

# MT. KENYA TIMES

WEEKEND ePAPER

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## Kenya Presses For Consular Access In Talks With Moscow



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# Kindiki Presides Over KSh12M Sacco Drive As Govt Pushes Nyeri Market, Road Projects

By: WMW  
 @themtkenyatimes

## Some Of The Moments As Captured In Pictures

Deputy President Kithure Kindiki on Friday presided over a resource mobilisation drive for traders set to occupy the KSh350 million Field Marshall Muthoni Kirima Modern Market in Nyeri Town, as the government stepped up support for small-scale businesses and local infrastructure.

A total of KSh12 million was raised to support the 1,000 traders who will operate at the facility.

The event was attended by Majority Leader in National Assembly Kimani Ichung'wa and several Nyeri leaders who included Governor Mutahi Kahiga, Woman Representative Rahab Mukami, MPs Dancun Mathenge (Nyeri Town), Njoroge Wainaina (Kieni), Wambugu Wainaina (Othaya), Eric Wamumbi (Mathira), Mwangi Kiunjuri (Laikipia East), Members of the County Assembly and other leaders.

Principal Secretaries Ann Wang'ombe (Gender) and Alex Wachira (Energy) also graced the events. Kindiki said the modern markets being constructed nationwide will provide dignified trading spaces equipped with cold storage facilities, internet hubs for e-commerce, boardrooms, meeting halls and lactation rooms for mothers.

He added that the government is helping traders mobilise working capital to ensure sustainable businesses.

The Field Marshall Muthoni Kirima Market, named after the highest-ranking woman in the Mau Mau struggle, will host 750 mama mboga and other small-scale traders.

It will complement the nearly complete Nyeri Municipal ESP Market, built at a cost of KSh70 million and expected to accommodate 300 traders.

Construction of the Kirima Market is on course for completion by August 31.

The Deputy President also announced plans to prioritise the tarmacking of the Ngangarithi-Kandara-Gitathi-ini-Ciara-ini road in honour of the late Rware MCA Paul Kanyari, and condoled with his family.



Editor's Desk

**The Mt. Kenya Times**

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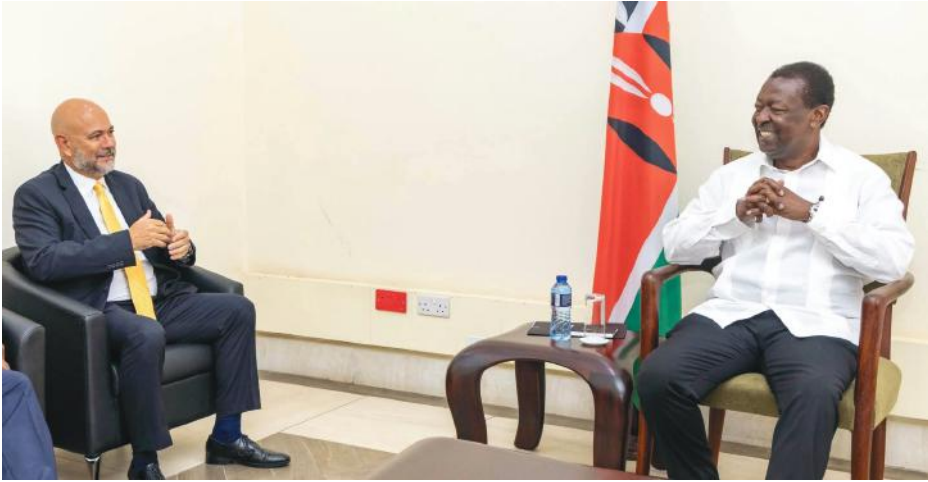


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## NEWS IN BRIEF



Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi has reaffirmed Kenya's commitment to strengthening a modern legal and institutional framework that supports international trade, investment, and efficient dispute resolution in line with global best practices. Speaking after meeting Dr. Cesar Pereira, CIArb Global President 2026, and the CIArb Kenya Branch Board at his Railways office, Mudavadi emphasized the importance of Alternative Dispute Resolution and arbitration in fostering a competitive, investor-friendly economy. He noted that Kenya is advancing judicial and legal reforms to ensure a predictable environment for domestic and cross-border disputes, positioning Nairobi as a leading arbitration hub in Africa.



The Nyeri National Polytechnic and the Open University of Kenya held a strategic meeting to discuss developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) focused on collaboration in training and technology. The partnership aims to enhance capacity building for trainers, support joint curriculum development, strengthen digital learning systems, and integrate innovative technologies into teaching and institutional operations. Both institutions emphasized expanding access to quality education through Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODEL), boosting digital skills, promoting research and innovation, and aligning programs with evolving industry needs. Once formalized, the collaboration is expected to establish a strong framework for knowledge exchange, technological advancement, and sustainable skills development in Kenya.



The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has secured a 35-year prison sentence against Moses Njagi Wachira for the murder of John Maina Gathogo in Nanyuki. The conviction was delivered by Justice A.K. Ndungu following prosecution by Counsel Lucas Tanui, Jackson Motende, and Esther Kimani. The court heard that on October 18, 2017, the deceased was drinking at Gitinga Bar when a dispute arose after he accidentally spilled the accused's beer. Though the situation was briefly calmed, the accused later assaulted him. The victim was later found with severe burn injuries and died in hospital. A postmortem confirmed multiple burns as the cause of death.

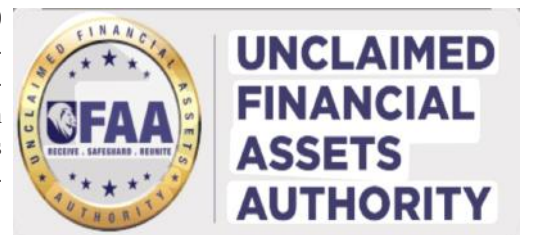


A student from Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), Mr. Peter Ndiritu Thuku (centre) has secured a three-month international internship at STAR.VISION Headquarters in Hangzhou, China, through a collaboration between the Kenya Space Agency (KSA) and the university. Thuku has been actively involved in projects under the Remote Sensing Research Group within the Centre for Spatial Information Science and Systems. He notably contributed to the STAR.VISION rideshare project, where his technical expertise and innovation were recognized. DeKUT hailed the achievement as a reflection of its commitment to research excellence, industry partnerships, and providing global exposure opportunities for students.

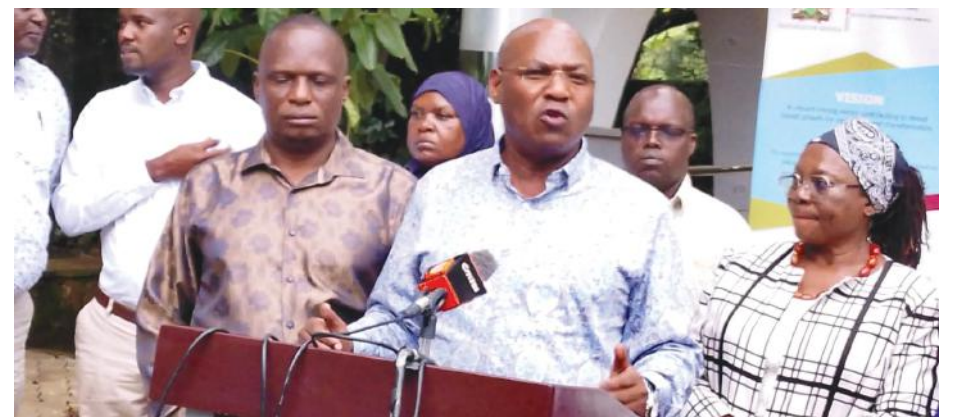


University student David Mokaya is seeking KSh200 million in compensation after being acquitted in a case linked to a social media post about President William Ruto. Through his lawyer Danstan Omari, Mokaya has issued a 48-hour demand notice to state authorities, warning he will file a constitutional petition if compensation talks are not initiated.

Unclaimed assets have surpassed KSh100 billion for the first time, with the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority holding Sh115 billion. The funds, ranging from bank deposits and shares to M-Pesa wallets and dividends, highlight growing challenges in tracing rightful owners.



Interior Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen, alongside Laikipia East MP Mwangi Kiunjuri and Inspector General of Police Douglas Kanja, launches the Mwireri Police Post in Umande, Laikipia County, and flags off the construction of the Mwireri-Maili Sita-Umande Ngenia road aimed at enhancing security operations in the area on Thursday.



Harry Kimtai, Principal Secretary for the State Department for Mining, addresses the media alongside Kakamega County Assembly Speaker James Namitsi and Members of the County Assembly after a consultative session held in Kisumu on February 18, as the Assembly prepares to debate petitions that could shape the future of gold mining in Kakamega County, where Shanta Gold Limited is seeking to exploit gold deposits in Ikolomani.

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# NEWS PAPER



## IN BUSINESS

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# City Hall Pact Faces Eleven-Day Scrutiny As Assembly Moves With Unusual Speed

By: MKT Correspondent

@themkenyaintimes

## Worth Noting:

- The motion, tabled by Majority Leader Jetesi Imwatok, was seconded by Minority Leader Antony Kiragu during a special sitting. Both leaders, usually divided by party lines, spoke in strikingly similar tones: the pact, they argued, could unlock unprecedented development for Nairobi, provided it is implemented with clarity and oversight.
- Speaker Kennedy Ng'ondi will chair the committee, with Paul Kadosi deputizing, and the panel is mandated to deliver its findings within eleven days.

The Nairobi County Assembly erupted into rare unanimity yesterday, approving the creation of a 21-member ad hoc committee to probe the cooperation agreement signed between President William Ruto and Governor Johnson Sakaja. In a chamber often defined by partisan skirmishes, the decision carried a dramatic sense of urgency, underscoring the political weight of a deal that promises to reshape the capital's governance and budgetary future.

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At the heart of the scrutiny lies an additional Sh80 billion earmarked under the agreement—a sum that could dramatically alter the city's fiscal trajectory. Imwatok, who witnessed the signing, urged colleagues to embrace the process: "This is the best thing for our city to fast-track development. I urge all members to understand it so we can work together." Kiragu echoed the sentiment, warning against bureaucratic delays had the matter been referred to the Assembly's 24 sectoral committees.

The committee's remit is expansive. It will clarify the Assembly's role in implementing the pact, assess its impact on the 2026/2027 budget cycle, and



Nairobi County Assembly during a past session. /FILE.

conduct public participation across Nairobi before tabling a final report. Analysts note that this approach reflects a growing insistence on legislative oversight in Kenya's devolved units, where cooperation agreements with the national government often spark questions of accountability.

Political observers see the move as a test of Nairobi's ability to balance executive ambition with legislative scrutiny. The pact itself, described by Kiragu as "one of the best decisions by the President and the Governor," is expected to touch on infrastructure, service delivery, and fiscal management. Yet the Assembly's insistence on pub-

lic participation signals awareness that Nairobi must be convinced of its benefits.

The urgency is palpable. Eleven days is a narrow window for a committee of 21 members to interrogate a 13-page document, consult stakeholders, and draft recommendations. Still, the Assembly's leadership appears determined to avoid the perception of rubber-stamping. By insisting on a structured review, they aim to project seriousness while maintaining momentum.

The stakes are high. Nairobi, a city of nearly five million residents, has long struggled with overlapping mandates

between City Hall and the national government. This pact, if approved, could redefine that relationship. But it also risks igniting debates over autonomy, fiscal control, and political influence. For now, the Assembly has chosen speed and unity, betting that scrutiny within eleven days will deliver legitimacy to a deal already hailed as transformative.

The committee begins work immediately. Its findings will set the stage for a debate that could determine not just the future of the cooperation agreement, but the trajectory of Nairobi's governance in the years ahead.

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*Anniversary  
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# DPP Seeks Conviction Of Obado, Co-Accused In Sharon Otieno Murder Case

By: MKT Correspondent  
 @themkenyatimes

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has urged the Milimani High Court to find former Migori Governor Zacharia Okoth Obado and his two co-accused guilty of the 2018 murder of university student Sharon Otieno.

In submissions before the court, Senior Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions Gikui Gichuhi told the judge that the prosecution had established a coordinated plot and joint criminal enterprise that led to Otieno's death.

She argued that the evidence demonstrated the accused acted in concert with a shared intention to eliminate the deceased and silence a key witness to avoid political fallout and reputational damage.

The prosecution named Michael Juma Oyamo and Casper Ojwang Obiero as trusted operatives in the alleged scheme.

The court heard that the two were

present at Graca Hotel on September 3, 2018, when Otieno and a witness identified as XYZ were abducted. The vehicle used in the incident, registration number KCL 418K, is registered to Obiero's wife and was driven by a longtime associate, the court was told.

Gichuhi outlined what she described as extensive and consistent evidence, including witness testimonies, cyber-crime reports, phone data analysis, and forensic findings linking the accused to the crime. She maintained that the evidence forms a complete and coherent account of events leading to Otieno's death.

The prosecution dismissed the defence case as inconsistent and an afterthought intended to create doubt where none exists.

Obado, Oyamo, and Obiero have been charged with murder. The court previously ruled that the three have a case to answer.

The matter is scheduled for mention on March 18, 2026, when the court is expected to announce a date for judgment.



Former Migori Governor Zacharia Okoth Obado (right) with his lawyer Kioko Kilukumi. Photo/Courtesy.

# Nakuru Activist Challenges Unlawful Age Limit In Hiring Advert

By: Suleiman Mbatiah  
 @themkenyatimes

A legal showdown is looming over a government job advertisement in Nakuru County that an activist says unlawfully locks out young applicants through an age restriction.

Laban Omusundi has petitioned the Deputy County Commissioner for Nakuru Town East Sub-County, challenging an advertisement for the position of Chief II at Teachers Location.

In a letter dated February 17, 2026, Omusundi, who introduces himself as an 'Active Citizen', objects to the requirement that applicants "be not less than 35 years of age," terming it unconstitutional.

"It has come to my attention that there is an advertisement for a vacant position of Chief II Teachers Location... whose requirement No. 2 discriminates against youths below the age of 35 years," he stated.

The advertisement, dated February 4, 2026, was issued by the Office of the President through the Ministry of Interior and National Administration.

It invites applications for Chief II, Job Group 'H', outlining duties that include coordinating national government functions and chairing peace and security committees at the location level.

Under the listed requirements, applicants must hold a minimum KCSE grade C (Plain) and meet other qualifications, including residency and communication skills.

The notice also specifies that candidates must be at least 35 years old, a condition Omusundi argues violates constitutional guarantees of equality and inclusivity.

"Such an age-based limitation of this nature is discriminatory and contravenes the Constitution of Kenya, particularly the principles of equality, non-discrimination, inclusivity, and fair competition in public service recruitment," he stated.

Omusundi contends that public of-

fices must remain accessible to all qualified citizens and should not impose barriers that exclude young professionals from leadership opportunities.

"Public offices must serve all citizens fairly, not create artificial barriers that lock out young qualified Kenyans from leadership and public service," he said.

He has asked the Deputy County Commissioner to withdraw the advertisement and re-issue it without what he calls discriminatory provisions. He added that the advertisement should be withdrawn and re-issued without any discriminatory age requirement.

"Failure to comply with the Constitution will leave us with no option but to move to the High Court and hold the responsible officer personally accountable for violation of constitutional rights and abuse of public office," he said.

As of press time, the Deputy County Commissioner had not publicly responded to the petition.



Laban Omusundi

# Kenya Presses For Consular Access In Talks With Moscow

By: David Kimani  
@themkenyatimes



*Kenyans at war in Russia*

## Worth Noting:

- Sing'Oei's statement was sharp and deliberate: Kenya insists on transparent protocols for repatriating prisoners of war and the remains of those killed. "The safety and dignity of every Kenyan abroad remains our priority," he said, adding that cooperation from Moscow would be critical in preventing further exploitation of vulnerable citizens.
- The Russian Embassy in Nairobi swiftly denied allegations of recruitment, dismissing them as "dangerous propaganda." It insisted no visas had been issued for combatants, though it acknowledged Russian law permits foreign nationals legally residing in Russia to enlist voluntarily. The embassy called for "constructive dialogue" and urged expedited agreements on labour migration and security cooperation.

Kenya has pressed Russia for "unimpeded consular access" to its citizens caught in the brutal Russia-Ukraine war, a demand that underscores Nairobi's growing unease over reports of illegal recruitment networks funneling young Kenyans into the conflict. The intervention, delivered with urgency by Foreign Affairs Principal Secretary Korir Sing'Oei during talks with Russian Ambassador Vsevolod Tkachenko, signals a rare moment of diplomatic friction between Nairobi and Moscow, just weeks before Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi's scheduled visit to Russia.

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tive dialogue" and urged expedited agreements on labour migration and security cooperation.

Yet behind the diplomatic courtesies lies a troubling reality. Kenya's National Intelligence Service and Directorate of Criminal Investigations recently uncovered what they described as an extensive trafficking network. Investigators allege rogue officials within immigration and employment agencies facilitated the clandestine movement of recruits. Parliamentary Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah told MPs that more than 1,000 Kenyans may have been lured with promises of salaries as high as Sh350,000 a month and signing bonuses exceeding Sh1 million—only to be dispatched to frontline combat zones after minimal training.

The revelations have sparked outrage. Civil society groups warn that the exploitation of Kenyan youth in foreign wars reflects systemic failures at home: unemployment, porous oversight, and corruption. Analysts argue that the scandal risks tarnishing Kenya's international reputation as a defender of human rights and peace. "If Kenya cannot protect its own citizens from being trafficked into war, its moral authority in global diplomacy is weakened," said one regional security

expert.

Families of missing recruits have begun speaking out, describing harrowing accounts of sons and brothers who vanished after being promised lucrative opportunities abroad. Some relatives claim they were contacted by intermediaries offering fast-tracked visas and citizenship in exchange for enlistment. Others say they have received no word since their loved ones left.

The government's response has been twofold: intensifying diplomatic pressure on Moscow while tightening domestic investigations. Security agencies are probing suspected recruitment cells in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Eldoret, while Parliament has demanded accountability from immigration and employment authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also urged Kenyans to avoid "dubious overseas opportunities" that may mask trafficking schemes.

International observers note that Kenya's position reflects broader African anxieties. Reports of foreign fighters from across the continent being drawn into the Ukraine war have unsettled governments, raising fears of exploitation and destabilization. The United Nations has repeatedly warned against the use of mercenaries, citing risks of human

rights abuses and violations of international law.

For Nairobi, the stakes are high. Mudavadi's upcoming Moscow visit will test Kenya's ability to balance diplomatic engagement with firm demands for accountability. Analysts expect labour migration, trade, and security cooperation to dominate the agenda, but the plight of Kenyan nationals in Ukraine will remain a shadow over the talks.

The controversy also highlights Kenya's domestic vulnerabilities. With youth unemployment stubbornly high, many young people are susceptible to promises of wealth abroad. Experts argue that addressing the root causes—job creation, vocational training, and stronger oversight of recruitment agencies—will be essential to preventing future exploitation.

As the war in Ukraine grinds on, Kenya's insistence on protecting its citizens abroad carries both moral and political weight. The government's demand for "unimpeded access" is not merely a diplomatic formality; it is a test of whether Nairobi can shield its people from the hidden costs of a distant conflict.

# Kagwe Admits Gaps In Sugar Law, Calls For Reforms And Increased Funding

By: MKT Correspondent  
 @themtkenyatimes

Agriculture and Livestock Development Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe has acknowledged shortcomings in the Sugar Act and its regulations, telling Parliament that legal amendments are necessary to address emerging gaps and strengthen ongoing reforms in the sector.

Appearing before lawmakers, Kagwe said concerns raised by Parliament's legal team were valid, noting that both the Sugar Act and its accompanying regulations require review.

He assured legislators that the Ministry had conducted extensive public participation and would move swiftly to introduce the required amendments.

On the contentious issue of electing directors in the sugar sector, Kagwe revealed that the matter is currently before the courts, limiting immediate administrative action. While some stakeholders have proposed a nomination system, the CS maintained that elections remain the preferred option since they allow farmers to directly

choose their representatives. However, he emphasized that any resolution must follow due legal processes, particularly on matters concerning zoning and governance.

Kagwe expressed sympathy for sugarcane farmers, acknowledging frustrations over long-standing structural challenges in the industry. He reiterated that the government's reform agenda is focused on ensuring farmers benefit more from their produce, pointing out that weekly payments to sugarcane farmers are already being implemented as part of the stabilization measures.

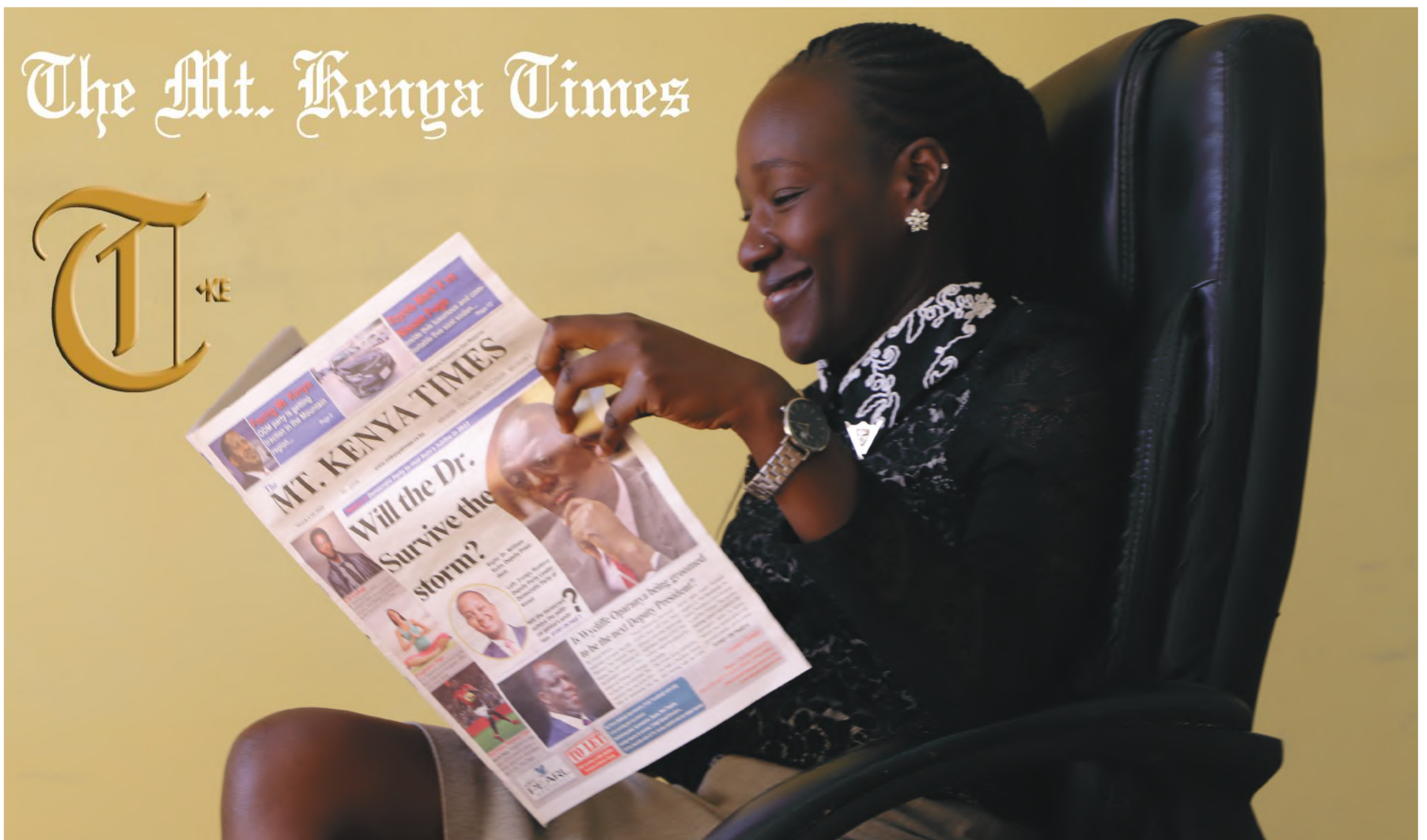
The CS further urged Parliament to allocate adequate funding to revive and strengthen the sugar sector, warning that the industry faces multiple systemic challenges that require urgent and coordinated interventions.

He stressed that without sufficient financial support and legislative adjustments, efforts to transform the sector may stall.

Kagwe's remarks come amid broader government efforts to reform key agricultural value chains and improve returns for farmers while enhancing governance and accountability within sector institutions.



CS Mutahi Kagwe stressing a point when he appeared before the parliamentary committee. Photo/Courtesy..



# Why United Opposition Ended Talks With Kanja Over Church Attack

By: Suleiman Mbatiah

@themkenyatimes

## Worth Noting:

- The leaders said they met Mr Kanja on January 30 at Jogoo House in Nairobi following what they described as a violent attack at Witima ACK Church in Othaya.
- They alleged that the incident targeted former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua during a church service and amounted to an attempted assassination.
- “We left that meeting in good faith, believing that investigations would proceed independently and that justice would follow,” the statement said.
- A follow-up meeting scheduled for February 16 did not take place after they were informed the Inspector General would be unavailable until February 20.
- The coalition claimed it had since received information that investigations into the church attack had been concluded and suspects identified.



Opposition leaders

The Opposition has withdrawn engagement with Inspector General of Police Douglas Kanja over alleged attacks at a church and political rallies, accusing senior state officials of blocking justice.

In a joint statement signed by Stephen Kalonzo, Rigathi Gachagua, Eugene Wamalwa and Fred Matiang'i, the coalition said it would no longer pursue talks with the police chief.

The leaders said they met Mr Kanja on January 30 at Jogoo House in Nairobi following what they described as a violent attack at Witima ACK Church in Othaya.

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A follow-up meeting scheduled for February 16 did not take place after they were informed the Inspector General would be unavailable until February 20.

The coalition claimed it had since received information that investigations into the church attack had been concluded and suspects identified.

It alleged that 12 police officers carried out the attack using two Land Cruiser vehicles from Nairobi and

that two Members of Parliament from Murang'a and Nyeri counties financed the operation.

The group further claimed that the investigation file had been prepared for submission to the Director of Public Prosecutions but was intercepted.

“This is the deliberate use of a government ministry to shield would-be assassins from accountability,” the statement said, accusing Interior Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen of directing that no prosecution should proceed.

Citing Article 157(10) of the Constitution, the coalition argued that the Director of Public Prosecutions operates independently and cannot be directed or controlled by any per-

son.

It said continued engagement with the Inspector General would be futile, alleging that the police service had been compromised by political interests.

“Service to all cannot mean protection for the powerful and repression for the opposition,” the statement said, referring to the police motto, Utumishi kwa Wote.

The Opposition announced it would initiate private prosecutions against the 12 officers and the two MPs it accused of financing and facilitating the attack.

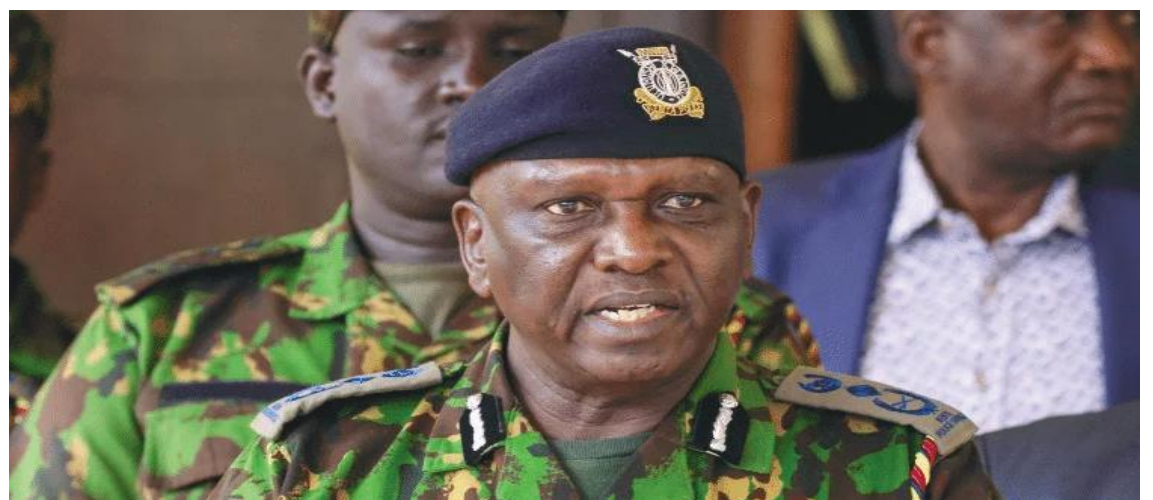
“The Constitution of Kenya is unambiguous. Article 157(6)(b) provides the constitutional basis for private individuals to institute criminal

proceedings when the State fails or refuses to act,” the statement said.

It also cited Section 28 of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act and Section 88 of the Criminal Procedure Code as the legal basis for the move.

The leaders warned the Inspector General and the National Police Service against interfering with their planned public meetings, including a rally in Nairobi on February 22, 2026.

Efforts to obtain comment from the Interior Ministry, the National Police Service and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions were ongoing at the time of publication.



Inspector General of Police Douglas Kanja

# Tribal Smoke And National Theft: Kenya Must Refuse The Script



By: Gitile Naituli  
@themkenyatimes

**Worth Noting:**

- The government under President William Ruto is not merely, allegedly, presiding over division; it is normalizing it as a political instrument. Whenever public pressure rises over corruption, questionable privatization deals, or the disposal of national assets, a familiar pattern emerges. Suddenly, the national conversation shifts. Cabinet secretaries, senior officials, and well-organized online surrogates ignite a tribal spectacle. The issue at hand disappears beneath a cloud of ethnic hostility. It is not confusion. It is choreography.
- Consider how quickly serious allegations about the handling of public assets are drowned in identity wars. When claims surfaced regarding the alleged Safaricom fire sale and broader privatization concerns, the communication machinery did not primarily respond with transparent explanations.

Kenyans, let us tell one another the truth. Nations rarely collapse because they lack resources. They collapse when leaders weaponize identity to conceal misconduct. They fracture when citizens are trained to fight each other instead of questioning power. And they decay when tribal emotion becomes a shield against accountability. What we are witnessing today is not random chaos. It is not spontaneous outrage. It is strategy.

The government under President William Ruto is not merely, allegedly, presiding over division; it is normalizing it as a political instrument. Whenever public pressure rises over corruption, questionable privatization deals, or the disposal of national assets, a familiar pattern emerges. Suddenly, the national conversation shifts. Cabinet secretaries, senior officials, and well-organized online surrogates ignite a tribal spectacle. The issue at hand disappears beneath a cloud of ethnic hostility. It is not confusion. It is choreography.

Consider how quickly serious allegations about the handling of public assets are drowned in identity wars. When claims surfaced regarding the alleged Safaricom fire sale and broader privatization concerns, the communication machinery did not primarily respond with transparent explanations. Instead, the atmosphere thickened with tribal accusation and counter-accusation. The message became less about the substance and more about the speaker.

And here lies the danger. In Kenya, we have reached a troubling place where the public reaction often depends not on what is said, but on who says it. If Wilson Socioni speaks, it is treated one way. If Muguna speaks, it is processed differently. But when Ndidi Nyoro, or A kamaru, or A maina raises similar questions, the debate shifts from content to identity. The question stops being “Is this information accurate?” and becomes “Why is he saying it?”

That shift is deliberate. It is easier to attack the messenger than to answer the message. It is simpler to inflame tribal suspicion than to defend policy decisions under scrutiny. When cornered, divert. When exposed, polarize. When pressured, ignite emotional fires.

This is not new. It is a survival manual perfected over years: when caught stealing, create ethnic tension; when confronted with evidence, question the tribe; when scrutiny intensifies, manufacture outrage. And the tragedy is that it works, if citizens allow it to.



President William Ruto chairing a Cabinet meeting in the past. Photo/Courtesy.

Tribal rhetoric becomes a convenient shield. It reframes governance failures as ethnic attacks. It transforms accountability into communal persecution. Those demanding transparency are branded bitter, entitled, or tribal. The debate shifts from national assets to national identities.

But corruption does not discriminate by tribe. When public resources are mismanaged or sold under opaque arrangements, the loss is collective. It affects farmers in Trans Nzoia and traders in Meru. It burdens youth in Kisumu and small businesses in Eldoret. It inflates taxes for Luhyas, Kikuyus, Kalenjins, Kambas, and every other Kenyan. Looting is equal opportunity in its consequences.

Those who profit from it, however, are not communities. They are networks. They are oligarchs. They are clusters of power that thrive when the public is emotionally distracted. They benefit when citizens are too busy insulting each other to notice structural shifts in ownership of national assets. This is psychological warfare dressed as politics.

A population divided along tribal lines is easier to manage. It is easier to steer. It is easier to exhaust. When citizens fear truth because it comes from the “wrong” tribe, they stop evaluating facts. They begin policing identity. And once that happens, governance escapes scrutiny.

Let us be brutally honest with ourselves: we are not enemies because of our surnames. We are not adversaries

because of our ancestral origins. The Luo is not the problem. The Kikuyu is not the problem. The Kalenjin is not the problem. The Luhya is not the problem. The problem is leadership that hides behind tribe to avoid accountability.

When the state dictates emotional responses, when it signals that criticism from certain communities is illegitimate, it trains citizens to distrust one another instead of questioning power. That is how nations weaken from within.

If we keep chasing tribal bait, serious national conversations will vanish. If every allegation of corruption becomes an ethnic skirmish, looting will continue uninterrupted. If we allow identity to replace analysis, privatization decisions will proceed without meaningful oversight.

This is how countries fall, not from poverty of resources, but from poverty of civic courage. Kenya’s challenge today is not scarcity. It is honesty. It is the willingness to critique information based on evidence rather than ethnicity. It is the discipline to separate facts from propaganda. It is the maturity to refuse manipulation. Fellow Kenyans, criticize the information. Interrogate the data. Demand transparency. But do not fall for the tribal trap. That trap was not designed to protect communities. It was designed to protect individuals who fear scrutiny.

When national assets are at stake, emotion is a distraction. When gover-

nance integrity is questioned, ethnic theatrics are a smokescreen. When powerful interests feel threatened, division becomes their first defense. We must see behind the game. We must insist that allegations be addressed substantively. We must refuse to allow whistleblowers to be reduced to tribal symbols. We must recognize that corruption is not communal, it is concentrated.

Above all, we must remember that we have one country. Kenya’s strength has never been uniformity of tribe; it has been unity of purpose. If we fracture ourselves each time power feels heat, we will enable the very forces that weaken us. But if we stay focused on truth, regardless of who speaks it, we will protect both our democracy and our dignity. Let us tell one another the truth. The enemy is not the tribe of the messenger. The enemy is the theft hidden behind tribal smoke. And unless we refuse that script, the smoke will thicken, until we can no longer see the country we are losing.

*Prof. Gitile Naituli comments on topical issues*

# Nyeri County Gets Modern Maternal And Newborn Units Under UHC Initiative

By: WMW  
 @themtkenyatimes

Nyeri County residents will now access improved maternal and newborn services following the official handover of upgraded Mother and Child Units at Karatina Sub-County Hospital and Naromoru Health Centre to the County Government. The handover, part of the Government's Taifa Care Model and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda, was led by Principal Secretary for Medical Services Dr. Ouma Oluga, in a ceremony attended by Nyeri Governor Mutahi Kahiga, Deputy Governor Kinaniri Waroe, and other senior county officials.

The modern facilities, developed in partnership with the Government of Finland and technical support from VAMED Group, are designed to enhance safe delivery services, neonatal care, and overall maternal health outcomes.

Beyond infrastructure, the programme has strengthened service quality through specialised training in obstetrics, gynaecology, and neonatology, as well as capacity building in equipment use and healthcare waste management, including observership programmes in Finland.

The Karatina unit is equipped with neonatal intensive care beds, resuscitation units, modern delivery beds, sterilisation facilities, oxygen and medical air systems, solar-powered boilers, and water purification systems. Naromoru Health Centre now offers integrated antenatal, delivery, and postnatal care, supported by a newborn unit, modern examination rooms, sterilisation areas, and enhanced waste management systems.

The PS lauded the initiative, noting that Nyeri is among 20 counties benefiting from the partnership and has achieved a 66 percent Social Health Authority (SHA) registration rate, signalling increased readiness to access quality and affordable healthcare.



PS Dr Ouma Oluga addressing the public in Nyeri on Thursday.

The PS, accompanied by Nyeri County Commissioner Josphat Biwott, Head of Cooperation at the Finnish Embassy Matts Weurlander, and VAMED Project Manager Sendin Alvaro, emphasized the project's role in reducing preventable maternal and infant deaths while promoting skilled, facility-based childbirth. Nyeri MCAs, including Martin Matu, Wanjiku Kawanjiku, Agnes Wachira,



PS Dr Ouma Oluga officially opening one of the facilities as leaders led by Nyeri Governor Mutahi Kahiga looks on. Photos/Courtesy.

and Janet Kamiru, expressed appreciation for the state-of-the-art facilities, which are set to serve over 170,000 residents across the Nanyuki-Karatina catchment area.

The collaboration between the national and county governments, alongside Finnish development partners,

underscores Kenya's commitment to expanding quality maternal and newborn care as part of the broader UHC and national development agenda.

# Elephant Dies After Falling Into Pit Latrine In Kwale

By: MKT Correspondent  
 @themtkenyatimes

A male sub-adult elephant has died after falling into an uncovered pit latrine in Mackinnon Road Town, prompting renewed calls for communities to secure hazardous structures in wildlife-prone areas.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) confirmed that the elephant, estimated to be between 15 and 20 years old, fell into the pit along Mzima Pipeline Road on the night of February 19.

The animal is believed to have been moving through the area in search of water when the incident occurred.

Despite response efforts, the elephant succumbed to fatigue and distress caused by postural asphyxia after prolonged attempts to free itself.

KWS veterinary and response teams are currently undertaking carcass retrieval and disposal in accordance with wildlife health and safety

protocols.

Mackinnon Road Town, located along the busy highway corridor to Mombasa, lies within an area where wildlife movement corridors increasingly intersect with expanding human settlements and infrastructure. Conservation officials say such incidents highlight the dangers posed by unsecured pits and open excavations in these zones.

Senior Assistant Director for the Tsavo Conservation Area, Wilson Njue, expressed regret over the loss and urged residents to take preventive measures. He warned that open pits and uncovered latrines pose serious risks not only to wildlife but also to people, livestock, and especially children.

"Incidents of this nature are preventable," Njue said, calling on residents to report hazardous structures so corrective measures can be taken promptly. He added that KWS is ready to work with communities to identify and safely fill or secure dangerous pits.

KWS has appealed to landlords,



The affected elephant

businesses, and construction sites to ensure that pit latrines, trenches, and excavations are properly covered, fenced, or filled. Members of the public are also encouraged to promptly report elephant sightings or wildlife movements through KWS and county hotlines to enable

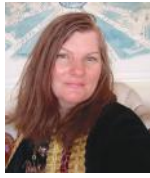
early intervention.

The death of the young bull, described by conservationists as being in its prime, has been termed a sobering reminder of the need for vigilance and shared responsibility in areas where people and wildlife coexist. Authorities stress that se-

curing hazardous infrastructure and maintaining open communication between communities and wildlife officials are critical steps in preventing similar tragedies in the future.

**14 POEMS**

**PEACE**



We found inside us  
We are grateful for every hard moment  
Because once the tough will pass

We will be in a complete harmony with our self

We need peace of mind  
We are in a transmission  
And everything is going too fast

Information about things we do not need

Advice about how to react  
To live  
To eat  
To breathe  
To exist

We are in need of peace  
But first we need to understand

What is Peace

WOMAN

Woman,  
You are alive  
A mother  
A daughter

Womens,  
We respect eachother  
We support eachother  
Our power is strong  
When we are together

Woman,  
A friend  
That we never leave you at your hard time

Woman,  
The creativity  
The poetry  
The art

Woman we must celebrate and be respected everyday

EVA Petropoulou Lianou  
Greece

**Letter To My Favourite Toy As A Kid**



Dear Guddy  
I love your cute dark graphy eyes  
Attracted by it's size.  
I have bought you glistening earrings  
Sparkling my heart also by your cheering.  
I hope you love the pendant?  
That hugs your bottle neck elegantly.  
Are you satisfied with your hair style?  
To comfort you underwent many trial.  
Do you love the bracelet?  
Mark my love within you as template.

I've designed your apparel  
Adding your beauty is more natural  
You are my angel, my stress buster  
Erasing my miseries as duster  
For your smile & words soothens me  
Stabilising me to be in glee.  
Yearning to have you beside me ever: my little dwarf  
But-time seeks to place beside your better half  
Yes! its my daughter - my priceless toy  
Gifted to play & enjoy.  
MOM---  
By infinite lover  
With white hair & blue heart  
G.Sarala  
Creative writers  
Tamilnadu  
India

**My Heart Is Not Satisfied...**



Morning has risen, it has not risen for me,  
mother,  
Sun has set, it has not set for me, mother.  
I have taken everyone's heart, but,  
My heart is not satisfied with the world,  
mother!

The darkness of her brow was from the pen,  
Your daughter's heart was eaten by sorrow.  
I know what some people say,  
My heart is not satisfied with the world,  
mother!

I have told you my sorrows, your heart is torn,  
I did not know then that I was buried in pain,  
I put the worries of the world on my

shoulders,  
My heart is not satisfied with the world,  
mother!

Has this foolish daughter of yours broken your stature?  
Has this foolish daughter of yours shed her pain?  
If she cannot find a day, the footprint you have made  
My heart is not satisfied with the world,  
mother!

I am leaving this world, mother,  
I am reaching heaven, mother,  
Your love is protecting me, mother  
My heart is not full of this world, mother!

Aliyeva Matluba Zhakbaraliyevna  
Born on April 5, 1990 in the village of Kumkurgan, Namangan district, Namangan region. 1st year master's student, specialty: Theory and history of pedagogy, Namangan State Pedagogical Institute



Coconut tree is so beautiful and tall,  
It is useful to all,  
It stands through it all wind and storm  
Its tender coconut is sweet and tasty  
Everyone likes to drink it happily

Its leaves are long, its shape is so nice,  
it is a treasure for all  
Grows in all places  
It feeds many, gives cool shade to all  
It is a home for birds,  
Birds build nest in coconut tree

It grows tall, with shining leaves  
There are no branches, yet it gives shade  
We use its leaves to build huts  
I like the coconut tree,  
It is a wonderful tree

Shivani. S.  
7B  
GHS Melpattampakkam Cuddalore dist  
Tamilnadu India

**Coconut Tree**

**Fight Silently, Win Loudly .**



Asking yours are your rights  
The way you claim your bites.

Fighting for your rights  
It helps to reach heights.

Try to work hard continuously and silently  
The outcome rewards you surprisingly .

A smooth drive helps to reach your destination.  
Make you feel happy there in location.

Claim your rights politely  
You will be rewarded amicably.

In depth, water flows silently  
The rolling stone becomes beautifully.

Rajesh Kanna B N  
RAJESH KANNA.B N  
M.Sc.,M.A.,M.A., B.Ed., PGD G&C, CELT.,  
BT Asst  
GMHSCHOOL,  
TIRUR.  
TIRUVALLUR DISTRICT.  
Tamil Nadu. India  
Creative Writers.



Bells wake the silence at her feet,  
each step a prayer struck on stone.

The floor remembers centuries  
as her ankles speak in rhythm.

Eyes bloom into stories filled with  
anger, love, surrender, grace  
each glance a river  
flowing toward the divine.

Hands carve the air with meaning,  
lotus, flame, moon, and vow,  
gestures older than words  
yet forever new.

Her spine holds stillness like a temple,  
her movements circle time itself,  
where body becomes scripture  
and breath becomes devotion.

In Bharatanatyam,  
the dancer does not perform.

She listens,  
and the universe answers in dance.

-S.Srimitra  
10th std  
GGHss, Pattukkottai  
Thanjavur

**The Sacred Dance**

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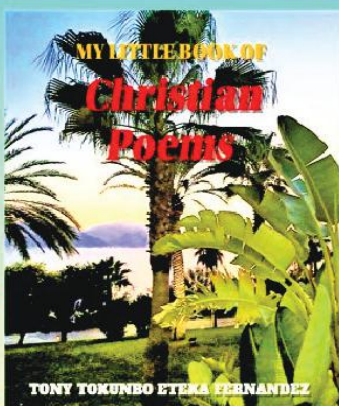
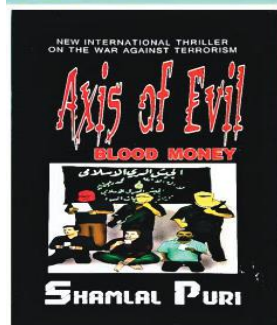
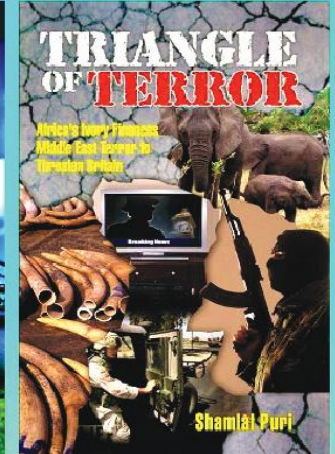
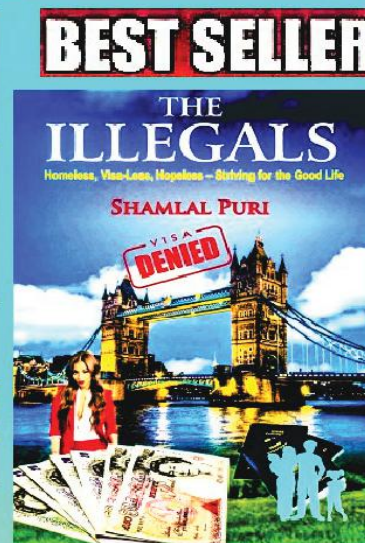
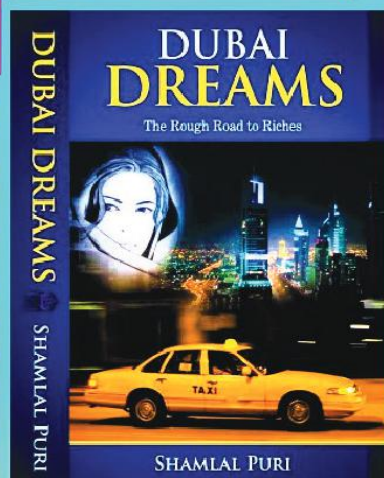
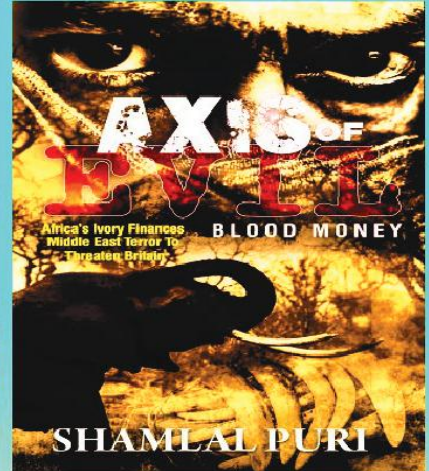
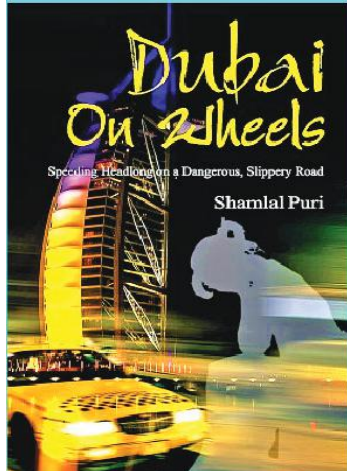
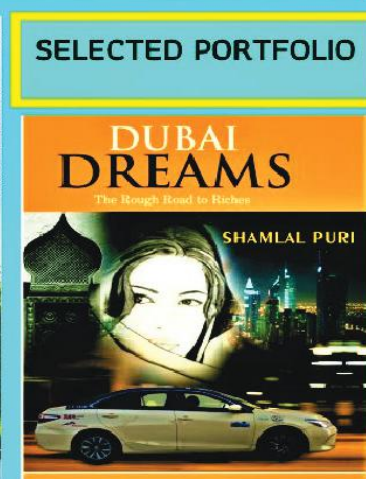
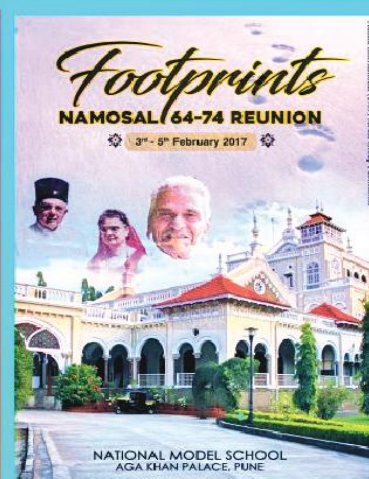
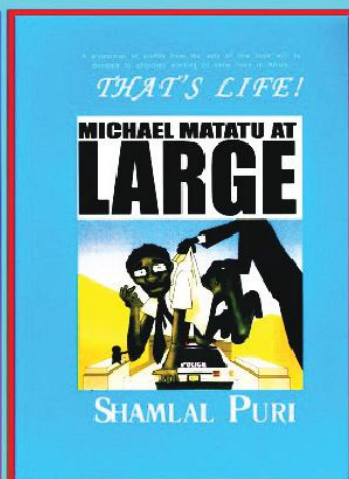
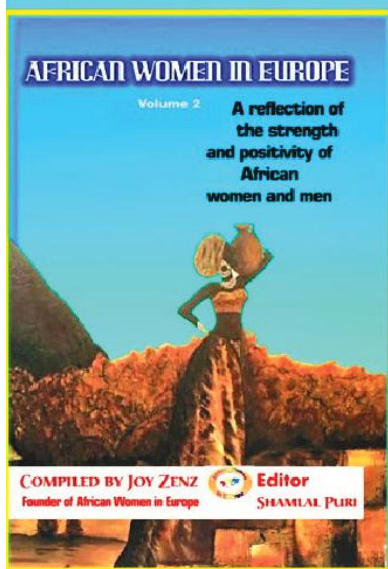
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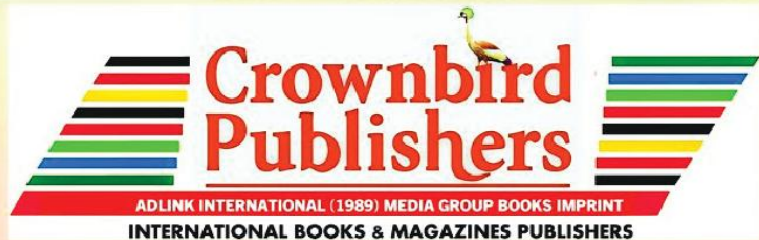
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## BUSINESS

# Gulf Energy Secures KSh1.9 Billion Onshore Oil Rig In Abu Dhabi, Ahead Of South Lokichar Project Kick-Off

.....officials from the State Department for Petroleum, EPRA, and the Turkana County Government, in Abu Dhabi for rig inspection

By: MKT Reporter

@themtkenyatimes

## Worth Noting:

- Gulf Energy Chairman Francis Njogu said the firm has reached a contractual arrangement with GWDC to deliver, commission and operate the rig in the South Lokichar Basin under a performance-based model that will also involve active skills transfer.
- He further disclosed that a high-level technical delegation from the Government of Kenya and the Turkana County Government has just finalised a familiarisation and inspection tour of the onshore drilling rig in the Al Dhafra region of Abu Dhabi.
- Even as the Gulf Energy awaits the parliamentary ratification of its Field Development Plan (FDP), the firm, he said, had commenced strategic investments, including rig sourcing, ahead of the US\$6 billion project kick-off.

Local oil exploration and production firm Gulf Energy E&P BV has secured and contracted an onshore oil rig in the Middle East, signalling its corporate commitment to deliver first oil from the South Lokichar Basin before the end of the year.

In a strategic and capital-intensive move, Gulf Energy has secured the GW70 rig, valued at more than KSh1.9 billion, from Great Wall Drilling Company (GWDC) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on a long-term lease arrangement and is finalising logistical arrangements to ship the rig from Abu Dhabi to Mombasa before the end of next month.

Gulf Energy Chairman Francis Njogu said the firm has reached a contractual arrangement with GWDC to deliver, commission and operate the rig in the South Lokichar Basin under a performance-based model that will also involve active skills transfer.

He further disclosed that a high-level technical delegation from the Government of Kenya and the Turkana County Government has just finalised a familiarisation and inspection tour of the onshore drilling rig in the Al Dhafra region of Abu Dhabi.

Even as the Gulf Energy awaits the parliamentary ratification of its Field Development Plan (FDP), the firm, he said, had commenced strategic investments, including rig sourcing, ahead of the US\$6 billion project kick-off.

The GW70 Onshore rig with a 1500 horsepower capacity, Njogu said, is expected in Kenya around June, ahead of procedural rig commissioning and acceptance checks to be ready for the start of drilling works (spud) in early July. In Abu Dhabi, the rig he disclosed has been undertaking projects for the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and has clocked what he described as an excellent, efficient, and safe operating record.

Alongside Gulf Energy Executives, the delegation in Abu Dhabi included technical officials from the State Department for Petroleum at the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA), and the Turkana County Government.

“At Gulf Energy, it’s all systems go, in the journey to deliver first oil by December 1st this year. The delega-

tion in Abu Dhabi has witnessed firsthand the advanced state of GW70, an integrated onshore oil field drilling rig which we recently secured,” Njogu said.

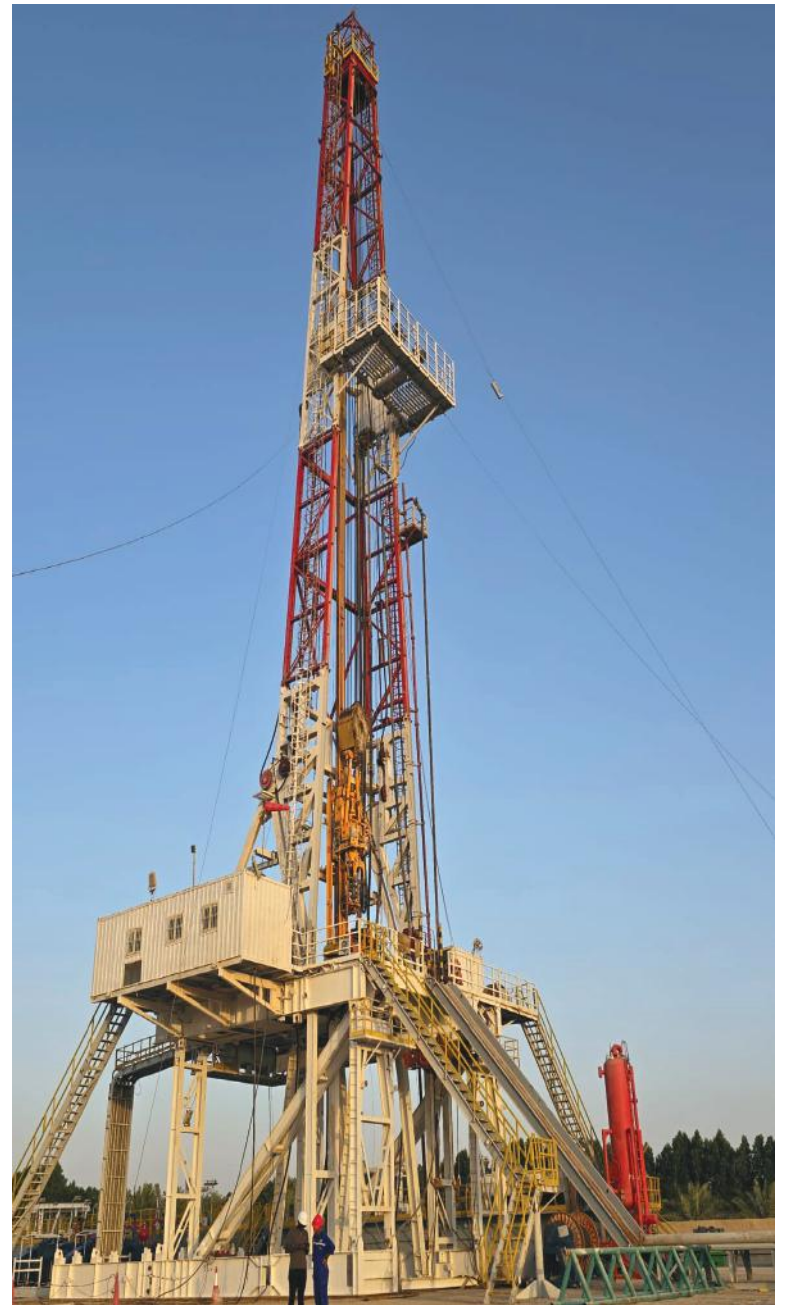
He noted that securing a modern onshore drilling rig marks a significant investment for the company, coming at a time when global demand for such equipment remains high, and mobilisation timelines are increasingly stretched. Despite these pressures, Gulf Energy says it expects to secure the required legislative and regulatory approvals and has already allocated the necessary capital for the rig.

In a communique from the UAE, Turkana County Government officials led by County Secretary Dr Amb. Richard Ekai and Director for Climate Change George Emase said the visit was undertaken following a formal delegation by Governor Dr Jeremiah Ekamais Lomorukai and was intended to ensure that the rig meets the highest industry standards before operations commence.

The delegation described the engagement as both enlightening and productive, noting that it provided valuable insight into the rig’s capabilities and operational preparedness. Beyond the mechanics and machinery, the team also focused on GWDC’s corporate and environmental credentials, including skills transfer commitments.

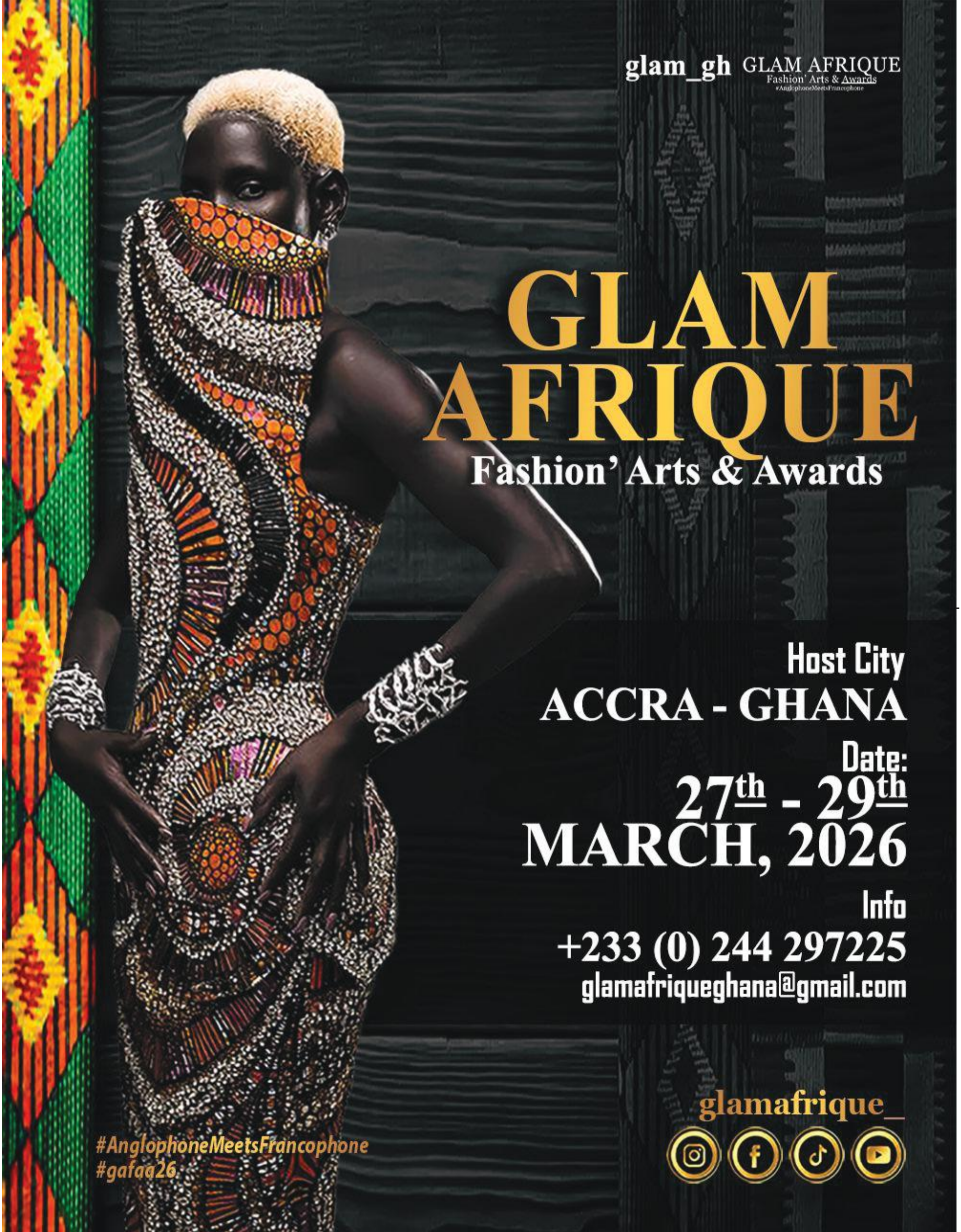
“This inspection forms a crucial part of the quality assurance, performance evaluation and safety verification process ahead of its deployment to the South Lokichar Basin in Turkana County. During the inspection, the team carried out a detailed technical evaluation of the rig’s operational systems and safety mechanisms. Recommendations were issued to fine-tune readiness and guarantee seamless performance once the rig is mobilised to Turkana,” the communique said.

Kenya stands to gain significant fiscal and economic benefits from the South Lokichar Basin oil fields development, with the Government of Kenya projecting potential earnings between USD 1.05 billion (at USD 60 per barrel) and USD 2.9 billion (at USD 70 per barrel), which translates to KSh136 billion to KSh371 billion over the life of the project.



GW70 Drilling Rig.





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# The Constitutional Framework Of Burial Rights In Kenya: Dignity, Culture, And The Courts



By: Odhiambo Jerameel Kevins Owuor  
@themkenyatimes

The right to a decent burial stands at a curious and profound intersection of law, culture, religion, and human dignity. In Kenya, the question of who may bury the dead, where, and according to which rites has generated some of the most emotionally charged litigation in the history of the nation's courts. From the landmark Otieno case of the 1980s to the post-constitutional era jurisprudence shaped by the 2010 Constitution, burial rights have remained a battleground where competing visions of modernity, tradition, and constitutional order collide. Odera Oruka observed, African legal thought must grapple with the tension between indigenous customary norms and the universalist claims of rights-based constitutionalism a tension nowhere more vivid than in the arena of burial disputes.

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya fundamentally transformed the legal landscape. By enshrining a comprehensive Bill of Rights, recognizing culture as the foundation of the nation, and guaranteeing human dignity as a non-derogable value, the Constitution provided courts with a rich normative framework for resolving burial disputes. Even so the Constitution does not contain a specific 'burial rights' provision. Rather, rights pertaining to burial must be inferred and constructed from a constellation of constitutional principles: human dignity (Article 28), equality (Article 27), protection of the family (Article 45), freedom of conscience and religion (Article 32), recognition of culture (Articles 11 and 44), and the right to fair administrative action (Article 47). It is the task of the judiciary guided by scholarship and the lived realities of African communities to weave these strands into coherent doctrine.

This article analyses the constitutional rights framework governing burial in Kenya across twelve thematic inquiries, drawing on Kenyan and comparative African jurisprudence, literary works from Kenya and Nigeria that illuminate the cultural stakes of burial, and South African case law that offers instructive parallels. The analysis proceeds from first principles outward into the terrain of specific constitutional provisions, judicial interpretation, and

comparative insight.

## II. Human Dignity as the Foundation of Burial Rights

Article 28 of the 2010 Constitution declares that every person has inherent dignity and the right to have that dignity respected and protected. The concept of human dignity, as the Constitutional Court of South Africa held in *Makwanyane v. State* [1995] ZACC 3, is the foundational value from which all other rights derive their meaning. In the burial context, dignity operates in two directions: the dignity of the deceased, whose remains are entitled to respectful treatment, and the dignity of surviving family members, whose grief and cultural observances must be respected by the law.

"Human dignity is the value and worth of each person simply as a human being. Law in its highest expression must honour this worth even when the person is no longer living."

The Nigerian scholar Chinua Achebe, in his seminal novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), illustrates the catastrophic dignity violation that results when burial is denied or dishonoured. The protagonist Okonkwo, who takes his own life, is denied burial by members of his clan because of the manner of his death, a denial that reverberates through the community as a wound to collective as well as individual dignity. Achebe's narrative reminds the legal scholar that burial is not merely a private family matter but a public statement about the worth of a human life within a community. Courts in Kenya have increasingly absorbed this understanding, recognizing that unduly delayed burial, or burial conducted in contempt of the deceased's religious and cultural identity, constitutes a violation of the dignity guarantee in Article 28.

## III. Equality and the Rights of Widows in Burial Disputes

Article 27 of the 2010 Constitution guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination. Subsection (3) specifically provides that women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres. The application of this provision to burial disputes has been transformative, particularly in cases where patrilineal customary law has traditionally subordinated the widow's preferences to those of the deceased's male relatives.

The High Court of Kenya held that a widow's rights over the burial of her husband could not be displaced by customary norms that vested such rights exclusively in male members of the deceased's clan. The court reasoned that to enforce such a custom would be to perpetuate discrimination on the basis of gender and marital status, contrary to Article 27. This reasoning aligns with the



broader principle articulated by legal scholar Patricia Kameri-Mbote, who argues that the post-2010 constitutional framework requires the active dismantling of gender hierarchies embedded in customary law, particularly where those hierarchies deprive women of basic rights at moments of profound personal significance. Kameri-Mbote writes that the Constitution's equality guarantee is not merely aspirational but operationally requires courts to subject customary norms to rigorous scrutiny when those norms disadvantage women.

The South African case of *Bhe v. Magistrate Khayelitsha & Others* [2005] (1) SA 580 (CC) offers a compelling parallel. The Constitutional Court struck down the principle of male primogeniture in intestate succession as inconsistent with the equality provisions of the South African Constitution, holding that customary law that systematically disadvantages women on the basis of gender cannot be immunized from constitutional review. Although this case concerned inheritance rather than burial, its foundational reasoning that equality norms demand active scrutiny of customary rules that produce gendered hierarchies has been applied by Kenyan courts in the burial rights context with significant effect.

## IV. The Family as the Fundamental Unit: Article 45 and Nuclear Family Priority

Article 45 of the 2010 Constitution recognizes the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society and the necessary basis for social order, and calls for its protection by the state. Courts have drawn upon this provision to establish a presumption in favour of the immediate nuclear family the surviving spouse and children over extended family and clan members in matters of burial. This presumption reflects a liberal constitutionalist understanding of family that centres the conjugal unit, in some tension with the African communitarian understanding of family as an extended relational network.

The Kenyan case of *Virginia Edith Wambui Otieno v. Joash Ochieng*

*Ugo & Another* [1987] LLR (the 'SM Otieno case'), though decided before the 2010 Constitution, remains the canonical reference point in Kenyan burial law. The Court of Appeal ultimately held that the customary law of the deceased's Luo community governed his burial, overriding the wishes of his Kikuyu wife. Post-2010 jurisprudence has substantially revisited this outcome: courts applying Article 45 now give primary weight to the nuclear family's wishes, while acknowledging that customary law may still be relevant provided it does not violate constitutional rights. The Otieno saga is memorably fictionalized in Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's novel *Coming to Birth* (1986), which captures the alienation of a woman navigating the complex gender politics of marriage across ethnic and class lines in Nairobi, politics that find their sharpest expression in disputes over death and burial.

## V. Culture as a Constitutional Value: Articles 11 and 44

The 2010 Constitution is unusual among African constitutions in the depth of its recognition of culture. Article 11 declares that culture is the foundation of the nation, while Article 44 guarantees every person the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of the person's choice. These provisions operate in the burial context to ensure that customary burial practices are accorded legal weight and protection, provided they satisfy the constitutional test of consistency with the Bill of Rights and are not repugnant to justice or morality.

The constitutional recognition of culture as a foundational value reflects a broader African legal philosophical position articulated by scholars such as Kwasi Wiredu, who argues that African communal values including those governing death, burial, and the afterlife represent a coherent normative system that deserves engagement rather than dismissal. In the burial context, this means that courts must take seriously the argument that a community's customary burial rules are not mere

superstition but are integral to the social fabric and spiritual identity of that community. The Nigerian writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o (though Kenyan by birth) explores this theme powerfully in *Petals of Blood* (1977), depicting how colonial disruption of African burial customs inflicted a deep cultural wound that persisted into the post-independence era. The constitutional recognition of culture in Articles 11 and 44 can be read as a legislative response to precisely this wound.

However, the cultural right is not absolute. Article 44(3) provides that a person shall not compel another person to perform or observe any cultural practice. This limitation is especially significant in burial disputes where one party invokes customary burial rights as a form of compulsion over the other. Courts have held that the cultural right must be balanced against dignity, equality, and religious freedom, and that where customary practices are found to be repugnant to these constitutional values, they yield.

## VI. Freedom of Conscience and Religion: Article 32

Article 32 of the 2010 Constitution guarantees every person freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion. In the burial rights context, this provision protects an individual's right to be buried in accordance with the religious practices of their chosen faith. Where a deceased was a practicing Christian, Muslim, or member of any other faith, their surviving family members may invoke Article 32 to ensure that burial rites conform to the dictates of that faith.

The tension between religious burial preferences and customary burial rules has generated considerable litigation. In cases where a deceased converted from a traditional religion to Christianity or Islam, extended family members have sometimes

# The Constitutional Framework Of Burial Rights In Kenya: Dignity, Culture, And The Courts

Contd from page 18

sought to impose traditional burial rites. Courts applying Article 32 have generally held that the deceased's religious identity, as manifested in their lived practice, governs burial a position consistent with the respect for human autonomy that runs through the Bill of Rights. The Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, in his play *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), dramatises with searing intensity the conflict between colonial law and Yoruba religious burial obligations, illustrating how interference with religious burial rites constitutes a form of existential violence. While Soyinka's context is colonial Nigeria, his analysis resonates in contemporary Kenyan constitutional jurisprudence, where courts must navigate similar conflicts between external legal frameworks and internally coherent religious systems of burial obligation.

## VII. Fair Administrative Action and Burial Permits: Article 47

Article 47 of the 2010 Constitution guarantees every person the right to administrative action that is expeditious, efficient, lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair. In the burial rights context, this provision applies most directly to the actions of local authorities in issuing burial permits and approving the location of burials. Delays or arbitrary refusals in the issuance of burial permits have been challenged successfully under Article 47, with courts holding that the administration of burial-related functions must conform to standards of reasonableness and procedural fairness.

The Fair Administrative Action Act No. 4 of 2015, enacted to give effect to Article 47, provides a statutory framework for challenging administrative decisions affecting burial rights. Courts have held that a local authority that refuses to issue a burial permit without giving reasons, or that imposes conditions not authorized by law, violates both Article 47 and the Act. This administrative law dimension of burial rights is particularly significant for communities in urban areas, where bureaucratic processes intersect with customary practices in complex and sometimes obstructive ways.

## VIII. Customary Law and the Repugnancy Doctrine

The application of customary law in burial disputes is governed by a long-standing principle, inherited from colonial-era legislation and now constitutionally re-anchored, that customary law applies only insofar as it is not repugnant to justice and morality and is not inconsistent

with the Constitution. The 2010 Constitution has substantially raised the constitutional threshold against which customary burial rules are measured, requiring courts to apply a rigorous proportionality analysis rather than a deferential 'community norms' standard.

"The Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic. Any law, including customary law, that is inconsistent with it is void to the extent of the inconsistency, and any act or omission in contravention of this Constitution is invalid."

This constitutional supremacy principle, articulated in Article 2(4) of the 2010 Constitution, has been applied by Kenyan courts to invalidate customary burial rules that violate equality, dignity, or religious freedom. Legal scholar Celestine Nyamu-Musembi has argued compellingly that the post-2010 framework enables what she calls 'engaged pluralism' a mode of constitutional interpretation that neither wholesale rejects customary law nor uncritically defers to it, but rather subjects it to principled constitutional scrutiny while remaining attentive to the legitimate cultural values it embodies. This approach offers a more nuanced and contextually sensitive framework than the blunt repugnancy doctrine of the colonial era.

## IX. South African Comparative Jurisprudence

South African constitutional jurisprudence offers valuable comparative resources for Kenyan courts grappling with burial rights disputes. South Africa's Constitution, like Kenya's 2010 Constitution, contains a transformative Bill of Rights that simultaneously recognizes customary law and subjects it to constitutional values. The Constitutional Court of South Africa has developed a sophisticated doctrine for mediating between these commitments in the context of burial and succession.

In *Mphela & Others v. Haakdoornbult Boerdery CC & Others* [2008] (4) SA rapidly settled the principle that courts must balance cultural burial rights against constitutional dignity rights with scrupulous care, giving neither automatic priority. The court in that case recognised the profound cultural significance of burial on ancestral land and declined to allow eviction proceedings to displace burial rights without full constitutional analysis. This approach has been adopted in principle by Kenyan courts, which similarly recognise that the forced displacement of a burial site may constitute a violation of both dignity and cultural rights.

The earlier South African decision in *Alexkor Ltd & Another v. Richtersveld Community & Others* [2003] ZACC 18 established that customary law ownership rights, in-

cluding rights pertaining to ancestral burial grounds, are constitutionally cognizable and may prevail against competing proprietary claims. This case has informed Kenyan jurisprudence on the protection of community burial grounds against alienation or development, with courts holding that the destruction or desecration of established community burial sites may violate the constitutional right to culture guaranteed by Article 44 of the 2010 Constitution.

## X. The Deceased's Wishes and the Right to Autonomy

A significant but under-theorised dimension of burial rights concerns the autonomy of the deceased. May a person legally bind their surviving family members and community to their expressed burial preferences? The 2010 Constitution's emphasis on individual autonomy and freedom of conscience suggests an affirmative answer, at least in principle. Where a deceased has expressed clear and documented burial wishes whether in a will, an advance directive, or sworn testimony courts have given those wishes significant weight, treating them as a continuing expression of the deceased's dignity and autonomy.

In another case the court held that where a deceased had clearly expressed the wish to be buried in a particular location according to specific rites, those wishes should be honoured unless honoring them would cause a clear injustice to surviving family members or would violate constitutional rights. This approach reflects a broader global trend towards the constitutionalisation of end-of-life autonomy rights, which scholars such as Ronald Dworkin have argued are an extension of the dignity interest in self-determination. Grace Ogot, Kenya's pioneering fiction writer, explores the pathos of unfulfilled burial wishes in her story *The Rain Came* (1968), in which a young woman's sacrifice challenges the community's burial customs and reveals the tension between individual autonomy and communal obligation, a tension that remains legally unresolved.

## XI. The Role of the Courts in Synthesising Constitutional Principles

The courts have emerged as the primary institution for synthesising Kenya's plural burial rights framework. Operating at the intersection of constitutional law, customary law, common law, and religious law, the courts are required to produce coherent outcomes in cases where all four normative systems may point in different directions. The High Court and Court of Appeal have developed a broadly consistent methodology: identify the applicable customary law; assess its consistency with constitutional values; apply the proportionality principle to resolve con-



flicts; and give effect to the principle of human dignity as the foundational norm.

This judicial methodology has been subjected to scholarly criticism on several grounds. Makau Mutua, has argued that courts applying Western liberal constitutionalism to African burial customs risk imposing a form of cultural imperialism in constitutional garb, displacing community norms in the name of abstract rights. Conversely, feminist scholars such as Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira have argued that courts have not gone far enough in dismantling patriarchal customary burial rules that continue to subordinate women's rights. These critiques suggest that the judicial synthesis of burial rights remains a work in progress, and that the courts' authority in this domain depends upon their capacity to engage with the full complexity of the societies they serve.

## XII. Conclusion: Towards a Holistic Constitutional Doctrine of Burial Rights

Kenya's constitutional framework for burial rights is neither simple nor static. It is a living construction, built from the intersection of the 2010 Constitution's Bill of Rights, evolving judicial doctrine, African customary legal pluralism, and global human rights norms. The principles surveyed in this paper human dignity, equality, family protection, cultural recognition, religious freedom, and fair administrative action together constitute a rich, if sometimes internally tensioned, normative architecture for governing burial disputes. The comparative insights from

South African constitutional jurisprudence, and the cultural illumination provided by literary works from Kenya and Nigeria, together suggest that burial rights occupy a unique space in constitutional law: they concern the most intimate moments of human experience, they are freighted with communal and spiritual significance, and they resist reduction to simple doctrinal formulas. As the Kenyan poet and scholar Ali Mazrui observed, the management of death and burial is one of the deepest expressions of a community's values and its understanding of the relationship between the living, the dead, and the yet-to-be-born. A constitutional doctrine adequate to burial rights must honour this depth.

The challenge for Kenyan courts in the years ahead is to continue building a burial rights jurisprudence that is simultaneously faithful to the transformative vision of the 2010 Constitution, attentive to the legitimate cultural claims of Kenya's diverse communities, and responsive to the needs of individuals particularly women and religious minorities who have historically been disadvantaged by customary burial rules. Meeting this challenge will require sustained engagement between the courts, legal scholars, cultural practitioners, and the communities most directly affected by burial disputes. It is a conversation that the Constitution invites, and that the courts have only begun to conduct.

*The writer is a social commentator*

# Uganda Sees 70 Per Cent Surge In Reported Mental Health Cases Over 4 Years

By: Xinhua News Agency

@themtkenyatimes

A new study published on Thursday shows that in Uganda, mental health cases reported to health facilities have increased by more than 70 per cent over the past four years.

Speaking at the launch of the State of Uganda Population Report 2025, Minister of Health Ruth Aceng said the evidence presented is deeply concerning, with cases rising to 843,295 from 494,326. Aceng said fewer than one in 10 people who need care receive appropriate support due to infrastructure gaps, workforce shortages, stigma, among other factors. The report showed that depression, anxiety, trauma-related disorders, substance misuse, and psychosocial distress are affecting millions of Ugandans, including about 23 per-

cent of children and 24 percent of adults, as well as large numbers of adolescents and young people navigating school pressures, unemployment, and social uncertainty. "These are not abstract statistics; they represent families under strain, classrooms disrupted, workplaces diminished in productivity, and communities carrying silent pain," the minister said while presenting the report.

According to the report, the economic impact of the situation is enormous. In 2021, direct expenditure on mental health amounted to 137.3 billion shillings (38.2 million U.S. dollars). Indirect losses from absenteeism reached 696.6 billion shillings, bringing the total annual cost to 833.9 billion shillings. The report warns that if the situation remains without intervention, total economic losses are projected to increase from about 1.1 billion dollars in 2024 to 4.5 billion dollars by 2040. "The

truth is simple and unavoidable: the cost of inaction far exceeds the cost of strategic action," Aceng said. She said the government will mobilize domestic and international financing aimed at implementing measures to combat the rising number of mental health cases.

The report said that without accelerated investment in prevention, early identification, and community-based mental health services, productivity losses could undermine the country's long-term development goals, including those outlined in the Fourth National Development Plan



Ugandan Minister of Health Ruth Aceng. Photo/Courtesy.

# Survival Over Celebration: Ramadan In Sudan Under Shadow Of Civil War

By: Xinhua News Agency

@themtkenyatimes

Ramadan in Sudan has lost its festive spirit, as the ongoing war and deepening economic crisis have transformed the holy month from a time of communal abundance into one of budgeting and daily struggle for survival.

In a market in Omdurman, north of Khartoum, Ahmed Abdul-Baqi, a civil servant whose income was slashed after his workplace closed, stood reviewing a Ramadan shopping list that was much shorter than in previous years.

"We used to buy enough supplies for the entire month, but now we shop day by day and stick to the basics," Abdul-Baqi told Xinhua, adding that rising prices and exchange rate volatility have made it hard to budget.

Economic analyst Abdul-Khaliq Mahjoub said Ramadan arrives this year in "an extremely fragile economic environment," with eroded incomes and higher production and transportation costs pushing up food prices. Supply gaps have emerged for basic goods like sugar, flour, and

cooking oil due to disrupted industrial activity in conflict zones, Mahjoub said. "A wartime economy shifts priorities, with families focused on securing minimum daily needs rather than variety." Since April 15, 2023, Sudan has been mired in war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The conflict rapidly spread nationwide, devastating infrastructure, crippling state institutions, and displacing millions.

Essential services -- electricity, water, telecommunications, and banking -- were severely disrupted. Public revenues and exports plummeted, transport costs surged, and the currency depreciated sharply, driving sustained inflation in the prices of basic goods and services. Political analyst and Chief Editor of Heart of Africa website Loay Abdelrahman noted that many families now depend on food distribution centers and volunteer organizations for Ramadan supplies. Displaced residents returning to cities such as Khartoum, Wad Madani, and Sinnar require urgent government support, including fee relief and measures to lower service and transportation costs, he said.

Sara Al-Naeem, a teacher who recently returned to Khartoum after

temporary displacement, said her family decided to reduce the number of dishes this year and focus only on necessities, as transportation and utility bills consume a growing share of their income. Families are also increasingly dependent on remittances from abroad or buying on credit, as salary payments are delayed and job opportunities dwindle. Interruptions to communications and banking services, however, have hindered remittance flows, a crucial income source for many households, according to Mahjoub. Since the war began, the U.S. dollar has skyrocketed from about 600 Sudanese pounds to nearly 3,500 pounds. The crisis has also fueled a surge in unemployment, which rose from 32.14 percent in 2022 to 47.2 percent in 2025, according to International Monetary Fund statistics.

As part of austerity measures, Khartoum State Governor Mohamed Osman Hamza banned collective iftars -- the evening meals marking the end of the daily Ramadan fast -- organized by state institutions. A statement from the Khartoum State media office said on Thursday the move aims to redirect funds toward vulnerable families.





## Why Nairobi Needs A Change In Leadership

For the second time under different regimes, Nairobi City County has been compelled to enter into cooperation with the national government to ensure the smooth functioning of the country's capital. Two successive county governments, yet the same challenges persist. Clearly, the problem lies deeper than political cycles.

Nairobi is not just another county; it is the nerve center of Kenya. Most government activities are coordinated from the capital, and instability here reverberates across the nation. Nairobi is also the country's global face, shaping perceptions of Kenya abroad.

Once celebrated as the pride of East Africa, Nairobi has in recent years been eclipsed by cities such as Kigali and Addis Ababa. From urban organization to sanitation and management, these cities have outperformed Nairobi, exposing the shortcomings of its leadership.

In Kenya's political context, leadership often becomes entangled in partisan interests. Yet Nairobi requires more than politics—it demands effective



management. To gamble with the city's leadership is to gamble with the nation itself, a risk Kenya cannot afford.

If Nairobi is to remain competitive globally, its governance model must change. The elective county government system should be replaced with a council of technocrats appointed by the head of state and approved by Parliament. Leadership must be based on competence, skill,

and vision—not political proximity.

Nairobi is destined to be Africa's hub. But without decisive reform in its leadership and management, the city will continue to lag as others surge ahead. Nairobi is not merely a city; it is Kenya's face to the world.

*By Daniel Maina, Laikipia University*

## Idle Hands, Restless Nation: Confronting The Youth Unemployment Crisis

Youth unemployment remains one of Kenya's most pressing socio-economic challenges, casting a long shadow over the country's development ambitions. Each year, thousands of young people graduate from universities, colleges, and technical institutions full of hope, only to encounter a job market unable to absorb them. In towns across the Mt. Kenya region and beyond, the sight of energetic and qualified youth idling in shopping centres or taking up unrelated casual jobs tells a troubling story of wasted potential.

Official labour statistics confirm that young people aged between 18 and 34 form the largest share of the unemployed population. While government programmes such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and Ajira Digital have sought to bridge the gap, access to capital, limited market linkages, and inadequate mentorship continue to hinder meaningful impact.



For many graduates, the experience barrier remains a frustrating paradox—one cannot secure a job without experience, yet cannot gain experience without a job.

The consequences extend beyond individual hardship. Prolonged unemployment breeds disillusionment, fuels mental health struggles, and, in some cases, exposes youth to crime, substance abuse, and political manipulation. A nation that sidelines its youth risks undermining its own stability and growth. Kenya's demographic dividend could easily turn into a demographic burden if urgent

and coordinated action is not taken.

Addressing youth unemployment requires more than temporary relief. Stronger alignment between education and market demands, expansion of vocational training, and deliberate support for small and medium enterprises are essential. County governments, private sector players, and financial institutions must nurture innovation and entrepreneurship. Unlocking youth potential is not charity—it is an investment in Kenya's future.

*By Whytney Nasir, Laikipia University*

## Grit And Academic Adaptability: The Mechanism Of Learning

Grit and academic adaptability are increasingly recognized as the twin pillars of effective learning in modern education. Grit embodies perseverance, determination, and sustained effort toward long-term goals, while adaptability reflects the ability of students to adjust to evolving academic environments, expectations, and challenges. Together, these qualities form a mechanism of learning that strengthens resilience, motivation, and performance. Learning is not merely the transfer of knowledge; it is a dynamic process shaped by emotional strength, cognitive engagement, and environmental support.

Students who demonstrate grit persist through academic difficulties, remain focused on their goals, and recover from setbacks. Those with adaptability thrive amid curriculum reforms, technological shifts, and diverse teaching strategies. Yet systemic challenges often undermine these qualities. Rapid policy



changes, inconsistent curricula, and inadequate teacher training create instability. Without proper digital integration, students struggle to adapt to modern platforms. Socioeconomic inequality, poor nutrition, and limited access to resources further widen achievement gaps, weakening resilience and adaptability among marginalized learners.

The impact of grit and adaptability extends beyond classrooms. These qualities foster critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving—skills essential for the global workforce. However, teacher shortages, burnout, and insufficient support systems remain pressing barriers. To address these challenges,

reforms must be gradual, teacher training continuous, and equity programs expanded. Schools should invest in counselling and mental health services to strengthen emotional resilience, while improved working conditions for educators will enhance instructional quality.

In conclusion, grit and adaptability empower students to overcome challenges and succeed academically and professionally. By cultivating these qualities through supportive policies and equitable resources, education systems can nurture resilient learners prepared for long-term success.

*By Collins Kibet, Koitalel University*

## The Hidden Cost Of Abandoning Traditional Foods

In recent years, many communities have steadily abandoned traditional diets in favor of processed and fast foods. Meals once rooted in indigenous grains, fresh vegetables, and natural ingredients are increasingly replaced with packaged snacks, sugary drinks, and refined products. While convenience and affordability drive this shift, the nutritional consequences are profound. Processed foods often contain excessive salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats, contributing to the alarming rise of lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Traditional diets were not only healthier but also culturally significant, reflecting the values and heritage of local communities. They provided balanced nutrition, sustained energy, and supported long-term wellness. By moving away from these foods, society risks losing both its cultural identity and its health resilience. The growing burden



of chronic illness strains families, healthcare systems, and national productivity, creating hidden costs that far outweigh the perceived convenience of modern diets.

The solution lies in reclaiming traditional food practices while integrating modern innovations. Public health campaigns should emphasize the benefits of indigenous diets, while schools and community programs can reintroduce traditional meals to younger generations. Farmers and local producers must be supported to grow and market

indigenous crops, ensuring affordability and accessibility. At the household level, families should prioritize fresh, locally sourced ingredients over processed alternatives.

Ultimately, food choices shape not only individual health but also national well-being. By embracing traditional diets, Kenya can reduce the burden of lifestyle diseases, preserve cultural heritage, and build a healthier, more resilient future.

*By Mc Gathuku, Independent Journalist*

# SPORTS NEWS

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**Sports >>** \*Kenyan teenage sensation Marion Serenge, who starred at the 2024 FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup, has officially been unveiled as the newest marquee signing for St. Noa Girls Secondary School-Zana.

## Rising Starlets Sensation Joins Uganda's St. Noa Girls



Marion Serenge celebrates her goal for teh Junior Starlets against Burundi. PHOTO/Raymond Makhaya

Kenyan teenage sensation Marion Serenge, who starred at the 2024 FIFA Under-17 Women's World Cup, has officially been unveiled as the newest marquee signing for St. Noa Girls Secondary School-Zana.

The move marks a significant cross-border transfer for the 17-year-old forward, who has spent her formative years at Archbishop Njenga Girls in Kenya under the tutelage of her father, the legendary Fred Serenge.

By joining St. Noa, she enters one of Uganda's most prestigious sporting institutions, famous for producing elite talent for the Ugandan national teams.

During Kenya's historic Under-17 women's World Cup de-

but in the Dominican Republic, she was ranked as the fourth fastest player in the tournament, recording a blistering top speed of 30.42 km/h.

Her ability to torment defenses with her electric pace and technical finesse was instrumental in the Junior Starlets' qualifying campaign, where she scored critical goals against Ethiopia and Burundi to secure Kenya's first-ever ticket to a global football showpiece.

Football runs deep in Marion's DNA. She is the daughter of former Harambee Stars player Fred Serenge and the sister of Kevin Amwayi.

Her decision to move to St. Noa suggests a strategic step

in her development, seeking a high-competition environment while balancing her academic aspirations, a dual path she has long advocated for.

For St. Noa Girls, securing Serenge's signature is a massive statement of intent as they prepare for the upcoming national and East Africa Secondary School (FEASSSA) Games.

Serenge is expected to wear her signature Number 10 jersey and lead the attack for the "Zana-based" giants. Her presence will offer elite Speed, big-game experience and a creative spark.

As Kenyan and Ugandan football continue to intertwine, Marion's move is more than just a school transfer, it is the next

chapter for a player whose sights are set firmly on a professional career in Europe.

*Capital Sport*

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

**Sports >>>** \*As Njoroge Kibugu carded an eagle on the 18th hole to confirm his place in the next round of the Magical Kenya Open, there was a familiar face among the crowd that was cheering him on.

# Top Golfer Njoroge Kibugu Pays Tribute To Man Behind Magical Kenya Open Success

As Njoroge Kibugu carded an eagle on the 18th hole to confirm his place in the next round of the Magical Kenya Open, there was a familiar face among the crowd that was cheering him on.

Amidst the euphoric moment in the aftermath of his historic feat, the face of his father, Kagwe Kibugu, was unmissable.

The two shared a heartwarming father-son hug as they reveled in another huge achievement for the Kibugus.

Afterwards, Njoroge paid homage to his old man for introducing him to the sport and supporting his career thus far.

"I didn't even expect him to be there but yeah, it's amazing. He was so happy and it's nice sharing the emotion with him. He's poured his heart and soul into me playing golf his whole life and I can't be more grateful to him and my mum. They're the reason I'm here and yeah, I'm happy he's happy," the 22-year-old said.

The older Kibugu is — in his own right — a golfing guru in Kenya, having begun as an amateur golfer who went on to serve as the chair of the Uganda Golf Club for a decade.

He mentored the younger Kibugu — along with his older brother Mutahi — sending the duo to golfing academies in South Africa to refine their art and craft.

## Return on Investment

It is an investment that has paid dividends for Kibugu Senior as both sons have gone on to establish a reputation as the country's top golfers.

At the 2022 Magical Kenya Open at the Muthaiga Golf Club, the then 18-year-old Njoroge made history by making the cut as an amateur courtesy of a 6-under-par 136 after two rounds.

A year later, Mutahi followed suit at the same venue, eventually finishing in 65th place with 1-under-par.



Njoroge Kibugu celebrates with family after making the cut for the Magical Kenya Open. PHOTO/KENYA OPEN GOLF LIMITED.

On Friday evening, Njoroge added another feather to his cap with a 5-under-par 69 to seal his place in the weekend action.

The Windsor Golf and Country Club player carded an eagle on the 18th hole to round off what had been a thrilling afternoon on the course.

Speaking afterwards, Njoroge admitted he did not expect things to pan out the way they did in the last minute.

"I didn't expect it to go as close as it did. I was trying to hit the centre of the green but it came out hot. Yeah, I had a 4-footer to finish and the rest is history," he said.

It would have been a different ending to the story after a bogey on the 12th and 14th holes, after what had been generally an assured performance on the course.

Reflecting on that oopsie moment, the youngster admitted his mind had been briefly sidetracked.

"I mean on 12, just came out of it, you know, got quick and yeah, just an unforced error that I didn't

need to make it at the time. At 14, again...a lapse of judgement. I wasn't in the zone, clocked out a bit but I managed to get it back. I knew I needed to steady it during 15, 16 and 17 just to get to 18 and I'm pretty proud of myself that I did," Njoroge explained.

## What next?

With countless eyeballs set to be fixated on him in the penultimate round, Njoroge will be feeling the pressure of shouldering the hopes of a nation.

However, the youngster is unworried; noting that the crowd at Karen Country Club will only fuel his drive.

"I'll come in numbers, you know, make noise. We like that. We like the energy. Bring the energy to the tournament. And yeah, I just can't wait to play the weekend, you know. A couple of low scores hopefully. Hopefully, I can get a few birdies in," he said.

With a slaloming run in the past year — in which he shone in the Sunshine Development Tour East

Africa Swing — Njoroge is loving his odds heading into the weekend.

His peerless run earned him a ticket to the prestigious Sunshine Tour in South Africa, where he is the sole male golfer from East Africa to make the list.

Due to the foregoing, Njoroge believes he belongs with the big boys and has vowed to give it his all come Saturday.

"This is my first time making cut as a pro. I've been playing really good golf coming in. It's been really good. I've come off a couple of wins and I felt like I deserved to be playing in the weekend and more so contending. Not quite there but I'm just proud to be there in the weekend," he said.

The youngster will tee off at 8:10 am, alongside Australian David Micheluzzi and Italian David Ravetto.

Capital Sport

# SPORTS NEWS



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# SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN



# Sunrise On The Reality Of Uzbek Women: A Dialogue With The Literary Rakshuna Akhmedova

By: Turkia Loucif  
@themtkenyatimes

The success of the novel in less than one year exceeded my expectations

In the world of Uzbek literature, writer Rakshona Akhmedova stands out strongly as a voice for women's issues and society. In this interview, we talk to her about her latest novel "Tongotar" (Sunrise), which deals with the subject of forced marriage and its impact on the lives of Uzbek women. We learn about her literary vision, her experience in writing, and her goals in changing social reality.

1: We welcome and honor you and your literary achievement in the novel Forced Marriage

In turn, I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude, Anarkshona Akhmedova is an Uzbek writer born in 1987 in the Fergana region of Uzbekistan. She graduated from Uzbekistan State University of the World Language in 2005. She won the national literary short story competition "Water is a priceless blessing".

I started my literary career with my first book, "Sea of Dreams", which was published in Uzbekistan in 2020, followed by "A Woman Under an Umbrella" in 2021, published by Akadem Publishing. My stories and poems have been translated into several languages and published in prestigious literary magazines.

My latest novel, Tongotar (Sunrise), published in 2025, has been critically acclaimed. I currently live in Prague, where I continue to weave my literary magic.

2: Celebrating your novel that deals with forced marriage in your society and the psychological consequences it affects the heroine's character, did the novelist Akhmedova choose a rural environment in which the events of a realistic novel are weaved?



Rakshuna Akhmedova

"Forced marriage is a very sensitive topic in Uzbekistan. In my novel Tongotar, I tried to delve into the suffering of Uzbek women who are forced to marry against their will. This forced marriage is not only a restriction on her freedom, but also a robbery of her dreams, her happiness, and her most basic rights in life.

I wanted to show how society, at times, places women in a narrow mold, where they are forced to sacrifice their happiness for the sake of family and children. A woman lives her life for others, and when she tries to live for herself, she has lost her health and youth.

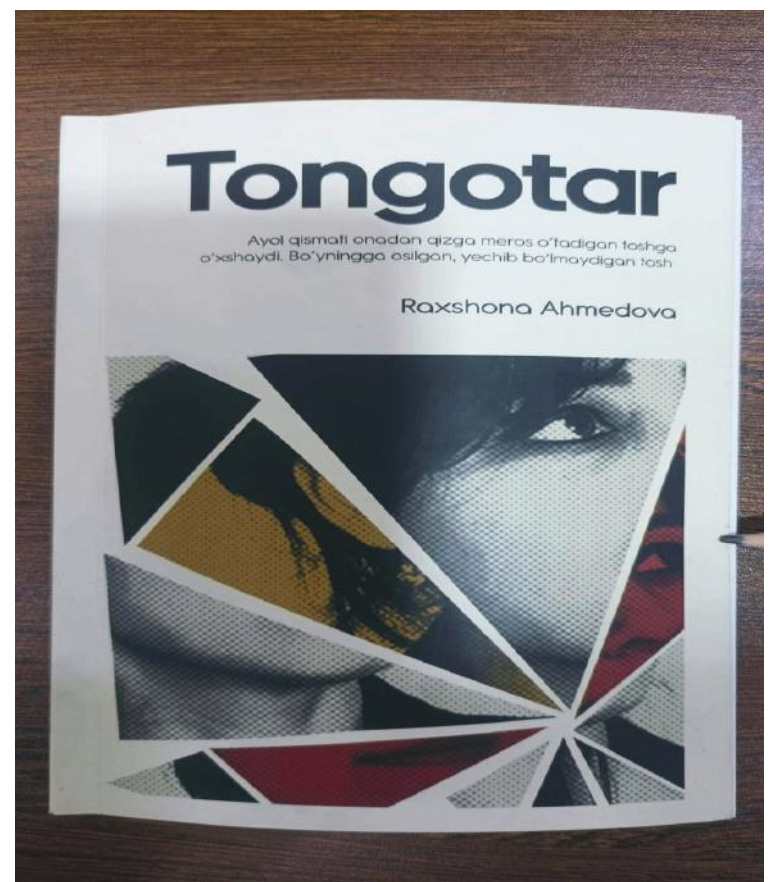
This novel is an attempt to open a dialogue about this social phenom-

non, about the need to respect women's rights and enable them to make their own decisions. I hope that my novel will contribute to changing reality, and that the voice of the Uzbek woman who has suffered in silence will be heard."

3: How did the novelist prepare her heroine to be deprived of her will? Is the motivation for these displacements purely material?

"The characters in my novel, like autumn leaves, are scattered in the wind, carrying with them stories of pain and hope. Each of them tells a different story, but they all intersect on one point: the search for happiness.

I wanted to make each character a symbol of resilience, of being able to stand up again after each fall.



Huda, which is the name of the heroine, was forced to marry when she was still a child, and she finds in her heart a strength that pushes her to continue. Amina, who has lost her dream of education, refuses to give up and finds her own way.

These characters, despite all their suffering, do not lose hope. Rather, it is this hope that guides us out of darkness into light, from suffering to joy. It's the story of unquenchable hope, which keeps beating in the hearts, pushing them forward, and making them smile on the face of time."

4: How can the novel be a mirror in which the Uzbek woman reflects her true image, revealing the pains and hopes she lives?

"Every literary work is a reflection of its time and place, and 'Tongotar' is no exception. In this novel, I tried to delve into the depths of women's lives in our society, to observe the details of their daily lives and their ongoing challenges. I wanted to show how, despite all the limitations, women remain strong, able to overcome difficulties and achieve

their dreams.

This novel is an attempt to understand the depths of women, to shed light on their lives and the great role they play in society. I hope that this image will be honest and contribute to enhancing understanding and respect for women and their role in society. It's a story of resilience, of hope, of the ability to change.

I would like to say that 'Tongotar' is a call to think, to reflect and to work for a better future for women and a more just and equal society."

5: Was the decision to write about forced marriage the result of a provocation or a social phenomenon that must be addressed in a literary work?

"Forced marriage is not a personal experience for me, but it has always been a sensitive and important topic of all times. For this reason, I decided to include it in my novel 'Tongotar'.

I wanted to highlight this social phenomenon, to show how it can affect the live.