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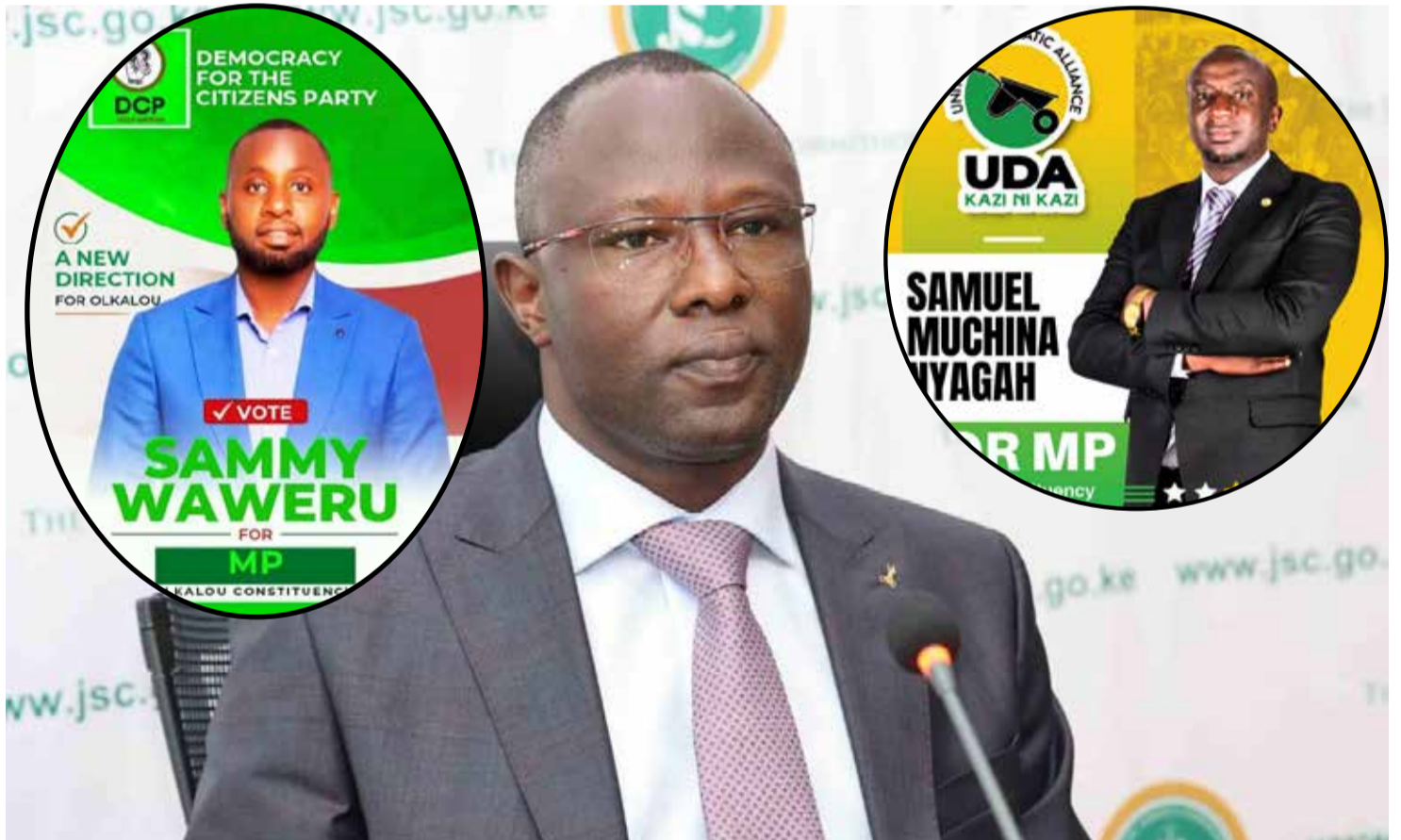
**By-elections** Electoral commission threatens to halt July 16 poll over bribery, violence and code of conduct breaches

# Ol Kalou poll may be postponed

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission has warned it may postpone or cancel the Ol Kalou parliamentary by-election scheduled for July 16, citing widespread allegations of voter bribery, illegal night campaigns and violence that has already claimed one life.

IEBC Chairperson Erastus Ethekeon issued the warning yesterday during the launch of the commission's 2022 Pre-Election Dispute Resolution Report in Nairobi, saying investigation teams had already been dispatched to the Nyandarua County constituency to probe the allegations. He said a final decision on whether the poll proceeds as planned is expected by Monday, July 13.

"In the event that, working with security officials and other stakeholders, we find that the environment is not conducive enough for us to conduct the by-election in Ol Kalou, we will be left with no choice other than to take the most unfortunate and drastic step of postponing the elections in Ol Kalou. And if that is not enough, we will cancel it altogether," Ethekeon said.



IEBC Chairperson Erastus Ethekeon. INSET Sammy Kamau Ngotho of the Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) and Samuel Muchina Nyagah of the United Democratic Alliance (UDA).

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# Safaricom Foundation launches 500-school programme with KSh95 million Kihate project

BY WMW

@themtkenyatimes

*Some of the moments as captured in pictures*

Safaricom Foundation has launched an ambitious programme to construct and upgrade 500 schools across Kenya's 47 counties over the next five years, beginning with a KSh95 million infrastructure project at Kihate Primary School in Mukurweni, Nyeri County.

The groundbreaking ceremony held yesterday was attended by Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba and Agriculture and Livestock Development Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe, highlighting collaboration between the government, the private sector and local communities in improving learning infrastructure.

Speaking during the event, Kagwe urged alumni associations to play a greater role in transforming their former schools by mobilising resources to improve infrastructure, mentorship and learning opportunities.

He said investing in education was one of the most meaningful ways of shaping future generations and preserving the legacy of schools.

Kagwe also commended the M-PESA Foundation, chaired by Joseph Ogotu, for committing to the nationwide school improvement programme, describing it as a transformative investment that will provide safe, modern and dignified learning environments for thousands of learners.

"We are not building for ourselves; we are building for the generations to come. Every classroom we build today lays the foundation for a stronger, more prosperous Kenya tomorrow," he said.

The KSh95 million Kihate Primaries School project is the first under the nationwide initiative and is expected to improve access to quality education while strengthening partnerships in the education sector.



**Editor's Desk**

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## NEWS IN BRIEF



A Sh8.3 billion infrastructure project at the Port of Mombasa is 50 per cent complete and is expected to be finished by March 2027, with the aim of improving cargo movement, safety and operational efficiency. Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) says the project, recommended by a 2018 TradeMark Africa traffic study, will ease congestion along the Back of Port Road corridor and enhance connectivity to Gates 18 and 20, Kipevu Road and the Northern Corridor. The development includes a 1.8-kilometre dual carriageway with a 704-metre elevated viaduct, two roundabouts, ramps, slip roads, utility relocations and a major drainage system. KPA says the project represents value for money and involves complex engineering works, including excavation, slope stabilization and protection of critical port infrastructure.



Delays in hearing defilement cases at the Kisii Law Courts are leaving child survivors and their families waiting months or even years for justice, despite constitutional provisions requiring timely resolution of cases involving children. A 2026 report by Midrift Hurinet and Childright shows some child sexual abuse cases in Kisii take two to three years to conclude, compared to less than six months in counties such as Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa. Stakeholders attribute the delays to missing police files, absent witnesses, compromised investigations, police transfers and lack of legal representation. Child rights advocates warn prolonged trials traumatise victims, disrupt education and increase the risk of intimidation and out-of-court settlements. They are calling for faster trials, stronger witness protection and improved enforcement of child protection laws.



African governments have been urged to accelerate implementation of proven interventions to reduce preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths through stronger political commitment, sustainable financing and accountability. Speaking at the Africa CDC Regional Policy Validation Workshop in Nairobi, Tanzanian Presidential Adviser Ummu Mwalimu said Africa already knows what works and should focus on scaling up effective solutions. She highlighted the African Union's "three zeros" agenda: zero home deliveries, zero preventable maternal and newborn deaths, and zero unvaccinated children. Africa CDC's Dr. Diana Nambatya Nsubuga called for increased domestic health financing, stronger primary healthcare systems and expanded local production of vaccines and medicines. The workshop is reviewing findings to guide future reproductive and child health policies across Africa.

The State Department for Economic Planning has extended its Gumzo la Uchumi Mashinani public participation programme to churches and mosques through a new "brethren to brethren" model aimed at increasing grassroots involvement in economic planning and budgeting. Speaking in Ruaraka, Principal Secretary Dr. Bonface Makokha (right) said the initiative seeks to move budget discussions from boardrooms to communities, in line with constitutional requirements on public participation. He said the department has already engaged youth, university students, boda boda operators, business groups and mama moga in several counties. Makokha cited limited access to information as a key challenge that fuels misinformation and urged Kenyans to submit formal memoranda to influence policy. Nairobi North County Commissioner Simon Asuma said involving faith leaders would also strengthen community policing and grassroots collaboration.



The government has accelerated the rollout of digital learning infrastructure in public schools to improve access to quality education and equip learners with skills for the digital economy. Speaking at Ol Kalou Comprehensive School, ICT and Digital Economy Principal Secretary Eng. John Tanui said nearly 40,000 kilometres of fibre optic cable had been laid towards a target of 100,000 kilometres to boost internet connectivity. He said 10,000 schools are benefiting in the first phase of the smart board programme, with another 10,000 to follow. Basic Education Principal Secretary John Ololua said the initiative is progressing well, noting that smart boards and internet connectivity are enhancing interactive teaching and helping address teacher shortages through virtual learning.



Electric motorcycles are gaining popularity in Nyeri as riders seek cheaper and cleaner alternatives to petrol-powered bikes amid rising fuel prices. Zeno Motors, which launched in the county in 2024 with three bikes, now operates a fleet of 120 and has established four charging stations. Riders say electric bikes offer lower charging and maintenance costs, reduced noise and zero tailpipe emissions, making them more economical for daily use. The company provides flexible purchase options, including battery-swapping services. However, challenges remain, including higher upfront costs, limited charging infrastructure and poor performance on rough roads. Stakeholders are urging the government to lower import taxes on electric bikes and spare parts to accelerate adoption.



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**Partnership** The arrangement is expected to increase visibility for small and medium-sized enterprises

# Nyeri, KICC forge digital trade partnership to expand market access for local businesses

BY DMS

@themtkenyatimes

The County Government of Nyeri is set to partner with the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) in a move aimed at opening new domestic and international markets for local entrepreneurs through digital trade and virtual exhibitions.

The planned collaboration follows a meeting between Nyeri Governor Mutahi Kahiga and a KICC delegation led by Chief Executive Officer James Mwaura, where the two sides discussed establishing a strategic partnership to enhance the marketing of products and tourism offerings from the county.

Governor Kahiga said the partnership would enable traders from Nyeri to move beyond reliance on traditional physical exhibitions and agricultural shows by taking advantage of KICC's digital and virtual exhibition platform.

The platform allows businesses to showcase products online throughout the year, giving them an opportunity to connect with buyers locally and internationally without the need to attend physical exhibitions or conferences.

According to the discussions, KICC intends to work with the county in promoting tourism products, agricultural produce, manufactured goods and other locally produced



KICC and Nyeri County government officials after the consultative meeting.

commodities through digital exhibitions and virtual conferences.

Businesses will also be able to advertise their products and services online during conferences and exhibitions hosted by KICC without having to travel to Nairobi.

The arrangement is expected to increase visibility for small and medium-sized enterprises, improve market access and create new revenue streams for traders. Revenue generated through the digital platform will be shared between KICC and the County Government under the proposed partnership.

Governor Kahiga said embracing digital technology was critical in enabling Nyeri enterprises to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

He noted that the collaboration would strengthen trade relations, support local

businesses in reaching wider audiences and contribute to economic growth by connecting producers directly with potential buyers.

The county administration has tasked the Department of Trade, Tourism, Culture and Cooperatives with fast-tracking the partnership. County Executive Committee Member Dr. Lucy Kiogora will lead further engagements with KICC, including negotiations towards the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to operationalise the initiative.

The partnership is also expected to complement Nyeri's broader strategy of promoting investment, tourism and value addition while embracing digital transformation in service delivery and commerce.

KICC, a State corporation under the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, has in re-

cent years expanded its mandate beyond hosting physical conferences and exhibitions by investing in digital exhibition platforms that enable businesses to market products virtually throughout the year.

The initiative is designed to increase participation by enterprises that may be unable to attend conventional trade fairs because of cost or distance.

Deputy Governor David Kinaniri joined Governor Kahiga during the meeting. Also present were County Secretary Edward Irungu, Chief of Staff Paul Wambugu and Chief Officer in the Governor's Office Nahashon Mung'ora.

The KICC delegation included Legal Officer Justus Kivindy, Finance and Accounts Manager Livingstone Kipyegon and ICT Officer Agnes Mutahura.

# Opposition yet to pick presidential candidate, says Karua



United Alternative Government Co-Convenor Martha Karua

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyatimes

United Alternative Government Co-Convenor Martha Karua has dismissed speculation over who will carry the coalition's presidential flag in 2027, saying no decision has been made.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Karua said the coalition is still finalising its governance structures and has not agreed on the process, criteria or timeline for selecting its candidate. "No decision has been made on the process, criteria, or timeline for selecting the coalition's presidential flag bearer," she said.

Karua, who co-convenes the coalition with Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka, said a technical committee chaired by former Cabinet minister Kipruto arap Kirwa has completed most of its work and

will soon present recommendations to coalition principals, who are expected to meet at a retreat to discuss governance structures and a shared reform agenda.

She acknowledged Kenyans' right to back a preferred candidate but insisted the flag bearer would emerge only through an agreed framework. "The selection of the coalition's flag bearer is one of the most consequential decisions we shall make," Karua said, urging patience as consultations continue.

The coalition brings together several opposition figures positioning themselves ahead of a contest against President William Ruto, with debate over the ticket intensifying in recent weeks.

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# NEWS PAPER

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**Land saga** The case has also taken on a distinctly political dimension, particularly following renewed focus on former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i

# Ruaraka Land Saga: Between the courts, politics and the search for accountability

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

A case that has become a legal battle, a political contest and a test of public confidence. Few public land disputes in Kenya have attracted as much legal scrutiny and political attention as the Ruaraka land saga. What started as a disagreement over ownership of land hosting two public schools has evolved into one of the country's most closely watched governance cases, drawing in investigative agencies, Parliament, the courts and political actors. Nearly a decade after the government paid about KSh1.5 billion in compensation for land occupied by Drive Inn Primary School and Ruaraka High School, the matter remains alive in court while the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) continues efforts to recover public funds it believes may have been irregularly paid.

The case has also taken on a distinctly political dimension, particularly following renewed focus on former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i, who has recently re-emerged as a prominent opposition figure ahead of the 2027 General Election.

The intersection of law, politics and public accountability has made the Ruaraka saga more than a land dispute.

It has become a test of how Kenya balances the pursuit of justice with the need to preserve confidence in public institutions.

How the dispute began

At the centre of the dispute is Land Reference No. 7879/4 in Nairobi, occupied for years by Drive Inn Primary School

and Ruaraka High School.

The ownership of the property has long been contested.

Private companies maintained that the land remained under their ownership despite the schools occupying it, while questions emerged over whether previous subdivision and planning processes had effectively converted the property into public land.

To permanently secure the schools, the National Land Commission (NLC) initiated compulsory acquisition proceedings.

Compulsory acquisition is a lawful constitutional process through which the State acquires private land for public use upon payment of prompt and just compensation.

Following valuation and approvals by various government agencies, approximately KSh1.5 billion was paid to the registered landowners. At the time, then Attorney-General Githu Muigai reportedly cleared aspects of the transaction, while approvals were also processed through the Ministries responsible for Education and the National Treasury.

However, almost immediately, questions emerged over whether compensation ought to have been paid at all if the land had already vested in the public.

Those concerns triggered investigations by Parliament, the EACC and other oversight agencies.

The courts examine the institutions, not personalities

As the controversy intensified, the dispute moved to the courts.

The Environment and Land Court was asked to determine several key questions: who legally owned the land; whether

compulsory acquisition had been necessary; and whether public funds had been improperly paid.

Subsequent appeals focused largely on whether the alleged private owners had ever legally surrendered the land and whether compensation was therefore justified.

The principal litigation has involved institutions including the National Land Commission, Afrison Export Import Limited, Huelands Limited, the Attorney General, the EACC, the Director of Public Prosecutions and other State agencies.

Court records have primarily examined statutory processes, institutional responsibilities and competing claims over ownership rather than assigning criminal responsibility to individuals.

Legal analysts point out that court proceedings are designed to establish liability through evidence presented before the bench, not through political debate or public commentary.

Politics enters the picture

While court proceedings have largely focused on institutions, public debate has increasingly centred on personalities.

The renewed attention on the matter has coincided with Fred Matiang'i's return to active national politics, where he is widely viewed as one of the opposition figures likely to play a significant role in the 2027 presidential contest.

That timing has fuelled debate over whether the renewed spotlight reflects the natural progression of investigations or whether politics has amplified public attention.

Supporters of the former Cabinet Secretary argue that

the principal court documents do not list Matiang'i as a party and contain no findings of personal liability against him.

They contend that the legal record largely concerns institutional decision-making involving multiple State agencies.

Others counter that investigations are not confined to court pleadings and that anti-corruption agencies are entitled to pursue any public official where evidence points to wrongdoing, regardless of political status or timing.

The differing perspectives underscore a broader challenge facing investigative institutions in politically charged cases: ensuring that investigations are seen to follow evidence rather than personalities.

Following the money

The latest phase of the Ruaraka saga appears to have shifted attention toward the movement of public funds.

The EACC has intensified efforts aimed at tracing compensation payments and recovering money it believes may have been improperly disbursed.

The agency's focus now extends beyond the legality of compulsory acquisition to the beneficiaries of the payments and the financial trail through which public funds moved.

Senior Counsel Ahmednasir Abdullahi publicly welcomed that approach, arguing that investigations should comprehensively trace recipients of the compensation, including legal intermediaries where appropriate.

That position reflects a growing public expectation that accountability should encompass every participant in a disputed transaction rather than concentrating on a single office holder.

Justice, perception and public confidence

The Ruaraka land dispute illustrates the increasingly complex relationship between law and politics in Kenya.

Public perception is often shaped by headlines, political statements and social media campaigns, while courts rely on documentary evidence, witness testimony and statutory interpretation.



Fred Matiang'i

Those two processes do not always move at the same pace.

For investigative agencies, the challenge is not merely to conduct investigations but to ensure that they are widely perceived as impartial, consistent and independent of political considerations.

Equally, those under investigation are entitled to the constitutional presumption of innocence until proven otherwise.

The Constitution requires public officers to be held accountable where evidence demonstrates abuse of office or loss of public resources.

At the same time, it protects every individual from condemnation before due process has run its course.

Maintaining that balance is essential if confidence in the justice system is to be preserved.

Beyond one individual

Ultimately, the Ruaraka land saga is larger than any single politician or public official.

It raises fundamental questions about land administration, compulsory acquisition, valuation of public assets, inter-agency decision-making and stewardship of taxpayers' money.

It also highlights the importance of institutional accountability in transactions involving billions of shillings.

As appeals continue through the courts and investigators



Belio Kipsang

pursue recovery of public funds, the final legal outcome will depend on evidence tested through judicial processes rather than political narratives.

Whether responsibility ultimately rests with institutions, individual office holders, private beneficiaries or a combination of all three will be determined by the courts and competent investigative bodies.

For Kenyans, the enduring lesson may be that public confidence is strengthened not by selective accountability but by comprehensive investigations that apply the same legal standard to every institution, official and beneficiary connected to disputed public transactions.

Only then can justice be seen not merely as a political slogan, but as a constitutional principle grounded in evidence, fairness and the rule of law.

Elections .....

# IEBC warns Ol Kalou by-election could be postponed

*Electoral commission threatens to halt July 16 poll over bribery, violence and code of conduct breaches*

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission has warned it may postpone or cancel the Ol Kalou parliamentary by-election scheduled for July 16, citing widespread allegations of voter bribery, illegal night campaigns and violence that has already claimed one life.

IEBC Chairperson Erastus Ethekeon issued the warning yesterday during the launch of the commission's 2022 Pre-Election Dispute Resolution Report in Nairobi, saying investigation teams had already been dispatched to the Nyandarua County constituency to probe the allegations. He said a final decision on whether the poll proceeds as planned is expected by Monday, July 13.

"In the event that, working with security officials and other stakeholders, we find that the environment is not conducive enough for us to conduct the by-election in Ol Kalou, we will be left with no choice other than to take the most unfortunate and drastic step of postponing the elections in Ol Kalou. And if that is not enough, we will cancel it altogether," Ethekeon said.

The commission is investigating reports of voter bribery, campaigns conducted beyond legally permitted hours, and the death of one person in Ol Kalou on July 1 under circumstances linked to the heightened political activity in the constituency. Ethekeon said candidates found culpable of breaching the Electoral Code of Conduct could face disqualification.

"If we find any culpability or any breaches of the code of conduct, the proper remedies shall apply, up to and including disqualifying some of those candidates," he said, adding that a postponement would come at significant cost. "Elections are very expensive, and in Ol Kalou alone the commission is spending almost KSh30 million."

The by-election was triggered by the death of area MP David Njuguna Kiraraho in February. Nine candidates are contesting the seat, with the race widely viewed as a two-horse contest between Sammy Kamau Ngotho of the Democracy for the Citizens

Party (DCP) and Samuel Muchina Nyagah of the United Democratic Alliance (UDA). More than 72,000 registered voters are expected to cast ballots in the vote-rich Mt Kenya region.

The commission's warning follows days of escalating accusations between the ruling UDA and DCP, the party led by former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua. In a statement, Gachagua alleged that President William Ruto's administration had spent over KSh1 billion bribing voters and KSh10 billion on development projects in an attempt to sway the outcome, and claimed the government was now pressing the IEBC to postpone the poll after failing to secure victory through spending.

"He is now pushing the IEBC to postpone the election and give him time to splash more money and see whether it will work," Gachagua said, alleging separately that "goons" would be deployed over the weekend to manufacture violence and provide grounds for postponement. He urged the commission to proceed with the vote as scheduled. "The IEBC should not and must not postpone the Ol Kalou by-election. The people of Ol Kalou are ready to elect their new Member of Parliament."

Gachagua also accused the commission of selective enforcement, saying it had failed to act against Cabinet Secretaries and Principal Secretaries he claimed had campaigned and distributed bribes in violation of electoral rules. He argued that failure to manage a single by-election would raise doubts about the commission's readiness for the 2027 General Election.

The government has disputed the characterisation of its spending as electoral inducement. Senior Economic Advisor to the President Moses Kuria, who has become a prominent figure at project launches in the constituency, rejected Gachagua's KSh1 billion figure, saying the true value of ongoing government investment in Ol Kalou exceeds KSh10 billion. "We are spending over KSh10 billion on projects in roads, water, gas, avocado farming and other sectors," Kuria said, listing initiatives including the tarmacking of the Ithagani-Nyaituga-Ngori-



DCP Party Leader Rigathi Gachagua

ka-Kanyiriri road, rehabilitation of more than 150 kilometres of roads, construction of Nyandarua University, distribution of title deeds, and the reintroduction of Kenya Railways passenger services along the Nairobi-Gilgil-Ol Kalou-Nyahururu route.

Among the projects launched in recent days are two fishing boats worth KSh5 million and the distribution of 20,000 subsidised six-kilogram LPG gas cylinders to residents at KSh1,500 each. Energy Principal Secretary Alex Wachira defended the timing of the rollout, saying the initiatives predate the by-election. "We are not bribing voters. These projects started even before MP Kiraraho died," Wachira said.

Kiharu MP Ndindi Nyoro has also questioned what he described as

an unusually heavy deployment of government resources during the campaign, joining Gachagua in criticising the scale and timing of the project launches.

The Presidency has not publicly responded to Gachagua's specific allegations of bribery, political interference or plans to sponsor violence, and no evidence has been made public to substantiate the claims. The IEBC has likewise not responded directly to Gachagua's accusations of selective enforcement against government officials.

The contest has become one of Kenya's most closely watched political battles ahead of the 2027 General Election, with the opposition seeking to consolidate influence in the Mt Kenya region and the Kenya Kwanza administration campaigning

heavily on its development record in the constituency. Deputy Chief Justice Philomena Mwili, speaking at the same event as Ethekeon, said the credibility of Kenya's elections rests on more than the casting of ballots. "Democracy is not sustained by simply casting ballots. It is sustained by the confidence of citizens that every stage of the electoral process is governed by law, administered fairly, and subject to impartial review where disputes arise," she said.

Whether the Ol Kalou by-election proceeds on July 16 will now depend on the security assessment the IEBC delivers by Monday, and on whether the accusations trading between the ruling party and the opposition translate into a peaceful vote or the postponement both sides claim to fear for different reasons.

**Kirinyaga** This is the first study of its kind in Kirinyaga. The findings will help us determine the actual burden of snakebites, map out the affected areas and enable the county to plan better

# Kirinyaga County's snakebite hotspots mapping and antivenom development initiative

BY MKT REPORTER  
@themkenyatimes

The County Government of Kirinyaga has partnered with the National Government to map snakebite hotspots across the county to support the development of a locally produced antivenom.

The exercise, being undertaken in collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Primate Research (KIPRE) through the Kenya Snakebite Research and Intervention Centre (K-SRIC), seeks to generate critical data that will strengthen snakebite prevention, improve treatment and support the development of an antivenom tailored to snake species found in Kirinyaga.

It also aims to establish the burden and geographical distribution of snakebite cases across the county. The findings are expected to guide strategic antivenom distribution, strengthen surveillance and referral systems, identify priority intervention areas, and support the development of an affordable and effective antivenom.

Speaking during the exercise, Kirinyaga County Director of Public Health and Sanitation Peter Irungu said the collaboration marks the first comprehensive study of snakebite burden in the county and will provide reliable data to support evidence-based planning and resource allocation.

"This is the first study of its kind in Kirinyaga. The findings will help us determine the actual burden of snakebites, map out the affected areas and enable the county to plan better for prevention, treatment and procurement of antivenom," Irungu said.

He noted that snakebite remains a neglected public health challenge despite af-

fecting many residents, adding that the study will generate accurate data on reported cases and enable the county to implement targeted prevention and disease control interventions.

As part of the exercise, Community Health Promoters (CHPs) are undergoing specialized training on snakebite prevention, appropriate first aid, early recognition of envenoming, timely referral and community education to strengthen frontline response and reduce preventable deaths and disabilities associated with snakebites.

Cecilia Ngari, a Public Health Research Scientist representing KIPRE, said the institution is working closely with the County Government's Department of Health to determine the burden of snakebite at the community level while documenting the challenges Community Health Promoters face when responding to snakebite cases. "Working closely with the county, we have been able to map around 600 households over the last two and a half weeks, and we expect to cover all the sub-counties before completing the exercise," she said.

Ngari said the exercise goes beyond identifying snakebite hotspots, noting that CHPs are being equipped with knowledge and practical skills to identify snakebite cases, administer appropriate first aid, educate communities on prevention measures and facilitate timely referral of victims.

She observed that the County Government has embraced snakebite as a public health priority, creating an enabling environment for stronger surveillance and community reporting. She added that equipping CHPs will improve case identification and reporting,

leading to more accurate data to guide interventions.

"Our institution has been mandated to develop a locally available antivenom that works better against the snake species found in Kenya. The mapping exercise will provide the evidence needed to understand where snakebites occur most, focus resources appropriately and support the development of an antivenom that will be affordable and easily accessible," she added.

The ongoing collaboration underscores Governor Anne Waiguru's commitment to providing affordable and accessible healthcare services to all county residents.

"We are committed to putting in place sound health systems that ensure our people access affordable and comprehensive care ranging from disease prevention and treatment to rehabilitation," she said.

During the training, CHPs were sensitized on the common signs and symptoms of snakebite envenoming, including swelling, bleeding, blisters, wounds, drooping eyelids and physical deformities resulting from delayed treatment. They were also informed that the red spitting cobra and black mamba are among the common venomous snake species found in Kirinyaga.

The trainees were further advised on appropriate emergency response measures, including immediately irrigating the eyes with plenty of clean water or milk where venom has been spat into the eyes, while ensuring victims are referred promptly to the nearest health facility for specialized treatment.

Community Health Promoter Charity Mugo from Kangai Location said the training had equipped her with practical knowledge that will help



Ms Cecilia Ngari, Public Health Research Scientist representing the Kenya Institute of Primate Research (KIPRE), trains Community Health Promoters (CHPs) on snakebite prevention, first aid during a countywide snakebite hotspot mapping exercise in Kirinyaga County | Photo: Courtesy.

protect communities from snakebite-related injuries and deaths.

"We have learnt about different snake species, where they hide and how to prevent them from invading our homes. We have also been trained on safe first aid without putting ourselves at risk. We will now educate our communities to keep compounds clean, use torches when walking at night and seek medical attention immediately after a snakebite," she said.

Her counterpart from Mumo, Charles Waweru, said the training had corrected misconceptions about venomous snakes and strengthened the

capacity of CHPs to respond effectively to emergencies.

"The training has opened our eyes. We now know how to respond when someone is bitten or when venom is spat into the eyes, and we will pass this knowledge to our communities to help reduce snakebite cases," he said.

Residents from snake-prone areas also welcomed the initiative, saying it will contribute to better prevention and improved access to treatment.

Murinduko resident Ephantus Kariuki said brown spitting cobras are common in the area, especially around homes where they search for eggs, chicks and water during

hot weather. He noted the importance of strengthening the

county's local response system to snakebite emergencies.

Another resident, Pius Muriithi, recounted surviving a snakebite after being bitten on the leg outside his home at night.

"I did not realize I had been bitten until I started bleeding and later developed severe swelling on my face. I was rushed by ambulance to Kimbimbi Hospital where I received treatment for more than a week," he recalled.



Ms Eunice Muhoro (right), a researcher with the Kenya Institute of Primate Research (KIPRE), interviews a resident of Murinduko Ward during a household survey as part of the ongoing countywide snakebite hotspot mapping exercise in Kirinyaga County.

# Senate committee confirms TharakaNithi headquarters was county-funded



**The near completion Tharaka Nithi County executive offices building at Kathwana. The Senate County Accounts Committee has clarified that the building has been funded by the Tharaka Nithi County Government | Photo:**

Alex Njeru

**BY Alex Njeru**

[@themtkenyatimes](#)

The Senate County Public Accounts Committee, led by Homa Bay Senator Moses Kajwang', yesterday clarified that the construction of the Tharaka-Nithi County Headquarters Executive Office Building has been funded by the County Government of Tharaka-Nithi.

The committee made the clarification during a sitting with Governor Muthomi Njuki, who had appeared before it to respond to the county's 2024/2025 audit queries.

Committee members observed that while Tharaka-Nithi had successfully completed its modern county headquarters, the other four counties that were initially earmarked for support in constructing county headquarters were still struggling to complete their projects.

They expressed interest in visiting Tharaka-Nithi to inspect the headquarters building and other development projects undertaken by the county government.

Tharaka-Nithi Senator Mwenda Gataya commended Governor Njuki for completing the headquarters project despite financial challenges.

He also praised the county administration for implementing other key infrastructure projects, including the ongoing construction of Kwa Magata, Gachugini and Mpuku bridges in Tharaka Constituency.

"That is a commendable work

Governor and it has taken long as you waited for the grant from the national government in vain," said Gataya.

Governor Njuki had earlier stated that the completion of the county headquarters marked a major milestone for the county, adding that his administration had laid a strong foundation for development.

He announced plans to transform Kathwana Market into an ultra-modern trading centre as part of his administration's legacy projects.

"We have left behind a county that is functional," the governor said.

Deputy Governor Nyaga Muisrael, Mariani MCA Anita Mbae and County Executive Committee Member for Administration and Devolution Affairs Muthini Karangi also lauded the governor for ensuring the headquarters project was completed despite funding constraints.

The leaders dismissed claims that the Executive Office Building had been fully financed by the National Government, maintaining that the County Government of Tharaka-Nithi provided the funding required to complete the project after national funding fell short.

They also criticized MCAs who had opposed budget allocations towards the headquarters, saying such opposition would have delayed the completion of one of the county's most significant infrastructure projects.



MMV Associates CLG group photo

## Freedom fighters' caucus welcomes Sovereign Wealth Fund law, begins search for chairperson

**BY MKT REPORTER**

[@themtkenyatimes](#)

A caucus representing former freedom fighters and their descendants has welcomed President William Ruto's assent to the Sovereign Wealth Fund Act, saying the new law marks a historic step towards securing Kenya's long-term economic future and preserving national wealth for generations to come.

The group, MMV Associates CLG, said the establishment of the Sovereign Wealth Fund would ensure that revenues generated from the country's strategic investments and natural resources are prudently managed, invested and preserved for both present and future generations.

Speaking during a press briefing after a meeting at Blue Post Hotel in Thika, the organization's Chief Executive Officer, Emmah Kasis, said the law demonstrated the government's commitment to safeguarding national wealth beyond the current generation.

She noted that the fund is expected to enhance economic stability by creating long-term savings for the country, cushioning the economy during periods of financial shocks, supporting strategic national investments and ensuring that benefits from Kenya's natural resources are shared equitably across generations.

Kasis said prudent management of the fund would also strengthen investor confidence, promote fiscal discipline and provide resources that could support national development projects without placing excessive pressure on taxpayers. She said members of the caucus,

many of whom are descendants of freedom fighters, believe the legislation offers hope that future generations will benefit from wealth created through the country's natural resources and strategic assets.

"The enactment of the Sovereign Wealth Fund law is an important milestone because it lays the foundation for preserving national wealth for generations to come while supporting sustainable economic growth," she said.

The Sovereign Wealth Fund Act establishes a legal framework for managing and investing Kenya's surplus revenues from strategic assets and natural resources through professionally managed investment vehicles. The government has said the fund is intended to build long-term national savings, stabilize the economy during downturns and finance strategic development priorities.

During the meeting, MMV Associates CLG also announced that it had begun the process of identifying a substantive chairperson to lead the organization.

Kasis said consultations are underway and expressed confidence that the caucus would settle on a chairperson before this year's Mashujaa Day celebrations on October 20.

She said the incoming chairperson will work closely with the organization's Director General, James Njuguna Mahuria, to accelerate ongoing efforts aimed at securing compensation for former freedom fighters and their families.

The new leadership will also coordinate with senior members of the organization in documenting Kenya's liberation struggle to preserve the history and sacrifices of independence heroes for future generations.

"We want to ensure that the stories of those who fought for Kenya's independence are properly documented and preserved so that future generations understand the sacrifices that secured the country's freedom," Kasis said.

The search for the caucus chairperson comes at a time when the Ministry of Defence has also invited applications for the position of Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Military Veterans.

According to a public notice issued by the ministry, the vacancy will arise on August 4, 2026, in accordance with the Military Veterans Act.

Eligible applicants must be retired general officers from the former Kenya Armed Forces or the current Kenya Defence Forces and must meet the integrity requirements of Chapter Six of the Constitution.

The Advisory Committee on Military Veterans plays a key role in advising the government on policies affecting retired service personnel and overseeing matters relating to their welfare under the Military Veterans Act.

Kasis described the parallel leadership transitions as significant, saying they reflect renewed efforts to strengthen institutions that represent individuals who made sacrifices in the service of the nation.

She expressed optimism that closer collaboration among organizations representing freedom fighters, military veterans and their descendants would enhance advocacy for their welfare while ensuring that Kenya's liberation history is preserved as part of the country's national heritage.

**Human trafficking** The fight against trafficking in persons cannot be won through prosecutions alone. We must empower communities with the knowledge to recognize the warning signs

# DPP calls for public vigilance as human trafficking networks turn to digital platforms

BY MKT Correspondent  
@themkenyaintimes

Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Renson Ingonga has called for intensified public awareness campaigns and stronger community involvement in the fight against human trafficking, warning that criminal networks are increasingly exploiting digital technologies to recruit and exploit victims.

Speaking during a meeting with Marco Bufo, Regional Coordinator for CIVIPOL, a technical cooperation agency under the French Ministry of the Interior, Ingonga said public education must become a central pillar of Kenya's anti-trafficking strategy as traffickers adopt more sophisticated methods to target vulnerable people.

He said while successful investigations and prosecutions remain critical, preventing trafficking begins with equipping communities with the knowledge to identify warning signs and report suspicious activities.

"The fight against trafficking in persons cannot be won through prosecutions alone. We must empower communities with the knowledge to recognize the warning signs, understand the tactics used by traffickers and know where to seek help," Ingonga said.

He warned that criminal syndicates are increasingly using social media, online job advertisements, messaging applications and other digital platforms to lure victims with false promises of employment, education and better living conditions before subjecting them to forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and other forms of abuse.

According to the DPP, the

growing use of technology by traffickers requires law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to adopt innovative approaches while strengthening cooperation with local communities and international partners.

"As technology advances, so do the methods employed by traffickers. This calls for innovative responses, stronger partnerships and sustained public education to ensure our communities are not left vulnerable," he said.

Kenya remains a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking, with victims including women, men and children trafficked for forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging and domestic servitude both within the country and across international borders. Authorities have also expressed concern over the increasing number of Kenyans, particularly young people, being lured by fraudulent overseas job offers that end in exploitation.

Ingonga commended CIVIPOL for its continued technical support to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), saying the partnership has strengthened the country's capacity to investigate and prosecute trafficking-related offences.

He said collaboration between prosecutors, investigators and international partners has enhanced Kenya's response to transnational organized crime while improving access to justice for victims.

"We appreciate CIVIPOL's unwavering support in strengthening the capacity of our prosecutors and fostering collaboration among agencies involved in the fight against trafficking in persons. Such partnerships are critical in

ensuring effective investigations, successful prosecutions and ultimately justice for victims," he said.

Marco Bufo reaffirmed CIVIPOL's commitment to supporting Kenya's efforts to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, noting that the crimes are transnational and require coordinated responses across jurisdictions.

"Trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants are complex crimes that transcend national borders. Addressing them effectively requires strong institutions, well-trained prosecutors, coordinated regional action and informed communities," Bufo said.

He added that CIVIPOL would continue working closely with the ODPP and other stakeholders to strengthen institutional capac-



During the meeting.

ity, promote knowledge-sharing among criminal justice agencies and support regional cooperation aimed at dismantling trafficking networks.

Through its partnership with the ODPP, CIVIPOL has supported several initiatives designed to improve Kenya's response to trafficking in persons. These include specialized training programmes for prosecutors, cross-border and multi-agency simulation exercises, development of standard operating procedures, regional cooperation forums and the production of public awareness materials on hu-

man trafficking and migrant smuggling.

The meeting also reviewed progress made under the longstanding partnership between the ODPP and CIVIPOL and explored additional measures to strengthen institutional capacity, enhance cross-border collaboration and improve coordinated law enforcement efforts.

Kenya has strengthened its legal framework against trafficking through the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act, which criminalizes all forms of human trafficking and provides for the protection,

rehabilitation and compensation of victims. The country also works with regional and international partners to implement the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

Authorities continue to urge members of the public to verify overseas employment offers, report suspected trafficking cases to law enforcement agencies and remain vigilant against online recruitment schemes that prey on vulnerable individuals seeking economic opportunities.



Mr Renson Ingonga

**Politics** Matiang'i had welcomed the Nyeri delegation, thanking them for their enthusiasm and commitment to building what he termed "a better Kenya"

# Matiang'i meets Wambugu, top Nyeri Jubilee aspirants

BY MKT REPORTER

@themkenyatimes

Former Interior Cabinet Secretary and Jubilee Party Deputy Leader Fred Matiang'i yesterday hosted a delegation of Jubilee Party leaders from Nyeri County in the latest round of consultations aimed at strengthening the party ahead of the 2027 General Election.

The meeting, held under the party's "Mbele Pamoja" mobilisation drive, brought together top aspirants as the former Cabinet Secretary continues engagements with party members across the country following his endorsement as Jubilee's presidential flag bearer.

Among those present was former Nyeri Town MP Ngunjiri Wambugu who recently criticized the way party affairs were being handled after Matiang'i met a section of aspirants on Monday where he claimed others were locked out.

After yesterday's meeting, Wam-

bugu described the discussions as candid and constructive, saying they focused on the future of the Jubilee Party and the aspirations of members intending to contest elective seats on the party ticket in 2027.

"Our discussion was frank, respectful and focused on the principles that matter most; strengthening the party and preparing a credible path back to government in 2027," Wambugu said, adding that the conversation would continue.

Nyeri senatorial aspirant Nick Mararo, who also attended the meeting, said the leaders used the session to exchange ideas, strengthen a shared vision and reaffirm their commitment to leadership that delivers meaningful change.

Earlier, Matiang'i had welcomed the Nyeri delegation, thanking them for their enthusiasm and commitment to building what he termed "a better Kenya."

Matiang'i has been meeting party aspirants from across the country where he urges them to begin grass-

roots mobilisation early and build ward-based campaign structures as the party prepares for the 2027 elections. He has been emphasizing disciplined organisation and sustained engagement with voters, saying Jubilee was rebuilding itself to offer an alternative government.

However, the consultations have also exposed lingering concerns within the party over internal democracy and inclusivity.

After the earlier aspirants' meeting, Wambugu publicly complained that some aspirants had faced discrimination in the organisation of party activities, arguing that Jubilee should provide a level playing field for all those seeking its nomination.

The former legislator, who has previously challenged changes to the party leadership through the Political Parties Disputes Tribunal, has consistently maintained that the party must strictly adhere to its constitution and democratic principles in managing internal affairs.

Despite the earlier disagreements,



From left; Richard Onyonka, Wangai Ndirangu, Fred Matiang'i, Ngunjiri Wambugu and Nick Mararo after yesterday's meeting | Photo: Courtesy.

yesterday's meeting suggested efforts by both leaders to bridge differences as Jubilee intensifies preparations for the next General Election.

Wambugu said politics should be about dialogue, solutions and putting the interests of Kenyans above personal positions, signalling his

willingness to continue engaging the party leadership.

The meeting was also attended by Nyeri gubernatorial aspirant Eng. Wangai Ndirangu and Kisii Senator Richard Onyonka.

## The Mt. Kenya Times

THE



## If you have the courage to start, then you have the courage to succeed



Everything you start is the first step toward success because starting is the most important action.

Your mind must decide and give permission; otherwise, nothing will happen.

First, prepare yourself mentally.

Once you take your first step, keep moving forward with the next steps. They will lead you to success.

If you have the courage to start, you will gain the courage to succeed.

So, do not hesitate to begin your work. Be courageous, and you will achieve success.

—G.YasminSirajudheen  
Secondary grade teacher  
Melmalayanur block  
Villupuram dt

## Bubbles



Bubbles float so light and high,  
They dance gently in the sky.

Big and small, shiny and bright,  
They sparkle in the morning light.

Rainbow colours we can see,  
They make everyone happy.

Soon they fade and fly away,  
Leaving smiles throughout the day.

poem written

By M.samiha hajra  
from 9th c.  
GGHSS, PATTUKKOTTAI.

## Nature: It is beautiful



“Mom, I woke up in the morning. Do you have any chores for me, Mom?”

“Get freshened up, my son.”

“I’m all freshened up! Where are we going?”

“We are going to our village, my son.”  
“Why are we going?”

“We are going for a festival.”

“Will you buy me a toy at the festival?”

“Okay, my son. I will buy you a toy,” said Mom.

“Okay, Mom! Buy me lots of toys! Mom, how are we going? By bus or by car?”

“We are going by bus, my son. It will be a fun ride!”

“Mom! Then I want the window seat.”

“Sure, you can have the window seat,” Mom smiled and held his hand as they walked to the bus stand.

The bus came and they got on. They found two seats and sat together. The boy looked out of the window. He saw green trees, fields, birds and small houses. The cool breeze touched his face. He was very happy. Mom gave him some homemade snacks and they ate together. Soon, they reached the village. The festival was full of lights, music, flowers and happy people. The boy smiled and said, “Nature is so beautiful!”

SATHYAMOORTHY B  
CLASS 8 B  
VKGHSS AYYANKALIPALAYAM TIRUPPUR  
TAMILNADU

Motivated by  
Tr.KUMARESWARI S  
VKGHSS AYYANKALIPALAYAM

## Rain poem



When gentle raindrops slowly fall,  
The sweet earth smell brings joy to all.

The cool breeze sings a peaceful song,  
And dancing plants sway all day long,  
Like happy peacocks, my heart feeling bright.

A rainbow shines with colours bright,  
It beauty fills my soul with love.  
And rain feels like gift from above.

S.Sahana,  
Grade 8,  
GHSS Kandigai,  
Chengalpattu district.

## Homeland....



Homeland is not just a piece of soil, but a unique and unrepeatable place that covers every corner of the earth, starting from the threshold and covering the entire surface of the earth, every living soul and every moment.

Homeland is one of the highest blessings that a person has. Homeland is the place where we were born and where we find refuge throughout our lives. The land that unites us, our ancestors and descendants, where our history is sealed and where our future is built is also the homeland.

A person must work for the well-being of his homeland, regardless of what happens in it. Various problems and unrest cannot be a reason to betray the homeland or abandon it, but everyone who wants his country to be peaceful, safe and developed must contribute to the prosperity of the homeland. In our sacred religion, a Muslim who sacrifices his life for his homeland will have the status of a martyr. Sa’id ibn Zayd (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of

Allah be upon him) that: “He who is killed in the way of protecting his wealth, life, religion, and family is a martyr.” Our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the best example for us in terms of loving, serving, and protecting his homeland. When he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) left his homeland, Mecca, to migrate to Medina, by the command of Allah Almighty, in order to be safe from the persecution of the polytheists, he said: “How good a city you are! How beloved you are to me!

If your people had not driven me away from you, I would not have lived anywhere else but you,” and he expressed his unwillingness to leave his homeland (Imam Tirmidhi, hadith 3926). The Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon them) also lived in the land where they were born and raised after migrating to Medina, and some of them even found it difficult to adapt there and became ill. So they prayed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to make Medina as beloved to them as Mecca.

In addition to loving and praising the homeland in peaceful times, it is also an important duty of a person to protect it when various calamities threaten the country. This is stated in the hadith: “Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: “I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: ‘On the Day of Resurrection, a flag will be raised for every traitor for his betrayal in this world.’” (Imam Bukhari, Hadith 3188).

Loving one’s homeland is a divine feeling, and Allah Almighty has bestowed upon His servants the feeling of loving their homeland. Sheikh Muhammad Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) described the homeland as follows: “Humanity loves its land and all that it contains, even if it is a desert where no one lives. “The homeland is the place where love is ingrained in the heart, where a person feels calm when he is there, yearns when he is far away, protects when he is attacked, and becomes angry when he is humiliated.” People with a pure nature and healthy nature always live with a sense of patriotism, only unhappy people are deprived of this feeling.

The homeland is a place of great value and sacredness that is in the heart of every person. The homeland is a peaceful land with a touch of the sun, a place to live under the sky, the history and culture of our generations. The homeland is our mother, father, friends and relatives. The homeland is our life and future.

Bobonazarova Yulduz, 2nd year student of Urgench State Pedagogical Institute

## My mom’s kitchen



She cooks sweet, spicy, and healthy meals,  
Made with love that everyone feels.  
Her delicious food makes me smile,  
And keeps me happy all the while.  
The kitchen is my favourite place,  
Full of warmth, love, and grace.  
It has many useful things to see,  
Making happy memories for me.  
Thank you, Mom, for all you do.  
Your loving food is my treasure, too!

– R. Dharani  
IX – A

Government Girls Higher Secondary School  
Pattukkottai

My mom’s kitchen is warm and bright,  
Filled with love from morning till night.  
When I am hungry, she gives me food,  
Fresh and tasty, just as it should.

**Elections** As politicians hand out cash and gifts, residents must ask: are we electing leaders, or selling our future?

# The price of a vote: When money speaks louder than leadership in Ol Kalou

BY Hadassah Karangu  
@themkenyatimes

As political temperatures rise in Ol Kalou, a familiar scene is quietly unfolding across villages, trading centres, markets, churches and public gatherings. Politicians and their allies are becoming ever more visible, not necessarily because of new development projects or fresh ideas, but because money is changing hands.

From small cash handouts to fundraiser donations, from sponsoring local events to quietly assisting selected groups, the flow of political generosity has become hard to ignore. For many families facing genuine economic hardship, the temptation is understandable. When school fees are due,

businesses are struggling and the cost of living keeps climbing, a few thousand shillings can feel like a lifeline.

But beneath the smiles and handshakes lies a harder question every resident of Ol Kalou should sit with: what happens after the money is spent?

History has shown, time and again, that vote-buying is one of democracy's greatest threats. When elections become transactions, leadership loses its meaning. Citizens begin choosing leaders based on immediate reward rather than long-term vision, competence, integrity and service delivery.

The danger is not simply that money influences voters. The deeper danger is that it lowers expectations. Instead of demanding better roads, quality healthcare, improved schools, employment opportunities

and accountability, communities can find themselves settling for handouts that disappear within days.

A politician who spends heavily to secure a seat may come to see public office not as a chance to serve, but as an investment to recover. The people end up paying the price through poor governance, stalled projects and years of unfulfilled promises.

What makes this particularly concerning is how many of these same politicians tend to vanish after the votes are counted. The faces currently at every gathering, greeting residents warmly and giving generously, can become strangely hard to reach once power is secured. Calls go unanswered. Pledges are quietly forgotten. Constituents are left waiting for the next election cycle, when the generosi-

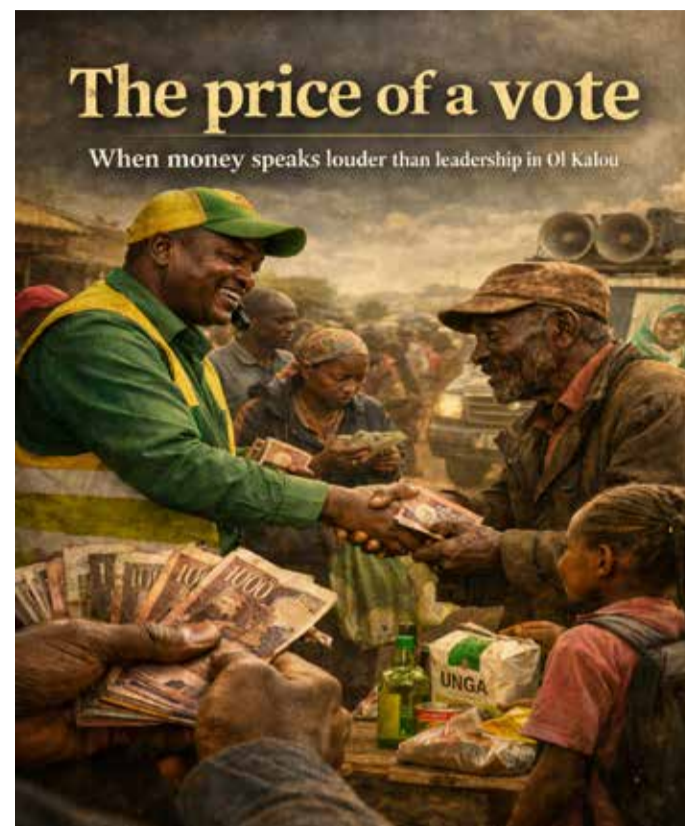
ty conveniently reappears.

Ol Kalou deserves better than leadership that only shows up in season.

Residents should press every aspiring leader with harder questions. What is your plan for youth employment? How will you support agriculture? What will you do for small businesses? How will you ensure transparency in the use of public funds? What lasting impact will your time in office actually leave behind?

Those answers are worth far more than any envelope of cash.

The future of Ol Kalou will not be decided by who gives the most today. It will be decided by who offers the clearest vision for tomorrow. As campaigns gather pace, voters would do well to remember that money can paper over today's problem, but only



Graphical illustration

good leadership can solve tomorrow's. The roads their children will use, the schools they will attend, the hospitals they will depend on and the opportunities open to the next generation cannot be built on handouts alone.

Democracy works best when citizens vote with their minds,

not their pockets.

The people of Ol Kalou stand at a crossroads. One path leads to temporary rewards and recurring disappointment. The other leads to accountability, development and meaningful change.

The choice, as always, belongs to the voters.

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**Politics** It is tempting, watching this unfold, to reach for the tired conclusion that the Kenyan voter is simply for sale that Wanjiku, offered a two-hundred-shilling note

# The ballot and the bribe: What Ol Kalou tells us about the Kenyan voter



By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo

@themkenyentimes

On July 16, 2026, the people of Ol Kalou Constituency in Nyandarua County will troop to polling stations to choose a successor to the late David Njuguna Kiaraho, the Jubilee MP who died on March 29. Nine candidates were cleared by the IEBC, the ruling UDA fielding Samuel Muchina Nyaga against DCP's Douglas Waweru and Jubilee's Wilson Kigwa, in a race that has drawn Cabinet Secretaries, governors, senators, and State House digital operatives into a constituency of roughly forty thousand voters. Days before nominations closed, a sitting MP was recorded explaining why identity cards were being demanded of residents receiving cash handouts running into over a million shillings.

The opposition coalition, in the same breath as pledging unity behind a single candidate chosen through what it called scientific polling, felt compelled to issue a formal warning against voter bribery, intimidation, and the deployment of state machinery to sway the outcome. Tourism, Roads, ICT and Lands Cabinet Secretaries have all made the pilgrimage to Ol Kalou; three governors have joined them; a State House digital strategist and a former Cabinet Secretary now moonlight as campaign choreographers, alongside musicians enlisted to warm up the rallies. These are not allegations whispered in back rooms. They are matters of public record, announced with the confidence of men who do not expect consequence, and reported in the same news cycles that carried word of a stalled railway line, dormant for forty-six years, now miraculously op-



A collage of gas cylinders, mattresses, electric posts and other goodies for residents of Olkalou constituency

erational, and a Lands office devolved to the constituency just as the campaign period opened.

It is tempting, watching this unfold, to reach for the tired conclusion that the Kenyan voter is simply for sale that Wanjiku, offered a two-hundred-shilling note and a kilo of sugar, will vote her stomach rather than her conscience. This is the story the political class prefers, because it is a story that absolves them of the work of persuasion and installs cash as a legitimate substitute for it. It is also, conveniently, a story that flatters the giver more than it indicts him: better to be seen as a shrewd reader of a corruptible electorate than as the architect of the corruption itself. But this story is also convenient for another reason: it lets everyone stop asking why the bribe works, if it works at all, and start assuming that it must and once a nation assumes its own electorate is unreachable by argument, it stops bothering to make one

The truer picture, one suspects, sits somewhere less comfortable for both the cynic and the romantic. There is nothing uniquely Kenyan about material politics; every democracy on earth has wrestled with patronage, from Tammany Hall's ward bosses handing out coal and turkeys

in nineteenth-century New York to the pork-barrel budgets that still grease the wheels of Washington. What may be distinctive here is not the voter's appetite for the handout but the near-total absence of consequence for the hand that gives it. Kenyan election law criminalises bribery under the Elections Act of 2011, and courts have, on occasion, acknowledged its presence in a contest without ultimately disturbing the result. Even so, the evidentiary bar set by the judiciary bribery must be proved not merely on a balance of probabilities but to a standard approaching criminal certainty, and its effect on the outcome must be shown to be substantial enough to have altered the result has made nullification on these grounds a rare and fragile thing. A tribunal may find that money changed hands, note it with disapproval in its judgment, and still decline to touch the certificate. The petitioner walks away vindicated in principle and defeated in practice, which is its own kind of lesson broadcast to every future campaign strategist watching from Ol Kalou to Mathare: the risk is trivial, the upside is a parliamentary seat, and the courts will write you a stern paragraph on their way to confirming your victory.

One could argue, in fairness to the bench, that the caution is not cowardice but constitutional discipline. Kenya's courts have been burned before by the temptation to overturn the will of the electorate on technical or thinly evidenced grounds, and the framers of the 2010 Constitution deliberately raised the threshold for annulling elections precisely to prevent the judiciary from becoming a third chamber of political contestation a forum where every loser simply relitigates the ballot he could not win at the polling station. A lower bar for bribery, the argument goes, would not clean up politics; it would simply hand disgruntled runners-up a permanent invitation to court, destabilizing the very sanctity of the vote the rule is meant to protect. Judicial restraint here is not indifference to corruption but a considered judgment that the cure of easy annulment might be worse than the disease of occasional impunity that a judiciary too eager to overturn results becomes, in its own way, as captured by the perception of politics as one that never overturns anything. There is something to this. A court that nullifies too easily invites the accusation that it, too, has picked a side; a court that never nullifies invites the accusation that it has picked

the same side every time.

Nevertheless, the pattern that persists in constituency after constituency the "development" pledges timed with uncanny precision to campaign season, the stalled projects suddenly revived, the electricity connections that arrive only when a ballot looms, the handouts dressed up as harambees and empowerment funds and last-mile connectivity drives suggests that what the law treats as an evidentiary problem is functioning, in practice, as a permission structure. The bribe does not need to be crude to work. It can wear the clothing of development, arrive as a cheque from a Cabinet Secretary rather than an envelope from a party agent, and still purchase exactly what the crude version purchases: a vote cast in exchange for something received, rather than something promised and later demanded of the winner. Ol Kalou's Sh10 billion in projects, its revived railway, its devolved Lands office all of it timed, all of it visible, all of it entirely legal, and all of it doing precisely the work that a plain brown envelope would do, only with better public relations and no risk of a bribery charge.

What, then, of the voter, caught between a court that will not act and a state that will not stop giving? Perhaps the fairer reading is not that Kenyans vote where they have eaten because they lack sophistication, but because the system has taught them, election after election, that eating now is the only certain transaction available. A promise is a bet on a future the voter has learned, through Kiaraho's predecessors and theirs before him, not to trust a future in which the winner disappears into Parliament and reappears only at the next nomination. A hundred shillings today is not sophistication's opposite; it may be its logical, weary conclusion in a polity where accountability mechanisms so rarely bite, where the petition process is slow, expensive, and structur-

ally stacked against the very people who would need to bring it. Ngugi wa Thiong'o once wrote of a nation whose soul had been colonised long after its flags had changed; one wonders whether something quieter but no less corrosive is happening here not the colonization of a nation but the slow re-education of a citizenry into believing that the vote is not a covenant but a commodity, to be exchanged at the fairest price on offer, because no one has shown them a better market.

If this by-election, and the general election it rehearses for in 2027, produces yet another petition alleging bribery that the courts decline to act upon with force, we ought to resist the temptation to say the system worked because no chaos followed. The absence of chaos is not the presence of justice; a peaceful election is not automatically a clean one, and the two words peaceful and free have been allowed to collapse into each other for too long in how this country congratulates itself after every polling day. Ol Kalou's forty thousand voters deserve a democracy where the ballot is not merely uncontested but genuinely uncorrupted, and where the men who fly in with Cabinet titles and campaign cheques answer to a court willing to say, plainly, that a seat bought is a seat forfeited. Until the judiciary is prepared to treat proven bribery as fatal to an election rather than merely regrettable, voter bribery will not remain a footnote to Kenyan politics. It may yet become its main character, the true incumbent no party need campaign against because no institution is willing to unseat it a permanent officeholder residing not in Ol Kalou or in Nyandarua but in the space between what the Constitution promises and what the courts are, so far, willing to enforce.

*The writer is a social commentator.*

**Biogas** “It was exhausting,” she recalls quietly. “Sometimes we walked for hours. Moreover, when the wood was wet, the smoke was worse. You cook while crying.”

# From smoke to a blue flame: How biogas is rewriting women’s stories in rural Kenya

**BY Elizabeth Angira**  
@themkenyatimes

At dawn in Kisii County, a soft blue flame flickers to life in Joyce Kemunto’s kitchen. She leans over her stove, gently stirring a pot of githeri as steam rises into the cool morning air. There is no smoke curling into her eyes, no frantic fanning of firewood, no coughing children retreating from the kitchen.

Just a year ago, this same space told a different story.

Back then, Kemunto cooked on three stones, her kitchen thick with smoke and her eyes constantly teary. Every meal came at a cost her health, her time, and her dignity. Like millions of women across rural Kenya, her days began with long treks in search of firewood, often alongside her daughter, their footsteps tracing paths worn by generations of women bound to the same routine.

“It was exhausting,” she recalls quietly. “Sometimes we walked for hours. Moreover, when the wood was wet, the smoke was worse. You cook while crying.”

Today, that life feels distant.

According to WHO around 2.1 billion people worldwide (around a quarter of the global population) cook using open fires or inefficient stoves fuelled by kerosene, biomass (wood, animal dung and crop waste) and coal, which generates harmful household air pollution.

At current rates, only 78% of the global population is expected to have access to clean cooking by 2030. This shortfall would leave nearly 1.8 billion people still without clean cooking solutions.

## A Kitchen Transformed, a Life Reclaimed

Kemunto is among a growing number of rural women embracing biogas a clean, renewable energy source produced from organic waste such as animal manure. What once seemed unimaginable has become her daily reality.

“I did not believe it at first,” she admits with a laugh. “How can cow dung produce gas for cooking? It sounded like a story.”



**Joyce Kemunto on her kitchen set to prepare food to her family.** | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

However, curiosity led her to her homestead.

community training session organized by a local initiative promoting clean energy solutions. Soon after, she installed a small biogas unit in

## The change was immediate.

Now, instead of spending hours col-



**Jane Moraa using biogas as a source of clean energy despite having been using firewood for so long complaining of irritation of eyes.** | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

lecting firewood, Kemunto uses her mornings tending to her vegetable garden and preparing her children for school. The time she has regained has opened doors she never imagined.

“Biogas has given me time,” she says. “Time to think, to work, and to rest.”

## The Invisible Burden Women Carry

Across Kenya, women bear the greatest burden of energy poverty. In many rural households, cooking remains dependent on firewood and charcoal fuels that are not only labor-intensive but also dangerous.

Dr. Richard Onkware is the Director of Public Health and Sanitation for Kisii County, warn that prolonged exposure to indoor air pollution is a silent killer. Women and children, who spend the most time near cooking areas, face heightened risks of respiratory infections, eye problems, and chronic illnesses.

Kemunto knows this all too well.

“My chest used to hurt, and my eyes were always red,” she says. “But I thought it was normal. Every woman was going through the same thing.”

Today, her kitchen is smoke-free and so is her life.

According to WHO Women and children disproportionately bear the greatest health burden from polluting fuels and technologies in homes as they typically labour over household chores such as cooking and collecting firewood and spend more time exposed to harmful smoke from polluting stoves and fuels.

Further it highlights gathering fuel

increases the risk of musculoskeletal injuries and consumes considerable time for women and children – limiting education and other productive activities. In less secure environments, women and children are at risk of injury and violence while gathering fuel.

## Beyond Cooking: A Pathway to Economic Empowerment

For many women, the benefits of biogas extend far beyond the kitchen.

In neighboring Nyamira County, 42-year-old Jane Moraa has turned time saved from firewood collection into an economic opportunity.

“Before biogas, my day was already finished before noon,” she says. “I was always tired.”

After installing her biogas system, Moraa ventured into poultry farming a long-held dream she never had time to pursue.

“Now I earn my own money,” she says with pride. “I am not just depending on my husband.”

The slurry produced from her biogas unit has also become a valuable resource. Used as organic fertilizer, it has improved her farm’s productivity, reducing her reliance on expensive chemical inputs.

“My vegetables are healthier, and my harvest has increased,” she explains. “Nothing goes to waste.”

## Biogas uptake

According to Sistema.bio South Nyanza officer Elijah Arodi, Kenya has installed more than 20,000 biogas systems nationally, but this represents only a small fraction of the households that could benefit from the technology.

Earlier initiatives such as the Kenya Biogas Program (KBP) helped install over 17,000 digesters across 36 counties, laying the foundation for

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**Sistema.bio South Nyanza officer Elijah Arodi, sensitizing residents on the importance of Biogas.** | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

**Biogas** “It was exhausting,” she recalls quietly. “Sometimes we walked for hours. Moreover, when the wood was wet, the smoke was worse. You cook while crying.”

# From smoke to a blue flame: How biogas is rewriting women’s stories in rural Kenya

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wider adoption of clean cooking energy in rural areas.

Arodi notes that biogas uptake has been strongest in dairy farming regions including Central Kenya, parts of Rift Valley, and counties such as Kisii where livestock keeping is common among smallholder farmers.

“In Kisii, adoption is moderate but still fragmented. Most users are smallholder dairy farmers with two to five cows, which is enough to run a household biogas system,” said Obwoye.

He added that much of the current growth is being driven by NGO-supported projects and private companies such as Sistema.bio and SimGas, which are helping farmers access affordable biodigesters and technical support.

Despite the progress, Arodi says biogas adoption in Kenya is still in its early stages, leaving millions of rural households untapped.

## Women Leading a Quiet Energy Revolution

As biogas gains traction, women are not just beneficiaries they are becoming champions of change.

In many communities, women are taking the lead in advocating for clean energy, educating their peers, and even training as technicians. Their lived experiences position them as powerful agents of transformation.

Ruth Mogaka gender expert, observes that biogas is not only an energy solution but also a tool for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. Women and girls traditionally bear the responsibility of collecting firewood and cooking, tasks that consume significant time and expose them to health risks from smoke.



**Kelvin Getanda an energy policy analyst addressing officers during the workshop says that scaling up biogas requires investment, awareness, and community engagement.** | Photo: Elizabeth Angira



**Biodigester-Biogas**

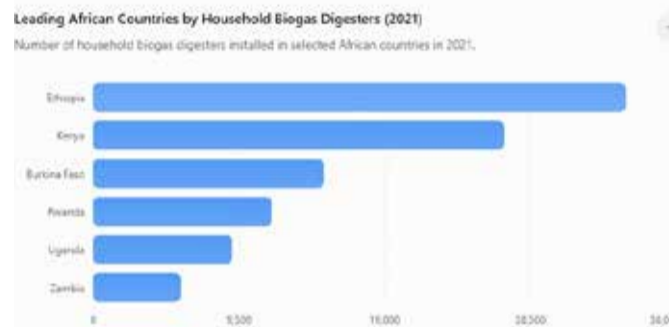
“When women gain access to clean energy technologies such as biogas, they save valuable time that can be invested in education, farming, entrepreneurship, and leadership roles within their communities,” Mogaka explains.

Mogaka adds that increased adoption of biogas can help reduce women’s unpaid care burden, improve their health, and create opportunities for economic independence, ultimately contributing to more equitable and resilient rural communities.

Kemunto has embraced this role wholeheartedly. Her home has become an informal learning center, where neighbors come to see the system in action.

“I tell them, ‘If you are tired of smoke, there is another way,’” she says.

Cyrus Nyabicha the Kisii County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources, says that, the government and development partners are increasingly positioning biogas



**Leading African Countries by Household Biogas Digesters (2021)**

as both a clean energy and women empowerment solution.

Nyabicha says that, women, who are traditionally responsible for cooking and collecting firewood in many households, stand to benefit significantly from cleaner cooking technologies.

He says that, Biogas helps to reduce the time spent searching for firewood, lowers exposure to harmful smoke, and allows women to engage in other productive economic activities.

Many clean cooking and climate programs now include gender inclusion targets and work closely with women-led farmer groups to increase access to renewable energy technologies.

“In many households, women are the direct beneficiaries because they experience the greatest burden from traditional cooking fuels,” Nyabicha explains.

## Barriers That Still Remain

Despite its promise, biogas adoption is not without challenges.

The initial cost of installation remains out of reach for many households. While some programs offer subsidies or financing options, access is uneven, particularly in remote areas.

“There are families who want this technology but cannot afford it,” Arodi explains. “We need more support to make it

accessible.”

There are also practical limitations. Not all households have enough livestock to sustain a biogas system, and awareness about the technology is still low in some communities.

For some, cultural perceptions and skepticism continue to slow adoption.

Even with growing interest, several challenges continue to slow the widespread adoption of biogas technology in Kenya.

According to Arodi, the biggest obstacle remains the high upfront installation cost, with most household systems ranging between Sh60, 000 and Sh150, 000 depending on size and design.

Many low-income households struggle to afford the systems due to limited access to affordable financing.

Technical challenges have also affected confidence in the technology. In some cases, poor installation quality has led to systems becoming inactive or underutilized.

Biogas systems also require reliable water supply and sufficient livestock manure, conditions that not all rural households can meet.

In addition, awareness levels remain low in some communities, while cultural cooking preferences for firewood and charcoal continue to hinder behavioral change.

“Demand for clean cooking solutions exists, but affordability and usability remain

the biggest barriers to adoption,” said Arodi.

## A Win for the Environment

Samson Bokea environmentalist, says that, beyond its impact on households, biogas is playing a quiet but critical role in environmental conservation.

Bokea says that, Kenya continues to face deforestation driven largely by demand for firewood and charcoal.

“By reducing reliance on these fuels, biogas helps preserve forests and lower carbon emissions. It also promotes better waste management, turning livestock waste into a valuable energy source while improving sanitation,” he says.

According to him, each biogas unit installed represents not just a household transformed, but a step toward climate resilience.

According to a National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) Official Samwel Tonui, says that, biogas technology is playing a crucial role in environmental conservation and climate change mitigation in Kenya.

Tonui notes that by reducing dependence on firewood and charcoal, biogas helps curb deforestation, protects water catchment areas, and lowers greenhouse gas emissions.

“Biogas provides a sustainable way of managing livestock waste while producing clean energy for households. It supports Kenya’s efforts to transition to renewable energy and promotes a healthier environment for present and future generations,” Tonui says.

NEMA is encouraging more households, particularly in rural areas, to adopt biogas as part of broader efforts to achieve sustainable development and environmental protection.

## Policy, Promise, and the Road Ahead

Kelvin Getanda an energy policy analyst says that, Kenya has made notable progress in promoting renewable energy, with clean cooking solutions forming a key part of its

**Biogas** “It was exhausting,” she recalls quietly. “Sometimes we walked for hours. Moreover, when the wood was wet, the smoke was worse. You cook while crying.”

# From smoke to a blue flame: How biogas is rewriting women’s stories in rural Kenya

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development agenda. Government initiatives, alongside partnerships with non-governmental organizations, are working to expand access to technologies like biogas.

However, Getanda emphasize that more needs to be done.

“Scaling up biogas requires investment, awareness, and community engagement,” says Getanda. “We must ensure that no one is left behind especially women.”

Getanda says that, innovative financing models, including pay-as-you-go systems, are emerging as potential solutions to bridge the affordability gap.

Kenya has established several policies and programs aimed at promoting renewable energy and expanding biogas use at the grassroots level.

Among the key policy frameworks supporting the sector are the Energy Policy 2004, Vision 2030, and the Kenya Energy Transition and Investment Plan (ETIP), all of which recognize biogas as an important renewable energy source.

Several major initiatives have also played a role in expanding adoption, including the Kenya Biogas Program (KBP), the Africa Biogas Partnership Programme (ABPP), and carbon finance-supported projects implemented by organizations such as SimGas and CI-Dev.

Private sector companies including Sistema.bio, SimGas, and Flexi Biogas have also intensified efforts to expand access to affordable biodigesters in rural communities.

Getanda says that, at the grassroots level, adoption has largely been driven through partnerships involving NGOs, private companies, farmer cooperatives, and county agri-



Determinants of Biogas adoption



Fire

cultural extension officers.

## A Flame of Dignity

As evening settles over Nyamira, Kemunto lights her

stove once again. Her children sit nearby, chatting as she prepares dinner. The kitchen, once a place of struggle, now feels like a space of comfort. She pauses, watching the

steady blue flame. “This has changed my life,” she says softly. “I no longer suffer the way I used to.” For Kemunto and thousands of women like her, biogas is

more than an energy source. It is freedom from smoke, from endless labor, from the quiet acceptance of hardship.

## It is time reclaimed. Health restored. Dignity regained.

In addition, in that small, unwavering flame, a different future is already burning one where women are no longer defined by the weight of firewood on their backs, but by the possibilities ahead of them.

## Future Plans and Expansion

Despite the challenges, the future of biogas in Kenya appears promising as both government and private sector players intensify investment in clean cooking technologies. Companies such as Sistema.bio are targeting expansion to reach more than 100,000 farmers in the coming years through cheaper and modular biodigester technologies.

The government is also integrating clean cooking solutions into broader national strategies such as the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) and Kenya’s climate commitments under the Net Zero 2050 framework.

New innovations including smaller prefabricated plastic digesters, carbon credit financing, and climate-smart agriculture programs are expected to further accelerate adoption.

Experts believe Kenya still has a massive untapped market, particularly among livestock-owning households in counties such as Kisii.

As the country pushes toward cleaner energy and climate resilience, biogas is increasingly being viewed not only as an energy source, but also as a solution for agriculture, environmental conservation, and rural economic empowerment.

According to Africa Biogas Partnership Programme (ABPP) launched in 2009 as a collaboration between the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and Hivos, with funding from the Dutch government. The program aimed to support the construction of 70,000 biodigesters across Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Burkina Faso.

In Kenya, the Kenya Biogas Programme (KBP) has been instrumental in spearheading biogas technology implementation. By 2021, KBP had overseen the installation of over 17,000 biogas units in 36 counties, providing clean energy solutions to thousands of households.

In Ethiopia, the National Biogas Programme, operating under the ABPP, has facilitated the construction of an estimated 40,000 biodigesters to date, enhancing rural energy access and improving household livelihoods by providing an alternative to traditional biomass fuels.

According to WHO 655 million people globally still lack access to electricity, and two billion use polluting fuels and technologies for cooking putting their health and well-being at risk. Sub-Saharan Africa bears a disproportionate share of these gaps, with over 560 million living without electricity and 970 million lacking access to clean cooking.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization “Universal access to clean and sustainable energy is not merely an energy challenge; it is a fundamental health imperative. Household air pollution from cooking fuels costs millions of lives, causes long-term disease and disability, and harms our environment. It disproportionately burdens displaced populations and women and girls who spend hours gathering fuels, exacerbating inequality for the most vulnerable. Amid an unprecedented crisis in energy security, a transition to clean cooking is essential to promote health, gender equality, mitigate climate change and to reduce costs for households and governments.”

**Zimbabwe** Zimbabwe's ZiG — Zimbabwe Gold — is the country's sixth attempt at a national currency since the 2009 collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar.

# Africa at a crossroads: roads, trade, climate and hope define the continent's moment

*From highway tragedies to diplomatic wins, Africa is navigating grief and ambition in the same breath this month*



By Norman Mwale

[@themkenyatimes](#)

“Nyika inovakwa nevene vayo. Africa’s future will be built by Africans themselves.” — Vice President Dr Constantino Chiwenga

Across Africa this month, the headlines have circled a single theme: movement. Movement of goods, of people, of energy, of ideas. From the highways of Southern Africa to the trade corridors of the West, from climate talks to diplomatic breakthroughs, the continent is holding crisis and opportunity in the same hand.

In Zimbabwe, grief has dominated the news cycle. On 16 April, a commuter omnibus caught fire and exploded along the Bulawayo–Beitbridge Highway, killing at least 18 people. The Zimbabwe Republic Police said the tragedy occurred between Chipangali and the Gwanda tollgate, on one of the region’s busiest trade routes to South Africa. President Emmerson Mnangagwa declared a state of disaster in response. The Zimbabwe Republic Police has since warned motorists against stopping on busy highways, but citizens are asking for more: better enforcement, safer vehicles, and real investment in infrastructure.

The pain on the roads has been matched by pressure on power. On 6 July, a fault on the Warren–Alaska 330kV transmission line triggered a nationwide blackout, plunging the country into darkness for several hours before supplies were restored with help from South Africa’s Eskom and Zimbabwe’s own hydro and thermal stations. The outage exposed, once again, how thin the margin is between Zimbabwe’s ageing grid and the demand placed on



Zimbabwe Vice President Dr Constantino Chiwenga

it. Government policy has for some time been pushing heavy industry and mining toward developing their own power supply, a shift that reflects a wider African story: state utilities struggling to keep pace, and responsibility migrating toward the private sector.

Yet there is also ambition. The 66th Zimbabwe International Trade Fair, held in Bulawayo under the theme “Connected Economies, Competitive Industries,” drew strong participation from local and international exhibitors, with organisers reporting exhibition space nearly fully booked

ahead of the show. In the energy sector, Australian firm Invictus Energy says it has invested about US\$100 million since 2022 exploring the Cabora Bassa Basin, raising hopes of domestic gas production following its Mukuyu discovery, ranked among the largest oil and gas finds in Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years.

Trade and currency questions remain central. Zimbabwe’s ZiG — Zimbabwe Gold — is the country’s sixth attempt at a national currency since the 2009 collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar. Officials insist it is backed by gold and foreign currency

reserves and is necessary to stabilise prices. But on the ground, dual pricing between ZiG and the US dollar remains common, a sign that public trust is still being rebuilt. Across the continent, central banks are wrestling with the same dilemma: how to anchor confidence while managing inflation and debt.

Health is another front where progress is visible. In February, Zimbabwe became one of the first countries in the world to roll out lenacapavir, a twice-yearly injectable HIV prevention drug, targeting more than 46,000 high-risk individuals across

24 sites nationwide. Funded by the US government and the Global Fund, the rollout has been described by health officials as a turning point for prevention among groups such as sex workers, adolescent girls and young women. It comes as African health ministries increasingly push to reduce reliance on donor funding and build local capacity.

Diplomacy has also been moving. In June, Zimbabwe was elected unopposed to a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2027–2028 term, securing 182 of 191 votes at the General Assembly — its third time serving on the Council since independence. Vice President Chiwenga has used recent public engagements to restate a philosophy gaining traction across the continent: that Zimbabwe’s development, and Africa’s, must be homegrown, inclusive, and driven by its own people.

That message resonated beyond Zimbabwe’s borders. In Cameroon, Pope Leo XIV used a visit to the conflict-scarred city of Bamenda to speak plainly about foreign exploitation, telling crowds that outsiders, in the name of profit, continue to lay their hands on the African continent to exploit and plunder it. He also urged Cameroon’s government to root out corruption. His words echoed a sentiment heard in boardrooms and village meetings alike: that Africa must negotiate better deals on its own minerals, energy and trade.

Not all of the news this month has been institutional. Everyday tragedies and everyday triumphs continued alongside the big policy debates — reminders that the continent is living, working and rebuilding even as its leaders argue over the shape of the future.

What emerges is a picture of Africa at a genuine crossroads. There is mourning and urgency on the roads. There is pressure and innovation in energy. There is investor interest in gas, trade and tourism. And there is a growing insistence, from officials and citizens alike, that the solutions must be African-led.

As Vice President Chiwenga’s words suggest, the future will not be imported. Whether that translates into safer highways, stable power, trusted currency and jobs for young people will determine how the next chapter is written. For now, the continent is choosing to move forward — with caution, with courage, and with the belief that its people remain its greatest resource.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Beyond Sifuna: The question ODM must answer

By Levis Wangamati

No party is bigger than its constitution — until it removes the man who defined its voice.

Edwin Sifuna's ouster as ODM Secretary General, now confirmed by the Registrar of Political Parties, closes months of legal wrangling. But it opens a harder question: what does ODM stand for once its loudest defender is gone?

Sifuna was never just an administrator. He was ODM's public face — combative, unmistakable, impossible to ignore. Agree with him or not, his voice was the party's identity. His exit is not a paperwork matter. It is a test of what ODM actually is.

Was this discipline, or the silencing of dissent? Was it about Sifuna's conduct, or his refusal to fall in line behind ODM's cooperation with President Ruto? The tribunal's earlier finding — that his first removal breached fair hearing — suggests the



party learned this the hard way, correcting course only under legal pressure.

Political parties earn legitimacy not from numbers alone, but from how they treat their own. Confidence collapses when leadership changes look less like discipline and more like purges.

ODM now faces a choice. It can let this episode harden into another chapter of opposition

infighting. Or it can prove its institutions outlast its personalities.

Kenyans watching the road to 2027 will notice. Parties that cannot govern themselves rarely inspire confidence to govern the country.

Sifuna's exit is not ODM's ending. It is its test — and the party is answering it in real time.

### Leadership is earned through service, not declarations

By Alvis Ndambuki

Titles are inherited. Leadership is not.

Recent remarks attributed to Siaya Governor James Oren-go, in which he reportedly cast himself as heir to the late Raila Odinga's political legacy, have reignited a familiar debate. But comparing oneself to a towering figure is not the same as earning the standing that figure held. That distinction matters, and Kenya's political class keeps missing it.

Ambition is not the problem. Every leader is entitled to a vision, and to say so publicly. The problem is when ambition substitutes for delivery. Kenyans are not asking who resembles whom. They are asking who will fix the cost of living, create jobs, rebuild healthcare and strengthen schools.

Political inheritance, real or claimed, buys attention. It does



not buy trust. Trust is built through performance, tested in public office, and confirmed at the ballot box, not asserted in a soundbite.

Leaders serious about legacy would do better to publish policies than to invoke predecessors. Show a plan for unemployment. Show a record on devolution. Show up when the cameras are off. That is what integrity and accountability

look like in practice, not slogans borrowed from history.

Kenya's next chapter will not be written by whoever claims the loudest lineage. It will be written by whoever earns it, one delivered promise at a time. The electorate, not political rhetoric, will decide who has truly inherited the mantle of national leadership.

Alvis Ndambuki is a media student.

### Payroll fraud probe tests Kenya's accountability

By Mercy Kanini

KSh6.2 billion. That is the price tag the government itself has put on suspected payroll fraud now sitting with the Directorate of Criminal Investigations — and it comes from auditing barely a quarter of the public service.

The Ministry of Public Service handed the DCI a forensic audit spanning just 12 of Kenya's 53 State departments. Even that limited sample uncovered unauthorised alterations to payroll records, irregular payments, and statutory deductions that vanished into weak controls. If a fifth of government can leak billions, the true national bill is anyone's guess.

This is not a paperwork problem. It is a governance failure, sustained for years by fragmented systems and absent oversight. Ghost workers, duplicate identities, salaries



drawn by the dead and the retired — these do not survive by accident. They survive because someone, somewhere, chose not to look.

Anti-corruption advocates are right to demand more than scapegoats. Arresting a handful of clerks while the architecture that enabled them remains untouched would be theatre, not justice. The real test is whether investigators trace the money to those who benefited, and whether the systems that al-

lowed manipulation are rebuilt, not merely patched.

Kenyans have heard promises of accountability before. Audits are commissioned; reports are handed over, cameras flash — and then silence.

This time, the government has named a number. It now owes citizens a reckoning to match it: arrests, recoveries, and a payroll system that cannot be gamed twice.

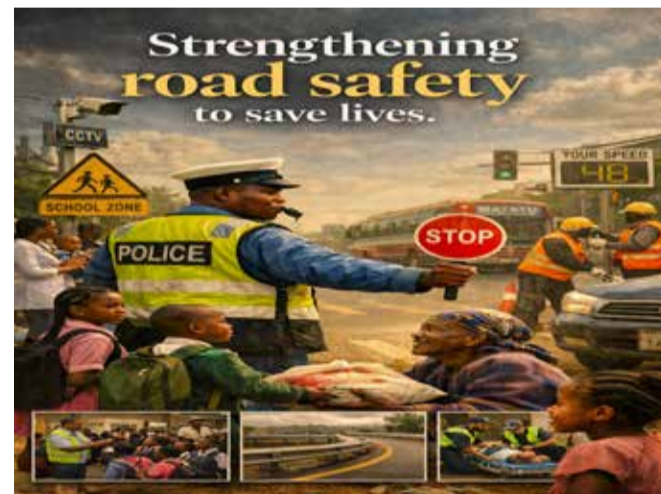
### Strengthening road safety to save lives

By Cynthia Jemutai, KICDP

Every 12 hours, another Kenyan family receives the phone call no one wants: a loved one has died on the road.

The National Transport and Safety Authority recorded 2,150 road deaths in the first half of 2026 alone, an 11 percent rise on the same period last year, and part of a trend that saw fatalities climb to 5,009 in 2025, according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Pedestrians bear the heaviest toll, followed by motorcyclists. Behind every figure is a funeral, a widow, an orphaned child, a family thrown into economic hardship it did not choose.

Most of these deaths are avoidable. Speeding, drunk driving, poor lane discipline and reckless overtaking remain the leading causes, compounded by potholed roads, faded signage and patchy



enforcement. NTSA officials themselves put the annual economic cost at up to KSh450 billion in lost GDP, a burden the country can ill afford.

The government must move beyond campaigns and slogans. Roads need repair, signage needs consistency, and traffic laws need enforcement that does not evaporate once the cameras are gone. Equally, drivers, passengers and pedes-

trians must stop treating traffic rules as optional.

Kenya has set a target of halving road deaths by 2030. That target will not meet itself. It requires infrastructure, discipline and accountability, sustained daily, not only after a tragedy makes headlines.

Every life lost on our roads is one too many. The next preventable death is the one we still have time to stop.

SPORTS  
NEWSPHOTOS  
SCORES  
OPINIONS  
STATISTICS  
SCHEDULES  
BREAKING NEWS

**Sports >>** \*The result was a near-exact replay of the 2022 World Cup semi-final in Qatar, when France also won 2-0 on their way to that year's final.

## France crush Morocco to reach World Cup semi-finals

By Martin Weche

France beat Morocco 2-0 in a World Cup quarter-final in Boston yesterday to book a place in the semi-finals of the 2026 tournament. Goals from Kylian Mbappé in the 60th minute and Ousmane Dembélé in the 66th sent the defending runners-up through, with Les Bleus advancing to face the winner of Spain against Belgium.

The result was a near-exact replay of the 2022 World Cup semi-final in Qatar, when France also won 2-0 on their way to that year's final. This time the stage was Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, and the outcome felt, if anything, more emphatic. France finished with 17 shots to Morocco's two, and the Atlas Lions failed to register a single shot on target across the ninety minutes.

Morocco had arrived unbeaten in ten matches under new coach Mohamed Ouahbi, having eliminated the Netherlands on penalties and thrashed co-hosts Canada 3-0 in the round of sixteen. But they were without their leading scorer, Ismael Saibari, who had torn his hamstring against Canada and could not recover in time. His absence was felt keenly in an attack that had carried Morocco's run through the tournament's earlier rounds.

The breakthrough, when it came, was a moment of individual brilliance. Mbappé, using Moroccan defender Issa Diop as a screen, curled a finish beyond goalkeeper Yassine Bounou and into the top corner to open the scoring. Six minutes later Dembélé doubled the advantage with a low, precise strike that Bounou got a hand to but could not keep out. It was the third-fastest response of its kind by two attackers in tournament history, and it put the outcome beyond realistic doubt.

For Didier Deschamps, the France head coach who has



confirmed he will step down after this World Cup, the win extended what has already been a remarkable fourteen-year reign. His side has now reached four consecutive World Cup quarter-finals, a feat only previously managed by the Soviet Union, Brazil and Germany. Ahead of the match, Deschamps had made clear he was taking nothing for granted against opponents he knows well. "We faced them four years ago in the semi-finals, and they've played in an Africa Cup of Nations final," he said of Morocco. "They are a very, very good team with excellent players. They aren't here by accident."

Ouahbi, who took charge of Morocco only in March after guiding the nation's Under-20 side to global glory, had spoken before kickoff of a determination not to repeat the frustrations of 2022. "The key is not to have any regrets," he said, reflecting on a semi-final four years earlier that both he and his players had felt they let slip. He had also pushed

back firmly on any suggestion that reaching the last eight was itself a success worth savouring. "France are favourites but we will do everything possible to win tomorrow and qualify for the semi-finals," he said before the match. "The bonus is to win the World Cup."

Beyond the scoreline, the fixture carried a weight that stretched past football. Morocco is a former French colony, and a large Moroccan diaspora lives across France, meaning the tie has long been read as more than a sporting contest between the two nations. Authorities in Paris and other major French cities had deployed several thousand police officers in anticipation of unrest, mindful that celebrations following the 2022 semi-final led to more than 250 arrests, many of them in the French capital.

For Morocco, the tournament nonetheless represents continued progress for African and Arab football. The Atlas Lions became the first side from either bloc to reach a World Cup

semi-final in 2022, and Ouahbi's young squad arrived in North America determined to build on that legacy rather than simply repeat it. That ambition now carries into a period of reflection for a team that, despite Thursday's exit, leaves the tournament with its reputation for organisation and resilience largely intact.

France, meanwhile, march on with the look of a side few opponents will relish meeting. Mbappé has now scored eight goals at this World Cup, matching Lionel Messi's tally from four years ago, and Les Bleus have won by more than one goal in five of their six matches so far. Whether Deschamps can guide his squad past the winner of Friday's Spain-Belgium tie and toward a third consecutive World Cup final will define the closing chapter of his long and decorated tenure.

# GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> \*Wales international set to arrive from Leeds as cover for first-choice Senne Lammens

## Manchester United close in on free transfer for goalkeeper Karl Darlow

By Martin Weche

Manchester United are close to completing a free transfer for goalkeeper Karl Darlow following his departure from Leeds United.

The 35-year-old became a free agent at the end of June after his Leeds contract expired, closing a three-season spell in which he established himself as the club's first-choice goalkeeper. Darlow made 22 Premier League appearances last season, keeping five clean sheets as Daniel Farke's side secured their place in the top flight. Farke described him as "very reliable, solid" and instrumental to Leeds' survival campaign.

The move to Old Trafford would position Darlow as understudy to Senne Lammens, the 23-year-old signed from Royal Antwerp last September who has established himself as Manchester United's undisputed number one under head coach Michael Carrick. Darlow, who has made Premier League appearances for Newcastle United, Nottingham Forest and Leeds across his career, is understood to have been chosen ahead of alternatives including former United academy graduate Sam Johnstone of Wolverhampton Wanderers, with Everton also having explored a move for the Welshman.

The signing would trigger a wider reshaping of Manchester United's goalkeeping department. Turkey international Altay Bayindir, who spent the majority of last season as Lammens' deputy, is expected to leave Old Trafford this summer, with Besiktas and Fenerbahce among the clubs credited with interest. Andre Onana has already departed on a season-long loan to Trabzonspor, where he spent the 2025-26 campaign, while Radek Vitek, the club's Czech-born academy graduate, is expected to depart either on loan or per-



Karl Darlow in action for Wales against Ghana last month

manently after an impressive season-long loan at Bristol City, during which he emerged as one of the Championship's most improved young goalkeepers.

Carrick had identified the need for experienced back-up cover given the uncertain fitness and availability of 40-year-old Tom Heaton, who has not featured in a first-team fixture since February 2023. Darlow, a 15-times capped Wales international and the country's current first-choice goalkeeper, offers precisely the profile of dependable, Premier League-tested cover the club has been seeking, without requiring a transfer fee.

The move would also mark a rare direct transfer between two of English football's fiercest rivals. Should it go through, Darlow would join a short list of players to have crossed from Leeds to Manchester United, following the likes of Alan Smith, Rio Ferdinand and Gordon McQueen, transfers that have his-

torically attracted significant attention given the deep-rooted rivalry between the clubs.

Providing the paperwork is finalised as expected, Darlow will be available for United's pre-season opener against Wrexham at Helsinki's Olympic Stadium on 18 July, part of a six-match tour that also includes fixtures against Rosenborg, Atletico Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain, Leeds United and AC Milan across Scandinavia, Ireland and Poland. The fixture will mark Manchester United's first appearance in Helsinki in more than six decades, since Matt Busby's side beat HJK Helsinki 3-2 in the European Cup in September 1965.

Carrick, who was appointed permanent head coach in May after guiding United to a top-three Premier League finish and Champions League qualification following Ruben Amorim's dismissal in January, has prioritised settling his goalkeeping department early in the transfer win-

dow. With Lammens established as first choice for the foreseeable future, the emphasis this summer has been on securing a deputy who requires no bedding-in period and can be trusted in the event of injury or rotation across a season that includes a return to the Champions League.

For Darlow, the move represents a chance to remain in the Premier League and compete for silverware after steering Leeds clear of relegation trouble. For Manchester United, it is a low-cost, low-risk piece of business that addresses a specific need without disrupting the succession plan already in place around Lammens.

Confirmation of the deal is expected before the end of the week, with Darlow set to link up with his new teammates in time for the opening days of pre-season training at Carrington.

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# SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN



# The day she hands you her whole world

*Why love asks a man to grow a second mind and carry two hearts*



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## Worth Noting:

- The first change you will notice is in how she sees. Her eyes, once scanning for threats and red flags, begin to soften. She starts noticing the small things: the way you keep your word when no one is watching, the way you show up tired anyway, the way you listen instead of rushing to fix. Logic does not disappear, but it takes a seat behind feeling.
- Some have called this the “dilution of the self.” In everyday language, it simply means her emotional world has doubled in size, and half of it now lives outside her own body. She begins to feel your pain as her own. She begins to imagine a “we” where there used to be only “I.” She starts planning her days around your peace.

Love rarely arrives with an announcement. It slips in between the ordinary moments — a shared laugh that lasts a second too long, a midnight text you both pretend isn't important. Then one morning she wakes up and realises the centre of her universe has quietly shifted. It now has your name on it. That is the moment a woman falls in love.

For many women, love is not a theory to be debated. It is a home to be moved into. When that door opens, she does not bring half of herself. She brings her heart, her mind, her plans, her fears and her future. She lays it all down and says, without words, “I trust you with this.” It is beautiful. It is also terrifyingly vulnerable.

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This is where the responsibility shifts to the man. To be loved like that is a sacred trust, and it demands a new way of thinking. A man in love can no longer afford the luxury of thinking only for himself. He must learn to

carry a second mind. Before every decision, the question has to change from “What do I want?” to “How will this affect her?” You must learn to hear what she does not say. Women are often fluent in the language of emotion — it is how they read a room, sense danger, and know when something is wrong. When love deepens, that sensitivity turns up, not down. The strategies she used when she was single — distance, detachment, over-analysis — often go on leave. She is no longer trying to figure out the relationship from the outside. She is living inside it.

This is not weakness. It is design. It is the same emotional depth that allows her to nurture, to empathise, to turn a house into a home. But depth needs an anchor, and that is the man's role. To love her well is to be the steady hand when her heart is racing. It is to be the clear voice when hers is trembling. It is to look at her tears and not call them drama, but data — they are telling you where she feels safe and where she feels afraid. A man who mocks her emotion loses her trust. A man who anchors it earns her life.

Let us be honest about the weight of this. She will believe in you on the days you doubt yourself. She will carry your name in her prayers and your children in her imagination long before they exist. She will give you the benefit of the doubt before you have earned it twice. That kind of faith is not casual. It is a commission. It means budgeting for two futures, not one. It means apologising first, even when you are mostly right. It means guarding her from your pride, your moods and your



laziness. It means building something solid, so that her softness has a place to rest.

The great mistake men make is thinking love is the end of reason and strength. It is not. It is reason baptised by commitment. It is strength redefined as service. The strongest man in a relationship is not the one

who wins the argument — it is the one who protects the peace. It is the one who can hold two futures in his head and still choose the one that honours both of them.

So to every man reading this: prepare. Prepare your mind to think ahead. Prepare your character to be consistent. Prepare your heart to be

a steward, not an owner, of the tender place she has put in your hands.

The day a woman falls in love, she hands you a piece of her world. It is fragile. It is valuable. It is alive. Hold it gently. Guard it fiercely. And spend the rest of your days building a life worthy of the trust she just gave you.