



DCP: Gov't Targeting Mt Kenya Traders In Nairobi Demolitions
 Opposition party Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) leader Rigathi Gachagua yesterday accused the government of selectively targeting traders from the Mt Kenya region in a series of demolitions of informal businesses in Nairobi. **Page 6**



Inua Jamii Mashinani Holds Public Engagement In Makeni, Residents Briefed On Healthcare And Development Plans
 The national government officials through the Inua Jamii Mashinani initiative yesterday engaged residents of Mutyambua in Makeni county on key development programmes. **Page 16**

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Wednesday, March 11, 2026 No. 01502 KSh 60 (TSh 1,700 : USh 2,700 : RFr 900)

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Politics Ruto affirmed that the Broad-Based Government is delivering on its promises

Ruto Pushes 10-Point Agenda As UDA, ODM MPs Convene



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 President Ruto highlighted progress in key areas of the 10-Point Agenda, starting with electoral reforms



President William Ruto has affirmed that the Broad-Based Government is delivering on its promises, highlighting progress across key social, economic, and political reforms anchored in the 10-Point Agenda, a framework jointly agreed with the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in March 2025. Speaking yesterday during a UDA-ODM Joint Parliamentary Group meeting at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), the President noted that the partnership between UDA and ODM is guided by a shared goal to unite the country, improve service delivery, and tackle long-standing challenges affecting citizens.

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President William Ruto. Photo | PCS

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UDA-ODM Parliamentary Meeting Seeks To Fast-Track Government Reforms

BY WMW

@themtkenyatimes

Some Of The Moments As Captured In Pictures

President William Ruto yesterday reaffirmed the Broad-Based Government's commitment to delivering on its 10-Point Agenda, a collaborative initiative between the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) aimed at promoting national unity, economic stability, and social development.

The government's focus includes lowering inflation, enhancing agricultural productivity, expanding health coverage under the Social Health Authority, and accelerating infrastructure development across the country.

The President also highlighted efforts to increase youth employment, strengthen devolution through higher county allocations, and improve justice administration, including police reforms and compensation for victims of protests.

Speaking at the UDA-ODM Joint Parliamentary Group meeting at the Kenya International Convention Centre, Nairobi, Ruto announced the formation of a parliamentary broad-based mediation committee to fast-track pending legislation submitted by NADCO.

He emphasized that this collaboration between UDA and ODM lawmakers is central to ensuring the swift implementation of key reforms, reinforcing the government's commitment to inclusive development and effective service delivery for Kenyans.

By deepening coordination within the ruling coalition, the meeting underscores the Broad-Based Government's approach to consolidating political partnership while addressing pressing economic and social priorities.



Editor's Desk



The Mt. Kenya Times



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Group Executive Chairman
M. Danson
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dan-mwangi-1b47446b/>

Our Contacts
P. O. Box 101 675 - 00101 Nairobi, Cell: 0700 161 866, 0705 215 262
Editorial Desk: editorial@mtkenyatimes.co.ke, **Adverts:** ads@mtkenyatimes.co.ke,
News Desk: news@mtkenyatimes.co.ke, **Web:** www.mtkenyatimes.co.ke

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Head of Public Service Felix Koskei emphasized the critical role of a disciplined and responsive Public Service in ensuring government programs deliver tangible benefits to citizens. He convened a consultative meeting with National Government Administrative Officers and Ministry leaders responsible for Internal Security and National Administration to discuss strengthening coordination, service delivery, and communication of government initiatives. The discussions highlighted the role of NGAOs in facilitating inter-ministerial coordination and keeping citizens informed. Koskei stressed integrity, professionalism, disciplined conduct, robust situational reporting, effective use of digital data systems, and structured community feedback to support evidence-based decision-making. He concluded that a cohesive and coordinated Public Service is essential for effective implementation of government programs for the benefit of all Kenyans.

Turkana County government, led by Deputy Governor Dr. John Erus, flagged off Sh96 million worth of medical supplies for 243 government health facilities across 11 sub-counties. Delivered via 11 lorries through the Last Mile Distribution system, the consignment includes pharmaceutical drugs, medical supplies, laboratory reagents, and vaccines such as anti-rabies and immunization vaccines. Supplies are requisitioned by facilities based on actual needs and distributed by KEMSA. County leadership emphasizes accountability, with verification at each facility and a public hotline for reporting misuse. Officials urge residents to rely on accurate information and commit to uninterrupted, high-quality health services for all.



Vocal Africa CEO Hussein Khalid has warned that Mombasa's aging infrastructure is at risk of being overwhelmed by ongoing heavy rains, pointing to a severe sewage crisis caused by outdated drainage systems. Residents and activists urged the County Government to urgently upgrade drainage and other critical infrastructure, highlighting crumbling roads, overflowing sewage, erratic electricity, and inadequate drainage. They called on Governor Abdulswamad Shariff Nassir and MCAs to prioritize public welfare, noting that much of the city's colonial-era infrastructure has deteriorated over time. Concerns come amid national flood alerts after deadly rains in Nairobi and other regions, emphasizing the urgent need for preventive action to protect residents and property.



The Kenya Forest Service (KFS) has temporarily closed several sections of Karura Forest due to heavy rains causing rivers to overflow, making trails and recreational areas unsafe. Key landmarks affected include the waterfall, caves, bridges, and low-lying picnic spots, as the Ruaka and Karura rivers have flooded paths. KFS emphasized that access is prohibited until further notice to protect hikers and cyclists from unstable, waterlogged terrain. Additional foresters have been deployed to monitor conditions and enforce restrictions. Visitors are advised to remain on higher ground, follow on-site instructions, and report any concerns. Access will resume only after safety inspections confirm the infrastructure is secure.

Muraga Technical Training Institute (TTI) in Tharaka Nithi County has urged young people and skilled workers across Kenya to enroll for skills training and certification to boost employability. Speaking to KNA, Chief Principal Ms. Purity Muriithi highlighted that the institute focuses on youth who have completed formal education but lack practical skills needed to earn a living. She emphasized that Muraga TTI equips trainees with marketable skills to help them compete effectively in the labor market. The institute also offers the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program, which allows individuals such as welders, masons, and electricians with informal practical experience to receive formal training and certification, enhancing their professional credibility and career opportunities.



A delegation from the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), led by Executive Director Dr. Canisius Kanangire, visited KALRO to discuss ongoing collaboration in agricultural research and value chain adoption. The team highlighted technologies promoting mechanization through the AgriDrive Technique, plans to introduce drone technology, and the creation of a youth innovation hub to empower smallholder farmers, youth, and women. KALRO Director General Dr. Patrick Ketiem welcomed the engagement, emphasizing the institution's role in generating, validating, and scaling climate-smart technologies for food and nutrition security. He stressed the importance of commercialization and market uptake of research outputs to ensure innovations reach farmers effectively. KALRO leadership reaffirmed commitment to strengthening partnerships for technology development and adoption.

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Demolitions Gachagua linked the demolitions to instructions allegedly issued by CS Davis Chirchir and President Ruto

DCP: Gov't Targeting Mt Kenya Traders In Nairobi Demolitions

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

Opposition party Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) leader Rigathi Gachagua yesterday accused the government of selectively targeting traders from the Mt Kenya region in a series of demolitions of informal businesses in Nairobi.

In a press briefing at the party headquarters, Gachagua condemned recent demolition exercises carried out by the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA), claiming they disproportionately affected small-scale traders from the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities.

Gachagua linked the demolitions to instructions allegedly issued by Roads and Transport Cabinet Secretary Davis Chirchir and President William Ruto, describing the exercise as a "witch-hunt" against traders struggling to survive in the informal sector.

"We raise issues of humanitarian concern that are taking the style of targeted ethnic profiling of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities in Nairobi that is well calculated to rip them off economically," Gachagua said.

The former Deputy President cited demolitions carried out in Githurai on February 18, Roysambu on March 5 and Uhuru Market on March 8, claiming the operations were conducted at night and without adequate

consultation with traders.

He further alleged that other markets dominated by traders from the Mt Kenya region had been earmarked for similar actions.

Among the areas he mentioned were Tsunami Market in Starehe constituency, Nyayo Market, Kamukunji Market, Gikomba Market, Morlem and City Cotton.

According to Gachagua, the demolitions raise concerns about fairness in the enforcement of planning and land-use regulations.

"If public land and road reserves must be cleared, the law must apply equally and without fear or favour," he said.

He questioned why other high-profile properties built on contested public land had not faced similar action, arguing that the government appeared to move swiftly against small traders while ignoring powerful interests.

The DCP leader also accused the government of worsening the economic hardship facing ordinary Kenyans by destroying small businesses without providing alternative trading spaces.

"These traders represent the backbone of our informal economy. They are not criminals; they are hardworking citizens striving to feed their families under extremely difficult circumstances," he said.

Gachagua further claimed that the demolitions were politically motivated and intended to weaken support

for Mt Kenya communities in Nairobi ahead of the 2027 general election.

At the same time, he called on the government to focus on addressing flooding and improving drainage systems in Nairobi, particularly as heavy rains continue to affect parts of the city and surrounding areas.

The opposition leader urged authorities to immediately halt the demolition exercise and subject it to what he described as a transparent and fair review.

"Any enforcement of planning regulations must be humane, lawful and uniformly applied across the board — from the smallest roadside stall to the most prominent commercial establishments," he said.

Government agencies have previously defended demolition exercises in Nairobi, saying they are meant to clear illegal structures built on road reserves and public land in order to improve road expansion, drainage and urban planning.

Before issuing the press statement, Gachagua and

"We raise issues of humanitarian concern that are taking the style of targeted ethnic profiling of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities in Nairobi that is well calculated to rip them off economically," Gachagua said.

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DCP leader Rigathi Gachagua addressing the media yesterday at party headquarters

other party officials held a consultative meeting with former MPs to deliberate on the state of the nation and the current economic situation.

Among the MPs present were; Kabinga Wathayu (Mwea), Munene Wambugu (Kirinyaga Central), Gichuki Mugambi (Otha-

ya), Gichuhi Mwangi (Tetu), Anthony Kiai (Mukurweini), Peter Mwathi (Limuru) and Wainaina Jungle (Thika town).



DCP leader Rigathi Gachagua with former MPs after a consultative meeting yesterday | Photo: Courtesy

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Infrastructure According to the President, the approach will allow the country to mobilise large-scale funding for development projects

Ruto: Privatisation Of State Firms To Fund Mega Infrastructure Projects

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

The government is using the privatisation of State corporations to unlock their value and channel the proceeds into the construction of mega infrastructure projects, President William Ruto has said.

The President said the strategy will help Kenya build a stronger and more resilient economy by directing resources from public assets toward transformative development initiatives.

Ruto explained that the KSh106 billion raised through the Kenya Pipeline Company (KPC) Initial Public Offering (IPO), following the sale of a 65 per cent government stake, will be used to leverage up to KSh1.2 trillion through the National Infrastructure Fund.

According to the President, the approach will allow the country to mobilise large-scale funding for development projects without increasing pressure on the national budget or relying heavily on public borrowing.

Speaking yesterday during the bell ringing ceremony for the Kenya Pipeline Company IPO at the Nairobi Securities Exchange, which marked the beginning of share trading, the President said relying solely on dividends from the company would not generate enough resources to finance the country's development ambitions.

He explained that Kenya Pipeline Company currently generates about KSh5 billion annually in dividends, meaning it would take nearly 20 years to accumulate KSh100 billion.

"In other words, while the annual dividends provide a steady stream of revenue, they are far too modest to fi-

nance the transformative projects our country requires," he said.

Ruto said that without proceeds from privatisation, the government would either slow down investment in critical infrastructure or continue borrowing to finance commercially viable projects.

"Neither option serves our long-term interests, and both are sub-optimal and ultimately counter-productive," he said.

The President reiterated that all proceeds from the privatisation of public assets will be directed toward infrastructure development through the National Infrastructure Fund.

He noted that unlike in the past, when privatisation proceeds were absorbed into the general government budget, the funds raised will now be ring-fenced for development projects.

"The proceeds of this IPO, as well as future privatisation, will provide capital to the National Infrastructure Fund, whose law I signed on Monday February 9, 2026," he said.

Ruto also revealed that the government plans to seek cheaper private capital through the stock market by issuing the Road Maintenance Levy Fund Securitisation Bond later this year to raise funds for road construction.

The President commended the Kenya Pipeline Company IPO, noting that it attracted more than 70,000 individual Kenyan investors. He said the participation of many citizens has broadened ownership and allowed more Kenyans to directly invest in national enterprises.

He also highlighted the participation of the governments of Uganda and Rwanda in the IPO, saying their investments strengthen Kenya Pipeline

Company as a strategic regional enterprise and reflect the growing economic integration within the East African Community.

"This transaction was also the first government-led IPO undertaken under the new legal framework established by the Privatisation Act, 2025," the President said.

Ruto further noted that the introduction of the Ziidi Trader platform has marked a new chapter in the democratisation of Kenya's capital markets by enabling more citizens to participate in stock trading.

"Already, 61 per cent of trading today at the NSE is by Kenyans, ordinary Kenyans, buying shares worth between KSh1,000 and KSh2,000," he said.

The President said privatisation reforms are also aimed at improving the efficiency of State corporations and ensuring they deliver value to citizens.

He cited reforms in the sugar sector, noting that several companies that previously depended heavily on government support are now paying taxes.

"These companies never paid taxes, but they are today paying KSh1.5 billion as tax. We have moved from using public resources to pay their debts to getting taxes from them. This is transformation," he said.

Ruto also pointed to reforms at New KCC, which has received about KSh7 billion from the Exchequer over the past three years. He said this support would not continue, and that the ownership and management of the creamery will instead be transferred to farmers and cooperatives.

The President said these reforms are among the key reasons the Kenyan economy remains stable.

"It is not by accident that our



President William Ruto speaking during the ceremony | Photo: PCS

exchange rate is stable. It is not by accident that our inflation rate is low. It is not by accident that we have a bigger kitty of foreign exchange reserves," he said. "It is a result of the deliberate actions we have taken."

National Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi said the government's economic policies are designed not only to manage the present but also to build a stronger future.

He noted that the Kenya Pipeline Company IPO will allow the company to access additional capital to expand

pipeline capacity, increase storage facilities and develop its oil refinery to meet growing domestic and regional demand.

Nairobi Securities Exchange Chairman Kiprono Kittony warned politicians against using the capital market to settle political disputes, saying such actions undermine investor confidence.

He said Kenya's capital markets have the potential to unlock significant value for citizens, attract regional and international investors, and position Nairobi as a financial

hub for East Africa.

"Already, the Kenya Pipeline IPO is demonstrating the leadership of Kenya in the capital market," he said.

Kenya Pipeline Company Chairperson Faith Boinett said the board is committed to protecting and growing shareholder value while maintaining high standards of governance and transparency.

"To our new shareholders, this is your company. We pledge to steer it with integrity, transparency and unwavering focus," she said.

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President William Ruto with NSE and government officials during the KPC bell ringing ceremony.

Politics The meeting was attended by Deputy President Kithure Kindiki, ODM Party Leader Oburu Oginga, governors, and Members of Parliament

President Ruto Highlights Progress Of 10-Point Agenda As UDA-ODM Parliamentary Group Meets

BY MKT Correspondents

@themkenyatimes

President William Ruto has affirmed that the Broad-Based Government is delivering on its promises, highlighting progress across key social, economic, and political reforms anchored in the 10-Point Agenda, a framework jointly agreed with the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in March 2025.

Speaking yesterday during a UDA-ODM Joint Parliamentary Group meeting at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), the President noted that the partnership between UDA and ODM is guided by a shared goal to unite the country, improve service delivery, and tackle long-standing challenges affecting citizens.

He emphasized that the government remains accountable to the people, not to self-appointed supervisors, saying, "We did not make the commitment to them; we made the commitment to the people of Kenya."

The meeting was attended by Deputy President Kithure Kindiki, ODM Party Leader Oburu Oginga, governors, and Members of Parliament led by Majority Leader Kimani Ichung'wah and Minority Leader Junet Mohammed.

President Ruto highlighted progress in key areas of the 10-Point Agenda, starting with electoral reforms.

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has been appointed and successfully conducted several by-elections, reinforcing the government's commitment to credible and inclusive elections.

On inclusivity, he noted that the administration has implemented policies supporting minorities, including bursaries and other social support measures. To tackle the cost of living, the President explained that the government has transformed the agricultural sector, increasing productivity and stabilizing prices of essential commodities. Additionally, currency stability has helped keep import costs, including fuel, manageable.

In education, the government has increased funding to reduce the fi-

nancial burden on parents, introducing a new model that lowers fees for universities and technical vocational institutions (TVETs).

President Ruto emphasized, "We want to make sure that we lift the burden of parents on school fees."

Healthcare access has also been expanded through the Social Health Authority (SHA), which now covers nearly 30 million Kenyans, reducing medical expenses for households.

On job creation, the President stated that the government has generated employment and business opportunities for 1.8 million previously unemployed citizens over the last three years. Initiatives span sectors such as housing, digital services, and labor export programmes.

President Ruto stressed the importance of devolution, announcing increased funding for counties, timely disbursement of funds, and measures to ensure county assemblies have their own budgets by July 2027. This will strengthen local governance and oversight. He also urged MPs to draft the Ward Fund Bill to provide a legal framework for local development funds, aligning with court recommendations on the Constituency Development Fund.

Anti-corruption measures have been strengthened, with the government enacting the Conflict of Interest Act and digitizing 30,000 government services to reduce waste and inefficiency. Platforms such as e-Citizen now facilitate daily revenue collection of KSh 1 billion. The introduction of the Single Treasury Account, zero-based budgeting, and e-procurement have further enhanced financial accountability. The Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission has secured 86 convictions and seized assets worth KSh 9.8 billion in three years, while pursuing KSh 22 billion acquired illegally.

On debt management, the government cut spending by KSh300 billion, halted consumption subsidies, and reorganized debt to maintain fiscal stability. Funding for development continues through public-private partnerships and privatization of state assets.

The President also called on the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) to propose legislation protecting protestors,



From left: DP Kithure Kindiki, President William Ruto and Dr Oburu Oginga walking to the meeting venue yesterday.

signaling a collaborative approach between the government and independent agencies.

The UDA-ODM Parliamentary Group endorsed extending the 10-Point Agenda committee for 60 days, forming a technical committee to coordinate coalition engagements, and establishing a parliamentary mediation committee to accelerate legislative implementation of agenda

items.

Deputy President Kindiki praised the new financing model as a vehicle for propelling Kenya toward a first-world economy, while Oburu Oginga highlighted the creation of the National Infrastructure Fund, expected to support mega projects such as dams, dual carriageways, and the extension of the Standard Gauge Railway to the Uganda border.

President Ruto concluded by reiterating that the 10-Point Agenda strengthens the Broad-Based Government, ensures accountability, and delivers tangible results in health, education, infrastructure, job creation, and governance reforms. The administration remains committed to uniting the country and improving the quality of life for all Kenyans.

Relief The relief support was delivered yesterday by Othaya MP Wambugu Wainaina, Nyeri Senator Wahome Wamatinga and the County Government of Nyeri

Leaders Step In As Othaya's Gura Canal Overflow Victims Receive Relief Supplies

BY WMW

@themtkenyatimes

Residents of Gituiga village in Mahiga Ward, Othaya Constituency, Nyeri County, who were affected by the recent overflow of the Gura Hydropower canal received food assistance from local leaders as efforts begin to address the damage.

The relief support was delivered yesterday by Othaya MP Wambugu Wainaina, Nyeri

Senator Wahome Wamatinga and the County Government of Nyeri during a meeting with the 20 affected families.

During the meeting, leaders assured residents that all damages caused by the incident would be assessed and compensated.

The MP, who was represented by his Personal Assistant Joel Macharia and Wambugu Wainaina Foundation official Joseph Macharia Wachira, pledged continued support to the affected households until the matter is fully resolved.

"We will ensure that all affected families are assisted and compensated after the ongoing assessment is completed," Macharia told residents.

Chinga Tea Factory Director Mukundi Wambugu, who also chairs the Gura Hydropower Committee, confirmed that a risk and damage assessment is currently underway.

He said the exercise will help determine the extent of losses to ensure fair and rightful compensation for the affected residents.

He added that the assessment



Othaya MP Wambugu Wainaina's representatives Joel Macharia and Joseph Macharia Wachira handing over relief supplies to some of the affected families. | Photo: Courtesy.

team is expected to conclude its work within the next three days.

The disaster struck Gituiga village over the weekend after water from the Gura Hydropower canal overflowed, leaving at least 20 families counting heavy losses.

Residents reported damage to household items, farms and livestock.

Local leaders also announced that a public participation meeting will be held tomorrow following a request from area residents.

The forum will bring together management from the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), officials from the Nyeri County Government and the Othaya MP's team to address the issue and discuss long-term solutions.

The Gura Hydropower project, developed by the KTDA, generates electricity mainly used by Chinga, Iria-ini, Gitugi and Gathuthi tea factories to lower processing costs for farmers.

However, the canal has previously been linked to flood-

ing and land damage in nearby farms during periods of heavy rainfall.

In past incidents, residents demanded compensation after water from the canal overflowed and eroded farms and tea plantations in Nyeri.

Local leaders now say the upcoming consultations will help address residents' concerns and prevent similar incidents in future.




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Chinga Tea Factory Director Mukundi Wambugu addressing the affected families yesterday.

Trade The agreement is widely seen as a key mechanism for boosting intra-African trade and strengthening regional value chains.

Kenya Advances AfCFTA Trade While Ethiopia, Somalia Align Policies

BY Suleiman Mbatiah

@themtkenyatimes

With a combined population of more than 200 million people and some of Africa's largest livestock resources, the Horn of Africa stands to benefit significantly from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The regional economies of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia are at different stages of implementing the continental trade agreement, with Kenya already participating in trade initiatives while Somalia and Ethiopia continue aligning their policies and institutions with AfCFTA requirements.

The AfCFTA, which officially launched trading in January 2021, aims to create a single African market for goods and services by reducing tariffs, harmonizing standards and addressing non-tariff barriers across the continent.

The agreement is widely seen as a key mechanism for boosting intra-African trade and strengthening regional value chains.

Discussions about the pace and progress of implementation in the Horn of Africa were highlighted during regional technical consultations on cross-border livestock trade integration under AfCFTA held in Naivasha, Nakuru County.

Kenya has emerged as one of the early implementers of the agreement. The country has developed a national implementation strategy and is actively participating in the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative, a program designed to facilitate early trade among participating countries while broader operational mechanisms are finalized.

According to officials, Kenya

is positioning key economic sectors to benefit from expanded continental markets created by the trade pact. The government aims to increase exports, strengthen regional value chains and improve the competitiveness of Kenyan products in African markets.

"The Kenya National AfCFTA Implementation Strategy (2022–2027) provides the national roadmap for implementing AfCFTA commitments and identifies agriculture, livestock and fisheries as priority sectors for export expansion and regional value chains," said Lynda Ouma of Kenya's State Department for Trade.

Kenya has already begun exporting goods under the AfCFTA framework through the Guided Trade Initiative. Several companies are participating in the program, and authorities have issued certificates of origin for shipments destined for other AfCFTA participating countries.

Officials say the country was among the first to ratify the agreement and join the Guided Trade Initiative.

So far, 33 firms have taken part in the program, and more than 100 certificates of origin have been issued for goods exported under the arrangement.

In addition to AfCFTA, Kenya continues to rely on existing regional trade agreements such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to facilitate cross-border commerce and strengthen regional trade flows.

Despite this progress, officials acknowledge that several challenges remain, particularly in areas such as animal disease surveillance, veteri-

nary services, infrastructure development and cross-border coordination systems. These challenges are especially important for the livestock sector, which plays a major role in regional trade and pastoral livelihoods.

Somalia, which joined the East African Community in 2024, is also moving toward full participation in AfCFTA. The country is currently in the final stages of ratifying the agreement and establishing the institutional framework needed for its implementation.

Somalia's parliament approved the AfCFTA ratification bill in late 2025 with strong support. The next steps include presidential assent and the formal deposit of ratification instruments with the African Union Commission before the agreement becomes legally binding for the country.

According to government officials, the parliament passed the bill with 145 votes in favor, reflecting broad political support for joining the continental trade framework.

Osman Ibrahim, Somalia's Director of Foreign Trade and Market Access, said the government is working to establish the institutions and technical structures required to coordinate the implementation of the agreement once it enters into force.

He noted that the creation of a National AfCFTA Coordination Committee and the development of technical capacity to support exporters will be essential to help Somali businesses take advantage of new market opportunities.

Somalia's economy is heavily dependent on livestock. The sector accounts for about 45 percent of the country's gross



Participants during a regional technical consultations on cross-border livestock trade integration under the AfCFTA held in Naivasha, Nakuru.

domestic product and generates more than 70 percent of export earnings. Access to continental markets under AfCFTA is therefore expected to provide significant opportunities for expanding livestock exports and strengthening the country's economic growth.

In Ethiopia, policymakers are focusing on regulatory reforms aimed at strengthening the country's livestock trade system and aligning it with AfCFTA standards. The reforms include improvements in veterinary services, certification frameworks and export regulations.

Ethiopia has Africa's largest livestock population, with more than 70 million cattle as well as tens of millions of

sheep and goats. This large resource base positions the country as a potential major supplier of animal products to markets across the continent.

According to AfCFTA coordinator Samuel Gizaw, the establishment of the continental trade area creates new opportunities for expanding intra-African livestock trade by reducing tariffs, addressing non-tariff barriers and harmonizing trade regulations.

Policy discussions on Ethiopia's livestock sector highlight the need to strengthen veterinary standards, modernize livestock marketing systems and improve export regulations in order to support greater participation in regional and continental trade networks.

However, despite its vast livestock population, Ethiopia exports only a small share of its production. Analysts attribute this to limited processing capacity, inadequate market infrastructure and widespread informal cross-border trade.

Experts say that improved coordination between the three Horn of Africa economies could unlock new livestock trade corridors linking pastoral communities in Ethiopia and Somalia with markets in Kenya and other parts of the continent.

Such trade corridors could enhance regional integration while providing new income opportunities for pastoral communities whose livelihoods depend heavily on livestock production and trade.

However, analysts caution that stronger cooperation between veterinary authorities, trade ministries and regional organizations will be necessary to fully realize these opportunities.

The African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) is already working with governments and regional economic blocs through the Africa Pastoral Market Development Platform to strengthen cross-border livestock trade and improve infrastructure along key pastoral corridors.

Dr John Oppong-Otoo, coordinator for economics, marketing and trade at AU-IBAR, said Africa still faces a significant trade deficit in animal products despite having one of the world's largest livestock populations.

He noted that the continent imported more than \$5 billion worth of meat in 2024, highlighting the opportunity for African producers to increase regional supply and reduce reliance on imports.

According to him, the main challenge is not the lack of animals or policies but the limited connectivity between markets across the continent.

"Africa has the animals, the institutions and the policies," he said. "What has been missing is the connection between our markets. Trade is about linking surplus to demand, and that is the gap we are working to close."



Kenya has emerged as one of the early implementers of the agreement. The country has developed a national implementation strategy and is actively participating in the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative, a program designed to facilitate early trade among participating countries while broader operational mechanisms are finalized.

Finance So far, 33 firms have taken part in the program, and more than 100 certificates of origin have been issued for goods exported under the arrangement

New Agro-Dealer Financing Initiative Set To Transform Farmers' Access To Inputs

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themtkenyatimes

Agro-dealers in South Nyanza are set to improve farmers' access to quality agricultural inputs following the launch of a financing initiative by agricultural technology company AVENEWS Kenya.

The program, launched in partnership with Enochem Agrovet Limited, targets agro-dealers operating in Nyamira County, Kisii County, Migori County, and Homa Bay County.

The initiative seeks to strengthen agro-dealer businesses by providing them with financing to stock ade-

quate farm inputs, including fertilizers, certified seeds and crop protection products.

Speaking during the launch, Emanuel Mbugua, Business Director at AVENEWS Kenya, said the program comes at a critical time when farmers across the region are preparing their farms following the onset of the rainy season.

"This is the period when demand for farm inputs rises sharply, yet many agro-dealers struggle to maintain sufficient stock due to limited capital," said Mbugua.

He noted that the financial constraints faced by agro-dealers often force farmers to travel long distances in search of farm in-

puts. In some cases, farmers end up buying cheaper but substandard products from unverified sources.

"The financing initiative is designed to bridge that gap by empowering agro-dealers with the capital they need to stock genuine farm inputs and serve farmers better," he said.

Mbugua explained that agro-dealers would access flexible financing that allows them to purchase inputs in bulk and stock their shops ahead of peak planting seasons.

"We realized that many agro-dealers find it difficult to access credit from traditional financial institutions. Yet they

play a critical role in the agricultural value chain because they are the closest link between farmers and agricultural input manufacturers," he added.

According to Enock Asuga Nyamwaro, Manager at Enochem Agrovet Limited, strengthening agro-dealer networks is essential for improving food production and supporting smallholder farmers.

"As the rains continue across western Kenya, this initiative will help ensure farmers are well prepared for the planting season and can access the inputs they need on time," said Nyamwaro.

He noted that agriculture



Emanuel Mbugua, Business Director at AVENEWS Kenya, Enock Asuga Nyamwaro, Manager at Enochem Agrovet Limited during the launch of agro dealer financing initiative. | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

remains the backbone of livelihoods in the four counties, where thousands of smallholder farmers depend on crops such as maize, beans, vegetables and bananas for both food and income.

However, Nyamwaro observed that access to certified seeds and fertilizers remains a challenge for many farmers, particularly those living in rural areas.

"Agro-dealers are a critical link between manufacturers of farm inputs and farmers. When they lack adequate capital to stock their businesses, the entire supply chain is affected," he said.

Through the financing initiative, AVENEWS Kenya aims to strengthen agro-dealer businesses while ensuring farmers have reliable access to genuine and effective agricultural inputs.

Faith Mwirigi, an officer at the company, said the program also focuses on improving farmers' knowledge of modern farming practices.

"Our goal is not only to strengthen agro-dealer businesses but also to ensure farmers receive the information and services they need to improve productivity," she said.

Mwirigi added that farmers purchasing inputs through participating agro-dealers would receive advisory support on best farming practices, including proper fertilizer application, crop protection and soil management.

"By connecting farmers with trusted agro-dealers and reliable inputs, we are helping

them make better decisions on their farms and increase their harvests," she said.

For Nancy Angwenyi, a stockist in South Mugirango, the partnership between Avenews and Enochem has opened new opportunities for agro-dealers to grow their businesses.

"I will now access supplies without paying cash immediately. Previously, I would run out of stock and lose customers because I did not have enough capital to restock," said Angwenyi.

She said the financing will help many agro-dealers overcome long-standing financial challenges that have slowed the growth of small agro vet shops.

"Most small agro vet shop owners operate with very little capital, which makes it difficult to maintain stock during peak planting seasons," she said.

Angwenyi added that restocking during high-demand periods has always been a challenge.

"Sometimes I delay orders because of cash flow problems, but with Avenews I will be able to restock faster and keep my customers," she said.

The initiative is expected to improve the availability of genuine farm inputs in rural communities while reducing the risk of farmers purchasing counterfeit products that can damage crops and lower yields.

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Counties Njuki declared that the position currently held by Deputy President Kindiki was not open for negotiation.

Governor Njuki Defends DP Kindiki As He Distributes Free Seeds In Tharaka Nithi

BY Alex Njeru

@themkenyaintimes

Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki has defended Deputy President Prof. Kithure Kindiki while launching the distribution of free certified seeds to farmers across the county's 15 wards.

The distribution tour took a political turn as he addressed ongoing national discussions about the position of Deputy President ahead of a planned joint parliamentary group meeting between Kenya Kwanza Alliance and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM).

Njuki declared that the position currently held by Deputy President Kindiki was not open for negotiation.

"As far as we are concerned, the position of Deputy President is not negotiable. If unity depends on giving up that position, then that unity can wait. Let those interested start claiming positions from number three, not number two," Njuki said.

He added that if ODM leaders were

keen on having a deputy president, they could instead recruit Kindiki into their party.

"If ODM must have the position of Deputy President, then we can offer them Kindiki to join ODM and become a DP from there," he said.

ODM leaders, including Oburu Oginga, have previously indicated interest in the deputy president's position as part of broader political negotiations with the government.

However, the proposal has drawn criticism from several leaders in the Mt Kenya region, many of whom have defended Kindiki and described the position as strategically important for the region.

Njuki expressed confidence that Kindiki, like previous holders of the office including President William Ruto, has the potential to rise to the presidency in the future.

Njuki began the seeds distribution exercise in Gatunga Ward at Karuguru Market before moving to Mukothima Ward at Mukothima cereals stalls.

He later proceeded to Nkondi Ward

at Nkondi Chief's Camp, then to Marimanti Ward at Kaarani Market, and concluded the day's distribution at Gaceeraka Chief's Camp in Chiakariga Ward.

The governor said the programme, now in its 12th season, has consistently supported farmers and helped improve food production across the county.

"This is my 12th season issuing free certified seeds, with each season benefiting at least 100,000 farmers across the county," Njuki said.

The seeds distributed include green grams, maize and beans.

County officials say the certified varieties have helped increase crop yields while reducing reliance on government relief food.

Njuki was accompanied by Deputy Governor Nyaga Muisrael, County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Administration Muthini Karangi, CECM for Gender Kelly Rwigy and Economic Advisor Dr. Mutegi Kabisani, among other county leaders.

According to the county govern-



Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki distributing free-certified seeds in Tharaka Constituency on Monday as other leaders, led by his deputy Nyaga Muisrael looks on. | Photo: Alex Njeru.

ment, the distribution exercise will continue today in all the five wards of Maara Constituency before moving to the five wards of Chuka/Igambang'ombe Constituency tomorrow. Farmers who received the seeds praised the programme, saying the certified varieties have significantly improved their harvests due to their

quality and reliability. "These are the seeds that have improved harvest in our county and we hope the next governor will continue with the programme," said Lucy Karimi, a farmer from Gaceeraka.

The Mt. Kenya Times



My Lovely Mother



She gives her youth, her laughter, and her light,
To guide our steps through darkness and through night.
With patient hands and words so warm and kind,
She fills our hearts with hope and peace of mind.
No crown she wears, no throne she asks above,
Her greatest treasure is her endless love.
For every child she softly prays each day,
A mother's heart forever lights the way.

Raxmonova Nargiza
English Teacher at School No. 4, Sirdarya District, Sirdarya Region

She spends her days for us with loving care,
Her gentle heart brings joy beyond compare.
Her time, her strength, her silent sacrifice,
Her endless love is the light of our lives.

Our Guiding Light



She guides me in the good way,
She is so kind and joyful.
She makes the students very strong.
She is the guiding light for me.

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My guiding light is my science teacher.
She teaches every one to rise.
She teaches lessons wonderfully.
She teaches lessons captivatingly.
In teacher's words, we find our way.
In her care, our talents flow.
She sows the knowledge in our brain,
Her knowledge helps us to win.

My Uzbek Daughters



Your eyes are like Shahlo
You are the flower of my homeland
You are the pride of my people
The sprout of the future
The luck of Uzbekistan

There is meaning in your words
You are beautiful, O Rano
My tongue is too weak to speak
Your lips are flowing with blood

Mukhammadeyeva Vasila, a student of grade 6B of school number 3 of the Kokdala district of the Kashkadarya region

My Uzbek daughters
Your traces are like flowers
Your cheeks are like tulips
Your lips are like buds

Your scarf is like silk
Your thoughts are like Ibo
Your faces are like the sun

Get Rid Of Old Ways



Enjoying themselves the warmth of smooth sun,
Without going out of the classroom.

Teaching techniques may varies,
It should show the value of what he carries
In his mind and heart without any worries,
That should be like the blossoms of Cherries.

So.....

Let get rid of our old ways,
Try to follow the new ways,
Capture the heart of little ones,
With just a click!

N.DEEPALAKSHMI
B.T.ASST IN ENGLISH
CREATIVE WRITER
VELLORE
TAMILNADU
INDIA

Following some rules strictly is someone's special,
How to follow that, is really a structurable,
Gaining confidence and love is appreciable,
That old traditional ways show how they are workable!

In teaching, We can follow so many techniques,
Lecture and Chalk and Talk method,
Gives our crystal clear picture of our profession,
But what is the use of our children's progression?

In this modern AI world, We can try some new one,
Which will make our children feel fun,

One Small Help



Stars that twinkle in the night
Help to give us gentle light.
Cows give us milk to drink,
Plants give vegetables, more than we think.

When all of nature lends a hand,
Why do we refuse to understand?
Why do we hesitate to help another,
When we are sisters and brothers?

V. JAYANTHI
Graduate teacher
Creative Writer
Chengalpattu district
Tamil Nadu India

One small help, one simple hand,
May one day help us stand.
We are living here on earth
To help each other from birth.

Even the sun helps us see
The world so bright and free.
Trees give us shade and fruits so sweet,
Nature's kindness is complete.

Light's Gentle Truth



A tumultuous tide shouts at casual leads.

Light your inner rhythm.
Not to show off your algorithm.
Twinkling stars does it's dutes.
Never cares for others squeezes.

Illuminate the darkest den with your fine pen.
Identify your brightest win.
Sculpture the right wing.
Eliminate the wrong pin.

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The nature of light is to shine.
The nature of the dark is to whine.
Shine or whine depends on one's mind.
A simple sheep follows ritual deeds.

Economy According to the Prime Cabinet Secretary, increased investment in key sectors such as research, agribusiness, technology and trade

Mudavadi: Africa Poised To Drive Next Wave Of Global Economic Growth

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Musalia Mudavadi has said Africa is well positioned to drive the world's next phase of economic growth if the continent strategically harnesses its resources, youthful population and expanding investment opportunities.

Mudavadi made the remarks during a panel discussion titled "Africa Rising: Pathways, Partnerships and Priorities," where he highlighted the continent's increasing influence in shaping the global economic landscape.

He noted that Africa holds vast untapped potential that, if effectively utilised, could significantly transform both

regional and global development.

According to the Prime Cabinet Secretary, increased investment in key sectors such as research, agribusiness, technology and trade will be critical in accelerating Africa's economic transformation. "These sectors will enhance productivity, spur innovation and position the continent as a competitive and resilient player in the global economy," Mudavadi said.

He also pointed to Africa's demographic advantage, describing the continent's youthful population as its greatest strength.

Mudavadi observed that Africa has the youngest and fastest-growing population globally, a factor he said presents enormous opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship and labour force expansion.

He noted that Kenya has al-

ready put in place several initiatives aimed at empowering young people through skills development, digital innovation and access to business financing.

Among the programmes he cited were the NYOTA Project, the Ajira Digital Programme, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and the Uwezo Fund. These initiatives, he said, are designed to equip young people with digital skills, promote entrepreneurship and create employment opportunities.

Mudavadi also highlighted Africa's rich natural resource base, saying the continent must move beyond exporting raw commodities and instead focus on value addition and industrialisation.

He said strengthening capital markets and promoting local processing of natural resources would enable Afri-

can countries to retain more value from their resources while supporting long-term economic growth.

The Prime Cabinet Secretary further noted that policy frameworks such as the African Mining Vision, alongside innovative financing models including public-private partnerships, green bonds and blended finance, offer viable pathways for mobilising the capital needed to support sustainable development projects across the continent.

Mudavadi emphasised that Africa's progress will largely depend on building strong and mutually beneficial partnerships with global partners while also strengthening collaboration among African countries.

He said partnerships anchored on trade, investment and innovation will be key in unlocking the continent's full



PCS and other officials leaving the discussion venue. | Photo: Courtesy.


potential. "Africa's future lies in confident partnerships that promote shared prosperity," Mudavadi said.

He added that with the right

policies, investments and collaborations, Africa is well placed to emerge as a major driver of global economic progress in the coming decades.



PCS during the discussion.



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Development Residents were also briefed on other ongoing projects, including the Affordable Housing project in Wote, modern market developments in Wote

Inua Jamii Mashinani Holds Public Engagement In Makueni, Residents Briefed On Healthcare And Development Plans

BY WMW
@themkenyaintimes

The national government officials through the Inua Jamii Mashinani initiative yesterday engaged residents of Mutyambua in Makueni county on key development programmes being carried out by President William Ruto's administration.

Public Health and Professional Standards Principal Secretary Mary Muthoni who is the convenor of the initiative said the forum, held under the grassroots participation platform is aimed at directly involving citizens in shaping development priorities that improve livelihoods and service delivery.

She noted that at yesterday's forum venue, some of the priority projects include plans to operationalise the Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) Mutyambua Campus and strengthen Mutyambua Sub-County Hospital.

"The operationalisation of KMTC Mutyambua Campus will provide a 10-classroom tuition block and a 340-bed



PS Mary Muthoni addressing Mutyambua area residents yesterday. | Photo: Courtesy.

hostel, creating opportunities for young people to pursue careers in healthcare close to home," PS Muthoni said, adding, "Meanwhile, the Mutyambua Sub-County Hospital will be upgraded and equipped under the National Equipment Support Programme (NESP), enhancing access to quality healthcare services."

Residents were also briefed on other ongoing projects, including the Affordable Housing project in Wote, modern

market developments in Wote and Kathonzi, support for farmers through subsidised fertiliser programmes, and the Emali-Matiliku road construction project.

The forum saw participation from officials of key agencies, including Winfrida Ngumi (KeNHA), Peter Muchendu (Konza Technopolis), Kieru Wa Wamboi (KIMC), Patrick Mwangi (Housing), and Ministry of Health representatives such as Adan Harakhe (SA) and Dr. Kelly Oluoch, CEO-



Some of the hundreds of Mutyambua residents who attended yesterday's forum.

KMTC, among others.

Inua Jamii Mashinani is a government-led public engagement initiative that

brings senior officials; Cabinet Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, and agency heads and directors as well as other

senior government officials to the grassroots to interact with citizens directly.

Its main objectives are to gather citizen input, track government responses, strengthen transparency and accountability, and ensure development projects meet local needs. The programme has previously held forums in various counties, giving residents a platform to influence service delivery and development priorities as they sensitize them on President Ruto's track record.

By combining dialogue with tangible development interventions, the initiative ensures that projects such as KMTC campuses, hospital upgrades, infrastructure works, and social welfare programmes are aligned with community needs. The Makueni engagement marks another step in deepening citizen participation while promoting sustainable development and improved public services in the county.



Some of Inua Jamii Mashinani initiative members in Mutyambua, Makueni county yesterday




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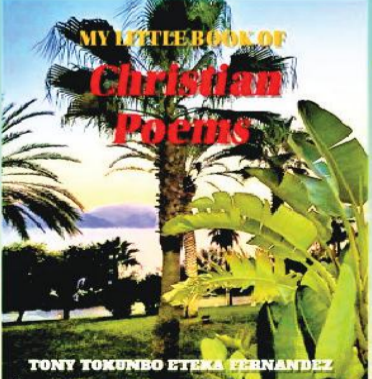
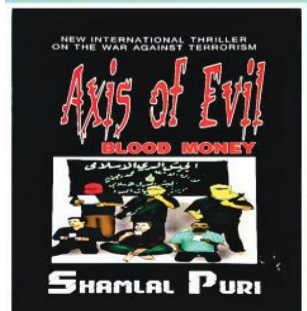
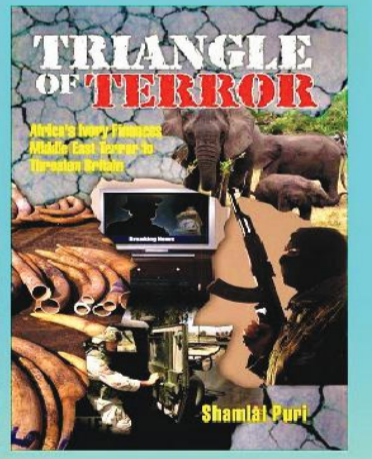
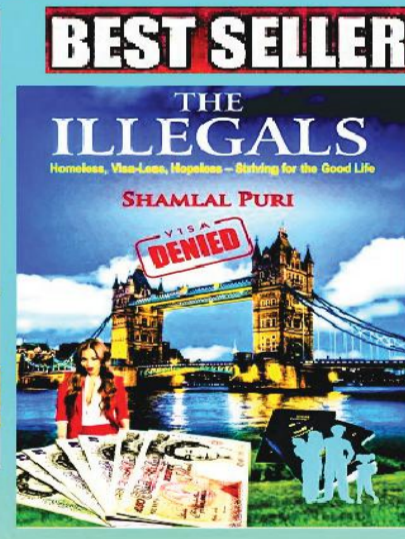
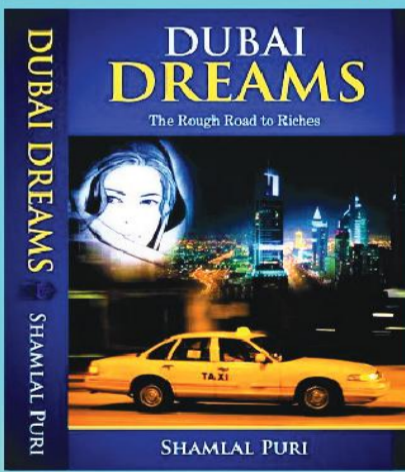
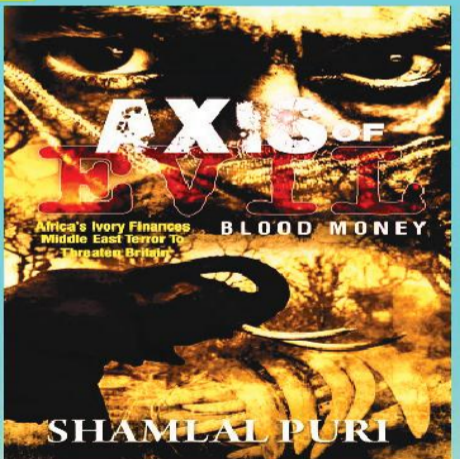
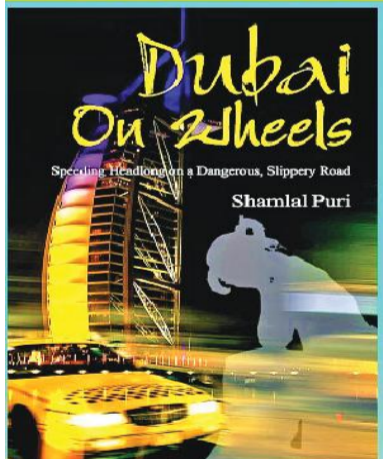
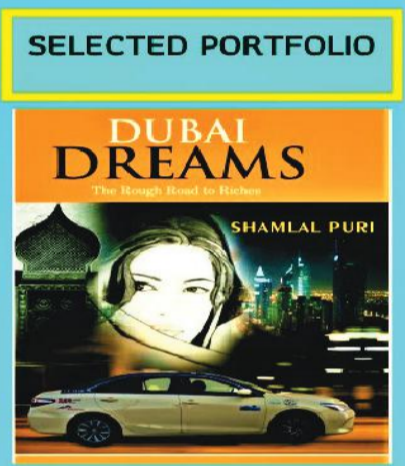
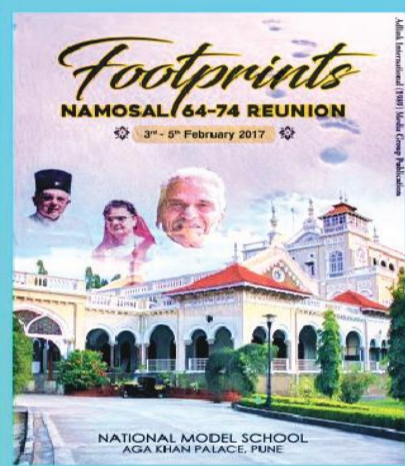
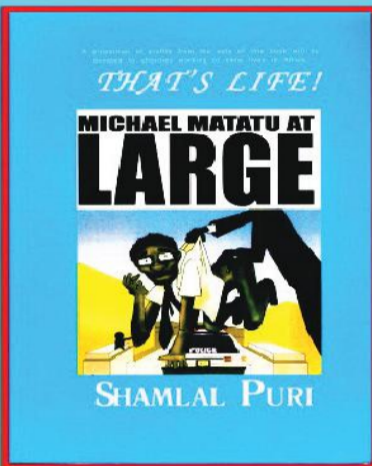
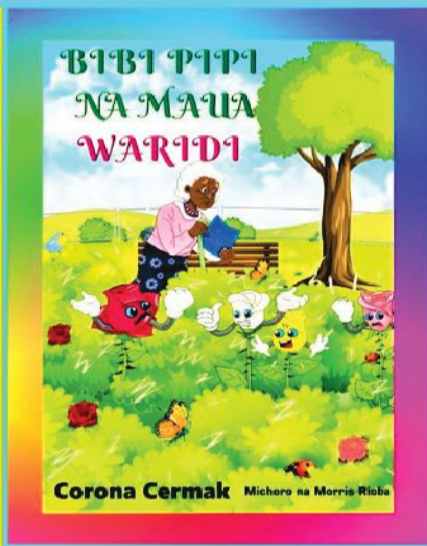
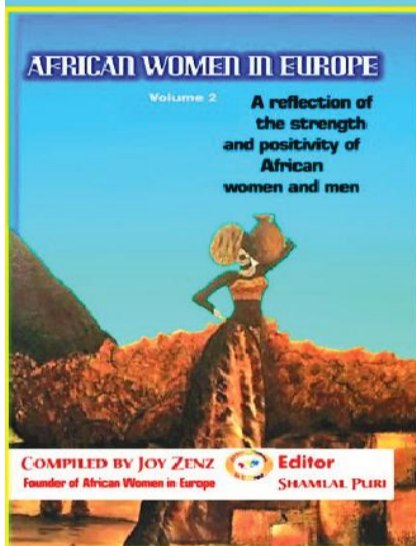
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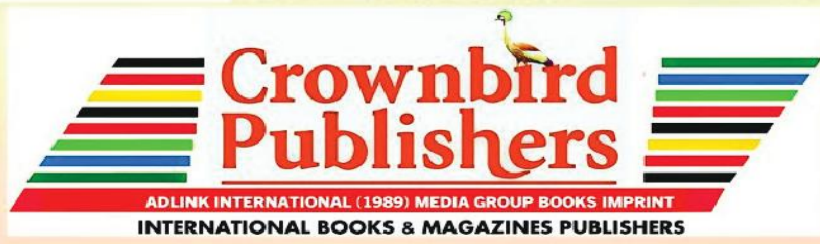
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Women Chiefs Chiefs were arbiters of land disputes, custodians of law and order, and gatekeepers of state power.

How Women Chiefs In Kisii And Nyamira Are Shaping The Data Behind Kenya's Digital Governance

BY Elizabeth Angira

@themkenyatimes

Few, if any, people believed that Mary Kemunto would succeed when she was appointed chief of Bogiakumu Location in Bonchari Constituency, Kisii County, in 1997.

In the highly patriarchal Gusii community, the idea of a woman chief was almost unthinkable.

“When I arrived for public meetings commonly referred to as barazas, sections of elders refused to sit when I addressed them,” recalls Kemunto. “They would ask me where my husband was and whether he approved of me being in office.”

Trailblazer who opened doors for many

Chiefs were arbiters of land disputes, custodians of law and order, and gatekeepers of state power. Kemunto stepped into this leadership position when the office of the chief symbolised male authority.

“I never imagined I would become a chief,” she says. “I was a teacher aide then, just doing my work quietly.”

Out of 12 applicants, she was the only woman.

Kemunto holds the distinction of being the first female chief in the Gusii region, which covers Kisii and Nyamira counties.

“My appointment shocked many, with some residents swearing that they would move away rather than be led by a woman,” she says.

Others, however, welcomed her, hopeful that female leadership would bring a new approach to governance.

Her appointment opened doors for many more women to pursue careers in the State Department for Administration and Field Services in the Ministry of Interior and National Administration.

Backed by the two-thirds gender rule enshrined in Article 27 of the Constitution, which provides for gender equality in governance, more women have joined the department. Data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) shows that the number of women serving as chiefs and assistant chiefs has risen over the past decade, although they still account for just one in five of



Judith Kwamboka says that digital tools are beginning to influence administration

| Photo: Elizabeth Angira

grassroots administrators. In 2014, only 574 women held these positions nationally, compared to 7,902 men. By 2024, the number of women had increased to 2,367, compared to 9,262 men.

Chiefs and assistant chiefs form part of the national administration system, acting as the government's representatives at the community level. They are often the first point of contact for reporting domestic violence, child marriage, land disputes and

school dropout cases. The incidents they document feed the data used to track trends and shape policy. When women are absent from these roles, many of the issues affecting women and girls risk going undocumented. This leaves gaps in the data that increasingly informs digital governance systems, yet the national artificial intelligence (AI) strategy envisions the use of AI in public administration even as it acknowledges that the country still lacks sufficient

data to train AI models.

Some of that national data could come from the cases chiefs handle daily in their communities.

Stella Achoki, the director for the Centre for Community Mobilization and Empowerment (CECOME), a community-based organisation, says that for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), women chiefs have become first responders.

Some chiefs recount receiving distress calls at midnight from women



Mary Kemunto holds the distinction of being the first female chief in the Gusii region. | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

fleeing abuse, girls escaping child marriages, or parents seeking help for children who have been sexually abused.

In extreme cases, a few chiefs have opened their own homes as temporary safe spaces when formal shelters were inaccessible.

Achoki says that these actions reveal a form of governance that centres on human dignity, particularly for those historically excluded from justice systems. The impact is that women and girls are more willing to report abuse.

“Before, we feared going to the chief,” says Rodah Nyagaka. “Now we know she will listen.”

Kisii County Woman Representative Dorice Donya says that citizen engagement has improved under women chiefs. Barazas are more inclusive, giving women, youth and persons with disabilities a voice in community discussions.

“When women lead, people talk more,” says Donya. “And when people talk more, governance improves.”

Leadership rooted in care

Despite the resistance many faced in their early days in office, including from male colleagues, what distinguishes many women chiefs is the way they wield authority

Jane Moraa, 50, emerged as the best – and only woman – among 17 short-listed candidates to be appointed the assistant chief of Nyoera Sub-Location in Bobasi Constituency, Kisii County, in 2003.

“Some male applicants went to the county commissioner to complain,” she says. “But the results spoke for themselves, and the county commissioner stood firm.”

“Whenever a woman is appointed a chief, her leadership is scrutinised, her decisions questioned and her authority openly challenged,” says Moraa.

“You have to use dialogue rather

than force, relationships rather than raw power, and, over time, scepticism gives way to trust,” adds Kemunto.

Over time, it becomes clear that the very qualities critics dismiss as weakness—patience, listening and negotiation—are some of the most effective leadership tools. Their leadership style often centres on empathy, an attribute frequently dismissed as “soft” yet proving transformative at the grassroots.

Instead of confrontation, many choose persistence.

During her tenure, Kemunto worked closely with elders, respecting cultural structures while firmly upholding the rule of law.

“I consulted elders when handling cases, but I never compromised on justice,” she says.

Jane Bosibori, a widow, recalls how Kemunto intervened when relatives

Women Chiefs Chiefs were arbiters of land disputes, custodians of law and order, and gatekeepers of state power.

How Women Chiefs In Kisii And Nyamira Are Shaping The Data Behind Kenya's Digital Governance

Contd from page 18

tried to evict her from her late husband's land.

"She did not come with police," Bosibori recalls. "She came alone, engaged the elders and amicably resolved the matter, protecting my right to stay on the land my late husband left me."

Samwel Bosire, the Secretary General of the Abagusii Council of Elders, says this kind of gender-inclusive governance expands leadership approaches to better reflect community needs.

New tools of trade
As women chiefs join the ranks of grassroots administration in communities that once resisted their leadership, the tools they rely on to manage communities and document their needs have also evolved.

When Kemunto began her career in the late 1990s, long before smartphones, the internet, dashboards, or data analytics, administering a location depended almost entirely on physical presence and personal networks.

She covered long distances on foot and discharged her duties under trees, in churches or in people's homesteads. She would often learn of disputes needing her intervention from a neighbour or a child running barefoot to her home.

"This was the only way to reach my people and enlighten them about government policy, resolve disputes or attend to a security matter," says Kemunto.

Judith Kwamboka, 38, the assistant chief of Ichuni Sub-Location in Nyaribari Masaba, says that while much of the work of chiefs still unfolds face-to-face, digital tools are beginning to influence administration.



Kisii Woman Rep Dorice Donya says that citizen engagement has improved under women chiefs. | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

Today, phone calls, email and mobile messaging platforms are reshaping how administrators interact with communities and respond to their problems.

"Now I do not need to knock on doors and sit with families long after the sun has set to engage my people," Kemunto explains.

Moraa uses her phone to plan her schedule, track cases and trends, and monitor gender-based violence. Through messaging platforms, like WhatsApp, linking chiefs, county officials and civil society organisations, the administrators also get updates in real time.

While chiefs are not currently using AI-enabled tools, the information they gather and the reports they file are helping create the datasets that could form the foundation for the country's future AI-driven public administration.

Currently, chiefs use this information to identify patterns such as violence hotspots and seasonal spikes in child labour, allowing them to re-

spond proactively.

"Technology helps us see what the eye may miss," explains Kwamboka. "It supports evidence-based decision-making."

However, even as chiefs use digital platforms to make their work easier, the digital divide remains stark. Many rural residents lack access to smartphones, reliable internet, and digital literacy, raising concerns that technology could reinforce inequalities if not deployed thoughtfully.

Kwamboka says women chiefs are aware of these gaps and ensure that technology complements rather than replaces community engagement.

Gender, data, and bias

The use of data-driven systems in governance also raises critical questions. Artificial intelligence systems rely on large datasets to identify patterns and guide decisions, and algorithms are only as fair as the data they are trained on. In many rural communities, cases affecting women and

girls—such as domestic violence, marital property disputes or child marriages—often go unreported. When such incidents are missing from official records, they may also be absent from the datasets used by automated analysis and monitoring systems.

Women chiefs play a crucial role in closing this gap, documenting cases that might otherwise remain invisible and ensuring that women's realities enter official data streams. "Data is power," says Moraa. "If women's problems are not recorded, they do not exist to policymakers."

Inclusive governance requires inclusive data, informed by those closest to

community realities.

Resistance, risks, and resilience

Even as women chiefs change the face of governance in communities, they continue to face threats, social isolation and, in some cases, physical danger, says Henry Okari, chairperson of Amnesty International, Kisii Chapter.

"Challenging entrenched power structures, particularly around land and patriarchal authority, comes at a cost," says Okari.

He adds that while national policies promote gender equality, implementation is inconsistent and support systems are uneven.

As Kenya moves toward digitisation and the use of artificial intelligence in governance, the data recorded by chiefs like Moraa and Kwamboka may shape how policymakers understand rural communities. Supporting the chiefs who document these experiences is critical to ensure that women's experiences are captured and that the data shaping Kenya's future reflects the full reality of communities they serve.

This article was produced as part of the Gender+AI Reporting Fellowship, with support from the Africa Women's Journalism Project (AWJP) in partnership with DW Akademie. The journalist used AI tools as research aids to review and summarise relevant policy and research documents and extract key statistics. All interviews, analysis, editorial decisions and final wording were done by the reporter, in line with Mt Kenya Times' editorial standards.

Inclusive governance requires inclusive data

"Data is power. If women's problems are not recorded, they do not exist to policymakers."

— Jane Moraa, Assistant Chief of Nyoeira Sub-Location, Bobasi Constituency, Kisii County



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China At a time of geopolitical tensions and global economic uncertainty, the plan seeks to strengthen China's long-term growth prospects

China's Five-Year Roadmap Bets Big On Innovation In Strategic Leap

BY Xinhua News Agency
@themtkenyatimes

China is crafting its 15th Five-Year Plan with a strong focus on innovation, aiming to transform the country from the world's factory into a global innovation powerhouse by 2030.

The blueprint, currently under review at the national legislature's annual meeting, emphasizes building a modern industrial system driven by advanced manufacturing and accelerating progress toward greater scientific and technological self-reliance.

At a time of geopolitical tensions and global economic uncertainty, the plan seeks to strengthen China's long-term growth prospects by prioritizing technological advancement and industrial transformation.

Strategic design

The five-year roadmap urges China to seize opportunities presented by the latest technological revolution and industrial transformation while developing what officials call "new quality productive forces." The country is preparing to significantly expand investments in technology and innovation.

In Beijing's Haidian District — often referred to as "China's Silicon Valley" — authorities have pledged more than 9 billion yuan (about 1.3 billion U.S. dollars) this year to support industrial innovation. Among the companies receiving support are leading artificial intelligence model developer Zhipu AI and chip designer Moore Threads, illustrating China's long-term strategy of backing high-tech industries.

This funding push is part of a broader national effort to channel large-scale capital into emerging technologies. A national venture guidance fund established last December is designed to attract investments worth trillions of yuan. Authorities have also proposed creating a national

mergers and acquisitions pool to unlock another trillion-yuan market.

Analysts say the government is not only encouraging innovation but also supporting it with substantial financial resources. Shirley Yinghua Shen of Ernst & Young (China) Advisory Limited noted that China is combining policy guidance with direct investment to strengthen research and development.

The surge in funding has fueled intense interest in frontier technologies. In Hefei, once overlooked in the tech investment landscape, venture capital firms are now competing for opportunities in the quantum technology sector, often requiring special recommendations just to participate in smaller funding rounds.

Experts say both state and private investors are moving quickly to capture opportunities in emerging fields. Over the next five years, China plans to increase spending on original innovation and raise the proportion of basic research funding within overall R&D investment. In 2024, China's basic research spending reached a record 7.08 percent of total R&D expenditure.

Regional governments are also being encouraged to develop specialized industries based on local strengths. In Shanghai, brain-computer interface (BCI) technology has been identified as a priority sector. The city is promoting collaboration between hospitals and technology companies to accelerate the commercialization of research.

Shanghai-based startup NeuroXess has already begun clinical trials of an invasive BCI device. In a notable milestone, a patient who had been paralyzed for eight years was able to control a video game using only his mind after receiving the company's wireless brain implant.

While Shanghai focuses on frontier technologies, Shenzhen is leveraging its strong electronics manufacturing ecosystem. The city's highly integrated supply chains al-

low companies to move from prototype design to assembly in as little as one day.

Professor Zheng Yongnian of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, describes China's emerging economic model as driven by three new pillars: foundational research, commercialization of applied technologies and long-term financial support.

Innovation premium

Some critics argue that China's heavy investment in technology could limit consumer spending. However, observers note that the country's large domestic market, advanced digital infrastructure and agile technology companies position it well to benefit from the next wave of technological change.

China's government has identified the development of a "smart economy" as a key objective. During the recent Spring Festival period, major technology firms raced to expand the commercial use of artificial intelligence. For example, online searches can now trigger AI assistants capable of recommending nearby entertainment, booking tickets and processing payments in a single interface.

Chinese technology companies are also releasing increasingly powerful AI models. Alibaba recently introduced a compact series of its Qwen AI models designed to run directly on smartphones as intelligent assistants. The models received international attention, with entrepreneur Elon Musk praising their "impressive intelligence density." Chinese-made technology products are also gaining global recognition. Smart glasses, 3D printers and home robots designed in China have seen growing demand on international platforms. More than 40 Chinese products appeared on TIME magazine's "Best Inventions of 2025" list, demonstrating their growing competitiveness in quality and innovation. These successes are support-

ed by China's comprehensive manufacturing ecosystem, which allows companies to rapidly translate technological breakthroughs into real-world applications. The five-year plan therefore emphasizes closer links between technological innovation and industrial production.

The country's "AI-plus" strategy is expected to accelerate the integration of digital technologies into the real economy. Engineers at companies such as Xiaomi and XPeng are developing humanoid robots designed to work on assembly lines, reflecting growing interest in "embodied AI" for manufacturing.

Regulators are also loosening rules to create new markets for emerging technologies. Drones are increasingly used for urban deliveries, robotaxis have been approved to operate on certain highways, and private aerospace companies are launching satellites more frequently.

The government is also exploring "sandbox regulation," which allows new technologies to be tested in controlled environments to encourage innovation while managing risks.

Officials expect China's emerging pillar industries to surpass 10 trillion yuan in value by 2030. Frontier technologies including quantum computing, brain-computer interfaces, embodied AI and 6G communications could form the basis of entirely new high-tech sectors within the next decade.

According to Zheng Yongnian, China is seeking to move beyond what he calls the "middle technology trap," a stage where developing economies struggle to reach the innovation levels of advanced nations.

Global bonus

China's emphasis on technological self-reliance partly reflects past restrictions on access to foreign technology. Quantum scientist Pan Jianwei recalled how export



**CHINA TO ACCELERATE
TECH SELF-RELIANCE
DURING 15TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN PERIOD**

controls on dilution refrigerators — essential for quantum computing — forced Chinese researchers to develop domestic alternatives.

The five-year plan therefore highlights the importance of mastering core technologies that are domestically developed and resilient to external risks. China has already made progress in several areas, including semiconductor design. In 2025, the country introduced multiple high-performance AI chips built on indigenous technology, while Huawei's Ascend ecosystem has supported the training of dozens of large language models.

However, Chinese leaders stress that technological self-reliance does not mean isolation. The five-year plan includes a strong commitment to maintaining openness and international cooperation.

Chinese open-source AI models are being adopted globally, demonstrating the country's growing influence in digital innovation. In addition, China has become a major force in clean energy technologies, producing about 80 percent of the world's solar cells and roughly 70 percent of both wind turbines and lithium batteries.

China has also signed 120

government-to-government science and technology cooperation agreements, many with developing countries. Analysts say China is increasingly becoming a key partner for the Global South not only as a market but also as a provider of digital infrastructure and green technology.

International collaboration is also evident in cutting-edge research. In 2025, Chinese and South African scientists used China's quantum communication satellite to achieve secure quantum communication across a distance of more than 12,900 kilometers.

Plans to expand global scientific collaboration are also included in the new five-year roadmap. These include opening research facilities to international scientists and leading multinational mega-science projects.

Wang Jian, a computer scientist at Zhejiang Lab, said China's open-source technology approach reflects its belief that innovation must be accessible globally.

"If your technology is not accessible to people around the world," he said, "it lacks persuasive power."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Respect For All Teachers



In every classroom across Kenya, teachers stand as the unsung architects of the nation's future. They shape minds, nurture discipline, and carry the weight of responsibility that often stretches far beyond the chalkboard. Yet, despite their pivotal role, society too often overlooks their sacrifice and resilience. Teachers spend more waking hours with children than most parents, guiding them through lessons while concealing personal struggles to ensure learning never falters. They fight silent battles, wear forced smiles, and shoulder the burden of

molding students into responsible citizens. As one veteran teacher in Laikipia remarked: "We give our best every day, even when our hearts are heavy, because the classroom must remain a place of hope." It is a cruel irony that those who build the foundation of every profession are sometimes dismissed or demeaned. Critics argue they are "paid to do their job," but teaching is not merely a career—it is a calling that demands patience, empathy, and unyielding commitment. From correcting unruly students to inspiring the brightest minds, teachers endure exhaustion yet refuse to

quit. The truth is simple: every leader, doctor, engineer, and innovator once sat before a teacher. Respecting educators is not charity—it is justice. To deny them dignity is to deny the value of education itself. Kenya must rise to the challenge of honoring teachers, not with empty praise but with genuine respect and support. Because when teachers thrive, society prospers. Respect for teachers is respect for the nation.

By Grace Akiru, Laikipia University

Trapped In Search Of Greener Pastures And Betrayal

Thousands of Kenyans depart each year chasing the promise of better wages abroad, particularly in the Middle East. They leave as domestic workers, drivers, nurses, and builders, hoping their sacrifices will translate into brighter futures for families back home. Yet as conflict spreads across the region, that promise is collapsing into peril.

The government's recent advisory urging citizens to flee conflict zones has stirred outrage—not for its urgency, but for its caveat: migrants must pay their own way home. For workers earning modest salaries and sending most of it back to Kenya, the cost of emergency flights is simply unattainable. The directive feels less like protection and more like abandonment.

Officials insist that embassies are monitoring the situation and stress that no Kenyan casualties have been confirmed. But reassurance rings hollow when thousands feel stranded, exposed, and financially cornered. Critics argue that in times of war, governments have a duty to evacuate their citizens without placing survival behind a payroll.



These workers' remittances are lifelines for households and a pillar of Kenya's economy. Yet when danger looms, the very people who strengthen the nation's financial backbone are left questioning whether their homeland will stand by them.

Labour migration has always carried risk, but this moment underscores its fragility. The dream of greener pastures has withered into

a test of survival—and of trust. Kenya must decide: will it be a nation that reaps the benefits of its diaspora, or one that abandons them when the stakes are life and death? If betrayal is the answer, then the cost is not just airfare—it is the erosion of faith in the very idea of home.

By: John Irungu Maina

Poverty Crisis Strains Kenya's Families

Poverty remains the most corrosive challenge facing Kenyan families, eroding dignity and opportunity across generations. It is not simply a lack of money—it is a condition that strips households of the ability to meet basic needs, leaving scars that endure long after the moment of hardship.

Unemployment is the chief culprit. Parents struggle to secure jobs, and without income, families cannot afford food, housing, or education. Many sacrifice by traveling abroad in search of work, hoping to secure a better future for their children. Yet for those left behind, the consequences are stark: children dropping out of school, poor performance under financial strain, and the emotional toll of uncertainty. Government bursaries and sponsorships provide lifelines, but they remain insufficient against the scale of need.

Poor living conditions compound the crisis. Families without proper sanitation or waste disposal face health risks, while women often migrate to foreign countries for work, enduring harsh conditions to support households. These pres-



sures ripple into classrooms, where children's mental well-being and academic performance suffer. The cycle of poverty also fuels child labour. Young boys and girls are forced into informal jobs to supplement family income, exposing them to exploitation and robbing them of education. Breaking this cycle demands more than rhetoric. It requires coordinated government policy, community

solidarity, and individual responsibility to ensure every family lives with dignity. Poverty is not inevitable—it is a challenge that can be overcome with collective will. A nation that fails its families fails its future.

By Hannah Njeri Gikandi, Laikipia University

Global Race To Regulate AI: Balancing Innovation And Protection

Artificial intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept—it is here, reshaping economies, jobs, and even democracy itself. The question now is not whether to regulate AI, but how fast governments can act before innovation outpaces oversight.

In the past year, regulation has vaulted to the top of global agendas. The European Union's AI Act stands as the first sweeping framework, classifying systems by risk and demanding transparency. Admirers hail it as a blueprint for responsible progress; detractors warn it could smother startups under red tape. The United States, meanwhile, has chosen a looser, sector-by-sector approach, appealing to industry but leaving uneven protections. Across Asia and Africa, governments are racing to draft their own rules—China tightening algorithmic control, while others seek policies that balance growth with accountability.

The stakes are enormous. Unchecked AI risks amplifying bias,



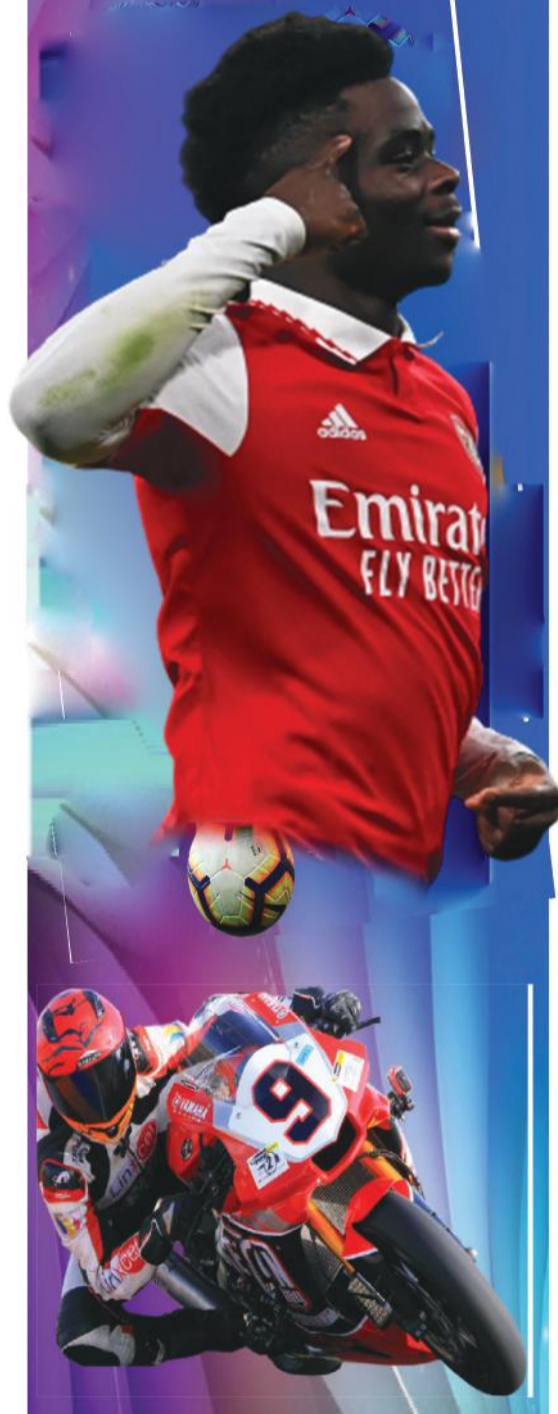
spreading deepfakes, and destabilizing labor markets. Already, routine jobs face automation while workers scramble to reskill. As Dr. Amina Rashid notes, "Without clear guardrails, AI's harms can grow faster than its benefits." Regulation, then, is not a brake on progress but a steering wheel. Civil society is demanding a seat at the table. Forums from Nairobi to Lagos highlight the need for locally tailored safeguards, proving that Silicon Valley's solutions can-

not simply be copy-pasted worldwide. The race to regulate AI is not just about technology—it is about trust, fairness, and the future of work. Governments must decide whether they will lead with vision or lag behind innovation. Because in this race, hesitation is not neutral—it is surrender.

By: Doreen Mueni, Laikipia University

SPORTS NEWS

PHOTOS
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Sports >> *Two-time world record holder for the men's marathon, Eliud Kipchoge, will compete at the Sanlam Marathon on May 24, this year, as he begins a new chapter in his longstanding athletics career.

Marathon Phenomenon Kipchoge To Make History With First-Ever Road Race On African Soil



Eliud Kipchoge celebrates after winning the Berlin Marathon

Two-time world record holder for the men's marathon, Eliud Kipchoge, will compete at the Sanlam Marathon on May 24, this year, as he begins a new chapter in his longstanding athletics career.

The road race will be Kipchoge's first as part of a personal mission to run in seven marathons across the seven continents of the world – known as Eliud's Running World.

It will also be the first time in his career that he has competed in a road race on African soil.

In a statement, the double Olympic marathon champion said competing in the Sanlam Marathon holds a deep significance in his heart.

"Africa is where my journey as a runner began and where the foundation of my success is deeply rooted. To start this World Tour in Cape Town is very special. It is about celebrating the strength of African running and inspiring the next generation. To race my first ever marathon on the African continent holds deep meaning for me. I cannot wait!" he said.

The Sanlam Cape Town Marathon has rapidly established itself as one of the leading races on the global running calendar, drawing elite athletes and runners from across the world to Cape Town each year.

The event is currently a candi-

date for Abbott World Marathon Majors status, with the ambition of bringing Africa its first Major and creating a global stage where African athletes can compete and triumph on home soil.

Speaking at the same time, the event's CEO Clarke Gardner said Kipchoge's participation in this year's edition marks a significant milestone for them.

"Eliud represents the very best of what running can inspire. To see him race our streets, meet our communities and engage with young runners across the city will be incredibly powerful. Moments like this remind us what is possible when the world's greatest athletes connect with the places and people

that shaped the sport," Gardner said.

The road race, which was first held in 1994, has established itself as one of the most prestigious on the African continent.

It boasts a course record of 2:08:15 in the men's race, set by Ethiopian Abdisa Tola in 2024 as well as 2:22:22 in the women's division — clocked by South African Glenrose Xaba in the same year.

The race will be Kipchoge's first since he debuted at the New York Marathon in November last year, clocking 2:14:36 to finish 17th.

Capital Sport

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *Arne Slot's 100th game in charge of Liverpool ended in 1-0 defeat as Galatasaray established a narrow last-16 Champions League lead to take to Anfield next week.

Liverpool Stunned At Galatasaray In Champions League Last 16 First Leg



Arne Slot's 100th game in charge of Liverpool ended in 1-0 defeat as Galatasaray established a narrow last-16 Champions League lead to take to Anfield next week.

In front of a hostile home crowd in Istanbul, Liverpool's familiar shortcomings resurfaced as Mario Lemina nodded the seventh-minute winner – the 10th goal Slot's side have conceded from corners this season.

The former Southampton, Fulham and Wolves midfielder was well placed to head past Giorgi Mamardashvili, making a rare start in the absence of injured first-choice goalkeeper Alisson, from close range after Victor

Osimhen's headed on a Gabriel Sara set-piece.

It was Lemina's first goal of the season – and five years ago he scored the winner at Liverpool for Fulham in a Premier League game.

Osimhen thought he had made it 2-0 after a calamitous mistake by Baris Alper Yilmaz was deemed to be offside in the build-up, even though he didn't touch the ball.

Liverpool thought they had equalised after the ball was bundled over the line from Dominik Szoboszlai's corner, but that was also ruled out for handball against Konate after a lengthy

video assistant referee (VAR) check.

In a frantic match, the Reds should have been ahead before Galatasaray's early breakthrough, but Florian Wirtz fired narrowly wide after an error by home keeper Ugurcan Cakir.

Even after conceding, they had chances to get themselves back on level terms.

Wirtz forced Cakir into a save before Konate drilled agonisingly over the bar, before Mamardashvili rescued the visitors.

The Georgia keeper produced a fine stop to deny former Spurs defender Davinson Sanchez from doubling his side's lead.

But the Turkish champions

looked hesitant at the back and Cakir stretched out a left hand to make a stunning save to keep out Hugo Ekitike's chipped finish after a good run by the French forward.

Liverpool thought they had equalised in a goalmouth scramble, only for VAR to intervene and leave Slot's side with it all to do in the second leg at Anfield on 18 March.

BBC

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SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN



Kez Wickham St George: Empowering Voices And Inspiring Writers Around The World



By: Anila Bukhari
@themkenyatimes



Worth Noting:

- One of her notable works, the novel *Scribe*, gained particular attention when the prologue of the book inspired a short film adaptation. This achievement reflected not only her storytelling talent but also the cinematic quality of her writing. Her ability to craft compelling narratives that resonate across different formats has contributed to her growing recognition within the literary world.
- Beyond her own writing career, Kez has dedicated much of her professional life to supporting and guiding other writers. As the founder of KezPublishing, she has created a platform that helps aspiring authors navigate the often challenging path to publication. Her mission is rooted in the belief that everyone has a story worth telling and that the world benefits when diverse voices are heard.

Kez Wickham St George is an internationally acclaimed mentor, publisher, speaker, and multi-award-winning bestselling author based in Perth, Western Australia. Widely known within the global literary community as the “Writers Mentor” and “The Writers Consultant,” she has built a reputation for inspiring writers, nurturing creativity, and helping authors bring their stories to life. Through her writing, mentoring, and publishing initiatives, Kez has become a powerful advocate for storytellers around the world, particularly women seeking to share their voices and experiences.

Over the years, Kez Wickham St George has developed a diverse and impressive body of literary work. As a prolific author, she has written more than a dozen novels and children’s books, exploring genres such as romance, adventure, paranormal fiction, and poetry. Her storytelling style combines imagination with emotional depth, allowing readers to connect with her characters and narratives on a meaningful level. Her works have reached audiences in several countries and have been translated into multiple languages, demonstrating the universal appeal of her stories.

One of her notable works, the novel *Scribe*, gained particular attention when the prologue of the book inspired a short film adaptation. This achievement reflected not only her storytelling talent but also the cinematic quality of her writing. Her ability to craft compelling narratives that resonate across different formats has contributed to her growing recognition within the literary world.

Beyond her own writing career, Kez has dedicated much of her professional life to supporting and guiding other writers. As the founder of KezPublishing, she has created a platform that helps aspiring authors navigate the often challenging path to publication. Her mission is rooted in the belief that everyone has a story worth telling and that the world benefits when diverse voices are heard. Through mentoring programs, workshops, and personal consultations, she empowers writers

to develop confidence in their craft and take meaningful steps toward publishing their work.

Kez is particularly passionate about encouraging women from different cultural and professional backgrounds to share their stories. She believes that storytelling can be a powerful tool for connection, understanding, and personal growth. By helping women transform their ideas and experiences into published books, she not only strengthens the literary landscape but also builds a supportive global community of writers.

In addition to mentoring authors, Kez actively promotes books and writers through her widely followed initiative known as #Kez-Bookreviews. Through this platform, she reviews and highlights books from a wide range of authors, giving both emerging and established writers an opportunity to reach new audiences. Her reviews are shared across social media platforms, magazines, and radio programs, helping to introduce readers around the world to fresh voices and diverse stories.

Her dedication to promoting literary creativity also extends to organizing the Wickham St George Book Cover Awards, a program that celebrates the artistic side of publishing. These awards recognize talented designers and authors who create visually striking and meaningful book covers. By acknowledging the importance of design alongside storytelling, Kez highlights the collaborative nature of the publishing industry and the many individuals who contribute to a book’s success.

Throughout her career, Kez Wickham St George has received numerous awards and recognitions for her contributions to literature and publishing. Among her achievements is the distinction of becoming a #1 bestselling author on Amazon. Her books and projects have earned several literary awards, reflecting both the quality of her writing and the impact of her work within the global writing community.

Despite these accomplishments, Kez remains deeply committed to



Kez Wickham St George is an internationally acclaimed mentor, publisher, speaker, and multi-award-winning bestselling author

uplifting others. She continues to mentor writers at different stages of their journeys, from those who are just beginning to write to those who are preparing to publish their first books. Her approach combines practical guidance with genuine encouragement, helping writers overcome self-doubt and recognize the value of their own stories.

Looking ahead to 2026, KezPublishing is encouraging fifteen women to participate in the anthology *Salt & Sage*, a collaborative book that will bring together the wisdom, experiences, and insights of women who wish to have their voices heard. The project reflects Kez’s long-standing mission of amplifying authentic stories and creating spaces where women can express their perspectives and inspire others.

Kez Wickham St George’s influ-

ence goes far beyond the pages of her own books. Through mentorship, publishing initiatives, literary promotion, and community building, she has created opportunities for countless writers to grow and succeed. Her dedication to storytelling, combined with her passion for supporting others, has made her a respected and admired figure within the international literary community.

Today, Kez continues to write, mentor, and advocate for authors around the world, demonstrating that literature has the power to connect people across cultures, generations, and experiences. Her journey reflects a deep belief that stories matter and that every voice deserves the chance to be heard.