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Gachagua blasts 2026/27 Budget and Finance Bill



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DCP leader Rigathi Gachagua at party headquarters on Friday.



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Gachagua calls Finance Bill “Punitive” as he accuses government of fiscal mismanagement

BY MKT REPORTER

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Some of the moments as captured in pictures

Former Deputy President and Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) leader Rigathi Gachagua has strongly criticized Kenya’s proposed 2026/27 Budget and Finance Bill, describing them as economically harmful, overly punitive, and disconnected from the realities facing ordinary citizens.

In his alternative budget address in Nairobi, Gachagua accused the government of excessive taxation, rising public debt, and poor fiscal priorities.

He argued that the KSh4.82 trillion budget framework reflects unsustainable borrowing and weak revenue performance, warning that a growing share of national revenue is being consumed by debt interest payments. He claimed that key sectors such as education, health, and agriculture have been underfunded, resulting in higher household costs, reduced access to services, and declining living standards. He also criticized proposals in the Finance Bill, including increased VAT on digital services, higher excise duties on mobile phones, and changes to tax compliance rules, saying they would raise the cost of living and hurt businesses and consumers.

Gachagua further alleged inefficiencies and wasteful government spending, calling for cuts to public administration costs and reductions in what he termed non-essential expenditures. He proposed redirecting resources toward agriculture, healthcare, and education, while halting certain levies such as the housing levy.

He urged Parliament to reject the budget and Finance Bill in their current form and called for a “national fiscal reset” focused on production-led growth, accountability, and reduced borrowing. According to him, Kenya’s economic future depends on disciplined spending, fair taxation, and stronger oversight of public finances. He was accompanied by dozens of former, current and aspiring political leaders from different parts of the country.



Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times



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NEWS IN BRIEF



Turkana County Government has launched a four-day county-wide training program for 70 front-line healthcare workers to enhance Ebola preparedness and response capacity. The initiative aims to strengthen the county's ability to prevent and manage a potential outbreak by equipping participants with skills in early detection, screening, triage, isolation, case notification, and infection prevention and control. Healthcare workers are also receiving hands-on training in the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE), hand hygiene, environmental cleaning, waste management, and safe patient handling practices to minimize transmission risks in health facilities and communities. The training brings together staff from referral and sub-county hospitals, as well as health facilities located at points of entry across the county.



Nairobi Governor Johnson Sakaja has suspended County Chief Officer for Urban Planning Patrick Akivaga Analo following his arrest by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), and appointed Dominic Mutegia acting chief officer. He also named Finance and Economic Planning CEC Ibrahim Auma Nyangoya to temporarily take over duties previously handled by Charles Kerich, who is currently facing litigation. Sakaja further ordered the immediate reconstitution of the Urban Planning Technical Committee, which oversees development approvals. The county has requested nominees from professional bodies and agencies, including planners, architects, engineers, resident associations, Nairobi Water, and the Civil Aviation Authority, while also proposing the inclusion of an EACC liaison officer to enhance oversight and accountability. Until the committee is reconstituted, all development approval processes have been suspended, with urgent cases to be handled by CEC Patrick Mbogo in line with the Physical and Land Use Planning Act.



James Orengo has rejected a traditional reconciliation process and barred the Luo Council of Elders from mediating his dispute with Oburu Odinga. Instead, he has set four conditions before any talks can proceed: a formal and clearly structured negotiation framework, a demonstrated commitment by Oburu and ODM leadership to the founding activist principles of the Orange Democratic Movement as envisioned by Raila Odinga, a neutral mediation team excluding current Luo Council of Elders leadership, and the return of alleged funds said to originate from William Ruto. Orengo insists these conditions are non-negotiable before engagement. The standoff highlights deepening internal tensions and delayed reconciliation efforts within ODM.



Migori Woman Representative Fatuma Mohammed has distributed Sh5.7 million to traders at Suna Marindi Market to help them recover from losses caused by devastating floods that destroyed property worth millions of shillings. The funds were raised through a major harambee held last month and attended by several leaders, including John Mbadi. Speaking during the disbursement, Fatuma said the money would be channelled directly to organized trader groups to ensure fair, transparent, and equitable distribution among all affected members. Beneficiaries included the Migori Fish Sellers Group and other traders seeking to restock and rebuild their businesses.

An NGO, Empowering the African Woman (ETAW), has donated essential maternal and neonatal care items to new mothers and their babies at Vihiga Teaching and Referral Hospital (VTRH). The donation included infant clothing, diapers and clothing for mothers recovering after childbirth, aimed at easing postnatal challenges and supporting newborn care. The handover was attended by healthcare staff, including representatives from the Newborn Unit, Postnatal Ward and Medical Social Work Department. Hospital officials praised ETAW for complementing healthcare services and providing much-needed support to vulnerable families. The initiative is expected to benefit many mothers and infants while promoting maternal and child health, strengthening community partnerships and improving patient welfare and dignity.



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Budget A mediation committee has begun bridging a Sh34.7 billion gap between the two houses

MPs and senators seek middle ground on revenue sharing row

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

A parliamentary mediation committee has begun deliberations to resolve a deadlock between the National Assembly and the Senate over how much revenue county governments should receive in the Division of Revenue Bill, 2026.

The gap is substantial. The National Assembly approved an equitable share of KSh420 billion for counties, while the Senate pushed for KSh454.7 billion, arguing that growing financial obligations at the county level demand a higher allocation. The Mediation Committee, co-chaired by Alego Usonga MP Samuel Atandi and Manderan Senator Ali Roba, convened this week to find a figure both houses can accept.

Roba made no apologies for the Senate's position. Counties, he explained, are wrestling with pending Salaries and Remuneration Commission advisories and are required to provide counterpart funding for several national programmes, including County Aggregation and Industrial Parks, Community Health Promoters, and the Financing Locally-Led Climate Action Programme. "Our proposal is data-driven and informed by consultations. We must keep these realities in mind as we deliberate," he said.

Atandi, who chairs the Budget and Appropriations Committee, acknowledged the



Mandera Senator Ali Roba and Alego Usonga MP Samuel Atandi

ambition but struck a cautionary note. "We were in agreement that we should one day achieve a KSh450 billion allocation for counties. But the current realities of our fiscal environment have changed," he said, pointing to a revenue shortfall estimated at Sh200 billion. "We want the government to succeed and the country to move forward."

The concern was echoed on the Senate side, though with sharper urgency. Narok Senator Ledama Olekina warned that service delivery at the county level is already suffering. "The situation is dire. Counties have many pending bills, and service delivery has been disrupted. Counties are asking for the constitutional

minimum to help them settle pending bills and meet operational costs," he said.

Members of the National Assembly were equally emphatic about their commitment to devolution, even as they urged restraint. Kibwezi West MP Mwengi Mutuse noted that the national budget stands at approximately KSh4.8 trillion against a deficit of about KSh1.1 trillion. "We must face the country honestly and make responsible decisions that safeguard fiscal sustainability," he said. "At some point we will get to the KSh450 billion mark, but we may not get there today."

Nominated Senator Tabitha Mutinda maintained that the Senate's constitutional role

leaves little room for compromise on county interests. "The Senate has to defend counties. We need to look at areas where resources can be rationalised, particularly where services are already devolved," she said.

The mediation committee is expected to resume negotiations next week. With both sides professing support for devolution and fiscal discipline simultaneously, the arithmetic of compromise will ultimately determine how much Kenya's 47 counties have to work with when the new financial year begins.

Garissa woman charged over hate speech



Sahara Ahmed Barre

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

A Garissa woman has been charged with ethnic contempt and released on bail after a video of her making inflammatory remarks circulated widely on social media.

Sahara Ahmed Barre was arraigned before the Kahawa Law Courts on Thursday, where she denied charges under Section 62(1) of the National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008. The court released her on a cash bail of Sh200,000 or a bond of Sh1 million, with the matter scheduled for mention on 22 June 2026.

The Directorate of Criminal Investigations said detectives reviewed the footage and assessed the context and intent of the statements before effecting her arrest on 26 April. Authorities contend the remarks were inciteful and capable of undermining

peaceful coexistence among communities.

In a statement following the court appearance, the DCI was unambiguous. "The Directorate of Criminal Investigations reiterates its commitment to impartially enforcing the law while protecting national cohesion, peaceful coexistence and public order," the agency said, adding that "utterances that may incite division, hatred or threaten peaceful coexistence will be dealt with firmly and without exception."

The case arrives amid intensifying scrutiny of online content and renewed efforts by law enforcement to curb hate speech on digital platforms. The DCI urged Kenyans to exercise constitutional freedoms responsibly, warning against sharing material capable of inciting hatred or division.

The law, it appears, is catching up with the scroll.

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NSSF defends contribution rates as court case continues, warns against misinformation



BY DMS

@themkenyatimes

The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) has moved to clarify the status of pension contribution rates, insisting that the current statutory deductions remain in force despite ongoing legal proceedings challenging aspects of the law.

In a statement, the Fund reaffirmed that the NSSF Act, 2013 is still operational following a Court of Appeal judgment delivered on February 3, 2023, which allowed the implementation of the law to continue while certain issues remain pending determination in court.

The clarification comes amid growing public debate and claims suggesting a possible reversion of monthly contributions to as low as KSh200 per employee and employer, claims the Fund has dismissed as misleading.

“NSSF Act is still in force on account of the judgement of the Court of Appeal... The issues pending determination by the court do not in any way affect contribution rates,” the statement read in part.

The Fund further urged employers and employees to comply with the current contribution framework, warning that failure to do so could lead to penalties and could deny workers future retirement benefits.

According to NSSF, Kenya’s pension coverage remains low, with only about 20 percent of workers having any form of retirement savings plan. The Fund also warned that old-age poverty remains a major challenge, citing that over 1.2

million elderly Kenyans reportedly struggle with food insecurity while hundreds of thousands live in isolation and poverty.

The institution defended the current contribution structure, arguing that previous low savings levels; sometimes as little as KSh200 matched by employers were inadequate to guarantee meaningful retirement benefits. It said the revised system is designed to strengthen long-term savings and improve dignity in old age.

The statement highlighted recent financial performance, noting that the Fund’s assets had grown to approximately KSh715 billion as of March 30, 2026, though the figure remains unaudited.

It also reported strong investment returns, declaring net returns of 11 percent in the 2023/2024 financial year and 17 percent in 2024/2025.

NSSF Managing Trustee and CEO David Koross reiterated the institution’s commitment to safeguarding members’ contributions and complying with court directives while maintaining enhanced contribution rates.

He urged stakeholders to disregard what he termed misinformation circulating in public discourse and to allow the courts to determine the outstanding legal issues without disrupting the current contribution framework.

The Fund maintained that the reforms under the NSSF Act are aimed at expanding retirement security and aligning Kenya with regional peers that have higher levels of pension savings.



Dr Agnes Kagure with her mother in a past photo.

Nairobi Gubernatorial aspirant Agnes Kagure mourns her mother

BY WMW

@themkenyatimes

Businesswoman, philanthropist and Nairobi gubernatorial aspirant Dr Agnes Kagure is mourning the loss of her mother, Mary Wangui Mwangi.

In an emotional message, Kagure described her late mother as her closest confidant, mentor and source of inspiration, whose strength, faith and wisdom shaped her life and touched many others.

“It is with deep sorrow and a heavy heart that I share the passing of my beloved mother, friend and mentor,” she said.

“She was a woman of great strength, faith, wisdom and love whose presence shaped my life and

many others’ in countless ways. Her prayers, guidance and sacrifices will forever remain part of who I am.”

Kagure said her mother’s unwavering support, counsel and prayers played a significant role in her personal and professional journey, adding that her legacy would continue to live on through the values she instilled in her family and community.

Mary Wangui Mwangi, who lived in the Kamakwa area near Nyeri Town, passed away at the age of 86.

Dr Kagure, a prominent Nairobi-based businesswoman and philanthropist has built a reputation through community empowerment initiatives, particularly those targeting women, youth and vulnerable families across the city.

Over the years, she has supported various charitable programmes, educational initiatives and community development projects aimed at improving livelihoods and expanding opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

She is also a key figure in Nairobi politics and is positioning herself for the 2027 Nairobi gubernatorial race. Kagure currently serves as the leader of the Kenya Patriots Party (KPP), a political movement that advocates issue-based leadership, improved service delivery and economic empowerment.

She has consistently campaigned on themes of efficient city management, better healthcare services, youth empowerment and support for small businesses.

Budget Gachagua described the proposed fiscal framework as “a twin evil” that would deepen the cost-of-living crisis and burden households

Gachagua blasts 2026/27 Budget and Finance Bill

BY WMW

@themkenyaintimes

A fresh political storm has erupted over Kenya's upcoming 2026/27 national budget and Finance Bill after Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) leader Rigathi Gachagua delivered a strongly worded alternative budget speech accusing the government of excessive taxation, rising debt, and misaligned spending priorities.

In a lengthy address presented at the party headquarters to dozens of supporters, Gachagua described the proposed fiscal framework as “a twin evil” that would deepen the cost-of-living crisis and burden households already struggling with inflation and stagnant wages.

He argued that the Finance Bill amounted to what he termed an “economic war against ordinary Kenyans,” warning that increased taxes would further strain workers, farmers, small businesses, and the youth.

He further criticized the size of the proposed KSh4.82 trillion budget, pointing to what he said was a widening fiscal deficit and rising public debt. Gachagua claimed that the country's debt levels had become unsustainable and that a significant share of government revenue was being consumed by interest payments, limiting funds available for development.

According to his statement, the government's borrowing trend and past revenue shortfalls reflect what he called “systemic fiscal mismanagement,” arguing that the state has repeatedly missed revenue targets while continuing to expand expenditure commitments.

The former deputy president also raised concern over what he described as declining allocations to key sectors including education, health, and agriculture. He argued that reduced funding for these sectors has directly affected households through higher school costs, reduced healthcare access, and rising food prices.

Gachagua singled out proposed tax measures in the Finance Bill, including VAT changes on digital services, increased excise duty on mobile phones, and withholding taxes af-

fecting non-resident landlords. He warned that such measures would raise the cost of living, discourage investment, and reverse gains in financial inclusion driven by mobile money and digital payments.

He also criticized provisions affecting tax compliance timelines and enforcement powers, arguing that they could undermine due process and place undue pressure on businesses.

Beyond criticism, Gachagua tabled an alternative fiscal proposal under the Democracy for the Citizens Party, calling for a reduction in overall government expenditure, elimination of what he termed wasteful spending, and a reallocation of resources toward agriculture, health, and education. He proposed increasing agricultural and health funding significantly while cutting public administration costs and halting certain levies such as the housing levy.

He further urged Parliament to strengthen oversight of public finances and reject what he termed unrealistic revenue projections and punitive taxation measures. According to him, Kenya's development strategy should focus on production-led growth rather than increased taxation and borrowing.

“The future of Kenya will not be built by a budget that feeds bureaucracy, but by one that empowers production and protects citizens,” he said, calling for what he termed a “national fiscal reset.”

The speech comes just days before the Treasury is expected to table the official 2026/27 Budget Statement and Finance Bill in the National Assembly, setting the stage for a heated parliamentary debate over taxation policy, public spending priorities, and debt management.

The government has yet to formally respond to the criticisms, but the proposals are expected to face intense scrutiny from both ruling and opposition lawmakers as Kenya's fiscal policy direction becomes a central political issue ahead of the new financial year.



Some of the leaders who attended the forum. | Photo: Courtesy.



Some of the leaders who attended the forum. | Photo: Courtesy.

Crime The arrest comes weeks after several other suspects linked to the same incidents were arrested and arraigned on May 18, 2026

DCI arrests comedian Erick Omondi over fuel protest-related offences

BY MKT Correspondent
@themtkenyatimes

Detectives from the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) on Friday arrested comedian and activist Erick Omondi at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in connection with alleged offences linked to recent fuel-related protests in Nairobi. In a statement, the DCI said Omondi was apprehended following what it described as credible intelligence gathered during ongoing investigations into incidents that occurred during demonstrations against rising fuel prices. According to the agency, officers from DCI Central,

working jointly with the Crime Research and Intelligence Bureau (CRIB) Nairobi Region, carried out the arrest before escorting the suspect to the Nairobi Region DCI Headquarters, where he was recording a statement and undergoing processing ahead of his planned arraignment in court. The arrest comes weeks after several other suspects linked to the same incidents were arrested and arraigned on May 18, 2026, as investigators widened their probe into activities surrounding the protests. While providing details of the arrest, the DCI reiterated its commitment to upholding

the rule of law, emphasizing that constitutional rights must be exercised within legal boundaries. "The Constitution guarantees the right to assemble, picket and demonstrate peacefully. However, any criminal acts committed under the guise of protests, demonstrations or civic action will be investigated and dealt with firmly in accordance with the law," the agency said. The detectives further warned that individuals found to have participated in unlawful activities during public demonstrations would face legal consequences regardless of their status or location. "The DCI will not hesitate to



Erick Omondi in a procession using a motor bike.

take decisive action against anyone involved in such offences. No matter where you hide, the long arm of the law will catch up with you," the statement added. The arrest is likely to attract

public attention given Omondi's prominence as a comedian and social commentator who has frequently participated in civic campaigns and public demonstrations on matters affecting ordinary Kenyans.

By Friday evening, no formal charges had been announced, but authorities indicated that the suspect would be presented before court once processing and investigations were completed.




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Courts A five-judge bench rules the former Chief Justice overstepped his constitutional mandate, but affirms that parliament's gender obligations remain firmly intact

Court nullifies Maraga's advisory on dissolution of parliament over gender rule

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

A five-judge bench of the High Court has declared unconstitutional an advisory issued by former Chief Justice David Maraga recommending the dissolution of Parliament for failing to implement the Constitution's two-thirds gender principle.

The ruling, delivered by the Constitutional and Human Rights Division in Nairobi, settled a long-running dispute that had placed three arms of government in direct tension — a legislature accused of chronic non-compliance, a former Chief Justice who believed he had exhausted patience, and a presidency that declined to act. The bench held that Maraga's advisory did not constitute a binding constitutional directive capable of compelling the President to dissolve Parliament, and quashed it in its entirety.

The case arose from Parliament's repeated failure to enact legislation required to give effect to the constitutional requirement that no more than two-thirds of members of any elective public body be of the same gender. Article 261 of the Constitution had set clear timelines for Parliament to operationalise various provisions, including the gender rule. Those deadlines came and went without meaningful legislative action, and frustration among gender equality advocates deepened with each passing electoral cycle.

It was against that backdrop that Maraga formally notified the Speakers of the National Assembly and Senate, as well as the Attorney General, that continued non-compliance could trigger constitutional sanctions — up to and including the dissolution of Parliament. Petitioners in the case argued that years of legislative inaction had left the for-



A five-judge bench of the High Court

mer Chief Justice with little practical choice but to invoke enforcement mechanisms to safeguard constitutional supremacy. They maintained he acted squarely within his mandate.

Some petitioners went further, urging the court to find that the President was under a constitutional obligation to act upon receiving such advice. They argued Parliament ought to have been dissolved within a reasonable period — proposing a maximum of 21 days — and that presidential inaction should have caused Parliament to be deemed dissolved automatically. They also contended that Parliament's persistent defiance of constitutional requirements undermined its standing to defend itself in legal proceedings arising from those very breaches.

The bench was unmoved by those arguments, though not without affirming the underlying constitutional obligations that gave rise to the dispute. The judges drew a careful distinction between Parliament's duties and the legal weight of the Chief Justice's advisory.

They affirmed that responsibility for enacting constitutionally required legislation rests with Parliament as an institution, not with individual lawmakers, and that those obligations survive changes in membership and successive electoral cycles. "The Constitution does not permit institutional failure to defeat its own enforcement mechanisms," the court observed.

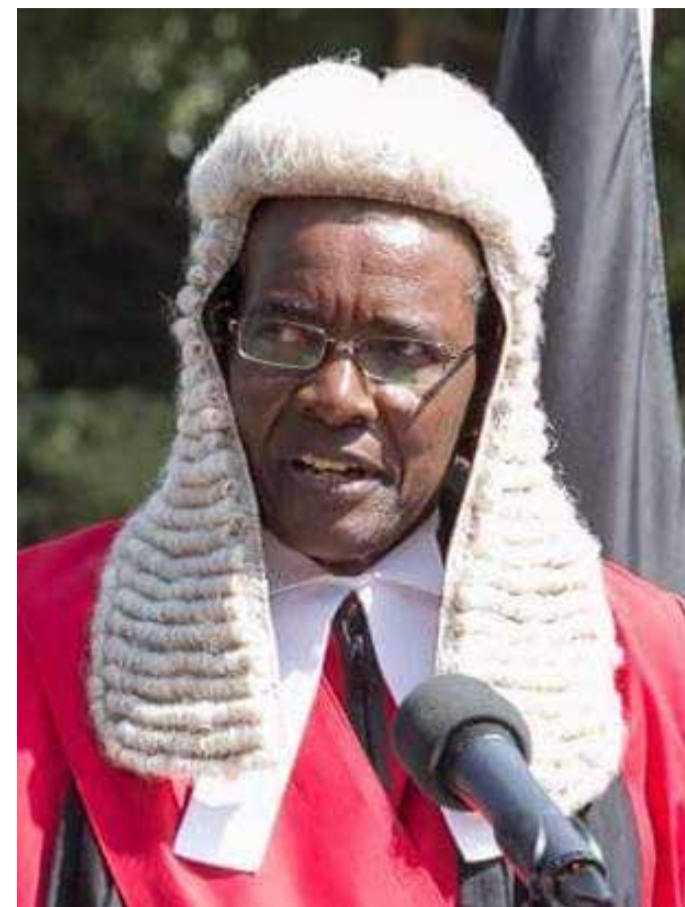
That declaration will provide some comfort to gender equality advocates who feared the ruling might dilute Parliament's accountability. The court was emphatic that constitutional duties remain enforceable. What it rejected, firmly, was the proposition that an advisory from the Chief Justice could serve as a self-executing instrument — one that automatically sets in motion the dissolution of a co-equal arm of government without further legal process.

Constitutional enforcement mechanisms, the bench reasoned, must be grounded in proper legal interpretation and judicial process. The assumption that an advisory opinion creates binding obligations on

the President, or triggers automatic consequences, finds no support in the constitutional text. To hold otherwise, the judges implied, would be to permit a single office to unilaterally alter the balance of constitutional power — an outcome the framers of the Constitution plainly did not intend.

The ruling arrives at a moment when the gender principle remains one of the most persistently unresolved constitutional obligations in Kenya's post-2010 order. Parliament has faced petitions, court orders and public censure over its failure to legislate on the two-thirds rule, yet successive assemblies have produced little more than procedural manoeuvres and stalled bills. The Constitutional Implementation Oversight Committee has repeatedly flagged the gap, while civil society organisations have grown increasingly impatient with what they describe as deliberate legislative avoidance.

For Maraga, the judgment is a rebuke — though not an entirely unexpected one. Legal scholars had questioned from



Former Chief Justice David Maraga

the outset whether an advisory, however strongly worded, could carry the constitutional weight he appeared to attribute to it. His defenders argue he was attempting to force accountability in the absence of any other viable mechanism, and that the President's silence left him with few options. Critics counter that the separation of powers demands institutional restraint even in the face of institutional failure.

The court's ruling does not absolve Parliament. If anything, it redirects attention squarely back to the legislature and to the political will — or lack thereof — that has allowed the gender princi-

ple to languish for 15 years since the Constitution was promulgated. The bench's reminder that constitutional obligations survive changes in parliamentary composition is, in effect, a message to the current assembly: the duty has not expired, and the courts remain available to those who choose to pursue enforcement through proper channels.

For the millions of Kenyan women whose equal participation in public life the two-thirds principle was designed to protect, the ruling changes the mechanism but not the urgency. Parliament still owes the Constitution a law it has never written.



Ebola What is difficult to understand is the logic that appears to underpin the proposed establishment of an Ebola quarantine facility in Kenya

If Ebola is too dangerous for America, why is it safe enough for Kenya?



By: Gitile Naituli
@themkenyatimes

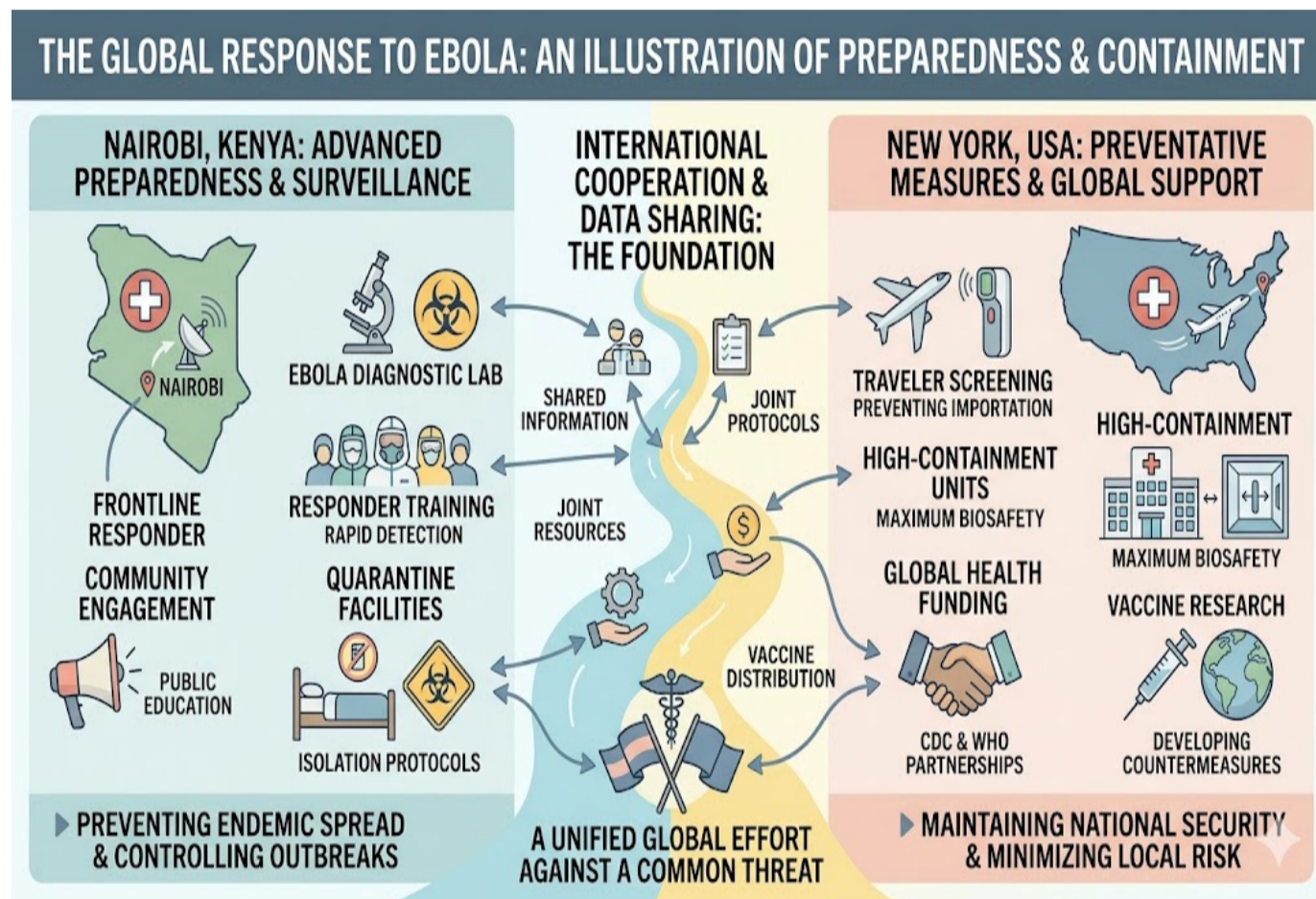
Every nation has a duty to protect its citizens. That duty is neither controversial nor negotiable. Governments exist, in part, to safeguard the lives, health, and security of the people they serve. It is therefore understandable that the United States government would seek to protect Americans from exposure to Ebola, one of the world's most lethal infectious diseases.

What is difficult to understand is the logic that appears to underpin the proposed establishment of an Ebola quarantine facility in Kenya for individuals whom the United States itself does not want on its own soil.

The controversy surrounding the reported plan has triggered understandable concern among Kenyans, not because citizens are opposed to international cooperation in public health, but because it raises troubling questions about sovereignty, equality, transparency, and the value placed on African lives in global decision-making.

According to reports, the proposed facility would be established on an air force base in Laikipia and would quarantine individuals exposed to Ebola before symptoms appear. The stated objective is to prevent potentially infected persons from entering the United States while ensuring they remain under observation and receive appropriate care. From Washington's perspective, this may appear pragmatic. From Nairobi's perspective, it appears profoundly contradictory.

If Ebola poses a sufficient risk to justify preventing ex-



Illustration

posed individuals from entering the United States, why should the same risk be considered acceptable for Kenya? That question lies at the heart of the public discomfort surrounding the proposal. The issue is not whether Kenya can contribute to international health responses. Kenya has a proud history of humanitarian engagement and regional leadership. Our medical professionals have repeatedly demonstrated competence, courage, and professionalism in responding to public health emergencies.

The issue is whether Kenya is being asked to assume risks that wealthier nations are unwilling to bear themselves. That distinction matters. The perception many Kenyans have formed is deeply unsettling. It suggests a world order in which wealthy countries externalize danger while retaining safety, outsource risk while keeping protection, and expect poorer nations to ab-

sorb burdens they would never accept domestically.

Even if that is not the intention of those negotiating such arrangements, perceptions matter in public policy. Trust matters. Legitimacy matters. A public health facility dealing with a highly contagious and deadly disease cannot be treated as an ordinary diplomatic project negotiated behind closed doors. It touches directly on citizens' right to life, health, security, and information.

That is why the legal concerns raised by civil society organizations deserve serious attention. The constitutional questions are significant. Were citizens adequately consulted? Was Parliament sufficiently involved? Were the risks transparently assessed and communicated? Were independent public health experts allowed to scrutinize the proposal before commitments were made? These are not procedural technicalities.

They are essential safeguards in a constitutional democracy.

The High Court's intervention reflects precisely this concern. Constitutional governance requires that decisions affecting public welfare be subjected to scrutiny, accountability, and public participation. The concerns expressed by healthcare professionals are equally important. Doctors are not politicians. Their objections carry weight because they emerge from professional experience rather than partisan interests. When healthcare workers publicly question whether Kenya possesses sufficient high-containment infrastructure and preparedness capacity, their concerns deserve careful consideration rather than dismissal.

Indeed, one of the most troubling aspects of the debate has been the question of reciprocity. If such a facility is established in Kenya, who exactly does it serve? Reports suggesting that the facility

would primarily or exclusively accommodate Americans exposed to Ebola have generated understandable resentment. Many Kenyans reasonably ask why a health facility carrying risks for local communities should not also be available to Kenyan citizens if needed.

The question goes beyond healthcare. It touches on dignity. Citizens naturally resist arrangements that create the impression that foreign lives are being prioritized while local populations are expected merely to host the risks. No sovereign nation should place itself in a position where its citizens feel like spectators in decisions affecting their own safety.

The controversy also arrives against a broader backdrop of changing global development relationships. Many African countries have watched reductions in international aid programs, including health-related support, while

simultaneously being asked to shoulder increasing responsibilities in global crises. This creates an understandable perception gap. When assistance is reduced but risk-sharing requests increase, citizens inevitably begin asking difficult questions about fairness. International partnerships must be built on mutual respect rather than unequal expectations.

Kenya should cooperate with global efforts to combat infectious diseases. Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and elsewhere are regional concerns that require collective responses. Disease does not respect borders, and no nation can isolate itself entirely from global health threats. But cooperation cannot mean accepting arrangements that appear one-sided or insufficiently transparent. Nor should international partnerships create the impression that Africa exists primarily as a buffer zone protecting wealthier nations from dangers they are unwilling to confront directly.

The principle should be simple. If a health facility is safe enough to be established in Kenya, then it should meet the highest international standards, operate under full public scrutiny, comply with constitutional requirements, and serve all human beings equally without creating categories of privileged and secondary lives. Global health security cannot be built upon unequal notions of whose lives deserve protection. The fight against Ebola should unite humanity, not divide it into those whose safety is paramount and those expected to absorb the risks.

For Kenya, the debate is ultimately larger than one quarantine facility.

It is about sovereignty. It is about transparency. It is about constitutional governance. And above all, it is about affirming a simple but powerful principle: Kenyan lives matter just as much as any others.

The writer comments on various topical issues

KDF Prior to his appointment, Maj Gen Nkoimo served as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Central Command.

Ruto reshuffles KDF leadership in major promotions and appointments

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

President William Ruto has announced a series of high-level promotions, appointments and postings within the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), affecting senior officers in the Kenya Army, Kenya Air Force and Kenya Navy.

In changes approved on the recommendation of the Defence Council, President Ruto appointed Major General John Maiso Nkoimo as the new Deputy Commander of the Kenya Army. He takes over from Major General Mohamed Nur Hassan, who has retired from military service.

Prior to his appointment, Maj Gen Nkoimo served as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Central Command.

The President also appointed Brigadier Mohamud Salah Farah, formerly the Base Commander at Laikipia Air Base, as the Deputy Commander of the Kenya Air Force.

As part of the restructuring, Brigadier William Kamoiro was promoted to the rank of Major General and appointed the new GOC Central Command, succeeding Maj Gen Nkoimo.

Brigadier Peter Kipketer Limo was similarly elevated to Major General and named Assistant Chief of Defence Forces in charge of Personnel and Logistics at Defence Headquarters.

Maj Gen Limo replaces Major General Edward Rugendo, who has been appointed Managing Director of the Defence Forces Welfare Services. Before his latest appointment, Limo served as the Managing Director of the same institution.

In a further decision aimed at maintaining continuity in naval leadership, President Ruto extended the tenure of Kenya Navy Commander Major General Paul Owuor Otieno by one year.

The Defence Council, chaired by Defence Cabinet Secretary Soipan Tuya, also recommended several other promotions and appointments across the military.

In the Kenya Army, Brigadier (Dr)

Francis Njoroge Kuria was promoted to Major General and appointed Director of Medical Services.

Colonel Mark Joseph Awala was promoted to Brigadier and appointed Chief of Operations at Kenya Army Headquarters.

Colonel Makonani Balata was elevated to Brigadier and named Commander of Langata Garrison, while Colonel Asma Diramo Kofa was promoted to Brigadier and appointed Chief of Provost at the Directorate of Oversight, Compliance and Accountability.

Within the Kenya Air Force, Colonel Peter Karigih Kariuki was promoted to Brigadier and appointed College Secretary at the National Defence College.

Colonel Benedetta Margaret Kikechi was promoted to Brigadier and assigned the role of Chief of Research and Development at the Defence National Security Industries. Lieutenant Colonel Bernadette Awar Eyanae was promoted to Colonel and appointed Colonel Plans and Programmes at the International



Kenya Defence Forces (KDF)

Peace Support Training Centre.

The latest appointments come as the government continues efforts to strengthen leadership, operational effectiveness and professional devel-

opment within the Kenya Defence Forces.

The changes take effect immediately.

The Mt. Kenya Times



The Uzbeks of the Year 2100



(A Short Three-Act School Play)

Act I

Grandmother and her granddaughter are walking through the city to see exhibits of old traditions.

Granddaughter:

Ugh, I'm tired to my feet,
Grandma, let's take a seat.
We've been roaming all the day,
From the dawn till evening gray.
So many curious things we see,
Preserved through time for you and me.

Grandmother:

This is barely half, my dear,
Many wonders still are here.
They are worth your time and sight,
Nothing spent on them is slight.

Granddaughter:

I told you, in my helicopter...

Grandmother:
There you go again, don't bother.
If I let you have your way,
You'd fly everywhere each day.
Walk a little on your feet,
Not in cars on every street.

Granddaughter:
At least we could bring my robot,
That would surely help a lot.
When I tire on the way,
It could carry me all day.

Grandmother:
Your robot does every chore,
Brushes teeth and so much more.
Bathes you, dresses you with care,
Brings your meals and waits right there.
All your duties it can do,
That's the life you're living through.

Granddaughter:
Grandma, please, don't start again
With advice that has no end.
Look! Another museum hall,
What a funny name and all!
"Customs and Traditions" stands
Written there in shining bands.

Grandmother:
Entrance fee—one thousand dollars?
Then it must be filled with wonders!

Granddaughter:
I'll pay now, let's go inside.

By: Odamboyeva Mohichehra

Good morning...!!!



After the lovely night, the dawn now softly
breaks,
The seas and streams grow calm as morning
wakes.

My radiant sun ascends beyond the sky's
embrace,
And autumn's charm brings peace and gentle
grace.

This morning feels so different, look and see,
How beautiful this world of love can be.
My eyes are glowing with affection's light,
And smiles appear on every face so bright.
The gentle breezes softly touch my face,
As though they hold me in a warm embrace.
They whisper in my ears with tender art,
As if confessing secrets from their heart.
At early dawn, the call to prayer is heard,
Grandfathers and grandmothers pray to the

Lord.
I too raise up my hands and humbly pray,
For blessings on a peaceful life each day.
O Lord, I ask of you with every breath,
Guide us upon the path of truth and faith.
May sacred words remain upon our tongue,
And make us dear to You while life is young.
And if at times we happen to forget,
Pour faith's bright light into our hearts afresh.
If worldly temptations blind our eyes one day,
Awaken us and lead us back Your way.
I ask for well-being, O Lord Divine,
May we remember You in prayers five times.
Within the Paradise that You have promised us,
May all Your servants follow You with trust.

— Usmonova Layloxon Ulugbekovna

Usmonova Layloxon Ulugbekovna was born in Gulistan City, Syrdarya Region, Uzbekistan. In 2026, she officially received a membership certificate from the International Organization of Science and Literature Writers in Argentina. Currently, she has been awarded an Honorary Second Place in the "Creative Youth" online competition organized by the Xatirchi District Council of the Social Democratic Party "Adolat" of Uzbekistan. In addition, her poem entitled "Kelsa Navrozim" has been published in the literary collection "Sharq Quyoshi" ("The Sun of the East").

Everything is easy if you are crazy



Nothing is easy if you are lazy.

Doing something more interestingly
You never feel tired.
With your involvement and interest.
You can make everything easy.

If you believe in your task, it will be rewarded.
Definitely it brings something to be awarded.
The determination in your mind.

Your desire will be possible to you.

The bird believes its wings
So it can easily fly over the sky.
With your hopes and trusts
You are more blessed with positive things.

Rajesh Kanna B N

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

What is meant for me



What is meant for me will never miss my door,
Though storms may delay it, it shall come ashore.
Like rivers that wander through valley and reach
the sea,
Destiny always remembers the path meant for
me.

At times life grants the dreams we hold tight,
Like dawn breaking softly after the dark night;
At times our desires fade thin into air,
Leaving behind silence, dismay and prayer.

Perhaps karma writes with its invisible hand,
Or pure intentions help blessings to land;
Perhaps the soul vibes from its core unseen,
Attracting only what truly has been.

We harvest not just by wishing for rain,
But by labouring through sunshine and pain;
For what we deserve is shaped day after day

By the strength of our effort that carves out
the way.

What is meant for us will always find its way
The universe works to bring it to our door way.
It bends winds and seasons, moves heaven and
time,
Till our waiting and blessing at last entwine.

And what slips away was never our own,
Though we watered it dearly, though it was
lovingly sown;
The universe sometimes says "not this, not now,"
Not to wound us, but protect us somehow.

So be content with the gifts life imparts,
Yet keep working with courage in diligent hearts
Trust the timing, the toil, the unseen divine will
What is meant for you will never flee.

And what misses you, let it drift like the foam,
For what truly belongs shall always find home.

Nandini AnandKumar
Educator,Writer, Motivator,Freelancer
(In Service of Education)

The sacrifices of a mother



Mother's sacrifice is immeasurable,
Her love is incomparable.
Mother takes good care
Of her children: to nourish and nurture.

With great compassion,
She takes care of her children with passion.
She sacrifices her sleep and nature's calls.
To take care of the child whenever it falls.

Like a mother bird,
Feeds her child.

Carries and supports the children,
Till troubles cease and make them bolden .

Though there may be any hardship,
Make her children worship.
Mother wants her children to grow further.
Till they rise higher.

A crown of glory when they take good decisions,
Children make her proud with great positions.

Jael Beulah. R
Graduate Teacher,
Creative Writers Group,
GHSS,
KILPALUR,
TIRUVANNAMALAI.
TAMIL NADU.

Families Speaking during the ongoing counseling sessions, Wamuratha encouraged affected families to seek help and take advantage of the free services available.

Families seek healing as free trauma counseling sessions begin in Kiambu

BY Felix Njenga
@themkenyatimes

Dozens of parents, students, and family members affected by recent school tragedies have begun attending free trauma counseling sessions offered by Kiambu Woman Representative Anne Wamuratha, as the county responds to the emotional impact left by the incidents.

The counseling program, which is being conducted at Wamuratha's Kirigiti office, is aimed at helping students from Utumishi Girls High School and other affected schools cope with grief, anxiety, fear, and other psychological challenges arising from the recent tragedies.

Since the initiative was launched, a steady stream of



Kiambu women representative Anne Wamuratha during the counseling session.

families has been arriving at the counseling center seeking professional support, a clear indication of the growing need for mental health services within the community.

Professional counselors have been stationed at the facility to provide psychosocial

support to students, parents, guardians, and relatives struggling to come to terms with the traumatic events.

Speaking during the ongoing counseling sessions, Wamuratha encouraged affected families to seek help and take advantage of the free services

available.

"If you, your child, a family member, or someone you know is struggling emotionally, please make your way to my office at Kirigiti. We are here to listen, support, and walk with you toward healing," she said.

The Woman Representative emphasized that recovery from trauma requires both time and support, noting that professional counseling can play a critical role in helping individuals process their experiences and regain emotional stability.

"My office remains open to all. Welcome as we walk through this together. It is free of charge," she added.

Parents who attended the sessions expressed appreciation for the initiative, saying the support had come at a crucial moment when many fami-



Counseling session taking place with parents and students.

lies were still grappling with shock and uncertainty.

Mental health experts involved in the exercise said early intervention is essential in preventing long-term psychological effects such as depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress. They urged families to remain vigilant and seek assistance whenever they observe signs of emotional distress among children and young people.

The counseling initiative comes amid heightened concern over student welfare following recent incidents that have deeply affected learning institutions and communities across the region.

Residents have welcomed the program, describing it as a

compassionate and timely response that will help families

begin the difficult journey of healing. Many have called for continued investment in mental health services in schools and communities to ensure that those affected receive sustained support.

As more families continue to seek assistance, Wamuratha has reaffirmed her commitment to standing with students and parents during the recovery process, stressing that no one should face trauma alone.

The free counseling sessions are expected to continue in the coming weeks as counselors work to help affected families rebuild confidence, resilience, and hope for the future.

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Politics According to the Senate Majority Leader Aaron Cheruiyot, pending bills worth billions of shillings owed by the counties to suppliers

Senator proposes ceiling, sanctions to contain rising pending bills in counties

BY KNA

@themkenyatimes

A change is in the offing to curb wastage among county bosses, as concerns over a rise in pending bills in counties risks causing financial distress in coming years.

The proposed policy reforms include enacting a financial ceiling cap and sanctions against governors found exceeding the established limit on pending bills.

According to the Senate Majority Leader Aaron Cheruiyot, pending bills worth billions of shillings owed by the counties to suppliers have increased three times over the last three years.

The move has resulted in closure and the risk of auction to tens of businesses that have supplied counties with critical and essential ser-



Senate Majority Leader Aaron Cheruiyot as other leaders look on. | Photo: Courtesy.

vices and goods due to the unpaid payments.

According to Senate Majority Leader Aaron Cheruiyot, 90 percent of the county governments have tripled their pending bills since they came into office in August 2022.

Cheruiyot said the ballooning pending bills by counties in the recent years of serious concerns warning that if left unaddressed, suppliers may stop doing business with counties, and court-enforced attachments of county accounts could grind devolved governments to a halt.

He acknowledged that while the problem requires a policy-level solution, including spending ceilings and sanctions, addressing it near an election cycle risks politicization, complicating timely action.

The senate leader said a recent analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Office indicated that no single county has committed to clearing its outstanding pending bills worth billions of shillings.

“Apart from Nairobi County which owes over Sh 90 billion in pending bills due to historical offices, all other counties have since tripled their bills in the last three years, which is crippling businesses,” said Cheruiyot.



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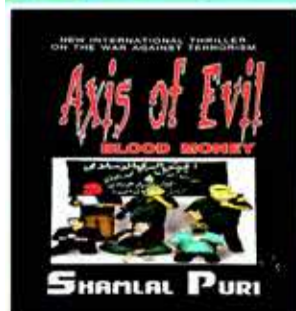
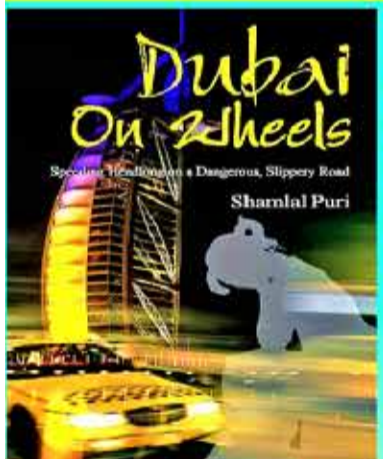
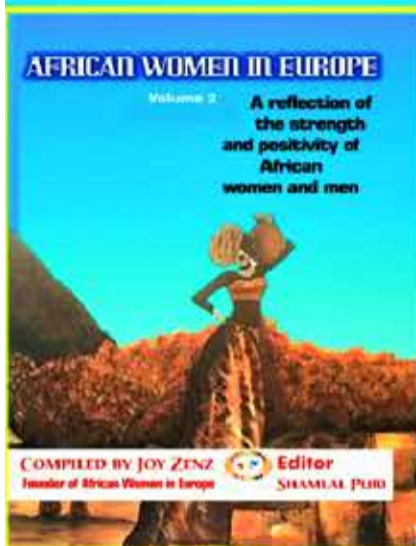
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Digital banking For financial institutions, the race is no longer about scale — it is about seamless experience and genuine customer value

How digital banking is reshaping Kenya's economy, one customer experience at a time



BY Jane Jelagat
@themtkenyatimes

Across Kenya, everyday life moves at the speed of a notification. A father in Nairobi sends money to his daughter at university in Eldoret. A trader in Gikomba transfers funds from a mobile wallet to restock for the day. A commuter pays for a ride with a tap on a phone.

This shift is not merely technological. It reflects a fundamental change in how individuals and businesses expect financial services to work — fast, seamless and on demand.

According to McKinsey, roughly 73 per cent of all interactions with banks globally are now conducted via digital channels. Recent data from the Kenya Bankers Association shows that more than half of the industry's customers now prefer self-service channels such as mobile and internet banking. That preference reflects something deeper than technology adoption. It signals a demand for convenience and efficiency.



According to McKinsey, roughly 73 per cent of all interactions with banks globally are now conducted via digital channels. Recent data from the Kenya Bankers Association shows that more than half of the industry's customers now prefer self-service channels such as mobile and internet banking. That preference reflects something deeper than technology adoption. It signals a demand for convenience and efficiency.

Ecobank digital banking

Today's customers compare banking experiences not only against other banks, but against the most intuitive digital platforms they use daily — from ride-hailing apps to e-commerce marketplaces and streaming services. They expect immediacy, simplicity and round-the-clock availability. Above all, they expect financial services to integrate seamlessly into their everyday lives.

Nowhere is this shift more consequential than in Kenya, where a youthful and digitally savvy population is driving one of Africa's fastest-growing digital economies. Loyalty is increasingly experience-driven, and institutions that fail to meet digital expectations risk los-

ing customers in a fiercely competitive landscape.

For decades, banking in many markets involved repeated form-filling, multiple document submissions and mandatory branch visits. Customers invested time travelling, waiting and navigating complex onboarding processes. Those systems were functional, but they were not designed for speed or convenience.

Digital banking, when properly designed, removes that friction. It eliminates repetitive paperwork, reduces dependence on physical locations and compresses onboarding timelines from days to minutes. More importantly, it gives customers visibility and control over their finances

at any time and from anywhere.

Early digital initiatives often focused on replicating branch services on smaller screens — forms uploaded, transactions mirrored, processes digitised. True transformation, however, occurs when banks redesign the entire customer journey from end to end. That requires identifying friction points across the customer lifecycle — from account opening and payments to lending and dispute resolution — and reengineering them for simplicity.

Account opening offers a clear illustration. In the past, opening a bank account required time away from work, physical documentation and in-person verification. In

an era where consumers can access services instantly in other sectors, such processes feel increasingly outdated. Digital onboarding platforms, including Ecobank's own account-opening process, now enable customers to open accounts remotely in under ten minutes using secure identity verification and integrated compliance checks. This is not merely about convenience — it expands access by reducing geographic and mobility barriers, allowing users to open an account instantly via a mobile app or website, with immediate access to payments, transfers and other financial services across Ecobank's pan-African network.

As digital adoption deepens, so does the need for robust data protection, identity verification and regulatory compliance. Modern platforms embed know-your-customer verification, anti-money laundering screening and transaction monitoring directly into digital workflows. Each transaction leaves an auditable trail, risk patterns can be identified in real time, and compliance becomes more consistent and less reliant on manual intervention.

Beyond convenience and compliance, digital banking carries broader economic implications. For salaried professionals and informal traders alike, digital savings and credit tools create meaningful pathways to financial resilience. Lower operating costs also enable institutions to design products for previously underserved segments — making digital banking a driver of both efficiency and inclusion, two priorities that sit at the heart of Africa's development agenda.

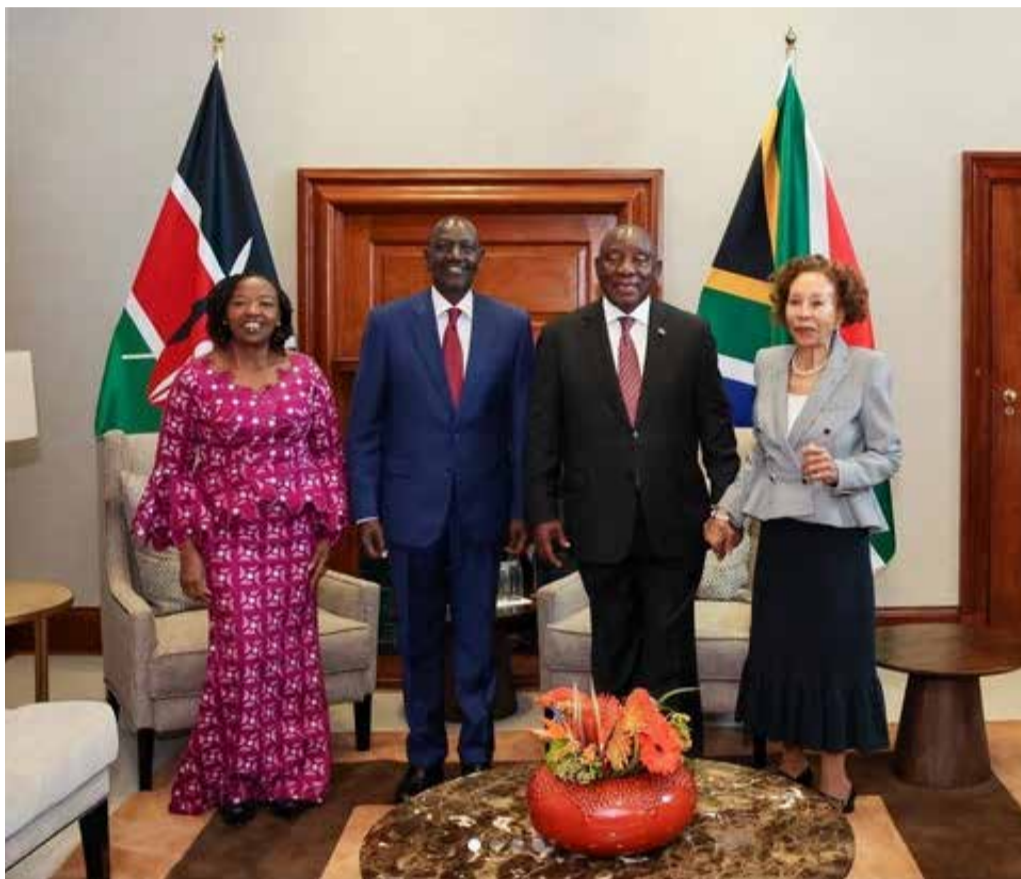
The future of banking in Kenya is not about eliminating branches entirely. Physical presence will continue to matter, particularly for advisory services and complex transactions. The shift is about repositioning branches as complementary rather than primary channels, ensuring that customers can open accounts, apply for credit, transfer funds across borders and manage investments without interrupting their daily lives.

Digital banking is already reshaping Kenya's economy, one customer experience at a time. The institutions that lead will be those that understand competitive advantage is built not on physical scale, but on seamless experience. True digital transformation will not be measured by the volume of features released or applications downloaded. It will be measured by the tangible value created — in time saved, access expanded and trust earned.

Jane Jelagat, Director, Consumer Banking, Ecobank Kenya Limited

Kenya - South Africa Two leaders sign six new agreements and direct ministers to dismantle barriers choking intra-African commerce

Pretoria and Nairobi cement ties as Ramaphosa hails strategic partnership and Ruto pushes for borderless African trade



President Cyril Ramaphosa hosts President William Ruto

BY Norman Mwale

@themkenyatimes

South Africa and Kenya have moved to deepen a partnership both presidents described as pivotal to continental prosperity, with Cyril Ramaphosa praising decades of solidarity and William Ruto calling on the two nations to dismantle the remaining barriers to trade, investment and industrial growth.

Speaking at the Union Buildings in Pretoria on Thursday, during Ruto's two-day state visit, Ramaphosa said the relationship with Kenya was "longstanding, cordial and mutually beneficial," rooted in a shared commitment to democracy, regional integration and multilateralism. "Kenya remains one of South Africa's most important strategic partners in East Africa and on the continent more broadly,"

he said, adding that Pretoria valued Nairobi "as a gateway to East Africa, as one of the leading voices on matters of peace, security and development on the continent."

The visit culminated in the signing of six memoranda of understanding covering agriculture, tourism, energy, transport, maritime cooperation, gender equality, technical and vocational training, arts and heritage, and sports development. Ramaphosa said the agreements "provide a legal framework to further expand our cooperation," building on 28 accords concluded since 1994.

Ruto framed the moment as an economic imperative. Speaking at a joint press conference, he said Kenya and South Africa must lead by example in unlocking the African Continental Free Trade Area. "We agreed to harness the tripartite alliance and the

AfCFTA to expand access and reduce costs to unlock the full promise of intra-African trade," he said. Addressing business leaders in Midrand, he was direct: "Business people should not hold us back. Let us embrace bigger markets and be competitive. In Europe, trade between countries stands at 70 per cent while here in Africa it stands at 19 per cent. We must correct this situation."

Trade figures lent weight to the diplomatic warmth. Bilateral trade rose from \$590 million in 2024 to \$650 million in 2025, according to Ruto, while South African data showed total trade increasing from R9.3 billion in 2016 to R10.5 billion in 2025. Ramaphosa noted that Kenya was South Africa's largest trading partner in East Africa and a growing base for South African firms operating in pharmaceuticals, retail, finan-

cial services, information and communications technology, manufacturing and infrastructure.

Both leaders directed their trade ministers to dismantle tariff and non-tariff barriers constraining commerce, with a communiqué tasking ministers with developing "a sustainable mechanism to identify, monitor, and resolve the non-tariff barriers that limit the trade potential between both countries."

The AfCFTA featured prominently throughout the talks. Ramaphosa recalled witnessing the first shipment of South African exports to Kenya under preferential AfCFTA

terms in January 2024, saying the agreement "must serve as a catalyst for inclusive growth, industrialisation and job creation." Trade Minister Parks Tau said both nations were "well positioned to harness the African Continental Free Trade Area for improved trade growth, complementary regional gateways and job-creating investments."

Beyond economics, the presidents aligned on continental security, referencing the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Western Sahara. "Working together, South Africa and Kenya can help shape a peaceful and thriving African continent that is al-

ways able to resolve its own problems — African solutions for African problems," Ramaphosa said.

The visit also highlighted people-to-people ties. Ramaphosa credited the visa-free travel regime introduced in 2022 — which he said Ruto had "twisted his arm" into approving — with growing tourism, business travel and cultural exchange between the two countries.

With more than 60 South African companies operating in Kenya and a Kenya-South Africa Business Council now in development, both governments signalled confidence that closer political alignment would translate into tangible economic gains. "This state visit has further strengthened the bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries," Ramaphosa said. "It has laid a firm foundation for deeper collaboration in trade, investment, industrialisation, infrastructure development, skills development and regional integration."

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Health Confirmed Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have risen to 363

WHO: Unsafe food causes 1.5 mln deaths annually, with young children hardest hit



Staff members prepare meals for people under quarantine in Goma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), on Thursday.

BY Xinhua News Agency
@themtkenyatimes

Confirmed Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have risen to 363, including 62 deaths, according to figures released by the DRC government, while Uganda reported four recoveries.

The latest developments were discussed on Thursday during an online press briefing organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa, which brought together senior WHO officials and government representatives from the DRC, Uganda and South Sudan. The outbreak, caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, was declared in the DRC and Uganda on May 15. The WHO later designated it a public health emergency of international concern. "The virus initially moved ahead of us. But we are catching up. We are already seeing progress," WHO Regional Director for Africa Mo-

hamed Janabi addressed the briefing. Janabi said six patients had been successfully treated and discharged in the DRC, while recoveries had also been recorded in Uganda.

Uganda's Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary Diana Atwine said the country had so far confirmed 15 Ebola cases, including 11 imported cases and four infections among health workers who treated the first patient. "Out of those, we have also discharged four." All the patients who later tested positive had already been placed in quarantine as identified contacts, allowing health authorities to monitor them before and after diagnosis, Atwine said. Uganda has monitored 620 contacts, of whom 270 have completed the required 21-day observation period and been discharged from follow-up, while the remainder are still under monitoring, she said. The country has strengthened its contact tracing, laboratory testing and

emergency response systems through previous Ebola outbreaks, Atwine said, adding that laboratory results could be obtained within about four hours. She stressed that Uganda had never exported an Ebola case beyond its borders during previous outbreaks.

DRC Health Minister Roger Kamba said expanded diagnostic capacity is helping authorities produce more accurate figures and respond more quickly in affected areas. "What is important now is to have a good diagnosis," he said, noting that testing has begun closer to the epicenter, allowing suspected cases to be confirmed more rapidly. WHO officials said the DRC is decentralizing the response to the health-zone level, with local coordination mechanisms, rapid response teams and alert systems being reinforced in affected areas.

Janabi, the WHO regional director, said the outbreak had once again shown that regional cooperation was

essential, noting that the first case identified in Uganda had come from the DRC after the patient crossed the border to seek care at a closer health facility. "This outbreak reminds us that regional integration is not an option. It is essential," he said. Janabi also warned that misinformation was complicating the response, saying health authorities were effectively fighting "two outbreaks" -- Ebola itself and false information surrounding the disease.

He criticized broad travel restrictions and border closures imposed in response to the outbreak. "Ebola is not an airborne disease. Blanket travel bans do not stop Ebola," Janabi said, warning that such measures could disrupt supply chains, weaken surveillance and discourage transparency. He urged countries to strengthen screening at official border crossings rather than push travelers toward informal routes where health checks would be more difficult.

WHO: Unsafe food causes 1.5 million deaths annually, with young children hardest hit

Unsafe food causes about 866 million illnesses and 1.5 million deaths annually, with children under five facing nearly three times the risk of foodborne disease compared with older children and adults, according to new estimates released Thursday by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Although they account for only 9 percent of the global population, young children suffer nearly one-third of all foodborne disease cases, especially deadly diarrhoeal diseases. Exposure to chemical hazards such as methylmercury and lead in food can also harm developing brains and cause lifelong neurological problems. The WHO estimates show that biological hazards were responsible for the vast majority of illnesses, causing about 860 million cases in 2021, while chemical hazards drove a disproportionate share of deaths, contributing to 73 percent of foodborne deaths. Most chemical-related deaths were linked to inorganic arsenic (42 percent) and lead (31 percent), due to increased risks of heart disease and cancers. While noting a decline in the total foodborne disease since 2000, the WHO said major regional inequalities persist, with the greatest burden in Africa and South-East Asia. The agency stressed that many of these diseases could be prevented through improved water, sanitation, hygiene, food safety practices such as pasteurization, and healthcare access.

The health impacts are accompanied by substantial economic losses. The study estimates that in 2021, foodborne disease led to about 310 billion U.S. dollars in lost productivity due to time away from work caused by illness. When adjusted for cost-of-living differences between countries, the economic impact is estimated at 647 billion U.S. dollars. "Food safety is not an abstract issue - it touches every meal, every family, every day," said WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "For the first time, countries have their own data to see where the burden is highest. With that knowledge, governments can prioritize actions to protect people's health." The WHO foodborne disease study was released ahead of World Food Safety Day on 7 June 2026. This year's theme is "From burden to solutions - safe food everywhere."

BY Xinhua News Agency
@themtkenyatimes



Assorted fruits in a market

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kenya's high school crisis deepens as fires and strikes disrupt learning

By Agnes Otieno

A wave of unrest has swept through Kenya's secondary schools, leaving at least 100 institutions disrupted in the early weeks of Term Two and raising urgent questions about student welfare, discipline and safety.

The most severe incident occurred on 28 May at Utumishi Girls Academy in Gilgil, where a dormitory fire killed 16 students and injured 79 others. Investigators say the blaze started when a mattress was set alight at the dormitory exit using a matchstick and paraffin. Nine students have been remanded for 21 days as police complete their inquiries. Survivors told investigators that the school matron failed to open an emergency door, forcing students to escape through a single exit. Just days later, on 4 June, a dormitory fire was reported at Alliance High School at around 3am, with 21 students detained for questioning over a suspected planned strike.

Education officials and analysts say the incidents fit a long-standing cycle of school unrest in Kenya. From Kyanguli Secondary School in 2001 to Hillside Endarasha Academy in 2024, major disasters have repeatedly involved overcrowded dormitories, padlocked emergency exits, inadequate supervision and a breakdown in communication between students and administrators.

"The result is a devastating cycle: tragedy, public outrage, state investigations, lofty promises, and eventual complacency until the next alarm sounds," wrote commentator Wanja Muireithi.

This term alone, schools including Moi Tea Girls, Litein High, Kipsigis Girls, Tambach High and Lari Boys have reported strikes, arson and closures. In Lari sub-county, 10 schools shut down within a single week.

Stakeholders point to several interlocking factors driving the unrest. Exam pressure and

fatigue are significant contributors — Term Two is the longest and most academically intense, with national examinations approaching. Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba has identified exam anxiety as a key trigger. Basic Education Principal Secretary Julius Bitok told school principals that weak communication, poor student engagement and unfair disciplinary measures are fuelling tensions. Students themselves point to substandard food, overcrowding and a lack of channels through which to raise grievances. There is also a contagion effect, with unrest in one school frequently sparking copycat incidents elsewhere.

"The situation is alarming. We are seeing student protests coordinated in real time across schools, sometimes with no stated reason other than a desire to go home," said Lari Sub-county Education Director Patrick Mwangi.

The Ministry of Education has placed school heads on high



alert and directed institutions to adopt proactive, learner-centred approaches. Ogamba warned that students who engage in arson will face prosecution and that examination candidates involved in unrest will sit their papers at external centres.

Experts caution, however, that punitive measures alone will not resolve the underlying problem. Prof. Henry Bwisa, a retired Jomo Kenyatta University academic, argues that the fires reflect "dual systemic collapse: institutional state corruption and the quiet fragmentation

of the contemporary African

labus and to ensure that candidates are not penalised for unrest beyond their control. In the meantime, families of the 16 girls who died at Utumishi wait for answers, with DNA results still expected to confirm identities.

Education stakeholders are calling for expanded counselling services, fire safety upgrades, conflict management training for school leaders and supervised extracurricular activities. National Parents Association chairman Silas Obuhatsa urged the government to act before "we lose a generation to frustration and fire."

With Term Two set to close on 2 August, the Ministry faces mounting pressure to prevent further disruption to the syl-

abus and to ensure that candidates are not penalised for unrest beyond their control. In the meantime, families of the 16 girls who died at Utumishi wait for answers, with DNA results still expected to confirm identities.

As one Lari Boys student put it: "We are not just burning buildings. We are burning down the walls that have kept our complaints unheard for years."

Agnes Otieno is an upcoming journalist.

A healthy lifestyle – the key to a long and happy life



By: Abriyeva Sevinch

In today's fast-paced world, our attention to health is decreasing, and we are taking less care of ourselves. Many of us tend to postpone starting a healthy lifestyle until Monday or the beginning of a new year. When we think of a healthy lifestyle, we often imagine strict diets or intense physical exercises. However, in reality, this concept is based on our daily choices.

Living in this rapidly developing era, many people are so focused on working and earning money that they neglect their health. Could this be one of the main reasons behind the

increasing number of illnesses?

Both young and older people spend most of their day outside — at school or at work. As a result, their eating habits are disrupted. Some eat too little, while others may even skip meals entirely. This can lead to various health problems. Poor nutrition can cause the stomach to shrink and may even lead to ulcers. As a result, the body becomes weaker and more vulnerable to diseases.

Many people try to maintain a healthy lifestyle by taking supplements or medications. However, a healthy lifestyle is not just about taking medicine — it is about building *правиль* (correct) eating habits. According to statistics, Japanese people are among those who live the longest. How did they achieve this?

Research shows that their diet mainly consists of natural foods and fruits. For example, they

consume rice, vegetables, and seaweed regularly. They also eat less meat and fatty foods, which reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases and cancer. They follow the "Hara Hachi Bu" rule, which means they stop eating when they are 80% full. This helps prevent obesity and digestive problems. In addition, they rarely consume sugary, carbonated, or artificially colored drinks.

Therefore, to adopt a healthy lifestyle, it is important to follow several key rules:

1. Healthy nutrition.

This means consuming natural foods, especially vegetables, which are beneficial for health. At the same time, reducing or avoiding fast food, excessive sweets, and carbonated drinks can greatly improve your well-being. Fast food often leads to weight gain. Drinking 1.5 to 2 liters of water per day helps keep the body healthy and

energized. Many people start their day by drinking a glass of water, which helps activate the stomach and improve brain function.

2. Physical activity.

Movement is a sign that we are truly living. Walking at least 30 minutes a day helps strengthen the body, while morning exercises improve the cardiovascular system. Engaging in sports not only improves physical health but also boosts mood.

3. Proper sleep routine.

For the body to recover, it is recommended to sleep by 11:00 PM. Sleep before 2:00 AM is especially important, as it helps maintain good condition throughout the day. A healthy adult needs about 7–8 hours of sleep. Going to bed on time calms the nervous system and increases productivity.

4. Avoid harmful habits.

Smoking and alcohol consumption shorten life expectan-



cy, and this has been scientifically proven. Instead, it is better to spend time on *полезные* (beneficial) activities such as reading books or walking in nature. These activities help calm the mind and support personal development.

In conclusion, starting a healthy lifestyle should not be postponed until tomorrow — it should begin today. Because small changes made today become the foundation for a healthy and happy future. Remember, your health is your greatest wealth.

Abriyeva Sevinch was born on June 21, 2008. She is currently studying at School No. 215 in Tashkent City. Her achievements include obtaining a B2 level certificate in English and a B+ result in her native language.

She has completed a debut project and received a certificate from a content center. She also participates in various conferences.

Her goal is to become an excellent journalist.

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Sports >> *The Polish world number 114 becomes the first qualifier in the professional era to reach a French Open women's singles final

Chwalinska shatters ceiling as qualifier reaches French Open final after stunning Shnaider

By Norman Mwale

Poland's Maja Chwalinska has torn through the Roland Garros record books, becoming the first qualifier in the professional era to reach the French Open women's singles final after a composed 7-6(4), 6-4 victory over 25th seed Diana Shnaider on Thursday.

The world number 114 delivered a performance of nerve and precision on Court Philippe-Chatrier, clinching the two-hour, seven-minute semi-final with a curling forehand winner before sinking to the clay, her face buried in her hands as history settled around her.

The 24-year-old from Dąbrowa Górnicza is only the second player, male or female, to progress from qualifying to a Grand Slam singles final in the Open Era, following Emma Raducanu's US Open triumph in 2021. She is also just the third woman to contest her maiden WTA-level final at a major, joining Venus Williams in 1997 and Raducanu.

Chwalinska's run has been built on resilience. After navigating three qualifying matches, she has since eliminated four seeds, with Shnaider — fresh from defeating world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the quarter-finals — the latest to fall.

The opening set was a tactical contest that went to a tie-break, where a deft drop shot and a perfectly judged lob gave Chwalinska set point before Shnaider's backhand drifted wide. Shnaider called for a medical timeout at 4-3 in the second set, stretching her left leg on the court, but could not halt the Pole's momentum. Chwalinska broke in the ninth game and served out the match at the first opportunity, striking 32 winners to Shnaider's 26 and winning 81 points in total



Poland's Maja Chwalinska

to the Russian's 70.

"It is like a dream," Chwalinska told the crowd moments after clinching match point.

Saturday's final will crown a first-time Grand Slam champion when she meets 19-year-old Russian Mirra Andreeva, who dispatched Marta Kostyuk 6-1, 6-3 in the other semi-final. Andreeva, seeded eighth, has dropped just one set all fortnight, yet it is Chwalinska's momentum that has captivated Paris.

Shnaider was gracious in defeat. She said Chwalinska's level "was really high from the first ball to the last" and acknowledged that the qualifier "deserved it today." Asked how Andreeva might approach the final, Shnaider offered a pointed tactical observation: "Mirra needs to

stay aggressive, take time away, because Maja is so solid from the baseline and she moves unbelievable."

Tournament director Amélie Mauresmo called Chwalinska's achievement "an extraordinary story for our sport," adding that Roland Garros "has always been about fighters, and Maja embodies that spirit."

The Pole, who missed much of 2023 through injury and entered the tournament without a main-draw win on clay this season, has now won seven matches in Paris. She will rise into the top 40 of the WTA rankings on Monday regardless of Saturday's result. Should she defeat Andreeva, she would become only the second qualifier in history to lift a Grand Slam singles trophy.

For Shnaider, the loss ended a breakthrough fortnight that had included her first victory over a world number one. "It was not easy to play her today," the 22-year-old admitted. "She was very consistent, and in the important moments she played better than me."

Chwalinska now has 48 hours to recover before attempting to complete one of the most remarkable triumphs in the sport's history. As she left Court Philippe-Chatrier, she paused, turned back to the crowd and placed her hand on her heart. Paris, and the history books, will be watching.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *The Elephants overturn a half-time deficit to hand one of the tournament favourites their first home defeat to an African side in more than a decade

Ivory Coast stun France 2-1 in World Cup warm-up as Diallo completes Nantes comeback



Ivory Coast stun France 2-1 in World Cup warm-up

By Norman Mwale

Ivory Coast delivered a statement of intent ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup on Thursday night, overturning a half-time deficit to beat France 2-1 at Stade de la Beaujoire in Nantes and leave one of the tournament favourites with serious questions to answer.

France struck late in the opening period. In the 45th minute, Rayan Cherki collected a pass from Ibrahima Konaté, glided past two defenders and drilled a low right-footed effort into the bottom left corner to give Les Bleus a deserved lead at the interval. Didier Deschamps' side had dominated possession and looked set to extend a run of eight wins from their last nine fixtures.

The Elephants emerged trans-

formed after the break. Ivory Coast levelled in the 53rd minute when Guela Doue — the French-born Strasbourg defender and older brother of France international Désiré Doué — finished off a flowing move to restore parity. Momentum swung decisively towards the visitors, who pressed France deep into their own half as the second period wore on.

The decisive moment arrived six minutes from time. Doue turned provider, delivering a pinpoint cross from the right that found Manchester United winger Amad Diallo arriving at the penalty spot. Diallo's controlled first-time finish nestled in the bottom left corner in the 84th minute to seal a famous victory for Ivory Coast.

France captain Kylian Mbappé endured a fruitless evening

and was withdrawn at half-time, leaving him on 56 international goals — one shy of Olivier Giroud's all-time record. Deschamps introduced Bradley Barcola in search of an equaliser late on, but the hosts could not find a way through.

Ivory Coast head coach Emere Faé praised his side's resilience after the final whistle. The result caps an unbeaten run for the African champions in their World Cup build-up and provides a timely confidence boost before they face Germany, Ecuador and Curaçao in Group E.

France midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni was measured in his assessment of the defeat. "It is unfortunate to lose, but we are in a preparation stage; we remain confident," he said. "There is nothing to conclude from this match, even if we had secured a

victory. We will be ready."

The defeat was France's first home loss to an African nation since 2013, ending a run of two wins and a draw in previous meetings with Ivory Coast. Les Bleus face Northern Ireland in Lille on Monday in their final warm-up before opening their World Cup campaign against Senegal on 16 June in East Rutherford. Ivory Coast now turn their full attention to the tournament across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

For a side tipped by many to lift the trophy, Thursday's result was a reminder that reputations count for little once the whistle blows. For Ivory Coast, it was proof that Diallo, Doue and the Elephants will fear no one when the World Cup begins.

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SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN



Irma Solís – A distinguished humanitarian leader, international ambassador, and advocate for positive change



By: Anila Bukhari
@themkenyatimes

Irma Solís is a respected humanitarian leader, international ambassador, entrepreneur, model, actress, and community advocate whose dedication to service, empowerment, and cultural representation has earned her recognition across diverse communities. Born in Jalisco, Mexico, and residing in Riverside County, California for over two decades, she has built a remarkable legacy that combines professional excellence, humanitarian outreach, and inspirational leadership.

As a devoted mother, independent interior decoration entrepreneur, and medical assistant, Irma has successfully balanced family life with a thriving professional and public service career. Her journey reflects perseverance, determination, and a deep commitment to uplifting others. Throughout the years, she has become a prominent figure within both Latino and English-speaking communities, earning admiration for her professionalism, compassion, and unwavering dedication to humanitarian causes.

Irma Solís has been recognized by numerous organizations for her outstanding contributions to society and her exceptional leadership within multicultural communities. Her work has consistently demonstrated a passion for creating opportunities, promoting education, and supporting initiatives that positively impact people from all walks of life. Through her efforts, she has inspired countless individuals to pursue their goals while remaining committed to serving others.

One of the most significant milestones in her career has been her long-standing association with humanitarian and educational campaigns focused on youth development and social responsibility. As

a distinguished representative and public image leader, she has actively participated in global initiatives that advocate for Human Rights Education, Drug-Free Communities, and The Way to Happiness movement. These campaigns aim to empower young people with knowledge, values, and life skills that encourage responsible decision-making and positive personal growth.

Her dedication to humanitarian service has earned her prestigious recognition within the Eiiumn Humanitarian Global organization. Celebrating her tenth anniversary as an Eiiumn Humanitarian Global Queen, Irma has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to advancing humanitarian values worldwide. Her outstanding contributions and continued service led to her being honored with the distinguished title of “Queen of Queens” within the organization, a recognition that highlights her influence, dedication, and impact on the global humanitarian stage.

In addition to her humanitarian achievements, Irma Solís has built an impressive career in the world of fashion, beauty, and cultural representation. As an International Model and Actress, she has represented elegance, professionalism, and cultural pride on numerous platforms. Her presence in international pageants and leadership roles has allowed her to become a role model for women who aspire to pursue their dreams while maintaining strong values and community involvement.

Her extensive list of titles and recognitions reflects years of dedication and excellence. She was crowned Señora California Elite 2021–2022, a title that recognized her leadership, grace, and commitment to community engagement. Prior to that, she earned the title of Señora Perseverancia 2019, celebrating her resilience and determination in overcoming challenges while continuing to inspire others.

Among her many accomplishments, Irma also held the distinguished title of Mrs. U.S.A. 2019, further solidifying her reputation as a representative of excellence and cultural diversity. Her achievements extend

beyond pageantry into spiritual and community leadership, including her service as a Chaplain since 2018, where she has offered guidance, encouragement, and support to individuals and families.

As an International Ambassador and Global Latina Ambassador, Irma has worked tirelessly to promote cultural understanding, unity, and empowerment. Her role as Mrs. Fashion Queen International and Mrs. Eiiumn Humanitarian Global allowed her to use her platform to advocate for meaningful causes while inspiring women to embrace leadership and service.

Her recognition as a Musa Ejemplar, or Exemplary Muse, highlights her role as an inspirational figure who encourages others through her actions, achievements, and dedication to positive change. Similarly, her appointment as an International Ambassador reflects the trust and respect she has earned within various organizations and communities around the world.

In 2024, Irma received the distinguished honor of serving as an I.C.O.E. Ambassador, further expanding her influence as a representative of humanitarian values and international cooperation. This role reflects her ongoing commitment to fostering dialogue, understanding, and collaboration among diverse groups and organizations.

Another meaningful aspect of her service has been her role as Madrina of Holas De Amor from 2021 through 2026. Through this initiative, she has contributed to programs that promote kindness, compassion, and community support. Her involvement demonstrates her belief that meaningful change begins with acts of generosity and genuine care for others.

Irma’s accomplishments also include prestigious cultural and international titles such as Ms Cultural World Mexico, Ms Amerasia Queen Super International, and Ms Amerasia Pacific International. These honors recognize her ability to serve as a cultural ambassador while promoting diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect among different communities and nations.



Irma Solís .

Her leadership and dedication have also been acknowledged through her role as Madrina Queen International Best and her participation in the celebration of the 17th Anniversary of Reinas, where she continued to support and mentor emerging leaders and ambassadors. Additionally, her role as Flash L.A. Madrina further reflects her commitment to community engagement and cultural initiatives that bring people together through shared values and positive action.

Throughout her career, Irma Solís has consistently demonstrated that true leadership is rooted in service, integrity, and compassion. Her achievements span multiple fields, including entrepreneurship, humanitarian advocacy, cultural representation, public speaking, fashion,

and community development. Yet beyond her many titles and honors, she is best known for her dedication to helping others and creating opportunities for growth, education, and empowerment.

Today, Irma Solís continues to serve as an influential voice for humanitarian causes, women’s empowerment, youth education, and cultural unity. Her inspiring journey stands as a testament to the power of perseverance, purpose, and service. Through her leadership and commitment, she continues to leave a lasting impact on communities both locally and internationally, inspiring future generations to lead with compassion, courage, and a genuine desire to make the world a better place.