**Pokot community calls on Uhuru Kenyatta to fulfill promise**

A group of former freedom fighters and their descendants from the Pokot community yesterday called on former president Uhuru Kenyatta to fulfill a promise made to them by his father.

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**Gachagua accuses Ruto of targeting Mt Kenya as he leads mourning for slain Ol Kalou youths**

Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) leader Rigathi Gachagua yesterday escalated his criticism of President William Ruto's administration

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Voice of the People

# The Mt. Kenya Times

Daily ePAPER

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**Politics** Murkomen was careful, as senior ministers tend to be, to frame his position as a corrective to hysteria rather than a dismissal of genuine concern

# Goons, guns, and denial

Interior Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen insists Kenya's problem of political goonism is overstated, even as he orders police to crack down on gangs and their sponsors. His remarks, delivered with ministerial confidence, jarred a public for whom "goon" is not a metaphor but a lived reality — intimidation at rallies, destroyed stalls, youths recruited into gangs for lack of jobs. To be told the threat is inflated felt less like reassurance than insult. Murkomen's balancing act — dismissing alarm while promising action — has ignited debate: is insecurity exaggerated by social media, or minimized by leaders unwilling to confront its roots? As 2027 looms, Kenyans demand more than rhetoric; they want arrests, convictions, and the guarantee that democracy will not be policed by fear.

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*A screengrab of a video shows hooded men brandishing guns and hurling tear gas canisters at residents and journalists during the Ol Kalou by-elections on July 16, 2026.* Pool

*Inset : Interior Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen*

# Gachagua blames Ruto over Ol Kalou killings, rallies Mt Kenya support

BY MKT REPORTER
@themtkenyatimes

Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) leader Rigathi Gachagua has accused President William Ruto's administration of targeting the Mt Kenya region following the killing of two youths during the recent Ol Kalou parliamentary by-election in Nyandarua County.

Speaking yesterday during the requiem mass for James Muigai and Zachariah Gakinya, who were killed in violence linked to the July 16 by-election, Gachagua claimed the deaths were part of a campaign of intimidation against the region. He said the victims lost their lives for exercising their democratic rights and insisted that Mt Kenya had withdrawn its political support for President Ruto and the Kenya Kwanza administration.

The former Deputy President argued that government efforts to regain support through financial inducements and intimidation would fail. He also urged Mt Kenya musicians to compose liberation songs to mobilise voters ahead of the 2027 General Election.

Gachagua pledged justice for the victims' families, promising reforms in the National Police Service and accountability for officers found culpable in the killings. He also unveiled "Operation Fagia," a political campaign targeting leaders allied to President Ruto, and called for the establishment of a support fund to educate children left behind by the deceased.

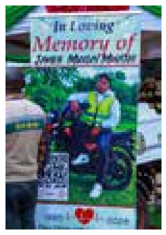
The requiem was attended by several Gachagua-allied leaders before they addressed supporters in Nyahururu, where they renewed calls for political unity ahead of the 2027 polls.

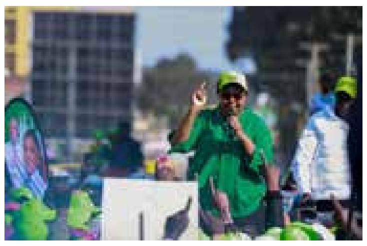
*Some of the moments as captured in pictures*



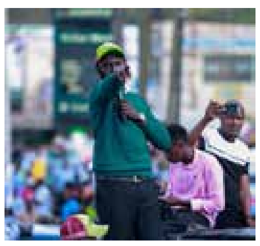


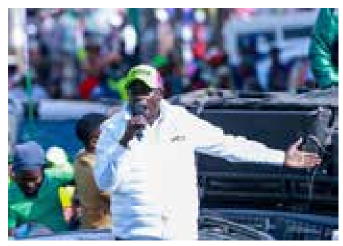






Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times

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

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

**Facebook:** Mt. Kenya Times, **Instagram:** Mt. Kenya Times , **Twitter**: @themtkenyatimes
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# NEWS IN BRIEF

Clinical officers in Vihiga County have gone on strike, accusing the county government of failing to implement a Return-to-Work Formula and a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) signed earlier this year. The Kenya Union of Clinical Officers (KUCO), Vihiga Branch, said members withdrew their services after the county allegedly failed to honour agreements aimed at improving their welfare and working conditions. Branch Chairman Ibrahim Vonyoli said the union signed the Return-to-Work Formula with the Council of Governors on January 28, 2026, followed by a CBA in February. He also faulted the county for delaying payment of SRC Cycle 3 dues, which were expected to take effect in July 2025.

Principal Secretary for Forestry Gitonga Mugambi (center) with other environmental stakeholders and development partner organizations during a donor roundtable meeting on forestry restoration in Nairobi on Wednesday. Mugambi reported that Kenya was seeking enhanced collaboration to accelerate the restoration of degraded landscapes, particularly in arid, semi-arid, and coastal ecosystems. Mugambi highlighted that the country's arid and semi-arid lands account for about 89 percent of the national landmass and possess immense potential for sustainable economic development, biodiversity conservation, tourism, and climate resilience.


Co-operatives and MSMEs Development Cabinet Secretary Wycliffe Oparanya has blamed weak management systems and mismanagement in coffee co-operatives for the sector's low production over the years. Speaking in Embu after launching Coffee Revitalization Programme Steering Committees for Embu, Meru, Tharaka Nithi and Kirinyaga counties, Oparanya said the government had initiated sweeping regulatory and structural reforms under the National Coffee Revival Programme to address the challenges. He said the proposed Co-operatives Bill and the Sacco Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2008, currently before the National Assembly, are intended to eliminate cartels, strengthen governance in co-operatives and increase coffee production to 150,000 metric tonnes by 2029.

The Great Escarpment Belt Irrigation Project in Kinale Forest, Lari Subcounty, is complete, with only some piping work remaining before the scheme is fully completed. The irrigation scheme will draw water from the permanent Gatamaiyu River through a weir and intake chamber that form part of the water abstraction system. Implemented by the State Department for Irrigation at a cost of KSh 316 million, the scheme is designed as a gravity-fed pipe sprinkler system covering about 500 acres and supporting approximately 500 farmers.

Isiolo residents have been urged to cooperate with security agencies by sharing information to help curb crime and improve public safety. Speaking during a security meeting convened after the killing of a businesswoman by unknown assailants, Isiolo Senator Fatuma Dullo called on residents not to shield criminals but to report them confidentially to the authorities. She said community cooperation with security and intelligence officers was vital in fighting crime and encouraged residents to report drug dealers as well as corrupt security officers who protect criminals or compromise whistleblowers. Dullo also pledged to lobby the government to improve police housing in Isiolo, saying better living conditions would enhance officers' performance. She further urged business people to resist political intimidation ahead of the General Election and demand quality public services.

Zoho Country Head for Kenya Veerakumar Natarajan speaks during the ZOHOLICS Kenya 2026 Conference at the Edge Convention Centre in Nairobi. During the conference, the global technology company Zoho partnered with the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) to accelerate the digital transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by expanding access to affordable business technology, digital skills, and artificial intelligence (AI)-powered solutions.


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**Tea** CS Kagwe thanked the Government of Japan, JICA and Japanese taxpayers for the investment

# CS Kagwe hands Kirinyaga farmers Africa's first Japanese Sencha tea factory

**BY MKT REPORTER**
*@themtkenyatimes*

The government has officially handed over the KSh360 million JICA-donated Japanese Sencha Green Tea Processing Factory to Kangaita tea farmers after the project remained idle since 2019 due to an ownership dispute.

Speaking during handing over, Agriculture and Livestock Development Cabinet Secretary Sen. Mutahi Kagwe, said the directive came from the president for the facility to be given to the farmers.

"This factory now belongs to the farmers of Kangaita. That is the message I was given by President William Ruto himself. We could not allow such an important investment to remain dormant while farmers waited to benefit."

The facility is the only factory in Africa producing authentic Japanese Sencha green tea, positioning Kenya to tap into premium global specialty tea markets where prices can reach up to USD10 per kilogramme.

CS Kagwe thanked the Government of Japan, JICA and Japanese taxpayers for the investment, saying the project represents the future of Kenya's tea industry through technology transfer, premium processing and higher farmer incomes.

He said value addition would not only increase export earnings but also create employment opportunities for young people.

"The children of tea farmers must also benefit from this industry. Value addition creates industries, creates jobs and ensures the next generation sees agriculture as a profitable enterprise."

The Cabinet Secretary further announced that Japan will continue supporting technical training to enable Kenyan experts to master Sencha tea production and establish Kangaita as a continental centre of excellence in specialty tea manufacturing.

He also called for stronger protection of Kenya's identity in international markets through Geographical Indications, saying some countries continue to package and sell Kenyan tea as their own.

CS Kagwe reaffirmed the government's commitment to investing Tea Levy proceeds back into the sector through research, market promotion, innovation and farmer empowerment, saying the ultimate beneficiaries will be tea growers across the country.

The CS has dismissed claims that the Tea Levy is hurting Kenya's tea industry, revealing that tea uptake has surged to 93 per cent, its highest level in years, and insisting the levy is critical to financing research, global marketing and value addition that will secure the sector's future.

"Tea uptake has increased to 93 per cent compared to the levels witnessed three years ago. It is therefore not true that the Tea Levy has caused a glut," CS Kagwe said.

Mutahi Kagwe

The Cabinet Secretary said the 0.08 per cent Tea Levy is not imposed on farmers but on tea buyers, and will provide the financial muscle needed to aggressively market Kenyan tea in new and emerging export destinations, fund research into improved tea varieties, strengthen climate resilience and promote value addition.

"Where will the money to promote Kenyan tea in international markets come from if we refuse to support the Tea Levy? Let us be honest—it is not the farmer paying this levy. It is the buyer."

CS Kagwe argued that Kenya cannot expect to remain the world's leading exporter of black tea while underinvesting in market development and innovation, saying sustainable financing is essential if farmers are to earn more from their crop.

He noted that ageing tea bushes have continued to reduce yields and quality in many tea-growing areas, making research into new, high-yielding and climate-resilient varieties more urgent than ever.

**CS Kagwe thanked the Government of Japan, JICA and Japanese taxpayers for the investment, saying the project represents the future of Kenya's tea industry through technology transfer, premium processing and higher farmer incomes.**
**He said value addition would not only increase export earnings but also create employment opportunities for young people.**
**"The children of tea farmers must also benefit from this industry. Value addition creates industries, creates jobs and ensures the next generation sees agriculture as a profitable enterprise."**

# Court throws out bid to bar Wetang'ula and Kingi from politics

**National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula and Senate Speaker Amason Kingi from participating in political activities/FILE**

**BY MKT REPORTER**
*@themtkenyatimes*

The High Court yesterday struck out a petition seeking to bar National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula and Senate Speaker Amason Kingi from participating in political activities, ruling that the case had been filed prematurely.

Justice David Mburu held that the petitioners, lobby group Vocal Africa, had failed to exhaust the statutory dispute resolution mechanisms provided under the Leadership and Integrity Act before approaching the court — specifically, by not first lodging a complaint with the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC).

"The doctrine of exhaustion is applicable in this matter," Mburu ruled, adding that the petitioners had not demonstrated any exceptional circumstances that would justify bypassing the established statutory process.

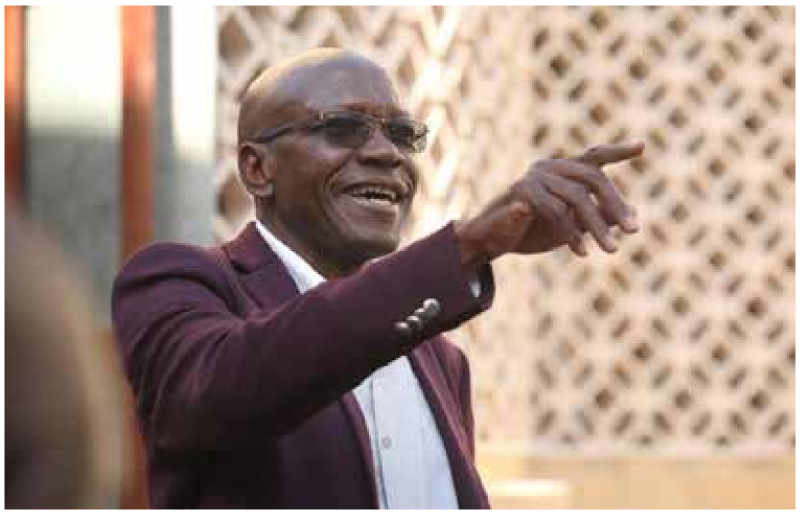
The judge further found that Vocal Africa had not shown it had been denied an adequate opportunity to pursue available administrative remedies, and had additionally failed to demonstrate how either Speaker had violated Chapter Six of the Constitution, the Leadership and Integrity Act or the Conflict of Interest Act through the political activities complained of.

Wetang'ula had opposed the petition, arguing it improperly sought relief against him both as Speaker and in his personal capacity. He maintained that, like every Kenyan citizen, he is entitled to the rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution unless lawfully limited, and that the petitioners had failed to show how the orders sought would serve the public interest.

Having upheld the preliminary objections, the court declined to consider the application for conservatory orders and struck out the petition entirely.


NEWS PAPER
IN BUSINESS

# Scrap SHA and restore NHIF, Khalwale tells Ruto



Kakamega Senator Boni Khalwale

**BY MKT REPORTER**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Kakamega Senator Boni Khalwale yesterday urged President William Ruto to abandon the Social Health Authority (SHA) and restore the defunct National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), arguing that the reasoning behind the President's reversal of the university funding model applies with equal force to healthcare financing.

Khalwale's remarks followed Ruto's announcement that the government intends to scrap the controversial means-tested higher education funding model and replace it with universal funding for all students admitted to universities and colleges — an effective acknowledgement that the differentiated system introduced in 2023 had failed to deliver and had inflicted serious damage on the higher education sector.

"When I publicly condemned this university education funding model and the system of SHA, while serving as Government Chief Whip, I was labelled as a rebel by State House court jesters," Khalwale said. "Mr President, William Ruto, it is also not too late for you to reconsider the system of SHA."

The senator's argument is straightforward: if the President can publicly acknowledge that a flagship policy has failed and reverse course, the same intellectual honesty should be applied to healthcare financing. Khalwale contends that the transition from NHIF to SHA has created tangible difficulties in accessing healthcare for ordinary Kenyans — difficulties the government has been slow to acknowledge.

Ruto was candid about the university funding failure. "We tried the differentiated model. It didn't work because it made most of our universities almost close down," he said at State House, adding that amendments had been submitted to Parliament to anchor the new universal framework in law. It was a rare moment of public self-correction, and it has emboldened critics to demand similar candour on other contested policies.

The government has resisted calls to reverse the SHA transition, maintaining that the reforms are central to its Universal Health Coverage agenda. Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi told Parliament last month that more than 31.2 million Kenyans have registered under SHA, up sharply from the approximately eight million previously covered under NHIF. He added that 228 Primary Care Networks had been established, more than 107,000 Community Health Promoters recruited, and KSh4 billion allocated to clear verified NHIF claims owed to healthcare providers.

NHIF was formally replaced by SHA on 1 October 2024. For a growing number of Kenyans, however, the promise of expanded coverage has not translated into improved access at the facility level — and Khalwale's intervention ensures that frustration now has a louder voice in the Senate.

# Pokot community calls on Uhuru Kenyatta to fulfill promise

**BY MKT Correspondent**
*@themtkenyatimes*

A group of former freedom fighters and their descendants from the Pokot community yesterday called on former president Uhuru Kenyatta to fulfill a promise made to them by his father.

The group, led by Nicholas Domokwang Kuku said the founding president Mzee Jomo Kenyatta promised to set up a museum in Kapenguria in honour of former freedom fighters but died without making it.

They spoke at Blue Post hotel, Thika where they had gone to mourn and condole with colleagues following the demise of former freedom fighter Githui Karue who died on Wednesday.

They called on Uhuru Kenyatta to fulfill the promise as a way of honouring the late Karue who was also a Kikuyu community traditionalist.

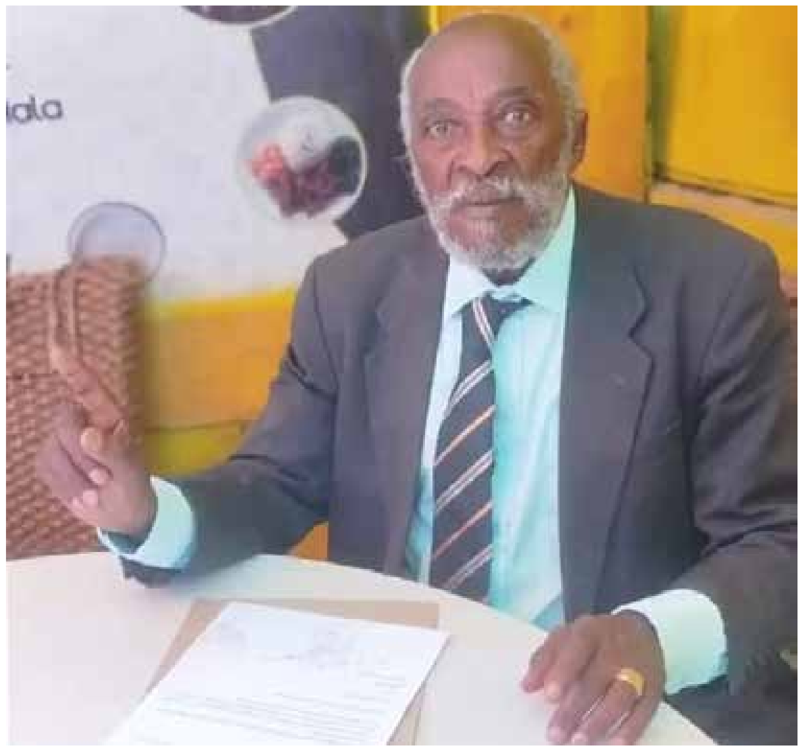
The team was hosted by a team led by Kikuyu Chief Seer Munyori Kinyenje Muhuri and MMV Associates CLG Director General James Njuguna Mahuria.

The Chief Seer handed over to the Pokot community a Kikuyu traditional walking stick, known as Múthígi as a symbol of appreciation.

Munyori supported their call for fulfilment of the promise saying were it not for the community, Jomo Kenyatta would have been killed by colonialists in Kapenguria but they tipped him and survived.

The two groups paid growing tribute to the late Karue saying he stood for the Kikuyu traditions and was liked by all.

The late Karue is remembered for joining Gen-Z last year when they were protesting against the oppressive Finance bill.



The late Mzee Githui Karue

The Chief Seer Munyori Kinyenje Muhuri (2nd left), Mzee Nicholas Domokwang Kuku (3rd left) and other leaders in Thika yesterday. | Photo: Courtesy

**Politics** The remarks, delivered with the measured confidence of a minister in command of his brief, landed in a country where the word "goon" has long since ceased to be political shorthand.

# Goons, guns and a government in denial: The crisis Murkomen says is exaggerated

***As the Interior CS dismisses public alarm over political violence as overblown, Kenyans living through it are asking a sharper question — who exactly is being protected?***

**BY Hadassah Karangu**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Interior Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen declared yesterday that the problem of goonism in Kenya has been exaggerated, even as he directed security agencies to intensify operations against criminal gangs and the politicians who bankroll them — a combination of reassurance and alarm that satisfied almost nobody.

The remarks, delivered with the measured confidence of a minister in command of his brief, landed in a country where the word "goon" has long since ceased to be political shorthand. For millions of Kenyans, it is a lived reality — the organised muscle deployed to disrupt rallies, silence opponents, intimidate communities and remind citizens that in certain corners of the republic, power answers to the highest bidder, not the ballot box. To be told, from the highest office responsible for their safety, that the threat has been overstated, struck many as not merely incorrect but insulting.

Murkomen was careful, as senior ministers tend to be, to frame his position as a corrective to hysteria rather than a dismissal of genuine concern. He acknowledged that politicians have historically relied on networks of youths for political mobilisation — a euphemism that does considerable work in Kenyan public discourse — but argued that the scale of the problem has been deliberately inflated for political purposes. In the same breath, he promised that police and investigators would pursue criminal gangs and their sponsors without mercy.

It is a difficult pair of positions to hold simultaneously, and the tension between them has driven the national conversation that followed.

Those who share the Cabinet Secretary's scepticism make a coherent case. Social media, they argue, compresses and amplifies isolated incidents into the impression of a country permanently on the edge of collapse. Kenya, by most objective measures, remains functional and largely peaceful across the vast majority of its territory. Exaggerating insecurity carries real costs — it deters investment, damages the country's international standing and can feed the very fear it purports to describe.

But for those on the other side of that argument — and they are many — the logic collapses the moment it meets specific human experience. A woman who cannot attend her preferred candidate's rally without risking violence is not experiencing an exaggeration. A trader whose stall is destroyed during politically motivated unrest is not a social media statistic. A youth recruited into a gang because no legitimate employer would have him is not a footnote in a policy paper. To those people, the Cabinet Secretary's framing does not feel like a correction. It feels like abandonment.

The deeper concern, and the one that serious analysts of Kenyan political history raise with increasing urgency as 2027 approaches, is not the current scale of organised political violence. It is its trajectory. Political violence in Kenya has never arrived fully formed. It has always begun at the margins — a disrupted meeting here, an attacked convoy there, a community warned to vote correctly or face consequences — before hardening, through impunity and normalisation, into something far more dangerous. The country knows this from experience it would prefer not to repeat.

That historical memory sits beneath every conversation about goonism, lending it a weight that statistics alone cannot capture. When Murkomen promises action against gang sponsors, he is making a commitment the country has heard before. The question Kenyans are asking is not whether the commitment is sincere. It is whether it will produce arrests, prosecutions and convictions — the only currency that buys genuine public confidence.

There is also a structural dimension that no policing operation can resolve alone. Kenya's unemployment crisis, particularly among young men in urban and peri-urban areas,

**Interior Cabinet Secretary Kipchumba Murkomen**

creates a reservoir of recruitable labour for anyone willing to pay for it. Gang membership, in this context, is often less an ideological choice than

**Murkomen was careful, as senior ministers tend to be, to frame his position as a corrective to hysteria rather than a dismissal of genuine concern. He acknowledged that politicians have historically relied on networks of youths for political mobilisation — a euphemism that does considerable work in Kenyan public discourse — but argued that the scale of the problem has been deliberately inflated for political purposes. In the same breath, he promised that police and investigators would pursue criminal gangs and their sponsors without mercy.**

an economic one. A government serious about eliminating political violence cannot treat it purely as a law enforcement problem. It must also ask why young Kenyans remain available, in such numbers, to be used as instruments of intimidation by those with money and political ambition.

Political leaders across the spectrum carry their own share of the responsibility. The language of political competition in Kenya has grown progressively more heated, and leaders who frame their opponents not merely as wrong but as existential threats to their communities create conditions in which violence becomes imaginable. Democracy requires the acceptance that opponents have legitimate standing — a principle that has been tested severely in recent years.

Murkomen is right that not every allegation of goonism is accurate, and that responsible public discourse requires proportionality. But proportionality runs in both directions. It demands that genuine incidents are taken seriously, that victims are not asked to accept minimisation as a substitute for justice, and that the bar for complacency is set at zero when the stakes are a free and peaceful election.

Because the 2027 general election is no longer a distant abstraction. It is, in political time, already here. The institutions, habits and expectations being formed today will shape the environment in which millions of Kenyans cast their votes. If those institutions signal, even inadvertently, that organised intimidation is a manageable inconvenience rather than a fundamental threat to democracy, they will have answered the wrong question entirely.

Peace in Kenya will not be measured in press conference assurances. It will be measured in whether a voter in Nyandarua, a trader in Kisumu or a student in Mombasa can participate in public life without calculating the personal cost of doing so.

That is the standard. Everything else is commentary.

**Politics** **The aspirant acknowledged making mistakes during the previous election cycle but said the experience had made him a better and more mature leader**

# Kieni MP aspirant Choromai rules out quitting 2027 race

**BY Wilfred Muchire**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Kieni parliamentary aspirant John Kariuki Choromai has dismissed speculation that he could abandon his 2027 bid, declaring that he remains firmly in the race and is committed to offering the constituency a new leadership agenda.

In a statement addressed to residents of Kieni constituency, Choromai said his decision to seek the parliamentary seat was the culmination of a nine-year political journey marked by lessons, growth and continued engagement with the electorate.

He recalled stepping aside in the run-up to the 2022 General Election to support the incumbent Member of Parliament Njoroge Wainaina, describing the move as a difficult but deliberate decision that gave him valuable experience in politics and governance.

The aspirant acknowledged making mistakes during the previous election cycle but said the experience had made him a better and more mature leader.

"As I reflect on the period leading to the 2022 General Election, I acknowledge that I made mistakes—mistakes that have shaped me and which I will never repeat," he said.

Choromai said he had spent the past several years listening to residents across the constituency and had gained a deeper understanding of the challenges affecting farmers, traders, women and young people.

He said his leadership agenda would focus on addressing those challenges through practical solutions aimed at unlocking Kieni's economic potential and improving livelihoods.

Without naming individuals, Choromai also revealed that some people had been sending emissaries to persuade him to drop his parliamentary ambitions.

He, however, maintained that he would not abandon what he described as a long-standing commitment to the people of Kieni.

"My commitment is to the people of Kieni, and I have no intention whatsoever of betraying the trust, hope and confidence that you have placed in me," he said.

Choromai has remained active in the constituency through community empowerment initiatives, educational support programmes and charitable activities targeting vulnerable families.

Over the years, he has sponsored bursaries for needy students, contributed to fundraising events for schools, churches and self-help groups, and supported youth and women through mentorship and economic empowerment initiatives.

His philanthropic engagements have helped maintain his visibility in the constituency even after the 2022 elections, with supporters citing his consistent interaction with residents and support for community development projects.

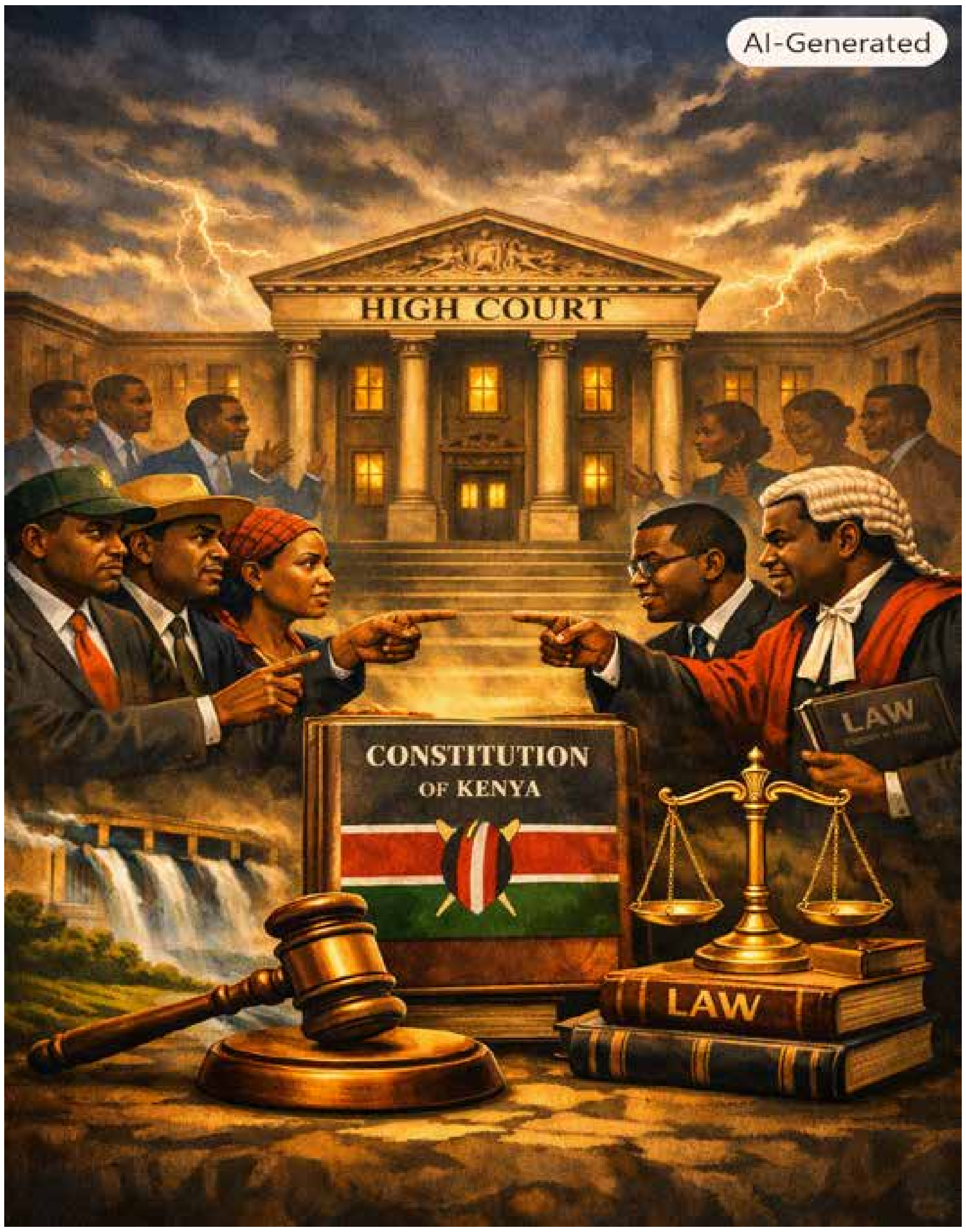
As political activity gathers momentum ahead of the 2027 General Election, Kieni is expected to witness a competitive parliamentary contest, with aspirants intensifying grassroots mobilisation and development-focused campaigns to win the support of voters.

**John Kariuki Choromai addressing a church congregation in the past.** | *Photo:* Courtesy.


**Kieni MP aspirant John Kariuki Choromai addressing farmers in the area.**

**County Governments** Five petitioners have asked the High Court to determine whether county laws published in county Gazette Supplements meet the constitutional threshold

# All County Governments face High Court battle over validity of their laws




**The petition, filed before the Constitutional and Human Rights Division of the Milimani High Court, has also named the National Council for Law Reporting, the Kenya Law Reform Commission, the Council of Governors, the Judiciary, the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions as respondents.**

**BY Felix Njenga**
*@themtkenyatimes*

All 47 county governments have been drawn into a constitutional battle at the High Court over the legal validity of county legislation, in a case that could have far-reaching implications for laws governing taxation, licensing, public finance and the delivery of devolved services.

Five petitioners have asked the High Court to determine whether county laws published in county Gazette Supplements meet the constitutional threshold for legislation to take effect, arguing that some of the laws may not have been published in the Kenya Gazette in the manner required by the Constitution.

The petition, filed before the Constitutional and Human Rights Division of the Milimani High Court, has also named the National Council for Law Reporting, the Kenya Law Reform Commission, the Council of Governors, the Judiciary, the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions as respondents.

The petitioners are James Gachira Nganga, Faith Ruguru Munene, Ahmed Chege Gikera, George Kennedy Kaganya Gitumbui and Kevin Gitau Waithira.

Ms Munene is suing as a member of and in the interest of the Kiambu business community.

At the heart of the dispute is the interpretation of Article 199(1) of the Constitution, which provides that county legislation does not take effect unless published in the Gazette.

The petitioners argue that the constitutional requirement raises a fundamental question over whether county legislation published in county Gazette Supplements can acquire the force of law without being published in the Kenya Gazette as contemplated under Article 260 of the Constitution.

They have asked the court to determine the legal meaning of the words “Gazette”, “supplement to the Kenya Gazette” and “supplement thereto” and whether the publication practices used by county governments comply with the Constitution.

The petitioners contend that a Gazette Supplement should be treated as an accompanying publication to the Kenya Gazette and cannot, in their view, be regarded as an independent substitute for the principal Gazette publication.

They claim that several county laws currently treated as being in force may not have satisfied the constitutional publication requirement.

Among the laws cited in the petition are various Nairobi City County and Mombasa County laws covering appropriation, alcohol licensing, betting, lotteries and gaming, childcare, community health, cultural heritage, disaster management, dog control, early childhood education and healthcare.

The petitioners have specifically questioned the status of legislation which they say was published in county Gazette Supplements but which, according to their case, has not been shown to have been published as such in a volume of the Kenya Gazette.

They have also raised questions about the role of the National Council for Law Reporting in maintaining county legislation on its Kenya Law platform as Acts in Force.

The petitioners claim that the continued recognition of such laws by public institutions has created uncertainty over whether legislation that they contend was not properly gazetted can lawfully be enforced.

The claims are yet to be responded to by the respondents and have not been determined by the court.

Justice Patricia Nyaudi Mande has already issued directions on how the case will proceed.

In directions issued on June 18, the judge declined to certify the application as urgent but granted the petitioners leave to serve the 51 respondents and seven interested parties through substituted service.

The petitioners were directed to publish the Notice of Motion and the court order in a newspaper of wide circulation within seven days.

The respondents have 14 days from the date of publication to file their responses.

The petitioners will then have 14 days after service of the responses to file and serve a further affidavit and their submissions.

The respondents will have another 14 days to file and serve their written submissions, while the petitioners have been granted seven days to file supplementary submissions.

The case will be mentioned on September 22 to confirm compliance with the directions and for the court to issue further orders.

The petitioners are also seeking the constitution of a bench of three or more judges to hear and determine the matter.

They want the file placed before the Chief Justice after the respondents enter appearance, arguing that the case raises substantial questions of constitutional law requiring consideration by a bench of several judges.

The petitioners say the questions before the court go beyond the parties to the dispute and have national implications because county legislation affects millions of Kenyans.

They have invoked Article 165(3)(d) of the Constitution, which gives the High Court original jurisdiction to determine whether any law is inconsistent with or contravenes the Constitution.

They have also relied on Article 258, which permits a person to institute proceedings where the Constitution has been contravened or is threatened with contravention.

The case has attracted all 47 county governments as respondents, ranging from Nairobi, Mombasa and Kiambu to counties in the Coast, North Eastern, Eastern, Central, Rift Valley, Western and Nyanza regions.

The petition also names seven interested parties, including individuals identified as officials of the Kiambu County Government, the Kiambu County Police Commander and the Kiambu County Administration Police Commandant.

The petitioners have alleged, among other issues, that certain officials associated with the Kiambu County Government have been performing functions which they claim fall within the mandate of the national government.

They have further questioned the legal basis upon which county legislation is recognised and enforced where its publication is disputed.

The respondents are yet to file their responses, and the court has not made any determination on the allegations or the validity of any of the laws cited in the petition.

The proceedings could, however, place the spotlight on the process through which county laws are published and brought into force more than a decade after the implementation of devolution.

If the petition succeeds, the ruling could potentially affect the legal framework governing a wide range of county functions and prompt questions over the status of legislation enacted by county assemblies since the establishment of the devolved system of government.

For now, the court has confined itself to procedural directions, allowing the parties an opportunity to present their cases before the substantive constitutional questions are considered.

The next major step will be the filing of responses by the respondents, followed by written submissions from both sides.

The matter is scheduled to return to the Milimani High Court on September 22, when the court is expected to assess compliance with its directions and determine the next course of action.

**Politics** **“The people have made up their minds and no amount of money or intimidation will change their stand,” Gachagua said.**

# Gachagua accuses Ruto of targeting Mt Kenya as he leads mourning for slain Ol Kalou youths

**BY William Muchiri**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Democracy for the Citizens Party (DCP) leader Rigathi Gachagua yesterday escalated his criticism of President William Ruto’s administration, accusing it of waging a political war against the Mt Kenya region following the killing of two young men during the recent Ol Kalou parliamentary by-election in Nyandarua County.

Speaking during the requiem mass for James Muigai and Zachariah Gakinya, who were killed on July 16 in violence that marred the by-election, the former Deputy President claimed the deaths were part of what he described as a sustained campaign of intimidation against residents of the region.

Gachagua said the killings had devastated the people of Ol Kalou, arguing that the victims had lost their lives simply because residents had exercised their democratic right during the by-election.

He maintained that the Mt Kenya region had completely withdrawn its political support for President Ruto and the Kenya Kwanza administration, insisting that attempts to win back voters through financial inducements would fail.

“The people have made up their minds and no amount of money or intimidation will change their stand,” Gachagua said.

The DCP leader alleged that despite the government deploying enormous financial resources during the by-election campaign, voters remained steadfast in rejecting the ruling administration.

He further called on musicians from the Mt Kenya region to compose what he termed liberation songs to mobilise residents ahead of the 2027 General Election, saying the music would reflect the people’s desire for political change.

Gachagua also pledged justice for the families of the two slain youths, saying police officers found culpable in the killings and other alleged cases of extrajudicial executions would be held accountable under a future administration.

He accused sections of the National Police Service of being compromised and promised sweeping reforms if the opposition forms the next government.

“We shall clean up the police service and ensure those responsible for these killings face justice,” he said.

In addition, Gachagua announced what he called “Operation Fagia,” a political campaign aimed at removing elected leaders whom he accused of supporting President Ruto’s administration despite what he termed widespread public dissatisfaction in the Mt Kenya region.

He also appealed to Nyandarua Senator John Methu to establish a support fund for the families of the deceased, saying the initiative should guarantee education for the children left behind.

The requiem service drew a large number of political leaders allied to Gachagua, including Nyandarua Governor Kiarie Badilisha, Senator John Methu, newly elected Ol Kalou MP Sammy Douglas Kamau Waweru and other elected leaders from the region.

After the church service, the leaders proceeded to Nyahururu town in neighbouring Laikipia County, where they addressed residents and reiterated calls for political unity ahead of the next General Election.

The deaths of Muigai and Gakinya occurred during the highly contested Ol Kalou parliamentary by-election, which was characterised by isolated incidents of violence and allegations of the use of hired goons. The killings sparked widespread condemnation from political leaders, religious groups and human rights organisations, with renewed calls for thorough investigations and prosecution of those responsible.

Police have since launched investigations into the circumstances surrounding the deaths, although no conclusive findings have been made public.

The Ol Kalou by-election attracted national attention as it was widely viewed as a political contest testing President Ruto’s influence in the Mt Kenya region against leaders aligned to Gachagua, whose relationship with the President has deteriorated since his impeachment as Deputy President.

The victory by DCP-backed candidate Sammy Douglas Kamau Waweru has since emboldened Gachagua’s allies, who argue the outcome reflects changing political dynamics in the region ahead of the 2027 polls.


**Ol-Kalou MP-elect Sammy Douglas Kamau Waweru addressing the public as DCP leader Rigathi Gachagua looks on.**

**DCP leader Rigathi Gachagua with some of the leaders during the burial ceremony yesterday.** | *Photo:* Courtesy.

**Courts** High Court cancels bond for former Migori governor and two others after finding all three guilty of killing the Rongo University student

# Obado and co-accused remanded after murder conviction in Sharon Otieno case

**BY MKT REPORTER**
*@themtkenyatimes*

The High Court yesterday cancelled the bond of former Migori Governor Okoth Obado, his former personal assistant Michael Oyamo and Caspal Obiero and remanded all three in police custody after convicting them of the murder of Rongo University student Sharon Otieno.

Judge Cecilia Githua directed that the three be held in custody for 21 days, after which the matter will be mentioned to confirm compliance with court orders. She also directed that both pre-sentence and victim impact assessment reports be filed within the same period.

"Pending that mention day, the accused persons shall be remanded in custody as their bonds have been cancelled," Githua ruled. "We can get a date after the 21 days when the matter can be mentioned to confirm that those directions have been complied with."

In delivering her judgment, Githua held that the prosecution had proved its case against all three accused beyond reasonable doubt, and that the evidence established each had played a distinct role in the commission of the offence, acting in concert with a common intention that constituted malice aforethought.

The court found that Obado financed the execution of the killing, Oyamo played a central role in carrying it out, and Obiero participated in concealing the offence. Githua further held that Obado's physical absence from Migori County on the day Otieno was killed did not shield him from criminal liability. The evidence, she found, clearly established that he was involved in planning and facilitating the murder from Nairobi.

Michael Oyamo, Caspal Obiero, and former Migori Governor Okoth Obado in court yesterday

The court concluded that overwhelming evidence linked all three to Otieno's death and that every element of the offence of murder had been proved to the required standard. Obado, Oyamo and Obiero were accordingly convicted of murder.

Otieno, who was pregnant at the time of her death, was abducted and killed in 2018. Her body was found in a bush in Homa Bay County. The case, which implicated a sitting governor, drew widespread public attention and became one of the most closely followed criminal trials in Kenya's recent legal history. Yesterday's conviction, nearly seven years after her death, marked the conclusion of a prosecution that her family and advocates for justice had pursued through a prolonged and often painful legal process.

# Crowns of trust, chains of doubts

A good boss wears a crown of trust,
Guides with fairness, firm yet just.
They lift the team, they share the praise,
And light the path through working days.
A bad boss binds with chains of doubt,
Silences voices, shuts them out.
They hoard the credit, spread the blame,
And dim the fire of passion's flame.
A good boss listens, builds with care,
Turns workplaces into gardens fair.
They plant the seeds, they guard the ground,
And joy in every task is found.
A bad boss mocks, divides, deceives,
Sows mistrust like withered leaves.
Their reign is short, their shadow fades,
For truth outlives the games they played.
So let us choose the path of light,
Where crowns of trust make futures bright.
For every leader, far or near,
Is known by trust or chains of doubt.

By
Ms. SEEMA PATHAK

# At dawn, I made a wish

At the break of dawn, I made a wish,
For the sick to live long, healthy lives.
For my friends, I wished for health and peace,
May they never face sorrow or evil.

Early in the morning, I asked for kindness,
So the unkind might learn to care.
For the unjust, I prayed for a better path,
And for the good, I wished lasting safety and happiness.

My name is Baratova Parizod. I am from Kashkadarya Region, Republic of Uzbekistan. I am currently an 11th-grade student. I enjoy writing poems and reading fiction books in my free time. These hobbies help me develop my creativity and broaden my knowledge.

# Be ready to live like an amphibian

Be ready to live like an amphibian,
Living both in land and water,
Tackling situations so very better,
So careful, not making it bitter,
Making life so much sweeter.
Stretching tongue to catch prey easier,
Aiming on insects to eat tastier,
Leaping on objects very faster,
Performing a sound as a croaker,
Laying in thousands without fear.
A spell with tadpoles so clear,
Falling prey to creepers without any delay,
Though messy and ugly in their way,
Adjusting to situations every day,
With clever dimensions on display.
Never be caught by men at any occasion,
Afraid of showering its waste on the predator,
A life like an amphibian,
So adjustable to every situation,
Seen with greater precautions.
Rotating eyes with accumulation,
An amphibian instantly matching with its lifestyle,
Adapting and adopting transactions,
A highly applaudable transformation!

— Vijayalakshmi V. R.
Graduate Teacher, CW Writers Group
Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu, India

# Friendship in the Exam Hall

Sitting in the arrear exam hall,
With all new and different faces.
Colorful clothes, no uniform,
Faces I'd never seen before.

No one knew anyone.
Not their names, birthdays, or addresses.
Not their character, behavior,
Their problems, caste, creed, or religion.
Not even their interests or hobbies.

Just 3 hours in one exam hall,
The strangers became so friendly and cordial.
Strange faces became familiar,
Unknown became known.

With generous hearts they discussed answers.
They shared, even if the answer was wrong.
Their only talk, their only aim
Was to answer every question.

They behaved like old friends and relatives.
Selfless, with no ego, hatred , jealous
No compulsion, only with interest.
They mingled like bosom friends
Closer than relatives and neighbors.

Passing the exam was the only motto.
Without second thoughts they shared
What they had written, what they knew.
No selfishness, no jealousy, no hatred.

And when the board results came,
Their happiness knew no bounds.
Outside the hall, those familiar faces smiled.
They exchanged addresses, phone numbers,
And promised, "Friends forever."

This bond was voluntary, without expectations.
A friendship they would carry for life.
A relationship like family.
All of it began in an arrear exam hall
Where those people who had failed, met.

They even shared pencils, erasers, and notes.
Mini xerox of full guides, laminated, waterproof,
Hidden in pockets or inner sleeves.
Frisking couldn't find them.
They spoke with eyes, fingers, and lips , no noise.
Even when the invigilator was strict
And "bits" were not allowed.

They showed each other all the answers.
And pathetically, most of them were wrong.
But they were happy anyway.
Who was to blame? No one.

For them it was just s help.
They never meant to give wrong answers.
They only said what they knew,
What was in their mind.

Let's learn a lesson:
Help everyone.
Don't treat anyone as strangers.
How They treated each other as friends in the exam hall
Without any hatred.

BRINDA. D
Creative writers
Ghs Melpattampakkam Tamil Nadu India

# Beauty beyond the surface

Not every eye can see what goodness hides;
A common thing may hold a quiet light.
The world is filled with gifts we often miss,
Because we judge too quickly at first sight.

A rough grey stone may seem of little worth,
Yet deep within a noble form may wait.
The sculptor only clears the needless parts,
And lets the hidden beauty meet its fate.

A teacher's voice may rise in sudden strength,
And many hear the sharpness of the sound.
But few can see the care beneath the words—
A hope to help young dreams stand firm and proud.

The rain may spoil the plans we made with joy,
Yet feeds the fields where tomorrow's flowers bloom.
The darkest night prepares the dawn to shine;
Each shadow quietly gives light more room.

So train your heart to look with kinder eyes;
Seek good in every person, place, and day.
For beauty lives in more than what appears—
It waits for those who choose to see its way.

V Durgadevi
Graduate Teacher
GHS Nesal
Tiruvannamalai District

**KTDA** The agency said the actual arrival dates of the fertilizer consignments will be communicated to the contracted transporters

# KTDA invites transporters to move tonnes of fertilizer to tea factories

**BY William Muchiri**
*@themtkenyatimes*

KTDA Holdings chairman Enos Njeru

The Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) has invited transport service providers to take up contracts for the transportation of 99,000 tonnes of imported fertilizer from Nairobi to its managed tea factories ahead of the arrival of the first consignment in August.

In a notice issued by KTDA Management Services Limited, the agency said the importation process for the fertilizer, packaged in 50-kilogramme bags, has been completed and deliveries to tea factories will begin once the consignments arrive in the country.

The notice follows a transport tender advertised in April this year. KTDA said it has completed the evaluation process and approved transport rates of KSh17.79 per tonne per kilometre for factories in Zone A and JSh15 per tonne per kilometre for factories in Zones B and C, inclusive of VAT.

Transporters who participated in the tender and are willing to accept the approved rates have been asked to collect and sign contract documents at the office of the Head of Field Services and Agriculture in Nairobi.

The agency said the actual arrival dates of the fertilizer consignments will be communicated to the contracted transporters.

To qualify, transporters must provide a list of trucks to be used in the exercise, copies of valid logbooks or lease agreements for leased vehicles, and ensure the trucks have a minimum carrying capacity of 15 tonnes.

The vehicles must also comply with all government requirements for commercial transport, including valid third-party insurance, relevant licences, vehicle tracking systems and speed governors.

**In a notice issued by KTDA Management Services Limited, the agency said the importation process for the fertilizer, packaged in 50-kilogramme bags, has been completed and deliveries to tea factories will begin once the consignments arrive in the country.**

In addition, transport crews will be required to present certificates of good conduct, while transporters must obtain a fidelity guarantee cover through or validated by Majani Insurance Brokers Ltd.

KTDA noted that it is not obligated to award contracts to all transporters and will allocate transport assignments to individual factories based on operational workload.

KTDA Holdings Chairman Enos Njeru said the transport arrangements are aimed at ensuring fertilizer reaches tea farmers on time.

"To facilitate the timely delivery of fertilizer to farmers at their designated collection points, we hereby invite bids from qualified transport service providers for the provision of efficient transportation services during the month of August," Njeru said.

The annual fertilizer distribution programme is a key component of KTDA's support to smallholder tea farmers, ensuring timely access to farm inputs that help improve tea productivity and quality.

The agency manages dozens of tea factories serving hundreds of thousands of tea growers across the country.

**Health** According to the association, these are highly specialized interventions that require years of competency-based education, clinical training and professional regulation

# Dental association demands withdrawal of KMPDC scope of practice over patient safety fears

**BY William Muchiri**
*@themtkenyatimes*

KDA officials addressing journalists yesterday | *Photo:* Courtesy


KDA members during the procession yesterday.

The Kenya Dental Association (KDA) has demanded the immediate withdrawal of what it terms an unlawful scope of practice published by the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council (KMPDC), saying it would allow unqualified persons to perform complex dental procedures and endanger patients.

In a statement issued yesterday, the association accused the regulator of exceeding its legal mandate by purportedly expanding the scope of dental practice through an administrative publication rather than through the legislative and regulatory processes provided for under the Constitution, the Health Act and other applicable laws.

The association said the move was unconstitutional, irrational and procedurally flawed, arguing that any changes affecting clinical dental practice must be subjected to public participation and meaningful consultation with the dental profession and other stakeholders.

KDA warned that the publication could expose millions of Kenyans to unsafe, substandard and unregulated dental care by permitting individuals who are not qualified dentists to undertake procedures that require extensive professional training and licensing.

Among the procedures the association says should only be performed by qualified dentists are root canal treatment, orthodontic care, restorative dentistry, prosthodontic treatment, advanced dental surgery, paediatric dental care and the prescription of medicines related to dental treatment.

According to the association, these are highly specialized interventions that require years of competency-based education, clinical training and professional regulation.

"The regulation of healthcare professions exists primarily to protect patients—not to lower professional standards or legitimize unauthorized clinical practice," the association said.

KDA argued that administrative notices or circulars cannot lawfully redefine the scope of clinical practice where statutory provisions do not permit such changes.

The association called on KMPDC to immediately withdraw the publication, suspend its implementation and disclose the expert reports, competency assessments and stakeholder consultation documents that informed the decision.

It also wants the regulator to convene an urgent consultative forum bringing together the Ministry of Health, universities, professional associations and the dental fraternity to review the matter.

KDA warned that it would pursue legal action if the publication is not withdrawn, saying it was prepared to defend patient safety, professional standards and the rule of law.

The dispute highlights growing concerns within the health sector over professional regulation and the scope of practice for various healthcare cadres. Professional bodies have increasingly insisted that any expansion of clinical roles must be backed by legislation, competency-based training, proper licensing and broad stakeholder consultation to safeguard patient welfare.

The association further urged Kenyans to seek oral healthcare only from licensed dentists, emphasizing that patient safety and quality treatment depend on services being provided by qualified and legally authorized professionals.

The statement was issued by the Kenya Dental Association's National Governing Council, led by President Dr. Kahura Mundia, under the theme: "Protecting Patients. Upholding Professional Standards. Defending the Rule of Law."

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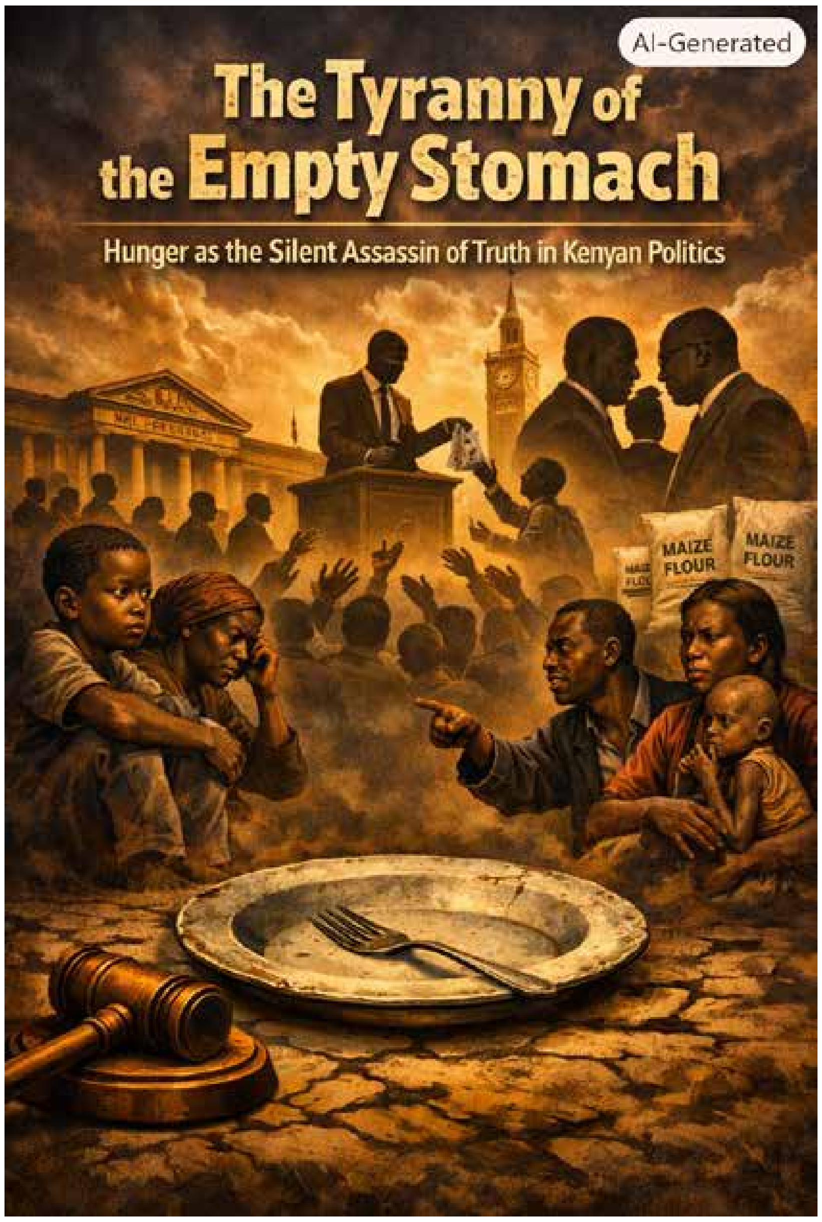
Politics ............................

# The tyranny of the empty stomach: Hunger as the silent assassin of truth in Kenyan politics

By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo
@themtkenyatimes




In Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People, Chief M.A. Nanga, the bombastic Minister of Culture, embodies the archetype of the post-independence African politician: a "man of the people" who weaponizes charisma and patronage to mask venality. Nanga's world is one where the stomach dictates loyalty, where the masses cheer the very hands that pick their pockets, seduced by crumbs from the national table. Achebe's satire, written in 1966, was prophetic. Today, in Kenya, the empty stomach remains a terrible advisor one that whispers justifications for defending the indefensible, shielding illegitimate actions, and trading truth for bread. When politics becomes a primary source of income, truth indeed becomes the enemy, and selective amnesia the survival strategy.

Kenya's recent history lays bare this tragedy. The 2024 Finance Bill protests, triggered by proposed tax hikes amid crippling debt and inflation, escalated into a national convulsion. Protesters, largely Gen Z, stormed Parliament on June 25, 2024, demanding an end to elite excess. Security forces responded with lethal force: at least 65 deaths in the initial wave, with totals exceeding 120 across 2024-2025 protests according to reports and watchdogs. Injuries surpassed 500, arrests over 1,500. Even so, amid this bloodletting, some voices hired or hungry rose not in outrage but in defense of the status quo.

The media chronicled this cycle relentlessly. In 2025, as drought gripped northern Kenya, nearly four million faced acute hunger. Families in Turkana survived on moringa leaves while politicians staged lavish rallies. President William Ruto's Nyota program launch in Garissa was overshadowed by political jabs rather than urgent relief, even as emaciated livestock and parched lands told a harsher story. The Standard reported politics trumping compassion: "Emaciated livestock, dry water pans, and families surviving on a single meal a day formed the unspoken backdrop." Meanwhile, corruption scandals piled up Sh6.6 billion lost in edible oil imports, Sh3.7 billion in mosquito nets, fake fertilizer scams eroding public trust as the cost of living soared. Tomatoes at Sh120-180 per kg, onions at Sh160. Empty pockets bred empty defiance.

This is the politics of the stomach, echoing Achebe's critique. The belly, when hollow, does not reason; it rationalizes. It transforms citizens into apologists for "their man," excusing graft, police brutality, and broken promises because survival hinges on patronage. A youth hired as a goon for Sh500 a day during by-elections like Ol Kalou sees not systemic rot but a meal ticket. Women lining up for KSh 333 shares in cash handouts during campaigns trade their vote for fleeting relief, blind to how such crumbs perpetuate the cycle. As The Standard noted in coverage of "politics of the stomach," dissent has devolved from issue-based engagement to personal survival within elite patronage networks.

Metaphorically, the empty stomach is a treacherous counselor, a serpent in Eden promising knowledge through loyalty while delivering chains. It clouds judgment like hunger pangs distorting sight making the oppressor appear as provider, the critic as enemy. In Kenya, this manifests in selective amnesia: yesterday's tax oppressors become today's defenders when jobs or tenders dangle. Politicians exploit this masterfully. They dispense harambees, CDF funds, and "youth empowerment" not as rights but as alms, binding loyalty with invisible ropes. When protests erupt over police killings or abductions, the hungry defender parrots: "He is building roads; the opposition is worse." Truth dissolves in the acid of want.

Data underscores the peril. Kenya's youth unemployment hovers near 67% in some metrics for the under-30s, per broader UN and local reports. Public debt burdens exceed 68% of GDP, with taxes funding elite luxuries while hospitals falter despite SHA contributions skyrocketing. Protests in 2024-2025 recorded thousands of events, per ACLED and Stats Kenya far beyond election-year spikes driven by economic despair. Yet accountability remains elusive. Few convictions for protest deaths; compensation announcements feel like hush money. The stomach advises patience, forgiveness, or deflection.

Intellectually, this dynamic reveals a deeper malaise: the commodification of citizenship. When politics is livelihood, principle becomes luxury. Sycophants journalists, clergy, youth wingers develop cognitive dissonance, praising infrastructure while ignoring the bloodstained foundations. Achebe's Odili, the idealistic teacher, grapples with this cynicism; Kenya's educated youth storming Parliament echoed his disillusionment, only to face batons and bullets. The tragedy compounds when the poor defend the powerful against fellow poor, fracturing solidarity. Ethnic mobilization, goon armies (over 100 linked to elites, per reports), and bribery in by-elections like Ol Kalou exemplify this: hunger recruits' enforcers for illegality.

Emotionally, the toll is soul-crushing. Imagine a mother in Kibera, stomach rumbling, watching her son join a protest and return in a body bag then hearing neighbors defend the regime for fear of losing relief food. Or a university graduate, degree in hand but pockets empty, typing defenses online for a meager stipend. This is not mere survival; it is spiritual erosion. The empty stomach devours dignity, fostering a nation of amnesiacs who forget yesterday's scandals for today's plate. It breeds moral relativism: "Yes, corruption, but at least he shares." Persuasion through hunger is the subtlest tyranny more potent than overt dictatorship because it enlists the victim as accomplice.

Even so, herein lies original insight: the empty stomach's counsel is not inevitable. History and literature teach resistance born of conviction over circumstance. Achebe warned that without vigilance, post-colonial promise curdles into predation. Kenya's Gen Z protests, leaderless nevertheless potent, pierced this veil momentarily, forcing bill withdrawals and cabinet reshuffles. They demonstrated that collective memory and moral clarity can overpower individual hunger when scaled. True leadership must address root causes structural unemployment, equitable resource distribution, anti-corruption enforcement rather than managing symptoms through patronage.

The solution demands intellectual honesty and emotional courage. Citizens must starve the politics of the stomach by demanding issue-based governance. Invest in education that fosters critical thinking, not sycophancy. Strengthen institutions like the EACC and judiciary against capture. Economically, prioritize job creation and safety nets untethered from political loyalty. Leaders must model sacrifice, not opulence curtailing lavish trips and scandals that inflame public fury.

In closing, an empty stomach is indeed a terrible advisor. It distorts vision, mutes conscience, and props illegitimate power. In Kenya, as in Achebe's fictional republic, it sustains a carousel of broken promises: protests met with violence, hunger with rallies, truth with amnesia. But humanity's greatness lies in transcending base needs. We must choose the fuller table of justice, accountability, and shared prosperity over the poisoned crumbs of complicity. Only then can Kenya move from being a nation of men (and women) for the people's stomachs to one truly of the people. The alternative is perpetual cycles of protest, repression, and regret echoes of a novel that predicted too much, too soon. Let us prove Achebe wrong by heeding not the growl of hunger, but the call of conscience.

*The writer is a social commentator*

**Profile** Ejersa's rise to the helm of KEMSA was not a matter of chance. A medical doctor by training, he earned his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Nairobi

# From Upper Eastern to national excellence: Dr Waqo Dulacha Ejersa's journey in transforming Kenya's public health

## *How a boy from Marsabit rose through 25 years of public service to lead the agency supplying medicines to millions of Kenyans*

**BY John Kariuki**
*@themtkenyatimes*

For decades, Kenya's Upper Eastern region has been discussed through the lens of historical marginalisation, infrastructural deficits, and harsh climatic conditions. Yet beneath those narratives lies a region that has consistently produced exceptional leaders and distinguished professionals who have made remarkable contributions to national development.

Few careers illustrate this more compellingly than that of Waqo Dulacha Ejersa, the Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA), whose more than 25 years in Kenya's public health sector represent a sustained record of service, policy leadership, and institutional stewardship.

Ejersa's rise to the helm of KEMSA was not a matter of chance. A medical doctor by training, he earned his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Nairobi before completing a Master of Public Health at the University of Melbourne. He has since pursued postgraduate studies in strategic planning, reflecting a career-long commitment to professional development.

His ascent through the Ministry of Health was marked by progressively senior and demanding roles. He served as Head of the National Malaria Control Programme, one of the country's most operationally critical public health mandates. During that tenure, he was involved in developing national malaria control strategies, mobilising financial resources, and expanding interventions aimed at reducing infections across the country — work that earned recognition both nationally and internationally.

Dr Waqo Dulacha Ejersa

He subsequently headed the Department of Non-Communicable Diseases Programmes, where he chaired the Interagency Coordinating Committee and oversaw policy development and strategic planning for conditions including diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. The role demanded coordination across multiple government agencies and stakeholder bodies, a challenge that sharpened his capacity for managing complex national programmes.

Ejersa also led Kenya's National Tuberculosis, Leprosy and Lung Disease Programme within the Ministry of Health, coordinating national efforts to reduce the burden of tuberculosis and other respiratory illnesses in close collaboration with county governments, development partners, and international organisations. Earlier in his career, he served as Provincial Director of Health in the Rift Valley, grounding his understanding of healthcare delivery at the implementation level.

That breadth of experience — spanning preventive, promotive, and curative health systems — positioned him to take on leadership of KEMSA, the authority responsible for procuring, warehousing, and distributing essential medicines and medical commodities throughout Kenya.

Since assuming the role of CEO, Ejersa has emphasised accountability, operational efficiency, and stronger partnerships with county governments. His public engagements have consistently focused on strengthening the medical supply chain and improving KEMSA's responsiveness to the needs of healthcare facilities nationwide. Under his leadership, the authority has continued to play a central role in Kenya's preparedness for public health emergencies, managing strategic medical commodities essential during disease outbreaks.

His contributions to public health have been recognised through the conferment of the Order of the Grand Warrior (OGW) in acknowledgement of his service to the nation.

Beyond the accolades, Ejersa's career offers a more enduring lesson. For young people from Marsabit and the wider North Eastern region, his journey is a clear signal that excellence is not defined by geography. Talent, education, and perseverance can open doors to national leadership regardless of where one begins.

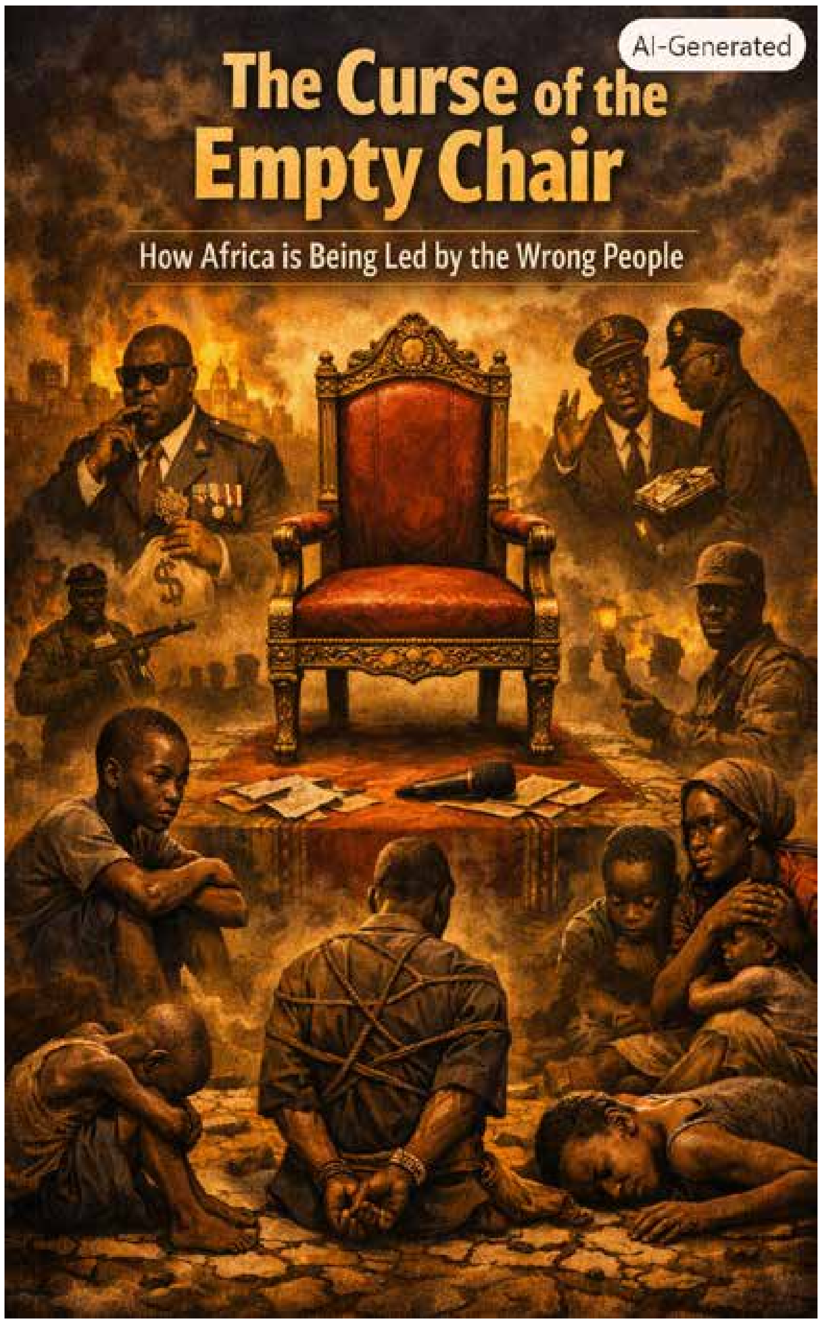
His story also challenges outdated perceptions of the region. North Eastern Kenya has produced accomplished professionals across medicine, engineering, academia, business, public administration, and politics. Ejersa stands among those whose work demonstrates that the region possesses the intellectual capital to shape Kenya's future.

As KEMSA continues supporting Kenya's healthcare system, his experience in public health policy, programme management, and institutional leadership provides a firm foundation for steering the authority in its mandate of ensuring reliable access to quality medical commodities for all Kenyans.

**Africa** The continent's crisis is not one of resources — it is one of leadership, and until that changes, Africa will keep burying its potential alongside its children

# The curse of the empty chair: How Africa is being led by the wrong people

By: Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza
*mukphix@gmail.com*




Illustration

Africa is not poor. Say it until it stops hurting. Say it until we stop apologising for being among the most abundantly blessed regions on earth.

This continent sits on the future of the world. Thirty percent of the planet's mineral reserves. The cobalt in your phone. The lithium powering the electric vehicle revolution. The gold in the vaults of banks that will never build a school on African soil. The youngest population on earth — sixty percent under the age of 25 — a demographic dividend that ageing economies in Europe and East Asia can only envy. Rivers with the hydroelectric potential to illuminate entire regions. Agricultural land capable of feeding the world twice over. A diaspora that remits billions of dollars annually not out of charity, but out of an enduring belief in home.

And yet mothers die in childbirth because there is no oxygen in the ward. Graduates with first-class degrees sell airtime by the roadside. Roads collapse the first time it rains. We export raw cocoa and import chocolate. We export crude oil and import fuel. We export our brightest minds and import foreign consultants to tell us what those minds already knew.

The problem is not in the ground. The problem is in the chair. The leadership chair — the one that was supposed to multiply what nature gave us. Instead, it has become the place where Africa's destiny goes to be auctioned.

Every five years, the continent repeats the same quiet catastrophe and calls it an election. The candidate with a ten-year education plan is told he has no money and should find a sponsor. The woman with data, integrity and a verifiable record of public service is told she is too young and must wait her turn. The engineer who could build factories is told he is unknown in the village and must return after he has greased enough hands. But the man with a briefcase full of cash and nothing in his head? The doors open wide. The man whose only manifesto is his ethnic identity? The microphone is his. The woman whose sole qualification is loyalty to a political godfather? She is sworn in before the ink on her résumé has dried.

Africa has built a machine that filters out vision and promotes emptiness. A system in which competence is treated as arrogance and ignorance is celebrated as being a man of the people. The continent no longer elects leaders. It elects financiers. It elects survivors. It elects people whose greatest skill is knowing how to take, not how to give.

Walk into any parliament on this continent and count honestly. How many legislators can read a national budget line by line? How many have built a school, a business or a community project without reaching into the public purse? How many are there because they earned it, and not because they bought it? The silence that answers those questions is the sound of a continent bleeding from a wound it keeps reopening.

This is not the residue of colonialism from a century ago, though that history has its place in any honest accounting. This is leadership failure happening in real time, in broad daylight, with our collective eyes open. We have oil and beg for fuel. We have land and beg for food. We dig gold, copper and cobalt from our own earth, ship it out in bulk carriers, and import it back as phones, batteries and motor vehicles at prices that keep us permanently indebted.

A leader with capacity looks at a river and sees power generation, irrigation, employment and industry. A leader without capacity looks at the same river and sees sand to sell and a backdrop for a photograph. When vision dies, resources do not become hospitals — they become motorcades. When integrity dies, budgets do not become schools — they become mansions in Dubai. When skill dies, projects are not completed — they are launched with great ceremony, the ribbon is cut, the cameras leave, and the structure quietly rots.

Watch African politics and the pattern is unmistakable. Campaigns are not contests of policy but exercises in patronage. Speeches are not about service but about insult. Leadership is not presented as sacrifice but claimed as entitlement. In a broken system, the loudest fool wins. In a hungry nation, the man with the envelope wins. In a captured media environment, the most convincing liar wins.

And so the good people retreat. The teachers return to their classrooms. The doctors go back to their clinics. The engineers take their skills abroad. The stage is left to performers — men and women who can work a crowd into a frenzy but cannot manage a ministry, who know how to mobilise but have no idea how to govern.

Do not mistake this for abstract political philosophy. This is the mother in Kampala walking seven kilometres with a jerrycan while a billion shillings earmarked for piped water vanishes into private accounts. This is the graduate in Nairobi with three degrees riding a motorcycle taxi because no one built the factories that would have employed him. This is the child in Goma dying of malaria because the drug procurement budget was quietly reallocated. This is the farmer in Malawi watching his maize rot by the roadside because the storage facility was never built, only budgeted.

Every incompetent leader costs Africa years it will never recover. Every stolen contract represents a school that will never open. Every recycled politician represents a generation growing up without a credible reason for hope. And the cruelest dimension of all is this: young Africans are watching. The generation that should be writing the next chapter is learning one of two lessons — leave, or become like them.

There is a way forward, but it will require an anger disciplined enough to produce action rather than noise. Political parties must stop functioning as shops where seats are sold to the highest bidder. Campaign financing must be tracked and capped. Merit must be made to matter more than money. Pathways must be created for teachers, nurses, engineers and entrepreneurs to enter public life without first having to sell their dignity to a political godfather.

Citizens must change what they reward. Selling a vote for sugar and soap is not an act of survival — it is a transaction that costs decades. Democracy is not a single day every five years. It is a daily discipline of watching, questioning and refusing to applaud what does not deserve applause.

And Africa must build institutions that do not depend on the virtue of any one individual. A civil service that functions even when the minister is incompetent. A judiciary that cannot be purchased. A press that cannot be silenced. Procurement systems that are open to public scrutiny. Strong institutions are the only reliable protection against bad leaders and the only reliable multiplier of good ones.

The resources are here. The ideas are here. The young people are here. What is missing is the collective courage to say, clearly and without apology, that a man without a plan has no business in office. The courage to vote with our minds rather than our hunger. The courage to demand better, even when the system has been carefully designed to make demanding better feel futile.

If that choice is not made now, Africa will spend the next half-century exporting its children and importing its food, telling the same story in different accents: Africa has potential.

But if the continent chooses differently — if it chooses capacity over connections, and principle over patronage — then history will not remember this as the century Africa suffered.

It will remember this as the century Africa woke up.

And when our grandchildren ask where we stood when the continent was bleeding, may we answer with tears in our eyes and pride in our voices: we stood up, we fought, and we took back the chair.

**Business** The leather industry, if developed along the lines Ilonito Leather is proposing, could become one of Kenya's more consequential manufacturing success stories

# Ilonito Leather charts a bold course for Kenya's leather manufacturing future

## *Under Elizabeth Lolchoki's leadership, one Kenyan company is making the case that the country's vast livestock wealth belongs in finished goods, not raw hide exports*

BY John Kariuki
@themtkenyatimes

Elizabeth Lolchoki (second left)

Ilonito Leather is emerging as one of Kenya's most ambitious players in the push to transform the country's leather industry from a supplier of raw materials into a globally competitive manufacturing sector, driven by a strategic vision that its founder, Elizabeth Lolchoki, has been building with quiet determination across a sector long defined by missed opportunity.

The company's rise arrives at a moment of genuine national urgency. Kenya sits on one of Africa's largest livestock populations — an estimated 70 million animals comprising cattle, sheep, goats and camels — yet continues to export the bulk of its hides and skins in raw or semi-processed form, surrendering the considerable value that finished leather goods command in international markets to processors in China, India and Europe. The economic logic of that arrangement has never been favourable to Kenya, and the frustration it generates among industry players, economists and policymakers has been building for decades. Ilonito Leather's model is a direct and unapologetic challenge to that long-entrenched pattern.

Lolchoki's concept paper, which has drawn serious attention in both industry and policy circles, sets out a roadmap that is ambitious in scope but grounded in operational reality. It calls for a significant reduction in raw hide exports, a meaningful increase in leather export earnings and a sustained commitment to value addition that retains more of the industry's generated wealth within Kenya's borders. The document draws on rigorous international benchmarking, advocates for greater mechanisation across the production chain and makes a forceful argument for policy reform and skills development as non-negotiable pillars of any credible industrial growth strategy.

The paper does not shy away from diagnosing why previous efforts to upgrade Kenya's leather sector have fallen short. Inadequate tannery infrastructure, inconsistent policy support, limited access to affordable financing, a shortage of trained technical personnel and the persistent dominance of raw material exports have all conspired to keep the sector below its potential. Lolchoki's response is not to lament these constraints but to map a practical path through them — identifying where investment is needed, where policy levers can be pulled and where the private sector must lead.

What distinguishes Ilonito Leather's approach from previous reform efforts is its emphasis on the full value chain rather than any single point within it. Research, innovation and modern manufacturing technologies sit alongside world-class product design — a recognition that competing in today's global leather market demands considerably more than production capacity. It demands quality, consistency, traceability and the ability to meet the exacting standards of buyers in Europe, North America and Asia who have no shortage of alternative suppliers and every reason to choose those who can guarantee reliability.

Design, in particular, is an area Lolchoki has identified as a critical differentiator. African leather goods have historically struggled to command premium prices not because of inferior raw material — Kenyan hides are regarded by processors as among the finest on the continent — but because the finished products have lacked the design sophistication that high-end markets reward. Ilonito Leather is investing in that gap, working to develop a product identity that is distinctly Kenyan in character while meeting international standards in execution.

The social dimension of the company's model is equally deliberate and equally important. Kenya's youth unemployment crisis has become one of the country's most pressing structural challenges, with hundreds of thousands of young people entering the labour market each year into an economy that has struggled to absorb them at scale. Ilonito Leather has positioned itself as part of the solution. By expanding domestic processing and finished goods manufacturing, the company argues, the leather sector alone could generate employment for tens of thousands of young Kenyans — in tanneries, in fabrication, in design studios, in quality control, in logistics and in retail.

The benefits would extend beyond direct employment. Smallholder livestock farmers and local hide collectors, who currently receive a fraction of the value their animals ultimately generate, would see their bargaining position strengthened as domestic demand for quality raw material increases. Local producers, currently at the mercy of export price fluctuations driven by markets they have no influence over, would gain a more stable and remunerative domestic customer base. The multiplier effects of a properly functioning leather value chain reach deep into rural Kenya in ways that few other manufacturing sectors can match.

It is a proposition with well-documented international precedent. Ethiopia's decision to impose export levies on raw hides in the early 2000s, combined with sustained public investment in tannery infrastructure and a deliberate strategy to attract foreign leather manufacturers to its industrial parks, produced a leather export industry that grew dramatically within a decade. Italy's dominance in high-end leather goods — handbags, shoes, belts, upholstery — rests on centuries of accumulated craft knowledge combined with relentless modern investment in design and manufacturing excellence. India has built one of the world's largest leather export industries through a combination of scale, policy support and skills development. The common thread in every success story is the same: a decision, made at both the national and enterprise level, that raw material export is not a destiny but a choice — and that a better choice is available.

Kenya has the raw material. It has the livestock numbers. It has, in its urban centres, a growing pool of design and technical talent. What has historically been missing is the infrastructure, the sustained policy commitment and the private sector leadership willing to make the long-term investments that industrial transformation requires. Ilonito Leather is making the case, through its own operations and through Lolchoki's increasingly prominent public advocacy, that all three are now within reach.

The Kenyan government's own manufacturing agenda — articulated through various industrial policy frameworks — has consistently identified leather as a priority sector for value addition and export growth. The gap between that stated priority and the reality on the ground has, until recently, remained stubbornly wide. Companies like Ilonito Leather are beginning to close it, not by waiting for the enabling environment to arrive fully formed but by demonstrating through commercial activity what is possible when ambition is matched by expertise and execution.

Lolchoki herself represents a model of the kind of leadership the sector needs. Her combination of technical knowledge, strategic thinking and willingness to engage with the policy dimensions of industrial development — rather than treating them as someone else's problem — sets a standard that others in the industry would do well to follow. She understands that building a globally competitive leather company in Kenya is not purely a business challenge. It is a nation-building exercise that requires alignment between the private sector, government, training institutions and development partners.

The leather industry, developed along the lines Ilonito Leather is proposing, could become one of Kenya's more consequential manufacturing success stories — generating foreign exchange, reducing import dependence in finished leather products, creating dignified employment at scale and establishing a replicable model for value addition that other commodity sectors could learn from.

That is a large ambition. But ambition, grounded in expertise, translated into practical strategy and pursued with the kind of disciplined commitment Lolchoki has demonstrated, is precisely what Kenya's leather sector has been waiting for.


Sports >> *The former Liverpool and Borussia Dortmund manager is expected to sign a contract running to the 2030 World Cup as Germany seeks to arrest a decade of international decline

# Klopp set to take Germany job as DFB calls today press conference

By **Martin Weche**

Jürgen Klopp is set to be confirmed as the new head coach of the German men's national football team today, with the German Football Association (DFB) summoning the media to its Frankfurt headquarters for a press conference at 11am local time.

The announcement, though not formally confirmed ahead of the event, follows weeks of negotiations between Klopp and the DFB over a deal that German media report will run until 2030 — the year of the next FIFA World Cup. The DFB's governing bodies had not yet met to ratify the agreement as of Thursday evening, according to AFP's sports subsidiary SID, which explains the association's deliberate silence on the purpose of the gathering.

For Klopp, 59, the appointment would represent a return to the most demanding stage in club and international football after a period in the corporate world. Since 2025, he has served as Head of Global Soccer for Red Bull, the Austrian energy drink company, overseeing its network of affiliated clubs including RB Leipzig, Red Bull Salzburg and the New York Red Bulls. German media report that Red Bull has agreed to release Klopp without a transfer fee, accepting instead a donation of one million euros — approximately 1.1 million US dollars — to Wings for Life, the company's charitable foundation supporting spinal cord injury research.

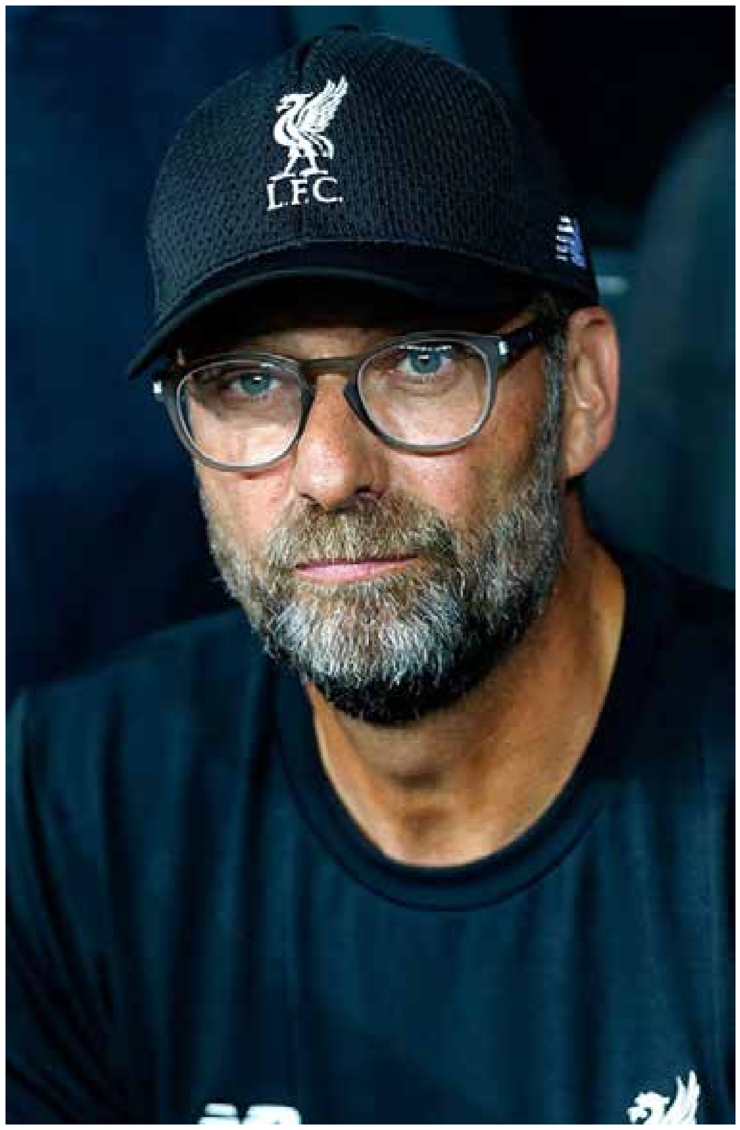
The terms of the departure reflect both the goodwill Klopp commands within the sport and the urgency with which the DFB is pursuing his signature. Germany, once the defining force in international football, has endured a decade of mounting embarrassment on the world stage. After winning a fourth World Cup title in Brazil in 2014, the national team made first-round exits at both the 2018 and 2022 tournaments. This past summer brought no relief: under Julian Nagelsmann, Germany were eliminated in the round of 32 at the World Cup, losing to Paraguay on penalties in a result that shocked a football-obsessed nation.

Nagelsmann was dismissed shortly after. The DFB, under mounting pressure from supporters, sponsors and the broader football public, moved quickly to identify a successor capable of not merely steadying the ship but restoring Germany's standing as a genuine contender. Klopp, for all the emotional weight his name carries in German football, was the obvious answer.

His coaching record is among the most compelling of his generation. He built his reputation at Mainz, the club where he had spent more than a decade as a player, before transforming Borussia Dortmund into a legitimate force in European club football. It was at Liverpool, however, that Klopp truly cemented his place among the game's great managers. In nine years on Merseyside, he delivered the club's first league title in 30 years, claimed a sixth European Cup and rebuilt a footballing institution from the inside out.

He stepped down from the Liverpool post in 2024, citing fatigue — an unusually candid admission from a man whose emotional intensity had defined his time in management. That honesty, and the sabbatical that followed, appears to have renewed him. Those close to the negotiations describe Klopp as motivated and clear-eyed about what the Germany role demands.

The challenge is formidable. Germany have won just one knockout match across the past five major tournaments — reaching the quarter-finals of Euro 2024 on home soil — and the structural questions about the national team's development pathways and playing identity remain unresolved. Klopp will inherit a squad with genuine talent but uncertain direction, and a public whose patience, while not yet exhausted, is wearing thin.


*Jürgen Klopp.*

What he brings, beyond the trophies and the tactical acumen, is credibility. German football knows Klopp. He played and managed in the Bundesliga, speaks the language of the dressing room and the terraces, and carries none of the distance that foreign appointments can sometimes breed. If anyone can reconnect a fractured national footballing identity with its supporters, the DFB is betting it is him.

Today's press conference will make it official. For German football, it cannot come soon enough.

Sports >> *World Athletics confirms the Kenyan's 1:59:30 in Tokyo among eight world records set in the first five months of 2026

# Sawe's 1:59:30 marathon record officially ratified as world record


*President William Ruto with record breaking marathoner Sebastian Sawe in State House, Nairobi on April 30, 2026.*

By **Martin Weche**

World Athletics yesterday ratified John Sawe's 1:59:30 marathon as an official world record, confirming the Kenyan as the first man in history to run a record-eligible marathon in under two hours.

Sawe made history on 26 April, shaving 65 seconds off the previous world record of 2:00:35 set by the late Kelvin Kiptum at the 2023 Chicago Marathon — a mark that had itself seemed almost untouchable. The ratification, announced alongside seven other senior world records and one world under-20 record set in the first five months of 2026, drew a line under weeks of anticipation within the athletics community and confirmed what many had witnessed in real time as one of the greatest individual performances in sporting history.

The race itself was a contest worthy of the record it produced. Sawe was pushed hard by Ethiopia's Yomif Kejelcha and Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo in what became one of the most competitive marathon fields ever assembled. The three men ran in close formation for much of the race before Sawe made his decisive move with one mile remaining, pulling clear to cross the line in 1:59:30. Kejelcha, refusing to yield, also broke the two-hour barrier with 1:59:41 — a time that would have been a world record on any other day. Kiplimo finished third in 2:00:28, himself one of only a handful of men in history to complete a marathon inside the landmark threshold.

The performance arrived laden with symbolism. Kiptum, whose record Sawe erased, died in a road accident in Kenya in February 2024 at the age of 24, just months after his own historic run in Chicago. His memory hung over yesterday's ratification, a reminder that the pursuit of the sub-two-hour marathon has carried both triumph and tragedy.

World Athletics also ratified Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa's women-only marathon world record of 2:15:41, set at the London Marathon while defending her title on the course. Assefa lowered her own previous record of 2:15:50 by nine seconds after pulling away from Kenya's Hellen Obiri and Joyciline Jepkosgei in the closing stages of a race that itself rewrote the history books. Obiri finished second in a personal best of 2:15:53, with Jepkosgei third in 2:15:55 — marking the first occasion on which three women have broken the 2:16 barrier in the same marathon race.

The London women's field, in other words, produced a collective performance as statistically remarkable as Sawe's individual effort in Tokyo. That both records were set within weeks of each other and ratified together underscores the extraordinary standard of long-distance running currently being set, with Kenyan and Ethiopian athletes at its centre.

Among the other records ratified by World Athletics was a further improvement to the pole vault world record by Sweden's Mondo Duplantis, who cleared 6.31 metres at the Mondo Classic in Uppsala on 12 March — competing in the city of his birth at the meeting that bears his name. The clearance moved his own record on by a centimetre from the 6.30 metres he had set when winning his third consecutive world title in Tokyo on 15 September 2025. Duplantis, who has now broken the world pole vault record on multiple occasions, remains in a category entirely his own in the event.

For Kenya, the ratification of Sawe's record is a moment of national pride that extends beyond athletics. The country has long been the dominant force in long-distance running, producing world and Olympic champions across generations. Sawe's achievement — running where no man had run before in a record-eligible race — adds the most coveted chapter yet to that story.

The sub-two-hour barrier, once considered a physiological frontier as remote as the four-minute mile, has now been officially crossed. What follows will define whether Sawe's mark proves as durable as Kiptum's seemed, or whether the history of the marathon is now entering an era in which the unthinkable becomes, simply, the next target.

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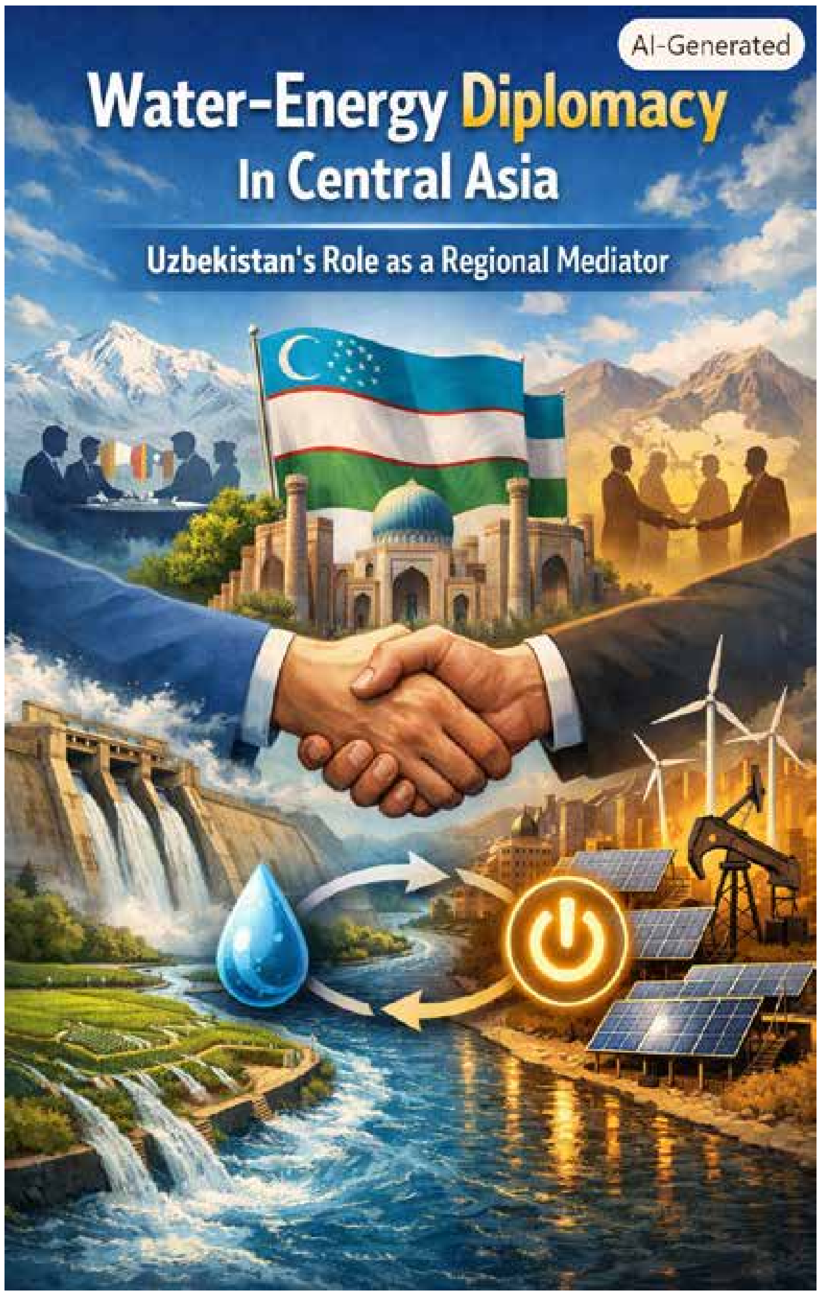
# Water-Energy diplomacy In Central Asia: Uzbekistan's role as a regional mediator

By: Akramova Sakinabonu Rakhmatulla
*@themtkenyatimes*

**Abstract**

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of disputes over the use of transboundary water and energy resources in Central Asia and examines diplomatic mechanisms for resolving these challenges. It also highlights the significance of institutional cooperation among regional states, the role of scientific and analytical platforms, youth diplomacy, and the principles of preventive diplomacy. The study concludes that establishing a culture of evidence-based and impartial negotiations is a decisive factor in ensuring regional stability and sustainable cooperation.

**Keywords:** water-energy diplomacy, transboundary resources, Central Asia, preventive diplomacy, regional security, Track II diplomacy.




**Introduction**

Central Asia consists of both upstream and downstream states whose interests regarding water resource management have historically diverged. The upstream countries—Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—primarily utilize water resources during winter for hydropower generation, whereas the downstream countries—Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan—prefer to conserve water for agricultural irrigation during the summer growing season. This divergence originates from the centralized water allocation system inherited from the Soviet period, which has not fully adapted to the geopolitical realities of independent states.

In recent years, climate change, glacier retreat, and steady population growth have further intensified pressure on the region's limited water resources. International experience demonstrates that disputes over transboundary water resources, if not managed through effective institutional mechanisms, may escalate into broader regional tensions.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the current state of water-energy diplomacy in Central Asia and to assess Uzbekistan's potential role as a regional mediator in promoting sustainable and peaceful cooperation.

**Theoretical Foundations of Water-Energy Diplomacy**

Within the field of international relations, transboundary resource diplomacy is commonly analyzed through the concepts of water security and preventive diplomacy. These approaches emphasize resolving disputes over shared natural resources through scientific, legal, and institutional mechanisms before they evolve into political or military conflicts.

**The academic literature identifies four major dimensions of regional water-energy cooperation:**

- institutional and legal cooperation, including international conventions and bilateral or multilateral agreements;
- scientific and technical cooperation through hydrological monitoring and data exchange;
- Track II diplomacy involving experts, universities, and civil society organizations;
- financial and investment cooperation supported by international financial institutions.

Together, these dimensions contribute to confidence-building and the sustainable governance of shared water resources.

**Current Situation in Central Asia**

At present, several institutional mechanisms regulate water-energy cooperation in Central Asia, including the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC). However, existing mechanisms are largely reactive, becoming active only after disagreements arise. A comprehensive regional early-warning system capable of preventing disputes before they escalate has yet to be fully established.

Furthermore, limited transparency in hydrological data sharing among the states weakens mutual trust. At the same time, higher education institutions across the region have not yet developed sufficiently comprehensive educational programs that provide practical skills in transboundary water diplomacy and conflict management.

These shortcomings underline the necessity of strengthening regional institutional capacity through greater transparency, academic collaboration, and preventive diplomatic initiatives.

**Uzbekistan's Potential as a Regional Mediator**

Over the past several years, Uzbekistan has significantly transformed its relations with neighboring countries. Progress in border delimitation, increased political dialogue, and the establishment of regular Consultative Meetings of Central Asian Heads of State have created favorable political conditions for Uzbekistan to serve as an impartial regional mediator in water-energy cooperation.

To strengthen this role, three institutional initiatives are proposed.

First, the establishment of an open regional hydrological information platform would promote transparency and improve mutual confidence.

Second, educational programs aimed at developing negotiation, mediation, and diplomatic skills among young professionals should be introduced at universities and research institutions.

Third, regional scientific forums and joint research projects should be expanded to reinforce institutional cooperation and facilitate evidence-based policymaking.

These initiatives would contribute to more effective regional governance while reducing the likelihood of future disputes over shared water resources.

**Conclusion**

Resolving disagreements over transboundary water and energy resources remains one of the key prerequisites for long-term peace and sustainable development in Central Asia. The findings of this study demonstrate that combining evidence-based analysis, youth diplomacy, and institutional cooperation provides an effective framework for preventing conflicts before they intensify.

Supported by its renewed foreign policy, growing diplomatic engagement, and expanding scientific capacity, Uzbekistan possesses significant potential to become a trusted regional mediator. Such a role would not only strengthen regional security and cooperation but also enhance Uzbekistan's international reputation as a constructive contributor to peace, sustainable development, and regional integration.

*Akramova Sakinabonu Rakhmatulla*
*3rd-Year Student, International Relations Program*
*International School of Finance, Technology and Science Institute (ISFT)*
*Phone: +998 94 066 66 71 / +998 93 919 18 93*
*E-mail: sakinabonu.akramova@mail.ru / sakinabonuakramova@gmail.com*

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