

MAILBOX

The futility of probe teams

Attempts to uncover the truth in cases of corruption, theft of public funds, mysterious deaths of prominent personalities and ethnic clashes have proved futile.

Sometimes, the police have been given mandate to probe the cases, at times Parliamentary committees have been set and task forces appointed to unearth the criminal activities but they have never succeeded.

In many cases, the findings have been rejected. In some cases, the committees have been unable to complete their work because of interference from some quarters or stopped outrightly.

The Kennedy Kiliku report of 1992 which was rejected by Parliament is still fresh in the minds of Kenyans.

The Elijah Mwangale report that adversely implicated the Government in the murder of JM Karikiu in 1975 was also rejected by Parliament.

It is such moves that isolate the Government from the people. The citizens are tired of a Government that cover truth. It is the responsibility of any civil state to fight criminal activities and promote the rule of transparency and accountability.

The country is faced with many problems that cannot be tackled by a party or an individual. There is need therefore for collective action.

The feelings of the citizens like the ones expressed to the Saitoti Committee of 1990 must be accepted and used as basis for formulating policies.

The Provincial administrators must also respect the people and stop treating Opposition leaders like small children.

What is required is a plan of action to provide a new orientation to the provincial administration.

The police force also needs to be restructured and given training on how to handle suspects. Torture during interrogation plus other ill practices by the police force should stop.

Concerned, Nairobi.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Monday, April 24, the 115th day of 1995. There are 251 days left in the year.

Highlights in history on this date:

1954 - After failure of the "General China" operation to secure mass surrender of the Mau Mau, security forces mount the biggest round-up of the 18-month-old emergency arresting 10,000 men.

1961 - At conference of Congolese leaders, Katanga's President Tshombe denounces Congolese Republic's President Kasavubu for his agreement with United Nations, and is arrested after walking out of conference.

1966 - Daniel arap Moi, Home Affairs Minister, announces the seizure of passports belonging to Members of Parliament, who have defected from KANU.

1967 - Soviet cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov is killed when parachute straps of his spacecraft get tangled during landing attempt.

1969 - Jordan's Premier Rashid Karame resigns amid dispute over government's restrictions on Palestinian guerrillas.

1970 - China launches its first Earth satellite.

1971 - Soviet cosmonauts link up with unmanned Earth satellite prior to attempt to build world's first orbiting space laboratory.

1975 - Thousands of Vietnamese refugees are being flown to US island of Guam as Communists move rapidly in their take-

Sex Education should be taught

The recent revelation by the Ministry of Education that Family Life Education was already being taught in selected Kenyan primary schools must not receive unfair reactions without justification. I read the response of the Catholic Church (Nation, April 1) and was shocked by the assertion that parents should be left to undertake this responsibility.

While I do not deny the inalienable responsibility of parents to determine what shall be taught their children, I do not fail to take note of the dismal performance of parents in the past in this regard. Let me illustrate. Among the Nandi, sex was never talked about with one's parents - the mention of sex organs was (and indeed still is) taboo. Usually grand parents were entrusted with this task and they had their own ways of code naming sex organs.

I have never found in my short life a young man who got to know the name of the male sex organs from his grand father but it was always referred to as *musa* or bird (*aritiit*) or *tobacco* and the female organ was *soda ash* (it is normally taken together with tobacco). A parent who is bothered by the three-year-old child about where children come from cannot explain it except with the erroneous allusion to stories of crested cranes giving children or the child being called a bush baby (*cherereet*). With these in mind it can be seen how the performance of the parents with regard to teaching about sex or sexuality is expected to be an unforeseen lesson of mythology.

The Catholic clergy do not have children and so do not know the pain of losing children

to ignorance and irresponsible sex. I remember those days when as budding teenagers, we could gleefully jeer a young menstruating girl just because she was not aware of her periods timing and we could create a whole fuss over the issue making the little girl look leprotic. And I am not sure that this has stopped in many Kenyan primary schools where teenage boys will not spare an opportunity like that to embarrass young girls going through a normal anatomical/physiological transformation in their bodies albeit with little knowledge.

Without risking being branded controversial, let me say that it is in fact sad to note that even at the level of university some of the students - a percentage that cannot be overlooked given that these are the brightest - are sexually ignorant. Some even do not know that they are risking acquiring STDs and Aids with irresponsible sex.

At a recent function by peer counselors at Egerton University, I overheard a fourth year in-service student dismiss the prospective speaker as a man who is so obsessed with the myth that he has become sick because of the psychological creation of the disease. That someone who has been in the field and is back to college can dismiss HIV and Aids as a myth is itself mythical but true.

What shall we say about the assertion that the US introduced sex education yet the moral standards had fallen? I am not a specialist on US morality but I believe that the exposure of the children at an early age to knowledge of sex and its consequences could have resounding positive consequences, setbacks notwithstanding. Does the fact that food

could potentially choke and kill one stop anybody from eating?

Obviously, a major contribution of the moral collapse in the US could be the fact that there is an overdose of pornography which is definitely an appetiser for moral decadence. It reminds me of the excitement with which we always anticipated a topic in biology called reproduction in high school. It was definitely a justifiable excitement ignited by a thirst for more knowledge on this mystery and in fact we appreciated it as an eye opener.

The churches cannot be trusted to teach sexuality because there will always be the religious cocoon (Ephesians 5:3: "But do not let immorality or any impurity... even be named among you as is proper among saints." Yet the church has perhaps suffered most in terms of its prolific youth falling prey to premarital sex, and pregnancies.

There is the famous lamentation of "the devil has snatched another one." Perhaps to allow people to choose consciously they should be taught by secular classes what the church cannot teach but would appreciate the result of this knowledge.

I believe that sex education or Family Life Education be introduced and taught with the curriculum structured to teach relevancies as per age strata so that in class three children are not taught about the menstrual cycle which would be appropriate for upper primary.

Seronoi arap Chelulei, Njoro.

Give voters chance in polls

Changamwe voters should be allowed to choose their leader without interference.

I am concerned that Kanu has forced a candidate on the people the way it did during the 1992 General Election.

By this note I am declaring my intention to vie for the Kanu nomination against the unsuccessful candidate in the 1992 General Election. The fact that one successfully petitioned the election of Mr. K. Kiliku should not be used to impose him on the electorate.

Mwinyi Haji Faki Khatie, Mombasa.

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Traditions to blame for ailments

As a resident of Maseno, I have observed that most patient attending Maseno Hospital suffer from communicable diseases in addition to malaria. These include dysentery, typhoid, tuberculosis and Aids. Records reveal that in the past one year, more than half the number of patients were suffering from dysentery.

Traditional practices of the people of Nyanza and Western provinces are to blame. Funerals are most notorious. Luos and Luhya keep a body of their dead for two to four days in the home instead before burial. During this time, people mourn as they feast.

Usually, hygiene is taken for granted which leads to infections. Many dysentery patients have a history of having attended a funeral. It should be noted that during the funerals, mourners relieve themselves anywhere. Human waste is scattered all over the place, attracting flies which eventually transport germs to the meals prepared in the open. Unfortunately even the educated have never thought of this matter seriously.

The university students who scrambled for meat at Jaramogi Odinga's funeral were an example of what cultural fixation can do. During the period of mourning, there is also a lot of indiscriminate

nate sex. This promotes the spread of Aids and other venereal diseases. This together with wife inheritance explain the high figures of Aids in the region.

When it rains during the funeral, people will congregate in small rooms which is a sure way of spreading or contracting diseases such as tuberculosis.

What is more, relatives who come from far sometimes stay for many days without taking bath. That is another way of contracting diseases.

It is imperative therefore that the people turn away from these harmful practices. They should avoid keeping corpses for too long, avoid feasting in funerals, stop wife inheritance, ban the youth from attending funerals at night.

Political, administrative and religious leaders should join hands and sensitise their people against the practices.

The schools, churches, harambee gatherings, funeral services, public rallies and hospitals should be used to transform the culture, and the people of Nyanza and Western Provinces.

Joel S. Gitai, Maseno.

Ouko murder: Why this apathy?

It is five years since former Cabinet Minister John Robert Ouko was murdered. However, nothing much has been done to unravel the mystery that surrounded his death.

Kenyans were promised that "no stone will be left unturned", but no stone has been turned upside down so far. And so there is some sick sense in a remark that the death was "just a passing cloud."

Many Kenyans would like a fresh inquiry into the death. At the time when the commission of inquiry headed by Justice Evans Gicheru was disbanded, a lot of things were emerging. The late PS Mr Hezekiah Oyugi had accepted to appear before the commission.

At the same time, the commission also claimed that their telephone conversations were being tapped by security officers. Law-appearing for the family also

complained of harassment.

What surprises Kenyans is why the Government has not sought forcefully to unravel the truth? Dr Ouko worked and served the Government with total dedication. He soulfully protected the Government internationally at a time when the country's human right records were appalling.

It is the deaths of the likes of Dr Ouko that drove many people out of Kanu.

The ghost of Dr Ouko will not go away although the Government would want to. It is time the Government went to the drawing board and set things right.

The first thing should be to unravel the mysterious death of Dr Ouko. The death of Bishop Alexander Muge is also still fresh in our minds.

Zachariah Owuor, Nairobi.

Programmes are doctored

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation has two programmes worth watching, namely the BBC TV News and Deutsche Welle TV news. The programmes are exhaustive as they cover news from all parts of the world.

However, what surprises me is why the programmes do not cover news about Kenya.

It seems to me that the BBC news is doctored for Kenyans. Whatever is aired over the BBC Radio is far different from what is presented on TV.

I suggest that KBC should do the following:

•Have continuous presentation of worthy and timely news.

•The station should have permanently employed well-trained newscasters rather have freelance newscasters who are poor in articulation.

•News should be prioritised depending on their strength.

•News coverage should be objective. Opposition parties should also be given coverage just like issues by Kanu functionaries.

•Equally propaganda and lies should stop. Kenyans are enlightened and cannot be fed on lies and falsehoods.

•The time span of showing pictures on TV seems too long. It should take four minutes reading and one minute showing a picture.

•The women broadcasters should dress well. Cases where female broadcasters dress in fanciful and outrageous dresses should stop.

•The BBC news should not be doctored the way it is done.

•KBC should be competitive to attract advertisers.

The monopoly it enjoys today will not last for long. The station should therefore start planning new strategies to meet the challenges in the coming years.

Zachariah Owuor, Nairobi.

QUOTE OF THE DAY "Leaders are like rubbish pits and everyone likes to call them names, but they must be tolerant to criticism." Mzee Tobias Ajuma commenting on the wrangling in FORD-K

THOUGHT FOR TODAY A feeble body weakens the mind - Jean Rousseau, French Philosopher (1712-1978).

THE CUTTING EDGE

By WATCHMAN

Conscientious Nahashon Odeoh Ong'ole wrote to the Income Tax office in Eldoret saying he had not received a P39 form (certificate of pay and tax) from his previous employer. A stern reply stated it was his responsibility to provide such a form and he better do it in 21 days. Yessir, fine, right, his responsibility no doubt. Only thing is, Mr Ong'ole wrote on February 18, 1994, they replied on March 22, 1995.

Is it true: Moi Estate, Langata lost its water again? Traffic police outside Pangani police station ignore indiscriminately parked motorbikes the better to harass innocent passers-by? There's a hotel shop upcountry that sells "gemstones" which are just coloured glass?

The Rugby World Cup is being staged in Africa (South Africa) for the first time in May and enthusiasts are asking if there's any chance of our broadcasters televising matches live? Maybe Kenya Breweries would be interested in sponsoring some games, rugby and beer being a compatible pair.

Feedback: Remember the askari who demanded Sh100 to take a job application form from the gate to the personnel office? Steel Structures of Nairobi went to considerable lengths to track down the applicant and have him identify the offender against whom "appropriate action has been taken." What's more the applicant gets an interview. Some companies do care! By the way, Kanti Chohan of A.B. Patel & Patel, Advocates of Mombasa, says he's not the Kanti Chauhan who had the argument with KPLC about how to write cheques.

Our Thought for Today recently was attributed to Vin Baum, an Australian-American writer-playwright (1888-1960). The following day the same Thought appeared again, this time attributed to Vic Baum, an Austrian-American etc. etc. Who is this person/persons? a reader asks. Wish we knew. Our Encyclopaedia Britannica offers no writer of either name but from the distant past we recall one Vicki Baum (sounds more Austrian than Australian), who wrote a novel called Grand Hotel or Berlin Hotel or somesuch. Can some learned literary person lighten our darkness?

A raggedy man gets off a bus in Nairobi, screws up his ticket and drops it in a litter bin. Behind him come two smartly dressed men and an elegant woman. All three toss their tickets to the wind.

Notice in a Nyeri matatu: God give us our dairy bread. Sliced, presumably.

Have a well-fed day, won't you!

•Write to Watchman, Daily Nation, PO Box 49010, Nairobi (fax 214047).