

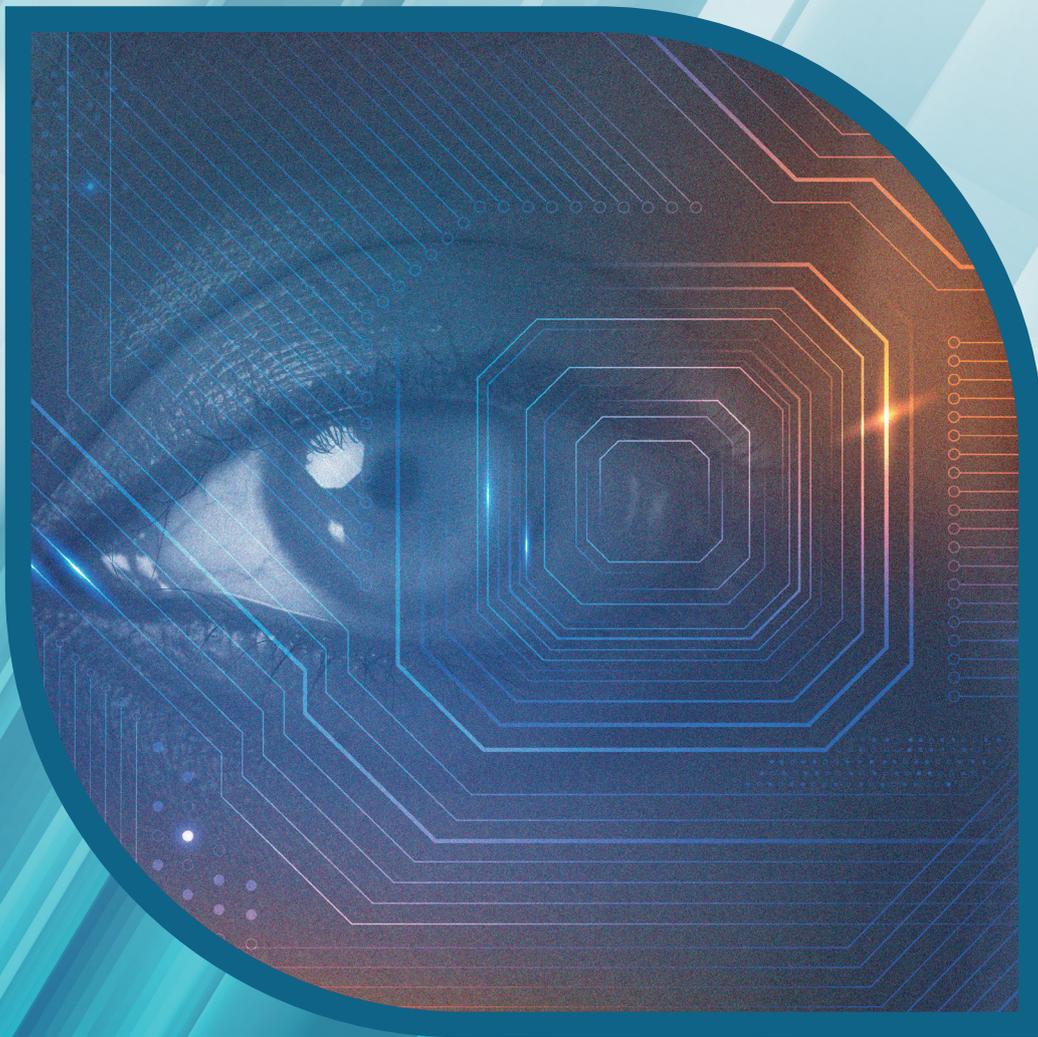


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JANUARY 2022

UGANDA

10TH JANUARY 2022

UGANDA'S PUPILS BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER RECORD 83-WEEK COVID SHUTDOWN

Uganda ended the world's longest school closure on Monday, ordering millions of students back to the classroom nearly two years after learning was suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic. Students poured through school gates that had been shut in March 2020 when Covid-19 swept the globe, greeting teachers and friends after 83 weeks outside the classroom. "I am so happy because I was missing school, my teachers, my friends and my studies," said 10-year-old Nawilah Senkungu of Nakasero primary school in Kampala. The education minister, John Musingo, said all primary and secondary students would automatically resume classes a year above where they left off, and urged schools to follow health protocols. "All schools have implemented guidelines and standard operating procedures to ensure the safe return of children to schools, and measures have been put in place to ensure those

who don't comply do so," he said. But for some parents, the return to school has been difficult after the economic pain caused by pandemic curfews and lockdowns.

Everyln Nyakato, a salon worker and 42-year-old single mother of five, said she worried about covering fees and other school costs. "Even before the Covid-19 outbreak, I was struggling to pay school fees. Since the pandemic, I was out of work as the government closed our businesses," she said. "I know I am not alone in this ... it's a nightmare for us, especially the poor." Musingo said any schools demanding fees above pre-pandemic rates would be sanctioned.

The closures affected at least 10 million primary and secondary pupils and lasted 83 weeks, according to the UN's education and cultural body, UNESCO. Children's rights groups had criticized the extreme length

of the shutdown, warning that closures had far-reaching consequences for learning and put vulnerable students at higher risk of child marriage or forced labor. "We can't let this happen again. We must keep schools open for every child, everywhere," the UN children's agency, UNICEF, said on Twitter.

The charity Save the Children said students would struggle after falling so far behind, and warned there could be high dropout rates in coming weeks unless special efforts were made to help the youngsters adapt. Remote learning was available only for the privileged few during Uganda's school closures. Senkungu spent the long closure helping on her grandparents' small farm, tending chickens and digging the fields. Her father, Siraj Senkungu, said: "I am very happy to see my children back to school. They have been missing their teachers plus learning."

SOURCE.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/10/ugandas-pupils-back-to-school-after-record-83-week-covid-shutdown>

BRITISH SCIENTIST FINDS NEW SPECIES OF RARE LEAFHOPPER IN UGANDA

27TH JANUARY 2022

The last recorded sighting of a leafhopper from the same genus as *Phlogis kibalensis* was in 1969. A new species of insect has been found in the Ugandan rainforest that belongs to a group of insects so rare that its closest known relative was last seen more than 50 years ago. The species of leafhopper, named *Phlogis kibalensis*, was discovered by a British scientist doing field work in a national park in western Uganda.

The species has a metallic sheen and pitted body surface. It resembles other leafhoppers, particularly in its male reproductive organs, which are partly shaped like a leaf. Before this discovery, the last recorded sighting of a leafhopper from the *Phlogis* genus was in Central African Republic in 1969. Leafhoppers are closely related to cicadas but are smaller. They feed mainly on plant sap and are preyed on by invertebrates including spiders, beetles and parasitic wasps, as well as birds.

“It’s the first time I’ve ever discovered a newly described species. Personally, it’s one of those things you aspire to do as an entomologist and I’ve managed to do it now,” said Dr Alvin Helden of Anglia Ruskin University, who found the species and has published the findings in the journal *Zoo taxa*. *Phlogis kibalensis* is a member of the leafhoppers. Most people are familiar with cicadas, and leafhoppers are related to cicadas. I usually describe them as much, much smaller. They all have the same overall structure; their head end is held slightly higher than their back end and they are quite colorful.

“Leafhoppers of this genus, and the wider tribe, are very unusual in appearance, and are rarely found. In fact, they are so incredibly rare that their biology remains almost completely unknown. We know almost nothing about *Phlogis kibalensis*, the new species I found, including what plants it

feeds on or its role in the local ecosystem.”

Since 2015, Helden has been leading student field trips to the Kibale national park, close to Uganda’s border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As part of this, Helden has been documenting the insects found in the park, making field guides which include photos of Kibale’s butterflies, hawkmoths and tortoise beetles.

“I wanted to produce my own identification guide for the butterflies for my students, so they can see them on their phones or tablets. I thought it would also be useful for other international groups and Ugandan students,” said Helden. “There are so many species in the rainforest of the Kibale national park and you can get a list of species, but there aren’t enough pictures. The guides are helpful for people who want to put a name to things.”

SOURCE.

<https://thehill.com/changing-america/sustainability/environment/591826-new-species-of-incredibly-rare-insect-discovered>

IN UGANDA'S KARAMOJA, RAMPANT RUSTLING AND A MILITARIZED RESPONSE AS VIOLENCE RETURNS

26TH JANUARY 2022

The stench of livestock lingered in the empty enclosure made of thorny branches where Aomet Lokong stood, a kraal head without any cows. Armed rustlers raided Lokong's communal kraal, or cattle enclosure, in northeastern Uganda's Kaabong district in late November and stole nearly 1,000 cows, local officials said. Six days later, the animals were still missing. "When the raiders come here, they find only children protecting the cows," said Lokong, despondent beneath his orange hat. "There is no one to scare them away because people have disarmed."

The nine districts of Karamoja, as this semi-arid northeastern borderland is known, enjoyed a decade of peace after the army disarmed gun-wielding rustlers in the early 2000s. But in the

last two years the raiders have returned, killing hundreds of people and stealing the cattle that are their livelihoods. A fresh disarmament campaign, launched by the army in July 2021, has Outside the kraal, gaunt men with tartan blankets had gathered to meet with local politicians. Their frustration was palpable: Of 34 kraals in the district, just four had been spared from the raids.

Lokong spoke with an orator's flourish, flinging out his arms and stooping to his knees. The army was doing nothing to protect their cows, he said. He had heard talk that soldiers were profiting from the raids. Soon, he worried, people would re-arm themselves. Then, younger herders stepped forward. "The cow is our bank," said one. Without it, he asked, how can we send our children to school? Another gestured at

the politicians: They just sat in their offices and did nothing, he complained. So far failed to stem the violence, while drawing allegations of human rights abuses.

Karamoja is a hot, dry savannah and, at 30,000 square kilometers, the size of a small country. People here are sometimes referred to as the Ngikaramojong or Karamajong, a loose term encompassing several distinct groups. Many of them herd livestock, though they often grow crops too. The region is far from the capital, Kampala, and nowhere in the country is as poor. Literacy rates are just 25 percent. People in Karamoja want peace, The New Humanitarian was repeatedly told. But until the government protects their cows and creates economic opportunities, some young men will see little alternative to fighting.

SOURCE.

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2022/1/26/Uganda-Karamoja-cattle-rustling-militarised-violence-returns>

PRESIDENT MUSEVENI LAUNCHES “EXPLORE UGANDA THE PEARL OF AFRICA” BRAND

28TH JANUARY 2022

While unveiling the brand at Kololo Independence Grounds in Kampala, the President urged the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities together with Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) to put more emphasis on community and cultural tourism. “We have four language groups in this country; the Bantu dialect, the Nilotic dialect, the Nilo-hamitic dialect, and the Sudanic dialect. I haven’t seen anyone explaining this,” Museveni said.

The President pointed out some unique aspects that highlight Uganda’s tourism potential that should be emphasized. These include; Uganda’s terrain, vegetation and climate, wildlife, weather and location.

“Whenever I go abroad, things are not easy at all. You’re not comfortable. You’re in hotels, air

conditioning. It is very hot in many places, in some very cold. But here, life is so easy and so nice,” Museveni said, adding that “It’s a very nice place but it needed a group to talk about it and inform the world. From what I am seeing, the Ajarova group is committed to talking about Uganda”.

Museveni also wants UTB to interest foreigners to understand Uganda’s strong health system that has made great strides in defeating health challenges like Aids, Ebola and Coronavirus (Covid-19). “So that they know that when they come here, they’re safe. They’re in a place where there’s safety from the health point of view “ Museveni said. He congratulated the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities and UTB board chaired by Hon Daudi Migereko for the initiative and pledged to support them.

The Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Col. Tom Butime, said the ministry has

embarked on several initiatives aimed at enhancing Uganda’s competitiveness as a destination. “Your Excellency, on behalf of the Tourism Sector, allow me to extend our commitment to increase tourism contribution to national development, to increase the number of tourist visitors in the country, to increase our contribution to GDP, protect and conserve the natural habitats, and flora and fauna,” Butime said.

UTB Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ms. Lilly Ajarova thanked President Museveni for being their Commander in Chief leading from the front, every time there’s important business for the country. “As our Number One Brand Ambassador who has spoken out strongly for our country, we feel emboldened by your presence and unending support “ Ajarova said. The launch was attended by among others the Vice President, Maj. Jessica Alupo, the 2nd Deputy Prime Minister, Lt. Gen Moses Ali, Ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs).

SOURCE.

<https://www.mofa.go.ug/data/news/>

SOMALIA

SOMALIA'S LEADERS AGREE TO HOLD DELAYED ELECTION BY FEBRUARY 25

9TH JANUARY 2022

Repeated poll delays amid a feud between the president and the prime minister have alarmed the international community. Somali leaders have announced they struck a deal to complete parliamentary elections by February 25, after repeated delays that have threatened the stability of the country. The agreement on Sunday was reached after several days of talks hosted by Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble with state leaders aimed at ending an impasse over the polls.

“The ongoing election of the House of the People [lower house] will be completed between the periods of January 15 and February 25, 2022,” said a statement issued after the talks in the capital, Mogadishu. Roble and Somalia’s President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known by his

nickname Farmaajo, have long been at loggerheads over the long-delayed elections, with fears their squabbling could erupt into violence. The international community has voiced its alarm over the crisis, fearing for the stability of the country as it continues to battle a deadly armed uprising by the al-Shabab armed group.

The feud between the two leaders erupted again last month when Farmaajo suspended Roble, the man he had himself chosen as premier in September 2020. But Roble accused the president of violating the constitution and of an “attempted coup” and defied the order, while Farmaajo himself faced calls by opposition leaders to vacate his office.

Farmaajo’s four-year mandate expired in February 2021, but

was controversially extended by parliament in April, triggering deadly gun battles on the streets of Mogadishu, with some rivals viewing it as a flagrant power grab. Roble then brokered a new timetable to a vote, but in the months that followed, the pair’s bitter rivalry derailed the polls again.

They agreed to bury the hatchet in October, and issued a unified call for the election process to accelerate. But their clash spilled out into the open again when Farmaajo suspended Roble, accusing him of corruption for allegedly interfering in a probe into a scandal over army-owned land. Elections in Somalia follow a complex indirect model, whereby state legislatures and clan delegates pick lawmakers for the national parliament, who in turn choose the president.

SOURCE

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/9/somalias-leaders-agree-to-hold-delayed-election-by-february-25>

SOMALIA DROUGHT: 1.4 MILLION PEOPLE MAY BE FORCED FROM THEIR HOMES, PREVENTATIVE ACTION NEEDED NOW

28TH JANUARY 2022

Somalia's escalating drought is creating a massive displacement crisis. 245,000 people have already fled their homes, with numbers projected to reach up to 1.4 million as the drought worsens. "Somalia's drought is dangerously escalating following three failed rainy seasons and some of the lowest rainfall in 40 years," said Mohamed Abdi, Country Director for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Somalia. "Without urgent preventative action to alleviate the crisis, lives will be lost."

A quarter of a million people have had no option but to leave their homes since the beginning of 2021, facing life-threatening water and food shortages. Humanitarian efforts are underway, but available resources are insufficient to meet increasing and urgent needs. NRC's humanitarian staff across the country are reporting increasing numbers of deceased livestock, malnourished children, drought-related deaths, and

people searching for aid. Women, children and the elderly are hardest hit.

"I fled with my children and arrived here, we had no other option," said Ebla Abdi, a mother of five who travelled 200 kilometers to a displacement camp in Kismayo, southern Somalia. "We had 30 cows, but many of them died because of the drought." "All my cattle succumbed to the drought. I lost 75 cows in a single night," said Markaba Bulle, a 90-year-old grandmother displaced by drought, arriving to the same camp. "We walked for eight days to reach here."

Preventative action, including supply of drinking water, food, basic income, and support for livelihoods, is crucial to avoid further displacement. Similar support, as well as shelter, is required for those already forced to leave their homes. NRC aims to provide this support to half a million of those hardest hits. "To avert the humanitarian disaster

unfolding before our eyes, we are asking donor countries to provide the funding necessary to ensure lifesaving assistance for the millions of people affected by one of the worst droughts in the last decade," said Abdi.

According to data from the Protection and Monitoring Returns Network (PRMN), 147,000 people have been displaced due to drought in the previous three months alone. At present, 3,200,000 people in Somalia – one-fifth of the population – are impacted by drought. Recent projections by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) estimate that up to 1,415,000 people may be displaced in the coming six months. The drought is posing severe consequences for communities, including food and water insecurity, malnutrition, rising commodity prices, crop and livestock losses, and risks to safety, including gender-based violence and conflicts over natural resources.

SOURCE.

<https://www.nrc.no/news/2022/january/somalia-drought/>

SOMALIA'S AL SHABAAB FIGHTERS KILL AT LEAST 7 IN ATTACK NEAR CAPITAL

30TH JANUARY 2022

Fighters from Somalia's al Shabaab militant group attacked a town north of the capital, Mogadishu, on Thursday, killing at least seven people as they battled government security forces, resident and police said. The attack happened amid a political dispute between Somalia's president and prime minister which its international partners worry has distracted the government from the fight against the insurgents.

Police and residents in Balad, 30 km (18 miles) north of Mogadishu, said fighters from the al Qaeda-linked group attacked and overran government forces guarding a bridge at a town entrance early in the morning.

"We were in a mosque praying when a heavy exchange of gunfire took place at the bridge. Al Shabaab thus captured the

town, overrunning the soldiers at the bridge," Hassan Nur, a shopkeeper in Balad, an agricultural town that links Somalia's Middle Shabelle region to Lower Shabelle, told Reuters by telephone.

"There were few police forces in the town. (The police) were missing. When the firing started people ran into their houses. I counted five dead soldiers and two civilian women," he said. Police captain Farah Ali said the fighters stayed briefly in the town after the attack but then left." AL Shabaab did not come to our station but captured the entire town in the fighting and left without patrolling," he told Reuters.

"I understand there are about eight people dead including soldiers." Al Shabaab aims to

topple the government and impose a strict version of Islamic law. It often carries out bomb attacks on government targets but also on civilians. It also targets African Union peacekeeping troops. Somalia, which has had only limited central government since 1991, is trying to reconstruct itself with the help of the United Nations.

The United Nations and various countries have urged its prime minister, Mohammed Hussein Roble, and President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed to settle their dispute, which has raised fears of conflict. The president on Monday tried to suspend the prime minister's powers for suspected corruption. The prime minister described the move as a coup attempt and he asked all security forces to take orders from his office, not the president.

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/somalias-al-shabaab-fighters-attack-town-near-capital-kill-7-police-residents-2021-12-30/>

KENYA

KENYAN CONSERVATIONIST RICHARD LEAKEY DIES AGED 77

2ND JANUARY 2022.

The legendary paleoanthropologist's groundbreaking discoveries helped prove that humanity evolved in Africa.

World-renowned paleoanthropologist Richard Leakey, known for his fossil-finding and conservation work in his native Kenya, has died at 77, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta has announced. Leakey, whose groundbreaking discoveries helped prove that humanity evolved in Africa, remained energetic into his 70s despite bouts of skin cancer, kidney and liver disease.

"I have this afternoon ... received with deep sorrow the sad news of the passing away of Dr Richard Erskine Frere Leakey," Kenyatta said in a statement.

Born on December 19, 1944, Leakey was destined for paleoanthropology – the study of the human fossil record – as the middle son of Louis and Mary Leakey, perhaps the world's most famous discoverers of ancestral hominids.

Initially, Leakey tried his hand at safari guiding, but things changed when at 23 he won a research grant from the National Geographic Society to dig on the shores of northern Kenya's Lake Turkana, despite having no formal archaeological training. In the 1970s, he led expeditions that recalibrated the scientific understanding of human evolution with the discovery of the skulls of *Homo habilis*, 1.9 million years old, in 1972 and *Homo erectus*, 1.6 million years old, in 1975.

A Time magazine cover followed of Leakey posing with a *Homo habilis* mock-up under the headline: How Man Became Man. Then in 1981, his fame grew further when he fronted, *The Making of Mankind*, a seven-part BBC television series. Yet the most famous fossil find was yet to come: the uncovering of an extraordinary, near-complete *Homo erectus* skeleton during one of his digs in 1984, which was nicknamed Turkana Boy. Battling ivory poachers

As the slaughter of African elephants reached a crescendo in the late 1980s, driven by

insatiable demand for ivory, Leakey emerged as one of the world's leading voices against the then-legal global ivory trade.

President Daniel Arap Moi in 1989 appointed Leakey to lead the national wildlife agency, soon to be named the Kenya Wildlife Service, or KWS. That year, he engineered a spectacular publicity stunt by burning a pyre of ivory, setting fire to 12 tonnes of tusks to make the point that they have no value once removed from elephants.

He also held his nerve, without apology, when implementing a shoot-to-kill order against armed poachers. In 1993, his small Cessna plane crashed in the Rift Valley where he had made his name. He survived but lost both legs.

"There were regular threats to me at the time and I lived with armed guards. But I made the decision not to be a dramatist and say: 'They tried to kill me.' I chose to get on with life," he told the Financial Times. Leakey was forced out of KWS a year later and began a third career as a prominent opposition

politician, joining the chorus of voices against Moi's corrupt government. His political career met with less success, however, and in 1998 he was back in the fold, appointed by Moi to head Kenya's civil service, putting him in charge of fighting official corruption. The task proved impossible, however, and he

resigned after just two years. In 2015, as another elephant poaching crisis gripped Africa, President Kenyatta asked Leakey to again take the helm at KWS, this time as chairman of the board, a position he would hold for three years.

Soft-spoken and seemingly devoid of personal vanity, Leakey stubbornly refused to give in to health problems. "Richard was a very good friend and a true loyal Kenyan. May he Rest in Peace," Paula Khumbu, the head of Wildlife Direct, a conservation group founded by Leakey, posted on Twitter.

SOURCE

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/2/kenya-conservationist-richard-leakey-dies-aged-77>

KENYA 2022: ANC PARTY LEADER MUDAVADI'S FORTUNES DWINDLE

14TH JANUARY 2022

With his vocal foot soldiers divided over whether to form a coalition with deputy president William Ruto or former prime minister Raila Odinga, Amani National Congress (ANC) party leader Musalia Mudavadi finds himself at a crossroad. Will he go it alone or choose to rally behind one of his rivals in the presidential race billed as one of the most competitive in the country's history?

After taking a short break from politics to celebrate the new year, Mudavadi appeared before the media on 5 January to assure Kenyans that all was well at the ANC and his presidential bid was still on course.

Appeared before the media on 5 January to assure Kenyans that all was well at the ANC and his presidential bid was still on course.

"Recently, I have been in the media more about what I did not say than what I said. My focus is clear and nothing has changed," said Mudavadi, flanked by his co-principals at the One Kenya Alliance (OKA) – a loose coalition of four mid-size political parties, which is currently punching below its weight in President Uhuru Kenyatta.

SOURCE.

<https://www.theafricareport.com/165804/kenya-2022-anc-party-leader-mudavadis-fortunes-dwindle/>

RWANDA

RWANDA TO HOST THE FIRST EDITION OF IRONMAN TRIATHLON IN EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

5TH JANUARY 2022

Rwanda is set to become the first country in the East and Central Africa region to host the Ironman 70.3 Triathlon competition slated for August 2022. The competition was launched in Rubavu District, the host city, on 20th January, and 1,500 athletes from around the world are expected to participate in this year's edition. The Minister of Sports Aurore Mimoso

Munyangaju recognized Rwanda's honor to have been selected and added to the Ironman 70.3 race calendar.

This choice is yet another note of appreciation from partners both locally and internationally in recognition of all efforts by our country to position itself as a sports destination. She spoke. The ceremony was also attended

by Serge Pereira, CEO of Starstone and Cindy Descalzi on behalf of the Ironman Group among other officials. The Ironman 70.3 Triathlon combines three sporting competitions namely cycling, marathon and swimming. With a limited time to complete the race, it is widely considered one of the most difficult sporting events in the world, conducted in a single day.

SOURCE.

<https://www.gov.rw/news>

UGANDA, RWANDA BORDER REOPENS AFTER THREE-YEAR CLOSURE

31ST JANUARY 2022

Uganda and Rwanda reopened their Gatuna border post on Monday, signaling the end of three-year frosty relations between the two East African nations. In a surprise announcement last week, Kigali said the frontier would be open

again after three years of closure, signaling a thaw in relations between the two East African nations that had long been at loggerheads.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's powerful son Muhoozi Kainerugaba -- seen as playing

a key role in Rwanda's decision -- tweeted: "Now our people can freely move, trade and interact as Almighty God always intended!" But as the rain poured at the main Gatuna post, the situation was unclear, with Rwandans complaining they were not allowed to cross while delays were also

reported on the Ugandan side. “I was told that the border is open and I came with the intention to cross to Uganda and buy some things. But Rwandan immigration officials have told me that I cannot cross until further notice. It is quite confusing,” a Rwandan trader who was turned away told AFP. Two-way trade collapsed after the frontier was closed in February 2019 as tensions between Kigali and Kampala spiralled over rival accusations of espionage and political meddling.

Kigali -- which used to rely on the Uganda route for the bulk of its imports -- announced it would reopen the border as a step towards repairing ties. Rwandan government spokeswoman Yolande Makolo said on Twitter that trucks, Rwandan citizens and returning residents were able to cross into the country at Gatuna, in line with Covid-19 restrictions. She added that “Rwandan &

Ugandan health officials are working on joint covid protocols, which will enable all to cross on both sides”, without mentioning the situation for Rwandans wanting to travel to Uganda.

A Ugandan truck driver was one of the first able to return to his home country just after the stroke of midnight. “This is a historic moment for our sister countries. I am so excited that this is happening,” Wasswa Ndugu Fabrison told journalists. On the Ugandan side, some at the border reported delays for goods clearance. Uganda’s immigration commissioner Marcelino Besigye told AFP the two sides had agreed to give priority to cargo trucks but that non-essential travel was not “encouraged” because of Covid protocols. “Our health teams and that of Rwanda will be working out a mechanism to ensure passengers are tested and allowed to proceed,” he

added. Kainerugaba was seen as instrumental in the reopening decision, after he visited Kigali and met Rwandan President Paul Kagame last month. Museveni and Kagame were close allies in the 1980s and 1990s during struggles for power in their respective countries, but relations turned deeply hostile.

Rwanda accused Uganda of abducting its citizens and supporting rebels seeking to topple Kagame. Uganda in turn accused Rwanda of spying as well as killing two men during an incursion into Ugandan territory in 2019. Before the closure, Ugandan exports to Rwanda -- predominantly cement and food -- total led more than \$211 million in 2018, according to World Bank figures. Rwanda, which subsequently turned to Tanzania for trade, had exported goods worth \$13 million to Uganda in 2018

<https://www.dw.com/en/rwanda-reopens-land-border-with-uganda/a-60611300>

BURUNDI

5TH JANUARY 2022

NEW EVIDENCE OF BELGIAN COMPLICITY IN 1961 KILLING OF BURUNDIAN PM

A popular prime minister of Burundi, Prince Louis Rwagasore, was shot dead just over 60 years ago with the complicity of Belgium, the departing colonial power, a researcher has claimed. The Belgian state has an “overwhelming responsibility” for the assassination of Rwagasore, according to Ludo De Witte, a Flemish sociologist who has spent five years investigating the killing. His previous work on the assassination of Congo’s first elected prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, led to a parliamentary inquiry that concluded Belgium had a “moral responsibility” for the death of the charismatic leader.

His new book, *Murder in Burundi*, explores unseen documents from archives in Brussels and London that expose Belgium’s hand in Rwagasore’s assassination, an event that shattered peace between ethnic groups, leading to decades of war and instability in the landlocked central African country.

The story unfolds on the terrace of the restaurant Tanganyika in

Bujumbura on Friday 13 October 1961, where Rwagasore was dining with ministers and allies. The 29-year-old son of one of Burundi’s last kings had been swept to power barely three weeks earlier in a landslide victory that had stunned the Belgian elite. A conservative aristocrat and a democrat with a knack for political organizing, Rwagasore wanted to unite Burundi’s different ethnic groups – the Hutus, Tutsi and Gangwas – in true independence from Belgium, the colonial power since 1918. His plans were never realized. He had been prime minister for only 16 days when he was shot. The killer and his accomplices were quickly caught and tried. The man who pulled the trigger, Jean Kageorgis, a Greek national, was executed on 30 June 1962, the day before Burundi’s independence. Five accomplices were put to death six months later.

De Witte argues that the role of the Belgian state was never properly examined, not by the Belgian colonial court, the newly independent government of Burundi, or the United Nations, which all conducted

inquiries into the killing. De Witte sees differences in the culpability of the Belgian elite in the two assassinations he has investigated. In the case of Lumumba, killed also in 1961, the Belgian elite had “a direct and concrete responsibility in the assassination”, De Witte said. In the case of Rwagasore, events were orchestrated by Belgian officials in Burundi while Brussels turned a blind eye.

Rwagasore’s life was in danger after his Uprona party won a crushing victory over the Christian Democrat party (CDC), which was seen as more friendly to Belgian interests. Two days after the Uprona landslide, Roberto Régnier, the Belgian resident (governor), convened a crisis meeting of senior Belgian officials and CDC allies, where he delivered a chilling message. “Rwagasore must be killed,” he said. His words were taken as an invitation by the CDC. Régnier’s words were confirmed by four participants in a 1962 investigation by the crown prosecutor of Brussels. But that report was never published and was left gathering dust until De Witte came across it. The first

clue of the report's existence was found in a dispatch from Britain's then ambassador to Burundi, James Murray. Writing in 1962, Murray told London that some senior Belgians had had "an almost pathological hatred" of Rwagasore, who they believed would harm Belgian-Burundian relations. He recalled Régnier's "words which go very far in the direction of incitement to murder".

Also accused is one of Belgium's most admired diplomats, Paul-Henri Spaak, the then foreign minister who is now celebrated as a founding father of the European project, who De Witte believes turned a blind eye to what was happening. "Spaak knew that Régnier and his aides were on a war footing with Rwagasore, that they were rebelling against the United Nations decision to order free elections with the participation of Rwagasore," he says.

He also describes how King Baudouin, one of Belgium's most popular monarchs, sought to help the assassins. He "moved heaven and earth" to commute the death sentence of the assassin to imprisonment. While some might suggest Baudouin was motivated by opposition to the death penalty, DeWitte contends that the young

king was heavily influenced by the ultra-conservative Catholic circle at the palace that took a pitiless attitude to anyone advocating real independence. But the picture remains incomplete. When De Witte went to examine Spaak's archive, he found only a few documents relating to Burundi for 1961. And a document he found in the African Archives in 2013 had disappeared when he went to look at it again a few years later, he says. The sources may be new but the conclusions do not surprise Burundian-Belgians. "We have known for a long time there was a crime committed by the Belgian state," said Libérat Ntibashirakandi, a mathematics professor in Brussels who founded the Burundian Diaspora of Belgium group. "The book brings new elements of proof that Belgium was implicated in this assassination."

Belgian parliamentarians have been calling for greater access to archives since the inquiry into Lumumba's death nearly 20 years ago. Experts repeated the "paramount importance" of declassifying the archives in October 2021 when a special commission handed over a report examining Belgium's colonial past in Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, a project triggered by Black Lives Matter protests across Belgium.

The experts acknowledged that their 689-page report paid "limited attention" to Rwanda and Burundi and called for further investigation into both countries, including Rwagasore's assassination. After two decades studying the darkest pages of Belgium's history, De Witte is not optimistic the commission will change much. "Among the Belgian elite there is a reticence, a real distance to confront the reality, the destructive consequences of colonization and decolonization," he says. A spokesperson for Belgium's foreign ministry did not respond directly to the charges in the book, but said: "The debate over historical reality is never over. It is perfectly legitimate, even necessary and desirable, that the historic colonial project be treated in a critical manner." The spokesperson said the government was waiting on recommendations from the special parliamentary commission on colonization before taking another position. Ntibashirakandi said the Belgian federal parliament needed to investigate the murder of Rwagasore, whom he sees as national hero who could have led Burundi to a very different future. "It's important for Burundi to know the truth and for all of Belgium to recognize the mistakes of the past."

www.theguardian.com/world/burundi

BURUNDI: ACCOUNT FOR DEAD IN GITEGA PRISON FIRE

24TH JANUARY

Burundian authorities should credibly investigate and provide a transparent and reliable account of the December 7, 2021, fire at Gitega's central prison, Human Rights Watch said today. Several hundred prisoners may have died or been injured.

The authorities have failed to conduct a transparent, credible, and impartial investigation into the fire to examine the circumstances in which it started and spread, officials' reaction and their failure to evacuate prisoners, and to accurately count and identify the dead and injured. They should communicate findings transparently – including the names of the dead and the injured – and fairly prosecute anyone who may be held responsible, if necessary. They should also provide survivors and victims' family members with compensation, medical care, and mental health support.

“More than a month after the tragedy at Gitega prison, the government has failed to give a full and truthful accounting of what happened and to treat family members of the deceased with dignity,” said Lewis Mudge, Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “The absence of information about

the real number and identities of the victims only adds further pain and distress in the wake of unimaginable loss.”

The fire broke out around 4 a.m. on December 7, in the prison in Burundi's political capital, and spread to several blocks; large rooms that can house up to several hundred prisoners. According to three prisoners interviewed and two other sources who have been inside the prison since the fire, block 4, which is thought to have housed over 250 prisoners, was the worst affected. Prisoners attempting to flee the flames broke through a wall. Prisoners also said that no evacuation took place until the emergency services arrived sometime between 5:30 and 6 a.m.

“In our block, many survived,” said one prisoner interviewed by phone. “But in other blocks they didn't wake up in time and many died. The guards came at 6 a.m., but by then it was too late. Between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m., it was only the prisoners and the fire.” Two other prisoners and a lawyer who spoke with two clients detained in Gitega prison confirmed this account. One prisoner said that in block 2, many prisoners suffocated from inhaling smoke. After emergency services arrived, Vice

President Prosper Bazombanza told reporters at the prison that the fire had killed 38 people but did not identify them. The Interior Ministry said on Twitter that an electrical short circuit caused the fire. Weeks later, on December 29, President Évariste Ndayishimiye said 46 people had died, including some who died in the hospital. However, prisoners and other sources told Human Rights Watch that they believe the number of dead is higher. They said no investigation or roll call had been conducted at the time of Bazombanza's announcement. “The government's numbers are lies,” a prisoner told Human Rights Watch on December 11. “The real number of dead is between 200 and 400... Since yesterday, prisoners are being sent back [inside] so we can see who is missing.”

Prisoners and two other sources present when dead bodies were removed said they were transported in large plastic sheets, some containing the remains of multiple bodies. Sources there at the time said the remains were buried in bags in mass graves on the evening of December 7 without any attempt to identify them. On January 7, 2022, Human Rights Watch spoke with family members of three prisoners, two of whom are believed to have died in the fire. The wife of a

missing prisoner, the mother of three children, said she traveled to Gitega the morning after the fire, struggling to pay for her

transportation: “When I arrived, I found others looking for their loved ones. The authorities told us they would communicate with us

later... Until today, I haven’t heard anything from them. I can’t afford to go back.”

SOURCE

Hrw.org/news/2022/01/24/Burundi-account-dead-gitega-prison-fire. Accessed on 9th February 2022

SOUTH SUDAN

25TH JANUARY 2022

CHILDREN AMONG THE DOZENS KILLED IN SOUTH SUDAN VIOLENCE

UN Mission in South Sudan condemns armed raids in Jonglei that left more than 30 people dead, including three children who

drowned in a river while trying to flee. The attacks on Dungrut and Machined villages on Sunday sent civilians from the Dinka Bor community fleeing as armed

youths from the Murle ethnic group opened fire and torched property.

31ST JANUARY 2021

AU CALLS FOR LIFTING OF ARMS EMBARGO ON SOUTH SUDAN (*THE DAWN, DAILY NEWSPAPER*)

The African Union (AU) at its 1060th meeting held on 25th January 2022 on the situation in South Sudan has called on the international community to

lift the arms embargo and other sanctions imposed in South Sudan. It is said in a communique that when arms embargo are lifted, the country will be able to build the required capacity of the

unified armed forces and also enable the coalition government to effectively discharge its constitutional mandate of defending the territorial integrity of the country.

28TH JANUARY 2022

SOUTH SUDAN TOPS WORLD'S HUNGER LIST *JUBA MONITOR*

South Sudan has topped yet another damning list of the world's hungriest countries

according to the latest food insecurity report by FAO and WFP, barely two days after being rated

the world's most corrupt country by Transparency International.

SUDAN

24TH JANUARY 2022

SUDAN DEPUTY LEADER MEETS ETHIOPIA DEFENSE MINISTER ON RARE VISIT *AL JAZEERA*

Sudan's second most powerful leader Mohammed Hamdan Daglo is in Addis Ababa

on a two day visit. He met with Ethiopia's defense minister on a rare visit to Addis Ababa by an official from Khartoum amid

border tensions, according to officials.

16TH JANUARY 2022

SUDAN PRO-DEMOCRACY FACTION AGREES TO UN-BROKERED TALKS *AL JAZEERA*

The Forces of Freedom and Change say it will take part in UN- sponsored talks to end months of political deadlock. A prominent Sudanese pro-democracy group has conditionally accepted the

UN's offer to broker an end to political deadlock following the October military coup.

Jaafar Hassan, a spokesperson for the Central Council for the Forces of Freedom and Change (CCFFC),

said in a press statement on Sunday that the council decided to accept the invitation of the United Nations mission (UNITAMS) to support dialogue between the parties to the Sudanese crisis.

15TH JANUARY

NEW US AFRICA ENVOY TO VISIT ETHIOPIA AND SUDAN *AL JAZEERA*

US envoy, assistant secretary to meet leaders and civil society actors during severe crises in the two African nations

The new United States envoy to the Horn of Africa, David Satterfield, and Assistant Secretary Molly Phee visited Sudan and Ethiopia amid continuing crises in the two African nations.

The pair met with the Friends of Sudan, a group calling for the restoration of the country's transitional government following a military coup in October.

ETHIOPIA

12TH JANUARY 2022

BLOCKADE CREATES 'HELL' IN ETHIOPIA'S TIGRAY: WHO

Tigray is under what the UN calls a de facto blockade that is preventing medicine and food from reaching millions. A blockade preventing medicines and other life-saving supplies reaching Ethiopia's Tigray has created "hell" in the war-ravaged

region, and is "an insult to our humanity", said the World Health Organization's chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"Nowhere in the world are we witnessing hell like in Tigray," said on Wednesday Ghebreyesus – himself from the northern

Ethiopian region. The fighting between forces loyal to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and their allies has killed thousands of people and forced several million from their homes since it erupted in November 2020.

Compiled and edited by Karen Geri and Anna Dure

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