



Kampala Capital City Authority has introduced another tax for commercial vehicles effective January 2016

John Nagenda

And a happy new 2016 to us all!

A glorious deed as 2015 disappeared into memory puts us in great shape for the infant 2016. A group of Kenyan Muslims travelling on a bus ambushed by Islamist extremist gunmen protected their Christian fellow passengers by refusing to be split into groups, according to those who were there. The Muslim passengers told the militants "to kill them together or leave them alone", a local governor reported.

Sadly two passengers had already been shot. The Somali al Shabab group said it had carried out the attack (not for the first time). In April, in its worst outrage, it killed 148 people, mostly students, at Garissa University College in Kenya, not far from the Somali border. There it had first separated Muslims from other, mostly Christian, people. In 2014 it had likewise killed 28 non-Muslims, travelling to capital city Nairobi for Christmas holidays.

Kenya has had a long tradition, like other countries in the region, of Muslims and other faiths living for the most part peacefully side by side, before al Shabab and other extremists set on their nefarious policy of trying to separate themselves by bullet, axe, knife and other grisly methods of death and destruction. It is a policy with no place in modern life. Centuries ago, in the infamous Crusades, the boot was on the other foot, with Muslims being pillaged by Christians in their own countries. What goes round comes round!

There is no doubt that Muslims, being human, share the good and bad sides of their fellow sojourners on Planet Earth, despite what cranks like odious Donald Trump might utter in their horribleness. How sad that some Americans seem to be agreeing with him. But that too shall pass, leaving Trump a forlorn footnote of history.

This last Christmas, only a scant eight days back, when Christians worldwide were still talking of Jesus Christ being born in a dung-saturated habitation of cows, and how He continued being regarded by billions of those who took His name (not in vain!) 20 centuries later, gives strong indication of



*Being human,
Muslims share the
good and bad sides of
fellow sojourners*

how humanity should try existing together! What is wrong, especially remembering Pope Francis' recent praying in a mosque in CAR, for all of us, according to our varied beliefs, to use the vision of the bus travellers refusing to be separated, this coming year? Thus might what happened in Kenya not spread throughout the world? Never forget that mighty oaks from little acorns grow!

In Uganda the coming presidential elections loom. A pattern emerges. The current Leader, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who has easily won them for nearly three decades, is comfortably leading yet again. It seems that even children and youths know he will win again. He is on record as saying he will get 80% of the vote.

I had said 72%, and expected the remaining 28% to be shared mostly by the two candidates, Besigye and Mbabazi, in that order: "20% to three-time loser Dr Besigye; leaving 7% to ex Premier

Mbabazi. 1% would go to the combined remaining five, whose names deservedly remain anonymous! It seems from *Daily Monitor* (no lovers of Museveni although enriched by his time) that I was 15% too high for Mbabazi! How my heart sang! I can only repeat my request to the voters that nothing is done to give him excuses to flee from the fray. He is already bleating daily. To my considerable shock my heart triple bypass operation (I can only guess) is beginning to make me feel a bit sorry for him! I shall try my best to overcome this.

Of far more importance is to ask what makes President Museveni so keen to address his vast electoral audiences, day after day. He knows he cannot be beaten, even if he stayed in bed until the process is over, as did UPC's Mr. Otunnu! But there Museveni is, day in day out, fresh as the morning air, good-humoured: exchanging pleasantries and badinage with his yellow-shirted followers. I have said before how this happens, but allow me to enjoy a repetition! Museveni's audiences of voters are his batteries. You can see him feeding off them, getting re-charged on an hourly basis. Certainly it isn't given to every candidate to achieve this. But how many would kill to do so! As he feeds off his voters, so his voters symbiotically feed off him, even to raptures of delight. He is theirs, and they are his.

Dr Besigye can prance and jump about and scowl until his face is scoured. It is no good. It looks too staged, too fake, as if he is rehearsing for a play that will never be staged. Also, since this is so, man and audience mimic the acts with no conviction. Still, both they and he fight through the futile motions, fully aware that any reality flew through the window long ago.

As for endlessly morose Amama Mbabazi, it is much worse. His thoughts, and how to convey them, is a tedious exercise only repayable in a series of blank statements. You fully expect him, before this whole trip winds down, to break without warning into bitter fits of weeping, knowing he took a wrong turning, and his political Journey's End has stopped in a remote siding.