

WHAT'S INSIDE

NEWS

Smuggling
syndicate
loots
lithium

Story on Page **18**



NEWS

We won't bury
Moreblessing
until Sikhala is
free: Ali family

Story on Page **28**



SPORT

Rarely, in recent
times, has the
Harare Derby
been massive

Story on Page **56**



Mnangagwa-linked entities paid US\$3m



Emmerson
Mnangagwa



Constantino
Chiwenga



Zunaid Moti



Kudakwashe
"Kuda" Tagwirei



Lishon
Chipango



Justice
George
Chiweshe

ALSO INSIDE

Gold looting bleeds Zimbabwe's economy

Mnangagwa entangled in massive chrome scandal

OWEN GAGARE

COMPANIES linked to President Emmerson Mnangagwa and Vice-President Constantino Chiwenga received US\$3 million from South African chrome miner Zunaïd Moti following a US\$120 million deal signed between the tycoon and the President's adviser Kuda Tagwirei in November 2017, an investigation by *The Sentry* published this morning reveals.

The chrome mining deal was signed on 17 November, while the military coup which toppled former president Robert Mugabe was unfolding.

The Sentry is an investigative and policy organisation that seeks to disable multinational predatory networks that benefit from violent conflict, repression, and kleptocracy. Launched in 2016, *The Sentry* produces hard-hitting investigative reports and dossiers on individuals and entities connected to grand corruption and violence.

Moti, a businessman who is fond of fast cars, cigars and private jets, is a well-known South African wheeler-dealer.

He acquired 70% of African Chrome Fields (ACF), a chrome mining company in Kwekwe, in 2014.

Moti quickly manoeuvred and established relations with the politicians and the military, resulting in ACF forming a joint venture with the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) in 2015. Chiwenga was the ZDF commander at the time.

He also employed then-Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa's son, Emmerson Junior, as a consultant, paying him as much as US\$10 000 per month. Emmerson Jr normally represents his father's business interests. In recent times, Mnangagwa has been travelling with Emmerson Jr or ensuring he takes part in vital meetings including where government business is addressed.

In January, Emmerson Jr attended a high-level State House meeting of Zimbabwe's top government officials and the visiting Belarusian delegation led by the eastern European country's autocratic leader, Alexander Lukashenko.

Mnangagwa travelled to Equatorial Guinea with Emmerson Jr amid concerns he was pursuing personal family business interests in February. Tagwirei also travelled with Mnangagwa.

Moti also brought in Mnangagwa through businessman Lishon Chipango, who indirectly owned shares in ACF via Spincash Investments, a Moti Group holding company that held the remaining 30% of ACF. Chipango is believed to be Chiwenga's business ally.

The Sentry investigation revealed that after Moti signed a deal with Tagwirei, in which Tagwirei paid US\$120 million for Spincash's 30% of ACF, a money-moving operation in which Moti's companies paid US\$130 million in 595 installments to a mix of established firms, companies whose records are missing, and politically linked entities in Zimbabwe followed.

"In December 2017 and January 2018 the payments included \$1 million to Mnangagwa's farm and \$2 million to a company controlled by Chipango and someone reported to be Chiwenga's niece. In a separate commercial transaction in February 2018, ACF also paid \$100 000 to a senior judge, Justice George Chiweshe, as part of a wider deal to mine chrome in concession areas controlled by a firm he chaired," *The Sentry* says.

Moti's initial plans for ACF, according to the report, was to mine and export raw chrome ore to be processed through his South African furnaces, while also building a new plant in



South African tycoon Zunaïd Moti (left) seen here chatting with President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Zimbabwe's Midlands province, so that more "beneficiation" — value-added processes — could take place inside the country.

"In pursuit of this two-pronged strategy, ACF benefited from valuable tax and regulatory decisions, such as when then-Vice-President Mnangagwa persuaded the cabinet to lift the raw chrome export ban in 2015," the report reads.

"ACF and its joint venture with the military — Zimbabwe African Chrome — submitted a combined application for National Project Status (NPS), which allowed them to import capital goods duty-free."

ACF also obtained duty-free chemical imports, an exemption from indigenisation laws, and central bank exchange control authorisation to "set-off" revenue against costs in Moti Group cross-border transactions.

"In 2016, Moti requested Mnangagwa's help in obtaining an exemption on paying duty on diesel, offering to supply 10 000 litres per month to the police, army, and Zanu PF in Midlands province. At the time, some of these concessions — including the successful request for duty-free diesel — were criticised by Parliament and by Mnangagwa's political enemies."

The Sentry also reports that Moti attempted to use his close relationship with Mnangagwa

to acquire a Zimbabwean diplomatic passport "so that he would not have to reveal details of his chrome processing techniques in South Africa", but the attempt was unsuccessful.

"However, Moti won a long list of concessions between 2015 and 2019, when ACF had business relationships with Mnangagwa's son and Chiwenga's business associate, and many of these lapsed after 2019, when Moti reportedly fell out with Mnangagwa. The Moti Group said that these concessions were designed to raise foreign direct investment and were available to other firms and that ACF did not receive favourable treatment," the report reads.

"The joint venture with the ZDF was to mine chrome on military-owned concessions, but the project never took off," Moti told *The Sentry*.

When Spincash received Tagwirei's US\$120 million in installments, Spincash and ACF began moving the money over several months, including to former ICT minister Supa Mandiwanzira and then High Court judge president George Chiweshe.

"The company that owns Mnangagwa's farm, Pricabe Enterprises, received \$1 million in December 2017, while \$2 million went to Cosmotex Investments, controlled by Chipan-

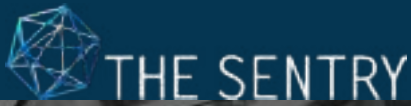
go and Evelyn Chakuinga, reportedly Chiwenga's niece, in two \$1 million transactions in December 2017 and January 2018. Chakuinga, Chiwenga, Mnangagwa, and Pricabe did not respond to requests for comment," the report reads.

"In January 2018, another \$500 000 went into a joint property investment with a company owned by Supa Mandiwanzira, a businessman who was then the information, communication and technology minister."

Mandiwanzira told *The Sentry* the property investment was part of a wider — eventually fruitless — deal to mine chrome on concessions legitimately obtained in purely commercial transactions by Mandiwanzira's firms. He said although he was a minister, there was no conflict of interest, as his ministry did not regulate mining or environmental matters.

"ACF paid Chiweshe \$100 000 in February 2018 as part of ultimately unsuccessful negotiations to mine chrome on concessions obtained by a firm Chiweshe chaired, Overseas Trends Resources (OTR)," the report reads.

The US\$1 million payment to Mnangagwa's farm — which has echoes of the unexplained cash found at South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's farm — has still not been adequately explained.



SPINCASH

Payments to Zimbabwe President's Farm and Vice President's Associate Followed a \$120m Chrome Deal

A South African chrome miner paid \$3 million to firms linked to the Zimbabwean president and vice president following a \$120 million deal signed in November 2017.

Fond of fast cars and cigars, South African wheeler-dealer Zunaid Moti dabbled in property development and private jets, but his main business in Zimbabwe was processing chrome. In 2014 he bought 70% of African Chrome Fields (ACF), a chrome mining outfit based in central Zimbabwe.

By 2015, ACF was a well-connected firm: it had formed a joint venture with the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) and hired then-Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa's son as a consultant. Businessman Lishon Chipango—identified by a source as then-ZDF commander General Constantine Chiwenga's "investment manager"—indirectly owned shares in ACF via Spincash Investments, a

Moti Group holding company that held the remaining 30% of ACF.

Moti signed a deal with ruling party benefactor Kudakwashe "Kuda" Tagwirei on November 17, 2017—in the middle of the week-long coup that brought President Mnangagwa and Vice President Chiwenga to power—in which Tagwirei paid \$120 million* for Spincash's 30% of ACF. A politically connected industrialist who later became an advisor to Mnangagwa, Tagwirei was the subject of separate corruption allegations relating to a power plant and an agricultural program at the time of the deal.

The Spincash deal was followed by a money-moving operation in which Moti's companies paid \$130 million in 595 installments to a mix of established firms, companies whose records are missing, and politically linked entities in Zimbabwe. In December 2017 and January 2018,

*Unless otherwise indicated, all dollar amounts are given in US\$.



Key Figures



Emmerson
Mnangagwa



Constantino
Chiwenga



Zunaïd Moti



Kudakwashe
"Kuda" Tagwirei



Lishon
Chipango



Justice
George
Chiweshe

the payments included \$1 million to Mnangagwa’s farm and \$2 million to a company controlled by Chipango and someone reported to be Chiwenga’s niece. In a separate commercial transaction in February 2018, ACF also paid \$100,000 to a senior judge, Justice George Chiweshe, as part of a wider deal to mine chrome in concession areas controlled by a firm he chaired.

The timing of the November 17, 2017, deal raises the question of whether there is a connection to the coup. Following Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) factional infighting throughout the

year, Mnangagwa fled Zimbabwe after being fired as vice president by President Robert Mugabe on November 6, 2017. Led by Chiwenga, the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) took control of Harare on November 14 and spent the next seven days persuading Mugabe to step down. After Mugabe’s resignation on November 21, Chiweshe—who at the time was judge president of the high court—ruled that the ZDF’s actions were constitutional and annulled the earlier dismissal of Mnangagwa, paving the way for the reinstated vice president to ascend to the presidency. Five weeks later, Chiwenga became vice president.

For the Moti Group, there are indications that the deal’s timing in the midst of the coup and the payments to some of the coup’s main protagonists were coincidental. Leaked recordings of Moti Group internal discussions about whether the timing of the deals was linked to the coup reveal staff sincerely stating that there was no connection. The Moti Group denied that they made any payments to politicians.

Nevertheless, there is no question that Moti and Tagwirei flew close to the political sun. For example, the Moti Group supplied 50 vehicles to Tagwirei for use in ZANU-PF’s 2018 election campaign, albeit in what Moti said was a commercial transaction. The \$1 million payment to Mnangagwa’s farm—which has echoes of the unexplained cash found at South African President Cyril Ramaphosa’s farm—has still not been adequately explained.



(L-R, wearing scarves) Kudakwashe Tagwirei, Zunaid Moti, and President Emmerson Mnangagwa launch African Chrome Fields’ new plant in 2018, while Emmer-son Mnangagwa Junior (third from left, wearing gold-rimmed sunglasses) looks on. Photo: African Chrome Fields, Facebook.

The Rise of ACF**

Moti made powerful friends soon after his purchase of 70% of ACF in 2014. By April 2015, ACF had formed a joint venture with the ZDF, as first reported by the Zimbabwe Independent. The following month, ACF hired then-Vice President Mnangagwa's son, Emmerson Mnangagwa Junior, as a consultant for \$5,000 per month—which would later rise to \$10,000—in an arrangement that would last until 2019. Neither Emmerson Mnangagwa Junior nor President Mnangagwa responded to requests for comment.

ACF's joint venture contract with the ZDF indicated that the military or their nominees would take up the remaining 30% of ACF's shares, if sold. In the end, these were bought by Spincash Investments in July 2015 for about \$500,000. Spincash was majority-owned by Moti's allies, with a minority stake held by Chiwenga's associate, Chipango. Initially, 25% of Spincash was owned by Chipango, but that later fell to 15%. In effect, in 2015, Chipango owned 7.5% of ACF,

which dropped to 4.5% by 2016. According to the Moti Group, Chipango didn't pay for these shares, as they were "sold to him on deferred payment terms, which payment he never settled." Later, Chipango moved the shares held in his own name to Raybeam Investments, a firm he controlled together with Shingirai Muzavazi, an executive at a Harare shopping mall part-owned by the military. Neither Muzavazi nor the military's holding company responded to requests for comment. Chipango declined to comment.



Lishon Chipango.
Photo:
Still from
Victory
Business
Forum
video,
YouTube.

**Reports by The Sentry are based on interviews, documentary research, and, where relevant, financial forensic analysis. In some cases, sources speak to The Sentry on the condition that their names not be revealed, out of concern for their safety or other potential retaliatory action. The Sentry establishes the authoritativeness and credibility of information derived from those interviews through independent sources, such as expert commentary, financial data, original documentation, and press reports. The Sentry endeavors to contact the persons and entities discussed in its reports and afford them an opportunity to comment and provide further information.

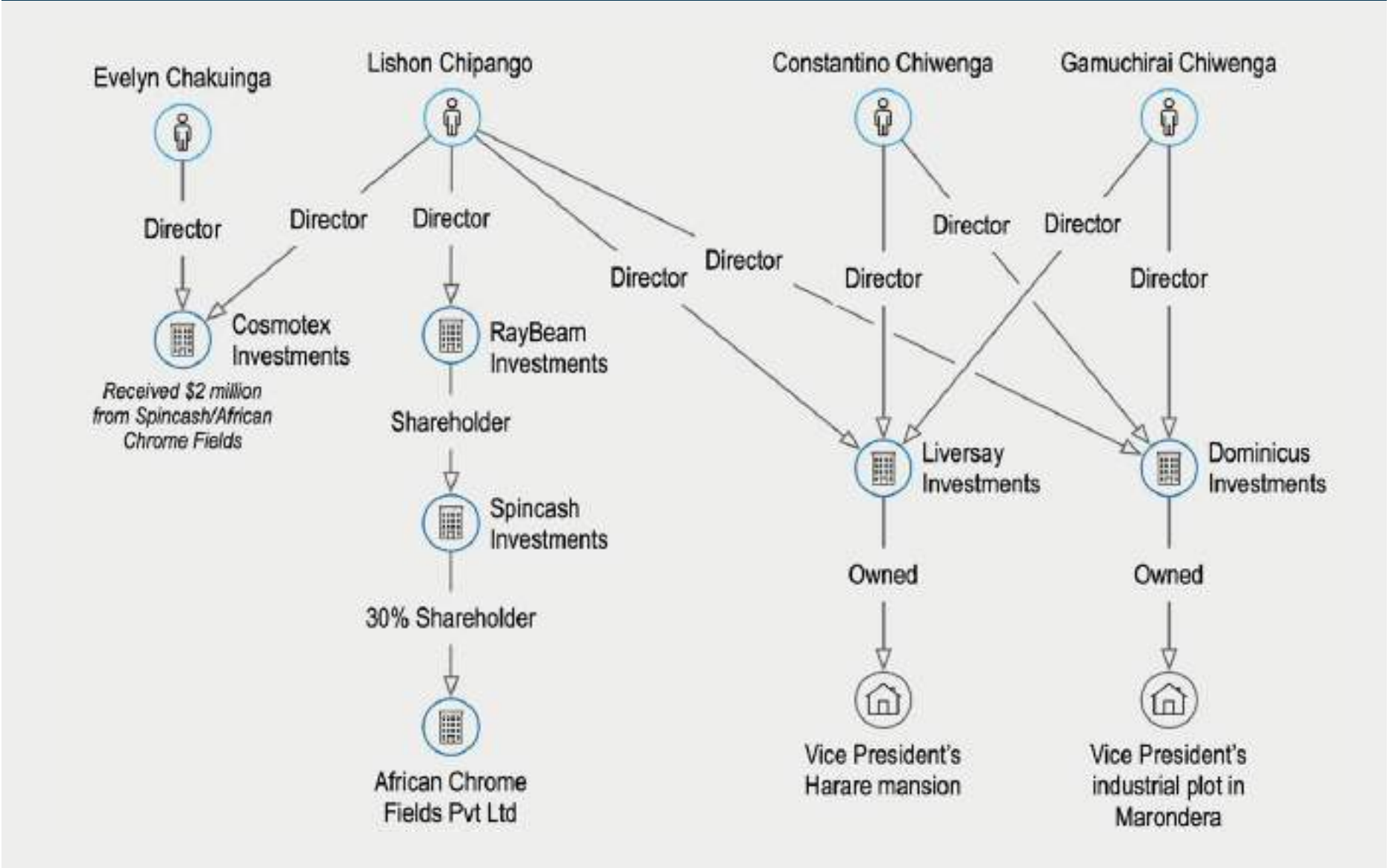
Chipango, an independently wealthy businessman, represents Chiwenga, according to three sources interviewed by The Sentry, one of whom described Chipango as “the de facto investment manager for the VP.” Chipango is trusted enough to be a director of two of Chiwenga’s property firms, including the holding company for the vice president’s Harare mansion. Moti denies that Chipango represents Chiwenga.

Moti’s initial plans for ACF had been to mine and export raw chrome ore to be processed through his South African furnaces, while also building a new plant in Zimbabwe’s Midlands province, so that more “beneficiation” – value-added processes – could take place inside the country. In pursuit of this two-pronged strategy, ACF benefited from valuable tax and regulatory decisions, such as when then-Vice President Mnangagwa persuaded the Cabinet to lift the raw chrome export ban in

Chiwenga’s Alleged “Investment Manager”



According to divorce and company records, Chipango was simultaneously a director of Chiwenga’s property holding companies and a shareholder in Spincash Investments, which owned 30% of African Chrome Fields.





AFRICAN
CHROME FIELDS

Top right: Chiwenga examines chrome ore with African Chrome Field's Ashruf Kaka (right, in baseball cap and sunglasses) in 2016. Kaka denies any wrongdoing. Photo: African Chrome Fields brochure.

2015. ACF and its joint venture with the military – Zimbabwe African Chrome – submitted a combined application for National Project Status (NPS), which allowed them to import capital goods duty-free. ACF also obtained duty-free chemical imports, an exemption from indigenization laws, and central bank exchange control authorization to “set-off” revenue against costs in Moti Group

cross-border transactions. In 2016, Moti requested Mnangagwa’s help in obtaining an exemption on paying duty on diesel, offering to supply 10,000 liters per month to the police, army, and ZANU-PF government in Midlands province. At the time, some of these concessions—including the successful request for duty-free diesel—were criticized by

Parliament and by Mnangagwa’s political enemies.

Some pleas, like Moti’s 2016 request to Mnangagwa for a Zimbabwean diplomatic passport so that he would not have to reveal details of his chrome processing techniques in South Africa, or a suggestion in 2017 that Chiwenga push to arrange a prisoner swap between Zimbabwe and the United Arab Emirates to help Moti in a legal dispute with a Russian businessman, do not appear to have come to fruition. Moti denies he has or had a diplomatic passport and states that he has no knowledge of a potential prisoner swap. However, Moti won a long list of concessions between 2015 and 2019, when ACF had business relationships with Mnangagwa’s son and Chiwenga’s business associate, and many of these lapsed after 2019, when Moti reportedly fell out with Mnangagwa. The Moti Group said that these concessions were designed to raise foreign direct investment and were available to other firms and that ACF did not receive favorable treatment. The joint venture with the ZDF was to mine chrome on military-owned concessions, but the project never took off, Moti told The Sentry.

Timeline 2015-16



- March 19, 2015**
Agreement between Zimbabwe and ACF is signed by VP Mnangagwa.
- April 2, 2015**
The ACF-ZDF joint venture begins.
- April 23, 2015**
Spincash is registered as a company.
- May 2, 2015**
Emmerson Mnangagwa Jr. becomes a consultant for ACF.
- May 19, 2015**
ACF and ZDF jointly apply for National Project Status.
- June 4, 2015**
VP Mnangagwa successfully lifts the chrome export ban.
- July 20, 2015**
ACF and Spincash sign a shareholders agreement.
- July 23, 2015**
ACF allots 30% of its shares to Spincash. Chipango holds 25% of Spincash.
- January 20, 2016**
ACF requests Mnangagwa's help with lifting the duty on diesel.



The Spincash Machine

Tagwirei's business dealings with Moti began in October 2017 with a loan to help ACF finish building its processing plant. By November 17, 2017, their relationship had blossomed into something much more ambitious: Tagwirei's Sakunda Holdings paid \$120 million for Spincash's 30% of ACF.

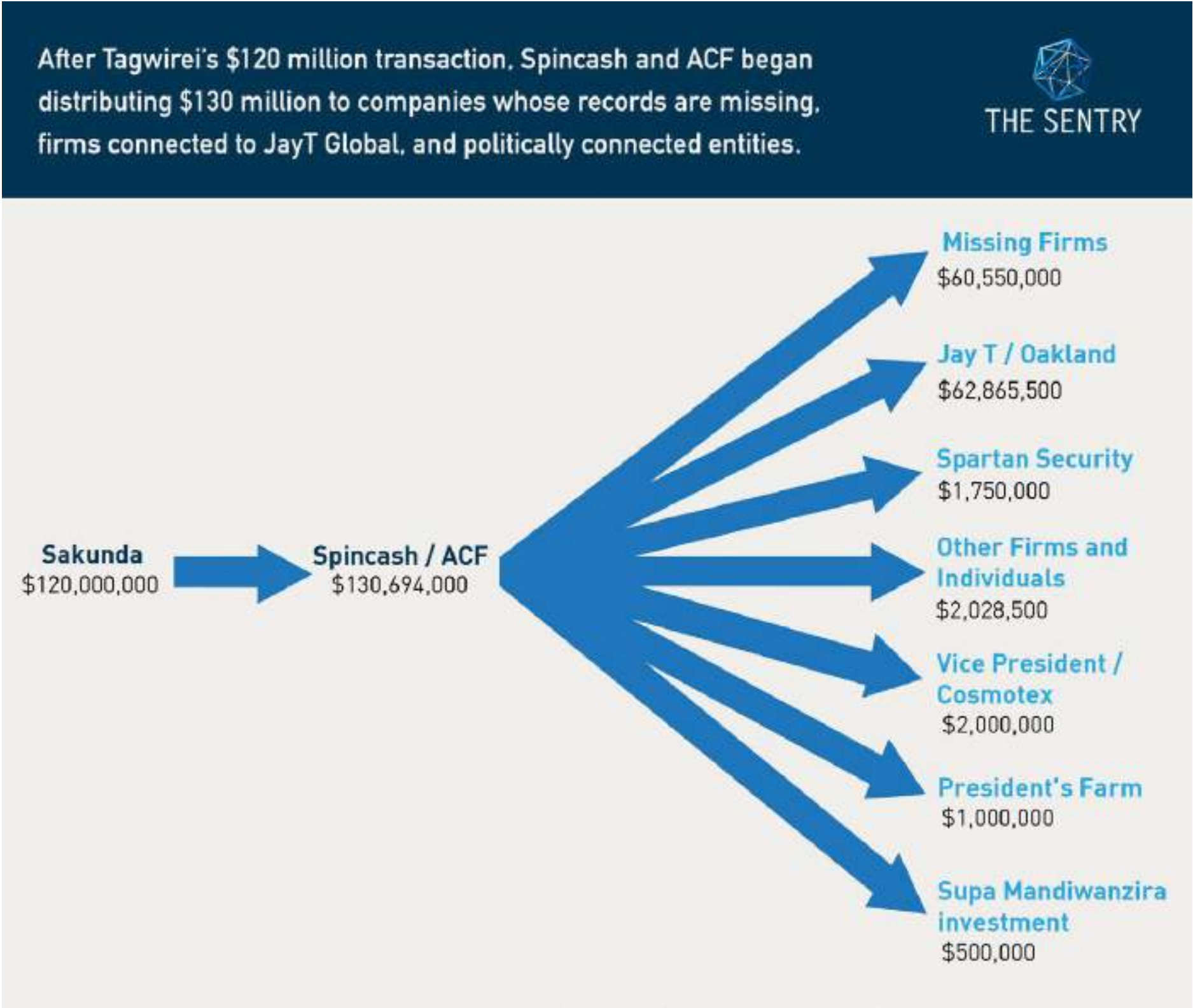
As Spincash received Tagwirei's \$120 million in installments, Spincash and ACF began moving the money over several months. Payments were made under loan contracts with two newly formed companies, JayT Global Bureau de Change and Oakland Mining, both co-owned by Zimbabwean businessman Patrick Chinondo. From November 2017 to September 2018, ACF and Spincash began distributing funds to Zimbabwean companies in what initially was known within the Moti Group as the "Kuda on-lend," in a reference to Tagwirei. According to the loan contracts and other financial records, JayT received money from ACF, and later Oakland received money from Spincash. Both JayT and Oakland also directed ACF and Spincash to make payments to third parties. Under these contracts, the Moti Group eventually paid \$130.7 million—in 595 installments—to 28 companies and four individuals.

Roughly \$60 million was paid to companies connected to Chinondo and his fellow JayT directors, another \$60 million went to firms whose records are missing from Zimbabwe's company registry, and at least \$3 million went to entities connected with politicians.

The company that owns Mnangagwa's farm, Pricabe Enterprises, received \$1 million in December 2017, while \$2 million went to Cosmotex Investments, controlled by Chipango and Evelyn Chakuinga, reportedly Chiwenga's niece, in two \$1 million transactions in December 2017 and January 2018. Chakuinga, Chiwenga, Mnangagwa, and Pricabe did not respond to requests for comment.

In January 2018, another \$500,000 went into a joint property investment with a company owned by Supa Mandiwanzira, a businessman who was then the information, communication and technology minister. In communications with The Sentry, Mandiwanzira denied any wrongdoing. The property investment was part of a wider—eventually fruitless—deal to mine chrome on concessions legitimately obtained in purely commercial transactions by Mandiwanzira's firms, he said. Mandiwanzira told The Sentry that although he was a minister, there was no conflict of interest, as his de-





partment did not regulate mining or environmental matters.

ACF paid Chiweshe \$100,000 in February 2018 as part of ultimately unsuccessful negotiations to mine chrome on concessions obtained by a firm Chiweshe chaired, Overseas Trends Resources (OTR). Chiweshe, who later became a Supreme Court justice, was a former military lawyer known for his partisan chairmanship of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commis-

sion during the rigged 2008 elections. OTR had obtained 20-year chrome mining concessions covering 6,000 hectares from the government in February 2017. Mandiwanzira told The Sentry that he had introduced Chiweshe to Moti, who was seeking more chrome concessions, for purely commercial negotiations that began in early 2017. Chiweshe said he does not recall any payment and told The Sentry that his judicial position had nothing to do with OTR, which was



Timeline 2017-18

While the Moti Group did not support the coup, political tension formed the backdrop to ACF activity in 2017, and some transactions benefited members of Mnangagwa's faction.



Political events ACF events

	June 19, 2017 Mnangagwa's relationship with ACF is criticized in cabinet by President Mugabe's allies.
August 12, 2017 Mnangagwa believes he is poisoned at a party rally.	
September 10, 2017 Grace Mugabe publicly criticizes Mnangagwa.	September 18, 2017 Minister of Mines Chidakwa denies an export license to ACF.
	September 29, 2017 ACF sues Chidakwa.
October 6, 2017 Mnangagwa publicly claims he was poisoned. Grace Mugabe denies responsibility.	
November 6, 2017 Mnangagwa is fired by President Mugabe.	
November 14, 2017 The coup begins.	November 17, 2017 Tagwirei pays \$120m to Spincash for 30% of ACF.
November 21, 2017 The coup ends.	November 21, 2017 Spincash/ACF begins payments to JayT Global.
November 24, 2017 Justice Chiweshe's rulings validate the coup. Mnangagwa is inaugurated as president.	December 5, 2017 Spincash/ACF pays \$1m to Mnangagwa's farm.
	December 19, 2017 Spincash/ACF pays \$1m to Cosmotex, whose directors are Chiwenga's reported niece and Chipango.
December 27, 2017 Chiwenga is appointed vice president.	January 8, 2018 Spincash/ACF pays a second \$1m to Cosmotex.
	February 2, 2018 ACF pays \$100k to Justice Chiweshe.
	July 4, 2018 Spincash/ACF pays \$1.75m to Spartan Security.
July 30, 2018 Elections take place.	

a mere partner to the state-owned Zimbabwe Mineral Development Corporation. Chiweshe did not answer a question about who owned OTR—for which records are missing from the corporate registry—but said that, while he chaired the firm, “to suggest that OTR is a tool for my personal benefit is in bad taste and

simply untrue.” The Moti Group confirmed that ACF made the \$100,000 payment to Chiweshe.

A month before national elections, in July 2018, \$1.75 million went to Spartan Security. According to Zimbabwe’s company registry, one of Spartan’s directors is Mnangagwa’s

relative, Tarirai David Munangagwa, who had reportedly helped Mnangagwa flee Zimbabwe before the coup. One media article—alleging that Spartan bought cars for ZANU-PF in the 2018 elections and facilitated foreign payments for the ZDF and both vice-presidents' offices—states that Munangagwa had resigned from Spartan in 2016 (contradicting information from the company registry, which is not always kept up-to-date), but remained a lifelong friend of Spartan's owner. Neither Spartan nor Tarirai Munangagwa responded to requests for comment. The Moti Group said that their payment to Spartan was instigated by JayT and was unconnected to the purchase of vehicles. The Moti Group did supply 50 vehicles to Tagwirei for use in ZANU-PF's 2018 election campaign, but it says these were paid for by Tagwirei as part of a normal transaction with their motor vehicle division. The Sentry reached out to Tagwirei, but he didn't respond to requests for comment.

The Moti Group describes the 595 Spincash payments as investment opportunities, made as the Zimbabwean currency (Real Time Gross Settlement dollars, or RTGS\$) depreciated: "ACF/Spincash utilized the purchase price received from Sakunda to invest in Zimbabwean operations and opportunities in order to try and protect the value

of the proceeds from depreciating ... JayT and Oakland form part of these advances, which effectively are loans." Chinondo, the owner of both JayT and Oakland, told The Sentry that the payments were to "our service providers and suppliers of goods at the time. Highly likely we asked ACF to make direct payments to these suppliers for one of the following reasons: suppliers request for immediate clearance of funds so they do not make losses in price changes since it was a hyperinflation period; suppliers didn't want the risk of holding money in the bank (RTGS\$) despite the government saying base currency was USD \$ at the time, for money in the bank (Rtgs\$) had a different rate to (Real Usd \$ cash value), for too long hence they preferred to send us their beneficiaries to pay. ... So in summary money was paid to the direct suppliers of a service or good but there were 3/4 principals who would have requested for this payment."

When asked about the payments to politically connected entities Pricabe, Cosmotex, and Spartan Security, the Moti Group told The Sentry, "As part of the advances to JayT and Oakland, they requested that payments be made to various companies by way of payment direction letters." Chinondo said, "I am not familiar with all except Spartan Security Services which we did do some



work with back them. We do not have any of these on our records. If ACF allocated them to our contracts it's a mistake they are not ours and we have no record of ever asking for these payments on our behalf."

The Sentry asked the Moti Group for proof that any loans were repaid, but no documents were provided.

Botswana

In 2019, the Moti Group approached Chinondo with a plan to support a political party in Botswana in the hope of gaining commercial opportunities. In May 2019, Chinondo agreed to pay \$1 million for 11% of Longway Solutions, a Moti Group Seychelles registered company. According to the agreement, Longway had committed \$9.4 million to Duma Boko's Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) 2019 election campaign "in order to maximize certain commercial opportunities." Other Moti Group internal documents describe how Longway or its representatives would seek to "serve as Advisor to the Presidency for the duration of UDC term"; be "appointed as the chief negotiator in the renewal process to engage with De Beers on behalf of the Government of Botswana"; "manage border control and security" with "10 year exclusivity"; and establish a "State Bank for inter alia payment of pensions. Bot Gov shall provide the initial capital funding of BWP 1 billion." The documents also list planned roles for Longway in wholesale and retail fuel distribution, a lithium oxide facility, wholesale fertilizer and agricultural input importation, halal beef exports to Arab countries, and a mandatory medical insurance plan for visitors to Botswana. It is not clear whether Boko or the UDC had agreed to any of these plans, and Boko did not respond to a request for comment.

In response to The Sentry's questions, Chinondo said, "This is a very interesting long shot, Yes I was offered these shares, and investment opportunities but after a careful Due Diligence I did not pay for them as I later discovered that there was no real substance in the offers



hence the payment for the shares never happened. However it's worth to mention that when I was offered these investments it was rather more of fantasy dreaming by the party which seemed to sell shares and they enticed me into signing some MOU but I never bought the shares."

Media coverage from 2019 reported Moti's financing of Boko's campaign, including by providing a private jet and helicopter. Moti also funded the UDC's failed legal challenge after losing the 2019 elections. Boko didn't respond to requests for comment but previously said in an interview: "Zunaid Moti is more than a friend to me. He's like a brother. He's been that way for many years...he's like a sibling to me." When asked if Moti was a sibling who donates money, Boko replied, "Of course, my siblings will donate to me. They have an obligation to do this. So there's absolutely nothing untoward."

The Moti Group said they only provided a minuscule amount of support to the UDC, not \$9.4 million, and stated, "We support democracy, and therefore provided the support the UDC requested, as they are a legitimate political party. There is nothing wrong with acquiring fuel, lithium, fertilizer or anything else commercially. Our proposals were a value add to Botswana, and would have been to their benefit. We hereby state our support for all ruling parties in the SADC [Southern African Development Community] region."

A Commission of Inquiry

In 2019, Moti's relations with Mnanagwa and Tagwirei reportedly soured, while his friendship with Chiwenga endures. The Moti Group continues to request Chiwenga's assistance in obtaining favorable regulatory decisions for ACF, including the reinstatement of its now-expired National Project Status and its duty-free diesel concession.

Amid a corporate reshuffle, Moti has recently announced a renewed personal focus on African Chrome Fields, with a new factory opening in mid-2023. He told Independent Online, a South African news site:

"It has taken me about 10 years to research and develop the concept. I started construction in 2016. It took patience. This is my dream."

It is important to establish whether ACF's growth took more than patience. When \$780,000 in cash was stolen from South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's farm, the resulting scandal led to an official inquiry led by former Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo. This case, in which \$1 million was paid to President Mnanagwa's farm for as yet unknown reasons, should also be investigated by a commission of inquiry consisting of appropriate persons from Zimbabwe and fellow African Union or Southern African Development Community states.



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Smuggling syndicate loots lithium



NATHAN GUMA

ZIMBABWE is losing unprocessed lithium, mainly extracted by artisanal miners, through smuggling by a well-knit syndicate of foreign nationals who take advantage of porous borders, bleeding the country of potential revenue, a new report by the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (Zela) has revealed.

According to the report titled: “Implications of the lithium rush in Zimbabwe”, the country has been losing raw lithium through illicit trade, through key players who include the Chinese, Indians, South Africans and Mozambicans, who have been draining the country’s fiscal potential from lithium.

An investigation by *The NewsHawks* published last week also exposed lithium smuggling from the Mudzi and Mutoko areas via Nyamapanda Border Post.

The location of lithium reserves close to the border has also made the mineral, also known as the “white gold”, prone to smuggling.

This is despite Zimbabwe imposing a ban on the exportation of unprocessed lithium. While cabinet also approved the beneficiation policy, the country has not yet fully operationalised value addition and beneficiation programmes.

Local participation and capacity in beneficiation have not been developed.

Zela’s February investigation revealed that foreign buyers are smuggling lithium ore, which is bought in bulk from artisanal miners. For instance, during one of Zela’s visits to mining sites

in Mberengwa, there were various buyers of lithium who were operating haulage trucks at night.

In one incident, the investigative team observed a fleet of seven haulage trucks headed for Mberengwa around 7pm. However, the following day, it was noted that only two trucks had been fully loaded overnight and left.

It also emerged that the lithium miners sell their lithium to buyers, mostly Chinese nationals who also drive at night to these remote areas for collection, according to the report. The Chinese nationals are said to be the best buyers, forking out between US\$120 and US\$150 on average for a tonne of lithium.

However, local buyers have been short-changing miners as they buy ore based on the percentage value of the ore after estimating the tonnage.

The buyers are reportedly bribing police officers to be allowed to leave with truckloads of lithium.

The artisanal miners are largely exposed to unsafe and inhuman working conditions, and have in several instances been losing ore to foreign buyers.

“The artisanal miners were not using safe methods of mining and there may be risk of fatal mine accidents. At Sandawana the miners were only targeting outcrops which are easy to mine. Therefore, most of them were employing shallow opencast mining methods to extract the near-surface outcrops.

“A few were employing shallow unsupported underground mining methods. The miners revealed that three weeks before the visit, there

was a pit which collapsed with nine people inside. One person died from the incident and the miners were able to assist the other eight miners. This event clearly demonstrates the hazards of unregulated artisanal mining.

“Lithium was being sold at between US\$100 and US\$150 per tonne. Chinese and Indian buyers did not weigh the mineral but used estimates that are given by the miner. There was a possibility of miners being short-changed because they lack knowledge of the value of the lithium, and buyers have bargaining power,” read part of the report.

Findings from the report also revealed opaqueness in regards to the licensing of lithium mining, with contracts signed between the government of Zimbabwe and different investors not accessible. There is also public concern over the ownership structure of Kuvimba Mining House, a company that owns Sandawana Mine, raising fears of corruption.

Mineral leakages have now become rampant, which has prompted the government to institute an audit into all mining companies operating in the country.

Experts say Zimbabwe has over 40 base minerals and several precious stones such as diamonds, yet it still remains a cause for concern that a nation with one of the largest known diamond and platinum deposits in the world has nearly half of its population living in extreme poverty.

Leakages have also been massive in the gold sector, with the country losing an estimated 200 kilogrammes every month due to gold leakages

by well-connected elites, as has been revealed by a four-episode investigative series that has been aired by the news agency in recent weeks.

All the people implicated in the smuggling web are closely linked to President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Kenyan gold smuggler Kamlesh Pattni in the final episode shows multiple photos of him with President Emmerson Mnangagwa, while offering to set up a meeting between the Chinese mafia (undercover Al Jazeera reporters) and the President.

Pattni, who almost bankrupted Kenya in the 1990s through a gold scandal which cost that country’s treasury US\$600 million, reveals he makes payments to Mnangagwa as “appreciation” every two weeks through his young brother to enable him to smoothly carry out his gold and money laundering operations in Zimbabwe.

The racket has seen gold smugglers transport at least US\$5 million every week, with the money being laundered in United Arab Emirates banks, as shown by the documentary.

The scheme includes self-styled prophet Ubert Angel, President Mnangagwa’s controversial envoy, who in the documentary brags about being able to sign binding treaties, even without the President’s knowledge, and controversial miner Henrietta Rushwaya, who was arrested in 2021 for attempting to smuggle 6.7kg of gold worth US\$366 000 at Robert Mugabe International Airport in 2020.

Phone calls in the documentary nail her as a notorious gold smuggler.

BRENNA MATENDERE

MUDZI Rural District Council is moving to curb the looting of lithium ore which had seen unlicensed miners selling the mineral to buyers who are smuggling it to Mozambique through the porous Nyamapanda Border Post.

The Zimbabwean government banned lithium ore exports through a circular issued by Mines minister Winston Chitando on 20 December 2022 under the Base Minerals Export Control Act.

The ban was effected through Statutory Instrument (SI) 213 of 2022 titled Base Mineral Export Control (Unbeneficiated Lithium Bearing Ores) Order, 2022.

Part of the SI reads: "Under the powers conferred upon me by section 3(1)(a) of the Base Minerals Export Control Act [Chapter 21:05], I, Winston Chitando, MP, Minister of Mines and Mining Development, by this my order direct that with immediate effect as follows:— 1. This order may be cited as the Base Minerals Export Control (Unbeneficiated Lithium Bearing Ores) Order, 2022.

"In this order — "lithium bearing ore" means any mineral ore containing lithium; "unbeneficiated lithium" means any lithium in whatever form that has not undergone processing to an extent that would exempt it from the payment of export tax under section 12B ('Collection of tax on exportation of unbeneficiated lithium; determination of value thereof') of the Value Added Tax Act [Chapter 23:12]; 3. (1) No lithium bearing ores, or unbeneficiated lithium whatsoever, shall be exported from Zimbabwe to another country . . ."

A recent investigation by *The NewsHawks* with the support of the Voluntary Media Council's investigative journalism fund for transnational crimes revealed that illegal buyers were frequenting Mudzi's Bangauya villages in ward 5 to buy loads of ore from unlicensed artisanal miners. The ore is then smuggled to offshore destinations through Nyamapanda Border Post.

Mudzi Ward 5 councillor Albert Saineti this week said Mudzi RDC has roped in a licensed company, Benson Mines, to legally carry out lithium mining operations at the source where artisanal miners were plundering the mineral.

Saineti said the miner has beefed up security to stop the plunder.

"The situation is now calm and the plunder of lithium by unlicensed miners has been contained. Benson Mines has since erected a perimeter fence around the area where poaching of lithium was happening and the company has deployed its own private security personnel who are manning the area in all the 24 hours of the day.

"The mining company has also stitched an arrangement with the local police for joint rapid responses in the event of large groups of illegal miners coming to try and breach the security. Even the trucks which used to come to collect the lithium from the local unlicensed miners have stopped frequenting the area," he said.

Mudzi RDC chairperson Victor Nyamutswa said the local authority's environmental officers are also working tirelessly to ensure that the intervention meant to stop the poaching of lithium is sustainable.

"So far the situation has been brought to calm and our environmental officers are also educating the community villagers on the need for sustainable and legal mining operations which do not damage their environment," he said.

Tivirai Chitemamuswa, the Mudzi RDC chief executive officer, also confirmed that in Bangauya the lithium poaching crisis had been put under control.

"We have since been deploying our officers to help secure the place and we have more plans to tighten the security there through collaborative operations with the police and private security personnel of the mining company. Our message to that community is that they must abide by the law and help to ensure that their environment is preserved also," he said.

Mutoko-based Youth Initiatives for Community Development (YICD) programmes manager Kuda Makanda told *The NewsHawks* that since the poaching of lithium had been contained in Mudzi, there is now need to ensure that the local community benefits from

Mudzi RDC moves to plug lithium exploitation source



Mines minister Winston Chitando

mining of the resource.

"There is need for local communities to be meaningfully located in the lithium value chain. One easy way is to un-designate lithi-

um as a strategic mineral so that even locals can mine it. There should be comprehensively inclusive consultations of the local communities in all the mining operations that will be taking

place in Mudzi," he said.

Makanda added that in broad terms, there is a need for the promulgation of laws that drive the empowerment of locals in all mining areas.

Gold looting bleeds Zim’s economy

BERNARD MPOFU

THE smuggling of gold and erratic power cuts buffeting the economy have affected Zimbabwe’s mining sector output amid indications that foreign currency earnings may drop, a local research firm has warned.

Akribos Research Services in its first-quarter research note says an exposé by international television network *Al Jazeera* revealed how Zimbabwe is losing millions of dollars to illicit financial flows and the smuggling of the yellow metal.

Al Jazeera said through thousands of confidential documents and exclusive interviews with whistle-blowers from within the criminal underworld, investigators obtained the blueprints of billion-dollar money laundering operations that service the political elite.

The sector accounts for about 12% of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). According to Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe statistics, the country’s total mineral exports increased from only US\$889.1 million in 2008 to US\$5 085.43 million by 2021.

Gold is Zimbabwe’s single largest foreign currency earner.

Experts say mineral output growth prospects for 2023 are expected to be lower than those for 2022.

According to the Chamber of Mines, frequent power outages, high costs, shortages of foreign currency, an unstable tax framework, and capital shortages are key risks to the outlook for 2023. Energy, the chamber says, is expected to drive a 15% increase in mining costs by 2023.

Due to the frequent breakdowns of Zimbabwe’s outdated generation plants, the country’s miners frequently experience power outages. Zimbabwe’s state-owned power utility gets some electricity from neighbouring countries to plug the deficit.

Therefore, it now bills miners in foreign currency to fund the power imports, a move that mining companies claim has raised operating costs.

“Another headwind in the mining sector is the smuggling of precious metals. In the recently released *Gold Mafia* documentary, several prominent political officials and businesspeople were alleged to be involved in gold smuggling and money laundering,” Akribos says.

“Global research group (2020) estimated that Zimbabwe is losing at least US\$1.5 billion a year through the smuggling of gold, mainly to traders in Dubai. This figure was higher than official estimates of US\$1.2 billion a year.

“This amount equates to about a quarter of the Zimbabwean national budget and if it was available in the economy, macro-economic stability was likely to be achievable.”

With close to 40 different minerals, Zimbabwe’s mining sector is extremely diverse. The predominant minerals include platinum group metals, chrome, gold, coal, and diamond.



Gold is Zimbabwe's single largest foreign currency earner.



With close to 40 different minerals, Zimbabwe's mining sector is extremely diverse.

BRENNA MATENDERE

THE Environmental Management Agency (Ema) has confirmed that Chinese diamond-mining company Anjin has begun the rehabilitation of deep gullies and slime dams in Chiadzwa which had sparked a malaria crisis in the area.

An investigation by *The NewsHawks* and Information for Development Trust, under a project meant to support investigative reporting focusing on the accountability and governance of foreign interests and investments in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa, last month revealed that a serious malaria crisis had hit Chiadzwa after Anjin left unrehabilitated pits in the area it is mining.

The pits, which have collected water, are breeding grounds for mosquitos, resulting in a spike in malaria cases among local villagers.

Some of the pits have also become death traps for humans, as people have slipped and died while fishing, while some villagers have committed suicide by drowning themselves in the deep pits.

During the investigation, Ema said it would ensure Anjin rehabilitates the pits to end the crisis.

Ema national spokesperson Amkela Sidange told *The NewsHawks* this week that Anjin had rehabilitated two hectares of land. The company has secured material to encircle the pits and produced an action plan for the rehabilitation of slime dams.

Sidange said Anjin has also submitted a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for other areas that were affected by degradation because of its mining operations.

"They have secured a fence to put on some pits. Work on rehabilitation of the slimes area is ongoing. So far two hectares have been done. Re-vegetation of the areas to start in June. They have produced an action plan to that effect which the Agency is monitoring," she said.

Sidange explained that the rehabilitation plan specified how the company intends to rehabilitate damaged areas and the timelines for accomplishing the task.

The rehabilitation includes filling gullies with soil and draining stagnant water.

Shylet Mapindu of Tonhorai Village located in ward 29 of Chiadzwa who contracted malaria two times last year together with her three-year-old son Prosper Mapindu, said she had witnessed the rehabilitation of the slime dams which had enhanced the breeding of mosquitos in the area. She was one of the villagers quoted by *The NewsHawks* during the investigation.

"We urge the Chinese company to speed up the process so that all the gullies that are breeding mosquitos can be filled with soil to save us from the mosquito bites," she said.

Anjin spokesperson Special Matarirano said the company in its rehabilitation plan intends to cover a total of seven hectares. The area is also going to be populated with different fruit trees. Slime dams are continually being fenced. We are aware of the duty to preserve ecosystems and humans," he said.

"The rehabilitation action plan will cover the hectarage we believe require immediate action on the gullies and it is seven hectares."

James Mupfumi, the Centre for Research and Development (CRD) director, told *The NewsHawks* that the rehabilitation exercise by Anjin was commendable although short-term methods that directly help in reducing malaria cases are needed.

"The rehabilitation exercise by Anjin in Chiadzwa is commendable, but it will take a long time and so there is need for short-term action to reduce the prevalence of malaria. These may include the company funding health programmes of government in Chiadzwa where malaria cases are still rife. There is also need for the company to fund clinics in the area so that they are able to effectively fight malaria cases there.

"The company could also consider distributing mosquito nets to the local community. These interventions will have short-term impact on the health crisis of malaria," he said.

Anjin Diamond Company is a joint venture between China's Anhui Foreign Economic Construction Company (AFECC) and Matt Bronze, an investment vehicle controlled by Zimbabwe's military.

The firm began operating in Chiadzwa in 2010, but was ordered to shut down in 2016

Anjin begins rehabilitation of Chiadzwa gullies after exposé



when the government ceased the operations of all diamond companies in the area after the then president Robert Mugabe claimed there were serious leakages of the gems amounting to US\$15 billion.

The ban led to the establishment of the state-owned Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC), which then took over operations. When President Emmerson Mnangagwa took over leadership of the country following a

military coup in November 2017, he lifted the ban on Anjin's operations, resulting in the company resuming full-scale diamond mining in Marange with an initial investment of US\$38 million in 2019.

Judge Makonese resignation saves Mnangagwa from embarrassment

OWEN GAGARE

AFTER President Emmerson Mnangagwa appointed a tribunal last week which he swore in this week to inquire into the question of removal from office of High Court Justice Martin Makonese following allegations of misconduct against him, the judge resigned, inadvertently saving the President the embarrassment.

Mnangagwa appointed a three-person tribunal chaired by retired Justice Professor Simbi Veke Mubako. Other members of the tribunal were Dr Gift Manyatera and Ms Sarah Moyo with Justice secretary Virginia Mabhiza being the the secretary of the tribunal.

It however emerged that Manyatera had a close working relationship with Makonese between 2005 and 2006 when they worked as lawyers, making him a conflicted member of the panel.

Officials in the judicial sector say Manyatera would not have been able to act independently given his close relationship with Makonese.

The situation had left Mnangagwa's tribunal compromised and open to possible judicial challenge by lawyers and civil society groups. The Law Society of Zimbabwe was scrutinising the panel, ready to join the fray.

Makonese was set to be the latest to face tribunals after Justices Thompson Mabhikwa, Erica Ndewere, Francis Bere and Edith Mushore, who were all fired for misconduct over the last three years.

The complaint against Makonese followed an order he issued in a commercial dispute in which he allegedly had a financial interest.

He made the order without an application made before him, and without the knowledge of lawyers of the two other parties in the dispute.

Makonese handled a dispute over a coal mine in Hwange pitting a company called Philcool Investments, which was the "applicant", and two other companies, Hwange Coal Gasification and Taiyuan Sanxing, which were the "respondents" during the hearing purportedly held on 12 October 2022.

He allegedly granted the companies relief they had not sought — including ordering them to abandon pending court applications, which suppliers to use and structuring payment terms to resolve the dispute. Allegations are that no such hearing took place.

Representatives of Philcool Investments tried to enforce the order, but failed.

Mnangagwa, through Statutory Instrument 54 of 2023, established the tribunal in terms of section 187(1) of the constitution of Zimbabwe which provides that a judge may be removed from office only for inability to perform the functions of his or her office, due to mental or physical incapacity; gross incompetence; or gross misconduct. Section 187(3) of the constitution provides that, "if the Judicial Service

Commission advises the President that the question of removing a judge from office ought to be investigated, the President must appoint a tribunal to inquire into the matter".

The tribunal was meant to conduct its



Justice Martin Makonese

work over a five-month period and produce a report at the conclusion of its inquiry.

Mnangagwa had directed that the tribunal's terms of reference be: "to inquire into the matter of the removal from office of Honourable Justice Martin Makonese; to investigate Honourable Justice Makonese's conduct as alleged in the dossier from the Judicial Service Commission, whether it can be deemed to have been tantamount to

gross misconduct and gross incompetence and to investigate whether the Honourable Justice Makonese interfered with the course of justice during the course of his duties."

The tribunal was meant to investigate whether Makonese presided over matters wherein he had a direct conflict of interest.

The tribunal was expected: "to consider all information submitted by the Judicial Service Commission in order to arrive

at an appropriate recommendation to the President; to investigate any other matter which the Tribunal may deem appropriate and relevant to the inquiry; to recommend on whether the Honourable Judge, is fit to hold office in light of the foregoing and to report to the President, in writing, the result of the inquiry within a period of five (5) months from the date of swearing in of the Members," Mnangagwa directed.



President Emmerson Mnangagwa

265 residents in Epworth received what the ruling party said were title deeds for their homes.

BRENNA MATENDERE

THE regularisation of Epworth settlements after President Emmerson Mnangagwa last week started distributing so-called title deeds has come under the spotlight as it has since emerged that the documents may not have legal standing but were just a vote-buying tactic by the ruling Zanu PF.

265 residents in the sprawling suburb received what the ruling party said were title deeds for their homes, most of which are underdeveloped and built on illegally acquired land in the poor Harare south-east peri-urban settlement.

About 11 000 more residents are on line to receiving the controversial title deeds.

A title deed is a formal document legally defining how a property is allotted by an authority, owned and transferred by the holder.

Legal property analysts told *The NewsHawks* that Mnangagwa's "title deeds", which are part of his election campaign, are not legally sound and binding.

The key stages and procedure on the issuing of title deeds on council land are articulated in Deeds Registries Act Chapter 20:05 (revised edition 1996) and Urban Council Act, section 152.

The critical stages that need to be followed in issuing title deeds — which were not followed in the case of the Epworth documents presented to residents by Mnangagwa — include an approved layout plan; approved survey diagrams; proof of payment/purchase price of residential stand and certificate of compliance with development conditions on water, sewer, roads to some stage and superstructure.

Before the issuance of a title deed, the responsible local authority, in this case the Epworth Local Board, through legal sections, initiates conveyance registration of the title deeds.

At another stage, external lawyers are appointed by the local authority to prepare title deeds and register them at the Deeds Office.

"In short, no title deeds can be issued at a political gathering without following the appropriate proper legal procedure. The Epworth residents were therefore sold a dummy by Mnangagwa and Zanu PF whose sole agenda at that event was simply to campaign ahead of the next elections," a legal property analyst said.

A land audit report presented to Mnangagwa in 2019 by Justice Tendai Uchena exposed how ruling party elites used land to bait voters and last week's event in Epworth brazenly confirmed the vote-buying tactic.

The Epworth event also confirmed long-held views that Zanu PF's penchant for regularisation of illegal settlements is mostly linked to ruling party-aligned co-operatives in a bid to harvest votes. During the ceremony to hand over the documents to the Epworth residents, Mnangagwa repeatedly reminded the mostly rented crowd that it was a project masterminded by Zanu PF.

Zanu PF has of late resorted to its traditional vote-buying tactics ahead of the next elections, with the latest move being the pampering of traditional chiefs with all-terrain vehicles in a development that sets on course rigging mechanisms of the next elections.

Last month, Mnangagwa handed over new cars to 38 newly installed chiefs during an annual chiefs' conference held in Bulawayo.

Critics told *The NewsHawks* that handing over the cars to chiefs four months before elections was a clear sign of vote buying.

"It's a case of outright vote buying. The timing of the meeting with the traditional leaders when facing the 2023 election is more telling about the hidden agenda of Zanu PF. Traditional leaders are being abused by Zanu PF for

political gain. This is prohibited by our constitution but continues with impunity," said, Obert Chinhamo, director of the Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa.

Two months ago, Zanu PF handed over ambulances emblazoned with big portraits of Mnangagwa, saying the vehicles were donated by party supporters. This, again, was seen as vote buying.

Zanu PF officials have also been on the campaign trail, doling out more goodies and cash ahead of the party's primary elections.

There has also been distribution of chickens, fertilisers and drilling of boreholes by Zanu PF functionaries in further vote-buying tactics.

The government has also been distributing inputs and food in rural areas in a partisan manner.

The current developments are an attestation of what Mnangagwa in August last year said when he unwittingly admitted that Zanu PF uses food aid as a political tool to drum up support in rural areas.

He made the remarks while addressing congregants at Johane Masowe Vadzidzi VaJesu shrine in Madziva, Mashonaland Central province.

Mnangagwa revealed that the ruling party structures would play a leading role in distributing food aid and agricultural inputs as the country heads to the 2023 elections.

"I have been to many districts in the country and most households are facing hunger. The ruling party is in every village, so people who are starving should forward their names to Zanu PF village committees so that they can be assisted with food aid. We want everyone to be Zanu PF," he said.

"I have been to Mangwe, Plumtree, where we donated solar-powered boreholes and helped people to start horticulture. When you go there and say Mnangagwa is bad, they will beat you up."

According to the constitution, central government is mandated to take a leading role in food aid distribution, but Zanu PF has been using food aid to harvest votes.

About 38% of the rural population, which translates to about 3.8 million people, will face hunger this year, according to government statistics.

A recent report by the Zimbabwe Civil Society Anti-Corruption Coalition, and other concerned civil society organisations raised grave concerns against acts of vote buying in the country which it described as electoral corruption.

"Our understanding of electoral corruption is that it is the manipulation, abuse or illegal interference with a conducive electoral environment, legal and policy frameworks, management modalities, voters, processes, the voting, outcomes and other related activities around the electoral cycle by state and non-state actors to give advantages to one political player over others," the report reads.

"We are concerned that electoral corruption is rampant, appears as if it is normal and that it has flourished with impunity.

"We are gravely concerned that acts of electoral corruption have deleterious effects on development since it leads to conflicts and controversial electoral outcomes. Apart from destroying economies and societies, it subverts and undermines the principle of free choice, thereby rendering an election open to contestation.

"In addition, electoral corruption jeopardises the freeness and fairness of elections, triggers physical fights, killings, and human rights abuses as witnessed in Kenya and Zimbabwe. It is also important to note that it leads to apathy triggered by the understanding that participating in elections that are often rigged is useless since that will not bring out changes expected by a voter," reads part of the report.

Election date proclamation due



BRENNA MATENDERE

IN terms of the constitution, President Emmerson Mnangagwa must proclaim a date for this year's general elections starting from Thursday next week, the Election Resource Centre (ERC) has said.

Zimbabwe last held elections on 31 July 2018 and citizens are anticipating this year's round of polls, but there are fears the ruling Zanu PF in conjunction with the smaller opposition MDC-Alliance outfit led by Douglas Mwonozora are rooting for a postponement.

Mwonozora has already gone to court to seek postponement of the elections, citing irregularities in the delimitation exercise.

However, ERC executive director Babra Ontibile Bhebhe told *The NewsHawks* on Thursday that Mnangagwa is obliged by the Electoral Act to proclaim the election date between 4 May and 26 July.

"According to section 38 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, a general election (harmonised election) must be held so that polling takes place not more than 30 days before the expiry of the five-year period which runs from the date on which the President-elect is sworn in and assumes office. President ED Mnangagwa was sworn in on 26 August 2018. The 30-day period before the expiry of the presidential term runs from 27 July-26 August 2023," she said.

She explained that Mnangagwa is mandated to fix the date for the elections after consulting the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission but the proclamation of election day has timelines that are clear at law.

"According to section 38 of the Electoral Act, the President must fix a date for a general election and elections for councillors, members of Parliament and the President, after consultation with the commission. The proclamation must take into consideration the factor of the Nomination Court which must sit at least 14 and not more than 21 days after the day of publication of the proclamation for the purpose of receiving nominations of candidates for election," she said.

Bhebhe added that polling day must be at least



30 and not more than 63 days after the sitting of the nomination court.

"Taking into account the timelines for the sitting of the nomination court and the possible election dates between 27 July 2023-26 August 2023 the President may only make a proclamation be-

mission before proclaiming," said Bhebhe.

Early this week, Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC) spokesperson Fadzayi Mahere (pictured) dismissed the possibility of the postponement of the elections in a statement.

"The constitutional requirement that elections be held every five years can't be suspended by political elites who have no support from the citizens and are afraid of electoral loss. Zanu PF and its proxies are terrified of how much support they have lost and are seeking to use whatever hare-brained plan they can think of to try and stop the process.

"We call upon citizens to continue demanding adherence to the constitution. Elections are like Christmas, you can't postpone them as they will come whether or not you have new clothes.

"Elections are a constitutional non-negotiable. Citizens must be at the centre of all national processes. We reject the notion of elite pacts or a Government of National Unity or whatever basis put forward. Done properly, elections are a true expression of the will of the people and a total necessity in a democracy," she said.

ZESN board chairperson and lawyer Andrew Makoni said: "In terms of section 158 of the constitution, elections must be held not more than 30 days before the expiry of the five year term of office of the president. This means that the elections can be held at least 30 days before the date the president was inaugurated.

"In terms of section 38 of the Electoral Act, the president shall fix a place or places and day or days, at least 14 and not more than 21 days of publication, on which a nomination court shall sit for purposes of receiving nominations of candidates and a day or days, at least 30 and not more than 63 days after the nomination day or last nomination day, on which a poll shall be taken place.

"So from the date of nomination to date of election, the election date must be within 63 days, which is just over two months, unless of course section 38 is amended to provide for lessor or longer duration. Therefore, if for instance the date of proclamation of the election is the 31st of May, elections must be held at most by August 2 2023," Makoni said.

CCC candidate vetting continues

RUVIMBO MUCHENJE

THE opposition Citizens' Coalition for Change which had promised to roll out names of nominees on 11 April says it is still vetting the nominated candidates and is urging people who are querying the speed of the candidate selection process to be patient and allow the party to complete the exercise.

The party's deputy spokesperson Gift Siziba addressed a Press briefing yesterday in Harare and made the clarification after a social media onslaught on the candidate selection process from critics and party sympathisers who felt the exercise was taking too long.

"Allow us to finish our process and we announce publicly the successful people; we can confirm whether we have areas where we do not have candidates or we have. The residue that we have and the process that was happening over the weekend was the vetting of more than 25 000 people who were nominated for councillor, members of Parliament from across the country. And these are the people who are going to go for caucuses after which we are going to have them being announced as candidates," said Siziba.

The candidate selection process is in four parts: nomination which happened on 5 April 2023; candidate acceptance confirmation where nominated candidates where supposed to accept the nomination; candidate vetting, announcement of candidates that would have passed the vetting stage; then move to consensus-building caucuses before the official announcement of victorious candidates.

Prominent journalist Hopewell Chin'ono put out a circular reportedly coming from the CCC that was appealing for the finding of candidates in rural constituencies, but the party says these are false allegations.

"It is absolutely not true, it is absolutely trying to create an impression that the citizens' movement has not spread its tentacles across the country. We are happy with the overwhelming subscription we have even challenged for avoidance of doubt those who say the specific area to say give us just a single ward for avoidance of confusion we give you the number of candidates. You know that there was an example of Chimanimani, we have more than six candidates that were nominated and more than 20 councillors for the few wards that are there who are going to go to the next stage, so we are happy we have candidates all over the country which are being vetted. We are expecting that once the caucuses are over, we announce the candidates and prove beyond any doubt that there are challenges in terms of candidates," said Siziba.

Zimbabwe's political landscape has always made it difficult for rural folk to openly declare that they support opposition.

In January 2023, elderly people convened a meeting in Murewa and were beaten by suspected Zanu PF youths and had to be evacuated to Harare for treatment.

An arrest was made, but the victims of the violent attack say they were not the actual perpetrators of violence.

During the build-up to the 26 March 2022 by-election, a CCC supporter, Mboneni Ncube, died at the hands of Zanu PF youths who violently disrupted the opposition party's rally.

It is against this background that people in rural areas are not confident of openly coming out as opposition activists.

To date, only nominations for Harare West which were announced at the initial Press conference have been made public, but everything else is being kept under wraps.

The nomination process was hit by confusion and chaos, with some candidates crying foul, but Siziba said those who fail the vetting test would have an opportunity to approach the appeals committee.

At the same Press briefing, Siziba responded to the vetting-form clause that spoke of allegiance to God, saying there was nothing amiss about the provision.

"The rest of the provisions were imported from the existing laws in our country, the constitution, the Electoral Act and other protocol



CCC deputy spokesperson Gift Siziba

manuals that govern the politics of our country," he said.

"We have not received any challenges from the particular individuals who have been vetted

who know and understand . . . Let me make it very clear for avoidance of doubt and confusion that the misinterpretation of our vetting template to try and make us look like people who

do not believe in freedom of conscience is wrong because in our movement we solely believe and protect the freedoms of people and part of those freedoms is religion," said Siziba.

Opposition improves in fielding rural ward election candidates

BRENNA MATENDERE

OXFORD-TRAINED Zimbabwean academic Phillan Zamchiya, who has conducted significant research into politics and elections, says the main opposition Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC) led by Nelson Chamisa and its MDC forerunners have been steadily improving in fielding election candidates in rural wards, perceived to be the ruling Zanu PF's political strongholds.

In a public commentary on the issue of CCC and the fielding of candidates in rural awards, Zamchiya said the trend from past elections since 2000 has been that the opposition — including the MDC in its mainstream manifestations — has been increasingly fielding candidates even though some of moves would have been symbolic. This comes amid reports and concerns that the CCC has been struggling to field candidates in rural areas at ward level. The party has consistently denied this, saying it has enough candidates to represent it in the upcoming August general elections.

Zamchiya said: "Here is what I try to answer today. Is the post-2000 opposition succeeding in fielding candidates in rural district councils dominated by the ruling party? What have been the internal and external factors affecting the process of fielding candidates? Is it even important to field even 'paper candidates' in 'unwinnable' rural wards in the upcoming 2023 general election?"

"Contrary to some media and popular narratives, the opposition formation has significantly improved in terms of fielding candidates in rural wards since the formation of a nationally competitive opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in 1999. The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu PF)'s historical trend of winning the rural wards uncontested, i.e. before the casting of the ballot paper is on an incipient decline."

Zamchiya said between the 2000 and 2018 elections, the opposition managed to increase its representation from 46.2% to 97.4%, which shows a dramatic improvement.

"The MDC only managed to field candidates in 646 out of the 1 397 rural wards in its first participation in countrywide Rural District Council (RDC) elections held on 28-29 September 2002. This translated to participating in only 46.2% of the wards signifying defeat before the polling day. In the subsequent RDC elections held on 28 October 2006, the MDC failed to field candidates in 482 wards. This meant a marginal but important decline in the number of free seats for Zanu PF," he said.

"In the 2008 harmonised elections, there was a further improvement from opposition parties as they managed to field candidates in 80.4% of the wards. Zanu PF was not opposed in 383 wards out of the contested 1 958 wards which included both urban and rural."

Zamchiya said by 2013 the opposition, which lost the general elections badly that year, had improved its ward representation to 95.9%

"The competitiveness of the opposition became more evident in 2013. The opposition managed to field candidates in 95.9% of the wards. Zanu PF continued to face a steep decline as this time it was not contested in 81 wards. The free seats won by Zanu PF were distributed as follows: Mashonaland Central (20); Mashonaland West (19); Mashonaland East (9); Midlands (10); Masvingo (10); Matabeleland North (7) and Matabeleland South (6)," he said.

"The number of wards won by Zanu PF without contestation even further dwindled in the last 2018 general election. The opposition parties managed to compete against Zanu PF in 97.4% of the wards. The ruling party was this time not opposed in only 51 out of 1 958 wards. The wards won by Zanu PF unopposed were distributed as follows: Mashonaland Central (19); Mash east (9); Masvingo (9); Mat South (1); Midlands (13)."



CCC leader Nelson Chamisa

Zamchiya outlined some of the external and internal factors that have shaped opposition candidate fielding in rural wards.

Exogenous factors

- Systematic and targeted state-sponsored violence against opposition prospective candidates and the destruction of their homes and other properties;
- The physical elimination of prospective opposition candidates and their supporters;
- Intimidation and threats of retribution by Zanu PF agents and traditional leaders through evictions from residential and arable land, denial of government food aid and farming inputs;
- Zanu PF militia and state agents illegally intercepting opposition candidates on their way to the nomination courts;
- Party infiltration characterised by last-minute defections or withdrawals by planted candidates;
- The targeted arrests, harassments and detentions of prospective candidates on the eve of nomination court;
- The barricading of nomination courts by ruling party agents to deny opposition candidates an opportunity to file papers; and
- The early closure of nomination courts before submission of papers by opposition candidates.

Endogenous factors

- Prospective candidates submitting wrong or inadequate documents at the nomination courts and at times arriving late;

- Paltry finances for party organisers to mobilise and recruit candidates through the length and breadth of the geographically vast rural areas;

- Failure to fundraise for nomination fees and transport costs for the contestants;
- The absence of socially embedded community protection mechanisms to increase the resilience of prospective candidates;
- Underdeveloped rapid response systems and inadequate social safety nets for targeted opposition candidates in the marginal rural areas;
- The absence of robust and active party structures and members in the deep rural enclaves; and
- Lack of institutional experience in everyday forms of mobilising, organising and recruiting candidates in volatile rural communities.

Said Zamchiya said: "It is important for the opposition to try and address some of the issues above and to thrive to contest in all the 1 970 wards in the upcoming 2023 general election. It makes political sense to contest even in 'unwinnable' rural wards as it does not only make multi-party democracy to function but brings benefits stated later.

"So far only the CCC led by Chamisa has publicly asserted that it will field candidates in all the 1 970 wards. CCC does have the potential, looking at the incipient decline of uncontested rural wards in post-2000. Were this to happen, it will be the first time since independence that Zanu PF will be contested in all the wards.

"Having competing candidates on all ballot

papers makes it harder for authoritarians to manipulate numbers. When you have candidates everywhere, you also increase the party's eyes to observe the counting of ballot papers. Participating in all wards provides an opportunity for the party to harvest all the potential votes therefore maximising the party's general vote share."

He adds: "A nationwide show ensures that Zanu PF is strained and does not have the luxury to re-channel their financial and human resources to a few contested areas. It is good for voters who are usually denied the chance to vote for a party or a councillor of their choice. It allows the opposition party to maintain rather than alienate their core of die-hard loyal supporters in the rural enclaves. Fielding candidates also provides a proper nationwide barometer to measure party support.

"Putting candidates in all the rural district councils in difficult provinces like Mashonaland Central raises nationwide voter confidence and increases odds of winning by even bigger margins elsewhere. Yet failure to put candidates in those rural wards has a ripple effect of creating a national sense of defeatism before the ballot is even cast.

"I am not a fan of a 'paper candidate' i.e. a person who is put on the ballot with little chance of winning to just increase the number of standing candidates in an area where the party has an insignificant support base. However, the only thing worse than putting a 'paper candidate' in difficult rural wards is not putting a candidate at all."

RUVIMBO MUCHENJE

THE operations of the Zimbabwe Republic Police have been flagged as a great impediment to the full enjoyment of the rights of assembly and association during the election period, new research has revealed.

The findings of a study by Francisca Midzi — a scholar, lawyer and holder of a political science degree — are contained in a journal titled *Democracy, Governance and Human Rights in Zimbabwe* published last week.

She asserts that the conduct of the police has made it dangerous for people to support opposition political parties.

“Through use of repressive laws and adding their own unlawful actions such as arbitrary use of force and dragnet arrests, police have made it difficult and dangerous for people to freely assemble and associate, especially during electoral periods,” he said.

In January 2023, 26 people, including two members of Parliament Amos Chibaya and Costa Machingauta, were arrested in Harare's Budiriro suburb during a dragnet operation. Even passers-by who were coming from nearby shops were arrested.

Midzi adds that police officers use excessive force when dispersing crowds, leading to injury.

“Police impunity is a major challenge on the exercise of the freedom of association and assembly. The police have injured people during dispersal of gatherings, but there is no evidence of internal disciplinary action or prosecution to hold them to account,” said Midzi.

Journalists and political party members have fallen victim to the heavy-handed conduct of the police. In January 2022, five members of the newly formed Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC) were brutally assaulted, arrested and charged with criminal nuisance and disorderly conduct in Harare's central business district for walking around clad in yellow.

Apart from this, there seems to be concerted efforts by the police to ensure that opposition parties, especially the CCC, do not conduct rallies.

Over 60 of the party's programmes were declined by the police since its formation in January 2022. Midzi says it is rare to hear of the prohibition of Zanu PF rallies.

“It is very rare to hear reports of the police prohibiting Zanu PF rallies. During the campaign period for the by-elections held in March 2022, the police prohibited or disrupted some of the CCC rallies. The CCC party also raised concern that their rallies were banned on unjustified reasons such as the police not having the capacity to manage the event or that the venue they intend to use has been booked,” he said.

Although police spokesperson Paul Nyathi told media practitioners at a meeting convened by the Election Resource Centre in February that they stopped Zanu PF from hosting a rally because the CCC had booked the same venue earlier this year.

In another event of selection application of the law, CCC official Job Sikhala was arrested for allegedly obstruction of justice for making utterances during a funeral in Nyatsime, while Abton Mashayanyika who called for the murder of Nelson Chamisa and his children at a Zanu PF rally in Mberengwa North is walking scot free

Midzi's paper suggests reforms are needed in order to ensure that the rights to freedom of assembly and association are enjoyed by all so as to ensure that the 2023 general election is held in a free and fair environment, which includes reforming the police service.

“The police should provide simplified information in all official languages explaining the notification procedures, police and convener's responsibilities and recourse mechanisms available to the public where they are not happy with police conduct,” she notes.

“Government must provide training to members of the police service at all levels and ranks to sensitise them on their constitutional mandate, in particular human rights-oriented enforcement of laws regulating the exercise of the freedom of assembly and association,”

“The police must ensure that it exercises political neutrality in the discharge of their functions during electoral process. The police command structure should regularly declare their political neutrality publicly.”

“Government must expedite the establishment and operationalisation of the ‘Independent Complaints Mechanism’, as required by Section 210 of the Constitution,” recommended Midzi.

ZRP impedes free, fair poll environment — Research



Police have ensured opposition parties, especially the CCC, do not conduct rallies.



RUVIMBO MUCHENJE

THE family of the slain Citizens' Coalition for Change activist, Moreblessing Ali, has told *The NewsHawks* that they are still waiting for the release of their incarcerated lawyer, Job Sikhala, to help them locate her dismembered body whose whereabouts are unknown since a controversial burial attempt in December 2022.

Washington Ali, brother to the deceased, said they do not know where the body was taken to when some family members attempted to bury Moreblessing at Mabvuku Cemetery in Harare without the consent of her children and the immediate family.

"We have no idea where the body is. We are waiting for Job to come out and continue to lead the family towards revealing the whole truth. Remember when they took or stole the body from Chitungwiza to where they said it was in Parirenyatwa, my family, our lawyer Job Sikhala and my nephew Silence were denied a chance to see the body; so that's where we will start from," said Ali.

Sikhala was arrested at his home in St Mary's on 14 June 2022 after addressing a prayer meeting for Moreblessing Ali in Nyatsime for allegedly inciting violence when he called for justice in her gruesome murder.

A month later, he was charged with obstruction of justice for calling out Pius Jamba, who was later arrested by the police as the main suspect, as the man behind Moreblessing's killing.

Sikhala was slapped with an additional charge of disorderly conduct earlier this month on an event that purportedly occurred in May 2022.

Sikhala also has two other charges that are before the courts, one on incitement of violence ahead of the July 2020 protests and communicating falsehoods.

Prospects of Sikhala coming out anytime soon are slim, but the family insists on waiting for a proper burial.

"Nothing yet; our position is very clear: until Job is out, we are not going to move an inch," said Ali.

Moreblessing was abducted from Chibhanguza shops on 25 May 2022 by the main suspect, Jamba.

She was missing for a fortnight before being discovered in a disused well at a plot belonging to Jamba's mother in Beatrice.

Her son is in hiding after he claimed suspicious men were trailing him.

We won't bury Moreblessing until Sikhala is free: Ali family



Zengeza West MP Job Sikhala

UK re-engagement drive in disarray

BRENNA MATENDERE

PRESIDENT Emmerson Mnangagwa's re-engagement of the United Kingdom ahead of the next elections has been thrown into disarray after British parliamentarians asked the secretary of state to revoke an invitation to the Zimbabwean leader to the coronation of King Charles III in May.

On Monday, Mnangagwa took to his *Twitter* handle to say he was "most excited" to have been invited to the 6 May coronation where he is expected to salvage his re-engagement drive with the UK which slapped Zimbabwe with sanctions over gross human rights abuses.

On Sunday, his re-engagement drive also appeared on course after he was visited by the British ambassador to Zimbabwe, Melanie Robinson.

Writing on *Twitter*, Mnangagwa said he had discussed trade, investment, and the special relationship between Zimbabwe and the UK. However, it has since emerged that British parliamentarians want Mnangagwa barred from attending the coronation.

Political analyst Vivid Gwede told *The NewsHawks* that the message behind the letter by the British MPs to bar Mnangagwa from the coronation is that the UK is saying reforms must come first before any re-engagement efforts can meaningfully start.

"The calls by the British MPs are consistent with what they have been advocating for. Which is re-engagement based on reforms by the Zimbabwean government.

"Some of the reforms asked for are consistent with what our own constitution requires such as respect for human rights, rule of law and credible, free and fair elections," he said.

In a letter signed by Nav Mishra, chairperson of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Zimbabwe (APPG Zimbabwe), and his deputy, Lord Jonathan Oates, and several other House of Commons lawmakers, secretary James Cleverly was asked to withdraw the invitation "in light of the grave political and human rights situation in Zimbabwe."

APPG Zimbabwe said that there is widespread violence and human rights abuses, with opposition members being "harassed, beaten, imprisoned and murdered, corruption is rife, extending to the highest levels of government."

The APPG said that the ruling party has overrun the country's economy, completely decimated the local currency, dismembered the judiciary, taken over the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and impoverished Zimbabweans.

APPG said the coronation invitation will "inevitably be used by President Mnangagwa as tacit acceptance by the UK of publicly evidenced political violence and repression in the run up to the forthcoming election and will be deeply demoralising to ordinary Zimbabweans in their struggle for democracy.

"We therefore urge the government to withdraw President Mnangagwa's invitation until Job Sikhala MP and other political prisoners are granted their constitutional right to bail and concrete actions are taken to address human rights abuses and guarantee free and fair elections."

Zengeza West Citizens' Coalition for Change lawmaker Sikhala, who is facing charges of inciting violence, has spent nearly one year at Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison.

Britain, the United States and other nations imposed targeted sanctions on some Zanu PF officials over human rights abuses and election rigging.



King Charles III

NATHAN GUMA

ZIMBABWEAN workers are reeling under deteriorating conditions underlined by serious violations of fundamental rights by parastatals, security forces and Chinese companies amid a clear pattern of intimidation, arrests and detentions, the United States embassy says in its 2022 *Human Rights Report*.

The report says workers' rights in Zimbabwe have been on a free-fall, with the government clamping down on public sector unions.

While public sector workers are barred from joining trade unions, their associations have been facing attacks by security forces, despite them usually meeting correct procedure.

According to the report, strikes were commonly met with police brutality, force, and dismissals.

"The government enacted punishment and retaliatory action against teachers who participated in continued strikes regarding the right to a living wage.

"In May, the ministry of Primary and Secondary Education deducted money from the salaries of teachers who participated in a January strike, leaving some with net salaries that were the equivalent of less than one US cent. The ministry of Education suspended more than 1 220 teachers, seized the salaries of 530 teachers, and arrested others," says the report.

For instance, in January last year, police arrested 18 teachers and Amalgamated Rural Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (Artuz) president Obert Masaraure for demonstrating for teacher wages to be fully paid in US dollars.

In June and July, after Artuz received the 2022 Frontline Human Rights Award, the authorities arrested Masaraure and Artuz secretary-general Robson Chere on murder charges for a man who died in 2016. A previous investigation reportedly found no foul play, therefore the latest move is viewed as an attempt to silence the union leaders.

In June last year, the Zimbabwe Professional Nurses' Union and the Zimbabwe Nurses' Association (Zina) were brutally quashed by police while demonstrating over a devaluation of their earnings in Zimbabwean dollars, and poor working conditions.

"The government deployed the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to monitor and contain the protests. Media alleged on June 23, ZRP officers wielding batons stormed Bindura General Hospital and indiscriminately attacked healthcare workers participating in the strike.

"Police and army members are the only legally recognized essential services employees and may not strike, but the law allows the ministry of Public Service and Labour to declare any non-essential service an essential service if a strike is deemed a danger to the population, such as one by healthcare workers," read the report.

The report also shows government patronage in trade union activities, which is likely to affect working conditions of affiliate organisations.

"Police and state intelligence services regularly attended and monitored trade union meetings and other activities. Police or Zanu PF supporters sometimes prevented unions from holding meetings with their members and carrying out organisational activities.

"Although the law does not require unions to notify police of public gatherings, police demanded such notification. Parastatal unions were generally perceived as pro-government. The Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions was regarded the largest pro-government trade union and a rival to the ZCTU, which had a history of alignment with opposition parties," read the report.

Chinese companies have also been under fire for breaching worker rights.

In January, multiple sources alleged Chinese-linked granite mining companies engaged in human rights abuses, poor working conditions, and violence against employees, among them Jinding Mining Company and Shanghai Haoyang Mining Investments.

For instance, according to the report, one villager reported witnessing a beating with a steel rod and the breaking of a 17-year-old's arm for arriving late to work at the mine.

"In May, a publication reported the deaths in 2020 of three miners at Kunyu Mine in Banze were the result of unsafe working conditions. Representatives from the Progressive Mining

Zim workers' rights brutally suppressed, says US embassy



Amalgamated Rural Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe president Obert Masaraure



Workers' strikes in Zimbabwe are commonly met with police brutality .

and Allied Industries Workers Union of Zimbabwe alleged the incident was never investigated due to close ties between PRC [People's Republic of China] enterprises and Zimbabwean au-

thorities.

"In February, PRC-owned Freestone Mines closed a quarry following a public backlash when investigative journalists documented la-

bour rights abuses and attempts to bypass environmental laws in companies owned by PRC parastatals and private PRC citizens," read the report.

International Investigative Stories



Kyrgyzstan's President Sadyr Japarov (front center left) walks with Khabibula Abdukadyr (front center right) at the inauguration of a new mosque near Bishkek.

THEIR trading monopoly, built on bribery and alleged smuggling, was exposed. But that hasn't stopped the secretive Khabibula Abdukadyr and his relatives. With new political alliances and projects worth billions around the world, they're more powerful than ever.

A 43-story skyscraper on Dubai's waterfront. A luxury hotel in the heart of ancient Samarkand. A seven-bedroom London mansion. Gas pipelines that supply an entire Kazakhstan city.

As a new investigation by OCCRP, RFE/RL, Kloop, and Vlast reveals, these assets and businesses across the world, worth billions of dollars, belong to a single family.

The Abdukadyrs, whose path to fortune is lined with bribery and political patronage, are exceptionally secretive. Members of this Uighur family use several variations of their first and last names and hold multiple citizenships. Most of their companies have no web sites, do not advertise themselves as a single holding, and are held by relatives or

The Abdukadyr family made a fortune in collusion with corrupt Central Asian officials. Now they've built a global business empire

associates.

The family has good reason to operate from the shadows. In 2019, OCCRP, RFE/RL, and Kloop exposed how they made their fortune: The eldest of four brothers, Khabibula Abdukadyr, ran a trading monopoly that made enormous profits channeling Chinese goods into Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and beyond — with the complicity of corrupt customs officials.

The exposé brought Kyrgyzstan's

citizens onto the streets, and the Abdukadyrs' top political patron in the country eventually pled guilty to corruption.

But the family remained untouched. Their companies in Germany, the United States, Turkey, and other countries, which had received vast sums of apparently laundered money, remained open. What the Abdukadyrs did with this money remained a mystery.

Now, reporters from OCCRP,

RFE/RL, Kloop, and Vlast have found that the family's companies have spent the last few years making colossal investments in new, legitimate businesses. Corporate and land records, government investment data, internal company documents, and other sources reveal that the Abdukadyrs have spent and committed at least \$2 billion into projects and luxury assets on several continents. This is a conservative estimate that does not include many assets whose

value is unknown.

Most of this money has gone into Central Asia, the Abdukadyrs' original base of operations, where the family is building entire new neighborhoods, brand-new customs terminals, and even a vast new center of Islamic study and worship. In Uzbekistan, they have become some of the country's largest "foreign investors." Local governing elites — and even national leaders — have lined up to welcome them, even though

their alleged smuggling and money laundering operations have been a matter of public knowledge for over three years.

Despite his many promises of reform, Uzbek President Shavkhat Mirziyoyev has embraced the family and their millions: Many of their projects have even received government support, including tax breaks, state land, and publicity. But that support doesn't come for free. Reporters found that Mirziyoyev's own relatives have become co-investors with the Abdukadyr family on some of their projects.

Khabibula Abdukadyr has even resurfaced recently in Kyrgyzstan, a country whose political system was shaken by earlier revelations of his schemes. In March, he appeared at two public events with President Sadyr Japarov, keeping close to Kyrgyzstan's leader at ceremonies inaugurating the construction of a new mosque and a major real estate development. Both, it turns out, are Abdukadyr projects.

Kristian Lasslett, a professor of criminology at Ulster University who has studied the Abdukadyr family, described their investments in Uzbekistan as corrosive to both economic and political freedoms.

"We've seen the Mirziyoyev government really effectively manicure itself on the international stage as this kind of reformist and modernizing government," he said.

"But these kinds of investments are ... adding blood into the veins of kleptocracy," he said. "It's not a kind of conventional free market economy. It's a sheltered workshop for protected political animals."

"Obviously, when people inject [this kind of] capital into that political economy, it only further strengthens it and deepens its roots. And of course, to protect the status quo, you can't have citizens asking questions."

David M. Luna, executive director of the International Coalition Against Illicit Economies and a former U.S. diplomat, said "we must continue to fight corruption."

"In autocracies, the corruptive influence of criminals enables complicit ruling elites to line their pockets and launder their dirty monies," he said. "And in democracies where kleptocracy takes hold, the abuse of power by corrupt officials often accelerates unjust power systems and insecurity that animate economies to spiral downwards into failed states."

Reporters sent over 50 requests for comment to the people, organizations, and government institutions named in this investigative series. Most did not respond, including President Mirziyoyev's administration. The Abdukadyr family acknowledged receiving questions from an email address known to be used by Khabibula Abdukadyr, but said they could provide information only at a later date.

A spokesman for Kyrgyz President Japarov said that "Kyrgyzstan is open for all investors. We are ready to work with everyone who is truly ready to invest money into projects in the country's various sectors."

An Illicit Fortune Exposed

Khabibula Abdukadyr's alleged

smuggling empire was first exposed by Aierken Saimaiti, a man who said he was Abdukadyr's money launderer. The canny operator made contact with reporters in 2019 after becoming disaffected with his work.

Bearing piles of documents, Saimaiti told journalists that he had personally sent hundreds of millions of dollars abroad for the Abdukadyr family, moving it from their base of operations in Central Asia into bank accounts around the world.

Within weeks of his last meeting with reporters, Saimaiti was dead, gunned down in Istanbul by hitmen whose paymasters remain unidentified to this day. But he had already provided enough information to enable reporters to reconstruct the Abdukadyr family's schemes.

The Abdukadyrs' competitive advantage lay in their alliance with Raimbek Matraimov, then the powerful deputy head of Kyrgyzstan's customs service, whose agents ensured their cargo trucks sailed through checkpoints while their competitors faced obstacles and delays. As a result, the Abdukadyrs were able to monopolize key trade routes that brought Chinese consumer goods into Central Asia, raking in colossal profits.

A large fraction of these profits were earned in cash at Abu Sahiy, a massive market on the outskirts of the Uzbek capital of Tashkent that was the destination of much of the Abdukadyrs' smuggled cargo after it was trucked through Kyrgyzstan.

The next step was getting this cash safely out of Uzbekistan and into foreign bank accounts. Saimaiti recounted how it was packed into truck tires and smuggled across the border into Kyrgyzstan in pre-arranged convoys. From there, he said, armed men brought him the money and he deposited it in his own local bank accounts. To make these vast influxes of cash appear legitimate, he often forged documents stating that he had earned the money at a remote Kyrgyz bazaar he owned.

Then it was time to send the money abroad. In some cases, he employed working-class men, such as taxi drivers, to physically fly the cash to Istanbul.

But most of the money was sent abroad in wire transfers, justified using various fraudulent techniques.

For example, reporters obtained a fake agreement that stipulated a \$50 million loan from his Kyrgyz bazaar to an Abdukadyr company incorporated in Nevada.

The cover was not a plausible one: According to a woman who co-owned the bazaar with Saimaiti, the business was barely surviving and had a turnover of under \$3 million per year. But the paperwork must have appeared legitimate enough for the transactions to go through.

In total, Saimaiti said he wired at least \$700 million over the years, enabling the Abdukadyr family to funnel the proceeds of their alleged smuggling operation out of Kyrgyzstan.

The Big Round Trip

After Saimaiti was murdered, the documents he provided helped reporters uncover properties the Abdukadyr family purchased across the world using the money he sent, including a villa in Dubai and a home

in the United States.

But this real estate can account for only a fraction of the money Saimaiti said he laundered for the family. What happened to the rest? It took over a year of additional reporting to discover the answer.

A significant portion of the money has ended up in the United Arab Emirates. The Abdukadyrs' local holding company, which received at least \$95 million of the funds he said he laundered, has become a developer there, building two residential skyscrapers in Dubai. The company is also planning a 24-story hotel.

But much of the money, transferred with so much risk and effort over so many years, appears to have ended up back where it started. Reporters found that the same Abdukadyr companies that received millions of dollars from Saimaiti — whose names have been in the public record since 2019 — are now investors in multi-million-dollar developments and thriving businesses in Central Asia.

In many cases, these companies' financial statements are not available, making it impossible to be certain that they made their investments using the same money they received from Saimaiti. But the Abdukadyr companies in Germany and the United Kingdom that do publish statements show little other commercial activity and don't indicate any other sources of financing.

In addition, thanks to a lucky break, reporters managed to obtain banking records for one German Abdukadyr company. They offer a rare insight into the transactions themselves, illustrating in granular detail how the family's money, having been moved out of Central Asia by Saimaiti, was sent right back.

Saimaiti's records showed that he had sent at least \$17 million to the company, AKA Immobilien (since renamed AKA Group). But what happened to that money next was a mystery — until Matraimov, the former Kyrgyz customs official and Abdukadyr ally, filed a lawsuit against OCCRP's two Kyrgyz partners, RFE/RL's Radio Azattyk and Kloop.

As part of an (ultimately successful) legal defense, RFE/RL obtained a subpoena in U.S. court to access banking records that prove Saimaiti's transactions really took place. Among them were records of both incoming and outgoing transactions in AKA Immobilien's German bank account.

In addition to confirming that Saimaiti really had been sending millions of dollars into the account, the records show what happened afterwards: Time after time, the money flowed out as quickly as it came in, sent to a newly-incorporated Abdukadyr company based in Kazakhstan called AIBI-I. For example:

- On May 27, 2014, Saimaiti sent two wire transfers to AKA Immobilien for \$500,001 and \$500,000. Three days later, AKA Immobilien wired \$1 million to AIBI-I.
- On September 9, 2014, Saimaiti wired \$500,000 to AKA Immobilien. That very same day, AKA Immobilien wired \$500,000 to AIBI-I. AIBI-I and several other "AIBI"

companies owned by the Abdukadyrs are vehicles for the family's projects in Kazakhstan, including a network of pipelines that supplies gas to the city of Qonaev, at least two factories, multiple blocks of residential buildings, and even a center of Islamic study and worship.

(Deutsche Bank, which handled these transactions as a correspondent bank and is where AKA Immobilien held its account, said in response to reporters' questions that they were legally prevented from commenting on specific clients.)

The bulk of the Abdukadyr family's Central Asian investments are in Uzbekistan, encompassing real estate developments, factories, hotels, mosques, and customs terminals.

For example, another of the family's German companies, AKA Petroleum, which also received tens of millions of dollars from Saimaiti, was used to scoop up the Abu Sahiy market in Tashkent — the very place the family earned much of their money in the first place. For years, the market belonged to the son-in-law of Uzbekistan's former president Islam Karimov. It was acquired by the Abdukadyrs in 2017 after Karimov died and his relatives fell out of favor. Today, the vastly expanded bazaar is a central node in the family's region-wide trading network.

'Foreign Investors'

The Abdukadyrs' money has now been legitimized to such an extent that many of the family's Central Asian projects are touted as high-profile foreign investments.

One of their Uzbek factories, which produces construction materials like roof sheets, sandwich panels, and glass products, is promoted in a video by the Tashkent city administration as a "foreign enterprise" that has "the latest equipment and technologies" and has "already created 325 jobs."

At least \$1.5 billion of Abdukadyr investments in the country (both current and planned) are classified by the government as "foreign direct investment." The fact that this is technically true — the money really did come from Abdukadyr companies based in Turkey, Germany, and elsewhere — is all the more remarkable considering what's known about its origins.

"These guys operate in broad daylight, you know. It's just incredible," says Lasslett, the criminology professor. "It's part of a larger scale of gray money coming from abroad."

"Obviously [Uzbekistan] is seen as a fairly safe and secure place to do investment for gray money. Certainly my research indicates that, providing you give kickbacks to the right people and give them a taste, no questions will be asked," he said. "And you don't have to worry about due diligence checks."

Indeed, the Abdukadyr family's high-profile shopping, commercial, and residential development in the heart of Tashkent has been promoted by President Mirziyoyev's office.

That project is among many Abdukadyr developments that have received state land. Many of their factories are located in special economic zones that confer tax breaks and other benefits.

There have been other benefits as well: The market dominance of

a customs terminal and logistics center acquired by the family by the Tashkent International Airport appears to have been engineered by government officials.

The family is even behind a project hailed as a personal gift from Uzbekistan's President Mirziyoyev to the neighboring country of Kazakhstan that's taking shape in the city of Turkestan — proclaimed the "spiritual capital of the Turkic world."

The grand new construction project, a sprawling new center of Islamic study on the city's outskirts, broke ground on the eve of Kazakhstan's independence day in 2019, with then-Prime Minister Askar Mamin himself taking part in the laying of the first stone.

However, though President Mirziyoyev is personally listed as the project's initiator on an information board posted on-site, the property is actually being developed by the Abdukadyrs. A company co-owned by the family is its developer, and another Abdukadyr company is carrying out the construction.

It is in Kyrgyzstan, however, where Khabibula Abdukadyr's public appearance with the country's leader is richest in irony.

To a certain extent, the Kyrgyz president, Sadyr Japarov, owes his position to earlier revelations of Abdukadyr's wrongdoing.

When the Abdukadyr family's alleged smuggling empire was first exposed, the key role played by Raimbek Matraimov, their ally within Kyrgyzstan's customs service, led to widespread outrage and impassioned street protests. About a year later, a political party backed by Matraimov won a close second place in a parliamentary election widely considered fraudulent. The result was a sudden popular uprising that led to nullification of the election results. After a murky series of backroom political maneuvers, Japarov — a former member of parliament who had been in prison for kidnapping — was thrust into the presidency.

Japarov came to power promising to tackle Kyrgyzstan's endemic corruption. Under his watch, Raimbek Matraimov pled guilty to his role in Abdukadyr's schemes and gave up several properties to the state as punishment.

Now, however, it seems that the orchestrator of the alleged smuggling empire Matraimov had enabled — Khabibula Abdukadyr himself — has become a valued foreign investor.

Last month, he appeared at two public events with President Japarov, keeping close to Kyrgyzstan's leader at ceremonies marking the construction of a new mosque near the capital of Bishkek and a major real estate development in the center of the city. Both are Abdukadyr projects.

"I'm not interested in what kind of relationship they have with previous presidents," Japarov has said. "The main thing is that they're not on a wanted list and there are no criminal cases against them. ... I'm interested in those who are ready to invest money in Kyrgyzstan. I greet them with applause."

— Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project.



Dictators serenade each other

PRESIDENT Emmerson Mnangagwa’s cosy relations with tainted dictators, dodgy companies and questionable wheeler-dealers has come under the spotlight.

This week, he is serenading Africa’s last absolute monarch, King Mswati III of Eswatini.

Mswati — whose government is yet to come clean over the cold-blooded murder of human rights lawyer and activist Thulani Maseko — rides roughshod over civil liberties in his country, ruling with impunity. Maseko cannot die in vain.

His “crime” was that he was a courageous human rights defender, lawyer and state critic who refused to turn a blind eye to the government’s oppression of the people of Eswatini. On 21 January, he was shot and killed by unknown gunmen at his home in Luyengo, Mbabane.

As Amnesty International and other global human rights groups have rightly demanded, the Eswatini authorities must promptly, thoroughly, impartially, independently, transparently and effectively investigate the killing and bring to justice anyone suspected to be responsible. The victim and his family must be provided with access to justice and effective remedies.

There has been no justice for Maseko and his distraught family. The world has a moral responsibility to ensure that the perpetrators of this heinous crime are brought to justice.

King Mswati this week jetted into Zimbabwe on a state visit, after which he would attend the Transform Africa Summit (TAS) held in Victoria Falls and also accompany Mnangagwa to officially open the 64th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) in Bulawayo.

Bizarrely, Zimbabwe’s Foreign Affairs secretary James Manzou said the visit is set to strengthen bilateral cooperation, tourism, agriculture and investment.

As we report in these pages today, while the Foreign Affairs ministry says Zimbabwe is “happy” to welcome Mswati, his negative regional human rights footprint has sparked an outcry, especially as Zimbabwe heads towards general elections which have been underlined by violence against opposition.

Mswati has been brutally intolerant of dissenting voices in Eswatini.

While the motive behind the unlawful killing of Maseko remains unclear, there is every reason to believe that he was attacked in relation to his work as a human rights lawyer and defender as he regularly stood up against the state’s abuse of power.

Prior to his death, he chaired the MultiStakeholders Forum, a group of political parties and civil society groups calling for democratic reform in the country. He has previously been targeted by the state for demanding justice and criticising the country’s judiciary.

Maseko had also taken a case to court against King Mswati over his decision to rename the country Eswatini by decree.

Notably, Maseko was killed a day after King Mswati III reportedly said in a public address that those who are calling for democratic reform in the country would be “dealt with”.

Surely, it cannot be mere confidence that, Hours before Maseko was murdered, King Mswati criticised activists pushing for reform, saying, “People should not shed tears and complain about mercenaries killing them.”

Mnangagwa has no business serenading such a leader.

It will be remembered that Mnangagwa in January this year hosted yet another controversial character, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a man described as Europe’s last tinpot dictator.

Mnangagwa himself has a soiled human rights record. But he is tarnishing Zimbabwe’s already tattered image and must stop entertaining vile characters.



Birds of a feather flock . . .



NewsHawks

Reaffirming the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and media freedom as the cornerstone of democracy and as a means of upholding human rights and liberties in the constitution; our mission is to hold power in its various forms and manifestations to account by exposing abuse of power and office, betrayals of public trust and corruption to ensure good governance and accountability in the public interest.

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INFLATION and exchange rate have remained largely out of control, with the authorities resorting to innovative ways of measuring and reporting inflation — just to make the numbers look better.

This protracted spiralling inflation in Zimbabwe has multi-faceted effects and lasting repercussions. Economists tend to just focus on the monetary and fiscal effects of inflation, but there are other lasting effects such as mental health problems we are witnessing in Zimbabwe.

An inflation rate of 5% is largely accepted as being healthy for economic growth, referred to as the optimal inflation rate. But if this rate starts increasing irregularly and tends to reach higher levels, then it poses threats to the economy. In this context, economists tend to focus on the macro-economic aspects by delving into how monetary and fiscal policy and economic shocks affect inflation and vice versa. But there has been very little debate on the multifaceted impacts of a protracted period of inflation, which leads to a serious issue of the public health crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to comprehend both the conventional and non-conventional implications of inflation.

Zimbabwe in this regard has been going through serious economic crises being among the top countries with highest inflation in the world in the past five years. This high inflation has decreased purchasing power which has resulted in a stark decline in the standard of living. Some businesses have closed, which has increased the unemployment rate and intensified the crisis. This inflationary pressure has also hampered the capability of youth to learn and acquire skills because in such circumstances the youth is more concerned to earn a living and supporting their family than acquiring skills. Thus, in the past five years, the lower-middle-class and lower-class have lost 70% of their purchasing power.

To measure the economic pressure that an ordinary individual is confronted with, the Economic Discomfort Index — a combination of unemployment and inflation rate, is used. In this context, Zimbabwe's Economic Discomfort Index has been worsening over the past decade. The massive increase in the measure of this index is an indication that the standard of living in Zimbabwe is in rapid collapse.

Traditionally, the cost of inflation is viewed in monetary terms, and other multifaceted effects of prolonged inflation are ignored. The unprecedented and protracted phase of inflation leads to a decline in the

Exchange rate, inflation and mental health nexus in Zim



Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe

standard of living, resulting in a worse public health crisis. The inflation rate in the health sector has been on the rise and stood at 50% in March 2023. This inflation in combination with an increase in the prices of necessities plays a catalytic role in the increasing stress. Different studies have concluded that people's mental health has suffered due to the psychological repercussions of economic crisis which has been compounded by the concerns of unemployment and inflation.

It is clear to state that the inflation rate in Zimbabwe is alarming. As a result, people are now showing the long-term signs of extreme conditions of irritability and intolerance. Due to the co-existence of inflation and health problems, healthcare spending increases devastatingly, which intensifies the prolonged stress. On the other hand, the mental illness of parents can have a significant impact on the cognitive development and educational success of their children. Social issues like drug abuse, crime, violent behaviour and intolerance are a direct re-

sult of this untamed inflation. Thus, inflation here in Zimbabwe is not only a monetary phenomenon; it is having serious psychological impacts on people in the long run.

On the other hand, the prolonged period of high inflation leads to deeper poverty and this, coupled with unemployment, results in increasing the crime rate. Unbridled inflation is one of the main causes of poverty and directly affects people's capacity to maintain their financial security. Robberies may double in frequency, and other crimes like homicide and auto theft also rise during tough economic times. This alarming situation of poverty owing to the high rise in food prices forces people to act harshly and Zimbabwe at present is on the brink of this abyss. People's frustration will increase in the coming days as they struggle to pay their bills, find it difficult to buy bread and butter,

lose their jobs, and are unable to pay their children's school fees, which will force them to turn to corruption and crime. It is a fact and today I have noticed that many of the pirate vehicles (mushika-shika) plying long routes, are being driven by police per-

rate. In the long run, the government must resort to long-term economic policies that promote sustainable economic growth.

Instead of taking cosmetic measures for controlling price hikes, it should take measures that will streamline the supply chains — necessary to avoid shortages. In addition, the most vulnerable segments of society are more prone to these negative impacts, so the government should focus on ensuring social safety nets.

Because the psychological impacts of inflation are least studied, a multi-disciplinary study that links inflation with mental health is critical. This is vital in the Zimbabwean context, given the rapid rise in mental health problems and Zimbabwe's long checkered history when dealing with inflation. As such, I challenge the authorities and academics currently to look at the nexus between inflation and mental health in Zimbabwe.



sonnel in uniform. Therefore, it is necessary to comprehend inflation through the lens of the inflation-crime nexus and plan accordingly in order to have effective strategies for coping with the non-conventional repercussions of this protracted inflation.

The surprisingly high inflation we are experiencing is having a very deep and deleterious impact on the large strata of society. Therefore, the government should strive to control the rapid rise in prices and exchange

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MARKETS

CURRENCIES	LAST	CHANGE	%CHANGE
USD/JPY	109.29	+0.38	+0.35
GBP/USD	1.38	-0.014	-0.997
USD/CAD	1.229	+0.001	+0.07
USD/CHF	0.913	+0.005	+0.53
AUD/USD	0.771	-0.006	-0.76

COMMODITIES	LAST	CHANGE	%CHANGE
*OIL	63.47	-1.54	-2.37
*GOLD	1,769.5	+1.2	+0.068
*SILVER	25.94	-0.145	-0.56
*PLATINUM	1,201.6	+4	+0.33
*COPPER	4.458	-0.029	-0.65

Gold-backed digital currency plan stirs debate

BERNARD MPOFU

ZIMBABWE’S plan to introduce a gold-backed digital currency has stirred debate as to whether or not the southern African nation is warming up to growing calls to move away from relying on the US dollar for trade, *The NewsHawks* has established.

As many economies battled to come to terms with the effects of the Second World War, the United States dollar was established as the world’s foremost reserve currency by the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944.

Early this year the Reserve Bank Monetary Policy Committee, a team of independent economic thinkers, hinted that the apex bank would in 2023 introduce digital gold tokens to ease the growing demand on the greenback.

Now the central bank is on the cusp of doing so and the lender of last resort is optimistic that this move would in future help the authorities in their de-dollarisation project. But not many seem to agree. Already 80% of the economy has been de-dollarised and experts say an untimely plan to re-introduce the local unit may result in unintended consequences.

Prosper Chitambara, a senior researcher at the Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe, a research think-tank of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), said Zimbabwe, a net importer, has joined the list of countries opting to ditch the dollar as a currency of trade.

“On paper, definitely they are contagious, these digital gold tokens. There are more options in terms of the store of value so they will off course operate or issued alongside the gold coins and even the United States dollar,” Chitambira says.

“I think they help through mopping up of excess Zimbabwe dollars to stabilise the situation like we saw with the gold coins. So effectively the purpose is similar. So they are providing an alternative not just investment but also an alternative currency and store of value.

“We have seen similar trends across the world, so it is not just the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe that is going this route. I think most central banks have been exploring digital currency in one form or the other and we have also seen that a lot of countries are moving from the US dollar. It is really part of the process of reducing reliance on the US dollar and trying ensure that there is greater stability.”

John Legat, Imara Asset Management chief executive, says the shroud of secrecy surrounding the salient features of the new currency is not good for the markets.

“It is for this reason that we were apprehen-

sive when the RBZ Monetary Policy Committee announced the launch of gold-backed digital products i.e. digital tokenisation of gold coins ostensibly to complement the current issuance of physical gold coins,” Legat wrote in a quarterly economic update for the period ending March 2022.

“Despite various concerns — also shared by the IMF — on the use of gold coins as a monetary policy tool; in the original format you could at least take physical possession of the serialised gold coin after purchase. The mechanics of the digitally backed products have not been availed, but we are wary of the initiative coming at a time when the actual coins have not been easily available.”

Leon Africa chief executive Tinashe Murapata warned that the new digital token could backfire.

“The RBZ is again off the tracks with another crazy idea. If RBZ believes in backing currency with gold, why not back their own issued currency, ZWL, with gold? The PMR [parallel market rate] rate is now 1 800, double the January rate in four months,” Murapata says.

“Inflation is spiralling out of control. Yet RBZ has ‘gold reserves’ to back digital currency. They should back ZWL with gold and the rate (including inflation) will stabilise. Surely, it’s simple enough.”

As the geopolitical tensions intensify following Russia’s war on Ukraine and the re-emergence of the multipolar political system, more and more countries — from Brazil to southeast Asian nations — are calling for trade to be carried out in other currencies besides the US dollar.

The US dollar has been king in global trade for decades — not just because the US is the world’s largest economy, but also because oil, a key commodity needed by all economies big and small, is priced in the greenback. Most commodities are also priced and traded in US dollars.

Experts say since the Federal Reserve embarked on a journey of aggressive rate hikes to stem domestic inflation, many central banks around the world have raised interest rates to stop capital outflows and a sharp depreciation of their own currencies. At 150%, Zimbabwe has one of the highest interest rates which many warn could have a boomerang effect on the economy.

According to data from International Monetary Fund’s Currency Composition of Foreign Exchange Reserves (COFER), the US dollar accounted for 58.36% of global foreign exchange reserves in the fourth quarter last year. Comparatively, the euro is a distant second, accounting for about 20.5% of global forex reserves while the Chinese yuan accounted for just 2.7% in the same period.



Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe

BERNARD MPOFU

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) sees Zimbabwe's economy growing by a modest 2.5% against a new government estimate of 6% as the multilateral lender warns of funding constraints in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

The southern African nation is facing high levels of inflation, a weakening domestic currency, high unemployment, huge debt overhang and most recently an energy crisis, which experts say will weigh down on economic growth.

According to a new IMF report titled Regional Outlook, Sub-Saharan: The Big Funding Squeeze, growth in the region will decline to 3.6% in 2023 amid a global slowdown.

A shortage of funding may force countries to reduce resources for critical development sectors like health, education, and infrastructure, weakening the region's growth potential.

"Many countries will register a small pickup in growth this year, especially non-resource-intensive economies, but the regional average will be weighed down by sluggish growth in some key economies, such as South Africa," the IMF says.

"Unlike many major advanced economies, countries in sub-Saharan Africa had limited fiscal space entering the pandemic recession, hampering policymakers' ability to mount an effective response.

"The lack of fiscal space has also made it challenging for countries to address the vast social needs, especially those in the most vulnerable segments of the population. Insufficient funding meant that the authorities struggled to scale up targeted support when the region faced record-high food, fuel, and fertilizer prices in 2022."

Debt-ridden Zimbabwe has since the turn of the millennium failed to access concessional funding from traditional multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank, African

Development Bank and the IMF after it went into arrears. The country now depends on domestic resources such as taxes, debt instruments and costly loans from regional financiers to fund its capital projects.

"In fact, the cost-of-living crisis remains a major concern for sub-Saharan Africa given the high incidence of poverty—35% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa was estimated to live under \$2.15 a day as of 2019 (latest available data from the World Bank Low-Income Dataset)," the report reads.

Sub-Saharan Africa, the IMF further projects,

IMF dismisses govt figure, projects 2.5% GDP growth



is poised to grow at 4.2% in 2024 from 3.6% in 2023. Almost four-fifths of the countries are projected to register a growth pickup in 2024, driven by higher private consumption and investment.

Despite the IMF painting a not-so-rosy picture of the region, the authorities in Harare remain upbeat that Zimbabwe — which the multilateral lender ranked among countries in fragile and conflict affected situations — will this year register strong growth. Zimbabwe and Mozambique are the only Southern African Development Community states in this group, according

to the IMF report.

Two weeks ago, the authorities said the gross domestic product (GDP) is now expected to increase from the current projection of 4% to 6% on account of the positive performance of the agricultural sector.

But the IMF says the region should brace for turbulence.

"Policymakers in sub-Saharan Africa are looking at yet at another difficult year, facing tighter financing conditions on top of the ongoing repercussions from a recent cascading series of

shocks," the IMF says.

"Despite serious financing constraints, there are still a few policy levers available to alleviate the situation. For instance, domestic revenue mobilisation offers a potential source of financing. Moreover, improving domestic legal and regulatory frameworks and undertaking financial systems reforms would not only attract much-needed climate finance but also other types of private finance to the region that can help address basic needs and development goals in addition to those arising from climate change."

Caledonia records decline in production

PRISCA TSHUMA

GOLD producer Caledonia Mining Corporation has recorded a production decline from both Blanket Mine and the Bilboes oxides project in Zimbabwe for the first quarter ended 31 March 2023.

Blanket Mine produced 16 036 ounces of gold, which was 13% lower than the 18 515 ounces produced in the same period last year. Bilboes produced 105 ounces of gold for the period under review, having started the production of gold from oxides derived from pre-stripping works in the last few days of the quarter.

The company blamed the poor performance on several insignificant mechanical breakdowns and logistical issues.

Commenting on the production, company chief executive officer Mark Learmonth said the low production at Blanket Mine in the first quarter of each year was a norm, although equipment failure also contributed to the low gold production of the quarter under review.

"Gold production at Blanket is usually lower in the first quarter of each year and increases in the following quarters. This trend is in evidence this year, albeit production in the first quarter of 2023 was below our target due to a series of issues including equipment failures and logistical issues," he said.

In addition, the gold company said the commencement of oxide production at Bilboes was slowed due to the adverse effects of inconsistent grades, mechanical breakdowns and the poor



availability of spare parts and alternative equipment.

"The oxide project was adversely affected by the breakdown of contractor-provided drill-rigs which are used for evaluation drilling and the limited availability in Zimbabwe of spare parts or alternative equipment," said Learmonth.

According to the production guidance published in January this year, the on-mine cost/oz (ounce) of Bilboes oxide production was anticipated to be US\$1 200 - US\$1 320, hence relatively low margin activity was registered.

Learmonth said this was primarily justified by the benefit of pre-stripping in anticipation of the development of the Bilboes sulphide project.

"The small-scale low-margin oxide operation at Bilboes is effectively a pre-stripping exercise for the larger sulphide project in respect of which we have commenced work on an updated feasibility study," said the chief executive.

He said the company was reviewing the preliminary evidence of this activity, given some of the initial challenges and relative to the larger sulphide project, for which a feasibility study was being up-

dated. Accordingly, the company said it would report the actual production achieved each quarter at the oxides project as part of the pre-stripping activities and has withdrawn guidance on the low-margin oxide production.

Meanwhile, Learmonth said the equipment and logistical issues were resolved, and production to date in April has been higher than expected.

In light of the foregoing, the company management reiterates production guidance for Blanket for the year to 31 December 2023 of between 75 000 and 80 000 ounces of gold.

BERNRAD MPOFU

THE value of Zimbabwe's fuel imports rose to US\$1.2 billion in 2022 from US\$1.1 billion in the prior year as global markets experienced supply chain disruptions of the commodity from the outbreak of Russia's war on Ukraine, officials figures availed to *The NewsHawks* have shown.

Erratic power supplies, which have increased demand for fuel-run generators and a sharp spike in imported vehicles over the years, have resulted in the spike in the commodity.

Geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe heightened in February 2022 when Russia invaded neighbouring Ukraine, triggering a chain reaction of actions which caused tremors across the globe.

The effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine were felt across the world, as well as in Zimbabwe, as record-high oil prices, excessive spending during forthcoming elections and disruptions of wheat supplies stoke inflation, with ordinary Zimbabweans suffering the brutal ramifications.

Following the outbreak of the conflict, which is ongoing, Zimbabwe, whose fuel prices spiked from an average of US\$1.10 for a litre of blended petrol at the start of the year, dramatically jumped to around US\$1.70/litre.

Debt-ridden Zimbabwe was named by the World Bank as one of the sub-Saharan African countries affected by the Russo-Ukraine conflict.

Statistics availed by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat) show that fuel imports for the southern African nation have been on an upward trend since 2021 rising from US\$1 billion. The imports rose to US\$1 126 623 051 in last year. During the period under review led petrol worth US\$100 million was imported using free funds, according to ZimStat.

Apart from fuel supply disruptions, the conflict also led to the scarcity of food, particularly cereals and fertilisers.

Russia and Ukraine are major wheat producers due to their favourable climatic conditions for the production of the cereal and the conflict between these two countries is resulting in increased grain prices.

Prices of bread and Zimbabwe's staple mealie-meal also rose due to a war-induced spike in commodity prices on the global market. Official figures show that Zimbabwe is consuming 16 000 metric tonnes of bread flour monthly, and approximately 1.2 million loaves a day.

After the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, economic commentators predicted that Zimbabwe, which recovered from two years of economic contraction between 2019 and 2020, would backslide and miss its key growth targets

Fuel imports increase on back of electricity crisis



due to the geopolitical tensions despite getting a shot in the arm from the International Monetary Fund.

The southern African nation received the equivalent of nearly US\$1 billion worth of IMF Special Drawing Rights holdings to help

cushion the country against the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic which has claimed the lives of millions across the globe.



Prices of bread in Zimbabwe rose due to a war-induced spike in commodity prices on the global market.

WestProp optimistic over US\$30m capital raise initiative subscription

FAST-GROWING local property firm WestProp Holdings is optimistic investors in London and across global markets will subscribe to the company's US\$30 million capital-raising initiative which is expected to close today.

Group chief executive Ken Sharpe told investors attending a capital markets conference in London last week that the company has strong fundamentals to develop bankable projects which will recoup good returns for investors.

Sharpe said the company has several projects on the cards such as Millennium Heights, Pokugara Residential Estate, Millennium Office Park, the Mall of Zimbabwe, Pomona City, Warren Hills Golf Club and Eco-Park Village which require US\$30 million in funding through an initial public offering (IPO).

The company plans to list on the Victoria Falls Stock Exchange. An IPO occurs when a private company first sells shares of stock to the public. In essence, an IPO means that a company's ownership is transitioning from private ownership to public ownership.

The world over, stock exchanges have proved to be viable platforms for raising capital for businesses and WestProp sees the VFEX which has been granting several incentives as a better option.

The proposed listing of WestProp Group, a company established in 2007, will be the country's first IPO since GetBucks listed on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange in 2016.

Last month, the company announced plans to list on the VFEX by way of an IPO in what market analysts said would be a badge of honour for the local bourse which is currently dominated by companies which migrated from the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange.

According to the prospectus, the company is expected to announce the results of the IPO on 26 April before listing two days later with 10% of the preference share offer having been underwritten by Alpha Holdings, the majority shareholder in the company.

Sharpe said his company has plans to lay a billion bricks on the ground in an anticipated multi-billion investment in real estate, which he says is not just business for him, but also a lifestyle.

The two-day conference began last Thursday at the London Stock Exchange and moved to Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in the British capital the following day.

It was organised by Financial Markets Indaba partnered by Bard Santner Markets Inc.

"Significant strides in this regard have been achieved as the vision is bearing fruit as evidenced through the developments at Pomona City, Millennium Heights and Pokugara Residential Estate with future flag ship developments of the Mall of Zimbabwe and The Hills Lifestyle Estate adding on to this impetus of growing an asset value of US\$5 billion within the next 27 years," Sharpe said.

"Our Company's business model is premised around fulfilling the needs of customers through the role of master planner, financier and developer of appropriately designed, sustainably built residential and commercial properties within the Greater Harare Area.

"As an investor you have an opportunity to partner with WestProp on this journey towards a better tomorrow; to buy shares, secure your money and get a solid return on investment in USD. By participating in the IPO, you can get your share in our success and own part of our exciting world-class property portfolio."

The group's revenue, according to the company's financials presented at the Capital Markets Conference, grew from 2020 to 2022 by US\$19 696 223 which is 597%. This, according to Sharpe, was mainly due to the increase in number of projects coupled with aggressive marketing strategies which increased brand awareness in the market.

Net profit excluding extra ordinary income



WestProp Holdings Group chief executive Ken Sharpe

was US\$334 649 in 2020, US\$5 691 498 in 2021 and US\$9 340 523 in 2022, which reflects a 2.691% increase from 2020 to 2022.

"Extraordinary income was mostly due to re-

valuation of investment property in accordance with the International Accounting Standard (IAS) 40," Sharpe said.

WestProp has already established notable proj-

ects in and around Harare such as the Mbudzi People's Market, development of the Gunhill residential estate and Pokugara cluster houses, among others. — STAFF WRITER.



Seed Co’s outlines growth strategy

SEED Co Group has mapped out a robust and aggressive growth strategy anchored on the rapidly growing African population and the continent’s vast tracts of land which will be the backbone of strong agricultural output, the company has projected.

Morgan Nzwere, Seed Co chief executive, told delegates attending the recently held capital markets conference in the United Kingdom that climate change-related factors are contributing to the increasing demand for food across the globe.

The two-day conference began last Thursday at the London Stock Exchange and moved to Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in the British capital the following day.

It was organised by Financial Markets Indaba, partnered by Bard Santner Markets Inc.

“Africa has the largest arable land resource in the world and the majority of the population depend on agriculture. We expect huge demand for food and stockfeeds in Africa and globally,” Nzwere said.

According to latest United Nations estimates, Africa is home to 1 430 889 282 people. The continent’s population is equivalent to 16.72% of the total world population, which has surpassed eight billion inhabitants.

As the global population grows,

the majority of that growth is projected to come from five countries on the African continent.

Last year, Seed Co ran out of stock in Nigeria due to the huge demand that decimated all carry-over stocks.

Seed Co has some seeds that are in the Southern African Development Community catalogue and this enables it to sell the seeds anywhere in the region.

Experts say Africa’s future billionaires and millionaires will make their money from agriculture. According to the African Development Bank, Africa’s agricultural business will be worth US\$1 trillion by 2030.

A Botswana and Zimbabwe Stock Exchange dually-listed public company, Seed Co has since the 1940s evolved from being a Zimbabwe-centric company to an entity with a strong presence in the region.

Seed Co became the first company to commercialise the single cross hybrid technology in the world in 1952.

The company also became the first organisation to introduce hybrid culture in smallholder agriculture sector.

In the outlook, the seed company is banking on more US dollar sales in Zimbabwe to get better value for money and increase hard currency earnings. — **STAFF WRITER**



Seed Co chief executive Morgan Nzwere

Karo develops world-class mine on Zim's Great Dyke



BERNARD MPOFU

KARO Mining Holdings' US\$4.2 billion platinum project on Zimbabwe's mineral-rich Great Dyke belt is a world-class platinum group metals (PGM) asset which will have a profound impact on Mhondoro and surrounding areas, as well as the economy, the company's head of investor relations and communication, Ilja Graulich, says.

Addressing investors and corporate executives at a capital markets conference organised by Financial Markets Indaba with Bard Santner Markets Inc as a partner in London, United Kingdom, last week, Graulich said Karo was onto something big at the low-cost, open-pit mine.

"If you are looking for a world-class asset; this is one. We are located in Mashonaland West (province) of Zimbabwe, approximately 80 kilometres southwest of Harare and 35km southeast of Chegutu," Graulich said.

"The project area covers 23 903ha located on the Great Dyke. It is located south of the Zimplats Selous Metallurgical Plant and north of the Zimplats Ngezi operations."

Karo Mining Holdings plc, which owns the Zimbabwean platinum project, is owned 70% by South Africa's Tharisa plc, while 30% equity is privately held by Leto Settlement Trust.

Tharisa plc is listed on the London Stock Exchange (LSE) and on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the largest bourse in Africa. The LSE is the second-largest bourse in the world after the New York Stock Exchange, the biggest globally by market capitalisation.

The Karo platinum project is run by Karo Zimbabwe Holdings, which is owned 85% by

Karo Mining Holdings plc and 15% by Generation Minerals, a government special purpose vehicle.

Zimbabwe is the second-largest producer of PGMs after South Africa. Russia is third.

The project has an initial life of 17 years with less than 10% of the 23 903 hectares mining area having been utilised to cover this production lifespan.

Graulich said the project, whose first phase will cost US\$400 million and employ 1 000 people, has a short construction period. It is due to deliver its first ore to the mill by July 2024. Karo will eventually establish a large-scale vertically integrated PGMs mining complex in Mhondoro. It will design and construct fully integrated facilities to ensure the maximum extraction of value from mining through the value-chain to final base metal and precious metal refining.

The project is based on proven technologies and industry best practices, Graulich added.

The concession, measuring 23 903 hectares, was previously held by Zimplats under its special mining lease.

On 6 June 2018, Zimplats released the project concession area to the government, resulting in the company holding two separate and non-contiguous mining leases over the Selous Metallurgical Complex area and the Ngezi area. Due to the vast size of the mining concessions that Zimplats held, the concession was never developed.

Zimplats had declared an indicated and inferred resource over the Karo project area, with the last declaration made in June 2017. It stated that the project area contains 96.4 Moz of PGMs (4E basis).

Karo acquired the project area in March 2018 and entered into the Investment Framework Agreement with government.

A comprehensive exploration programme and detailed implementation study were undertaken. This resulted in a favourable outcome, with the study advocating the development of an open-pit mining operation with a proposed output of some 150 000 ounces of PGMs annually.

The initial exploration programme, comprising 238 diamond core boreholes totalling 32 483 metres, took place from November 2018 to April 2019.

This programme was followed by a second phase of drilling comprising 77 diamond core holes totalling 7 642 metres. The second phase of drilling was completed in December 2020.

It generated over 22 000 samples that were assayed by an independent laboratory.

The total number of drill holes completed were 315. The Karo Special Economic Zone was declared by the Zimbabwe Investment Development Agency in October 2019. Investor and development licences are valid for 10 years and can be renewed.

Incentives such as favourable corporate tax rate and exemptions from withholding tax have been gazetted for special economic zones.

The implementation studies, conducted by Tharisa plc, developed the following economic case:

Initial Great Dyke open pit resource: 152 metric tonnes (mt) containing 9.97 Moz at 2.04 g/t (6E); 3PGE+Au (Pt 45.0%, Pd 42.0% Rh 4.0% and Au 9.0%) base metal rich - 0.10% Cu and 0.12% Ni; 20-year open-pit mine plan at an average grade of 3.0 g/t (6E)

targeting average production of 150 kozpa (thousands of ounces per annum) of PGMs in concentrate.

Strong financials: Capex US\$250m with peak funding of US\$310 million. Project post-tax net present value 12.9 US\$770.4 million, internal rate of return of 47.6% and return on invested capital of +47.0%.

At least US\$33 million equity was invested for exploration and early works and US\$135 million equity and quasi-equity funding.

The syndicated project finance is US\$260 million. Of this, US\$160 million supported by ECIC political and commercial insurance wrap. Then there is also the Victoria Falls Stock Exchange bond of US\$37 million raised.

Zimbabwean PGM supply has gradually increased over the last five years. All three major PGM producers are operating on the Great Dyke.

Zimplats (owned by South Africa's Impala Platinum) produces 580 kozpa; Unki (owned by Anglo Platinum) 190 kozpa and Mimosa (run by Sibanye Stillwater/Impala Platinum) 120 kozpa.

Zimplats has said it will invest US\$1.8 billion, Unki invested US\$48 million invested in 2021 and Mimosa is also investing to expand production capacity.

Mining earns up to 60% foreign currency receipts for Zimbabwe and contributes more than 12% to gross domestic product.

Mines minister Winston Chitando says the sector has the potential to generate US\$12 billion annually by this year if the government addresses challenges such as persistent power shortages, foreign currency shortages, currency volatility and policy uncertainties.

VFEX on phenomenal growth path

ZIMBABWE'S United States dollar-indexed Victoria Falls Stock Exchange (VFEX) registered phenomenal 450% growth rate in market capitalisation since its inception 15 months ago as it surged over US\$1 billion in March this year, chief executive Justin Bgoni has said.

This makes it one of the fastest growing equity markets on the continent as local firms and new counters opt to migrate to list on the bourse to hedge against market volatilities.

Last year, Finance and Economic Development minister Mthuli Ncube in terms of section 78B(2) of the Banking Act [Chapter 24:20] issued the Banking (Declaration of the Victoria Falls Special Economic Zone as an International Financial Services Centre) Notice, 2022.

The minister declared the Victoria Falls Special Economic Zone as an International Financial Services Centre with effect from the gazetting of the notice on 7 January 2022.

The government wants Victoria Falls to become a regional business and financial hub; a cross-border investment destination of choice for the region and Africa.

With its natural beauty and magnetic attraction of tourists, Victoria Falls has a huge potential to become a business and financial hub, offering a wide range of services within the free economic zone and a stable currency environment.

The VFEX offers currency and certainty stability given that it is US dollar-indexed.

Several companies listed on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE) have migrated from the bourse to the VFEX, now widely seen as a safe haven against economic shocks, especially currency and exchange control risks.

Zimbabwe is facing high inflation levels and weakening domestic currency, rendering stocks on the ZSE undervalued.

The VFEX was established in 2020 as a subsidiary of the ZSE operating in the resort town's special economic zone.

Bgoni told investors attending the recently held capital markets conference in London that the bourse provides several incentives to investors.

He said at its launch in 2021, the exchange received enormous support at the highest level.

The two-day conference began last Thursday at the London Stock Exchange and moved to Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in the British capital the following day.

It was organised by Financial Markets Indaba partnered by Bard Santner Markets Inc. Many local companies, corporate executives and investors attended.

"VFEX has received support from the government and this has been demonstrated by the official launch by the President of Zimbabwe on 2 December 2021," Bgoni told the conference.

"VFEX has been attractive as a capital-raising platform due to: ability for companies to raise capital in USD or any other hard currency; trading, clearing and settlement (on or offshore) in USD; reduction in currency risk for listed companies and investors and less onerous listing requirements."

Mauritius is the leading treasury and trade finance hub in the region.

The Mauritius International Financial Centre (IFC) is a core part of the Mauritian economy. It contributes almost US\$1 billion to GDP (8% of total) and US\$180 million in tax revenues (8% of total), and provides more than 11 000 jobs (4% of skilled labour).

The IFC today is built upon three pillars: cross-border investment, cross-border corporate banking and private banking and wealth management. The core area of specialisation is the facilitation of cross-border investments and related fund administration activities, which comprise 60% of the IFC's economic value add, an estimated 88% of IFC tax revenues and 70% of the IFC employment.

In line with the Mauritian government's Vision 2030 target to double the size of the financial sector, the IFC aspires to grow its contribution to GDP in real terms, to US\$1.9 billion.

This is what Zimbabwe wants to transform Victoria Falls into in the long-term.

A few companies such as Karo Mining Holdings have joined the register by way of listing bonds on the VFEX.



Finance minister Mthuli Ncube

The ZSE market has continued to experience a currency-induced exodus in 2023. In Q1'23, Innscor and Axia migrated to the VFEX, while African Sun and First Capital Bank are expected to migrate during the second quarter of 2023. Out of the remaining 45 counters on the ZSE, there has been a high demand for heavy cap and medium cap counters.

Official figures show that VFEX total value traded from January 2022-March 2023 amounted to US\$13 373 114.63. VFEX average daily value

traded was US\$57 150.06 from January 2022 to March 2023.

VFEX was founded in October 2020 to cushion investors against currency volatilities.

The bourse offers the following investments: Shares, depository receipts, fixed income instruments, exchange-traded funds, exchange-traded notes and real estate investments trust.

Capital raised through a VFEX listing may be held in an approved local or offshore account, and there would be an allowance for offshore settle-

ments for executed trades for easier repatriation of dividends and more transactional flexibility to existing shareholders.

This would attract a more diverse shareholder base and enable shareholders to realise the value of their holdings, incentivising greater liquidity.

The VFEX offers tax incentives for shareholders which include 5% withholding tax on dividends and no capital gains tax on share disposal. Shareholders would be able to retain more of their earnings compared to the ZSE. — STAFF WRITER.



NATHAN GUMA

PRESIDENT Emmerson Mnangagwa's cosy relations with King Mswati III of Eswatini, Africa's last absolute and despotic monarch, shows his fondness for tainted dictators, as well as dodgy companies and business moguls.

This week, King Mswati jetted into Zimbabwe on a state visit, after which he would attend the Transform Africa Summit (TAS) held in Victoria Falls and also accompany Mnangagwa to officially open the 64th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) in Bulawayo.

Foreign Affairs secretary James Manzou said the visit is set to strengthen bilateral cooperation, tourism, agriculture and investment.

While the Foreign Affairs ministry said Zimbabwe is "happy" to welcome Mswati, his negative regional human rights footprint has sparked an outcry, especially as the country heads towards general elections which have been underlined by violence against opposition.

Mswati has been intolerant of dissenting voices in Eswatini.

For instance, in February this year, Amnesty International, a human rights organisation, wrote to Mswati demanding justice over the killing of prominent human rights defender Thulani Maseko who was gunned down by unknown assailants from the window of his living room.

In the letter, Amnesty International said while the motive behind the unlawful killing of Maseko remains unclear, they have reason to believe that he was attacked in relation to his work as a human rights lawyer and defender as he regularly stood up against the state's abuse of power.

Prior to his death, he chaired the MultiStakeholders Forum, a group of political parties and civil society groups calling for democratic reform in the country. He has previously been targeted by the state for demanding justice and criticising the country's judiciary.

Notably, Maseko was killed a day after King Mswati III reportedly said in a public address that those who are calling for democratic reform in the country would be "dealt with".

Political analyst Rashweat Mukundu says Mnangagwa's close association with questionable elements speaks volumes of his character.

"Show me your friends and I will know your character", and 'Birds of a feather flock together'. King Mswati is a murderer and the remaining absolute monarch in Africa who murdered a human rights activist Maseko just a few months ago, which was condemned by the Southern African Development Community (Sadc) and even by the African Union (AU).

"For that person to be in Zimbabwe purporting to be promoting business, the question becomes: what level of discernment exists within our government?" Mukundu told *The NewsHawks*.

"So, it is unfortunate that we had the likes of Lukashenko (Belarusian dictator) and the likes of Mswati in Zimbabwe. These are people who bring nothing but misery in Zimbabwe, because they are busy repressing and oppressing their people, and the question becomes: what else teach they teach our own government other than just perpetuating the suffering and the daily struggles that we are facing as a people?" Mukundu told *The NewsHawks*.

Mswati has also been under fire from the international community for his

Mnangagwa hosts King Mswati as his dalliance with dictators grows



King Mswati (left) with President Emmerson Mnangagwa (right).

country's security forces' crackdown on protesters in June 2021. Eswatini citizens were protesting over the incarceration of two members of Parliament.

A report published on 29 October 2021 by the Eswatini Commission on Human Rights and Public Administration says at least 46 people died during the June protests; 245 people had gunshot injuries; 22 people multiple gunshot injuries; and 118 people had unspecified injuries.

Many people are feared to have died during the protests.

A human rights watchdog, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiCZ), says Mnangagwa's penchant for dictators is likely to weigh down on principles of good governance, which will worsen the suffering of citizens.

"Zimbabwe has a constitution, and because of that, governance should be regulated by our constitutional order. Zimbabwe frowns upon dictatorship and the violation of human rights," said Obert Masaraure, CiCZ spokesperson.

"So when we see the head of state wining and dining with those who kill people in their own jurisdictions, those who violate human rights in their jurisdictions, then those people become friends with the President, he will be at the end of the day disrespecting the constitution which he should be up-

holding.

"The association with mafias, which has been exposed by the Al Jazeera documentary among other publications is also a serious issue given that the President is supposed to be protecting the interests of Zimbabweans and not particular individuals."

Masaraure said Zimbabwe should not be associated with upholding the rule of law and not to be found in the league of people who kill their people to preserve power.

"We are worried that our leaders may be exchanging notes on how to engage in violent conduct with other despots like what Mswati is doing. What else could they be meeting for? Maybe they want to exchange notes on the Swazi template on how to repress people, which is very worrisome to us that our own President may want to get the Swazi template, which is contrary to our constitutional values.

"As we approach the election season, we would be expecting our republic to be inviting observers from credible jurisdictions and not to be inviting despots like Mswati," Masaraure said.

In January this year, Mnangagwa hosted the Belarusian dictator, Lukashenko, who is Russian President Vladimir Putin's confidante. Putin is under fire over his invasion of Ukraine.

Lukashenko fell out with the West on 17 August 2020 when members of the European Parliament issued a joint statement saying they did not recognise him as the president of Belarus, considering him to be persona non grata in the European Union.

On 19 August 2020, the member states of the European Union agreed to not recognise the results and issued a statement noting that the presidential elections were neither free nor fair.

The governments of the United States, United Kingdom and Canada have also refused to recognise the results.

In an interview on 22 August, Josep Borrell explicitly stated that the EU does not recognise Lukashenko as the legitimate president of Belarus in the same manner that it does not recognise Nicolás Maduro as the legitimate president of Venezuela.

On the afternoon of 11 May 2021, Mnangagwa flew to Uganda to witness the swearing-in of that country's President, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, again associating himself with yet another dictator.

Museveni was declared winner in an election also contested by Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, known as Bobi Wine.

Museveni's presidency has been marred by involvement in the First

Congo War, the Rwandan Civil War, and other African Great Lakes conflicts; the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency in Northern Uganda, which caused a humanitarian emergency; and constitutional amendments, scrapping presidential term limits in 2005, and the presidential age limit in 2017.

Museveni's rule has been described by scholars as competitive authoritarianism, or illiberal democracy.

The Press in Uganda has been under the jackboot of the government. None of the Ugandan elections for the last 30 years (since 1986) have been found to be free and transparent.

On 16 January 2021, Museveni was re-elected for a sixth term with 58.6% of the vote, despite many videos and reports that show ballot box stuffing, over 400 polling stations with 100% voter turnout, and human rights violations.

Some of the deals Mnangagwa clinched in the "New Dispensation" involve controversial business characters, including Zunaid Moti, Lucas Pouroulis and Jacco Immink.

In 2018, Moti reportedly invested US\$300 million to set up a chrome extraction and processing plant in Zimbabwe along the mineral-rich Great Dyke. During that time, Moti was arrested in Germany on charges that he defrauded his former business partner Alibek Issaev an estimated US\$35 million in a sham mining deal in Lebanon in 2013.

In June that year, Mnangagwa's crony Pouroulis signed a controversial US\$4.2 billion deal with the government, paving way for his investment vehicle Karo Resources to grab mineral claims stretching over 23 903 hectares previously held by Zimplats along the Great Dyke.

The US\$4.2 billion cost had been plucked out of thin air, raising questions over the value of the investment.

The Pouroulis family holds a 42% stake in Tharisa Plc, which has managed to mobilise only US\$8 million for the implementation of the platinum project. On shady business dealings, an investigation by news agency Al Jazeera exposed Mnangagwa as ring leader of gold smuggling and money laundering in Zimbabwe.

The investigation showed how different gold smuggling syndicates looting gold and salting away proceeds to offshore accounts have been linked to Mnangagwa; including his Envoy and Ambassador-at-Large Uebert Angel, a self-styled prophet who is a key interlocutor throughout the documentary, Rikki Doolan, Ewan MacMillan, Kamlesh Pattni and Alistair Mathias, all smuggling kingpins.

Pattni, who almost bankrupted Kenya in the 1990s through a gold scandal which cost that country's treasury US\$600 million, reveals he makes payments to Mnangagwa as "appreciation" every two weeks through his younger brother to enable him to smoothly carry out his gold smuggling and money laundering operations in Zimbabwe.

Mnangagwa's wife Auxillia, the First Lady, and his gold baron Pedzisai "Scott" Sakupwanya were also implicated, with Auxillia discussing gold smuggling in the video.

Auxillia tells Angel to talk to the President, something he said he was going to do urgently to find out if the US\$1.2 billion would be transported in the President's private jet or the mafia's.

In every episode, featuring different gold networks and actors, one name kept cropping up — Emmerson Mnangagwa's.

South Africa is scrapping special work permits for Zimbabweans

HUNDREDS of thousands of Zimbabweans have flocked to South Africa to escape economic hardship since the 1990s. The South African government has, since 2010, granted the migrants a special permit to live and work in the country. Its latest iteration is the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit. Now the government says the permit has run its course and wants to scrap it. This has sparked fears that the move will jeopardise the lives of the permit holders and their dependants. The Conversation Africa's Thabo Leshilo spoke to Sikaniso Masuku, an immigration and migration expert, about the issue.

What is the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit?

The South African government recognised that it had a huge Zimbabwean migrant population so, in 2010, it granted an amnesty meant to legalise the status of those who had either illegitimately claimed asylum or fraudulently acquired other South African legal documents in order to stay in the country.

This Dispensation for Zimbabwe Permit was valid until 2014. It was succeeded by the Zimbabwe Special Permit that was, in turn, replaced by the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit, effective from September 2017 to December 2021.

The Zimbabwe Exemption Permit, like the one it replaced,

- entitled the holders to the right to live and work in the country
- did not grant them the right to permanent residence — irrespective of how long they had been in the country, and
- would not be renewed or extended.

Holders could not change the conditions of the permit in South Africa. Similar exemptions were previously granted to people from Lesotho and to Angolan refugees.

How many people have the permit?

There are 178 412 Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders, drawn from three waves of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa since the 1990s. Some entered between 1994 and 1997, just after apartheid ended. There was an influx in 2000 as Zimbabweans fled from an economic and political crisis. This group of forced migrants was only recognised as asylum seekers in 2002. Then, in 2008, even more Zimbabweans arrived, fleeing a heightened economic crisis.

South Africa's Immigration Act permits employment under certain visas. These visas include the general work visa, critical skills visa and permanent residence permits. The Zimbabweans found that they did not qualify for any of these visas. Most, therefore, pursued the asylum seeker route to live and work in the country legally.

Why is the matter in court?

The South African government announced on 25 November 2021 that the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit would be discontinued in December



Immigrants, mostly Zimbabweans, crowd the entrance of a government refugee centre in Johannesburg, in 2008. John Moore/Getty Images

2021. Permit holders would have to either return to Zimbabwe or apply for visas allowing them to work. This caused an outcry because of the short notice period.

The Helen Suzman Foundation, a think-tank promoting human rights and constitutional democracy, is challenging the November 2021 announcement on behalf of some of the permit holders. Three other entities, the Zimbabwe Immigration Federation, the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit Holders Association and the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, have mounted separate court challenges.

The Helen Suzman Foundation is partly arguing for the court to rule that the Minister of Home Affairs' decision was unconstitutional. It is also arguing for a fair process in respect to the permit holders' children's rights to family unity, stability and schooling.

The other parties are arguing that the decision to terminate the exemption permits is detached from the economic and political realities in Zimbabwe that necessitated the exemption in 2010.

As part of regularising the permit holders' status, restrictions on their rights to apply for other visas have been lifted. Hence, those who have acquired critical skills can now migrate to other mainstream visas. While this reprieve sounds noble, it only came into effect after the Department of Home Affairs tightened the list of critical

skills covered in February 2022. This was just three months after the termination of the Zimbabwean exemption permits.

There were also concerns that, although Home Affairs was not expected to continue the permits in perpetuity, a consultative process taking into account the risks to the lives and livelihoods of the permit holders — was never done. The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 12/7/2009 equally demands that the Home Affairs minister must first consult with affected individuals before making any decision.

The department has denied that it failed to consult, citing correspondence to this effect.

It also insists that the decision announced on 25 November 2021 was government policy as it was arrived at with the support of the cabinet. It is thus government policy that a blanket exemption for Zimbabwean citizens should end. They would now have to comply with the provisions of the Immigration Act.

Furthermore, the minister argues that the decision on permits did not take away rights, but rather conferred them. The permit holders can now apply for a general worker's visa, to be granted at the discretion of the department's director general.

Through a waiver system, low skilled exemption permit holders have also been allowed by the department to apply for general work visas without

first obtaining a certificate from the Department of Labour. However, a pre-existing backlog of nearly 63,000 visa applications has sparked fears that Home Affairs might lack the capacity to process new waiver applications in time. Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders' response to the waiver application system has also been poor, with only 4,000 applications received by Home Affairs by September 2022.

What, in your view, is the correct position?

The conditions of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permit have always been clear that the holders are not entitled to permanent residence, irrespective of the period of stay in the country.

More than anything, this debate has exposed the challenges arising from the formulation of temporary policies that operate outside the confines of the Immigration Act. Clearly, the permit was designed as a contingency plan in response to the reality of mass migration. However, it was never envisioned that, more than 13 years after the conditions necessitating this extraordinary exemption, Zimbabweans would still be desperate to remain in South Africa.

The discontinuation of the permits was inevitable. Most of the litigants in the case against Home Affairs aren't debating the permits' cancellation as such. Instead they are focusing more on issues of constitutional validity or procedure, rationality, and fairness of gov-

ernment action. This shows that even they accept its impermanence.

How should the issue be resolved?

Although cabinet said on 24 November 2021 that the holders of the exemption permit have to apply for mainstream visas — most of them do not qualify for other visas allowing them to work.

Unless another version of the exemption permit is created (as has been done thrice already), the people concerned will most likely remain ineligible to claim alternative forms of protection under the the Immigration Act. For instance, although the permit was set to expire at the end of 2021, an 18 month grace period was granted. This has not yielded much as 97% of the 178,412 permit holders have still not applied for alternative visas.

A viable solution appears to be a measured discontinuation of the exemption permit. This should include assessing and addressing the resultant social and economic effects of the move. That way, the permit holders might finally be able to pursue more durable and alternative solutions and get some closure.

— *The Conversation.*

**About the interviewee: Dr Sikaniso Masuku is a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa, University of Cape Town, South Africa.*

British MPs want Mnangagwa barred from the coronation of King Charles



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Secretary of State
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
1 Charles Street
London SW1

Monday, 24th April 2023

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We urge you to reconsider the government's advice to Buckingham Palace on the invitation of President Mnangagwa to the Coronation, in the light of the grave political and human rights situation in Zimbabwe.

To summarise, political violence and human rights abuses are widespread with opposition Members of Parliament and party members harassed, beaten, imprisoned and murdered; corruption is rife, extending to the highest levels of government, destroying the economy and impoverishing the Zimbabwe people; and the judiciary, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and all institutions of the state have been suborned to the ruling party. The main opposition party leader, Nelson Chamisa, is habitually denied permission to hold rallies and his political activities are frequently disrupted by violent Zanu-PF supporters, and the police force. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission appointees are overwhelming Zanu-PF supporters, including the sons and daughters of key Zanu-PF party officials.

It is more than 300 days since Citizen's Coalition for Change (CCC) Deputy Chairperson, Job Sikhala MP was detained after providing legal representation to the family of murdered opposition campaigner Moreblessing Ali. Since then, he has been held without trial in Chikurubi Maximum Security prison and denied his constitutional right to bail. In response to Mr Sikhala's detention, the Inter-Parliamentary Union stated on 22 October 2022 that it "fails to understand how his detention in a maximum security prison could possibly be justified and is alarmed by allegations that Mr Sikhala is being held in inhumane conditions".

In 2020 opposition MP Joanah Mamombe and supporters Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova were detained by police for taking part in a protest and subsequently abducted from Harare Central Police Station, tortured, sexually assaulted and dumped by a roadside. On 10 June 2020, five special procedures experts of the UN Human Rights Council issued a statement calling on the Zimbabwe authorities to "urgently prosecute and punish the perpetrators of this outrageous crime, and to immediately enforce a policy of 'zero tolerance' for abductions and torture throughout the country." Instead of the arrest of the perpetrators, the three victims were charged with publishing a false statement prejudicial to the state, for daring to report the crime. Three years on Joanah and Cecilia continue to face state sponsored harassment through the courts – their colleague Netsai Marova managed to escape from the country and gain sanctuary in Norway.

On 27 February 2022, a CCC rally was attacked in Kwekwe. Mboneni Ncube, a 30-year-old CCC supporter, was killed and at least 17 others were seriously injured. Speaking at a Zanu-PF rally in Mbizo Stadium in



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Kwekwe the previous day, Zimbabwe's vice-president, Constantino Chiwenga, told the crowd that Zanu-PF would "crush the [CCC] party like lice".

In October 2022, Bulawayo MP, Jasmine Toffa had her arms fractured in an attack by Zanu-PF supporters when she was campaigning for a local council candidate and there are regular reports of local party campaigners and councillors being attacked, tortured and murdered with direct incitement from Zanu-PF leaders.

This month on April 6th, Amnesty International shared a statement on the conviction of opposition party spokesperson, Fadzayi Mahere, saying, "The conviction of Fadzayi Mahere (on 5 April 2023) is a travesty of justice as it is based on a law that is no longer existent in Zimbabwe and applied to silence dissent. The legal provision that was used to convict Mahere was declared void by the Constitutional Court in 2014. The High Court confirmed this in another case in 2021. The Magistrate Court in this case should have taken note of the decisions of the upper courts and acquitted Mahere. The conviction and sentencing demonstrate the extent to which authorities are willing to go to muzzle critical voices and suppress the right to freedom of expression. The authorities are sending a clear message that there is no space for exercising the right to freedom of expression in Zimbabwe."

A chilling recent development is the issuing of direct threats through the Twitter account of the President's Office of Communication. The prominent Human Rights and Pro-Democracy advocate Makomborero Haruzivishe had a menacing tweet directed at him following his attendance at a House of Lords debate in January. Then again, just two weeks ago, when he spoke out about corruption, a further threat was tweeted "Do you remember when we sent a team to abduct you and you were begging for your life? We have agents in your location!!!!". Both came from the account of George Charamba, *Deputy Chief Secretary- Presidential Communications in the Office of the President of Zimbabwe*. As President of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), Makomborero Haruzivishe was the target of continuous intimidation and prosecutorial harassment, which included 37 arrests and detention without trial of eleven months.

2023 is already proving to be a year of heightened tension due to planned elections in July. Independent sources including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders, are recording rising levels of political repression, arbitrary and politically motivated arrests of elected opposition party members and intimidation of the press. At the same time, the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, led by former South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, which was established to investigate widespread violence in the aftermath of the August 2018 elections, have still not been implemented.

The Coronation invitation will inevitably be used by President Mnangagwa as tacit acceptance by the UK of publicly evidenced political violence and repression in the run up to the forthcoming election and will be deeply demoralising to ordinary Zimbabweans in their struggle for democracy.

We therefore urge the government to withdraw President Mnangagwa's invitation until Job Sikhala MP and other political prisoners are granted their constitutional right to bail and concrete actions are taken to address human rights abuses and guarantee free and fair elections.

Yours sincerely,



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Nav Mishra MP
Chair, APPG Zimbabwe

Lord Oates
Co-Chair, APPG Zimbabwe

Co-signed:

- Lord St John of Bletso (Vice Chair)
- Lord Bellingham (Vice Chair)
- Sir Peter Bottomley MP (Vice Chair)
- Lord Hain (Vice-Chair)
- Lord Hayward (Vice-Chair)
- Baroness Hoey of Lylehill and Rathlin (Vice-Chair)
- Rachel Hopkins MP (Vice-Chair)
- Kim Johnson MP (Vice-Chair)
- Lord Purvis of Tweed (Vice-Chair)

LARISA W. CHIKANYA

Introduction

"No true democracy heedlessly invades the rights of its citizens and represses people's thoughts and actions, their ability to speak their minds, and their ability to organise.

"Only a despot would resort to intimidation and force, silence legitimate opposition, and turn public security forces into tools of oppression. Democracy withers wherever citizens wait for the late-night knock on the door, where they rightly fear arbitrary arrest and imprisonment." — Kevin O'Reilly (2021): Reflections on 20th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Inter-American Charter.

THE quality of elections has come under increased scrutiny in recent decades.

As the most visible expression of democracy, polling day presents an opportunity for the legal contestation of political power. Yet, elections are often contentious and regularly fall short of "free and fair" status. Given that fear and intimidation may have been used to prevent voters from casting their ballots, many case studies, as well as anecdotal evidence, suggest that electoral violence has a suppressive effect on voter turnout. This is not new to Zimbabwe.

Since November 2022 I have been a follower of the Elections Policy Dialogue Series convened by SAPEs and RAU and in every one of these dialogues, the experts have been raising fears about violence, frequently pointing to incidents that were taking place, ranging from murders, assaults, torture, assaults, intimidation, unlawful arrest and detention, and disruption of legitimate political meetings. The point of this publication was particularly motivated by the episode entitled "Is Election violence in 2023 increasing ahead of the Poll?" What struck me the most was the frequent discussion around the struggle to maintain the democratic balance during elections in Zimbabwe.

The democracy paradox in elections

Democracy as an idea is inconceivable through the act of violence. But democracy as a regime finds it cannot enforce its laws or defend itself from hostile neighbours without a coercive apparatus.

In many ways, democracy is an impossible ideal. Its realisation requires trade-offs. The rights of minorities may interfere with the will of the majority. The enforcement of the law may require coercion for some to obey it.

The politics of violence represents a departure from constitutional governance and democracy, it reduces the law to the whims of individuals and distils politics into a dangerous form of individualism.

In most rural areas in Zimbabwe, this has been evidenced by the selective access to resources such as food aid and agricultural inputs based on political party affiliation.

Related to that is the fact that power in the rural community at the local community level resides in formal, non-state structures, particularly structures of the ruling party.

There is a seeming paradox at work on the African continent. Democracy has established itself as the dominant political system, and as an integral part of this process, multi-party elections

What will be different in Zimbabwe's 2023 elections?



Citizens' Coalition for Change supporters in Harare.

have emerged as the most legitimate route to political office.

Yet, in recent years violence has increased in such elections. Electoral violence is no longer limited to general and national elections, byelections at the constituency level have generated high levels of violence, intimidation, and insecurity, as the main political parties compete to hold ground and make territorial inroads in preparation for the next round of national elections.

One of the speakers during the series "Is Election violence in 2023 increasing ahead of the Poll?" indicated that election-related violence is not limited to physical violence but includes other coercive means, such as the threat of violence, intimidation, and harassment.

Zimbabwe has a long history of a one-party and dominant political party where politics and economics have been conflated. As a result, politics in Zimbabwe has been exclusive, intolerant of opposition, and militarized. Furthermore, many of the socio-economic and political benefits of democracy have yet to be fully realised among large parts of the population.

Therefore, the stakes at elections become high and the electoral contests tend to be perceived as a zero-sum game.

Therefore, winning an election has become a matter of survival for the competing parties, and more importantly for the communities.

This is true for the latter because the perpetrators of violence are never held to account by the law, not only do they remain influential in the communities in which they commit violence, they constantly threaten and use intimidation as a mechanism to remain in control.

Fear becomes the survival mechanism for victims and survivors because they are constantly being monitored and manipulated. This is traumatic for them as they are easily reminded of what capacity those perpetrators have to repeatedly cause harm to them each day.

Many political experts and analysts in Zimbabwe fear have become the major factor affecting the participation of citizens in democratic or governance processes in the country, especially at the community level because that's where the level of polarisation is very apparent.

Zimbabwe is a primary offender of Organised Violence and Torture (OVT) – including election violence – among Southern African Development Community countries. This is attested to by an enormous number of reports produced by human rights organisations, and these are backed mostly by hard evidence.

It is important to note that women are affected in different ways than men by electoral violence.

Voter turnout among women is much lower than among men, par-

ticularly in areas where there is a high threat of gender-based violence and high risks of intimidation of women in public

life. These acts of violence are commonly treated as isolated incidents, instead of as the result of structural and widespread discrimination against women.

Electoral violence against women coercively excludes women from having a voice and participating in political life and governance processes and has been the cause of young women refusing to participate in politics in Zimbabwe, as noted by one of the speakers and supported by research.

The impunity of perpetrators by the state perpetuates this form of violence against women and sends a message that male violence against women is both acceptable and inevitable. This impunity extends to even the most terrible violations against women, rape.

The weaponisation of youth in Zimbabwe

Youth in Zimbabwe make up a total population of 67.7%, and their participation is the foundation of sustainable inclusivity and democratic change. Ideally, for political systems to be inclusive, all parts of society must be incorporated.

When youth are alienated or detached from political processes this results in the undermining of political systems' representativeness. Inclusive

political participation is not only a fundamental political and democratic right but also is crucial to building stable and peaceful societies and developing policies that respond to the specific needs of younger generations. The history of youth participation in Zimbabwe has been characterised by violence, their participation has not been aligned with any key national processes but has been less important or retrogressive.

This is explained by the following: manipulation, decoration and tokenism which are types of non-participation (seeming/fake involvement) as stipulated by Roger Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation.

The model draws attention to various ways in which youth are co-opted into subordinate positions to provide legitimacy to decisions that others would have made. Recently, there has been a growing population of youth being used by political actors to perpetrate and perpetuate violence to further their interests.

These youth are usually those living in urban areas, particularly in high-density suburbs where they are likely to be idle, unemployed, abusing drugs and have no access to anything else all over the communities. As long as youth are exposed to political exploitation they will be hindered from fully participating in electoral processes meaningfully.

Furthermore, the resuscitation of the National Youth Service programme after years of not being operational before elections is quite worrying, especially considering the controversies around it during the 1st Republic.

The programme's purpose was supposedly "to transform and empower youths for nation building through life skills training and leadership development."

The trainees were allegedly used for political purposes, especially in rural and peri-urban areas, and linked to election-related violence, including sexual abuse and torture. There is great concern that, like its predecessor, the revived programme would be more likely primarily provide boots on the ground for the security sector and the ruling party ahead of the 2023 elections.

Conclusion

Polarisation is on the rise, trust in elected officials and between voters is declining, and frustration with a perceived inability of democracy to deliver for citizens is intensifying tensions around, and

the stakes of, elections. My hope for Zimbabwe was described by the words of the late Kofi Annan during his visit to Zimbabwe in July 2018: "everyone must act responsibly before, during

and after the elections to ensure a Zimbabwe free from violence, where human rights are respected and prosperity restored."

— Research and Advocacy Unit.

**About the writer: Larisa W. Chikanya is a researcher at the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU).*

The British trophy hunting ban Bill will harm African wildlife



Balancing act: Human-wildlife conflict occurs when populations expand and one management tool is hunting, which also raises income for locals in Zambia. Photo: Alexander Joe/Getty Images

EMMANUEL KORO

AFRICAN wildlife's destruction was sealed when British pop stars, comedians and animal rights groups fundraising industry NGOs recently influenced their parliamentarians to vote for the hunting trophies imports ban Bill, ignoring the harm it causes to African wildlife and habitat conservation.

Amy Dickman, an Oxford University conservation biologist, together with other British scientists and conservationists worldwide, have warned against this ill-informed decision. The British parliamentarians' decision to vote for the ban is viewed by many in the conversation and hunting world as moment of madness.

They rejected a scientific wildlife management approach, involving the sustainable harvesting of excessive wildlife populations in specific ecosystems so that large wildlife populations do not exceed the carrying capacities of their ecosystems.

Hunting helps control wildlife overpopulation and prevents leaving wildlife with insufficient water and food supply and even space to exist.

Yet, this is the ecological disaster that the British parliamentarians have just set in motion. They

apparently do not care about wildlife conservation but do care about increasing their popular ratings, fundraising opportunities and political votes.

For the animal rights fundraising industry NGOs, the wildlife conservation crisis that scientists have warned would break out is good news, particularly in Africa where there are the Big Five that they can use as species in peril and ask for donations. For the record, many have not saved a single elephant in the wilderness. They selectively focus on elephants in zoos, to whip up public emotions and then ask for donations. Shame.

International hunting is a management measure supported by the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora Species. It is also supported by a big international NGO, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). According to the WWF 1997 Quota Setting Manual, the main purpose of a quota is to identify the number of animals that can be killed without reducing the population.

Science is not about votes of parliamentarians and public referendums. Neither is it about the support of animal rights groups fundraising industry NGOs,

comedians, politicians and pop stars.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, resulting in millions of people dying, it did not take votes to decide on vaccines and other scientific measures that needed to be observed to save human lives.

Why then, in the 21st century, do we see the United Kingdom, which helps fund poverty alleviation, reject one of the ways that African hunting communities use to alleviate poverty by banning hunting trophy imports into the UK?

In an intense human-wildlife-conflict scenario, people in the Southern African Development Community would struggle to profitably grow crops and safely store their agricultural produce. Wildlife would have nowhere to run and get wiped out through revenge killings.

Where in your country, British parliamentarians, will you accommodate southern African wildlife? You neither have the scientific wildlife management know-how, space, appropriate vegetation, nor love for African people and wildlife.

The acting director of Zambia's department of national parks and wildlife management, Andrew Eldred Chomba, recently said,

"One of the disadvantages of conservation success is that it results in elephant overpopulation that leads to human-wildlife conflict and our people continue to be killed by elephants."

It is against such a challenging scenario as is the case in most hunting communities of Southern Africa that international hunting is used as a wildlife management tool to control the wildlife population and to raise income for these communities.

No wonder that, before the 17 March British parliamentarians' vote for hunting trophy imports ban, elephant-overpopulated Botswana warned the British government that the legislation would harm its wildlife and negatively affect people's livelihoods.

"If the Bill is passed by Parliament, it will affect Botswana's wildlife management," said a Press release from Botswana's ministry of Environment and Tourism.

"It will also increase the risk of poaching and human-wildlife conflict, negatively impacting, for example, the largest herd of elephants that Botswana supports."

Ishmael Chaukura, of Zimbabwe's Masoka wildlife producer community, which boasts a school built from revenue raised from hunting that has produced

medical doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals, said: "The hunting trophies imports ban Bill shows that the British aren't genuine conservationists, but pretenders and they don't respect African wildlife producer communities and their leaders.

"They can ban hunting trophies imports into the United Kingdom but can never stop hunting in Africa."

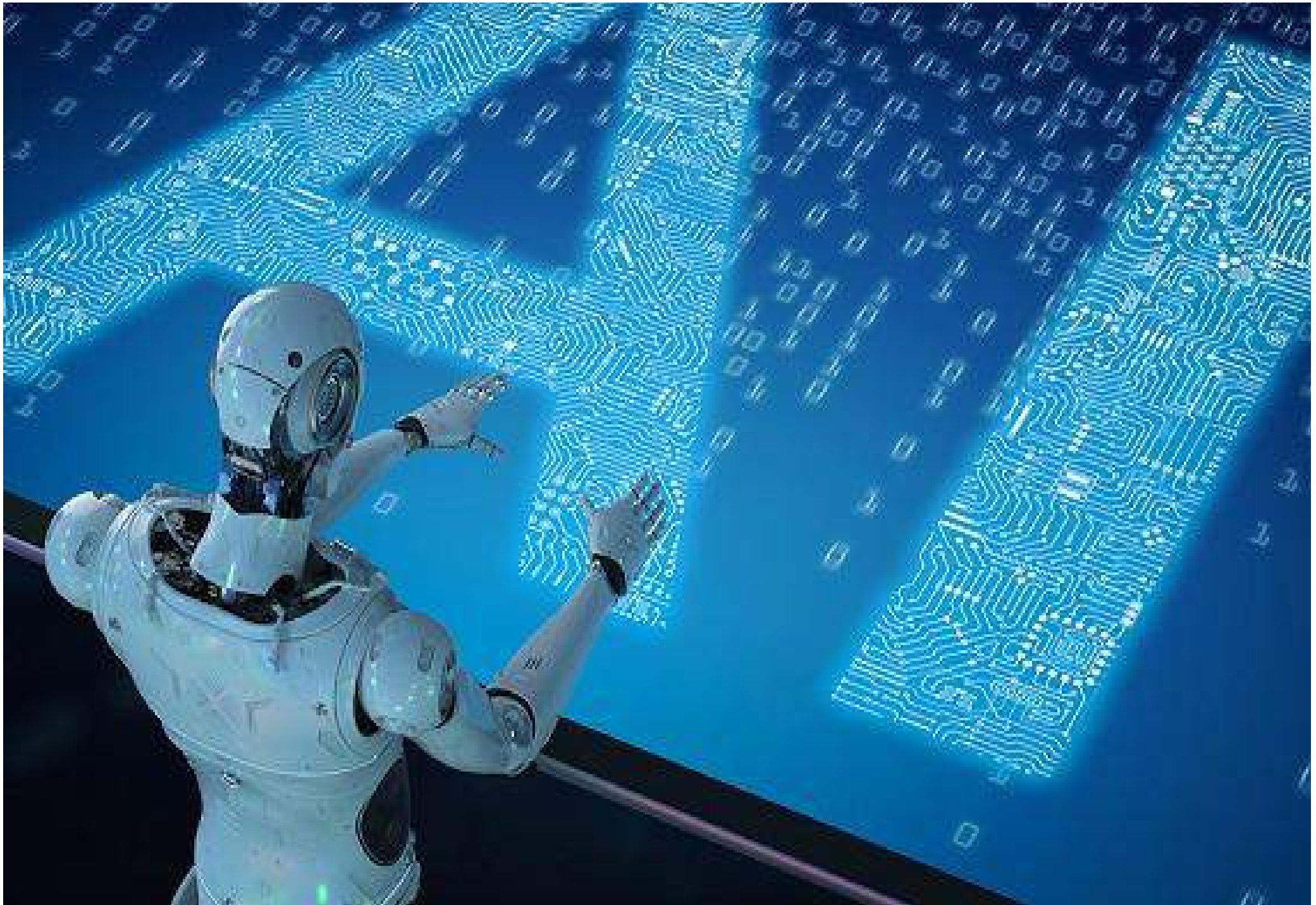
The British parliamentarians have already approved the hunting trophies imports ban into the UK. The Bill will be discussed in the House of Lords in May or June.

Although it is unable to prevent bills passing into law except in certain limited circumstances, the House of Lords can delay bills and force the House of Commons [parliamentarians] to reconsider their decisions.

Therefore, it remains to be seen if the House of Lords can get the parliamentarians to reconsider their decisions.

— Mail & Guardian.

**About the writer: Emmanuel Koro is a Johannesburg-based international award-winning environmental journalist who has written extensively on environment and development issues in Africa.*



The key to responsible AI development

KLAUS SCHWAB/ CATHY LI

GENERATIVE artificial intelligence (AI) will change the world, whether we like it or not. At this pivotal moment in the technology's development, public and private stakeholders must do everything in their power to ensure that the process leads to fair, equitable, and sustainable outcomes.

In recent months, the development of artificial intelligence has accelerated considerably, with generative AI systems such as ChatGPT and Midjourney rapidly transforming a wide range of professional activities and creative processes. The window of opportunity for guiding the development of this powerful technology in ways that minimise the risks and maximise the benefits is closing fast.

AI-based capabilities exist along a continuum, with generative AI systems such as GPT-4 (the latest version of ChatGPT) falling within the most advanced category. Given that such systems hold the greatest promise and can lead to the most treacherous pitfalls, they merit particularly close scrutiny by public and

private stakeholders.

Virtually all technological advances have had both positive and negative effects on society. On one hand, they have bolstered economic productivity and income growth, expanded access to information and communication technologies, extended human lifespans, and improved overall well-being. On the other hand, they have led to worker displacement, wage stagnation, greater inequality, and increasing concentration of resources among individuals and corporations.

AI is no different. Generative AI systems open up abundant opportunities in areas such as product design, content creation, drug discovery and health care, personalized education, and energy optimization. At the same time, they may prove highly disruptive, and even harmful, to our economies and societies.

The risks already posed by advanced AI, and those that are reasonably foreseeable, are considerable.

Beyond widespread reorientation of labor markets, large-language-model systems can increase the spread of disinfor-

mation and perpetuate harmful biases. Generative AI also threatens to exacerbate economic inequality. Such systems may even pose existential risks to humankind.

For some, this is a reason to tap the brakes on AI research. Last month, more than 1,000 AI technologists, from Elon Musk to Steve Wozniak, signed an open letter recommending that AI labs "immediately pause" the training of systems more powerful than GPT-4 for at least six months. During this pause, they argue, a set of shared safety protocols – "rigorously audited and overseen by independent outside experts" – should be devised and implemented.

The open letter, and the heated debate it has triggered, underscores the urgent need for stakeholders to engage in a wide-ranging good-faith process aimed at aligning on robust shared guidelines for developing and deploying advanced AI. Such an effort must account for issues like automation and job displacement, the digital divide, and the concentration of control over technological assets and resources, such as data and com-

puting power. And a top priority must be to work continuously to eliminate systemic biases in AI training, so that systems like ChatGPT do not end up reproducing or even exacerbating them.

Proposals for AI and digital-services governance are already emerging, including in the United States and the European Union. Organizations like the World Economic Forum are also making contributions. In 2021, the Forum launched the Global Coalition for Digital Safety, which aims to unite stakeholders in tackling harmful content online and facilitate the exchange of best practices for regulating online safety. The Forum subsequently created the Digital Trust Initiative, to ensure that advanced technologies like AI are developed with the public's best interests in mind.

Now, the Forum is calling for urgent public-private cooperation to address the challenges that have accompanied the emergence of generative AI and to build consensus on the next steps for developing and deploying the technology. To facilitate progress, the Forum, in partner-

ship with AI Commons – a non-profit organization supported by AI practitioners, academia, and NGOs focused on the common good – will hold a global summit on generative AI in San Francisco on April 26-28. Stakeholders will discuss the technology's impact on business, society, and the planet, and work together to devise ways to mitigate negative externalities and deliver safer, more sustainable, and more equitable outcomes.

Generative AI will change the world, whether we like it or not. At this pivotal moment in the technology's development, a co-operative approach is essential to enable us to do everything in our power to ensure that the process is aligned with our shared interests and values.

**About the writers: Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairperson of the World Economic Forum, is co-author of The Great Narrative: For a Better Future (Forum Publishing, 2022). Cathy Li is head of AI, data and metaverse and a member of the executive committee at the World Economic Forum.*

Peace in the DRC: East Africa has deployed troops to combat M23 rebels

— Who's who in the regional force

JENNA RUSSO

THE East Africa Community (EAC) has completed the deployment of its regional force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to oversee the withdrawal of the rebel group, M23, from the eastern part of the country.

The last contingent was of South Sudanese soldiers who joined troops from Kenya, Burundi and Uganda.

Formed in 2012 as a splinter group of the armed militia National Congress for the Defence of the People, the M23 briefly occupied the city of Goma the same year. It was quickly routed by forces operating as part of the UN peacekeeping mission, Monusco.

The M23 re-emerged in 2022, prompting the east African region to send in troops.

While eastern DRC contains over 100 armed groups, the M23 has drawn the region's attention. This is not only because the conflict could spill across borders, but also because the M23 is widely seen as backed by Rwanda (a claim Rwanda denies). Thus, a rise in tension could reignite fighting between Rwanda and DRC, and draw in the broader region.

The EAC's forces could be important in bringing the threat posed by the M23 under control, given the regional dimensions to this conflict. But their involvement is complicated.

On the one hand, neighbouring countries often have a better understanding of local political and security contexts than international actors. They also have more direct interest in the outcome of conflict, potentially leading to more sustained engagement.

On the other hand, neighbouring countries have their own interests, which means their actions may not always be in the best interests of the country they're meant to help. Such risks are especially pronounced in the DRC.

The country's history has been rife with meddling by its neighbours, including some members of the EAC regional force. The two Congo wars – in 1996-1997 and 1998-2003 – brought numerous foreign forces to Congolese soil.

While some neighbouring countries came to support the DRC government, others backed the rebels during the two wars, and actors from multiple sides have pillaged DRC's natural resources. Public distrust in the regional force is, therefore, high.

Based on lessons learned from previous interventions in the DRC, it's not clear whether the EAC regional force will help the DRC find peace this time around or contribute, de-



South Sudanese soldiers prepare for deployment to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Samir Bol/AFP via Getty Images

liberately or otherwise, to its instability. Here is a short overview of the players in the regional force and their connections to the DRC.

Kenya

Kenya has relatively more economic resources than some other EAC members and a less complicated history with the DRC. While Kenya has had troops in the country since 1999 as part of the UN peacekeeping operation, it has been less tangled in previous conflicts in the DRC.

Kenya deployed its troops as part of the regional force in November 2022 after the the M23 enlarged its territorial hold in Congo's eastern region.

Kenyan president William Ruto has stated that defeating the M23 is important for the region. Stability in the DRC is also in Kenya's economic interests. It accelerated investments into the DRC after the latter joined the regional bloc in 2022.

Burundi

Burundi has a tangled history with the DRC. It was involved in the two Congo wars and has been accused by the DRC of occupying its border provinces and violating human rights and international law during

these conflicts.

Burundi formally deployed troops to Goma in August 2022. A second battalion was deployed seven months later. But a Burundian rights group has claimed that Burundi has been conducting secret operations against Burundian opposition groups within DRC for some time. The group also expressed concern that Burundi may use its membership of the regional force to continue operations against its opponents.

Uganda

Uganda deployed troops to the force in March 2023. Before this, it conducted joint operations with Congolese national forces against the rebel Allied Democratic Forces, a Uganda-based, Islamic State-allied group that has been particularly violent towards civilians.

Despite their common foe, Uganda and DRC have a history of tension. Uganda's military intervention in the DRC in the 1990s was found by the International Court of Justice to be "of such magnitude and duration" that it was considered "a grave violation" of the prohibition on the use of force in terms of the UN Charter. The court ordered Uganda to pay US\$325 million for

its illegal occupation. Uganda made its first payment of US\$65 million in September 2022.

Ugandan troops have found some early success in their deployment. This includes the area of Bunagana, where they were able to regain control of the town that had been held for months by the M23. Nevertheless, Uganda's involvement in the illegal exploitation of DRC's natural resources in the 1990s and early 2000s raises concerns about its presence among the local population.

South Sudan

South Sudan is the most recent EAC member state to deploy troops to the DRC after some initial logistical delays. South Sudan's history with the DRC is less contentious than Uganda's and Burundi's. However, its national forces have a history of human rights abuses against their own population.

Despite South Sudan president Salva Kiir's instruction that his troops not "go and rape women and girls", their presence within the crowded theatre could increase the risk of human rights abuses.

Risky, but necessary?

Despite these risks, the EAC regional

force may be the DRC's best chance of defeating the M23. Monusco has struggled to mitigate the M23 or the numerous other rebel groups operating in the eastern region.

One advantage for the EAC is that it's leading both the political and military responses to the M23, which were previously led by different actors. The M23 threat requires both a political and military response, and ensuring these two prongs remain closely integrated is essential.

So far, though, the M23 has not respected the timelines for withdrawal set as part of the political process, including the most recent 30 March 2022 deadline.

This lack of progress has led Angolan president João Lourenço – who is mediating peace talks between the DRC and Rwanda – to announce the deployment of 500 Angolan troops to the volatile east. Kinshasa said the Angolan troops would be there "not to attack but to help maintain peace". Sadly, there is not yet much peace to be maintained.

— *The Conversation.*

**About the writer: Jenna Russo is a researcher and lecturer at City University of New York in the United States.*

JAISHREE RAMAN

SUB-SAHARAN Africa is disproportionately affected by malaria. The region accounts for 95% of the world's malaria cases. The disease kills an African child every 60 seconds.

These figures are alarming. But malaria is preventable and treatable.

The progress made between 2000 and 2015 is proof of what can be achieved. Support from global donors helped drive down malaria deaths among children under five from 723 000 to 306 000. Most of the deaths prevented were in sub-Saharan Africa. Fifty-five of the 106 malaria-endemic countries showed a 75% decrease in new malaria cases by 2015 compared to 2000.

But in 2016, the global malaria response plateaued. In some regions it even backtracked. Malaria cases and deaths increased as national malaria control programmes competed with other health challenges.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and other partners issued urgent calls to address the challenges national programmes were facing. But the gap in funding and technical capacity widened. Malaria control efforts in Africa remained woefully off-track to meeting 2030 elimination targets.

And then the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

At the start of the pandemic, there were dire warnings of catastrophic disruptions to routine malaria services. These were expected to lead to a doubling of malaria deaths in Africa.

There were disruptions. But national malaria control programmes have shown impressive resilience over the past three years. Innovative actions saw malaria deaths increase by only 10% between 2019 and 2020. Malaria deaths didn't double, and have remained stable in 2021.

Now, the battle to eliminate and eventually eradicate malaria has become even more challenging. The challenges include the impact of climate change on the distribution of malaria-carrying mosquitoes; the invasion and rapid spread of new mosquito species; as well as emerging drug-resistant malaria parasites and insecticide-resistant mosquitoes.

However, there is hope on the horizon. After decades of intense research, two new malaria vaccines have come to market. And researchers are developing new treatments and experimenting with different drug combinations. It may not happen by 2030, but malaria can be eradicated.

History

In 2000, the United Nations launched the millennium development goals. One of the goals was to reduce the malaria burden by 75% by 2015. This catalysed significant investments, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2000 and 2015, international donor funding primarily from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the American government-led President's Malaria Initiative, enabled national malaria

Hope is on the horizon for a malaria-free Africa



The World Health Organisation and other partners issued urgent calls to address the challenges national malaria programmes were facing.

control programmes in Africa to replace failing interventions with more effective ones.

By 2015, over 150 million insecticide-treated bednets; 179 million malaria rapid diagnostic tests; and 153 million doses of the malaria treatment recommended by the WHO – artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) – had been distributed across Africa.

Encouraged by the progress in rolling back malaria, the WHO launched the Global Technical Strategy for Malaria. This strategy provided malaria-endemic countries with a roadmap for reducing malaria transmission. The ultimate aim was to have a world free of malaria by 2030.

Unfortunately, the release of this strategy coincided with a levelling off in domestic and international funding, which led to an uptick in malaria cases.

In 2016, there were 216 million cases – five million more than in 2015. Ninety per cent of the new cases were in Africa where funding had dropped to less than 42% of what the continent required for ef-

fective malaria control.

Setbacks

Now the global malaria response faces new challenges.

Climate change experts predict that as the Earth warms up, malaria will spread into malaria-free areas. The malaria mosquito and parasite will develop faster. And that malaria transmission rates in areas where the disease is currently will increase. In addition, environmental changes linked to human activities, such as deforestation, are also likely to change the distribution of mosquitoes and the diseases they carry.

The recent invasion and rapid spread of the Asian malaria vector, *Anopheles stephensi*, through the Horn of Africa and as far west as Nigeria, may be an example of this. It has been identified as a threat to malaria elimination efforts in Africa. This mosquito species is extremely difficult to control. It thrives in urban areas, bites both in and outdoors, feeds on animals and humans, and is resistant to several insecticide classes. Acutely aware of the threat

that this mosquito poses to malaria control in Africa, the WHO released an initiative to slow the spread of this vector into the rest of Africa.

Not to be outdone, the malaria parasite has also thrown a few curve balls into the mix. *Plasmodium falciparum* is the deadliest and most prevalent human malaria parasite in Africa. It has mutated and can go undetected by the most widely used point-of-care diagnostic tool in rural malaria endemic regions. This leaves malaria-infected individuals at risk of developing severe illness, and still capable of transmitting malaria. In addition, African malaria parasites from Eritrea, Rwanda and Uganda have become resistant to the artemisinin part of ACTs. ACTs are the only class of effective antimalarial currently available. The WHO has developed a strategy for tackling emerging resistance in Africa.

Way ahead

In 2021, the WHO took the bold step of approving the use of the RTS,S malaria vaccine in high-burden countries, despite its very mod-

est efficacy of less than 40%.

A newer version of the RTS,S vaccine, the R21 vaccine produced by Oxford University's Jenner Institute, has shown much high efficacy in a Phase III trial. This has prompted Ghana and Nigeria to approve its use this month without pre-approval from the WHO.

Researchers are developing newer, more effective antimalarials. Others are investigating using different combinations of existing drug and antibodies to effectively treat malaria.

Newer, more effective insecticide-treated nets are being rolled out. And genomic surveillance is a new tool in the malaria elimination toolbox to assist with evidence-based decision-making.

— *The Conversation.*

**About the writer: Jaishree Raman is principal medical scientist and head of laboratory for anti-malarial resistance monitoring and malaria operational research at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa.*

Maskiri teams up with fellow ‘survivor’ and songbird Tererai to deliver a banger!

JONATHAN MBIRIYAMVEKA

MASKIRI and Tererai Mugwadi have experienced both good times and misfortune in their music careers.

They have topped the charts, serenaded Zimbabwean fans with hit songs at the beginning of the hip-hop revolution in Zimbabwe, known locally as urban-grooves.

These two indeed were some of the revolutionaries of this popular genre, and will go down in history as some of the greats.

Differing personal misfortunes, however, saw their careers go downhill, accompanied by some unwanted publicity, making the news for all the wrong reasons as they led troubled lifestyles.

Written off and even forgotten, these two have over the past few years however proved that they are survivors. God-given talent can never be taken away.

Rapper Maskiri and songbird Tererai come a long way, and you will remember that they in fact worked together on Maskiri’s debut album – Mu-viri Wese – around the turn of the millennium.

Over two decades later, they have proved that like fine wine, they have only gotten better with age.

Skillaz and Terry, as they are known to their legion of fans, collaborated on a gem of a song, titled Masendeke.

This could be an ode to the notorious murderer Masendeke, infamous for his yesteryear prison break at Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison.

But Maskiri is equating that notoriety to his love for his woman.

The song, produced by Sunshine, is an enjoyable listen while the video, which was dropped on YouTube two weeks back, was shot by Mr Hasty.

If there is anything quite intriguing about the bars it is that Maskiri is still good at his wordplay and he does it effortlessly.

Maskiri, who also inspired rappers like Ti Gonzi, takes a dig at the rapper of the moment in a thinly veiled diss.

The more prominent diss though is directed at Holy Ten, a younger-generation rapper who has been hailed by his own fans as a better and modern version of Maskiri.

He raps: "Ndirikumberi kwa10 kunge 11 ndine ma1 . . . (I’m ahead of 10 just like 11, I’m bad!) In another line he raps: “Ziso rakatsvuka kunge Opera Mini.”

Maskiri laid out his bars proving to all and sundry that he is a lyrical genius. Believers and non-believers should give him his dues. And Tererai laces her vocals nicely over a lingering beat which makes you want to sing along.

The song quickly gets you into the groove and it keeps playing in the head long after the track is finished.

Having said that, the video, which is shot by little-known Mr Hasty, is also quite telling.

It was shot at a farm where Maskiri and Tererai seem to be in a getaway car, fleeing from people. Both Maskiri and Tererai showcase good chemistry in the production.

The video is trending in the top 20 for music videos and so far it has amassed over 600 000 views on YouTube.



JONATHAN MBIRIYAMVEKA

RONALD Chiwanza was first introduced to the music of James D-Train Williams in his teen years.

The man who introduced him was none other than Nhamo Tutsani, who these days is better known as the tycoon co-owner of CAPS United, one of Zimbabwe’s biggest football clubs.

DJ Sweet T, as they called Tutsani back in the days, was a music enthusiast who rocked some of Harare’s best known night spots those days.

His protégé, the young Ronald, later assumed the moniker of James Williams, courtesy of his mentor Tutsani.

And now after 18 years, D-Train Chiwanza has put down the mic at Classic 263, leaving behind fond memories among his legion of adoring fans.

It is never easy to say goodbye, but D-Train now heads to the United

Top DJ D-Train leaves radio

Kingdom to join the rest of his family.

D-Train, who is turning 53 on 3 October 2023, is a father of three boys. Reminiscing on the good old days on radio, D-Train cherishes the moment he joined 3FM (now Power FM) in 1995 as a radio producer.

“I started out as a still radio producer for Witness ‘Chuman’ Matema Show Club 95 on 3FM in 1995,” he said.

“Then I was recommended to take up a shift on Saturday morning guest slot by then station manager Innocent Manase in 2003 when they moved to Gweru,” D-Train explained.

“It was exciting, especially the 2003 era when the 75% local con-



Ronald Chiwanza

tent drive was introduced.

“Working with the pioneer urban grooves generation like Extra Large, Maskiri, Ngoni Kambarami, Major E, Booker T, Shame and Nathan, was interesting because these guys have evolved to be stars in their own rights.”

D-Train had been presenting and producing for his shows on Classic263 since 2005 when it was still SFM.

“I presented basically every shift but notable ones are the Monday Night Magic Moments, Saturday Breakfast Show, TGIF Drive Time, Old-Skool Saturdays, Classic Sunday Listening, The Sunday Soccer Show and Classic Sports,” he said.

But while he is moving to greener

pastures, D-Train says he will miss his fans the most.

“I will miss the Classic 263 listeners’ warmth, knowledge of music and support.”

While he had a huge following on radio, at one time D-Train was part of the nomadic group, Huggiez Entertainment – with the likes of Kudzi “Mr Kool” Marudza, Witness Matema and DJ Flabba.

As Huggiez Entertainment, they would move from one club to the next, playing Old-Skool music which at the time drew scores.

Old-Skool music became the in-thing after radio stations changed from 75% local content to 100% around 2000. A good number of music lovers, particularly the older generation, felt the “urban grooves” sound was half-baked and, in most cases lacked depth.

So there was huge demand for Old-Skool music which Huggiez Entertainment effortlessly delivered.



Title: The Last Stand
Poet: Gift Sakirai

At two I knew not what they taught
Daily, I stayed indoors
\doggedly pursuing mother to a fault.
Snotty-nosed and recalcitrant,
I threw tantrums to my mother's consternation.
At five, I left the comfort that home guaranteed
and found my personage in the midst of people
unknown.
Fear thus a friend of mine became
in that class of peers unforgiving.
I learned mostly from a curriculum unofficial,
kicks and fists thus my friends became
and homeward I took nosebleeds like homework
daily. At fifteen I loved my first love,
a gem of a girl whose smile was
the envy of many
a teenager. I mumbled in her presence daily
for words would fail me always.
This it was for a whole year
until like a bird in flight
she flew out of my life.
At twenty I stumbled into university,
having scrapped by my studies.
Therein all hell broke loose
for what mother had taught was useless thus
rendered.
I partook in pomp and fanfare.
By chance it was that I finished my studies, only
to be accosted by a job market unforgiving.
At thirty-five I decided to take the plunge
after years of a hesitation acute
and hitched
myself to a woman who had thus been a decade
patient.
Therefrom, I second guessed myself into father-
hood, and bumbled along in a world where
I was a stranger unwelcome.
At sixty-four with hair turned grey
I'm still waiting to exhale and for once
have a momentary relief
from a life vengeful
a year before I'm put out to pasture
like a heifer overworked.
I know not what the twilight years will my way
bring a mystery it was in childhood, a mystery it
still is in old age.
A hustle death will have in taking me to the world
beyond though.
Having been short changed many times over in
life, I swear my fall won't be as easy as that.
This time,
I won't go down without a fight.
Death, beware!

Title: A Farmer's Return
Poet: Farai Chinaa Mlambo

Fed with toil,
Having dedicated his entire life
to tilling the soil,
At last, the farmer returns to his wife.
Several seasons away, in far off arable lands,
Leaving everything in the logical will of the rain-

maker,
And in God's able hands –
Himself, the ultimate peace and Love maker.
Like one fresh from detention
He arrives home with determination.
And the first thing to grab his attention
is her pregnancy.
The wife, now bulging with expectancy,
Hurries to embrace her dear husband
Under her own oppressive load.
Her thoughts race faster than her feet.
And her heart skips a bit, overcome with fits.
But she quickly calms herself
As an almighty voice commands a storm
to cede its untimely and unnecessary havoc.
A sweet smile of reassurance she wears
And in her heart she confidently swears;
"This time I'll bear him a son, for sure,
I shall bring honour to him and his family.
He shall be very very pleased;
Isn't what he always longed for.
I shall kowtow and call him Shewe.
I shall forever be his heart's desire."
But the farmer is functionally illiterate.
He is not too good with his mathematics.
He can't even count days of the calendar.
So he doesn't quite remember
when they last mated.
He just knows it was many moons ago
When there were some monsoons.
That night, like one possessed,
She flung herself wildly upon his being
And he thrust his plough into her fallow regions
Digging furrows so deep she screamed.
Or could it have been a mere dream?
He desperately tries to read the signs.
Then he resignedly sighs.
Something isn't adding up.
Still, he silently shoulders the responsibility
of the paternity
For he fears to offend her, should he ask;
He is aware of her suicidal tendencies.
He might lose both the seeds of the land
he impregnated
And the almost ripe seed in her womb
Upon the collective wrath of the ancestors
Who are quick to frown at harassment
of the fairer sex.

Title: Days like these
Poet: Sir OCTAgon

There are mornings that smoke weed,
That roll my days into blunt truths
Like this rolling stone which keeps gathering moss
Dust is a sure bet!
Noons are for toi toi;
Negotiations for joy with this mournable body
Patching leaking eyes with plastic hope from
recycled faith
Nights are for resolve;
Myriad of dilemmas to solve
Thoughts scattered about,
and emotions gathered in a corner
Its here they share a joint and discuss what to do
with me tomorrow.

Title: Distant shadows
Poet: tchigazz

silhouetted distant shadows
waltz before his cold strained eyes
causing odd reflections on ice
of horses, beggars and wishes too.
if only he were the grubby walls
which the shadows were gleefully licking
he wouldn't be wishing or imagining
but experiencing the feel of their tongues
they attract furtive peeps of strangers,
and keen puzzled peers
of perplexed passers-by,
cherishing the beauty of distant shadows
his fingertips itch to softly caress
sketching out the shadowy outline
nonchalantly nodding back and forth,
to a wheeze of his curious breath's puff
they appear golden-like summer sunset
shades
beautiful like a rainbow reflection,
across the slanting, sunlit rain showers
behold the beauty of distant shadows

Title: Progress Check
Poet: Patrick Hwande

Day by day, towards zero hour we're itching,
Bring your progress record for public scrutiny,
It's time we separated men from mice,
Rigmarole is an exercise in futility.
Why did Dorica die of treatable disease?
Why is the mass still mired in a bottomless pit
of poverty?
Why did Dhongi vanish for daring to flap his
wings?
Happiness is now a pure rarity,
Are we still living?
Why did you condemn us the living dead?

Title: Drops Of Rain
Poet: Andy Kahari

All I ever wished for was to be rain
And be in a race with mankind
With every thunder starting gun
Be the sprayed bullets in amorous congress
with spayed not clouds
Hope I had to espy on seeds of union drop-
lets they be; To ravage in precipitation sweat
drenching pores; Living I then rain in awe
As to who among men has ever been able to
eschew drops of rain
Yet many when in torrents
Will I espy on again striving to outrun dew's of
mist; When their days are already drenched
moaning's enduring a chew
Living nothing of this torrid man's broken life
shoe; Only for I to understand what they do
not perceive
Still to this sounding bell of time
Why they all are sweaty gongs in this race
they deem existence
When in pluvial already the wetting uterus is
dim wide for the dream running man

2023 Zimbabwe International Trade Fair



Brahman cattle breeder Morgan Sibanda's three-year-old bull Noble which won top prize at ZITE.

Rarely, in recent times, has the Harare Derby been this massive

ALWYN MABEHLA

FOR the first time in a long time, the big Harare Derby will have huge impact.

It is for contrasting reasons between both teams, but good enough reasons to shape up a real blockbuster on Sunday at the National Sports Stadium.

Dynamos and CAPS United renew their rivalry in what promises to be a thriller, but at the same time could prove the end for beleaguered Glamour Boys coach Herbert Maruwa.

The two Harare giants clash in what is this weekend's headline fixture at the Nationals Sports Stadium in the capital.

Both sides have had conflicting fortunes in the early rounds of the season and, on paper, it looks like the green half of the capital city might well prevail.

That the two giants come into the famous Harare Derby against this background makes it a highly anticipated encounter, a departure from the bore that fans were subjected to in the last few seasons.

The magic and significance of this iconic clash was now lost, buried beneath archival records.

Sunday, thankfully, is a big one.

DeMbare head into it under serious pressure from their ever hard-to-please fans. Maruwa's men have had an indifferent start to the season, winning only two of their opening five matches to sit in 7th position.

Last Sunday's morale-sapping 3-2 loss to Bulawayo Chiefs has amplified the pressure on Maruwa, who has barely settled into the job following his appointment at the beginning of the season to replace Tonderai Ndiraya.

Stung by the Chiefs defeat last weekend, the blue army is baying for the coach's blood already.

Defeat to United, their sworn city



Herbert Maruwa

foes, might prove the final straw. A win will buy time for the under-fire Dynamos gaffer, and at best rebuild the fans' trust after the early underwhelming performances.

Easier said than done, though, against a CAPS side with a sense of momentum following a promising

start to the season, which has seen them being spoken of as early title favourites.

Lloyd Chitembwe's side sit on top of the table with 12 points – undefeated with three wins and three draws.

They are building their season on a solid defence that has only been

breached once, in an entertaining 1-1 draw with champions FC Platinum in a game that many observers felt Makepekepe ought to have won.

In earnest, Chitembwe's charges have been fluid in almost all departments and, if they can maintain this kind of form, they indeed will have

a strong say in the destination of the championship. For Dynamos, it is a game that will most likely shape big decisions going forward.

Fans have seemingly rekindled their love with the local game – a humdinger should be in-store for the football-loving public.

From page 56

When this year we announced the final travelling team (for the Barthes Trophy), we also had in the background an academy team that we are looking to add into this system going forward. As we are going to be competing in the Junior World Rugby Trophy, we definitely have to keep our standards at that level. So we need to have youngsters in the wings. Youngsters that have trained with us, up to camp stage, so that they understand how we prepare as Junior Sables and what work is needed, and what standard is needed for final selection. So that's the plan, and it has worked well. Obviously we are glad to see that the chemistry is showing on the park, we are glad that it's paying dividends."

Born in a Muslim Harare family, the tournament in Kenya came right at the end of Ramadan, something De Souza holds dear in his life, but

The prayerful commander, the little general, and their merry band of troops

prefers to separate from his normal sporting life.

"My religion is just my faith, it has no effect on the way I manage the team, the way I coach," said the former Sables fan favourite.

"My coaching time is my coaching time, my work ethic is bound by my religion. How I carry myself, how I express myself to my players, how the team relate around each other — it all comes down to the

ethics that I'm bound by. My religion is Islam. So having Ramadan before the final camp, for me, it was just one of those events that we were preparing for. In the month (of Ramadan) we carried on as normal, it didn't affect me in any way. I carried my religious duties and I still coached and got the team ready. I still got to work and coach rugby in the evening. So that doesn't change my lifestyle, it has just become part

of my lifestyle that I have to coach, work and follow my religion."

Kenya defeated Namibia 24-13 in the other semi-final contest on Wednesday.

So Kenya await Zimbabwe in the final this Sunday, by virtue of the East Africans being automatic qualifiers for the Junior World Rugby Trophy that they will host in July.

But there is the small matter of being crowned African champions,

of course with the pride and bragging rights that come with it.

After running riot against Côte d'Ivoire and Tunisia without conceding a single try, Zimbabwe will be overwhelming favourites in the final, even in front of a strong Nairobi home crowd on Sunday. But don't say that to a perfectionist like Shaun De Souza.

"Yes, the scoreboard states that we have displayed dominance, but there is a lot of work we still need to work on," he said.

"The scoreboard is just a reflection of what you managed to convert, there are a lot of points that we left out on the field. We didn't cash in. If we had faced strong opposition, we would have put ourselves under pressure. But ja, that's what we will assess in the game review, the Kenya-Namibia game, to see what strategy we will go with in the final."



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The prayerful commander, the little general, and their merry band of troops

ENOCK MUCHINJO

PANASHE Zuze found himself trending this week, courtesy of a picture of his tiny frame next to the huge Côte d'Ivoire captain – in apparent on-field confrontation – as the referee frantically tried to separate the two.

Like Australia legend George Gregan, fresh-faced Zuze is the smallest man in his own team, but the side's natural leader. It is also worth noting that the great ex-Wallabies captain Gregan, whose middle name is Musarurwa, has Zimbabwean roots and was a nippy scrumhalf, just like Zuze.

Zimbabwe Under-20 skipper Zuze's image next to the Ivorian giant, of the same age as him, sparked wide-ranging reaction around the continent: amazement, subtle scorn, and even sheer ignorance.

Ignorance because while size does matter a great deal in rugby, it is not everything, as shown by the final score-line on Saturday, Zimbabwe 55 and Côte d'Ivoire 0.

Four days later, before the first Rugby Under-20 Africa Cup semi-final in Kenya on Wednesday, former Hartmann House and St George's College pupil Zuze also appeared in another attention-grabbing picture with his opposite number. He is seen shaking hands with the Tunisian skipper, an absolute bear of a man – bearded, intimidating, and taking a bird's eye view of the Zimbabwean number 9 and skipper.

The score in the end, a 66-6 rout of the big North Africans, sent rampaging Zimbabwe into Sunday's final against Kenya, guaranteeing the Young Sables a place at July's Junior World Rugby Trophy.

"Yes, definitely the Tunisians were towering over our captain," Zimbabwe head coach Shaun De Souza told



Zimbabwe's Panashe Zuze shakes hands with the Tunisian captain ahead of their semi-final clash on Wednesday.

The NewsHawks from Nairobi on Wednesday after another thoroughly convincing outing.

Pint-sized his captain might be, De Souza is a man immensely proud and confident of the fine balance of the Zimbabwe squad, and he did make good on his vow to challenge the Tunisians in the physical confrontation on Wednesday.

"For us it's a mind game, having Panashe go for the captains' photo, it's just something that sort of draws attention to the team and people think that Zim is small," De Souza declared.

"They don't know that he is just the diamond, with a bunch of elephants that are behind him. So ja, I think it has worked for us and

we are happy to have him in our leadership. Panashe's size has never been a factor, we have worked with him for a while, we understand him, we know how to utilise him. He has grown to understand my way of play and how I like things done. So he made the cut along with a strong support structure behind him."

While De Souza is chuffed to have Zuze leading from the front, he also has another ace up his sleeve in the form of replacement scrumhalf Shadrack Mandaza.

"He (Zuze) has a good combination with Shadrack Mandaza, and it's working well," De Souza said.

"Panashe comes in and does his work, and Shadrack comes in and finishes it off. They all have different attributes at 9, which definitely makes our game unique in the sense of tempo, and style of play when they both come on. It's about the way they lead the team when the changes are made. So ja, we are very happy to have these two and we're proud of what they are doing."

De Souza's team is unique in that players are drawn from diversified backgrounds – across social classes – with the greatest strength being the camaraderie forged from spending time together, and fighting bruising battles alongside each other.

"The team displays good brotherhood, they have now gelled, and they now know each other, they understand each other," stated De Souza.

"What people don't know is that I have been working with this team since 2021 when they were youngsters in the high-performance system. We've been building on this, and we've been working on a programme that has continuity.

Continued on page 55



ALSO INSIDE

'Losing is not an option': declares De Souza