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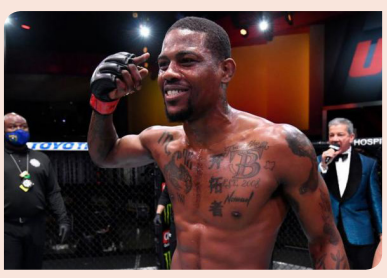
Russia's war with Ukraine risks putting fresh pressure on rising fertiliser prices

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Sudan's latest coup is crippling its frail health sector

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Kevin Holland on internet trolls, fighting at welterweight and facing Alex Oliveira

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Two New Columns

We have introduced two new columns on **page 6** and **page 8** for Saturday editions only.

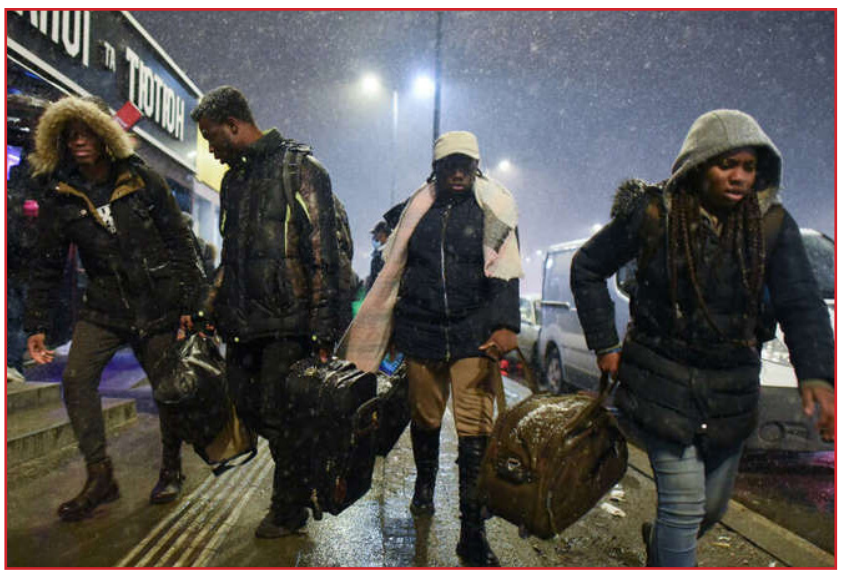
I Woke Up in the Arms of an Indian Lady - Namibian student

■ **Justicia Shipena**

A Namibian student was among those who fought tooth and nail with the cold weather at the Poland border in an effort to escape Ukraine after Russia's invasion.

With temperatures dropping, Ethan (not his real name) lost consciousness before crossing the Polish border while awaiting his turn to enter Poland due to the cold. "I was shaking. I don't know what was happening. All I could remember was that my chest became so heavy in breathing," he told The Villager. He was coming from Lviv after hustling for a train to the border. At that moment, Ethan said his vision was vivid, and everything was moving so slow.

Continued on P2



Shiimi Unable to Raise N$500m for Census

■ **Nghiinomenwa Erastus**

The Namibian nation should not be surprised when budget allocations and other spending options do not talk to their needs because the government is officially now using outdated data.

This would have been resolved in August when the Namibian Statistics Agency conducts the national census for demographics.

However, finance minister Ipumbu Shiimi omitted this crucial activity from his recently tabled budget.

Therefore, the country's policymakers will continue to plan using outdated statistics and estimates as they have not spared some coins to the undertaking of the national census.

According to the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA), the remaining part of the census, which is supposed to take place in the space of five months, will require around N$500 million, according to the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA).

This week, the agency announced that the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) would not take place in August (2022).

This is because "it is not provided for in the national budget of 2022/2023 due to financial constraints and other critical national priorities," wrote NSA.





A census is conducted every ten years and is essentially collecting, processing, analyzing, publishing, and disseminating demographic, socio-economic, and spatial data of the population during a specific period. It provides information on how many people are in the country, their characteristics (who they are), and where they live.

The census is the only data source that provides information on minor geographic areas and small population groups. To be specific, the main objective of a population and housing census is to provide information on the population and housing characteristics of the country, according to NSA.

This is to guide development planning decision-making and monitor and evaluate developmental progress.

A census helps communities get their fair share for schools, hospitals, roads, and public works. It allows the government to decide how to distribute funds and allocate resources across the society. Not only will outdated statistics guide the country's planning, but the government is also breaking its laws as Section 7 (2)(d)

Continued on P2

How Russia-Ukraine War Feeds Racism

Western media journalists' thinking about European nations not attacking each other has brought out their worst racial prejudices. For years, war was for the developing countries. Check the thread below.

1. BBC
"It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed."
- Ukraine's Deputy Chief Prosecutor, David Sakvarelidze

2. CBS News
"This isn't Iraq or Afghanistan...This is a relatively civilized, relatively European city." - CBS foreign correspondent Charlie D'Agata

3. Al-Jazeera [not strictly Western, but West-aligned]
"What's compelling is looking at them, the way they are dressed. These are prosperous, middle-class people. These are not obviously refugees trying to get away from the Middle East...or North Africa. They look like any European family that you'd live next door to."
- Peter Dobbie, Al Jazeera news presenter.

4. BFM TV (France)
"We are in the 21st century, we are in a European city, and we have cruise missile fire as though we were in Iraq or Afghanistan, can you imagine!?"

5. The Daily Telegraph
"They seem so like us. That is what makes it so shocking. Ukraine is a European country. Its people watch Netflix and have Instagram accounts... War is no longer something visited upon impoverished and remote populations. It can happen to anyone."
- Daniel Hannan

6. ITV (UK)
"The unthinkable has happened... This is not a developing, third-world nation; this is Europe!"

7. BFM TV (France) (again)
"It's an important question. We're not talking here about Syrians fleeing... We're talking about Europeans."

8. NBC News
"To put it bluntly, these are not refugees from Syria, these are refugees from Ukraine...These are Christians, they're white. They're very similar [to us]".

- Kelly Cobiella, NBC News Correspondent, explaining why Poland, which was hesitant to take in refugees from West Asia and North Africa, is now accepting refugees.
(Thread by Alan MacLeod of Mint Press News on the most racist Ukraine coverage in mainstream Western media.)

Indian Lady

"I'm trying not to panic. I'm trying to find a spot where I can sit and try to regain my focus, but I could not as all the sides of the border had no walls," he expressed.

It was Sunday, he continues to say, "I lost consciousness, and then I woke up in a blanket in the arms of an Indian lady. She covered me with a blanket and gave me a jersey."

He further said that the Indian lady also offered him bread.

"The two slices of bread, I kept pieces for the remaining hours so I can feed along the way. I was taking small bites of it for the energy," he said.

A media crew passed by Ethan at the border, they then gave him an orange.

"That orange, I also shared it with other people. So you can just imagine how hungry we were, and we kept drinking leftover water. It was tough," said Ethan.

Caught up in the whole mist, he lost his laptop bag and some of his other belongings.

Three musketeers broken up

He said the border at which he was, was only used by three Namibians.

"At that border, they were only allowing ladies to pass first. So the other two Namibians I was with were ladies, and we got separated, and I stayed behind."

After crossing the Ukrainian border, it was time for him to cross the Polish border.

"We had to wait to follow the polish border procedures. And they were also taking ladies first. I slept at the Polish border for one night, and it was tiring. I was sleepwalking and cold," he emphasised.

Ethan adds that he was worried but at the same time kept thinking positive.

"You don't know what you are going to eat. I was drinking water that I found from half bottles on the road."

He further said that people would get blankets from suitcases that had been abandoned on the side of the road to keep warm.

"So many people left their suitcases due to fear and panic. We also had to make fires to keep warm," he said.

Moreover, after making it through the Polish border, he said he was overjoyed, although he still had to walk 100m to the closest town.

"My whole just body realised that I made it, I felt the joy. On my may, Polish residents gave us free food and get ready morning starter packs with snacks, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant and shower gel."

Chaos at the border

At the border, he spoke of how people pushed and thrust when it was time for them to move in line.

"No one wants to be left behind, and now they are pushing. The more you push, the more you wait at the border because we had to follow procedures, but people did not want to understand that," he said.

In this vein, he said most nationalities began to make others feel inferior.

"I was the only Namibian, so it was hard to stick with other Africans because we did not understand each other language-wise."

"It was tough, and seeing people in extreme panic mode is not the best experience at all."

He said he was able to reach one of the girls he was with at the border before separating.

"We are at the same accommodation, and we are so happy to see each other because we have been in this together, worried sick about each other. We made out alive. Many people did not, and some gave up in the process," he expressed.

He stated that the Namibian government helped guide him.

"I was able to have someone to talk to. She came from Germany to Poland to ensure that all Namibians were brought to safety. Every time I charged my phone, she would call to check on me, and I would always update her."

He also said he had to find accommodation once I arrived in Poland.

"But the government is paying for our tickets to leave Poland and accommodation in the capital Warsaw. So finally, our government has provided something which is good," he added.

> **"I was the only Namibian, so it was hard to stick with other Africans because we did not understand each other language-wise."**

Census

of the Namibia Statistics Act prescribes that the agency must cause a population and housing census to be taken every 10 years on.

NSA also indicated that it has no idea when the census will take place and promises to return to the public when this information is available from the National Planning Commission.

The 2021 Census was postponed again last year due to competing priorities such as the Covid-19 budget prioritization.

NSA is funded through NPC, for the next financial year, starting next month, the planning entity was only given N$182,8 million- this is not even half of what NSA require for the main census enumeration.

A census is implemented in three main phases, namely the Pre-census activities (2017-2021), Census enumeration (2022), and then the Post-census activities (2022-2025).

If the government does not allocate resources and continues with this cancellation- the country might get its census result in 2026 if it does the census enumeration next year.

However, scrutiny of the government's Medium-Term Expenditure shows that only N$94,4 million is availed by NPC for subsidies by the department responsible for the timely production of statistics.

SO MUCH HAS BEEN DONE

At this stage, the NSA has completed the Census Mapping, Pilot Census, and Pilot Post-enumeration Survey.

The NSA had recruited 517 unemployed young people to visit and verify 955 037 built-up structures countrywide during the Census Mapping project at the cost of about N$101 million, the entity revealed.

NSA also recruited around 266 young unemployed people to conduct the pilot census and the Pilot Post-enumeration survey.

The NSA has spent around N$137 million to complete the Pre-census activities.

The original census budget estimates for the complete phases, which span from 2017-to 2025, was estimated to be in the region of N$ 1,1 billion.

For the Financial Year of 2022-2023, the main enumeration was initially estimated to cost NSA an amount of N$950 million, where over 11 500 staff will be recruited, over 2 400 vehicles to be hired, and 11 500 tablets to be purchased for the use of data collection during the census.

Although the main enumeration (during 2022-2023) was estimated to be N$950 million, NSA indicated that it adopted measures to further reduce this budget amount to about N$606 million.

The agency wrote early before the budget that there were indications that they would be allocated about N$500 million for the main enumeration phase for the 2022-2023 financial year.

Unfortunately, the treasury and the rest of the government planners have not allocated anything for the census.

The Post-Census phase planned for the 2023-2025 budget is slightly above N$12 million, which is allocated to Census data cleaning, processing, main report, and thematic reports production.

The NSA has received a total funding of N$209, 7 million (N$ 179,4 million from the government via NPC and N$ 30,3 million from other government institutions).

This was towards the census for over two financial years covering Pre-enumeration activities.

NSA indicated that it had spent about N$ 137 million on Pre-enumeration activities.

Email: erastus@thevillager.com.na

Meeting Recon Africa Doesn't Change Views on Namcor Stake'

■ **Justicia Shipena**

Popular Democratic Movement leader (PDM) McHenry Venaani says that the meeting held with Recon Africa on Wednesday does not change their stance on Namibia's stake through the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (Namibia).

The Canadian company is acquiring 5% of Namcor's current 10% for N$30 million in cash, pushing the stake to 95%.

Recon Africa currently owns a 90% stake in the oil-drilling license in the two Kavango regions.

"Our stance is very clear from the beginning on the Namcor stake. The problem is that we have this idea of selling everything for every resource that comes our way until the country has no stake in its resources. It's important to maintain this," said Venaani.

He added that Namibia must have its stake to preserve for future generations.

"PDM has no right to give blessings or not. Our right is to look at investors in general. When investors come into the country, they must comply with the rules and regulations," he said.

Last month, PDM stood out against the proposed plans by Namcor to sell half of its 10% stake in the oil exploration license.

Venaani expressed that the company assured him that: "Recon Africa is not drilling oil in Namibia; they are looking for oil."

He further said that development is not a one-way street, and he will still listen to environmentalists and other parties.



> **"Yes, we need investments, but that investment should also not hurt people, livelihood, and environment."**

"Yes, we need investments, but that investment should also not hurt people, livelihood, and environment," he said.

Speaking to The Villager on Thursday, he said he raised issues on permits during the meeting.

"They assured us that they have already undergone all the environmental assessment and passed all the tests, and in the meeting, they agreed to send all the documents to prove this," he explained.

He added that the outcome of the meeting with the Canadian company is that it must continue with its activities.

"However, they must make sure that their oil exploration does not negatively affect the environment," said Venaani.

Venaani said the community must carry wealth in the process and understand what is to be done by Recon Africa.

"We also raised geographical questions in terms of fracking. They also reassured us that there will be no fracking as they would use better and new technology."

In this vein, he said Recon made it clear that they want communities to benefit from social-economic development.

"We spoke about the funding of students. They told us that they wanted to do more. They have already arranged to finance students. In engineering, they have identified ten, giving employment creation of 400 temporary jobs. To look at Namibians as the absorption capital so that more Namibians can go into the oil industry," he expressed.

Venaani further said he is alive because they are not drilling they are only exploring oil.

"As a party that supports companies to flourish in a social market economy, we give heed to people who want to invest in the country. If f people are investing in the country, our community should not be taken for a ride and not undermined in resources that belong to them." He adds that the party at the meeting approached to ask for funding for students in Ukraine and have experience hardship because of Russia's invasion.

"We asked for the donation. I have already given instructions for the youth league to start preparing for psychological support." Thus, he said, they are not getting the donation for the party's benefit.

"We gave them options on whether to pay the money to us or ministry of international relations, for as long as the money goes to the students."

Howard-Smith Says IPC Leadership's Unwilling to Talk



■ Justicia Shipena

Independent Patriot for Change (IPC) Swakopmund constituency councillor Ciske Howard-Smith says that the party's leadership is not forthcoming in mediation talks.

This comes after attorney general Festus Mbandeka recommended that Howard-Smith returns to office while IPC finalises its investigations.

Howard-Smith told The Villager that mediation was planned in Windhoek; however, the party leaders booted out.

"I was in my car to go to Windhoek for mediation with IPC, I was very excited to meet with them, and then they cancelled it," she said.

She added that she is not the one, holding back in talks with the party and claims that the leadership is also not forthcoming in that matter.

"I am not the one not willing to sit down and sort this out. I am very eager to sort it out. The party's leadership is not counter to mediate or talk," Howard-Smith.

"Itula and the NGS were here in Swakopmund less than a month ago, and they did not even have a sit down with me. Which I again feel is quite unprofessional."

In this vein, she said she is not the villain and has not hurt anyone.

"So, we can still act like adults and talk to each other. At the end of the day, we are here to serve the people and not our interests," she adds.

Smith-Howard was restrained on 27 October 2021 by her party after allegations that she has not been residing in the Swakopmund constituency, where she was elected into office in 2020.

Speaking to The Villager on Wednesday, Howard-Smith said she is excited about being back in office duties as an IPC councillor.

"I am standing in my office as we speak. It feels great."

According to her, there is no winner in the situation as people suffered without her, not in the office.

"It is really exciting to be back, and I'm glad I'm here. The work stood still. The only people that lose out are people of the community. So, with the three months I was kept out of office, I have a lot of work to do to catch on," she said.

She further emphasises that it is unfortunate that there is no winner and says her fight remains to ensure she can serve the community.

"I haven't spoken with IPC, and they haven't given out any statements yet. This came from the attorney general's office saying that I cannot be kept out of office while IPC is still doing their investigation. They cannot keep me out of my council duties."

Howard-Smith stated that IPC gave her the vehicle to serve her community.

"I don't ask the question when somebody walks into my door, and I don't ask them what party they belong to. I ask them about their needs. So I try best as possible to meet their needs." This is a public office, and it's not a party office," she said.

A month after the party summoned her to a disciplinary hearing in Windhoek, the IPC councillor dragged the party to court to have her suspension nullified and declared void. This resulted in her winning the case against the party.

When contacted by The Villager for a comment, IPC spokesperson Imms Nashinge said, "A matter in court? Her matter is at 'bar'. We can't comment for now."

Angolan Underage Street Vendors Increasing



■ Ludorf Iyambo

The number of young Angolan boys who flee their country in search of green pasture in Windhoek is rising.

Most of these minors are forced to do manual work such as domestic work, selling eggs, fruits and airtime vouchers, among other things.

Most of them told The Villager that they do not attend school and wake up early to start with the day's work.

One of the minors, Ndwau Tuhafeni, a 15-year-old boy from Angola, said that he came to Namibia in 2020 after being told that one of his uncles had a house in Windhoek and is leaving a luxurious life.

Ndwau said he couldn't have gone back to his parent's home because he didn't have transport money to return.

"I started selling eggs and fish for a fellow Angolan man who has been in Windhoek before," he said. He added that he made about N$ 200 per day from fish and maize but did not have a salary or a wage.

The minor said his boss said he would only get paid when he returned home. "I did not hesitate to do the job because I'm trying to get money to go back home," He said.

Another underage street vendor of Angola descent who spoke to The Villager Newspaper is 16-year-old Andonya Batromeus, who came to Windhoek in 2012.

Batromeus said he is currently a self-employed street vendor. "I'm the owner of the business. I don't work for anybody anymore, "he said.

The minor claimed that the business is not always good as it is supposed to be because their products do not get finished all the time.

"Sometimes, if the fish did not finish, I eat them up before they get spoiled. It's always a loss because I have struggled to get money again and replace the stock," he explained.

Another minor, Tuhafeni Johannes, a 12-year-old boy, said that a bad situation at home drove him out to come and look for green pasture.

Johannes said he just came to Windhoek in 2021. "I did not get a chance to go to school because the school was far from home. I want to work very hard to save up money to help at home," He said.

There are many other cases of underage children roaming around Windhoek's streets and another town in Namibia.

Question for comment from the Embassy of Angola in Namibia spokesperson Darcio Lukas said that he is not the right person to give any answers regarding this matter.

"What I advise you to do is write an email then I will forward it to my boss they will decide who can help to give this answers but not me".

The communication, advocacy, and partnership specialist of UNICEF, Judith Matjila, said that UNICEF does not have programs in Namibia but only support Namibia's government on their programme.

"The best people you could have probably go to is the ministry of gender," said Matjila.

CONTACT DETAILS
Eagle Media House
33B John Ludwig Street
Klein Windhoek
Office Tel: +264 832888400
Studio Tel: +264 832888 401
Email: news@eaglefm.com.na

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From a minister to a crop and livestock farmer



■ Frans Sinengela

Former deputy minister of works and transport Sankwasa James Sankwasa says he has revived his old crop and livestock farming skills after retiring.

Sankwasa says that farmers in the Zambezi region are being deliberately left out when accessing the country's beef market.

According to Sankwasa, farmers in the Zambezi region are not allowed to sell their beef beyond Kongola.

"Farmers from Oshikoto, Ohangwena and other northern areas can sell their meat to us in the Zambezi. Why are we not allowed to sell our meat in those regions if our cattle have the same quality; there was foot and mouth disease in those regions too, but they have not restricted the way we are. Why is that?" he argues.

Sankwasa further says that he raised this concern to the prime minister last year, but nothing has been done.

He says Meatco is also under-pricing their meat compared to their counterparts in the southern side of the redline." Here Meatco buys our meat at N$37 per kg, while in the south they buy at N$67; why do we have different pricing if the quality of cattle in the south is the same quality we have here?" he questioned.

Sankwasa further criticised the directorate of veterinary service for what he terms as "unscientific restrictions" on the sale of beef products in the Zambezi.

"There were meat carcasses destined for the factory in Okahandja, but they stopped the process and ordered that the meat should be consumed locally; what does that tell you, we are in one country, but we are treated differently; what have the people of the Zambezi done to deserve this discrimination?" he lamented.

However, Sankwasa told the Villager that he has several projects that he initiated while at the helm of the ministry of works and transport as a deputy minister and were completed, now serving as his footprints.

Sankwasa said, his first task when he was just two weeks in the office was to facilitate the gaveling of the show swamp area, connecting places such as Mbalasinte school and clinic, Ikaba and Kasika school and clinic north-east of the swamp." These places were inaccessible during rainy and flood seasons," he added.

Not only in the Zambezi region, but he also managed to get a contractor to construct classrooms at Niigambo combined school, a few kilometres from Omuthiya in the Oshikoto region.

"I went there to inspect the road being constructed there, and I saw children being taught under trees and zinc structures," he said.

Rural Sports tournament to conclude on Sunday



■ Uakutura Kambaekua

The most celebrated football and netball rural tournament under the auspices of Namibia Rural Sports Development Federation that commenced last weekend is set to conclude on Sunday at the Khomasdal Sports Field in Windhoek.

The tournament, which dates back to more than 20 years ago, has yielded some remarkable talents that represent the Namibian national team, with some plying their trade in the South African premier league and other leagues across the African continent.

NRSDF spokesperson Ngatuuane Hange said that the tourney concludes on Sunday. The federation has been growing exorbitantly and has huge potential in identifying untapped talent at grassroots levels while ushering in a new era in transforming Namibia football.

The tournament, which has attracted 28 netball and 32 football teams from different rural constituencies, will see the remaining top four teams battle it out for N$ 45 000, of which N$ 15 000 is set aside for the netball category. In contrast, the remaining N$ 30 000 will be shared among the football top performers.

The winning side for the netball category will walk away with N$ 7 000, a trophy and 14 gold medals, with the runner-up to pocket N$ 4 000 and 14 silver medals while the semi-final losers will each settle for N$ 2 000.

The football champions will pocket N$14 000, plus a trophy and 22 gold medals, the runner-up will receive N$ 8 000 while the semi-final losers will walk away with N$ 4 000 each. According to Hange, the tournament organiser have also set aside additional awards for individuals who shows exceptional performance throughout the tournament.

Sunday's netball fixtures will see Omaruru-based outfit Ohunukununa ya-Tjiperongo up against Epukiro based Otjimanangombe in the first semi-final match, followed by Otjombinde's El Maestro versus Fine Young Stars from Otjinene.

In an all Omaheke regional affair, Otjinene's based outfit Fine Young Stars will go toe to toe with Otjozondjima from the Epukiro constituency for the football category. The second semi-final will see Epukiro's Eastern Swallows up against Young Stars from Otjombinde. The tournament, Hange noted, 's organised yearly and only comprises the top two teams from each of the NRSDF affiliated constituencies.

He said all COVID-19 protocols would be observed.

Nam Recorded 8 000 TB Cases in 2020

■ Vetondouua Tjivikua

Namibia remains in the top 10 countries globally, with many TB cases.

Namibia recorded several 8100 cases in 2020.

This comes as Namibia is set to commemorate the World TB day that will be observed on the 25 March 2022 in the Oshikoto region at Onandjokwe State Hospital in the Onyaanya district, where the 2021 TB statistics will be released.

Communication and social mobilisation officer for the ministry of health and social services Pinehas Iipinge said TB continues to be of high concern in Namibia.

He Said Namibia has observed a steady decline in the number of cases reported countrywide compared to the 16 156 cases reported in 2004 to about 8100 cases reported in 2020.

Iipinge also noted that Namibia remains among the top 10 countries with a high number of TB cases despite the decline. A global TB report states that Namibia reported about 2700 people who died of TB.

Even while the disease is curable and no one is supposed to die, we still have many people who died of TB.

"The health ministry with its partners and stakeholders are doing very well to make sure that whoever is put on TB treatment complete their full treatment and those on symptoms seeking services to be assisted and start their treatment as soon as possible".

Iipinge further stated the ministry had maintained uninterrupted treatment and diagnoses of TB patients for the past two years, where COVID-19 has escalated.

They have been doing this by decentralising the TB care and services from the health facilities to minimise the patients' contact with the health care workers and advising patients to collect their medication at local community TB centres within their areas.

A TB survivor and prevention advocate Karin Husselmann said she was diagnosed with TB in 2004 in Cape Town. She pulled through the recovery process by taking a handful of TB medication despite the high stigma and the rejection at the time.

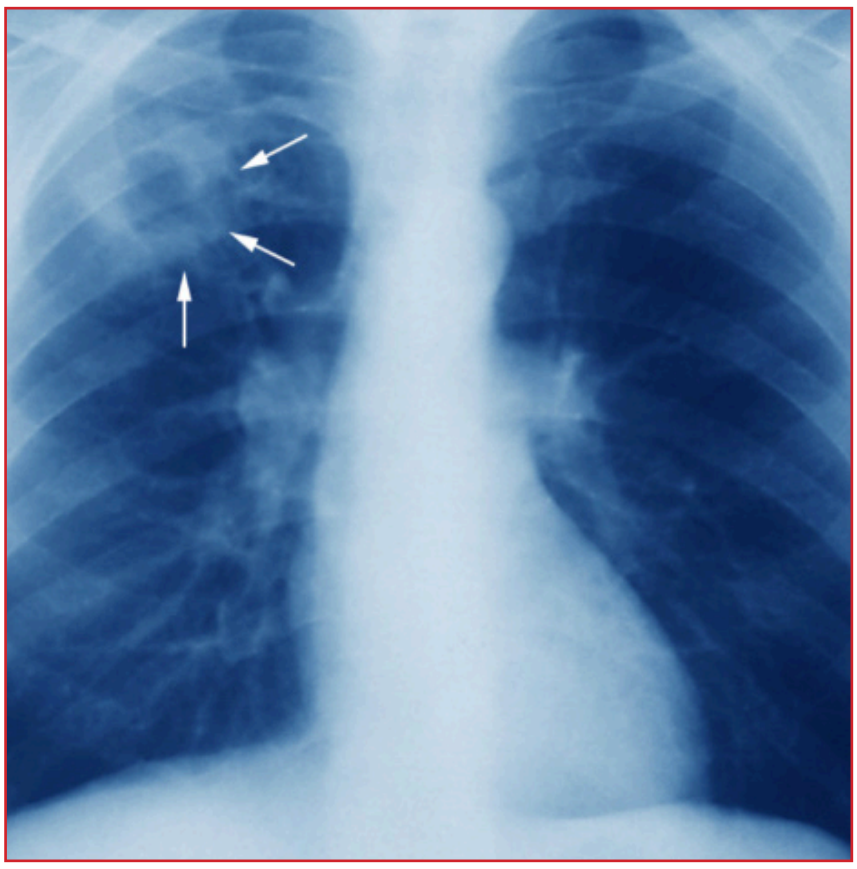
"In the last couple of years I realised that I need to let my voice heard because it's not only people who live in shacks, don't have food, or people who we believe do not take a good bath it can happen to anyone, and we can fight it and get over it", said Husselmann.

In the same vein, Husselmann encouraged people out there to listen to the messages about TB instead of waiting until you get diagnosed while you can just prevent it.

Namibia currently carries one of the highest burdens of TB and multi-drug resistant TB globally.

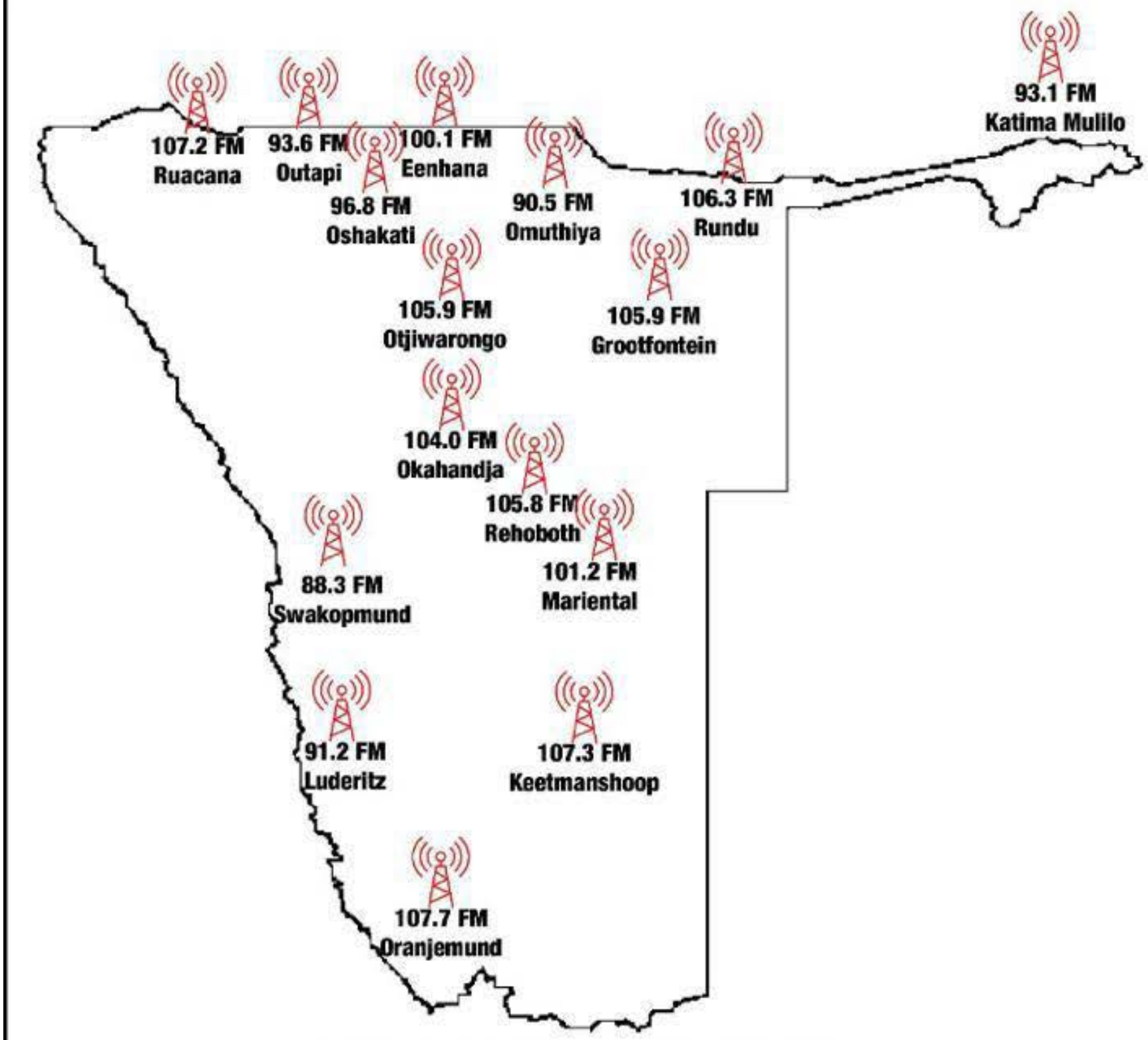
A 2020 study has found that the country has a rate of 442 cases per 100 000 people and is ranked fifth among countries with the highest TB burdens.

> **"My office has played a vital role in establishing school feeding kitchen and the supply of food items to different schools"**



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CONTACT DETAILS
Eagle Media House
33B John Ludwig Street
Klein Windhoek
Office Tel: +264 832888400
Studio Tel: +264 832888 401
Email: news@eaglefm.com.na

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Under attack, Ukraine's musicians become war reporters and military fundraisers



■ **Mark Savage**

Last weekend, Olga Korolova fled her home in Chernihiv, Ukraine, with her daughter, her dog and whatever possessions she could cram into two bags.

"I was driving like a crazy," she says. "I saw a bomb and in my brain, all I could think was, 'Get away because of the baby'."

She drove for hours, eventually crossing the border into Poland where, that same night, she had a gig booked.

One of Ukraine's top techno DJs, Korolova threw out her setlist and played music exclusively by fellow Ukrainian artists.

"I was crying on the stage," she tells BBC News. "I was playing and I was crying. It was the hardest set of my life, but I knew for sure I needed to do something."

Korolova donated her fee to the Ukrainian army and charities helping people displaced by the conflict. The following night, she hosted a separate fundraiser on her YouTube channel. Her Instagram page, once home to glamorous travel photos and shots of nightclubs, now shares updates from Ukraine and footage of the Russian invasion.

Her aim is to show fans - especially Russian fans - the extent of the destruction.

"I'm in shock that Russian people are not seeing the truth," she says. "It's like they are in North Korea, without information. My fans from Russia, they send me messages saying, 'It's not true. It's a lie. All of your posts are a lie.' They don't want to see it."

Korolova is not alone. Faced with war, Ukraine's vibrant and flourishing music scene has become a sort of unofficial news outlet, documenting the conflict for an audience that might not be tuned in to traditional news channels.

"Everyone is now addressing their audience on social media," says folk singer Khrystyna Soloviy.

"We are spreading information about events in cities, trying to reach out to Russians to go to rallies, telling them that this is Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

Across YouTube, hundreds of Ukrainian artists have replaced the thumbnail image on their videos with a picture of the country's flag, superimposed with the words: "While you are watching this video, Ukrainian people are dying from Russian attack. Stop it."

On Facebook, Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, frontman of the Ukrainian rock band Okean Elzy, is posting hourly updates about the conflict. In one video, he's visiting wounded soldiers in hospital; in another he's in a bullet-proof vest, making a speech on the streets of Kharkiv; in another, he's delivering food and fuel to Kyiv in his car.

"I'm a well-known this person in this part of the world and I'm trying to use this [position] and do whatever I can," he says.

'Appeal to their instincts'

Slava's soft-spoken humility underplays his role in Ukraine's public life. A former politician who renounced his seat in 2008 in protest at Ukraine's corrupt political culture, he later played a key role in the Maidan Revolution that culminated in the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovych.

With Okean Elzy, he is arguably the country's most beloved singer - the equivalent of Bruce Springsteen or Paul McCartney in the West - and drew Ukraine's biggest-ever concert audience in 2014. Crucially, he is just as popular in Russia.

He says he's using all of his cultural capital to change people's minds about the current conflict.

"It's already too late to send just messages to fans," he says. "Now, I'm mostly talking to people like the mothers of [Russian] soldiers - and I explain to them that if they don't stop the children from going into war, they will get these children back in packages. We need to appeal to their instincts."

While DJ Korolova says Russian listeners have been resistant to such messages; Eugene Abdukhanov of the metalcore band Jinjer has had a different response.

"I received some texts from our Russian fans, apologising and saying they're definitely against this," he says from the south-eastern district of Kyiv.

"I didn't receive any angry texts from the Russian side, trying to justify this. Even though some people have this militaristic position, they're ashamed enough not to mention this to me."

Like many musicians, Abdukhanov has abandoned his day job to concentrate on the immediate humanitarian crisis. He is currently establishing a charity "to help the military, to help the civilians" and will soon join his friends in running a shelter providing "food supplies, water [and] protection" for people displaced by the conflict.

To the west in Lviv, Khrystyna Soloviy is also working with refugees.

"Lviv is overrun [so] I go to the refugee centre and give them psychological support. Many people are stunned and can't say which city they came from, or when they last ate.

"I hardly sleep and I have no appetite, but I feel safe."

'Vibrant music scene'

It hardly needs to be said, but this is not what Ukraine's top musicians were expecting from their career.

The country has a thriving, diverse music scene that brings a home-grown flavour to hip-hop, punk, EDM, pop and psychedelic rock.

Although it has produced few international stars, the music is particularly palatable to those of us raised on Western rock - partly because the Ukrainian language is hypnotically melodic, featuring more soft consonants than other Slavic languages.

The country's folk tradition, which incorporates ritual lamentations and lyrical love songs, is equally rich and emotional; and that passion persists with the current generation of musicians.

"Ukrainians create a lot of music in different genres," says Dartsya Tarkovska of Music Export Ukraine. "One of their memorable and interesting approaches is to use folk motifs and ethno elements in their songs. So that's a very distinguishing feature."

So you have bands like Onuka, whose electro-folk ballads evoke the music of Bjork and FourTet; or DhakaBraka, who spin traditional melodies into a blur of unexpected musical styles from around the globe.

Elsewhere, Dorofeeva makes slick, Dua Lipa-style pop bangers; Fo Sho blend dark hip-hop beats with their Ethiopian heritage; Aspire make uncompromising, feedback-drenched hard rock; and Anastasia Topolskaia, known as Nastia, has been named one of the world's top 30 alternative DJs by the UK's DJ magazine.

A scene born in conflict

Ironically, it was Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 that accelerated the country's music scene, says Kostiantyn Pochtar, who found fame with rock group 5 Vymir, and now performs solo as Postman.

"Artists from Europe and America refused to come here because they were afraid of war," he explains. "So we, as young bands, had an opportunity to step in and play in these enormous great halls.

"This is how we started - but we all kept in mind that the war may start again tomorrow, because we knew that Russia wouldn't stop in Crimea.

"We just thought 'OK, if the end is going to be tomorrow, we need to have fun.' So this is how we rolled all those years, and it resulted in a really, really vibrant musical scene."

Pochtar was in Poland when Russia invaded last week, but one of his songs, Streets Of Kyiv, has become a source of comfort for the people living in shelters and underground bunkers in the Ukrainian capital.

"It makes me very emotional because it's a very delicate song," he says. "It's about a gentle type of love for a city that maybe is not able to love you back.

"When people in a shelter tell me they are under attack for three days and listening to that song, I am always touched."

Singer-songwriter Khrystyna Soloviy has had a similar experience. Last week, just hours before Russian troops crossed the border into Ukraine, she released a demo song that's become a rallying cry for the Ukrainian resistance.

"I dream about going to our seaside in Crimea," she sings over crashing piano chords, "but damn executioners are taking over our homes / So get ready for a fight."

"In those last hours of peace, I felt anxiety and tremors," she says by email from Lviv in West Ukraine.

"The mood of the song is dictated by life in Ukraine with the permanent war against Russia [for the] last eight years. This song is addressed to young people who decide to take up arms to defend our freedom.

"Yesterday one of our soldiers asked [me] to send the audio separately, because the Internet is not everywhere. I hope to be able to record a studio version soon."

But for most artists, making music is no longer their main concern.

"The war definitely overturned [my] values," agrees Jinjer's Eugene Abdukhanov. "I'm not thinking about my job, my business, my band, popularity, anything like that. I am only thinking about my family because they are outside of Ukraine. They really need me, and I cannot be with them."

In Poland, Kostiantyn Pochtar is taking a different approach - organising an impromptu tour to raise money for victims of the conflict.

His booker, Bartek, came up with the idea on Saturday, asking fans on Facebook if they'd like to host a gig - whether in a venue, a school, a church hall or even their living room. Within an hour, he had 60 offers. Pochtar played the first date on Sunday.

"At first, when the invasion happened, I was disgusted, a little bit, to pick up a guitar and play," he says. "But now, I have to do it.

"I'm not sure if I could go back to Kyiv and pick up a gun and start shooting - but I am going to take my guitar and use it as a weapon."

Many other Ukrainian musicians are having to consider whether they, too, would take up arms.

"I'll take my kids to a safe house and then I'll return to follow the instructions of the government," Andriy Khlyvnyuk of pop-rock band Boombox recently told Euronews, "Musicians are peacemakers [but] now it's not time for playing guitars. It's time to take the rifles."

"If it comes to this, there is no other way," agrees Abdukhanov.

Musicians or not, Slava says the country's resolve is unshakeable.

"Everybody, including many Western analysts, was sure it was going to take Russia two days to overcome Ukraine. It's already sixth day and we are holding and we are resisting and we will win.

"Russian soldiers only have orders, but we have motivation."

-BBC

> **“The mood of the song is dictated by life in Ukraine with the permanent war against Russia [for the] last eight years.”**

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Big Lips

Cry Freedom, Cry. Democracy Has Been Eaten

There has always been this belief that the British author George Orwell wrote his book 1984 to depict the tyranny in the then Soviet Union.

Looking at the events unfolding in the world today, a lucid mind can only point at a situation where every country has become Oceania where there is double-speak. Citizens across the world do not have any freedoms left. All they can do is cry for freedom.

Britannica says Orwell wrote Nineteen Eighty-four as a warning after years of brooding on the twin menaces of Nazism and Stalinism.

Its depiction of a state where daring to think differently is rewarded with torture, where people are monitored every second of the day, and where party propaganda trumps free speech and thought is a sobering reminder of the evils of unaccountable governments.

Winston is the symbol of the values of civilised life, and his defeat is a poignant reminder of the vulnerability of such values amid all-powerful states.

The book's title and many of its concepts, such as Big Brother and the Thought Police, are instantly recognised and understood, often as bywords for modern social and political abuses.

The book is set in 1984 in Oceania, one of three perpetually warring totalitarian states (the other two are Eurasia and Eastasia). Oceania is governed by the all-controlling Party, which has brainwashed the population into unthinking obedience to its leader, Big Brother. The Party has created a propagandistic language known as Newspeak, designed to limit free thought and promote the Party's doctrines. Its words include doublethink (belief in contradictory ideas simultaneously), which is reflected in the Party's slogans: "War is peace," "Freedom is slavery," and "Ignorance is strength." The Party maintains control through the Thought Police and continual surveillance.

The book's hero, Winston Smith, is a minor party functionary living in a London that is still shattered by a nuclear war not long after World War II. He belongs to the Outer Party, and his job is to rewrite history in the Ministry of Truth, bringing it in line with current political thinking. However, Winston's longing for truth and decency leads him to rebel against the government secretly. He embarks on a forbidden affair with Julia, a like-minded woman, and they rent a room in a neighbourhood populated by Proles (short for proletariats). Winston also becomes increasingly interested in the Brotherhood, a group of dissenters. However, unbeknownst to Winston and Julia, they are being watched closely (ubiquitous posters throughout the city warn residents that "Big Brother is watching you.").

When Winston is approached by O'Brien—an official of the Inner Party who appears to be a secret member of the Brotherhood—the trap is set. O'Brien is a spy for the Party, on the lookout for "thought-criminals," and Winston and Julia are eventually caught and sent to the Ministry of Love for a violent reeducation. Winston's subsequent imprisonment, torture, and reeducation are intended not merely to break him physically or make him submit but to root out his independence and destroy his dignity and humanity. In Room 101, where prisoners are forced into submission by exposure to their worst nightmares, Winston panics as a cage of rats is attached to his head. He yells out for his tormentors to "Do it to Julia!" and states that he does not care what happens to her. With this betrayal, Winston is released. He later encounters Julia, and neither is interested in the other. Instead, Winston loves Big Brother.

Rereading the book today, one feels that it is no longer about the Soviet Union but all the powerful countries that subject their people to spying.

The move by tech giants to shut out Russia ostensibly to block propaganda is akin to what Orwell writes about in his book.

Those who own social media and cable news networks are choosing for the people what they must listen to and when.

They are also deciding for people what propaganda is and what is not.

The intrusion into people's lives is no longer a preserve of the communist world but those that used to claim to be civilised.

*Additional Information from Britannica

Russia's war with Ukraine risks putting fresh pressure on rising fertiliser prices



■ **Wandile Sihlobo**

Russia is one of the major players in global agricultural markets. The country is a significant exporter of grains, and also integrated into global agriculture as a supplier of inputs, particularly fertiliser. The country is a leading world supplier of the key ingredients of a range of them.

It's therefore important to keep track of the impact of Russia's invasion of the Ukraine on various transmission channels, and the knock on effects they could have on Africa's agricultural markets.

So far the focus has been on the supply and price of grains and oilseeds. The war presents upside risks to both because Russia and the Ukraine make significant contributions to global exports of wheat, maize and sunflower oil.

There are also risks for countries that export to Russia. Globally the country is the 13th largest agricultural products importer in value terms. The key products Russia imports include citrus, cheese, bananas, wines, soybeans, apples, pears, beef and palm oil. These are mainly sourced from a range of countries such as Belarus, Turkey, Brazil, Germany, China, Ecuador, Italy, Indonesia, France and Germany.

In the case of South Africa, Russia accounted for 7% of its citrus exports in value terms in 2020. And it's South Africa's second-largest market for apple and pear exports.

But there's a great deal more at play. Russia is the world's leading exporter of fertiliser materials in value terms, followed by China, Canada, the US, Morocco and Belarus. These fertiliser mixtures include minerals or chemicals ranging from nitrogen to phosphourous and potassium.

Fertiliser constitutes a significant share in the growth of agricultural commodities and crops across the world, and also substantial share of input costs.

In South Africa, fertilisers account for about 35% of grain farmers' input costs in South Africa.

As with the grains and oilseeds market, the actual disruption of export activity is yet to unfold. But the extensive sanctions that Western countries have imposed on Moscow, including the agreement to exclude some Russian banks from some global payment systems such as SWIFT, could negatively affect Russia's trading activities.

This disruption could push fertiliser prices even higher than the spike experienced in the past 18 months. In some cases, for example in ammonia, prices rose by 260% between December 2020 and December 2021. This meant that farmers had to absorb substantial costs for the 2021/2022 crop across the world. The generally higher commodity prices, specifically grains and oilseeds, provided financial flexibility to absorb some of these costs, but not fully. The Russia-Ukraine war will now be an added upside risk on prices for farmers.

For consumers, the knock on effects will typically be through the size of the final harvest of the crop. Farmers are price takers, and might therefore not necessarily pass on the input costs to consumers.

Fertiliser price dynamics

Fertiliser prices increased sharply in 2021 and remained elevated this year.

For instance, in January 2022, the international prices of a range of key fertiliser ingredients shot through the roof. Since January 2021 the price of ammonia has gone up by 220%, urea by 148%, di-ammonium phosphate by 90%, and potassium chloride by 198%.

A range of factors have been behind these sharp input cost increases. These include supply constraints in critical fertiliser-producing countries such as China, India, the US, Russia and Canada. Rising shipping costs, and high oil and gas prices have also been contributing factors, along with firmer global demand from agriculture produces.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict will add to these price pressures, particularly if Russia's exports suffer as a result of the war and sanctions. The primary markets for Russia's fertiliser material are Brazil, Estonia, China, India, the US, Finland, Mexico, Poland, Romania, and Latvia.

Even countries with small direct fertiliser imports from Russia, such as South Africa – Russia's 36th largest fertiliser materials market – will feel the price pressures.

This week the US Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, said it was too early to know if the war in Ukraine would disrupt international fertiliser trade. But he warned companies against taking "unfair advantage" of the current circumstances by artificially inflating prices.

Africa's fertiliser usage

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are small consumers of fertiliser compared with other regions of the world. Consumption is estimated at 19,9 kilograms of nutrients per hectare of cropland, which is well below the 128,7 kilograms of nutrients per hectare of cropland in developed countries such as the US.

This low use of fertiliser has partly contributed to generally lower agricultural productivity in the region.

There are numerous reasons for this low use of fertiliser, including affordability issues for the continent's smallholder farmers. The current prices levels have exacerbated the problem. This could keep productivity levels low for the foreseeable future.

But the picture isn't uniform. Countries such as South Africa are major fertiliser users, with an average of 72,8 kilograms of nutrients per hectare of cropland compared to the regional average of 19,9 kilograms.

Zambia is also an important fertiliser user, consuming 52,5 kilograms of nutrients per hectare. Kenya and Nigeria are smaller fertiliser consumers. Consumption for both is less than 30 kilograms of nutrients per hectare.

The major regional users also import substantial volumes of their annual consumption.

The longer view

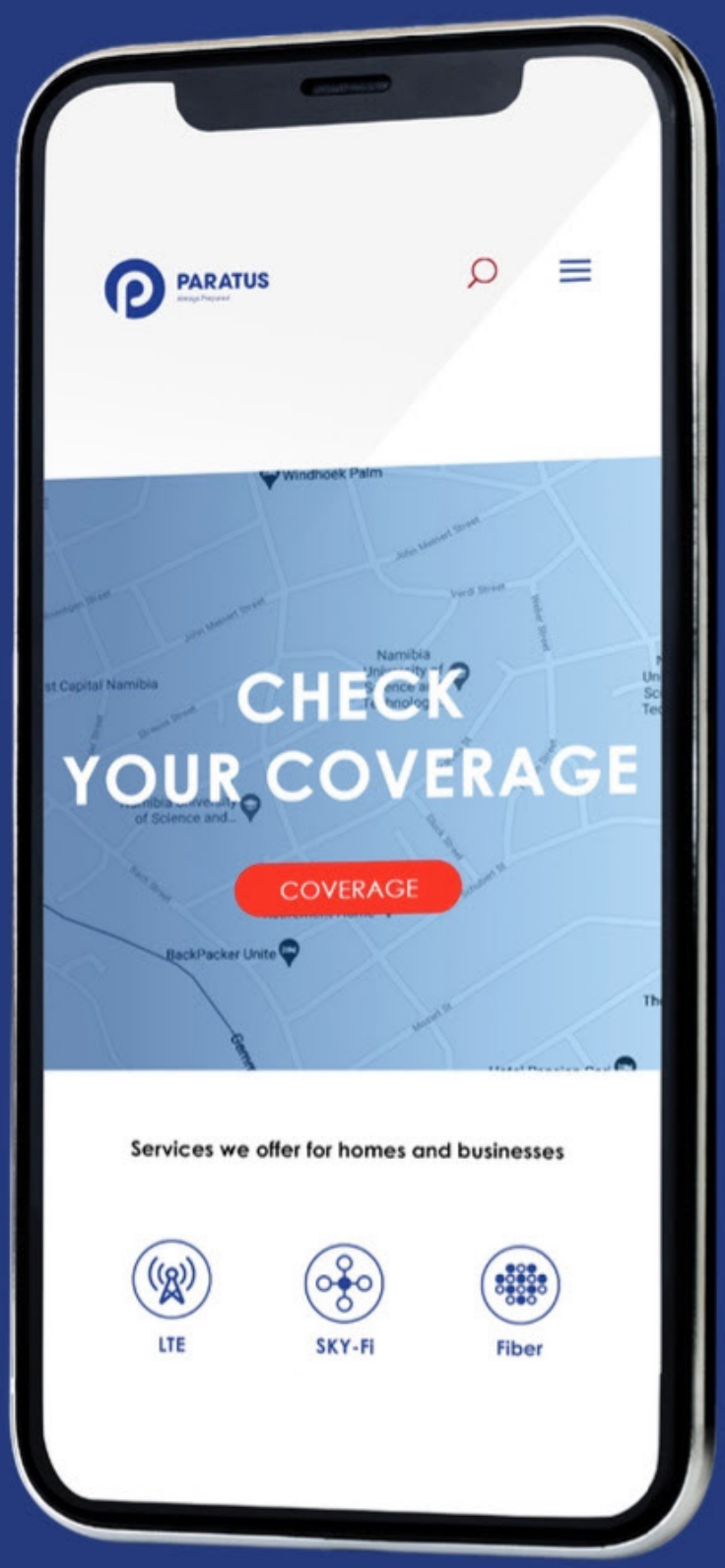
It has often been argued that Africa needs to improve its agricultural productivity to improve its food security. But for this to happen there needs to be a financially conducive production environment. As things stand, the cost of inputs like fertiliser don't augur well for the realisation of improved agricultural productivity on the continent.

This is a global challenge for all farmers, and unfortunately, the ultimate crop yields that farmers harvest is dependent on the use of fertilisers. A reduction in fertiliser use, and the resulting negative impact on yields, has implications for the consumers across the world, particularly in poor countries where agriculture constitutes a significant share of the economy.

Wandile Sihlobo
Senior Fellow, Department of Agricultural Economics, Stellenbosch University

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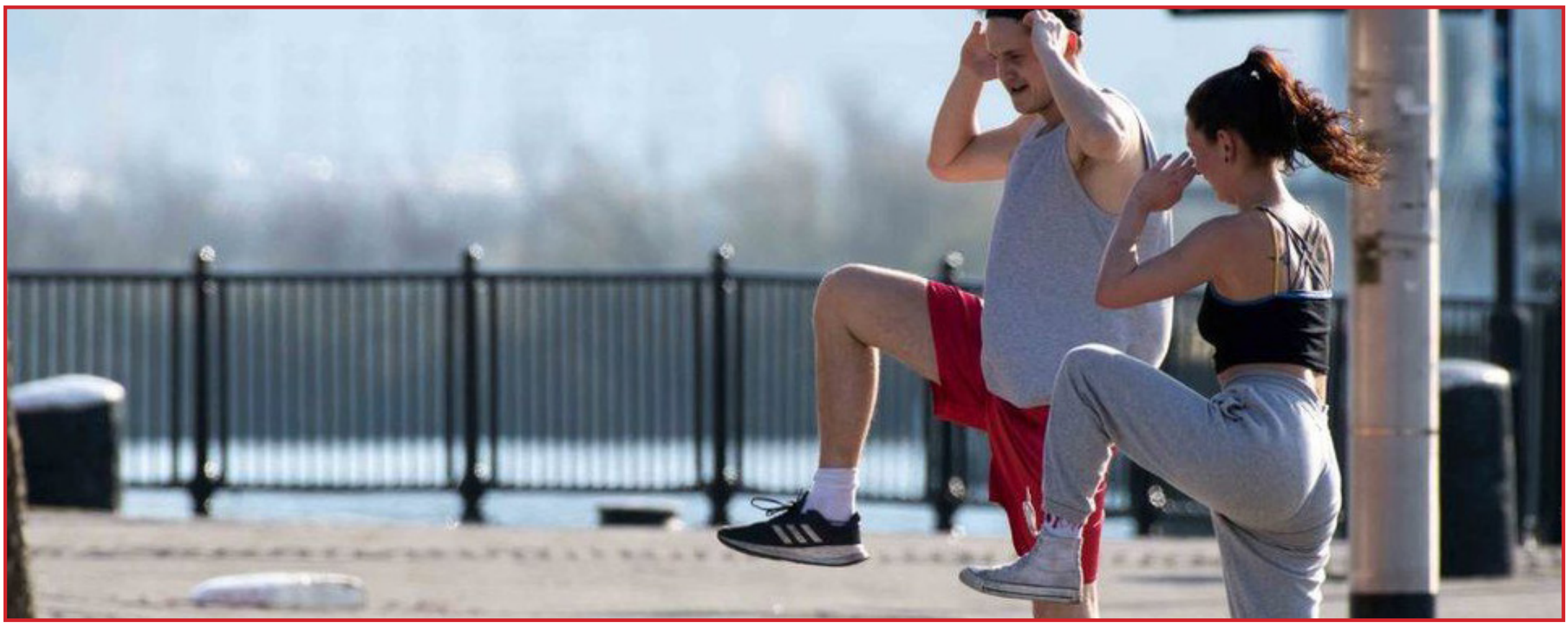
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Covid: How could the pandemic have affected your brain?



■ **Dani Thomas**

Memory loss, fatigue and trouble concentrating can be symptoms of having had coronavirus.

But scientists think people who haven't had Covid are also suffering increased tiredness, impaired decision-making and a lack of focus due to the pandemic.

Experts believe Covid uncertainty and disruption to routines have led to a phenomenon known as "pandemic brain".

A leading behavioural neuroscientist is now calling for more research into it.

"People form habits so we see friends on a particular day or enjoy a sport on a particular evening - and that lack of regularity can be quite challenging," said Dr Emma Yhnell.

Has the pandemic affected your brain?

"Uncertainty influences the biology of our brains - and generally we can cope with a certain amount of uncertainty but the longer we have it, generally the worse it is for our brain.

"Lots of research has looked at the effect of Covid infection on the brain but actually we know that living in a pandemic more generally really has had impacts on our brain function and brain health."

The UK has a population of more than 68 million people and the latest government figures show there have been more than 18.9 million confirmed UK Covid cases since January 2020.

Two years ago this month, the Covid-19 crisis was declared a global pandemic and the UK went into stay-at-home lockdown - with more than 160,000 people dying in the UK after testing positive for coronavirus.

There are many studies into the long-term impact of having a Covid infection or long Covid - but some who haven't had the virus believe two years of living with restrictions has had a significant impact.

'I was hesitant to hug my mum'

Sannan Iqbal said he was "hesitant" to hug his mum during the pandemic as the 22-year-old with cystic fibrosis shielded to protect himself.

He said he felt like he "had a tonne of bricks" on his shoulders with "nowhere to escape" as he tried to avoid getting Covid.

"This pandemic has taken its toll on me" said Sannan, who lives with his parents in Cardiff.

"I do feel more fatigued, I do feel more anxious, I do feel myself questioning or even triple questioning my decisions."

Sannan, whose condition affects his mobility, remembers being "glued to the television" when Covid hit the UK, trying to understand the restrictions and statistics.

"I already have mental health issues because of my disability, so all this added stress and pressure didn't help," he told BBC Wales Live.

He said his care services were withdrawn during the first lockdown in March 2020, leaving his anxiety levels "sky high", and affecting his relationship with his parents, who are both key workers.

'What happens if my parents caught Covid?'

"I relied on those services to give me and my parents a bit of respite from each other," he said.

"I was a bit hesitant to even hug my own mother at most points during the pandemic.

"What happens if one of my parents caught Covid or were asymptomatic and brought it home? Would I be safe? Would I be able to cope?"

Scientists think regular changes in lockdown rules, travel restrictions, worries about getting the virus and limited face-to-face contact with others has affected some people's brain health.

For Abbie Wright, losing her job at an insurance company during the pandemic impacted her routine and affected her focus.

'I feel like my memory is gone'

"The uncertainty, it was just awful. And you couldn't see the end," said the 27-year-old from Barry in Vale of Glamorgan.

"I feel like my memory is gone. Brain fog has been a definite big thing for me. Forgetting words to use in a sentence and forgetting a simple sum."

Abbie was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder in October 2019, just months before the pandemic, and the uncertainty meant she stopped doing things that would normally help her.

"I love going to the cinema, I love going to concerts," she said.

"That's a big part of my life - just anything that takes my mind off things. Things that you take for granted and were normal pre-pandemic now just seem alien.

"Then it's the anxiety of getting back out there now restrictions are lifting."

More research needed into 'pandemic brain' impact

Now there are calls for more research into the psychological impact of living through a pandemic for those who didn't get Covid

"This term 'pandemic brain' has cropped up - and the really interesting thing about it is that different people will have different experiences," said Dr Yhnell, a senior neuroscience lecturer at Cardiff University.

"We know people who have experienced chronic stress or chronic anxiety see some changes to their brain in the parts that are involved in decision making and attention.

"But we need much more research to determine whether the experience of the pandemic has caused structural changes in people's brains."

-BBC



Russia's biggest lender Sberbank exits Europe

Russia's largest lender Sberbank says it is pulling out of Europe after coming under pressure from tough sanctions announced by Western countries in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"In the current environment, Sberbank has decided to withdraw from the European market," it said on Wednesday in a statement carried by Russian news agencies.

The state-controlled bank's European subsidiaries were experiencing "abnormal cash outflows and threats to the safety of employees and branches", it added.

The bank said it was no longer able to supply liquidity to European subsidiaries, following a central bank order, but its capital level and asset quality were sufficient to pay all depositors.

The news came as Sberbank reported record annual profits for 2021.

European Union sanctions

Ukraine says hundreds of civilians, including children, have been killed since Russian troops rolled into the country last week to achieve President Vladimir Putin's mission of overthrowing the pro-Western government of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Kremlin says it does not target civilian infrastructure during what it calls a "special operation".

The unprecedented steps taken by Western nations to isolate Russia's economy and financial system over the invasion have included sanctions on its central bank and the exclusion of some of its lenders from the global payments system, SWIFT.

The European Central Bank had already ordered the closure of Sberbank's European arm, after warning it faced failure because of a run on its deposits sparked by the backlash to the war.

Sberbank, which had operations in Austria, Croatia, Germany and Hungary among other nations, had European assets worth 13 billion euros ($14.4bn) as of December 31, 2020.

Sberbank's Austria-based European arm, Sberbank Europe AG, would be allowed to enter "normal insolvency proceedings", while branches in Croatia and Slovenia were sold to local banks, ECB said.

Slovenian bank NLB said it was acquiring Sberbank's Slovenian unit.

The exit does not affect the bank's operations in Switzerland.

Sberbank's net profit for 2021 jumped 64 percent year on year to 1.25 trillion roubles ($12.38bn). Return on equity for the year was 24.2 percent and its net interest income stood at 1.8 trillion roubles.

The Moscow Exchange has halted trading on stocks and sought to prevent capital outflows from Russian assets, but Sberbank's depositary receipts in London have lost their entire value, falling to $0.

-Al Jazeera



Former Nissan executive convicted over Carlos Ghosn pay case

A former Nissan executive Greg Kelly has been found guilty of assisting the Japanese car giant's ex-CEO Carlos Ghosn to evade pay disclosure laws.

The court in Tokyo heard that Mr Kelly had helped Mr Ghosn hide part of 9.3 billion yen (£60m; $80.4m) of his income from financial regulators.

Mr Kelly was sentenced to six months in jail, suspended for three years.

In 2019, Mr Ghosn fled Japan to his home country Lebanon hidden in a box on a private jet.

The ruling means that Mr Kelly, who is a US citizen, will not be jailed as long as he adheres to the conditions of his sentence for the next three years.

Prosecutors had sought a two-year prison sentence for Mr Kelly. Under Japanese law both sides could appeal the verdict.

Mr Kelly's sentencing brings to an end the first, and potentially only, trial over the charges that saw Mr Ghosn's arrest in 2018.

The court also fined Nissan 200 million yen for failing to disclose Mr Ghosn's pay. The carmaker pleaded guilty at the start of the trial 18 months ago.

Before Mr Ghosn's escape from Japan he was expected to be a co-defendant alongside Mr Kelly.

Mr Ghosn was first arrested on charges of financial misconduct, for allegedly under-reporting his pay package for the five years to 2015.

He has told the BBC about his dramatic escape, that involved disguising himself to slip unnoticed through the streets of Tokyo, being hidden in a large music equipment box and fleeing to his native Lebanon.

In 2021, an American father and son were handed jail terms in Japan for helping to smuggle Mr Ghosn out of the country on a private jet.

US Special Forces veteran Michael Taylor was sentenced to two years in prison, while his son Peter was handed a term of one year and eight months.

-BBC



Jerome Powell: US central bank boss says he plans to raise rates



The US central bank's boss has indicated that he plans to press ahead with interest rate increases this month.

Speaking in front of Congress, Jerome Powell said he's in favour of a 0.25 point increase, aimed at tackling the surging cost of living.

The bank is under pressure to rein in inflation as prices in the US rise at the fastest rate in 40 years.

Analysts expect a rate hike in March, which would be the first since 2018.

It comes as costs for food, fuel and cars have risen sharply in recent months, leaving families' budgets strained.

Mr Powell admitted that he was open to further interest rate increases further down the line if inflation, which measures how quickly the cost of living rises over time, remains "persistently high."

The idea of raising interest rates is to keep those current and predicted price rises under control.

Higher interest rates make borrowing more expensive, for example. For households, that could mean higher mortgage costs, although - for the vast majority of homeowners - the impact is not immediate, and some will escape it entirely.

Many central banks, including the Federal Reserve in the US, aim to keep inflation contained at 2%.

Mr Powell acknowledged that price increases have jumped far above that target. In January, the increase in the cost of living jumped by 7.5% when compared with a year earlier.

"The inflation that we're experiencing is just nothing like anything we've experienced in decades," he said.

At the start of the pandemic, the Federal Reserve slashed rates to zero in a bid to stimulate spending and the economy at a time when many sectors were shut-down.

But a mix of issues, such as high demand as restrictions ease, labour shortages and supply chain problems have led to increases in the cost of goods in particular.

The chairman of America's central bank Jerome Powell has made it a point during his tenure of trying to demystify what the Federal Reserve does. He is committed to explaining what policymakers are doing and why because of what happened during the 2008 financial crisis.

Even by those standards, he was unusually blunt during his semi-annual Congressional testimony.

Mr Powell telegraphing explicitly what he wants to do at the central bank's next meeting in two weeks: proposing a quarter percentage point rate increase, while moving carefully and watching the economic implications of war in Ukraine.

Even before Russia's invasion, the Fed had a tough job on its hands trying to tame soaring inflation. A series of rate hikes were already expected this year.

But the conflict in Ukraine has complicated that job. The invasion is likely to undermine global growth while pushing up prices, especially for energy and food.

Given the uncertainty, Mr Powell is taking the view that a cautious approach is best and is putting all his cards on the table.

'Significant hardship'

The chair recognised that "high inflation imposes significant hardship" on people and said the Bank will use all its tools to ensure the increased prices do not become "entrenched".

The Fed is not alone in its plans to raise interest rates from their current levels. The Bank of England raised interest rates twice in three months and drew outrage when its boss asked workers not to ask for a pay rise to try to stop prices rising out of control.

Looking ahead, Jerome Powell said that the Fed expects inflation "to decline over the course of the year as supply constraints ease... we are attentive to the risks of potential further upward pressure" on prices.

He cautioned, however, that the invasion of Ukraine, and sanctions imposed by Western countries, create a great deal of uncertainty around the prices of wheat, oil, and other goods.

"The near-term effects on the US economy of the invasion of Ukraine, the ongoing war, the sanctions, and of events to come, remain highly uncertain," he said in his semi-annual testimony to Congress.

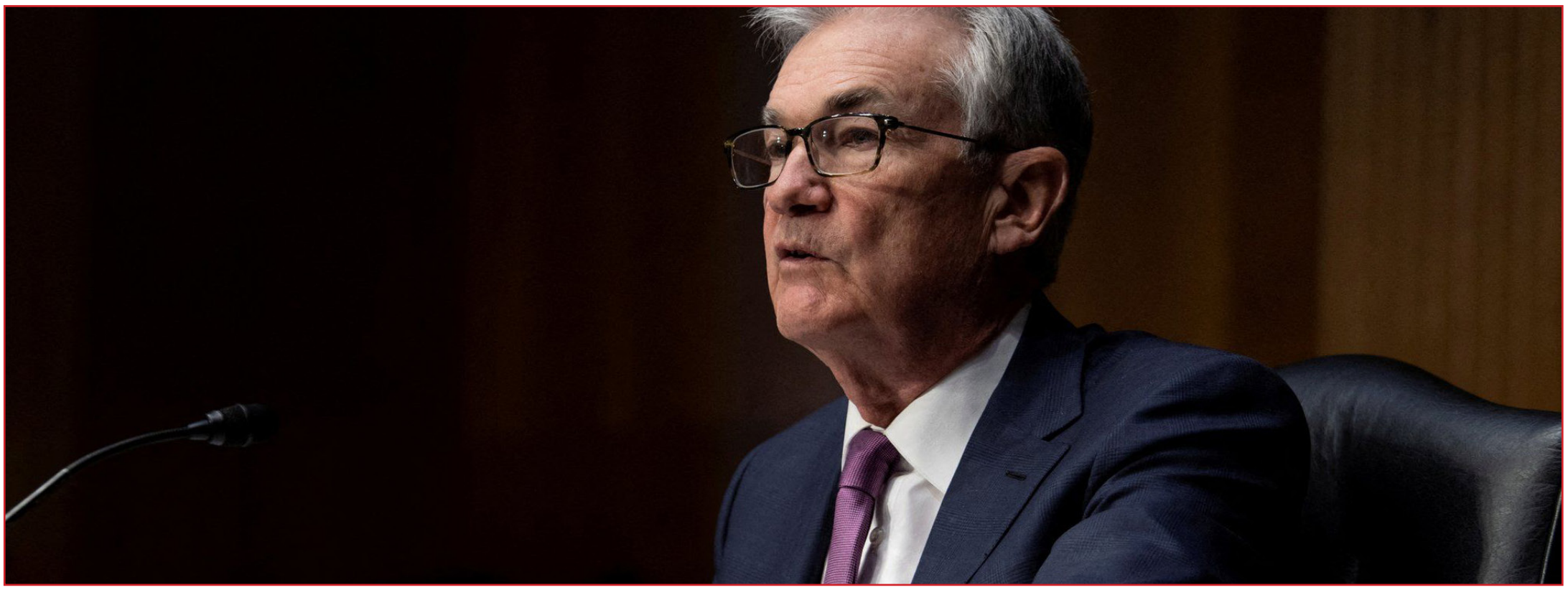
"We will be monitoring the situation closely."

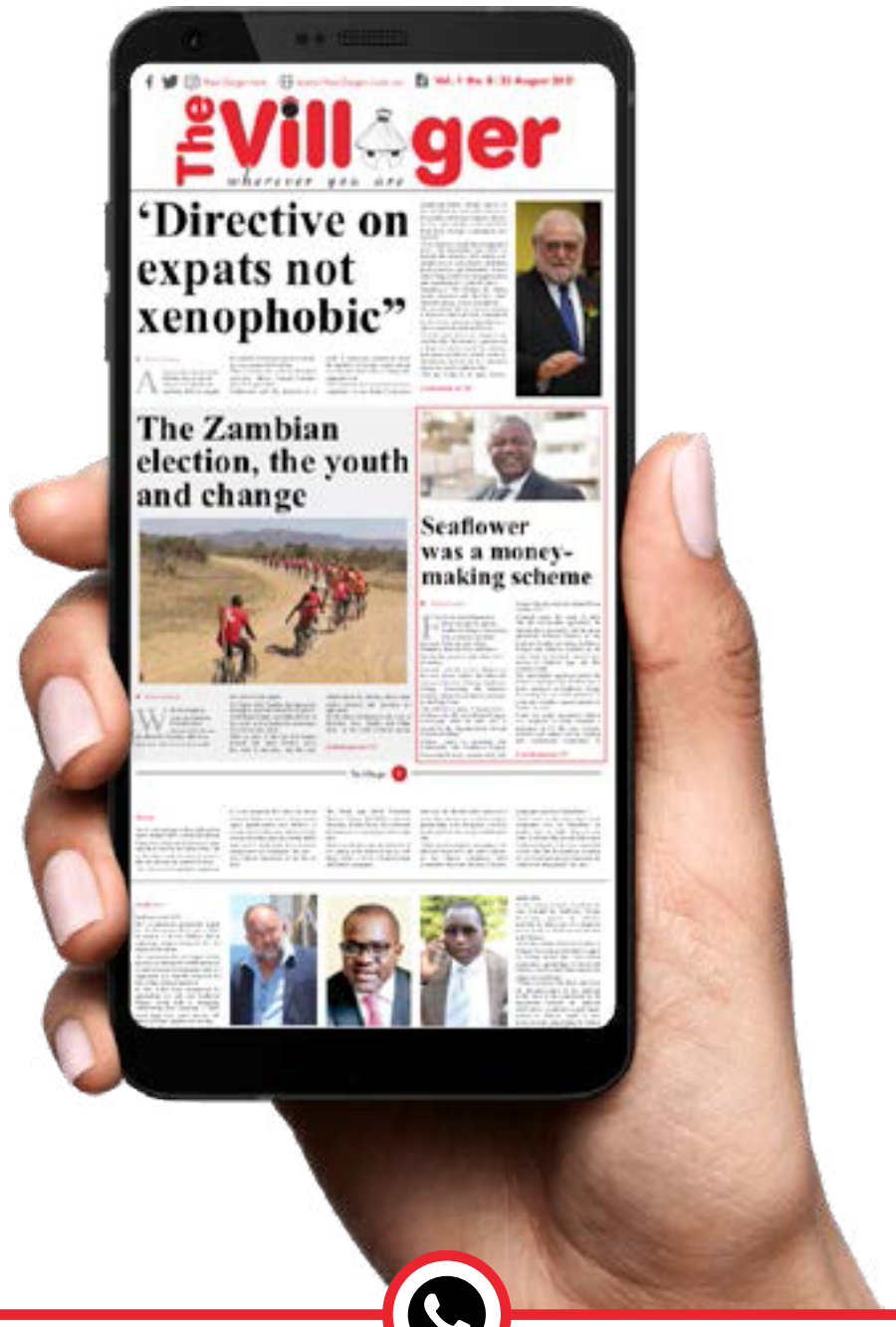
On Wednesday, oil prices surged again despite the US and other members of the International Energy Agency agreeing to release 60 million barrels of emergency stockpiles.

Russia is one of the world's largest oil and gas exporters, but US President Biden has not ruled out banning imports from the country.

-BBC

> **“The near-term effects on the US economy of the invasion of Ukraine, the ongoing war, the sanctions.”**





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Unpacking the Day with Wonder
09h00-10h00
Free Your Mind
10h00-12h00
Tech Eagle with Frans
12h00-13h00
Brand Conversation with Sally
13h00-14h30
On the Radar with Dwight
14h30-16h30
Ookundana Dhingi with Helen
16h30-18h30
The Home Run with Frans/ Fanus
18h30-20h00
Business Segment with Gabriel
20h00-23h00
Omutumwa pamuee naTate Fly
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Penge Omhito pamue na Leonard

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33B John Ludwig Street
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Office Tel: +264 832888400
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Why so many African and Indian students were in the country



■ Soraya Ali

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused a mass exodus of civilians, including thousands of international students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Ukraine was home to over 76,000 foreign students, according to government data from 2020.

Nearly a quarter of the students were from Africa, with the largest numbers coming from Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt.

India easily accounts for the highest portion with over 20,000 students.

The students - studying medicine, engineering and business - are an important part of the country's economy.

But, as Russia launches the biggest European invasion since the Second World War, thousands of them have fled, hundreds are still trapped, and many remain uncertain about the fate of their education.

What was the attraction of Ukraine?

Ukraine has long appealed to foreign students, which can be traced back to the Soviet era, when there was a lot of investment in higher education and a deliberate attempt to attract students from newly independent African countries.

Now, Ukrainian universities are seen as a gateway to the European job market, offering affordable course prices, straightforward visa terms and the possibility of permanent residency.

"Ukrainian degrees are widely recognised and offer a high standard of education," said Patrick Esugunum, who works for an organisation that assists West African students wanting to study in Ukraine.

"A lot of medical students, in particular, want to go there as they have a good standard for medical facilities," he added.

Desmond Chinaza Muokwudo, a Nigerian student who had been based in the city of Dnirpo, said he was attracted by the relaxed admission requirements and the cheap cost of living compared to other European cities.

He enrolled at the University of Customs and Finance less than three months ago.

Many courses are offered in English, but the 30-year-old was undertaking a preliminary Ukrainian language course, before moving on to study international relations.

"I was a welder back in Nigeria and I needed an education to accomplish things," he told the BBC from a hostel in Poland after fleeing the conflict.

"Ukraine was the best option for me."

Where are the students now?

Like Mr Muokwudo, more than 10,000 other African students have managed to flee the conflict and enter neighbouring countries, according to the EU.

There have been reports of foreign students receiving racist treatment at the border, with social media footage showing Ukrainian officials preventing some from crossing.

Hundreds of students are still believed to be in Ukraine, but it is hard to confirm exact numbers.

One Indian student was killed when he ventured outside to buy some food.

Christophe, a 22-year-old Cameroonian student, spoke to the BBC from inside a basement in the southern city of Kherson, which has been taken by Russian forces.

"When the bombardments start, we go inside, it's a very little hole," he said while the fighting was still raging.

He said it was now relatively calm but there was a lockdown during the day and more than two people were not allowed to be together outside.

The international business student was one year into his bachelor's degree at the Kherson National Technical University when the fighting began.

"It's difficult to imagine finishing your studies in this sort of environment," he said.

In another part of the city, Mamady Doumbouya, a computer science student from Guinea said: "I want to go back to my country, we can't study in war."

He spoke to the BBC from inside a dark basement surrounded by his classmates from Gabon, Senegal, and Cameroon.

"We don't have water, we don't have light," he said.

What are governments doing to help?

Ukraine halted all civilian flights when the invasion began on 24 February.

African governments have been scrambling to evacuate their citizens from the country, with some organising flights back home to those who make it across the border.

Ghana was the first African nation to welcome home a group of students on Tuesday.

Speaking to the BBC after landing in the capital, Accra, student Jared Otumfuo Catey said: "A few days ago, I didn't know I'd be here right now. I'm feeling grateful that I made it through and I'm safe."

Nigeria said it would follow suit and offer flights for those wishing to return via Romania, Hungary, and Poland.

South Africa's ambassador to the Ukraine told the BBC that he had to leave Ukraine for his own safety but that he had been working hard to secure the exit of South Africans and other foreigners from the country.

South Africa's ambassadors in both Poland and Hungary have also gone to the borders to help people get through, he said.

The Ukrainian government has launched an emergency hotline for Africans and Asians fleeing, according to the foreign minister.

In a tweet, Dmytro Kuleba said the authorities were "working intensively" to ensure the safety and passage of African and Asian students.

Will they be able to finish their studies?

Having invested a lot of money in an education in Ukraine, many students have told the BBC that they were torn between returning home or staying in Europe to complete their degrees.

Jessica Orakpo, a sixth-year medical student at the Ternopil National Medical University, was four months away from graduating when the Russian troops invaded.

"I'm stuck now, I can't move forward with my education because my school has all my documents," she told the BBC on her way to the Hungarian capital, Budapest.

"I don't have time to start all over again and I just want my degree. Maybe I can finish my master's somewhere else."

Foreign students in Ukraine get temporary residence for the duration of their studies, but this does not extend to neighbouring countries.

Mr Muokwudo said he would try to finish his course elsewhere in Europe, if all else fails.

"I'm going to stay here and see if the situation improves," he said.

"Going back to Nigeria is not an option."

-BBC



Sudan's latest coup is crippling its frail health sector



Khartoum, Sudan – At Ibrahim Malek hospital in Sudan's capital Khartoum, anaesthetics are in such short supply that patients sometimes wake up while still on the operating table.

Staff say they have stopped receiving medical supplies from the Ministry of Health since Sudan's October 25 military coup.

"When people are about to wake up, we give them more anaesthesia," said Dr Ali Shaker, general manager of Ibrahim Malek, one of the busiest public hospitals in the country. "These supplies should be given to us for free from the Ministry of Health, but they're not coming…it's a catastrophe."

Like all other hospitals, Ibrahim Malik has resorted to purchasing drugs and equipment from the unregulated black market, but doctors cannot know whether those supplies are safe or effective.

Anaesthetics, in particular, wear off much sooner than they should, pushing doctors to administer double and sometimes triple the dose to knock patients back to sleep during an operation.

An already reeling sector

Sudan, and its healthcare sector, has been through a lot in the past three years. In April 2019, former dictator Omar al-Bashir was overthrown by a wave of popular protests and a civilian-military partnership formed to administer the country. Four months ago, the military overthrew the civilian administration and took power alone.

Even before the military coup, Sudan's healthcare sector was already reeling from decades of privatisation under al-Bashir. Officials of his administration were notorious for eroding public medical services and pocketing funds for the sector, while wealthy Sudanese sought treatment abroad.

Medical workers and former health officials say that during the country's brief democratic transition, then-Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok improved the situation somewhat. But he also imposed IMF-advised austerity measures that made medications unaffordable for many.

Under the military's control, things have worsened. The sector is on the verge of collapse as protests persist nationwide against the coup. Hospital directors and health officials have been replaced with Bashir-era cronies – many of whom have been accused or implicated in corruption scandals – after international aid to the tune of billions of dollars was paused because of the coup.

This has led to shortages of drugs and equipment as well as a spike in medical costs across the public sector, say doctors and former health workers.

Potential for corruption

Asil Sidahmed, a former adviser to the health ministry under Hamdok's government, says the coup opened the door for high-level corruption in the sector.

She said most of the Ministry of Health's funding was supposed to come from the World Bank Global Fund and Gavi, a public-private partnership providing vaccines to the global south.

But Sidahmed cautioned against the restoration of aid to the ministry because it would finance the military, not help patients.

"I think what we need to do is find a model where healthcare centres get money directly," she told Al Jazeera over the phone. "It should go to directors of primary healthcare clinics and some selective hospitals that meet the requirements of fiscal responsibility. Those are the places where money should go."

Despite already leaning heavily on international and local aid groups, Dr Shaker said his hospital barely has the materials needed to perform most basic operations safely. In the hospital's storage room, he points at a few boxes of surgical gloves; they were the only ones available to conduct an estimated 60 surgeries a day for at least the next month.

"We ask our patients to buy gloves and syringes before their operation," Dr Shaker told Al Jazeera. "We try to save the ones we have for emergency procedures."

A number of medical workers and healthcare officials have also been fired since the coup; Al Jazeera was unable to verify the exact number.

Dr Khaled Badr, the former director of primary healthcare at the health ministry, said he was one of three people kicked out just one week after the coup. "We were the ones fired at the federal level, but at the state level many people were fired," he said.

Dr Shaker was also supposed to be fired along with his deputies, but the heads of all 27 departments in Ibrahim Malik threatened to strike if their manager was let go.

The indiscriminate sacking of healthcare professionals was because doctors and medical workers like Dr Badr played a major role in protests that overthrew al-Bashir in 2019, explained Samahir Mubarak, spokesperson for Sudan's Professional Pharmacists Association. At the time, the Sudanese Professionals Association – which was mostly doctors – spearheaded protests that called for the fall of the regime.

With members from al-Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) now back in government, she expects them to settle scores. "The return of the NCP (officials) will definitely be vengeful," she said. "They are coming back with power and with the army behind them."

Rising Prices

Since April 2021 when Dr Shaker took over the reins at Ibrahim Malik Hospital, he has waived medical fees for patients unable to pay, a welcome gesture in a country where even public healthcare costs are unaffordable for many.

But on February 19, the government hiked healthcare fees across the board without first informing the public, according to the pharmacists' union and several doctors.

Patients now have to pay at least 2,000 Sudanese pounds ($4.49) to spend a night in the hospital and pay at least four times as much for X-rays and malaria tests. Even admitting a patient to the hospital rose from 220 Sudanese pounds ($0.45) to at least 7,000 ($16) – an increase of 3,000 to 5,000 percent.

Sudan's health minister, Dr Haythem Mohamad Ibrahim, told Al Jazeera the cost of services is related to the lack of international funding. He added that the ministry is considering ways to help poor citizens, such as expanding national health coverage so insurance companies can foot a portion of the bill.

"There is not enough money going to hospitals from the Ministry of Finance," he told Al Jazeera via WhatsApp voice notes. "That's why medical prices are expected to be at least five times more expensive this year."

People like Ahmed Baqar will not be able to afford such high costs. Baqar, a day labourer who makes a meagre 5,000 pounds ($11.22) a month, brought his baby son to Ibrahim Malik just before the price hikes took effect.

"I brought [my son] here because he was having trouble breathing…but I didn't expect each service to suddenly cost 4,000 or 5,000 Sudanese pounds," he said, with his wife and baby next to him. "I thought I would have to take my son home."

Luckily for him, Ibrahim Malik refused to apply the new prices, unlike most other hospitals.

Dr Shaker had pleaded with the authorities to roll back the hikes until a transparent review was conducted. The next day, the government approved his request, but he fears that prices will not stay frozen for long and hopes to see the administration increase support for the sector.

"If the [military] wants to govern this country, then they should pay for people's healthcare as much as they pay the security forces… and as much as they pay for the tear gas they use to fire at protesters," he told Al Jazeera.

"We know the government has money, but it's not going towards healthcare."

-Al JAzeera



Is Samsung the latest Android device maker throttling apps?

■ Jon Porter

Some of Samsung's smartphones include software that appears to be artificially limiting, or throttling, the performance of thousands of popular apps, Android Authority reports. Reports about the behavior have been gathering steam on Twitter, as well as Samsung's Korean community forums.

At the core of the issue is Samsung software called Game Optimizing Service (GOS), which is reportedly throttling the performance of 10,000 apps. This list includes popular apps like Instagram, Netflix, TikTok, and even Samsung's own apps like Secure Folder and Samsung Pay. Crucially, however, it doesn't appear to include benchmarking apps like 3DMark and GeekBench, which means they might not give an accurate picture of the performance of a phone. So a benchmarking app will run just fine, but when you actually come to use an app like TikTok, you might not get the full performance you expect (and, arguably, deserve).

A test done by one Korean YouTuber shows the extent of the impact this can have. Simply by renaming a benchmarking app that wouldn't usually be throttled (3DMark) to the name of a popular game that is (Genshin Impact) they were reportedly able to trick the phone into throttling 3DMark's Wild Life Extreme benchmark, reducing its overall score from 2618 to 1141.

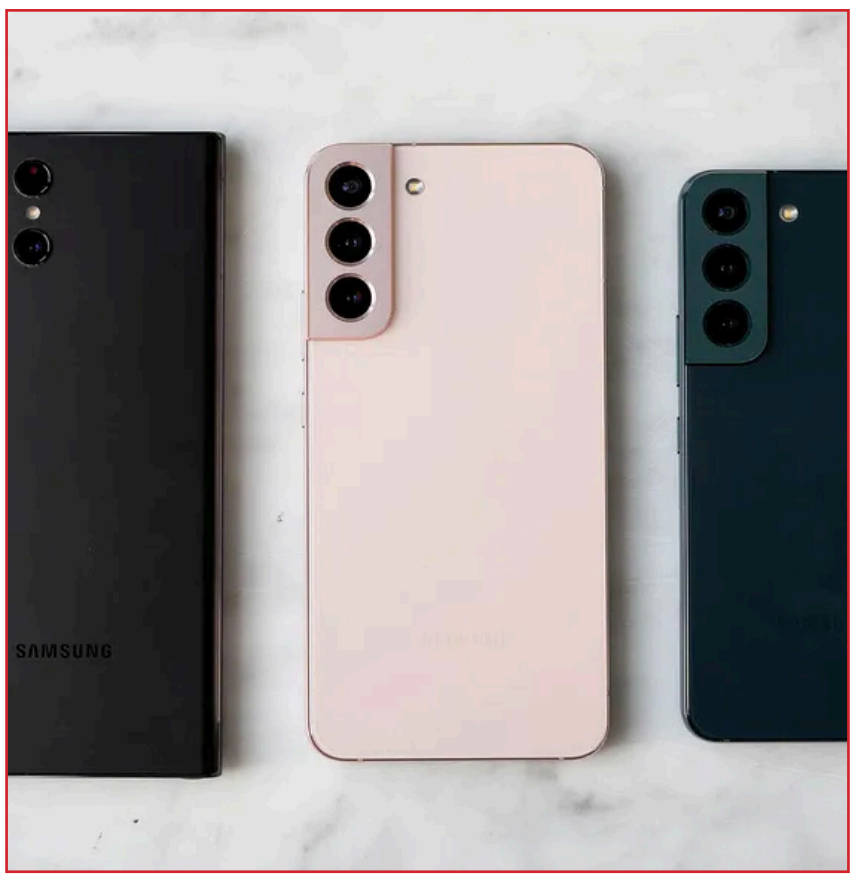
What's unclear at the moment is which phones are equipped with this Game Optimizing Service. Android Authority reports that it didn't find the software on its Galaxy S22 devices, the Galaxy S20 FE, or the Galaxy S10E, but that they did find it on the Galaxy S21 Plus. But, confusingly, 9to5Google reports that the software was installed on their Galaxy S22 Plus. The Korean Youtuber cited above appears to be showing the software running on a Galaxy S22 Ultra.

If the story of an Android device maker throttling app performance sounds familiar to you then that might be because OnePlus was caught in a very similar situation last year, where it was diverting popular apps like Chrome and Twitter (but not benchmarking apps) away from its phone processor's high performance CPU cores. OnePlus justified the decision by saying it was optimizing for battery life and heat, but users were rightly annoyed that they weren't told about this behavior up front.

Samsung is yet to respond to The Verge's request for comment on what it's Game Optimizing Service is meant to achieve, though if it's similar to OnePlus it seems likely it's also aimed at improving battery life. But what's less clear is why users aren't given the option of disabling the behavior, or why Samsung hasn't told them about it in the first place.

-The Verge

"Crucially, however, it doesn't appear to include benchmarking apps like 3DMark and GeekBench."



Netflix pauses future projects in Russia

■ James Clayton & Jasmin Dyer

Streaming giant Netflix has announced it has paused all future projects and acquisitions from Russia.

The company said it was assessing the impact of the current invasion of Ukraine.

Filming for the production of Russian language series Zato will be halted.

Elsewhere in tech, cloud computing company Oracle also said it has suspended operations in Russia.

The two companies are the latest US technology firms to take action against Russia as attacks on Ukraine's cities have escalated.

On Tuesday, Apple also announced that it was halting sales in Russia.

Oracle's announcement on Twitter came three hours after Ukraine's Minister of Digital Transformation tweeted the company, calling for support.

Deputy Minister Alexander Bornyakov told the Reuters news agency that Ukraine has sought help from 50 different companies - in a bid to apply pressure to Russia.

"More sanctions imposed, faster peace restored," Borynakov said on social media.

In a tweet Oracle said: "On behalf of Oracle's 150,000 employees around the world and in support of both the elected government of Ukraine and for the people of Ukraine"

In recent days, global brands including Shell, Nike, H&M and Boeing have cut ties or temporarily suspended sales in Russia.

Moscow has responded to foreign companies distancing themselves from Russia by temporarily restricting Russian asset sales by foreigners.

On Wednesday, President Vladimir Putin met with the president of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs to discuss how it would attempt to minimise the impact of sanctions announced so far.

Netflix would not comment on how many people use its streaming service in Russia.

Earlier this week, however, it confirmed in a report by Hollywood Reporter that it would not carry Russian state channels.

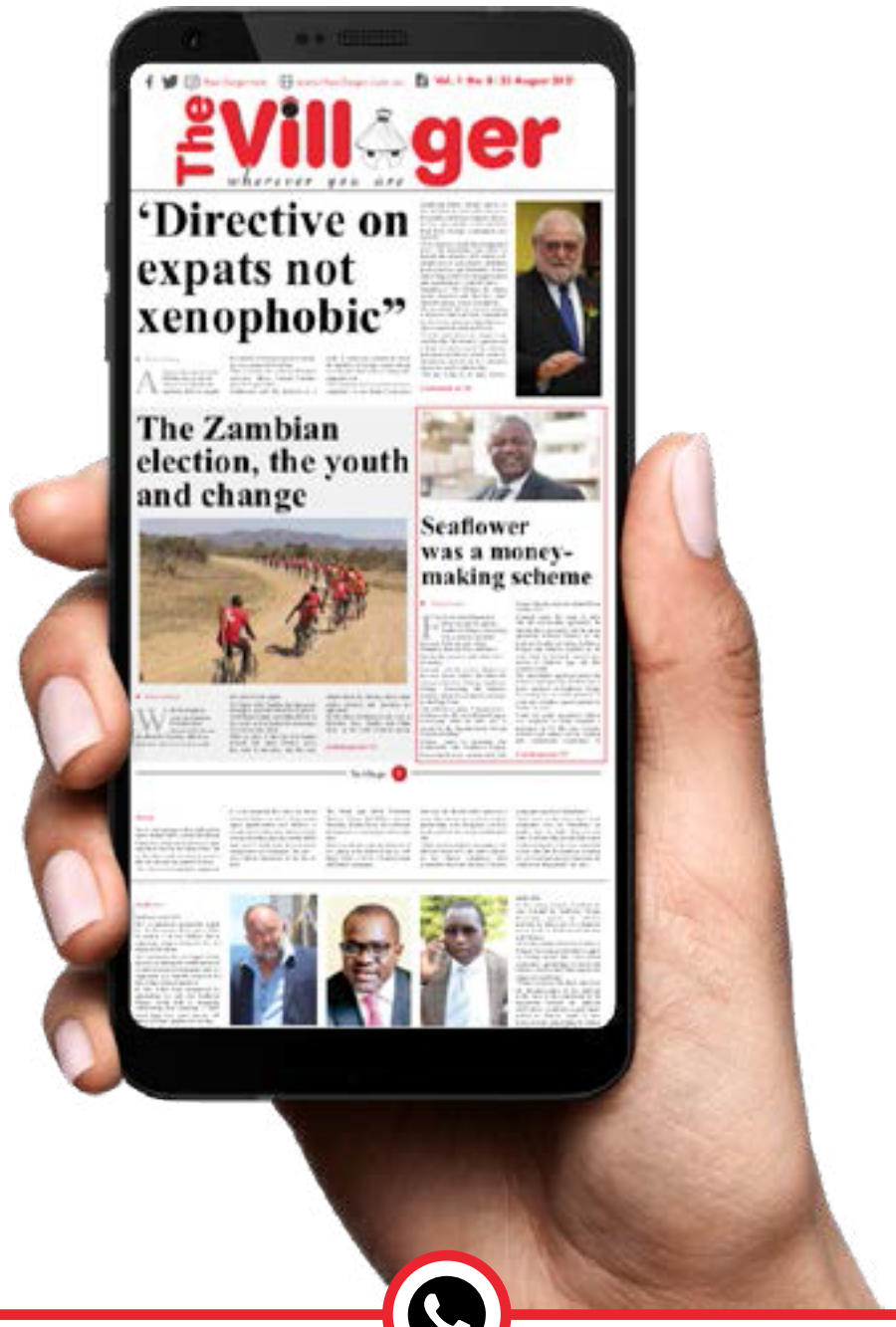
"Given the current situation, we have no plans to add these channels to our service," a Netflix spokesperson told the magazine in a statement.

Under a law that only came into effect on 1 March, "audiovisual services" in the country with more than 100,000 users will be required to carry 20 major state television channels.

-BBC

"On behalf of Oracle's 150,000 employees around the world and in support of both the elected government of Ukraine and for the people of Ukraine."





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Guy Reffitt accused of being 'tip of spear' in 6 January mob

The first defendant to stand trial over the Capitol riots said that he would drag lawmakers "kicking and screaming" from the building, prosecutors say.

Guy Reffitt, 49, is accused of carrying a handgun on to the Capitol grounds, obstruction of an official proceeding and obstruction of justice among other charges. Opening remarks for his criminal trial began on Wednesday.

The Texas man has pleaded not guilty to the five charges against him.

On 6 January, 2021, a mob of pro-Donald Trump rioters stormed the US Capitol as lawmakers gathered to certify Joe Biden's presidential election win. Prosecutor Jeffrey Nestler described it in opening remarks for Mr Reffitt's trial as "worst assault on the Capitol since the War of 1812", a date when British forces set fire to the White House.

He is accused of driving from Texas to Washington.

The prosecutor described Mr Reffitt as a "leader", saying he was "the tip of this mob's spear" that day.

He said that Mr Reffitt, who federal prosecutors accuse of being part of the Three Percenters militia group, had led rioters up the Capitol's stairs to storm the building.

The prosecutor said the Texas man, a drilling rig worker, had also texted a friend about plans to drag Democratic House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other lawmakers from the Capitol that day.

William Welch, the lawyer representing Mr Reffitt, gave a short opening statement, where he noted his client "does brag, he exaggerates and he rants" but that the "trial will be about fact versus hype". He also said Mr Reffitt had never entered the building.

More than 750 people have been arrested since the Capitol attack last year. Most have been charged with misdemeanours, but at least 40 have received prison sentences.

More than 200 people have pleaded guilty to various charges. Mr Reffitt, who was arrested on 19 January, 2021, is the first person facing criminal charges to stand trial. The trial is expected to be watched as a test case for future prosecutions.

Mr Reffitt's son and daughter are both expected to testify against him. According to a justice department affidavit, Mr Reffitt is accused of threatening his children if they turned him in to authorities for his alleged role in the Capitol riots.

Earlier this week, nine men and seven women were selected to serve on the jury, four as alternates.

Separately on Wednesday, Joshua James, a man with alleged ties to the far-right militia group the Oath Keepers, pleaded guilty in federal court as part of a plea agreement to a seditious conspiracy charge related to the Capitol riots.

A sedition charge is defined as attempting "to overthrow, put down or to destroy by force the government of the United States".

The leader of the Oath Keepers, Stewart Rhodes, and 11 others including James were charged in January with the crime over last year's attack.

The Department of Justice accuses Mr Rhodes of working with other Oath Keepers - a loosely knit militia that believes the US government has been corrupted by elites - to transport weapons and ammunition to Washington DC in their effort to block Mr Biden's presidency. Mr Rhodes has pleaded not guilty

-BBC



ICC to begin investigation into possible war crimes in Ukraine

The International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor has said he will "immediately proceed" with an investigation into alleged war crimes in Ukraine dating back to 2013, when protests erupted against a Russia-friendly government in Kyiv.

Karim A A Khan said late on Wednesday that the probe was starting after 39 countries that are parties to the Rome Statute that established the court – including Canada and France – petitioned the ICC to begin an investigation.

"These referrals enable my Office to proceed with opening an investigation into the Situation in Ukraine from 21 November 2013 onwards," Khan said in a statement, adding that its scope would encompass "any past and present allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed on any part of the territory of Ukraine by any person".

The announcement comes a week after Russia launched an all-out attack on Ukraine, drawing condemnation and sanctions from major world powers.

The ICC prosecutor had made public his intention to launch an investigation on Monday, saying that there was a "reasonable basis" to believe that war crimes have occurred during the conflict.

"I have notified the ICC Presidency a few moments ago of my decision to immediately proceed with active investigations in the Situation. Our work in the collection of evidence has now commenced," Khan said in Wednesday's statement.

Established in 2002, the Hague-based court investigates and prosecutes genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Last week, Khan warned the warring parties that his office had jurisdiction over Ukraine because the Ukrainian government accepted the ICC's mandate in 2015, despite the country initially not being a party to the Rome Statute.



In the days since Russian troops began their offensive last Thursday, the violence has intensified in several major Ukrainian cities, prompting hundreds of thousands of people to flee the country in search of safety.

Russian forces entered the southern port city of Kherson late on Wednesday, its mayor was cited as saying by the Reuters news agency and The New York Times.

But the Russian military's advance on the capital Kyiv "remains stalled", the Pentagon said earlier in the day, as Moscow's forces regroup and face logistical challenges and Ukrainian resistance.

The United States established a task force on Wednesday to go after wealthy Russians in President Vladimir Putin's inner circle, vowing to seize their assets and to ensure that a series of financial restrictions are being enforced.

But as the fighting in Ukraine continues, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said diplomacy was still possible to resolve the crisis.

"It's much more difficult for diplomacy to succeed when guns are firing, tanks are rolling, planes are flying," Blinken told reporters. "But if Russia pulls back and pursues diplomacy, we stand ready to do the same thing."

-Al Jazeera

"I have notified the ICC Presidency a few moments ago of my decision to immediately proceed with active investigations in the Situation."

Do Indians think women make better politicians?



■ **Soutik Biswas**

Most Indians say that "women and men make equally good political leaders", and more than one in 10 feel that women generally make better political leaders than men, according to a new Pew Research Center survey of nearly 30,000 adults throughout India.

Only a quarter of Indian adults believe that men make better political leaders.

Does this finding reflect a strong demand for female leaders? Indian women have been ministers, president and prime minister - Indira Gandhi was only the second woman to head a state in the 20th Century. Some 14% of MPs in the current parliament are women, up from 5% in the first election in 1952.

Yet, political participation is poor. Only 8% of the more than 50,000 candidates in federal and state elections are women, according to a 2019 report by the Association for Democratic Reforms, a research group. India ranks 144 among 193 countries in a global ranking of women in national parliaments. A bill to reserve a third of all seats in the national parliament and state legislatures for women has been hanging fire since 1996.

Researchers like Alice Evans, a social scientist at King's College London, are sceptical about the latest findings. "We should not necessarily see this as a strong demand for female leaders. There is plethora of evidence pointing to discrimination against women in India," Dr Evans, who is researching a book on gender equality, told me.

A women's electoral victory in India has no "demonstration effect", said Dr Evans. Other parties are no more likely to field women candidates and women in nearby constituencies are no more likely to stand for office.

"Restriction of mobility has meant that Indian women struggle to be electorally competitive - they have little opportunity to congregate with peers, amass knowledge of the wider world, forge alliances with unknown men, and collect campaign funds," she said.

Many of India's women leaders, say researchers, tend to be privileged - wealthy, upper caste or members of family dynasties. "For ordinary women, politics is out of reach," said Dr Evans.

Separate research in OECD countries has shown that representation of women in politics is higher in countries with the proportional representation system, where the distribution of seats hews closely to the proportion of total ballots cast for each party.

One reason, researchers suggest, is that people vote for the party rather than individuals, and politicians - including women - can take career breaks and do not need strong and sustained networks with local people and businesses to win.

But in countries like India and the UK with a first past the post (FPTP) electoral system where the candidate with the highest number of votes in a constituency is declared the winner, representation of women in politics could be stymied. Politicians must establish personal credibility and forge long-term links with constituents. Interruptions in career can be costly.

However, in domestic settings, Indians tend to say men should have more prominent roles than women, according to the Pew Survey.

About nine in every 10 Indians agree with the notion that a wife must always obey her husband, including two-thirds who completely agree with this sentiment. Indian women are also only slightly less likely than Indian men to say they completely agree that wives should always obey their husbands.

That's not entirely surprising. India remains predominantly rural, and many women continue to be sequestered with very few friends. This limits their opportunities to mingle and critique inequalities. "Men enforce their authority and women endure it," said Dr Evans.

The Pew survey also found that many Indians express egalitarian views toward some gender roles in the home: 62% of adults say both men and women should be responsible for taking care of children.

But traditional gender norms still hold sway among large segments of the population: roughly a third of adults feel that child care should be handled primarily by women.

Similarly, a slim majority (54%) says that both men and women in families should be responsible for earning money, but many Indians (43%) see this as mainly the obligation of men. And most Indian adults say that when jobs are in short supply, men should have greater rights to employment than women.

The perception of the male breadwinner is both a consequence and cause of low female employment, creating a chicken-and-egg situation, says Dr Evans.

She believes Indian families face what she says is an "honour-income trade off": female employment rises if the woman earns well enough to outweigh the loss of family honour. Female graduates are pursuing careers in IT, engineering, telecoms, finance and hospitality. "But job creation remains low in India. Job queues are very long, and women are at the back," said Dr Evans.

A worrying finding of the survey is that many Indians see sex-selective abortion, despite the illegality of the practice, as acceptable in at least some circumstances.

Four in 10 Indians say it is either "completely acceptable" or "somewhat acceptable" to "get a check-up using modern methods - antenatal sex screening - to balance the number of girls and boys in the family", a euphemism to connote sex-selective abortion.

Differences by religion on this question are modest: roughly four in 10 - Hindus (40%), Muslims (37%), Christians (43%), Sikhs (38%) and Jains (40%) - say this is acceptable. At least one in five people in nearly every state say sex-selective abortion is completely acceptable.

This, believes Dr Evans, is also linked to low female employment as parents continue to want at least one son to provide for them in old age. If there were more jobs for women, if daughters could get decent jobs and provide for their parents, then a preference for sons would probably diminish as it has in South Korea and parts of China, she said.

So what do the findings tell us about gender equality in India?

Indian adults are roughly in line with the global median in their support for equal rights for women, according to Jonathan Evans, the lead researcher of the survey. But only one of the 61 countries surveyed by Pew - Tunisia - has a higher share than India who agree completely with the idea that men should have greater rights to a job than women when jobs are scarce.

Yes, more Indian women are getting educated, and women's movements have secured laws on dowries, divorce, domestic violence and inheritance. Women have publicly challenged traditional norms by lighting funeral pyres of family members.

"But the women's capacity to claim these rights and challenge patriarchal guardians is constrained by social seclusion and economic insecurity. For women to claim their rights they first need to come out of their homes. That requires more jobs-oriented growth and safer public places," said Alice Evans.

-BBC





2021 Ford F-150 XLT Supercrew 4X4 First Test: Big Performance Doesn’t Come Cheap

■ Scott Evans

In announcing our 2022 Truck of the Year, we observed that today's trucks are far more than workhorses. They're also commuter cars, family haulers, weekend toys, and luxury vehicles. It's a trend at least 20 years in the making, but one that doesn't make everyone happy. Indeed, some of you wrote to us and expressed your displeasure with this mission drift and argued for trucks to be treated like trucks again. That's easier said than done, as it turns out. Take, for example, this 2021 Ford F-150 XLT Supercrew 4X4 we just tested.

This isn't a blinged-out luxury truck; it's an XLT with cloth seats, a column shifter, basic four-wheel drive, a bedliner, and a max-towing package. One step above the base model, this should be a work truck, yet it's priced at $59,520 as tested. (The same truck would cost $62,325 in 2022.) How the heck did that happen?

Towing

Yep, modern work trucks are expensive. The good news is you still get a lot of work for your money. We hitched this Ford F-150 XLT up to a high-profile two-horse trailer and found it to be the comfortable, stable towing platform we've come to expect from Ford. After returning the livestock, we filled the bed with a yard of hot, fresh mulch for the garden. Here again, the torquey twin-turbo V-6 made light work of the added weight, and the sizable payload and tongue-weight ratings meant the truck barely squatted.

A Pleasant Ride

More impressive, though, is how well the Ford F-150 XLT rides, either empty or loaded. With leaf springs capable of holding up 2,100 pounds of payload, you'd reasonably expect a stiff ride, but Ford's engineers worked wonders. The F-150 is as pleasant and comfortable to drive while doing work as it is cruising into town for groceries.

Track Testing

It'll get you down to the market quick, too. Unburdened, the 3.5-liter twin-turbo V-6 hustled this 5,345-pound truck up to 60 mph in just 5.3 seconds and past the quarter-mile mark in 13.9 seconds at 99.9 mph.

Power is not a problem, and neither is stopping. The Ford F-150 XLT was consistent in our braking tests from 60 mph, achieving a best result of 126 feet, about average for a full-size pickup. Even better, the stops were drama-free, with little nosedive or wiggling around.

Handling tests were similarly uneventful. We discovered excellent composure for a pickup truck, with well-controlled body motions, good brakes, and strong traction. The 0.76-average lateral g it pulled on the skidpad and its 28.0-second figure-eight lap at 0.62-average g are on the right end of the full-size-truck class—and undersell how well the 2021 Ford F-150 XLT takes a corner without any weight loaded into it.

Safety

Opt for Ford's Co-Pilot360 Assist 2.0 suite of driver aids and included among all the safety stuff are adaptive cruise control and lane-keep assistance, which helps steer the vehicle and keep it in the center of the lane. Ford's system, which takes some load off your mind on long highway slogs, is one of the better hands-on systems on the market.

Wrapping Up

The rest of the driving experience isn't bad, either. The cloth seats are plenty comfortable and feature a pleasing contrasting color scheme. The column shifter frees up a ton of center-console bin space and allows you to use the flip-out tray table while the truck is moving. The rear seat could use a bit more thigh support and recline, if we're being picky, but we like how much space it frees up when you fold it out of the way.

As mentioned earlier, our truck was fitted with the big infotainment screen, and it's good to see how far Ford's Sync system has come. This latest incarnation is more user friendly and intuitive, sports modern graphics, and has a handy split-screen mode that lets you use Apple CarPlay or Android Auto simultaneously with other built-in programs like the radio without having to change screens.

Simple fact is, unless you're a fleet manager buying dozens of trucks from a commercial dealer, even work trucks are pricey these days. Yes, the convenience and dress-up options can run up the bill, but even the stuff you need to get the job done will dent your budget hard. The good news is, these trucks drive, tow, and haul better than any time in history.

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Simple fact is, unless you're a fleet manager buying dozens of trucks from a commercial dealer, even work trucks are pricey these days. Yes, the convenience and dress-up options can run up the bill, but even the stuff you need to get the job done will dent your budget pretty hard, too. These trucks tow and haul more than any time in history, and they drive, tow, and haul better than ever. But that capability doesn't come cheap.

-Motor trend







Winter Paralympics 2022: Russia and Belarus athletes unable to compete at Games



Athletes from Russia and Belarus will not be allowed to compete at the 2022 Winter Paralympics in Beijing after the International Paralympic Committee reversed its original decision.

The IPC was heavily criticised when, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it initially said it would allow the athletes to compete as neutrals.

A statement said the "situation in the athlete villages" was "untenable".

The Games' opening ceremony takes place on Friday.

IPC president Andrew Parsons said an "overwhelming number of members" had told his organisation they would not compete should athletes from Russia and Belarus be allowed to take part.

Parsons described the Russian and Belarusian athletes affected as "victims of your governments' actions".

"We are very firm believers that sport and politics should not mix," Parsons added.

"However, by no fault of its own the war has now come to these Games and behind the scenes many governments are having an influence on our cherished event.

"Ensuring the safety and security of athletes is of paramount importance to us and the situation in the athlete villages is escalating and has now become untenable."

Valeriy Sushkevych, the Ukrainian Paralympic chief, said his team's presence at the Games is a "symbol that Ukraine is alive".

There were set to be 71 competitors from Russia and 12 from Belarus - plus guides for both nations - competing in Beijing.

Parsons said the decision to prevent the athletes competing would "preserve the integrity" of the Games and "the safety of all participants".

On Wednesday, a number of governing bodies and political figures criticised the IPC for not immediately banning Russian and Belarusian athletes.

A joint statement from the athletes of Ukraine and the Global Athlete group, an international athlete-led body that aims to inspire change in world sport, said the IPC had issued "another blow" to every Ukrainian athlete and citizen with its decision.

Ukrainian Olympic skeleton racer Vladyslav Heraskevych, speaking before the IPC reversed its decision, described the situation as "disgusting".

"They put Russia above the interest of other countries," said Heraskevych, who displayed an anti-war sign during the Beijing Games in February.

"Anything less than a full ban is unacceptable. It's sad and heartbreaking."

Nadine Dorries, UK Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said she was "very pleased" the IPC had changed its ruling after calling for it to "urgently reconsider".

Dorries added:

"The welfare of all the other competing athletes is of upmost importance and we're pleased the IPC also recognise that."

Professor Nick Webborn, chair of British Paralympic Association, said the IPC's decision on Thursday was the right one.

Asked if the ParalympicsGB team would have boycotted the Games, Webborn told Radio 4: "That was one potential scenario but something that we would not wish to exercise because our athletes deserve the right to be here.

"We would not want to remove that opportunity for them if we could possibly help it."

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, who won 11 Paralympic gold medals for Great Britain in the summer Games, said she felt sympathy for the athletes on an individual level.

"Life in Russia for a disabled person is incredibly hard and most of the athletes are only funded on the medals that they win," she told BBC Breakfast.

"If they are not able to get any funding, it affects not only their ability to do sport, but also their lives. It is hard, but we cannot keep pretending sport and politics aren't linked."

Parsons said it was unlikely a viable Games could take place should Russian and Belarusian athletes be allowed to compete.

"To the Para-athletes from the impacted countries, we are very sorry that you are affected by the decisions your governments took last week in breaching the Olympic Truce," he added.

"I hope and pray that we can get back to a situation when the talk and focus is fully on the power of sport to transform the lives of persons with disabilities, and the best of humanity."

A number of governing bodies from across sport have introduced measures to exclude Russian and Belarusian athletes, including banning the use of their flags and cancelling events.

'Our presence here is not merely a presence'

Ukraine has reported more than 2,000 civilians have died since Russia began its invasion on 24 February.

Their Paralympic team, consisting of 20 athletes and nine guides, are in Beijing and able to compete.

Sushkevych said it was a "miracle" the team had made it to the Games amid the turmoil caused by the Russian invasion.

"We came here from Ukraine and we travelled through Ukraine. It took us many days, we had to overcome a lot of barriers that had to do with the war," Sushkevych said.

"Many members of our team barely managed to escape from the bombardments and shells exploding but still we made it here.

"I can say that this is a miracle."

Sushkevych thanked reporters who attended a news conference on Thursday, saying their attention was important "for Ukraine and all countries and people in the world".

He said that while staying in Ukraine would have been the easiest thing, their absence from the Games would have signified that "this country would cease to exist".

"To be more specific, a superpower wants to destroy our country. Our presence here is not merely a presence," Sushkevych added.

"This is a sign that Ukraine was, is and will remain a country. For us, it is a matter of principle to be here with the Paralympic family - to be here as a symbol of Ukraine that is alive."

-BBC



Kevin Holland on internet trolls, fighting at welterweight and facing Alex Oliveira

■ Paul Battison

UFC star Kevin Holland has a unique way to deal with trolls - he invites them to his gym.

The American, who fights against Alex Oliveira in a welterweight bout at UFC 272 in Las Vegas on Saturday, says that inviting hecklers over for a bit of MMA action can teach them how to be humble.

"I'm not looking to hurt anybody - I don't fight these guys, I simply give them a troll smack," Holland, 29, told BBC Sport.

"I think they can learn some valuable lessons.

"Getting trolls to participate in martial arts for a few months, and getting them more humble in the mind, that would be awesome."

Holland has posted footage online of him competing against the trolls.

Since releasing the videos, the number of abusive messages in his inboxes has risen, despite his belief that it would have the opposite effect.

He says it depends on his mood that day as to whether the abuse affects him.

"Some definitely bother me. If you call me outside of my name, it's going to bother me," said Holland.

"But at the end of the day, I call people outside of their names too, it's just part of the game. Some days you don't like it, some days you can be sitting on the pooper getting the biggest laugh of your life.

"But guys - you don't have to disrespect me to get a session with me. All you have to do is go to the gym and tell my coach you'd love to get a session with me, and that's truly why you're there to sign up."

'You won't see many downfalls at welterweight'

Holland will be moving down to welterweight from middleweight for the first time in five years when he takes on Brazil's Oliveira.

After breakout year in 2020, when he won five times to tie the UFC record for the number of victories in a calendar year, he struggled in 2021, losing twice, with another fight ending as a no-contest.

He says his decision to cut down to welterweight was influenced by the manor of those defeats, where he was out-wrestled.

"After dropping the ball to [Marvin] Vettori and [Derek] Brunson - two guys who can't strike to save their lives but have just enough strength to hold a skinny guy like me down, I was like 'I'll give it a shot'," said Holland.

"I'm primed out at welterweight, as long as the weight cut and everything goes smoothly, and I go out there and do my thing.

"At 185lb, the only time I really lost was being held down, so as long as these guys don't have a will to hold me down and look for a submission, you won't really see many downfalls."

Holland, who was born in California but lives in Texas, is excited at the prospect of facing 34-year-old Oliveira.

The Brazilian, who is nicknamed Cowboy because of a previous job as a rodeo bull rider, has fought 21 times in the UFC, winning 11 bouts.

"To me he's a legend of the sport and a legend of the game," said Holland.

"There's no bad blood here, but I've got a bounty [fight of the night bonus] on his head which is £50,000, baby, so I've got to get that."

"You know what they say when you live down south, man - when you live in spot with a lot of cowboys. 'The only way to become a true cowboy is to take out a cowboy.'"

-BBC



Minamino double takes Liverpool past Norwich into FA Cup last eight

■ Gary Rose



Jurgen Klopp praised "top-class" Takumi Minamino as his two goals ensured Liverpool followed up their Carabao Cup triumph by beating Norwich to reach the FA Cup quarter-finals.

The Reds beat Chelsea on penalties in a gruelling and thrilling Wembley encounter on Sunday and showed their strength in depth by winning this fifth-round tie at Anfield after making 10 changes.

Minamino was an unused substitute at Wembley but grasped his chance of a return to the starting line-up with two first-half goals against the Canaries.

The Japan international opened the scoring when he was teed up by Divock Origi to drive in from close range, adding a second just before half-time when he was left unmarked at a corner to hit a great strike into the roof of the net.

"It was an exceptional game of football," Liverpool boss Klopp said of Minamino. "He looked extremely sharp. He showed all of the things he knows for sure he has in him. It was a complete performance.

"The two goals were great but all the rest he did was top class as well."

Minamino had scored four goals in five EFL Cup games for Liverpool this season but was left out of the starting XI for the final.

Asked if he would have been disappointed by that, Klopp added: "It was disappointing, I can imagine.

"How he is, I don't think that is the reason why he played so good tonight. He isn't the kind of person for this sort of anger.

"Takumi was a massive part of the whole journey. Not playing in the final might have been hard in the moment but in the long term, he can look back [on the fact] that he won the League Cup and that can be a good thing."

It was not a straightforward win for Liverpool as Norwich showed fight late on, giving their impressive away following hope when Lukas Rupp found himself in space to thump a fierce shot beyond Alisson.

The Liverpool goalkeeper then pushed over a powerful Jonathan Rowe strike as Norwich pressed but the hosts held on to secure their passage into the last eight.

Klopp's side have now beaten Norwich four times this season - home and away in the Premier League and in the EFL Cup third round, along with Wednesday's win.

It is also the first time in the Reds' history that they have beaten the same team four times in a single campaign.

"I thought the team who deserved to go through went through," Norwich boss Dean Smith told BBC Sport.

"But we asked enough questions of them. We created chances. A lot of players who haven't had many minutes have come in and done exceptionally well. That'll help us picking the team."

FA Cup progress paving the way for quadruple?

Victory in Sunday's EFL Cup final means an unprecedented quadruple - winning the Champions League, Premier League and two domestic cups - remains a possibility for Liverpool.

The Reds have a 2-0 lead over Inter Milan from the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie and are six points behind Manchester City in the title race but winning the lot is something Klopp has, understandably, played down.

No English club has ever managed the feat. City came close in 2019 after winning a domestic treble but they were beaten by Tottenham in the quarter-final of that season's Champions League.

But while Klopp may play down a clean sweep of trophies, he will nevertheless be keen to win at least the FA Cup, given that it is a trophy that has so far eluded him and Wednesday marked the first time he had taken the Reds beyond the fifth round.

Squad depth is going to be key to the Reds' hopes of challenging for multiple trophies and Minamino's display underlined just how much talent they have.

With Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah, Diogo Jota and new signing Luis Diaz, the Reds have a plethora of attacking options - but despite that, Minamino has played his part this season.

Asked about how important squad depth has been for Liverpool's form this season, Klopp said: "That's the reason for the situation we are in. We have this kind of mentality and character in the squad.

"It is exactly what we need to be successful in the long term. That is the quality we need and the boys have to be ready. They don't fight each other for a position but they have to fight for their best version."

-BBC