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Countdown 2027

The ballot must be mightier than the stone

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Ruto launches Kenya National Talent Search to unlock creative economy

BY Grace Wanja
@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in picturesSome of the moments as captured in pictures

President William Ruto yesterday ordered the immediate establishment of the Kenya National Talent Search, directing the State Department for Youth, the Creative Economy Office and the Sports Fund to roll out the year-round programme without further delay.
Speaking at the 98th Kenya National Music Festival at State Lodge in Bungoma County, Ruto said the initiative would identify and nurture talent across music, comedy, acting, poetry, film, dance and sport, positioning the creative economy as a formal pathway to employment and opportunity. He directed Deputy President Kithure Kindiki to ensure full government coordination behind the programme.
"We must identify, nurture and support talent wherever it exists across Kenya," Ruto said.
The President announced "Kenya Beyond 2030" as the programme's inaugural theme and directed the Ministry of Education to adopt it across all school creative events from next year. He also directed the ministry to disburse KSh5 million to every institution that performed at the 2026 Kenya Music Festivals State Concert.
Ruto added that winners of the annual Kenya Science and Engineering Fair would henceforth be invited to State House. "I want to meet them, see what they have built and hear their ideas. Above all, I want them to know that their country believes in them," he said.









Editor's Desk

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Nairobi Women Representative Esther Passaris yesterday called for greater investment in mothers and children, saying stronger families are the foundation of a prosperous society, as she officially opened the Mother and Child Exhibition bringing together families, businesses and organisations committed to maternal and child welfare. Passaris said the exhibition creates meaningful connections, promotes local enterprise and showcases solutions designed to help families thrive. "When we invest in mothers, we strengthen families. When we nurture our children, we invest in our future," she said. She commended organisers for building a platform that unites diverse stakeholders around issues affecting mothers and children, reaffirming her commitment to initiatives that support women and protect children. "To our mothers, fathers and children, you remain at the heart of the society we are building," Passaris said. Reported by John Kariuki

Nairobi Rivers Commission chairperson Margaret Wanjiru yesterday issued a 30-day resignation notice to Head of Public Service Felix Koskei, saying she intends to leave office on 31 August to pursue other engagements. In her letter, Wanjiru described her 20 months at the commission as a valuable learning experience and requested that her successor be appointed before her departure to ensure an orderly transition. "The time has come for me to move on and give my full attention to other work," she said. She asked Koskei to convey her appreciation to President William Ruto, who appointed her chairperson through a Gazette Notice dated 25 October 2024. "Let him know I appreciate the opportunity he gave me, and hope we can collaborate on other matters in future," Wanjiru said. The nature of her next engagement remains undisclosed.

Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba yesterday challenged universities to accelerate the commercialisation of research and innovation, saying institutions of higher learning must move promising discoveries from laboratories to the market to create jobs and address Africa's development challenges. Ogamba, speaking through Principal Secretary Esther Muoria at the joint graduation ceremony of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and the Pan African University Institute for Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation — where 5,035 students graduated — said universities must deliberately scale innovations with commercial potential. "I call upon our institutions of higher learning to make deliberate efforts to scale up promising innovations and translate them into viable products, services and enterprises," he said. JKUAT Vice-Chancellor Victoria Ngumi said the university was contributing to Kenya's National AI Strategy, developing cleaner maritime technologies and connecting dairy farmers to markets, while introducing new programmes aligned with emerging national needs.

A primary school teacher in Kilifi County was yesterday sentenced to 10 years in prison after Senior Resident Magistrate Ivy Wasike convicted him of abusing his position of authority to pursue a sexual relationship with a pupil, contrary to Section 24(4) of the Sexual Offences Act. The court heard that the teacher took the girl to a bush in Ganze Sub-County on 21 October 2021, where he attempted to have sexual intercourse with her after previously sending her a love letter. The case emerged after an informer overheard pupils discussing the matter and alerted school management. Principal Prosecution Counsel Nancy Njeru urged a deterrent sentence, arguing the teacher had exploited a position of trust. His record has been forwarded to the Teachers Service Commission. He has 14 days to appeal.

The National Liberal Party yesterday declared it would negotiate with both the government and the opposition ahead of the 2027 General Election but would not seek political accommodation on unfavourable terms, with party leader Augustus Muli telling a rally of more than 5,000 supporters at Kitui Stadium that Ukambani's interests were non-negotiable. "NLP will work with either opposition or government. But we are not going to beg. We are going to bargain and fight for our people. We are also willing to go alone," Muli said. He confirmed he will contest the Kitui Central parliamentary seat in 2027 on the NLP ticket, while warning that the treatment of Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka by sections of the opposition left him with little confidence in that formation. NLP delegates formally resolved that the party would not seek accommodation at the expense of its interests.

Chiefs across Isiolo County have been directed to ensure all residents aged 18 and above obtain national identity cards and register as voters, with officials warning that large numbers remain without identification documents, cutting them off from government services and democratic participation. Kenya School of Government Director Nura Mohamed, speaking after a meeting of chiefs and assistant chiefs from across the county, urged residents to prioritise registration, saying identity cards were essential to engaging with the country's development agenda. National Cohesion and Integration Commission Commissioner Josephine Elegai said the meeting also addressed cattle rustling, banditry and drug abuse, calling on politicians to maintain proper conduct ahead of the forthcoming elections. County Commissioner Chaunga Mwachaunga assured that National Government Administration Officers would resume identity card registration and issuance across all wards in Isiolo.

Agriculture CS said processing poor-quality leaf alongside good plucking undermines the value of tea

Kagwe orders tea factories to reject substandard leaf as KSh7.1B modernisation drive begins

BY MKT Correspondent
@themtkenyatimes


CS Mutahi Kagwe showcasing what tea farmers should pick

Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe has ordered tea factories to reject green leaf that fails to meet the recommended "two leaves and a bud" standard, warning that modern machinery will have little impact on farmer earnings if the quality of raw material remains poor.

Kagwe said the Government's KSh7.1 billion tea factory modernisation programme must go hand in hand with improvements in green-leaf quality to enable Kenya to secure better prices in international markets.

Speaking during a visit to Kapsara Tea Factory, where he handed over Sh44.6 million for the installation of a new withering plant, the CS said processing poor-quality leaf alongside good plucking undermines the value of tea and denies farmers better returns.

"If we have agreed that quality tea is two leaves and a bud, then that is what must come to the factory," Kagwe said, adding that farmers who observe proper plucking practices should not be penalised by those delivering inferior leaf.

He said the Government was seeking to establish a quality culture across the tea industry while increasing the production of orthodox, specialty and value-added teas.

Kagwe cited Momul Tea Factory as an example of the financial benefits of improved leaf quality, saying the factory had raised the value of its tea from about $2 to more than $3 per kilogramme after improving the quality of green leaf supplied by farmers.

He said the focus on quality should ultimately be measured by the amount of money reaching farmers through improved tea prices and annual bonuses.

At Kapsara, the Sh44.6 million allocation will finance a new withering plant to replace ageing equipment that consumes significant amounts of electricity. The modernisation programme is also expected to replace obsolete machinery, improve energy efficiency and reduce production costs.

Kagwe said the investment formed part of President William Ruto's efforts to transform agriculture into a major source of household wealth, but stressed that modern equipment alone could not deliver better returns if factories continued receiving substandard raw materials.

The CS also called for greater diversification of tea markets, urging the industry to retain traditional buyers while aggressively pursuing new international markets for orthodox, specialty and value-added products.

He further defended the tea levy against political criticism, saying opponents should stop misleading farmers about its impact.

According to Kagwe, the levy is paid by buyers and not farmers or tea factories. The funds will support areas including price stabilisation, tea research, infrastructure, marketing, quality improvement, value addition and market development.

Senator Allan Chesang praised Kagwe's efforts to transform the agricultural sector and improve farmer incomes. He noted that improved road infrastructure in tea-growing areas was also helping facilitate the movement of green leaf from farms to factories.

Kagwe directed Kapsara Tea Factory management to ensure the Sh44.6 million allocation is used strictly for the intended purpose. He also said farmer training and extension services would continue as part of the Government's broader drive to improve tea quality and competitiveness.

The modernisation programme comes as Kenya seeks to increase the value of its tea exports by moving beyond bulk black tea and expanding into higher-value products and markets.

Petroleum Prices Adjusted: Diesel Drops, Petrol and Kerosene Steady


Petrol station

BY James Kariuki
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The Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) has announced new maximum retail petroleum prices for the period 15th August to 14th September 2026. In its latest review, the regulator confirmed that the price of diesel will decrease by KShs.5.00 per litre, while super petrol and kerosene will remain unchanged. This stability is attributed to government stabilization support measures amounting to KShs.938 million.

According to EPRA, the average landed cost of imported super petrol rose by 6.99 percent, from US$886.92 per cubic metre in June to US$948.92 in July. Diesel, however, recorded a significant 13.08 percent decline, dropping from US$984.37 to US$855.59 per cubic metre. Kerosene also fell by 11.01 percent, from US$1,028.17 to US$915.01 per cubic metre.

The regulator emphasized that these prices include Value Added Tax (VAT) and excise duty adjustments in line with the Finance Act 2023 and other legal provisions. Exchange rate fluctuations also played a role, with the USD/KShs rate averaging 129.74 in July.

In Nairobi, motorists will pay KShs.214.03 per litre for super petrol, KShs.217.86 for diesel, and KShs.191.38 for kerosene. Prices vary slightly across towns, with Mombasa recording the lowest petrol price at KShs.210.87 per litre.

EPRA reiterated its commitment to fair competition and consumer protection, assuring the public that the pricing framework balances importation costs with affordability.


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Maize shortage The roots of the current shortage lie largely in Kenya's enduring dependence on rain-fed agriculture.

Kenya faces maize shortage that could push up food prices and strain household budgets

A projected deficit of 5.4 million bags by end of September 2026 exposes deep vulnerabilities in the country's agricultural system and food security planning

BY John Irungu Maina
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Kenya is heading into a difficult period as a projected maize deficit of 5.4 million 90-kilogram bags by the end of September 2026 raises serious concerns about food security, rising prices and the resilience of an agricultural system that millions of households depend on every day.

The government has announced plans to import one million bags of maize to help address the expected shortfall — a response that underlines both the urgency of the situation and its scale. One million bags would cover less than a fifth of the projected deficit, leaving a substantial gap that markets, traders and ordinary consumers will be left to absorb. For a country in which maize is not merely a crop but a dietary cornerstone — the foundation of ugali, githeri, uji and countless other daily meals — a shortage of this magnitude is not simply an agricultural statistic. It is a problem with the potential to reach almost every household in the country.


Maize shortage

The most immediate concern for ordinary Kenyans is the price of maize flour. When supplies tighten, millers and traders compete for limited stocks, and that competition pushes prices upward. Higher maize prices translate directly into more expensive unga — a product that millions of Kenyan families treat as a basic necessity rather than a discretionary purchase. For households already navigating the pressures of high living costs, even a modest increase in the price of a two-kilogram packet of unga can force difficult decisions: reducing consumption, changing eating habits or redirecting money that would otherwise go towards transport, school fees or healthcare.

The roots of the current shortage lie largely in Kenya's enduring dependence on rain-fed agriculture. Maize production remains acutely sensitive to the reliability, timing and distribution of rainfall. When rains fail, arrive late or prove inconsistent across growing regions, farmers bear the consequences directly. A smallholder who has invested in land preparation, certified seed, fertiliser and labour can watch an expected harvest diminish through no fault of their own. This year's projected deficit reflects a familiar vulnerability — one that has recurred across multiple seasons and one that imports alone cannot resolve.

The government's decision to import maize may provide short-term relief, but it does not address the structural weaknesses that have repeatedly left Kenya exposed to food shortages. The country needs sustained investment in irrigation infrastructure to reduce dependence on rainfall, improved access to affordable farm inputs, expanded agricultural extension services and technologies that help farmers adapt to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns. Farmers also need reliable markets and fair prices if maize production is to remain economically attractive over the long term.

Strategic food reserves represent another critical gap. A country that consumes maize at Kenya's scale requires sufficient buffer stocks to cushion citizens between harvests and reduce the pressure that production shortfalls place on both markets and government finances. The current situation — in which a September deficit requires emergency imports — suggests that reserve management needs to be taken more seriously as a component of national food security planning.

The shortage also invites a broader conversation about dietary diversification. Kenya's heavy dependence on maize means that alternative crops — sorghum, millet, cassava, sweet potatoes and other nutritious staples — remain underutilised as buffers against maize supply disruptions. Supporting these crops more robustly, both through production incentives and consumer awareness, could help reduce pressure on maize during difficult seasons. However, diversification must be accompanied by genuine market development. Farmers will not shift away from maize simply because alternatives are encouraged. They need processing industries, storage facilities and reliable returns before alternative crops become economically viable choices.

Post-harvest losses add another layer to the problem. Kenya cannot afford to lose significant quantities of food between farm and market, yet inadequate storage infrastructure means that post-harvest wastage remains a persistent drain on the food supply chain. Addressing this would require investment in on-farm storage, community-level facilities and cold chain infrastructure — unglamorous but essential expenditure.

Behind the figure of 5.4 million missing bags are farmers who harvested less than they planted for, millers facing tighter margins, traders managing scarce stocks and families quietly calculating how far their food budgets will stretch. Their collective experience is a reminder that food security is not an abstraction discussed in policy documents. It is a daily reality felt at kitchen tables across the country.

Kenya faces a choice. It can treat this deficit as another temporary setback, import maize and wait for the next harvest. Or it can use the moment as the basis for a serious, sustained rethink of how the country produces, stores and distributes food. Emergency imports will keep markets supplied through September. Long-term food security will require something more durable — investment in Kenyan farmers, smarter reserve management and the political will to address vulnerabilities that have been visible for years.

The 5.4 million-bag deficit is a warning. Whether it becomes a crisis will depend on the decisions Kenya makes today.

Politics **The convoy of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua came under attack during a political tour of Nakuru Town West**

The ballot must be mightier than the stone

The attack on Gachagua's convoy in Nakuru is not merely a political incident — it is a warning Kenya has heard before and cannot afford to ignore again

BY Levis Wangamati
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Kenya did not need another reminder of how quickly political competition can turn dangerous. It got one in Nakuru on Friday.

The convoy of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua came under attack during a political tour of Nakuru Town West, with stones reportedly thrown at the motorcade in the Soko Mjinga area. The Democracy for the Citizens Party said its vehicles were targeted and damaged, and alleged that Gachagua narrowly escaped harm — claims that have not been independently verified. But the more important question is not simply who threw the stones. It is what the stones represent.

When political arguments spill onto the streets, when rallies become confrontations and when supporters begin treating opponents as enemies to be silenced rather than defeated at the ballot box, democracy starts losing the very character that makes it democratic. Political competition is supposed to be a contest of ideas, policies and persuasion — settled by citizens standing in queues, marking ballots and accepting outcomes. It should never require a crowd to silence an opponent before voters have had their say.

Nakuru is not an insignificant location in this conversation. The county carries some of Kenya's most painful political memories. The post-election violence of 2007 and 2008 left more than 1,200 people dead and over 300,000 displaced, tore communities apart and left scars that have never fully healed. International mediators were required to pull the country back from the brink. The economy contracted sharply. Tourism collapsed. Families were separated, properties destroyed and livelihoods erased. That catastrophe should have permanently altered Kenya's political conscience, embedding in every leader and every citizen an unshakeable commitment to resolving differences through democratic means alone.

Yet Kenya continues to flirt with the same dangerous habit — treating political rivalry as justification for confrontation. The lesson of 2007 and 2008 has been recited at countless forums, memorials and political gatherings. It has been invoked in speeches, cited in policy documents and referenced in peace frameworks. But recitation is not internalisation, and the events in Nakuru suggest that for some, the lesson remains theoretical rather than lived.

The greatest danger is not that Kenya suddenly descends into widespread violence. It is that Kenyans gradually become comfortable with political violence in small doses. A disrupted meeting becomes normal. A hostile crowd becomes part of the political theatre. A blocked convoy becomes something supporters explain away. A broken windscreen becomes a footnote. Each incident, considered in isolation, is treated as manageable, unfortunate but not alarming. Yet collectively, these incidents establish a pattern — and patterns, left unaddressed, become precedents. Behaviour that should alarm a functioning democracy begins to look like ordinary politics. That is precisely how political violence takes root — not always with the worst-case scenario, but with the quiet acceptance of conduct that should have been condemned the moment it appeared.

Recent political events reinforce the concern. Human rights organisations have already issued formal warnings about the risks of political violence and intimidation ahead of the 2027 General Election. Civil society groups tracking political incidents have noted a rise in confrontational rhetoric, the disruption of political gatherings and the use of organised crowds to restrict the movement and activities of political opponents. These are not isolated observations. They form part of a documented pattern that demands serious attention from the state, political parties and the public alike.

The 2024 anti-government protests offered another cautionary lesson — demonstrations that began around opposition to the Finance Bill eventually produced deadly confrontations, widespread destruction and the storming of Parliament. Those events are not identical to what happened in Nakuru and should not be carelessly equated. But they demonstrated something Kenya must never forget: once confrontation becomes normalised, events can move beyond the control of those who started them. The individuals who lit the first fires of those protests did not intend for Parliament to be breached. Escalation has its own momentum, and by the time leaders call for calm, the situation has often already moved beyond their reach.

The convoy of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua came under attack during a political tour of Nakuru Town West

Friday's incident therefore deserves more than partisan commentary. It should concern government supporters. It should concern opposition supporters. And it should concern every Kenyan who holds no party card at all, because democracy cannot be selective about violence. An attack on an opposition politician is wrong. An attack on a government politician is equally wrong. Disrupting a political meeting because one dislikes the speaker is wrong. Using political influence to intimidate opponents is wrong. The standard cannot change depending on whose convoy is under threat, whose meeting has been disrupted or whose supporters stand accused. A democracy that applies different rules to different political actors is not a democracy in any meaningful sense — it is simply organised advantage dressed in democratic language.

Political leaders carry a particular responsibility here. They cannot condemn violence only when their own side is the victim while remaining silent when their supporters stand accused of intimidation. They cannot demand tolerance for themselves while denying it to opponents. They cannot deploy inflammatory language before crowds and then express surprise when the crowd acts on it. Words matter in politics. They carry weight. They move people. And when leaders use words carelessly, the consequences are rarely confined to the platforms from which those words were delivered.

If Kenya is serious about 2027, political parties must begin treating restraint as a democratic virtue rather than a sign of weakness. The ability to campaign aggressively while maintaining discipline, to criticise opponents while respecting their right to exist in the political space, and to mobilise supporters while keeping them within the boundaries of lawful conduct — these are not limitations on political ambition. They are the foundations on which credible democratic leadership is built.

The police, too, must act without favour. Political violence cannot be managed by selectively protecting some politicians while leaving others exposed. Investigations must be credible, perpetrators identified through evidence and accountability applied regardless of political affiliation. The perception that law enforcement responds differently depending on the political identity of those involved is itself corrosive to democratic confidence. When citizens believe that justice is partisan, they begin to seek protection through other means — and those means are rarely peaceful.

Politicians making serious allegations must equally understand the weight of their words. Claims require evidence and proper investigation, not merely amplification through rallies and social media. Accusations made without substantiation can inflame tensions, mobilise angry crowds and produce consequences far more serious than the original grievance.

Friday's events unfolded against a backdrop of intensifying political mobilisation. Gachagua had opened a Democracy for the Citizens Party regional office in Naivasha as part of a wider Nakuru tour, while publicly challenging President William Ruto to focus on him rather than retired President Uhuru Kenyatta ahead of 2027. That political temperature matters. As Kenya moves deeper

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Politics The convoy of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua came under attack during a political tour of Nakuru Town West

The ballot must be mightier than the stone

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into its pre-election cycle, the temptation for political actors to treat every public gathering as a test of strength will only grow. Crowds will get larger. Rhetoric will sharpen. Competition for political territory will intensify. In that environment, the incident in Nakuru is less an anomaly than an early indicator of what lies ahead if the country does not deliberately choose a different path.

Kenya does not need an election in which citizens are encouraged to fear one another because of how they intend to vote. It needs an election in which politicians fight fiercely for votes while respecting those who may choose differently. It needs political competition that is loud, passionate and consequential — but bounded by the rule of law and by the basic recognition that an opponent is not an enemy.

Democracy is not the absence of political conflict — it is the capacity to manage that conflict without turning citizens against one another. Kenya will disagree in 2027. It should. Candidates will challenge each other's records. Parties will compete for influence across every region of the country. Supporters will celebrate victories and mourn defeats. That is politics, and it is healthy. But politics must have a boundary, and that boundary is drawn at the point where competition becomes coercion, where rivalry becomes hostility and where the desire to win overrides the obligation to preserve the democratic space in which winning is possible.

The ballot box must remain more powerful than the stone. Kenya has travelled this road before and knows its cost in lives, livelihoods and national dignity. The time to make a different choice is now — while political competition remains something the country can still shape and control, rather than later, when violence has begun controlling the politics.

The convoy of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua came under attack during a political tour of Nakuru Town West

Politics "I want to propose that she will be the Deputy Party Leader of Wiper Patriotic Front," Kalonzo said, drawing applause from those in attendance

Kalonzo backs Jumwa for Wiper Patriotic Front deputy party leader

Wiper leader proposes the Public Service Cabinet Secretary for senior party role in a move widely seen as a strategic bid to strengthen the party's Coast presence ahead of 2027

Wiper Patriotic Front (WPF) leader Kalonzo Musyoka welcomes former CS Aisha Jumwa into the party in Kilifi on August 14, 2026.| Photo: COURTESY

BY Hadassah Karangu
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Wiper Patriotic Front leader Kalonzo Musyoka yesterday proposed Public Service Cabinet Secretary Aisha Jumwa for the position of Deputy Party Leader, a move that could significantly reshape the party's leadership structure and extend its political footprint along the Coast region ahead of the 2027 General Election.

Speaking during a public function in Kwale County, Kalonzo announced that he would front Jumwa for the influential position, while making clear that the party leadership would formally deliberate on the proposal before any official announcement is made. The declaration, delivered before a gathering of party supporters and officials, immediately placed Jumwa at the centre of Wiper's unfolding political strategy.

"This woman is a jewel to the whole world, and when she stands with Wiper Patriotic Front, Kalonzo commands respect. I want to propose that she will be the Deputy Party Leader of Wiper Patriotic Front," Kalonzo said, drawing applause from those in attendance.

The remarks were significant not only for what they signalled about Jumwa's rising stock within the opposition landscape, but also for what they revealed about Wiper's broader ambitions as it seeks to reposition itself as a nationally competitive political force.

A seasoned politician with Coast roots

Jumwa is among the most experienced politicians operating in Kenya's current political environment. Her career has spanned multiple electoral cycles and institutional roles, beginning with her rise as a grassroots organiser before she secured a parliamentary seat and subsequently ascended to Cabinet level under President William Ruto's administration, where she currently serves as Cabinet Secretary for Public Service.

Her political journey has taken her through several party affiliations and alliances, each transition reflecting the fluid nature of Kenyan politics and her ability to adapt and maintain relevance across shifting political landscapes. Throughout these transitions, Jumwa has retained a loyal following along the Coast, a region where personal political networks and community ties carry considerable electoral weight.

It is precisely this Coast influence that is widely seen as the primary driver behind Kalonzo's public endorsement. The Coast region, which encompasses counties including Mombasa, Kilifi, Kwale, Taita Taveta, Lamu and Tana River, has historically played a decisive role in national political calculations. Its bloc of votes has been courted by every major presidential contender in recent electoral history, and its political leaders have commanded attention far beyond what the region's population size alone might suggest.

For Wiper, which has traditionally drawn its core support from the Ukambani region — comprising Machakos, Kitui and Makueni counties — the prospect of anchoring a prominent Coast figure in a senior leadership position represents a meaningful step towards building a broader national coalition.

Strategic timing ahead of 2027

The proposal comes at a moment of intense political activity across Kenya. Although the 2027 General Election remains on the horizon, political parties have already begun the process of restructuring, forging alliances and positioning their leaders for maximum electoral impact. In this environment, every senior appointment and public endorsement carries strategic weight.

Kalonzo himself has been among the most active opposition figures in the current political period. Having contested the presidency on multiple occasions, he remains a significant voice in opposition politics and has continued to build Wiper's structures in anticipation of another electoral contest. His decision to publicly name Jumwa as his preferred candidate for the deputy leadership role suggests a deliberate effort to signal the party's national ambitions and its readiness to welcome influential figures from outside its traditional base.

Political analysts have noted that Wiper's ability to expand beyond Ukambani will be critical to its viability as a presidential platform in 2027. While the region remains a dependable source of votes for the party, no candidate has won the Kenyan presidency on a narrow regional base alone. Coalition-building, cross-regional alliances and the recruitment of prominent figures from other parts of the country have consistently been among the defining features of successful presidential campaigns in Kenya's multi-party era.

By reaching towards the Coast — and towards a figure of Jumwa's profile — Kalonzo appears to be laying the groundwork for precisely this kind of broader electoral coalition.

Jumwa's position and possible implications

For Jumwa, the proposal presents both an opportunity and a political calculation of her own. As a sitting Cabinet Secretary in the Ruto administration, her formal entry into a senior opposition party role would represent a significant political shift, one that would require careful navigation given her current government responsibilities.

It remains to be seen whether Jumwa would be in a position to accept the role while continuing to serve in Cabinet, or whether the proposal would only take practical effect under different political circumstances. Kalonzo's public declaration, however, has already placed her name firmly in the conversation and elevated her profile within Wiper's political ecosystem.

Should she eventually take up the position, Jumwa would bring to the party not only her Coast networks but also her experience in government administration, legislative affairs and campaign mobilisation — a combination that could prove valuable as Wiper builds its structures and seeks to attract new supporters and allied politicians.

Her elevation would also send a message to Coast communities that Wiper views the region as central to its national ambitions, rather than as a peripheral consideration to be addressed closer to the election.

Party deliberations to follow

Kalonzo was explicit that the proposal is not yet final. He indicated that the party's leadership organs would need to formally consider and approve the nomination before any official announcement is made. This means that the coming days and weeks are likely to be significant for Wiper's internal processes, with senior officials expected to deliberate on the matter and determine whether to endorse the party leader's recommendation.

Such deliberations are standard practice within organised political parties, where leadership appointments typically require endorsement from national executive committees or governing councils before they are formalised. The process also allows the party to manage the announcement strategically, timing it for maximum political impact.

Nevertheless, Kalonzo's public declaration in Kwale has effectively set the agenda. By naming Jumwa openly and in front of supporters, he has applied a degree of momentum to the process and made it politically difficult to reverse course without explanation.

A new chapter for Wiper

The proposed appointment reflects the increasingly dynamic nature of Kenyan politics in the pre-election period, where alliances shift, parties restructure and leaders make bold moves to strengthen their positions. For Wiper Patriotic Front, the possible addition of Jumwa to its senior leadership represents an effort to broaden its appeal, deepen its national footprint and signal to potential coalition partners that the party is serious about competing at the highest level in 2027.

Whether the proposal is ultimately formalised remains subject to the party's internal processes. But Kalonzo's declaration in Kwale County has already opened a new and closely watched chapter for both Jumwa and Wiper Patriotic Front.

Loan Proponents of the bill argue that embedding repayment within the salary payment process would create a more predictable and reliable recovery mechanism

From salary to student loans: New bill targets faster repayment of graduate debts

Proposed legislation would require employers to deduct loan repayments directly from graduates' salaries and remit funds by the ninth of every month

BY Angela Mwanga
@themtkenyatimes

A new bill before Kenya's legislature could fundamentally change how graduate student loans are repaid, placing employers at the centre of a more structured and automated recovery system designed to improve compliance among working graduates.

The proposed law would require employers to deduct student loan repayments directly from employees' salaries and remit the funds to the relevant authorities by the ninth day of every month. The measure is aimed at closing the gap between graduates who secure formal employment and the loan repayment obligations that many have struggled to honour consistently since the current system relies heavily on individual initiative.

Under the proposed framework, deductions would be capped at 25 per cent of an employee's gross salary — a ceiling intended to prevent loan repayments from consuming an unreasonable share of workers' earnings while still enabling meaningful recovery of outstanding debt. Employers who fail to remit deducted amounts within the required period would face a monthly penalty of five per cent, a provision designed to deter delays and ensure that money withheld from employees' salaries reaches its intended destination promptly.

The proposal arrives at a moment when access to higher education in Kenya remains deeply tied to student financing. Tens of thousands of students rely on government-backed loans each year to meet tuition fees and related educational costs. Many graduate into a competitive job market where stable formal employment is not guaranteed, making loan repayment one of the more persistent financial pressures facing young Kenyans in the early years of their working lives.

Proponents of the bill argue that embedding repayment within the salary payment process would create a more predictable and reliable recovery mechanism. Rather than depending entirely on individual borrowers to initiate payments — a system that has historically produced inconsistent results — the proposed arrangement would make repayment automatic for those in formal employment. The funds recovered could then be recycled to support future generations of students, sustaining the loan programme over the long term and extending its reach to more Kenyans seeking access to higher education.

The logic is straightforward and draws on models used in other countries. In the United Kingdom, for instance, student loan repayments are collected through the Pay As You Earn tax system, with employers deducting amounts automatically once graduates earn above a specified income threshold. Kenya's proposed bill appears to follow a similar philosophy — using the employment relationship as a reliable collection point rather than leaving repayment to individual discretion.

There are, however, legitimate concerns that the bill will need to address before it can be regarded as fully workable. For graduates on lower salaries or those supporting dependants, a 25 per cent deduction — even with the cap in place — could represent a significant strain on household finances, particularly in an environment of rising living costs. The cap provides a degree of protection, but it does not eliminate the pressure that automatic deductions could place on workers whose earnings leave little room for additional obligations.

Questions also arise around the bill's practical application beyond the formal employment sector. Kenya's labour market is characterised by a substantial informal economy, and a significant proportion of graduates work in arrangements that fall outside conventional employer-employee structures — including self-employment, contract work, casual labour and small-scale enterprise. How the repayment framework would reach these graduates, and what obligations would apply to them, are questions that will require clear and carefully designed guidelines if the system is to be implemented equitably.

The treatment of graduates who change employers, experience periods of unemployment or work across multiple income streams simultaneously would also need to be addressed. Gaps in employment, career transitions and income volatility are realities for many young professionals, and a repayment system that does not account for these circumstances risks penalising borrowers for economic conditions that are partly beyond their control.

For employers, the bill introduces a new administrative obligation that smaller businesses in particular may find burdensome. The monthly remittance requirement, combined with the five per cent penalty for late payment, places responsibility on employers to manage an additional payroll function accurately and on time. Implementation support, clear guidance from the relevant authorities and a reasonable transition period would all be important in ensuring that the burden does not fall disproportionately on smaller enterprises.

The bill ultimately represents a serious attempt to bring discipline and sustainability to Kenya's student loan recovery system — a system that has long struggled to recoup funds efficiently enough to remain viable as a long-term financing mechanism for higher education. The principle behind it is sound: graduates who are earning should be contributing towards their loan obligations, and a structured, automatic mechanism is likely to produce better compliance than one that depends on voluntary action.

Its success, however, will depend on more than enforcement alone. A repayment system that is experienced as punitive, inflexible or disconnected from the realities of graduate employment will generate resistance rather than cooperation. For the bill to achieve its stated purpose, it must be paired with a genuine commitment to expanding formal employment opportunities, supporting graduates entering the labour market and ensuring that the loan recovery process is administered with fairness, transparency and human understanding.

The salary deduction mechanism may well be the right tool. But it will only work if the graduates being asked to repay are actually in a position to do so.

Housing KMRC Chief Executive Johnstone Oltetia said the sector must confront two distinct but equally damaging gaps simultaneously

KMRC conference to tackle Kenya's housing finance gap as millions locked out of homeownership

BY MKT REPORTER
@themtkenyatimes

The Kenya Mortgage Refinance Company will tomorrow convene the fifth Kenya Affordable Housing Conference at Lake Naivasha Resort in Nakuru County, bringing together government officials, lenders, developers, investors, pension funds, SACCOs and international experts to address the financing barriers that keep millions of Kenyans outside the formal housing market.

The two-day conference, running from 20 to 21 August under the theme "Scaling the Base: Unlocking Inclusive and Sustainable Housing Solutions," signals a deliberate shift in Kenya's housing conversation — away from the number of units being built and towards the more fundamental question of who can actually afford to buy them.

KMRC Chief Executive Johnstone Oltetia said the sector must confront two distinct but equally damaging gaps simultaneously. "This year's theme speaks to both the scale of the challenge and the promise before us: to close the twin gaps that constrain access at scale," Oltetia said. One gap lies on the supply side, where affordable housing units remain scarce. The other is on the demand side, where Kenyans with informal or irregular incomes struggle to qualify for conventional mortgages regardless of how many homes are built.

Delegates from Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and India will share experiences on extending housing finance to households that have traditionally been excluded from formal lending systems, including informal workers, micro-entrepreneurs and SACCO members. The discussions will also examine blended finance, development finance instruments and mortgage liquidity facilities as mechanisms for widening the pool of potential homeowners.

Land administration reforms, climate-resilient construction, green building standards and the application of artificial intelligence across the housing value chain are among the additional areas on the agenda. The conference will also feature testimonies from Kenyan homeowners, providing ground-level insight into whether existing housing interventions are genuinely meeting citizens' needs.

The event concludes with the inaugural Kenya Affordable Housing Awards, recognising primary mortgage lenders for contributions to expanding homeownership and driving innovation.

Affordable Housing

My best friends

If my situation is bad,
You will be sad.
In a difficult situation,if I cry,
You will worry what made to cry.

If I have nothing,
You will share something.
When my growth is struck with a problem,
You will find the best solution.

The above reasons justify you are my best friend
Our friendship has no end.
....
Written by
HAVIN KRISHNA V.R
GR-5
ST.JOSEPH GLOBAL SCHOOL
ACHARAPAKKAM

The lock inside you

The lock inside you waits for a key,
Sometimes key didn't come faster,
but a little hope inside, said "wait"
Not all things come faster
Don't disappoint for that,
Struggles make success.

No one wins by standing still,
Every failure adds strength and skill.
Finally the lock gets its key,
Not because it is clever or wise.
It waited patiently for the key to come.

Sometimes you have to move forward to achieve,
You have to reach your goal by yourself no one will help you to reach,

Every locked dream has its key,
Persistence opens destiny.
Wait with hope, work with courage,
And great things will come to those who never give up.

D. DHANYASRI
GRADE 8
JOHN DEWEY MATRIC HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL, LINK ROAD, PANRUTI, CUDDALORE.

My hobby

My hobby is colouring,
When I started colouring I feel very happy,
When I was free I started colouring
I love colouring,
The rainbow colours are inside my box.
Every colour tell me the new stories,
I pick the colour one by one,
Red, green, blue and orange,
A blank Page fills with beauty,
I enjoy it every day.

V.Joshika
Grade 8
John dewey matric higher secondary school, Link road, panruti.

My Wonderful School

My school is neat and bright
,It fills my heart with light.
I read and write each day,
I learn in a happy way,
Teachers are kind and wise,
They help me reach the skies.
Friends are caring too,
My school feels fresh and new,

I love my school with pride,
It is my joyful guide.
Learning is fun each day,
My wonderful school—!

Mahisha varthini, Grade 7..
John dewey matric. hr. sec.school
Panruti

The mysterious cupboard

Inside my cupboard, shadows softly play,
Folded dreams and old letters I couldn't throw away.
My cupboard sighs when no one's around,
Sweaters journals and dust of thoughts I've found .

Pesture straight ,I stand and face what's there,
Mystery of me, folded meet with care.
It isn't just wood and a lock ,
It's where I kept the parts of me the talk.

When the feels load I open the door ,
And fine the girl I'm still becoming more.
And every time I close ,it I feel okay,
Because some magic is meant to say.

'be kind today-
It finds it's way back to you.'

Penned By: JEGADEESWARI V,
STANDARD:11-A
SCHOOL:ST. Joseph's Matriculation HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL ACHARAPAKKAM.

Two things you don't fight for ... True love and True friends .They come naturally

Love is true when it is unconditional
Friendship is true when it is Selfless
Faith and selflessness are the signs of trust
Betrayal and Selfishness are the signs of Dust.

True love never acts
But it will react
When the beloved ones suffer
True love will be an emotional buffer.

True friends seem to be
Ordinary
They truly do the task extraordinary
When their beloved ones suffer
Even the situation becomes Tougher
They will take a role of Mother.

True love is like a river
As it is known as a giver.
True friends are like a shower
They act and guide us like a Tower.
.....
Penned by
RANGANATHAN E
B.T.Asst(Eng)
Marwar Govt.Boys Hss
Acharapakkam

The little dream

A tiny dream was born one night,
Wrapped in hope and shining light.
It whispered softly, "Do not fear,
Your brightest days are drawing near."

Step by step, I learn and grow,
Like rivers that forever flow.
With every fall, I rise once more,
Stronger than I was before.

Books may close, but dreams stay wide,
With courage always by my side.
The future waits with open skies,
For hearts that dare and spirits rise.

So I will smile, believe, and try,
Reach for stars beyond the sky.
For every dream begins this way—
With hope, hard work, and one brave day.

M.R.Hanshiga
Grade 8-C
John Dewey Matric Higher Secondary School
Panruti Cuddalore Tamil Nadu India

Justice **The programme provided a rare forum for journalists and government communication officers to surface the tensions that frequently complicate their working relationships**

Justice sector and media unite to combat election misinformation ahead of 2027

BY MKT Correspondent
@themtkenyatimes

Communication officials from Kenya's justice and security institutions yesterday joined journalists in a two-day capacity-building programme organised by International Justice Mission Kenya, aimed at strengthening election-period communication and countering misinformation ahead of the 2027 General Election.

The programme brought together representatives from the National Police Service, National Police Service Commission, Internal Affairs Unit, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Witness Protection Agency, Independent Policing Oversight Authority, Crime Journalists Association of Kenya and Court Reporters Association of Kenya — a

breadth of participation that reflected the scale of coordination the organisers sought to establish.

At the heart of the sessions was a shared concern: that the electioneering period creates conditions in which misinformation and disinformation thrive, public tensions run high and the demand for credible information frequently outpaces institutions' capacity to provide it. Participants examined how justice-sector bodies should respond to emerging issues, including determining which matters warrant a public statement, who holds the authority to speak on behalf of an institution and when communication should be issued to avoid compounding rather than clarifying a situation.

Trainer Asha Bashir addressed directly the tension that communicators face when facts are still being established. "When verification is incomplete, responsible communication does not mean silence, and it does not mean speculation," Bashir said. "It means communicating what is known, clearly identifying what is being verified and updating the public when reliable information is established." Participants were also cautioned against the instinct to respond to every emerging claim, particularly where an institutional statement could inadvertently amplify misinformation or compromise ongoing investigations.

The programme provided a rare forum for journalists and government communication officers to surface the tensions that frequently complicate their working relationships. Both sides identified operating in silos as a principal obstacle to effective public communication, with limited coordination and fragmented information-sharing undermining efforts to provide timely, accurate and properly contextualised reporting — especially during periods of heightened political activity. Closer collaboration ahead of 2027, participants agreed, was not optional but essential.

International Justice Mission also incorporated a mental health dimension into the programme, with professional counsellors conducting group sessions to help participants manage the psychological pressures that accompany high-stakes journalism and institutional communication work. Team-building activities were woven into the schedule to strengthen trust and professional relationships among participants drawn from organisations that do not always share the same interests or perspectives.

The timing of the engagement is deliberate. Kenya's 2027 General Election is approaching against a backdrop of intensifying political activity, and the institutions represented at the programme will be among those most visible — and most scrutinised — when the country's political temperature peaks.

How well they communicate in those moments may matter as much as anything they do in the field.

Travel The warning comes against the backdrop of a broader shift in traveller behaviour that has been documented globally

Book early or pay more, Kenyan travellers warned as holiday fares climb

Rising demand on domestic routes is squeezing seat availability and pushing up fares for last-minute bookers, industry data shows

Fly748

BY Conrad Onyango
@themtkenyatimes

Kenyans who delay booking domestic flights during peak travel periods risk paying significantly higher fares and finding fewer options, industry officials and travel data warned yesterday, as August school holiday demand continues to strain capacity on popular routes.

The warning comes against the backdrop of a broader shift in traveller behaviour that has been documented globally. Data from online travel agency CheapOair shows that 62 per cent of travellers worldwide are currently booking trips within 30 days of departure, reflecting a growing tendency to delay commitment in the hope of securing better prices. Search activity has simultaneously surged, with domestic weekend travel searches rising 16.2 per cent, international family travel searches up 16.3 per cent and international group travel searches climbing 11.5 per cent. Yet the volume of searches has not produced a corresponding increase in bookings, suggesting many travellers are watching and waiting rather than committing — a strategy that industry insiders say frequently backfires.

George Oduor, Head of Scheduled Services at fly748.com, said the assumption that waiting produces cheaper tickets is one of the most persistent and costly misconceptions among domestic travellers.

"The biggest advantage of booking early is choice. You have more options when it comes to fares, flight times and seat availability, and you are less likely to be caught out when demand increases," Oduor said.

He was equally direct about the risks of the opposite approach. "Travellers should not assume that waiting until the last minute will always produce a cheaper ticket. Airfares are influenced by demand and seat availability. If you already know your travel dates, particularly for a holiday or weekend trip, it is often better to secure your seat early rather than risk higher fares or limited availability," he said.

The dynamics Oduor describes are particularly acute on Kenya's busiest domestic corridors. Routes connecting Nairobi to Mombasa and Ukunda/Diani — the coastal destinations that attract the heaviest leisure traffic during school holidays, long weekends and festive periods — tend to fill rapidly as departure dates approach. Families travelling with children, in particular, face the compounded difficulty of needing multiple seats on the same flight, a requirement that becomes increasingly difficult to meet as availability narrows.

Fly748.com operates scheduled services from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport Terminal 2 to both Mombasa and Ukunda/Diani, and has sought to position domestic air travel as a practical and accessible option for a broader segment of Kenyan society. The airline offered a 10 per cent discount on tickets during the last week of July, a promotional initiative designed to encourage early commitment and reward travellers who plan ahead.

For families, Oduor said the school calendar itself is among the most reliable planning tools available. "If you know you will be travelling during a school holiday, long weekend or festive period, start looking early. Even when travelling at short notice, being flexible with your departure time or travel date can give you more options," he said.

The advice resonates beyond the immediate August holiday window. Kenya's domestic aviation market has expanded considerably in recent years, with more Kenyans choosing to fly for leisure, family visits and business travel on routes that were once served almost exclusively by road or rail. That growth in demand, while broadly positive for the sector, has also intensified competition for seats during peak periods, making early booking an increasingly important element of travel planning rather than merely a matter of personal preference.

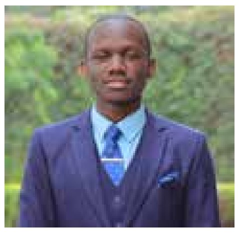
The broader global picture reinforces the point. The CheapOair data indicates that while travel appetite in 2026 remains strong, the growing habit of late-stage decision-making is putting pressure on travellers in markets where demand is concentrated around predictable peaks. Kenya's school holiday calendar, public holiday schedule and coastal tourism season create exactly those conditions, compressing demand into narrow windows and rewarding those who act early.

For Kenyan travellers, the message from both industry data and airline operators is consistent: searching is not the same as saving, and flexibility — whether in timing, date or departure window — remains the most reliable tool available to those who find themselves planning at short notice.

Those who plan furthest ahead, however, are likeliest to pay the least.

Energy Energy poverty is not simply the absence of a switch on the wall. It is the quiet confiscation of time, dignity, opportunity, and hope

When the grid gasps: Energy poverty and the silent theft of Kenya's tomorrow



By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo
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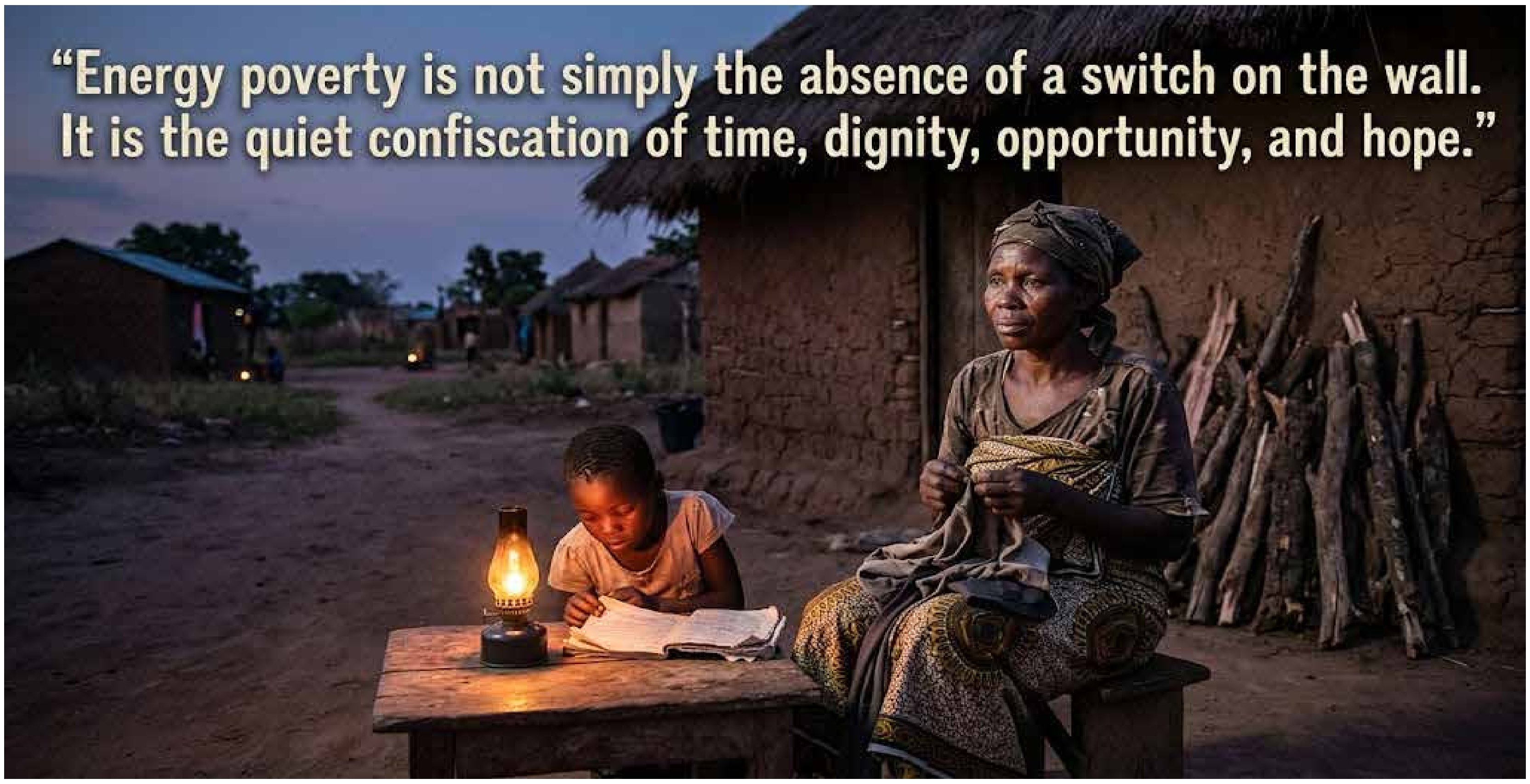


In Kenya today, more than one in five citizens still live without reliable access to electricity, while those connected endure an average of 8.39 hours of blackouts every month nearly six times the regulatory target of 1.5 hours. Peak demand has climbed past 2,439 megawatts, leaving the national grid with a wafer-thin reserve margin of roughly 2.3 percent. These are not abstract numbers. They are the measured pulse of a nation whose lights flicker not merely from technical failure but from a deeper structural betrayal: the persistence of energy poverty in a country that has made genuine strides yet remains trapped in the shadow of scarcity.

Energy poverty is not simply the absence of a switch on the wall. It is the quiet confiscation of time, dignity, opportunity, and hope. It is the student who studies by the dying glow of a kerosene lamp, inhaling fumes that scar lungs while peers in better-served neighbourhoods finish homework under steady light. It is the small trader whose refrigerated goods spoil when the power dies at dusk, turning a day's profit into loss. It is the mother who still gathers firewood for hours because clean cooking remains a distant promise for nearly seven in ten households. Load shedding the deliberate, scheduled denial of power to protect the grid from collapse has become the visible symptom of this deeper disease. Between 5 p.m. and 10 p.m., when demand surges and intermittent wind and solar generation often falters without adequate storage, entire communities are plunged into darkness so that others may keep their lights on. The grid gasps, and ordinary Kenyans pay the price in interrupted lives.

Consider the correlation that cuts to the bone. Electricity access rose dramatically from roughly 37 percent in 2013 to around 75–79 percent in recent years, an achievement driven by the Last Mile Connectivity Project and off-grid solar innovations. Urban areas approach universal connection. Yet rural access lags sharply, and even among the connected, reliability is fragile. System losses hover between 21 and 23 percent far above acceptable thresholds leaking both energy and revenue through aging lines, theft, and technical inefficiency. Demand grows with population, urbanization, and economic ambition, yet firm capacity has not kept pace. A moratorium on new power purchase agreements in earlier years, combined with delayed generation projects and the inherent variability of renewable sources without storage, has left the system exposed. The result is rationing that falls heaviest on those least able to absorb it.

This is not mere inconvenience; it is a developmental chokehold. Manufacturing output stalls when machines fall silent. Small enterprises the backbone of Kenya's informal economy burn scarce capital on diesel generators whose fuel costs devour margins. Hospitals risk interrupted procedures. Schools lose instructional hours. The economic toll compounds: lost productivity measured in hundreds of millions of shillings daily in some estimates, deterred investment, and a quiet erosion of confidence in the country's infrastructure. Energy poverty and load shedding do not merely reflect poverty; they reproduce it. Children without reliable light fall behind educationally. Women and girls, disproportionately burdened by the labour of fetching fuel and managing households without power, lose hours that could have been spent on income or rest. Health suffers from indoor air pollution caused by traditional biomass. The correlation is stark and circular: inadequate energy locks communities into low productivity, which in turn limits the fiscal space and political will to fix the energy system.

There is intellectual dishonesty in celebrating connection statistics while ignoring the quality of that connection. A household counted as "electrified" yet receiving power for only half the day or less is not liberated; it is taunted. Official figures that trumpet progress must be measured against the lived reality of SAIDI scores that remain stubbornly high and restoration times that average over two hours. The grid's intermittent failures are not random acts of nature. They are the predictable outcome of underinvestment in firm capacity, insufficient storage for variable renewables, aging distribution networks, and policy choices that prioritized rapid connection over sustainable reliability. Kenya generates the majority of its electricity from renewable sources geothermal, hydro, wind, solar an admirable achievement. Yet without the complementary infrastructure of storage, flexible generation, and robust transmission, the green transition becomes a source of evening rationing rather than uninterrupted abundance.

The deeper insight is this: energy poverty is a form of temporal theft. It steals the present from those who must wait for light, and it steals the future from a generation whose human capital is diminished by darkness. Load shedding is the state's public admission that demand has outrun supply, that planning has lagged ambition, and that the social contract of reliable public services is fraying. When the President himself acknowledges the necessity of daily rationing between late afternoon and night, the problem ceases to be technical and becomes political and moral. A nation that aspires to middle-income status, to industrialization, to digital transformation, cannot treat electricity as a luxury subject to the roulette of wind speeds and rainfall.

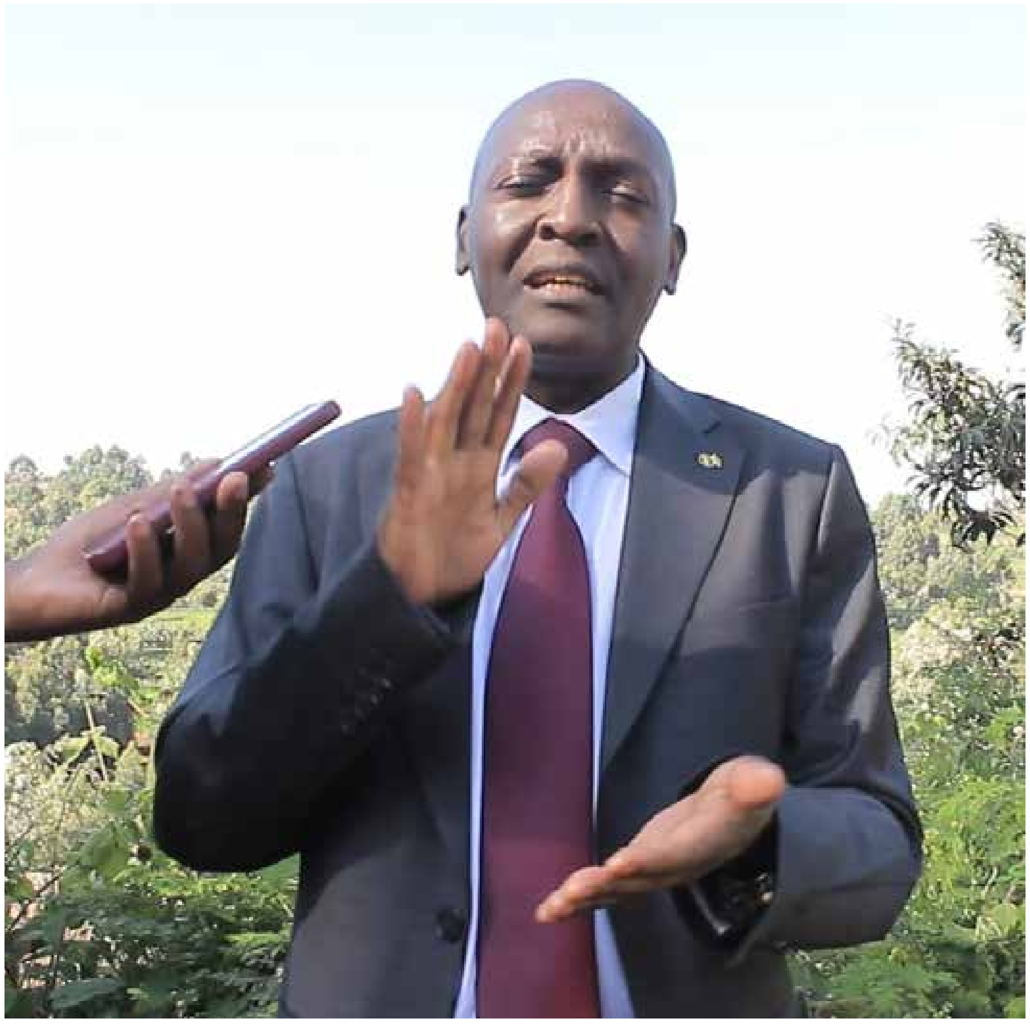
What is required is not more rhetoric but hard choices executed with discipline. Accelerate firm capacity geothermal expansions, carefully managed hydro, and strategic thermal or storage solutions that bridge the evening peak. Deploy battery storage at scale so that the abundant daytime solar and strong wind periods are not wasted. Aggressively reduce system losses through modern metering, network rehabilitation, and enforcement against theft. Prioritise rural reliability, not merely rural connection. Align tariffs and subsidies so that the poorest can afford meaningful consumption rather than token lighting. And above all, treat energy access as the foundational infrastructure of human development rather than a sectoral afterthought.

Kenya has proven it can move rapidly when political will and technical focus align. The leap in access over the past decade stands as evidence. Yet progress that leaves a quarter of the population in the dark and subjects the majority to chronic interruption is incomplete and, ultimately, unjust. The lights that flicker across Kenyan evenings are more than a technical failure; they are a mirror held up to the gap between national aspiration and institutional delivery. Until that gap is closed until the grid no longer gasps under the weight of unmet demand energy poverty will continue to exact its quiet, cumulative toll on the bodies, minds, and futures of millions. The darkness is not inevitable. It is chosen, day after day, by the decisions we make or refuse to make. The question is whether Kenya will finally choose light.

The writer is a social commentator.

Politics Kemoni says he is best placed to lead Nyamira and transform its development agenda, arguing that the county has not made enough progress

Engineer James Kemoni eyes Nyamira Governor's seat on Jubilee ticket



Engineer James Kemoni says that Nyamira County needs leadership with vision. | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themtkenyatimes

As the 2027 electioneering period approaches, the Nyamira gubernatorial race is attracting a growing number of aspirants keen to lead the county.

Among those who have expressed interest in the seat is Engineer James Kemoni, who is presenting himself as a visionary leader with a focus on transforming Nyamira through development.

Kemoni says Nyamira needs leadership with a clear vision and practical solutions to address the challenges facing residents and put the county on a stronger development path.

Kemoni has declared his intention to contest for the Nyamira gubernatorial seat in the 2027 General Election on a Jubilee Party ticket, setting the stage for what could be a closely watched political contest in the county.

Kemoni says he is best placed to lead Nyamira and transform its development agenda, arguing that the county has not made enough progress compared with other counties in the country.

Speaking during his engagement with residents, Kemoni said Nyamira needs visionary leadership capable of turning the county's potential into tangible development that benefits ordinary residents.

He said his decision to seek the governor's position was influenced by concerns raised by members of the public over the pace of development in the county.

According to Kemoni, residents have continued to raise concerns about poverty and what he described as inadequate development in some parts of Nyamira.

He said these concerns have strengthened his resolve to offer himself for leadership.

"If elected, I will bring change to Nyamira," Kemoni said, while calling on residents to assess political leaders based on their development record, ideas and vision rather than their financial status.

He also took issue with politicians who, according to him, boast about their wealth and promise to use money to influence voters during elections.

Kemoni urged residents not to allow money to determine their choice of leaders, arguing that political leadership should be about addressing the challenges facing the people.

He said residents should instead elect leaders with a clear vision and a proven commitment to improving their lives.

Kemoni further urged eligible residents who have not registered as voters to do so, saying voter registration will give them an opportunity to participate in choosing leaders they believe can deliver meaningful change.

He also called on voters to scrutinize the records and plans of candidates before making their decisions in the 2027 elections.

Beyond politics, Kemoni pointed to his involvement in supporting vulnerable people in Nyamira as part of his commitment to the community.

He said his support for residents is not based on clan or political affiliation and pledged to continue assisting people across the county regardless of their background.

Kemoni maintained that Nyamira requires leadership that brings people together and focuses on development rather than clan politics.

His declaration adds another dimension to the race for the Nyamira governor's seat as politicians and potential candidates begin positioning themselves ahead of the 2027 General Election.

Kemoni is now expected to intensify his engagement with residents as he seeks support for his gubernatorial bid under the Jubilee Party banner.

As the political contest gathers momentum, residents will be looking at the candidates' manifestos, development records and ability to address issues affecting the county, including poverty, infrastructure, health, education and economic opportunities.

For Kemoni, the message is clear: Nyamira needs a new approach to leadership, and he believes he is the person to provide it.

In Nyamira county those who have shown interest to vie for gubernatorial seat are Nyamira incumbent woman rep Jerusha Momanyi, incumbent governor Amos Nyaribo, Walter Chanua, Ben Momanyi, Walter Nyambati, Timothy Bosire, among others.

> **Kemoni says Nyamira needs leadership with a clear vision and practical solutions to address the challenges facing residents and put the county on a stronger development path. Kemoni has declared his intention to contest for the Nyamira gubernatorial seat in the 2027 General Election on a Jubilee Party ticket, setting the stage for what could be a closely watched political contest in the county**

Dairy sector Milk purchased by processors reached a record 908.4 million litres in 2024, a 12 per cent increase from 810.8 million litres

Kenya's dairy sector at a turning point as quality, growth and farmer welfare take centre stage

BY John Kariuki
@themtkenyatimes

Kenya's dairy industry is undergoing a significant transformation, with record formal milk intake, expanding processing capacity and a sharper focus on quality, productivity and farmer incomes placing the sector at one of the most consequential crossroads in its history.

At the centre of that transition is Kenya Dairy Board Chairman Genesio Njagi Mugo, whose reappointment for a second three-year term beginning February 2026 provided the continuity the industry needs at a moment when sustained reform matters more than short-lived intervention. The stakes are considerable. Kenya's dairy sector is valued at more than KSh162B, supports approximately 1.8 million households, sustains more than 700,000 jobs and contributes roughly four per cent of the country's GDP and 14 per cent of agricultural GDP — making it one of the most important value chains in the Kenyan economy.

The numbers underpinning recent growth are striking. Milk purchased by processors reached a record 908.4 million litres in 2024, a 12 per cent increase from 810.8 million litres the previous year and the highest annual volume recorded since 2001, according to Kenya Dairy Board data. The momentum carried into 2025, when formal processors received approximately one billion litres of milk valued at KSh52.2B — an 11.6 per cent rise from 2024 and a 25.1 per cent increase compared with 2023. Recorded marketed milk climbed to 1.013 billion litres, while processed milk and cream reached 704.4 million litres. These figures point unmistakably to a sector becoming more commercialised, more integrated into formal markets and more consequential to the national economy with each passing year.

Behind the statistics, however, are structural challenges that no amount of optimism can paper over. High feed costs, low productivity per cow, climate variability, animal disease burdens, inadequate cold-chain infrastructure, weak market linkages and persistent milk quality concerns continue to threaten the sustainability of the gains being recorded. It is in navigating these competing pressures that Mugo's stewardship of the Kenya Dairy Board becomes particularly significant.

Kenya Dairy Board Chairman Genesio Njagi Mugo

Mugo, first appointed Non-Executive Chairperson in February 2023, has consistently placed farmers at the centre of his public interventions. In 2024, he issued pointed warnings against illegal powdered milk imports, arguing that unregulated products undermine the market for locally produced milk and threaten the livelihoods of the farmers who supply it. He has repeatedly emphasised the importance of creating stronger, more reliable markets for Kenyan cow, camel and goat milk — a position that reflects a clear understanding that production growth means little if farmers cannot sell what they produce at prices that cover their costs.

Those costs remain the industry's most stubborn challenge. The Kenya Dairy Board estimates the cost of producing a litre of milk at between KSh30 and KSh37, depending on the farming system and scale of operation. Rising feed prices, electricity costs and other input expenses have compressed farmers' margins significantly. Demanding higher farmgate prices offers only a partial solution, since higher prices can also reduce the competitiveness of locally produced milk against imports and place additional pressure on consumers. The more sustainable answer lies in improving productivity — enabling farmers to produce more milk from the same land, labour and resource base through better genetics, improved feeding practices, stronger animal health management and more efficient water use.

It is on this front that one of the most significant institutional developments of recent years becomes relevant. In September 2025, the Kenya Dairy Board and the International Livestock Research Institute signed a five-year partnership agreement aimed at strengthening research, institutional development and capacity building across the dairy value chain. The agreement seeks to connect scientific knowledge and regulatory oversight from farm to glass, addressing challenges including climate change adaptation, animal disease management, genetic improvement and milk quality through evidence-based approaches rather than guesswork. For an industry that has too often relied on informal knowledge and inconsistent practice, the partnership represents a meaningful step towards a more scientifically grounded future.

Quality has emerged as a defining theme of the current dairy leadership. For years, the sector's conversation revolved primarily around production volumes and farmgate prices. But Kenya cannot compete sustainably by producing more milk alone. Safety, traceability and value addition will increasingly determine the industry's long-term trajectory. Training activities supported by the Kenya Dairy Board have focused on hygienic milk handling, animal health and breeding, fodder and feed management, quality control and regulatory compliance. Mugo has engaged directly with county leadership on building farmer capacity and promoting sustainable dairy practices, most recently during a farmers' field day in Murang'a. The underlying principle is straightforward: farmers should ultimately be rewarded not simply for the volume of litres they deliver, but for producing milk that is safe, clean and nutritionally valuable.

The Kenya Dairy Board has also moved to extend its geographical reach beyond the traditional high-production counties — Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyandarua, Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, Meru and Kericho among them — to emerging dairy areas with significant untapped potential. In Garissa, the Board has sought to strengthen its presence and build dairy knowledge among farmers and stakeholders operating within pastoral and agro-pastoral systems. This wider approach reflects an understanding that dairy can serve as a powerful tool for rural economic transformation when adapted thoughtfully to local conditions and production systems.

Processing capacity has grown considerably, with the 2026 dairy sector factsheet estimating total capacity at approximately 5.2 million litres per day across processors, mini dairies, cottage industries and small-scale operations. Yet capacity alone cannot deliver its full economic value unless farmers consistently supply adequate volumes of quality milk. During an inspection of the underutilised New KCC Runyenjes facility in Embu, Mugo argued that placing greater control in the hands of farmers could help increase production, processing and value addition while improving their earnings. The message was clear: dairy farmers should not remain suppliers of raw materials while the greatest economic value is captured further along the chain by processors and retailers.

Kenya's long-term dairy ambition is substantial. The Kenya Dairy Board's own projections envision milk production reaching 12 billion litres by 2030 — a target that would require dramatic improvements in per-cow productivity, which currently remains low due to poor genetics, inadequate feeding practices and weak farm infrastructure. Achieving that ambition will require sustained investment in breeding programmes, extension services, cold-chain infrastructure and cooperative development, as well as the kind of consistent regulatory oversight and strategic leadership that Mugo's reappointment is intended to provide.

For Mugo, the dairy sector has never been merely about milk. It is about the farmer who rises before dawn to milk a cow, the cooperative that collects the produce, the processor that transforms it, the retailer who delivers it to consumers and the millions of Kenyan families who depend on dairy for both nutrition and income. That farmer-centred vision, pursued consistently over three years and now extended for another term, gives Kenya's dairy industry a leadership voice that has placed the right questions firmly on the national agenda.

The transformation is underway. Whether it delivers on its promise will depend on how honestly and ambitiously Kenya answers those questions in the years ahead.

> **Kenya Dairy Board Chairman Genesio Mugo's reappointment signals continuity at a critical moment for an industry valued at more than KSh162B and supporting 1.8 million households**

BOOKS & LITERATURE
with D. Brinda

D. Brinda receives special mention for excellence in education and literature at Chennai's ninth annual Homepreneur Awards

Indian educator honoured at India's Suyasakthi Awards among 3,000 nominees

Indian educator and literary figure D. Brinda was yesterday honoured with the Suyasakthi Special Mention Award for Excellence in Education and Literature at the ninth edition of the Suyasakthi Virudhugal Homepreneur Awards 2026, held at Lady Andal School Auditorium in Chennai, India.

Brinda was selected from a field of 3,000 candidates by a 25-member expert jury, which evaluated shortlisted finalists across nine competitive categories before determining winners. Her recognition, in a field that drew nominees from across the globe, marks one of the most significant honours of her career and stands as a testament to decades of commitment to learning, literary expression and community development.

The awards ceremony, co-presented by Sakthi Masala and Brand Avatar, was held on 9 August at the Lady Andal School Auditorium on Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai. Tamil Nadu School Education Minister Rajmohan Arumugam presented the awards before an audience of nominees, dignitaries and supporters. Also present were P.C. Duraisamy, Founder of Sakthi Masala, and Santhi Duraisamy, Director of Sakthi Masala.

Hemachandran, Chief Executive of Brand Avatar, spoke at the ceremony about the widening reach of the Suyasakthi Virudhugal initiative. "The impact of SuyaSakthi Virudhugal in identifying and celebrating women entrepreneurs and strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including among the global Tamil community, continues to grow," he said.

Now in its ninth season, the Homepreneur Awards have over the years recognised more than 450 women entrepreneurs, empowered upwards of 19,000 homepreneurs and provided more than 2,500 participants with access to the jury interview process. What began as an awards programme has evolved into a broader ecosystem for recognition and mentorship, reaching women from diverse professional backgrounds and communities well beyond India's borders.

The nine award categories span Digital Media and Entertainment, NRI, Healthcare, Sports and Fitness, Social Welfare, Education and Literature, Beauty and Wellness, Home Retail and Home Professionals, Arts and Culture, and Food and Beverages — a breadth of recognition that reflects the diversity of women's enterprise and contribution across sectors.

For Brinda, the honour in the Education and Literature category reflects a body of work built steadily over many years. Through her engagement with poetry, storytelling and literary education, she has encouraged individuals — many of them women — to find their voices, develop their creative capacities and believe in the power of their own ideas. Her work has consistently bridged the worlds of formal education and personal expression, creating spaces where learning is not merely transactional but genuinely transformative.

Being selected from among 3,000 candidates for the special mention award carries a significance that extends beyond personal achievement. It places her alongside a distinguished group of women who have made meaningful contributions in their respective fields and who have been judged by an expert panel to have done so with exceptional dedication and impact.

The Suyasakthi Awards were established to shine a light on women who have transformed their circumstances through hard work, courage and an entrepreneurial spirit — qualities that are often present in abundance but go unrecognised in the absence of platforms specifically designed to honour them. Over eight successful seasons before this year's edition, the awards have grown steadily in stature and reach, attracting nominees from a widening range of professional fields and geographies.

Brinda's recognition at an international platform of this scale serves as a reminder that the contributions of educators and literary advocates, though often quiet in nature, carry a profound and lasting impact. In encouraging others to learn, to write and to express themselves, such individuals shape not only individual lives but the cultural and intellectual fabric of entire communities.

Her Suyasakthi Award 2026 is both a personal milestone and a broader celebration of what education and literature — pursued with sincerity and passion — can achieve.

Sports >> *Secondary school athletes from across the region begin arriving in Tanzania for one of East Africa's most anticipated annual school sports championships

East African schools converge on Morogoro for FEASSA Games 2026

By **Pascal Okoth**

Secondary school athletes from across East Africa yesterday began arriving in Morogoro, Tanzania, for the 2026 Federation of East Africa Secondary Schools Sports Association Games, with competition opening today and running through 21 August before closing ceremonies conclude the championship on 23 August.

The FEASSA Games rank among the most significant school sporting events on the East African calendar, bringing together students who have excelled in their respective national championships and earned the right to test themselves against the finest young talent the region can produce. Teams from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and Zanzibar are participating, making this edition as much a celebration of regional solidarity as a contest for sporting honours.

Football is expected to command the greatest attention across the championship's nine days of competition, but basketball, volleyball, handball, athletics, rugby and netball will all feature prominently, ensuring that students with diverse sporting abilities have a genuine platform on which to represent their schools and nations. The breadth of disciplines on offer reflects the FEASSA Games' founding ambition — not merely to identify the best athletes in the region, but to give as many talented young people as possible the experience of competing at a level beyond their national borders.

FEASSA Games 2026 Set to Bring East African Schools Together in Tanzania

For Kenya, the games represent a significant opportunity to demonstrate the depth of talent within its secondary school sports system. Kenyan schools have historically been competitive across multiple disciplines at FEASSA level, and this year's representatives carry with them the weight of that tradition. The competition will be demanding. Uganda and host nation Tanzania have consistently produced strong performances at regional level, and every fixture will carry real consequence in the race for medals and overall honours.

For the young athletes themselves, the stakes extend well beyond trophies. Many of those competing in Morogoro are doing so at the most significant level of their sporting lives to date. The experience of managing pressure, adapting to unfamiliar opponents and sustaining performance across multiple days of competition is one that no training session can fully replicate. Coaches who have guided their teams through demanding national qualifying campaigns will play a central role in helping students draw on their preparation when it matters most, and their contribution — often unglamorous and rarely celebrated — is fundamental to everything that unfolds on the field.

The social dimension of the championship is equally valuable. When students from seven countries share facilities, meals and living spaces for nearly two weeks, something more lasting than results tends to emerge. Friendships form across national boundaries. Cultural exchanges happen naturally. Young people who arrived as competitors leave with a lived experience of East African community that broadens their understanding of the region they inhabit. These connections, quietly formed in the margins of competition, are among the most enduring products of the FEASSA Games.

Tanzania carries both the privilege and the responsibility of hosting this year's edition. Morogoro's facilities and organisational infrastructure will be closely observed by visiting delegations, and the quality of the experience provided to participating teams will reflect on the country's capacity and commitment as a regional host. Early preparations have been thorough, with nations briefed well in advance on logistics, schedules and accommodation arrangements.

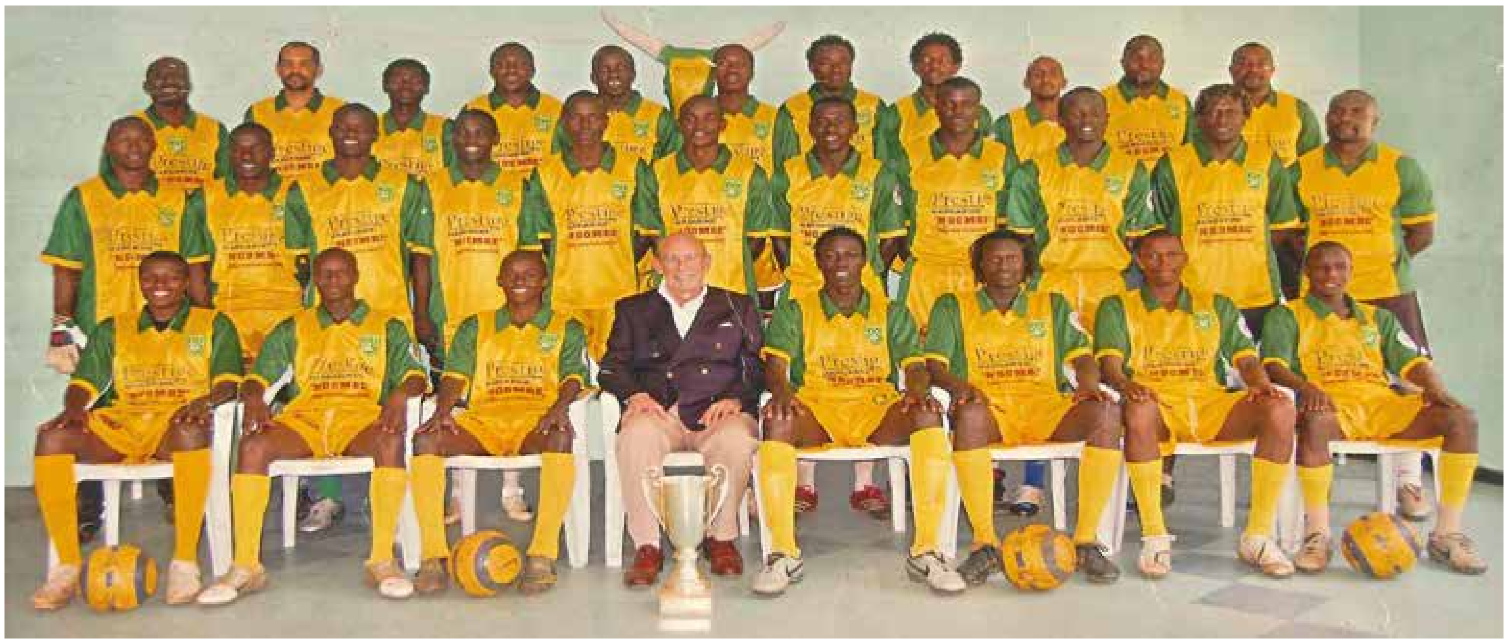
Beyond the immediate competition, the FEASSA Games serve a purpose their founders understood clearly. School sport, at its best, builds more than athletic ability. It shapes character, instils discipline, teaches young people how to function within a team and how to handle both success and disappointment with equal composure. The values embedded in those lessons do not remain on the pitch — they travel home with students and inform the kind of adults they become.

As competition gets underway today across Morogoro's sporting venues, the attention of schools, parents, teachers and administrators across East Africa turns to the young athletes who have earned their places on this regional stage. Some will surpass expectations. Others will discover that the regional level demands more than they anticipated. All of them will leave Tanzania shaped by the experience.

The 2026 FEASSA Games are open. East Africa is watching.

Sports >> *Former champions face difficult questions ahead of 29 August curtain-raiser after back-to-back pre-season losses in Rwanda

Mathare United suffer second Kigali defeat as FKF Premier League season looms



Mathare United

By **Martin Weche**

Mathare United suffered their second consecutive defeat in Kigali yesterday as the former Kenyan champions continued their pre-season preparations ahead of the 2026/27 Football Kenya Federation Premier League season, which opens on 29 August.

The results in Rwanda have done little to inspire confidence among Mathare's supporters, who are eager for a marked improvement from a campaign that saw the club finish 14th — just three points above the relegation zone — with 41 points from 34 matches. For a club that once set the standard in Kenyan domestic football, survival by the narrowest of margins represented a sobering reality check, and the expectation heading into the new season is that newly appointed head coach David Ouma will engineer a significant turnaround.

Ouma's arrival has generated cautious optimism within the club, with the new coach tasked with restoring Mathare's competitive edge and returning them to the upper reaches of the table. Pre-season, however, has so far offered more questions than answers, and Ouma will be acutely aware that preparation time is running short before the competitive action begins.

Mathare's opening fixture of the new season is a home assignment against APS Bomet FC, a match the club will approach needing a statement performance to signal that the struggles of last season belong firmly in the past. The early weeks of the campaign will be critical in establishing whether Ouma has managed to instil a new sense of purpose and organisation into a squad that visibly lacked both for extended periods last term.

Across the league, the 2026/27 season promises to be among the most competitive in recent memory. Defending champions Gor Mahia will open their title defence against Muranga Seal, carrying with them the weight of expectation that comes with being Kenya's most successful and widely supported club. Gor's consistency at the summit of Kenyan football has made them the team every other side measures itself against, and their title defence will be closely watched from the first whistle.

Last season's runners-up AFC Leopards face Bandari in what promises to be a testing opening assignment. Leopards finished the previous campaign in the strongest form of any side in the division and will be confident they have the quality to mount a sustained title challenge. Their rivalry with Gor Mahia — one of the most storied in African club football — adds an additional layer of intrigue to what is already a compelling title race.

Newly promoted Mombasa United face a baptism of fire against Kakamega Homeboyz, a side with the experience and physicality to make life extremely difficult for top-flight newcomers. Promotion is one achievement; survival is quite another, and Mombasa United's ability to adapt quickly to the demands of the Premier League will determine how their debut season unfolds.

Elsewhere, record champions Tusker FC travel to face Ulinzi Stars — themselves 2010 champions — in a fixture that carries the hallmarks of one of the division's most intriguing early-season contests. Both clubs possess the pedigree and ambition to feature prominently in the upper half of the table, and their opening encounter is likely to offer an early indication of where each side stands heading into the long months ahead.

The 2026/27 season is scheduled to conclude on 16 May 2027, giving clubs nine months of football in which reputations will be made, ambitions tested and, for those at the bottom of the table, survival battles fought with everything at stake.

For Mathare United, those nine months begin with the knowledge that last season's near-miss cannot be repeated. A club of their history and tradition — former league champions with a proud record of developing Kenyan football talent — deserves to be competing for honours, not scrambling to avoid relegation. Whether Ouma can restore that ambition to reality remains the defining question of their season.

Two defeats in Kigali have not answered it. The league will.

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"The car in front of you is a Toyota" — why the Japanese brand rules Africa

Decades of reliability, an unmatched spare parts ecosystem and deep emotional loyalty have made Toyota more than a car manufacturer across the continent — but new challengers are emerging

By: John Irungu Maina
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Toyota

There is a familiar joke among African motorists: the car in front of you is a Toyota. It sounds like an exaggeration until you spend five minutes on any African road and watch a Corolla pass, a Hilux carry a load, a Probox dart between lanes on an errand, a Prado cruise through town and a Land Cruiser disappear into the distance ahead. The joke works because it is, in most places across the continent, largely true.

For decades, Toyota has built its African reputation on four qualities that matter deeply to motorists in markets where road conditions are unforgiving, incomes are carefully managed and the cost of mechanical failure can be devastating: reliability, durability, affordability and strong resale value. But reducing Toyota's dominance to those four words misses something important. What the Japanese manufacturer has built in Africa goes beyond engineering. It has built trust — and trust, in any market, is the hardest thing for a competitor to replicate.

Toyota's relationship with Africa stretches back generations. The Land Cruiser was among the first vehicles to establish the brand's continental credentials, proving itself on remote tracks, rugged terrain and roads that would defeat less capable machines. The Hilux followed as an indestructible workhorse — the vehicle of choice for farmers, contractors, aid organisations and anyone who needed a pickup truck that would start reliably in difficult conditions and keep working long after its contemporaries had given up. The Corolla, meanwhile, brought Toyota's reputation for dependability to urban families and small business owners, becoming the default sensible car across a continent where sensible choices matter enormously.

In Kenya, that relationship is particularly vivid. Toyota vehicles appear on every road in every county — from Nairobi's congested arteries to the dusty tracks of remote pastoral areas. Their ubiquity has created an entire support ecosystem that reinforces their dominance. Mechanics who know these vehicles intimately are available in almost every town. Spare parts are stocked widely and priced competitively. A Toyota owner in Kenya rarely faces the nightmare scenario of a broken-down vehicle whose components cannot be sourced locally or whose repair requires specialist knowledge unavailable outside the capital.

Then there is resale value — perhaps Toyota's most powerful commercial advantage in markets where vehicles are frequently bought and sold as assets rather than merely as transport. A used Corolla, Hilux or Land Cruiser needs no introduction when it comes to market. Its reputation has already been established by the generations of owners who drove it before. Buyers know what they are getting, and that certainty commands a premium. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle: more Toyotas on the road produce more skilled mechanics and parts suppliers, which makes ownership easier and cheaper, which attracts more buyers, which drives demand, which protects resale values, which makes Toyotas more attractive as purchases. Competitors entering the market face not just a popular brand but an entire industrial and commercial infrastructure built around it.

Beyond the economics lies something more personal. For many Africans, Toyota is woven into automotive memory. It may have been the car their parents owned, the vehicle in which they learned to drive, the first car they saved to buy or the workhorse that helped establish a business. That emotional connection accumulates over generations, and it is almost impossible to manufacture through marketing alone. It must be earned through years of consistent, honest performance — and Toyota has earned it.

That position is, however, no longer uncontested. Chinese manufacturers — among them Jetour, BYD, Chery and GWM — are entering African markets with modern designs, advanced technology and competitive pricing that is forcing a genuine reassessment of the landscape. The Jetour T2 is a case in point, offering rugged styling, four-wheel-drive capability and strong performance at a price point that directly targets buyers who might previously have defaulted to an established Japanese SUV. Electric and hybrid options from Chinese manufacturers are also beginning to appear in markets that Toyota has long treated as exclusively its own.

Toyota cannot indefinitely rely on the reputation it built in the past. It must continue improving its technology, accelerate its embrace of electrification and give customers compelling reasons to remain loyal in a more competitive environment. The brand is aware of this, and its continued investment in hybrid technology and next-generation vehicle platforms suggests it understands the challenge ahead.

Yet its greatest advantage remains the one no competitor can purchase or engineer quickly: time. A new manufacturer can produce a powerful engine, a sophisticated interior or a technologically impressive SUV. What it cannot immediately produce is decades of accumulated customer experience across a continent of more than a billion people.

That is why the joke endures.

The car in front of you is a Toyota. It is more than a punchline. It is a portrait of how deeply one brand has embedded itself in the daily life of a continent — and a reminder that Africa did not simply adopt Toyota. In many ways, Africa helped make Toyota what it is today.

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