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Birds 'land' at JKIA

The aftermath of a plane crash is horrifying and traumatising. It is even more alarming when such a calamity is caused by a single bird.

By Michael Wambete

Thousands of egrets have invaded Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) and are causing anxiety to airlines and aircraft users.

Danger looms in the air. The birds have strayed from their annual migratory course between Europe and Africa, and have settled at JKIA. They are multiplying in large numbers on the acacia trees, directly under the landing route for aircraft.

The aftermath of a plane crash is horrifying and traumatising. It is even more alarming when such a calamity is caused by a single bird.

In 1997 a Kenya Airways plane dropped its engine in Ruai, a few kilometres away from JKIA, after it was intercepted by one marabou stork. Early this year, another bird intercepted the British Airways, Boeing 747, causing the plane to be grounded for a week. "Similar accidents occur the world over," says Mr Jackton Agolla, the JKIA Ground Flight Safety Unit official.

The egrets, whose local name is *nyange*, are voracious feeders of a variety of insects, rodents and snakes. They establish their make-shift nests with alarming speed, during daytime and feed at night. The birds are attracted to the airports due to the abundance of insects drawn there by flood lights. As they feed they perch on the apron, parkways, runways, and taxiways. This disrupts the landing and take-off of aircraft. The consequences are fatal, even if a lone bird is sucked in by the aircraft's engine.

Mr. J. Makathimo, the Public Relations Officer, Kenya Airways, is wary of the looming danger of birds in the airport area. He says, "The birds are a real threat to aircraft."

Talking to *The Anvil*, Mr Makathimo said that he was appreciative of the efforts Kenya Airports Authority (KAA), was making to contain this bird menace.

The KAA Birds Strike Management Unit has sounded an alert to Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) to move fast and avert the disaster. On the ground, the unit has cut the long grass, the haven of insects and rodents, to discourage the egrets from the area. At the aerodrome, the Ground Flight Safety Unit has worked in liaison with the JKIA Police Commandant, to chase the egrets away, using rubber bullets. The birds moved only a few kilometres away and erected a new habitat, compelling KAA to adopt other



Flock of egret birds that have invaded fields around JKIA. The birds pose danger to aircraft. Inset, a KTDA official holding an egret's egg. (Picture by Sammy Chesire)

control measures.

KAA contracted a private firm to prune branches of the acacia trees on Mombasa Highway, near the General Motors assembly plant. Contrary to a story broadcast by a local TV station, egrets do not eat trees.

The danger has not been averted. The birds have stuck their ground, they are now nesting on the felled branches and there are no signs that they will go away. They have also taken over an empty field that belongs to the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), nearby.

According to Mr Kathurima, a security officer, the birds were about 30 in number when they perch on trees, in the field six months ago. Hardly were the big numbers foreseeable and the danger that they were going to cause anticipated.

In spite of the assurances to *The Anvil*, by the Ground Flight Safety Unit, the situation is not yet under control. When interviewed, Mr Agolla told the paper that KAA management is in full control of the situation and that there is no cause for alarm.

Airport safety is a very serious matter. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), uses it as the first consideration in awarding licences to operate airports.

Birds have caused havoc that ICAO has placed the safety of the airport as the main criterion for approving airport op-

Restructuring at KPLC commences

By Waimiri Kung'u

The giant Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) is undergoing a major re-organisation, which will see 2,000 members of staff retrenched by the end of 2003.

Already, quit notices have been served to over 200 employees who are in the process of clearing up with the company. Their retrenchment costs, which include three months pay in lieu of notice, two months salary for every year worked, and pension have been computed.

Another 600 employees will leave by the end of the year and a further 600 will receive the dreaded pink slips by 2002.

Energy Minister, Mr Raila Odinga, recently said that the restructuring was meant to make the company more efficient and profitable. The minister told Parliament that the government was keen to open up the power sector to private participation.

He however, did not disclose how this would be done given that KPLC owns and manages the entire transmis-

sion and distribution network in the country.

Mr Odinga said the government's ultimate vision was to create a market in which competition would be the main drive for provision of efficient and reliable power supply.

The minister said that the competition being experienced by mobile telephone operators was healthy and was benefiting subscribers.

The government has appointed a financial consultant to assist in improving the operations and financial management of KPLC to make it more attractive to investors. Investors are usually keen to see a healthy balance-sheet before they can put their money in an organisation.

That notwithstanding, KPLC is likely to attract good investors given the potential that the country has in an untapped market for electricity.

As it is, the country's power demand is growing at a remarkable eight per cent per annum with most rural areas not being connected to the power grid yet.

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College accredited to JKUAT

By Davis Mokaya

Tala Secretarial College has been accredited to Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

According to Sister Pauline Ndeche, the College Principal, the accreditation of the college follows a visit to the college in June 2001, by the University's Vice Chancellor Professor Ratemo Michieka and other senior academic staff.

The college which started in 1967 was founded by Catholic nuns and offers certificate and diploma courses in secretarial and computer studies. Sister Pauline says "It's affiliation to JKUAT will go a long way into opening up the college and exposing the students to advanced training in Information Technology. We shall invite the public to the accreditation ceremony."

Asked to comment on why she thinks the college is fit to offer information technology courses, she says the College had produced graduates who have done well in their places of work. It has qualified teaching staff and the computer laboratory is well equipped.

"We shall continue to steer the college towards meeting the current academic requirements as dictated by the market demands. We do not only provide academic qualifications in this College but also give an all round education so that our students are both morally and physically upright", the Principal adds.

Several colleges have been accredited to JKUAT. They include Marine College in Mombasa and Strathmore College, Nairobi.

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Condom is no panacea

If Africa is a damsel in distress, then the Condom is a knight in shining armour, an elixir that will rid the continent of the HIV/AIDS scourge, currently annihilating her population. This is the message being drummed down our throats by medical mercenaries and other beneficiaries of prophylactics, either deliberately or as pawns in a wider, insidious scheme.

Nothing could be more specious. Equating condom use to safe sex is a monumental delusion. Shortcomings of this item are many and disturbing. Failure to highlight these weaknesses is to invite unsuspecting consumers to play Russian roulette with their lives a gamble with death. This constitutes a dereliction of duty by custodians of public health a grave indictment indeed.

The US Department of Health and Human Services has given over 12 rules for proper condom use and handling: condoms should be stored properly; should not be put in hip pockets or handbags; should be kept in temperatures below 35 degrees centigrade; keep away from direct sunlight; they are most useful within one year of manufacture (Kenyan market has had condoms whose expiry date is not even indicated); should not be opened with teeth, sharp nails or scissors. A condom should not be gummy or stick to itself, and its tip should not be brittle. In addition, users are advised to ascertain absence of holes or tear. Only water-based lubricants are safe; a condom should not come into contact with petroleum products like vaseline jelly. Avoid getting condoms from vending machines because extreme temperatures compromise reliability. And caution is given against unrolling a condom before wearing it.

More than 90 percent of Kenyans are not aware of these rules. Even if they were, it is no guarantee that they would be this meticulous. It is naive to expect people in heightened passion to observe these instructions. Sobriety is not necessarily the guiding principle in matters of sex.

Besides, quite a number engage in illicit sex and subscribing to these rules is to expect too much from people already inebriated with lust and in a rush. Furthermore, majority of Kenyans live in poorly-lit rural homes. It makes it doubly difficult to check a condom for holes and tear.

You could fit the people living off continued use of condoms in a telephone booth. Trouble is, the chorus has been picked up by others who barely have a smattering of the subject. Introduction of HIV/AIDS in school curriculum will most likely see the same gospel perpetuated as the ultimate salvation from imminent extinction.

To waive duty on condoms is to mollify coddle angels of death and some merchants must surely smirk with glee. To give the impression that it is either the condom or death, is to create a false dilemma: the height of insincerity and deceit, a con game. The best methods include abstinence and faithfulness-in short, morality. Period. It has always stood us in good stead.

There are daunting statistics about the misery this disease has visited on Kenyans. One need not be overly numerate to recoil at the ramifications of these figures. Over 2.5 million Kenyans are infected with HIV, and 1.5 million are already dead from AIDS. 700 more die daily. No one can say for sure the victims contracted the dread for failure to use condoms. That is if they got it through sex.

A condom has a failure rate of 10-30 percent as a contraceptive. Ideally, conception is possible in only three days, whereas HIV may be transmitted any day of the cycle. Its failure rate to check HIV is certainly higher than that of pregnancy prevention. In addition they break during use, seminal fluid may spill over the rim, and a condom may slip off during sex and get stuck in the birth canal. Moreover, condoms have pores 70 times bigger than HIV. Storage and transportation in metal containers damages them.

Condoms imported into Kenya do not even have expiry dates indicated! Substandard, defective batches of condoms litter the third world. Now the condom song has reached a crescendo and whoever unleashed the HIV/AIDS menace has got more than he bargained for. There is a quick buck to be had from rubber too. President Thabo Mbeki of the Republic of South of Africa felt that something did not quite add up and he spoke his mind.

He had not reckoned with American and British Rapid Reaction Force wielding the ultimate weapon - the pen.

Western journalists saw red. The vultures circled and swooped into a feeding frenzy with a mission castigating the President on acres of media space. Mbeki had taken on big money, as well as challenged a population policy: a cardinal sin. But he is a gentleman to the bone. He returned the compliment. He was in America around the same time the UN was holding an AIDS conference in New York. The absurdities of this theatre did not suit his style. He shunned the conference.

President Mbeki's isolated voice should not be smothered into oblivion by lieutenants of big industry. Other African leaders have been mute except when sending out an SOS as they pander to rich nations' perceived philanthropy in an acknowledgement of dependency. Unfortunately, today's world is a veritable sharkpool and this won't do. Never more has Darwinian theory of survival for the fittest held sway.

There is nothing out front about liberalisation and globalisation. They are mere slogans neatly woven to serve the West's avarice meant for sale to the gullible. These are not rules but a ruse for economic domination.

Daily demise of 700 Kenyans by AIDS is the stuff of nightmare. Glorifying the condom is not waving a magic wand: unless you are in it for money. True, this continent has sunk into a despicable abyss, and tragically, we cannot exculpate its leadership, past or present. Some of our own abetted slavery and colonialism. Still Africa has enough potential to pull a Lazarus act; not play second fiddle to others in perpetuity.

We cannot replace morality with condoms. We may have few authentic friends in the West. Still, it should not be lost on us that there are profiteers of death, who sometimes use even the well-meaning of their kin. These, we should be wary of: the Jekyll and Hyde type, both from within and without. Africa should live on, and the condom does not necessarily push that agenda.

That is the bottom line.



COMMENTARY

State endless promises on water

By Kawewa Kawawa

The government's promise to provide clean, piped drinking water by the year 2000 has come a cropper. It has indeed turned out to be a pipe dream. In the rural areas, the time spent in search of the life saving commodity could be used more gainfully. Unfortunately, the picture is not any rosier in the urban centres.

Residents of Lang'ata, Nairobi, can hardly remember the last time their taps spouted water. Many of them have resorted to buying it from hawkers. Ofcourse, the source and the cleanliness of the water is another issue. The more financially endowed have been forced to sink costly bore-holes.

In the sprawling slums of the city, residents have to make do with water from vendors. A jerrycan goes for about Ksh.20. For those without money, murky rivers are sources of water.

In the arid and semi arid parts of the country, search for water is actually a full day's activity. Where there are no beasts of burden such as donkeys, the backs and heads of the women folk are constantly weighed down by assorted containers of water. One shudders to imagine how life would have been had there been no NGO's in the far flung parts of the country. The bore-holes they have sunk have gone along way in making the lives of the inhabitants bearable.

The Nairobi City Council and the City fathers are a marvel at the inability to comprehend job description and deliver services. When the 'venerable' souls are not fighting over plots and open spaces in the city, they are busy running their bars and kiosks. His Worship the mayor, is an excellent pacesetter - he runs an all day and night job on Outerwing road in the Eastlands section of the city. One need not mention the fact that the outfit is on a road reserve. The other major preoccupation of the city authorities is the

festering hawking problem. It is astounding how a local authority can be so fixated on such a simple problem for such an ethnicity. The incompetence of City hall and the rot associated with it are best shown by the mayor's disappearing chain. Perhaps, we are expecting too much if our hopes are hinged on the bunch of opportunists at that City hole to provide clean water and quench our parched throats.

The otherday, one Kimani Kongo, a former city council commissioner supplied the council with plain chalk worth Ksh. 70 million in the name of chlorine for cleaning water. While he smiled his way to the bank, thousands of Nairobians limped their way to various health centres courtesy of a myriad of water borne diseases. A number of

fast shilling. Some crooks are just boiling tap water and then bottling it and giving them exquisite names which suggest it is mineral water gotten from places such as mountain tops. Some may not even be boiling it. The water bottles are going like hot cakes. One of the main features that tell you that you are in Kenya is the sight of people clutching the so called mineral water bottles.

The plight of Kisumu lakeside town cries for divine interpretation. The town reels from a perennial water crisis. Despite it being on the shores of the largest fresh water lake in the world, residents are going without water. We are not even complaining that the water gushing from the taps is untreated. The taps are literally dry and rusting.

The greater tragedy is that raw sewage is released into the lake. This has gone on for donkey years yet the government and the town authorities are evidently doing nothing. The danger this poses to the flora and fauna of the lake is obvious to even a pre-unit school child.

Kenyan local authorities suffer from a plethora of problems. Most ofcourse, have a direct bearing on the rather wanting educational background and the ensuing incompetence of the men and women we have entrusted the running of the city to. The Nairobi mayor says that the council has been paying salaries for thousands of ghost workers. That is nothing new. Ghosts and payslips in government ministries and local authorities have always been buddies.

It is ironical that Kenyans cannot get clean water to drink three decades after the attainment of independence. Millions of gallons of water flow into the Indian ocean every day. The country does not suffer from want of fresh water lakes either. The government must put its act together and provide clean drinking water to its citizens. It can neither afford the luxury of negligence nor indifference.

Kimani Kongo, a former city council commissioner supplied the council with plain chalk worth Ksh. 70 million in the name of chlorine for cleaning water. While he smiled his way to the bank, thousands of Nairobians limped their way to various health centres courtesy of a myriad of water borne diseases.

Supremacy fight intensifies in Kenyan beer industry

By Waimiri Kungu

Some of the world's biggest names in the brewing industry are aggressively battling for loyalties in the Kenyan beer market.

The entry of Castle Breweries into the Kenyan market in 1997 heralded stiff competition between the South African Breweries (SAB) subsidiary and Kenya's most prominent brewing company, the East African Breweries Limited (EABL).

EABL has dominated the beer market for decades especially with its flagship brand, Tusker, and did not take the competition lightly. The company has in the last four years engaged in aggressive marketing strategies such as brand promotions, sponsorships and competitions.

A source at the firm's Ruaraka plant told *The Anvil* that *Mavuno Kenya Nzima* was one of the largest competitions in the country ever with prizes of over Ksh. 9 million to be won. The firm has also sponsored the 'Tusker Safari Sevens' in which an undisclosed amount of money was spent.

"What we look at is the impact of our marketing strategy, not the money we spend," a source who did not wish to be named told this reporter.

With SAB being the fourth largest brewer in the world, EABL has had to counter this onslaught, and has entered into a merger with Guinness International Plc which now owns a 52% stake in the firm. The acquisition has however not been smooth sailing with shareholders fiercely fighting to block Guinness on 'nationalistic grounds'.

On its part, EABL has argued that Guinness will give it a competitive edge as it will promote use of advanced technology such as a strong web presence, finan-

Thugs invade Bethwell church

By Philip Cheruiyot

Thugs broke into Komarock Bethwell Baptist Church last on Wednesday night and made away with property worth Kshs 200,000.

The Pastor of the church Mr. Patrick Ouma told *The Anvil* that he woke up on Thursday morning and noticed that the church gate and office doors were open. He decided to check around for the watchman only to find him tied onto a pillar and his mouth gagged.

He added that the thugs took away a computer, communion cups, a Bible and several books.

Pastor Ouma has called upon the thieves to come forward and repent for performing an abominable act against the house of God. He said that should they present themselves and return the church property they will be forgiven and no charges will be preferred against them.

Of late there has been a spate of break-ins into churches with properties worth thousands of shillings being stolen. Two weeks ago the St. Stephen's Anglican Church on Jogoo Road was broken into and property worth Kshs 300,000 stolen.



Some of the huge advertising billboards dotting the whole country put up by the two companies in a bid to stay ahead of competition. (Picture by Sammy Chesire)

cial astuteness and expertise in brewing.

EABL has recently used this strong financial position to diversify into wine and spirit production. In a joint venture with Vinters Kenya, the firm has recently launched Smirnoff Ice which interestingly has become a popular 'ready to drink' beverage. It is evident that the introduction of Smirnoff Ice has offered a strong challenge to SAB's Redds canned drink, which had captured a fairly large segment of leisure drinkers.

For Guinness, the deal with EABL adds to its substantial African presence with its brand now available in 45 countries in the continent.

The war between Castle and EABL emanates from the fact that SAB dominates 90% of the Southern Africa market. In this regard EABL has cause for concern that the Kenyan market might not remain lucrative for long unless it keeps up with world-class brewing techniques.

Both firms are aware of the dwindling purchasing power of Kenyans and are developing wananchi-friendly products. EABL's Citizen is one of the brands that meet this goal as it is affordable to many beer drinkers.

Regardless of what the outcome is in the short-term, it is clear that Kenya's brewing industry will continue to attract a ferocious competition.

Germany welcomes skilled emigrants

By Thurania Mutunga and DWTV

Germany's population is falling rapidly, a situation that could lead to a demographic crisis if not checked. The Government has in response set up an Immigration Commission in a proactive move to promote immigration to Germany.

The Interior Minister is trying to build consensus with conservative politicians as the issue is bound to ignite xenophobic feelings. The Commission has already worked out its recommendations.

Unless 100,000 new-comers enter Germany each year, her population will fall by 20 million in 50 years due to a low birth rate. The country is already experiencing a shortage of skilled workers, especially internet software experts and nurses.

The government recommends that sectors with skilled manpower shortage should be able to bring up to 20,000 people every year on a point system. The procedure will involve young applicants being given extra points; 20 points will be awarded for German language skills; 30 points for vocational training; children of well educated spouses with work experience will fetch additional points.

Maximum number of points will be 100.

The Commission also proposes that 10,000 young people be allowed into Germany for vocational training. Special rules will apply to those planning to set up businesses in the country as well as business executives and university graduates.

Immigrants will be required to take 600 hours of German language instruction combined with cultural and social integration.

This is expected to put a break on demographic decline, but would not completely make up for the country's low birth rate. More people, especially women, will be required to enter the labour force.

In 5-10 years, the country may have to consider raising retirement age as an option. It further intends to improve opportunities for women to combine career and family.

To make a dent in the country's four million unemployment statistic, the Immigration Commission is recommending provision of vocational training and retraining for Germans. This is meant to mollify anti-immigration passion and create an acceptance social climate for the new-comers.

The West will need to admit foreigners to prop up its industry and pay

taxes as well as provide pension for the senior citizens. It is estimated that by 2003 the European Union will have a shortfall of 1.7 million computer experts. The American economy will also continually create vacancies for 100,000 of these experts every year for the next ten years. Other sectors will be equally hit.

These countries will have to look outward and Germany has already taken a bold move despite a conservative past. More countries will join the bandwagon and there is likely to be a multiplicity of green cards.

Kenya has an immigration crisis of a different nature. Lax enforcement of immigration pre-requisites has led to an influx of foreigners with no special skills to offer. The emigrants compete for menial jobs with Kenyans in a tight labour market. Some immigrants are employed as shop and supermarket attendants in Asian enterprises.

Most expatriates do not possess expertise that the Kenyan market lacks, yet they hold senior positions in key sectors. Most private schools offering foreign curricular have immigrant teaching staff while qualified Kenyan teachers are jobless. The Government partially lifted a moratorium on teacher recruitment this year. It had been in place since 1998.

Catholics to meet their training cost - Bishop Njenga

By Sammy Chesire

Aspiring catholic priests will soon pay for their training, *The Anvil* can authoritatively report.

In a sermon marking radical departure from tradition, Archbishop John Njenga of Mombasa Diocese, while addressing Seminarians and their parents at St. Mary's Seminary, Molo, told them to brace for hard times ahead as those aspiring to train as nuns and priests will start paying for their training.

"Gone are the days when His Eminence the Cardinal used to receive money from the Vatican to meet training costs for seminarians," he said. He revealed that resources from the Vatican were diminishing and parents should be ready to meet the education of their sons in that field.

Archbishop Njenga informed parents, who had gathered to witness the posting of their sons to various Catholic parishes for attachment, that priesthood was not an ordinary form of education. "Priesthood is a calling which requires self-surrender and self-control. I, therefore, exhort parents to sacrifice for the education of their sons when called upon to do so", he said.

He advised the young seminarians to be men of integrity because that lays the foundation of good priesthood. He extolled the virtues of priesthood and told the young seminarians to hold firm on to the Biblical teachings on celibacy in order to succeed.

He further noted that the process of training was to prepare the aspiring priests in both their spiritual and intellectual formation. "It is important that we train our priests according to our doctrine so that they can attain the critical mind necessary to handle other critical men in the outer world," he said.

The parents who had turned up for the occasion were taken aback by the Bishop's comments. They complained that such an action would deter many young men from joining priesthood.

Many parents complained that they were already overburdened because they pay fees for their children in secondary and primary schools. "How do we pay for the training of those who join priesthood and yet they come and serve the church?" wondered Mr. Wilfred Chebet, one of the parents.

Some parents wondered how they would be expected to meet the training of priests who study for either seven or 15 years as the case is with Jesuit and Franciscan Fathers respectively.

Curse of delayed child birth among the modern women

By Stephen Karanja
and Sammy Chesire

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All the villagers were convinced that it was a monster. Most hospital staffers were not any wiser. They were sure that she had been bewitched. Some said it looked like a caricature of a tortoise, dog, human and a goat. They could visualise a head and even a shell. All were quite petrified.

When Joyce Awinja went to Bungoma District Hospital, she looked every bit pregnant. She was now 38 years, married for 20 years but without a child. Her husband and relatives thought the long awaited child had finally come.

When Awinja went for a pregnancy test, she was shocked to learn that it was negative. With the unreliable laboratory tests in this country, she was convinced that the results were not correct. Shock turned into outrage and bewilderment when her doctor revealed that he could not feel the baby's heart beat. He said it could be fibroids.

The doctor operated on her and removed a large uterus with multiple fibroids. Few in this area had seen fibroids and even fewer knew of their existence.

Uterine fibroids are hard growths that occur in the womb. They afflict women prone to fibroids, when they attain the age of 28 years and over without bearing children.

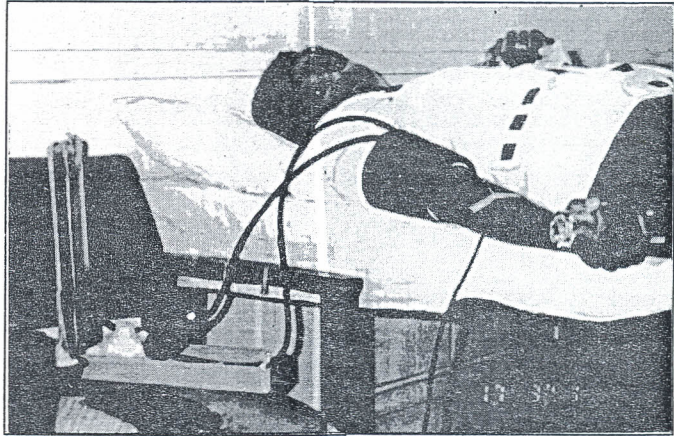
Fibroids are not cancerous and over 30 per cent of women have them. A woman may have very small fibroids, many medium sized ones, the size of mangoes or even huge ones that may be five kilograms and above.

Though occasionally seen in women below the age of 20 years, they are commonly found among older women. If a woman has one or two children while young and stays for over 10 years without conceiving, fibroids are likely to grow.

Diagnosis of fibroids is made through the woman's medical history and examination. Tests like ultrasound scanning may pick even smaller fibroids missed at examination. Joyce Awinja's fibroids were huge and easily confirmed by examination.

Not all fibroids need treatment. In medical parlance, it is often said that fibroids "speak" and demand that something be done. This is because fibroids exist in two main groups. There are those that are completely silent and give no symptoms, and those that cause trouble.

Fibroids cause significant change in the menstrual pattern. Excessive, heavy and prolonged bleeding may occur. This may be on and off or continuous. The amount of bleeding may not be related to the size of the fibroids. Small fibroids protruding into the cavity of the womb are frequently associated with profuse bleeding, whereas large mango-sized fibroids or even bigger are totally silent. Awinja's fibroids were big but



A woman donating blood. Regular medical check-ups will rid women of persistent health risks. (File Picture)

Uterine fibroids are hard growths that occur in the womb. They afflict women prone to fibroids, when they attain the age of 28 years and over without bearing children.

did not cause excessive bleeding.

Though rarely painful per se, if accompanied by pain and tenderness, it is an indication that the fibroid is degenerating. A fast growing large fibroid may lack enough blood supply and, therefore, oxygen leading to the pain.

If fibroids enlarge they may compress the surrounding organs in the pelvis. They may press the urine bladder causing frequency of urination. Pressure on the large intestines may cause constipation and difficulty in opening bowels. Large pelvic growths may cause discomfort during intercourse. They may also compress the uterus, causing urine back-flow to the kidneys which may be injured. They may also contribute to chronic low back pain.

Silent fibroids should only be observed. Various treatment options exist for those that cause problems. Hormonal therapy, given in the form of tablets or injections may be used to stop bleeding. This is a temporary measure as the woman is prepared for surgical treatment. Hormonal treatment is cheap, effective, though temporary, with some side effects.

Where facilities allow, bleeding fibroids, protruding into the cavity of the womb may be "cut off" or "shaved-off" through a telescope like instrument called hysteroscope. The bleeding points are visualised and stopped by electrical energy. For those who wish to retain their fertility,

the procedure ends here. For those women not wishing to have more children may have the lining of the womb removed, permanently ending their monthly menstrual bleeding. This, where available, is an out-patient procedure that is cheap and successful in up to 80 per cent of patients.

There are two common surgical procedures for removal of fibroids. For those who wish to retain their fertility, individual fibroids are removed and the uterus saved. They may be removed through a small cut with a telescoping instrument. A conventional large incision may be used and the fibroids manually dissected out. The later operation is more common in Kenya. It is also by far the most superior, though expensive and with a longer period of recuperation.

For those who do not wish to have more children or when it is impossible to remove every fibroid the uterus, together with all the fibroids are removed enmass.

This is the most complete treatment and curative measure. This was the operation that was performed on Joyce Awinja. She was not bewitched. Infertility had led to the growth of fibroids and had compounded her problems of infertility.

As the modern woman takes years to develop her career and start a family, ultimately having fewer and fewer children, fibroids previously rare in Africa, will become an increasing medical problem.

Are we losing fight against Aids?

By Japhet Muthomi

The HIV virus that causes Aids was first agonised in the United States in the late 1970s, but slightly over two decades later, prevalence rate of the disease in the United States and Europe lies at below one percent while Sub-Saharan Africa is chock-full under the scourge.

This is despite the fact that the western society is more permissive in sexual issues and the people there lead a carefree lifestyle.

The latest report by World Health Organisation name South Africa as leading in the infection rate. Botswana has the highest Aids prevalence rate where one out of every three people is infected with the virus. The picture is no better here in Kenya. A report released by Office of the President shows Mombasa and Kisumu districts having more than 30 percent HIV/Aids prevalence rate.

Though this paradox may lend some credence to conspiracy theories like HIV being lab manufactured or condoms sold in third world countries being laced with the virus, the reality is that wrong approaches to control the disease remain the single most important reason why Africa cannot cope with the disease effectively as the developed countries have done.

Uganda, a country that was the first to devise serious methods to tackle the disease in the early 90s has successfully managed to reverse the infection trend.

A few years ago, while I was an undergraduate student at the University, a friend asked of how in a few years to come, the

ministry of Lands will have to do land demarcation afresh after entire families are wiped out by Aids leaving no heirs to inherit the land. This was followed by prolonged laughter as it was thought to be a light joke. A joke no longer it is. Sample this: 500 Kenyans are going to the grave daily courtesy of the disease and 600 more are joining the club of the infected each passing day.

When the disease was first reported in Kenya in the early 80s, its existence was greeted with much scepticism. Some cynics even suggested that Aids is an acronym for American Ideas of Discouraging Sex. Others have resigned to it as punishment from God. Currently, there is not a single Kenyan who has not lost a relative, a friend or at least a villager to the disease.

Despite this, the disease has not been fully accepted. Not many people are willing to go for a test nor are relatives willing to acknowledge Aids as the cause of death to their departed ones. Churches are also reluctant to ask for Aids free certificate before joining couples in marriage despite calls for the same. This is the frankness that lacks in African societies but is abundant in the west.

Efforts to control the disease in Kenya have been uncoordinated and lacking in direction. Christian and Muslim leaders have been drumming the abstinence drums, secular organisations are calling for use of condoms

while the government seem not to have a clear cut policy on the issue.

After first denouncing use of condoms and sex education in schools, the state appeared to change the stand as the president openly called out to the youth to use condoms to protect themselves from Aids. Sex education however is yet to be introduced in schools due to stiff opposition from religious organisations.

For a country that has declared Aids a national disaster, one would expect a massive awareness campaign targeting schools and other institutions to sensitise the populace on the disease. Use of condoms should also be promoted with care as only those people who lead an unusually active sex life with multiple partners and those unfaithful to their spouses should be targeted to use them.

What we are seeing now is a frenzied condom promotion through the mass media where FM radio stations are even offering prizes in competitions where condom rappers are the entry forms. This might lead to people who are not involved in care-free sex to start experimenting. Abstinence and faithfulness to one partner are by far better options than condom use.

Though the Ministry of Education has with the assistance of Unicef developed a Aids Education curriculum to be taught in schools, inservice training to abridge teachers knowl-

edge and teaching skills on the area have not been carried out.

Out of the five public Universities training teachers and scores of teacher training colleges, only Kenyatta University offers a course in HIV/Aids education which was started last year. Starting Aids education with training of trainers is important.

For the religious bodies, their abstinence gospel has unfortunately been only confined to the pulpit: We would expect seminars in public places, printed literature and billboards in strategic places to take the message to all. Messages emanating only from the pulpit might only apply as the day lasts and forgotten all through the week.

For the political leaders, they need to realise that Aids is not a matter of people's health but peoples lives. Why put Aids control in an unfamiliar ministry of Office of the President while experts in health matters are in the ministry of health. It doesn't escape attention that the shifting of Aids control programmes from health ministry came when it became apparent that donors are giving billions of shillings for the efforts. The legal tussles over the composition of Districts' Aids Control Committees also confirm that greed and self interests still guide us even in this grave issue.

Use of Condom may put you at risk

By S. K. Karanja and Thuranira Mutunga

HIV/AIDS infection will continue to rise in Kenya even with increased use of condoms if users are not educated on their proper use and handling.

Recently, the Minister for Finance, waived duty on imported condoms to make them more readily available to Kenyans. Both the Government and NGOs encourage condom use to check the rising tide of the HIV/AIDS scourge.

Research and information from manufacturers reveal that the use of condoms to prevent infection is not fool proof.

The National AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases Control Programme (NASCO) estimates that AIDS related complications have claimed 1.5 million Kenyans and 2.5 million more are infected. 700 die daily and the number is expected to rise.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services gives several instructions to observe in order to enhance condom efficacy. These include:



Popular brand of condoms in the Kenyan market.

- Store condoms properly.
 - do not put condoms in back pockets or handbags.
 - store in temperatures below 35 degrees centigrade.
 - keep them away from direct light.
 - pay special attention to expiry date. They are most reliable within the first year of manufacture.
 - do not open with teeth, sharp nails or scissors.
 - check if condom is gummy or sticks to itself.
 - check the tip to ensure that it is not brittle.
 - check for tears or holes.
 - use only water-based lubricants. Petroleum products like vaseline jelly must be avoided.
 - be cautious about vending machines since extreme temperatures reduce condom reliability.
 - do not unroll before wearing.
- Doctors say that 90 percent of Kenyan condom users are unaware

of these instructions. They add that even those who are aware may not be meticulous enough. Besides it may not be practical to scrutinise a condom for defects in poor lit rural homes where majority of Kenya's population lives.

Pro-condom use advocates have not mounted a proportionate campaign to highlight condom defects.

A condom is most reliable during its first year of manufacture. Until two years ago, most condoms for public distribution in this country did not have expiry dates.

Other shortcomings include:

- Failure rates of 10-30 percent as contraceptives. It is believed the failure rate is higher in preventing HIV infection. The rubber pores are 70 times larger than the virus. The window of fertility is only three days in the menstrual cycle. HIV on the other hand may be transmitted everyday of the cycle.

- Condoms break during use.
- Seminal fluid spills over the rim.
- Condoms slip off during use and are left inside the birth canal.
- The storage and transportation in metal containers may damage them. These containers are often hot in summer and frozen in winter.

It is surprising that substandard condoms, some without expiry dates, enter into the Kenyan market. The Kenya Bureau of Standards or the Ministry of Health are the relevant authorities that should issue an alert when public health is at risk.

The Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) is a statutory body that tests the quality of consumer products against set standards and certifies them as fit for use or otherwise.

Recently, KEBS advised against the use of beauty products containing harmful substances, creating a furor in the cosmetic industry. Also see editorial - page 2

FOCUS ON HEALTH

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By Japhe

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A Community Health Volunteer. Such individuals need to be empowered with appropriate knowledge in health management. (File Picture)

Expired female condoms on sale in Kenyan market

By Charles Sikulu

Expired female condoms are on the market, *The Anvil* has learned. The expired female contraceptives are on sale in various city chemists. The contraceptive that has been on the market for close to five years, is still unknown to majority of Kenyans.

Nobody has bothered to popularise this female contraceptive and the public is still naive about its usage, availability and cost.

A survey done by the Anvil Team reveals that only two percent of women know about the female condom, 90% of whom are the elites and prostitutes in major urban areas. The same applies to developed countries.

Female condoms are made of a thin plastic called polyurethane. This is not latex or rubber. The condom is placed in the woman's private parts. Both ends have a flexible rings that keeps the condom in place.

The female condom launched in early 90s, only gained substantial use by 1998. The condom is not widely used even in developed countries. Part of the problem being cost. In developed countries, retail price is between \$2 to \$3. In Kenya it sells at about Ksh 280.

Despite the high costs, the fe-

male condom, like the male one, is not recyclable. It is used once and discarded. This is one of the biggest disadvantages of the costly female condom. As compared to the male condom, which is available almost for free. The female condom costs as high as three times, more than the average daily income for an ordinary Kenyan.

According to Dr S. K. Karanja, a practising gynaecologist, in Nairobi, Most people do not have an idea on the use of female condoms medical practitioners inclusive. He adds that due to the very nature of its use, and it should not be used in developing countries due to lack of medicare and basic amenities like water. He adds that there can be a temptation to recycle due to the cost involved.

Some of the condoms available on the Kenyan market have expired due to lack of customers. Some of the condoms which are given for demonstration have landed on the market.

City politician who was given a million condoms for distribution ended selling them making a whooping 200 million plus.

A number of people interviewed feigned ignorance and enthusiasm at the same time. Nyambura Muthoni, a businesslady, said that she has heard about the condom but could not imagine it surfacing in Kenya. She is eager to know its usage and its relative advantages.

The main advantage of using the female condom is that the woman has control and freedom. There is assured protection

says a second year student, at Kikuyu campus. She says that she is aware about the condom and would not mind using it even though she knows that its ugly. This is one of the reasons why some ladies dislike using the female condom.

Robert Kuloba an economist at KETRI says "It costs dearly if the two of you have to wear condoms. A complete sexual intercourse could cost as much as Ksh 1000. He can only buy his, given the option between the two.

It has a few other advantages. Women need to see a medical practitioner to get it, can be inserted several hours before intercourse, unlike the male condom which has to be inserted on the spot. It prevents both infection and pregnancy.

Its large, unattractive and odd looking shape and size makes it disadvantageous. Although it looks different and may appear unusual at first. It also takes practice to use it correctly.

It still remains unpopular as efforts have not been made to popularise it. From the Ministry of Health to non-governmental organizations none has bothered to popularise the condom. This might be part of the reason why there is ignorance and expired varieties on the market.

It took along time for the male condom to be accepted, thanks to religious and traditional opposition. It still faces resistance within certain quarters especially religious groups against its use insisting that it is counter productive to societal morality.

Healthy heart

In recent years cases of heart disease have increased tremendously in Kenya compared to the 1950s and 60s. Heart specialists attribute this to various factors such as smoking, lack of exercise, eating fatty foods, taking too much salt and sugar, poor nutrition during infancy, and other genetic factors.

Poor eating habits encourage the development of heart diseases such as ischemic and high blood pressure.

Some of the most common heart operations performed in Kenya are valve replacement for a narrowed or leaky valve, repair of a hole in the heart or coronary artery bypass.

The good news however, is that,

By Joseph Nyamari and Gichuki Njeru

Kenya does not have the kind of resources and facilities available in the West. Our doctors and nurses are now more knowledgeable on better methods of heart operations. Consequently, the number of unsuccessful heart operations has dropped significantly over the years.

This notwithstanding, it is critical to keep your heart in good condition, as prevention is always better than cure. One of the ways of preventing heart diseases is by eating a healthy balanced diet and maintaining the correct weight for your height.

You should avoid too much fatty foods like butter, margarine, lards and cooking fats, nyama choma, cheeses like cheddar, whole milk and cream. Instead, try to reduce fat in your diet by:

- choosing low fat spreads and margarine
- Using low fat oils such as corn, sun-

flower and olive

- Drinking skimmed milk rather than whole milk
- Avoiding too much junk foods like chips, sausages, and hamburgers
- Taking leaner meat and avoiding nyama choma outings
- Eating dishes where meat is combined with vegetables

Exercising has become tantamount to healthy living, especially as life has become more demanding. All age groups need to exercise for good health. Not only does exercising keep one fit, but also plays a vital role in preventing heart attack. It does not have to be strenuous for it to be beneficial, aerobics, a slow short jog are suitable and can be done even in the comfort of one's own home.

In as far as alcohol is concerned, one bottle of beer or a glass of sherry a day is acceptable. Too much alcohol is bad for one's health in addition to being a waste of money. One should also avoid smoking at all costs in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Writers' hand in African politics

By Japhet Muthomi

"It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of the contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb/who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing the flames."

-----Chinua Achebe in his book, *African Writer and Biafran Cause* justifying his involvement in the Biafran secessionist politics.

What is it with literature and politics, writers and politicians?

Throughout history, the paths of the two have never crossed on friendly terms. Writers have always played the role of checking the excesses of leaders and their attempts to settle scores have left record of cases of murder, torture and other inhuman acts against the scribes.

Despite the dangers that have continued to haunt writers who have been bold enough to rush in where cowards fear to tread (political ground), creative writers have continued to use the barrel of the pen in their marksmanship aimed at ills and injustices perpetrated and sustained by politicians.

There is yet another breed of writers who have gone beyond firing salvos to the political arena from the literary tent. These have actively involved themselves in politics either at elective level or in activism for change or freedom.

For people like Agostino Neto, who was a distinguished poet and leader of armed liberation struggle in Angola, the barrels of the gun and the pen and the political platform served the same ends - total liberation of the people of Angola. His militant tone poems in the anthology *When Bullets Begin to Flower*, speaks of nothing but freedom for the people of

Angola. A writer like Leopold Sedar Senghor (of the 'Negritude' movement) went ahead and became the president of Senegal.

But whether actively involved in the political struggle or not, many African writers have often found that the very subject matter of their works have landed them on the wrong side with the rulers. South Africa's popular anti-apartheid writers like Ezekiel Mphahlele, Alex La Guma and Mazizi Kunene had all to flee to exile to flee the marauding agents of the apartheid regime. Alex La Guma was to be received with both hands by the Communist Cuban government after he had been booted for daring to predict the coming to an end of the apartheid season which could not be seen by fog-covered eyes of the racists.

Another event that had writers openly involved in political struggles was the Nigerian Biafra war. The war took the life of the then Africa's most celebrated poet, Christopher Okigbo who died in action. He is mourned generously by Olusegun Obasanjo (the commanding officer of the government forces and the current Nigerian president) in his book, *My Command*. Other writers actively involved in the war were Cyprian Ekwensi, Gabriel Okara and Chinua Achebe.

Whether writers' involvement in active politics is seen as wrong or right, writing is a process of curing the society and can never be ignored by a politician worth his salt. The founding father of our nation, in efforts to make Kenyans more conscious, chose a pen and paper in his publication *Mwigwithania* (Kikuyu for uniter). Tanzania's founding president Julius Nyerere was an accomplished writer and so is the current president Benjamin Mkapa.



Grace Ogot

Recently, politicians have realised the power in writing and have ventured into the field with gusto. The latest include Kiraitu Murungi with his *In the Mud of Politics*, and Kenneth Matiba with *Aiming Higher*. Not forgetting people like Kenneth Kaunda, Nelson Mandela, Koigi Wamwere and many others.

Other politicians in active writing today include; Adams Karauri, him of the *devil you Know*, Professor Anyang Nyong', and former Gem MP Grace Ogot.

According to nominated MP, Professor Anyang Nyong'o, writer need to have a vision with which to inspire society and capture a moment in their lives. This possibly explains why very few politicians are good writers as they definitely lack the vision and not many writers have made it in this visionless field.

In the run up to the 1997 General Elections, I read with fascination press reports that leading playwright, Professor Francis Imbuga, humour columnist Wahome Mutahi and popular literature novelist David Mailu were to contest



Okot p'Bitek

parliamentary seats. As it came to happen, none of the three contested. Only Imbuga refuted the press reports with Wahome Mutahi having a field day in his column on how delegations are visiting to pledge their loyalty only with intentions of milking him dry.

I had a chance of meeting Wahome Mutahi and asking him why he chickened out of the contest. He talked of being reluctant to abandon his national constituency (writing) after serious thought and advice from friends.

This shows a clear political phobia from writers who think that the 'dirty game' might negatively affect their literary work. Is this fear placed or is it a case pioutry fear of the truth which renders writers irrelevant as Achebe puts it?

The main difference between a politician and a writer is that a politician craves for following. A politician owes his survival to the number of followers he can garner. For writers, it is the opposite. Following is not a factor but judgement of their work is. In fact, great writers are not the widely read as majority of

readers will go for sensational fast paced thrillers that offer readers temporary withdrawal from hard reality. This would explain why South African, Wilbur Smith, is far more widely read than Nigerian Nobel Prize laureate Wole Soyinka.

However, both the writer and the politician have certainly many things in common as they both trade in words, are created by the same reality of the world around them and both have to take sides in that world.

Some writers like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o hold that there would rather be no demarcation between the two as politics is part of literary territory. In his book *Writers in Politics*, he says that a writer after all comes from a particular class, race and nation. He (writer) is a product of an actual social process - eating, drinking, learning, loving and hating and hence cannot be excluded from politics.

Though the price of standing up against the might of politics as been severe and in some situations, virtual, history is made by those who dared to stand up against the unholy and risk the extreme. Ken Saro Wiwa who steadfastly stood with his Ogoni people against economic exploitation and met his match in Sani Abacha, the 'Butcher of Abuja', but his legend lives on. Jack Mapanje of Malawi was tortured and jailed for denouncing Kamuzu Banda's dictatorship while Camara Laye of Guinea was incarcerated to death by the regime of Sekou Toure. All their experiences have given motivation and new awakening to aspiring writers.

These literary martyrs are the ones who make literature tick, meaningful and worth attention. They have made it more than a mechanistic reflection of social reality, but a result of conscious acts of men in the society.

Violence: The madness of Kenya's electioneering

Call it polling madness, electioneering thuggery or any other name. It remains the same thing - election violence. It has become the norm in Kenya's political polling process. A living nightmare for many Kenyans as the 2002 General Election closes in.

Talk of general or by-elections and you re-ignite memories of violence. Everybody starts shivering in anticipation of another spate of mayhem; a culture deep-rooted in our electioneering process.

Stanley Kirui, a political analyst and parliamentary aspirant from Sotik constituency in Kenya's next general election, attributes polling "madness" to low levels of civic education.

"Both the electorate and contenders lack awareness of what an electioneering process entails in a democratic system," he says.

The phenomenon is as old as the electioneering process in independent Kenya. It is fast becoming uncontrollable. Prior to multipartism, election violence was mainly a result of political immaturity - a by-product of mob psychology, mostly triggered by differences in opinion.

A passionate belief in an issue not in line with the thinking of an opponent

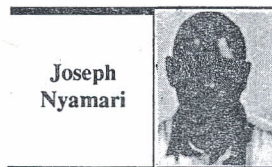
would for instance spark a heated argument. With rising tempers, supporters of the political contenders would often join the argument. What began as an expression of divergent views snowballs into a confrontation fuelled by mob psychology.

Such instances could only arise at public forums and elders or other leaders could intervene and the showdown defused, remembers Sheikh Abdi Mohammed, a former member of parliament. He adds, "The exchanges were healthy as they helped us to assess your popularity from the numbers who rallied behind you. We could even shake hands when the incident was over." It was seen as a show-off, a demonstration of numerical advantage.

Moses Moranga, a supporter of the late Dr. Zachary Onyonga, recalls that sometimes election violence was unconsciously triggered when some candidates realised they had no remarkable advantage over their opponent.

He particularly remembers the violence that led to the infamous killing of Uhuru Ndege.

"It became a matter of life and death when Dr. Onyonga realised that his opponent, the former Knut national treasurer, John Bosco Mboga, was likely to emerge



Joseph Nyamari

the winner.

Remorsefully, Mr. Moranga adds, "these incidences of election violence were never orchestrated in advance like we witness in the current political arena. They were circumstantial and ended there and then. Casualties were treated as victims of circumstances.

However, with the advent of multipartism, the situation has changed. It has seen election violence degenerate into fatal tribal animosity. In the past, the few cases of polling chaos used to be limited to the particular tribe involved; in fact a particular constituency, and even the particular platform.

Reports from the commission of Inquiry into Tribal Clashes show that they are politically instigated.

People are brought in from without to cause instability aimed at disorienting the opposition supporters ahead of elections.

Thus, what had previously occurred at the spur of the moment, has become an issue of prior scheming and strategizing.

Sometimes this violence is intensified by a need for self-defence. Thus, it will appear, that every political heavy-weight worth the high office, must of necessity acquire an army like group for self-defence. This has led to the emergency of groups like Baghdad Boys associated with Raila, Amachuma for Nyachae, another one yet to be baptised for James Orenge mainly consisting of University students, and Mungiki is now widely alleged to be associated with the Kikuyu political heavy-weights to counteract *Jeshi la mzee*.

The current brand of election violence cannot be attributed to low levels of civic education which in most cases does not go beyond the theoretical phase anyway. Even those who spearhead this education are preaching water while drinking wine.

"More often than not, even the members of Mageuzi do little to avoid confrontational situations and are knowingly accompanied by disgruntled individuals particularly from the public universities," adds Thomas Mogaka, an electorate from Kitutu Chache constituency and a keen observer of political trends in Kenya.

Internal wrangles within political parties also play an important role in the escalating incidences of polling violence. Losers within a party incite the electorate and if they don't succeed, they create discontent resulting in violence.

Foreign machination in the political scene has its share of blame. Most Kenyans live below the poverty line. In their struggle for survival, they readily accept monetary hand-outs which tie their allegiance to their benefactors.

The political parties or individuals who are financed by foreigners compromise the poor by making them dependent. When called upon to unleash violence they have no option but to comply. After all he who pays the piper calls the tune.

The issue of electioneering violence is abetted by a constitution which gives the executive so much power to hide behind at will. The way forward is a concerted effort towards making the necessary amendments to the constitution so that in subsequent elections relevant clauses will deter those bent on causing electioneering disorder.

Horticulture storage to benefit from JICA

By Japhet Muthomi

Small-scale produce farmers who had to contend with high wastage rate of their produce when it is rejected by buyers after spoiling during storage and transportation now have a reason to smile.

A project funded by Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Horticultural Produce Handling Facility, set up at seven centres country-wide is aimed at addressing the farmers' handling and transportation problems.

The facility consists of pre-cooled stores and satellite depots that will ensure that fresh produce stays fresh for several days awaiting transport.

The idea was conceived out of the realisation that most roads leading to horticultural produce growing areas are impassable during the rainy season.

A quick solution was found when the Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA) in conjunction with JICA decided to tackle the handling problem since it might take quite long for the government to repair the roads and the farmers continued incurring heavy losses.

In the recent times, there has been complaints from importers of the Kenyan produce especially from Europe over pesticide residue and low shelf life of the imported produce. Though the pesticide residue problem can only be addressed by the farmers themselves, this new initiative will readily address the shelf life problem giving a big boost to the industry that has been on a steady growth since early 90s save for 1998 when the ravaging El-Nino rains destroyed most of the crops in the farms.

These cooling and handling centres

are located at Kibwezi, Nkubu, Mwea, Limuru, Yatta and Machakos.

At the satellite depots, the farmers produce will be palletised and packed in crates. It will then be pre-cooled to remove field heat and then weighed ready for transport. Transport from the depots to the airport and local market will be done by exporting companies. This will only be for the produce that can be palletised.

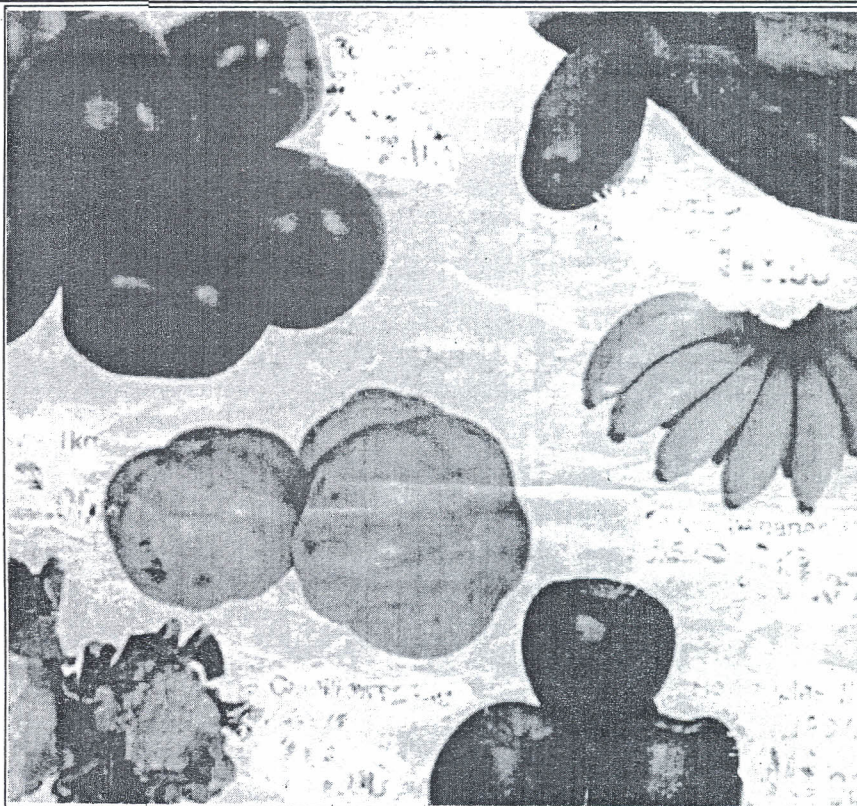
For the pre-cooled stores, the farmers will first enter into a contract with HCDA. The contracted farmers will transport their produce to the handling centres. After delivery, the produce will be recorded and pre-graded before it is stored in cooled containers awaiting transport to the airport or the local market.

From the cooled facilities, the produce will be transported by insulated trucks to maintain freshness up to the airport where it is stored under refrigerated rooms. From here, importers' representatives can inspect the produce before it is airlifted.

This process will also save farmers from 'desperate selling' which has been the case even when the prices are very low since they can hold the produce a little longer for the prices to stabilise.

There are also plans to improve the selling system from direct individual exporting to a more centralised auctioning system so as to fetch better prices to benefit of the farmers.

Just as with tea and coffee, horticultural produce auctioning will be done in the country with the buyers coming to make their purchases here. Selling will be to the highest bidder. Under the current system, individual exporters source



Some of Kenya's horticulture products. JICA's project is a big boost to the prime sub-sector.

for their own market hence farmers may not get a fair deal since they will be ignorant of the prices their produce are fetching at the international market.

Horticulture is the third chief foreign exchange earner after tea and tourism. The industry has been recording a steady growth and according to the figures from HCDA, Kenya exported 14 thousand tons of fresh fruits and vegetables in 1995,

and peaked at 19 thousand tons in 1997. The figure then collapsed to an all time low of 12 thousand tons in 1998 due to the El-Nino rains but is now picking up. For cut flowers, the export volume for the year 1995 stood at 30 thousand tons going up to 38 thousand tons in 1999 and is still growing.

Europe has continued to be the dominant export market for Kenya's fresh

produce. In 1998, the United Kingdom took an impressive 32 percent of the produce with Netherlands and France following closely with 21 and 15 percent respectively.

The Fresh Produce Exporters of Kenya, Export Promotion Council and HCA are engaged in a marketing campaign to promote the Kenyan produce in the Asian and Far East markets.

KIMC varsity dream dwindles

By Davis Mokaya

The future of the pioneer Mass Communications training Institute in East and Central Africa hangs in the balance, following the government's failure to give it autonomy.

The delay in giving the Institute autonomy has hampered its funding and expansion. The Institute which has already prepared a Training Prospectus in anticipation of offering Degree Programmes once it acquires, cannot go ahead with those noble plans without the elevation through a draft paper. In this case the minister for Information and Tourism is expected to study the paper and forward it for necessary action.

Contacted for comment, the Deputy Secretary in charge of Information in the ministry, Mr. Elijah Guantal, who is also working on the draft paper entitled *Draft Report on Making KIMC Autonomous*, said "This paper is top on my agenda. However what we worked on earlier, must be reviewed first and then forwarded. I am certain that the process will be completed within the year otherwise it is long overdue."

The current status of the college has denied it external assistance hence

the dilapidated state of most of the television and radio studio equipment.

According to the Institutes Principal Mr. Job Osiako, although the Institute is currently holding consultative talks with Wilbershrum University and University of Nairobi for possible affiliation, the move is not possible if the college lacks autonomy.

Talking to *The Anvil* on phone Mr. Osiako said "The draft document towards making the institute autonomous is in government hands. Hopefully the process will be speeded up towards this end." The principal hastened to add that the benefits accrued to an institution that is independent of government control are enormous "because then we can straight away contact the donors and other well-wishers to fund certain departments. Now our hands are tied," he consented.

Challenged to say how the college was losing as a result of the delayed autonomy, Osiako said "Of course the institute is not able to enjoy certain privileges and benefits like Utalii college. For instance we cannot explore and exploit our full potential. Our challenges are not only limited but also curtailed."

On what he intends to do to improve the worn out facilities, the principal said that the institute is not fully

grounded in terms of facilities since those already there are still functional. "The facilities are overstretched because of increase in student population and we are busy looking into possibilities of revamping the Institute."

Earlier the Institute's deputy Principal Mr. Richard Ndirango had expressed optimism that the Institutes elevation will open it up to modern challenges. "In fact I will be thrilled to witness the necessary changes. I hope it will be effected soon. Right now we can do very little, because, knowing our status most universities shy away from any cooperation with us."

Meanwhile a senior lecturer who sought anonymity lambasted the college management and the government for falling to pace up the process of elevating the college "What are these people saying? The talk about raising its status started way back in 1991 and to date it is the same old story. May be even the Hon. Minister is not even aware about it. What disgusts me is why the government will want to hold on to an institute like this all these years instead of giving up to enable it grow," he argued.

HUMOUR

The power of the punch

By Japhet Muthomi and Dorothy Otieno

As the story goes, the early man's most lethal weapon used to be a stone. Soon he graduated from stone to hand axes and spears. Man developed so fast that he discarded the two weapons for hoes and machetes. From there, he moved to spears bows and arrows.

The modern man then developed guns, bombers, and other weapons of mass destruction. To date, the most lethal and sophisticated weapon has been developed by a group of intellectuals - the punch.

Last night comrades, I had a dream. I dreamt that we were living in an island where everything worked through the power of the punch (how I wish it was real). This island was called the 'budding full time fourth estate class of SoJ.' In this island, to buy something from the grocer, you just punch the attendant and you are served. To greet somebody, a single punch would do, and yet to show anger, again it is a punch.

However, there was one variation comrades. When dealing with a woman, (you guessed it right) it would be two punches. To ask for a cup of tea from her, two punches, to show love two more, and to make a complaint, still it's two. Didn't our fore fathers invent ritual beating. Isn't that something to aspire for? Sure, and thanks for your applause.

In my dream comrades, something happened. One afternoon, I was busy punching the keys of my computer to produce a story. A woman came around. Just as I was raking my otherwise sharp brain to find something to communicate to her and hence an excuse to punch her twice, she stood up and marched full length to where I was standing. She held me by the collar, attempted to strangle me and dared me to stand up for a fight.

Stop dropping your jaws in disappointment comrades, it was just a dream. This woman whom I believe was sent by external forces to undress me tried to pull me up for a fight but I stuck to my seat and pretended that I am busy punching the computer keys. At last she left me but her shadow still remains to haunt me.

Then I woke up and realised that it was just a dream. There is no such lovely island.

At last comrades, I will say a little prayer for you. I pray that the almighty arm all of you with the power of the punch, a power more lethal than the barrel of the pen and of the gun. I pray that the women folk will realise that punches were created for them and when they get them, it should be with a smile. I also pray that no other woman will be sent by powerful forces to haunt me.

Lastly, I pray that our dream island minus the woman come to be. This is where we won't need pens, guns, smart bombs nor any communication tools, punches will just do.

Amen.

The Anvil

Row at Kikuyu Campus

By Anvil Team

A row is brewing at the College of Education and External Studies (CEES) over payment of service providers in parallel programmes. The most affected is the Faculty of External Studies (FES) which has not paid its service providers for six months now.

According to our source, the bone of contention has been queries by the Principal CEES, Prof. Lucia Omondi, over glaring disparities in payment and her insistence on inclusion of staff from her office and the Finance department. The highest paid member from the faculty gets Ksh49,000 and the lowest earns Ksh 1,350. Some senior lectures, it is said, earn less than the administrative staff.

The faculty on the other hand insists that staff from the Principal's office and the accounts department can only be paid when their duties are specified. At the moment FES pays the cashier who is actively involved in collection of fees.

The faculty further insists that the Principal's Office has its own allocations from parallel programmes, separate from the faculty and the department. They insist that the Principal should use her office allocation to pay service providers within her department. Finance department is directly under the principals office.

Fees paid by parallel students is divided between the central administration, the college, faculty, department and

the library. Each has its own budget.

Our sources further indicated that memos have been exchanged between the Dean FES, Prof. David Macharia and the Principal, but approval for expenditure has not been granted.

Early this year, parallel programmes under CEES were almost paralysed when lecturers from the faculties of education and social sciences petitioned the Vice Chancellor to order the principal CEES to approve payment of services rendered or withdraw from the programme.

Lecturers in the two faculties had taught for months without payment. University of Nairobi Enterprises and Services (UNES), the body that manages parallel courses, does not release payments without prior approval from the relevant College Principal. The Vice Chancellor's intervention saved the situation.

On the spotlight is the college auditor, a Mr. Aritho, who has been accused of working in collaboration with others to frustrate FES. At one time, the Dean wrote to the Director, UNES, informing him to advise Mr. Aritho on what to audit regarding payments of service providers.

Mr. Aritho has had a share of his problems with the Kikuyu Campus fraternity. He is said to insist on seeing the original insurance sticker on the vehicle, before passing mileage claims. Normally copies of a log book and insurance stickers filed with the college are enough.

Other complaints about the auditor include his insistence on teaching timetables before processing teaching claims

already authorised by the head of the department.

Anvil further learned that retrenched workers who left the Faculty in March this year, have not been paid for the services rendered. The Principal CEES has been wondering why they should be paid when they are no longer on the payroll. The Faculty argues that the retrenched workers rendered service before they were axed and deserved payment. This has formed part of the problem. The deadlock was there before retrenchment.

Workers have been contemplating on a go slow or a complete withdrawal from the programme over frustrations and delay in payments. They however, fear that this could be used as an excuse to retrench them during the second phase.

Early this year, attempts by the university to implement the Kibera (IV) report which suggested among others, to pay lecturers on the basis of the number of students, paralysed parallel programmes for three days when the dons refused to teach. The administrators retreated and classes resumed.

As the events unfold, students are likely to be the victims as some lecturers threaten to pull out of parallel programmes in FES. Teaching in parallel programmes is considered a part time assignment which makes withdrawal have less bearing on a lecturer's terms of service.

Water contamination

By Tom Ongalo and Dorothy Otieno

Water supply to consumers in Nairobi is properly treated and safe for consumption.

Responding to a question by Mr. Njehu Gatabaki, the Assistant Minister for Local Government, Mr. Musa Sirma, told Parliament on Tuesday that the city's water system is treated through three plants, namely Ng'ethu, Sasumua and Kabet.

Mr. Gatabaki had sought to know what measures the Government was taking to ensure that water supplied to consumers in the city and other towns conforms with international standards. Mr. Sirma explained that the treatment involves an aluminium sulphate dosage, coagulation and flocculation, sedimentation, filtration, chlorination, and PH correction.

He added that "the results obtained from the Quality Monitoring Unit indicate that City Council's tap water is safe and is within both the Kenyan standards and the World Health Organization's guidelines and values".

A visibly infuriated Gatabaki asked the Assistant Minister to assure the House that his wife and children drink water directly from the taps without boiling.

Mr. Sirma drew the ire of the House when he jokingly invited Mr. Gatabaki to his house for confirmation. The Speaker, Mr. Francis Ole Kaparo, warned the Assistant Minister to take the House seriously since the matter was of grave concern to Kenyans.

Standing on a point of order, Mr. Paul Muite drew the attention of Mr. Sirma to the rising cases of typhoid. He also said that children in city schools had been warned not to drink water from the

taps. "Even in Parliament, no Hon. Member takes water without asking whether it has been boiled!" Mr. Muite added.

Despite spirited pleas to the Assistant Minister from the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Mwai Kibaki, Mr. Simeon Nyachae and Mr. Kamolleh to declare tap water in the city contaminated, Mr. Sirma maintained that it was fit for consumption. He said that any contamination could be a result of other reasons such as leakages within the piping system. He also attributed the notices in hotels warning tourists not to drink tap water as a conspiracy by bottled water dealers to market their products.

Mr. Norman Nyagah drew the attention of the House to the Report of the House Committee on Health, Housing, Labour and Social Services which toured the whole country extensively and established the inability of local authorities to treat water.

The Speaker ordered Mr. Sirma to consult with the Minister for Public Health, Prof. Ongeri and come back to the House in two weeks time with a satisfactory answer.

Mr. Anyona described this trend as disruptive of proceedings, while the Opposition Chief Whip Mr. Norman Nyagah drew the attention of the Speaker to his earlier directive to the Leader of Government Business that Ministers must be in the House to answer questions.

The Speaker, in his ruling, replied that the Government has a higher responsibility to Parliament and to the public than an individual Member of Parliament. He called upon the Government to take action against its Ministers who "apparently are tired!" However, he conceded that he did not have the power over Ministers and asked the House to give him more power to discipline errant Ministers.

Warwick university in Kenya

By Patrick Kariku

A leading British University is training Kenyan graduate teachers aspiring to work in schools offering the British National Curriculum.

The University of Warwick is conducting the in-service training courses through Braeburn Ltd. in Nairobi, which has been appointed to represent the University in East Africa.

Upon completing the course, a Bachelor of Philosophy, B.Ph (Education), degree is conferred. So far, 14 students have graduated, while six students are expected to graduate by the end of this year, and seven more by next year.

The training program started in 1997, and the first 14 graduands were awarded their degrees in November, 2000, at the Braeburn School, Nairobi. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Warwick, Sir Brian Follet, conferred the degrees.

According to Mr. Gordon Austin, the director of the programme, the course comprises of three subject modules each taking four to six months, complemented by regular visits by lecturers to teach, advice and assess.

The whole course takes a duration of two to four years and it is mandatory to

write a 12,000 word dissertation. To enrol, one must be a holder of a first degree in Education from a recognised Kenyan university.

Mr. Austin explains that since most International schools in Kenya follow the British National Curriculum, there is need to equip Kenyan teachers with skills to enable them take advantage of employment opportunities in these schools.

Anthony Ndun'gu, 29, a teacher at Braeside School, Nairobi, and one of those who have gone through the course, says, "The course is quite demanding since you study and work at the same time. However, it is relevant because assignments are classroom based and thus practical."

Hillcrest, Peponi, Banda, Cavina, Kenton College, and Braeburn, are some of the schools in Kenya that follow this system of education.

Most of the teachers in these schools are expatriates. According to a senior teacher at Peponi School, Nairobi, every year they receive thousands of applications from Kenyan teachers, but very few are lucky enough to secure a job.

The few local teachers who get jobs in these schools are paid much better than those in the public sector. However, as The Anvil learnt, some of the expatriates earn six times more than the locals. The

explanation given was that the expatriates have to be paid an equivalent of what they get back home.

Possibly the answer to better pay lies in improving our economy. We hope that more teachers will be able to take advantage of the training opportunity. At the moment, only those employed by Braeburn have.

Birds 'land' at JKIA

From page 1

erations. It should be noted that the International Runaway Protection Zone is put at five nautical square miles. This means that the area covered by JKIA extends to include Kirima, Athi River and Ngong Hills. It therefore translates that the people within these zones are literally staying within the airport.

The United States of America spends over five million dollars every year as liability costs to airlines on accidents caused by birds within airport zones.

Kenya and USA are the only countries in the world that have instituted Birds Strike Management Units in their airports.

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