

Kenya: Nairobi at standstill

Heavy rainfall has led to flooding in Nairobi. Residents had to spend the night on the roofs. In the poor neighbourhood of Ngando, the floods washed away huts. The Athi River burst its banks and flooded numerous streets. The entire country has been suffering from heavy rainfall since March, with more than 60,000 people affected by flooding.

Tunisia: "Lag B'Omer" - reduced pilgrimage

Thousands regularly make the journey to Djerba, the North African island where many of Tunisia's 1,500 remaining Jews live, to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Lag B'Omer in May. But this year, the community has decided to limit the celebrations to the 26-century-old synagogue of El-Ghriba, the oldest surviving synagogue in North Africa, instead of celebrating across the island as before.

Uganda: virus transmission routes

According to a study, wild chimpanzees in the Budongo forest have been eating bat faeces from a tree cave that was contaminated with viruses after tobacco cultivation wiped out their usual food source. Bat faeces guano is an "alternative source of essential minerals" for the animals after the palm trees they once consumed were "cut down to extinction". The trees are also used by the locals to dry tobacco leaves, which were then sold to international companies. Among the 27 viruses found in the guano eaten by chimpanzees, antelopes and monkeys was a virus linked to Covid-19. According to the researchers, this finding sheds light on how new viruses can spread from wild animals to humans.

Angola: Subsidies cut - higher diesel prices

The Petroleum Products Regulatory Authority increased diesel prices by around 48% this week, from 135 kwanzas per litre to 200 kwanzas (€0.25). This is part of the government's efforts to cut costly subsidies that are a drain on public finances. Prices for other fuels such as petrol (€0.35) and LPG (€0.12) remain unchanged. In mid-2023, there were widespread riots following an increase in petrol prices, which mainly involved motorbike taxi drivers in Luanda. The police arrested dozens of people and used tear gas. Angola is one of many major African oil producers that have come under pressure from rising debt costs and high prices. Nigeria, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo have all tried to abolish fuel subsidies, leading to considerable public outrage.

Floating solar systems

An Italian research team believes that it is more favourable for African countries to cover existing lakes with photovoltaics instead of creating new reservoirs in order to generate electricity. The floating systems could generate up to 100% of the electricity that the planned hydropower plants are supposed to supply. Taking the Zambezi as an example, which already has several reservoirs and more are planned, the money would be better invested in floating solar plants, which would minimise the annual fluctuations in energy production and the risk of droughts. The only disadvantages would be for fishing and tourism. Another advantage is that immense amounts of water are saved because evaporation is prevented, which also benefits the electricity supply in the case of reservoirs.

Eswatini: Money laundering hub

The Swazi Secrets project, coordinated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) in collaboration with other partners, has uncovered Eswatin's unexplored role as a possible mastermind of gold smuggling in southern Africa. In 2012, around 180 people were forcibly relocated to

make way for a government-approved "Special Economic Zone" (SEZ) called the Royal Science and Technology Park. The SEZ has turned the country into a hub for money laundering. ICIJ uncovered two phantom gold refineries through which millions of dollars were channelled to Dubai. King Mswati III and the members of his huge family - said to include 11 wives and over 30 children - have earned a reputation for conspicuous consumption. The king's collection of customised watches alone is worth millions of dollars, and his fleet of luxury cars and jets belies the ailing state of an economy. The kingdom, with a population of 1.2 million, is plagued by high unemployment: Almost 60% of Swazis under the age of 25 are unemployed. The country's life expectancy in 2021 was 53 years for men and 61 years for women - one of the lowest in the world.

Rwanda: UK - Deportations imminent

The Rwanda Act, which aims to send British asylum seekers to Africa to have their claims processed, has been passed by Parliament after two years of legal wrangling and political wrangling. The law will come into force once the King has given his assent. People who could be sent to Rwanda are asylum seekers - people who have sought the protection of the UK and entered without authorisation from another safe country. This affects around 52,000 people. They are currently housed in Home Office-funded accommodation and are not allowed to take jobs as their case has not yet been heard to either be removed from the UK or recognised as asylum seekers.

Kenya: Ban on plastic bags for organic waste

Kenya is introducing a ban on the use of plastic bags for the disposal of organic waste, underlining the country's status as a global leader in the fight against plastic pollution. This comes seven years after single-use plastic bags were banned in the country. According to the country's environmental agency, residents and local authorities now have three months to prepare for the changes before they come into effect.

Shipping containers the answer to the housing crisis?

According to the Ghana Statistical Service, around six million of Ghana's 33 million inhabitants are in urgent need of housing. Over time, slums have formed on the outskirts of the larger cities, where more than 8.8 million people live. An initiative aims to help provide urgently needed housing. Eric Kwaku Gyimah converts discarded shipping containers into environmentally friendly houses. To use less energy, these houses utilise natural ventilation through more strategic placement of windows and vents. Simple container homes can be completed in a few weeks. Some have a small garden, spacious living areas, plenty of natural light, good insulation and solar panels for energy. The cost of these homes varies depending on the design, with the most basic options ranging from \$7,000 to \$10,000. Building a new two-bedroom brick house costs between \$50,000 and \$70,000. In Accra, a one or two bedroom house costs around \$100,000.

More Info: <https://netzwerkafrika.de/>

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