

# Insight Bulletin

For People Who Want to Know

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## MEC Relocates to Lilongwe, Introduces New Strategic and Operational Plans



*Minister of lands and MEC Chairman during building launch ceremony*

**M**alawi Electoral Commission which was previously headquartered in Blantyre has moved to Lilongwe where it has been allocated a new building as its head office.

Minister of Lands, Deus Gumba, said the new building for the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) will be able to help the commission thrive in its performance.

Gumba said this in Lilongwe during the key handover ceremony of the new head office building on August 11, 2023.

Gumba went on to say that MEC's decision to move to Lilongwe will help to ease the challenges MEC was facing

in its operations to consolidate democracy in the country.

"As we hand over the keys to the building, we are also handing over a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to uphold the sanctity of the running of the Commission. This will help the commission ensure that its independence is guaranteed and not undermined by lack of resources," said Gumba.

In his remarks, the MEC Chairman Justice Chifundo Kachale said the relocation of MEC to the capital was one of its strategies as per its 2017 strategic plan.

"Lilongwe being in the Central region of the country enables MEC to transport staff and other materials to

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## Editorial

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# IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA



**P**eople and the entire world have been greatly impacted by social media. One cannot even envisage a world without technology or social media since they are so integral to human culture. Social media have had a huge impact on many people's lives in a variety of ways, including through the fostering of connections through global connectedness, online commerce and digital marketing, the development of brand loyalty, and awareness-building.

Social media make it easy to obtain and update information for everyone, which is a blessing. However, no one can dispute the fact that consuming it excessively can result in serious health problems, which can have a terrible effect on life.

Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, TikTok, and other social media platforms are currently the ones that are most popular.

Social networking does present a lot of difficulties, though. Developing a social media addiction can interfere with sleep, work, and lifestyle routines. Because of its addiction, it can be harder to concentrate, reason, and think clearly.

However, there are a number of challenges that come with social media. Becoming a social media addict can cause disruptions in lifestyle, the pattern of work, and sleep patterns. Its addiction can lead to an unproductive mind by lessening the ability to focus, think, and reason.

Especially among young people, social media has turned into an addiction. The majority of them use their smart phones nonstop throughout the day. They frequently do actions that are not beneficial to their country or personal growth. They are dealing with major problems as a result of their addiction.

Utilizing something is not harmful, but developing an addiction to it might have disastrous effects. People squander their energy and unproductive time on it. Teenagers should be concentrating on their education, but they spend all of their time on social media instead.

To improve one's physical and mental health, it is necessary and

advantageous to take a social media break. It is up to the individual using social media to make the most of it in order to avoid being on it all the time or developing a social media addiction. People can use social media for a set amount of hours for business or pleasure and may also need to prepare properly.

In terms of social media's drawbacks, excessive use might result in ill health, a frail physique, despair, tension, worry, and even fatalities. Set a suitable time for its use so that it doesn't result in ineffective effort. The solution to these issues is to spend fewer hours on social media. An individual can spend some time doing other things instead of spending hours on social media.

Social media do have benefits and drawbacks, and this is undeniable. It is entirely up to the users to use them wisely and purposefully. Everyone wants to take use of social media's advantages, but nobody wants to unintentionally harm themselves by becoming hooked to it. It is advised that you stop using social media when you feel like it is encroaching on your personal space. After all, when something is used properly, it doesn't interfere with your work or your life; rather, it positively improves both by fostering a positive social environment and a creative, healthy workplace.





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**PROUDLY  
MALAWIAN**

&lt;&lt;FROM PAGE 1

# MEC introduces new strategic and operational plans

other distant districts like Chitipa,” he said.

“This will also make it easy for MEC to conduct its operations while being close to the capital city,” said Kachale.

Later on the day, MEC launched its strategic and operational plan to be used for the next 5 years.

The Malawi Electoral Commission says it is ready to perform amicably with safe delivery of elections that are credible and reliable.

Speaking in Lilongwe during the launch of the strategic plan 2023–2028 and the 2025 tripartite elections operational plan, Kachale said MEC is working on improving the planning and management of all electoral activities, right from voter registration all the way to various aspects of results management processes including ballot counting.

The MEC chairperson further said that the plans outline the specific actions, timelines, and responsibilities necessary to carry out each stage of the electoral process up to the results announcement for the 2025 tripartite elections.

“From voter registration to candidate nominations, from ballot distribution to results declaration, every step will require meticulous planning, coordination, and the participation of stakeholders,” Kachale explained.

The plan will help the institution operate smoothly with no hiccups.

MEC usually faces challenges which makes it fail to deliver voting booths on time in other locations due to bad roads and other communication barriers.

“As an institution, we are certain that these plans will be of great help in implementing MEC’s activities,” said Kachale.

Among the stakeholders that were present at the launch of the strategic and operation plan were representatives of registered political parties, civil service organizations, government officials, development partners and the media.

Kachale further said that this is the fifth strategic plan for the Malawi

Electoral Commission since its establishment.

“The first strategic plan was formulated for the period 2001–2004 and was succeeded, respectively, by the plans for the periods 2005–2009 and 2013–2017. The fourth one, which has just expired, covered the period January 2018 to December 2022,” he said.

The vision and mission of the plans are “**a professional and trusted electoral management body that delivers credible elections in Malawi**” and “**to deliver credible elections according to the laws of Malawi in entrenching democratic values,**” respectively.



*Minister of Lands and MEC Chairman launch the building*



*Launching of strategic and operational plans*



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*Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman greets Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas*

# Palestinian officials welcome the first Saudi Arabian ambassador

**P**alestinian officials welcomed their first Saudi Arabian ambassador on August 12, 2023, even as the kingdom

mulled over establishing formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's diplomatic adviser, Majdi

Al-Khalidi, received a copy of the credentials of Ambassador Nayef al-Sudairi as a non-resident envoy in Jordan on Saturday, according to Palestinian news agency Wafa.



# RIYADH HAS REPEATEDLY SAID IT WILL STICK WITH THE DECADES-OLD ARAB LEAGUE POSITION OF NOT ESTABLISHING TIES WITH ISRAEL UNTIL THE CONFLICT WITH THE PALESTINIANS IS RESOLVED.

Al-Sudairi, the kingdom's current ambassador to Jordan, will also serve as consul general in Jerusalem.

Al-Khalidi said the occasion is "an important step that will contribute to further strengthening the strong brotherly relations that bind the two countries and the two brotherly peoples",

*The ambassador's appointment occurred while the US is looking to normalise Israeli-Saudi relations.*

The Saudi envoy also called the appointment "an important step", which underscores the desire of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "to strengthen relations with the brothers of the State of Palestine and give it a formal boost in all areas", he said in a video broadcast by the Saudi state-affiliated Al-Ekhabariya channel.

The file for the Palestinian Territories has traditionally been handled by Saudi Arabia's embassy in Amman.

Palestinian analyst Talal Okal said the new appointment is a step towards an official Saudi representation office in the occupied West Bank.

"It is also a message that Saudi Arabia is committed to the rights of the Palestinians in a fully sovereign state," Okal said.

The ambassador's appointment occurred while the United States was looking to normalise Israeli-Saudi relations.

The US, Israeli, and Saudi officials, however, have said any such deal is a long way off, as a number of thorny issues—from Israeli raids in the occupied West Bank to Saudi nuclear power development—stand in its way.

Riyadh has repeatedly said it will stick with the decades-old Arab League position of not establishing ties with Israel until the conflict with the Palestinians is resolved.

Still, in recent months, Riyadh

and Washington have held talks concerning Saudi conditions for normalisation. These include security guarantees and assistance with a civilian nuclear programme.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said on August 10, 2023, that "peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia is a matter of time".

According to Aziz Alghashian, a Saudi analyst and expert on Saudi-Israeli relations, Saturday's move "gives insight into how diplomatic relations might be between Saudi Arabia and Israel: a Saudi ambassador to Palestine with a file for Israel".

"The immediate signal is to treat Saudi demands for Israeli concessions seriously," Alghashian said.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki said the Palestinian Authority is hoping to relay its concerns to Saudi officials about the normalisation push.

# Hilal Afrika brings hope to Malawians



*Chiefs and Dr. Lanjesi explaining the challenges that the community members were facing*

In collaboration with the Mangochi District Health Council, a Germany based organization Hilal Afrika provided health care to more than 3000 people from Makanjira in Mangochi.

To facilitate easy access for the people, the project was held in three distinct locations.

During the function's opening ceremony, Hilal Afrika Chairman Umut Turan stated that when he visited the area last year, he discovered that many people were suffering from scabies, an outbreak which affected people many parts of

the country.

"The time we came here, it was such a bad situation to witness. As a charity organization, we went back to Germany and pleaded with our donors for funds that helped us provide the services we are offering today," he said.

After appreciating the issues that people in the area experience, the Hilal Afrika group joins up with around 40 healthcare personnel from various specializations at Mangochi District Hospital to carry out the health work.

Dr. Innocent Lanjesi of Mangochi

District Hospital stated that many individuals are unable to receive health care due to mobility challenges.

"With the introduction of this initiative, many people have expressed a desire to seek medical attention. This doesn't usually happen, and as health professionals, we commend such gestures," he stated.

Chief Lulanga expressed his gratitude noting that when people are not in good health, it impacts the development of his area.

He went on to say that the areas of Chief Kantande, Lulanga, and



Makanjira have a population of over 300,000 people who rely on one health clinic that is about 20 miles away from other villages.

The organization further went on to officially open a rehabilitated bridge at Nyenje village in Ntaja, Machinga district on July 26, 2023.

Cyclone Freddy devastated the bridge, mostly affecting many people in the country, particularly in the Southern region.

Nyenje bridge connects people from different areas to access health services, markets, and other developmental activities.

Further on, Hilal Afrika has implemented organic farming in T/A Bwananyambi's Chisopi area.

Over 300 households have benefited from the project, with an average of 130 people benefiting from the initial phase.



*Health specialist attending to a sick child at Kantande primary school*

Umut Turan, Chairman of Hilal Afrika, stated that the project has come to promote organic farming to farmers and make them less reliant on artificial fertilizers.

"A lot of people in the area are farmers, but they lack necessary skills to succeed. As an organization, we decided to launch the project in order to continue empowering farmers," Turan stated.

Speaking with Insight Bulletin on July 26, 2023, at the project launch Turan said although government provides affordable farm inputs, some farmers do not benefit from the program; hence the introduction of the Chisopi farm project in the area.

Each farmer will receive two bags of organic fertilizer, a hoe, maize seeds, post-harvest maize preservation chemicals, and packing bags.



*Turan poses with the farmers*

# JORNOS TRAINED IN SRH, CHILD RIGHTS



*SRH, EAM members and Journalists that attended the training*

**By: Kassim Kajosolo**

**A**t least 50 journalists, electronic media presenters, and managers from faith-based media houses have been trained in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and child rights reporting, courtesy of the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) and its partners, with funding from the N'zatonse project.

EAM's Deputy Secretary General, Bishop Grey Mwarabu, encouraged the media practitioners to focus more on reporting issues of sexual and reproductive health to people of different faiths, as it is one way to share the right information to people of different faith and religious beliefs.

"One of the things that the faith community needs to understand is that sexual and reproductive health is a story for us all, and as the faith community, we are partly to blame for some of the problems happening in the country because we don't

preach or talk about them in time," said Bishop Mwarabu.

He encouraged faith leaders to work together in managing issues related to sexual and reproductive health in their respective prayer houses.

"What we don't know is that the faith community takes up a large percentage of the country's population. The faith community is in a better position to help in resolving issues affecting the citizenry by providing them with spiritual messages that will change their mindset and let them know the truth about issues related to sexual reproductive health," said Bishop Mwarabu.

One of the facilitators, Haward Kasiya, who is also the Health Services Manager for EAM, said sexual and reproductive health should not take a holistic approach as many of the faith communities think. He said there are some sexual reproductive health ways that are permissible that faith leaders should focus on as they

teach their congregations.

"Family planning is part of love, which the Bible and the Qur'an encourages. The Bible says in Jeremiah 15:9, 'The mother of seven will grow faint and breathe her last. Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated. I will put the survivors to the sword before their enemies,' declares the LORD. ' Which simply means a family should plan to have children, which will keep the mother healthy to look for the children," he said.

He also said the two-year period that women are told to breastfeed after delivery is not just from the health authorities but from the Bible and Qur'an, which faith leaders should focus on in their preaching.

One of the participants, Hector Nkhoma from Radio Islam, said he was happy to have been part of the team and said the training has opened his focus to producing good health programs for family planning and other health issues.



"Honestly, family planning and other sexual reproductive health issues were deemed not to be for faith-based media to air, but this training has helped us to understand what our role is as faith-based media houses and journalists," he said.

Commenting on the matter, Head of Programs for Qadria Muslim Association of Malawi (QMAM), Ousmane Chunga, said the issue of population growth is a concern for every Malawian, and there is a need for every citizen to play a role to address it.

"Population growth should not be a blame game; we should all hold hands in dealing with the problem," he said.

"There are ways that Allah put in place to control birth rate, one of which is in Qur'an 2 v. 233, which says, 'Mothers shall suck their children for two years, and for these years she shall not conceive.' This is one of the birth controls given by Allah," he said.

He called upon faith leaders to give the right information on sexual and reproductive health to people, especially the youth, saying the youth are a large population of the country.

"51 percent of the country's population is youth; it is important for



**Chunga; Religious leaders have a great role to play**

the faith community to stand up and help in giving proper information to the adolescents," said Chunga.

Media houses such as Television



**Mwarabu; We do not need to ignore Sexual reproductive health**

Islam, Living Waters, Blantyre Synod, Maziko, Luntha Television, Radio Islam, Radio Maria, Afribrief, and some freelance journalists were among the participants in the training.



**Journalist Nkhoma, expressing his gratitude**



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# CAMA concerned with electricity tariff adjustment

By: Lovemore Katanda

**T**he Consumers Association of Malawi (CAMA) has described 69.7 percent proposed tariff hike by the Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) as not justifiable, saying the charges do not reflect the services ESCOM provides to its customers.

On July 11, 23, ESCOM conducted public meetings in Blantyre soliciting views from the public pertaining to its application to the Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA) for a 69.7 percent tariff hike.

During the first public hearing, ESCOM Chief Operations Officer Maxwell Mulimakwenda said that the 69.7 percent tariff hike is reasonable as the company has not had any tariff increases for the past four years.

“We believe this adjustment is reasonable; other companies have had price increases for their products, but ESCOM has not had any tariff increases for the past four years,” he said.

But commenting on the matter, Malawi Consumers Association of Malawi (CAMA) Executive Director John Kapito said that the 69.7 percent increase will only push the burden on ordinary consumers who are already struggling for survival.

“When ESCOM increases the electricity tariff, everything goes up. This will definitely put a burden on our consumers,” he said.

Kapito reasoned that ESCOM could



*Kapito; Dismantle ESCOM's sister company, Electricity Generation Company (EGENCO), saying it is not adding any value to the country's power supply*

have put the tariff increase on government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and not on ordinary consumers.

Kapito further asked government to dismantle ESCOM's sister company, Electricity Generation Company (EGENCO), saying it is not adding any value to the country's power supply.

“It is like people are just funding these institutions that are not efficient. It could be better to have only one company, and then probably have a department that can look into production. By doing so, we can also reduce the cost to run these institutions,” explained Kapito.

However, Mulimakwenda narrated that people should not panic as the proposed tariff increase will be implemented in phases for the next four years.

“This does not mean that from August on, ESCOM will increase tariffs by 69.7 percent. This adjustment will be phased from 2023 up to 2027,” clarified Mulimakwenda.

He further disclosed that the tariff hike will help ESCOM improve its service delivery and buy power from local companies and interconnector projects in Mozambique.

On the other hand, MERA Executive Director Henry Kachaje said he is delighted and contented with the information received from ESCOM and the public regarding the proposed tariff hike.

“This is a revised version of what was submitted earlier. We will take comments from all angles, and then we will sit down and discuss the way forward,” he said.





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