



**Africa's Democratic Dilemma: The Case For Transformative Leadership Could Benevolent Authoritarianism Succeed Where Electoral Democracy Has Struggled?**

For over three decades, Africa has embraced democratic governance as the pathway to development. Yet despite regular elections across the continent, many African nations continue to grapple with poverty, corruption, infrastructure deficits, and economic stagnation. This paradox has prompted uncomfortable questions

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**News >> Kenya Eyes New Export Sectors After AGOA Extension**

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**News >> UDA Moves To Deepen ODM Alliance As Party Orders Repeat Grassroots Polls**

**P. 12.** UDA has moved to consolidate its grassroots structures and strengthen its political partnership with the ODM ahead of the 2027 General Election, following a high-level National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting chaired by President William Ruto.

# Babu, Ndindi Blast Ruto's Singapore Plan

**⚡** Kiharu Member of Parliament Ndindi Nyoro and his Embakasi East counterpart Babu Owino have questioned President William Ruto's push to model Kenya's economic transformation on Singapore, arguing that the two countries are fundamentally different in size, structure and economic realities. Speaking during an interview on JKLive yesterday, Nyoro cautioned against benchmarking Kenya with other economies that are not comparable, saying economic assessments must be grounded in similar conditions.



A collage of photos of MPs Ndindi Nyoro (Kiharu) and Babu Owino (Embakasi East). PHOTO | JASE MWANGI

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# Wamatangi Alleges Political Persecution After Business Premises Demolished

By: WMW  
@themtkenyatimes

## Some Of The Photos Showing The aftermath

Kiambu Governor Kimani Wamatangi yesterday accused powerful individuals of using state machinery to politically persecute him after his business premises near Nyayo Stadium in Nairobi were demolished in a heavily guarded operation on Tuesday night.

In a statement issued after he toured the area, the governor said bulldozers, escorted by hundreds of armed police officers, descended on the property without notice, despite a court order barring any demolition.

Wamatangi said the land had been legally leased and that he had been operating on the premises since 1994, paying all required lease fees in accordance with the agreement.

“What have I done to deserve this? For the past three years, I have been politically terrorised both at work and at home by individuals abusing state power,” the governor said.

He described the demolition as a cowardly act aimed at obstructing his work as Kiambu governor, but insisted it would not weaken his resolve to serve the people. “I leave everything to God,” he said.

Property worth millions of shillings was destroyed when the heavily guarded machinery flattened several businesses operating on the land.

The incident has sparked fresh debate over the alleged use of state agencies in political battles.

Last evening Kenya Railways stated that they own the land and that they had issued vacation notice which was ignored.



Editor's Desk



**The Mt. Kenya Times**



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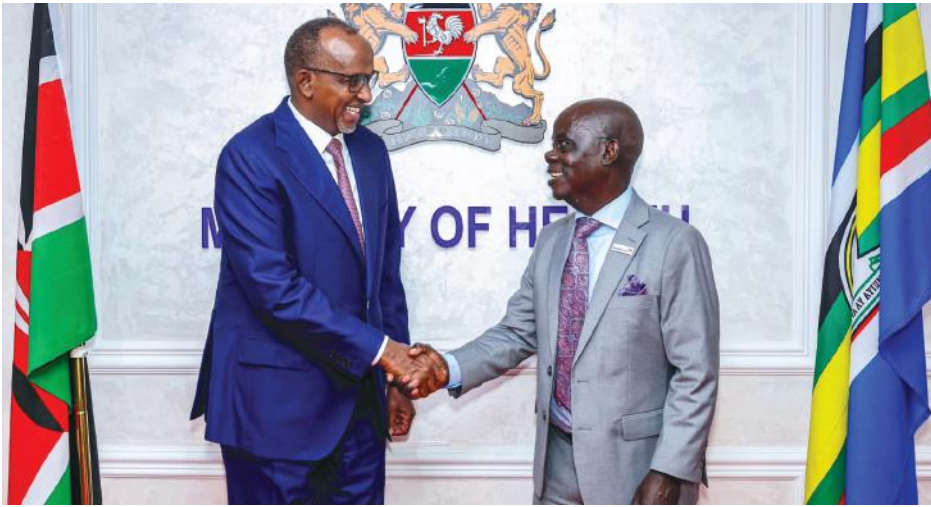


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## NEWS IN BRIEF



Health Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale (left) shares a warm handshake with World Vision Kenya National Director Gilbert Kamanga during a meeting at the CS's office in Nairobi yesterday, an event that reaffirmed a shared commitment to fast-tracking Universal Health Coverage (UHC) through strengthened, community-driven health systems.



Safaricom Foundation Chairman Joseph Ogutu (left) and Kisumu Governor Prof. Anyang Nyong'o during the ground breaking ceremony for Neonatal and pediatric intensive care units at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital in Kisumu yesterday.



It was a sigh of relief for over 1,380 students in Nakuru County after they received bursary cheques worth KSh13.8 million from the office of Women Representative Liza Chelule through the NGAAF Nakuru County office to help settle school fees balances. Speaking during the distribution, Chelule (right) urged men to refrain from defiling schoolgirls and warned that cases of teenage pregnancies are on the rise in Nakuru County. Nakuru NGAAF Fund Manager Daniel Njogu said the office remains committed to ensuring no child drops out of school due to lack of fees or teenage pregnancies. Parents who benefited from the program, led by Elizabeth Ngathoka and Muchira Kamau, applauded the legislator for the timely intervention, noting that many learners had not reported back to school two weeks after reopening due to unpaid fees.



A total of 1,129 learners from vulnerable families joining Grade 10 in Garissa County this year have benefitted from the Elimu Scholarship Programme 2026, a move set to ease their financial burden in senior secondary schools. Of the beneficiaries, 245 learners are from the Dadaab refugee camp.



The Coast Water Works Development Agency (CWWDA) is set to significantly cut its electricity costs and stabilise water supply across Kenya's coastal region following the rollout of a 4.6-mega-watt solar power plant. The large-scale renewable energy project is designed to reduce the high cost of electricity used to pump water from boreholes and transport it over long distances to consumers in Mombasa, Kilifi, and Malindi. For years, the agency has relied heavily on grid power, a dependence that has translated into soaring electricity bills and frequent disruptions to water supply. According to Project Coordinator David Kanui, CWWDA's monthly power bill currently stands at about Sh60 million, placing immense financial pressure on water service providers and, ultimately, consumers.



As part of its employee support initiatives, a Kericho-based multinational tea company has awarded Sh3 million in scholarships to 20 bright and needy children of its employees joining senior secondary school. For the 2026-2028 academic cycle, Browns Plantations Kenya Limited has granted each of the beneficiaries who sat the 2025 Kenya Junior School Education Assessment (KJSEA) Sh50,000 to cover their three years of schooling. In a statement, Browns Plantations Kenya Limited Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dushanth Ratwate emphasized that the scholarship is an investment in community growth, empowering students while uplifting their families and shaping future generations.



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**NEWS PAPER**

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# DP: KSh6 Billion Set To Mitigate Drought

By: DPCS

@themkenyatimes

## Worth Noting:

- “The government has made arrangements to make sure that we provide enough food to all the affected people and also to save their livestock from demise because of the drought. There should be no panic in the country,” he said.
- The Second in Command urged the partners to support the government’s efforts saying the government is doing everything possible to lessen the impact of the drought that has hit over 20 counties, most affected in the Arid and Semi-Arid areas.



Drought stricken area in northern Kenya. Photo/Courtesy



Deputy President Kithure Kindiki addressing the forum yesterday. Photo/DPCS.

Deputy President Kithure Kindiki has assured Kenyans that the government has fully prepared to respond to the ongoing drought in the country saying adequate measures have been put in place to mitigate the situation.

The DP called for calm revealing that KSh6 billion has already been allocated to support response measures asking development partners to boost the efforts.

Prof. Kindiki spoke yesterday when he co-chaired the 14th Development Partners Forum at the Official Residence in Karen, Nairobi.

“The government has made arrangements to make sure that we provide enough food to all the affected people and also to save their livestock from demise because of the drought. There should be no panic in the country,” he said.

The Second in Command urged the partners to support the government’s efforts saying the government is doing everything possible to lessen the impact of the drought that has hit over 20 counties, most affected in the Arid and Semi-Arid areas.

“The Government is also committing 2 billion shillings every month and is

asking for increased assistance from the development partners and other role players to ensure that the drought situation is comprehensively dealt with,” he stated.

He also said the government is assembling sufficient amounts of hay, vaccines and water to avert loss of livestock.

The Chairman of the Council of Governors Ahmed Abdullahi called for urgent intervention to avoid a deterioration of the situation.

“While ASAL counties are the most affected. Non-ASAL counties are experiencing spill-over effects through rising food prices, water stress and livelihood disruptions,” he said.

Present at the Forum were Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi, Head of Public Service Felix Koskei, Cabinet Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, United Nations Resident Coordinator Stephen Jackson (co-chair), Germany Ambassador Sebastian Groth (co-chair), Council of Governors led by Chairman Ahmed Abdullahi, ambassadors and representatives of various development agencies among others.



DP at his Karen residence yesterday.

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# Kenya Eyes New Export Sectors After AGOA Extension

By: Suleiman Mbatiah  
 @themtkenyatimes

The United States has extended the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) by three years, giving Kenya fresh momentum to expand its exports beyond textiles and apparel.

The extension follows the passage of a Bill by the US House of Representatives, easing uncertainty that had weighed heavily on Kenya's export sector after AGOA lapsed last year.

Kenya has benefited from AGOA since 2000, using the duty-free access to grow exports to the US, particularly in textiles and apparel produced in Export Processing Zones. The arrangement expired in 2025, triggering concern among investors and workers over the future of the industry.

The textile and apparel sector employs more than 80,000 people directly and supports an estimated 250,000 others indirectly, according to the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry.

Cabinet Secretary Lee Kinyanjui said the extension restores confi-

dence and opens the door for diversification.

"The extension gives Kenya the space to protect jobs while deliberately expanding into new export areas beyond textiles," CS Kinyanjui said.

He said the government is now targeting additional products under the AGOA framework as part of efforts to grow exports and create more jobs.

The extension follows sustained engagement by Kenya's leadership with US officials. In November 2025, President William Ruto chaired a consultative meeting on AGOA renewal, bringing together industry players, including the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and the Kenya Private Sector Alliance.

During the meeting, President Ruto briefed stakeholders on his discussions in Washington with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, which covered both the extension of AGOA and plans for a longer-term trade framework to guarantee predictable market access for Kenyan products.

The CS has also led engagements with US investors, including at the American Chamber of Commerce State of Trade in Kenya Forum, where he assured them of Kenya's



Trade CS Lee Kinyanjui with US Trade Representative, Amb. Jamieson Greer, where they advanced plans for a trade pact to boost Kenya-US trade last year.

commitment to stable and mutually beneficial trade ties.

In 2024, US exports to Kenya were valued at about Sh119.5 billion, while Kenyan exports to the US stood at roughly Sh114.2 billion. Apparel

accounted for about Sh72.9 billion of Kenya's exports to the American market.

The CS said the government is strengthening value chains in textiles and agriculture, investing in energy

reliability and positioning Kenya as a strategic hub for US businesses seeking long-term trade partnerships in Africa.

# Koimburi Ditches Gachagua, Blames Him For Deceit And Betrayal

By: John Kamau  
 @themtkenyatimes

A fallout is simmering at the Democracy for Citizens Party (DCP) as leaders start trooping out of the party that is led by former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua.

Juja MP George Koimburi is the latest leader, after Githunguri MP Gathoni Wamuchomba, to public announce his dissertation from Gachagua citing betrayal and deceitfulness from the party leader.

Koimburi in an interview accused Gachagua of betraying his ardent foot soldiers who stood by him when he was ousted by the Kenya Kwanza government from his position by embracing their competitors at their respective regions.

Koimburi asserted that after his chaotic visit at Kiamworia AIPCA Church in Gatundu South last Sun-

day, Gachagua paraded Aloise Kinyanjui, his closest political nemesis in the Juja Constituency seat and announced that he will be the DCP candidate for the seat in next year's general elections.

The MP said that he felt betrayed by a leader whom he has fought battles for claiming that money exchanged hands at his expense.

He noted that the numerous court battles he has been facing as well as political persecution from diverse political quarters has been as a result of his unwavering support for Gachagua.

He quipped that his constituency has suffered immensely with underdevelopment due to his dalliance with Gachagua and the DCP party as the government diverted developments to regions with overwhelming support.

Koimburi maintained that he will now support the ruling government for the sake of developments across Juja Constituency noting that the re-



Juja MP George Koimburi during a press briefing yesterday.

gion requires roads, water, electricity, hospitals, modern markets among other development projects.

The lawmaker however dispelled rumors that he has been 'bought' by

President William Ruto's government as claimed by Gachagua during an interview with a local TV station.

He at the same time cautioned budding politicians against joining

the DCP party saying that the party tickets have been reserved for those "with deep pockets".

# MPs Babu Owino, Ndindi Nyoro Tear Into President Ruto's Singapore Vision

By: Brian Kimani  
@themtkenyatimes



MPs Ndindi Nyoro (Kiharu) and Babu Owino (Embakasi East) on Citizen TV's JKLIVE show yesterday. PHOTO | JASE MWANGI

## Worth Noting:

- Speaking during an interview on JKLIVE yesterday, Nyoro cautioned against benchmarking Kenya with other economies that are not comparable, saying economic assessments must be grounded in similar conditions.
- “In economics, just to bring it in terms of real life, if you're a banana farmer, you can't compare how well you're doing with another banana farmer by using oranges or pears,” said Nyoro.
- He added that countries should only be compared where there is economic homogeneity, asking whether Kenya and Singapore share similar dynamics.
- Nyoro pointed to the sharp disparity in wealth levels, noting that Singapore's GDP per capita stands at about USD 90,000 compared to Kenya's roughly USD 3,000.

Kiharu Member of Parliament Ndindi Nyoro and his Embakasi East counterpart Babu Owino have questioned President William Ruto's push to model Kenya's economic transformation on Singapore, arguing that the two countries are fundamentally different in size, structure and economic realities.

Speaking during an interview on JKLIVE yesterday, Nyoro cautioned against benchmarking Kenya with other economies that are not comparable, saying economic assessments must be grounded in similar conditions.

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He added that countries should only be compared where there is economic homogeneity, asking whether Kenya and Singapore share similar dynamics.

Nyoro pointed to the sharp disparity in wealth levels, noting that Singapore's GDP per capita stands at about USD 90,000 compared to Kenya's roughly USD 3,000.

“The point is that the economies are fashioned very differently,” he noted.

He further argued that Singapore's growth was anchored on heavy State involvement in the economy, particularly in its early years.

Citing the Singapore Exchange, Nyoro said government-linked entities such as Temasek dominate ownership among top companies, a model of State capitalism that contrasts with Kenya's current push to divest from State-owned enterprises.

According to Nyoro, Kenya's economic structure and aspirations align more closely with South Korea than Singapore.

He noted that Kenya and South Korea have comparable population sizes, both around 50 million, unlike Singapore's population of just over six million.

Nyoro also highlighted how Asian tiger economies deliberately nurtured private enterprise, developed labour-intensive industries before upgrading to capital and technology-intensive sectors, and relied heavily on foreign direct investment.

He warned that Kenya often confuses remittances with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); a term which refers to an investment made by an entity in one country into a business interest located in another country.

“Remittances are consumer-driven. FDI is investment-driven,” he said,

adding that none of the successful Asian economies grew through patronage or by mixing political power with economic incentives.

On governance, Nyoro said corruption that distorts economic incentives remains a major obstacle, while human capital development should be Kenya's most critical focus if it hopes to achieve sustainable growth.

MP Babu Owino echoed the criticism, focusing on the stark physical and demographic differences between the two countries.

He noted that Singapore covers just 736 square kilometres, roughly the size of Nairobi, while Kenya spans about 580,000 square kilometres.

“Kenya is about 800 times bigger than Singapore,” said Owino, adding that Kenya's population of 58 million far exceeds Singapore's 6.1 million.

Owino questioned how Kenya could realistically mirror Singapore's model given these differences.

“How else will the 58 million Kenyans fit into Singapore which is smaller?” he asked, arguing that Kenya already has a homegrown development blueprint.

He cited former President Mwai Kibaki's Vision 2030, which target-

ed double-digit economic growth anchored on three pillars: economic growth through tourism, manufacturing and micro, small and medium enterprises; social development through education, healthcare and sanitation; and political reforms focusing on justice and electoral systems.

According to Owino, the failure to prioritise foundational issues such as security, police reforms, macro-economic stability, infrastructure and land reforms has undermined Kenya's progress.

“We ran away from all that and told you about bottom up. We cannot talk about Singapore if we can't provide the basic needs to a common human being,” he stated.

The remarks by the two MPs add to a growing debate over the suitability of Singapore as a model for Kenya's development, with critics urging the government to prioritise implementing the bottom-up economic agenda before making aspirational comparisons.

# Message To The Leaders Of The Nations

By: MKT Reporter  
@themkenyatimes

Hear this, you who hold power over peoples and lands.  
You have set your hands upon pride, violence, and injustice, and you lead the nations toward destruction while calling it progress.  
You divide, exploit, and exalt yourselves, forgetting that all authority is accountable to Me.  
As it is written in the Book of Obadiah:  
"The pride of your heart has deceived you... Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down."  
You trust in alliances, weapons, wealth, and strategy, yet you have ignored humility, mercy, and righteousness.  
What you do in secret is seen.  
What you justify will be judged.  
Turn back while there is still time.

Defend the poor.  
End violence and deceit.  
Rule with justice, not arrogance.  
If you do not understand this message, consult your spiritual leader.

The consequences of ignoring it are already written.

*Message from the Elders and Seers of Mt. Kenya*



## The Mt. Kenya Times



# Kindiki Urges Development Partners To Support Kenya's Quest For First World Status

By: DPCS

@themtkenyatimes



Deputy President Kithure Kindiki addressing the forum yesterday.

## Worth Noting:

- Prof. Kindiki spoke yesterday when he co-chaired the 14th Development Partners Forum at the Official Residence in Karen, Nairobi.
- “Our next vision is clear: to transform Kenya into a first-world economy within a generation. We are persuaded beyond doubt that if other countries elsewhere have done it, Kenya has what it takes to do it as well. South Korea did it. Malaysia did it. Singapore did it. There is absolutely no reason why Kenya cannot do it,” he said.
- To achieve this, the DP revealed, the government is revamping key sectors of the economy as well as sustaining faster and comprehensive implementation of the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda which is at the centre of the administration's development blueprint.

Deputy President Kithure Kindiki said Kenya is strengthening partnership with development partners and agencies to hasten the realization of first-world status.

The DP said President Ruto's vision of elevating Kenya to similar economic status as Asian Tigers such as Singapore, Malaysia and South Korea is achievable and requires input by everyone including the partners.

Prof. Kindiki spoke yesterday when he co-chaired the 14th Development Partners Forum at the Official Residence in Karen, Nairobi.

“Our next vision is clear: to transform Kenya into a first-world economy within a generation. We are persuaded beyond doubt that if other countries elsewhere have done it, Kenya has what it takes to do it as well. South Korea did it. Malaysia did it. Singapore did it. There is absolutely no reason why Kenya cannot do it,” he said.

To achieve this, the DP revealed, the government is revamping key sectors of the economy as well as sustaining faster and comprehensive implementation of the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda which is at the centre of the administration's development blueprint.

“We have not abandoned BETA.

We want Kenya to move to first world economic status within one generation and the paradigm that will take us there is BETA,” he assured.

Present at the Forum were Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi, Head of Public Service Felix Koskei, Cabinet Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, United Nations Resident Coordinator Stephen Jackson (co-chair), Germany Ambassador Sebastian Groth (co-chair), ambassadors and representatives of various development agencies among others.

The Second in Command noted that Kenya is keen to exploit every available resource locally and internationally to speed up economic transformation.

“The drivers that will take us there are people, partnerships and technology. The people are the centre of our development planning and programs. Technology and partnerships are going to play a great role in the transformation,” he stated.

The pillars of the transformation are agriculture, water and energy development.

The DP said agriculture is relied on by many people and if transformed could lift up millions of Kenyans

out of poverty in the shortest time possible.

Water harvesting and conservation is also at the centre of the economic transformation with a target to build 50 mega dams, 200 mid-sized dams and 1000 mini-dams across Kenya to harvest water and put an additional 2.5 million acres of land under irrigation.

“This will make agriculture more productive and reduce importation of food hence reducing loss of foreign exchange earnings as well as creating jobs,” he added.

Upgrading infrastructure including roads, airports, seaports and railways is also key to this objective. An additional 7000 megawatts of electricity are also being targeted to meet the ever increasing energy needs in the country.

The DP said this will be achieved through Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) and other innovative ways like establishment of Sovereign Wealth Fund and Infrastructure Fund.

“We are setting up the Sovereign Wealth Fund. This will be used to secure resources obtained from the extractive industry for the purpose of securing the nation against shocks including climate change shocks

and other external economic shocks like pandemics that can destabilize our economy.

Through the infrastructure fund, Kenya is now mobilizing capital through markets, public-private partnerships and private investment to sustainably fund national transformation,” DP emphasized.

The enablers of the nation's transformation, DP revealed, are long-term national security, promotion of national values and development of human capital.

“We are going to promote a society based on integrity, patriotism, justice, equality and respect for the rule of law, national unity. Unless we instill this in ourselves and the younger generation, the transformation will falter,” he added.

The Deputy President also challenged the development partners to realign their projects and programs to fit in the BETA plan citing the NYOTA program being implemented in partnership with the World Bank.

“The program is squarely sitting within the BETA priorities of empowering young people through creating employment, employability and encouraging a savings and entrepreneurship culture,” DP said.

# UDA Moves To Deepen ODM Alliance As Party Orders Repeat Grassroots Polls

By: MKT Reporter  
 @themtkenyatimes

The United Democratic Alliance (UDA) has moved to consolidate its grassroots structures and strengthen its political partnership with the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) ahead of the 2027 General Election, following a high-level National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting chaired by President William Ruto.

In a communiqué issued after the meeting held yesterday, UDA said it had received a detailed briefing from the party's National Elections Board (NEB) and the Electoral and Nomination Dispute Resolution Committee (ENDRC) on the grassroots elections that were conducted in 20 counties last Saturday.

The party revealed that the elections attracted an unprecedented 492,439 candidates who competed for 231,770 positions across 17,953 polling centres.

A total of 2.4 million registered party members participated in the exercise, highlighting UDA's extensive national reach and growing internal democratic processes.

According to the NEC, the elections recorded notable inclusivity, with women accounting for 44 per cent of those elected, while youth made up 33 per cent of successful candidates. Men constituted 56 per cent of the winners.

However, the party acknowledged that the exercise was not flawless. The NEC directed the NEB to organise repeat elections within 30 days in all polling centres where voting either did not take place or failed to attract adequate participation.

It also ordered that ward-level party elections be conducted across the country within 30 days after the repeat polls are concluded.

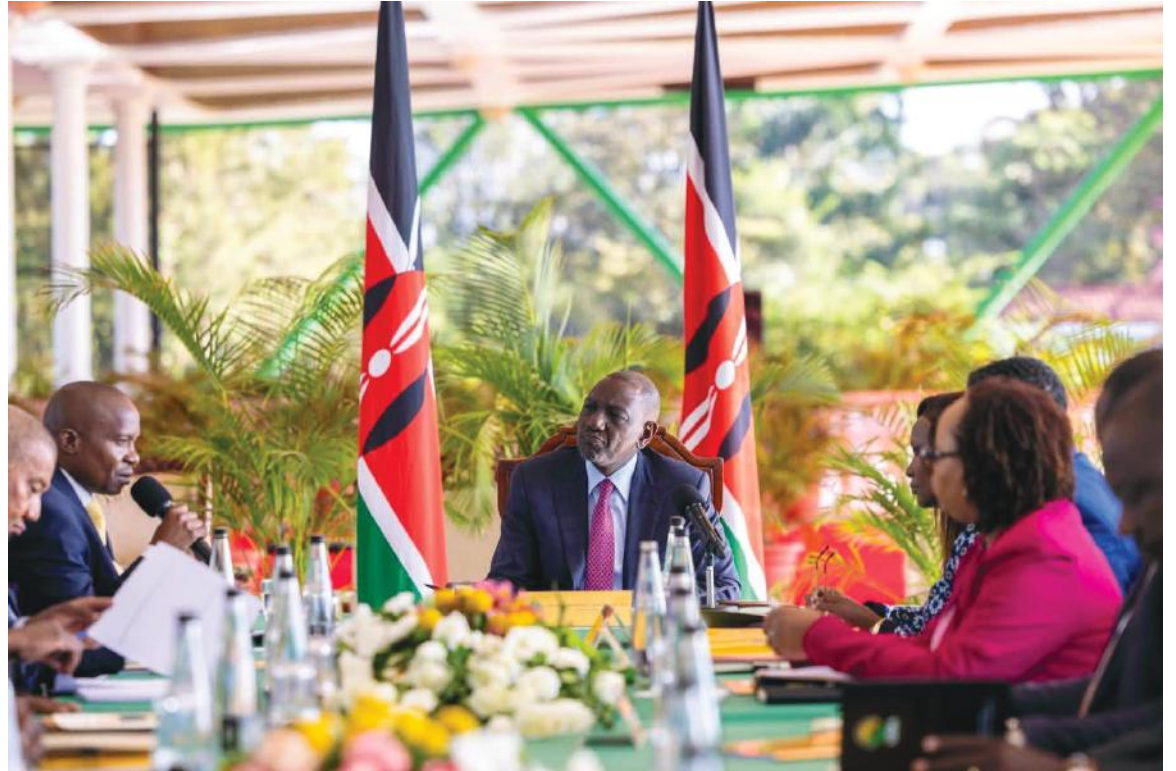
To ensure smooth execution of the upcoming polls, the NEB was further instructed to develop a comprehensive calendar for member sensitisation and the registration of aspirants for the available positions.

In a major organisational shift, the NEC approved the establishment of Ward Executive Committees, each comprising seven members.

These will be elected by a Ward Congress, an electoral college made up of officials from all polling stations within the ward. The move is expected to strengthen party coordination and grassroots mobilisation.

The ENDRC was also directed to fast-track the resolution of all disputes arising from the grassroots elections in line with the party constitution.

Beyond internal party matters, the NEC devoted significant attention to



Deputy President Kithure Kindiki addressing the UDA NEC meeting as other leaders led by President William Ruto looks on. Photo/Courtesy.

UDA's growing political partnership with ODM.

The party said the cooperation between the two rivals-turned-partners had already yielded tangible outcomes, including the adoption of the National Dialogue Committee (NADCO) report of 2024, the formation of a broad-based government that now includes ODM leaders, and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on a 10-point reform agenda.

The alliance has also translated into electoral success, with UDA and ODM jointly winning all Senate and National Assembly seats contested in the November 27, 2025 by-elections.

The NEC further noted ODM's decision to initiate structured negotiations with UDA and other Kenya Kwanza Coalition partners to formalise the partnership through a coalition agreement ahead of the 2027 General Election.

The NEC mandated President Ruto,

in his capacity as UDA Party Leader, to establish mechanisms for structured engagement with ODM to secure a lasting and mutually beneficial political arrangement.

The developments signal a major realignment in Kenya's political landscape, as the ruling party and its former opposition rival move closer toward a formal coalition that could shape the outcome of the next general election.



UDA NEC members during yesterday's meeting.

**Worth Noting:**

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# UDA Urged To Fix Gaps Witnessed In Grassroots Polls Ahead of 2027 Party Nominations

By: Suleiman Mbatiah  
 @themkenyatimes

The United Democratic Alliance has been urged to draw lessons from its recently concluded grassroots elections to prevent a repeat of logistical failures during the 2027 party nominations.

Nakuru Town East MP David Gikaria said the weekend exercise exposed weaknesses that could erode confidence in the party's internal democracy if left unaddressed.

He cited late deployment of party officials and delayed opening of polling centres in several areas. In some cases, voting did not take place at all.

"At Lakeview and Mirugi Kariuki primary schools, polling centres were not opened," Mr Gikaria said, adding that party members in those areas were denied their right to participate.

Out of the 55 polling centres earmarked for Nakuru Town East Constituency, he said only nine experienced major disruptions. Still, he insisted that even isolated failures must be treated seriously.

"Party members in those areas have a

right to vote. We will formally notify the party so that these challenges are corrected ahead of the main nominations," he said.

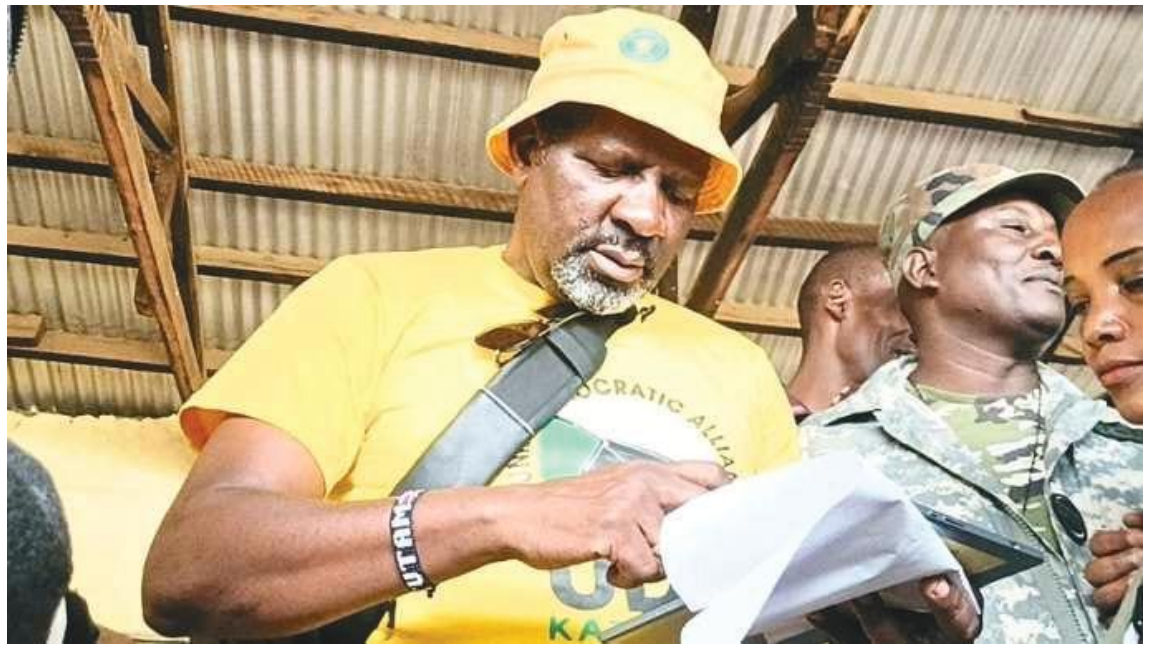
The 2027 Nakuru Senatorial aspirant also pointed to technical problems, saying some electronic devices failed while others wrongly profiled candidates, causing confusion at polling stations.

UDA conducted the grassroots elections to pick officials at polling centre, ward, constituency and county levels. The exercise is meant to strengthen party structures ahead of the 2027 General Election, where nominations are expected to be highly competitive.

Mr Gikaria said the credibility of that process would depend on proper planning, reliable technology and strict adherence to timelines. He urged party officials to emulate William Ruto, particularly on time management, warning that delays send the wrong signal to ordinary members.

"The party must assure members that the electronic voting system will work during the nominations. These are serious matters affecting the masses," he said.

He added that feedback from the grassroots should be used to refine



Nakuru Town East MP David Gikaria casts his vote electronically at Kimathi Primary School. Photo/Suleiman Mbatiah

systems, train officials and ensure future party exercises are smooth, transparent and inclusive.

Official party data shows 310,651 candidates registered for grassroots elections in 20 counties, exceeding the 237,940 party positions available.

The Mt Kenya region recorded the highest numbers, led by Meru with 35,343 candidates against a projected

21,000. Kiambu registered 21,000, Murang'a 20,880, Nyandarua 18,665, Nyeri 16,448, Embu 15,881 and Kirinyaga 14,000.

In the Rift Valley, Nakuru recorded 30,010 candidates, Bomet 25,350, Nandi 15,220 and Uasin Gishu 13,570. Baringo had 11,842, Elgeyo/Marakwet 7,236, Kericho 5,967, Samburu 4,386 and Laikipia 2,958.

Executive Director Nicodemus Bore praised the elections board, saying the exercise was well coordinated and seamless. Director of Elections Higgins Mbugua urged the secretariat to maintain the momentum as preparations begin for the next phase.

# Heroin Seized In Nakuru, One Arrested Amid Renewed Drug Crackdown

By: MKT Correspondent  
 @themkenyatimes

Heroin valued at KSh1.19 million was seized in an intelligence-led operation in Nakuru, leading to the arrest of a suspected trafficker.

Detectives from the Anti-Narcotics Unit arrested the suspect after trailing him while he rode a motorcycle within the town.

The suspect was identified as Ephantus Kariuki Mwangi, 42. He was riding a motorcycle, registration number KMEC 785W, and carrying luggage that drew the attention of officers.

A search of the luggage uncovered 397 grams of heroin concealed for transport. Police also recovered two syringes and needles, ten rolls of bhang, and three packets of Super-match cigarettes.

Investigators said the arrest disrupted what they believe was an active

drug supply run within Nakuru and its environs.

Kariuki is being held in police custody as detectives complete investigations ahead of his arraignment.

The Directorate of Criminal Investigations said the operation was part of sustained efforts to dismantle drug trafficking networks.

"We will not relent in pursuing drug traffickers and dismantling their networks through intelligence-led operations and inter-agency cooperation," the DCI said.

Police said further investigations are ongoing to establish whether the suspect is linked to a wider trafficking syndicate.

The arrest comes amid a renewed government crackdown on drugs and substance abuse.

President William Ruto has pledged to escalate the war on narcotics, warning traffickers of tougher penalties under proposed new laws.

Speaking on January 3 during a wedding ceremony in Kimumu, Uasin Gishu County, the President said



A photo collage of the suspect, motorcycle and heroine. Photo/ DCI

the government was drafting legislation to classify drug and substance abuse offences as capital crimes.

Under the proposal, the sale of hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine would attract the harshest penalties, replacing what he described as lenient punishments, including fines as low as Sh1 million.

In his New Year address, President

Ruto also announced a nationwide crackdown on illicit brews and drug abuse, saying traffickers were destroying young people's lives for profit.

The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) welcomed the remarks, saying they placed alcohol and drug abuse at the centre of

the national agenda for 2026.

NACADA board chairperson Stephen Mairori said the authority supports the proposed policy direction and will work with the government to curb substance abuse through stronger laws and coordinated enforcement.

**14 POEMS**

## Losing A Mother Is A Life-Changing Event



Losing a mother is a life-changing event  
That can leave us feeling untethered and bent.  
One can't express the emotions and memories  
That come with such a profound loss and histories.  
With my mom's guidance, I stood tall and strong,  
Cladding life's dares, where once was wrong.  
I took on responsibilities,  
With a heart now made so bold,  
Holding each moment with care, though young or old.  
As my mother's love moulded me, I designed  
to be brave,  
Educating to care others, to nurture and

to save.  
In all my steps with my mother, I find my way,  
Through life's joys and sorrows, night and day.  
She is the pillar of strength, a guide for my race.  
Like her with confidence and maturity, I take my place,  
She set me free to live my life, but still I could not go.  
But our bond was strong, love was true; I have to go  
I'll love to honour, my mother's legacy, her love and care,  
So, strive to be the person she knew I'd be,  
with grace to share .

( SAVAAL SATHIYA )  
Sathiya V  
B. T assistant,  
GHS Themmavur ,  
Kunrandar Kovil Block,  
Pudukkottai district .

## Music As A Medicine



Music, that most salubrious and anodynous of art forms, has long been recognized as a potent therapeutic agent, capable of alleviating the most recalcitrant of psychological and physiological afflictions. Its melodious incantations and harmonious cadences have been employed since antiquity to soothe the savage breast, calm the febrile mind, and restore the ravages of time to the enfeebled body. As a panacea for the human condition, music has been hailed as a universal balm, its efficacy in treating a wide range of maladies attested to by the annals of medical history.

The mechanisms by which music exerts its therapeutic effects are multifaceted and complex, involving a subtle interplay of cognitive, emotional, and physiological processes. Research has shown that music can modulate the activity of the brain's default mode network, reducing rumination and anxiety while enhancing cognitive function and mood. The rhythmic and melodic elements of music can also stimulate the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin, which play a crucial role in regulating mood, appetite, and sleep. Furthermore, music's ability to evoke powerful emotional responses can facilitate

the processing and release of pent-up emotions, providing a salutary outlet for the expression of feelings that might otherwise remain repressed.

The therapeutic applications of music are diverse and far-reaching, encompassing a wide range of conditions including anxiety, depression, Alzheimer's disease, and chronic pain. In palliative care settings, music has been shown to reduce pain, anxiety, and distress in patients with terminal illnesses, improving their overall quality of life. Music therapy has also been used to treat individuals with autism spectrum disorder, helping to improve social skills and communication. The efficacy of music as a medicine is perhaps most strikingly illustrated in the treatment of individuals with dementia, where it has been shown to awaken dormant memories and restore a sense of identity and connection to the world.

Music is a potent and versatile medicine, capable of healing the most profound and intractable of wounds. Its therapeutic effects, grounded in the complexities of brain function and emotional experience, offer a powerful tool for the treatment of a wide range of psychological and physiological afflictions. As a complement to traditional medical interventions, music has the potential to revolutionize our approach to health and wellness, offering a non-invasive, non-pharmacological means of promoting physical, emotional, and cognitive well-being.

Dr. S. Latha  
Music Cannoisseur  
Creative Writers

## Eternal Impermanence



Turning the tides up and down.  
Makes the world move around.

Stagnation leads to congestion.  
Careful moves bring the right transformation.

The mighty ocean transformed into a mountain.  
Tough nights becomes famous fountains.

Never cry like liters of waterfalls.  
Smash all the falls into the dark wells.

So dance beneath the fleeting light,  
Love loud, live fully and shine bright.

This tragic story ends never.  
Remember the way we lived echoes forever.

M. DEVIKA  
CREATIVE WRITERS  
PGT- ENGLISH  
FGS, CHENNAI, TAMILNADU, INDIA.

## Nothing Is Permanent..



Situations Will Change Everything...

Nothing is permanent ...  
situations will change everything .....

See how the earth is rotating  
nd revolving in it's own axis...  
Time changes worldwide things ...  
Vapours to steam nd steam to clouds ...  
Clouds to rain drops nd  
Rain drops to seas...Seas forming  
Magnificent Oceans.....  
A cycling process of the Universe  
A governance so Unique...  
Supervised by ALMIGHTY ...  
A human being transformed into  
A new born baby...To a little child...  
To a schooling boy or girl,

To a teen aged college guy  
Or to a bride or groom ..  
To a mother or father and so on...  
Man is a transforming animal  
Changing often in quality...  
Ofcourse in behaviour...  
In growth nd in physical nd social status...As  
nothing is permanent...  
EVERY THING IS MORTAL  
EXCEPTIONAL OF THE LORD GOD  
He dares to create situations  
For civilian's welfare....So friends...  
Be wiser nd change with changes Dedicating  
everything to  
OUR SAVIOUR...

V.R.Vijayalakshmi,  
Graduate teacher, Kanchipuram district  
Tamilnad, India

## Be Happy with Your Offline Work Too



Be happy with your offline work too,  
The quiet efforts nobody sees but you.  
Not every success needs a screen,  
Not every victory has to be seen

In silent rooms and steady days,  
Dreams are shaped in simple ways.  
Hard work grows where patience stays,  
Far from likes and public praise.

Offline hours build the soul,  
Small steps slowly reach the goal.  
What you learn when no one knows  
Becomes the strength that truly grows.

Screens may shine for a moment bright,  
But inner work gives lasting light.  
Skills, values, truth, and care  
Are built in moments calm and bare.

So smile at work done quietly,  
Trust your path and move steadily.  
Be proud of progress made unseen  
Offline effort shapes who you've been

V. JAYANTHI  
Creative writer  
Graduate teacher  
Chengalpattu

# DO YOU WANT TO GET PUBLISHED?

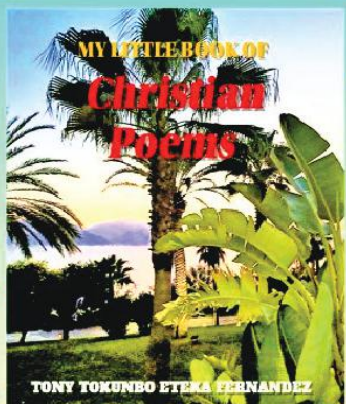
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# Lamu Cotton Farmers To Benefit As Government And Private Sector Roll Out BT Seeds

By: Felix Njenga  
@themtkenyatimes

Lamu County's cotton industry is on the path to revival following renewed government support and growing private sector investment aimed at transforming cotton into a profitable and sustainable livelihood for farmers.

The latest boost comes after Thika Cloth Mills (TCM) and other buyers purchased cotton worth KSh 335 million from Lamu farmers in the last season, a strong signal of confidence in the county's production potential.

The large-scale uptake of cotton has encouraged the government, working together with private sector partners, to introduce BT cotton seeds across the county.

These genetically improved seeds are designed to resist major pests, reduce the need for pesticides, and significantly improve yields. The initiative is expected to increase farmer incomes while lowering production costs, making cotton farming more attractive and commercially viable.

Speaking to farmers in Mpeketoni, Principal Secretary for Agriculture Paul Rono said the government was committed to providing high-quality seeds and modern technology to ensure cotton farming becomes a dependable source of income.

He emphasized that the rollout of BT seeds is part of a broader strategy to rebuild the entire cotton value chain, from seed supply and production to marketing and processing.

Rono added that partnerships with private sector players are central to the revival of the industry.

By working closely with companies such as Thika Cloth Mills, the government aims to guarantee markets for farmers while strengthening links between producers and processors.

TCM Chief Executive Officer Tejal Dhodhia reaffirmed the company's commitment to supporting Lamu farmers and the wider cotton sector.

She said TCM is dedicated to providing stable markets and fostering long-term partnerships that benefit growers.

According to Dhodhia, about 3.5 million kilogrammes of cotton valued at KSh 335 million were purchased from Lamu farmers during the last season, making the county



CEO Thika Cloth Mills Tejal Dhodhia receives a cheque worth KSh80 million from PS Agriculture Paul Rono accompanied by PS Investment Abubakar Hassan in Lamu.

the top cotton producer in Kenya.

She noted that Lamu's performance demonstrates what farmers can achieve when they are given the right inputs, access to technology, and assured buyers. With BT cotton seeds now being introduced, production levels are expected to rise even further in the coming seasons.

The Lamu Farmers Cooperative Union has welcomed the initiative, describing it as a turning point for a sector that had been in decline

for many years. Chairman Migwi Mwangi said the renewed collaboration between the government and private sector players is restoring farmers' confidence and creating new hope for the future of cotton farming in the county.

He added that BT cotton seeds have the potential to transform livelihoods by increasing yields and improving profitability, allowing farmers to invest more in their farms and improve their standards of living.

Overall, the rollout of BT cotton seeds, together with strong private sector backing and government support, marks a new chapter for cotton farming in Lamu.

The initiative is expected not only to boost farmer incomes but also to strengthen Kenya's cotton and textile industry, create jobs, and contribute to economic growth in the coastal region.

# KWS Cautions Job Seekers Against Online Recruitment Scams

By: Nicholas Opiyo  
@themtkenyatimes

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has warned members of the public to be on high alert following the circulation of fake recruitment links on social media platforms.

In a statement posted on its official X account, KWS said the purported recruitment links have been confirmed to be fraudulent and urged the public to avoid engaging with them.

The agency cautioned against clicking on the links, making any payments, or sharing personal information, noting that such details could be used for identity theft, financial fraud, or other criminal activities.

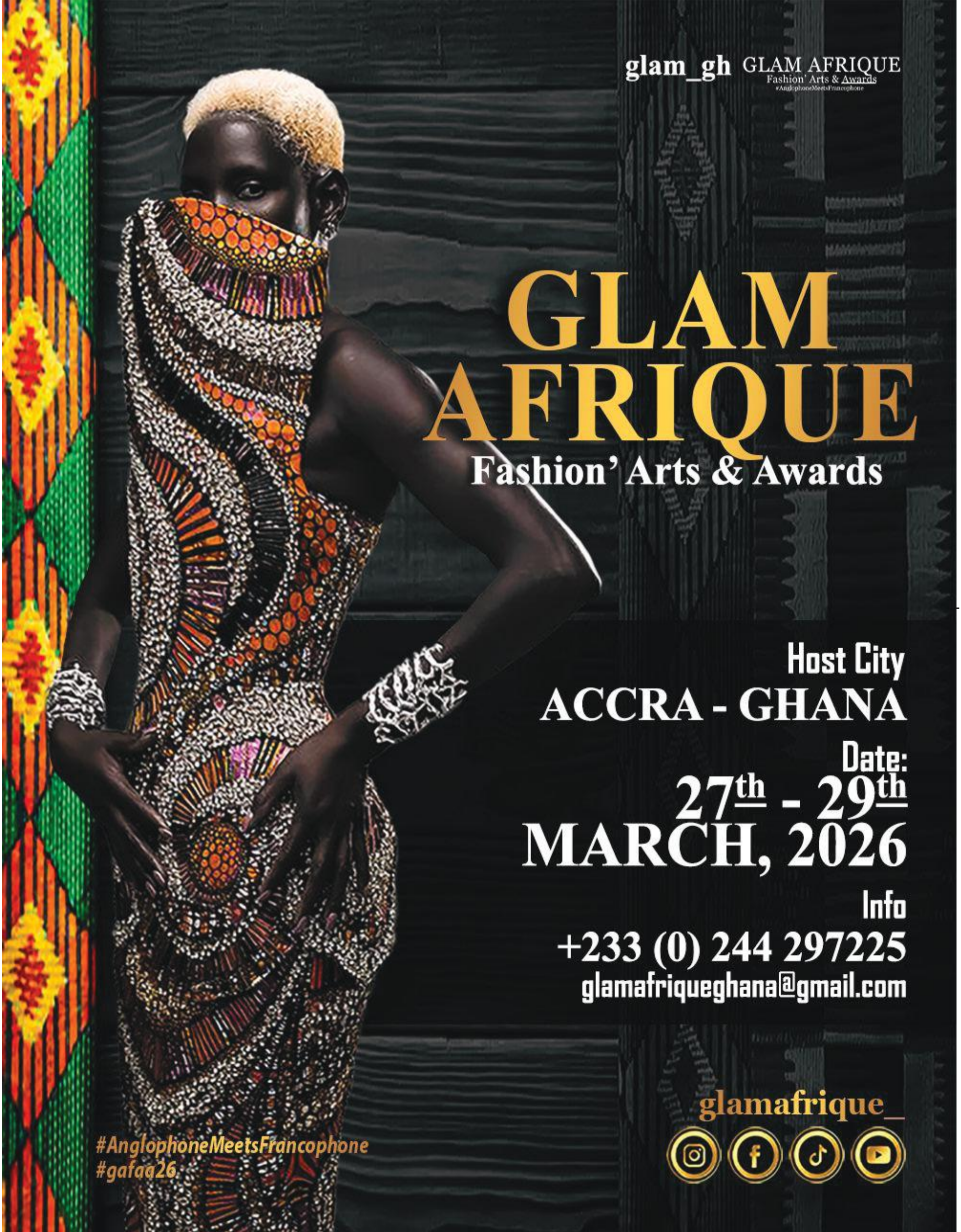
KWS further warned that beyond direct scams, the spread of misleading recruitment information fuels online misinformation and undermines public trust, particularly in

relation to public services.

The wildlife agency emphasized that all legitimate recruitment exercises are communicated exclusively through its official channels, including its verified social media platforms, official website, and announcements carried in mainstream media.

Members of the public have been advised to rely only on these official sources for verified information and to report any suspicious recruitment-related links or messages to the relevant authorities.





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A row of four circular social media icons: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube.

# Africa's Democratic Dilemma: The Case For Transformative Leadership Could Benevolent Authoritarianism Succeed Where Electoral Democracy Has Struggled?



By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande  
 @themtkenyatiimes

For over three decades, Africa has embraced democratic governance as the pathway to development. Yet despite regular elections across the continent, many African nations continue to grapple with poverty, corruption, infrastructure deficits, and economic stagnation. This paradox has prompted uncomfortable questions: Is Western-style democracy the right developmental model for Africa at this stage? Could a different governance approach deliver the transformation that conventional democracy has struggled to achieve?

## The Democratic Deficit

The promise of democracy in Africa has often exceeded its delivery. While elections occur with increasing regularity, many scholars point to troubling patterns: political competition frequently divides along ethnic lines rather than policy platforms; constitutional term limits are routinely circumvented by aging leaders; and governance systems inherited from colonial powers often reflect European interests rather than African realities.

Consider the constitutions themselves. Many African nations operate under legal frameworks established during decolonization, documents drafted in European capitals that embedded systems designed to facilitate resource extraction and maintain spheres of influence. These structures, critics argue, were never intended to serve African development but rather to preserve post-colonial economic relationships.

## The Asian Precedent

Proponents of alternative governance models point to East Asia's developmental trajectory. Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and China achieved remarkable economic transformation not through liberal democracy but through periods of authoritarian developmental states. Lee Kuan Yew built Singapore from a poor port city into a global financial center under single-party rule. South Korea's economic miracle occurred under military government. China lifted 800 million people from poverty under Communist Party leadership.

These examples suggest that rapid development may require the decisive action, long-term planning, and policy consistency that strong centralized leadership can provide—qualities often absent in systems where politicians focus on the next election cycle



Rwanda President Paul Kagame

rather than the next generation.

## The Youth Leadership Argument

A new generation of African scholars and activists argues that the continent needs young, reform-minded leaders unencumbered by the compromises and patronage networks of the old guard. These voices suggest that transformative change requires leaders willing to fundamentally restructure inherited systems rather than work within them.

The argument runs as follows: constitutional transitions of power—led by military or civilian reformers—could install technocratic governments focused on infrastructure development, education reform, agricultural modernization, and industrialization. Such governments could rewrite colonial-era laws, renegotiate exploitative resource contracts, and implement economic policies serving African interests rather than foreign corporations.

Rwanda under Paul Kagame is often cited as evidence. While his government restricts political freedoms, Rwanda has achieved impressive gains in healthcare, education, gender equality, and economic growth. Kigali is among Africa's cleanest, safest cities. The country has largely moved beyond the ethnic divisions that fueled genocide.

## The Counterarguments

This perspective faces substantial criticism. Opponents argue that au-

thoritarian systems, however well-intentioned, inevitably concentrate power dangerously. Without checks and balances, even benevolent leaders can become corrupt or make catastrophic mistakes. History provides ample examples of military governments that promised transformation but delivered kleptocracy.

Critics also note that Africa's developmental challenges stem less from democratic institutions themselves than from their incomplete implementation. Corruption, they argue, thrives not because of democracy but because of weak rule of law, unaccountable institutions, and insufficient civic engagement—problems that authoritarianism typically worsens rather than solves.

Furthermore, the "Asian model" may not be replicable. Those nations benefited from specific historical circumstances, massive foreign investment, and Cold War geopolitics that no longer exist. And several, including South Korea and Taiwan, eventually transitioned to democracy as their middle classes demanded political rights alongside economic prosperity.

## The Legitimate Questions

Yet the frustrations driving this debate are real. Why do African nations rich in resources remain poor while resource-poor Asian nations prospered? Why do elections often change faces without changing outcomes? Why do debt, dependency, and underdevelopment persist sixty years after independence?

These questions deserve serious engagement rather than dismissal. The current system demonstrably isn't working for hundreds of millions of Africans. Whether the solution lies in better implementation of democratic principles or fundamental governance restructuring remains hotly contested.

## The Path Forward

What seems clear is that Africa needs governance systems designed for African development rather than inherited from colonial administration. Whether that means strengthening democratic institutions, experimenting with alternative models, or some hybrid approach, the conversation itself represents healthy democratic debate about the continent's future.

The core insight from proponents of change may be not that authoritarianism is inherently superior, but that Africans should have the agency to determine their own governance structures based on what delivers results for their populations rather than what satisfies Western donors or conforms to imported political theories.

As this debate continues, the ultimate measure of any system's legitimacy will be its ability to provide education, healthcare, economic opportunity, and dignity to ordinary Africans—outcomes that current arrangements have too often failed to deliver.

## Worth Noting:

- The promise of democracy in Africa has often exceeded its delivery. While elections occur with increasing regularity, many scholars point to troubling patterns: political competition frequently divides along ethnic lines rather than policy platforms; constitutional term limits are routinely circumvented by aging leaders; and governance systems inherited from colonial powers often reflect European interests rather than African realities.
- Consider the constitutions themselves. Many African nations operate under legal frameworks established during decolonization, documents drafted in European capitals that embedded systems designed to facilitate resource extraction and maintain spheres of influence. These structures, critics argue, were never intended to serve African development but rather to preserve post-colonial economic relationships.



## The Silent Burden: Grandmothers Left To Raise Abandoned Children

It is one of the most heartbreaking realities of our time: elderly mothers pushed into depression and ill health as they shoulder the responsibility of raising grandchildren abandoned by their own daughters. What should be a season of rest has become a relentless struggle for survival.

Across Kenya, cases are mounting of young women who, after giving birth, leave their children in the care of aging parents while they pursue city life or income generating activities. In some instances, parents themselves request to take in the children, hoping to ease their daughters' burdens. Yet too often, the arrangement turns into abandonment, leaving grandmothers overwhelmed and children deprived of parental love.

The consequences are severe. According to the Fatherless Boys Foundation Blog, children raised without parental presence face heightened risks of depression, low self esteem, poor academic performance, and substance



abuse. Meanwhile, elderly caregivers suffer silently—lamenting their inability to afford food, clothing, or medical care while battling stress related illnesses. Some even die under the crushing weight of responsibility.

This is not just a family issue; it is a societal crisis. Respect for parents must extend beyond words to responsible action. Young women must recognize that bringing a child into the world demands commitment, not

escape. Communities, too, must rally around vulnerable families, offering support systems that prevent neglect and protect both children and caregivers.

The call is urgent: let us stop turning our mothers into victims of our choices. Parenthood is a duty, not a burden to be passed on.

*By Grace Akiru, Laikipia University*

## Eradicate Sexual Violence And Protect Our Girls

Kenya is staring at a crisis that can no longer be ignored: the rising tide of sexual violence against girls and women. The brutal killing of 17 year old Phedona Auwor in Homabay County, alongside similar cases in Rusinga, has shocked the nation. Last year, a young man assaulted and murdered his own grandmother. These are not isolated tragedies—they are symptoms of a society failing to protect its most vulnerable.

Every assault shatters dreams, destroys families, and erodes trust in our collective humanity. Phedona's ambition to join senior secondary school was cut short in the most horrific way. Survivors, meanwhile, carry scars of trauma—struggling with depression, mistrust, and fractured relationships. The psychological toll is immense, leaving many unable to rebuild their lives.

We cannot normalize this violence. It is time to act differently. Beyond sex education and awareness campaigns, the focus must shift to perpetrators. Rehabilitation programs, guided by psychologists, can help uncover



root causes and prevent repeat offenses. Tackling the problem at its source is more effective than merely punishing its outcomes.

Still, accountability must be uncompromising. Sentences for rape and murder should be tougher, with life imprisonment for the worst offenders. Justice must be thorough, ensuring convictions are accurate and rights

protected, but consequences must be severe enough to deter future crimes.

This is a national emergency. Protecting our girls is not optional—it is the measure of our society's dignity. Silence is complicity; action is the only path forward.

*By Mercy Mutheu, Rongo University*

## The First Grade 10 Set To Begin Studies: A New Face For High Schools

Kenya's education system is entering uncharted territory as the first cohort of Grade 10 students prepares to begin studies in newly designated Senior Schools. The release of the 2025 KJESIA results sparked tension among parents and institutions, many unsure of what the transition meant for their children's future.

While learners performed well and eagerly awaited placement in schools of their choice, confusion lingered. What were once traditional high schools have now been rebranded as Senior Schools, a shift that has left families grappling with both excitement and uncertainty.

Some parents expressed satisfaction, praising the Ministry of Education for efficient placements. Yet challenges remain. Reports from across the country reveal cases of students stranded at home, placed in schools far from their counties, or assigned institutions outside their original preferences. For many, the prospect of attending a day school



miles away is impractical and disheartening.

Beyond placement, the success of Senior Schools hinges on resources. Adequate funding is essential to provide textbooks, laboratories, and qualified teachers trained for the new curriculum. Without these, the promise of reform risks collapsing under the weight of poor implementation.

The Ministry must act swiftly to resolve placement errors and ensure that every learner has access to quality education close

to home. Parents and students deserve confidence in a system designed to serve them, not frustrate them.

Education reform should inspire hope, not anxiety. The Grade 10 transition must be remembered not for confusion, but for laying the foundation of a stronger, fairer future.

*By Sharon Jepkosgei, Laikipia University*

## How The Government Is Supporting Students In Their Studies

Education remains the backbone of national progress, and the government's role in ensuring access to quality learning has never been more critical. In recent years, deliberate interventions have been rolled out to ease financial burdens, improve facilities, and guarantee equal opportunities for all learners.

Financial assistance stands at the forefront. Scholarships, bursaries, and grants have enabled thousands of bright but needy students to remain in school. For those in higher education, loan schemes provide lifelines—covering tuition and basic needs, with repayment scheduled after graduation. These measures ensure that poverty does not dictate a child's future.

Equally significant is the provision of free and subsidized education at primary and secondary levels. By covering teachers' salaries, supplying learning materials, and maintaining infrastructure, the government has reduced costs for parents while



boosting enrollment and literacy nationwide.

Investment in facilities has also transformed learning environments. New schools, libraries, laboratories, and digital centers are being built, while classrooms are increasingly equipped with technology. These resources foster academic excellence and prepare students for a modern economy.

Importantly, inclusivity has become a guiding principle. Special programs and targeted funding support learners with disabilities and those from marginalized regions, ensuring that

no child is left behind.

The message is clear: education is not a privilege but a right. By strengthening financial aid, infrastructure, and inclusivity, the government is laying the foundation for a generation capable of driving Kenya's development.

The true measure of progress will be when every child, regardless of background, can dream—and achieve—without barriers.

*By Alex Mutisya, Laikipia University*

# How Are Humanitarian Conditions In Gaza After The Ceasefire?

By: Xinhua News Agency  
 @themtkenyatimes

## Insufficient aid

Nearly three months after a Gaza ceasefire, humanitarian conditions in the besieged coastal enclave improved to some extent but remain dire, amid international calls for intensified efforts to deliver aid and ease suffering.

## Winter hardship

Despite the calm brought by the October ceasefire, conflict between Hamas and Israel has persisted, with one side accusing the other of violating the truce. Gaza-based health authorities have said that 424 people have been killed and 1,199 others injured in Gaza since the ceasefire. "I don't believe there is a truce. This is a false truce," Abu Mohammed al-Qeedra, the father of a killed victim, told Xinhua at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, where the bodies of the victims had been brought, and families gathered to mourn. The winter weather isn't helping. Three people have died of cold by the end of December, including a two-month-old baby, according to Gaza-based health authorities. "Since the start of winter, we have been flooded once, twice, three times. All the tarps were pulled outside. The bedding is soaked, and the clothes -- everything is flooded," Om Mohammed, a Palestinian woman in Gaza City, told Xinhua. "People gave me a coat to wear to protect me from the cold," Mohammed said. "Everything around me is submerged in water. I am exhausted."

Following the ceasefire, larger volumes of supplies reached the Gaza Strip, easing food shortages to some extent. In January, monthly food assistance has been adjusted to a ration of two food parcels and two 25-kilogram bags of flour per family, covering minimum caloric requirements, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). That was the first time since October 2023 that UN partners have sufficient stock to meet minimum standards, the OCHA said. In Gaza markets, food prices have fallen, supported by the gradual resumption of commercial imports. In the second week of December, some staple foods, such as wheat flour and sunflower oil, were even sold at below pre-war prices, according to the UN World Food Programme. No areas of the Strip are currently classified as in famine, according to one analysis from multiple organizations and institutions. But UN organizations warned that this progress "remains extremely fragile" as Gazans continue to struggle with massive infrastructure destruction and collapsed livelihoods and food production. "Gains are fragile -- perilously so," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in December. "And 1.6 million people in Gaza -- more than 75 percent of the population -- are projected to face extreme levels of acute food insecurity and critical malnutrition risks." Aid deliveries remained insufficient and subject to restrictions. Between Oct. 10 and Dec. 16, some 9,000 tons of aid supplies were rejected by Israeli authorities



War crisis in the region

for entry into Gaza, an OCHA report said. "In the new year, we hope that ... prices will go back to what they were before the war, and that people will once again be able to buy their daily needs from malls in the usual way, like the rest of the world," Amir Salah, a vendor in Gaza City, told Xinhua.

## Aftermath of war

The conflict has left the Gazans with immense challenges, including unexploded ordnance. On Dec. 18, three incidents of explosive ordnance caused casualties in the Gaza Strip, according to the OCHA. Intensive combat between Hamas fighters and

Israeli forces and explosive devices deployed by both sides had left an "absolutely immense" level of contamination, said Julius Van Der Walt, chief of the UN Mine Action Programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Mohammed al-Shafea, a Palestinian boy in Gaza City, told Xinhua that his family set up a tent in the city after being displaced to the south of the Strip. His left leg was wrapped in bandages, and his back bore scars. Pointing to an area not far from the tent, he said, "We were playing there when it suddenly exploded, and we found ourselves thrown in every direction." "We needed to cook something, so we started searching for wood and nylon to light a fire. We

lifted something, and it exploded," he added. His mother was worried about her kids because of the remnants of war. "We don't know what's beneath the rubble," she said. Another challenge is solid waste management. Since October 2023, an estimated 66 million U.S. dollars in damages have been recorded in solid and medical waste management systems, according to an OCHA report. Across the Gaza Strip, children were seen weaving through piles of garbage, with many playing atop the refuse. When it rained, sewage spilled out from the heaps. This could raise health risks and accelerate the spread of diseases, medical experts have warned.

# UN Launches KSh1B Humanitarian Response Plan For South Sudan

By: Xinhua News Agency  
 @themtkenyatimes

fects of the Sudan conflict, economic deterioration, and persistent violence. "Despite receiving only 43 percent of the requested funding last year, humanitarian partners managed to reach about four million people with lifesaving assistance, including food, health, water, sanitation, education, and protection support," Gbeho said in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, at the launch of the HNRP. Gbeho said South Sudan faced one of its most challenging years in 2025 as political tensions escalated into conflict, limiting humanitarian access and compounding an already dire situation.

The HNRP projects that 7.5 million people could face acute food insecurity in 2026, including 28,000 people already in catastrophic condi-

tions, said Gbeho. Albino Akol Atak, South Sudan's minister of humanitarian affairs and disaster management, said the government is committed to protecting vulnerable populations as the country confronts conflict, climate shocks, and the spillover of the Sudan crisis, which has driven more than 1.3 million people into South Sudan. Akol said the 2026 HNRP reflects a "humanitarian reset," targeting 4.3 million people most in need, down from 5.4 million in 2025, as part of a more focused and accountable approach. "This is not a withdrawal from responsibility, but a commitment to reach those in the most acute need with greater impact," Akol added.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on Tuesday launched the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) for South Sudan, noting that more than 10 million people may require humanitarian assistance this year.

Anita Kiki Gbeho, UN humanitarian coordinator for South Sudan, said the plan, with a budget of 1 billion US dollars, aims to prioritize four million people facing the most acute humanitarian risks across the country, as partners brace for the spillover ef-



# Cheque Trails And Broken Dreams: The Finland Scholarship Scandal That Shook Kenya

By: Grace Chebet  
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Kenya's corridors of justice are once again echoing with the sound of betrayal, as the Finland scholarship scandal unfolds in the Nakuru Law Courts. What was meant to be a beacon of hope for hundreds of young students aspiring to study abroad has instead become a grim tale of broken promises, vanished billions, and the painful reminder of how corruption continues to rob the nation of its future.

On Wednesday, the 137th witness—a bank official—took the stand, meticulously detailing the cheque trail that prosecutors argue forms the backbone of the Ksh1.1 billion graft case. The accused, Uasin Gishu Senator Jackson Mandago, alongside Joshua Lelei and Meshack Rono, face charges of embezzlement and abuse of office. According to testimony, cheques allegedly signed by the trio were traced through accounts linked to the Uasin Gishu Overseas Education Trust Fund, a scheme originally designed to support students pursuing higher education in Finland. Instead of fulfilling its noble mission, the fund has become synonymous with betrayal, leaving families devastated and students stranded.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) has been clear: this is not just a case of financial mismanagement, but a deliberate diversion of public money. Documentary exhibits presented in court show how funds were channelled away from their intended purpose, exposing the fragility of Kenya's oversight mechanisms. For the students who had pinned their hopes on scholarships, the scandal is more than numbers—it is the collapse of dreams nurtured by parents who sold land, took loans, and sacrificed livelihoods to secure a better future for their children.

Reports from local dailies and investigative platforms have highlighted the human cost of the scandal. Families in Uasin Gishu recount how they were persuaded to contribute to the trust fund, believing it was a legitimate pathway to international education. Instead, many of their children remain at home, unable to pursue studies, while debts mount and trust in public institutions erodes. The scandal has become a national conversation, sparking outrage across social me-



Uasin Gishu Senator Jackson Mandago and his co-accused, Joshua Lelei and Meshack Rono in court

dia and drawing condemnation from civil society groups who argue that Kenya's youth are being systematically betrayed by leaders entrusted with their welfare.

The testimony of the bank official adds weight to the prosecution's narrative. By explaining standard banking procedures and tracing the movement of funds, the witness provided a forensic map of how money flowed from the trust fund into accounts under scrutiny. This evidence, prosecutors argue, demonstrates intent and coordination among the accused. It is a damning picture of how public resources can be siphoned off with precision, leaving behind a trail of paperwork that now forms the basis of criminal proceedings.

Legal analysts have noted that the case is emblematic of Kenya's broader struggle against corruption. According to Transparency International's 2025 report, Kenya continues to rank poorly on the global corruption index, with education and healthcare sectors among the most vulnerable. The Finland scholarship scandal, therefore, is not an isolated incident but part of a systemic problem where public trust funds are routinely exposed to abuse. The involvement of high-ranking officials only deepens the crisis, raising questions about accountability and the

political will to confront graft.

The scandal has also reignited debate about the role of oversight institutions. The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) has been criticized for slow investigations, while Parliament faces scrutiny for failing to provide adequate checks on county-level initiatives. As the hearings continue, many Kenyans are asking whether justice will truly be served or whether this case will join the long list of unresolved corruption scandals that fade into obscurity once public outrage subsides.

Beyond the courtroom, the scandal has left scars in Uasin Gishu County. Interviews conducted by media reveal the anguish of parents who feel deceived by leaders they trusted. Some sold ancestral land to raise funds, others borrowed heavily, only to watch their children's futures collapse. The psychological toll is immense, with students reporting feelings of hopelessness and betrayal. For a generation that believed education was the surest path to opportunity, the scandal has become a cruel reminder that corruption can snatch away even the most carefully nurtured dreams.

International observers have also weighed in. The Finnish Embassy in Nairobi, while distancing itself from the scandal, expressed concern

over the misuse of education funds and emphasized the importance of transparency in scholarship programs. Education experts argue that the scandal risks damaging Kenya's reputation abroad, potentially undermining future partnerships and opportunities for students seeking international education.

As the trial progresses, the stakes are high. If the prosecution succeeds in proving its case, it will mark a significant step in holding powerful figures accountable. Yet the broader question remains: will justice for the victims translate into systemic reforms that prevent similar abuses in the future? Civil society organizations, including the Kenya Human Rights Commission, have called for stronger safeguards in scholarship programs, including independent audits and direct oversight by education ministries.

The scandal also underscores the need for cultural change. For too long, corruption has been normalized in Kenya, with perpetrators often escaping accountability. The Finland scholarship case is a stark reminder that corruption is not victimless—it destroys lives, erodes trust, and undermines national development. If Kenya is to move forward, it must confront this reality with urgency and resolve.

The courtroom drama in Nakuru is more than a legal battle; it is a test of Kenya's commitment to justice. Each cheque traced, each document produced, is a piece of evidence not just against the accused but against a system that allowed such abuse to occur. For the students whose futures were stolen, justice must mean more than convictions—it must mean restitution, reform, and a renewed commitment to protecting the dreams of the next generation.

As the gavel falls and hearings continue, one truth remains undeniable: the Finland scholarship scandal is not just about billions lost, but about futures destroyed. Kenya cannot afford to let this case fade into silence. The nation must demand accountability, not as a matter of law alone, but as a moral imperative to protect its children from the corrosive grip of corruption.

In the end, the cheque trails tell a story of betrayal, but the voices of parents and students tell a story of resilience. Justice must bridge the two, ensuring that never again will the promise of education be turned into a scam that robs the nation of its brightest hopes.

# SPORTS NEWS

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**Sports >>** \*Sadio Mane struck a sizzling shot as Senegal beat Egypt by a solitary goal to qualify for the finals of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon).

## Mane's Rocket Spurs Teranga Lions To 2025 Afcon Finals With Win Over Egypt



*Sadio Mane celebrates his goal against Egypt. PHOTO/TOTALENERGIES AFCON 2025*

Sadio Mane struck a sizzling shot as Senegal beat Egypt by a solitary goal to qualify for the finals of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon).

The former Liverpool striker fired a low, raspy shot from outside the box, past a stranded Mohammed El Shenawy in the Egyptians' goal.

The goal came after a dominant

period by the Teranga Lions who had the 'lion's share' of possession in the second half.

Having struggled to penetrate the Pharaohs' fortress, it took a stroke of fortune for Senegal to receive their reward.

A deflected long range shot landed fortuitously at Mane's feet, the winger firing through the legs of the defenders to rattle

the back of the net.

The Egyptians, stung by the goal, finally woke up from their slumber and started to mount wave of attacks in the Senegalese territory.

Omar Marmoush drilled a low shot from the edge of the box but Senegal keeper Edouard Mendy was upto the task, the ex-Chelsea custodian gathering the ball

comfortably in his arms.

Senegal will now await the winner of the other semi-final between Morocco and Nigeria ahead of Sunday's final in Rabat.

*Agencies*

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

**Sports >>** \*Kenya's tennis superstar Angella Okutoyi has risen to position 476 on the International Tennis Federation (ITF) ranking after a successful outing at the W35 Women's World Tour.

# Tennis Star Okutoyi Receives Huge Boost In Quest To Qualify For 2028 Olympics



*Angella Okutoyi celebrates during a past tournament*

Kenya's tennis superstar Angella Okutoyi has risen to position 476 on the International Tennis Federation (ITF) ranking after a successful outing at the W35 Women's World Tour.

The African Games champion is the biggest mover of the week on the rankings, having jumped 82 places during a period when other

ITF competitions were held across the world.

Okutoyi won the singles and doubles titles on Week 1 of the World Tour, held at the Parklands Sports Club before repeating the trick in the subsequent week — at the same venue.

Her excellent start to the year bodes well for her ultimate target,

which is to qualify for the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.

Should she make it to the top 400, the 2022 Wimbledon Open doubles junior champion will be in prime position for a maiden appearance at the quadrennial competition.

*Capital sport*

**SPORTS NEWS**

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# From Market Stalls To Global Impact: The Rise Of Chanazi Washaya, Champion Of Women's Economic Empowerment



By: Anila Bukhari  
@themtkenyetimes

## Worth Noting:

- Those early lessons laid the foundation for what would become Sweet Quip Food Equipment, a leading Zimbabwean enterprise founded and led by Chanazi as Founder and Chief Executive Officer. Sweet Quip has grown into a trusted supplier of efficient, affordable, and durable food equipment, serving a diverse range of clients including bakeries, butcheries, restaurants, supermarkets, hotels, schools, and large institutions across Zimbabwe and the wider African region.

- Yet Sweet Quip is more than a supplier of machinery. Under Chanazi's leadership, the company has become a partner in business sustainability, helping food enterprises strengthen their operations, improve efficiency, and achieve long-term growth. Her approach is practical and impact-driven — focusing not only on sales, but on empowering businesses with systems that allow them to scale responsibly and competitively.

Born and raised in the high-density suburbs of Mabvuku and Sunningdale in Harare, Zimbabwe, Chanazi Drums Washaya is a living testament to the power of resilience, vision, and purposeful leadership. Her story is not one of overnight success, but of steady determination shaped by hardship, faith, and an unyielding belief that circumstances do not define destiny.

Raised by a widowed mother, Chanazi learned the meaning of responsibility at an early age. Life demanded maturity far beyond her years, and survival required more than hope alone — it required discipline, strategy, and prayer. By the age of eight, she was already trading at local markets, learning to negotiate with customers, manage money, and understand value. What seemed like a childhood burden became her first classroom in entrepreneurship, quietly shaping instincts that would later define her career.

Those early lessons laid the foundation for what would become Sweet Quip Food Equipment, a leading Zimbabwean enterprise founded and led by Chanazi as Founder and Chief Executive Officer. Sweet Quip has grown into a trusted supplier of efficient, affordable, and durable food equipment, serving a diverse range of clients including bakeries, butcheries, restaurants, supermarkets, hotels, schools, and large institutions across Zimbabwe and the wider African region.

Yet Sweet Quip is more than a supplier of machinery. Under Chanazi's leadership, the company has become a partner in business sustainability, helping food enterprises strengthen their operations, improve efficiency, and achieve long-term growth. Her approach is practical and impact-driven — focusing not only on sales, but on empowering businesses with systems that allow them to scale responsibly and competitively.

Chanazi's contribution to the food and entrepreneurship ecosystem has earned her widespread recognition. She is a multi-award-winning business leader, celebrated both nationally and internationally for her impact and innovation. Among her notable honours are the Outstanding Businesswoman in Food Equipment

Supply Award from the Zimbabwe Women in Business Forum Awards and the Women in Business Excellency Award presented by the Comessa Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB). These accolades, among many others, acknowledge her pioneering role in transforming access to food equipment and strengthening the food industry.

Her influence, however, extends far beyond awards. Chanazi has been recognised on global platforms across Africa, Europe, and the United States, where she is respected as a voice of excellence in food entrepreneurship, innovation, and women-led business leadership. Her work reflects a rare balance of commercial success and social impact — a combination that has positioned her as a role model for aspiring entrepreneurs across the continent.

Deeply committed to women's economic empowerment, Chanazi has dedicated a significant part of her journey to uplifting other women. She is the founder of the Women Entrepreneurs Lounge (WEL), a pan-African platform designed to provide mentorship, training, and safe growth spaces for women entrepreneurs. Through WEL, women gain access to guidance, peer support, and practical knowledge that enables them to build sustainable businesses in often challenging environments.

In addition, she established the Foodpreneur Network, powered by Sweet Quip — a hands-on support hub for food entrepreneurs. The network equips business owners with essential tools such as financial management systems, scaling strategies, operational efficiency frameworks, and access to finance. Through this initiative, Chanazi bridges the gap between ambition and execution, ensuring that food entrepreneurs are not only inspired but also practically equipped to succeed.

Her vision is bold and forward-looking: to empower 10,000 women entrepreneurs across Africa by the year 2030. This mission reflects her belief that when women are economically empowered, families, communities, and entire economies are transformed.

Based in Harare, Zimbabwe,



Chanazi Drums Washaya

Chanazi is also a respected business coach and certified trainer, having received professional certification from globally recognised institutions including the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Microsoft, and ITCILO (WIDB). She is a proud mentee of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women Entrepreneurs, further strengthening her global exposure and leadership capacity.

Her professional development includes participation in prestigious international programmes such as NAWBO (USA), the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE – USA), Incubator Con Valores (Spain), Stanbic Level Up Incubation, and Women Ascension, among many others. These experiences have refined her strategic thinking and expanded her ability to support

entrepreneurs across borders.

From humble beginnings in Zimbabwe's high-density suburbs to influential global platforms, Chanazi Drums Washaya stands as a powerful African voice of possibility. Her journey proves that with vision, resilience, and purpose, limitations can be transformed into leadership — and adversity into impact. She is not only building businesses, but shaping futures, one empowered woman at a time.