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Ruto announces pay rise and worker reforms at Labour day celebrations

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in photos

President William Ruto announced a series of measures aimed at improving the welfare of Kenyan workers, including a 12 per cent increase in general wages and a 15 per cent rise in agricultural sector pay. Speaking during the 2026 Labour Day celebrations at , the President said the move recognizes the resilience and contribution of workers to the country's economic stability.

Ruto also revealed that the deposit required to purchase affordable housing units has been reduced from 10 per cent to 5 per cent for salaried workers, in a bid to improve access to home ownership.

On healthcare, he announced reforms to the Social Health Authority (SHA), including the removal of restrictive outpatient caps that had previously limited access. Teachers are set to benefit significantly, with access to over 9,000 health facilities nationwide, up from 900, and expanded services in all Level 6 hospitals.

The President further reaffirmed the government's commitment to labour rights, noting ongoing efforts to ratify key International Labour Organization conventions on domestic workers and workplace protections. He emphasized that the government remains committed to fair labour practices and collective bargaining rights.



Editor's Desk

The Mt Kenya Times is a Kenyan Newspaper that provides a unified view of Kenyan news, entrepreneurship, events, opinions, analysis, and a historical background to current affairs in a way that is both creative and innovative. It is published by **Exponential International Limited**, a Private Limited Liability company incorporated in Kenya to provide Communications and Media services.

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Mombasa County Government has paid Sh14 million to cover registration and affiliation fees for 155 football teams linked to FKF and MCFA, in a move aimed at strengthening youth development and reducing crime through sports. Governor Abdulswamad Sharif Nassir said the initiative is part of a broader plan to invest in sports infrastructure and opportunities for young people. He announced upcoming projects including the Mwashima Stadium groundbreaking, ongoing construction works in Ziwani, and efforts to address flooding challenges there. The county has also handed over Mombasa Municipal Stadium to the national government after settling its share of debt, and is negotiating with Kenya Ports Authority to secure the KPA ground for public use.



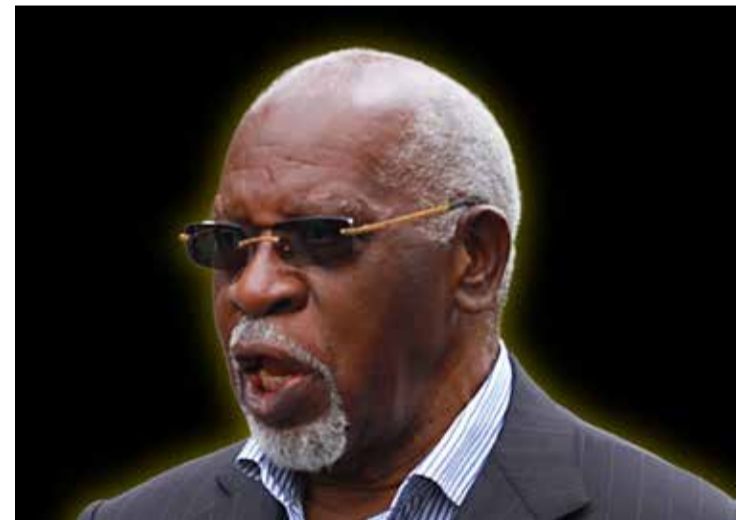
Dr. Agnes Kagure, the Kenya Patriots Party leader and Nairobi City County gubernatorial aspirant, led a humanitarian outreach in Mathare North where her Mbogi na Mama team delivered relief supplies to more than 100 families affected by recent floods. The visit focused on providing essential household items to residents who have been displaced or severely impacted by the heavy rains, with Kagure emphasizing the need for immediate support for vulnerable communities. She said the initiative was part of a broader commitment to stand with residents during times of crisis, noting that effective leadership is defined by presence and action on the ground rather than distance from affected citizens. Kagure highlighted the resilience of working families in informal settlements, saying they continue to endure difficult conditions despite contributing significantly to the city's growth. She pledged continued engagement with communities facing hardship and reiterated that her team would remain active in providing support and advocacy for affected households.

Kirinyaga County Commissioner Husein Allasow has expressed concern over rising cases of cattle theft in Mwea and surrounding areas, describing the trend as alarming and unacceptable. He warned those involved that security agencies have intensified operations and will take firm action against offenders, saying enhanced surveillance is already in place. Allasow directed the Ngao security team to strengthen collaboration with residents in identifying and arresting suspects. He stressed the importance of community policing in combating livestock theft and urged the public to share timely information with authorities. He assured residents that efforts to curb the vice will continue until it is eliminated.



Police in Nakuru and Vihiga counties have recovered assorted stolen items in separate operations as part of an ongoing crackdown on theft and burglary networks. In Nakuru, officers from Free Area Police Post conducting a night patrol in Naka Estate at around 3 a.m. spotted two suspicious individuals and tracked them, leading to the recovery of items suspected to have been stolen from a nearby gas shop. The shop owner later identified the goods as his property. In Vihiga's Mudete area, police recovered electronics from a suspect's premises after a tip-off from members of the public, with investigators linking the suspect to a wider burglary syndicate. All recovered items have been secured as evidence as investigations continue, with authorities urging the public to report suspicious activity through official channels.

Veteran gynaecologist and Nairobi Hospital director Dr Job Obwaka has died at the age of 83, weeks after his dramatic arrest over alleged falsified records. He passed away this evening at the very facility where he served patients for decades, his wife, Everose Obwaka, confirms. Hospital sources said he was brought in unconscious and was pronounced dead on arrival.



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Politics “critical democratic transition” approaching in 2027

Justin Muturi calls on workers to mobilize ahead of 2027 political transition

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

The Democratic Party of Kenya used this year’s Labour Day to deliver a bold and politically charged message to the country’s workforce: reclaim your place at the center of Kenya’s future or risk being left behind once again.

In a statement released on Friday, the party’s leader, Justin Muturi, painted Kenyan workers as both the “backbone of the economy” and a historically overlooked force in national decision-making.

While celebrating their resilience, the statement doubled as a rallying cry ahead of what the party described as a “critical democratic transition” approaching in 2027.

“For too long, workers have been sidelined in decisions that directly affect their livelihoods. That must end,” the statement declared, signaling a policy shift that would place labour representatives at the heart of governance; particularly on issues of wages, working conditions, and social protections.

While honoring Kenya’s labour movement for its historical role in shaping democracy, the party warned against complacency.

It urged workers not to “give up on our mother Kenya,”

emphasizing that their collective voice and vote would be decisive in the country’s next political chapter.

Drawing parallels with the anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s, Muturi invoked a powerful sense of historical continuity. “Just as the workers and patriots of that era said ‘Enough is Enough,’ today’s generation must rise with the same courage,” the statement read in part.

The comparison positions the modern labour movement not just as an economic actor, but as a potential catalyst for systemic political change.

The Democratic Party also took aim at what it described as Kenya’s failure to fully implement progressive labour reforms already adopted internationally.

While acknowledging that the country has ratified several international labour conventions, the statement criticized the lack of enforcement, arguing that many workers remain trapped in cycles of poverty despite these commitments.

“Ratification is not enough,” the party asserted, adding, “We will ensure full domestication and enforcement of international labour standards so that Kenyan workers stand shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts across the globe.”



Justin Muturi

Perhaps most striking was the declaration that “2027 will be the year of the Kenyan worker,” a phrase that underscores the party’s broader political ambitions.

By tying labour rights directly to the upcoming election cycle, the statement effectively reframes workers not just as beneficiaries of policy, but as kingmakers in the next government.

The tone throughout was unapologetically mobilizing.

Words like “organize,” “par-

ticipate,” and “demand accountability” punctuated the closing lines, transforming what might otherwise have been a ceremonial Labour Day message into a clear political call to action.

As Kenya marked another Labour Day, the Democratic Party’s message added a new layer of intensity to the national conversation around workers’ rights and political inclusion.

Moses plants 47,460 mangroves in world record bid



Antoine Moses, after completing the record-breaking environmental feat, is now awaiting ratification.

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

International environmental advocate Antoine Moses planted 47,460 mangrove propagules within 24 hours at Mirarani, Tudor Creek in Mombasa County on Friday, surpassing his own previous global benchmark in a feat now awaiting ratification by Guinness World Records.

The challenge concluded at 08:01 a.m. on May 1, drawing immediate praise from Forestry Principal Secretary Gitonga Mugambi, who attended the finish and said Kenya was proud to host an effort of such global significance. “We welcome him to Kenya, congratulate him for the attempt awaiting ratification, and encourage the community and all of Kenya to plug in,” Mugambi said.

The PS noted that mangrove planting ranks among the most demanding forms of ecological restoration, carried out in tidal mud zones under

shifting coastal conditions. He said Moses’s endurance directly supports President William Ruto’s target of planting 15 billion trees by 2032, and described the record attempt as a powerful public awareness campaign on the value of Kenya’s coastal ecosystems — critical for biodiversity, fisheries, carbon storage, and protection against storm surges.

The Kenya Forest Service, Kenya Forestry Research Institute, EarthLungs, and local community groups supported the 24-hour exercise. Mugambi said restoration success depends on precisely such partnerships between government, communities, and private conservation actors.

He invited Moses to explore more of Kenya following the challenge, and said the achievement should inspire young Kenyans to see environmental stewardship as a calling worth pursuing — in mud, tide, and all.

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Conflict Governors Malombe and Jama unite in Nguni to demand arrests and a county-wide register of herders, as communities count the dead and reopen a blocked highway

Kitui to register camel herders and track their movements after a week of deadly attacks

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

Leaders from Kitui and Garissa counties have proposed the mandatory registration of all camel herders and their owners in Kitui County, following a spate of deadly attacks this week that killed at least nine people — including a 14-year-old boy — and brought traffic along the Mwingi–Garissa road to a standstill for three days.

The proposals emerged from a joint security meeting held in Nguni, convened in response to the deteriorating situation along the two counties' shared border, where tensions between farming communities and migratory camel herders have simmered for years and periodically erupted into bloodshed. The latest violence began with the killing of the teenager in Ukasi by suspected camel herders, triggering violent demonstrations that blocked a key transport artery. Shortly after, seven people were killed in Kwa Kamari village in Tseikuru by armed bandits in a separate but related breakdown of security in the region.

Under the proposed framework, county chiefs and assistant chiefs will maintain detailed registers of all camel owners, herders, and — crit-

ically — the landowners who have leased their land to herders for grazing. The registers will be forwarded to sub-county and county security committees, enabling authorities to track the movement of herders and facilitate swift arrests when incidents occur. It is a straightforward mechanism, but one that acknowledges a reality long understood on the ground: that anonymity has shielded perpetrators and left security agencies with little to work with after each attack.

Kitui Governor Dr Julius Malombe addressed the meeting directly and without euphemism. He acknowledged that some residents within the county had complicated the situation by entering into grazing agreements with herders — arrangements that, while economically rational at an individual level, had created blind spots for security agencies. “We will put strategies in place to know who has camels in this county,” he said. “Let us also be truthful — there are some people in this county who have leased their land to the camel herders to graze their livestock.” He called on communities not to allow themselves to be divided by a criminal minority, while making clear that full transparency on ownership and herding chains was now a non-negotiable expectation. “We want to have



Leaders from Kitui and Garissa counties

all the details of the camel herders, including their phone and identity numbers, so that when something happens, we know where the suspects are,” Malombe added.

“If the suspects had been arrested and charged, these demonstrations

would not have happened.” — Garissa Governor Nathif Jama

Garissa Governor Nathif Jama took a harder line on the security establishment, pointedly questioning why, nearly two weeks after the killing of a 24-year-old taxi driver in Garissa — and close to a week after the Tseikuru and Ukasi killings — police had yet to make a single arrest. His frustration was unambiguous. “If there are criminals who are killing our people, why have they not been arrested? Why are our security systems slacking behind?” he asked. “We need to take swift action if something like this happens. Security agencies in this country must do their work well. If the suspects had been arrested and charged, these demonstrations would not have happened.” It was a rebuke that landed with particular weight in a room that included county commissioners Mohamed Mwabudzo of Garissa and Erustus Mbui of Kitui, along with their respective security committees.

The broader context is one that both counties know painfully well. Farmer-herder conflict along Kenya's arid and semi-arid borderlands is not a new phenomenon. It follows well-worn fault lines — competition over land and water during dry seasons, the expansion of camel herding into historically agricultural zones, and

the persistent failure of security responses to create deterrence. What the violence of the past week has done is compress that long-running grievance into a short, visceral series of events that left communities demanding answers and blocking roads in grief and fury.

The Nguni meeting signals a shift — at least in intention — toward a more systematic, intelligence-led approach. Whether the registration framework will be implemented with the rigour it demands, and whether security agencies will respond to Governor Jama's charge with the urgency it deserves, remains to be seen. Public service transport along the Mwingi–Garissa corridor was expected to resume on Friday following the talks, restoring a fragile normality to communities that have had their lives interrupted not for the first time, and likely not for the last.

The dead deserve more than a register. They deserve a system that makes the next killing harder to commit and impossible to escape.



Mwingi-Garissa clashes

Politics

Jimi Wanjigi shifts political debate to economy, dismisses ethnic politics

BY WMW

@themkenyatimes

Safina Party leader and presidential aspirant Jimi Wanjigi has called for a fundamental shift in Kenya's political conversation, urging leaders and citizens alike to focus on economic hardship rather than ethnic divisions, which he described as outdated and distracting.

Speaking during the opening of the party's new office in Homa Bay County on Friday, Wanjigi painted a stark picture of the country's economic reality.

He argued that a vast majority of Kenyans are struggling to meet basic financial obligations, characterizing the national mood as one weighed down by "pain, trauma, and tears."

Despite the grim assessment, Wanjigi struck a hopeful tone, commending Kenyans for their resilience and entrepreneurial spirit.

He expressed confidence that the country can overcome its current challenges if leaders and citizens unite around a shared economic vision.

The choice of Homa Bay for the event carried symbolic and political weight.

The region has long been a stronghold of opposition politics, and Wanjigi acknowledged its historical significance while describing it as a place he considers home.

He emphasized the importance of building unity across political lines to advance economic progress.

Wanjigi also highlighted the untapped potential of Homa Bay County, pointing to its strategic position along Lake Victoria and its strengths in fishing, agriculture, and cross-border trade with neighboring countries.

He argued that such regions should serve as engines of growth under Kenya's devolved system, rather than being held back by inefficiencies and missed opportunities.

A key theme of his address was a rejection of ethnic-based politics. Wanjigi criticized leaders who continue to rely on tribal narratives, saying they divert attention from the real challenges facing Kenyans.

While acknowledging historical grievances in regions like Nyanza, he warned against using them to

deepen divisions.

Turning to national policy, Wanjigi delivered a pointed critique of the government's economic management.

He described the current model as ineffective, citing rising public debt, high inflation, and declining investment as key concerns.

According to him, a large share of government revenue is now consumed by debt servicing, limiting the state's capacity to invest in development.

He further noted signs of slowing growth in critical sectors such as agriculture, construction, and services, alongside weakening private sector activity.

These trends, he said, have led to job losses and business closures, worsening the economic strain on households.

In a dramatic metaphor, Wanjigi likened the country's economic situation to a biblical flood, framing the present moment as a turning point.

He presented the Safina Party as a vehicle for recovery, calling on Kenyans to embrace a new path toward prosperity.

Central to his message was what he described as an "economic salvation plan." The proposal focuses on reducing reliance on debt, investing in human capital, and promoting innovation and enterprise.

He advocated for a shift in fiscal policy, including lowering taxes and prioritizing value creation.

Among the measures he outlined were reducing sales tax, expanding access to free education and publicly funded healthcare, and increasing the availability of affordable credit.

He also proposed limiting government borrowing from domestic financial institutions to ease pressure on private sector lending.

Wanjigi stressed the importance of strengthening local industries, particularly manufacturing and high-value agriculture, as a means of creating jobs and building sustainable wealth.

He argued that long-term economic stability will depend on empowering these sectors.

He also called for governance reforms aimed at improving accountability and restoring public trust. According to Wanjigi, rebuilding



Jimmi Wanjigi addressing the public after opening Safina party's Homa Bay office. | Photo: courtesy.

confidence in public institutions is essential for achieving meaningful and lasting economic recovery.

Wanjigi urged Kenyans to take an active role in shaping the nation's future.

He framed economic empowerment as a form of freedom and invited citizens to join the Safina Party, describing the newly opened office as a symbol of opportunity and renewal.

The event highlighted the growing centrality of economic issues in Kenya's political landscape as the country moves toward the 2027 general election, with leaders increasingly advancing competing visions for recovery and growth.



Safina party leader Jimmi Wanjigi with supporters in Homa Bay on Friday.

Politics The timing of the Treasury’s directive — less than 24 hours after her public break with the ruling party — is already drawing sharp political scrutiny.

Ngirici ousted from Kenya Seed board a day after dumping UDA

BY MKT REPORTER
@themtkenyatimes

Former Kirinyaga Woman Representative Purity Ngirici has been removed as chairperson and director of the Kenya Seed Company board, less than 24 hours after she publicly broke with the ruling United Democratic Alliance (UDA).

In a letter dated April 30, National Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi directed Kenya Seed Company

Managing Director Sammy Chepsiror to effect the removal immediately, invoking provisions in the company’s Articles of Association. “In line with the above provisions in the Articles of Association, you are hereby advised to process the immediate removal of Ms Purity Wangui Ngirici as Director and Chairman of the Board,” Mbadi wrote. No reasons were given for the decision.

The directive landed barely a day after Ngirici made a pointed public declaration on

Wednesday, announcing her exit from President William Ruto’s party and accusing its leadership of betrayal. She said she had made considerable sacrifices for UDA and the Kenya Kwanza administration, only to be sidelined and denied political opportunity. It was a familiar grievance — in 2022, she ran as an independent candidate in Kirinyaga after falling out with UDA during party nominations, despite having been among President Ruto’s most visible allies in the Mt Kenya



Former Kirinyaga Woman Representative Purity Ngirici

region.

This time, Ngirici has anchored herself to the emerging “Wantam” political movement, ruling out any future electoral bid on a UDA ticket. She has signalled her intention to remain active in Kirinyaga politics, with specula-

tion already building that she may contest the county governorship in the next General Election.

Her removal from the Kenya Seed board adds a blunt new chapter to what has become one of the region’s most closely watched political

breakdowns — and a pointed illustration of how swiftly loyalty, once withdrawn, can be answered in Kenya’s political economy.

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Virtue The universe does not reward virtue. It never promised to. But what we do in the wreckage — that is the only question that has ever mattered.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

“The rain does not check your virtue before it falls. It soaks the saint and the sinner with identical indifference.”



By: Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza
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There is a particular kind of phone call that cuts through sleep and leaves the room colder. It comes at 2:03 a.m. and tells you the house is gone, the diagnosis is terminal, the child will not wake up. And when you trace that call, it does not land on the doorstep of the corrupt, the cruel, or the indifferent. It finds her — the woman who packs an extra lunch for the security guard. It finds him — the man who turned down the bribe, lost the promotion, and still showed up to work early the next morning. These are the people with calloused knees from prayer and empty pockets from giving. They are the ones who do the right thing when no one is watching. And they are the ones we bury. So we are left to ask, with shaking voices and fists that cannot unclench: why?

Let us begin by dispensing with euphemism — because euphemism is the language of people who have not yet been burned. Cancer is not “a journey.” It is a siege. It is the slow cellular mutiny that strips a father who once coached every Saturday football match down to a hospital gown and a whispered name on a chart. Betrayal is not “a lesson.” It is an execution — the husband who empties the joint account and leaves the house key on the counter like an indictment; the confidant who takes your most vulner-



able truth and scatters it like broken glass. Poverty is not “character-building.” It is violence in slow motion: the arithmetic of despair, choosing between a child’s antibiotics and the month’s electricity bill, watching a gifted daughter fold her university admission letter into a drawer because the school fees are a mountain that will not move. And death — the senseless kind — is not “part of life.” It is theft. A drunk driver swerves. A stray bullet does not request your résumé. An infant becomes a past tense before she ever learns to be present. We have all stood at

gravesides where the mathematics refuse to balance: the good, buried young; the predatory, growing old in comfort.

“The rain does not check your virtue before it falls. It soaks the saint and the sinner with identical indifference.”

The hardest truth is this: the world was never under contract to be fair. Many of us were raised on a merchant’s theology — do good, get good. But the universe does not operate on transaction. It operates on physics, probability, and the unfettered agency

of broken people. A drunk driver does not audit your morality before crossing the centre line. To believe goodness is a shield is to stand in a storm holding a newspaper and call it shelter. There is no cosmic ledger balancing virtue against loss. The ledger does not exist.

There is a second, harder truth: light attracts predators. The wolf does not stalk the wolf — it studies the lamb. Integrity is inconvenient to corrupt systems, so the person who refuses to forge the document gets fired. The woman who will not trade her dignity for a contract gets passed

over. The man who forgives is read as weak and exploited twice. Cruelty builds moats. Compassion builds bridges. And bridges, by design, are walked on — and sometimes burned by the very people they were built to carry.

Consider, too, what the alternative would cost us. Imagine a world in which virtue guaranteed protection. In that world, no act would be truly moral. Every kindness would be a calculated investment. Charity would be a stock trade. The only way goodness can be real — genuinely, irreducibly real — is if it expects no dividend. The fact that you can lose everything and still choose mercy is the only evidence that your mercy was ever authentic. That truth is both devastating and sacred.

“Your suffering is not the receipt that proves you were abandoned. Sometimes it is the evidence that you were entrusted.”

The hardest truth is this: the world was never under contract to be fair. Many of us were raised on a merchant’s theology — do good, get good. But the universe does not operate on transaction. It operates on physics, probability, and the unfettered agency of broken people. A drunk driver does not audit your morality before crossing the centre line. To believe goodness is a shield is to stand in a storm holding a newspaper and call it shelter. There is no cosmic ledger balancing virtue against loss. The ledger does not exist.



None of this will comfort the six-year-old in the oncology ward, nor should it. The mother placing flowers on a small grave does not need perspective — she needs presence, and then silence. Platitudes offered too quickly are a form of abandonment dressed as consolation. But for those who hold to the belief that this life is one searing page in a longer volume, the argument is not that pain is purposeful — it is that pain does not have the final word. That belief does not suture the wound. It does not sanitise the ink. But it refuses to let suffering write the ending.

So where does that leave us? Guttled. Incandescent with rage. And rightly so. Apathy in the face of unjust suffering is not enlightenment — it is a quiet form of death. To not be shattered when the innocent are shattered is to be something less than human. We are left at a fork: calcify into bitterness, or be refined into something stronger. Bitterness is the path of least resistance. Choosing otherwise will cost you. It will ask for your forgiveness after betrayal, your generosity after theft, your hope after the funeral. It will demand what feels like the last of you.

And yet. If the good abandon goodness the moment it stops protecting them, then cruelty claims a second victory — it takes not just their present but their future. We cannot afford to surrender that ground. So mourn. Rage. Doubt. Collapse. All of that is human, and all of it is honest. But tomorrow, rise and do the next good thing — not because it will shield you from the next bad thing, because it will not. Do it because there is someone watching you, someone who is one more tragedy from surrender, and who needs proof that it is possible to endure.

That is all we are given. Not an answer. A rebellion.

Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza writes on faith, society, and the human condition. He can be reached at mukphix@gmail.com

Development Following drilling of the bore hole, the school fraternity can now access clean and reliable water, effectively ending years of acute shortage

First Lady launches projects at Unoa Primary Comprehensive School

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

First Lady Rachel Ruto has launched several projects at Unoa Comprehensive School in Makueni Sub-county that she initiated last year, geared towards improving the welfare of children at the institution.

Among the projects she commissioned are a bore hole, nine refurbished classrooms, a solar water system and an improved playground, all aimed at creating a conducive environment for the children.

The projects have been completed in partnership with the Dawoodi Bohra Community, National Water Harvest-

ing and Storage Authority, Makueni county government and other government agencies.

Following drilling of the bore hole, the school fraternity can now access clean and reliable water, effectively ending years of acute shortage of the same.

At the same time, the availability of water has enabled learners at the facility to have a kitchen garden, hence improving their nutrition status, besides contributing to the overall national food security.

“What has touched me most is what Unoa Comprehensive School has done with this change. Unoa did not wait; you took action. The kitchen garden you have created

with fruit trees and nutritious crops is a powerful statement. It means that you received change and built on it. I am proud of that,” said Mrs Ruto during the official handover ceremony at the Unoa Sports Ground on Thursday.

“To our learners, the kitchen garden feeds you. It is teaching you. It is preparing you for a future where you are not just learners but creators, innovators and problem solvers. I am happy the seeds planted here are no longer just growing in this school compound but are also growing in your homes.

I have been told learners like Samuel Wambua (Grade 7) and Mitchell Mwende (Grade 4), among many others, have



First Lady Rachel Ruto

already started kitchen gardens at their homes.

Also, Justine Kisilu, a teacher, is leading by example, showing that true teaching does not end at the classrooms; it lives on, when well modelled, this is a culture being born, with a school inspiring homes,” added the

First Lady.

It should be noted that the greening of Unoa Playground started last year in June, when Mrs Ruto graced the Day of the African Child, held on the then-dusty ground that impacted negatively on the health of the children, as a result of which she promised to ensure grass is planted on the field.

During the event, Mrs Ruto urged parents to protect the progress already achieved, besides challenging them to support their children in their education in a bid to ensure the school becomes a model school.

The First Lady also urged the learners to use the newly refurbished classrooms and the conducive learning opportunities they now have to become whatever they want to become in this life.

During the event, Mrs Ruto also provided 1,700 pairs of shoes for learners at the Unoa Comprehensive School, as well as 25 computers that will facilitate their acquiring digital skills.

The First Lady lauded the Dawoodi Bohra Community for mobilising resources to renovate the nine classrooms, saying their kind gesture had restored dignity and created comfortable spaces where children can learn with pride in a conducive environment.

At the same time, she thanked the Bohra Community for pledging to construct a modern cooking kitchen and

administration block at the Unoa Comprehensive School.

“Your generosity has done more than restoring buildings. You passionately embraced this school and mobilised resources and your time to make this a success. You have renovated lives and restored dignity. You have created spaces where children can learn with pride. You have made these classrooms accessible for children enabled differently, ensuring no child is left behind,” said Mrs Ruto.

Speaking at the same event, Gender Cabinet Secretary Hannah Cheptumo lauded the First Lady for the initiative that she said will transform the lives of children at Unoa Comprehensive School, besides improving the learning environment.

The CS also echoed the need for parents to improve learning facilities so that pupils can have smooth learning without any problems.

“I call for collective responsibility to protect the facilities accorded to this school. Now that you have a better environment to learn, work hard and improve your lives,” she urged the learners.

During the event, the CS donated 50 bags of 90 kg, 50 bags of rice and 30 bags of beans, 20 bags of cowpeas, 60 bales of wimbi flour and 15 jerricans of cooking oil to the school.



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Students In their testimonies, the students said they initially struggled to adapt to the cold weather and a new working environment

Kenyan students in UK seasonal work scheme share gains, challenges and call for local investment

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

Kenyan students working in the United Kingdom under the Seasonal Workers Scheme have shared mixed but largely positive experiences, highlighting personal growth, financial progress, and lessons that they say could transform Kenya's agricultural sector if applied locally.

The students from the Kenya School of Agriculture and Bukura Agricultural College met with Cabinet Secretary Sen. Mutahi Kagwe in London during a session organized with the Kenya High Commission. They are currently attached to Charlton's Farm, a fruit packaging company where more than 200 Kenyans work alongside international colleagues.

In their testimonies, the students said they initially struggled to adapt to the cold weather and a new work-

ing environment but gradually adjusted, citing discipline, teamwork, and strong English communication skills as key strengths that helped them thrive. Some reported receiving promotions and pay increases after demonstrating reliability and efficiency.

They emphasized the professional work culture, pointing to structured breaks, fair treatment, and exposure to advanced agricultural technologies as major benefits of the programme. Key lessons included time management, quality control, cleanliness, and adherence to workplace standards.

Several students said their earnings had enabled them to invest back home in land, housing, dairy farming, education, and family support, describing the experience as life-changing and eye-opening.

CS Mutahi Kagwe commended the students, describing them as ambas-

sadors of Kenya and urging them to maintain discipline and integrity while abroad. He said the success of the programme depends on their conduct and reputation, and encouraged them to acquire skills that can be transferred to Kenya's economy.

He further called on participants to avoid conduct that could undermine the initiative and instead focus on building experience that supports national development.

The students, however, also used the platform to challenge leaders to strengthen local fruit production and invest in value addition, arguing that such measures could create similar job opportunities within Kenya.

The High Commission noted continued support for the programme, while expressing optimism that skills gained abroad could help modernize Kenya's agricultural sector in the long term.



Cabinet Secretary Sen. Mutahi Kagwe with Kenyan students working in the United Kingdom under the Seasonal Workers Scheme

The Mt. Kenya Times

T_{KE}



A mother's love



In a world that swirls with vibrant hues,
Where chaos hums and storms accrue,
A mother's love, a fortress stands,
An anchor grounding shifting sands.

Her arms, a haven, gentle and warm,
A sanctuary protects from worldly harm.
With tender touch and soothing voice,
She weaves a safety net, a love-filled choice.

In her embrace, all worries fade,
A symphony of comfort, softly played.
Her words are whispered lullabies,
Guiding dreams beneath starry skies.

Her love, a tapestry, woven in grace,
With every stitch she leaves her trace.
Through laughter, tears, and sorrows shared,
A deep connection, eternally bared.

Her love, a beacon in the darkest night,
Illuminating paths with tender light.
She shines as a guide, steady and strong,
In her embrace, we always belong.

No mountain too high, no river too wide,
Her love, an unbreakable tie that's tied.
For a mother's love knows no end,
A bond that time cannot transcend.

So, let us cherish and celebrate,
A mother's love, a sacred part innate.
For in her arms, we find solace true,
A sanctuary where love shines through.

Keith Onyango- Rongo university

A day came into my life



When everything was going worse,
Then a girl came into my life,
And she looked like a beautiful purse.
Do I look like a thief,
Or is she under some bad curse?
I never told her anything,
Though she didn't notice my flaws.
Blowing candles, talking to another girl,
While she was busy listening to others' sad whirl,
Everything was going wrong, but then I saw her

again,
I don't know if I'm into her, but I sent a request
then.
It got accepted, and she followed back,
All I wanted was to share a game, not slack,
Things weren't going well, but she was on my
Instagram,
She wasn't interested, and I started feeling
shame.
A few months later, she replied to my story,
And I felt like it was a moment of glory,
I talked to other girls, but never in a hurry,
Her texts were dry, yet I felt it would be worthy.
And yes, that day came into my life,
She looked as beautiful as fine wine,
Her texts and calls felt like a perfect rhyme,
Yes! It's her — the unexpected girl.

Naman Virmani
Faridabad

When the world is dark



How did she make it in the dark
Then tell them all you need is a lamp
And a little spark
A spark from your soul and the lamp
Don't ever let yourself go damp
All you need is a lamp
When the world is dark...

When the world is dark
All you need is a lamp to get going
All you need is that spark
From the little lamp
And from you heart
And from you heart
Keep on pushing the cart
It may seem heavy
And you want to stop
But don't let your motivation ever drop

When the world is dark
All you need is a lamp
Soon you'll be at your destination
Everyone will look with their eyes filled with
fascination

Fill the way with light
And Let your soul ignite
No matter what strikes
Keep going for your dreams
Go on till your life gleams
Lit the world up with your light
Let your destiny be bright

All you need is a little Lamp to keep going
Always hoping and growing
When the world is dark
All you need is a little lamp to keep going...

-Kashish Makkar
- D.A.V. Public school
- nh-3 Faridabad, Haryana, India

Ideas don't work without you doing the work



Think big
Ideas flows like a river
When we put into action
Our goal comes nearer!

Sky is the limit
It's never far away
Work while you work
Play while you play

Never get confused
Concentrate on your work!
If our ideas didn't work

It's our inability to do it wisely!
Taking first step is harder
Next step is less harder
Scaling heights requires consistent efforts!

Leaving the idea in
First step itself
Leaves us alone
Continuous work helps us

To reach greater heights!
Do your work
God will do the rest!

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Holiday



Holiday is the happy day,
Holiday is the jolly day,
holiday is to free,
We can enjoy the day,
Sunday is holiday to everyone,
Sunday is the jolly day,

And a festival day is a holiday,
Holiday is to spend time with family,
holiday to travel any place,
holiday is to enjoy with our family day,
Holiday is a smiley day,
Holiday is a beautiful day,
The day is holiday to enjoy,
Happy holidays.

P.HEMANYA
VIII
JOHN DEWEY MAT HR SEC SCHOOL
PANRUTI CUDDALORE DISTRICT.

Just me and my exams



I sit and look at my book,
but nothing goes inside my head.
Everyone says "study, study,"
but I just feel tired.

I'm scared of marks,
like they decide my whole life.

I try to learn,
but pressure keeps coming back.

Sometimes I feel like crying,
but I just stay quiet.

Still... I open my book again,
because I don't want to give up.

V. S. Nithiyasri
VII
John Dewey Matric Higher Secondary School,
Cuddalore, Tamilnadu.

Tourism Based at WTTC's global office in Madrid, Mr. Balala has started in a new role as Executive Vice-President for Advocacy, Government Affairs and Research

Former minister Balala appointed to lead advocacy and government engagement at the WTTCouncil

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

The highly experienced former Kenyan Tourism Minister, Najib Balala, has been appointed to the Leadership Team at the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the global voice of the private sector within the industry.

Based at WTTC's global office in Madrid, Mr. Balala has started in a new role as Executive Vice-President for Advocacy, Government Affairs and Research. He will lead WTTC's global advocacy agenda, government engagement and policy research.

Mr. Balala has substantial public and private sector experience on the global stage. As a former Tourism and Wildlife Minister for Kenya, for over 12 years, he shaped



Najib Balala (left)

national and international tourism policy and helped to strengthen the operating envi-

ronment around the world for the sector's growth. Among his many accom-

plishments, Mr. Balala's highly-successful career includes his time as Cabinet Minister

for Tourism and Wildlife for Kenya, in which he led an highly-resilient department during times of crisis and political upheaval. His open-door policy with the private sector was heralded by many in the industry across Kenya.

During the Covid pandemic, he spearheaded the tourism industry through policy and strategic change, leading Kenya to become the first country in the world to be awarded the "Safer Tourism Seal" in recognition of the health and safety measures put in place.

His leadership drove the transformation of Kenya's tourism sector through progressive policy frameworks and impactful destination branding, while his strong record in strategic diplomacy enabled him to effectively bridge government priorities with private sector ambitions

across international platforms.

In his new role, Najib Balala will report to WTTC President & CEO Gloria Guevara.

Commenting on his appointment, Najib Balala said: "It is an honour and a privilege to be selected by WTTC for this role and I am looking forward to working with the visionary WTTC Chairman Manfredi Lefebvre and President & CEO Gloria Guevara. I'll be bringing my experience bridging the private and public sectors to WTTC's overall strategic roadmap and ensuring it has strong relations with all the stakeholders in governments and beyond."

WTTC President and CEO, Gloria Guevara, added: "Najib Balala's substantial experience as a Cabinet Minister on the world stage will help WTTC grow our sector even further. We are seeing many new members join us, and old members return, as we continue to build one of the finest Travel & Tourism teams globally, offering world-class advocacy and support to the sector."

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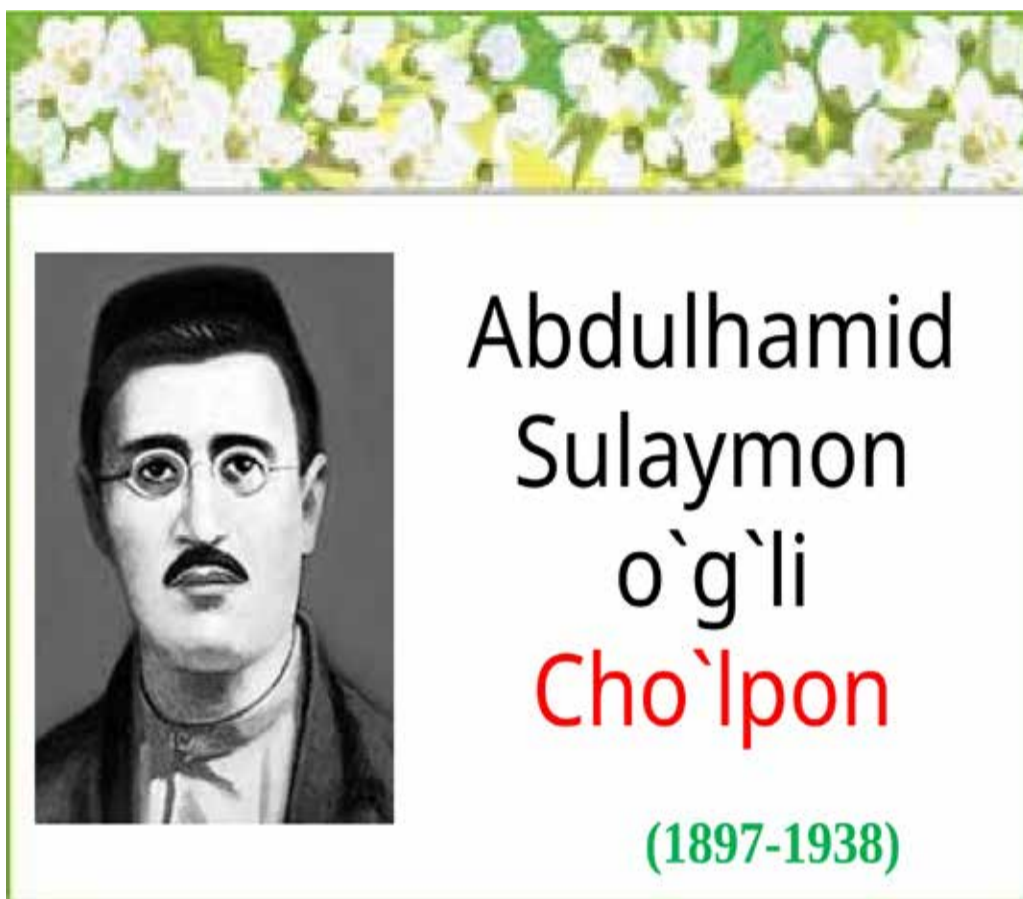
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Talent Cho'lpon's poetry brought about a true revolution in Uzbek literature. Breaking free from the rigid patterns of classical aruz meter

The fiery singer of the nation: The soul and fate of Cho'lpon



Abdulhamid
Sulaymon
o'g'li
Cho'lpon
(1897-1938)

Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li Cho'lpon

BY Shohista Narzulla O'ktamova

@themkenyatimes

When we look back at the history of early 20th-century Uzbek literature, the figure of Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li Cho'lpon shines on its horizon like a bright morning star, radiating incomparable grandeur. Cho'lpon was not merely a poet or writer; he was the artistic embodiment of an entire nation's spiritual rebellion against colonial chains, its struggle for self-awareness, and its aspiration for freedom. His life and творчество encapsulate the most painful period in the history of the Uzbek people—a time striving to move from darkness into light.

Formed in the enlightened environment of Andijan and under the passionate breath of the Jadid movement, this great figure elevated Uzbek literary art to an entirely new level during his short yet tur-

bulent life.

Cho'lpon's poetry brought about a true revolution in Uzbek literature. Breaking free from the rigid patterns of classical aruz meter, he introduced the syllabic (barmaq) meter closer to folk rhythms, infusing poetry with a living spirit, sincere pain, and a rebellious tone. Although his lyrical works may appear to depict nature or romantic emotions on the surface, each line conceals a deep cry of anguish and hope reflecting the oppressed state of the nation under tyranny.

The symbols in his famous poems such as "Go'zal" ("The Beautiful") and "Binafsha" ("The Violet") are, in essence, expressions of longing for freedom and dreams of a liberated homeland. When the poet exclaimed:

"Do not wear chains, do not bow your head, for you too were born free!"

he was not merely speaking words, but striving to awaken

the dignity of a nation sinking into despair. Each of his poetic collections—whether "Uyg'onish" ("Awakening") or "Tong sirlari" ("Secrets of Dawn")—played an invaluable role in shaping the social consciousness of the Uzbek people.

Cho'lpon's mastery in prose reached its peak in his masterpiece, the novel "Kecha va Kunduz" ("Night and Day"). Through this work, he explored the tragedy of the nation from within. The novel is not simply a story of the past, but a philosophical reflection on why the people fell under the oppression of Tsarism, and the bitter consequences of ignorance and spiritual decline. Through the character of Zebi, he portrayed the lack of rights of Uzbek women, while in the figure of Akbarali mingboshi, he masterfully depicted the cunning of leaders enslaved by their own desires.

Cho'lpon dreamed of seeing the "Day," yet the era he

lived in remained a "Night" of repression and cruelty. Nevertheless, he demonstrated exceptional courage in the art of translation, bringing world masterpieces such as Shakespeare's "Hamlet" into the Uzbek language, proving the richness and power of his native tongue.

The tragic fate of Cho'lpon was one of the harshest blows to the nation's spirituality. The Soviet regime, fearing his free thought, patriotism, and immense influence over the people, subjected him to relentless persecution. Despite slander, oppression, and accusations of "treason," he never abandoned his beliefs. On October 4, 1938, he became a victim of repression, like his

contemporaries Fitrat and Abdulla Qodiriy.

Although he was physically destroyed, Cho'lpon's name and his fiery lines were never erased from the memory of the people. Today, Cho'lpon stands as an eternal star on the path of freedom and independence of the Uzbek nation. His works serve not only as a literary heritage for the free generation of today but also as a timeless testament to preserving national pride and honoring the sacred love for the homeland.

His short and contradictory life was, in essence, a great sacrifice devoted to the eternal awakening of the nation.

Conclusion: Who Is Cho'lpon

for Us Today?

Today, we live in an independent country. The "freedom" and the "beautiful dawns" Cho'lpon dreamed of have come true. We read his books freely. But one thing must never be forgotten: Cho'lpon left us not only poetry, but also the responsibility of freedom.

As we turn the pages of his works, we should always ask ourselves:

"Are we today the worthy generation he dreamed of, the one for which he sacrificed his life?"

Cho'lpon lives on—in our language, in our spirit, and in our love of freedom.

"You are alive, not dead; you too are human, you too are a person!"

Kattakurgan State Pedagogical Institute

Shohista Narzulla qizi O'ktamova

Student of the Uzbek Language and Literature program

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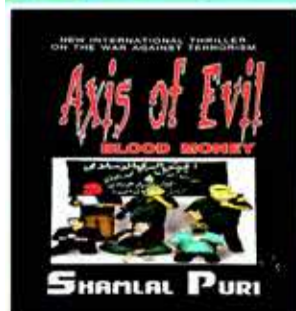
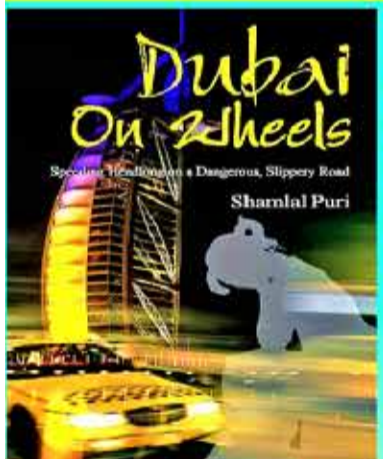
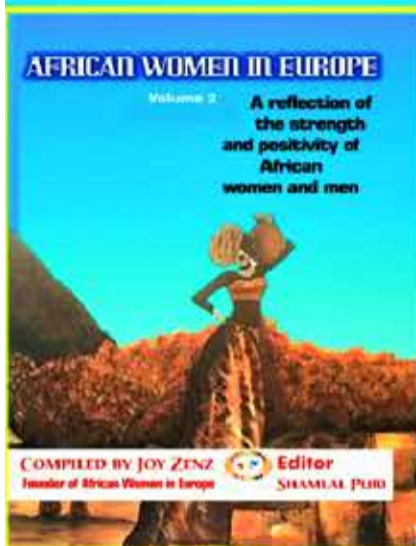
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Politics In the theater of Kenyan politics, elections are rarely just about leadership, but about performance. The stage is set long before the political campaign

The politics of performance: Loans without interest and the cost of Kenya's ballot



BY Fredrick Chelimo

@themkenyatimes

A political theatre is a genre of performance, drama or public action that aims to provoke thought, challenge the existing status quo, advocate for change and using techniques that blur the line between art and activism. It focuses on social justice, power structures and political events. It raises awareness, prompts reflection, incites action and challenges the audience to take critical stance. It emphasizes, critiques or supports political issues, social structures, and ideologies as well as provoking critical thinking about societal power structures, rather than entertaining.

In the theater of Kenyan politics, elections are rarely just about leadership, but about performance. The stage is set long before the political campaign periods are declared. Loudspeakers mounted on pickups or long trucks cackle to life across villages and estates. Music blares, names are chanted and promises either real, imagined or totally false are repeated until they sound like truths. At the center of this orchestrated spectacle stands a troubling paradox; the very resources stolen from the public are recycled back to the public as political bait under the guises of generosity, but better understood for what they truly are; repayment of a public debt, returned in the wrong form, at the wrong time, unproportionately and stripped of dignity.

This is not a cynical observation but a lived reality across much of Kenya. Public funds that should reliable roads build road, equip hospitals, and empower communities often find their way to private pockets. In a twisted and renamed cycle, some of this wealth returns to the citizens during campaign season in the form of handouts, donations and facilitations. These are not gifts, tokens of goodwill or acts of alleviation. They are repayments, partial, distorted



Ballot illustration

and deliberately timed to manipulate. In essence, they are loans repaid without interest, offered not out of accountability, but as a bait for continued impunity and cartelism.

What should have been a right, access to services, becomes a temporary privilege, theatrically granted. A road that should have been constructed is replaced by a rally. A hospital that should have been equipped is substituted by a handout. A job that should have been created is replaced with a one day payment for chanting slogans. The citizen is shortchanged twice; first through theft and secondly through deception.

The tragedy deepens when this economic manipulation is paired with masterful communication. Kenya's political class has refined the art of rhetoric into powerful weapon. Eloquence in language is no longer just a leadership trait; it is a tool of persuasion that can mask incompetence, sanitize corruption, and inflate empty promises into believable versions. Carefully crafted messages, often delivered in local dialects, wrapped in humor, and amplified by cultural resonance, create emotional connections that override rational judgement.

Within this messaging perpetrated regularly and persistently lies a dangerous linguistic distortion. Handouts are framed as support. Cash distribution are described as appreciation. Donations are celebrated as empowerment, however temporary.

But this language is veil. It disguises what is fundamentally a repayment of stolen public funds, returned not as infrastructure, not as a service, not as long term investment, but as a short-term inducement to make a skewed electoral decision. It is repayment without accountability, and crucially a repayment without interest. No penalties, consequences, but just recycled transaction disguised as generosity.

Charisma seals the deal. A charismatic candidate becomes more than a leader; they become a symbol. They embody hope, defiance or identity. They can command crowds, silence descent, and convert skepticism into applause. When that charisma meet messaging and money, it creates a political force that is difficult to resist, especially in economically vulnerable communities. When the money is perceived as a personal gift rather than a repayment, the illusion becomes complete. A saint is emerging.

Nowhere is this dynamic more visible than among unemployed youth. In many parts of the country, young people form the backbone of campaign mobilization. They dance behind the motorcades, attend rallies and chant slogans, not necessarily out of ideological conviction, but out of necessity. A small payment, a meal, or even the promise of future opportunity becomes enough reason to participate. But even here clarity must be restored; these payments are

not wages in any meaningful economic sense, nor are they gifts. They are fragments of larger public debt being returned in instalments – loans without interest, repaid selectively to secure loyalty rather than justice.

Political engagement becomes transactional. Democracy becomes survival and survival in this context, leaves little room for scrutiny. When a young person accepts money to attend a rally, they are not being empowered, but they are being reimbursed, partially and inadequately for opportunities they were never created in the first place.

This is not failure of the youth, but a failure of the system. When economic opportunities are scarce, politics become one of the few available sources of income. The result is a generation that is politically active but economically trapped, mobilized but not empowered, paid but not served.

The consequences are profound. Voters, overwhelmed by noise, spectacle, and short-term incentives, struggle to distinguish between genuine leadership and political theatrics. The line between service and self-interest blurs. Leaders who have mismanaged or beneficiaries of public resources are rebranded as the new messiah's, theft reframed as generosity and repayment mistaken for benevolence and the absence of interest, of accountability, of consequence becomes normalized.

This phenomenon creates what can

only be described as an “infovarished” society, one where access to accurate, objective, and critical information is limited or overshadowed by propaganda. In such environment, decision making is not based on policy or performance, but on perception or persuasion. The citizens are deprived of both resources and reliable information, is left navigating in a land of illusions. The danger is cynical. When voters reward inducement over integrity, the advertently reinforce the very system that exploits them. Leaders recognizing what works, invest more on spectacle than in service. The public institutions weaken. Trust erodes and the promise of democracy – governed by people, for the people – becomes increasingly hollow.

This is not irreversible condition. Breaking this cycle requires more than moral appeals; it demands structural and cultural shifts and civic education must move beyond formal settings and everyday conversations and equip citizens with the tools to critically evaluate leadership and to correctly interpret inducements for what they are; repayments of stolen resources, not gifts to be appreciated and celebrated. Economic empowerments especially for youths and the vulnerable including persons with disabilities, must be prioritized to reduce dependence on political handouts. Media and civic society must amplify fact-based narratives that challenge misinformation and expose manipulation.

Most importantly, there must be a collective redefinition of leadership – and of political money. Any monetary inducement must be understood as loan repaid without interest, a partial and distorted return of what was taken. It must never be mistaken for act of generosity, a token of good will, or an investment in the people. It is, at best, a reluctant refund. At worst a strategic brine designed to secure a continued access to public resources. As the country moves into another political season, the question is not whether the music will play or the crowds will gather – it will.

The question is whether Kenyan's will continue to dance to repayments disguised as gifts, or whether they will begin to demand full accountability – with interest. Because in the end, democracy is not just about the right to vote. It is about the wisdom to recognize when you are being paid back your own money – and the courage to demand what was promised in the first place.

Mr. Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo
PWD

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Agriculture The EU environmental policy framework is based on sustainable development, the polluter-pays principle, preventive measures, and strong legal foundations

Agricultural policy in the environmental policy of the European Union



BY Shafiha Rahimli

@themtkenyatimes



Agricultural policy

This study examines the integrated relationship between the European Union's environmental policy and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with particular emphasis on the process through which environmental sustainability has become a central component of agricultural policymaking. The EU environmental policy framework is based on the principles of sustainable development, the polluter-pays principle, preventive measures, and strong legal foundations. Over time, these principles have significantly influenced the objectives of the CAP, especially through the reforms introduced after 1992, when environmental considerations became an inseparable part of agricultural support mechanisms.

The EU environmental policy framework is based on sustainable development, the polluter-pays principle, preventive measures, and strong legal foundations. Over time, these principles have significantly influenced the objectives of the CAP, especially through the reforms introduced after 1992, when environmental considerations became an inseparable part of agricultural support mechanisms.

The European Union, initially established with the aim of economic integration, has gradually evolved into a multidimensional political structure that also encompasses social, environmental, and sustainable development dimensions. One of the most significant reflections of this transformation can be observed in the interaction between environmental policies

and agricultural policies. In Europe, the agricultural sector is one of the areas where natural resources are intensively used and where environmental impacts are most clearly visible. Therefore, the integration of the EU's environmental policies into agricultural policies lies at the center of its vision for sustainable development.

The main objective is to examine the relationship between the European Union's environmental policies and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and to analyze strategic orientations in environmentally sensitive agricultural practices, protection of natural resources, sustainable production, and food security. The study addresses the effects of environmental policies on agriculture within historical development and current policy instruments, showing how balance is established between sustainability, economic growth, and agricultural production.

Agricultural production directly affects soil, water, air, and biodiversity, while also contributing to environmental problems such as excessive chemical use, soil erosion, water pollution, and carbon emissions. In response, environmental policies aim to transform the agricultural sector into a more sustain-

able, nature-compatible, and resource-efficient structure. In this context, integration of environmental policy into agriculture is strategic not only for environmental protection but also for rural development, food security, and climate change mitigation.

Environmental and agricultural policies in the EU were initially separate. The Common Agricultural Policy, based on the 1957 Treaty of Rome, was designed to ensure food security, eliminate production shortages, and increase rural welfare. Priority was given to production expansion and price stability. However, from the 1970s onward, overproduction, resource waste, and environmental degradation pushed the EU toward sustainability-oriented reforms.

With the Single European Act of 1987, the environment became an independent policy area, and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 made environmental protection integration mandatory across all EU policies. From this period onward, CAP was restructured to include environmental criteria, and environmentally friendly farming practices and rural development measures were introduced.

In the 2000s, environmental objectives were strengthened through rural development

policies. Sustainable use of natural resources, promotion of organic farming, and reduction of carbon emissions became central goals. The Lisbon Strategy (2000) and Gothenburg Strategy (2001) established sustainability as a core EU objective.

In recent years, the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy have further transformed agricultural policy. Agriculture is now seen as an instrument in combating climate change, reducing pesticide and fertilizer use, limiting carbon emissions, and expanding environmentally friendly production systems.

The European Green Deal is a comprehensive strategy adopted by the European Commission in 2019, aiming for the EU to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050. This deal covers all sectors, including energy, industry, transport, construction, and agriculture. Its most important component for the agricultural sector is the "Farm to Fork" strategy.

The Green Deal has placed agriculture at the center of environmental policy because agriculture is both a victim of climate change and one of its causes. Agricultural activities account for approximately 10% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, establishing sustainable

food systems has become essential both for achieving climate targets and for ensuring the protection of natural resources.

The "Farm to Fork" strategy aims to improve environmental and health standards at every stage of food production. It seeks to make the food supply chain sustainable, reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, promote organic farming, and prevent food waste. It also aims to ensure that consumers have access to healthy, safe, and environmentally friendly food products.

The main targets of the strategy are: Reducing pesticide use by 50% by 2030,

Reducing chemical fertilizer use by 20%,

Increasing organic farming land to 25% of total agricultural land,

Halving food waste.

Within the framework of the Green Deal, CAP has become not only a system that supports farmers' income but also a mechanism that protects the environment. Measuring the carbon footprint of agricultural activities, monitoring soil health, and promoting sustainable irrigation techniques are concrete practices of this new era. This strategy represents a comprehensive structural transformation that integrates environmental policy and agricultural policy.

The Common Agricultural Policy is one of the oldest policy areas of the EU. Established on the basis of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, it initially aimed to ensure food security, increase agricultural production, and stabilize rural economies. Over time, it evolved into a system that includes environmental sustainability, biodiversity protection, and rural development.

From the 1970s onward, overproduction problems and environmental degradation led to structural reforms. The 1992 MacSharry Reform marked a turning point by shifting from production-based subsidies to direct

income support and introducing environmentally friendly farming incentives.

The 1999 Berlin (Agenda 2000) Reform introduced a two-pillar structure: First Pillar: Market regulation and direct income support

Second Pillar: Rural development and environmental protection

The 2003 Fischler Reform introduced "decoupling," meaning subsidies were no longer tied to production levels but to environmental compliance. Farmers had to meet standards related to soil protection, water management, and animal welfare.

The 2013 CAP Reform introduced "greening" practices, requiring ecological focus areas, crop rotation, and pasture protection.

The 2021–2023 reform aligned CAP with the European Green Deal, making climate action, biodiversity protection, and sustainable production central priorities.

Cross-compliance mechanisms link agricultural subsidies to environmental obligations. Farmers must comply with soil protection, water conservation, biodiversity protection, and chemical usage rules to receive payments. This ensures that public funding supports environmentally responsible agriculture.

Statutory Management Requirements (SMR) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) standards form the core of these obligations. Failure to comply results in reduced payments, making environmental protection a binding requirement rather than a voluntary choice.

The interaction between EU environmental policy and agricultural policy has become increasingly integrated over time. Agriculture is now considered not only an economic sector but also a key actor in environmental protection and sustainable resource management. This integration has been reinforced by rising environmental awareness, climate change pressures, and international commitments such as the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement, and the UN Sustainable Development

Zero-tariff China had already scrapped tariffs on 100 percent of tariff lines for imports from 33 least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa since Dec. 1, 2024.

China's new zero-tariff policy for Africa offers shared future in a fragmented world

BY Xinhua News Agency

@themkenyatimes

China on Friday began implementing an expanded zero-tariff treatment on imports from all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, a landmark move seen as promoting openness and cooperation for the Global South amid rising protectionism and fragmentation in the global economy.

With 24 tonnes of South African apples entering China at Shenzhen Customs in the early hours of Friday as the first shipment under the newly effective initiative, China has become the world's first major economy to unilaterally grant tariff exemption to all African nations with diplomatic ties. By offering full market access without requiring reciprocal concessions, China is setting a new benchmark for supporting industrialization in the Global South, noted Ricky Mukonza, an associate professor at Tshwane University of Technology in South Africa.

Pioneering commitment and "golden hallmark"

China had already scrapped tariffs on 100 percent of tariff lines for imports from 33 least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa since Dec. 1, 2024.

Under the new policy, from May 1, 2026 to April 30, 2028, China will grant zero-tariff treatment, in the form of a preferential tariff rate, to 20 African non-LDCs that have established diplomatic ties with China, according to the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council. The Ministry of Commerce said in a statement that China's latest move will create opportunities on multiple fronts, adding that zero tariffs will lower the cost of African products entering the Chinese market and give them a competitive edge. According to the ministry, the zero tariffs are also expected to help drive the diversification of African export products, increase their added value and optimize export structures, which will benefit farmers as well as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, support job creation, and



An exhibitor (L) communicates with visitors during the fourth China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo at Changsha International Convention and Exhibition Center in Changsha, central China's Hunan Province, June 13, 2025. | Photo: Chen Sihan.

boost people's livelihoods.

The ministry also expects the zero-tariff policy to further advance China-Africa cooperation in areas spanning services trade, digital trade, green industries and sustainable development, which will be conducive to enhancing Africa's capacity for independent development and accelerating its modernization process. African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf hailed the move as "very timely" for a continent bearing the brunt of global crises and vulnerable to isolationism. "I would like to express, on behalf of the African Union Commission, our sincere gratitude for this very brotherly gesture that all Africans appreciate," Youssouf told media last week. "The policy is a strong sign of China's long-term commitment to Africa's development," said Mukonza. He described it as a significant milestone in South-South cooperation that will strengthen confidence across the continent.

The move stands in stark contrast to the rising tide of unilateralism and protectionism globally. "While some regions are turning toward protectionism, China's approach offers an alternative based on openness and

cooperation," Mukonza said. China is Africa's largest trading partner. According to China's General Administration of Customs, China-Africa trade hit a record high of 348 billion U.S. dollars in 2025. Meanwhile, China's imports from Africa amounted to 123 billion dollars, up 5.4 percent year on year. In the first quarter of 2026, bilateral trade witnessed an increase of 23.7 percent year on year, with Chinese imports growing by 14.6 percent.

From January to February, China's new direct investment in Africa surged 44 percent year on year, according to Du Xiaohui, director-general of the Department of African Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Du called the zero-tariff arrangement a "golden hallmark" for China-Africa cooperation in the new era, poised to become an enduring engine for the high-quality development of bilateral relations. "The removal of tariffs lowers the risk for exporters and sends a strong signal that the Chinese market is stable and offers long-term opportunities for African brands," Mukonza said.

Unlocking opportunities, adding certainty

Experts say that the zero-tariff policy is expected to catalyze Africa's industrial and agricultural modernization. By slashing costs for African exports, it will help rebalance trade flows, diversify African exports, and position the vast Chinese market as a more appealing destination for higher added-value African products.

At the permanent exhibition hall of the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo in Changsha, capital of central China's Hunan Province, over 2,000 types of African specialty products are displayed, ranging from coffee and spices to handicrafts, among others. "With the zero-tariff policy, customs clearance costs for African goods will drop significantly, and market access will be further eased," said Yang Yi, general manager of the exhibition hall's operator, Hunan Yufei Industry Investment Co., Ltd. He anticipates a steady flow of premium African products into the Chinese market, enriching consumer choice.

Chinese enterprises are actively leveraging the new policy to build integrated cross-border supply chains.

Li Huanguo, chairman of Jingzhou Guoling Technology Co., Ltd., plans to import 3,000 tonnes of Poria cocos from the Republic of Congo over three years. "Relying on the zero-tariff policy, we will work with the Congolese side to build demonstration planting bases and create a Poria cocos health brand in Africa," he said, highlighting a model of industrial synergy. Lan Shengbin, deputy director of Changsha Customs, said the policy would bring multiple positive impacts. The import of high-quality African agricultural products, such as macadamia nuts from South Africa and fresh avocados from Kenya, is expected to expand, according to Lan.

Zhao Yongsheng, a researcher at the University of International Business and Economics, described the tangible, win-win benefits from zero tariffs as the embodiment of the all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era. "The policy's 'multiplier effect' is reflected on multiple levels," Zhao said. In the short term, it boosts employment and income in Africa. In the medium term, it promotes industrialization through investment and technology transfer. In the long run, it helps cultivate African consumption power, ultimately contributing to a more balanced global trading system.

Wang Xuekun, head of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce, said the latest move marks a new stage in China-Africa economic and trade cooperation, transitioning from "unilateral openness" to "institutional empowerment." It also embodies a pragmatic action by developing countries in the Global South to explore independent development paths, Wang added, noting that this also adds certainty to the global economy. China has been deepening reform and opening up comprehensively with unswerving commitment. It has expanded unilateral opening up, adopting zero tariffs on all products from all the LDCs with which it has diplomatic ties, according to last year's government work report.

China will open wider to the world. The country will expand market access and open up more areas, particularly in the service sector. It will further expand opening-up trials for value-added telecom services, biotechnology, wholly foreign-owned hospitals and other fields, take well-ordered steps to expand opening up in the digital sector, and shorten the negative list for cross-border trade in services, according to the government work report released in March this year.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From 'Tumetenga' to 'Tutafanya': Kenya's cycle of political promises

By: **Oliver Ogutu**

In the political landscape of Kenya, language plays a dual role as a beacon of hope and a breeding ground for increasing skepticism. Phrases such as tumetenga “we have allocated,” tutapanga “we will allocate,” baada ya miezi mitatu “after three months,” and kwa miezi sita “in six months’ time” have become common refrains in the public speeches of William Ruto. When spoken with confidence and conviction, these statements convey a sense of action, urgency, and dedication. President Ruto’s communication approach is bold and future-oriented, articulating plans, forecasts, and assurances that depict a government actively engaged in planning and executing. However, critics argue that this language can at times raise expectations that

are not fulfilled within the specified time frames, leading to disappointment among citizens eagerly anticipating concrete outcomes.

A notable example often cited in public discourse involves the promise of an international airport in Narok County. Reports and images circulated online appearing to show construction underway sparked excitement among residents. Yet, questions later emerged about the authenticity of those images and whether the project had truly begun as suggested. For locals, the issue was not just about an airport, it was about trust, transparency, and the reliability of official communication.

More recently, similar promises have been directed toward Bomet County, where the idea of building an airport has been floated. While such infrastructure projects can be transforma-

tive, they also require careful planning, funding, and clear timelines. Without visible progress or detailed follow-through, these announcements risk being perceived as part of a broader pattern of ambitious pledges that remain uncertain.

This pattern reflects a wider challenge in political leadership: the tension between ambition and execution. Leaders often aim to inspire and reassure, especially in difficult economic times. But when assurances are repeated without corresponding outcomes, the public begins to question whether these are firm commitments or aspirational statements.

For many Kenyans, especially the youth, students, and small-scale entrepreneurs, the stakes are high. Promises about funding, infrastructure, and economic opportunities are not abstract; they shape real decisions

about education, business, and daily survival. Delays or unmet expectations can therefore deepen disillusionment and erode confidence in leadership.

Supporters of the president, however, caution against quick judgment. They point out that large-scale projects are complex and can be slowed by budget constraints, bureaucratic processes, or shifting national priorities. From this perspective, what appears as inconsistency may reflect the realities of governing rather than intentional misdirection.

Even so, the growing gap between political messaging and lived experience remains a concern. In an era of widespread information access and public scrutiny, credibility has become one of the most valuable, and fragile, assets in leadership.

Ultimately, the issue is not about the use of phrases like



President William Ruto

“tumetenga” or “tutatenga,” but about what follows them. Citizens are not just listening; they are watching. And as Kenya continues to navigate its development path, the true measure of leadership will lie not in the

confidence of its promises, but in the consistency of its delivery.

Oliver Ogutu, Rongo university.

Agriculture The EU environmental policy framework is based on sustainable development, the polluter-pays principle, preventive measures, and strong legal foundations

Agricultural policy in the environmental policy of the European Union

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Goals.

Agricultural activities have significant environmental impacts, particularly on water, soil, and biodiversity. Intensive irrigation increases water scarcity, especially in Mediterranean regions, while pesticide and fertilizer use leads to water pollution and eutrophication. Soil degradation caused by intensive farming practices reduces fertility and contributes to carbon loss, while biodiversity declines due to habitat destruction and monoculture practices.

In response, the EU has developed policies aimed at reducing environmental pressure from agriculture. These

include sustainable land management strategies, soil protection frameworks, and agri-environmental measures designed to support biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Climate change has further intensified the need for policy integration. The EU follows both adaptation and mitigation strategies in agriculture. Adaptation focuses on improving resilience through drought-resistant crops, water management systems, and risk management tools such as agricultural insurance. Mitigation focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially methane from livestock and nitrous oxide from fertilizers.

A key emerging concept is “carbon farming,” which aims to turn agriculture into a carbon sink by enhancing

soil carbon storage, protecting grasslands, and promoting sustainable land use. This aligns directly with the objectives of the European Green Deal and climate neutrality goals.

EU financial instruments play a crucial role in supporting this transformation. The LIFE Programme funds environmental and climate-related projects, including habitat restoration, water protection, and ecological farming practices. Horizon Europe supports research and innovation in climate-resilient agriculture, precision farming, digital agriculture, and sustainable food systems.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) supports rural development policies under the second pillar of CAP. It

finances organic farming, green investments, renewable energy projects in rural areas, agri-environmental schemes, and support for young farmers. These funds strengthen both environmental sustainability and rural economic development.

The EU also extends its environmental-agricultural policies to developing countries through trade and cooperation mechanisms. Agricultural imports are increasingly subject to environmental standards such as deforestation-free production, carbon footprint limitations, and pesticide regulations. The EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) is a key example, targeting commodities like cocoa, coffee, and palm oil.

Through development programs and cooperation funds

such as the European Development Fund, the EU supports sustainable agriculture, soil restoration, water management, and climate-resilient farming in developing countries. This contributes to global environmental governance and sustainable supply chains.

The conclusion of the study shows that environmental sustainability has become a structural element of EU agricultural policy. CAP has evolved from a production-oriented system into a sustainability-driven framework. Environmental principles now shape agricultural production, funding, and trade policies.

Agriculture is no longer viewed solely as an economic activity but as part of environmental governance. The integration of environmental and agricultural policies in the EU

represents both an internal transformation and a global policy model. This system positions the EU as a leading actor in sustainable agriculture and environmental protection worldwide.



SHAFIHA RAHIMLI,

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SPORTS NEWS



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SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN



A book Release Function at GHS Melpattampakkam

By: D. Brinda

@themkenyatimes

On April, 2026, GHS Melpattampakkam hosted a vibrant book release function. The event saw the launch of four solo books and two school anthology, presided over by Chairman Jayamoorthy and Headmistress Venkateswari.

The books released were:

1. "Waves of Thoughts Beyond Classroom" by Arivazhagan grade 7
2. "The Writer in Me" by Sivamani grade 7
3. "School Days of Class 8" an anthology
4. "Leaves of Luminous Thoughts" by Brinda English teacher
5. "Creative Side of GHS Melpattampakkam" (anthology)
6. Poetry from the heart by Ramana

Students were awarded shields, certificates, and medals. Mrs. Brinda, the English teacher, was lauded for her efforts in nurturing the students' writing skills. Mrs. Brinda was behind the students to make them write on their own Creatively. She was a role model and she also released her own book in the function. This achievement is not a simple thing. She Motivates children to think creatively beyond the text book and to avoid sceren. This is the outcome of motivation, inspiration and encouragement. Anyone can achieve if they are channalysed well.

The event received a positive response from parents, motivating other children.

D. Brinda
English teacher
Ghs Melpattampakam
Cuddalore
Tamil Nadu India

Online published books of GHS Melpattampakkam

1. Waves of thoughts beyond classroom by Arivazhagan 7th
<https://amzn.to/4lyRwOD>

2. A writer in me , by sivamani 7th
<https://amzn.to/4lvzYD3>

3..School days of mpm
<https://amzn.to/4sPUSzs>

4. Leaves of Luminous Thoughts - by brinda
<https://amzn.to/47xcPum>

5. Creative Side of GHS Malpattampakkam -
<https://amzn.to/4bODTbb>
6. Ramana

