Kenya's Flickering Lights: How Load Shedding Entrenches Energy Poverty

In October 2025, Kenya's peak electricity demand reached an unprecedented 2,412 megawatts, a threshold that pushed the national grid to its absolute limit and necessitated the immediate implementation of load shedding to prevent a catastrophic nationwide collapse.

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Mbeere North Petition Tests Kenya's Democracy

News>>DCP Denies Koimburi Membership, Pledges Transparent Nominations Ahead of 2027 Polls

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News>>From Nyeri To The Senate: Nick Mararo Seeks To Carry A Family Legacy Into Nyeri's Future

P. 12. Across history and across cultures, leadership has often followed family lines. From biblical times to modern democracies, sons and daughters have frequently stepped into public life inspired by the paths laid by their parents.

Kenya's democracy is once again under the microscope, and this time the lens is firmly focused on Mbeere North. What began as a routine parliamentary election has now spiraled into a high stakes legal battle that could reshape not only the constituency's political future but also the credibility of the country's electoral system. The petition challenging the election of Leo Wa Muthende, declared winner of the November 27 parliamentary race under the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) banner, is set to become one of the most closely watched cases in recent memory.

Justice Richard Mwongo

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Ruto: Digital Platforms End Corruption In Youth Empowerment Programmes

By: MKT Reporter
@themtkenyatimes

The Government is using technology to deliver public programmes more efficiently, transparently and free from corruption, President William Ruto has said.

He noted that the full digitalisation of key initiatives, including the National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement (NYOTA) programme, has ensured that every young person now has an equal and fair chance to access business capital, on-the-job training and recognition of prior learning.

"The new system removes human interference and puts an end to favouritism and bribery. Opportunity is now determined by merit, not by who you know," the President said.

Speaking at Kenyatta Stadium in Machakos Town, President Ruto launched the disbursement of KSh147.5 million in Nyota Start-Up Capital to 5,901 beneficiaries drawn from Machakos, Kitui and Makueni counties.

He said the funds will enable young entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses, create jobs and take charge of their economic future, adding that youth empowerment remains a central pillar of the government's development agenda.

Some Of The Moments As Captured In Pictures

Editor's Desk

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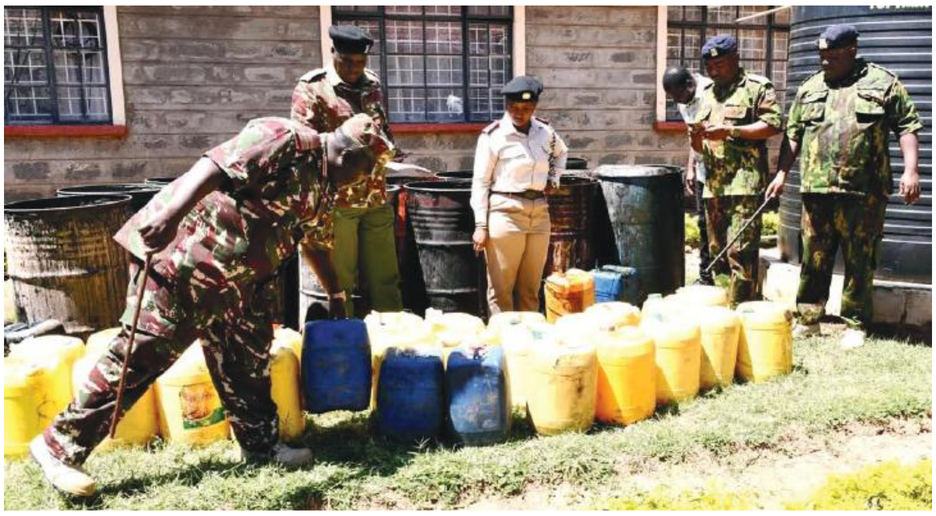
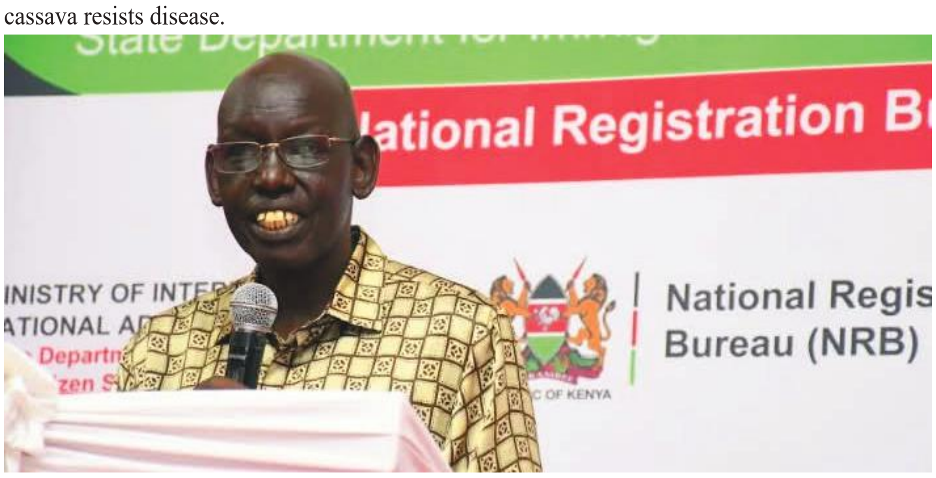
NEWS IN BRIEF



Police in Lugari, Kakamega County, destroyed over 2,700 litres of kangara and seized 550 litres of chang'aa in Marakusi location during a crackdown on illicit brews. The operation, led by Lumakanda OCS Wycliffe Kwendo, has resulted in one person arrest and the impounding of several motorcycles used to transport the liquor. Lugari Deputy County Commissioner Jeremiah Tumo vowed that law enforcement will not relent.

The genetically modified cassava is being displayed by official from Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KALRO) after completing National Performance Trials (NPTs). The cassava is now awaiting commercialization. Kenya has successfully completed NPTs for genetically modified (GM) cassava, the National Biosafety Authority (NBA) has announced. The new varieties are resistant to Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD), which damages edible roots, and some are drought-tolerant, boosting yields and strengthening food security. Trials were conducted in Mtwapa, Kandara, and Alupe ahead of full commercial release in Kenya and Uganda. NBA Acting Director of Technical Services Josphat Muchuri compared the rollout to Bt cotton, commercialized in 2020, and Bt maize, approved in 2025. He explained that, like these crops, GM cassava resists disease.



The government has empowered chiefs and assistant chiefs to serve as primary identifiers in a nationwide identity registration drive aimed at eliminating delays and bureaucratic barriers. Immigration and Citizen Services Principal Secretary Belio Kipsang said the initiative targets long-standing challenges in border and marginalised areas where strict vetting excluded many eligible Kenyans from obtaining IDs. Sensitisation forums have been conducted in six counties, with the Coast nearly completed and the exercise moving to Tana River and Lamu. Under the new system, each chief must verify applicants using a biometric signature, ensuring accountability and ending collective decision-making. The PS warned against frustrating applicants or verifying non-citizens. To improve efficiency, the department has deployed 300 live capture machines and 55 vehicles, enabling ID and passport issuance within seven days or even same day in major towns.

Nyeri County Commissioner Josephat Biwott has attributed the county's rising suicide cases and breakdown of family units to widespread alcohol and drug abuse. Nyeri records an average of 10 suicides every month, ranking among the worst affected counties nationally. In response, a multi-agency committee has been formed to combat illicit alcohol, drugs, substance abuse and criminal gangs, following a presidential directive declaring the issue a national emergency. Biwott said traffickers are targeting 25 learning institutions with counterfeit alcohol, heroin and bhang. He blamed weak licensing, corruption and lax enforcement, warning civil servants involved will face disciplinary action.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Eliud Lagat inspected firearms surrendered by residents during the ongoing 60-day amnesty for communities in Tana River County to hand over illegal weapons. He cautioned that a forceful disarmament exercise would be undertaken if the illegal firearms are not surrendered within the amnesty period. The DIG was accompanied by regional police commanders Papita Ranka (North Eastern), Ali Nuno (Coast), National Police Reservists (NPR) Director Kenneth Kimani, and other senior police officers. National Police Service Ministry of Interior and National Administration.

Residents of Kocholia in Teso North Sub-County are raising alarm over increasing wildlife invasions, with animals destroying crops and killing livestock. Last week, a wild animal, suspected to be a hyena, killed four sheep on Sikosoa Kotere's farm around 2 a.m. "Had we not checked the disturbance, all six sheep could have been killed," Kotere said. Area Chief Eliud Munyala Itubo confirmed the incident and noted that it had been reported to the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). He urged residents to stay vigilant, escort children to school, move in groups, and report sightings immediately.

Kenya Secures 98.2 Per Cent Zero-Duty Access To China In Major Trade Breakthrough

By: William Muchiri
@themtkenyatimes

Worth Noting:

- The deal comes at a critical moment for Kenya, which has been seeking to expand and diversify its export basket while reducing persistent trade imbalances with major global partners.
- China recently introduced a duty-free and quota-free scheme for African exports, but the initiative was designed primarily for Least Developed Countries, effectively excluding Kenya and several other developing economies. This placed Kenyan exporters at a disadvantage compared to some of their regional and continental competitors, prompting Nairobi to move quickly and engage Beijing in negotiations for a tailored arrangement.

Kenya has recorded a major diplomatic and economic victory after securing near-total duty-free access for its goods into the vast Chinese market, a move that is expected to dramatically reshape the country's export landscape and strengthen its global trade position.

In a statement released yesterday, Cabinet Secretary for Investments, Trade and Industry Lee Kinyanjui disclosed that Kenya and China have reached a preliminary bilateral agreement granting Kenyan products 98.2 per cent zero-duty market access under an early harvest trade framework.

The deal comes at a critical moment for Kenya, which has been seeking to expand and diversify its export basket while reducing persistent trade imbalances with major global partners.

China recently introduced a duty-free and quota-free scheme for African exports, but the initiative was designed primarily for Least Developed Countries, effectively excluding Kenya and several other developing economies. This placed Kenyan exporters at a disadvantage compared to some of their regional and continental competitors, prompting Nairobi to move quickly and engage Beijing in negotiations for a tailored arrangement.

Those talks have now yielded a breakthrough that gives Kenyan goods almost unrestricted entry into one of the world's largest and most lucrative markets. With tariffs removed on the vast majority of exports, Kenyan products will be able to compete more favourably on price and volume, opening up fresh opportunities for farmers, manufacturers and exporters across the country.

Lee Kinyanjui.

Agriculture, which remains the backbone of Kenya's economy, is expected to be one of the biggest winners as products such as tea, coffee, avocados, macadamia nuts, flowers and processed foods gain easier access to Chinese consumers.

The government says the zero-duty regime will not only stimulate exports but also drive job creation, increase foreign exchange earnings and encourage investment in value addition and manufacturing. By making Kenyan goods more competitive abroad, the agreement is expected to support rural livelihoods, boost industrial output and contribute to overall economic growth at a time when the country is under pressure to strengthen its balance of payments and stabilise its currency.

Although the arrangement is being implemented as an early harvest framework, it is seen as a foundation for a more comprehensive bilateral trade agreement between Kenya and China. Officials on both sides have indicated that further engagements will follow to expand coverage, address non-tariff barriers and streamline trade procedures in order to fully unlock the potential of the partnership.

For Kenya, the deal represents a strategic shift from being largely an importer of Chinese goods to becoming a more active exporter into that market, helping to rebalance a relationship that has long favoured Beijing. For China, it signals a deepening of economic ties with one of East Africa's key economies and a commitment to supporting African trade beyond the continent's poorest nations.

As Kenyan exporters prepare to take advantage of the new access, the agreement is widely being hailed as one of the most significant trade milestones in recent years, with the potential to reshape the country's engagement with the global economy and deliver tangible benefits to businesses and households alike.

Last evening, Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development Mutahi Kagwe welcomed the move it marked a major boost for exports.

"The agreement is expected to expand agricultural exports, create jobs and help correct trade imbalances, strengthening Kenya," Kagwe noted in a brief statement.


The Mt Kenya Times
10th
Anniversary
Celebration

DCP Denies Koimburi Membership, Pledges Transparent Nominations Ahead of 2027 Polls

By: William Muchiri
@themtkenyatimes

George Koimburi

Rigathi Gachagua

Hezron Obaga.

Aloise Kinyanjui.

The Democracy For the Citizens Party (DCP) has dismissed claims by Juja MP George Koimburi that he defected from the party, saying he has never been a formal member.

The party also reaffirmed its commitment to free and fair nominations for all aspirants ahead of the 2027 General Elections.

The controversy has its roots in 2024 impeachment saga, where Koimburi stood firmly with the DCP party leader, voting against the motion sponsored by Kenya Kwanza administration.

His loyalty earned him praise, but tensions reportedly arose early this week after he discovered that his electoral competitor, Aloise Kinyanjui, had joined DCP and participated in public engagements in Juja, including greeting constituents at Kimbo Junction on Sunday.

Sources said that on Monday, Koimburi requested a private meeting with the party leader, citing stress and seeking clarification over his standing in the party. Accompanied by DCP Deputy National Chairperson Peter Mwathi, Koimburi met the party leader in his private office.

Sources say he expressed frustration that despite his loyalty, Kinyanjui was being welcomed into the party, and he demanded a written guarantee of a direct nomination for the 2027 polls.

Koimburi reportedly also sought exemption from attending public party functions until February, citing 15 pending criminal cases, including land fraud, forgery of academic certificates, and a self-abduction incident he orchestrated to evade arrest.

He allegedly threatened to rejoin President Ruto's camp if his requests were not met.

In response, DCP Secretary General Hezron Obaga said the party appreciated Koimburi's support during the impeachment process but could not grant his demands.

"All aspirants intending to fly the DCP flag must go through a free and fair nomination process supervised by the National Elections Board," Obaga said.

He stressed that exempting anyone from nominations would undermine the party's democratic principles.

The party leader, according to Obaga, accepted Koimburi's request to step back from public functions temporarily while deciding on his next steps.

Koimburi is still expected to attend a DCP retreat for allied MPs this weekend at the coast, where he requested and was granted a photo opportunity with the party leader, which was later circulated by his supporters.

Obaga expressed gratitude to Koimburi for standing by the party leader during the impeachment proceedings and wished him success in whichever political path he chooses.

"While we acknowledge his past loyalty, DCP remains focused on preparing all candidates for the 2027 elections through a transparent and democratic process," he said.

Political analysts say the Koimburi episode underscores DCP's internal tensions as the party positions itself for next year's elections.

Koimburi's grievances stemmed from perceived favoritism toward his competitor and concerns over ongoing legal challenges.

However, the party's clarification appears aimed at reinforcing discipline, preventing misrepresentation, and upholding democratic procedures.

"The episode is a reminder that loyalty alone does not guarantee political rewards," said a Nairobi-based political observer.

"DCP is sending a clear message that all aspirants must earn their place through proper party processes."

Observers note that DCP's insistence on impartial nominations could strengthen its credibility among supporters and aspiring candidates.

By publicly clarifying Koimburi's membership status and the rules for nominations, the party hopes to avoid speculation about defections, favoritism, or internal divisions ahead of the 2027 polls.

As the political landscape heats up, DCP is determined to maintain internal cohesion, uphold democratic principles, and provide a level playing field for all who wish to represent the party. The coming months, analysts say, will test how well the party balances loyalty, ambition, and transparency as it gears up for a high-stakes election.

Ballot Truth On Trial: Mbeere North Petition Tests Kenya's Democracy

By: Grace Wanja
@themtkenyatimes

Kenya's democracy is once again under the microscope, and this time the lens is firmly focused on Mbeere North. What began as a routine parliamentary election has now spiraled into a high stakes legal battle that could reshape not only the constituency's political future but also the credibility of the country's electoral system. The petition challenging the election of Leo Wa Muthende, declared winner of the November 27 parliamentary race under the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) banner, is set to become one of the most closely watched cases in recent memory.

> **Worth Noting:**
>
> - **The formal hearing of a petition challenging the election of Leo Wa Muthende as the Mbeere North Member of Parliament is set to begin on March 9 and run until March 19, 2026. Justice Richard Mwongo, who is presiding over the case, said the hearings will be conducted in two sessions, with the first running from March 9 to March 12, 2026, and the second from March 16 to March 19, 2026. "Hearings will proceed as follows: 9:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.; health break from 10:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; lunch break from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.; and 2:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. The matter will be heard day to day until concluded. If necessary, the court may adjourn the proceedings for not more than five continuous days mid-hearing," Justice Mwongo said.**

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That schedule, precise and uncompromising, reflects the judiciary's determination to handle the matter with urgency and transparency. It is a reminder that electoral justice must not be delayed, for every day of uncertainty erodes public trust.

At the heart of the petition are allegations that cut deep into the foundations of electoral integrity. Petitioners, including Democratic Party candidate and runner up Newton Kariuki, argue that Wa Muthende is not a registered voter and that inconsistencies in his identity cast doubt on the legitimacy of his election. If proven, these claims would not only nullify his victory but also expose glaring weaknesses in the vetting mechanisms of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC).

The courtroom has already become a stage for heavyweight legal battles. Petitioners are represented by a formidable team of advocates—Kariuki Njiru, Kibe Mungai, Ndegwa Njiru, Kiragu Wathuta, and Angela Maina—while Wa Muthende has enlisted Mwaniki Gachuba and

Leo Wa Muthende

Adrian Kamotho. The IEBC and its returning officers are defended by Charles Mwongela and Laureen Omondi. The sheer breadth of representation underscores the stakes: this is not just about one constituency, but about the credibility of Kenya's democratic machinery.

Justice Mwongo has also directed that all three applications filed in the matter will be heard simultaneously on February 12, 2026, streamlining the process and avoiding the procedural delays that have often plagued election petitions. In another significant move, earlier orders on the storage and preservation of election materials have been varied, with IEBC now required to keep the contested materials in safe custody within court precincts. This decision, seemingly technical, is in fact a safeguard against tampering and a reassurance to the public that evidence will remain intact.

For the people of Mbeere North, the petition is not an abstract legal exercise but a matter of representation, resources, and dignity. Constituency development projects, public services, and local leadership hinge on the legitimacy of their MP. If the election was flawed, then their voices were silenced. If it was fair, then their choice must be respected. Either way, the outcome will shape not only their immediate future but also their faith in the democratic process.

Analysts note that the case could set precedent in how courts handle allegations of candidate eligibility. If Wa Muthende is found ineligible, it would raise uncomfortable questions about IEBC's oversight, the role of political parties in nominations, and the loopholes that allow disputes of identity to reach the ballot unchecked. For voters across Kenya, it would be a reminder that democracy is fragile and requires vigilance at every stage—from registration to tallying to adjudication.

The political undercurrents are equally significant. UDA, the ruling party, has invested heavily in consolidating its parliamentary majority, and losing Mbeere North would be more than a symbolic setback. For the Democratic Party and its allies, the petition is an opportunity to challenge what they see as a culture of impunity in electoral politics. Civil society groups have also weighed in, arguing that the case highlights the urgent need for reforms in voter registration and candidate verification.

Kenya's judiciary has faced criticism in the past for wavering under political pressure, but it has also earned praise for landmark rulings that strengthened democracy. The Mbeere North petition will test which side of history it chooses this time. Transparency, speed, and fairness will be the benchmarks by which the public judges the court. Already, the detailed schedule and custody orders suggest a determination to avoid the pitfalls of delay and opacity. Whether that determination holds through the heated arguments and political maneuvering ahead remains to be seen.

As the March hearings approach, one thing is clear: this is more than a contest between Wa Muthende and Kariuki. It is a contest between accountability and impunity, between the promise of democracy and the temptation of shortcuts. The courtroom will decide the fate of one constituency, but the ripple effects will touch the entire nation.

The ballot is sacred, but only if the truth behind it is protected. If Kenya fails to uphold that truth in Mbeere North, then every vote across the country is at risk. If it succeeds, then democracy will stand taller, proving that even in the smallest constituencies, justice matters. The nation waits, the gavel poised, the stakes immense.

Why Stillbirths Form Majority Of Unclaimed Bodies At Kwa Jack Mortuary

By: Suleiman Mbatiah
@themtkenyatimes

Stillbirths account for the largest number of unclaimed bodies at the Nakuru County Public Mortuary – Annex (Kwa Jack) and risk disposal in mass graves if they remain unclaimed in the coming days, official records show.

Out of 38 unclaimed bodies listed by the mortuary, 21 are infants recorded as stillbirths that were collected from different parts of the County and brought in by police officers.

A source at the facility said most of the bodies are linked to abortions or infants abandoned and dumped shortly after birth, underscoring an ugly pattern and reality behind the unclaimed remains.

The remaining 17 are adults whose deaths were attributed to a range of causes including sudden death, drowning, road accidents, suicide, murder, natural causes and mob injustice.

A notice issued by the facility indicates the bodies have remained unclaimed for more than three months, leading to congestion and decomposition.

"The office has exhausted all the available mechanism to trace their next of kin without trace," said Rachel Waithera Mwangi, the Public Health Officer at Annex Hospital – Nakuru in a notice seen by this writer.

The hospital has sought assistance from the County Commissioner to help trace relatives. If no claimant comes forward within 21 days from the date of the notice, the hospital says the bodies will be disposed of at the Nakuru South Cemetery, in line with procedure.

The hospital attached detailed lists of the unclaimed adults and infants, including dates, locations and police escorts involved in bringing the bodies to the mortuary. Officials say the disposal is necessary to decongest the facility.

Ruto Touts Digital Governance And NYOTA Grants As Key To Fighting Corruption And Empowering Youth

By: MKT Correspondent
@themtkenyatimes

Worth Noting:

- **Speaking in Machakos yesterday during the launch of the National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement (NYOTA) business start-up capital programme, the President said the government has digitised more than 23,000 services, a dramatic rise from just 320 in 2023.**
- **He noted that the move has significantly reduced direct contact between citizens and public officials, cutting out middlemen and greatly lowering opportunities for bribery, favouritism and other corrupt practices.**
- **"For far too long, many Kenyans have been denied the benefits of government programmes because of corruption and the use of connections. Digital systems are helping us end that era," President Ruto said.**

President William Ruto has reaffirmed the government's commitment to fighting corruption and delivering public services more efficiently through the use of digital technology, saying the shift to e-government is already transforming how Kenyans access opportunities.

Speaking in Machakos yesterday during the launch of the National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement (NYOTA) business start-up capital programme, the President said the government has digitised more than 23,000 services, a dramatic rise from just 320 in 2023.

He noted that the move has significantly reduced direct contact between citizens and public officials, cutting out middlemen and greatly lowering opportunities for bribery, favouritism and other corrupt practices.

"For far too long, many Kenyans have been denied the benefits of government programmes because of corruption and the use of connections. Digital systems are helping us end that era," President Ruto said.

He cited the NYOTA programme as a clear example of how technology is being used to ensure fairness and transparency. Under the new system, all applicants must apply online, and no one can be recommended by politicians, officials or brokers. From the point of application to the final selection of beneficiaries, the entire process is automated, ensuring that opportunities are awarded strictly on merit.

"To eliminate brokers, middlemen and the use of connections, we made a decision that no one would be recommended by anyone. Everyone had to apply online so that every young Kenyan has an equal chance," the President said.

At the Machakos event held at Kenyatta Stadium, the government disbursed KSh147.5 million in start-up capital to young people from Machakos, Kitui and Makueni counties. A total of 5,901 youth from the three counties are set to benefit, enabling them to start businesses, create jobs and take charge of their economic future.

President Ruto said the NYOTA programme is being implemented in line with the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, which focuses on empowering people at the lowest levels of the economy. He noted that the programme is rolled out at the ward level, the lowest unit of devolution, to ensure broad and equitable access.

"Today, this programme benefits between 70 and 80 young people in each of the country's 1,450 wards," he said.

President William Ruto and his deputy Kithure Kindiki in Machakos yesterday. Photos/Courtesy..

He further emphasised that the programme does not require academic qualifications, pointing out that many Kenyans have missed out on formal education through no fault of their own.

"There are people who have not had the opportunity to go to secondary school or college. They are still Kenyans and they deserve support," he said.

The President warned politicians who are critical of the NYOTA programme to keep away, saying the initiative is a major boost for young entrepreneurs. He also urged young people not to allow themselves to be used for political violence, stressing that Kenya's future depends on their participation in education, business and productive economic activities.

He dismissed claims that Kenya is a failed state, saying the country is moving forward under strong and transformative leadership. According to the President, key economic indicators show clear progress since his administration took office in 2022. Inflation has fallen from 9.6 per cent in 2022 to 4.5 per cent, while the Central Bank's dollar reserves have grown from $5.7 billion to $12.3 billion, the highest level in Kenya's history. The exchange rate, which had weakened to KSh165 to the dollar three years ago, has strengthened to about KSh129.

President Ruto also said Kenya is now the sixth largest economy in Africa, up from eighth place, attributing the improvement to better leadership and sound economic management.

Deputy President Kithure Kindiki said the NYOTA grants will significantly boost young entrepreneurs at the bottom of the economic pyramid, describing the programme as a practical demonstration of the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda.

"Any person opposing the empowerment of young people of Kenya is an enemy of our country," he said.

Labour Cabinet Secretary Alfred Mutua praised the programme for promoting entrepreneurship rather than a handout culture, while Sports Cabinet Secretary Salim Mvurya said the government remains inclusive and equitable in serving all parts of the country. Cooperatives and MSMEs Cabinet Secretary Wycliffe Oparanya added that the NYOTA programme has been implemented transparently and offers every Kenyan an equal opportunity to benefit.

Principal Secretary, State Department for MSMEs Development, Susan Mang'eni going through a message confirming receipt of NYOTA funds to one of the beneficiaries.

From Nyeri To The Senate: Nick Mararo Seeks To Carry A Family Legacy Into Nyeri's Future

By: Charles Kinyua and Wilfred Muchire
@themtkenyatimes

Worth Noting:

- **A successful city-based entrepreneur, philanthropist and passionate sports supporter, Mararo has declared his intention to run for the Nyeri Senate seat in the 2027 General Elections.**
- **The seat is currently held by Wahome Wamatinga and is already drawing interests among local aspiring leaders.**
- **These include another businessman King'ori Wanjohi, farmer and former MCA Duncan Gituanja and former international athlete Phillip Mugweru Nguyo with former Mukurweini MP Kabando wa Kabando also expected to join the race.**
- **Mararo says his entry into the race is driven by a deep concern for Nyeri's young people.**

Across history and across cultures, leadership has often followed family lines. From biblical times to modern democracies, sons and daughters have frequently stepped into public life inspired by the paths laid by their parents. Kenya itself offers many such examples, including the country's first and fourth presidents, who were father and son, much like the Bush family in the United States.

In Nyeri, the Gachagua brothers left their own mark, one serving as Member of Parliament before becoming the county's first governor, while the other rose from MP to become Kenya's second Deputy President.

There are so many classic examples of fathers, mothers or brothers, sisters leaving political seats to their kin and kith.

It is within this tradition of unique public service that Nick Mararo is now stepping forward. He is the son of the late David Mararo Waigi, a respected Karatina and Nyeri towns businessman and politician. He was first elected councillor for Hospital Ward in Karatina Urban Council before expanding his business interests to Nyeri town, then Central province headquarters. There, Waigi again won elective office for Gamerock ward and eventually rose to become Mayor of Nyeri Municipality. His influence across Mathira and Nyeri Town constituencies made him one of the best-known local leaders of his time.

Today, his son is determined to build on that foundation; while taking it further.

A successful city-based entrepreneur, philanthropist and passionate sports supporter, Mararo has declared his intention to run for the Nyeri Senate seat in the 2027 General Elections.

The seat is currently held by Wahome Wamatinga and is already drawing interests among local aspiring leaders.

These include another businessman King'ori Wanjohi, farmer and former MCA Duncan Gituanja and former international athlete Phillip Mugweru Nguyo with former Mukurweini MP Kabando wa Kabando also expected to join the race.

Mararo says his entry into the race is driven by a deep concern for Nyeri's young people.

He argues that unemployment, frustration and hopelessness are pushing many youths into crime and drug abuse and that this dangerous trend must be reversed.

"Young people in this county are almost at a breaking point because of the lack of opportunities," Mararo said during an interview, adding,

Nick Mararo during an interview in a Radio station studio. Photos/Courtesy.

"We must restore hope by opening doors for work, enterprise and talent development."

A strong believer in sports as an economic pathway, Mararo says athletics, indoor games and other sporting disciplines can become reliable sources of income if they are properly supported and professionalized.

Through his sponsorship of various sports activities, he has already been promoting this vision, encouraging youth to channel their energy into productive pursuits rather than idleness. He has done this in various parts of the country with some events, such Pool game attracting players from outside the borders of the country.

But his idea of leadership goes beyond competition for government resources.

"Leadership is not just about fighting over budgets," he says. "It is about giving direction, offering guidance and helping people see a better future. That is the mandate I want to fulfill."

If elected, Mararo says his first priority will be to create a culture of transparency and accountability in Nyeri County.

He also plans to push for the registration and empowerment of youths, women and persons with disabilities so that they can fully benefit from opportunities available at both county and national levels.

He is particularly keen on building training platforms and empowerment programs focused on value addition in agriculture, the backbone of Nyeri's economy.

His blueprint includes the establishment of entrepreneurship hubs and cottage industries that would work hand in hand with private sector partners to turn local produce into high-value goods for both domestic and global markets.

Under his vision of "shared dreams and shared prosperity," Mararo wants Nyeri's communities to move beyond raw production and instead become players in the international economy through innovation, branding and local enterprise.

His political slogan, "Kamùingi koyaga Ndĩrì," reflects a call for unity and collective responsibility.

Part of that responsibility, he says, includes protecting and maximizing the value of Nyeri's strategic assets such as Kiganjo Police College, the Mt. Kenya Forest and Water Tower, and the Aberdare National Park.

He believes local communities should be more involved and gain more direct benefits from these resources rather than seeing them as distant national institutions with limited local impact.

As the 2027 race begins to take shape, Mararo is presenting himself as a fresh, energetic and development-focused alternative in Nyeri politics.

Anchoring his campaign on economic empowerment, education, youth development and modernized county institutions, he hopes to transform both the legacy he inherited and the future of the county he now seeks to serve.

Nick Mararo addressing a public forum.

Kenya To Establish Animal Feed Reserves To Stem Sh50 Billion Drought Losses

By: MKT Reporter
@themtkenyatimes

From left: Embu Deputy Governor Kinyua Mugo, CS Mutahi Kagwe and Governor Cecily Mbarire in Embu yesterday. Photo/Courtesy.

Worth Noting:

- **Speaking in Embu County, Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Mutahi Kagwe said Kenya must now treat drought as a permanent feature of its climate rather than a temporary emergency and respond with long-term preparedness instead of crisis-driven interventions. He said the establishment of feed reserves marks a major shift in how the country protects its livestock sector and rural livelihoods.**
- **Under the plan, the government will stockpile hay, silage and other drought-resilient animal feeds during periods of surplus and deploy them early when dry spells begin, guided by weather forecasts and early warning systems. This proactive approach, Kagwe said, will ensure animals are fed before they weaken or die, avoiding the massive losses and distress sales that have characterised previous droughts.**

The Government has unveiled a bold plan to set up national animal feed reserves aimed at shielding livestock farmers and pastoralist communities from the devastating effects of recurring droughts that have in the past wiped out more than 2.5 million animals and inflicted losses exceeding Sh50 billion.

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Counties will take the lead in identifying feed needs and coordinating distribution, while the national government will provide policy, financing and logistical support. Cooperatives will play a central role as last-mile delivery agents, ensuring that subsidised feed reaches livestock owners in time, particularly in pastoral and arid regions.

At the same time, the government will tighten controls on livestock movement to prevent the spread of diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease, which often flare up during droughts when animals are moved long distances in search of pasture and water. Kagwe said vaccination campaigns will be intensified and biosecurity at checkpoints strengthened to protect herds and maintain market access for livestock producers.

Addressing dairy farmers in Embu, the Cabinet Secretary urged them to focus on improving productivity rather than increasing herd sizes. Embu currently produces about 101.3 million litres of milk annually, but average yields remain low at about eight litres per cow per day. With better feeding, breeding and farm management, Kagwe said, milk output could more than triple, significantly raising farmer incomes without putting more pressure on land and feed resources.

To support this drive, the government has approved additional funding for more milk cooling facilities in the county to reduce post-harvest losses and enable farmers to benefit from quality-based payments. Stronger cooperatives and improved cold-chain infrastructure, he said, are key to ensuring farmers are paid fairly and on time.

Kagwe said the new strategy, built around feed reserves, disease control, cooperative-led distribution and cold-chain expansion, is designed to end Kenya's long-standing reliance on emergency drought responses. By acting early and planning ahead, the government aims to safeguard pastoralist livelihoods, stabilise livestock markets and strengthen national food security in the face of a changing climate.

The CS was hosted by leaders from Embu County led by Governor Cecily Mbarire.

Burn All Evils From Inside

Burn all evils from inside
Throw all stress, fear, and jealous hatred
All we need is peace and happiness
Let's renew new energy from today

Throw all old things
And make a fresh start
It gives good happiness
Many a time we keep old ego within us
This is the right day to throw all

Bhogi's fire is a good symbol
To burn negativity,
Let's start positivity
With peace, love, and a happy light
Not only to throw old mat and dress but to throw
All our old bad habits
Old materials can be reused or renewed or recycled
Instead of polluting the environment

Brinda. D
GRADUATE TEACHER,
GOVT HIGH SCHOOL,
MELPATTAMPAKKAM
CUDDALORE, Tamilnadu India
creativewritersmag@gmail.com

Whatever Comes, Let It Come, What Stays, Let It Stay, What Goes, Let It Go

Whatever comes, let it come
Whether it's opportunity or misfortune,
Try to be deaf and dumb
And be without reactions shown.

Man can't stop anything offered by God
What is destined will surely stay
Instead of trying something odd
Hold it with grace and don't chase it away.

The mind stays free without tension
When you practise patience and tolerance,
For all the happy things begotten
Hold on to gratitude and temperance.

Always go with the flow, try not to attach or detach
And let life unfold in its own way,
Just surrender yourself to the Supreme Being to patch
And allow His light to clear your way.

Manimozhi Albert
Graduate Teacher of English
Govt. Girls Hr. Sec. School, Santhaipettai,
Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Pongal, A Day Of Thanking The Sun God Bright

Pongal, a day of thanking the Sun God bright,
Praying for a better future, filled with light
Festival of lovable animals at home, so sweet,
Taken to swim in streams, play with love and fun to meet
Fields are filled with graceful harvests gold,
Workers sing and enjoy, stories untold
All thanked with love and kindness true,
We share love, prayers all together as one,
Pongal's vibe flows through

Let's keep the culture nurtured..

Viji. T
Ghs kvpudur
Namakkal
Creative writers
Tamilnadu,
India

The Diary Of Masud Shafi

Niloy Rafiq
In tales, a staff-saint stumbles through falsehood,
Blind devotion rides the river in a reverse chariot.
The heritage of flowers adorns the heart's home with trees—
On the far shore, you may glimpse the light of civilization.

In the artisan of weeds, a vast genius hides!
Waves of stolen dreams ripple through the breast of purity.
North to south, the casuarina sulks in silence—
Is the torn manuscript still missing from memory?

Masud Shafi, thirst unfinished,
Awakens the pole star in sky and mountain.
In slogans of light, the face meets life's horizon—
Hand me the notebook of words, scented with reflection

Translator: Jyotirmoy Nandy

THE WINTER BIRD
Niloy Rafiq
I gaze, enchanted, as fragrance stirs nature's courtyard—
Through deep forests, the winter bird glides,
Mist-veiled windows brim beside riverbanks,
Waves kiss the hills with a smile of misted delight.

In the green's dancing form, a bird loses its way,
Each day, a restless soul calls to the land of memory.
At the fair of pure love, a word-farmer sows verses
On a winter-bitten morning, as a golden sun warms the Bakkhali's shore.

In the spellbound gaze of trees, a procession of songs—
Unlatch the heart's lock, let the unknown ferry arrive.

Translator : Jyotirmoy Nandy

THE HOUSE OF PEACE
Niloy Rafiq
In the sea's waves, artful songs rustle through casuarina leaves,
Day and night, dreams bloom in the city of color.
By the oyster's edge, faces glow with floral grace—
Invisible, afar, words of fulfillment drift across the wetland.

At time's threshold, an innocent heart lingers,
A spellbound Baul gazes through twin rivers of the window.
Where nature meets the soul's inner chamber,
The night-flower sleeps, scented with peace.

In enchanted love, the mirror flickers with secret light,
In quiet grains, the moon drowns in clouds.
In boundless beauty, the house of art carves its craft—
Rain falls in the festival, tang

Translator: Jyotirmoy Nandy

Niloy Rafiq was born in 6 August 1983 Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Niloy Rafiq has been writing in the literary pages of local daily newspapers since his school days. Later, his poems were published in national and international literary magazines including various famous little magazines. So far, his notable poems have been translated into more than twenty foreign languages. His English poetry book 'Sun Leaf" has already been published under 'Stockholm Project 2033 Global Leader' by Amazon. His second English translated poetry book 'An Incomplete Kiss" has published in 2024 from Amazon.The number of his poetry books written in Bengali languages are 6 respectively 1. I, the swan float in pure sadness, 2. Thirst's eternity, 3. Salty man's face, 4. Unknown fire, 5. Adinath in eyes, 6. Wax prayer bowed in a clay body. His poetry has a magical, edgy feeling. Poet Niloy Rafiq is like a magician in the extraordinary weaving of words and rhythms.

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niloyrafiq@gmail.com
Facebook: niloyrafiq

Woman

For some, she is a ruby;
for others, she is nothing more than an ordinary object.
She is a creation whose eyes are filled not with the desire for the world, but with a longing for love.
At times, she carries the innocence of a child—her gentle smile upon her face makes people forget grief and sorrow.
She continues her life in silence, turning a blind eye to oppression and humiliation.
With her tiny heart, she endures insults, degradations, and stones thrown in her direction.
She is the embodiment of patience and resilience, granted to her by the Almighty Creator.
She is an angel, created from the most delicate and beautiful rib of Adam, peace be upon him.
Though her child never returned from war, she is endurance itself—spending her entire life seated on a rough stone at her doorstep, waiting for her beloved child.
Even in her old age, she lives thinking only of her family, a devoted hero who sacrifices herself without hesitation.
She is a compassionate figure, capable of illuminating and transforming the world with her loving smile.
Through her humility, she earns the affection of all, a tireless soul who has forgotten the meaning of exhaustion.
No ordinary description can define her.
Her perseverance has turned into legend.
Poems, odes, epics, and ballads have been written in her honor.
She is one of a kind.
She is sacred.
She is beloved.
She is cherished beyond measure.
For some, she is a mother, a sister, a younger sister, a friend, a beloved wife, or a daughter.
In a single word, she is the symbol of loyalty—the descendant of Mother Eve.
She is Woman.

Xasanova Aziza Kumushbek qizi student of Tashkent economics and pedagogy university

CRIME & SECURITY

Veteran Rally Photographer Anwar Sidi Suspects Sabotage After Targeted Burglary

By: Suleiman Mbatiah
@themtkenyatimes

Worth Noting:

- The thieves only took his MacBook Pro, Model A2338 EMC 3578, serial number FVFF-32N7Q05H, cameras and five external hard drives containing motorsport and safari rally photographs spanning 43 years.
- Mid-September last year, Sidi resigned from the 2026 World Rally Championship Safari Rally organizing committee, citing unresolved structural problems. He said the decision followed careful reflection, adding that his work was not "adequately appreciated or respected", prompting a new path.
- In a statement, at the time, he said the decision was difficult but necessary for his professional journey. He said he was leaving with his head held high, grateful for the experiences gained and the opportunities he had been given.

Veteran motorsport journalist is reading foul play and possible sabotage after a burglary at his home in South C, Nairobi where he lost equipment worth millions of shillings and a digital photo archive built over more than four decades.

Anwar Sidi said the break-in that occurred nearly two weeks ago appeared selective.

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His unexpected departure was, and continues to be, felt across the motorsport fraternity, with colleagues praising his unmatched eye for detail, his courage in capturing high-risk shots, and his firm commitment to the sport. He was the face of the annual motorsports thriller.

"This is the first time my home has ever been violated, and the way it happened raises serious questions, The selective theft makes me wonder whether this was sabotage," Sidi said in a social media post.

The stolen laptop carried irreplaceable images documenting the growth of motorsport in Kenya and the wider region, from the heyday of the Safari Rally to national and club-level competitions.

He also pointed to a separate cyber incident last year, when his email account was hacked and passwords altered, adding to his concerns about a sustained pattern of interference. Despite the setback, Sidi said he remains determined to continue working.

"They can take my possessions, but they cannot take away my skills, knowledge, or experience. I stepped down with my head held high, and that will not stop me from photographing the event," he said.

Anwar Sidi

Sidi is part of the Sidi Brothers, whose images chronicled some of East Africa's most memorable motorsport moments from the 1980s through the early 2000s. Their work covered rallying, motocross, enduro, karting and national championships, capturing drivers, crews and fans during a period many regard as the sport's golden era.

With a heavy heart, he paid tribute to the clubs, volunteers and sponsors who sustained the sport during that time, describing a close-knit community where competitors shared fuel, service crews worked through the night and results were published as cars crossed the finish line.

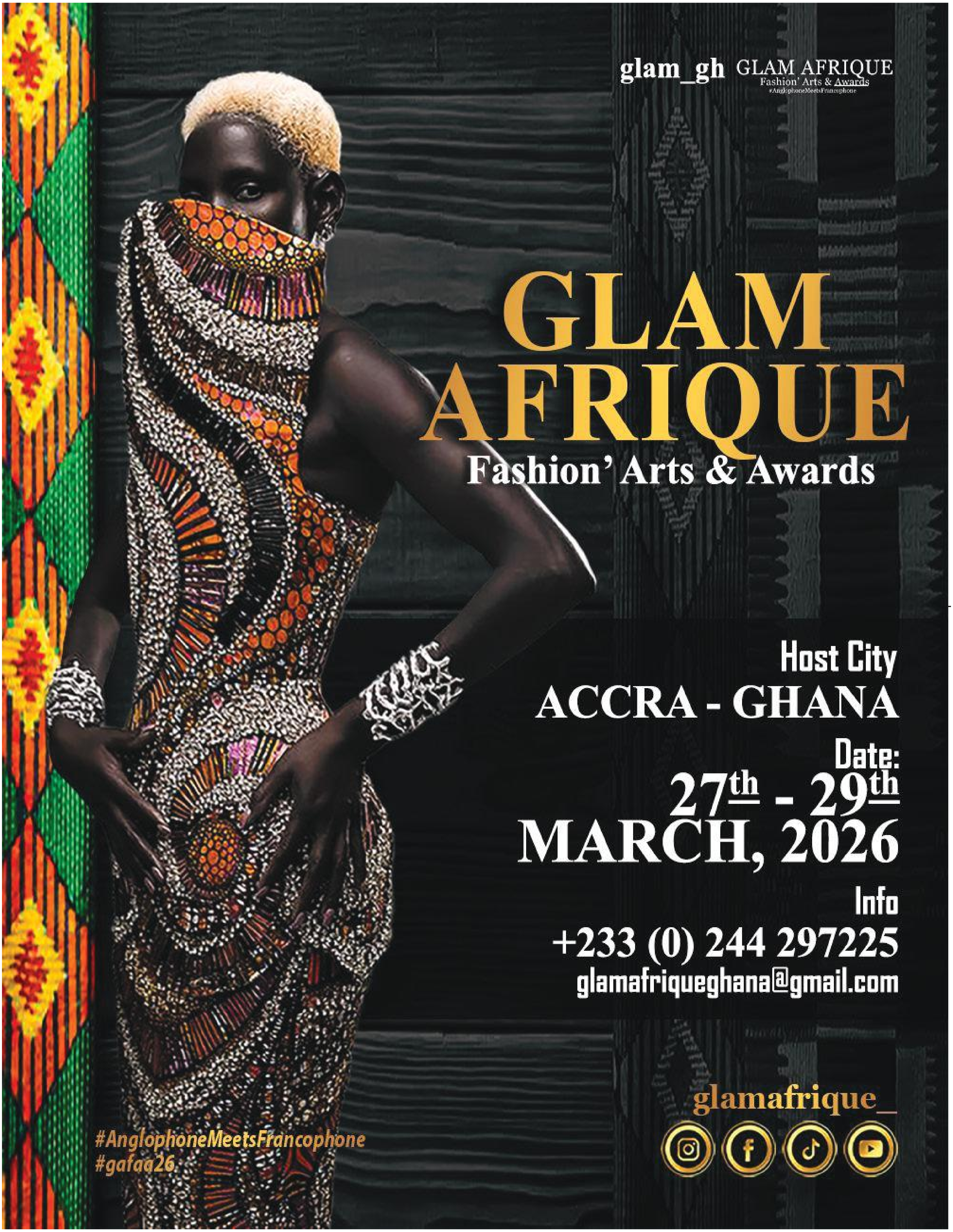
Sidi singled out the organization of the Marlboro Safari Rally as a benchmark, saying it drew global media attention and demanded round-the-clock coverage under difficult conditions, often with limited technology.

The award-winning photographer appealed for respect for experience in the management of the sport, arguing that motorsport thrives on institutional memory built by competitors, marshals and organizers over many years.

Investigations into the burglary are ongoing. Sidi said he remains hopeful that information will emerge to help recover the stolen equipment and archive, which he described as part of Kenya's sporting history.

Sidi appealed to anyone who may come across the stolen laptop or external drives, or have information on their whereabouts, to contact him immediately, urging the public to share the details widely on social media. He can be reached on 0722 786 714 or 0735 786 714.

He said the loss goes beyond the value of the equipment, describing the data as professionally and historically significant and difficult to replace. He has offered a reward to anyone who assists in their recovery adding that no police or legal action would be taken against anyone who returns the items.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Kenya's Flickering Lights: How Load Shedding Entrenches Energy Poverty

By: Odhiambo Jerameel Kevins Owuor
@themtkenyatimes

Worth Noting:

- **This statistical progress, however impressive on paper, masks a far deeper and more insidious crisis that threatens the foundation of Kenya's development aspirations. Load shedding does not merely disrupt daily life through inconvenience; it actively exacerbates energy poverty, leaving millions of Kenyans trapped in a vicious cycle of unreliable and increasingly unaffordable power.**
- **The phenomenon creates a dual burden where those who can least afford it must either endure extended periods without electricity or invest in expensive backup solutions, effectively pricing the poor out of the benefits of electrification they were promised. This situation transforms what should be a public good into a luxury commodity, undermining the very premise of universal energy access as a development goal.**

In October 2025, Kenya's peak electricity demand reached an unprecedented 2,412 megawatts, a threshold that pushed the national grid to its absolute limit and necessitated the immediate implementation of load shedding to prevent a catastrophic nationwide collapse. This stark reality underscores not merely a temporary setback but the fundamental fragility of Kenya's energy infrastructure, where scheduled power outages have evolved from emergency measures into routine interventions necessary to maintain the precarious balance between supply and demand.

As the country's economy continues its expansion trajectory, electricity consumption has surged correspondingly, with national demand climbing to 5,484.54 gigawatt-hours in the first half of the financial year, representing a significant increase from the 5,205.79 GWh recorded in the previous comparable period. This growth, while indicative of economic vitality and expanding access, simultaneously exposes the infrastructure's inability to keep pace with development needs.

This statistical progress, however impressive on paper, masks a far deeper and more insidious crisis that threatens the foundation of Kenya's development aspirations. Load shedding does not merely disrupt daily life through inconvenience; it actively exacerbates energy poverty, leaving millions of Kenyans trapped in a vicious cycle of unreliable and increasingly unaffordable power.

The phenomenon creates a dual burden where those who can least afford it must either endure extended periods without electricity or invest in expensive backup solutions, effectively pricing the poor out of the benefits of electrification they were promised. This situation transforms what should be a public good into a luxury commodity, undermining the very premise of universal energy access as a development goal.

Load shedding in Kenya stems from a critical mismatch between rapidly increasing demand driven by population growth, urbanization, and economic expansion, and supply capacity that has remained essentially stagnant due to underinvestment and mismanagement. President William Ruto publicly acknowledged in November 2025 that electricity demand has decisively outstripped supply, leading to the implementation of nationwide rationing measures that have become increasingly frequent and severe.

Multiple interconnected factors contribute to this crisis. Delayed infrastructure projects, plagued by bureaucratic inertia, corruption allegations, and funding shortfalls, have prevented crucial capacity additions from coming online when needed. The country's over-reliance on hydroelectric power, while initially economical, has proven dangerously vulnerable to increasingly frequent and severe droughts linked to climate change, causing generation capacity to fluctuate wildly with rainfall patterns.

Perhaps most frustratingly, there has been insufficient investment in renewable energy sources despite Kenya's abundant and largely untapped geothermal and solar potential, resources that could provide stable, sustainable baseload power. Critically, this crisis reveals a deeper policy paralysis, where stalled reforms and lack of political will have systematically failed to modernize the grid infrastructure, expand transmission capacity, or implement smart management systems. The result is a cascade of frequent blackouts that could have been substantially mitigated through proactive strategic planning, meaningful diversification of energy sources, and genuine commitment to infrastructure development.

Statistics paint an increasingly grim picture of load shedding's pervasive presence in Kenyan life. Throughout 2025, Kenyans endured weekly power outages with such predictable regularity that citizens began sardonically referring to them as "Blackout Wednesdays," a testament to the systemic nature of these shortfalls rather than isolated incidents.

Approximately 22% of households with nominal electricity connections report that service is actually available for only half the day or less, a stark statistic that highlights the profound unreliability plaguing even those officially counted among the electrified population. This chronic intermittency affects not only urban centers like Nairobi, which leads the nation in absolute energy consumption and hosts critical economic infrastructure, but also rural and peri-urban areas where grid expansion continues to lag behind population growth.

In these underserved regions, communities are forced into greater reliance on costly and environmentally damaging alternatives like kerosene for lighting, charcoal for cooking, and diesel generators for those who can afford them, creating a regressive energy economy that perpetuates rather than alleviates poverty.

Energy poverty in Kenya must be understood as a multidimensional challenge encompassing limited access to modern energy services, unreliable supply even when connections exist, and the inability to afford sufficient energy to meet basic household and productive needs. Millions of Kenyans remain dependent on traditional biomass sources like firewood and charcoal for cooking and lighting, technologies that carry significant health costs through indoor air pollution and environmental costs through deforestation.

Despite impressive strides in electrification programs that have reached over 75% of households by 2024, an achievement worthy of recognition, frequent and unpredictable outages systematically undermine these gains. This creates a troubling form of "hidden" or "qualitative" energy poverty where nominal access, reflected in connection statistics and policy documents, does not translate to consistent, usable power that households can depend upon for their daily needs.

This situation proves particularly acute in low-income communities, where families lack the financial resources to invest in backup systems like batteries, inverters, or generators. This inability deepens existing inequality structures and creates cascading barriers to meeting basic needs: children cannot study effectively after dark, medical clinics cannot refrigerate vaccines reliably, small businesses cannot operate consistently, and households cannot adopt modern appliances that would improve quality of life and economic productivity.

Load shedding directly and measurably exacerbates energy poverty through multiple interconnected pathways that create self-reinforcing cycles of deprivation. Power outages fundamentally disrupt livelihoods and income generation, particularly for micro and small enterprises that constitute the backbone of Kenya's economy, employing the majority of the workforce and contributing substantially to GDP.

When a tailor's sewing machine stops mid-project, when a salon cannot operate hair dryers or styling tools,

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Kenya's Flickering Lights: How Load Shedding Entrenches Energy Poverty

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when a welding shop loses productive hours, or when a small grocery cannot refrigerate perishables, the economic losses accumulate rapidly. This leads to reduced employment opportunities, decreased household incomes, and the perpetuation of poverty cycles that become increasingly difficult to escape.

At the household level, families experiencing frequent and unpredictable blackouts become rationally less likely to invest in electrical appliances and modern energy-using equipment, even when they might have the means to do so. This rational response to unreliable infrastructure stunts the adoption of energy-efficient technologies that could improve quality of life and reduce long-term costs. Instead, families remain trapped in reliance on inefficient and health-damaging alternatives like charcoal stoves, which produce dangerous levels of indoor air pollution, kerosene lamps linked to respiratory diseases and fire hazards, and other traditional methods that exact both financial and health tolls.

Economically, the impacts of sustained load shedding are both profound and far-reaching, threatening Kenya's development trajectory and economic competitiveness. Continued and worsening load shedding could measurably shrink Kenya's GDP by stifling manufacturing output, deterring both domestic and foreign investment, and undermining investor confidence in the country's infrastructure and policy environment, as repeatedly noted by industry leaders and business associations.

Businesses across sectors face mounting losses from multiple sources: spoiled goods in industries requiring refrigeration or climate control, halted production lines that cannot meet delivery schedules, damaged equipment from voltage fluctuations, and increased reliance on expensive diesel generators that can triple or quadruple electricity costs. These inflated operational costs inevitably translate to higher consumer prices, reduced competitiveness in regional and international markets, and business closures in extreme cases.

This ripple effect disproportionately burdens the poor and vulnerable, who already spend a significantly larger share of their limited household income on energy needs compared to wealthier households. When electricity becomes more expensive and unreliable, forcing greater expenditure on alternatives, poor families must make impossible choices between energy and other essentials like food, education, or healthcare. This dynamic further entrenches poverty and increases inequality even as power tariffs continue rising due to stalled sector reforms, inefficient utilities, and the compounding costs of grid mismanagement.

On the social front, load shedding amplifies existing vulnerabilities and creates new ones, with effects that fall particularly heavily on women and children in energy-poor households. Without reliable electricity that can be counted upon during evening hours, children's ability to study after dark becomes severely compromised or impossible, widening educational achievement gaps between those with reliable power or backup systems and those without. This educational disadvantage compounds over years of schooling, limiting opportunities and perpetuating intergenerational poverty.

Health risks rise dramatically from continued dependence on biomass fuels for cooking and heating, with indoor air pollution from wood smoke and charcoal causing respiratory diseases, cardiovascular problems, and premature deaths, particularly affecting women who spend more time in cooking areas and young children in their care. The time burden of collecting firewood or purchasing charcoal also falls disproportionately on women and girls, time that could otherwise be invested in education, income generation, or rest.

Critically, this ongoing crisis fosters growing public dissatisfaction and cynicism regarding Kenya's much-touted energy transition and renewable energy initiatives. When even rapid expansion of green energy capacity fails to deliver tangible, equitable benefits to ordinary citizens when the lights still go out regularly despite rosy policy pronouncements the poor and marginalized reasonably feel excluded from and skeptical of national development narratives. This erosion of trust in public institutions and development promises carries serious implications for social cohesion and political stability.

A critical analysis reveals deep-seated and systemic policy failures at the very heart of this multifaceted crisis. Despite Kenya's extraordinary renewable energy potential geothermal resources alone could realistically

triple current generation capacity, while solar potential remains vastly underutilized persistent bureaucratic delays, inadequate transmission infrastructure investments, and fragmented policy implementation have collectively allowed demand to systematically outpace supply additions.

This paradox demands difficult questions about governmental priorities and competence: Why continue to prioritize reactive short-term fixes like rationing and load shedding over proactive long-term strategies such as genuine public-private partnerships, accelerated licensing for independent power producers, investment in decentralized solar and mini-grid systems, and serious grid modernization programs? Why have successive administrations failed to implement reforms that the energy sector has clearly needed for over a decade?

Such sustained policy inaction and implementation failures not only expose dangerous economic fragility and competitive disadvantage but also carry the serious risk of social unrest and political instability in a nation where reliable energy access is increasingly understood and demanded as a fundamental right rather than a privilege. As frustration mounts with each blackout, the social contract between government and governed frays further.

Potential solutions to this crisis exist and are well-understood; what they demand is urgent, coordinated, and multifaceted action backed by genuine political will and adequate resources. Strengthening and modernizing the transmission and distribution grid through strategic expansions, infrastructure upgrades, and deployment of smart grid technologies could substantially reduce technical losses and outages, as repeatedly recommended by international energy assessments and sector experts.

Dramatically accelerating renewable energy uptake, with particular emphasis on Kenya's competitive advantages in geothermal and solar generation, must be coupled with serious investment in off-grid and mini-grid solutions specifically designed for rural and peri-urban areas where grid extension remains economically challenging. This approach would address energy poverty at its roots by providing reliable power to currently underserved populations rather than perpetuating an urban-centric model.

However, these technical solutions will fail without accompanying institutional and policy reforms. This requires transparent governance structures that reduce opportunities for corruption and rent-seeking, regulatory reforms that genuinely lower costs rather than protect incumbent interests, and deliberately inclusive policies that prioritize reaching vulnerable and marginalized populations rather than perpetuating a system that primarily serves urban elites and well-connected interests. Financing mechanisms must also evolve, exploring innovative approaches like results-based financing, green bonds, and targeted subsidies that reach intended beneficiaries.

In conclusion, Kenya's load shedding crisis represents far more than a temporary technical problem or infrastructure glitch it stands as a revealing symptom of deeper systemic inequities and governance failures that actively deepen energy poverty, constrain economic potential, and fundamentally hinder sustainable and inclusive growth. The government faces a defining choice: it can harness data-driven insights, learn from past failures, mobilize necessary resources, and forge a genuinely resilient, equitable energy future that serves all citizens or it can continue business as usual and watch the lights dim progressively on the nation's development aspirations and the hopes of millions of its citizens. The technical solutions exist. The financial resources, while constrained, can be mobilized. What remains uncertain is whether the political will exists to implement comprehensive reforms that prioritize long-term resilience over short-term expedience, and that place the needs of ordinary Kenyans above entrenched interests. The answer to this question will shape Kenya's trajectory for decades to come.

The writer is a social commentator

Why Japanese PM Decides To Call Snap Election?

By: Xinhua News Agency
@themtkenyatimes

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Wednesday informed senior officials of the ruling coalition parties of her intention to dissolve the House of Representatives at the initial stage of this year's ordinary parliamentary session and call a snap election.

The decision has drawn widespread attention and controversy.

Why dissolve Lower House now

The Japanese government had originally planned to prioritize passage of the fiscal 2026 budget when the Diet (Japanese parliament) opens on Jan. 23. However, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) currently lacks a majority in both chambers, meaning the government must rely on opposition cooperation to pass key legislation -- an obstacle that has constrained Takaichi's agenda. Many Japanese media outlets noted that since Takaichi made erroneous remarks on Taiwan during a Diet session in November 2025, which strained China-Japan relations, she has faced repeated criticism from opposition parties. If the Diet were to convene as scheduled, these issues would likely resurface during intensive questioning. Dissolving the lower house at this juncture may therefore be a tactical move to avoid concentrated pressure.

The potential impact of Takaichi's economic policy is another factor. In last December, Japan's parliament enacted an 18.3 trillion yen (about 116 billion U.S. dollars) supplementary budget for the 2025 fiscal year. Despite the soaring government debt, much of the supplementary budget will be funded through bond issuance. Market participants have warned that this could push up government bond yields, weaken the yen and fuel inflation, potentially unsettling financial markets. Should these effects become more pronounced in the future, public support for the Takaichi cabinet could deteriorate rapidly. Instability within the ruling camp has also played a role. The LDP's cooperation with the Japan Innovation Party (JIP) takes a relatively loose form, with the JIP expected not to take cabinet posts for the time being. This move is widely seen as a "disengagement strategy" by the JIP, which means it can withdraw at any time when there are policy differences or changes in public opinion. The JIP has demanded a reduction in the number of lower house seats as a condition for alliance, a proposal opposed by other parties. If deliberation on this issue is postponed again this year, the JIP could threaten to terminate its coalition, further increasing political uncertainty for the Takaichi administration.

What impact could it have

If the lower house is dissolved shortly after the session opens, there are two possible schedules for a snap election: one with official campaigning starting on Jan. 27 and voting on Feb. 8, and another with campaigning beginning on Feb. 3 and voting on Feb. 15. Japanese media warn that either scenario would likely prevent the fiscal 2026 budget from being passed by the end of March, forcing the government to compile a provisional budget to maintain fiscal operations, a move expected to have a significant impact on people's livelihoods. The decision has therefore attracted sharp criticism. Constitutional Democratic Party leader Yoshihiko Noda accused Takaichi of "engineering an election at the cost of creating a political vacuum." Komeito chief Tetsuo Saito questioned the timing, stressing that the timely passage of the fiscal 2026 budget is crucial for the overall economy. The Asahi Shimbun argued that Takaichi's decision revealed a political stance that prioritizes increasing ruling-party seats over safeguarding people's livelihoods.

What results are possible

The outcome of the snap election remains highly uncertain. First, greater opposition coordination could pose a serious challenge to the ruling bloc. Leaders of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party and Komeito met on Monday and reached a basic agreement on advancing higher-level cooperation during the election. Analysts said a coordinated opposition could significantly improve its chances of defeating LDP candidates in some districts. Second, public support for the LDP remains weak. A recent Nikkei poll shows the party's approval rating hovering at a low level, while the party's "slush fund" scandal remains unresolved. Takaichi herself was accused in December last year of accepting a political donation that exceeded the legal maximum. Her ambiguous responses on these issues may further erode voter trust. Finally, the early election could expose internal divisions within the LDP. Chuo University professor Koji Nakakita said the decision to dissolve the lower house was made with insufficient prior consultation within the party. LDP Vice President Taro Aso, widely regarded as a key power broker behind Takaichi, is reportedly opposed to the move. Nakakita described the decision as a high-stakes gamble for Takaichi. A strong result could reduce her dependence on Aso, deepening existing rifts. Moreover, a poor result would further weaken her standing within the party and place the stability of her administration under greater strain.

PM Sanae Takaichi

Qatar Confirms Personnel Departing From U.S. Air Base Over Regional Tensions

By: Xinhua News Agency
@themtkenyatimes

Qatar has confirmed in a statement that some personnel are departing from the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base in the country over "regional tensions."

"With reference to circulating media reports regarding the departure of certain personnel from Al Udeid Air Base, the International Media Office (IMO) of the State of Qatar states that such measures are being undertaken in response to the current regional tensions," the IMO said. The IMO reaffirmed that Qatar continues to implement all necessary measures to safeguard the security and safety of its citizens and residents as a top priority, including steps related to the protection of critical infrastructure and military facilities. Regarding the evacuation, an informed Iranian official said in Tehran on Wednesday that the move could be part of U.S. psychological warfare against Iran. He added that the Iranian armed forces are fully prepared for any scenario to unfold, are monitoring all the developments and U.S. movements in the neighboring countries, and will take the necessary actions in case of any attack against the country.

Earlier on Wednesday, Reuters, citing an anonymous U.S. official, reported that the United States is withdrawing some of its personnel from its military bases in the Middle East as a precaution amid heightened regional tensions. The latest developments came as regional tensions show signs of escalation following Iran's protests, with U.S. officials repeatedly threatening to intervene. Over the past days, U.S. President Donald Trump has kept threatening Iran with a possible military action, claiming that it would be in support of Iranian protesters. Protests erupted since late last month in several Iranian cities over the sharp depreciation of the Iranian currrency. The Iranian authorities said they are prepared to address economic grievances, while warning against violence, vandalism, and unrest.Initially peaceful, the protests gradually turned violent over the past few days, resulting in casualties and damage to public property, mosques, government buildings, and banks. Iranian authorities have blamed the United States and Israel for the unrest.

The Reality Of Economic Inequality In Today's World

The world is richer than ever, yet millions remain trapped in poverty. That paradox defines our age: dazzling skyscrapers rise while families struggle to put food on the table. Economic inequality is not a distant statistic—it is the daily reality of a system that rewards a few while sidelining the many.

Global wealth has expanded, but its distribution is grotesquely uneven. A sliver of the population commands vast fortunes, while countless households wrestle with unaffordable housing, inaccessible healthcare, and underfunded schools. Prosperity and poverty now coexist side by side, exposing the cracks in a system that claims progress but delivers exclusion.

The most corrosive effect of inequality is the denial of opportunity. Education, healthcare, and decent work increasingly hinge on family income rather than talent or effort. Children born poor inherit limited schooling, fragile health, and diminished prospects, while the wealthy secure advantages that guarantee success. Inequality, in effect, becomes hereditary.

The consequences ripple beyond individuals. Societies with yawning income gaps face rising crime, unrest, and eroding trust in institutions. When citizens feel locked out of prosperity, frustration fuels polarization and weakens democracy itself. An economy perceived as unjust is not merely inefficient—it is destabilizing.

Closing this gap demands bold, inclusive policies: investment in public education, universal healthcare, fair taxation, and job creation. Reducing inequality is more than economics; it is a moral imperative. A society that tolerates prosperity for the few while consigning millions to struggle is not sustainable. Justice demands growth that lifts everyone—or it is not growth at all.

Juliet Dandu, Laikipia University

Who Holds MPs Accountable For CDF?

Billions of shillings pour into constituencies each year through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), promising classrooms, clinics, and roads. Yet behind the glossy pledges lies a troubling question: who truly holds Members of Parliament accountable for how this money is spent?

On paper, CDF was designed to bring development closer to the people. In reality, MPs sit at the heart of the system—shaping projects, steering committees, and basking in the credit. This proximity is both its strength and its fatal flaw. When the same political figure mobilizes funds and oversees their use, oversight collapses into self congratulation. Criticism is brushed aside as partisan noise rather than a legitimate demand for transparency.

Across Kenya, half built classrooms, stalled dispensaries, and inflated contracts tell a damning story. Committees exist, audits are filed, reports are written—but accountability rarely bites. Citizens seldom see MPs grilled over failed projects, and consequences are almost unheard of. The silence is deafening.

True accountability requires more than paperwork. It demands citizens who show up at barazas, demand project details, and refuse to be cowed by political theatrics. It requires institutions willing to separate development from politics, ensuring that public money is not reduced to campaign fodder.

CDF was meant to be a lifeline for grassroots development, not a political trophy. Unless accountability shifts from slogan to practice, the fund risks becoming a monument to squandered opportunity—money spent, but trust lost.

By Silas Wafula Okumu, Laikipia University

SHA Rollout Sparks National Debate On Kenya's Healthcare Future

Kenya's healthcare system is at a crossroads. The launch of the Social Health Authority (SHA), replacing the long criticized National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF), has ignited a national debate that cuts to the heart of equity, trust, and survival. Heralded under the government's Taifa Care programme, SHA promises affordable, accessible healthcare for all—but its rollout has been anything but smooth.

Supporters hail SHA as a bold stride toward universal health coverage. Millions have already signed up, with assurances that vulnerable groups—the elderly, the poor, and marginalized households—will benefit from subsidized care. Expanded services, from preventive medicine to mental health, are touted as evidence of a system finally catching up with modern needs. For many, SHA represents hope: a chance to dismantle decades of inequality in healthcare access.

Yet skepticism runs deep. Critics warn that contributions feel steep compared to the benefits, while hospitals complain of delayed reimbursements. Confusion over digital registration has left citizens frustrated, fueling suspicion that the reform may be more rhetoric than reality. Transparency and efficiency remain the Achilles' heel of Kenya's health reforms, and without clear communication, public trust will erode further.

The stakes could not be higher. A healthcare system that fails to deliver risks not only worsening inequality but also undermining national unity. SHA's success will hinge on whether government can match promises with performance—ensuring timely payments, fair contributions, and reliable services.

Kenya cannot afford another broken promise. Healthcare reform must heal, not divide.

By: Boaz Rotich, Laikipia University

Empowering The Youth Through Education

A nation's future is written in the classrooms of today. If Kenya—and indeed any country—wants to secure prosperity, it must invest in the education of its youth. For too long, promises of opportunity have been undermined by inequality, underfunding, and neglect. Yet the truth remains: education is the single most powerful weapon for empowerment and transformation.

Young people are the backbone of society, and equipping them with knowledge and skills is not charity—it is survival. Critical thinking, creativity, communication, and problem solving are no longer luxuries; they are the currency of a modern economy. Education opens doors to jobs, reduces poverty, and fuels entrepreneurship, giving the youth the tools to shape their own destiny rather than wait for handouts.

But empowerment must go beyond chalkboards and exams. Access to quality education, modern technology, and practical training aligned with market needs is essential. Technical and vocational programs can turn idle hands into innovators, while digital literacy ensures young people are not locked out of the global economy.

Education also molds responsible citizens. It instills discipline, integrity, tolerance, and respect for diversity—values that strengthen democracy and national unity. An educated youth is less likely to be swayed by divisive politics and more likely to contribute to peace and progress.

Still, challenges persist: dropouts, poverty, and resource gaps. Governments, communities, and stakeholders must act with urgency to ensure equal access for all.

Education is not just a policy—it is a promise. Break it, and nations crumble. Keep it, and the future shines.

By David Omondi, Laikipia University

Sports >> *Kenya's Harambee Starlets have been drawn in a tough looking Pool 'A' for the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) to be held across four venues in three cities of Morocco from March 17 to April 2.

Harambee Starlets Land Tough Pool In WAFCON Draw

Morocco's forward Brahim Diaz celebrates after winning the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) semi-final football match between Nigeria and Morocco at the Prince Moulay Abdellah stadium in Rabat on January 14, 2026. (Photo by FRANCK FIFE / AFP)

Kenya's Harambee Starlets have been drawn in a tough looking Pool 'A' for the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) to be held across four venues in three cities of Morocco from March 17 to April 2.

According to a draw conducted at the Mohammed VI Football Complex in Rabat on Thursday afternoon, Harambee Starlets landed hosts Morocco, Senegal and Algeria.

The 2026 edition marks a historic moment for the competition, featuring an expanded 16-team field for the first time, up from the previous 12.

The Beldine Odemba-coached Harambee Starlets made a return to the continental showpiece after defeating The Gambia with a 4-1 aggregate scoreline, booking a slot in the tournament for the first time since their maiden appearance in 2016.

Defending champions Nigeria face a reunion with Zambia in Group 'C' that also has Egypt and debutants Malawi.

The Super Falcons thrashed Zambia 5-0 on the way to beating Morocco 2-1 in the final in Rabat and claiming a record-extending tenth Wafcon title in July last year.

South Africa, winners in 2022, will face Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Tanzania in Group B while Ghana were handed games with Cameroon, Mali and debutants Cape Verde in group D.

The four semi-finalists at the tournament will qualify for the 2027 Women's World Cup, with the losing quarter-finalists playing off for two spots at an inter-confederation qualifier.

Wafcon 2026 group draw

Group A: Morocco (hosts), Algeria, Senegal, Kenya.

Group B: South Africa, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Tanzania.

Group C: Nigeria (holders), Zambia, Egypt, Malawi.

Group D: Ghana, Cameroon, Mali, Cape Verde.

Citizen Sport

Sports >> *Hosts Morocco will play Sadio Mane's Senegal in this weekend's Africa Cup of Nations final after both emerged victorious in tense last-four

Hosts Morocco Set Up Senegal AFCON Final Showdown

Hosts Morocco will play Sadio Mane's Senegal in this weekend's Africa Cup of Nations final after both emerged victorious in tense last-four ties on Wednesday as Mohamed Salah's dreams of winning the title were again dashed.

Morocco beat Nigeria 4-2 on penalties after their semi-final showdown of few chances in capital Rabat finished 0-0 at the end of extra time, with goalkeeper Yassine Bounou performing heroics by saving twice in the shoot-out.

Bounou, of Saudi side Al-Hilal, saved from Samuel Chukwueze and Bruno Onyemaechi, allowing Youssef En-Nesyri to convert the winning kick and spark wild celebrations among over 65,000 fans inside the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium.

As well as joy there was relief for Hamza Igamane, who had appeared distraught after his kick -- Morocco's second in the shoot-out -- was saved by Nigeria goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali.

He was the only Moroccan player to fail to score in the shoot-out, however, with captain and talisman Achraf Hakimi among those who converted their penalties.

"It was one of the hardest matches we have had against a very solid and talented team," said Morocco coach Walid Regragui, who played in the last Atlas Lions team to reach the AFCON final when they lost to Tunisia in 2004.

"I am very happy for the players and for the Moroccan people who really deserve this.

"It is a great gift for them to be in the final but we will need to recover quickly because we put a lot of energy into the game."

The shoot-out came after a cagey encounter, with almost all the chances of note coming in the first half and Nigeria mustering just two shots in the entire game.

Morocco have been under enormous pressure to deliver a first AFCON title for their country in half a century and just their second overall.

FILE: Harambee Starlets bench led by Beldine Odemba (C), and her assistants Jackline Akoth Juma sing National anthemn moments to their 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) First leg Qualifier against Tunisia at Ulinzi Sports Complex in Nairobi on February 21, 2025. Photo/Sportpicha

However, as their dream remains alive it is an agonising way for Nigeria's hopes to end, two years after they lost the final to the hosts in Ivory Coast.

Led by two recent winners of the African player of the year prize in Victor Osimhen and Ademola Lookman, Nigeria had been arguably the best team at the tournament up to the semi-finals and the top scorers with 14 goals in their first five matches.

"The players fought for every ball and it is difficult to lose on penalties, but this is football and we have to accept it," said Nigeria coach Eric Chelle.

He added: "I am proud of my players but I am disappointed for them because the reality is we were maybe the best team that there has been in this AFCON."

- Mane ends Salah's dream -

Earlier, Mane scored a 78th-minute winner to give Senegal a 1-0 victory over Egypt in Tangiers, then said he was playing in the tournament for the last time.

"I'm very happy to be able to play in my very last AFCON. I hope to win it (the final) and bring (the trophy) back to Dakar," the 33-year-old said.

Senegal, champions in 2022, dominated possession against cautious Egypt as the Cup of Nations title continues to elude Liverpool superstar Salah.

This was Salah's fifth AFCON and the closest he has come to a winners' medal is finishing a runner-up twice.

It will be Senegal's fourth Cup of Nations final appearance overall and their third in the last four editions.

"I think we managed the game well from start to finish and, overall, we deserved to win. We'll try to be ready for the final, above all to give our best," said Mane.

"The most important thing for me is that Senegal wins every time... I am a soldier of the nation. I try to give my all every day, whether in training or in matches.

"The Africa Cup of Nations is the most difficult competition in the world. All the teams are evenly matched."

Referring to his former Liverpool teammate Salah, Mane said the Egyptian is "one of the best players in the world".

The goal that decided the game came with 12 minutes remaining, as Mane's low shot flew past the goalkeeper and into the net.

AFP

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From Early Responsibility To National Service: The Resilient Journey Of Margaret Wanjiku

By: Anila Bukhari
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Worth Noting:

- **Margaret's formal education began at Rwambiti Primary School and continued at Kiburia Girls High School, where she completed her secondary education in 1994. Even as a student, she demonstrated uncommon maturity and discipline, qualities sharpened by the weight of early responsibility. Determined to build a stable and impactful career, she later joined to pursue hospitality and hotel management. The choice reflected her natural inclination toward service, organization, and people-centered leadership.**
- **Her academic journey did not end there. Two years after completing her hospitality studies, Margaret enrolled at Pioneer College, where she studied project management and counseling for another two years. This combination of structured management skills and human-centered counseling training would later become central to her humanitarian and community development work.**

Margaret Wanjiku's life story reads like a testament to endurance, compassion, and purpose-driven leadership. Born in Kirinyaga County to the late Stanley Kibuta Gichuki and the late Lucy Tabitha Njeri, she grew up as the first girl and fifth-born in a family of eight children. Her childhood was shaped not by ease, but by responsibility. Raised in a challenging family setup, Margaret assumed the role of caregiver at an age when most children are still discovering themselves. By the time she was nine years old, she was already helping to raise and care for her younger siblings—an experience that quietly planted the seeds of resilience, empathy, and service that would later define her life's work.

Margaret's formal education began at Rwambiti Primary School and continued at Kiburia Girls High School, where she completed her secondary education in 1994. Even as a student, she demonstrated uncommon maturity and discipline, qualities sharpened by the weight of early responsibility. Determined to build a stable and impactful career, she later joined to pursue hospitality and hotel management. The choice reflected her natural inclination toward service, organization, and people-centered leadership.

Her academic journey did not end there. Two years after completing her hospitality studies, Margaret enrolled at Pioneer College, where she studied project management and counseling for another two years. This combination of structured management skills and human-centered counseling training would later become central to her humanitarian and community development work. It equipped her not only with the ability to plan and execute projects, but also with the emotional intelligence to understand the complex realities faced by vulnerable populations.

In 1998, Margaret ventured into entrepreneurship, opening a gas selling and supply business—an enterprise that continues to operate successfully to date. At a time when female entrepreneurship faced significant cultural and economic barriers, her ability to sustain the business spoke volumes about her determination, resilience, and financial acumen. Yet, for Margaret, business was never an end in itself. It became a tool—a means to support a broader mission of service and social impact.

Over the years, she devoted herself to extensive volunteer work in humanitarian aid, working closely with street families, the elderly, and persons living with disabilities. Her involvement went far beyond short-term assistance. She offered counseling, prepared meals, and provided emotional and psychological support to those often overlooked by society. Through this hands-on engagement, Margaret began to articulate a larger, more structured vision—one that included establishing a rescue center, an elderly home, and rehabilitation facilities for drug addicts. Her work was guided by a firm belief that dignity, guidance, and opportunity can restore lives.

This vision took institutional form in 2021 when she founded Hope and Trust Foundation. The organization was created to transform years of grassroots volunteerism into sustainable, organized impact. Through the foundation, Margaret hopes to see her long-held dream of comprehensive care for vulnerable groups realized—anchored in compassion, accountability, and community empowerment.

Her commitment to service naturally led her into public life. Margaret vied for the Kahawa Wendani Ward seat, an experience that, although unsuccessful electorally, deepened her understanding of governance, leadership, and grassroots advocacy. In the same year, 2021, she was appointed to serve in the Ministry of Education, Gender, Culture and Social Services, where she worked for one year and six months. She was later moved to the Ministry of Gender, Culture and Social Services, where she continues to serve to date. In these roles, she has contributed to policy implementation and social programs aimed at uplifting women, families, and marginalized communities.

Margaret Wanjiku

Beyond government service, Margaret's leadership is deeply rooted in faith and community. She is a committed member of ACK St Martin's Kahawa Wendani Church, where she is a born-again Christian and an active participant in church life. Over the years, she has served across multiple church departments, including hospitality, children's ministry, and leadership roles as a chair and patron. She is also a member of the Mother's Union, serves as an usher, participates in Cluster Five, and contributes to the church's health department—roles that reflect her holistic approach to service, addressing spiritual, physical, and social well-being.

Her influence extends beyond local borders to national and international platforms. Margaret is a leader in the Kenya Interdenominational Protocol, working closely with the Kenya National Altar at State House. In this capacity, she contributes to faith-based engagement.

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