The AfriFiles

Volume III - October, 2025

We Know Africa

Exclusive Interview

OMO: Zanzibar's resurgence needs willpower

Kings golden mirage global dealers looted Eswatini's promise

Odinga: The relentless lion who fought for Kenya's soul

The PSG star who chose Zanzibar over Maldives

Samia's presidential inevitable triumph

Samia's presidential inevitable triumph

Cover Story:

The A friFiles h as c hosen t o s potlight S amia Suluhu Hassan, the presidential candidate of Tanzania's ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), as the main news of this issue. The story explores the compelling political, structural, and historical factors that make her victory appear both certain and predictable, even before Tanzanians head to the polls on October 29, 2025.. **Listen to an audio analysis of Samia's successes - Page 6**

The AfriFile Profile:

The AfriFiles is the continent's flagship monthly technology-powered magazine, driven by Africa's top editors and journalists. It is shared free through Email, Signal, LinkedIn, email, and social platforms. Here, Africa's leaders and citizens unite to tell the real stories - of victories, challenges, and futures being built. Bold, incisive, and unapologetically African. The AfriFiles delivers the insights and perspectives that shape tomorrow.

TAF Team

Publisher: AIJC
The AfriFiles is a monthly magazine published by Impact Africa Journalists Consortium (AIJC).
Interim Chairman; Chief Knowledge Advisor: **Simon MKINA** (Tanzania)
Interim Vice Chairman: **Emmanuel DOGBEVU** (Ghana)
Secretary: **Emmanuel MUTAIZIBWA** (Uganda)
Contact:
Secretariat - IAJC,
20 Bldg -Baker Street,
Rosebank, Johannesburg,
South Africa.
Email: **info@iajc.africa**
Editorial:
Editorial Director: **Isabella ELIJAH** (Namibia)
Managing Editor: **Manaseli GDOBOI** (Ghana)
Editor: **Phinius GANIZWA** (Uganda)
Chief Sub Editor: **Nkwame AWESI** (Ghana)
Chief Reporter: **Julie KAMANENE** (Rwanda)
Senior Reporter: **Johnson WILLIAMS** (Nigeria)
Creation Lead: **Yassin LUPATU** (Tanzania)
Address:
General Enquires: **info@theafrifiles.com**
Editorial: **editor@theafrifiles.com**
Advertisement: **adverts@theafrifiles.com**
Ombudsman: In case of any complaints, please channel your concerns to: **ombuds@gmail.com**

Who Reads The AfriFiles?

The AfriFiles reaches a global audience of institutions and individuals seeking timely, accurate, and incisive analysis of Africa's history, challenges, and developments.

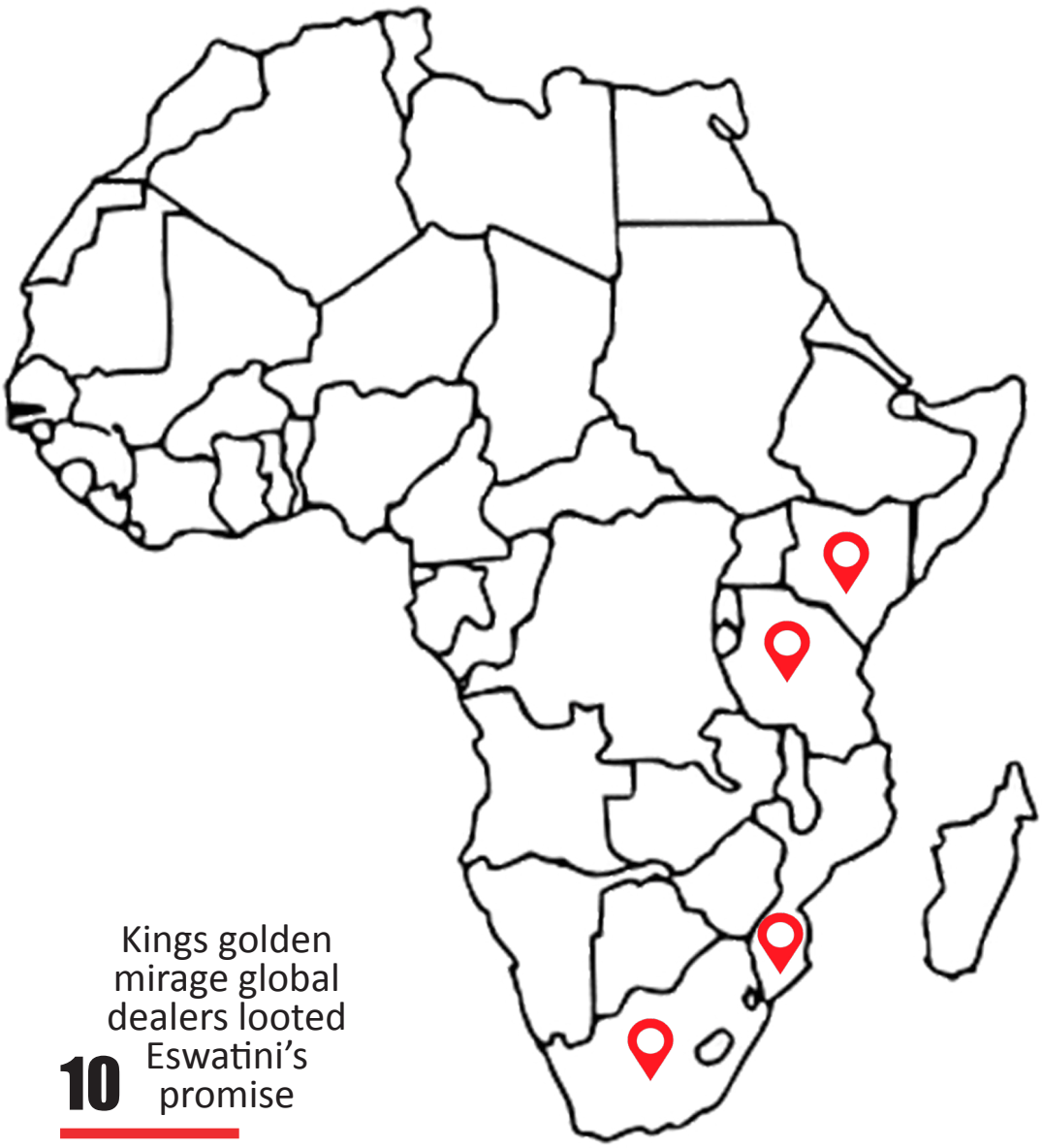
Its subscribers include elite individuals, government agencies, defense, intelligence, foreign affairs, and diplomatic corps - alongside multilateral bodies, business networks, universities and academic institutions.

SUBSCRIBE. IT'S FREE

GET The AfriFiles free. Do you value real and undistorted stories on Africa? Just send an email to; editor@theafrifiles.com or follow us on all social media through the handle; @theafrifiles

INSIDE

Contents



Kings golden mirage global dealers looted Eswatini's promise 10

ANC faces financial meltdown as creditors seize party assets 13

Odinga: The relentless lion who fought for Kenya's soul 30

OMO: Zanzibar's resurgence needs willpower 17

Chapo's bet on dialogue over firepower 14

The living clay of faith in Africa 34

The PSG star who chose Zanzibar over Maldives 21

0.17%

The national maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Uganda is about 170 deaths per 100,000 live births - which is 0.17%.

70%

It is estimated that 70% of Kenya's population are at risk of malaria. The most vulnerable being children. The population is 58 million.

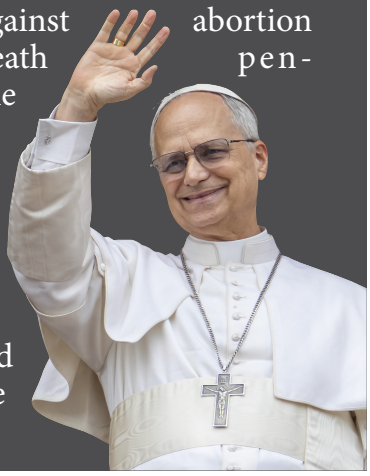
Global Beats

Pope's bold rebuke of hypocrisy

POPE Leo has ignited global debate with remarks that cut deep into politics, morality, and faith.

Pole accused conservatives of double standards of some administrations saying; "You can't be against abortion and support the death penalty—or the inhumane treatment of migrants."

The Chicago-born pontiff also condemned greed, criticized military rhetoric from various countries and urged action against climate destruction.



Putin warns over missile escalation

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has cautioned United States of America that supplying long-range Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine would mark a dangerous new stage in escalation, straining US-Russia ties.

Speaking at a forum recently, Putin said the move would cause "serious damage" to relations but insisted it would not alter the battlefield, where Russian forces are pressing forward. He acknowledged the missiles could strike Russian targets but stressed air defenses would quickly adapt.

"It will not change the balance of force," Putin declared, projecting confidence that Moscow's slow yet steady advances against Ukraine will continue despite western arms support. Russia and the United States have at times cooperated on various international missions, and both are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Big brother in your pocket

IMMIGRATION and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of The United States of America (USA), has quietly bought access to a powerful surveillance tool updated daily with billions of data points from mobile phones.

Internal ICE documents reveal the agency favored this "all-in-one" system because it fuses sweeping location records with social media intelligence.

The move signals ICE's intent to resume tracking people through harvested smartphone data - despite previously saying it had ended the practice.

Surveillance firms routinely sell massive datasets of human movement to governments, bypassing warrants or court oversight.

President Joe Biden administration backed off from purchasing the same devices after legal warnings, but now ICE is already back in the game.

China's clean plate revolution

LAUNCHED in 2020, China's "Clean Plate Campaign" is reshaping eating habits by urging citizens to order less and waste less.
Backed by President Xi Jinping, the campaign seeks tougher laws, tighter supervision, and stronger public awareness to stop food waste.

With 18 million tonnes discarded annually in big cities - enough to feed 30–50 million people, the stakes are enormous.

Though less wasteful per capita than the US or Australia, China's vast population magnifies the problem.

Critics note vague enforcement measures and controversial monitoring tactics, but the campaign has sparked nationwide debate on food culture, sustainability, and responsibility.

Cartoon by Gado

Share with us:

We welcome your voice. Share your views, opinions, suggestions, queries or reflections with our Editor. Your letters / message help enrich dialogue and broaden perspectives for our readers worldwide. **Send to editor@afrifiles.com**

Letters to the Editor

Samia can restore the promise

Editor,

I AM deeply concerned about the growing political instability in Tanzania, which threatens our peace and development. Division, intolerance, and corruption are eroding the democratic values our nation once cherished.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan has the vision, authority, and moral strength to steer the country back to unity, justice, and prosperity. She can restore promise and trust in leadership to make Tanzania great again.

A concerned Citizen,
Via email

Salute to The AfriFiles team

Editor,

I wish to extend my heartfelt congratulations to The AfriFiles magazine for its inspiring, godly, and transformative work for Africa. Your commitment to truth, justice, and uplifting African voices reflects divine purpose and journalistic excellence.

Through bold storytelling and moral integrity, The AfriFiles continues to awaken hope and unity across the continent. May your vision for a better Africa keep shining brightly.

Proud Reader,
Via email.

Will Raila's legacy breathe?

Editor,

THE passing of Raila Odinga has left Kenya in deep mourning and uncertainty. For decades, he embodied courage, reform, and hope for a united, democratic nation.

Now, as the country seeks direction, one question looms large; who will rise to uphold his legacy, safeguard peace, and continue his mission for justice and development? Kenya's stability depends on the answer.

Mourice Obuya,
Via WhatsApp

Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan

Samia's presidential inevitable triumph

By Editorial TEAM

LATER this month - on October 29, Tanzania heads to the polls in what will be its seventh general election since the reintroduction of multiparty democracy 33 years ago.

Seventeen political parties have nominated candidates, but the outcome seems foregone; President Samia Suluhu Hassan is on course for an emphatic victory that will secure her a second and final term in high office.

Her winning appears not a matter of if, but by what margin.

In a political landscape where the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) has never lost an election since independence, Samia's path is paved by incumbency, party machinery, and a divided opposition that has failed to regroup since the 2020 vote.

Tanzania, once hopeful for robust multiparty democracy, now risks sliding back into the realm of one-party dominance under democratic disguise, as the opposition continues to prove its political weakness in competing with the mighty ruling party.

The most defining feature of this election is the collapse of the opposition front. Once a formidable force, the opposition now lies scattered and silenced.

Chadema, the said main opposition party – in the Mainland Tanzania, has chosen to boycott the vote under the rallying cry "No Reforms, No Election."

Their boycott removes the only party with a real grassroots footprint and the mobilization power to challenge CCM in both urban and rural constituencies.

The party's symbolic figurehead, TunduLissu, faces treason charges, a legal battle that has effectively sidelined him from political life, at least for now when he is behind bars – and attending court in Dar es Salaam.

Listen to analysis on mobile

Listen to analysis on PC

His absence leaves a gaping void in the national discourse, and the opposition's voice has been reduced to whispers on social media rather than rallies in the streets.

Another blow landed on ACT Wazalendo, the second-largest opposition outfit, after the disqualification of its presidential candidate, Luhaga Mpina, a former minister who defected from CCM just before the nomination process.

The High Court's ruling to uphold his exclusion shut the final door on consequential competition.

What remains are sixteen minor candidates — well-intentioned but virtually invisible.

Their parties exist largely on paper, starved of funds, structure, or national resonance.

Their campaigns struggle to attract crowds, airtime, or even curiosity. The ballot paper will be crowded; the race will not.

The machinery of power

Behind the expected landslide lies an unrivalled political machine.

CCM's organisational depth reaches every ward, village, and neighbourhood — a network woven into the state itself. Its mobilisation capacity is unmatched, sustained by decades of patronage and state resources.

President Samia has spent her first term consolidating control over this machinery. Regional commissioners, district executives, and local administrators act as de facto campaign coordinators.

One political analyst, Mwanaidi Msami, commenting on the role of regional and district commissioners during elections, said their biggest role is rather supportive than coordinative as people thinks.

The blurred line between state and party, long a feature of Tanzanian politics, has only deepened.

The Independent National Electoral Commission, though nominally autonomous, is widely viewed as sympathetic to the ruling establishment.

In Tanzania's political culture, such alignment makes it nearly impossible for any challenger to triumph, and unthinkable for them to be declared the winner.

From transition to transformation

Yet Samia's dominance is not built on coercion alone. When she assumed office in March 2021, following the sudden death of President John Magufuli, she was seen merely as a caretaker.

Within months, she defied that label, recasting herself as a reformist and conciliator.

Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan

She reopened banned media outlets; Mawio and MwanaHalisi weeklies, freed political detainees, and invited opposition leaders for dialogue — small but symbolic gestures that re-energised civic space and restored international goodwill.

"President Samia brought back the language of civility," says Dr. Kisinza Leonard, a lawyer in Dar es Salaam. "She calmed a nation that had been shouting at itself."

Economically, she maintained Magufuli's infrastructure drive but replaced his combative nationalism with measured, investor-friendly governance.

Projects in energy, mining, and transport resumed with fresh financing. Her Tanzania Vision 2050 plan promised diversification into manufacturing, renewables, and digital technology.

For the first time in a decade, Tanzania was again a darling of the World Bank and IMF, which applauded her fiscal discipline and policy stability.

Among business leaders and middle-class voters, Samia became the face of continuity with compassion — a blend of firmness and empathy rarely seen in Tanzanian politics.

A foregone election

Some unofficial opinion surveys and political analysts predict Samia will secure above 90 percent of the vote — margins reminiscent of CCM's golden era in the early 2000s.

The nearest challenger, perhaps from Chama cha Ukombozi wa Umma (Chaumma) or another fringe party, is unlikely to reach even three percent, let alone five percent to qualify for receiving monthly government subsidies.

Young voters, a demographic that constitutes nearly two-thirds of the electorate – as in many African countries, express dissatisfactions that elections change very little to their expectations.

Civil society groups and some online media, predict turnout could fall below 50 percent, one of the lowest in Tanzania's history.

Activists online, and Chadema, have already announced "silent protests" on polling day, urging citizens to stay home in symbolic rejection of what they call a "staged election."

Whether these calls translate into visible action remains uncertain, but they reflect the depth of public disillusionment with the electoral process.

The stakes of victory

A landslide win will give Samia unrivalled leverage within CCM, allowing her to shape its next generation of leaders. But it also raises expectations. Her second term will test whether she can translate political security into policy delivery.

Internationally, Samia's reformist image faces its own pressure. Western partners admire her diplomacy but remain uneasy about Tanzania's shrinking political competition.

> **When she gets back in the high office, expect renewed emphasis on women's empowerment, a cause central to her identity as Tanzania's first female head of state..."**

The imprisonment of opposition figures, allegations of enforced disappearances, and the slow pace of judicial reform could erode her credibility abroad.

If the election is widely perceived as unfair, the glow of her reformist reputation may fade quickly.

The shape of a second term

Insiders suggest Samia's next government will be technocratic and continuity-driven, anchored on economic modernisation, energy security, and public-sector efficiency.

"When she gets back in the high office, expect renewed emphasis on women's empowerment, a cause central to her identity as Tanzania's first female head of state..."

"Foreign policy will likely maintain its balancing act; deepening ties with China and India while courting Western investors and aid partners," says Hamisa Holli, a political analyst, based in Dar es Salaam, a country's economic capital.

Tanzania's quiet diplomacy in regional conflicts, from the Great Lakes to Mozambique's Cabo Delgado, is expected to continue under her watch.

Yet, behind CCM's unity lies a simmering reality; succession politics. With the constitution limiting Samia to two terms, the jockeying for 2030 will begin almost immediately.

How she manages internal ambitions could determine whether CCM remains cohesive or fractures along generational lines.

Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan

Continuity without contest

The 2025 general election may go down as the most predictable in Tanzania's modern history under multiparty elections, an exercise in affirmation rather than competition. For many citizens, it is less a battle for power than a ritual of continuity.

Still, even an uncontested victory can carry political weight. It grants Samia the moral authority to pursue deeper reforms if she chooses; strengthening institutions, confronting corruption, impeding abductions, and restoring public faith in democracy.

Whether she uses that mandate to democratise or entrench Tanzania's political order will define her legacy.

As the nation prepares to cast ballots in an election it already knows the result of, one truth echoes through the political landscape; Samia's inevitable triumph is also Tanzania's defining test - of what democracy means when choice no longer matters.

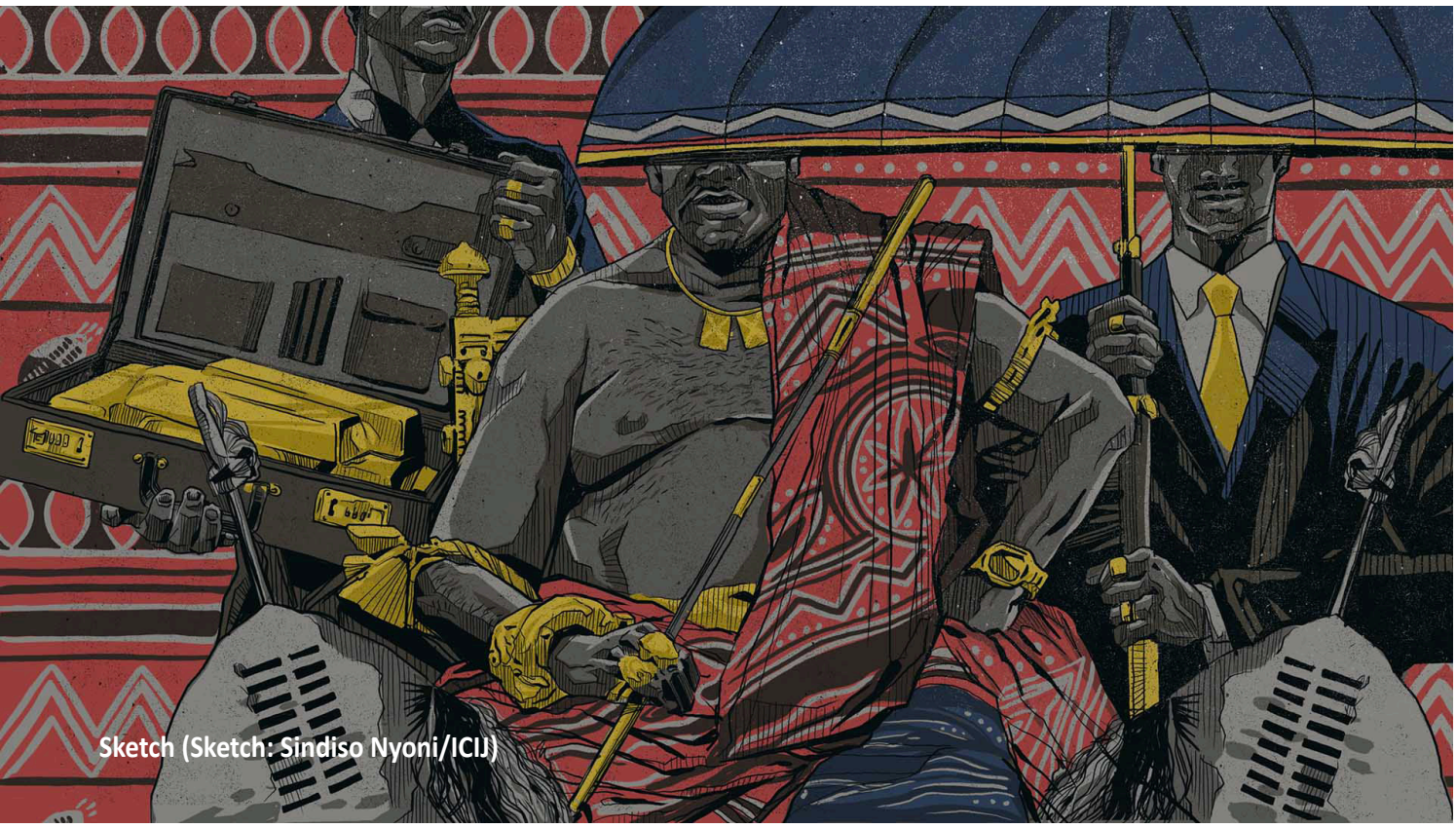
Samia 100 days in office

In her first 100 days in office, President Samia Suluhu Hassan has set a tone of renewal and reconciliation.

She has pledged to heal the nation's political divisions, revive the long-stalled process of drafting a new constitution, and steer Tanzania toward a future of inclusivity and stability.

Her early days have been marked by a softer political tone, open dialogue, and a promise to restore trust between citizens and the state.

Samia's message is clear; national unity, accountability, and a better life for every Tanzanian will define her leadership and the country's next chapter.



Sketch (Sketch: Sindiso Nyoni/ICIJ)

Kings golden mirage global dealers looted Eswatini's promise

Leaked financial records reveal how Eswatini's royal project was hijacked by powerful smugglers moving millions through Africa's last absolute monarchy.

By Micah REDDY

BENEATH misty hills of Eswatini, where sugarcane fields shimmer and cattle graze between acacia trees, lies a vast ghost land known as the Royal Science and Technology Park.

Once hailed as a bold experiment to transform Africa's last absolute monarchy into a modern economy, it now stands silent - an empty monument to greed and deception.

Launched under the vision of King Mswati III, the project was supposed to bring prosperity, foreign investment, and innovation.

Instead, it became the unlikely heart of an international gold-laundering network - a glittering mirage that drew in smugglers, shell companies, and royal insiders.

A dream that began with evictions

For Musa Motsa, a 51-year-old farmer and father of six, the dream began with heartbreak. His family lived on the land outside Matsapha, growing cabbages and fetching water from a spring.

But in 2012, police armed with rifles stormed in. "We slept in the open - no roof, no food," Motsa recalls quietly. Their houses were harshly demolished.

He and 180 others were expelled to make way for what officials called a Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

The government promised factories, laboratories, and jobs. Instead, bulldozers flattened homes, and families like Motsa's scattered.

A decade later, the land lies empty again. Grass creeps over wide, unused boulevards. Streetlights never lit still stand in rows. Only one government office block rises from the wilderness — a monument to broken promises.

The illusion of prosperity

On paper, the SEZ gleamed with ambition. Press releases boasted of "first-world status." Officials spoke of high-tech industries and export hubs. Two gold refineries; Mint of Eswatini and RME Bullion — were touted as its crown jewels.

But the refineries existed only on paper. No furnaces roared, no workers melted gold. Yet millions of dollars flowed through their accounts.

Leaked documents later revealed that between November and December 2018, nearly $4.7 million passed through Eswatini's banks in a matter of weeks.

The money originated from a South African "cash-in-transit" company and landed in the account of Keenin Schofield, a jeweler - and the king's son-in-law.

From there, it moved through Mint of Eswatini, one of the supposed refineries, and on to Dubai.

Investigators suspected the operation was a sophisticated laundering scheme exploiting the SEZ's tax-free and lightly regulated environment.

Royal connections and global shadows

Schofield, then in his early thirties, was known for selling diamond-encrusted watches and gold chains to footballers and celebrities. But his biggest client was royalty - he was married to Princess Temtsimba, one of King Mswati's daughters.

His business partner, Alistair Mathias, a Canadian businessman based in Dubai, presented himself as an investment expert.

Al Jazeera's Gold Mafia exposé later described him as the "architect" behind a sprawling laundering network that moved billions of dollars in gold across Africa.

Together, Schofield and Mathias registered Mint of Eswatini inside the SEZ, each holding half the shares.

Within weeks, suspicious funds began flowing in.

According to Eswatini's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the transactions showed all the hallmarks of money laundering; large, rapid, and circular.

Mint of Eswatini had no offices, no refinery, and no employees. It was, as one central bank memo put it, "a shell company acting as a conduit for funds of unknown origin."

Farmer Musa Motsa stands in front of the land where he used to live. The land was cleared to make way for a special economic zone in Mutsapha, Eswatini.
(Photo: Yeshiel Panchia / ICIJ)

The gold trail to Dubai

When Eswatini's banks froze Mint's accounts in early 2019 for lack of "Know Your Client" documentation, Mathias simply created another company — RME Bullion - again inside the SEZ.

This time, RME was promoted as being "endorsed by His Majesty King Mswati III." It quickly won permission to move $40 million a month across borders without full oversight.

RME claimed it would import gold from African countries, refine it in Eswatini, and export it to Dubai.

But there was no refinery - not even a melting furnace.

Bankers grew alarmed. In confidential reports, the Central Bank of Eswatini warned that the SEZ had become "a gigantic loophole" for criminals, allowing "transactions of no economic value to the country."

The FIU echoed the warning, suggesting that Eswatini was being "used as a conduit for smuggling illegally obtained gold to the United Arab Emirates."

The Central Bank later revoked RME's special privileges after concluding the company's operations were fictitious.

> **It gave the illusion of modernity," says financial crimes expert Paul Holden, "but in practice, it was a playground for the world's gold mafias."**

The empire of gold and greed

Mathias, in undercover recordings, bragged about his global reach. "Gold is cash," he told Al Jazeera reporters posing as investors. "As long as you're in gold trading, you can move money anywhere."

His partner Schofield told the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) that he thought the operation was legitimate at first but later realized it "could have been illegal."

He blamed Mathias, saying he was young and naïve; "of course now that I've grown up, this is part of my entrepreneurial journey."

Mathias denied any wrongdoing, insisting he never laundered money or gold. Authorities in Eswatini, Dubai, and Zimbabwe have so far not charged him.

King Mswati III

Gold trader Alistair Mathias, filmed by undercover Al Jazeera reporters. (Photo: via Al Jazeera)

A Kingdom's betrayal

The Royal Science and Technology Park was meant to symbolize Eswatini's leap toward progress - the king's promise to lift his people from poverty. Instead, it became a case study in elite capture and global exploitation.

For ordinary Swazis, life remains hard. Nearly 60% of young people are unemployed, and the country has one of the world's lowest life expectancies.

Meanwhile, King Mswati - with 11 wives, over 30 children, and a fleet of luxury cars - continues to preach "self-reliance."

Analysts say the scandal underscores how secrecy and royal privilege turned the SEZ into a perfect laundering hub.

"It gave the illusion of modernity," says financial crimes expert Paul Holden, "but in practice, it was a playground for the world's gold mafias."

The land that dreamed

Back in Matsapha, the silence is haunting. Motsa stands near the ruins of his old home, the land he once cultivated now fenced off and forgotten.

"I am 51 years old and have no home," he says softly. "The sad part is, there is nothing here."

The Royal Science and Technology Park promised to lift Eswatini to prosperity. Instead, it exposed a kingdom's vulnerability - where power met corruption, and gold turned a dream to dust. ■

92%

This is the approximate of South Sudan's population of 8.2 million live below the poverty line, defined as surviving on less than US $2 per day.

5.4%

Ethiopia's obesity rate is relatively low compared to many higher-income countries, but it is increasing.

ANC faces financial meltdown as creditors seize party assets

By Robert MAAMLE

FOR the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa's ruling party for three decades, the financial storm has returned - fiercer and more perilous than ever.

What was once whispered in political corridors is now playing out in the open; the party that liberated a nation is struggling to liberate itself from debt.

The crisis came to a head after Ezulweni Investments - the company that designed and printed the ANC's 2019 election campaign materials - finally lost patience.

After years of unfulfilled promises, the firm has moved to attach several of the party's bank accounts and assets, including office equipment, as part of a legal bid to recover a staggering R102 million owed.

Writs of execution have already been secured against at least two major ANC accounts. Insiders confirm that computers, printers, and furniture were seized from the party's historic headquarters in downtown Johannesburg.

The move has crippled daily operations and laid bare a worsening liquidity crisis that is shaking the ANC's foundations.

Documents seen by The AfriFiles reveal that the party also owes money to seven companies and four individuals, most linked to consultancy contracts that remain unpaid.

Staff members, already reeling from months of salary delays, say morale is at an all-time low.

"We're tired of empty assurances," said one long-serving employee who asked not to be named. "The party can't keep blaming apartheid or the economy forever."

In an exclusive comment to The AfriFiles, ANC treasurer-general Gwen Ramokgopa admitted the party is under strain but insisted that legitimate debts would be honored.

"Those clear and authentic debts will be paid," she said. "But there are some few things to put in order first."

Behind the scenes, Ramokgopa and her team are scrambling to negotiate repayment plans and reach out to old allies for financial support.

Yet sources close to the leadership concede that the ANC's once-reliable donor network, once overflowing with corporate goodwill, has all but evaporated, wary of reputational risks and the party's fading credibility.

"This is not just a cash-flow issue; it's an existential crisis," political economist Sibosiso Mandle told The AfriFiles. "The ANC's inability to manage its own finances mirrors the dysfunction it has presided over in the state."

As sheriffs move through the party's headquarters enforcing court orders, the image is painfully symbolic; the liberation movement that once stood for economic freedom now stands on the brink of financial collapse.

Unless a lifeline arrives soon, the ANC may see not just its assets - but its legacy - auctioned away, piece by piece. ■

Chapo's bet on dialogue over firepower

If Chapo follows through, his gamble will not simply be to negotiate with enemies. It will be to recognize that Cabo Delgado's war is less about ideology than about abandonment.

By Emmanuel MUNYUKI

PRESIDENT Daniel Chapo of Mozambique is signaling a dramatic shift in how his government confronts the brutal Cabo Delgado insurgency.

In a rare admission of failure on the battlefield, Chapo told Al Jazeera that Mozambique cannot bomb its way to peace. The only way forward, he declared, is through dialogue - government and insurgents, face to face.

For a man who has inherited one of Africa's most stubborn conflicts, it was an unusually candid moment.

Chapo conceded that the fight is not going well, and the evidence is everywhere. Rebel fighters remain active across the north, ambushing Macomia even as the army claims victories in Mocímboa da Praia.

Every government push seems to scatter militants only for them to resurface elsewhere. After eight bloody years, the message is stark; this war is far from won.

Mozambique's President Daniel Chapo. Photo: AL24

Chapo's government leans heavily on foreign muscle, especially Rwandan troops guarding the Rovuma Basin's multibillion-dollar gas fields - the economic lifeline Mozambique cannot afford to lose.

Yet, even with international firepower, peace remains elusive. The president seems to sense what many already whisper; Cabo Delgado cannot be pacified at gunpoint.

But declaring the need for talks is easier than making them real. Since first floating the idea in June, Chapo has unveiled no roadmap, no mediators, no sign that insurgents are even willing to engage.

Meanwhile, Cabo Delgado marked a grim milestone - the eighth anniversary of the rebellion - with residents once again fleeing Mocímboa da Praia, the cradle of the insurgency.

The rebels remain shadowy, their leadership structure murky, their motivations tangled between local grievances and the global jihadist narrative of the Islamic State.

What is clear is who does the fighting. Police in Mocímboa are estimating that 80 percent of insurgents are local youth, drawn from across the province. They are not outsiders but Mozambicans whose lives have been marked by poverty, joblessness, and despair.

That may be Chapo's opening. For all the talk of jihad, most young fighters dream less of a caliphate and more of opportunity - work, schooling, and dignity.

A strategy that mixes dialogue with development, that listens as much as it confronts, could drain the rebellion of its fuel.

If Chapo follows through, his gamble will not simply be to negotiate with enemies. It will be to recognize that Cabo Delgado's war is less about ideology than about abandonment.

And only by answering the cries of its youth can Mozambique begin to glimpse peace.

We don't just need governments that deliver, we need governments that listen" **Rakesh Rajani, President, JustSystems, opening the 9th OGP Global Summit in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain.**

BRICS rising: Africa's escape from the debt trap

By Dr. Eugene MAXWELL

ACROSS Africa, finance ministers are juggling impossible arithmetic. Debt service payments are ballooning, currencies are sinking, and foreign reserves are drying up.

In more than a dozen countries, interest costs alone swallow over half of annual revenues. From Lusaka to Accra, treasuries are gasping for oxygen.

Now the expected game changer has entered the game for rescue - Brics ; the coalition of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, now expanded to include Egypt and Ethiopia.

Its leaders are promoting a new promise; a financial lifeline outside the orbit of the IMF and World Bank. Could this emerging bloc be Africa's route out of debt?

A new financial grammar

Through its financial establishments; the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, BRICS offers loans and liquidity support meant to counterbalance Western financial dominance.

The NDB has already funded renewable-energy, transport, and water projects across South Africa and Egypt - often with fewer political strings attached.

BRICS finance ministers are also exploring de-dollarization, encouraging trade settlements in local or alternative currencies.

For African economies battered by dollar shortages and exchange-rate volatility, the idea is appealing; reduce reliance on the greenback and reclaim monetary breathing space.

Hope meets hesitation

But optimism must be tempered with realism. BRICS loans, while attractive, are still small compared to Africa's vast debt stock - estimated above $1.1 trillion.

Most NDB projects remain modest in scale, and repayment terms are not radically softer than those of traditional lenders.

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa. Photo: Linked in

Meanwhile, China, BRICS' financial heavyweight, already holds a large share of African sovereign debt, raising fears that old dependencies may simply be rebranded.

Critics also warn that "no strings attached" can mean less transparency and weaker governance standards.

Without strict oversight, new loans risk feeding the same inefficiencies and corruption that deepened previous crises.

Towards smart partnerships

Yet, dismissing BRICS outright would be short-sighted. The bloc could help African economies diversify funding, negotiate better global terms, and pilot regional financing tools under the African Continental Free Trade Area.

If Africa uses BRICS as a bridge - not a substitute, it could gain leverage to reform debt frameworks and boost sustainable investment.

The verdict

BRICS will not magically erase Africa's debt, but it can loosen the noose. The real test lies in how African leaders use this partnership; to escape dependency, or to reinvent it in a new accent. ■

A Palestinian girl carry cans to collect water as she walks by houses which were destroyed in an Israeli strike, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, May 22, 2024. (Photo: Mohammed Salem /Reuters).

Rebuilding Palestine's lifeline restoring water, hope

By The AfriFile REPORTER

WATER has become Gaza's silent weapon of war. Once a source of life, it now symbolizes despair — with pipes shattered, wells poisoned, and families walking miles for a few drops of unsafe water.

At the Eighth Cairo Water Week, ended recently, Egypt's Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Hani Sewilam, made a powerful pledge; his country will lead efforts to rebuild Palestine's broken water infrastructure, a sector he called "a victim of war and neglect turned into a weapon of collective punishment."

Speaking during a session titled Enhancing Resilience through Strategic Investments in Palestine's Water Sector, Sewilam laid bare the devastation. More than 90 percent of Gaza's water systems are damaged or destroyed, and 97 percent of its water is unfit for human consumption.

"Children walk kilometres for just a few litres of unsafe water, while hospitals struggle to maintain basic hygiene," he said. The collapse of wastewater systems, he added, has contaminated groundwater that families rely on to survive.

The crisis is no less dire in the West Bank, where some communities receive as little as 30 litres per person daily, far below the World Health Organization's minimum standard of 100 litres. "This is not just a technical failure," Sewilam warned. "It is a humanitarian and moral catastrophe."

Egypt, he said, stands ready to act, deploying its expertise in hydraulic engineering, desalination, and wastewater management to support recovery efforts.

Egyptian companies will collaborate with the Palestinian Water Authority to design a comprehensive rebuilding plan.

Sewilam outlined a three-pillar framework; restoring safe water access, investing in climate-resilient and decentralized systems, and fostering regional cooperation to secure Palestine's place in a shared water future.

He also revealed plans for a Gaza Reconstruction Financing Conference, which would prioritize water and sanitation funding through dedicated international support.

Sewilam called for a global coalition to rebuild Palestine's shattered lifeline. "We will walk this path hand in hand with Palestine," he declared. "Because water is not a privilege — it is a human right." ■

OMO: Zanzibar's resurgence needs willpower

▶ Face to face with 'Second in Command' of the archipelago

Great Interview

Zanzibar's First Vice President, Othman Masoud Othman

Zanzibar's First Vice President, Othman Masoud Othman (OMO) — the presidential candidate from the opposition ACT-Wazalendo — speaks with rare candour about power, peace, political hypocrisy, and the uncertain future of the archipelago's youth and economy.

By Andrew MSECHU, Zanzibar

The AfriFiles: You've now spent some time serving as the First Vice President of Zanzibar. How would you describe the experience? Are you enjoying your position?

Othman: To be utterly honest, I do not have job satisfaction in this role. When we came into office, our primary mission was to restore peace and stability in Zanzibar, a goal that, sadly, remains unfulfilled.

We did not enter government to build roads or new buildings; those were never Zanzibar's main problems. Our priority was reconciliation and justice.

Yet what comforts me is to know that I am still part of the ongoing efforts to seek a better, more peaceful Zanzibar, working with good intentions and persistence.

In pursuing this, there is no one we haven't spoken to - from CCM leaders to retired elders.

Our commitment has always been genuine; why shouldn't Zanzibar reach a stage where elections are peaceful and no one gets hurt?

The tragedy is that free and fair elections do not require billions of shillings, only honest political will.

Our colleagues in the ruling party, CCM made promises to ensure that, but they have failed to deliver. Why? No one seems to know.

The AfriFiles: History shows Zanzibar has never held a truly free and fair election. If your party were to lose in a fair contest, would you accept the results?

Othman: We've always been clear on that. Our late founder, Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad, insisted that legitimate victory must never be contested, it should be congratulated.

We've said openly, whoever wins a credible election will receive our hats-off and cooperation. If we can work with our political rivals even under atmosphere of injustice, why wouldn't we cooperate in times of peace?

Our top priority is not victory; it is peace. Zanzibar cannot move forward if it continues under toxic political culture.

Zanzibar's First Vice President, Othman Masoud Othman (OMO) — the opposition ACT Wazalendo's presidential candidate — speaks with rare candour and conviction about power, peace, and political hypocrisy, while reflecting on the uncertain future facing the islands' youth and fragile economy. (Photo by Fidelis Felix)

Even if we win today under the hostile environment, that victory would be meaningless.

Right now, Zanzibar is stuck in the political mud. The first task is to pull it out, to clean the ground before we can truly move forward. Otherwise, we'll keep splashing dirt on each other without progress.

The AfriFiles: How do you assess President Hussein Mwinyi's administration?

Othman: I have served in public service for more than 25 years, holding several sensitive positions. I've worked alongside President Mwinyi — he is a leader, but he must find the courage to listen to his own conscience and the people's will, not just his party's voice.

One of the key lessons I've learned in leadership is the importance of ethical conduct and protecting the dignity of office. Today, unfortunately, some leaders have abandoned those principles.

Instead of integrity, we now see a culture of flattery — an alarming level of sycophancy. Leaders are rarely told the truth; they are praised even for their mistakes. This erosion of honesty is not only dangerous for governance — it corrodes the very soul of our nation.

The founders of National of Government Unity (GNU) of Zanzibar; President Amani Karume (R) with Maalim Seif Shariff Hamad. (Photo by FVPZ Office)

The AfriFiles: Recently, there have been political voices suggesting that President Mwinyi should be granted an extension of his next term. What is your take?

Othman: It was clear those remarks did not represent CCM's official position. They came from individuals within the ruling party pursuing personal interests.

But constitutionally speaking, the presidential term limit is not a party matter; it is a matter of the Constitution, which belongs to the people. The party is a child of the Constitution; it cannot rise above it.

In Zanzibar, the section on presidential tenure is well protected. It cannot be changed without a public referendum.

Those proposing otherwise were simply entertaining themselves, another symptom of the sycophancy I mentioned earlier.

The AfriFiles: Within the Government of National Unity, what measures have been taken to address youth unemployment?

Othman: We've made some efforts, yes, but the real problem lies in how we empower our youth. Take this example; Zanzibar has over 600 hotels, yet after six decades we still import basic items like wheelbarrows, tissues, toothpicks, and even small cleaning tools. These could easily be produced locally.

We should focus on nurturing small industries and value addition. There are entrepreneurs making tissues and other small products, but they need support to scale up.

Similarly, many young people are in fish farming or seaweed cultivation, but sadly without access to seed money.

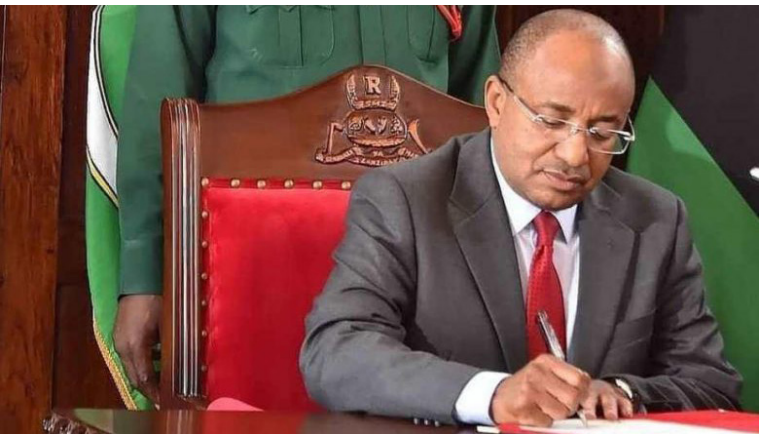
We've created investment funds and built technical colleges, but it's still not enough, we need more of that and create a basket fund for the startups.

The AfriFiles: It's often said Zanzibar's economy relies too heavily on services. Is the government doing enough to transition toward production?

Othman: Technical colleges are part of the solution, but training alone is not enough. Young graduates need capital to start businesses.

The youth empowerment fund exists, but it's too small to make a national impact.

Zanzibar's First Vice President, Othman Masoud Othman (C) speaking to Senior Editor, Peter Nyanje (R), and Senior Reporter, Andrew Msechu (L), during a special interview at his home Unguja, Zanzibar.
(Photo by FVPZ Office)



Zanzibar's President, Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi

> **We need to support these value chains; from storage to packaging to marketing. At the same time, conservation must remain central.**

The truth is, service economies benefit only a few. We need systems that uplift the majority. Look at Mauritius; they diversified by registering offshore companies but required each to employ at least three locals. It worked. Zanzibar too must find creative, inclusive economic models.

The AfriFiles: Do you believe the Blue Economy can transform Zanzibar?

Othman: The Blue Economy has potential, yes, but our approach so far has been limited to formalizing small-scale fishing.

Many of the boats distributed to people can't go far into the deep ocean. Even when fishermen return with large catches, we lack processing systems for exports. The catches end up in the household kitchens.

We need to support these value chains; from storage to packaging to marketing. At the same time, conservation must remain central. If everyone fishes without regulation, we'll destroy the ecosystem.

There's also untapped potential in salt production, an entire subsector that has received very little attention.

So I would say, the Blue Economy holds great promise, but only if we invest strategically and sustainably. ■

A tale of unity, heritage

ZANZIBAR, a semi-autonomous archipelago off Tanzania's coast, is famed for its tourism, spice trade, white-sand beaches, and rich Swahili-Arab heritage centered in historic 'Stone Town.'

Politically, it has long navigated tensions between the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and opposition ACT Wazalendo. Following disputed elections, the two parties formed a Government of National Unity (GNU) to promote peace, reconciliation, and shared governance.

This unique power-sharing model, uniting CCM's dominance with ACT Wazalendo's reformist agenda, aims to heal divisions, foster democratic inclusion, and secure Zanzibar's stability while preserving its proud identity as the Isles of Cloves.

The PSG star who chose Zanzibar over Maldives

Achraf Hakimi

Destiny | Zanzibar

Achraf Hakimi in a group photo with Patandi school students in Arusha when visited Tanzania in June, 2024, (Photo: The Citizen).

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

UNDER the turquoise skies of the Indian Ocean, Achraf Hakimi walked ashore in Zanzibar - the island where history, culture, and natural beauty converge.

To the outside world, he is the Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) right-back, the Moroccan star whose speed and skill electrify stadiums from Paris to Doha. But here, he was more than an athlete.

He was a guest, a global icon discovering a corner of Africa that has long enchanted sultans, explorers, and dreamers alike.

Hakimi's journey to Tanzania — and especially to Zanzibar — was more than a celebrity holiday. It was a statement. One of the world's most recognizable footballers chose the Spice Islands not merely to unwind but to celebrate Africa's richness, connect with its people, and remind the world that inspiration does not always come from European arenas or glittering megacities. Sometimes, it rises from the coral beaches of the Swahili coast.

A Star's Journey East

Hakimi's week-long tour began on the mainland, where he visited Arusha and made headlines for his generosity at Patandi School for students with special needs. Computers, projectors, and laptops flowed from his hands — gifts that will open doors of opportunity far from the roar of Parc des Princes.

Achraf Hakimi with his mother

From there, the journey carried him east to Zanzibar, where he was officially welcomed by the Minister of Tourism and Heritage, Mudrik Soraga.

It was more than a protocol moment; it was symbolic. One of Africa's proudest football sons was being embraced on African soil not as a stranger, but as family.

Achraf Hakimi

On social media, images of Hakimi exploring Stone Town spread fast. In a world where celebrity vacations so often orbit around the Maldives, Miami, or Mykonos, the sight of a PSG star choosing Zanzibar was refreshing.

Suddenly, the Spice Islands were not just a postcard — they were proof that even the global elite seek meaning, serenity, and renewal in East Africa.

More than beaches

Zanzibar has long captivated adventurers with its white-sand beaches, spice plantations, and the winding alleys of Stone Town — a Unesco World Heritage site.

For Hakimi, this was a chance to experience more than leisure. It was a reconnection with cultural depth.

As he wandered streets once walked by Omani sultans, Indian merchants, African traders, and European explorers, the island's layered identity seemed to mirror his own; Moroccan, African, European-raised, yet unmistakably global.

For icons like Hakimi, visits like this are not just tourism; they are pilgrimages to heritage. By choosing Zanzibar, he showed that Africa is not only a supplier of talent to the world - it is also the stage where its sons and daughters return, find joy, and give back.

Inspiration beyond football

Hakimi's presence reverberated far beyond football circles. His visit was a subtle but powerful endorsement of Tanzania's tourism brand.

A single photograph of him against the Zanzibar sunset can travel across millions of feeds, generating publicity no marketing budget could ever buy.

> **By choosing Zanzibar, he showed that Africa is the largest stage where its sons and daughters return, find joy, and give back.**

But more than influence, it carried heart. Here was a young man who has scaled the heights of global sport, yet chose to spend time with schoolchildren in Arusha and to walk barefoot on Zanzibar's sand instead of hiding away in an exclusive resort.

For young Africans, it was proof of humility and belonging. For fellow global icons, it was a reminder that fame does not have to disconnect you from your roots - it can amplify them.

The ripple effect

Tourism boards across Africa have long sought the celebrity spark. The Maldives thrives because every Instagram post from a footballer or Hollywood star becomes priceless advertising. Hakimi's Zanzibar journey offers Tanzania that same momentum.

If leveraged well, it could spark a ripple effect. Tomorrow, perhaps another PSG teammate, a Grammy-winning musician, or a Hollywood director may follow.

Because Zanzibar offers more than beauty; it offers authenticity. Here, luxury is not sterile but alive - spice farms where cloves still grow, dhows drifting on the horizon, the call to prayer echoing beside centuries-old churches. It is heritage, humanity, and hospitality woven together.

Hakimi with Tanzania's champion football club - Yanga President, Hersi Said

A promise to return

Perhaps the most stirring part of Hakimi's visit was his pledge to come back. "I will return," he said - words that echoed not just as a personal promise but as a challenge to others. To return is to belong, and belonging is what every destination longs to inspire.

For Zanzibar and Tanzania, that vow is priceless. It transforms Hakimi's trip from a fleeting celebrity sighting into the start of a relationship.

That vow hints at a future where global icons do not simply pass through Africa but become advocates for it - celebrating its beauty, supporting its communities, and inspiring others to follow.

Beyond the headlines

Hakimi's Zanzibar story can be read in many ways; as a holiday, as philanthropy, or as part of the new African celebrity circuit. But above all, it is proof that inspiration travels both ways. Just as Hakimi inspires millions on the pitch, so too did Zanzibar inspire him.

And that is the essence of this journey. When global icons like Hakimi choose Africa, they do more than escape their schedules.

They actually validate Africa's place on the world stage as a destination of choice, not chance. They encourage others to follow, to discover, and to connect.

Hakimi came to Zanzibar as a visitor. He left as an ambassador. And in doing so, he has opened a new chapter for the Spice Islands; one where the world's brightest stars will find not only beaches, but belonging.

Gold, graft and a dying river

By Farai MATIASHE

ON a misty June morning along the Mutare River in eastern Zimbabwe, ten young men wade into the brown shallows.

Dressed in torn overalls, they dig into the mud with shovels and picks, sifting for specks of gold. Each carries a vial of mercury – a toxic shortcut that binds flecks of gold into silver beads, later burned to reveal the metal.

What remains seeps back into the river, poisoning the water.

This is illegal. Since December 2024, alluvial mining has been banned under Zimbabwe's Environmental Management Act, carrying penalties of up to $5,000 or a year in prison.

Yet the Mutare's banks are alive with hundreds of miners, their pumps and voices filling the air. What shields them is not secrecy, but collusion.

At Magetsi, a site notorious for illegal mining, plainclothes police stroll through by mid-morning. A miner known as Tee slips a folded $5 note into one officer's palm.

The men walk away. Work resumes. Such transactions are routine. Over several weeks, this reporter observed miners paying off officers at half a dozen sites, from Penhalonga to the Odzi River.

Miners describe it as "registration" – cash exchanged for protection and advance warnings of raids.

"Once you know the language, you work in peace," says Fatso, a miner from Honde Valley. His crew of 12 pays around $20 per visit.

Sometimes, police arrive three times a week. Without payment, miners risk losing their tools or facing arrest until bail is raised.

The corruption corrodes not just law enforcement but the river itself. Downstream, the Mutare runs brown and foul, stripped of fish and frogs.

Farmers once used it for irrigation and livestock. Now, the water is too polluted to drink. Civil society groups like the Centre for Natural Resource Governance blame collusion between police and miners for the devastation.

"They work together," says director Farai Maguwu. "When raids are ordered, miners are warned in advance."

Officials deny it. Police spokesperson Paul Nyathi insists there is "zero tolerance" for corruption, while the Environmental Management Agency calls enforcement a "group responsibility."

Neither acknowledges the bribes miners openly describe.

For young men like Tinashe, barely 20, mining is survival. On a good day, he makes $30 - enough to feed his family. For the police, it is a payday.

For the Mutare River, it is a death sentence. ■

This article has been produced by the Southern Africa Accountability Journalism Project (SA | AJP), an initiative of the Henry Nxumalo Foundation with the financial assistance of the European Union. It can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union. Edited to fit The AfriFiles standards.

An illegal gold miner works in Mutare River in Mutasa, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe on 23 June 2025. (Photo: Farai Matiashe/SAAJP).

Kabila's death sentence rocks DRC as power struggle erupts

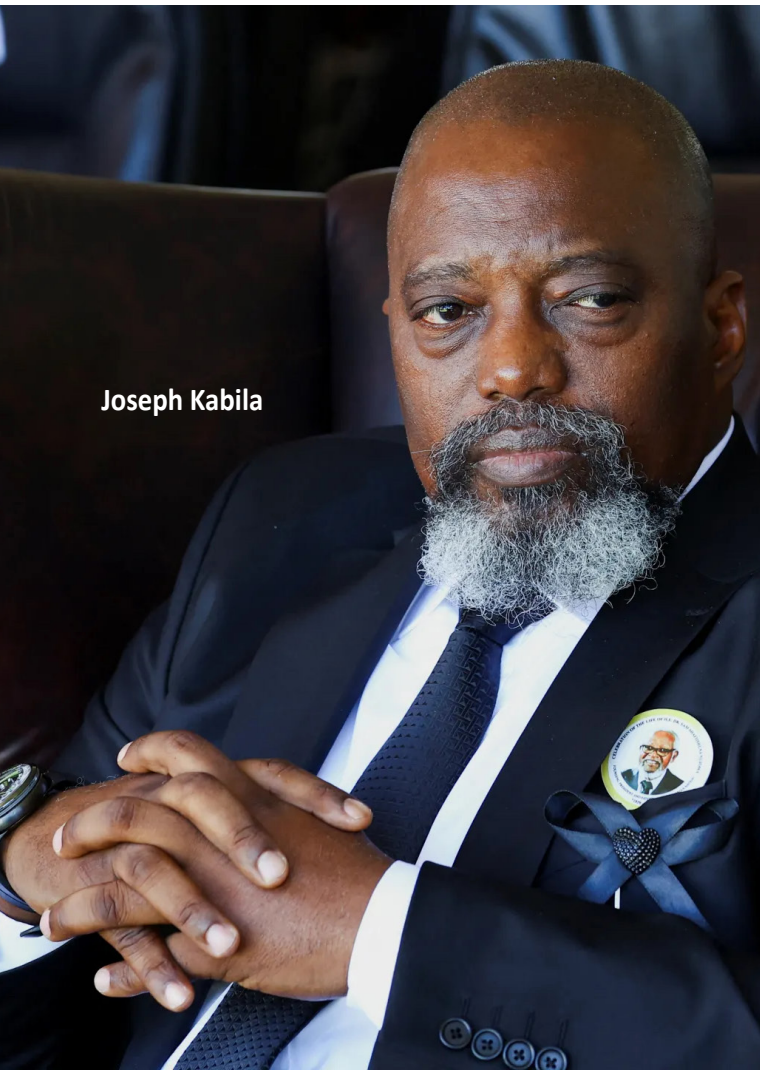
By TheAfriFiles REPORTER

FORMER Congolese President Joseph Kabila has been sentenced to death in absentia, a thunderbolt verdict that has jolted the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and sent tremors through Africa's political corridors.

For a country long numb to impunity, this is unprecedented; the first time a former head of state faces such a fate for treason and war crimes.

Now believed to be in Kenya, holding clandestine meetings with exiled loyalists, Kabila's next move could reignite Congo's deep political rifts and test the survival of its fragile democracy.

The Kinshasa military court found Kabila guilty of colluding with the M23 rebels, the brutal militia that has plagued eastern Congo for years.



Joseph Kabila

Prosecutors claimed he financed and protected the insurgents in exchange for control of mineral-rich territories.

In court documents, Kabila is cast as a fallen strongman turned conspirator, a commander-in-chief who sold his nation's peace for power and profit.

Kabila has blasted the ruling as a political witch-hunt, calling it "a script authored by President Félix Tshisekedi to erase my legacy."

For Tshisekedi, the judgment signals a fierce assertion of authority, a message that no one is untouchable.

It burnishes his reformist image as a leader confronting the ghosts of corruption and impunity that have haunted Congolese politics.

Yet the gamble is perilous. Kabila retains powerful allies in the military, parliament, and his native Katanga, where he is revered as a symbol of stability.

His followers denounce the verdict as selective justice, accountability turned into vendetta.

The diplomatic backlash has been swift. Reports of Kabila's secret meetings in Nairobi have rattled Kinshasa and drawn scrutiny on Kenya, now accused of shielding a condemned figure.

Analysts warn that Kabila's loyalists could regroup into an opposition-in-exile, linking with rebel networks to destabilize Tshisekedi's government.

On the ground, the stakes are explosive. M23 and allied militias could use Kabila's conviction as justification to intensify attacks.

The ruling may also embolden rival power blocs within Kinshasa, threatening to unravel what little control the central government still holds.

For now, Kabila remains silent, but not irrelevant. His exile could become a rallying point or a ticking time bomb.

One thing is certain; the DRC once again stands at a crossroads between reform and revenge, justice and power, peace and peril. ■

Trapped in Pakistan, Zambian women betrayed, abused

Women are being enticed with promises of good jobs abroad, only to find themselves trapped in nightmare conditions. Their passports seized, freedom stripped, and hope fading fast. Yet, the man orchestrating this cruel trade continues to prosper, untouched and unpunished, even though the authorities are fully aware of his crimes.

Jam Hussain meets Adolphine Lupasha in Karachi in early 2024, before taking her passport.

By Annie ZULU, Lusaka

IT began with a WhatsApp message and a promise of a better life.

When a friend connected Blessings Banda* to a recruitment agent, the 22-year-old single mother from Zambia's Copperbelt province thought she had finally found her breakthrough.

She was told she could work as a domestic helper in Pakistan, earn $300 a month, and send money home to her child.

Three years later, she remains stranded in Lahore, penniless, sick, and holding a two-month-old baby, her passport confiscated, her future stolen.

The man who sent her there, a recruiter calling himself Jam Hussain, is still at large and continues to lure young Zambian women into similar traps.

Despite multiple complaints, authorities in both Zambia and Pakistan have failed to act decisively, leaving a trail of broken lives in his wake.

When Banda first spoke to Hussain, he appeared legitimate, even charming. He said he ran Al-Hassan Employment Services, a company that supposedly placed Zambian women in safe, well-paying domestic jobs abroad.

He promised a salary six times higher than Zambia's minimum wage. "I thought this was my chance to change my life and give my child a better future," she said.

Within weeks she had a passport, and Hussain told her to travel by bus to Zimbabwe for a visa and flight to Pakistan.

What followed was a carefully orchestrated trafficking route exploiting weak oversight and bureaucratic loopholes.

Zambia is not considered a major source of domestic workers, so its citizens traveling through Zimbabwe to South Asia rarely raise suspicion.

When Banda landed in Karachi, Hussain welcomed her warmly, took her to his home, then asked for her passport "to process paperwork." A few days later, he sent her to Lahore to work for an elderly woman's family.

Her dreams collapsed almost instantly. She was locked in a small, windowless room, fed scraps, and allowed only a few hours of sleep.

Her employer insulted her, called her racial slurs, and halved her promised salary to $150, which she received only once.

When she complained, Hussain ignored her. When she protested to her employer, she was thrown out. "I had nowhere to go," she said softly. "I slept outside, hungry and cold. I cried until morning."

Banda later met other stranded Zambian women, also victims of Hussain. Some had resorted to prostitution to survive.

Hussain placed her in another household, but the abuse intensified. She was sexually harassed, mocked for her race, and once threatened with a gun. When she pleaded to go home, Hussain demanded a "release fee" of $450.

Her health deteriorated. Tests confirmed she was pregnant and HIV-positive. Without proper documentation, hospitals refused to provide treatment.

She survived on over-the-counter antibiotics meant to suppress infections. When her condition worsened, Hussain reluctantly released her passport so she could seek medical help.

Now she lives in fear, waiting for assistance from Zambia's embassy in China, which covers Pakistan. "I want to go home to my family," she said. "I don't want to die here."

> **"I want to go home to my family," she said. "I don't want to die here."**

This investigation also found two more Zambian women in Pakistan; both recruited by Hussain. Their stories are nearly identical, false promises, passport seizures, withheld pay, and relentless humiliation.

"My boss calls me mad and blames me for things I haven't done," said one.

"I asked Hussain for my passport to go home, but he refused. I've lost hope." Another woman said she works from dawn to midnight, eats once a day, and sleeps on a torn mattress.

Hussain's scheme is simple and sinister. He receives lump-sum payments from Pakistani employers, uses part of the money to fund the women's travel, and keeps the rest.

The employers then justify not paying the women, claiming they already paid Hussain. Despite repeated public pleas from survivors, he continues to recruit through social media and intermediaries in Zambia.

In February 2025, posing as a single mother seeking work, this reporter contacted Hussain via WhatsApp. He replied within minutes, asking, "Send me your passport fast." No questions about experience, references, or skills. Just urgency.

The Zambia Anti-Human Trafficking Department admits the system is vulnerable. "People leaving are not necessarily required to show contracts," said director Boris Mulengu.

"Many don't say they're going for work." Zambians can apply for Pakistani e-visas online within 48 hours, a loophole traffickers exploit with ease. After months of reports and investigations, authorities finally announced a special committee to examine the surge in trafficking cases to Asia, but concrete results remain elusive.

Further inquiries reveal Hussain is not acting alone. He works with local accomplices in Zambia who use aliases like "Mr Ron," "Mr Kasonde," and "Madam Martha."

One of them admitted to this investigation that she connects girls to Hussain for a commission. The supposed travel agency that arranged transport; R & R Traveling Consultancy, which does not appear in Zambia's business registry.

Hussain's own company, Al-Hassan Employment Services, also doesn't exist in Pakistan's business registry. Its Facebook page, last updated in 2017, advertised "better opportunities abroad" for Zambians and Nigerians. A 2019 YouTube video promoting the same agency is still online.

With help from a trafficking survivor, we accessed Hussain's restricted Facebook profile and found more than ten photos of Zambian women posing in his office and at airports.

When confronted with this evidence, Hussain threatened to block the reporter. Hours later, the Facebook page disappeared.

Today, Blessings Banda lives in the shadows of Lahore with her newborn child, sick and stranded. The trafficker who destroyed her life remains free, unpunished, and in business. "We left to work," she said, "but we were sold."

While authorities deliberate and committees investigate, women like Banda wait for salvation that never comes.

In the growing silence of official neglect, one truth rings clear: Zambia's daughters are still being trafficked into misery, and the man profiting from their pain is still counting his money.

*Real name concealed for the safety of the woman, who is still in Pakistan. ■

This investigation was produced by the Southern Africa Accountability Journalism Project (SA | AJP), a project of the Henry Nxumalo Foundation funded by the European Union. The article does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union. Edited to fit The AfriFiles tune.

Joburg turns the page, welcome The Friday Paper

In a media landscape obsessed with algorithms and clicks, The Friday Paper is a bold act of resistance. It restores the dignity of journalism and reminds Johannesburg that reading can still be communal, thoughtful, and alive.

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

The new baby of a famous newspaper; The Continent has arrived. A new kind of digital reading has arrived in Johannesburg, and it's quietly rewriting how the city get news.

The Friday Paper, the latest publication from the team behind The Continent, made its debut on October 3, 2025, with a simple but radical idea; to bring people back to the pleasure of reading deeply, slowly, and together.

In an age of swipes, scrolls, and soundbites, The Friday Paper feels almost rebellious. It asks readers to pause. To think. To read stories written by journalists who believe that accuracy matters a lot.

It's a manifesto against distraction, wrapped in newsprint, a call to rediscover what it means to actually engage with journalism.

The paper's design is just as deliberate. It mirrors The Continent's viral model, a free publication distributed digitally through WhatsApp and Telegram - but with a weekend twist.

It's built for sharing, not selling. There are no paywalls, just pure access. For Johannesburg, a city bursting with energy yet often starved of trusted news, that accessibility is revolutionary.

But the real change may come in how it reshapes habits. In a place where most reading happens between bus stops or on glowing screens, The Friday Paper invites the city to slow down. It's something to hold, digitally - and linger over.

In cafés, on minibus taxis, or in campus corners, people are already sharing copies and conversations. Each issue becomes an excuse to talk, to think, to care.

The front page of The Friday Paper

The stories are rooted in South Africa's lived experience, from mining's scars to political unease and cultural shifts that define Johannesburg's rhythm.

They don't just inform; they resonate. They remind readers that the city's heartbeat deserves more than headlines, it deserves reflection.

In a media landscape obsessed with algorithms and clicks, The Friday Paper is a bold act of resistance. It restores the dignity of journalism and reminds Johannesburg that reading can still be communal, thoughtful, and alive.

If it continues to grow, it might just turn the world's fastest-scrolling city into one that reads again, together, deliberately, and with purpose.

Odinga: The relentless lion who fought for Kenya's soul

Raila Odinga

By Simon Martha MKINA

RAILA Amolo Odinga, one of Africa's most resilient political figures and a defining voice in Kenya's post-independence journey, has passed away.

The veteran politician, who devoted over four decades to the pursuit of democracy, justice, and reform, died of cardiac arrest at the age of 80 while undertaking treatment in India.

His death marks the end of an era - a lifetime intertwined with Kenya's turbulent political evolution and Africa's wider democratic awakening.

A legacy rooted in struggle

Born on January 7, 1945, in Maseno, Nyanza Province, Raila was the son of Kenya's first Vice President, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, himself a founding father of Kenya's independence movement.

From an early age, Raila was exposed to the ideals of Pan-Africanism and resistance to oppression. But he also inherited his father's burden; the belief that freedom must be fought for, and that democracy is a struggle renewed each generation.

Educated in East Africa and later in Germany, where he studied mechanical engineering, Raila returned to Kenya in the late 1960s.

But rather than enjoy the privileges of elite life, he was drawn into activism, joining the reformist circles that opposed the one-party rule of the Kenya African National Union (Kanu) under President Daniel arap Moi. His activism would define his destiny - and cost him dearly.

Prison, torture, and defiance

Raila's name became synonymous with defiance. He was detained without trial for nearly a decade across several imprisonments, accused of involvement in the 1982 coup attempt against Moi's government.

Those were Kenya's darkest political days, censorship, disappearances, and the crushing of dissent. Yet, Raila's resolve only hardened.

Upon his release, he emerged not as a broken man, but as the face of a rising pro-democracy wave.

His calm defiance, trademark rhetoric, and unyielding faith in constitutional reform turned him into a symbol of hope for millions of Kenyans yearning for change.

He was no longer just Jaramogi's son; he had become a movement.

The fight for multiparty democracy

By the early 1990s, Kenya's democracy movement reached fever pitch. Raila was at the heart of it, co-founding the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (Ford), which challenged the Kanu dictatorship.

The struggle was bloody, bitter, and often personal. Yet, when Kenya finally restored multiparty democracy in 1992, Raila's fingerprints were all over the victory.

His political career, however, would be marked by triumphs that often felt like heartbreaks. He ran for the presidency five times; in 1997, 2007, 2013, 2017, and 2022 - and though he never held the highest office, he shaped every election's outcome.

To his supporters, "Baba" (as he was affectionately called) was the president Kenya never had; to his critics, he was a stubborn disruptor.

But even his detractors conceded that without Raila, Kenya's democracy would not be what it is today.

The 2007 election, the wounds of a nation

The 2007 general election was perhaps the most defining and devastating chapter of Raila's political journey.

He ran on an anti-corruption, pro-reform platform under the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), galvanizing millions of Kenyans.

When the results were disputed and the country descended into post-election violence that claimed over 1,000 lives, Raila became both a victim and a mediator.

His eventual power-sharing deal with President Mwai Kibaki in 2008, brokered by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, birthed the position of Prime Minister - which Raila held until 2013.

During his tenure, he championed the 2010 Constitution, a landmark document that redefined Kenya's governance and devolved power to the people.

It remains one of his most enduring legacies.

The statesman of reform

Raila's politics was never just about elections; it was about transformation. He spoke of social justice, equity, and the unfinished business of the liberation struggle.

His fiery speeches, laced with parables and humor, often struck deep chords in a nation divided by ethnicity and inequality. He was both revolutionary and reconciler - capable of inciting the streets or calming them.

In later years, Raila grew into a statesman. His 2018 "handshake" with then-President Uhuru Kenyatta - after months of electoral protests and tensions - stunned Kenya and the world.

It symbolized unity, compromise, and political maturity, though it also divided his traditional base.

Yet Raila defended it as "a sacrifice for peace," insisting that Kenya's democracy must be built on dialogue, not perpetual war.

The Pan-African visionary

Beyond Kenya, Raila Odinga was an African statesman. His political philosophy echoed across the continent - that democracy must serve people, not power.

He engaged with regional bodies, served as the African Union's High Representative for Infrastructure Development, and tirelessly advocated for cross-border integration and the modernization of Africa's transport networks.

His dream of a connected, industrial Africa — from Mombasa to Lagos — embodied his belief that Africa's political freedom must be matched by economic liberation.

He mingled easily with leaders from Nelson Mandela to Julius Nyerere, from Thabo Mbeki to Samia Suluhu Hassan.

Yet he always saw himself as a servant of ordinary people; fishermen, farmers, traders, the youth. "I am one of you," he often told rallies. "Our freedom is not complete until every Kenyan can walk tall."

A life of personal sacrifice

Raila's journey was not without scars. His detentions left deep physical and emotional marks.

He lost friends, allies, and even family to political persecution. Yet his marriage to Ida Odinga - a steadfast partner through decades of storms - remained his anchor. Together, they raised a family rooted in resilience and service.

In his later years, as his health declined, Raila remained politically active - advising young reformers and occasionally weighing in on national debates.

His death from cardiac arrest closed a chapter of Kenyan history that spanned colonial legacies, dictatorship, reform, and democracy.

The final goodbye

As Kenya and the continent mourn, tributes have poured in from presidents, activists, and citizens alike.

To many, Raila Odinga was more than a politician, he was a teacher of resistance, a warrior for justice, and a father of modern democracy.

His critics may recall his stubbornness; his admirers will celebrate his courage. History will likely remember him as both, a man who refused to surrender his convictions, even when the cost was immense.

In one of his last speeches, Raila said: "You can detain the body, but never the spirit of a free people." Those words now serve as his epitaph - a reminder of the unbreakable will that defined his life.

Legacy of a people's champion

Raila Odinga's story is the story of Kenya; of struggle, compromise, and resilience. His voice may be silenced, but his vision lives on in every Kenyan who believes that justice is worth fighting for.

The flame he lit; of truth, reform, and unity, will continue to burn across generations.

He may not have become Kenya's president, but he became something far greater; its conscience.

Go well Baba, see you on the other side of the river. ■

The writer is the Editor-In-Chief of The AfriFiles and Pambazuko newspapers.

Need to connect with ancestors, taste Egusi soup

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THE onions sizzle first — soft, golden, and fragrant — then comes the nutty aroma of ground melon seeds meeting palm oil. In that instant, a kitchen in Lagos, Accra, or even London becomes sacred ground.

Egusi soup isn't merely food; it's a ceremony, a call to the ancestors through the language of taste.

Golden, thick, and unapologetically rich, egusi soup is one of West Africa's most beloved dishes.

Its secret lies in the humble melon seed -sun-dried, ground, and transformed into a creamy, hearty base. What seems simple to outsiders is, to those who grew up with it, a living archive of family and culture.

The seeds themselves — from the Cucurbitaceae family — have fed generations across Nigeria, Ghana, and beyond.

In Nigerian homes, egusi sits proudly on tables during weddings, Sunday feasts, and festive gatherings, often cooked with goat meat, stockfish, or beef.

In Ghana, it comes slightly thinner, paired with kenkey or banku. Wherever it appears, egusi is more than sustenance; it's kinship in a bowl.

Making it demands patience and inherited intuition. The ground melon paste must toast gently in palm oil — neither rushed nor burnt.

Then come the blended peppers, onions, and crayfish, deepening the flavor into something earthy, spicy, and soulful.

Finally, leafy greens like ugu or spinach bring freshness, while a hint of fermented ogiri or iru adds the mysterious note only true West Africans appreciate.

To eat egusi soup is to remember. Every household has its variation: tomatoes for color, bitterleaf for edge, or plain purity in the Yoruba style.

Across Nigeria's regions and into the diaspora, egusi continues to evolve - appearing now in New York kitchens, London pop-ups, and Ghanaian restaurants in Berlin - yet it carries the same heartbeat; community.

When served, thick and glowing under the light, egusi demands your hands, not cutlery. A mound of pounded yam waits beside it, soft and steaming. The first dip slows time.

Egusi soup doesn't just fill the stomach — it restores the soul. It tells of the soil that grew the seeds, the hands that stirred the pot, and the voices that sang over the fire.

Every spoonful is a homecoming.

The living clay of faith in Africa

By Ismale MANNE

IN the heart of Mali's ancient city of Djenné, stands a monument that breathes history and devotion, the Great Mosque, which is the largest earth-built structure in the world.

Rising majestically from the sun-baked plains of the Niger inland delta, this architectural masterpiece is not only a centre of worship, but also a powerful symbol of Africa's ingenuity, endurance, and spiritual identity.

The Great Mosque dominates the cityscape like a sculpted mountain of clay, its smooth, tapering towers crowned with wooden beams known as toron.

These timbers serve both as decoration and scaffolding for the mosque's annual replastering, a communal ritual that binds the city's people together.

Each year, men and women of Djenné, young and old, gather with mud, water, and faith to renew their sacred monument, transforming maintenance into celebration.

It is an act that fuses religion, art, and community spirit into one living tradition.

Constructed in 1907 on the site of an earlier 13th-century mosque, the Great Mosque of Djenné reflects centuries of architectural wisdom passed down through generations of Sahelian builders.

It's very design embodies adaptation; thick earthen walls regulate indoor temperatures in the desert heat, while the raised platform protects the structure from seasonal floods.

The mosque's elegant symmetry, carved minarets, and rhythmic lines of toron create an awe-inspiring harmony of form and function, an eloquent testimony to Islamic and African aesthetics intertwined.

But beyond its beauty, the Great Mosque tells a larger story. Between 800 and 1250, Djenné thrived as a hub of trans-Saharan commerce and scholarship, attracting traders, scholars, and pilgrims from as far as Timbuktu, Morocco, and Egypt.

Gold, salt, and manuscripts passed through its markets; ideas and faith flowed through its streets.

The mosque became the beating heart of a city that once linked Africa's interior to the wider Islamic world.

Today, despite modern pressures and the slow creep of erosion, the Great Mosque stands tall, an enduring emblem of faith sculpted from earth itself.

It is more than a monument; it is a living link between past and present, a reminder that Africa's greatest structures were not born of steel or stone, but of hands, hearts, and the soil beneath them.

The cunning monkey and the greedy hyena

DEEP in the heart of the vast Congolese jungle lived two unlikely companions; a clever monkey and a greedy hyena.

Monkey was small, quick, and mischievous, while hyena was big, clumsy, and forever hungry.

Their friendship was one of convenience; monkey found food through cunning, while hyena relied on force and foolishness.

One sunny afternoon, monkey sat high in a baobab tree, eating bananas, while hyena prowled below, starving.

"Friend monkey!" Hyena called. "You always eat well. How do you do it?" Monkey grinned. "By being smart. Humans have plenty of food, if you're silent and swift."

Hyena begged to learn, and monkey agreed - but only if they shared whatever they stole. Hyena promised, though he never meant to keep it.

That night, monkey led hyena to a village. Moving like a shadow, Monkey stole bananas easily. But hyena wanted meat.

Against monkey's warning, he charged into a food hut and gorged himself noisily. Crash! A pot fell. The villagers woke and chased him.

Monkey escaped to the trees, laughing. "A thief must be smart, not greedy!" he taunted. Hyena barely escaped, battered and humiliated.

Days later, hyena, burning with jealousy, plotted revenge. Pretending remorse, he begged monkey to steal again. Monkey agreed - but planned a lesson of his own.

He led hyena to the biggest food hut. "Go first," he whispered, "I'll watch the door." Hyena rushed inside and devoured everything in sight. Quietly, monkey locked the door and whistled.

The villagers surrounded the hut. Hyena panicked, shouting, "help me, monkey!" But monkey only laughed from a tree. "Greed always traps itself."

At dawn, the villagers released a bruised, starving hyena as a warning. The jungle mocked him as the fool who was outwitted by a monkey.

Monkey, meanwhile, lounged atop his tree, grinning as the sun set. "Cleverness," he mused, "will always defeat greed."

From that day, hyena wandered the jungle in shame, a living reminder that greed devours its master - while the wise, like monkey, always stay a step ahead.

This African tale was extracted from https://fabulahub.com - Edited to fit The AfriFiles standards.

Cape Verde's World Cup dream comes alive

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

When the final whistle blew in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, the archipelago erupted in joy. The tiny African country with less than a million population defeated Eswatini 3-0.

The Blue Sharks—Tubarões Azuis—had done what many thought impossible; they had qualified for a FIFA World Cup tournament. For a nation of just over half a million people scattered across ten volcanic islands, this was more than a sporting milestone - it was a moment of national awakening.

Cape Verde's football journey has always been one of persistence over privilege. With limited resources, few professional facilities, and many of its stars plying their trade in Europe's lower leagues, the country's rise on the global stage is a triumph of vision and unity.

Most of the squad's players are dual nationals, born or raised in Portugal, France, or the Netherlands, but fiercely loyal to their ancestral home.

Under the calm leadership of Coach Pedro Leitão Brito, famously known as Bubista, Cape Verde fused discipline, technical flair, and unbreakable spirit to become Africa's Cinderella story.

Their path to qualification was anything but smooth. Drawn against continental powerhouses like Cameroon and Egypt, the Blue Sharks relied on tactical patience and collective grit.

Their football—fast, fearless, and full of rhythm—reflected their island soul: resourceful, joyful, and resilient against the odds. Every goal, every save, was a declaration that small nations, too, can dream big.

But beyond football, this achievement carries a deeper resonance. It has inspired Cape Verde's youth, boosted its tourism visibility, and united its vast diaspora. Streets once filled with morning fishermen now throb with chants of victory; the ocean breeze carries songs of hope and pride.

For Cape Verde, qualifying is more than just entry to a tournament—it's a statement to the world. From volcanic shores to the grandest arenas of football, this tiny island nation has proven that determination, not population, defines greatness.

The Blue Sharks have bitten into history, and the world is finally taking notice. ■

Mali's illusion of safety

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

FOR many years, Mali has danced on the knife's edge between fragile peace and open conflict.

Once seen as a beacon of democracy in the Sahel, the West African nation has since slid into an abyss of insecurity, foreign influence, and silent fear. The question; is Mali still safe? Now sounds almost rhetorical.

After the expulsion of French troops and the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission, Mali's security vacuum widened.

The government turned to Russian-linked Wagner mercenaries to fill the void, but their presence has not brought stability, only a different brand of fear.

Armed groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have entrenched themselves deeper across the vast northern and central regions. What was once distant insurgency has crept into towns, trading routes, and even the capital, Bamako.

The violence has become alarmingly unpredictable. In 2024, militants carried out deadly attacks within Bamako's outskirts, while convoys, schools, and markets in Mopti and Gao were turned into killing fields.

"No one can claim to be safe anymore," a machanic from Bamako told The AfriFiles. "We used to hide from jihadists. Now, we hide from everyone; soldiers, militias, even our neighbours."

Travel advisories by Britain, Canada, and Australia now paint Mali entirely red — "do not travel." The once-thriving tourist trail from Timbuktu to Djenné is ghostly quiet. Aid agencies operate under armed escort; journalists risk abduction or worse.

The United Nations estimates that over 6 million Malians now require urgent humanitarian assistance, while displacement figures continue to climb.

Beyond the gunfire, governance has crumbled. The military junta that seized power in 2021 has postponed elections multiple times, citing security concerns.

Political dissent is crushed; civic space is shrinking. Human rights groups have documented extrajudicial killings and civilian massacres committed by both state forces and militants, a grim symmetry of impunity.

Yet, amid the turmoil, Malians endure with stoic resilience. In Bamako's crowded markets, life carries on — traders bargain, taxis blare music, children chase each other between stalls.

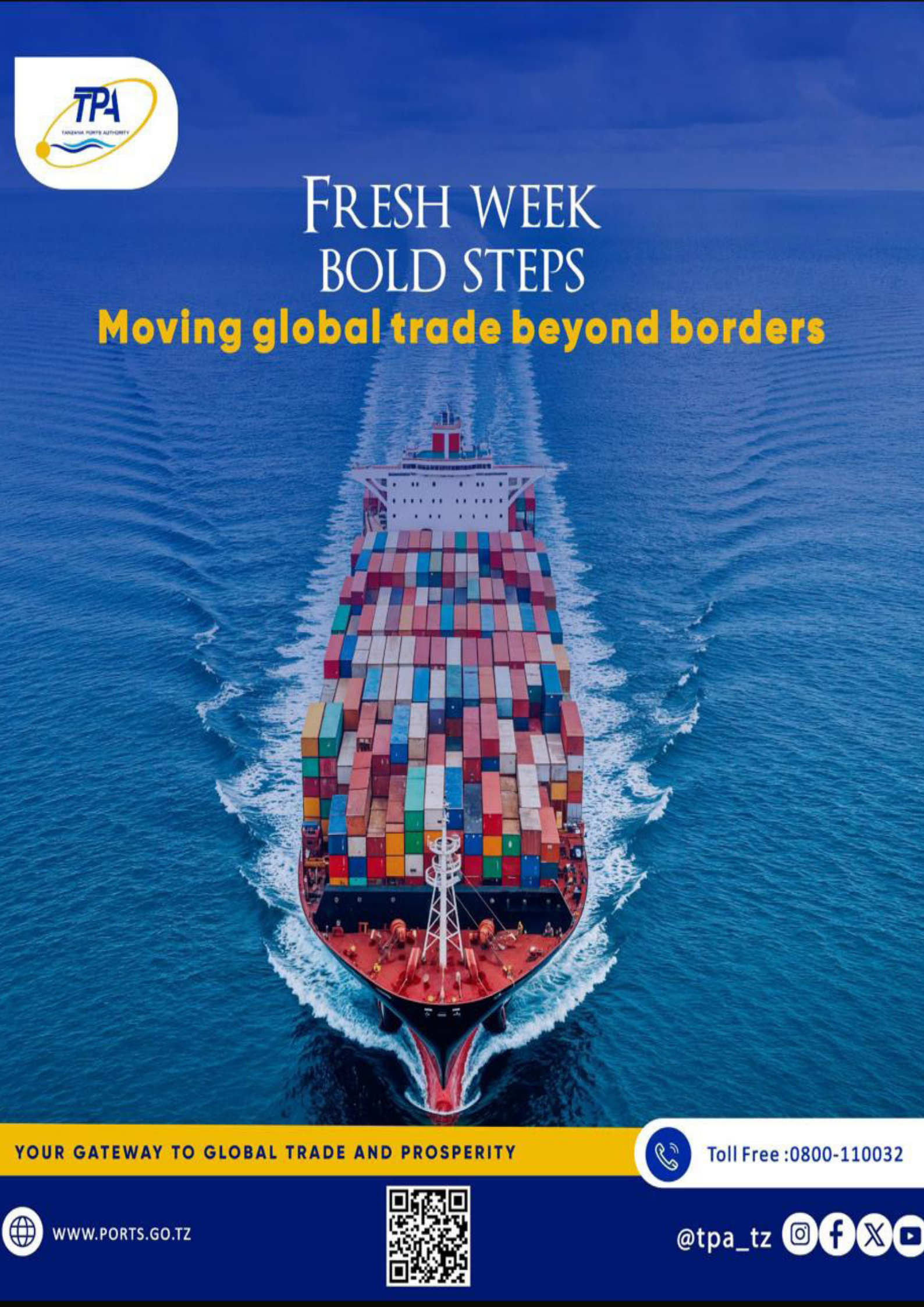
So, is Mali still safe? Not in any conventional sense. The map may show borders, but on the ground, control belongs to whoever carries the gun that day.

Mali remains a land of haunting beauty and historic pride, but beneath that charm lies a state caught between insurgency and illusion, fighting not only for safety but for its very soul.

The Malian Armed Forces (FAMa) patrolling near a military base in the northern city of Timbuktu. (Photo: APA)

FRESH WEEK
BOLD STEPS

Moving global trade beyond borders



YOUR GATEWAY TO GLOBAL TRADE AND PROSPERITY

Toll Free :0800-110032

WWW.PORTS.GO.TZ

@tpa_tz