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Countdown 2027

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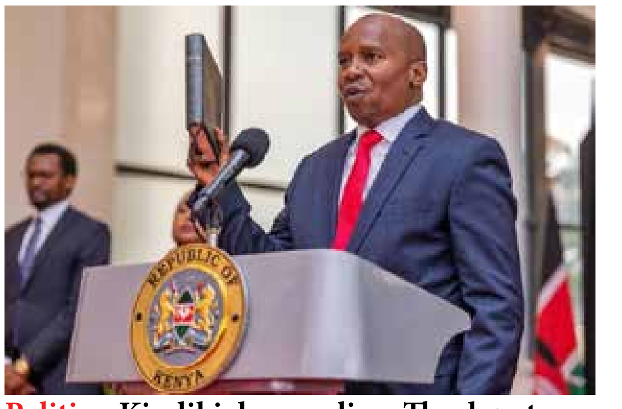

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Ruto launches police rebrand with new uniforms

BY MKT REPORTER
@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

President William Ruto yesterday unveiled new uniforms for the Kenya Police Service as part of a broader rebranding exercise intended to signal a shift in the force's identity, culture and relationship with the public it serves.

The redesign, presented at a ceremony attended by senior security officials, is being framed by the government as one element of a wider transformation agenda for the service — one that Ruto said would change not only how officers appear but how they conduct themselves.

The announcement has, however, drawn scepticism from opposition leaders and civil society. Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka was pointed in his criticism, noting that the previous uniform had itself been changed only eight years ago.

"Kenyans want the police trained on how to change the way they serve Kenyans, not how to wear uniforms. They should be humane in their service delivery," Kalonzo said.

For a public that has endured years of complaints about police brutality, extrajudicial conduct and corruption, the test of this rebrand will not be measured in fabric and insignia — but in behaviour on the streets.
















Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times

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

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

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

Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka yesterday took aim at the government's decision to redesign the national police uniform, dismissing the move as a costly distraction from the deeper reforms Kenyans are demanding from their security forces. Kalonzo noted that the previous uniform had itself been changed only eight years ago, questioning the rationale and expense of another overhaul at a time when public confidence in the police remains fragile. He argued that what ordinary Kenyans want is not a new look but a fundamental shift in how officers conduct themselves on the streets. "Kenyans want the police trained on how to change the way they serve Kenyans, not how to wear uniforms. They should be humane in their service delivery," Kalonzo said.

Isuzu East Africa yesterday handed marathon legend Eliud Kipchoge the 159th and final unit of the Kipchoge 1:59 Limited Edition D-Max, bringing to a close a three-year vehicle campaign inspired by his historic sub-two-hour marathon run. In a fitting conclusion to the campaign, Kipchoge purchased the final vehicle himself — the same number as the total production run, a figure chosen to honour his legendary time of 1:59:40 clocked at the INEOS Challenge in Vienna in 2019, when he became the first human to run a marathon in under two hours. Each of the 159 desert-orange pickups, assembled locally and bearing the Kenyan flag on the grille, carries the owner's name engraved on the vehicle. The campaign also gave rise to the Kipchoge 1:59 Club, uniting owners around his enduring philosophy of excellence and perseverance — a community as much as a collectors' circle.

Sports Principal Secretary Elijah Mwangi yesterday directed athletes across all disciplines to register with their respective national federations — or with the Registrar of Sports if competing individually — after top skater Kevin Kiarie once again turned to the public for financial support to attend an international tournament. Mwangi said the directive was aimed at ensuring athletes access structured government support rather than relying on public fundraising, which he described as an unsustainable and undignified path for competitive sportspeople representing the country. Proper registration, he said, opens the door to official funding channels and ensures athletes are recognised within the national sports framework. Kiarie's repeated appeals for public assistance have reignited debate about Kenya's support structures for athletes in minority sports, where federation backing remains thin and government visibility even thinner.

The Ministry of Health yesterday intensified emergency preparedness measures across flood-prone regions ahead of the anticipated El Niño rains, warning that heavy rainfall poses significant public health risks that require urgent community vigilance. The ministry said flooding and displacement historically trigger sharp rises in disease outbreaks, particularly in areas where rising waters contaminate drinking sources and overwhelm sanitation systems already under strain. Officials are working to pre-position medical supplies, strengthen surveillance networks and coordinate with county health departments to ensure rapid response capacity is in place before the rains arrive. Residents in low-lying and historically flood-affected areas have been urged to take precautionary measures, including securing clean water storage and reporting unusual illness patterns to the nearest health facility without delay.

Zambian opposition leader Brian Mundubile surrendered to police yesterday after two weeks in hiding, turning himself in following a summons over treason allegations stemming from his role in last month's disputed presidential election. Mundubile, who finished second in the contested poll, had evaded authorities since the summons was issued, with police accusing him of posing a threat to national security. State media reported that he presented himself voluntarily at a police station, ending a two-week standoff that had drawn sharp criticism from opposition figures and human rights groups who described the charges as politically motivated. His arrest deepens the post-election crisis gripping Zambia, raising fresh concerns among regional observers about the state of democratic governance and the treatment of political opposition in the southern African nation.

A new study has found that more than 240 million women in Sub-Saharan Africa lived within 50 kilometres of active deadly conflict in 2025, representing approximately one third of all women exposed to violence globally and a fivefold increase from 2010 levels. The findings, which lay bare the accelerating pace of insecurity across the region, signal a dramatic deterioration in the safety of women and girls over a fifteen-year period. Researchers warn that proximity to conflict exposes women to heightened risks of sexual violence, displacement and disruption of essential health services, with consequences that extend across generations. The report is expected to intensify calls on African governments and international bodies to prioritise gender-sensitive conflict prevention and place women's protection at the centre of peace and security frameworks.

Security Washington's investment in Kenyan policing arrives as Ruto unveils new uniforms

US pumps KSh930M into Kenya police modernisation

BY David Kimani
@themtkenyatimes

President William Ruto wiith the United States Chargé d'Affaires to Kenya, Ms. Susan M. Burns at the Kenya Police Training College in Kiganjo.

The United States government yesterday launched a KSh930M initiative to modernise and professionalise Kenya's police service, unveiled at the Kenya Police Training College in Kiganjo, Nyeri County, during a ceremony at which President William Ruto presided over the graduation of more than 6,000 new officers.

The $7M programme, announced by the US Embassy in Kenya, marks one of Washington's most significant direct investments in Kenyan security sector reform in recent years. It arrives at a politically charged moment — twelve months before Kenya's August 10, 2027 general election, in a country where the conduct of its police force remains one of the most contested questions in public life.

"We believe well-trained officers can best protect and serve their fellow citizens. Safety is vital for Kenyan and American businesses operating here," the US Embassy said. "This is why we are proud to launch a $7 million initiative today at the Police Training College in Kiganjo to support Kenya's pursuit of a modern, professional, and effective police service."

The programme signals that the United States views police reform in Kenya not merely as a domestic governance matter but as a strategic interest tied to trade, investment and regional stability. Kenya hosts one of the largest US embassies on the African continent and remains a critical partner in Washington's East Africa security architecture. American businesses with operations in Nairobi and beyond have a direct stake in whether Kenya's streets are safe and its institutions trustworthy.

The timing is layered with significance. Ruto also used yesterday's ceremony to unveil new uniforms for the Kenya Police Service as part of a broader rebranding exercise — a move that drew immediate scepticism from the opposition. Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka was pointed in his criticism, noting that the previous uniform had itself been changed only eight years ago. "Kenyans want the police trained on how to change the way they serve Kenyans, not how to wear uniforms. They should be humane in their service delivery," Musyoka said.

That tension — between symbolic gestures and structural change — sits at the heart of Kenya's policing debate. Human rights organisations have documented repeated patterns of excessive force, with security agencies implicated in the deaths of protesters during the 2024 and 2025 Gen Z demonstrations, in which at least 127 people were killed. Public trust in the police remains fragile, and with the election season gathering pace, how the force conducts itself over the next twelve months will matter enormously — both politically and constitutionally.

The US initiative, which focuses on training, professionalism and institutional effectiveness, is precisely the kind of long-term structural investment that reform advocates have called for. Whether KSh930M and American technical expertise can shift entrenched institutional culture within a politically sensitive timeframe is a question that will be answered not in Kiganjo's parade grounds — but on Kenya's streets.

Court halts KCB executive's burial

A husband's legal battle has placed a grieving family's farewell on hold — and raised sharp questions about an employer's role in death.

Rosemary Chemutai Kimwatu

BY Cherono Joyce
@themtkenyatimes

A Nairobi court yesterday temporarily halted the burial of KCB Bank Kenya executive Rosemary Chemutai Kimwatu after her husband moved to the Milimani Chief Magistrate's Court to stop funeral arrangements made without his involvement.

Kevin Migwe Kimwatu filed papers on August 26 arguing that despite being the deceased's husband and father of their four children, he had been sidelined from all decisions regarding her burial. He wants his wife interred at his ancestral home in Matasia, Ngong Sub-County, Kajiado County, rather than at her family's home in Kericho County as her relatives had planned.

Chemutai, who served as Head of Data Protection within KCB's Risk Division, died on August 21. The couple married at St Austin's Catholic Church, Nairobi, in 2013. Kimwatu says that although they had separated for about four months before her death, they had reconciled.

The dispute sharpened when Kimwatu alleges KCB issued a letter on August 25 instructing the funeral home to release the body only to his wife's sister. His lawyers argue that an employer has no legal authority to direct burial arrangements. They have also raised data protection concerns over personal information allegedly disclosed in that letter.

"This is certainly not the situation any family would wish to find itself in while grieving," the family said.

The bank, funeral home and relatives named as defendants will have an opportunity to respond.


NEWS PAPER
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+254 724 439 949, +254 720 918 828, +254 721 103 040, +254 713 318 438
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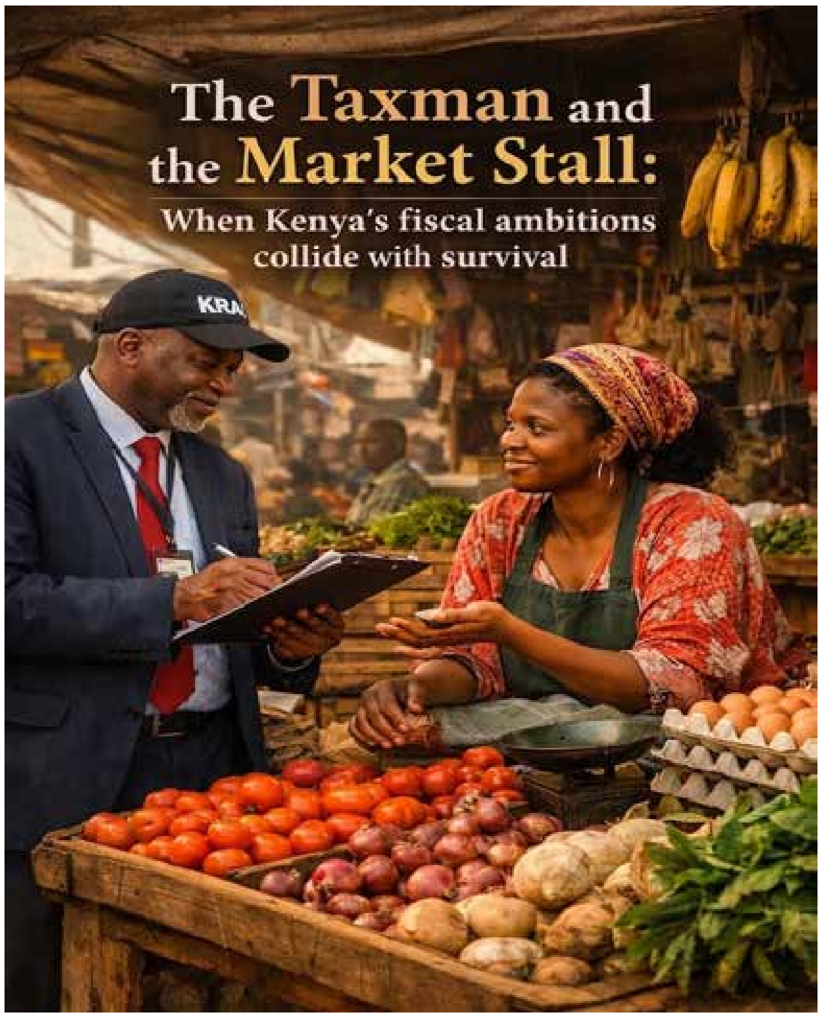
Business For a small trader operating out of a cramped stall in Kamukunji, Gikomba or along the bustling stretch of Luthuli Avenue, it represents an entirely different order of magnitude

The taxman and the market stall: When Kenya's fiscal ambitions collide with survival

BY Levis Wangamati
@themtkenyatimes



An order is placed overseas. A deposit is sent through mobile money or a local bank, calculated to the last shilling based on current freight costs and projected market demand. Weeks later, the shipment lands at the port or an inland container depot. By the time the goods are routed through customs clearance, the arithmetic has shifted fundamentally. The valuation benchmark has been adjusted upward. Logistical and clearance charges have moved. The slim profit margin that made the import venture viable when the order was first placed begins to evaporate — before the merchandise has even been unpacked in a local store.

For a large multinational corporation with deep financial reserves, diversified supply chains and a dedicated legal department, that kind of friction is a manageable variance on a quarterly balance sheet.

For a small trader operating out of a cramped stall in Kamukunji, Gikomba or along the bustling stretch of Luthuli Avenue, it represents an entirely different order of magnitude. It can mean the difference between keeping a business afloat and shutting down permanently under a mountain of unpayable debt.

That is the stark reality underlying yesterday's clashes in Nairobi's Central Business District between small-scale importers and the Kenya Revenue Authority over adjustments to consolidated cargo taxation. What appears from the sterile, air-conditioned corridors of government offices as a routine technical question of customs yield and revenue optimisation is, on the ground, an existential question of economic survival.

And that distinction matters profoundly.

When policymakers and tax technocrats decide to nudge a customs valuation benchmark upward, the language used to justify the move is clinical, orderly and administrative. We hear terms like revenue mobilisation, compliance efficiency, closing loopholes and creating a level playing field. On paper, the spreadsheet is clean. The policy memo reads logically. The projected Treasury inflows look convincing.

The marketplace, however, is none of those things.

The real marketplace is volatile, unforgiving and intensely competitive. Operating margins are razor-thin. Capital is often mobilised through loans, savings groups or borrowed resources. Stock can sit on shelves for weeks as consumer purchasing power fluctuates. Customers negotiate aggressively over every coin. Transport costs are unpredictable. Rent does not wait for bureaucratic adjustments. School fees do not pause because a container took an extra week to clear. Neither do family medical bills or the next inventory cycle.

A small trader does not experience a tax or valuation adjustment as a percentage point on a macroeconomic chart. They experience it as lost inventory, a cash-flow deficit, delayed debt repayments or a business model that suddenly ceases to make any economic sense.

This is where Kenya's broader fiscal policy confronts a profound structural contradiction.

The state is trying to walk in two directions at once. On one hand, it seeks more revenue from an informal economy that it simultaneously wants to expand, formalise and elevate as the engine of grassroots prosperity. It speaks the language of bottom-up economic transformation while frequently designing taxation from the top down. It celebrates the resilience of the small entrepreneur in policy speeches, yet often meets that same entrepreneur at the customs border primarily as a revenue target.

That is the defining irony of our current economic model.

You cannot simultaneously ask the informal sector to serve as Kenya's socioeconomic shock absorber, its largest employment generator and its grassroots growth engine — while treating every additional financial squeeze as though the sector possesses an infinite capacity to absorb pain.

The informal economy is not a minor side road running parallel to the formal economy. It is the main highway. It absorbs millions of citizens whom the formal labour market cannot accommodate. It builds commercial ecosystems where traditional institutions hesitate to invest. It moves goods into neighbourhoods and communities that conventional retail networks rarely reach.

Granted, it is messy. It is difficult to regulate. It grapples with genuine compliance challenges that any serious state must address. Yet it is also remarkably resilient. And governments should exercise real caution before they tax that resilience into fragility.

None of this is an argument that small traders should be placed above the law. A functioning state requires predictable revenue to finance public infrastructure, education, security and healthcare. Customs authorities have a legitimate responsibility to protect revenue, enforce standards and prevent abuse of trade frameworks.

However, strict enforcement is not synonymous with economic intelligence.

A tax policy that maximises immediate collection from a struggling enterprise today may inadvertently destroy the very business ecosystem that would have generated sustainable taxable activity tomorrow. That is the long-term calculation that policymakers too often overlook — and too rarely pay the price for overlooking.

The deeper problem is not taxation itself. It is unpredictability.

When importers cannot estimate what a shipment will cost before committing capital, business planning becomes speculation. When valuation rules change without adequate transition periods, risk is shifted disproportionately onto the smallest market participants. When clarification arrives only after protests have erupted, government is no longer managing policy. It is merely managing the consequences of policy.

That is why the familiar sequence has become so deeply troubling. A policy shift is announced. Traders raise concerns. Protests erupt. Security forces deploy. Clarifications are issued. Meetings are convened. Promises are made. Then the cycle repeats itself.

This is not a functioning feedback loop. It is institutional firefighting.

The solution cannot simply be another round of official statements or vague assurances that stakeholders are being engaged. Kenya needs permanent mechanisms that make meaningful consultation unavoidable rather than reactive. Major customs duty and valuation adjustments affecting small-scale importers should be accompanied by realistic transition windows, giving traders adequate time to adjust supply chains and honour existing financial commitments.

The government should also consider a transparent, tiered framework that clearly distinguishes between multinational corporations moving thousands of containers and associations of traders pooling modest resources to import a single consignment. These are fundamentally different economic actors and should not be treated as though they operate under identical conditions.

Beyond that, a dedicated trade ombudsman mechanism linking the Kenya Revenue Authority directly with market associations, clearing agents and small-business representatives would help bridge the growing gap between Times Tower and the market stalls. A trader should never feel that their only path to being heard is marching into the central business district under the threat of teargas. That is not a concession to disorder. It is sound economic governance.

The objective must be to move policy arguments from the streets to the negotiating table — replacing confrontation with predictability and emergency clarifications with genuine institutional dialogue.

Kenya does not have to choose between collecting revenue and protecting small businesses. It simply has to become considerably better at doing both.

A market stall is never just a physical space. It is somebody's capital. Somebody's rent. Somebody's school fees. Somebody's payroll. Somebody's second chance. And when the state squeezes that micro-economy without providing room to breathe, the consequences eventually travel far beyond the market stalls and return — with interest — to the state itself.

The lesson from Nairobi's streets must therefore extend beyond the latest tax dispute.

Kenya cannot build a bottom-up economy through top-down surprises. It cannot demand compliance without offering predictability. It cannot celebrate entrepreneurship while making survival increasingly difficult. And it cannot continue waiting for the teargas to clear before it starts listening.

The marketplace should be where economic policy builds livelihoods. Not where it goes to fight.

Tax ....

Tear gas, shuttered shops and a government out of touch: The KRA tax revolt that could define Kenya's road to 2027

BY James Mwangi
@themtkenyatimes

Traders are protesting new Sh3.2m KRA container tax

Hundreds of small-scale traders shut their shops and marched on the Kenya Revenue Authority's Times Tower headquarters in Nairobi yesterday, protesting a 28 per cent increase in the customs benchmark for consolidated cargo that they say threatens to destroy their livelihoods before a single coin reaches the government's coffers.

Shops along Moi Avenue, Kenyatta Avenue and Tom Mboya Street stood shuttered as traders from Kamukunji, Gikomba and Nyamakima markets took to the streets, many carrying Kenyan flags, banners and vuvuzelas, converging at the Kenya National Archives before marching toward Times Tower. Police responded with tear gas to disperse the crowd before it reached its destination — a scene that, with the August 10, 2027 general election now precisely twelve months away, carries consequences well beyond the question of customs benchmarks.

The dispute has a precise number at its centre. KRA raised the minimum customs benchmark for general containerised consolidated cargo from KSh2.5 million to KSh3.2 million, a change that took effect on 21 August 2026. The adjustment represents a KSh700,000 increase — roughly 28 per cent — in the benchmark used for consolidated cargo, the mechanism that allows small importers to pool their shipments and share the cost of a single container.

For Kenya's vast army of micro-importers, most of whom source clothing, electronics, kitchen appliances and household goods from China through shared containers, the arithmetic is brutal. Consolidators currently charge traders roughly KSh896 per kilogramme for air cargo and KSh640 per kilogramme for sea freight. With the revised benchmark in place, importers face compounded costs involving import duty, value added tax, excise duty, the Import Declaration Levy and the Railway Development Levy. For a trader operating on thin margins in a cramped stall in Eastleigh or along Luthuli Avenue, that is not a technical adjustment. It is a potential death sentence for the business.

KRA's position is that the benchmark is being misread. The authority insists the KSh3.2 million figure is not an automatic tax bill on every consolidated container but a risk-management reference used under a simplified clearance arrangement. "The minimum yield is not a representation of the actual tax liability for the goods contained in a container," KRA said in a statement issued on 27 August. The authority further argued that the previous KSh2.5 million benchmark had remained unchanged for approximately six years, despite significant shifts in exchange rates, freight charges and East African Community tax laws.

KRA said the revision is also intended to address undervaluation, under-declaration, misclassification and misdescription of goods — including the practice of declaring high-end smartphones as cheaper models to reduce customs liabilities. "This is not about targeting small traders. It is about creating a level playing field where businesses compete fairly," the authority said.

The traders are unconvinced. The Small Traders Association has vowed to sustain weekly demonstrations until KRA invites them to a proper negotiating table, arguing that the 28 per cent increase threatens the survival of micro-importers, wholesalers and retailers who rely on consolidated shipments. "These sudden punitive increases pose an immediate structural threat to the baseline survival of micro importers, local wholesale networks and everyday retail traders," a traders' representative said.

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Alliance of Kenya has been equally forceful in its opposition. It has demanded the immediate withdrawal of the KSh3.2 million benchmark, the permanent retention of the KSh2.5 million threshold, and a formal commitment that no future increase will be implemented without meaningful prior consultation with affected traders.

The political class moved swiftly to capitalise. Kiharu MP Ndindi Nyoro, leader of the People's Party of Kenya, took to social media on Friday to oppose the new benchmark, warning that the increase could not be allowed at a time when traders were already dealing with higher freight costs. He argued that traders in Nyamakima, Gikomba, Kamukunji, the Nairobi CBD and Eastleigh must be listened to. Nyoro's intervention was not simply a matter of principled concern — it was a calculated positioning in a political landscape where the allegiance of Nairobi's trading community is a prize worth fighting for.

That political dimension cannot be overstated. Kenya is witnessing unusually early political activity ahead of the August 2027 general election, shaped by a rapidly growing youth population, the political fallout from the 2025 Gen Z protests and the realignment of alliances following the impeachment of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and the death of former Prime Minister Raila Odinga. President William Ruto, who built his political identity on the language of the "hustler" — the small trader, the boda boda rider, the market woman — faces a profound credibility test when that same constituency is being tear-gassed outside the taxman's offices.

Ruto has pointed to the Hustler Fund as evidence of his commitment to small businesses, noting that it has lent KSh90B to 27 million Kenyans. "Hustler was not a slogan. Hustler was a fund," he said recently. But a government that speaks the language of the hustler while simultaneously raising import costs for the hustler's stock-in-trade is sending a contradictory message at precisely the wrong moment.

The dispute also carries regional implications. Kenya's Port of Mombasa serves Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, Burundi and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Regional trade experts warn that higher import costs may feed into inflation across East Africa, particularly for products that regional consumers depend on heavily. A benchmark set in Times Tower reverberates across the continent.

The latest standoff presents KRA with a delicate balancing act: raising revenue and curbing tax evasion without making formal importing prohibitively expensive for thousands of small businesses. The government invested in facilities such as the National Deconsolidation Centre at Nairobi Central Railway Station to make it easier for small traders to collect cargo transported by the Standard Gauge Railway — a gesture of support for informal traders that now sits awkwardly alongside the benchmark increase.

Speaking yesterday at the Kenya Police Service pass-out ceremony at Kiganjo, Ruto said Kenya was approaching an important moment in the life of the Republic. "Political competition is an essential feature of our democracy. Parties are at liberty to organise. Candidates must be free to campaign. Citizens must be free to assemble, listen, question, criticise, and choose," he said. The irony of those words being delivered on the same day that traders exercising precisely those rights were being dispersed with tear gas in the capital will not have been lost on Kenya's politically astute public.

The deeper problem here is structural and painfully familiar. KRA issues a new directive. Traders raise concerns. Protests erupt. Security forces intervene. Statements are issued. Meetings are promised. And the cycle threatens to begin again. It is not governance. It is crisis management with a press release.

With twelve months to polling day, the government needs the trading community's votes as much as it needs their taxes. The question is whether it can find a way to collect both — or whether Friday's tear gas will linger in the memory of Nairobi's market stalls long after the smoke clears.

Politics It was a message that landed with particular force in a county that sits at the intersection of Kenya's southern political geography — Kamba heartland, Taita tradition, and the restless Coast

Kalonzo comes to the Coast with a simple, devastating message: You have been betrayed

From Njukini to Amboseli, the Wiper leader is stitching together a southern Kenya coalition on a thread of broken government promises — and with twelve months to polling day, it may be enough to make him the opposition's standard-bearer.

Wiper Patriotic Front leader Kalonzo Musyoka and team Friday swept through Njukini in Taita Taveta County

BY Agnes Wavinya
@themtkenyatimes

Wiper Patriotic Front leader Kalonzo Musyoka yesterday swept through Njukini in Taita Taveta County, drawing an energetic and overflowing crowd as he sharpened his case for the presidency on a single, resonant argument: President William Ruto has made promises to marginalised communities, put his name to the paperwork, and then allowed the machinery of government to quietly ignore what was signed.

It was a message that landed with particular force in a county that sits at the intersection of Kenya's southern political geography — Kamba heartland, Taita tradition, and the restless Coast vote that every serious presidential candidate must court. The rally in Njukini, where the crowd chanted and waved in the afternoon heat, was both a political statement and a preview of what Musyoka and the United Alternative Government intend to build in the twelve months separating them from the August 10, 2027 general election.

The opposition in Kenya has rarely been more fragmented — or more urgently in need of a unifying figure. The death of former Prime Minister Raila Odinga in late 2025 removed the towering personality that had defined opposition politics for three decades. The impeachment of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua opened a new front, drawing parts of Mt Kenya into an anti-Ruto coalition without a settled leader. Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna's Linda Mwananchi movement has added further complexity, with its populist grassroots energy threatening to splinter the vote that a unified opposition needs to concentrate. Into this uncertain landscape, Musyoka has been moving with a quiet but unmistakable sense of purpose — and yesterday's rally was the clearest signal yet that he intends to be the one who holds it all together.

His central argument is built not on abstract ideology but on concrete, documented grievance. Nowhere is that grievance more pointed than in the story of Amboseli National Park. President Ruto personally presided over the transfer of the park's management to Kajiado County in November 2025, handing Kajiado Governor Joseph Ole Lenku a Deed of Transfer during Maa Cultural Week celebrations. The arrangement was specific and legally gazetted: 50 per cent of Amboseli's revenue to Kajiado from July 1, 2026, rising to 70 per cent in the following year and to full county control by 2028/2029. The park generates approximately KSh3B annually through gate fees, concession revenues and campsite income — money that was supposed to flow into Kajiado's hospitals, schools, roads and water infrastructure for communities that have guarded the ecosystem for generations.

July 1, 2026 came and went. The Kenya Wildlife Service released nothing. When Kajiado county officials arrived to collect the county's 50 per cent share, KWS officers — armed rangers — turned them away, citing a lack of instructions. Lenku told the Senate Public Accounts Committee in July that KWS had not remitted "even a coin" since the presidential proclamation. "How does KWS come and outrightly defy the presidency? What country have we become?" he asked the committee.

It is on this broken promise that Musyoka is building his campaign among the Maa community. The Maa nation, he told the crowd in Njukini, does not need another promise. It needs what was already signed and gazetted. "The money must be released. Amboseli must benefit Kajiado," he said. "Komboa Kenya." The phrase — liberate Kenya — has become the unifying slogan of his campaign, and it is gaining traction precisely because it does not ask voters to believe in something new. It asks them to demand what they were already told was theirs.

The political logic of Musyoka's southern Kenya strategy is sound. Taita Taveta, Kajiado, Makueni, Kajiado East and the broader Coast region represent a substantial bloc of votes that no winning presidential coalition can ignore. His recent tour of Makueni, Kajiado and Taita Taveta counties is part of a systematic effort to lock in the counties that border his Ukambani stronghold and extend his reach toward the Indian Ocean. His unveiling of a Coast team — led by Nyali MP Mohammed Ali, Wundanyi MP Danson Mwashako and former Gender Cabinet Secretary Aisha Jumwa — signals that the strategy is being translated from rally energy into organised political infrastructure.

Jumwa, who described herself as a servant of the people of Coast, was direct about the challenge ahead. She warned that the government would deploy resources and development projects as election season intensified, but urged voters to exercise their democratic right independently at the ballot. "Accept any benefits brought to you," she said, "but vote your conscience." It was a message calibrated to voters who have felt the weight of government attention only when their votes are being sought.

Kenya is witnessing unusually early and unusually intense political activity for a country whose election is still a year away. A combination of factors — a rapidly growing youth population, the political fallout from the 2025 Gen Z protests, the reshaping of alliances following Odinga's death and Gachagua's impeachment — has accelerated the campaign cycle. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission has formally set the election date and commenced the election period, lending an official structure to what is already a fast-moving contest.

Ruto enters this period with real vulnerabilities. His approval ratings have come under sustained pressure from the cost of living, controversial taxation measures and lingering anger over the security forces' conduct during the 2024 and 2025 protests, in which at least 127 people were killed. His relationship with former President Uhuru Kenyatta has deteriorated into open mutual hostility, with the two trading accusations over who is pulling opposition strings. Ruto's suggestion that Kenyatta is a "sponsor" of opposition politicians has met with a sharp public rebuttal from Kenyatta, who said the choice of 2027's president belongs to the people — "if they say they want Kalonzo, it is Kalonzo."

Musyoka has moved to secure a parallel vote-tallying system for 2027, announcing plans to deploy Gen Z agents with mobile phones at polling stations nationwide to transmit results before official tallies are announced. The move reflects hard-earned wariness from Kenya's disputed election history — and a determination that this time, the count will not be contested on anyone else's terms.

For the people of Njukini who turned out in such numbers yesterday, the appeal is ultimately simple. A government that makes promises in public ceremonies and then allows its own agencies to ignore them in plain sight is a government that has run out of excuses. Musyoka is betting that by the time August 10, 2027 arrives, enough Kenyans in enough counties will agree — and that the Coast, the Maa nation, Ukambani and beyond will march to the ballot together under a single, liberating slogan.

Komboa Kenya.

Politics Kindiki told ODM plainly that even in 2027, he will be the running mate of President William Ruto, who will be seeking a second term in office

Kindiki draws a line: The deputy president who refuses to be traded away

Deputy President Kithure Kindiki

BY Collins Kibet
@themtkenyatimes

At Nembure Stadium in Embu County last week, Deputy President Kithure Kindiki stood before 20,000 grassroots leaders and delivered a message that was as much a political declaration as it was a rally address. He told ODM plainly that even in 2027, he will be the running mate of President William Ruto, who will be seeking a second term in office. The crowd roared. The message landed.

But behind the bravado lies one of the most complex and precarious political battles Kenya has seen in years — a three-front war being fought simultaneously against ODM's ambitions, the lingering shadow of his predecessor and the shifting calculus within the Kenya Kwanza coalition itself. The debate stretches far beyond the corridors of power. It is being fought in church gatherings across Mt Kenya, inside ODM strategy meetings, on social media, at government functions and within the Kenya Kwanza coalition itself. Every political move by Kindiki, every presidential tour and every opinion poll is increasingly being interpreted through one question: Is the Deputy President secure?

How it began

Appointed by President William Ruto in October 2024 to replace impeached Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, Kindiki's role was intended to consolidate control over the Mt Kenya voting bloc, which had delivered 87 per cent of the region's votes to Ruto in 2022. It was a high-stakes appointment from the outset. Kindiki was expected to hold a restless mountain, manage a bruised coalition and deliver results — all while his predecessor refused to disappear.

He has served as Deputy President since 1 November 2024. In under two years, the political ground beneath him has shifted dramatically. Gachagua, refusing to fade into political irrelevance, formed the Democracy for Citizens Party and forged alliances with key Mt Kenya leaders. And then came ODM.

ODM's demand

What began as a governance partnership is increasingly taking the shape of an early coalition negotiation, with both parties seeking to secure their interests ahead of the 2027 General Election. ODM has made it clear that its support for any future coalition with President Ruto cannot be taken for granted. Senior party leaders have publicly insisted that if UDA fields the presidential candidate in 2027, ODM should produce the running mate.

The Orange party's position hardened after joining the broad-based government through a Memorandum of Understanding negotiated by the late Raila Odinga in March 2025. On November 3, 2025, Oburu had indicated that ODM would not accept any post below the deputy presidency in negotiations.

The language from Kisumu has grown bolder by the month. Speaking on August 4 at State House during President Ruto's meeting with village elders, Oburu said the deputy president's post should be open for negotiation, questioning openly why he could not occupy it. "Particularly the number two position. Don't you think I deserve to be number two? Can't I be number two?" he asked, to the evident discomfort of Kindiki's allies.

Kisii Governor Simba Arati went further, spelling out ODM's conditions with unusual candour. He stated that the only circumstances under which ODM would relinquish the running mate position would be if President Ruto chose to contest the presidency under the ODM banner instead of UDA, or if Kindiki left UDA and officially joined ODM.

Kindiki's fightback

Faced with pressure on multiple fronts, Kindiki has responded not with silence but with an escalating mobilisation campaign across Mt Kenya East. On August 15, he met more than 30,000 elders brought together by the Mt Kenya East Council of Elders, representing communities from Meru, Tharaka-Nithi, Embu, Isiolo and Mwea areas. The following weekend, he hosted thousands more at Kinoru Stadium in Meru, before heading back to his Irunduni home in Tharaka-Nithi to address 15,000 UDA grassroots officials.

Kindiki vowed to wipe out the opposition's influence, terming his mobilisation skills superior to Gachagua's. "The opposition should not dare mess with me. Gachagua has been having an easy time in the Mountain because we were busy working as they campaigned. Let him know that I am a lethal striker in political campaigns," he said.

His allies have been equally forceful. Tharaka-Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki argued that Kindiki was a net electoral asset to President Ruto, capable of mobilising more votes than any running mate proposed by ODM. "We are ready to hand over Prof Kindiki to ODM provided that he remains Deputy President in 2027," he said. Embu Governor Cecily Mbarire and Public Service Cabinet Secretary Geoffrey Ruku dismissed what they termed persistent and provocative claims by Oburu over the deputy president's position, insisting the seat is not vacant.

Kindiki has also signalled a longer-term political ambition beyond 2027, positioning himself as a potential presidential contender while challenging opponents to prepare for a prolonged political contest. Speaking to UDA grassroots leaders at his Irunduni home, he presented his political survival as part of a wider battle for influence in the Kenya Kwanza administration and the region.

The Ruto factor

At the heart of this contest is a question that nobody is yet willing to answer publicly: what does President Ruto actually want? President Ruto's suggestion of gender equity in future tickets could potentially sideline Kindiki. Competition for the Deputy President position within Mt Kenya is intensifying, with Kirinyaga Central MP Gachoki Gitari advocating for Anne Waiguru as a potential running mate.

Ruto has publicly expressed confidence in his deputy. But in Kenyan politics, presidential silence on such matters is rarely reassuring. ODM, emboldened by its cooperation agreement with Kenya Kwanza, has openly declared that it wants the country's second-highest office if it is to support President Ruto's re-election. The demands represent more than ordinary coalition bargaining — they introduce an entirely new layer of uncertainty into discussions previously centred almost exclusively on Mt Kenya politics.

The historical parallel

Kindiki's predicament has historical parallels. In Zambia, Levy Mwanawasa resigned as vice-president in 1994 following differences within Frederick Chiluba's administration. He briefly left frontline politics but returned as the ruling party's presidential candidate in 2001, winning and becoming Zambia's third president. Kenya's Jaramogi Oginga Odinga followed a different path — he resigned as vice-president in 1966 after falling out with President Jomo Kenyatta, formed the Kenya People's Union and established himself as the country's leading opposition figure. History, in other words, offers no single template.

What comes next

For now, Kindiki is betting on the ground — on grassroots numbers, regional solidarity and the argument that replacing him would cost Ruto more votes in Mt Kenya than ODM could ever compensate for from Nyanza. Mt Kenya leaders have maintained that Kindiki will not be sacrificed in an effort to accommodate ODM. The by-elections victory in February, in which Kindiki played a leading role, hardened that conviction.

But coalitions are transactional by nature, and the pressure is real. The coming weeks will determine whether Kindiki's show of force is enough to settle the question definitively — or whether it simply raises the stakes of a contest that has only just begun.

The Deputy President's message is clear enough: he is no pushover. Whether that declaration is sufficient to hold his seat is the question Kenya's political class is watching most closely as 2027 draws near.

Parenting **It was not a dramatic conversation. There was no major life lesson announced, no grand speech about parenting. We were simply talking**

The older I get, the more I understand my father

Behind the ordinary things we take for granted are years of quiet sacrifice we may never fully see.

BY Hadassah Karangu
@themtkenyatimes

There are things about our parents that we only begin to understand when we grow older. As children, we see them through a narrow lens — what they give us, what they deny us and the rules they impose. We notice the things they bought, the opportunities they provided and, perhaps most vividly, the things they refused to allow us to do. But adulthood has a strange way of reshaping that perspective. Suddenly, the ordinary begins to look extraordinary.

I experienced one of those moments recently while sitting and talking with my father.

It was not a dramatic conversation. There was no major life lesson announced, no grand speech about parenting. We were simply talking. Yet somewhere in that ordinary exchange, I found myself looking at my upbringing differently — noticing things I had long grown accustomed to and, in growing accustomed to them, had quietly stopped appreciating.

I thought about our farm and the investments my father has made over the years. The water infrastructure. The taps placed in different parts of the compound to make work easier. The countless decisions behind developing and maintaining a piece of land — the planning, the labour, the repairs, the expenses and the constant, quiet thinking about what would make tomorrow easier than today. I realised that what I had always considered normal was actually somebody's sacrifice. And perhaps that is one of the greatest ironies of childhood: we mistake our parents' sacrifices for the ordinary conditions of life.

It made me think more deeply about fatherhood.

Let me be clear from the outset: this is not an argument against single mothers. It would be both unfair and intellectually dishonest to suggest that children raised without fathers cannot thrive. They absolutely can. Millions of women have raised children under extraordinarily difficult circumstances and produced responsible, educated and compassionate adults. Many single mothers have carried responsibilities that were never meant to be theirs alone. They deserve recognition, not pity. But acknowledging their extraordinary work should not prevent us from having an honest conversation about the value of an involved father.

Because fathers can matter enormously.

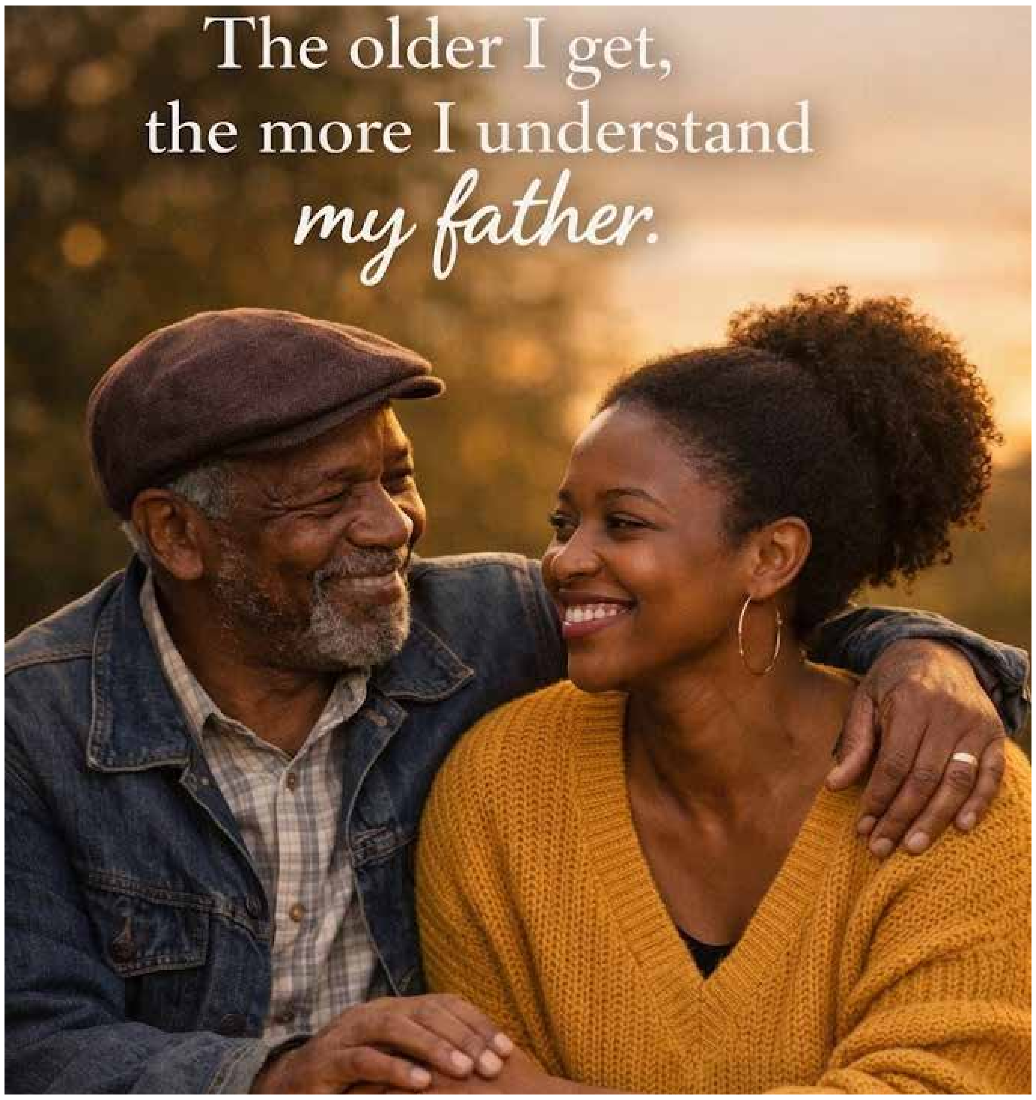
Not necessarily because they are fathers, but because of the particular role they can play when they are present, responsible and emotionally invested in their children's lives. There is, after all, a difference between having a father and experiencing fatherhood. A man can live under the same roof as his children and still be absent from their lives. He can pay school fees and put food on the table while never once asking his child how they are doing. He can be physically present but emotionally unavailable. The real question, then, is not simply whether there is a man in the house. The question is: what kind of presence does a child actually experience?

Growing up, I did not always understand the value of my father's actions. But now, looking around our farm, I see more than physical structures and investments. I see a philosophy of life. I see someone who has spent years asking questions that children rarely think to ask. What will this place need in five years? How can we make this work easier? What needs to be repaired? What can be improved? These may appear to be ordinary questions. But children learn from ordinary things.

A child watching a parent solve problems is learning problem-solving. A child watching a parent work despite exhaustion is learning resilience. A child watching a parent plan for the future is learning responsibility. A child being corrected after a mistake is learning that actions have consequences. And sometimes, a child simply needs someone older to say: that is not the right way — try again.

That does not mean mothers cannot teach these lessons. They absolutely can and do. It simply means that different people bring different experiences, perspectives and forms of guidance into a child's life. This is where the conversation about fatherhood needs to grow up. For too long, society has reduced fathers to providers. A father's success is measured by whether he brings money home, pays school fees or builds a house. Those things matter. But fatherhood is far larger than a payslip.

Children need fathers who talk to them and listen. Who correct without humiliating. Who demonstrate responsibility rather than merely demanding it. Who can admit when they are wrong. Who teach their sons that becoming a man is not about aggression or conquest, but about responsibility, self-control and the courage to do what is right. Who teach their daughters that their worth is not determined by the attention of men, but by who they are and what they are capable of becoming.



Father and daughter

This matters especially for boys. There is a great deal of talk today about young men needing to "man up" — but we rarely ask where they are supposed to learn what healthy manhood actually looks like. Someone has to show them. And often, the most powerful lesson is not a lecture. It is observation. A boy watches how his father treats his mother. He watches how his father treats people who cannot offer him anything in return. He watches how he behaves when money is tight, when things go wrong, whether he keeps his promises and whether the man who demands honesty from him is himself honest. The child may say nothing. But he is always taking notes.

The same is true for girls. A daughter's understanding of respect and healthy masculinity can be shaped significantly by the men she encounters growing up. But this does not mean a girl without a father is destined to lack these qualities. Children can find excellent role models in mothers, grandparents, teachers, uncles and community members. Human beings are remarkably capable of filling gaps. Still, we should not romanticise absence simply because some children overcome it. The fact that someone can survive without something does not mean that thing has no value.

There is also an uncomfortable truth we must confront: many fathers have voluntarily removed themselves from their children's lives. Some leave after separation. Some disappear after an unplanned pregnancy. Some provide money but no relationship, genuinely believing that paying the bills completes their parenting responsibility. It does not. A child may remember the school fees. But they will remember far more vividly the father who attended their school event, listened to their worries or simply sat beside them when life became difficult.

There is a form of wealth that does not appear in a bank account. It is the wealth of having someone who truly knows you — who notices when you are unusually quiet, who can recognise a dangerous decision before you make it, who has lived long enough to say: I have been there. Do not take that road.

Legacy is not always a mansion or a bank account. Sometimes it is a water tap installed in the right place because someone thought about the people who would use it years later. Sometimes it is a work ethic passed quietly from one generation to the next. Sometimes it is a sentence your father said ten years ago that suddenly makes perfect sense when you are older and facing something hard.

Appreciate your parents while they are still here. Not because they are perfect, but because behind many ordinary things we take for granted are years of sacrifice we may never fully see.

The greatest inheritance a parent can leave a child is not what they put in their hands — but what they put in their character.

Faith **PCEA is one of Kenya's oldest and most established Protestant denominations, with a significant presence across the country and a long tradition of engagement on social and governance issues.**

PCEA distances itself from State House visit row

Church moderator moves to quell storm over clergy's alleged bid to seek financial favours from politicians.

BY Grace Wanja
@themtkenyatimes

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) yesterday moved to distance itself from an alleged plan by some of its clergy to visit State House and other political figures in search of financial favours, issuing a strongly worded statement reaffirming the church's independence and non-partisan stance.

The statement, signed by Moderator Thequ Mutahi of the 24th General Assembly, was addressed to all Presbytery Clerks and came in response to a trending video clip that had sparked concern among the faithful and the wider public.

"PCEA is not organising, sponsoring or endorsing any delegation to visit any politician to seek financial favours or political patronage, whether at State House, Wamunyoro, Tseikuru or Sisi ndio Sifuna," Mutahi said in the circular issued from the Office of the General Assembly in Nairobi.

Mutahi acknowledged that the church was facing financial pressures but was unequivocal that such challenges could not be allowed to compromise its doctrinal integrity or its role as a voice of conscience in public life. "Our financial challenges must never compromise our conscience, our doctrines or our ability to speak truth to power," he said.

PCEA Moderator Thequ Mutahi

The statement underscored the church's commitment to what Mutahi described as political hygiene — a principle, he said, that must be jealously guarded against partisan interests. He called on members to remain calm and prayerful, expressing confidence in the institution's foundations.

PCEA is one of Kenya's oldest and most established Protestant denominations, with a significant presence across the country and a long tradition of engagement on social and governance issues.

Pain has exhausted me

Problems have exhausted me,
The slander blocking my path has exhausted me.
Those who call themselves friends to my face,
Yet laugh behind my back—
Those two-faced souls have exhausted me to the core.

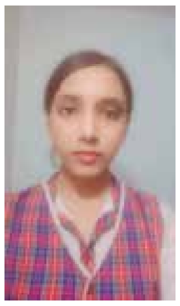
Love has exhausted me, devotion has exhausted me,
The whispered words saying "I love you" have exhausted me.
Those who murmured in my ear
Only to turn their backs later—
Those whose pride reaches the skies yet are low inside have exhausted me.

Money has exhausted me, trade has exhausted me,
My pockets emptying before they can even be filled have exhausted me.
Gone even before it arrives,
Bending my back in hard labor has exhausted me.

Testing me over and over,
Do not break me, life.
Do not withhold
Your happy days from me, life.
From the share of happiness gifted to every servant,
Do not deprive me either, life!

Author: Amirova Nodira

The weight of trust: Beyond just believing



By: Shruti Kumari, Class Xth B

Trust is a heavy world.In today's world, finding someone you can blindly believe in is incredibly hard. We guard our emotions, scared of being hurt. But as the saying goes, "EARNING TRUST IS A DIFFICULT CLIMB, BUT CARRYING ITS RESPONSIBILITY EVERY DAY IS REAL JOURNEY."

While trusting someone requires a leap of faith, being the person who is trusted is a much bigger test of character. When someone puts their faith in you, they hand over a piece of their vulnerability. Keeping that trust alive requires consistency, honesty, and selflessness every single day. It is not a one-time promise, but a lifelong responsibility.

Ultimately, breaking trust takes just a few seconds, but carrying it safely through life is what define true loyalty and maturity.

Shruti Kumari
X
DAV PUBLIC SCHOOL
NH-3, NIT, FARIDABAD

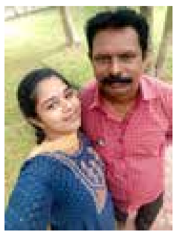
Rain

Rain, you bring a message, as if from you,
Gently caressing my face…
To remember the warmth of your touch,
I tried to warm the raindrops in vain…

Not a single one resembles you,
You are only the friend of the night.
Wrapping my heart in deepest darkness,
You have left me alone with loneliness…

Manzura Asqarova
Uzbekistan

My Dad, My God



I'm obliged to my dad,
Who stood behind my talents.
Advised me for some reason,
It moulded me into a true person.
He made my fears run,
All I had with him was fun.
My mistakes are in regret,
Yet been affectionate to me
He has never been a nit-picker
He loves me, the way I am.
Even if I've one more birth,
He should be my dad forever.

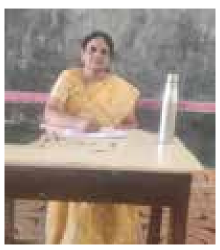
M Sruthi Bala MA
English Department
Ethiraj Women's College
Chennai
Tamilnadu

The promises were just a deception

Will going to repair roads ,give 24/7 hr electricity and water connection
If we won , I promise, promise, promise said he.
But did we get what he claimed?
Unfortunately not , without the slightest guilt .
What happened about the promise?
Why we , the one who suffer ?
Not we were , the one to give the authority ?
Are thoughts of everyone.
Is this about corruption or fake promise or betrayal?
I'm not the one who know.
Hoping to believe that this is a dream .
Not reality of falsehood, we're facing now
When it's going to end ,
Everyone wants badly to know .

Sneha
XII Humanities
DAV PUBLIC SCHOOL
NH-3 ,NIT, FARIDABAD

Beautiful Beginnings and Endings



Every sunset is proof that endings can be beautiful.
Every sunrise spreads its wings beautifully and brings a pleasant moment to the wonderful world. Likewise, every sunset creates a beautiful scenery in the peaceful evening.
Both beginnings and endings can be beautiful, depending on how we look at them.
Everyone has a dream. Dreams become thoughts, and thoughts become actions.
Every action has two faces:
a beginning and an ending.
Behind every beautiful ending, many struggles are hidden.
Those struggles help us build something beautiful and new.
So, do something new with courage.
Never be afraid of endings,
because even endings can be beautiful.

__G.YasminSirajudheen
Secondary grade teacher
Melmalayanur block
Villupuram dt.

Dark nights

Dark nights seems scary right?
Alone with nowhere to hide,
I was stuck in a dark night.

Nights that shatters your pride,
Are called the scariest dark nights.
With no hope with no sense of light ,
I was swallowed by the night.

I don't know where to go,
whom to find,
To guide me back to myself,
to reclaim the pride I'd left behind.

The strength to fight,
The hope to escape the dark night.
I needed to find myself before the sunrise.

If I want to escape the dark night ,
I need to let go of the pride that holds me behind,
the past that became my dark night.

The sunrise that comes after the night,
shines the brightest and holds the highest pride,
I need to become the sunrise of my dark nights ,
so that the dark night does not seem scary right.

Priyanka Yadav
Alumna
DAV PUBLIC SCHOOL
NH-3 ,NIT ,FARIDABAD

Constitution Ochoki called on Kenyans to remember the people who fought for constitutional reforms and to protect the gains made over the past 16 years

Kenyans urged to appreciate gains of 2010 constitution as country marks 16th anniversary

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themtkenyatimes

Wilkins Ochoki

As Kenya marks the 16th anniversary of the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, advocate Wilkins Ochoki has urged Kenyans to appreciate the freedoms and reforms introduced by the country's supreme law.

Ochoki, an Advocate of the High Court based in Kisii, said the journey to the 2010 Constitution was long and difficult, with many Kenyans losing their lives and others suffering detention and other forms of human rights violations in the struggle for constitutional reforms.

He said the Constitution had significantly transformed the country, particularly by strengthening the rights of arrested persons.

"Before the Constitution, the 24-hour rule for arrested persons was not there. Police could keep people in custody for a very long time. We even had detention without trial," Ochoki said.

He noted that Kenyans should not take such freedoms for granted, saying the Constitution had also expanded the country's democratic space by guaranteeing freedoms of association, assembly and peaceful protest.

Ochoki also highlighted devolution as one of the major achievements of the 2010 Constitution, saying the establishment of county governments, governors and county assemblies had brought governance closer to the people.

He, however, acknowledged that the implementation of some constitutional provisions remains a challenge.

He cited the constitutional requirement on gender representation, saying the two-thirds gender principle has not been fully realised in elective positions and public appointments.

According to Ochoki, Kenya must continue working towards the full implementation of the Constitution rather than only celebrating its achievements.

He also raised concerns about what he described as the misuse of constitutional freedoms, arguing that while Kenyans have greater space to associate and express themselves, those freedoms should be exercised responsibly.

Despite the challenges, Ochoki said the 2010 Constitution had given Kenyans important safeguards, including presidential term limits.

He observed that the Constitution provides for a maximum of two five-year terms for a sitting president, unless the Constitution is amended.

Ochoki called on Kenyans to remember the people who fought for constitutional reforms and to protect the gains made over the past 16 years.

"As Kenyans, we need to really appreciate that we have a lot of freedoms," he said, urging citizens to remain vigilant in defending the Constitution and ensuring that its provisions are fully implemented.

The 2010 Constitution was promulgated on August 27, 2010, following years of agitation for political, democratic and institutional reforms. It replaced the previous Constitution and introduced major changes, including devolution, an expanded Bill of Rights and stronger checks and balances among state institutions.

Ochoki, an Advocate of the High Court based in Kisii, said the journey to the 2010 Constitution was long and difficult, with many Kenyans losing their lives and others suffering detention and other forms of human rights violations in the struggle for constitutional reforms.
He said the Constitution had significantly transformed the country, particularly by strengthening the rights of arrested persons. "Before the Constitution, the 24-hour rule for arrested persons was not there.

Meru Kiome encouraged farmers to revisit traditional practices, including the use of animal manure, alongside modern agricultural knowledge

Meru farmers urged to go back to basics as Safaricom launches farming bundle

A new digital product promises extension services, input discounts and hospital cover — but the deputy governor says safer farming must start in the soil.

BY Brian Gitonga
@themtkenyatimes

Farmers in Meru County have been urged to embrace safer agricultural practices and reduce their dependence on potentially harmful chemicals, as concerns grow over the link between farm inputs and rising rates of diet-related illness in the region.

The call came yesterday at the launch of Safaricom's Bundle ya Mkulima in Meru County, where Deputy Governor Lindah Kiome told farmers that how food is grown matters as much as how much of it is produced.

Kiome encouraged farmers to revisit traditional practices, including the use of animal manure, alongside modern agricultural knowledge. She said such methods offered viable alternatives for those seeking to produce food while reducing unnecessary exposure to agrochemicals.

"In the past, our people used manure from animals to grow their crops, which is why experts today say that using such manure is one of the safest ways to produce crops that are healthy for the body," Kiome said.

She also raised concern over the burden of cancer in the county, citing esophageal and gastrointestinal cancers among conditions that local doctors have flagged. Kiome said the pattern should prompt residents to pay closer attention to how their food is produced and what goes into it.

> **"In the past, our people used manure from animals to grow their crops, which is why experts today say that using such manure is one of the safest ways to produce crops that are healthy for the body," Kiome said.**

Meru County, Deputy Governor Lindah Kiome Adreses the farmers | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

"Doctors have pointed to many cases involving esophageal and gastrointestinal cancers, which they say are linked to what people consume. That is why it is important to embrace safe farming practices," she said, adding that the situation made it all the more urgent for farmers to learn how to handle farm inputs responsibly.

Meru County Executive Committee Member for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Janaro Gatangugi welcomed the Bundle ya Mkulima initiative, saying it would make it significantly easier for the county to reach farmers with extension and veterinary services without requiring them to travel long distances in search of assistance.

"Safaricom has made our work easier in providing farmers with extension and veterinary services. Through Bundle ya Mkulima, farmers do not have to leave home because they can use data bundles to seek information and assistance on problems affecting their crops and animals," Gatangugi said.

He said the digital approach would make access to agricultural support faster, more efficient and better suited to the realities of smallholder farming, where time away from the farm can directly affect production.

Meru County Executive Committee Member for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Janaro Gatangugi Adresses the press | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

Safaricom Chief Consumer Business Officer Fawzia Ali Addresses the press. | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

Safaricom Chief Consumer Business Officer Fawzia Ali said the product was developed following detailed engagements with farmers to understand what they actually needed, rather than what the company assumed they needed.

Those conversations, she said, revealed two consistent priorities: data to search for information about crop diseases and communicate with agronomists, and relief from the high cost of agricultural inputs. The bundle was designed to address both.

"We said the baseline for the farmers' bundle must have data and minutes. Farmers also told us they spend most of their money on inputs, so we sought partners and agrovets near them to offer discounts to farmers subscribed to the bundle," Ali said.

Farmers are expected to register through the DigiFarm platform and receive a membership number, which they present at participating agrovets to access the discounts available under the initiative.

The consultations also surfaced a concern that Ali said the company had not initially anticipated — the economic disruption caused by illness. When a farmer is hospitalised, she noted, the farm is often left unattended, with direct consequences for productivity and household income.

Bernard Kinoti, a farmer from Meru county Adresses the press. | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

That insight led Safaricom to incorporate an insurance component into the bundle, developed in partnership with Turaco.

"We sought a partner called Turaco, an insurance company, and agreed that when a farmer is in hospital, their family will receive support under Tunza Mapato. For up to 30 days in a year, they will receive KSh1,000 for each day the farmer is admitted," Ali said.

The insurance component also provides up to KSh15,000 towards medical expenses. In the event of death, the farmer's family receives up to KSh100,000 to help meet funeral costs — a provision Ali said was intended to ensure that a family's loss did not compound into a financial crisis at the most difficult of moments.

The response from farmers at the launch was warm. Bernard Kinoti, a local farmer, said the bundle addressed two concerns that had been weighing on the farming community — the rising incidence of disease and the daily challenge of accessing reliable agricultural information.

"With the increase in diseases such as cancer affecting farmers in our county, it is thoughtful of Safaricom to introduce a programme that will help us when we fall sick," Kinoti said.

He added that access to affordable data would allow farmers to research crop diseases, identify treatment options and connect with reputable agrovets — capabilities that many smallholders currently lack or access only at significant cost and inconvenience.

The launch marks Safaricom's latest effort to deepen its reach into Kenya's agricultural sector through the DigiFarm platform, positioning digital tools as practical, everyday resources rather than aspirational technology for a future that has not yet arrived for most smallholder farmers.

For Meru's farming communities, the message from yesterday's event was twofold: the tools to farm smarter are now more accessible than before — and the urgency to farm more safely has never been greater.

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Aviation The ozone layer is no abstract scientific construct. It is the invisible membrane that has permitted complex life to flourish on Earth for hundreds of millions of years

The hollow guardianship: ICAO's abdication in shielding the ozone layer from aviation's fuel-borne assault under the shadow of international air law

By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo
@themtkenyatimes

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

In 1985, scientists confirmed a gaping wound in the stratospheric ozone layer over Antarctica a seasonal void that allowed lethal ultraviolet radiation to pierce the planet's natural shield. Two years later, the Montreal Protocol forged the most successful environmental treaty in history, binding nearly every nation to phase out ozone-depleting substances. Yet aviation, the very industry that threads the upper atmosphere where ozone is most fragile, continues to release nitrogen oxides and cling to residual halons, while the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) treats the crisis as a peripheral footnote rather than a central mandate. This is not oversight. It is institutional neglect dressed in the language of technical progress.

The ozone layer is no abstract scientific construct. It is the invisible membrane that has permitted complex life to flourish on Earth for hundreds of millions of years. When Paul Crutzen and others warned in the 1970s that nitrogen oxides from proposed fleets of supersonic transports could catalyze ozone destruction, the world listened enough to pause the Concorde-era ambitions. The 1985 Vienna Convention and 1987 Montreal Protocol then delivered near-universal ratification and measurable recovery: chlorine and bromine loadings declined, and projections now place the Antarctic ozone hole's return to 1980 levels as early as the 2040s if further insults are restrained. Aviation's contribution is not the dominant historical driver of depletion, yet it remains a persistent and growing one. Subsonic aircraft emit NOx at cruise altitudes of 10–12 km, where chemical lifetimes lengthen and the species can influence both tropospheric ozone production and stratospheric chemistry. Studies estimate that aviation NOx contributes to tens of thousands of premature deaths annually through enhanced surface ozone exposure alone over 53,000 in one high-resolution assessment for a recent baseline year while higher-altitude operations risk direct catalytic loss.

International air law, born of the 1944 Chicago Convention, was never designed for planetary boundaries. Its architects sought safe, orderly skies for commerce and sovereignty after the wreckage of two world wars. Article 24 exempts fuel already on board from customs duties, a provision later expanded through bilateral agreements into a near-total tax holiday for international aviation fuel. ICAO, the specialized agency created by that Convention, inherited a mandate focused on safety, navigation, and economic facilitation. Environmental protection arrived late, formalized only in Annex 16 decades after the ozone crisis erupted. Even then, the Annex's volumes prioritize noise, local air quality, and, more recently, carbon dioxide through the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) and aspirational net-zero goals for 2050. Sustainable aviation fuels receive attention as carbon reducers; their potential co-benefits for particulate and sulfur emissions are acknowledged, yet the deeper interplay between fuel composition, NOx formation, and stratospheric chemistry remains secondary.

Consider the historical parallel. When the Montreal Protocol confronted halons potent bromine carriers used in fire suppression the aviation sector secured essential-use exemptions and then dragged its feet. Decades later, replacements for engine and cargo-compartment systems remain incomplete; stockpiles dwindle while demand persists. The Protocol's own technical assessments have noted the industry's procrastination. ICAO, as the global standard-setter for civil aviation, possesses the authority and the technical committees to accelerate phase-out and certification of alternatives. It has not done so with the urgency the science demands. The same pattern repeats with fuel: cleaner energy frameworks adopt modest targets a collective 5 percent CO_2 reduction by 2030 through sustainable and lower-carbon fuels while the physical chemistry of combustion at altitude continues to inject reactive nitrogen into regions where ozone chemistry is finely balanced.

The correlation is stark. Montreal succeeded because it treated the atmosphere as a shared commons subject to precautionary, science-driven controls with differentiated responsibilities and trade measures that enforced compliance. ICAO operates under a consensus model that privileges non-discrimination and equal opportunity for market access, principles written into the Chicago Convention's DNA. The result is governance by lowest common denominator. CORSIA offsets carbon after the fact rather than preventing emissions at the source. Fuel standards lag. States that might tax aviation fuel domestically or impose stricter NOx limits confront the gravitational pull of ICAO's global framework and the fear of competitive disadvantage. The sky becomes a tragedy of the commons written in kerosene exhaust.

This is not mere technical shortfall; it is a failure of moral imagination. Every commercial flight that climbs through the tropopause carries the legacy of an industry that profits from the very medium it chemically alters. The ozone layer does not negotiate. It does not accept aspirational goals or phased pilots. Ultraviolet radiation that slips through elevated columns raises skin-cancer rates, damages crops, and disrupts marine food webs impacts that fall heaviest on the vulnerable populations least responsible for aviation's growth. Data from atmospheric models show that even modest fleets of future high-altitude aircraft could produce percentage-level ozone column reductions in critical regions. Subsonic growth already embeds non-CO_2 effects that rival or exceed pure carbon forcing in near-term climate impact. To pretend that carbon-centric schemes alone discharge the duty of care is intellectual evasion.

Original insight demands we recognize the deeper structural flaw: international air law still treats the atmosphere primarily as a highway rather than a life-support system. The Chicago Convention's silence on environmental integrity created a vacuum that ICAO has filled with incrementalism. Contrast this with the Montreal Protocol's adaptive architecture adjustments, amendments, and a Multilateral Fund that transferred technology and finance. ICAO's environmental instruments lack equivalent teeth. They measure, report, and offset; they rarely prohibit. The word "governance" itself becomes ironic when the governing body prioritizes the continuity of traffic growth over the continuity of the protective shield.

The actors who must act are clear and numerous. ICAO's Assembly and Council must elevate ozone and non-CO_2 atmospheric chemistry to co-equal status with carbon in Annex 16, mandating rigorous standards for NOx at altitude and accelerated timelines for halon elimination. Member States must cease hiding behind the Convention's tax exemptions and negotiate, within ICAO or bilaterally, the fiscal and regulatory space for cleaner fuels and cleaner engines. Airlines and manufacturers must abandon the rhetoric of "essential use" for substances whose alternatives exist or can be engineered; the same ingenuity that produces next-generation airframes can produce next-generation suppression systems and low-NOx combustors. Scientific bodies and civil society must refuse to allow the narrative of recovery to become complacency; every new emission inventory that shows rising aviation NOx is a warning, not a statistic. And the Parties to the Montreal Protocol itself must close remaining loopholes and demand coordination with the aviation regime rather than polite coexistence.

The ozone layer recovered because humanity once chose binding rules over convenient growth. Aviation's environmental governance under international air law has not yet made that choice. It continues to fly on the borrowed time of a healing atmosphere while the chemical ledger of its fuel remains unpaid. The shield thins not only from past sins but from present inertia. Words alone will not restore it. Only categorical action measured, enforced, and unapologetic can ensure that the sky we cross does not become the sky we destroy.

The writer is a social commentator.

Business Group Chief Executive Arthur Oginga said the performance reflects the group's strategic intent rather than a favourable market accident

Old Mutual swings to KSh882M profit as insurance arm ends losing run

A dramatic turnaround in underwriting performance and surging assets under management have restored confidence in Kenya's oldest diversified financial group.

From left, Isaiah Gakonyo, Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Habil Olaka (EBS), Chairman and Non-Executive Director, and Arthur Oginga, Group Chief Executive Officer, Old Mutual Holdings PLC, during the announcement of the company's financial results.

BY Waceke Joan
@themtkenyatimes

Old Mutual Holdings Plc yesterday reported a profit after tax of KSh882M for the six months ended June 30, 2026, a near-miraculous recovery from the KSh5M profit it recorded in the same period last year, driven by a sharp reversal in its insurance business and robust growth across its investment and asset management operations.

The results, released in Nairobi, mark the most significant turnaround the Nairobi Securities Exchange-listed group has delivered in recent memory, arriving at a moment when the broader insurance industry continues to grapple with compressed underwriting margins and an increasingly competitive financial services landscape.

The headline figure is striking enough. But the story behind it is more instructive. The insurance service result — the core measure of whether an insurer is actually making money from the business of insuring — swung from a loss of KSh303M in the first half of 2025 to a profit of KSh287M in the equivalent period this year. That is a KSh590M turnaround in twelve months, achieved through what the group describes as focused claims management, tighter underwriting discipline and rigorous cost control across all business lines.

Group Chief Executive Arthur Oginga said the performance reflects the group's strategic intent rather than a favourable market accident. "Our performance demonstrates the progress we are making in executing our strategy and delivering on our long-term ambitions. We will continue to enhance this performance through new growth engines and a focus on a value-led rather than a volume-led business," Oginga said. He added that the group's ambition remains unchanged: to become customers' first choice for sustaining, growing and protecting their prosperity, guided by strategic pillars of lifestyle and wellness, technology and digital transformation, sustainability, strategic partnerships and customer experience.

The investment business delivered equally encouraging numbers. Net investment results rose 16 per cent to KSh1.9B, up from KSh1.7B in the corresponding period, supported by selective allocation to higher-yielding instruments, asset-liability matching initiatives and disciplined liquidity management. The group has clearly been deliberate about where it places its money — and that deliberateness is beginning to show in the numbers.

Perhaps the most eye-catching metric is the growth in assets under management, which expanded by 32 per cent over the period. That expansion drove a 34 per cent rise in commission income, contributing to total commission, fees and other income of KSh1.6B. When an asset manager grows its AUM by nearly a third in six months, it suggests that clients are entrusting the group with more capital — a vote of confidence that goes beyond what any quarterly earnings announcement can manufacture.

Group Chief Financial Officer Isaiah Gakonyo was measured but firm in his assessment. "Our first half performance reflects disciplined execution across the group, delivering improved insurance profitability, stronger net investment results, and sustained growth in asset management. These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of our strategic interventions in strengthening earnings quality and resilience," Gakonyo said. He identified asset-liability management, cost optimisation, balance sheet restructuring and targeted technology investments as the pillars sustaining the improvement.

The group's chairman, Habil Olaka, offered the most forward-looking commentary, and the one that shareholders will have read most carefully. Olaka said the board's priority is to ensure that the first-half improvement translates into sustained long-term profitability rather than a single-period anomaly. "We are strengthening the group's businesses, balance sheet and operating model to build greater resilience and create sustainable value for shareholders," he said. He added that as profitability and the group's financial position continue to improve, the board's ambition is to create the capacity for sustainable shareholder distributions — including the future resumption of dividend payments, subject to the group's financial position and applicable regulatory requirements.

That last sentence will have been noted. Old Mutual has not paid a dividend in some time. The chairman's language suggests the pathway back to regular distributions is being cleared, even if no timeline has been set.

For a group that entered 2025 with its insurance arm bleeding and its profitability barely registering, the first half of 2026 reads like the opening chapter of a genuine recovery story. The second half will determine whether that story holds.

Xenophobic Renewed hostility towards foreign nationals in parts of South Africa has once again shaken the conscience of the continent

South Africa's xenophobic resurgence: A test of our collective conscience

BY Dennis Wendo
@themtkenyatimes

Xenophobic violence in South Africa

The resurgence of xenophobic violence in South Africa is more than an isolated security concern. It is a painful reminder that Africa's enduring dream of unity remains fragile and, at times, elusive. Every attack against a fellow African diminishes not only the victim but also the ideals upon which the continent seeks to build its future.

For decades, Pan-Africanism has embodied the aspiration of a continent united by shared history, mutual respect and collective prosperity. This vision is reflected in the African Union's Agenda 2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area and the growing commitment among African states to promote trade, investment and the lawful movement of people across borders. Yet these aspirations cannot be fully realised if Africans continue to fear one another.

Renewed hostility towards foreign nationals in parts of South Africa has once again shaken the conscience of the continent. Businesses have been looted, livelihoods disrupted, families displaced and communities traumatised. Violence founded on prejudice has no place in a constitutional democracy governed by the rule of law, regardless of the nationality of those targeted.

History offers no comfort here. The xenophobic attacks of 2008, followed by further outbreaks in 2015 and 2019, claimed lives, destroyed property and displaced thousands. Each episode attracted widespread condemnation and fresh commitments to address underlying causes. Yet the recurrence of similar violence suggests those causes remain insufficiently confronted.

South Africa's socio-economic challenges are undeniable. High unemployment, persistent inequality, poverty and growing public frustration place enormous pressure on communities. These realities demand serious policy attention. But economic hardship cannot justify violence against people whose aspirations differ little from anyone else's — to work, pursue education, build businesses and provide for their families.

Periods of economic uncertainty have historically produced convenient scapegoats. Migrants become easy targets for frustrations whose origins lie in far more complex structural and governance failures. Blaming foreign nationals does not create employment, reduce inequality or improve public services. It risks weakening social cohesion, discouraging investment and undermining confidence in the rule of law.

States have a legitimate right to regulate immigration, secure their borders and enforce immigration laws. Irregular migration must be addressed through lawful, fair and effective systems. But immigration status should never become a justification for dehumanisation or violence.

Migrants — including some without regular status — nevertheless participate in the economies in which they live. They work, trade, rent homes, purchase goods and services and contribute to economic activity. Those in formal employment contribute through taxation; their consumption generates indirect tax revenues. Kenya offers an instructive example: in construction, agriculture, domestic work, hospitality and small-scale trading, foreign nationals have taken up roles that some local residents are increasingly reluctant to fill. This is not an argument for illegal immigration. It is an argument against the simplistic assumption that an undocumented migrant is automatically an economic burden.

The appropriate policy question is: what economic role are migrants playing, under what conditions, and how can governments regulate that contribution fairly and lawfully? Governments should enforce immigration laws while protecting labour rights, preventing exploitation, ensuring tax compliance and addressing genuine security concerns. A person can be in violation of immigration law and still make an economic contribution. These realities can coexist.

For Kenya, developments in South Africa carry particular weight. Thousands of Kenyans have established careers, businesses and professional networks there — working as teachers, healthcare professionals, engineers, entrepreneurs, academics, hospitality workers and employees of multinational organisations. Their contribution extends beyond South Africa through investment, remittances, knowledge exchange and stronger commercial and cultural ties between the two countries.

Although Kenyans have not consistently been the principal targets of xenophobic violence, hostility towards foreign nationals rarely remains confined to one nationality. Once xenophobia becomes normalised, every African migrant becomes vulnerable. Kenya must therefore continue strengthening mechanisms to protect its citizens abroad. The Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the National Employment Authority and Kenyan diplomatic missions should enhance diaspora registration, bilateral labour agreements, crisis communication, legal assistance and emergency response capabilities.

South Africa, meanwhile, must ensure that immigration enforcement remains the responsibility of legitimate state institutions — not vigilante groups, criminal gangs or mobs. Those who incite or participate in xenophobic violence should be investigated and prosecuted. The principle is straightforward: a country can enforce its immigration laws without dehumanising immigrants.

Political leadership matters equally. Rhetoric that portrays migrants collectively as the cause of unemployment, crime or pressure on public services risks converting legitimate public grievances into prejudice. If unemployment is the problem, governments must address job creation, skills development and investment. If crime is the concern, law enforcement must pursue criminals regardless of nationality. If public services are strained, governments must improve planning and delivery. Foreign nationals should not become the convenient explanation for failures of governance.

The responsibility extends further. The African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community and other regional bodies should treat recurring xenophobic violence as a continental human security concern. Stronger early warning systems, preventive diplomacy, civic education and migrant protection mechanisms are needed to break recurring cycles of violence. Continental integration is not simply about moving goods and capital. It is also about ensuring that Africans can travel, study, work, trade and invest across borders without fear.

South Africa's own history provides a powerful reminder. During the struggle against apartheid, countless South Africans found refuge across the continent. Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique offered sanctuary, education and solidarity to those fleeing oppression. That generosity represented some of the highest ideals of African unity.

Today, Africa must ask whether it is prepared to extend that same spirit of solidarity to migrants, students, workers and entrepreneurs who cross its borders in search of opportunity. The philosophy of Ubuntu — expressed through the idea that "I am because we are" — reminds us that our humanity is interconnected. It does not require African states to abandon sovereignty, border controls or immigration laws. It challenges them to exercise those responsibilities without abandoning their humanity.

The answer to unemployment is sound economic policy, not hatred. The answer to crime is effective policing, not collective blame. The answer to irregular migration is effective management and lawful enforcement, not mob justice. And the answer to inequality is inclusive development — not violence against neighbours seeking opportunity, dignity and hope.

South Africa's xenophobic resurgence is therefore more than a domestic challenge. It is a test of our collective conscience — and of whether Pan-Africanism is a principle we genuinely believe in, or merely invoke when convenient.

The true measure of African unity will not be found in declarations adopted at continental summits. It will be found in whether an African trader feels safe in another African country, whether a student can pursue an education without fear, whether a professional can build a career across borders with dignity — and whether a migrant, regardless of status, is treated as a human being while the state lawfully determines their right to remain.

Africa cannot build an integrated economy while allowing hatred to police its borders. If we fail this test, we risk weakening the foundations of continental integration. But if we respond with courage, justice, responsible leadership and compassion, we can reaffirm the values that inspired Africa's liberation movements and preserve the promise of a peaceful, prosperous and united continent.

Dennis Wendo is a governance and social policy commentator with the Integrated Development Network (IDN Kenya).

Security Kenya's security environment has changed. Criminal networks are becoming more sophisticated. Cyber threats increasingly intersect with physical security

Beyond the Guard at the gate: A unified professional roadmap for Kenya's national security ecosystem

BY Fredrick Chelimo
@themtkenyatimes

"A nation does not become safer by multiplying security actors; it becomes safer when every legitimate security capability knows its place, understands its responsibility and works toward one national purpose."

Kenya needs to have a more honest and mature conversation about security. For decades, the phrase national security has largely summoned images of police officers on patrol, soldiers at the border, intelligence officers working behind closed doors and government institutions responding to threats. At the same time, private security has been quietly growing around us—at the gates of hospitals, banks, universities, factories, hotels, residential estates, airports, warehouses and government offices.

Every morning, thousands of private security officers leave their homes and report for duty. They open gates, screen visitors, monitor cameras, respond to alarms, manage access points and observe what is happening around some of the country's most important institutions. Behind them are control-room operators, security consultants, risk managers, investigators, technology specialists and companies deploying increasingly sophisticated security systems. Yet we continue to treat much of this enormous capacity as if it exists outside the national security conversation. That is no longer sustainable.

Kenya's security environment has changed. Criminal networks are becoming more sophisticated. Cyber threats increasingly intersect with physical security. Critical infrastructure is more technologically dependent. Terrorism, organised crime, fraud, violent extremism, industrial espionage, public disorder and emerging technological threats do not respect the old boundaries between the public and private spheres.

The question, therefore, is not whether private security should become part of government security. It should not. The question is whether Kenya can afford to leave such a substantial protective capability fragmented, under-professionalised and insufficiently connected to the wider security architecture. The answer must be no.

The Constitution provides the starting point. National security remains a constitutional responsibility of the State, exercised within the framework of the rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Kenya Defence Forces, National Intelligence Service and National Police Service remain the national security organs established by the Constitution. Private security cannot become a fourth national security organ, assume sovereign powers or blur the constitutional distinction between public authority and private protection. But constitutional clarity should not be confused with institutional isolation. The real opportunity lies in complementarity.

The police must remain the police. Intelligence must remain the responsibility of authorised State institutions. The military must retain its constitutional mandate. Private security officers must remain private security professionals. But these institutions and professionals should be capable of operating around a common national security purpose, with clearly defined boundaries and lawful channels of cooperation.

Imagine a private security officer at a commercial facility noticing suspicious behaviour. Today, the quality and speed of escalation can depend heavily on individual judgement, company procedures and local relationships. Imagine instead a professional system in which that officer knows precisely what constitutes a reportable security concern, how to preserve relevant information, whom to contact, how to protect evidence and what information can lawfully be shared. That is the difference between simply having security personnel and having a security ecosystem.

Kenya should therefore develop a National Public–Private Security Partnership Framework that establishes structured interfaces between State security agencies, the Private Security Regulatory Authority, licensed security providers, security consultants, training institutions, technology companies, critical-infrastructure operators and other legitimate stakeholders. This would not create a parallel security state. It would create clarity.

The first transformation must be professional. Kenya can no longer afford to regard private security principally as a source of cheap labour. The person standing at a hospital entrance, guarding a financial institution or monitoring a control room may be the first human being to detect a security incident. That responsibility deserves more than a uniform and a whistle. It deserves professional training, decent equipment, ethical standards, occupational protection and a genuine career pathway.

A modern security officer should understand the Constitution, human rights, lawful use of force, emergency response, first aid, fire safety, conflict management, incident reporting, evidence preservation and basic cybersecurity awareness. Those working with sophisticated systems should understand technology. Those managing crowds should receive appropriate specialist training. Those protecting high-risk or critical facilities should meet higher competency standards.

Security should become a profession in which a young person can enter at an appropriate level and progress through recognised qualifications into supervision, control-room operations, investigations, technical security, risk management and senior security leadership. That would change not only the industry but the dignity of the people who work within it.

The second transformation must involve security consultancy. Kenya has a growing pool of people with expertise in criminology, security management, policing, military affairs, intelligence, cybersecurity, risk management and organisational resilience. Their contribution should not be reduced to writing occasional reports after something has gone wrong. Good security is fundamentally about anticipating vulnerability before vulnerability becomes victimisation.

Security professionals should therefore be engaged in threat assessments, security audits, crisis preparedness, business continuity, emergency planning, physical-security design and institutional resilience. Regulation should protect the public from incompetence and unethical practice while allowing genuine professional expertise to flourish.

The third transformation is technological. The security officer of tomorrow may not simply be watching a gate. They may be working alongside cameras equipped with analytics, biometric access systems, alarms, drones, GPS technology, digital command centres and artificial-intelligence tools. Technology can make Kenya considerably safer—but technology can also make a society considerably more vulnerable if deployed without restraint. The country must therefore reject the false choice between security and rights.

A modern security system must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, auditable and accountable. Data protection and privacy cannot become afterthoughts. Security technology must protect citizens without turning citizens into permanent objects of surveillance. Kenya needs smart security, not indiscriminate surveillance.

But there is another issue that deserves uncomfortable honesty: the welfare of the security officer. We cannot continuously demand vigilance, courage and professionalism from people whom we compensate poorly, equip inadequately and sometimes expose to unacceptable working conditions. A person who is expected to protect a bank, hospital, factory, school or residential estate deserves protection too.

Kenya should also consider how government can encourage responsible investment in the industry. Where private-sector investment creates measurable public security value, appropriate incentives could support training, research, innovation and locally developed security technologies.

A small residential guarding company should not necessarily face precisely the same regulatory architecture as a company providing highly specialised protection to critical energy infrastructure. Cash-in-transit operations, sophisticated cybersecurity services, technical surveillance and ordinary guarding involve different risks and therefore require proportionate standards.

The real questions are harder. Are security incidents being prevented? Are response times improving? Are officers better trained? Are critical facilities more resilient? Is information reaching the right authority quickly and lawfully? Are citizens' rights being protected? Are security companies becoming more professional? Are workers safer? Are technology systems being deployed responsibly? Those are the outcomes that matter.

Ultimately, Kenya does not need a private security industry that merely survives by satisfying regulatory paperwork. It needs a professional, ethical, technologically capable and nationally connected protective sector. The State must remain the sovereign guarantor of national security. There should be no ambiguity about that. But sovereignty does not require isolation.

A police officer on patrol, a soldier defending the nation's territorial integrity, an intelligence professional assessing threats, a private security officer watching an entrance, a consultant examining vulnerabilities, a control-room operator monitoring cameras and a technology specialist designing the next generation of security systems may have entirely different mandates—but their work can still contribute to one national purpose. That is the future Kenya should build. Not a country where security actors compete for territory, recognition or influence, but one where every legitimate security capability understands its place, respects the law and knows how to contribute.

Kenya's next security revolution should not be about creating more security actors. It should be about creating greater coherence among the legitimate capabilities we already possess. Because the safest Kenya will not necessarily be the Kenya with the most uniforms, cameras, barriers or checkpoints. It will be the Kenya in which responsibility is clear, professionalism is respected, technology is used wisely, information moves lawfully, institutions cooperate and every legitimate security capability works toward the same constitutional objective: a safer, more secure and more resilient nation for everyone.

Sports >> *.......

Liverpool close in on Barcola in £120m PSG blockbuster

By **Pascal Okoth**

Liverpool yesterday moved to the brink of signing Bradley Barcola from Paris Saint-Germain in a deal that could reshape their attack and signal the club's ambitions under manager Andoni Iraola.

The two clubs reached an agreement in principle for a package worth £120m, representing a significant breakthrough after a summer of protracted negotiations. The deal has not yet been fully finalised, with final details still being worked through, but the mood on both sides is understood to be positive.

PSG had been holding out for around £145m for the 23-year-old France international, making the gap in valuations one of the central obstacles throughout the summer. That Liverpool have managed to bridge much of that distance speaks to the depth of their desire to land a player they have identified as a long-term cornerstone of their attacking plans.

Barcola joined PSG from Lyon in the summer of 2023 and went on to win back-to-back Champions League titles with the Parisian club under coach Luis Enrique. He was also a key figure for the French national team at the 2026 World Cup, where he scored three goals before France were eliminated by Spain in the semi-finals.

His arrival at Anfield would carry enormous symbolic weight. Barcola is set to become Liverpool's second most expensive signing in history, behind Alexander Isak, who joined from Newcastle in the summer of 2025 for around £125m. The club have been searching for a long-term solution to fill the void left by Mohamed Salah, whose iconic nine-year stay at Anfield came to an end after his contract expired, and Barcola fits the profile they have been seeking.

The winger's qualities are well established at the highest level of European football. His electrifying pace, sharp dribbling, creativity in tight spaces and ability to cut in from the left and threaten goal make him ideally suited to the demands of the Premier League. He contributed substantially to PSG's domestic and continental dominance over the past two seasons, establishing himself as one of the most dangerous wide forwards on the continent.

For Liverpool, the pursuit has been both persistent and patient. Initial approaches were rebuffed, with PSG initially treating Barcola as untouchable. His agent, Moussa Sissoko, played a significant role in keeping dialogue alive. PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi's positive relationship with Liverpool's Fenway Sports Group hierarchy, and the fact that the two clubs share a minority stakeholder in private equity firm Arctos, are also understood to have helped facilitate productive discussions.

A move to Anfield is said to appeal to Barcola personally, a factor that will have given Liverpool's negotiating team additional confidence as the summer window approached its closing stages.

PSG, for their part, have not stood still in the market. The French giants have already added Mika Godts from Ajax and moved to sign Ferran Torres from Barcelona, signings that have gradually softened their resistance to parting with Barcola. The financial package on the table has ultimately proved difficult to turn down, particularly with the player entering the final years of his contract.

For Iraola, the arrival of Barcola would represent a significant boost to his attacking options as Liverpool seek to compete on all fronts in the 2026-27 season. The Spaniard took over at Anfield this summer tasked with maintaining the club's standing among England and Europe's elite while building his own identity into the squad. A signing of Barcola's calibre would give him a genuinely world-class weapon in attack.

Bradley Barcola

With an agreement in principle now in place, attention turns to completing the remaining formalities. Personal terms and the finer contractual details are expected to be resolved in the coming days, with the official announcement of one of the summer's most anticipated transfers edging closer.

Liverpool fans have waited long enough. Barcola appears to be heading to Anfield — and the Premier League is about to get considerably more exciting.

Sports >> *Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are racing to deliver a unified travel framework as the continent's biggest football showpiece draws closer.

East Africa's Afcon dream: Single visa to ease fans' path to Pamoja 2027

By **Martin Weche**

Sports Cabinet Secretary Salim Mvurya

Kenya is developing a single visa with co-hosts Uganda and Tanzania to ease cross-border movement for fans and officials attending next year's Africa Cup of Nations, Sports Cabinet Secretary Salim Mvurya confirmed yesterday.

Mvurya made the announcement as a delegation from the Confederation of African Football, led by Head of Competitions Khaled Nassar, arrived in the country for its second inspection visit since March to assess Kenya's preparedness for the tournament.

The single-visa framework, still being finalised, is intended to allow travellers to move freely across all three host nations on a single travel document — a logistical necessity for a tournament that will be staged simultaneously across multiple cities in different countries. Kenya already operates a free-visa policy for African nationals, but Mvurya indicated that the shared instrument would go further, creating a seamless regional travel experience for the duration of the competition.

"We are committed on cross-border mobility, the movement between the three countries. Kenya already has a free visa policy for Africa, but we also enhance as we operationalise the single visa with our colleagues in the East Africa region," Mvurya said.

The three governments have established a joint oversight structure, the Pamoja committee, which brings together the sports ministers of all three countries. The committee met earlier this week to review progress across the key pillars of tournament organisation, with Mvurya describing the meeting as productive and the alignment between the three nations as firm.

"We had a meeting on Monday as a Pamoja oversight committee, bringing together the three ministers from Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. We went through the key motions of organising this tournament and we all committed to host a successful Africa Cup of Nations," he said.

The stakes could hardly be higher. Afcon 2027 will be the first time East Africa has hosted a tournament of this scale — a milestone that carries both sporting and economic weight for a region that has long watched West Africa, North Africa and southern Africa take centre stage in continental football. The historical significance is sharpened by the memory of 1996, when Kenya withdrew from hosting, ceding the tournament to South Africa — a country that went on not only to stage the competition but to win it.

Thirty-one years on, the region is determined not to let the moment pass. Mvurya framed the tournament not merely as a football event but as a transformative opportunity for communities, economies and the region's broader standing on the African continent.

"For the three countries, this is the first time that we are hosting a continental tournament. West Africa, North Africa and South Africa have been ahead of us on matters of football and therefore this is a golden opportunity for us," he said.

Infrastructure work is progressing on both of Kenya's designated match venues. The brand new Talanta Sports Stadium, which will have a capacity of 60,000 spectators, is under active construction, while the 40-year-old Kasarani Stadium — a venue steeped in Kenyan sporting history — is undergoing a comprehensive refurbishment to bring it up to CAF standards. Both stadiums are expected to be ready ahead of the tournament, which kicks off in June 2027.

Nassar's visit this week is being closely watched as a barometer of how Kenya's preparations are measuring up against CAF's requirements. The inspections cover stadium works, training facilities, accommodation, transport logistics and security arrangements — a checklist that leaves little room for complacency at this stage of planning.

The single-visa initiative, if delivered successfully, would represent one of the more meaningful legacies of Afcon 2027 — a practical demonstration that the East African Community can function as a coherent travel and economic zone when the political will exists. Regional integration has long been an aspiration articulated at summits and in communiqués; a shared tournament visa would be a rare example of it working in real time, for millions of people.

Football, it turns out, may achieve what decades of policy meetings have not.

SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN

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A legacy that lived more than just in songs; Dolly Parton

By: Wanjohi. P. Mugambi
@themtkenyatimes

Worth Noting:

- **Her music had roots. Told by her stories. Her song, "Coat of Many Colors," is one of the celebrated songs. Telling a story of a little girl who loved life though life was never fair. And i quote, "Though we had no money, but i was rich as I could be in my coat of many colors, mama made for me." Even when she hit fame, she never forgot that coat of many colors that her mother made for her.**
- **With this she gave back. Gave back to the community that she was once a little girl in that cabin. She never stopped there. She continued singing. Loving what she does. Doing it with all love.**

By Wanjohi P Mugambi

Dolly Parton beloved queen of country music was not just a celebrated singer who wrote more than 3000 songs but was a great person in world history. Born and raised in a large family Dolly knew what poverty is. She understood the pain of going to bed hungry, having to share one plate of food with his siblings. Just as a little girl in Tennessee, Dolly wanted to make a change to the world. Not just for her family but also for the universal world. In one interview Dolly explained her fathers struggle in raising her and her siblings. It was never a walk in the park. In one time Dolly explains that she was forced by circumstances to take care of her little sibling who later died when she was just 9 years old. How devastating. Losing someone at that age was heartbreaking. Dolly felt it. That is how her music started. At just the age of ten, Dolly started singing. Her career. A legacy in country music that went to a span of seven decades. Yes, I literally mean 70 years in music.

Her music had roots. Told by her stories. Her song, "Coat of Many Colors," is one of the celebrated songs. Telling a story of a little girl who loved life though life was never fair. And i quote, "Though we had no money, but i was rich as I could be in my coat of many colors, mama made for me." Even when she hit fame, she never forgot that coat of many colors that her mother made for her. With this she gave back. Gave back to the community that she was once a little girl in that cabin. She never stopped there. She continued singing. Loving what she does. Doing it with all love.

Dolly was a family person. She got married to the love of her life but she loved keeping her family matters to herself. With a sense of humor she got into movies. She filled many families with laughter every evening and night when they were watching her on their televisions. God did love her. But just one thing she didn't have, children. Not that she didn't try to have one. Yes, just like any other married woman she tried to have kids but unfortunately she didn't. She explains that in her first years in marriage she felt that pain. The pain however didn't hurt her for long, she understood how to turn her pain into her gain. She says in one of her interviews that she later understood that she was a mother to everyone. Actually she was a mother to millions of children across America and in different continents. Her determination kept her going.

America knew her. The White house was her friend. She was for the first time welcomed at the White House in 1979. The then president of the United State of America, lover of country Music was her friend and with what she was doing she eventually earned her place there. Also, her love in the White House now that she is with the Lord has been felt by the different tribute from former presidents. Presidents indeed mourned a great Icon in American History. A mother to many. Former President Bill Clinton paid her tribute by acknowledging a life that was felt across the globe. His wife Sen. Hillary Clinton expressed that Dolly Parton, Queen of Country Music knew what she should do, how she could do, and to who she should do the act to.

Dolly Parton was a philathropist. In 1995 in record she started her Imaginary Library that would distrubute books to little children upto yhe age of five. Filled with the love of reading and writing she started the Imaginary Library in her Hometown. She explains that this was in the honor of her father whom she calls The smartest man in the world yet she says her father never knew to read and write in those times. Through her Imaginary Library she has distributed more than 200 millions books across America. From 1995 it is. That explains the love. Persons in America from the age of 31 have benefitted from her work. That explains the love. Again, it should be noted that she loved the society she grew up in. She found out that the level of dropout in her community was at 35%. Knowing this she started an initiative of giving out scholarships and even getting into contracts with students that once you finish your studies you get a gift of 500 dollars. That was more money. She was ready to part with it to make the lives of others better. It bared fruits. The rate of dropout dropped to 5% up to now.

Dolly Parton.

Dolly's work of Love is felt by many. During the wildfire, she donated 1000 dollars to every family victim. In accounts it is said that even her donation was earlier than that of the government.

She has done a lot with love. She donated a lot in the health sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Dollywood her legacy remains.

She never changed. She loved her looks that never changed. Inspired by a lady in her town she wanted to be pretty and truly she was in her looks and even in heart. Who would look like her at her age? She always made fun of it even on our screens and truly as President Donald Trump said, No one was like her, Never would there be someone like her. Dolly lived a life. From a little cabin she became a household name. She became a great Icon. A queen of Country Music. A mother to many. A great leader. American Flags are half-staff for her legacy. She is more than just a legacy. She is History made known to the world. She is a queen, and the generations to come will hear her stories. Through Music, through the library and most of all in what she told us, A recorded song that will be opened in 2045 locked in Dolloywood. We loved you Dolly.

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