

Insight Bulletin

For People Who Want to Know

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Asian Business Community Covid-19 Task Force Assists Malawi Government



At a press briefing in Blantyre Asian Business Community (ABC) Chairperson, Faizal Aboo, said the Community formed a parallel COVID-19 task force in March this year in order to assist the Malawi government to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

"Its purpose is to immediately identify and address the limited knowledge about COVID-19 and to donate equipment, supplies and other requisites towards a well-equipped isolation, quarantine and treatment center for the government of Malawi as we have done," he said.

Aboo further said that in coordination with the district health workers and other government officials in the health sector, they have identified possible locations to establish isolation, quarantine and treatment facilities in Blantyre and Zomba districts respectively. Procurement of ventilators, personal protective equipment and medication has nearly been concluded.

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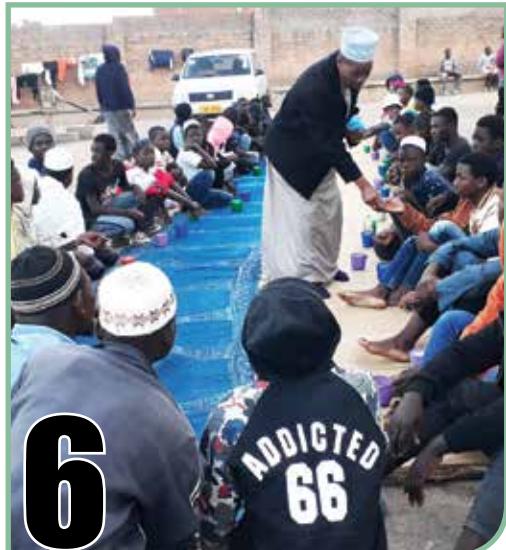
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HOW IMPORTANT IS A MUSLIM VOTE?



As Malawians get prepared to vote for their favorite president in the forthcoming fresh elections Muslims are divided as to whom should they vote for? Looking at the Malawi constitution, every Malawian has a right to vote or to be voted for at any position. However, it is worrisome that there are cases where sometimes few people feel that certain group of people are not eligible to be leading this country while at the same time confidently think that they are the only ones entitled to be leaders.

Given the above situation, one would therefore argue where is democracy in a heterogeneous nation like Malawi where

is because the party accepted that all tribes are equal before the South African Law therefore, everyone is entitled to compete in the political sphere as long as they are fit for whatever elective position which is desired. The ANC has therefore managed in this case as a result after the Rule of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki who were both from Xhosa Tribe in Eastern Cape, then followed Jacob Zuma who is a Zulu from Kwazulu Natal and then incumbent Cyril Ramaphosa who is a Venda from Limpopo province.

There have never been challenges of leadership or succession plan crisis

we have less than Ten Tribes like the Yao, Ngoni, Lhomwe, Tumbuka, Chewa and few others. Notwithstanding this fact one tribe still wants to dominate the other. Whereas in countries like South Africa they have Twelve Tribes but they live in harmony. Take African National Congress (ANC) for example. The party has been in power ever since the fall of Apartheid (The system of institutionalized racial segregation against the blacks)

Some of the reasons why this happens

as compared to what Malawi has experienced. For instance Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda never groomed anyone to take over from him as a result his Party the Malawi Congress (MCP) came out of government until to date, Similar thing happened to United Democratic Front (UDF) it went out of government because there were no succession plans, today almost all the parties are facing the same challenge.

Having said the above, the question remains, since there is no Muslim presidential candidate, who should Muslim voters give their vote to? Although there have been calls from political leaders not to play a Muslim card campaign as there is no room for any president to declare Malawi as a Christian Nation. This comes amid outcry that some political leaders have taken the blood of others as a milestone to give them a vote. According to political rights in the constitution of the Republic, there is a provision of equal rights to vote or be voted for. Therefore, there is no way one would think others are not eligible to hold public office because they are of different ethnic group or faith.

From this background it is also therefore wrong to think that as a Muslim candidate, people should vote for you just because you are a Muslim. Such being the case, Political leaders are advised to woo votes from every Malawian with facts and not by wearing an Islamic attire as witnessed recently by some politicians because this is a mockery to the peaceful Faith. This is how important a Muslim Vote is unfortunately Muslims themselves are not aware how their vote is important.

FROM PAGE 1<<

Asian Business Community Assist Malawi Government

Aboo says that the Asian Business Community took only 72 hours to raise funds from well-wishers to equip the Ministry of Health's isolation and quarantine centers at the Kamuzu College of Nursing in Lilongwe.

During his presentation, Vice chairperson for the Community, Dr. Party Patel, urged people in the country to learn the hard way the lesson the world has learnt over the virus.

Patel further added that his community does not have enough medical staff and facilities necessary to cope with the extra burden that the pandemic has brought, he then advised Malawians to observe all preventive measures the ministry has put in place or stay at home unless they are the breadwinner,



Altaf Mahomed (right) of Limbe Muslim Jamat and other members of different associations

The Community implemented a partial lockdown in its effort to prevent spread of Corona virus.

Blantyre District Director of Health Services, Dr. Gift Kawalazira, said the support being rendered by ABC is

making a difference in the fight against the virus.

He said the district office has put in place strategies in managing the virus such as monitoring and routine tests among health workers.



We are proud to say that we have changed the lives more than hundred thousand Malawians - Faisal Aboo, Chairman of Task Force.



Members of the task force exchanging ideas on how best they can assist the community.

THE COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTED A PARTIAL LOCKDOWN IN ITS EFFORT TO PREVENT SPREAD OF CORONA VIRUS.

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The spiritual and health benefits of fasting in the month of Ramadan

By Dr. Shahid Athar

At the onset of Ramadan Muslims all over the world start fasting from dawn to dusk daily for 30 days as ordained in Quran.

"O you who believe fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you so that you can learn Taqwa" (Quran 2:183)

The Arabic word Taqwa is translated in many ways including God consciousness, God fearing, piety, and self restraining. Thus we are asked to fast daily for one month from dawn to dusk and avoid food, water, sex and vulgar talk during that period.

But why do we need to fast? It is our experience that temptations and ways of the world tend to spoil our purity and austerity. Thus we indulge in food all of the time, snacking and nibbling the whole day, heading to obesity. We drink too much coffee, or tea, or carbonated drinks. Some sexaholics can not stay away from sex unless they do it at least once or more a day. When we argue, we leave our decency

ONE OF THE ODD NIGHTS IN THE LAST 10 DAYS OF RAMADAN IS CALLED THE NIGHT OF POWER WHEN ANGELS DESCEND DOWN, AND TAKE THE PRAYER OF WORSHIP TO GOD FOR ACCEPTANCE.

aside and resort to vulgar talk and even physical fighting.

Now when one is fasting, he or she cannot do all of that. When he looks at the mouth watering food, he cannot even taste it and he has to give up snacking and nibbling as well as smoking cigarettes if he does. No constant coffee, tea or Coke drinking either. Sexual passions have to be curtailed and when he is provoked to fight, he says "I am fasting that I cannot respond to your provocation". To achieve God consciousness or God nearness, a better word, we are advised to do additional prayer and read the Quran.

MEDICAL BENEFITS OF RAMADAN

Muslims do not fast because of medical benefits which are of a secondary nature. Fasting has been used by patients for weight management, to rest the digestive tract and for lowering lipids. There are many adverse effects of total fasting as well as of crash diets. Islamic fasting is different from such diet plans because in Ramadan fasting, there is no malnutrition or inadequate calorie intake. The calorie intake of Muslims during Ramadan is at or slightly below the nutritional requirement guidelines. In addition, the fasting in Ramadan is voluntarily taken and is not a prescribed imposition from the physician.

Ramadan is a month of self-regulation and self training, with the hope that this training will last beyond the end of Ramadan. If the lessons learned during Ramadan, whether in terms of dietary intake or righteousness, are carried on after Ramadan, their effects will be long lasting. Moreover, the type of food taken

during Ramadan does not have any selective criteria of crash diets such as those which are protein only or fruit only type diets. Everything that is permissible is taken in moderate quantities.

The difference between Ramadan and total fasting is the timing of the food; during Ramadan, we basically miss lunch and take an early breakfast and do not eat until dusk. Abstinence from water for 8 to 10 hours is not necessarily bad for health and in fact, it causes concentration of all fluids within the body, producing slight dehydration. The body has its own water conservation mechanism; in fact, it has been shown that slight dehydration and water conservation, at least in plant life, improve their longevity.

The physiological effect of fasting includes lowering of blood sugar, lowering of cholesterol and lowering of the systolic blood pressure. In fact, Ramadan fasting would be an ideal recommendation for the treatment of mild to moderate, stable, non-insulin diabetes, obesity, and essential hypertension. In 1994 the first International Congress on "Health and Ramadan", held in Casablanca, entered 50 extensive studies on the medical ethics of fasting. While improvement in many medical conditions was noted; however, in no way did fasting worsen any patients' health or their baseline medical condition. On the other hand, patients who are suffering from severe diseases, whether type I diabetes or coronary artery disease, kidney stones, etc., are exempt from fasting and should not be allowed to fast.

There are psychological effects of fasting as well. There is a peace and tranquility for those who fast during the month of Ramadan. Personal hostility is at a minimum, and the crime rate decreases. Muslims take advice from the Prophet who said, "If one slanders you or aggresses against you, say I am fasting."

This psychological improvement could be related to better stabilization of blood glucose during fasting as hypoglycemia after eating, aggravates behavior changes. There is a beneficial effect of extra prayer at night. This not only helps with better utilization of food but also helps in energy output. There are 10 extra calories output for each unit of the prayer. Again, we do not do prayers for exercise, but a mild movement of the joints with extra calorie utilization is a better form of exercise. Similarly, recitation of the Quran not only produces a tranquility of heart and mind, but improves the memory.

One of the odd nights in the last 10 days of Ramadan is called the night of power when angels descend down, and take the prayer of worship to God for acceptance.

Fasting is a special act of worship which is only between humans and God since no one else knows for sure if this person is actually fasting. Thus God says in a hadith qudsi that "Fasting is for Me and I only will reward it". In another hadith, the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) has said "If one does not give up falsehoods in words and actions, God has no need of him giving up food and drink.



PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT MAHMOUD ABBAS SPEAKING DURING A LEADERSHIP MEETING IN RAMALLAH, IN THE ISRAELI-OCCUPIED WEST BANK. ABBAS SAYS ALL DEALS WITH ISRAEL AND THE US ARE NOW VOID [ALAA BADARNEH/POOL VIA REUTERS] [DAYLINE]

ARAB LEAGUE SLAMS ISRAEL'S PROPOSAL TO ANNEX OCCUPIED WEST BANK

The Arab League has condemned Israel's controversial proposal to annex much of the occupied West Bank, saying the move would constitute a "new war crime" against the Palestinians.

The remarks came in a joint statement issued by Arab foreign ministers on Thursday following a virtual conference chaired in Egypt's capital, Cairo.

"The implementation of plans to annex

any part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including the Jordan Valley and the lands on which Israeli settlements are standing represents a new war crime against the Palestinian people," said the statement.



ISRAELI PLAN WEST BANK

The Arab League also urged the United States to "withdraw its support in enabling the plans of the occupying Israeli government".

US President Donald Trump in January

unveiled a controversial plan to resolve the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Rejected by the Palestinians and condemned by much of the international community, the plan gives Israel the green light to annex Jewish settlements and other strategic territory in the West Bank.

An Israeli coalition government agreement reached between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main rival Benny Gantz last week includes a framework for implementing the annexations outlined in the plan. Such annexations would violate international law.

During the Arab League meeting, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said the annexation would "end the two-state solution".

He said the move would "turn the battle from a political one to an endless religious war ... that will never bring about stability, security or peace to our region".

Last week, the United Nations special Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov said such a move would be a "devastating blow" to the internationally-backed two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the European Union said annexing Palestinian territory "would constitute a serious violation of international law".

On Monday, the US said it was ready to recognise Israel's annexation of key parts of the West Bank, but also asked the new unity government to negotiate with the Palestinians.

Palestinian President Abbas says accords with Israel, US are void.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

announced that his administration considers all agreements signed with Israel and the United States null and void, after Israel declared it would annex parts of the occupied West Bank, according to local media reports.

Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that Abbas made the announcement during an emergency meeting held in Ramallah to discuss the Israeli plans.

"The Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine are absolved, as of today, of all the agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and of all the obligations based on these understandings and agreements, including the security ones," Abbas reportedly said.

"The Israeli occupation authority, as of today, has to shoulder all responsibilities and obligations in front of the international community as an occupying power over the territory of the occupied state of Palestine."

Abbas threatened to withdraw from agreements back in February, after US President Donald Trump unveiled his Middle East plan, which included the possibility of annexation.

"While he said that the PLO is no longer bound by agreements signed with Israel, he did not say that he is dissolving the Palestinian Authority," Ibrahim said from Ramallah.

During his address, which was broadcast on Palestinian television, Abbas also said he was still ready to negotiate with Israel and remains committed to ending the conflict on the basis of a two-state solution.

Scepticism

Speaking from Chicago, Ali Abunimah of

ARAB LEAGUE SLAMS ISRAELI PLAN TO ANNEX OCCUPIED WEST BANK

Electronic Intifada was sceptical about Abbas' announcement.

"Mahmoud Abbas has announced I can't remember how many times that he's suspended this agreement or that agreement and the fact is that he's never (actually) done that. He's never (actually) suspended an agreement," he said. "The reality is that the Palestinian Authority cannot move a salt shaker from one side of the table to another without the permission and help of the Israelis."

Annexing parts of the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley as part of Trump's Middle East plan was a central promise of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's latest re-election campaign. His former political rivals-turned-allies Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi have also expressed their support of the plan.

Netanyahu was sworn into office for another term on Sunday, after more than 500 days without a stable government and three inconclusive elections.

Addressing the parliament before the vote, Netanyahu said his incoming



government should apply Israeli sovereignty over Jewish settlements, which are illegal under international law.

"It's time to apply the Israeli law and write another glorious chapter in the history of Zionism," Netanyahu said on the issue of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory.

"These territories are where the Jewish nation was born and grew," he said of

the settlements.

Such a move will likely cause international uproar and inflame tensions in the West Bank.

Jordan's King Abdullah II, warned Israel of a "massive conflict" if it went ahead with the plan, while the European Union's foreign policy chief said EU would use "all our diplomatic capacities" to try to dissuade the new government from going ahead with the move.

JORDAN'S KING ABDULLAH II, WARNED ISRAEL OF A "MASSIVE CONFLICT" IF IT WENT AHEAD WITH THE PLAN, WHILE THE EUROPEAN UNION'S FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF SAID EU WOULD USE "ALL OUR DIPLOMATIC CAPACITIES" TO TRY TO DISSUADE THE NEW GOVERNMENT FROM GOING AHEAD WITH THE MOVE.



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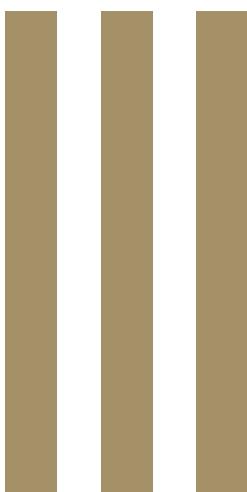
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Malawi's Fresh Presidential Elections A Fight of Three Candidates

By Yusuf Chinyada



As Malawians are expected to go for fresh presidential elections this year, three political parties in the country have successfully presented their nomination papers to the Malawi Electoral Commission, MEC on 6 May and 7 May, 2020.

The first to present the papers at Sunbird Mount Soche in Blantyre was the president of Malawi Congress Party, Dr Lazarus Chakwera who is leading Tonse Alliance of nine opposition political parties. In an interview after presenting his papers, Dr Chakwera said, he decided to present the papers to the electoral body to follow the rule of law.

"We have not presented the papers to an individual but an institution as required by the law," said Chakwera.

CHAKWERA AND HIS RUNNING MATE DR. SAULOSI CHILIMA WHO IS THE CURRENT VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI AND ALSO PRESIDENT OF UTM SAID THE ALLIANCE IS AIMED AT BUILDING A NEW MALAWI THAT WILL BE ENJOYED BY EVERYONE.

Chakwera and his running mate Dr. Saulosi Chilima who is the current vice president of the republic of Malawi and also president of UTM said the alliance is aimed at building a new Malawi that will be enjoyed by everyone. Dr. Chakwera promised a Malawi free of regionalism and ethnicity and a leadership that will respect the vice president, among others.

On the political violence happening in some parts of the country, Dr. Chakwera said, "We condemn the political violence, we can express different opinions without physical violence."

Next to present his nomination forms was Candidate for Mbakuwaku Movement for Development, MMD, Peter DSD Kuwani, speaking after presenting his papers of nomination said he was optimistic that he will emerge winner of the fresh election because of his sound manifesto.

After presenting his papers on Wednesday, President Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party, DPP said the fresh elections are not the will of the people. According to Mutharika, the 2019 presidential elections went to his favor as they were free, fair, peaceful and transparent as also acknowledged by the international observers.

"The elections reflected the will of the people. You should register and vote in

order to restore the will of the people," said Mutharika. Mutharika who unveiled Atupele Muluzi, his alliance partner from the United Democratic Front, UDF as his running mate urged Malawians to vote for him to develop the country.

A political Science lecturer at Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi Ernest Thindwa is quoted from the media after the nomination exercise that results of the fresh presidential elections will be determined by he who gets more votes in his strongholds than the other.

Speaking during the nomination exercise before her resignation chairperson for MEC Justice Dr Jane Ansah assured all candidates that MEC is fully committed to deliver a free and fair and credible election to the satisfaction of all contestants and stakeholders.

Ansah said, "MEC will continue with its pledge of working professionally, independently and with utmost impartiality in the management of the elections.

She also called for issue based campaign saying Malawians are tired of mouth slimming and foul language campaigns that result into violence.

She urged all candidates and political parties to observe a code of conduct that they all signed for peaceful elections.

With the coronavirus pandemic which has killed 4 in the country, Ansah urged all parties to employ new techniques of campaigning to protect the spread of the virus.

"There is need for new means of campaigning to protect the citizens whom we want our votes from," Ansah said.

In total 13 Candidates collected the nomination forms and nine were successfully filled. Independent candidates Smart Swira and Ras Chikomeni David Chirwa failed to submit their papers due to non-payment of 2 Million Kwacha nomination fees. Reverend Hadwick Kaliya, Khwechani Wesuze Nkhoma and Pemphero Mvula withdrew from the race and president of the New Vision for Democracy Shaibu Mustafa was nowhere to be seen.

During his appearance at the event Phunziro Mvula said he withdrew from the race due to lack of trust to the electoral body. He and Reverend Hadwick Kaliya however endorsed the candidature of Dr Chakwera of the Tonse Alliance.

The fresh presidential election follows the judgment of the High Court of Malawi delivered on 3 February that nullified the 2019 presidential election due to widespread irregularities and ordered for fresh elections within 150 days from the date of the judgment.

Health governance activists for Presidential candidates commitment on ATI Bill

By Jordan Simeon-Phiri

MEC Stringer

Health governance commentators have recommended the engagement of Presidential candidates in the July 2 fresh Presidential polls to commit themselves that they will operationalise the Access to Information (ATI) Bill once elected to enhance the flow of information to promote transparency and accountability.

Health and Rights Education executive director Maziko Matemba said in an interview that he is skeptical that with just less than a month to go to the Constitutional Court sanctioned fresh Presidential elections, government will operationalise the Bill that President Peter Mutharika assented to in 2017.

Matemba said that Access to information is a constitutional right for citizens. As such they have to freely get vital information related to health service delivery from duty bearers. The absence of the Law is jeopardising citizens' watchdog role to provide

checks and balances. This is why there is need to engage the three presidential candidates to make a commitment that once elected they will operationalise the Bill.

Health governance project officer at Justice and Peace of Karonga Diocese said the delay to operationalise the Bill is creating room for corruption and fraud in Councils through abandonment of health centre projects or construction of substandard structures.

"The delay is negatively impacting the quest to promote quality health service delivery as people fail to get information, citing the K109 million Mpata maternity wing project that was abandoned at foundation level in 2013 and efforts to trace contractual documents of the project failed, Mkandawire said.

Malawi Congress Party (MCP) publicity secretary Maurice Munthali said the only reason the ATI Bill has not been operationalised into law is because the current government has so much filth to hide.

Munthali said that the Tonse Alliance

under Dr. Lazarus Chakwera will make ATI Law not only expeditiously operationalised but also allow it to work without any impediment

Mbakuwaku Movement for Development (MMD) President Peter Kuwani could not be reached for comment.

However, government spokesperson who is also Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Mark Botomani said the process to have the Bill operationalised is complete but the only stumbling block is COVID-19 which is preventing stakeholders from meeting to regulate the Bill.

In an interview, a Chancellor College based political analyst Mustapha Hussein said for the operationalisation of the Bill to be effected, there is need to put in place appropriate institutions such as Police, Ministries and government machinery to undertake the path of full enforcement and compliance of the Law therefore, by now the process would be done to enable the community to demand information from duty bearers.

THE DELAY IS NEGATIVELY IMPACTING THE QUEST TO PROMOTE QUALITY HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY AS PEOPLE FAIL TO GET INFORMATION, CITING THE K109 MILLION MPATA MATERNITY WING PROJECT THAT WAS ABANDONED AT FOUNDATION LEVEL IN 2013 AND EFFORTS TO TRACE CONTRACTUAL DOCUMENTS OF THE PROJECT FAILED.

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