwe hospital



Hertha Ekandjo

Four medical interns have been kicked out of the Onandjokwe Hospital after it came out that they had failed their first internship in Windhoek.

The Onandjokwe state hospital is located in Ondangwa in the Oshana region. One of the interns is said to have studied in Russia with grade twelve symbols that are not above the symbol E and as low as Symbol G. This specific intern threatened to take the Onandjokwe Hospital to court after they were told to leave.

The interns told The Villager that when they decided to approach the superintendent known as Doctor Monica, they were told that she was not in the country.

"When we went back to the head of departments she told us that was the instruction that she got from the superintendent and that she had nothing to do with us," explained one of the interns. According to Onandjokwe Hospital's head of department, Doctor Msanga, the reason why they asked the medical interns to leave was because there was no proof that they were really sent by the Health Professionals Council of Namibia (HPCNA).

Msanga said that she gets instructions from the medical superintendent on whether to accept these interns or not. "They were supposed to bring a

letter from the HPCNA stating that they were really sent by them and have been allocated to our hospital, which they did not have," explained Msanga.

The head of the department told The Villager that it was impossible for her to accept these interns without a letter and communication from the medical superintendent.

Moreover, Msanga said they always had interns from Windhoek and never refused to accept them just because they were from the city. "They were told to go back to HPCNA for more clarity, (they were) not chased," she expressed.

Msanga further said that they don't just accept interns from other hospitals without communication.

She further emphasized that there must be a reason why these interns were sent from Windhoek to the north. HPCNA's intern curator, Doctor Bezuidenhout, said that these were interns who were recently positioned at Windhoek central hospital, where they did rotations and failed.

Bezuidenhout said that there was an agreement between HPCNA and the Onandjokwe Hospital superintendent that some of the interns that failed could go to Onandjokwe for another and different examiners.

"This was to see if they will pass that side," narrated Bezuidenhout.

Bezuidenhout told The Villager that two of the medical interns they sent that side ended up failing again.

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One Africa

judge, he should not have prior knowledge of the case. That was the first violation. The preliminaries were also not accorded me. He just wants to harm the company”

“He was shouting at me and my representative throughout my hearing and he was always interjecting my representative and didn’t want her to finish, her name is Lelanie Hochobeb. Before I was found guilty, he used information that came after the hearing in his judgment of the matter,” says the journalist.

Wohler was found guilty on the 7th of December 2021 after which he appealed the decision.

He also says that he was consequently fired on the 3rd of January this year.

“After I appealed Zenobia Bruwer, One

Africa TV’s Chief Financial Officer, confirmed that Rainbow Legal Services had been hired as the appeal chairperson under Set Gowaseb, who is a good friend and former employee of Maletzky. Through our investigations we have photos of them partying.”

“He also made a declaration with the police that he never participated in the hearing as appeal chairperson. But he is also alleged to be a distant relative of Sebastian Gowaseb who is the former head of production at One Africa TV. I just feel like how can he allow his own relative to be used in the case? I don’t know if he was aware that he was being used but it’s just sad,” says Wohler.

In the meantime, both parties are waiting for a date to be allocated for conciliation and the labour hearing while police investigations are under way.

Maletzky has denied allegations against him

saying that he is incorruptible.

“It is the first time I hear of this but in any event all disciplinary hearings that I chair are above board and when it comes to the way I conduct disciplinary hearings I am incorruptible. There was no information provided to me in any questionable fashion or in an irregular modus operandi. In fact, before the hearing commenced, all the parties were in agreement with the issues placed before me as the chairperson, only after all parties agreed to proceed with the hearing we proceeded.

“So, as far as his right to approach the labour office is concerned, obviously by all means he is entitled to do that, and lay a complaint of unfair labour practices or whatever he wants to. But from my side what I can tell you is that I am incorruptible when it comes to the execution of my duties,” he said.

Onandjokwe

He explained that as a result, the superintendent from Onandjokwe could not accept interns who failed in Windhoek.

“I was still supposed to call doctor Msanga, but I discussed it with the acting superintendent of Onandjokwe hospital. But still, Monica said she would not accept interns that side,” he said.

The curator stated that he was in the process of making arrangements for these rejected interns to go to Oshakati State hospital instead.

He, however, could not clarify why failed interns refused by one hospital could be sent to another.

“Some of these interns, like the one busy threatening to take the Onandjokwe hospital to court, that individual scored a 'G' symbol for typing and office administration in grade 12, a G in Physical science, E in Biology and i think an E or F in other subjects and went

and studied medicine, came back and failed the internship here," he stressed.

"We sent her to Onandjokwe, and she failed there. Is that a person who is supposed to study medicine?" Bezuidenhout questioned.

Moreover, he said that these were the interns that he was trying to assist, but they approached the media and portrayed the HPCNA as the bad guy.

"The curator stated that he was in the process of making arrangements for these rejected interns to go to Oshakati State hospital instead."

Anarchy at NIMT: Workers cry out



Staff Writer

The Namibia Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT) is in a state of chaos and anarchy due to bad management, employees have expressed in 28th of June letter to the board of trustees, the Namibia National Teachers Union (NANTU and executive director, R. Bussel.

Bussel has been accused by NNC principal, Mek Jason, of having failed to comply with the NIMT training program which encompasses six months, opting to make sure of a substandard three month-program.

Jason has expressed that this has now undermined and tainted the integrity of the organisation as well as the industry and national interest.

He also accused Bussel of failing to come out clear on an amount of N\$240 000 which allegedly got taken from an NNC account in January 2021.

“Failure to reply on official communications. Failure to provide information with regard to Automotive Mechatronics that replaced Diesel Mechanic. No training material provided. Providing misleading information to public as per NIMT information brochure, March 2022-August 2022,” said Mek in his litany of accusations against Bussel.

Mek has also highlighted that the NIMT ED has allowed a state of unruliness at the institution whereby subordinates are being allowed to give instructions to higher authority.

He also said that NIMT has failed to comply with internal assessment criteria which include two internal tests per semester, setting up question papers consisting 100

marks, setting different internal exam time tables for NNC and non-issuance of IBOS certificates among other issues.

“Incomplete question papers sent to NNC while other campuses received complete question papers causing NNC students to fail in big numbers. Failure to ensure that NIMT assessment is fair and transparent. Failure to hold management meetings,” he said.

The board of trustees has further been told that the elephant in the room at the institution is the huge wage bill at the head office which has become unsustainable.

Another employee who declined to be named has accused NIMT of “stealing money from NSFAF for many years”.

“If it was not for me to inform NSFAF and open their eyes, NSFAF would not have stopped a loan grant for a so-called level 4 at NIMT this year. NIMT has been claiming a level for loan grants from NSFAF since ever. This is a level for which NIMT doesn't issue training neither a qualification.”

“Training at NIMT is completed over four years, at VTCs over three year. They all get a level 3 qualification and equally recognised by NQA. The training grant from NTA and loan grant from NSFAF towards a trainee at NIMT caters for four years.”

“At VTCs, those grants cater for only three years. We are talking of all trainees acquiring the same qualification, if the same NQF level from their respective institutions, but differently funded. Why...? Only now that NSFAF decided not to fund it anymore, NTA has not expressed their take on that yet.”

The Villager can confirm that some of the grievances concerning the alleged rot at NIMT have been sent over to higher education ministry executive director, Raimo Naanda.

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**LELAPAY**

Chaos at Wednesday's pension payout



■ **Ludorf Iyambo**

Chaos and anger erupted Wednesday morning due to delays in the cashing out of pensioners' money in Khomasdal, with the situation remaining the same well into the afternoon. More than 100 senior citizens including the disabled thronged at the gender ministry to receive their N\$1 200 social grants.

One of them, identified only as Willy Swartbooi and his spouse, told The Villager that they usually get the cash payouts on the 4th of each month.

"When we went to the bank yesterday there was nothing in our accounts. We went to the post office and again the money was not available. At the post office they advised me to go to the ministry of gender and find out what is happening there," Swartbooi said. He has been on the social grant since 2021 and expressed that this was the first time, he has experienced a glitch in the process.

A total of N\$ 5 billion was allocated to the 2022/2023 financial year towards the provision of social grants to pensioners, persons with disabilities and child welfare grants.

By 2021, reports were that Namibia's social safety net was carrying 773 463 persons. However, the number of pensioners alone stood at 191 865 along with 47 368 persons

with disabilities and 339 735 vulnerable children plus 194 495 parents.

The chaotic scenes at this Wednesday's pension pay out continued until 15h00 in the afternoon, attracting the attention of political parties like the LPM and PDM.

In the meantime, Swartbooi added that when he questioned why he did not receive his money at the ministry, he was told there was a change in the system and that his name had been erased.

"I asked, what is going to happen next? I was told I should come back with my birth certificate, a copy of my Identification Card and Nampost letter so that they can reregister me again in the system," he said.

Another pensioner, Hipondoka Felemon Martin, 61 years old, said that if the ministry knew there was a problem, they should have consulted them via radio.

"They know that we senior citizens love listening to the radio; if they could have announced it, all the long queues and frustration could have been avoided," he said.

Irja Ndapandula, who is 51 years and living with a disability, said her health is at risk as she did not receive her grants for two months.

She said apart from being blind, she also has high blood pressure; hence the dependence on pension money for her medication.

Syndicate on the prowl trafficking people to Oman: Nandi-Ndaitwah

... as 31 Namibians fall victim



■ **Staff Writer**

International relations and co-operation minister, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah has said that she is aware of a syndicate operating in Namibia and trafficking people to Oman in the Middle East, with 31 people having fallen victim so far.

The women are recruited as domestic workers in Oman, allegedly in pursuit of greener pastures.

Some are said to have sent voice notes to Namibian crying out for help, the minister revealed in the National Assembly Wednesday afternoon.

She revealed that 21 have so far been safely whisked back into the country via the Hosea Kutako International Airport at the cost of their families.

So far, 10 still remain stuck in Oman.

"The remaining ten (10) victims have indicated their wish in returning to Namibia as soon as possible, pending their family members securing the required funds to assist them, with travel expenses as well as the cancellation of the debt bondage fee, linked to the visas and other expenses."

"It is believed that the employers (Sponsors) indicated that they would only release the victims upon receipt of their reimbursement of a bondage fee that ranges between Thirty-Seven Thousand Namibian dollars, (N\$ 37000.00) and Fifty Thousand (N\$ 50 000.00)," she said.

Government has been aware of this since February 2022 while the victim's ages range from 27-40 years.

The minister said reports are that the victims allegedly hitch-hiked from Namibia to South Africa and boarded planes to Oman, after their documentation was arranged by the agents in Oman, using South Africa as a transit country.

Another report is that the prospective

employers (Sponsors) in Oman avail funds to the agent in Namibia, to facilitate the logistical and travel expenses including air tickets.

In addition, the Namibian recruitment agent also charges facilitation fees for arranging employment opportunities, she said.

"Upon arrival in Oman, the employers (sponsors) would confiscate the victim's passports and cellphones and compel them to sign employment contracts in Arabic, with strict and mandatory provisions. It has been further reported that the victims are working under horrendous conditions and are expected to work 19 hours per day, 7 days a week with very few resting hours."

"In a plea to the Government, some of the victims sent voice notes to family members appealing for assistance by Government in rescuing them from their respective "sponsors" and assisting them to repatriate them back to Namibia," said the minister.

INTERPOL-NCB Windhoek and INTERPOL-NCB Muscat, held a virtual meeting on Tuesday, 13th June 2022, to discuss possible ways of relocating the victims to a safe house.

The minister disclosed that necessary repatriation processes are being arranged with the families.

"As of Thursday, 30th of June 2022, twenty-one (21) out of the thirty-one (31) victims have safely returned to Namibia from Oman, through the Hosea Kutako International Airport, with ten (10) Namibians still in Oman. It should be noted that the cost of the repatriation of the victims back to Namibia has been carried by the victims' Families."

"To date, a criminal case was registered under case number Windhoek CR260/06/2022. The case relates to the contravention of Sections 3, subsection 1 (e), (d), Section 4-19 (c), (d) and Section 5 (a) and (b) of Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act, Act 1 of 2018."

"The case is still under investigation and when the time is opportune, and if evidence so dictates, then an arrest will be affected. This is an important case and the Police and other stakeholders are carefully gathering and considering evidence before the matter is placed on the court roll."

"The Government has made arrangements that when victim(s) arrive in Namibia, they are to be received by the Namibian Police Force and referred to Social Workers at the Ministry of Health and Social Services, for psycho-social support and trauma counselling before their statements are obtained by police," she said.

Health Care services are also said to be arranged and provided at existing the health facilities.

The minister said should long term care and support be required social workers will be available in the regions where they can make follow ups, provided contact and residential address of those who need such care are provided.

"I wish to appeal to the Namibian public to remain vigilant in cases of this nature, as trafficking in persons are on the increase not only in Namibia but worldwide. Economic migrants should be aware that the grass is not always greener on the other side, as the entire world is in an economic crisis following the COVID-19 Pandemic and other global disasters."

"Under the guidance of the National Committee on Combating Human Trafficking, which I have the honour to Chair, the National awareness campaign on Trafficking in Persons will be intensified, in collaboration with all the various stakeholders."

"Finally, the Government is appealing to those who are aware of cases of Trafficking in Persons to engage the Namibian Police as soon as possible. MIRCO will continue to update the nation through different media platforms about the progress made on the repatriation of Namibians," she said.

Witvlei council boss underfire



■ **Justicia Shipena**

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Hendrick Muisoor, at the Witvlei Village Council is under fire after workers resigned from the council due to alleged unethical practices. The resignations will now be followed by a peaceful demonstration on Thursday against the village council. An association styling itself as Voice of the Voiceless is accusing the village council of being corrupt. The group claims that the village council has been running without a management committee and that the CEO of the village is dishing out plots to his close friends. "We are planning a peaceful demonstration on Thursday morning, and we will close down the village council office until all irregularities are sorted," a member of the Voice of the Voiceless said. In 2020, the same group protested at the village council over poor service delivery. Amongst the grievances, the members accuse Muisoor of running the village council like 'a bar'. "He is running the council like a bar. There are corrupt activities whereby the budget given by the government is misused. He never did anything in the past ten years. That is why the community decided to hold a peaceful demonstration to close the office until the office is audited. We want to

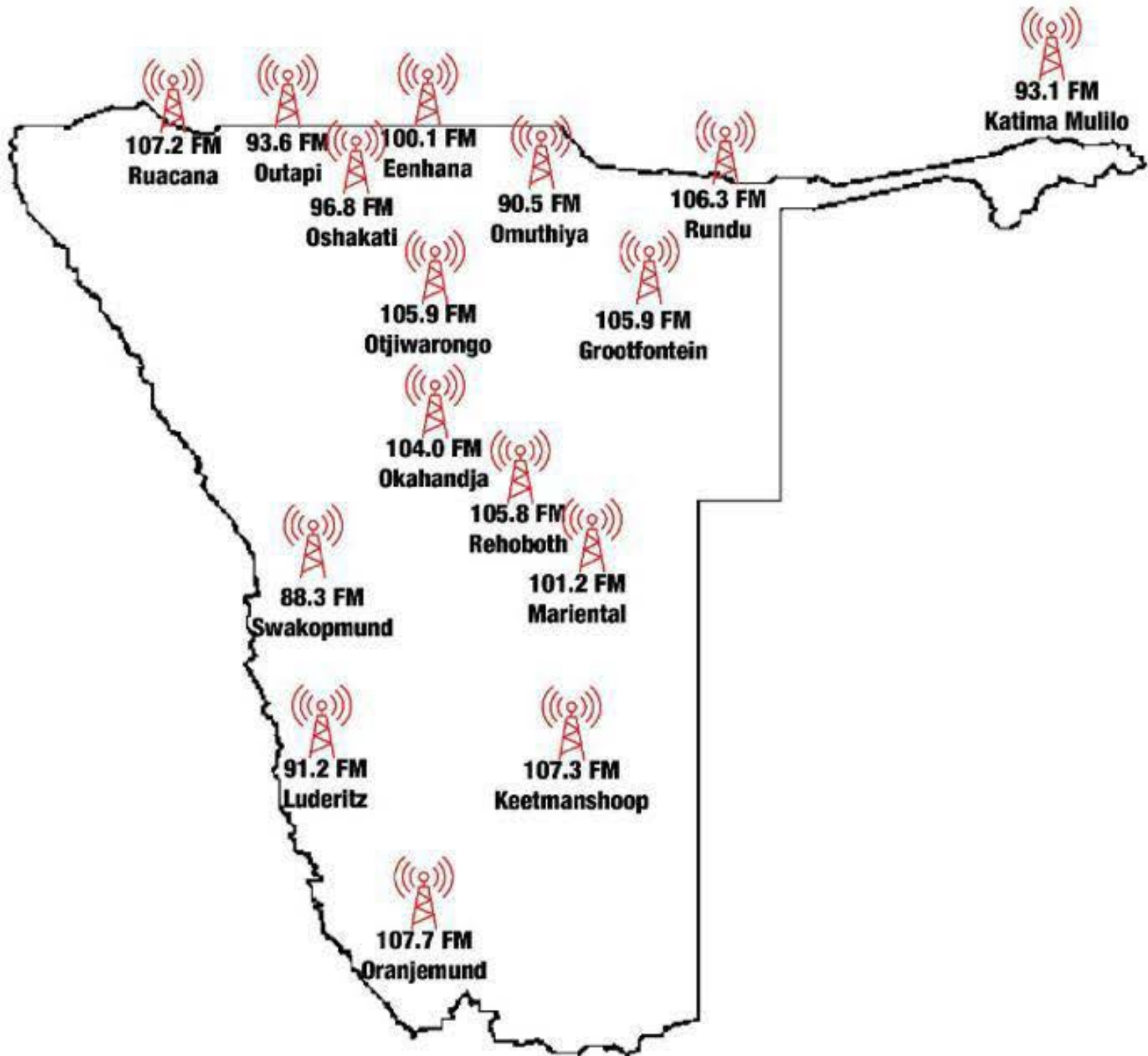
confiscate three laptops so we can hand them over to the police." According to the chairman of Voice of the Voiceless, Whitey Hoebeb, the community started having issues since the appointment of Muisoor. He claims Muisoor is not transparent in his work. "His administration is poor. There is nothing he has achieved while in office. He never advertised tenders, and he hand picks those in his favour to take them up," he said. Muisoor's term in office ends in September this year. "He does not want to work together with the development committee. He refused for one to be established. He manipulates the councillors on issues of maladministration. The HR, as the technical officer, also resigned, and they all complained about him. He would travel on personal accounts and claim on the ticket of the village council. The village council must repair things on account of the council," said Hoebeb. Voice of the Voiceless also claims that Muisoor uses divide and rule tactics at the office. An ex-employee at the village council told The Villager that he resigned because he was told to do work unethically. "At the village council there is a lot of mismanagement. Councillors are diverting into our administration, whereby we don't work on our maintenance plans. Councillors

will pop up at the office daily, giving us things out of our line." He expressed that it frustrated him; hence he decided to leave, adding that there is no control at the village council. Brian (not his real name) worked for the council for three years and seven months before he parted ways. "They would make me make payments for a job card for causal to be paid. Another issue is they would use cars for trips with families. When I came there, it was organised, but when we got new councillors, everything got out of hand in 2019," Brian narrates. Muisoor has in the meantime refuted the allegations against him, adding that he had no power over the sale of plots. "I have got no power to sell anything." In 2018, the Witvlei Village Council failed to present supporting documents accounting for N\$4 million to Auditor General, Junias Kandjeke, for the 2016/17 financial year. At that time, an amount of N\$200 000 for the provision of leave disclosed on the financial statement could also not be verified. The report revealed that there is no fixed assets register, so an amount of N\$107 000 could not be verified. Furthermore, employees of the village council, except the former CEO, strangely did not have employment contracts. At the same time, travel allowance claims were also not submitted after trips, and some journeys are not supported by invitations.





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Fourth Thor film is 'funny but silly', critics say



The latest Thor movie has received broadly positive reviews with critics describing it as "fun" but "silly".

Thor: Love and Thunder is the fourth instalment in the superhero series, based on the Marvel Comics character.

In a plot twist, it sees Natalie Portman's Jane Foster returning with superior powers to her ex-boyfriend Thor, played by Chris Hemsworth.

The Guardian said the follow-up to Thor: Ragnarok "repeats some of that masterwork's tongue-in-cheek approach".

In a three-star review, Peter Bradshaw said it was another "cosmic spectacular in the tradition of Mike Hodges' Flash Gordon", filled with "nice gags" and "big cameos", although he "missed some of the major characters" from the previous films.

The movie was directed by Oscar-winner Taika Waititi who also features on-screen alongside Hemsworth, Portman, Christian Bale, Tessa Thompson and Jaimie Alexander. The plot finds Thor on a search for inner peace after the apocalyptic events of 2019's Avengers: Endgame. But his quest for karma is interrupted by Gorr the God Butcher (Bale) who is seeking the extinction of the

gods... Thor included.

To battle this evil, he enlists the help of Valkyrie (Thompson), Korg (Waititi), and his old earthling astrophysicist flame Jane - now in possession of Thor's famous hammer and a red cape of her own.

"The film is probably on its strongest ground with the most purely absurd touches, such as the squabbling rivalry between the hammer Mjölñir, and his new weapon, the axe Stormbreaker - which is always crowding into the frame suspiciously when Thor starts swoonily hanging out with Mjölñir, unable to accept that Mjölñir is with Dr Foster now," wrote Bradshaw.

"Thor himself has conquered his weight issues, and is now a fine figure of alpha-maledom who literally makes young goddesses faint in one scene after he is disrobed and his manhood (or rather godhood) is revealed to them."

While still full of "silliness", the new film has its "more solemn" moments, Bradshaw continued, with reference to Dr Foster's cancer and references to her chemotherapy. But it is ultimately "effectively ruled by one cameo", the critic warned, from a big Hollywood name - who we won't name here,

don't worry - as Zeus.

The comedy or "self-satire" that has become Marvel's trademark of late, he concluded "is becoming a bit of a cul de sac - but that isn't to say it isn't still funny, and Thor still delivers a mighty hammer-blow, or rather axe-blow, of fun."

The Independent went one better than the Guardian, giving the movie four stars, saying it was an example of "a rare Marvel film that remembers its main audience are kids".

"Of course, Ragnarok's distinctive humour is carried over, and there's a blissfully dumb running joke about a pair of giant, heavy metal-screaming goats," wrote Clarisse Loughrey. "But, really, it's the heart that matters here."

"Love and Thunder's characters are all running towards the same conclusion: That, no matter how long or short our time on Earth (or any planet) may be, we're all inevitably living for the benefit of others."

"We love. Then we love again. It's nice for Marvel, always caught up in its own chaos, to remind us of something so simple".

Loughrey noted how while the previous film had hinted at the bi-sexuality of Thompson's Valkyrie - now the King of New Asgard

- the "deadpan nonchalance" she displays after losing the woman she loved in battle confirms it.

Variety's Owen Gleiberman lavished praise on the "otherworldly" movie, saying he felt "moved" by the final scenes.

"I like plenty of Marvel movies just fine, but they are what they are, and what they are is products," he wrote.

"This one has enough wide-eyed boldness and shimmer to earn the designation of fairy tale."

However the Sun said Love and Thunder didn't live up to the expectations of Thor's previous outing - frequently named as one of the best (and funniest) entries in Marvel's 29-movie cannon.

Critic Grant Rollings said the creators had missed an opportunity by not calling it "Thor Four" - but he appreciated Waititi's attempt to re-create Ragnarok's "successful formula".

"By putting comedy into the comic book, Waititi makes Love and Thunder a likeable rumble," he added, while dishing out three stars.

Screen Daily found the production "rousing" and "funny and emotional" if not "occasionally a little unfocused and jokey".

"Impressively, Waititi goes for a darker, more rousing tone in later reels, the one-liners and sight gags taking a backseat to a more sombre exploration of love and sacrifice," wrote Tim Grierson.

"Love And Thunder doesn't always gracefully execute its balance of light and dark but when the film focuses on the unshakeable bond between Thor and Jane, the results can be mighty moving."

Finally, while Dr Foster may have gained equal footing with her godly ex, the new film is still Thor's playground, stressed BBC Culture.

"Disney's marketing talks a good game about how Jane is wielding the God of Thunder's hammer, Mjölñir, and has become a superhero called Mighty Thor," wrote Caryn James.

"True enough, but this is still original Thor's film. Fortunately, Hemsworth is better than ever at making the character the most human, lifelike and appealing of gods, a regular guy except when he's saving the world."

She added: "This big-hearted Thor, thundering and sensitive, may be just the diverting hero we need right now."

-BBC





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Amushelelo and Dimbulukeni Are Prisoners of Conscience

Is it not interesting that we are being told that the Chinese who could be the witnesses to the damages done to their properties have not yet submitted statements?

At least, from lawyer Kadhila Amoomo's comments in the media, Michael Amushelelo and Dimbulukeni Nauyoma are still stuck in the Windhoek Correctional facility because some Chinese are yet to submit statements.

Let us check out when Michael Amushelelo and Dimbulukeni Nauyoma were arrested - 9 June 2022. By Thursday, they would have spent close to a month in prison.

The court has been saying they could not do anything because investigations are still ongoing. One wonders what investigations the courts and the police were talking about when the whole episode happened on camera?

The Chinese cannot be the only witnesses in this case because the media and those in the vicinity of China Town took videos and pictures of the protest.

At this juncture, I can safely conclude that nothing was destroyed and that no single Chinese suffered any losses. The fact that the Chinese did not suffer any losses could be why some of them have nothing to say regarding the matter.

This matter is straightforward because all Chinese business people based in China Town need to do is produce the goods that were damaged during the protest. The same Chinese should also produce evidence that Michael Amushelelo and Dimbulukeni Nauyoma or any of them physically assaulted them. To do this, the Chinese need to produce medical reports that spell out the injuries' severity.

It is so empty for the courts and the police to use unfinished investigations as a pretext for not concluding the case by either convicting Michael Amushelelo and Dimbulukeni Nauyoma together with the other six.

Take the police, for example; for a whole month now, how and what are they investigating? Who are they talking to that has left the country and they have to travel to follow them?

Suppose it is true that the police are still investigating the China Town demonstrations that happened in the full glare of the cameras. In that case, we have a sheer ineptitude police force, unless we are saying that there are people who are capitalising on the continued detention of Michael Amushelelo and Dimbulukeni Nauyoma.

One cannot avoid thinking that some people are capitalising on the detention because the Chinese cannot come forward with evidence. If the Chinese cannot come forward with evidence, what evidence are the court and the police using to detain the two?

It may be that the police did not sanction the demonstrations. If so, then why not convict them on that? It may be that they threatened the Chinese; if there is evidence to that effect, why not hold them to account on that basis?

One day, my friend on the radio said the police, the court and the Chinese could not quantify the damages. That they cannot put a cost to the damages suffered. Let us just suppose the court will convict; what will constitute the basis of their argument in the absence of such evidence? One thing is certain, though, that the continued detention is tantamount to harassment. Even those accused of stealing millions of fishrot money have been arguing that they were being denied their freedom as bestowed upon them by the Constitution. But these are people found with properties whose origins they could not explain.

At this point, Michael Amushelelo and Dimbulukeni Nauyoma are prisoners of conscience. They are being held and persecuted for the nonviolent act or expression of their conscientiously held beliefs.

Those who argue that the demonstration was violent, can you produce evidence apart from the callous and unprovoked attack launched by the police?

History will judge the current regime for this unwarranted detention and denial of human rights based on flimsy reasons such as the failure of the Chinese to give witness accounts.

How Africans can assess the value of the latest G7 summit



Leaders of the world's seven advanced economies have once again pledged economic support for Africa and other developing countries. But the realisation of these commitments depends on political developments in the Group of Seven (G7) countries, specifically the United States, the outcome of Russia's war with Ukraine, and whether Russian president Vladimir Putin retains his grip on power.

How each of these political developments will pan out is difficult to tell. But each has an important bearing on the decisions African leaders must make in terms of which power blocs, if any, they align with.

The G7 is an informal group of advanced democracies that has been meeting annually since 1975. The impetus then was a global recession caused by an energy crisis. There was also the desire among the US, UK, Germany and France to have Japan as full partner in meeting that crisis. Italy and Canada were quickly added. The president of the European Commission also attends.

Topping this year's agenda were the many pressing economic issues arising from war in Ukraine, notably the scope and effects of western sanctions against Russia.

US politics was also a backdrop to this year's summit, amid fears that Donald Trump might return to office in 2024. Trump's administration was seen as an admirer of Putin and questioned the need for a G7. President Joe Biden is, by contrast, an enthusiastic supporter. But Biden faces domestic political insecurities, raising the prospect of Trump's return or the election in 2024 of someone with his nationalist outlook.

This was the context for this year's G7 summit, to which South African president Cyril Ramaphosa and the current chair of the African Union, Senegal's Macky Sall, were invited to make presentations. So were the leaders of India, Indonesia and Argentina. Each one is a democracy with extensive ties to members of the G7. But they are also what Brookings scholar Bruce Jones describes as "fence sitters" regarding the isolation of Russia.

African governments especially face many challenges, amid escalating tensions between western democracies, Russia and China. Africa's interests would be best served if its leaders were to avoid being drawn into the hostile divide between Russia and China and the west. But it may not be possible to avoid taking sides while trying to maximise advantageous partnerships.

Political uncertainties among the major powers abound, including the course of the Ukrainian war, US domestic politics, and even Putin's hold on power. The Russian leader has been in office since 2000 and has amended Russia's constitution to extend his term to 2036. Biden faces restive voters in 2024, with current polling data showing his support below 40%.

Germany, the summit host, succeeded in having western economic issues of the Ukraine war discussed on the first day. The second day addressed challenges facing African and other developing nations. Climate change, global health, gender equity and digital infrastructure were included.

Currently, the Ukraine war affects all these issues. Its terrible effects on Africa should not be ignored.

Assessing the value of the G7 summit

The G7 summit offered the most recent insights for Africa into how the western advanced nations are considering their stakes in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the impact that could have

on developing nations. Sorting substance from rhetoric will take time. African scepticism as to whether the west will deliver has merit.

As African governments assess the significance of the G7's promises of support in areas of vital concern to Africans, four key political possibilities could advance or derail them.

- If Putin remains in power and Biden wins a second four-year term, then the prospects for a second Cold War in Africa will escalate. This would likely differ from the first one in being less of a military confrontation, and without the competing ideologies of communism and capitalism. Rather, it would be about variations of democracy and authoritarianism, presenting difficult choices for African governments and citizens.

- If Putin remains but Biden loses to the still dominant Trump faction Republicans in the 2022 congressional and 2024 presidential elections, then America's pledge to the G7 package could be abandoned in 2025. Trump cancelled the US pledge to support the special fund to mitigate the effects of climate change in 2017.

Other cuts in multilateral programmes, including to the World Health Organisation and African peacekeeping, that Biden restored, would likely be reinstated. And if Trump allies gain greater power in Congress, their role in protecting programmes in health, agriculture and development that Trump failed to slash in his first Trump presidency would be vulnerable.

- If Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity survive, and Putin is deposed or politically weakened, and Biden wins, then risks of a new Cold War in Africa should decline, and possibilities for collective African agency improve.

- If Biden and Putin both lose power at home, then risks of a new Cold War in Africa also diminish. The focus will turn more towards China and whether the G7 can function as an equally important partner in Africa's collective efforts to improve the daunting prospects of its myriad challenges without America's leadership.

Timely reminder

On 27 June 2022 the G7 leaders and guests issued a "resilient democracies" statement.

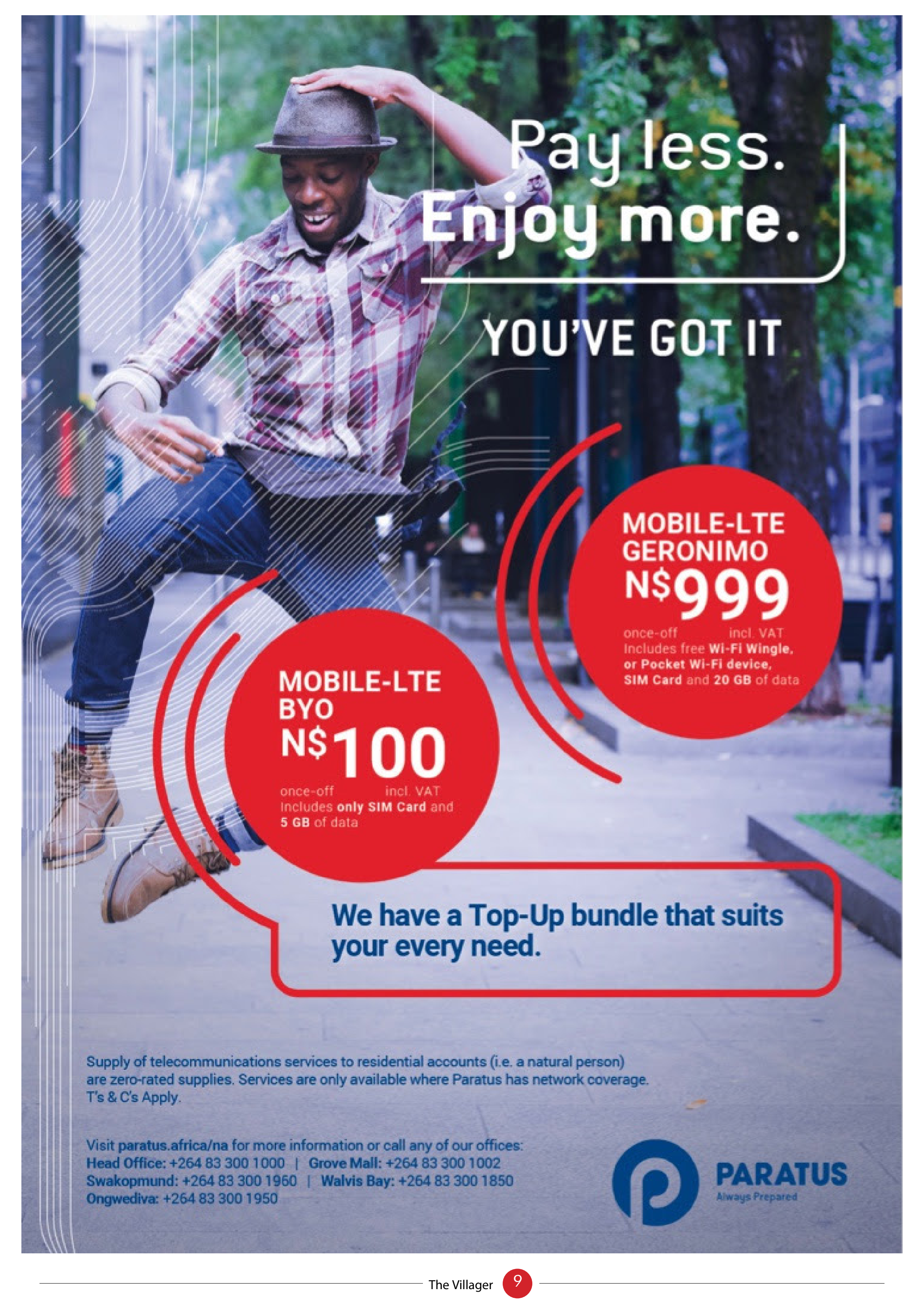
In it the leaders describe democracies globally as reliable partners, willing and able to defend open, pluralistic debate. They also reaffirm their commitments to inclusion, equality and the promotion of equal representation.

It is an important indicator of the democratic commitments embedded in the founding documents of the African Union, as well as the UN Charter and institutions. Russia's disregard for these rules might even open fresh opportunities for reforming the UN Security Council and other multilateral forums to Africa's advantage.

The statement, endorsed by the chair of the African Union, is a timely reminder that Africans – for their own reasons – aspire to entrench basic freedoms and rights, different from authoritarian alternatives. That fact alone makes Africa's participation in this year's G7 a timely signal of its aspiration to achieve national and regional integration by democratic means.

John J Stremlau

Honorary Professor of International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand



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‘Fourth wave’: Dozens die of COVID in last 5 days in Bangladesh



■ **Faisal Mahmud**

At least 32 people have died of the coronavirus disease in Bangladesh in the first five days of July, data compiled by Al Jazeera shows, as the country reports a sharp rise in infections which experts say is due to a new sub-variant of the virus. The South Asian nation reported nearly 2,000 new cases and seven of those COVID-related deaths on Tuesday, with the trend showing a positivity rate of 16.74 percent, according to a daily bulletin issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). The latest figures took the country's total deaths to 29,181, while the total caseload mounted to about two million since the pandemic struck in early 2020. Only a month ago, Bangladesh detected just 43 new cases with a daily positivity rate of less than one percent. Experts fear it could be the arrival of a fourth wave of the coronavirus in Bangladesh, saying a new sub-variant of the deadly Omicron variant is responsible for the spike in cases. A study conducted by the International

Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) found the sub-variant BA.5 is spreading rapidly in the country. The sub-variants are classified as variants of concern by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). "The recent countrywide upsurge of COVID-19 cases as well as hospitalisation warrants continuation of public health and social measures," the icddr,b said in a statement. In six weeks – between May 14 and June 24 – Omicron BA.5 "became the most predominant subvariant," said the statement. "During this period, 51 out of 52 COVID-19 positive cases were identified as BA.5 subvariants and one BA.2 by using complete genome sequencing," it added. 'Fourth wave' To curb the spread of the virus, the Bangladesh government on June 28 instructed its officials to enforce a "no mask, no service" policy in all offices and public places. The government's National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on

COVID-19 has recommended strengthening the screening of all incoming passengers at airports. NTAC president Dr Mohammad Shahidullah told Al Jazeera if people do not abide by the health guidelines, the infections could further rise. "We can already call it the fourth wave of COVID-19. I am urging all to maintain social distancing again," he said. Shahidullah said they are not considering any lockdown "as this is not a feasible solution, especially in view of its economic impact". Dr M Mushtuq Husain, adviser at the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) of Bangladesh told Al Jazeera many in the world are now treating COVID-19 "like flu". "Of course, people are dying because of COVID but we can no longer go for a lockdown. Life has to go on, but carefully," Husain said. The government has vaccinated more than 70 percent of its 160 million population with two doses of the coronavirus vaccine, while nearly 15 percent of the people have received booster shots.

"You can protect against infection for three months on average after getting vaccinated. Previous occurrence of COVID also gives you protection for around three months at best," Husain said. Husain, however, fears the worst in the coming days as the Muslim-majority country prepares for the Eid al-Adha festival which falls next week. Officials say the packed markets, especially the large cattle markets for the ritualistic sacrifice, could become "super-spreaders" of the virus. Before the festival every year, a number of makeshift camps crop up mainly in capital Dhaka and the port city of Chattogram where cattle traders from across the country sell cows and goats, with millions attending. The two cities, among the country's largest, also witness an exodus of millions of people taking trains, buses, ferries and private vehicles to reach the countryside to celebrate the festival with their families. "Because of the cattle markets and Eid, I believe this wave will reach its peak by mid-July. But it will subside very fast too – by the end of July," said Husain. -Al Jazeera

Experts fear it could be the arrival of a fourth wave of the coronavirus in Bangladesh.



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British Airways cancels 1,500 more flights

■ Beth Timmins

British Airways has cancelled a further 1,500 flights, mostly for July. The wave of cancellations made over the past weeks will affect tens of thousands hoping to jet off this summer from Heathrow and Gatwick. The industry has been struggling with staff shortages as demand for air travel rebounds. British Airways had already removed 10% of scheduled flights between April and October, but said that "regrettably" more reductions were needed. A spokesperson from the airline, which is the UK's largest, said: "We took pre-emptive action earlier this year to reduce our summer schedule to provide customers with as much notice as possible about any changes to their travel plans. "As the entire aviation industry continues to face into the most challenging period in its history, regrettably it has become necessary to make some further reductions." The carrier said it was in touch with customers to "apologise and offer to rebook them or issue a full refund". The wave of cancellations comes ahead of Friday's deadline, announced last month by the Department for Transport (DfT), for an amnesty to give airlines a short window to hand back airport slots in the summer season they are not confident they will be able to operate. BA is expected to announce further cancellations over the summer ahead of the deadline. Airport slots provide airlines with the authorisation to take off or land at a specified time on a specified day. In usual



circumstances, the carriers risk losing the slots - and taking a hit to their business - if they cancel flights. On Wednesday, British Airways was also affected by a rare "schedule intervention" by Heathrow Airport. Heathrow asked airlines to cut 30 flights from their Thursday morning schedules, as more passengers were expected than it could deal with. It made the move to ensure the airport

had enough security staff on duty for the number of passengers. Strike action The cancellations come as hundreds of British Airways check-in staff at Heathrow are deciding on strike dates which could further affect the peak summer school holiday travel period. Many jobs in the aviation industry were lost during the course of the Covid pandemic and recruiting enough staff in

time to deal with the surge in demand for travel has proven difficult for airlines and airports. Gatwick has already said it would be reducing the number of flights during summer because of staff shortages before the airport slots amnesty was announced. And Manchester Airport has warned it will not be able to return to its pre-pandemic standards until the autumn.

Thousands of passengers were affected by last-minute flight cancellations over the Easter and half-term holidays. That earlier disruption prompted the government and the aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority, to write to airlines telling them to ensure their summer timetables were "deliverable... based on the resources you and your contractors expect to have available". -BBC



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Norway's government steps in to end oil and gas strike, averting a new energy shock for Europe



■ **Gayle Harrington
& Anna Cooban**

Norway has intervened to end a strike by oil and gas workers, the country's government said in a statement late Tuesday, citing concerns about Europe's energy crisis amid Russia's war in Ukraine. Natural gas prices spiked after Norwegian oil and gas workers went on strike over a pay dispute Tuesday, shutting three fields in the North Sea and threatening to escalate action over the course of the week. Norway is Europe's second-largest energy supplier after Russia and the strike had pushed gas prices to their highest level in four months. The Norwegian government has proposed a compulsory wage arbitration to settle the dispute, the statement said. "We normally exercise significant restraint before intervening with compulsory wage arbitration," Labor Minister Marte Mjøs Persen said after he summoned oil companies and workers to a meeting late Tuesday. "However, the serious consequences of the announced escalations have forced my hand in intervening." The Norwegian oil and gas employers' lobby had said the strikes could have halted almost 60% of Norwegian gas exports to Europe from July 9.

The closure of the three fields resulted in the loss of the equivalent of about 89,000 barrels of oil a day, Norway's state-owned energy company Equinor said in a statement. Europe is trying to reduce its reliance on Russia's exports, which are already being curtailed by Moscow. Any sustained drop in Norway's output could deal a big blow to efforts to replenish gas stocks ahead of the winter, as well as raise the risk of a catastrophic energy shortage. Germany, the region's biggest economy, has already declared a "gas crisis" and warned it can't rule out introducing rationing to get through the winter. News of the strike helped push European natural gas futures prices up 5% to hit 172 euros (\$177) per megawatt hour, data from the Intercontinental Exchange showed. That's the highest price since early March in the days following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasizes that Russia's offensive war against Ukraine has had a major impact on security of supply in many European countries," the Norwegian government said in its statement. "There is an immediate risk of additional energy shortages in Europe. A reduction in Norwegian gas deliveries will worsen

the energy crisis, in addition to the inherent political, financial and societal consequences. Norway must do everything in its power to bolster European energy security and European solidarity against Russian aggression." An uncertain winter The Norwegian strike came nearly three weeks after Russia reduced the flow of gas to Europe through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline and after it cut off three European Union countries and several energy companies for refusing to pay in rubles, rather than euros or dollars. Gas flows through Nord Stream 1 are currently running at just 40% of capacity, according to an analysis by S&P Global Platts. To add to the uncertainty, deliveries through the pipeline are due to stop completely for 10 days from the start of next week for maintenance work. "The concern is rather that gas shipments may be even further reduced or not even resumed at all following the maintenance work," Carsten Fritsch, analyst for energy, agriculture and precious metals at Commerzbank, wrote in a note on Tuesday. "This would make it virtually impossible to replenish European natural gas stocks for next winter and would necessitate further-reaching political measures and

cuts to gas consumption," he added. Gas storage facilities in the EU are about 59% full, data from Gas Infrastructure Europe show. That is about three percentage points below usual storage levels for this time of year, Fritsch said. Bigger headache Alex Froley, an analyst at the Independent Commodity Intelligence Services, told CNN Business the bigger problem facing Europe was the closure of a major liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant in the United States. A fire at the Freeport LNG facility in Texas last month has temporarily stopped production. Normally, the facility produces about one-fifth of the US' LNG exports, according to analytics firm Vortexa. In recent months, Europe has become increasingly reliant on imports of LNG to compensate for the reduction in Russian natural gas supplies. "Gas demand for heating is greatly reduced in summer, though, and Norway always carries out some maintenance in summer — so it's not an immediate physical problem for the market to see some reductions," Froley said. "[The Freeport LNG plant has] been a big source of supply for Europe this year, and isn't expected back until October at the earliest," he added. -CNN

We normally exercise significant restraint before intervening with compulsory wage arbitration.





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On the Radar with Justicia
13h00-14h30

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The Home Run with Frans/ Fanus
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Business Segment with Dwight
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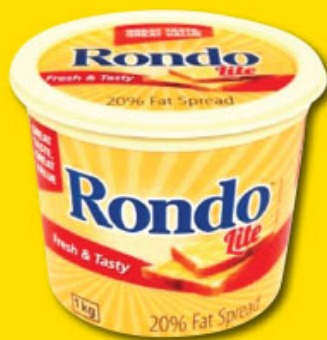


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Sudan protesters sceptical military will step aside

■ **Mat Nashed**

Appearing on television late on Monday, Sudan's coup leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan announced that the military would step aside and allow civilian forces to assume power, appearing to concede to the demands of the country's mass pro-democracy movement.

But violence against demonstrators, along with reports that the military will continue to control Sudan's central bank and foreign policy, have supported widely held suspicions that the security forces have no intention of actually relinquishing power.

"How many times has [al-Burhan] spoken about participating in negotiations, and not killing people, and how government forces protect civilians?," asked Dania Atabani, a member of one of the resistance committees – neighbourhood groups spearheading demonstrations across the country. "It would be very stupid if we trusted him again now."

As the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces, al-Burhan said that the military would withdraw from internationally backed political talks and allow civilians to form a transitional government.

Al-Burhan added that the military, along with a powerful paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), would form a new "Security and Defence Council", tasked with protecting the country.

Protesters, politicians, and experts told

Al Jazeera that they fear the new council would supersede the authority of a civilian executive.

That would allow security forces to preserve their lucrative economic assets, safeguard the interest of their foreign patrons, and evade accountability for killing at least 114 civilians in anti-coup protests, which began after the military upended the country's fragile transition to democracy on October 25, 2021.

"What gives al-Burhan the authority to set up a security and defence council?" asked Kholood Khair, a Sudanese political analyst and the head of Insight Strategy Partners, a think-tank based in the capital of Khartoum. "He has basically completed the coup by doing away with all of the institutions from the democratic transition."

Coming Together With the military sidestepping responsibility for running day-to-day affairs, civilian blocs and resistance committees are now rushing to build a new front to assume executive functions and advance their quest for full civilian rule.

In a news conference on July 5, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) – a coalition of political parties that participated in government before the military overthrow – said that all revolutionary forces must first agree on a constitutional declaration that outlines the mandate and parameters of the transitional period.

"There is now a real chance to recapture the spirit of the broad-based civilian coalition



that unseated Omar al-Bashir," Khair told Al Jazeera, referring to the protest movement that brought down Sudan's former president in April 2019. "But I think one thing that the FFC really needs to do is align itself with the resistance committee's charters."

Resistance committees from across Sudan have produced two political charters that reflect the core demands of the pro-democracy movement. The first was signed by 15 out of Sudan's 18 states in March. The second was signed by 15 resistance committees from Khartoum in May.

Both charters call for full civilian rule, sustainable economic development, and equitable wealth sharing. Despite some differences, resistance committees have agreed to merge the two charters to establish a unified political vision.

Ammar Hammada, a spokesperson for the FFC, told Al Jazeera that politicians are

hoping to make the charters a core part of a plan that represents all civilian groups. However, he stressed that not everyone will see eye to eye on every detail.

"We still need to reach an agreement about [the charters] and as we get into the details we will find obstacles here and there," he said. "But the FFC is not the only main player any more. We must unite with the resistance committees and other civilian groups."

Keeping up the Pressure

Al-Burhan's announcement indicated that the leaders of Sudan's military coup are now worried about a mounting civil disobedience campaign that ramped up after security forces killed nine people during a mass protest on June 30. In response, resistance committees and the FFC called for a general strike and sit-ins across the country.

"The immediate calls after the violence suggested that protests were going to spread like fire on dry grass," said Suleiman Baldo, the founding director of the Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker. "The [strike,] in particular, would have been the moment of total defeat for the military and its coup."

Baldo added that civilian forces have a real chance to push the military to relinquish power if they come up with a political map quickly.

"Citizens need to very clearly spell out what the military's powers are ... They can't leave it to al-Burhan to define the defence council's mandate," he said.

The FFC has already stressed the need

for security sector reform, stating that Sudan needs a single national army. The coalition also urged the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) – an eight-member East African regional bloc that has been accused of yielding to the military – to condemn the coup during a summit this week that al-Burhan attended in Kenya.

IGAD and the broader global community have kept quiet about al-Burhan's announcement of a new council. Just days before, diplomats from the European Union and the Troika – the United States, United Kingdom and Norway – were calling for civilian groups and the military to engage in a tripartite political dialogue, which IGAD, the UN and the African Union were mediating.

But the pro-democracy movement rejected those calls out of fear that it would produce another power-sharing deal that could legitimise the military's stranglehold over politics and the economy.

Shaienz Gamal, a resistance committee member who spoke to Al Jazeera from one of the sit-ins in Khartoum, said that the only way forward was to continue calling for strikes and protests. She promised that a united civilian front would eventually defeat Sudan's military leaders – as long as the FFC adhered to popular demands.

"The position of the street is clear," Gamal said. We keep telling everybody that there will be no negotiations, no partnership, and no legitimacy for the military."

-Al Jazeera

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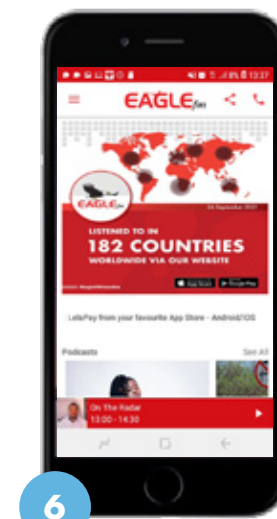
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How junta got Ecowas economic sanctions lifted



Mali's military junta whipped up nationalist sentiments as it successfully pushed West African leaders to end the economic blockade imposed on the country following a coup, writes regional analyst Paul Melly.

In return for setting a firm February 2024 election deadline, Mali's regime has secured an end to the sanctions imposed by the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas).

For ordinary Malians, particularly the urban population in the capital, Bamako, who consume more imported goods, the lifting of the sanctions is certainly good news.

Although the measures were not meant to curb the supply of basic essentials, in practice they were an additional pressure for traders and families already struggling to cope with the rise in world grain and fuel prices driven by the resurgence of world demand after the pandemic and then the Russian attack on Ukraine.

The sanctions were imposed in January after the junta, which seized power last year, announced a four-year delay in the transition to elected civilian rule. It has now pruned back the transition to less than two years, with elections starting in February 2024.

This was accepted by Ecowas leaders at their summit meeting in Ghana's capital, Accra, at the weekend.

'Bullying neighbours'

It is a significant success for Mali's regime,

but also a huge relief for Ecowas, which has increasingly come to be viewed by many Malians, and many others across the region, as an over-weening club of presidents who take a harsh line against military putschists but overlook their own faults.

Mali's military leaders and Prime Minister Choguel Maïga cleverly played on these popular perceptions to present themselves as the defenders of the people against bullying neighbours, who failed to appreciate the need for radical change in a country whose traditional elite had supposedly been rotted by corruption and complacency.

Over the past six months, every tough message from Ecowas or Europe and the United Nations, has been met with a defiant nationalist response from Bamako. In mid-May the regime announced that Mali was quitting the G5 Sahel bloc, created in 2014 to coordinate a joint effort by Sahelian armies in fighting jihadist groups.

The regime has maintained its collaboration with the Russian security contractor Wagner, despite allegations from Human Rights Watch and others about widespread abuses against civilians.

The breakdown of its relations led France and other European countries to announce the withdrawal of the troops they had deployed to fight jihadist groups, a process that will be complete with the departure of the final contingent from the French force

Barkhane next month.

Meanwhile, the Bamako regime has imposed ever-tighter restrictions on the operations of the UN peacekeeping force known by its acronym Minusma, denying its investigators local access to investigate reported crimes, such as the army and Wagner's alleged killing of around 300 people in the village of Moura in late March.

Yet even as Mali became more defiant, it gradually reined back its political agenda, edging towards something that Ecowas might accept.

Spate of coups

West African leaders were initially ready to show some flexibility. Their envoy for the Mali crisis, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, kept up his shuttle diplomacy visits to Bamako.

However, Ecowas felt it had to hold the line against the accelerating wave of military coups across a region that until recently could pride itself on being mostly ruled by governments elected in genuine multi-party systems.

The August 2020 coup in Mali was followed by a second putsch in May last year. Then in Guinea in September Colonel Mamady Doumbouya overthrew the increasingly autocratic President Alpha Condé.

And in Burkina Faso in January this year military officers ousted President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré - who had been elected to a second term in a genuinely

democratic contest only 14 months earlier - amid anger at his failure to curb the spread of jihadist violence.

Then February saw what appeared to be a failed coup attempt in Guinea-Bissau. Eleven people died as soldiers loyal to President Umaro Sissoco Embaló successfully fought off soldiers who attacked the government headquarters.

And there has been speculation that other countries in the region could also see military takeovers. So Ecowas certainly needed to deter potential putschists.

Yet at the same time its leaders have been desperate to find a way that would bring Mali, as well as Guinea and Burkina Faso, back into the club of countries that are governed by elected civilians, under proper constitutional rule.

And that has been important not just for the sake of West African democracy but also because Mali sits right at the heart of the Sahel crisis and the struggle to contain the spread of militant violence and inter-communal tensions.

Regional collaboration in tackling other pressures such as food insecurity and climate change could only be hobbled by the country's deepening isolation.

Retreat from confrontation

Step by step, the regime in Bamako took measures that have helped to reassure Ecowas leaders - the passage of a new electoral law and arrangements for an elections authority, and a detailed roadmap for the transition, and, above all, a fixed timetable that sets a firm deadline for the

first round of the presidential election to take place in February 2024.

There still appears to be uncertainty over whether the new arrangements will deny the junta leader, Assimi Goïta, the right to stand in that election.

But Ecowas appears to have decided to "bank" the commitments that it could secure at this stage and remain in dialogue with the Malian leadership over the remaining details.

West African leaders concluded that this is sufficient to justify the lifting of sanctions. And for them, there is a further big plus point.

This compromise deal opens the path to a gradual retreat from the damaging confrontation with a defensively nationalist Bamako regime and a gradual restoration of the normal cooperative relationships between Mali and its neighbours - so badly needed as the region struggles to tackle the Sahel crisis.

And in that same vein, Ecowas has also managed to reach agreement with Burkina Faso's military junta on a timetable for a transition back to democracy, with a return to civilian rule in July 2024.

Ecowas hopes these precedents will encourage the Guinean military regime to follow suit. It has chosen Benin's former President Thomas Boni Yayi as its mediator, to try to negotiate a deal with the regime in Conakry.

-BBC



Hadron Collider: What could subatomic particle smasher reveal?



Scientists in Switzerland have resumed smashing together the tiny particles that make up the physical properties of the universe, in hopes of better understanding the forces and phenomena that undergird existence.

On Tuesday, the latest round of experiments began at the Large Hadron Collider, a massive apparatus at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) facility in Geneva, following a three-year renovation that scientists say has upped the possibilities for the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator.

The beginning of the so-called "Run 3" of the collider comes nearly a decade after data it yielded proved the existence of the Higgs boson particle, also known as the "God particle", a revelatory discovery that scientists say confirmed the "final puzzle piece" of the Standard Model theory, which outlines the fundamental building blocks and forces of the universe.

What is the Large Hadron Collider?

At its most basic, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) is a mechanism that creates controlled beams of atomic and subatomic particles, which are then made to collide. Using extremely advanced sensors, data can be collected and studied from the collisions, which can briefly reveal the even smaller particles that make up those that collided. The collision process has been used to create what has been described as a mini-big bang, helping to shed light on the conditions in the first moments of the creation of the universe.

The LHC consists of a 27km underground ring of "superconducting magnets" and energy-boosting structures that help the particle beams travel at the near speed of light. The ring is connected to a distribution system of liquid helium, which keeps the magnets at 271.3 degrees celsius, a temperature colder than space, according to CERN.

The collider, which took about three

decades to plan and build, began operating on September 10, 2008. It was shut down in 2013 and 2018 for upgrades. The current experiment will involve collisions at a record 13.6 trillion electronvolts, allowing for increased collision rates and higher collision energy.

"This is a significant increase, paving the way for new discoveries," CERN Director for Accelerators and Technology Mike Lamont said in a statement.

The collider began running in April to rev up to the level needed to conduct the experiments.

What has been discovered before?

The most high-profile discovery from the collider has been the confirmation of the existence of the Higgs boson, a sub-atomic particle that "essentially provides the origin of mass", Brian Cole, a professor of experimental nuclear physics at Columbia University, told Al Jazeera at the time of the discovery.

Mass is one of the most basic properties

of matter, which makes up all physical components of the universe. Because of this, the Higgs boson particle has already helped scientists to explain several phenomena, including how atoms have mass.

It could also help to reveal details of how the universe formed.

"We know that very early in the universe, a period of what's called inflation occurred, when the universe grew incredibly rapidly over billionths of a billionths of a second," Cole said. "And we don't yet know quite how that happened, but it's possible that had to do with the Higgs."

The existence of the Higgs boson was first theorised by a group of scientists, including Peter Higgs, a physicist at the University of Edinburgh, in 1964, almost 50 years before it was proven.

The collider has been used to discover dozens more so-called "non-elementary" particles, meaning particles beyond the protons, neutrons, and electrons that make

up an atom.

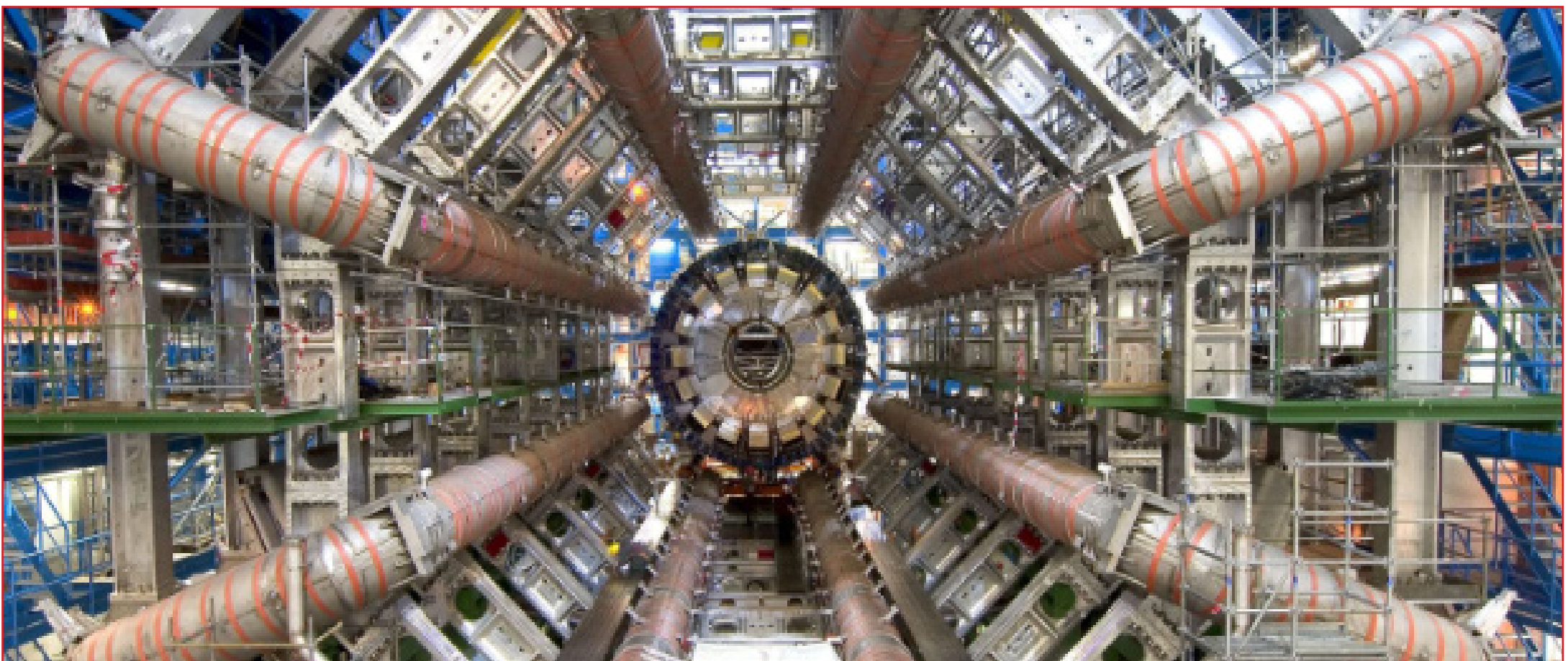
What are scientists hoping to find?

Scientists will seek to further study the Higgs boson, with the updated collider allowing for a better understanding of the behaviour of the particle.

Scientists also hope the advanced technology will help to detect signs of dark matter, which is matter that cannot be seen directly, but is known to exist because of its effect on observable objects, including its gravitational pull, according to the United States space agency NASA.

There is also hope that the LHC will help to answer the question of why there is considerably less antimatter in the universe compared to its partner substance, matter, when both should have been produced in equal parts following the big bang.

Meanwhile, as experiments got under way on Tuesday, scientists at CERN announced the discovery of new "exotic particles" that could provide clues about the force that binds subatomic particles together.





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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 Frans/ Fanus
16h30-18h30
Business Segment with Dwight
18h30-19h30
Pulling Heart Strings with Elizabeth
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Climate change and war send Syria’s bees further afield

■ Ali haj Suleiman

Ahmad al-Hassan arranges a wide array of colourful honey jars on his shelf in his shop in Idlib city. Beekeeping is the only work the 29-year-old Syrian has ever known, but conflict, economic deterioration, and even climate change have become painful stings to his livelihood. A short drive away from his shop, al-Hassan and four employees wear their protective clothing before checking in on their 50 hives. “There isn’t enough land for the bees any more,” the frustrated beekeeper said as he looked into the distance. “Before the current situation, we had swathes of land to work with.” Now, they may have to relocate their bee colony to another plot of land, where the bees can forage for nectar and pollen. Idlib is in northwestern Syria, where an estimated 97 percent of the residents live in extreme poverty, and most are internally displaced from the country’s 11-year uprising-turned-war. Many live in tents in displacement camps. Al-Hassan has taken risks with his bee colonies, often moving them close to the Turkish border or even near de facto front lines with Syrian government-held areas so his bees have access to flowers and plants. “We worry when we place the hives near a front line, but it’s better than letting the bees just die,” he said with a sigh. Production has continued to decline every year, and so has business. “We don’t export anything,” al-Hassan said as he rearranged jars of honey on his shelf. “All we rely on is local demand.” But the local market in northwestern Syria has been financially shattered. Economic woes have compounded for



millions across opposition-held Idlib and northern Aleppo provinces. The Turkish lira, the primary currency used in the region, has sharply lost value, and the area is also over-reliant on imports for wheat, fuel, and essential food items. To make matters worse, with the Ukrainian conflict in full swing, international donor fatigue has continued, leaving food assistance and free-of-charge medical programmes on shoestring budgets. Climate crisis effects And even when al-Hassan and his crew find some open land for his bees, they

often discover there are fewer plants and flowers. “There is less fennel flower, anise, and cotton,” he explained. “Less flowers means less production.” The beekeeper was only able to produce half of the honey, wax, pollen, and royal jelly he had yielded the year prior. Climate change has been a factor. “Winter is like summer, and summer is like winter,” al-Hassan explained, as he pointed to the unexpected gloomy and cloudy weather. “Our bees continue to die at increasing rates.” Warming temperatures and a decline

in rainfall have ravaged northern Syria in recent years. Humanitarian and development agencies have said that climate change could further worsen economic conditions, public health, and food insecurity in the war-torn country. “Rainfall is sporadic and happens at more unexpected times – even the wind patterns have changed,” al-Hassan said. “We can barely break even every season now.” Going forward, the beekeeper is revisiting his budget to keep his business afloat. He used to be able to import bees that produce more honey, honey pollen, and other

derivatives, unlike Syrian bees, which produce less honey and wax. “It costs almost \$200 to run a hive of foreign bees, as opposed to about \$35 for a local one,” al-Hassan said. “But Syrian bees don’t produce nearly as much honey.” For now, al-Hassan and his team of beekeepers are moving their colonies towards the Turkish border, hoping the bees will venture to greener pastures and return safely with pollen and nectar – and provide a financial lifeline amid the country’s economic crisis. -Al Jazeera

Qatari foreign minister in Tehran to help nuclear deal efforts

■ Maziar Motamedi

Qatar’s foreign minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani has met his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amirabdollahian in Tehran in an effort to move along talks aimed at restoring Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. The top Qatari diplomat arrived in the Iranian capital on Wednesday afternoon and is also scheduled to meet Iran’s security chief Ali Shamkhani. The visit comes after Doha hosted two days of indirect talks between Iran and the United States in late June, with the European Union conducting shuttle diplomacy. The talks concluded without any progress, as significant disagreements over the scope and guarantees on the lifting of US-imposed sanctions remain between Tehran and Washington, and no more negotiations have been scheduled thus far. Amirabdollahian and Al Thani held a press conference after their meeting, during which the Iranian diplomat sought to counter the United States’ narrative that Iran is to blame for the failure of the nuclear talks. “Despite some media claims by the

American side, we have no claims that go beyond the JCPOA,” he said, referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the formal name of the nuclear deal. The Iranian foreign minister added that Iran was ready for a strong and sustainable agreement. Amirabdollahian confirmed that a major sticking point during the talks in Qatar was Iran’s demand for an “effective guarantee” by the US on “anything that could [negatively] impact Iran’s economic benefits” promised under the original deal. For his part, Al Thani reiterated Qatar’s support for the restoration of the nuclear deal, and also for regional talks between Iran and countries of the region. US State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Tuesday that Washington has no plan for another round of talks at the moment. He also said Tehran has “consistently introduced extraneous demands that go beyond the four walls of the JCPOA”, which he said showed Iran lacks seriousness and is not committed. Al Thani’s trip also comes after a series of phone calls between stakeholders to discuss the fate of the nuclear deal, which the US unilaterally abandoned in 2018.

Separately, Amirabdollahian and the EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, had a phone discussion on Tuesday. The Iranian diplomat tweeted after the call that the “US must decide if it wants a deal or insists on sticking to its unilateral demands” while Borrell wrote that “decisions are needed now” since the window to revive the accord is closing. Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s chief negotiator in the nuclear talks, which initially began in Vienna in April 2021, reacted by tweeting that “it is high time for the US to take a more forthcoming position” in the talks if it committed to restoring the JCPOA. Amirabdollahian had also spoken with French foreign minister Catherine Colonna and Omani foreign minister Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi earlier this week. Along with Iran and the US, China, Russia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom were the other signatories of the original accord. Qatar and Oman have been relaying messages between Iran and the US since last year in efforts to help restore the deal. ‘Tensions are rising’ Time to revive the landmark deal is limited since the global nuclear watchdog has warned that its significantly limited ability to monitor Iranian nuclear sites could



signal the death of the JCPOA. Last month, Iran removed 27 cameras installed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as part of the nuclear deal and also began installing cascades of advanced centrifuges to boost its uranium enrichment. The country has capped enrichment at 60 percent, short of the 90 percent required for a bomb, while maintaining that its nuclear programme is strictly peaceful. The move to restrict IAEA monitoring came in response to the passing of a resolution at the IAEA board censuring Iran for its nuclear programme and lack

of cooperation with the agency. The resolution was put forward by the US and its European allies. In a speech in Australia on Tuesday, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said the agency is ready to resume its monitoring activities in Iran, and also warned that Iran’s nuclear activities could prompt its neighbours to ramp up their nuclear programmes. “There are countries in the region today looking very carefully at what is happening with Iran, and tensions in the region are rising,” he said. -Al Jazeera

Highland Park shooting: Suspect charged with 7 counts of murder



The man accused of opening fire on a Fourth of July parade near the city of Chicago in the United States has been charged with seven counts of murder.

Illinois State Attorney Eric Rinehart said on Tuesday that the suspected gunman, Robert E Crimo III, faces a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of parole if he is convicted.

Reinhart said the first-degree murder charges would be followed by “dozens of more charges” and that he would ask that Crimo remain held in custody without bail at the suspect’s first court appearance, scheduled for Wednesday.

The young man is accused of shooting his victims from a sniper’s perch on a rooftop above the parade in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, Illinois.

Officials said he had planned the attack for weeks.

They said he fired more than 70 rounds at random into the crowd watching Monday’s parade and that he was dressed in women’s clothes to help conceal his identity and blend in with the panic-stricken crowd as he fled.

“He blended right in with everybody else as they were running around, almost as if he was an innocent spectator as well,” said Sergeant Chris Covelli, a spokesperson for the Lake County Sheriff’s office, adding that the suspect has distinctive facial tattoos.

In addition to the seven victims killed by gunfire, more than three dozen people were treated in hospitals for gunshot wounds and other injuries.

Missed signals

Covelli said Crimo had two previous encounters with law enforcement – an April 2019 emergency-911 call reporting that he had attempted suicide and another in September of that year regarding alleged threats “to kill everyone” that he had directed at family members.

Police responding to the second incident seized a collection of 16 knives, a dagger and a sword amassed by Crimo in his home, though no arrest was made as authorities at the time lacked probable cause to take him into custody.

“There were no complaints that were signed by any of the victims,” Covelli said. Still, the suspect went on to apply for a gun license in December of the same year, when he 19. His father sponsored his application, and state police said in a statement that “there was insufficient basis to establish a clear and present danger” and deny the application at the time.

Covelli said Crimo legally purchased the rifle used in the attack in Illinois within the past year. The weapon, which he dropped at the scene, was a high-powered rifle, similar to an AR-15. In all, police said Crimo purchased five firearms, which were recovered by officers at his father’s home. Investigators who have interrogated the suspect and reviewed his social media posts have not determined a motive or found any indication that he targeted victims by race, religion or other protected status, Covelli said.

Crimo’s attorney, Thomas A Durkin, a prominent Chicago-based lawyer, said he intends to enter a not guilty plea to all charges.

Asked about his client’s emotional state, Durkin said he has spoken to Crimo only once – for 10 minutes by phone.

He declined to comment further.

‘Still reeling

Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering said the community of 30,000 was in shock.

“This tragedy should have never arrived at our doorsteps,” she told NBC News. “As a small town, everybody knows somebody who was affected by this directly and, of course, we are all still reeling.”

Among those killed in Monday’s attack were Nicholas Toledo, a grandfather from Mexico in his 70s celebrating with his family among the flag-waving crowds, and Jacki Sundheim, a teacher at a nearby synagogue.

President Joe Biden ordered US flags to be flown at half-staff in mourning until sunset on Saturday. A recent string of deadly mass shootings, including an attack in which 19 school children and two teachers were killed in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24, just 10 days after 10 people were slain in a supermarket in a predominately Black neighbourhood in Buffalo, New York, has renewed debate about gun safety in the US.

The US Supreme Court last month asserted a constitutional right to carry weapons in public in a ruling that made it easier for pro-gun groups to overturn modern gun regulations. It has since thrown out a lower court ruling upholding Maryland’s ban on assault weapons.

Congress last month passed its first major federal gun reform in three decades, providing federal funding to states that administer “red flag” laws. The law does not ban sales of assault-style rifles or high-capacity magazines but does take some steps on background checks by allowing access to information on significant crimes committed by juveniles.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who visited Highland Park on Tuesday, said the latest mass shooting demonstrated the need for restrictions on assault weapons.

“This person will be brought to justice. But it’s not going to undo what happened,” she said in a meeting with city leaders. “We’ve got to be smarter as a country about who has access to what, in particular assault weapons.”

She added, “This should never have happened. We talk about it being senseless.

It is senseless. It is absolutely senseless.”

Rotering, the mayor of Highland Park, said she knew the suspect when he was a little boy and a Cub Scout, and she was a Cub Scout leader.

“What happened? How did somebody become this angry, this hateful?” she said. “Our nation needs to have a conversation about these weekly events involving the murder of dozens of people with legally obtained guns.”

The suspect’s father, Bob Crimo, ran Bob’s Pantry and Deli in Highland Park for at least 18 years, according to a Chicago Tribune business profile. Bob Crimo closed the deli in 2019 before he unsuccessfully ran against Rotering for mayor.

Online social media posts written by the suspect or under his rapper alias, “Awake The Rapper,” often depicted violent images or messages.

One music video posted to YouTube under Awake The Rapper showed drawings of a stick figure holding a rifle in front of another figure spread on the ground.

–Al Jazeera

They said he fired more than 70 rounds at random into the crowd watching Monday’s parade and that he was dressed in women’s clothes to help conceal his identity.

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2022 Acura NSX Type S First Test: Doing It GM-Style

■ Scott Evans

For decades, General Motors was notorious among its own loyalists for underfunding and underdeveloping a promising new car, expressing shock when initial sales excitement evaporated, reluctantly spending the money it should have in the first place to make the car as good as it should have been from the start, wondering why sales didn't rebound despite the tarnished reputation, then canceling the car once that it was finally good (see: Pontiac Fiero). Acura's parent company, Honda, has collaborated with GM in the past and continues to collaborate with GM today, and this is one tradition it shouldn't adopt. Case in point: the 2022 Acura NSX Type S. Not to put too fine a point on it, but the Type S is what the NSX should've been from day one. The reborn NSX held such promise, and Acura engineers benchmarked the right cars. Their insistence in thinking like Honda engineers, though, and worrying about how practical their mid-engine supercar was and how it drove in Ohio winters, compromised its final form. They studied the Ferrari 458 Italia but built a car that didn't drive anywhere near as well or as viscerally. The limited-edition Type S makes great strides toward righting that wrong. It's far more engaging to drive than any NSX before it. Much of the feel and feedback missing from the standard car has finally broken through in the Type S. Test Numbers Trail Regular NSX's Unfortunately, it seems to have come at the cost of some performance. Despite driving better than any other NSX we've tested, the Type S is also the slowest NSX we've ever tested. At 3.4 seconds to 60 mph, it's 0.4 second behind the quickest we've evaluated, and it doesn't get any better by the quarter-mile mark. To get there, the Type S needs 11.6 seconds, and it's traveling at 120.7 mph by the finish line, 0.4 second and 3.3 mph slower than the quickest one. It's not down to a bad launch, either, because the Type S is 0.2 second slower accelerating from 45 mph to 65 mph than the quickest NSX we've tested. This despite the Type S being the most powerful NSX ever at 600 hp and 492 lb-ft, 27 hp and 16 lb-ft more than any other. It's worth saying, though, that the NSX Type S experience is delightful. The engine revs very quickly and has a broad powerband thanks to the pancake electric motor mounted between the engine and transmission. It pulls hard all the way to redline, and the transmission, in Track mode, won't upshift until you've actually reached the redline, so you get every last pony. It's also happy to not upshift and let the engine wind back down if you lift off the throttle, helpful on a twisty road with short straights between tight corners. And despite all the electrification, the powertrain even manages to

sound pretty good for a V-6. The engine noise is surprisingly melodious, and the turbo flutter is icing on the cake. Back to the instrumented testing results, it wasn't any better going the other way. Stopping the Type S from 60 mph required 103 feet, a massive 8 feet longer than the best one we've tested. On a mountain road, that translated to several instances of standing on the brakes and not getting the stopping power a 600-hp car ought to have. Making the experience somehow worse, the squishy, spongy brake pedal response provides no feedback. Better brakes would let this car go down the road considerably faster. There is a bright spot in the Type S' numbers, and it's shining on the handling results. Pulling 1.03 average lateral g on the skidpad ties it with the stickiest NSX, as does its 23.2-second figure-eight lap time, though the 0.89 average g it pulled on in the figure eight was 0.03 g off the leader.

And you know what? We're OK with all of that. We're willing to give up a tenth here and two tenths there for a car that drives better. Still, this should've been the starting point six years ago, not the swan song. You do still have to drive it like an NSX, though. To get the most out of this powertrain, you need to treat it the way your high-performance driving instructor told you not to. Brake early, point it at the apex, and then get back on the power as soon as possible. Before the apex if you can. Normally, this delivers guaranteed understeer, but in the NSX, the front motors go to work, the nose bites, and it pulls you through the corner while accelerating hard. You can actually correct understeer by going to the power. Once you figure this out, the car becomes far more impressive than it is when driving it like a typical all-wheel-drive car. Tips For the Next One (Which Isn't Coming) Were this car to get the next generation it

deserves, there are a few other components that could be further improved, as well. Body control, for one. The Type S is stiff, which is fine, but it lacks compliance. It's bouncing around way too much on bumpy pavement, making you constantly chase it with the steering or back out of throttle. It's especially bad in big brake zones where the car starts shimmying around in its lane. It's all manageable, but it shouldn't have to be managed. Tie it down, and, again, the car could go down the road noticeably faster. The steering is better than before, but it could be even better still. In this case, it's not so much holding the car back as it isn't making it better. It's very precise, but it lacks feel. Other companies have figured out how to get steering feel out of a car with electric motors powering the front axle, and Acura could, too. Then, of course, there's the interior. It was never up to snuff, and it still isn't because it hasn't

changed. It looks like an Acura interior. A next-generation car would need a complete interior redo with much less plastic, a much more expressive design, and for the love of all that's holy, a modern infotainment system with a volume knob. You can put Civic parts or even TLX parts in a car priced nearly on par with an entry-level Ferrari. Hopefully, Acura will get all those details right when the NSX returns as an EV in the future—as it promised to, after a hiatus—but this still feels like a missed opportunity for the high-performance hybrid iteration of the car. The Type S proves the current NSX formula wasn't fundamentally flawed—it was just unfinished. It's a shame this car missed the mark so widely that its sales can't support a second generation of this model to finish the job. If the NSX Type S is any indication, it could've been great. Instead, Acura is pulling a GM and canceling it just as it started to get right. Everyone loses. -Motor Trend



Paul Pogba set to rejoin Juventus on free transfer following Manchester United exit

■ Simon Stone

Paul Pogba is set to rejoin Juventus on a free transfer after his Manchester United contract expired.

It is understood the 29-year-old France midfielder will have a medical at the weekend before completing the move.

Pogba joined United from the Italian side in 2016 for a then world-record fee of £89m.

United and Pogba failed to agree on a new contract and the club confirmed at the start of June that he would leave as a free agent this summer.

It is anticipated Pogba will begin training with Juventus next week prior to their trip to the United States, where they will face Barcelona and Real Madrid on 27 and 30 July respectively.

For the second straight season, Juventus finished fourth in Serie A, 16 points behind champions AC Milan.

They had been Italian champions for the preceding nine seasons, with Pogba playing a key role in their title wins from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

He scored 34 goals from 178 games in his previous spell with Juventus having also joined on a free from United in 2012, after coming through the Old Trafford academy.

During his first season back at Old Trafford, Pogba helped United win the EFL Cup and Europa League but they would prove to be the only trophies he won in his second spell.

A disagreement with then manager Jose Mourinho saw him lose the vice-captaincy in 2018 and injuries and sporadic form reduced his impact.

Pogba, who joined the United academy



from Le Havre as a 16-year-old in 2009, was influential as France won the World Cup in Russia in 2018 and scored 16 goals for United in 2018-19.

But over the last three seasons he scored eight goals from 91 appearances, with one from 27 last term.

"It was a low-key end to a United career that brought so many individual high moments," read a United statement earlier this month when they announced Pogba was to leave.

United offered him an extension and BBC Sport understands it was a more lucrative offer than his previous deal

but in an Amazon Prime documentary 'The Pogumentary', he said the club was "bluffing".

Pogba scored 39 goals in 233 appearances across his two spells at the club but his final home appearance against Norwich City in April saw him jeered by his own supporters as he was substituted.

He expressed gratitude for the "unconditional support from the fans" in a message on social media following the club's announcement that he was leaving.

Analysis - Pogba has played in moments When Paul Pogba returned to Old Trafford in 2016, it was championed as

Manchester United righting the wrong of Sir Alex Ferguson's decision to let him go in 2012 after a major falling-out with the midfielder's adviser Mino Raiola.

History will conclude Ferguson was probably correct first time round.

At a rough estimate, United have spent around £200m on Pogba in transfer fees and wages during his two spells at the club.

The number of top performances could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

United never found a solution to why Pogba is so effective for France and not for them. It could be many reasons - different team set-up, different manager, better

players, fewer games. But by the end, hardly any United fans wanted the club to keep Pogba.

Evidently, he has skill in abundance. He is capable of delivering passes few in the world can match and at times, he is unplayable. But Pogba has played in moments. Two goals in the famous comeback win at Manchester City, four assists against Leeds United, a goal in the Europa League final. For the investment United made, it was not enough.

In a recent interview, Pogba said he had wasted his time at United. It is hard to disagree.

-BBC

Tunisia’s Jabeur reaches first Grand Slam semi-final

Tunisian third seed Ons Jabeur, the highest surviving seed in the women’s draw, recovered from losing her first set at Wimbledon 2022 to beat Czech Marie Bouzkova 3-6, 6-1, 6-1 and reach her first Grand Slam semi-final.

Since going down in the opening round at this year’s Roland Garros in a shock defeat, Jabeur has won 10 straight matches on grass, having arrived at the All England Club with a title in Berlin in the lead-up.

Currently playing at her highest career ranking of second, Jabeur will meet the 103rd-ranked Tatjana Maria, who earlier beat fellow German Jule Niemeier, for a place in Saturday’s final.

Jabeur, 27, became the first Arab to reach a Grand Slam singles semi-final and is bidding to become the first woman from Africa to win a major.

Coming into her second straight Wimbledon quarter-final, Jabeur had yet to lose a set in her four rounds, not allowing opponents to settle with her gamut of forceful serves, powerful forehands, deft slices and well-disguised drop shots.

She used plenty of drop shots in the opening stages of the first set against the

66th-ranked Bouzkova but the 23-year-old Czech read them well to blunt one of the Tunisian’s main weapons.

Jabeur failed to find a way past the Czech’s stoic defence as Bouzkova chased down most of her groundstrokes and was rewarded with a break of serve in the fifth game. A second break in the ninth got her the opening set.

As the first set Jabeur had lost in this year’s tournament, it seemed to wake up the Tunisian.

Jabeur stepped up her aggression, started hitting her groundstrokes flatter and broke Bouzkova’s first service game of the second set.

A second and a third break followed and the Tunisian soon levelled the match as her favourite drop shots once again found the mark on the lush green lawns.

The Czech, who came into the Centre Court contest with six career wins over top-10 players, headed off for a lengthy bathroom break but could not change the momentum.

Bouzkova, who had never gotten past the second round of a Grand Slam before this year’s championships, was 40-0 up in the second game when Jabeur won five straight

points to break serve and then consolidated her advantage with a hold to love.

Jabeur had won eight straight games to jump into a 4-0 lead before the Czech halted the juggernaut with a break to get on board in the third set.

However, it proved to be only a minor hiccup for Jabeur who picked up another break in the next game and then held serve to love to seal the contest on her first match point.

“I knew she was going to come and really make me work to win a point,” Jabeur said. “She’s a talented player, and I’m really happy that I woke up during the second set and I played much better in the third set.”

Looking ahead to the semi-final, Jabeur said it will be tough to play against her “barbecue buddy” Maria – who returned from maternity leave only last year after giving birth to her second daughter and reached her first major semi-final at the 47th attempt.

“I love Tatjana so much and her family is really amazing,” Jabeur said. “She’s a great friend. I am really happy for her that she’s in the semi-final.”

-Al Jazeera



Zambian Barbra Banda ruled out over 'gender eligibility' issues

■ Celestine Karonay

Zambia captain Barbra Banda has been ruled out of the Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) after failing gender eligibility tests.

Despite being allowed to play in last year's Olympic Games, the 22-year-old forward has failed to meet the criteria required by global governing body Fifa, whose gender rules the Confederation of African Football (Caf) defers to regarding WAFCON.

"All the players had to undergo gender verification, a Caf requirement, and unfortunately she did not meet the criteria set by Caf," Andrew Kamanga, the president of Zambia's FA (Faz), told BBC Sport Africa.

"It's unfortunate that we find ourselves going into the tournament without our best players."

Zambia opened their Group C campaign with a 0-0 draw against three-time runners-up Cameroon on Sunday and face Tunisia on Wednesday prior to finishing the group with a clash against debutants Togo at the weekend.

Banda shot to global prominence when becoming the first player to score back-to-back Olympic hat-tricks in Tokyo.

When asked by BBC Sport Africa on Sunday how it was possible for Banda to have played in the Olympics but not at WAFCON, Caf's communications director Lux September responded by saying "there is no such decision from the Caf medical committee".

The answer has irritated Kamanga however, who has told BBC Sport Africa that "whatever happened was purely a Caf requirement".

Banda - who was pulled from the squad by Faz after she failed the verification on the

eve of the finals - is one of the most prolific strikers in African women's football and is currently in Morocco and training with the Copper Queens squad, despite being unable to play.

"Everybody at home [in Zambia] has been made to believe that Faz did nothing and decided on their own to exclude the player," Kamanga added.

"We the federations are compelled to undertake the tests and then we pass on the information to Caf, and Caf, equally, test the players if needs be in the tournament.

"So it will be unfair to turn around and say Caf is not part and parcel of whatever has transpired."

BBC Sport Africa understands that three other Zambian players were affected by gender eligibility but chose not to feature for the national team, whose squad features 22, rather than the permitted 26, players.

Banda was originally named in Zambia's WAFCON squad after taking medication to help reduce her levels of testosterone, which are naturally overly-high, but she has still not met the regulations, BBC Sport Africa understands.

The forward is contracted to Chinese side Shanghai Shengli but is reported to be on the verge of a possible move to Spain's top flight.

Gender debate

Gender verification is not new to sport, nor is the fierce debate that accompanies it.

Multiple Olympic athletics star Caster Semenya of South Africa has been in a battle with World Athletics for many years in a bid to challenge its gender eligibility rules.

She is currently awaiting a verdict in her case from the European Court of Human Rights after previously losing appeals at the Court of Arbitration for Sport and

Switzerland's Federal Supreme Court.

In football, Fifa's eligibility rules - which the 2022 Women's Nations Cup defers to - were put in place over a decade ago, in May 2011.

According to the Fifa document, the rules were introduced to ensure a level playing field and "safeguard the separation between male and female players.

"Androgenic hormones have performance-enhancing effects which may provide an advantage in football," the Fifa document states.

As a result, the amount of naturally-occurring testosterone in female players is limited to certain levels, with players who are over those levels needing to reduce them through medication (or, in extreme cases, surgery) before they can be passed eligible to play.

Inconsistent application of rules

Faz says it is concerned at the implementation of the rules set by Fifa, which oversees Olympic football events among countless other tournaments.

"Barbra carried the team on her shoulders during the qualifiers for the Olympics, as well as the tournament itself," Kamanga explained.

"She's done a good job, but we also need to now address this issue, which seems to have technically taken her out of the tournament.

"The elephant in the room is to deal with this issue of gender verification, which seems to be discriminatory, in the sense that you seem to have it in this competition [but not others].

"But these are professional players, who are also playing professional football in different leagues, where that requirement doesn't seem to be in tandem with what Caf is asking.



"Equally, if you take it to the next level in the Fifa competitions, you now start questioning why it should only be enforced in this competition, when it should really cut across all competitions. I think this is where we seem to be at cross purposes." Having faced criticism for travelling with a player who they knew would not meet the set criteria, Kamanga explained that they travelled with Banda in the hope that her testosterone-reducing medication

could have enabled her to play.

"The medical team recommended she be given an opportunity without being dropped outright and she was still given that opportunity up to the last minute when the final team was announced," the Faz president explained. "But most importantly, she's the captain of the team and she's equally important for team-building and ensuring spirit in the team." -BBC

Tyrell Malacia joins on four-year deal from Feyenoord

■ Simon Stone

Manchester United have signed full-back Tyrell Malacia from Feyenoord on a four-year contract until June 2026, with the option of a further year.

The Netherlands international, 22, will cost 15m (£13m) euros with a further 2m (£1.7m) euros in add-ons.

Malacia, who made 136 appearances for Feyenoord, is the first new arrival of Erik ten Hag's tenure as United manager following his move from Ajax.

"It's an incredible feeling to have joined," he said.

Malacia added: "This is a new chapter for me, a new league with new team-mates and a tremendous manager leading us.

"I know from playing against his teams in the Eredivisie, the qualities that he has and what he demands of his players.

"While I know that I am still young and will continue to develop, I can promise the United fans that I will leave everything on the pitch every time I pull on the red shirt." The left-sided defender had been in talks with French club Lyon before United stepped in.

It had been hoped the deal for Malacia would be done on Monday but it was delayed waiting for a work permit.

It is anticipated he will now be part of the United squad that leaves for its pre-season trip to Thailand and Australia on Friday afternoon.

John Murtough, United's football director, said: "Tyrell is an exciting, dynamic young footballer with excellent experience for his age, including five seasons in the Eredivisie, a European final and full International honours for the Netherlands.

"We look forward to seeing him continue to develop under the guidance of Erik ten Hag and his coaching team in the years ahead."

The announcement comes just a day after it was reported Denmark international Christian Eriksen had agreed on principle to join United.

The 30-year-old's short-term contract at Brentford ended last month and it is believed Eriksen could also have returned to Thomas Frank's side, but the lure of playing for United proved too much.

A three-year contract is being prepared for the midfielder, who is still to have his medical at Old Trafford.

-BBC

