

## Zambia: Chinese cybercrime syndicate uncovered

An "elaborate internet fraud syndicate" has been uncovered that has led to the arrest of 77 people, including 22 Chinese nationals. Golden Top Support Services in Lusaka recruited "unsuspecting" Zambians aged between 20 and 25. They were tasked to "engage in fraudulent conversations with mobile phone users through various platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, chat rooms and others using scripted dialogues". The operation found 11 sim boxes, devices that route calls to bypass legitimate phone networks. They are used for fraudulent activities, including internet fraud and online fraud. More than 13,000 sim cards - both domestic and international - were also seized. There are indications that people in countries such as Singapore, Peru, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other African countries have been affected. 11.04.2024

## South Africa: Cape Town's "digital nomads"

As long as there is a decent internet connection, the number of laptop-wielding remote workers, mostly from Western Europe and the USA, who want to combine their digital work with tourism in one of the most picturesque cities in the world - the backdrop of Table Mountain, the sweeping sea views and perfect summer weather - is growing. While supporters see the financial benefits, critics believe that living space will become scarcer and more expensive and that other costs will also rise. So far, the "digital nomads" can stay for 90 days, depending on their nationality, and work for a foreign company. The South African government is planning a remote work visa that will be available to these "nomads". However, details have not yet been finalised. 11.04.2024

## Zambia: Summons after critical sermon

The Catholic priest, Father Andrew Chewe Mukosa, had lamented the high cost of living, youth unemployment and constant power cuts in Zambia in his Good Friday sermon, which was preached in the local language. Father Mukosa joins a long list of journalists, youth activists and political opposition leaders who are being harassed for allegedly criticising the authorities. The Zambian authorities are increasingly resorting to the provisions of the 1955 Public Order Act to suppress opposition activities, including denying permits for opposition meetings and rallies. Despite initial hopes that the election of President Hakainde Hichilema in 2021 could lead to an improvement in the human rights situation in the country, the Zambian authorities continue to crack down on all forms of dissent. 10.04.2024

## Uganda: Expression of opinion and arrest

Band members are arrested for "insulting" Museveni because they said, in the local Runyankole language, "Rutabandana Waturusya Rugahamuzindaro", which loosely translated means "We are tired, leave the microphone". The speech was very long. President Yoweri Museveni was speaking during the 50th wedding anniversary celebrations of former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi and his wife Jacqueline Mbabazi. The statement was taken as an insult to the president. 10.04.

## Mali: Extreme heatwave

A maximum temperature of 48.5 °C was recorded in the south-western town of Kayes. It would be the hottest day on record in Africa in April. Local sources speak of over

250 deaths in three days. The authorities have shortened and changed school hours for primary school pupils to protect them from the dangerous temperatures. The high temperatures are attributed to the El Nino weather phenomenon, which has increased temperatures in the oceans and atmosphere. 09.04.2024

## Sierra Leone: State of emergency because of the kush

President Julius Maada Bio has declared a national state of emergency due to rampant drug abuse. Kush, a psychoactive mixture of addictive substances, has been widely used in the country for years. The president described the drug as a "death trap" and said it represented an "existential crisis". One of the drug's many ingredients is ground human bones - security has been tightened at cemeteries to prevent addicts from digging up the skeletons from graves. Groups of mostly young men sitting on street corners with limbs swollen from kush abuse are a common sight in Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone Psychiatric Hospital, about 63% are "kush patients". The President established a National Task Force on Drugs and Substance Abuse to focus primarily on "combating the kush crisis". District centres are to be set up and as well as treatment, law enforcement agencies are to dismantle the drug supply chain through investigations, arrests and prosecutions. 09.04.2024

## Zimbabwe: No Zim-Dollar - now ZiG

Zimbabwe has introduced a new gold-backed currency called ZiG - "Zimbabwe Gold". The new currency will be introduced with immediate effect and banks will have to convert their balances from Zimbabwe dollars to ZiG. The new banknotes will be available in seven denominations from 1 to 200 ZiG. Zimbabweans will have 21 days to exchange their old, inflation-affected banknotes for the new currency. The ZiG will be backed by a mixture of foreign exchange reserves, gold and other precious metals. The previous currency, the Zimbabwe dollar, was heavily devalued, trading at Z\$36,000 per US dollar, having lost more than three quarters of its value this year alone. However, the US dollar, which accounts for 85% of transactions, remains legal tender and most people are likely to continue to favour it. 08.04.2024

## Egypt: Coastal strip sold

The sale of a stretch of beach west of Alexandria to the United Arab Emirates is being hailed as a turning point for the ailing economy. The UAE wants to invest 35 billion dollars directly in the Egyptian economy. Part of the sum has already been transferred and will help combat the shortage of foreign currency, which is aggravated by the war in Gaza and the shrinking Suez traffic. Critics believe that President al-Sisi is using the loans to realise his irrational mega-projects. The UAE's investment will not be the only one. Saudi Arabia also wants to invest 15 billion dollars in a tourist destination on the Red Sea. 08.04

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