FORMER Finance minister, Tendai Biti, has torched a storm after challenging Treasury authorities insistence that the country’s national debt is around US$14 billion.

The opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) finance and economics spokesman said Zimbabwe’s sovereign debt had reached US$30 billion, twice the official figure by incumbent Finance Minister, Mthuli Ncube.

Addressing Parliament this week, Biti who is also Harare East lawmaker, slammed Ncube for underestimating and understating how much the country owed China, Bretton Woods institutions, among other creditors.

By James Muonwa
Mash West Correspondent

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I've got a hell of a lot of pride

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Debt row...

from page 1

Said Biti: “I want to come to another thing Madam Speaker, Mzim which is the debt question. Zimbabwe is struggling with a debt overhang. Our debt overhang, the minister puts the figures at US$14 billion.

“We beg to differ. We think that a sovereign debt of Zimbabwe is over US$30 billion. We think that the minister is under estimating and understating the debt we owe to the African Import and Export Bank, the Republic of China and various private loans that we know the Government has contracted.”

The legislator lamented that there was no will to tackle the debt question which inhibits the country from accessing other loans.

“It is not sanctions. We have got US$2 billion that we owe to the World Bank. We have got US$500 million that we owe to the African Development Bank,” he said.

“We have got US$5 billion to the Paris Club of Lenders. Our point to the Minister of Finance is that please come up with a debt plan. At least, Chinnamasah had his Lima Plan, which may have failed …”

In order to balance the books, Biti went on, Mthuli must devise a credible macro-economic framework and come up with a solution to fix the exchange rate.

“In my opinion, please float the Zimbabwean dollar, live within your means,” he said.

“Pursue fiscal prudence, pay civil servants including teachers and Members of Parliament in United States dollars, please fund agriculture adequately.

“Please fund the social services adequately and deal with corruption and cartels.”

In response, Mthuli argued that the validated debt and reconciled public external debt stock stood at US$15.2 billion, as at June, 2022.

“There were instructions that the debt could be as high as US$30 billion, that is incorrect,” said the Treasury boss.

“The correct figure is US$13.2 billion for external debt. This is as a result of a regular validation and reconciliation of the public guaranteed debt undertaken by our Public Debt Management Office and its creditors.”

The finance minister said he reports to Parliament twice a year, and was mandated by same to come before it and present a report on the state of indebtedness, which he had done diligently.

He said the debt stock included called up guarantees while other outstanding guarantees were normally reported in the statement of public debt report to Parliament on Public Debt as memorandum items as these were not called up guarantees, but contingent liabilities.

Anger as transporter calls black employees ‘lizard skinned people’

By Mary Taruvinga
Senior Reporter

THE Chief Executive Officer of one of Africa’s leading fuel supply and distribution companies, Strauss Logistics Zimbabwe, has been caught up in racism storm for calling his black employees ‘lizard skinned’, NewZimbabwe.com has learnt.

The allegation has created tension between Adrian Smuts and his employees, who are mainly truck drivers.

It is also alleged that the workers are not being paid and have lost all labour cases against their employer who allegedly brags about being “connected, and that no one will touch him”.

He threatens people because he had links with the late President Robert Mugabe, links which keep him aloft to date, and he calls blacks lizard skinned people,” said an employee who requested to be anonymous.

“Adrian is former boss at Sabot, Pioneer Transport and Green Fuels … his history is firing people when they go on strike.

It is strange that Justice Godfrey Musariri, the Labour Court judge, has always been regular on all cases that Adrian forwarded to his court at all those companies he had worked for.”

Why Musariri at Sabot, Pioneer and Green fuels and now Strauss Logistics?”

In June this year, the workers embarked on an industrial action but the move has turned sour for them after the same judge granted Smuts permission to punish his employees for embarking on the job action.

Smuts, through his company, is cited as the applicant documents seen by NewZimbabwe.com, rushed to court challenging the strike complaining that it was illegal.

The matter was handled by Justice Musariri who, according to the employees, controversially handles all labour disputes between them and their employer.

Smuts argued that the job action failed to comply with the requirements of section 104 of the Act which requires a 14-days’ notice of the job action, a vote by the employees and conciliation of the underlying dispute.

The judge ruled in favour of Smuts, stating that “the respondents (workers) did not dispute their failure to comply with the stated requirements”.

The chairman of the workers committee had deposed an affidavit on behalf of the employees challenging the labour court action by the employer.

He told the court that he was unfairly stopped from driving his truck together with the committee’s secretary.

They were put on suspension pending disciplinary hearing.

They communicated their displeasure in writing but started receiving calls from “strangers claiming to be from the Office of the President and Cabinet and the number which called was registered in the name of one Jacob Mupeti.”

On the night of 11th and 12th, the workers committee secretary and I survived kidnapping from unknown people who visited our residence.

“These incidents were reported to the Zimbabwe Republic Police under reference 0131149/22 Kuwadzana for myself and 013801/22 Norton for the secretary,” he told court.

At the time of the court hearing, the secretary general’s whereabouts were unknown following his disappearance on June 22 after meeting at Strauss Logistics premises.

The judge ruled it was not clear who had kidnapped the committee members.

“Respondents did not dispute that they failed to comply with the mandatory requirements for lawful strike set out by subsections 2 and 3 of S104 … the applicant is hereby authorised to take disciplinary action against the respondents who disobey the terms of this order and each party shall pay its costs,” ruled the judge.

Last Friday, over 200 drivers were called for a disciplinary hearing over the industrial action after the company was given permission to punish the employees.

The workers were however, aggrieved that a new workers committee was selected when the current one had not been absolved.

The company’s human resources manager, Tavonga Machigere refused to comment.

“We are still going through some processes at our company,” he said.

Asked what the process was, Machigere said, “You might not need to know about that.”

Efforts to get a comment from Smuts were in vain as his mobile was unreachable.

He did not respond to text messages sent to him.
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Mliswa says shadowy company Rusununguko used by Generals and top politicians to loot the country

**Defence minister warns legislator against baseless accusations**

By Thobekile Khumalo

Independent Norton legislator, Temba Mliswa was on Tuesday kicked out of Parliament for exposing a shadowy military company called Rusununguko and claiming it was being used by Generals and top politicians to loot the country.

According to Mliswa, the company was formed by late Minister of Foreign Affairs Sibusiso Moyo with the intention of raising funds to help to ease economic hardships faced by the army.

The legislator however, claimed that company uses public funds that are never accounted for, with Zanu PF benefiting from this.

Mliswa said the money that is being breast-pocketed by the army has been given resources without their knowledge.

“Rusununguko has been given resources in this country so that the Ministry of Defence is not seen to be suffering but is complemented by resources coming from Rusununguko,” said Mliswa.

“But Rusununguko is yet to tell us that the resources given to them by Government have achieved how much. We do not know whether those resources are for certain individuals using the name Rusununguko in the army, or Rusununguko is truly an army concern.”

“We have not seen any financial reports so that when we debate on the budget of the Ministry of Defence, the income that Rusununguko makes comes in, the Minister of Finance then takes it on and does not give the Ministry of Defence all the money.”

“Rusununguko has been given resources in this country so that the Ministry of Defence is not seen to be suffering but is complemented by resources coming from Rusununguko.”

Mliswa claimed that soldiers were complaining that there is no money yet there are resources which the army has been given to pay to the soldiers.

In response, Minister of Defence and War Veterans Oppah Muchinguri Kashiri said the accusations by Mliswa were baseless and unfounded.

“These are very serious accusations which we are not taking lightly,” said the Minister.

“These accusations are coming at a time when we have recently celebrated the great work that our soldiers are doing in order to defend our independence and territorial integrity.”

“Want also to emphasise that these soldiers are a people’s force who respect the interest of our nation and also protect the people of Zimbabwe.”

“Last week when we had our Zimbabwe Defence Forces Day, His Excellency shared with the nation programmes which are lined up in order to address the interest of our soldiers. “I will start Mr. Speaker, with the military salary concept which had been abandoned during the First Republic, only to be resurrected during this Second Republic.”

She insisted that Rusununguko was resuscitated in the interest of the army with junior soldiers benefiting the most and allowances having also been increased.

“Mr Speaker Sir, let me state that Rusununguko is a private company which is in partnership with the Chinese and does not benefit from any budget from Parliament; it operates like any other private company,” said the minister.

“We have so many cases where ARDA has gone into partnership with the private sector and to single out Defence where every effort is being made by His Excellency to address the social welfare issues of our soldiers is to say the least very, very unfair.”

Muchinguri-Kashiri warned against “speculation, misleading the nation where people do not have facts”, saying this was “an offence, a serious offence”.

“We should not abuse Parliament by raising issues where Rusununguko cannot come and defend itself,” she said.

“It was very important that we set this record straight to make sure that where people come into Parliament, it is very unparliamentary where people speak without proper facts. “So I dismiss the accusations, I say that the Second Republic is doing all things possible to address the challenge facing our defence staff.”

Mnangagwa’s son in law in property scandal, client’s houses fraudulently disposed to army

By Mary Taruvinga

Senior Reporter

PRESIDENT Emmerson Mnangagwa’s son in law, top lawyer Gerald Mlotshwa is embroiled in a messy property scandal after his former client’s upmarket houses ended up in the hands of the army without his knowledge.

Mlotshwa is a Zimbabwean lawyer who mainly practises commercial law running G.N Mlotshwa and Co. Legal Practitioners.

The matter has since spilled to the courts where the Oman -based client, businessman Thamer Said Ahmed Al Shanfari, is demanding back his property claiming it was fraudulently given to the army.

Shanfari is suing G.N.Mlotshwa and Co. Legal Practitioners, Mlotshwa himself, his partner Tawanda Maguwudze, Minister of Defence Oppah Muchinguri- Kashiri, her ministry and the army owned company, Rusununguko Nkululeko Holdings (Private) Limited as well as Martin Rushwaya and the army.

Mlotshwa had protested being included in the proceedings of the main case but High Court judge Justice Paul Musiithu dismissed his arguments ruling he was at the centre of the controversy.

“There is no way that the respondents can escape any involvement in those proceedings since it is their conduct that the applicant complains about in the main application. It is partly because of the respondents’ conduct that proceedings were instituted therein.”

For the foregoing reasons, this court is satisfied that this is an appropriate case for the joinder of the respondents in the main matter,” ruled the judge.

In the main case, Shanfari had sued the minister and the other parties leaving out Mlotshwa and partners.

Court papers show that on 21 October 2019, Shanfari filed the main application seeking the placement of a caveat over four immovable properties, all in Glen Lorne.

Shanfari said properties were acquired through his own finances during the period 1999 and 2001.

He intended to have them registered in the name of a trust and companies in which he was the majority shareholder.

All the key documentation pertaining to the acquisition and ownership of the properties as well as Shanfari’s business interests were allegedly in the hands of Muchinguri’s lawyer, who is G.N Mlotshwa and company and Mlotshwa himself.

Shanfari claimed that sometime around 2012, he engaged Chibune & Associates Legal Practitioners to handle his legal affairs pertaining to his various business interests in Zimbabwe.

The principal partner in the law firm, one Chibune, fell ill for some time, which led Shanfari to transfer his files to Mlotshwa.

Shanfari formally engaged Mlotshwa around 15 March 2012, and gave it a mandate to manage his legal affairs.

He also handed over to Mlotshwa, for safekeeping, various original and photocopies of documents pertaining to the acquisition and ownership of the said properties.

The receipt of those documents was confirmed by an email of 21 March 2012, from Mlotshwa’s employee dated 21 February 2021.

One Timothy Mazongo, who was employed by Mlotshwa also confirmed receiving some files for safekeeping.

According to Shanfari, the documents handed over to Mlotshwa confirmed that the said properties were owned by him in his capacity as director of Bourhill Investments (Private) Limited, Graphic Investments (Private) Limited, and as the beneficiary of the Fifty Seven Foyton Trust.

The said documents remained with the lawyer.

Further, according to Shanfari, the properties were vacant when he purchased them except for a small structure on Stand 99 Glen Lorne Harare.
Mnangagwa’s son in law in property scandal...

That small structure had been demolished to make way for a main structure which was custom made to Shanfari’s specifications.

Shanfari had been residing at this property for intermittent periods as he was often resident outside the country.

The Application for the Caveat HC 8780/19.

Shanfari claimed that on 27 February 2019, his agent Alan Passaportis received a letter of demand from Muchinguri’s lawyer, who is Mlotshwa.

The same letter further claimed that the ministry, cited as the fifth respondent had regularised documentation pertaining to the alleged regularisation of ownership of the said properties; and clarification as to ownership by Rushwaya.

He also demanded information were all in vain prompting the applicant to institute proceedings under HC 8780/19.

“In their opposition in HC 8780/19, the first and second respondents raised preliminary points at the outset alleging that: the applicant was peregrinus and had not offered security. They also said Shanfari was a fugitive from justice with two outstanding warrants of apprehension; he was also a prohibited immigrant.”

Muchinguri also averred that GN Mlotshwa & Co Legal Practitioners should have been cited as party to those proceedings in view of all the allegations made against them.

It was within the context of the background above that Shanfari sought the joinder of the first to third respondents to the main case.

In opposing the joinder, Mlotshwa and partner said there was no cause of action to find an application for their joinder.

They also said Shanfari was seeking to join them out of necessity.

Measles outbreak in Zimbabwe kills 157 unvaccinated children

At least 157 children have died in a new measles outbreak in Zimbabwe.

“The outbreak was first reported in the eastern Manicaland province in early April and has since spread to all parts of the country.

At least 2,056 cases have been reported and virtually all of the deaths have been children who were not vaccinated, Information Minister Monica Mutsvangwa said.

Zimbabwe’s Cabinet has invoked a law used to respond to disasters to deal with the outbreak, she said.

The government says it is embarking on a mass vaccination campaign targeting children aged between 6 months and 15 years old and is engaging traditional and faith leaders to support the drive.

Zimbabwe continued vaccinating children against measles even during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, but the drive has been hampered by religious groups that preach against vaccines. The Christian sects are against modern medicine and tell their members to rely on self-proclaimed prophets for healing.

Church gatherings that have resumed following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions have “led to the spread of measles to previously unaffected areas,” said the health ministry in a statement last week.

Measles is among the most infectious diseases in the world and mostly spreads in the air by coughing, sneezing or close contact. Symptoms include coughing, fever and a skin rash, while the risk of severe measles or dying from complications is high among unvaccinated children.

Outbreaks in unvaccinated and malnourished populations have been known to kill thousands. Scientists estimate that more than 90 percent of the population needs to be immunized to prevent measles outbreaks.

The World Health Organization April warned of an increase in measles in vulnerable countries as a result of a disruption of services due to COVID-19.
INDEPTH: Zimbabwe’s monetary authorities battle to prop up currency amid market indiscipline

By Xinhua

OVER the past three months, the Zimbabwean monetary and fiscal authorities have announced various measures to try to halt the depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar (ZWL) by curbing speculative activity.

The latest of the measures is the introduction of gold coins into the market on July 25 by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), the country’s central bank.

According to the RBZ, the coins are an alternative stable investment product for value preservation, which should help to stabilize the exchange rate, and prices to curb inflation.

Announcing his mid-term monetary policy statement last week, RBZ Governor John Mangudya said the central bank was pleased by the uptake of the coins, adding that it plans to release smaller units of gold coins into the market in November this year.

The move is meant to allow ordinary Zimbabweans to buy them since the first coins released last month are exorbitantly priced, he said.

The coins entered the market at 1,823.83 U.S. dollars, a figure which is beyond the reach of many.

"Following the successful launch of the gold coins on July 25, 2022, and in response to public demand, the Bank shall introduce and release into the market gold coins in units of a tenth ounce, quarter ounce and half an ounce for sale with effect from mid-November, 2022," said Mangudya.

He said the features, characteristics, sale terms and conditions of the smaller coins shall remain the same as the current trading arrangements of the gold coins in circulation.

The gold coins have liquid asset status, prescribed asset status, can be tradable and used as collateral, and can be bought back.

Individuals, domestic corporates including institutional investors are allowed to buy the gold coins in both local and foreign currency while international buyers can only buy the coins in foreign currencies that include the U.S. dollar, South African rand and the British pound.

Fluctuations will be experienced in the U.S. dollar and Zimbabwean dollar prices as a result.
The introduction of the gold coins is part of the central bank’s measures to tackle the country’s currency crisis through exchange rate stabilization.

Mangudya said as of Aug. 10, a total of 4,475 gold coins had been sold, realizing 3.7 billion Zimbabwean dollars (about 10.22 million U.S. dollars), of which 90 percent was paid in local currency and the balance in foreign currency.

“The high demand for the gold coins will assist in mopping up excess liquidity from the market and thus strengthen the demand and enhance the value of the local currency,” the central bank governor said. “The Bank shall continue to release additional gold coins into the market on an ongoing basis in line with demand.”

Apart from releasing the gold coins, the central bank has been reviewing bank policy rates since the beginning of the year in line with exchange rates in a bid to tame inflation and bolster the Zimbabwean dollar.

The bank policy rate was increased from 60 percent in January 2022 to 80 percent in April and further to 200 percent in June 2022. According to Mangudya, the increase in policy rates and its alignment to the minimum lending rate has gone a long way in reducing speculative borrowing and stabilizing the exchange rate.

The central bank chief noted that the increase in interest rates and the introduction of the gold coins have gone a long way in preserving the value of the local currency, reducing liquidity in the market and reducing foreign currency demand on the parallel market and thus stabilizing the exchange rate and prices.

Persistence Gwanyanya, the economist and member of the RBZ Monetary Policy Committee, told Xinhua that the gold coins were a policy instrument that the RBZ was using to mop up excess liquidity from the few contractors, institutional investors and pension funds that hold the bulk of the country’s excess liquidity that is being used to drive up parallel market activity.

“As you drive demand for the gold coins, the Zimbabwean dollar strengthens. We have started seeing that happening and the Zimbabwean dollar will continue strengthening as the RBZ sucks liquidity from the market and from those with high volumes of local currency,” he said.

Gwanyanya said before the injection of the gold coins, the exchange rate on the parallel market had depreciated to 1 USD:850 ZWL but a few weeks after, the rate firmed to around 1 USD:750 ZWL and is continuing to strengthen with rates of 1 USD:600 ZWL:720 ZWL now in the market.

Zimbabwe reintroduced the local currency in 2019 after abandoning it in 2009 when it was hit by hyperinflation.

Confederation of Zimbabwe Retailers President Denford Mutashu told Xinhua that the appetite for gold coins since its introduction was encouraging and the coins were providing much-needed competition to the U.S. dollar.

“The parallel market exchange rate has not only stabilized but came down from 900 ZWL:1 USD to the current average of 650 ZWL:1 USD. Consequently, prices of basic commodities came down with cooking oil price reducing from an average of 56 U.S. dollars per box to the current average of 50 U.S. dollars per box,” Mutashu said.

He, however, expressed concern that sugar prices continued to go up in local currency from an average of 609,000 ZWL per tonne last week to 709,000 ZWL per tonne Monday this week.

“Business should ensure the consumers benefit from the current stability through responsible pricing,” he said.

Also, to arrest further depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar, the government has taken steps to review its procurement approach to minimize the practice of forward foreign exchange rate pricing that was being pursued by its suppliers of goods and services.

Mangudya is also upbeat about the monthly inflation outlook, noting that the policy measures they have announced so far have begun to tame inflation.

“As a result of the measures, month-on-month inflation, which had increased to 30.7 percent in June 2022, decelerated to 25.6 percent in July 2022. The exchange rate has also largely stabilized during the month of July 2022 following the implementation of the tight monetary policy measures,” he said.

Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube said the fiscal side was working very hard to curb speculative activities.

“There is a lot that we are doing and we have made sure that either we are tackling domestic factors or acting on external factors and those together have gone a long way in stabilizing inflation and the exchange rate,” he said.
GOKWE: For many years, Silibaziso Handa has grown cotton on her five hectares of land in Mavhulele village in Zimbabwe's Gokwe South District.

But even at the age of 63, she is still growing the cash crop despite facing poverty.

Widowed and taking care of four orphaned grandchildren, she has made sure to plant cotton each farming season.

Little change

Handa has however kept complaining that for all the years she has toiled growing the crop, very little has changed in her life.

Before her husband, Pritchard, died a decade ago, they farmed cotton together.

"Money would come in bits during the time my husband was alive, and we were at least grateful for that. But that money would only buy food and the cotton seeds we needed for the next season," she told Anadolu Agency.

She claimed there were always excuses from cotton buyers from the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe to buy the white gold.

Handa lost three of her daughters to AIDS, and with her three other daughters married and living in cities with their own families, she has had to remain at her rural homestead in the company of her orphaned grandchildren, whose parents also succumbed to AIDS a few years back.

Aged 17, 18, 20 and 22, for lack of school fees, the grandchildren -- all of whom are girls -- dropped out of school and now focus more on growing cotton with their grandmother, even as they get next to nothing after selling a couple of cotton bales.

"In fact, cotton farmers like Handa and her grandchildren are farming themselves into poverty in this southern African nation, getting zero returns from their sweat at the end of each farming season.

Worthless currency

For their growing plight as cotton farmers, many like Handa have had to pin the blame on the local currency preyed on by Zimbabwe’s ballooning inflation.

Cotton itself is bought using the local currency, even as it has been rendered almost worthless by inflation, which hovers above 257% in Zimbabwe.

Prior to 2018, when the multi-currency system was in place, a single kilogram of cotton was priced at $1.42 in 2015 and $1.51 in 2017.

But that is a thing of the past now, with cotton sold only in Zimbabwe dollars, meaning cotton farmers like Handa have to perpetually battle with poverty with zero benefits from their sweat.

"The money has no value, even if it comes, and this is made worse by payments that often come late when the local currency would have been chewed away by inflation," said Handa.

At the official exchange rate of about one US dollar to 408 Zimbabwean dollars, a single kilogram of cotton costs between $0.53 and $0.68.

Yet as inflation erodes the Zimbabwean dollar, local cotton buyers are said to be vanishing for months on end before availing payments to poor farmers like Handa.

That has meant by the time many cotton farmers like Handa get paid for their cotton deliveries, the money they receive would have lost value.

Persisting

In Zimbabwe’s regions like Gokwe in Midlands Province, even as they earn poorly from selling the white gold, the farmers still cling to growing the crop.

"Many cotton-growing farmers here incur losses on growing cotton. But every farming season, they still go back to growing the crop, even if it may mean they have to borrow the inputs, remaining poor in the process," Mathias Mucherera, a government agricultural extension officer based in Midlands Province, told Anadolu Agency.

As such, as the cotton farmers fall deeper and deeper into poverty, cotton deliveries in Zimbabwe last year jumped to 116,052 tons from 82,479 tons in 2020 following subsidies and increased government support to farmers, according to the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe.

Handa has said she wonders why many of them have descended into poverty when recorded sales of cotton are on the rise in the country.

Corruption

But recently, with corruption rocking the cotton farming industry, Gokwe Nembudziya legislator Justice Mayor Wadyajena was arrested following a case related to stockpiles of cotton farming inputs which were of late reportedly found stashed at a warehouse linked to him in his constituency.

Ironically, Wadyajena chairs the Zimbabwe parliament’s portfolio committee on land and agriculture.

For Handa and many other cotton farmers here, as politicians like Wadyajena reportedly devour what should be theirs, poverty has become the order of the day.

"It's as if we farm poverty as we insist on growing cotton. Nothing seems to change for me, and I struggle to even buy food and farm inputs despite growing cotton every year," she said.

Yet, said Handa, farmers like herself have had no choice except to keep growing cotton with the hope of earning better returns each season, but the result has been the same every year.

She has to battle it out fending for her four orphaned grandchildren, who still look up to her for support.

Falling prices

Cotton prices have also fallen over the years here, and that has meant that the situation is getting worse and worse for farmers like Handa.

"Cotton is not paying any longer," she said.

In fact, with poor pricing of the white gold here, some cotton farmers, like 68-year-old Eliva Mhere, a resident of Gokwe, are quitting growing the crop, citing poor returns where a kilogram of cotton is now priced way below $0.50.

"I have stopped growing cotton because it only makes me poorer because of how its prices have kept falling," she said.
Zimbabweans hit by 257% inflation: Will gold coins help?

By Associated Press

HARARE: After working as an overnight security guard at a church in Harare’s impoverished Mabvuku township, Jeffrey Carlos rushes home to help his wife fetch water to sell. Prolonged water shortages mean most residents of the capital city of more than 2.4 million must source their own water. Carlos is lucky because the property he rents has a well and his family can haul up buckets of water to sell to neighbors.

“This is our gold,” he says of the well water.

“If we are lucky, we can sell up to 12 buckets of water (per day) for $2,” said the 50-year-old father of three. That’s about enough money to buy the family’s food for the day, he said. Rising prices and a fast depreciating currency have pushed many Zimbabweans to the brink, reminding people of when the southern African country faced world-record inflation of 5 billion% in 2008. With inflation jumping from 191% in June to 257% in July, many Zimbabweans fear the country is heading to hyperinflation.

To prevent a return of such economic disaster, President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s government last month took the unprecedented step of introducing gold coins as legal tender. The country’s central bank, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, said that because the value of the one-ounce, 22-carat coins would be determined by the international price of gold they will help tame the runaway inflation and stabilize the nation’s currency.

The glitter of the gold coins is hard to see for Zimbabweans struggling each day to eke out a living. The government sees things differently and is pleading for time.

Although expensive at an average price of just below $2,000 per coin, central bank governor John Mangudya said the coin will have a trickle-down effect that will eventually help average folk.

“The ordinary man will benefit more from the stability (provided by) these gold coins. Where there is stability, money will have value and stability in prices,” said Mangudya ahead of the launch. He said the central bank plans to introduce smaller denominated gold coins in November to allow ordinary people to also use them as a saving mechanism. The smaller coins will be half an ounce, a quarter of an ounce and 10% of an ounce, he said.

But many such as Carlos say they can hardly afford a meal, let alone earn enough to save.

“Where will I get the money to buy the gold coins? It is for them, the rich. Poor people like me do not see any difference. Things continue to be hard in this country,” he told The Associated Press between trips to the well to pull up buckets of water.

“Gold coins are a scheme for the elite. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer,” said Gift Mugano, an economics professor during an online roundtable debate titled: “Is there gold in the coins?”

With so many Zimbabweans scrambling to get food to eat each day, there are questions if the gold coins will help them.

“They are struggling. They are living from hand to mouth. Most people may not actually have the money to save in the first place. Most people are in survivalist mode because of inflation,” said Prosper Chitambara, a Harare-based economist.

To get by, many are forced to take up multiple jobs. Carlos, in Mabvuku, says he gets about $100 dollars a month from his job as an overnight security guard for a church and the bar next door. That’s hardly enough to pay rent, school fees and other basic needs. Sometimes, he exchanges water for food items.

“If we fetch water for someone but they don’t have money, so we get tomatoes, vegetables, beans or maize. That’s how we get food,” he said.

His wife, Christwish, 43, prepares the day’s evening meal — the staple maize (corn) meal and vegetables plucked from a small home garden — over a wood fire. Because of Zimbabwe’s lengthy power cuts, the children do their homework by a candle, although their parents press them to use it sparingly.

“The firewood costs a dollar for a small bundle enough (to cook) for a single meal. The candles are also expensive,” lamented Christwish, who supplements the family income by doing household chores for better-off families in exchange for money or food items. Items previously regarded as basics are now out of reach, she said.

“We last ate bread with margarine on Christmas Day,” she said. “Now we just see these things in the shops and leave them there.”

By Associated Press
In November 2021, the African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat announced the appointment of Chido Cleopatra Mpemba of Zimbabwe as the AU Envoy for Youth for a two-year term. Ms. Mpemba is the second person to assume the role that was created in 2018. Ahead of International Youth Day on 12 August, Ms. Mpemba discuss below with Africa Renewal’s Kingsley Ighobor about her priorities, her hopes for the global climate talks (COP27), and the legacy she hopes to leave behind. These are excerpts from the interview.

First, why are you here at the UN headquarters in New York?

I’m here as the African Union Youth Envoy. And that’s part of efforts being made to ensure that young people are at the forefront of development. I was invited by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) President [Amina Mohammed] and the UN Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres] to participate in a special high level dialogue roundtable discussion. I spoke about Agenda 2063 and the Africa We Want, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. It’s also part of strengthening the partnership between the AU and the UN. We believe that I’ve been hosted by the AU Permanent Observer to the UN, Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mbow, and also received support from the office of the Deputy Secretary-General.

You were appointed the AU Youth Envoy a few months ago. What are your priorities?

My priorities include focusing on the young people across Africa and ensuring that I amplify their voices in all the 55 member states of the African Union. On policy, we advocate for youth voices at the decision-making table. I am honoured to have the opportunity to present the needs of young Africans before the relevant bodies. I get to ensure that when we speak on issues that affect Africa—whether it’s post COVID recovery, education, or unemployment—that the policy platforms we create account the needs of young people who constitute the largest population segment in Africa.

Is there anything that has surprised you so far in your work?

Let me focus on the positive. What has surprised me! Everywhere I’ve been, I hear young people’s voice. I’ve been surprised also to see many advocates for young people, including decision-makers and policy experts. And they are doing great things across the continent. They have many best practices that we could replicate in the continent to achieve the Africa that we want. What’s come up the most is youth livelihoods. They also want us to focus on accelerating efforts on tackling issues related to climate change and adaptability, climate finance, and climate education. What are young Africans telling you?

I am doing listening tours at the moment. I have visited many communities in Africa. And I have carried out a digital survey to learn about the priorities of young people over the past five years. What’s come up the most is youth livelihoods. They also want us to focus on accelerating efforts on tackling issues related to climate change and adaptability, climate finance, and climate education, to name a few.

How do you organize your dealings with young people in individual countries?

My role is to be open. I’m working with a team of volunteers. I would say that 80 per cent of these volunteers reached out to me on social media. I intentionally take time to speak to young people on social media and give them opportunities to speak to my office.

Outside of that, we have the AU structure. For example, we have representatives of the various member states and youth groups at the AU Commission in Addis Ababa. We have young people working with the Regional Economic Communities. For example, we have the ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] youth groups, the SADC [Southern African Development Community] youth groups, and the East Africa Community (EAC) youth groups. We disseminate information to these groups. We shouldn’t forget about the marginalized community. I’m hoping we can reach out to youths with disabilities and those in disadvantaged communities, ensuring they also get the message because we recognise has access to digital information, which goes back to the rationale for our listening tours and the community engagements.

You mentioned livelihoods. I think employment is a part of that. How bad is the unemployment situation of young people in Africa?

Currently, we face a huge unemployment challenge. We need to bridge the skills gap and prepare the youth for the labour market. There are not enough jobs for young people. That’s why innovative ways to create employment opportunities. In addition, when we speak about entrepreneurship, it’s about empowering the youth to become job creators so that they can help foster economic development on the continent.

After your listening tours, what next?

The purpose of the listening tour is to inform young people about the mandate of the office of the AU Youth Envoy and our Plan of Action. It is also to present to policymakers what we heard on the ground so that when we lobby, we lobby based on evidence on the ground. In addition, we plan to have a publication that we will leave as a framework of the voices of young people, including best practices that could be replicated.

You mentioned that young people are talking about the climate crisis. COP27 will take place in Egypt this year. What do you expect from the conference?

I expect young people to be at the forefront of efforts to address the climate crisis. We should have the needs of young people at the forefront when it comes to climate adaptation and climate financing. We must also have opportunities for young Africans to innovate and provide climate solutions. For COP27, I am hoping there is a youth advisory board to ensure that the needs of young people are fully represented.

Why should youths in Africa care about the climate crisis?

Because we are being affected by the climate crisis. Globally, everyone is affected by climate change; but in Africa, we are affected in a unique way. Take deforestation and the lack of access to water because of drought. There’s food insecurity because bad weather conditions affect agriculture. And so much more.

As I mentioned before, because we’re the largest demographic in Africa, we must be at the forefront of discussions on climate change.

I’m glad that the African Union appointed African Youth Peace Ambassadors for the various regions in Africa. And we’ve been having consultations regarding a Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security. As I speak, Youth Ambassadors are in Nigeria to consult on that framework and to assist in rolling out a national action plan on peace and security.

Let’s talk about peace and security in Africa. How do conflicts in countries affect young people?

Yes. It’s something dear to my heart. I’m very passionate about issues that affect young girls and within my office currently, we have plans for programmes that focus on young girls because we have a responsibility to ensure that our future generation, including the young girls, are empowered.

For young people worldwide, my message is that the future is in our hands. We must act now. We must influence decisions that affect us. I assume it’s not all been smooth sailing for you. What challenges have you faced so far?

The office of the AU Youth Envoy was created less than four years ago. I’m the second youth envoy. Therefore, we need to continue to lay a solid foundation for this role. It’s a challenge that comes with mobilising capacity and resources for a full-fledged office. It’s also an opportunity because this is our time as Africans to shape what we’d like the continent to be, and I believe we can do so.

What would success look like for you when you complete your tenure?

It is building a legacy for young people that goes beyond me, something continuous so that the next envoy will meet a strong foundation. It is ensuring that there are best practices in place that can be replicated in Africa and indeed globally.

The world will be marking International Youth Day on 12 August. What is your message to young people globally, particularly those in Africa?

For young people worldwide, my message is that the future is in our hands. We must act now. We must influence decisions that affect us. To young people in Africa, I say we constitute a large share of our population and it’s important that we harness our potential to build the Africa that we want.

This article was originally published by Africa Renewal.
AIM-listed mining company Galileo Resources has identified multiple gold targets in its latest aeromagnetic and radiometric survey conducted at the Bulawayo Gold Project, Zimbabwe.

The survey successfully mapped magnetic greenstone lithologies, the most likely host for gold mineralisation in the region, together with geological structures, which typically act as conduits for mineralising fluids.

Specific targets have been pegged for follow up based on regional shears and splays that have hosted former gold-producing mines. Galileo is currently prioritising targets for further exploration, integrating the new geophysical data with existing gold deposit and soil geochemical datasets.

Chairman and chief executive officer Colin Bird said: “The area covered by our licences and the recent airborne survey has historically been a prolific source of small-scale gold mines and continues to support operating mines today. “Our mission was to examine the potential for a major gold system and evidence certainly points to the possibility of a large gold system discovery.”

Shareholders can expect further announcements once a target hierarchy has been established.
By Kate Finnigan

BORN in Derby to a white British mother and a black Zimbabwean father, the family lived in the African country until Chawawa was 11, when they moved to Norfolk. “The cultural differences were really pronounced,” he says.

“In Zimbabwe a teacher would ask a question and every hand would rocket up. In England no one’s did except mine. I started to think maybe it’s not cool to want to progress academically or express yourself. I shrank into my shell.”

If there is any positive to be taken from this depressing revelation it’s that a) thankfully the joy came back when he started doing comedy videos, and b) the experience gave him a unique perspective that helped to fine-tune his observational comedy.

Living in the posh village of Framingham Pigot — “far from the perceived definition of the ‘hood” — he observed Britain’s particular social structure at close quarters.

In his teens he worked for a silver-service catering company. “They were who catered when the Queen came to Norwich. Actually, when the Queen came to Norwich I was told to take the day off,” he says, laughing gamely. “In retrospect maybe it was because I had a mohawk and they didn’t want someone with a mohawk and a butter knife walking towards the Queen.”

Maybe that was it. But other microaggressions were available. On one occasion a guest complimented him on his “very good English.” You can see it in his ever-growing cast of characters, like the socially tone deaf Unknown P (“Britain’s first posh drill rapper”), the culturally appropriating chef Jonny Oliver, and Barty Crease (look it up), the moronic racist news reporter. He also does a more affectionate and euphemism-rich takeoff of Nigella Lawson, which he performs wearing a T-shirt on his head. She’s his favourite, but no feedback from Lawson herself yet. “I’m waiting to collab with her,” he says. “It’s going to take a while to get through to the top layers of the pancake stack she presumably lives on, but it will happen because, as I like to say, good things come to those who mee-cro-wah-vay.”

Chawawa originally wanted to be a television presenter but after studying psychology at the University of Sheffield and working as a TV producer, he was continually knocked back from front-of-camera opportunities.

He had been making his own videos for five years before he reached the million-follower mark this April.

“There were times when I was sitting on my bed going, why can’t I make a video that gets a billion views and that will just be it?” he says.

“But I’m glad it happened slowly. It allowed me to grow an audience who are accepting of trial and error and to forge more of a connection with people.”

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He is the internet satirist who parodies everything from Boris to the great British heatwave — and has garnered millions of young fans on TikTok along the way. Is he the future of comedy?
Mapfumo UK-bound

28 August show starts wind down of touring career

By Paidashe Mandivengerei

Chimurenga music legend, Thomas ‘Mukanya’ Mapfumo will be performing at the Athena, Leicester during the United Kingdom summer bank holiday on August 28 as he moves towards calling it a career after decades of touring and churning out masterpieces.

Mapfumo, a leading exponent of traditional music, owns a rich catalogue from as far as the 1960s. He will be sharing the stage with Sungura maestro, Alick Macheso and Zimdancehall chanter Tocky Vibes hosted by radio personality Miss V Candy with DJ Sab, Fatha Ansy, Tongishto on the decks.

The concert is organised by promoters PHAB Entertainment with support from Diaspora Insurance. Speaking to NewZimbabwe.com, organiser Joab Mugugu said the show will bring together the greatest performers to emerge from Zimbabwe before Mapfumo winds up his career.

“We have tried to cater for everyone in terms of the different genres plus we have enlisted tried and tested DJs who know how to rock the crowd well,” said Magugu.

“Our line-up was motivated by our desire to do something that’s not been done before, it’s fair to say that Mapfumo and Macheso are arguably the last men standing when you talk of international touring track record and Mapfumo has already given indications that he is winding up his touring career now.”

He added; “With that in mind we thought it would be a crime if this were to happen before he toured with Macheso, one of the greatest performers of our generation.

“On the other hand, Tocky Vibes’s appeal transcends across all generations due to his music style and artistry. So we also thought who best could compliment this line up and host them on such a big platform than Miss V Candy, who will bring her feminine touch.”
By Leo Devine

UK-BASED Diaspora Insurance (DI) is now a truly pan-African company with operations in several countries and helping mitigate the adverse socio-economic impacts of brain drainage on the continent.

Addressing a workshop organised by the Birmingham Africa Business Chamber, recently, Diaspora Insurance founder and Chief Executive Jeff Madzingo said brain drain was as serious a problem for Africa and the company was playing a key role in linking the Diaspora with the continent.

The workshop was attended by, among other dignitaries, South Africa's sports minister Nathi Mthethwa, Kenyan High Commissioner Manoah Esipisu, the Ugandan deputy high commissioner John Mugerwa as well as the trade representative at the Ghana High Commission Papa Owusu-Ankomah.

"(Brain drain has seen) Africa becoming a training ground; you train professionals and then lose them to first world countries. That brain drain is really draining in terms of human capital capacity development," he said.

"How do we reverse it? It’s difficult to reverse in a physical manner because people will, naturally, migrate and look for opportunities and there is very little we can do apart from creating opportunities for them back home."

"But as Diaspora Insurance, we are able to link the African Diaspora, lost by the continent to the first world countries, with their countries back home."

"We created a solution called Diaspora Funeral Cash Plan which, as opposed to traditional consumer-based remittances, creates opportunities and capacity in Africa while hosting risk in some of the world’s biggest capital markets in London and Berlin alike."

He added: "Also, when it comes to financial inclusion, we are risk-transferring such that people in Africa are able to be covered on a policy where the risk resides in the biggest capital markets of the world through our product."

"This is because a diasporan is able to cover not just themselves in the Diaspora; they are also able to cover their family back home."

"As such, when a bereavement happens back in Africa, the money is paid from the world's biggest capital markets to those communities, in the process giving capacity to these communities."

Now in its tenth year of operation since writing its first policy in 2012, Diaspora Insurance has grown to become a multi-million-dollar business which has also paid millions of dollars in cash settlements to families.

From its base in the UK, the company has since expanded to some eight countries in southern Africa, four in east Africa as well as Ghana in West Africa.

"We have a call centre in Birmingham but we are expanding rapidly and now have another call centre in Randburg South Africa, creating employment there as well," said Madzingo.

"We are in the process of buying a huge office building in South Africa for our Call Centre and that is money coming in, not as consumer remittances, but actual direct investment going into Africa as part of brain drain mitigation."

"We are looking to invest in different markets and as a growing company, there are opportunities arising from our growth in terms of distribution partners and customer support."

He commended the Birmingham African Business Chamber for creating a networking platform for Diaspora businesses saying, "we believe in the power of networking and unlocking opportunities."
Fresh demolitions rock Harare’s Budiriro 4 suburb; at least 45 families displaced
How Zimbabwe’s Ryan Burl quit university and battled financial crisis to make a mark

By Agencies

"...I’VE GOTT A hell of a lot of pride and I’m very patriotic about Zimbabwe," the shine in Ryan Burl’s eyes and the tone of his voice add more depth to his words.

He was still a teenager when he gave first-hand proof of the love and passion he has for his country. Enjoying a secured life with a university degree offered in Southampton and a contract to play county cricket, Ryan was all set to have a much-desired and lucrative lifestyle in England. If he had backed up the talent with performance in county cricket consistently then perhaps even a shot at playing international cricket for England would not have been far off. But the then 19-year-old cricketer born in Marondera, 72km east of Harare, was still unsure. Something didn’t feel right. Something was missing.

It was during that time he got a call to play first-class cricket in Zimbabwe. That was it, Ryan found the missing piece of his jigsaw. "I was really young. I was studying at a university in Southampton at that time (in 2013-14). I wasn’t totally sure where my career or my life was going. You are quite naive when you are 19 or 20. I couldn’t turn down the opportunity to play for my country. That pride and passion to play for my country obviously led to my decision. I moved back to Zimbabwe. I stopped university, stopped any pursuit of county cricket and just wanted to give Zimbabwe Cricket my everything," he told Hindustan Times in an exclusive interview.

The thought of risking both his financial and cricketing prospects never crossed the all-rounder’s mind. The idea of wearing the Zimbabwe shirt one day at an international match was far greater than any other concern. After 3 Tests, 28 ODIs and 47 T20Is and becoming the first Zimbabwe cricketer to hit six boundaries in a T20I - five sixes and a four against Bangladesh - it’s still the same. "I’m not regretting that decision at all, I’m really happy," he said with a kid in a candy shop expression.

Things, however, were not as easy as Ryan tried to make them appear. Even before his international career could kickstart against India six years ago, which also was the last time India toured Zimbabwe, Ryan suffered a tear in the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). "The last time we played against India, I had an injury. I tore my ACL the day before I was supposed to make my debut," he said. The dream to play against an MS Dhoni-led Indian outfit remained unfilled but the left-handed attacking middle-order batter, who also bowls handy leg-spin, will be one of Zimbabwe’s main hopes in their upcoming three-match ODI series against India starting Thursday at his home ground in Harare.

The six-year gap between an India-Zimbabwe bilateral had a lot to do with the kind of condition Zimbabwe Cricket was in. Financial instability and government interference led to the suspension of the cricket board in July 2019 and although ICC revoked the suspension, restoring Zimbabwe Cricket’s status and although ICC revoked the suspension, restoring Zimbabwe Cricket’s status three months later, it was too late for them to compete in the T20 World Cup qualifier the next year’s edition in India. For someone like Ryan, it was a dagger to the heart.

“It’s kind of hard to explain those emotions. At that time, there was so much uncertainty. You don’t know what was going on and then obviously, after that there came Covid... There was a feeling, am I ever gonna play? In the 2019 ODI World Cup, we missed out (qualification) by a couple of runs. We were not eligible to take part in the T20 World Cup. It was very difficult. I was honestly unsure and uncertain (about the future). We shed a lot of tears and kind of somehow wanted to get past that period," the 28-year-old all-rounder when asked the reasons behind his tweet last year.

Things, however, have changed for good since then. Under new coach Dave Houghton, Zimbabwe have started winning again. Ryan, with his all-round performance, was at the forefront. He has been far off. But the then 19-year-old cricketer born in Harare, was still unsure. Something didn’t feel right. Something was missing.

It was then that Ryan came up with a tweet with photos of his torn shoes that shook the cricketing world.

“It was an insight into what kind of life we cricketers come into, behind the scenes. I know I’m not the only one in the change room doing that tinkering with their stuff whether it be gluing your shoes, changing your grips, or fixing your studs that might be bending. It was to show what kind of go on in the background with us cricketers," said the all-rounder when asked the reasons behind his tweet last year.

When asked about his plans against India, the Ryan who hit 34 runs in an over against Bangladesh left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed took centre stage overtaking the one highlighting the sorry tale of Zimbabwe cricketers a year ago.

"Just bowl our best balls (to their batters), say a few prayers. Just keep it as simple as possible, we are obviously playing at home so we obviously know the conditions better. We’ve got the back-ups and on the day we’ve gotta get out there and perform well," he added.