

## Protest of Davis Cup tie planned

JOHANNESBURG: This weekend's Davis Cup tennis "tie-in" match between Israel and South Africa, at the Irene Country Club in Centurion today and tomorrow is expected to be tense and heated – both on and off the court.

BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions), PSA (Palestine Solidarity Alliance), PSC (Palestine Solidarity Committee) and the NC4P (National Coalition 4 Peace) will be holding protests outside the event in anger over what they say is Israeli racism and apartheid, akin to the sporting boycotts organised internationally against apartheid South Africa.

Sports Minister Thusal Nxesi has announced that he will boycott the event. The boycott is also being supported by the Centre for Tennis Development, Crescents Cricket Club, LCC Cricket Club, LSA Football Association, SA Students' Congress, Benoni Spurs Football Club, Actonville Spurs Cricket Club, the Council of African Independent Churches, the SA Communist Party, and Wits University PSC.

South African Jews, however, are divided over the issue. The SA Jewish Federation (SAJF) has slammed the planned protests.

"The protests amount to destructive, disruptive, aggressive and nonsensical behaviour which manipulates hate among those who have no understanding of the real facts," said a SA Zionist Federation (SAZF) press release.

Calling the boycott and protests "vicious", the SAZF further encouraged Israeli supporters to buy tickets and attend the event, while endorsing a response by Tennis SA (TSA) to appeals for the event to be cancelled. – African News Agency (ANA)

## Rebels on the rampage in CAR

KINSHASA: Rebel groups have reportedly dragged patients from hospital beds and shot them dead in the worsening crisis in Central African Republic (CAR).

This has forced doctors to flee to neighbouring countries, worsening an already dire health crisis caused by attacks on hospitals and ambulances ferrying civilians wounded during the insurgency.

Doctors Without Borders painted a grim picture, with severe fighting between Christian and Muslim rebel movements. – CAJ News

## Good Sports



A group of volunteers wearing handbooks, Korean traditional dress, yesterday greet athletes entering the Olympic Village as flags, including North Korea's, fly before the 2018 Winter Olympics in Gangneung, South Korea, which starts next Friday. South Korea sees the Olympics as an opportunity to revive meaningful communication with North Korea after a period of animosity and diplomatic stalemate over the North's nuclear and missile programmes.

PICTURE: AP

## Fear for journalists over media crackdown

NAIROBI: The Kenyan authorities are increasingly targeting the media, resulting in three Kenyan journalists who fear arrest sleeping in their newsroom overnight as plain-clothes policemen reportedly camped outside.

This development follows the closure of several independently owned TV stations by Kenya's broadcasting authority during the mock inauguration of opposition leader Raila Odinga on Wednesday.

President Uhuru Kenyatta warned last Friday that TV stations that went ahead and broadcast Odinga's mock swearing-in would have their licences withdrawn and would be taken off air.

The three journalists – from NTV news, one of the three independently owned stations that were taken off air – said their lawyers were filing court petitions yesterday morning to prevent their arrest.

"We were doing our job; we had the right to do this, and if I was to do it again, I'd do it the same way," NTV senior anchor and reporter Ken Mijungu said after an anxious night spent conferring with lawyers and wondering if police would appear with arrest warrants.

On Wednesday his colleagues Larry Madowo and Linus Kaikai were warned by security sources that their arrest was imminent.

The crackdown on the Kenya media has come as a shock to journalists in the country who generally have more freedom than many other states in Africa. – African News Agency (ANA)

# Tough task to rebuild Gambia

### President focuses on economy to restore confidence

**G**AMBIA'S new president says taking over a bankrupt nation is "like carrying a mountain" and that stabilising the economy will take some time, after the former leader left it in tatters.

In an interview in the capital, Banjul, President Adama Barrow said the government was busy restoring the confidence of international development partners.

He took over the government a year ago after a political showdown that saw long-time dictator Yahya Jammeh go into exile, following a surprise election loss.

The new president said his administration should persuade Gambia's population of less than 2 million to have enough trust in the future to stay at home and not make the risky journey towards Europe, like many countrymen before them.

After more than two decades of Jammeh's rule, which was marked by widespread allegations of human rights abuses, the new government has vowed greater freedoms and justice for victims.

But now the coalition of opposition groups that joined to get Barrow elected

must stick together as the economy poses the first massive challenge.

"If you don't stabilise your economy, you cannot succeed as a nation," said Barrow.

Jammeh looted the economy and fled into exile in Equatorial Guinea, with some of his fortune.

As Barrow's administration began probing the depths of corruption, the giddiness of ousting one of Africa's most colourful dictators quickly turned to despair.

"The debt burden was very high and over 120% of the GDP," Barrow said.

Over the past year, his administration has been forging ties with global development partners, many of whom had turned away from Gambia during Jammeh's reign.

The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, EU and other partners have already pledged support. The World Bank lists \$76 million (more than R900m) in lending commitments for the 2017 fiscal year.

"We are now edging towards four months into recovery" with a new period of economic growth, Barrow said.

A new National Development Plan has been launched as the government

"aspires to lay the foundations for a modern democratic state, but also to address pressing economic and social ills", he said.

Economic recovery is crucial in keeping Gambia's youth from setting off on the sometimes deadly journey across the Mediterranean towards Europe for work.

The average Gambian earns about \$40 a month.

"We have to win the confidence of these young people to stay at home," Barrow said. But he was quick to add: "The issue of migration needs to be put in a wider context. It is not only an African problem", but one that Europe and Africa should address.

About 5 000 Gambians are still stranded in Libya as Europe tightens measures that include training and equipping Libya's coast guard to stop boats attempting the dangerous sea crossing.

The stranded migrants also risk being sold into slavery. Gambia was among the African nations expressing horror at recent video footage of slave auctions in Libya.

Many Gambians have called for military intervention in Libya, but Barrow has rejected the idea. – AP/African News Agency (ANA)

## Protesters halt phosphate output

TUNIS: Protesters calling for jobs brought Tunisia's entire phosphate output to a halt by staging sit-ins at installations at the state-run Gafsa Phosphate (CPG), an official said yesterday.

Though such protests at CPG sites are frequent, this action comes after weeks of unrest in Tunisia sparked by the government, under pressure from international lenders, implementing price and tax hikes to shrink the deficit.

Tunisia was once one of the world's largest producers of phosphate minerals, but its market share fell after a 2011 uprising against then-president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. – Reuters

# World Wetlands Day

02 February 2018

## Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future

Urban wetlands making cities liveable

World Wetlands Day in 2018 is celebrated under the theme "Wetlands for Sustainable Urban Future."

### WHAT IS A WETLAND?

Not all land that is wet is a wetland. Wetlands are areas such as swamps and marshes, where water saturates the soil, and conditions are favourable to plants which are adapted to anaerobic (low oxygen) soil conditions.

Wetlands are important for the ecosystem as they provide a number of benefits, not only to the natural environment, but also to our livelihoods. In urban areas, wetlands improve water quality and serve as reservoirs, containing run-offs from roads, drains, roofs and storm water drains. Wetlands also help to reduce and prevent urban flooding.

### Working for Wetlands

Through the Working for Wetlands programme, government invested more than R1 billion in the rehabilitation of 1 360 wetlands countrywide between 2004 and 2017.

This has improved or secured the health of more than 64 000 hectares of wetland area, and provided 27 000 employment opportunities.

### RAMSAR SITES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. South Africa currently has 23 Ramsar sites with a combined surface area of 557,028 hectares.

Barberspan, Northwest Province (1)

Blesbokspruit, Gautent Province (3)

De Hoop Vlei, Western Cape Province (2)

De Mond, Western Cape Province (4)

False Bay Ecology Park, Western Cape Province (22)

Kosi Bay, Kwazulu Natal (8)

Lake Sibaya, Kwazulu Natal (9)

Langebaan, Western Cape Province (7)

Makuleke Wetlands, Limpopo Province (18)

Natal Drakensberg Park, Kwazulu Natal (13)

Ndumo Game Reserve, Kwazulu Natal (14)

Ntsikeni Nature Reserve, Kwazulu Natal (20)

Nylsvley Nature Reserve, Limpopo (16)

Orange River Mouth, Northern Cape (10)

Prince Edward Islands, Western Cape Province (19)

St. Lucia System, Kwazulu Natal (5)

Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve, Free State Province (15)

Turtle Beaches/Coral Reefs of Tongaland, Kwazulu Natal (6)

uMngeni Vlei Nature Reserve, Kwazulu Natal (21)

Verloren Valei Nature Reserve, Mpumalanga Province (17)

Verlorenvlei, Western Cape Province (11)

Wilderness Lakes, Western Cape Province (12)



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