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Countdown 2027 The bigger story is why his continued political presence has generated so much anxiety

Uhuru Kenyatta's exit politics

The High Court's decision to uphold the law restricting retired presidents from holding political party office beyond six months after leaving State House has done more than settle a legal question. It has reopened one of Kenya's most compelling political debates ahead of the 2027 General Election: what happens when a former president leaves office but does not leave politics?

For retired President Uhuru Kenyatta, the answer is becoming clearer. He has indicated willingness to complete the Jubilee Party leadership handover following the ruling, describing the decision as a reaffirmation of democratic maturity and respect for the Judiciary.

But the bigger story may not be Kenyatta's departure from formal party office.

The bigger story is why his continued political presence has generated so much anxiety.

Is Kenyatta actually a threat to the current administration, or has Kenya simply reached a point where the influence of a former president is too significant to ignore?

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Retired President Uhuru Kenyatta

Gachagua hits the fairway in Portland as 2027 campaign takes shape

BY MKT REPORTER
@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

Rigathi Gachagua yesterday played in a golf tournament alongside his wife and Kenyan diaspora members at Gresham Golf Course in Portland, Oregon, in what observers regard as the opening move of an intensifying overseas political campaign ahead of the August 2027 general election.

The appearance was carefully framed. Gachagua described the outing as "truly fulfilling" — language that signals community rather than campaign, yet the political calculus is unmistakable. With eleven months to polling day, every handshake, every shared fairway, and every photograph with Kenyans abroad is currency in a race that is already drawing battle lines.

Removed from the deputy presidency in October 2024 following a parliamentary impeachment, Gachagua has since repositioned himself as an opposition figure, leading the Democracy for the Citizens Party and cultivating networks across Mt Kenya and the diaspora with growing urgency.

The diaspora vote is not decorative. Kenyan communities in North America carry both financial muscle and symbolic weight in domestic politics. A former deputy president working the golf courses of Oregon is a man who understands exactly where the next election will be won and lost.









Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times

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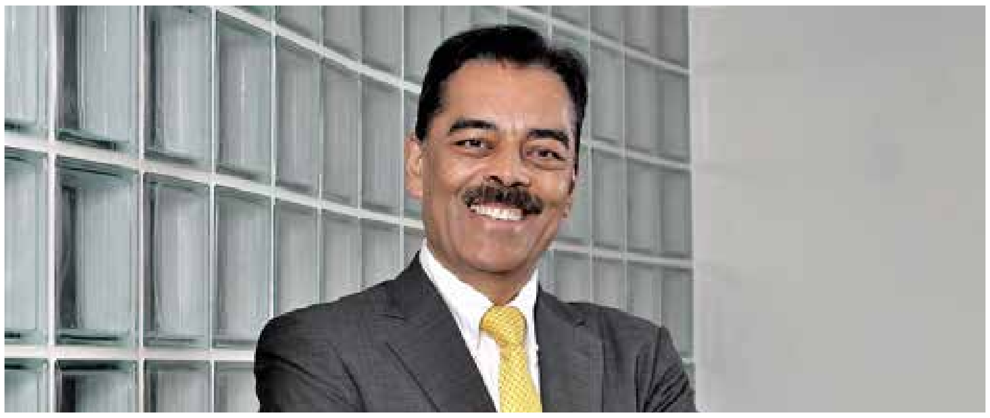
NEWS IN BRIEF

Tana River County received a significant boost yesterday when Water and Sanitation Cabinet Secretary Eric Mugaa launched an ambitious flood management initiative aimed at ending the region's decades-long cycle of devastating seasonal floods. Speaking during a site visit, Mugaa said the government had identified structural interventions — including dyke reinforcement, catchment management, and early warning systems — as the permanent solution to a problem that displaces thousands of residents and destroys livelihoods every rainy season. "This is the answer to Tana River's perennial flooding," Mugaa said, describing the project as a priority for the national government. The initiative forms part of a broader water infrastructure programme targeting flood-prone counties across the country. Tana River has historically suffered some of Kenya's worst flood damage, with entire communities repeatedly forced from their homes when the river bursts its banks.

Embakasi East MP Babu Owino yesterday called on the opposition to prioritise strategy over spectacle, arguing that political rallies alone would not deliver victory in the August 2027 general election. Owino, who is eyeing the Nairobi governorship, also announced he would scale back his attendance at Linda Mwananchi rallies as he redirects his focus toward building a credible campaign for the county seat. He dismissed as unfounded reports of a rift between himself and Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna, insisting the two remained aligned. The remarks signal a broader tension within opposition ranks over how best to deploy energy and resources in the eleven months remaining before polling day, with individual ambitions increasingly competing with the collective imperative of presenting a united front against the Kenya Kwanza administration.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Gilbert Masengeli has taken his academic frustrations to court, filing a case against the United States International University-Africa seeking orders to compel the institution to process his PhD dissertation without further delay. Masengeli, one of Kenya's most senior police officers, argues that the university's handling of his doctoral work has been unnecessarily slow and risks preventing him from graduating this month. The case puts an unusual spotlight on a senior security official whose name has featured prominently in high-profile legal proceedings in recent months. USIU-Africa, a respected private university in Nairobi with strong international affiliations, has not publicly responded to the claims. The matter will test the boundaries between institutional academic processes and the rights of students to timely degree completion.

A Kiambu mother who gave birth to quintuplets lost four of the five babies yesterday, in a devastating outcome that has drawn an outpouring of grief from the community and renewed attention to the country's neonatal care capacity. The mother, whose identity has not been disclosed, delivered the five babies at a county health facility, but four were unable to survive. One infant remains under medical care. Hospital officials described the births as high-risk from the outset, citing the significant medical challenges that multiple births of this nature present, particularly in facilities with limited specialist neonatal support. The tragedy has reignited debate about the adequacy of resources available to mothers carrying multiple pregnancies in Kenya's public health system, where specialist neonatal intensive care units remain scarce outside major referral hospitals.



Bidco Africa chairman Vimal Shah yesterday revealed that the company lost KSh102 million in a foreign exchange transaction gone wrong, identifying investment firm Nesbitt as the counterparty in a deal that turned costly. Shah, one of Kenya's most prominent industrialists, disclosed the loss publicly, describing the circumstances of the forex arrangement and the financial damage it caused Bidco. The disclosure is significant given Bidco's stature as one of East Africa's largest consumer goods manufacturers, with operations spanning edible oils, personal care products, and fast-moving consumer goods across the region. Shah did not elaborate on whether the matter had been referred to regulators or whether legal proceedings were being considered. The revelation adds to growing scrutiny of foreign exchange dealings in Kenya's private sector amid persistent currency volatility.

Kenya could soon extend maternity leave from the current 90 days to six months, following proposals that have gained traction in parliamentary and policy circles. The change, if enacted, would represent the most significant reform to Kenya's maternity provisions in decades and align the country more closely with international standards recommended by the International Labour Organisation, which advocates for a minimum of 14 weeks with movement toward six months. Advocates argue the extension would improve maternal and infant health outcomes, support breastfeeding, and reduce the pressure on new mothers to return to work before they are physically and emotionally ready. Employer groups are expected to raise concerns about the financial burden the change would impose, particularly on small and medium enterprises. The proposal now awaits formal legislative action.

Business Mutiga arrives from Safaricom, where he served as chief business development and strategy officer

Mutiga takes the helm at Stanbic Bank Kenya

A career banker and lawyer with two decades of experience across investment banking and telecoms, Michael Mutiga steps in as Stanbic posts record first-half profits.

BY Grace Wanja
@themtkenyatimes

Stanbic Bank Kenya yesterday confirmed Michael Mutiga as its new Chief Executive, bringing to a close a leadership transition that has been in place since March. The appointment, now backed by full regulatory clearance from the Central Bank of Kenya, positions Mutiga to lead one of the country's largest financial institutions at a moment of considerable momentum.

The bank reported a KSh6.6B profit after tax for the first half of 2026, with total assets expanding by 27 per cent to KSh602 billion — figures that set a high bar for incoming leadership but also reflect the strength of the institution Mutiga is inheriting.

Board chairman Joe Muganda made clear that Mutiga was chosen precisely because his background spans two worlds that are increasingly intertwined in modern banking. "Michael is a highly respected leader with an extensive and successful career in banking and finance, both in Kenya and across Sub-Saharan Africa," Muganda said. "His unique experience, combining deep investment banking expertise with strategic leadership in the telecommunications sector, uniquely positions him to steer Stanbic Bank Kenya into the future."

Mutiga arrives from Safaricom, where he served as chief business development and strategy officer — a role that placed him at the intersection of technology, commerce, and customer behaviour at scale. Before that, he spent approximately 15 years at Citibank, rising to managing director and head of corporate finance for Sub-Saharan Africa. He also held senior positions in the investment banking division at Barclays, now Absa. He holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Nairobi and a Master of Laws from Temple University in the United States.

That combination — legal training, deep capital markets experience, and a front-row seat at Kenya's digital economy — gives Mutiga a profile that few candidates in the banking sector can match. For Stanbic, whose ambitions extend well beyond traditional retail banking, the appointment signals intent.

Michael Mutiga

Mutiga himself struck a tone of both humility and ambition. "This is a formidable institution with a rich history in this country and a very strong foundation for future growth," he said. "The bank's recent performance is a testament to the talented team and their commitment to our clients. I look forward to working with my colleagues to deepen our customer relationships, accelerate our digital transformation agenda, and partner with key sectors of the economy to drive Kenya's sustainable development."

He takes over from Abraham Ongenge, who has steered the bank in an acting capacity since March 2026. The board acknowledged Ongenge's contribution warmly, and he now returns to his substantive role as head of personal and private banking — a position of considerable significance given the retail growth the bank has been targeting.

For Mutiga, the task ahead is clear: sustain the financial trajectory, deliver on digital transformation, and deepen the bank's relationships with the sectors driving Kenya's economic future. Stanbic has handed him both the platform and the mandate.

The real test, as always, begins today.

Dangote opens Africa's biggest IPO to the masses — at a price

Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote

BY James Mwangi
@themtkenyatimes

Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote on Monday launched Africa's largest share sale with the initial public offering of his oil refinery, targeting the general public to raise as much as $2.1B for its expansion.

Dangote, Africa's richest man, has marketed the offer of a roughly 3 per cent stake as a "people's IPO," saying it is about giving ordinary Nigerians the opportunity to participate in the success of the plant. His stated aim is to "democratise wealth creation" — words chosen carefully for a continent where industrial wealth has historically remained beyond ordinary reach.

Retail investors can buy a 10-share bundle in the sprawling Lagos-based refinery for $4, the minimum investment. Dangote retains 87 per cent ownership.

The fine print, however, deserves scrutiny. Retail investors will be paying a higher price than institutional investors who bought into a July private placement that raised $2.5B for a 6 per cent stake. That private placement valued the company at $40B, whereas the IPO moves the valuation closer to $49B. The people's IPO, it turns out, costs the people more.

The $19B refinery began production in 2024, transforming Nigeria from an importer of refined oil into an exporter. Mohammed Saidu, head of research and investment analysis at Lagos-based TrustBanc, called it "a game-changing IPO for Nigeria's markets."

Dangote has also proposed building a refinery in Kenya by 2030 — a prospect that will sharpen East African interest in Monday's offering considerably.

The ambition is genuine. The valuation gap between institutional and retail investors is real. Both things can be true simultaneously.

Business The three-judge bench found that the government had entered into binding agreements with Vodafone Group before completing the required policy and parliamentary approval processes

A court, a KSh244.5B deal, and a government running out of road

BY David Kimani
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Kenya's High Court yesterday declared the government's sale of a 15 per cent stake in Safaricom to South Africa's Vodacom Group unconstitutional, illegal, null and void, ordering the shares restored to the State and plunging the Ruto administration into its gravest governance crisis yet — with the August 2027 general election just eleven months away.

The ruling, delivered by a three-judge bench of the Constitutional and Human Rights Division comprising Justices Francis Gikonyo, Roselyne Aburili, and Tabitha Wanyama, dismantled one of the most consequential privatisation transactions in Kenya's post-independence history. On 30 June, the government had sold 6,009,814,200 Safaricom shares — 15 per cent of the company — to Vodafone Kenya at KSh34 each in a single block trade on the Nairobi Securities Exchange, banking KSh204.3B from the sale and a further KSh40.2B as an advance on future dividends, for a combined KSh244.5B. That money was earmarked to seed the National Infrastructure Fund and the National Sovereign Fund — flagship vehicles for Ruto's development agenda in the final stretch before voters pass judgment.

Yesterday, the court said the entire process was rotten from the start.

The three-judge bench found that the government had entered into binding agreements with Vodafone Group before completing the required policy and parliamentary approval processes. Records showed that a share purchase agreement, priced at KSh34 per share, and a separate dividend rights purchase arrangement were signed on 3 December 2025. The structure of the deal itself, the court found, was systematically misrepresented to the public, to the Cabinet, and to Parliament.

The court found that although Parliament conducted public hearings in 30 counties, critical documents relating to the transaction — including the share purchase agreement and the agreement concerning future dividend rights — were not made available to the public. That omission was not bureaucratic error. The judges were unsparing: "We accordingly find that the Government of Kenya engaged in unexplained obscurity on the identity of the proposed buyer, made misrepresentation and concealed material information in respect of the partial divestiture throughout the process," the court ruled.

The concealment ran deeper than paperwork. The court found that the proposed sale was presented to Parliament and the public as a partial divestiture when, in reality, the transaction involved a much larger corporate restructuring that would give Vodacom effective control of Safaricom. Under the arrangement, Vodafone Kenya's stake would rise from about 39.9 per cent to 55 per cent, while Vodacom Group would acquire full ownership of Vodafone Kenya. The court said the arrangement therefore amounted to a takeover, rather than simply a sale of a 15 per cent government stake. Parliament had been told it was approving a partial sale of a minority government interest. It had, in effect, been asked to rubber-stamp a foreign takeover of one of Kenya's most strategically important companies.

The government had mounted a spirited defence. President Ruto and Deputy President Kithure Kindiki argued the proceeds would finance major infrastructure projects and deliver on Kenya Kwanza's development agenda ahead of the 2027 general election. Kindiki had dismissed critics pointedly, saying: "The opposition is lecturing us as though this is the first time the government and the country have sold Safaricom shares. Safaricom shares were first sold in 2008, and they were sold twice during the administration of President Mwai Kibaki. This is the third sale, and we are not selling all the shares." Central Bank of Kenya governor Kamau Thugge and the Central Organisation of Trade Unions backed the deal, citing its potential to ease the country's debt burden.

None of that survived judicial scrutiny. The judges rejected the argument that Parliament's subsequent approval could cure the constitutional defects, ruling that the petitions challenged the constitutional foundation of the transaction itself. The State had broken the law before Parliament ever voted. Approval granted after the fact could not undo that breach.

The political fallout is immediate

Safaricom

and severe — and it arrives at a moment of acute vulnerability for a government already fighting on multiple fronts. Opposition figures including former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka had strongly criticised the privatisation drive, and the criticism extended beyond the formal opposition to legislators such as Ndindi Nyoro of Kiharu and ODM-aligned members Babu Owino and Caroli Omondi. Critics accused the government of undervaluing the shares and shutting ordinary Kenyans out of a company they effectively owned. Yesterday's ruling vindicated that argument with the full force of constitutional law.

For Ruto, the timing could scarcely be worse. With the election eleven months away, the Safaricom transaction was never simply a financial instrument. It was a political one. The KSh244.5B was designed to fund roads, electricity infrastructure, and markets — the tangible, visible projects on which Kenya Kwanza planned to run its re-election campaign. The opposition has already vowed to revoke privatisation transactions if it assumes office in 2027, arguing that such decisions are stripping Kenya of its strategic assets. Yesterday's court ruling did the opposition's work for it, before a single campaign rally has been held.

The consequences now cascade in several directions simultaneously. Vodacom, which had moved to consolidate Safaricom onto its balance sheet following the June completion, now faces the prospect of unwinding one of the largest privatisation transactions in Kenya's history. The KSh244.5B the Treasury banked must, in principle, be returned. The National Infrastructure Fund and the National Sovereign Fund, into which those proceeds were channelled, face an uncertain future. Development projects predicated on those funds face delay, cancellation, or emergency refinancing at a moment when Kenya's debt load is already a political flashpoint.

The court's judgment also scrutinised Safaricom's importance beyond its commercial value, noting that the company operates critical telecommunications, mobile money, and digital infrastructure used by millions of Kenyans. That observation matters. Safaricom is not merely the country's most valuable listed company. It is the backbone of Kenya's digital economy, the platform through which tens of millions of Kenyans save, pay, borrow, and receive money. The court treated it, correctly, as a strategic national asset — one that cannot be transferred to foreign majority ownership through a process shrouded in opacity.

The ruling also sets a precedent with implications well beyond this single transaction. The decision establishes that the need to raise revenue cannot override constitutional and statutory requirements governing public resources. That principle, now firmly embedded in case law, will constrain every future government contemplating the disposal of public assets. Kenya's privatisation programme — already controversial — now operates in a fundamentally different legal environment.

What happens next is uncertain, but the direction of travel is clear. The government will almost certainly appeal. Vodacom will resist an unwinding that would require it to disgorge one of Africa's most profitable telecoms investments. The Treasury will seek time, arguing that reversing a completed transaction of this magnitude cannot happen overnight. The courts will have to manage competing claims of constitutional principle and practical financial reality.

But none of that complexity will be resolved before August 2027. The election will be fought in the shadow of this ruling. Every road not built, every infrastructure promise undelivered, every project stalled for want of funds that the court has now ordered returned will be a campaign argument. The opposition, fragmented and still searching for unity and a candidate, has been handed a narrative gift: a government that sold a national treasure through concealment, misrepresentation, and procedural contempt for the Constitution — and was caught.

For Ruto, the task now is damage limitation in a deeply compressed political window. For Kenya, the task is larger: to determine whether the institutions designed to protect public resources have the strength, speed, and independence to function as the election approaches.

Yesterday, at least, they did.

Politics Is Kenyatta actually a threat to the current administration, or has Kenya simply reached a point where the influence of a former president is too significant to ignore?

Uhuru Kenyatta and the six-month rule: Is this about democracy, power or fear?

BY Hadassah Karangu
@themtkenyatimes


Retired President Uhuru Kenyatta

The High Court's decision to uphold the law restricting retired presidents from holding political party office beyond six months after leaving State House has done more than settle a legal question. It has reopened one of Kenya's most compelling political debates ahead of the 2027 General Election: what happens when a former president leaves office but does not leave politics?

For retired President Uhuru Kenyatta, the answer is becoming clearer. He has indicated willingness to complete the Jubilee Party leadership handover following the ruling, describing the decision as a reaffirmation of democratic maturity and respect for the Judiciary.

But the bigger story may not be Kenyatta's departure from formal party office.

The bigger story is why his continued political presence has generated so much anxiety.

Is Kenyatta actually a threat to the current administration, or has Kenya simply reached a point where the influence of a former president is too significant to ignore?

That is where the debate becomes complicated.

Kenyatta no longer occupies State House. He controls no instruments of government. He cannot issue executive orders or appoint Cabinet Secretaries. Yet he remains a former president, a former Jubilee leader, and one of the most recognisable political figures in the country. More importantly, his influence extends well beyond any position he formally holds.

This is precisely what makes former presidents different from ordinary politicians.

A former president leaves office, but he does not leave behind the networks built over years at the centre of power. He retains relationships, experience, political knowledge, and the ability to bring different political actors into the same room. In Kenya's personality-driven politics, that amounts to considerable political capital.

And that may explain why the debate around Kenyatta has become so intense.

The law itself is not targeted at him specifically. It establishes a general restriction on retired presidents holding party office beyond six months after leaving the presidency — a provision the High Court has now upheld. On paper, this is about institutional principle rather than any one individual.

But politics rarely operates only on paper.

Kenyatta left State House in September 2022. Since then, he has remained a significant figure within Jubilee and has continued participating in opposition conversations. His name has repeatedly surfaced in discussions about forming a coalition capable of challenging President William Ruto in 2027.

That makes the timing politically significant.

The 2027 election is approaching, and Ruto's administration already faces an increasingly competitive opposition environment. In such circumstances, a former president who commands political respect and maintains relationships across different camps can become a consequential player — even without holding an official party position.

That does not automatically mean Kenyatta is sponsoring the opposition.

Government-aligned politicians have made that accusation, while Kenyatta and figures within Jubilee have rejected it. Fred Matiang'i, associated with Jubilee's presidential ambitions, has also pushed back against claims that Kenyatta is bankrolling opposition activity.

This distinction matters. Kenya must be careful not to allow political suspicion to harden into political fact. If Kenyatta is accused of funding or directing opposition candidates, those claims require evidence. Without it, the country risks creating a culture in which former leaders are treated as threats simply for remaining influential.

There is, however, a legitimate separate concern.

Should a former president be allowed to retain indefinite formal control of a political party? The law now says no — and there is a reasonable democratic argument for that position. A former president should be free to participate in public life, express opinions, and offer counsel. Retirement from State House should not mean retirement from citizenship. But holding formal party office is different. It provides an institutional platform from which to shape political organisation and electoral competition in ways that can create parallel centres of power.

The concern, therefore, is not necessarily that Kenyatta is dangerous. The concern is that a country can find itself with more than one centre of political gravity — a sitting president with constitutional authority alongside a former president with extensive networks and party structures. That arrangement can generate real tensions, particularly during an election cycle.

But there is a question Kenyans must not ignore.

If this law is genuinely about protecting institutions, will the same principle apply equally to every former president, regardless of who is politically inconvenient at the time? That is the real test. A law becomes a weapon when it is perceived to target a specific individual rather than govern everyone equally.

Ruto and Kenyatta have a complicated history. They campaigned together successfully in 2013 and 2017. They became fierce opponents after the 2018 handshake between Kenyatta and Raila Odinga and the political realignments that followed. Today, Kenyatta is increasingly linked to efforts to reorganise the opposition ahead of 2027.

That makes his political role relevant to the current administration. But relevance should not be confused with proof. It is one thing to say Kenyatta's influence could affect Ruto's re-election strategy. It is another to claim Ruto is personally behind every legal or political move involving the former president. The first is political analysis. The second requires evidence.

Perhaps the most instructive aspect of this episode is Kenyatta's own response. He has not been defiant. He welcomed the court's decision and indicated the path is clear for the Jubilee transition. That is not the posture of someone preparing for confrontation.

Kenyatta may leave the Jubilee leadership, but political irrelevance is unlikely to follow. Leadership is not always found in a title. Influence does not evaporate because a position is surrendered. A former president can hand over a party office and still shape conversations, alliances, and political decisions from outside any formal structure.

The real question for Kenya, therefore, is not whether Kenyatta should disappear from politics. It is whether Kenya can distinguish between legitimate political participation and excessive concentration of power. The former deserves protection. The latter warrants regulation.

The court has drawn a line around formal party office. What happens beyond that line will not be determined by the Judiciary. It will be decided by political parties, political choices, and ultimately, by the Kenyan voter.

Elections Koyier said the commission was engaging women, youth and persons with disabilities to prepare them for the elections and address challenges

Gender Commission calls for women, youth and PWDs to participate in 2027 elections

National Gender and Equality Commission Chairperson Thomas Koyier has urged women, youth and persons with disabilities to come out and participate actively in the 2027 General Election. | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themtkenyatimes

By Elizabeth Angira

The National Gender and Equality Commission has urged women, youth and persons with disabilities to come out and participate actively in the 2027 General Election by seeking elective positions.

Speaking in Kisii during a three-day engagement with special interest groups, NGEC Chairperson Thomas Koyier said the commission was concerned about inclusivity and participation in the electoral process ahead of the 2027 polls.

Koyier said the commission was engaging women, youth and persons with disabilities to prepare them for the elections and address challenges that could prevent them from participating.

"Today's activity is also being carried out in Meru and Nyamira. The chairperson of the National Gender and Equality Commission, Hon. Rahama Jaldesa, is in Meru, while I am here with Commissioner Dr Margaret Karungaro to engage the youth, persons with disabilities and women on preparations for the elections," Koyier said.

He said the commission was also focusing on gender-based violence, which he noted could discourage women and other special interest groups from participating in elections.

"We realise that inclusivity in elections is a major concern for this nation and also for us as a commission. As part of our mandate, we want to engage in dialogue to encourage the youth and women to participate in elections and ensure that there is no gender-based violence during the election period," Koyier said.

Koyier said the commission would work closely with security agencies, county governments, the county commissioner's office and the Judiciary to address cases of violence targeting women, youth and persons with disabilities.

"Any woman, youth or person with a disability facing any form of violence can seek support. We will coordinate with the security forces, the county government, the county commissioner's office and the whole-of-government approach, including the Judiciary, to address these challenges," he said.

The commission is scheduled to hold dialogue meetings over the next three days, bringing together various special interest groups as part of preparations for the 2027 elections.

Commissioner Dr Margaret Karungaro expressed concern over what she described as the low representation of women in elective leadership in Kisii County.

Karungaro said women in the county had continued to lag behind in political representation despite the constitutional requirement for gender equality and the push for the two-thirds gender principle.

"My concern is that in Kisii, since independence, we have had very few women elected into political leadership. Most of the positions have continued to be held by men. This is worrying, especially when we are fighting for the two-thirds gender rule, which is recognised by the Constitution," Karungaro said.

She said women should be given an opportunity to take part in decision-making at all levels of government.

Karungaro also warned that fear of violence and intimidation could discourage women from seeking elective positions.

She said the commission was working through existing intergovernmental structures to ensure that women and other special interest groups who experience violence during the electoral period receive the necessary support.

"The participation of women is critical. Those who want to participate in elections should be supported and protected from any form of violence or intimidation," she said.

The commissioners said they had also discussed issues surrounding gender parity and women's empowerment in Kisii County.

They said the commission would work with relevant government agencies and other stakeholders to address challenges affecting women, youth and persons with disabilities and ensure they are able to participate fully in the 2027 electoral process.

National Gender and Equality Commission Chairperson Thomas Koyier (Second left) has urged women, youth and persons with disabilities to come out and participate actively in the 2027 General Election. | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

Elections **"The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter." — Winston Churchill**

The war drums will not win the election: Kenya's ruling class must face the record

"A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones." — Nelson Mandela and "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." — Sun Tzu"The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter." — Winston Churchill. These great quotes from these leaders may have relevance to us a citizens of Kenya today more than ever.

BY Fredrick Chelimo
@themtkenyatimes

Kenya's ruling political class appears to be discovering an uncomfortable truth: political noise becomes less persuasive when citizens are quietly keeping score. As the country moves closer to another decisive electoral contest, sections of the ruling party and its affiliated political formations have adopted an increasingly combative posture, as though the coming election were a battlefield and every political competitor were an enemy to be eliminated. The war drums are getting louder, the language harsher and the personal attacks more relentless. Yet beneath the noise lies a fundamental political question: why is a government that should be presenting its record spending so much energy fighting the people who want to replace it?

There is nothing wrong with robust political competition. Democracies require disagreement, scrutiny and competing visions. What should concern Kenyans is the transformation of legitimate political competition into political warfare, where opponents are branded, ridiculed, intimidated or portrayed as enemies simply because they have exercised their constitutional right to seek elective office. The politician who cannot defend a record without destroying the character of a competitor is not demonstrating strength. He is revealing the poverty of his argument. Kenya has had enough of the political goonism that treats public debate as a street fight.

The emerging political class must understand that citizens are not asking politicians to manufacture enemies. They are asking them to solve problems. The mother struggling to pay school fees does not care which politician can insult another most creatively. The young graduate without employment is not comforted by another rally in which leaders trade accusations. The farmer facing expensive inputs and uncertain markets wants answers. The patient confronting an inaccessible or unaffordable health system wants answers. The small trader battling taxation and rising operating costs wants answers. These citizens are increasingly asking a simple question: what happened to the promises?

This is perhaps the most serious challenge facing any administration approaching re-election. Campaign promises create expectations, and expectations eventually become a political invoice. A government cannot promise transformation during campaigns, make ambitious declarations after assuming office, revise its priorities repeatedly and then expect citizens to remember only the rhetoric while forgetting their lived experience. Consistency matters.

If a government promised economic relief, citizens will ask whether their household finances improved. If it promised jobs, young people will ask where those opportunities are. If it promised affordable and accessible healthcare, patients will judge the system from the hospital queue, the pharmacy counter and the family budget. If it promised to transform education, parents and students will judge the reality in classrooms rather than the language used at political rallies. This is the uncomfortable nature of democratic accountability: the citizen experiences government personally.

There is another issue that the political class should not underestimate—the perception that governments sometimes respond to social and political frustrations by creating increasingly punitive or restrictive legal frameworks rather than addressing the grievances generating those frustrations. Laws are necessary for the functioning of a modern state, but legislation should never become a substitute for listening to citizens.

"STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS ONE..."

When people begin to perceive new laws as draconian, excessive, selectively enforced or designed to silence legitimate dissent, the relationship between government and governed becomes dangerously transactional. Citizens may comply with the law while simultaneously losing confidence in those who make it. A democratic government should not fear criticism. It should welcome scrutiny because accountability is not an obstacle to governance; it is one of governance's safeguards.

Parliamentarians, particularly those supporting the administration, must therefore appreciate that voting for legislation is not merely a parliamentary procedure. Every law carries consequences into the lives of ordinary people. Representatives cannot pass controversial measures today and expect voters to forget their role tomorrow. Parliamentary votes are part of the public record, and the electorate increasingly has the ability and determination to revisit them. This is where political accountability is changing.

The politician's greatest assumption used to be that citizens would remember the campaign slogan but forget the parliamentary vote. That assumption is becoming obsolete. Citizens are increasingly asking who voted for what, who made which promise, who defended which policy and who remained silent when the public expected courage. The political record is becoming a permanent marking scheme. And no amount of political noise can erase it.

The ruling establishment should therefore be extremely careful about the growing culture of political intimidation and personal vilification. A politician announcing his or her intention to contest an election is not an enemy of Kenya. A critic is not necessarily a traitor. A journalist asking difficult questions is not automatically part of a conspiracy. A citizen demanding accountability is exercising democratic citizenship. The state belongs to citizens—not to political parties.

The presidency is a constitutional office, not a political possession. Parliament belongs to the people, not to party headquarters. Public resources are held in trust. Political power is temporary. This is why the spectacle of political opulence becomes particularly uncomfortable when contrasted with the economic difficulties confronting ordinary Kenyans. When citizens are struggling with education costs, healthcare challenges, unemployment, food prices and household financial pressures, conspicuous displays of political wealth can create a profound psychological distance between rulers and the ruled. People notice that distance.

They may not shout about it at rallies. They may not confront politicians publicly. But they remember. And ultimately, elections provide citizens with the most peaceful instrument ever invented for expressing that memory.

The ruling party should therefore stop behaving as though the Opposition is its greatest threat. Its greatest electoral threat is its own record. If the record is strong, present it. If there are failures, acknowledge them. If promises remain unfinished, explain why and provide a credible path to completion. If policies have caused hardship, listen and correct them. If laws have generated legitimate public concern, engage citizens rather than dismissing them.

There is still time for political maturity. Kenya does not need leaders who spend their remaining mandate sharpening political spears. It needs leaders who finish the work for which they were elected. It does not need warlords of political rhetoric. It needs statesmen and women capable of disagreeing without dehumanising one another.

The electorate, for its part, must also mature beyond the politics of personality and mobilisation. Voters should not allow themselves to become foot soldiers in somebody else's political war. They should examine records, compare promises with delivery, interrogate legislative decisions and demand evidence. The ballot should become the place where citizens settle political arguments—not the rally ground, not social media and certainly not the street. Kenya's political class should understand that the citizen has become the ultimate auditor. And the auditor is no longer interested in excuses.

The war drums may be loud, but they cannot drown out the lived experiences of millions of Kenyans. The insults may be fierce, but they cannot substitute for delivery. The promises may be beautifully packaged, but they cannot permanently conceal inconsistency. And laws may command obedience, but they cannot manufacture public trust. When the election finally arrives, politicians will discover that citizens have been listening—not only to what they said, but to what they did.

The ruling class should therefore lower the political temperature, put away the weapons of verbal warfare and face the electorate with the only currency that ultimately matters in a democracy: a credible record of service.

Athletics The most visible test is Kasarani. The stadium is undergoing major renovation ahead of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, two years before the World Athletics Championships

Kenya won the right to host the world: Now it must prove it can

Nairobi's bid victory for the 2029 World Athletics Championships is historic — but the real race begins now.

Faith Kipyegon

BY Levis Wangamati
@themtkenyatimes

For once, Kenya has won something without having to run for it.

Nairobi has been awarded the 2029 World Athletics Championships, beating bids from London, Rome, and Munich to secure a place in sporting history that belongs not only to Kenya but to an entire continent. When the championships arrive, Africa will host the senior World Athletics Championships for the first time. The announcement, made by World Athletics in Budapest, is more than a sports story. It is a declaration that Africa can stage the biggest events in global athletics — and that Kenya believes it is ready to welcome the world.

But celebration should not make us careless. Winning the bid is the beginning of the story, not its conclusion. Kenya has earned the right to host the world; it has not yet proved it can deliver the world-class experience the world will expect. That distinction matters because international sporting events are unforgiving. Athletes arrive with stopwatches, officials with checklists, broadcasters with cameras, and spectators with expectations. Nobody awards extra credit because the host nation is passionate about athletics. By 2029, Kenya must perform — and this time, the race will not be decided on the track.

The opportunity is enormous. Kenya has spent decades building a reputation as one of athletics' most successful nations, producing champions recognised far beyond our borders. Faith Kipyegon, Eliud Kipchoge, David Rudisha, Hellen Obiri, Vivian Cheruiyot, and generations of others have made Kenyan athletics a global brand. World Athletics president Sebastian Coe described the sport as woven into the fabric of the country and said Nairobi presented a compelling and emotional bid. That endorsement matters because Kenya has not simply borrowed athletics' global spotlight. It has helped create it.

Yet sporting reputation cannot substitute for infrastructure. Nairobi will have to move thousands of athletes, officials, journalists, volunteers, and spectators efficiently through a city already notorious for traffic. It will have to deliver accommodation, security, transport, medical services, telecommunications, and reliable facilities on a scale that ordinary international competitions do not demand. The country has relevant experience — the city hosted the World U18 Championships in 2017 and the World U20 Championships in 2021, while the Kip Keino Classic has grown into one of Africa's leading athletics meetings. Those successes provide a foundation, but the 2029 championships will demand a far larger performance.

The most visible test is Kasarani. The stadium is undergoing major renovation ahead of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, two years before the World Athletics Championships. That creates both an opportunity and a warning. If the upgrades are completed properly, Kenya enters 2029 with a modern national stadium capable of bearing the weight of a global event. If construction descends into delays, inflated costs, and unfinished works, the same project intended to showcase Kenya could become an embarrassment. A stadium should not be completed merely because cameras are arriving. It should be built because Kenyans deserve facilities that remain useful long after the visitors have gone.

This is where Kenya must learn to think beyond the event itself. The World Athletics Championships should not become another temporary spectacle — one that arrives, consumes billions, generates patriotic excitement for a fortnight, and then fades from national memory. The real measure of success will be what remains when the final athlete leaves the track. Can young athletes access better facilities? Can coaches find better opportunities? Can local businesses grow? Can tourism receive a lasting boost? Can Nairobi improve its transport and hospitality systems? Can Kenya strengthen its standing as a reliable destination for major international competitions?

Those questions matter because global events can be powerful economic engines when properly planned. Hotels, restaurants, transport operators, tour companies, retailers, and event organisers can all benefit from an international influx. Young Kenyans can find opportunities in hospitality, media, security, technology, and event management. The championships can also introduce visitors to a Kenya that extends well beyond the safari postcard — a modern African capital with culture, enterprise, creativity, and sporting excellence.

But opportunity has a way of attracting those who see public events rather differently from ordinary citizens. Where there is a large budget, there will always be interest in the tender. Where there is construction, there will be interest in the contract. Where there is international attention, there will be those eager to convert patriotism into personal profit. Kenya therefore needs exceptional transparency as it prepares. The phrase "historic opportunity" cannot be allowed to become a convenient cover for waste.

The lesson should be clear, because Kenya has hosted major sporting events before. We know the excitement that accompanies international competition. We also know the frustrations that follow when promised facilities, roads, and services fall short. The 2029 championships should be guided by a straightforward principle: build for Kenyans first, and host the world with what Kenya has built. If a new road is required, it should continue serving Nairobi after the athletes depart. If a stadium is renovated, it should remain a functioning institution. If technology is upgraded, Kenyan businesses and citizens should keep benefiting from it.

There is another responsibility that cannot be set aside: the integrity of Kenyan athletics. Kenya's extraordinary success has been accompanied by persistent concerns over doping. The international spotlight arriving in 2029 will celebrate our champions, but it will also scrutinise the systems protecting the sport's integrity. Hosting the championships gives Kenya an opportunity to demonstrate that its commitment to clean sport is as serious as its commitment to winning medals. The global stage should become a platform for stronger institutions, better testing, athlete education, and a culture in which excellence requires no shortcuts.

Kenya must also use the next three years wisely, because three years can feel like a long time in politics but is remarkably short in infrastructure planning. There should be no last-minute scramble to complete facilities, no frantic procurement when deadlines loom, and no expectation that Kenyan ingenuity will rescue poor preparation at the eleventh hour. Work must begin immediately, with clear milestones, public accountability, and regular reporting. The world has already sent the invitation. Kenya must now prepare the house.

For Nairobi, 2029 is also a chance to redefine the city's relationship with international sport. Every airport arrival, hotel experience, traffic jam, stadium entrance, press conference, and medal ceremony will shape the world's understanding of Kenya. National reputation is built through thousands of small encounters. A visitor who leaves Nairobi impressed becomes an informal ambassador. A visitor who spends hours in traffic, struggles with basic services, or encounters disorganisation carries a very different story home.

And then there is the young Kenyan watching from somewhere far from Kasarani — a child who has never left their county, has no professional coach, no equipment, and no connection to the sporting establishment. Watching the world's greatest athletes compete on Kenyan soil can change what that child imagines is possible. That is the deeper promise of 2029. It is not only about medals already won. It is about convincing the next generation that the starting line can be anywhere.

Kenya has received something more valuable than a hosting contract. It has received a test of national organisation. The country has spent years telling the world it is an athletics powerhouse. In 2029, the world will come to see whether the nation behind the champions can organise itself with the same discipline it demands from its athletes.

The pride is justified. Africa has waited a long time for this moment, and Kenya has earned its place in it. But patriotism must not obscure responsibility. The real victory will not be the announcement made in Budapest. It will be the moment, three years from now, when the stadium is full, the races begin on time, the athletes perform, the visitors are impressed, the facilities work, and Kenya can look at the world without excuses.

Kenya has won the right to welcome the world. By 2029, the world will decide whether Kenya deserved the invitation.

Education High exam marks alone will not prepare children for life — the skills that determine lasting success are learned long before any test.

Why emotional intelligence matters more than academic scores

BY Ashford Kimani
@themtkenyatimes

For generations, academic performance has been treated as the ultimate measure of a child's potential. Parents celebrate high examination scores, schools reward top performers, and societies equate academic excellence with future success. Report cards, grades, and rankings become the central indicators of achievement. Yet educational psychologists and child development experts increasingly argue that another quality plays an even bigger role in determining a child's long-term wellbeing and success: emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand emotions, manage feelings effectively, recognise the emotions of others, and build healthy interpersonal relationships. It shapes how children handle disappointment, solve problems, communicate with peers, respond to challenges, and navigate life's complexities. Academic knowledge equips learners with technical competence; emotional intelligence equips them with life competence.

A child may excel in mathematics, science, or languages but struggle greatly when faced with failure, criticism, peer conflict, or stress. Another child may achieve average academic results yet demonstrate resilience, empathy, self-awareness, teamwork, and emotional control. In most real-life situations, the second child often thrives more sustainably — because success in adulthood depends not only on what people know, but on how effectively they manage themselves and relate to others.

Modern workplaces reflect this reality. Employers consistently seek individuals who collaborate effectively, communicate clearly, demonstrate leadership, adapt to changing circumstances, and solve problems creatively. Technical knowledge remains important, but emotional skills frequently determine career progression, workplace relationships, and long-term professional success. Children who develop emotional intelligence early build foundations that extend far beyond classroom walls.

Resilience is among emotional intelligence's strongest benefits. Life inevitably presents setbacks. Learners may fail examinations, lose competitions, experience rejection, or encounter personal difficulties. Emotionally intelligent children learn to process disappointment constructively rather than becoming overwhelmed by failure. They develop perseverance and the capacity to recover from challenges. Instead of viewing mistakes as evidence of inadequacy, they learn to see them as opportunities for growth.

Confidence also grows when children understand and regulate their emotions. Emotional intelligence allows learners to express themselves appropriately, seek help when necessary, and engage confidently in social settings. Children who understand their emotional experiences tend to build stronger self-esteem because they develop awareness of their strengths and limitations — without defining themselves solely through academic achievement.

Relationships form another critical area shaped by emotional intelligence. Schools are social environments where children continuously interact with peers, teachers, and support staff. Learners who demonstrate empathy and emotional awareness build stronger friendships and healthier social networks. They become better listeners, more effective communicators, and more capable of resolving disagreements peacefully. These social competencies contribute significantly to emotional wellbeing and academic engagement.

Mental health experts increasingly identify emotional literacy as an essential protective factor against anxiety, stress, and emotional difficulties. Children who can identify and communicate their feelings effectively experience reduced emotional distress. Rather than suppressing emotions or expressing frustration destructively, emotionally intelligent learners develop healthier coping mechanisms. They learn to recognise emotional triggers and respond thoughtfully rather than impulsively.

Parents play a critical role in nurturing emotional intelligence. Children learn emotional behaviours largely through observation. Adults who model calm problem-solving, empathy, patience, and emotional regulation provide powerful examples for young minds. Conversations about feelings matter enormously. Parents who encourage children to express emotions openly create environments where emotional awareness develops naturally.

Simple family practices can strengthen emotional intelligence considerably. Listening attentively when children speak communicates respect and emotional validation. Helping children name emotions builds awareness. Encouraging problem-solving rather than immediately providing solutions develops emotional independence. Praising effort rather than outcomes alone helps children build resilience and a growth mindset that sustains them through difficulty.

Schools carry equal responsibility. Educational institutions focused exclusively on examination performance risk neglecting critical human competencies. Learners need environments that value emotional wellbeing alongside academic achievement. Teachers who create psychologically safe classrooms encourage participation, curiosity, and confidence. Collaborative activities, leadership opportunities, and conflict resolution practices all contribute meaningfully to emotional development.

This conversation carries particular significance within the Kenyan educational context. For many years, examination performance has heavily shaped educational priorities. Learners frequently face immense pressure to achieve high grades because results influence educational pathways and future opportunities. Yet educational transformation through competency-based approaches increasingly recognises broader dimensions of learner development.

The Competency-Based Curriculum emphasises communication, collaboration, citizenship, self-efficacy, creativity, and critical thinking — competencies that align closely with emotional intelligence principles. Schools preparing learners for modern realities must balance academic mastery with emotional growth. Teachers observe that learners demonstrating emotional stability often perform better academically over time. Children who manage anxiety effectively participate more actively. Those who build positive relationships engage more fully in classroom life.

Parents sometimes worry that prioritising emotional development means lowering academic expectations. It does not. Strong education integrates both dimensions. Literacy and numeracy remain essential. Academic excellence remains valuable. Emotional intelligence strengthens the ability to apply knowledge effectively throughout life — it does not compete with academics; it amplifies them.

Education ultimately extends beyond examination rooms. Schools prepare children not merely for tests but for adulthood. Society needs individuals who think critically, communicate respectfully, lead ethically, adapt to change, and contribute positively to communities. These qualities emerge through emotional development as much as academic instruction.

Academic scores may open doors. Emotional intelligence determines how successfully children walk through them — and how far they go once inside.

The healing power of laughter

Once you start laughing, you start feeling better.
Laughter is good for our health and can help reduce stress.
It is a gift from God that brings happiness and well-being into our lives.

When you laugh loudly, your stress decreases silently.
When a child laughs happily,
the whole home becomes joyful, like heaven.
Laughter can help us feel relaxed and refreshed.
In many countries,
people have started laughter clubs to enjoy its benefits.
Laughter can reduce stress and may improve blood circulation.

Laughter also brings people closer,
strengthens relationships, and helps us feel relaxed. It does not come from outside
it comes from within us.
It is free of cost, but its value is very high.
That value is happiness.

When you feel happy,
your worries may seem lighter.
So, keep smiling, spread happiness,
and live like a beautiful laughing rose.

__G.YasminSirajudheen
Secondary grade teacher
Melmalayanur block Villupuram dt

If you want to be successful...

Do this first.

Engaging always with your tasks and moving forward.
Make you feel better and experienced.
Planning makes you comfortable with your life.
Activate your life and take care of your health.

Spending time on other tasks is not our duty
Talking about others is also not our duty.
Your hard work and consistency brings you success.
And also takes you to the high position.

Keep your eyes closed on seeing bad evils.
And zip your mouth while you are in tempt.
Closing your ears on hearing gossip.
Use your senses wisely and engage yourself busily.

Rajesh Kanna B N

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Great things never come from comfort zones

Caterpillar, in its own shell,
The fight to come out of hell,
Once out, flutters as a beautiful butterfly,
In its own majesty, reaches the sky.

Eagle, pampered well within the walls,
Once let down, strives against all odds.
Wrestling with the inner thoughts,
Flying high when brought out.

Food on the bark, birds rush out,
With feathers fearfully beaten.
First flight, scared and frightened,
Time moves, the journey gets smoothened.

C.Angelin Gracita
St.Marys College (Autonomous),
Thoothukudi

Find your way in the waves of change

When jobs change, a new door opens,
When plans change, new ideas are born,
When relationships change, new bonds are created,
When comfort zones change, life starts afresh.

Change may arrive without warning,
And leave us unsure of the way,
But what feels like an ending today
May be a new beginning someday.

So let us not fear the changing tides,
Or hold too tightly to what we knew;
For in the waves of change,
We may discover a path that is truly ours.

M.Raddhika
Freelance content writer,
Creative Writers,
Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India

The street performer

When I was a child,
I watched a thousand wonders
a race upon a single wheel,
a walk upon a slender wire,
a dance along a trembling rope,
little monkeys performing their tricks,
tiny drums beating their ancient rhythm,
bicycles turning into flying dreams.
All of it
for the hunger of a belly
no wider than a palm.
We forget the hunger
of the little monkeys
dancing beside him.
In the plate he holds out,
only a few coins fall
while the man before us
performs feats
that could have won Olympic gold.
Yet we never learn
the grandeur of his art.
And those who mock
the poverty of the performer
how could they ever understand
the height of an Olympic gold
when they cannot even see
the gold hidden
inside his hands?

Raj Ganesh

Dr. K.R.GANESAN
BLOCK RESOURCE TEACHER EDUCATOR
BLOCK RESOURCE CENTRE,
GOBICHETTIPALAYAM
ERODE Dt.
TAMILNADU, INDIA

Great things never come from comfort zones

I was just lying down,
Enjoying the warmth of spring,
It was so smooth to sing,
Life flowed like a rainbow ring.

I continued the same in winter too,
Until the ground had changed its hue,
I shuddered deep in the cold,
A day more, and I'd be mould.

I decided to change my ways,
It asked for strenuous days,
To get up and do the chores,
My soft life felt so hard at its core.

I wrapped myself in struggle, tight,
No sun, no song, no spring in sight,
A lonely shell, a silent tomb,
Where I had to sit inside my gloom.

But waiting was not the end,
Time began to bend and mend,
The dark cocoon tore at the seam,
And cracked the edge of my old dream.

Now see — I don't just crawl, I soar,
No longer bound to the cold floor,
From comfort's grave, from winter's grey,
I am the butterfly — I found my way.

RAJITHA D
Creative writer
GGHSS PADAPPAI
KANCHEEPURAM

Vaccination **The county government will subsidise the vaccination cost by paying Sh110 per animal, leaving farmers to contribute only Sh50 per head of cattle**

Nyamira rolls out KSh38.6m drive to fight livestock disease

"Our officers are moving from farm to farm for the next two months vaccinating our cows. I call on our farmers to have their cattle registered and vaccinated. Equally, encourage your neighbours to do the same," Nyaribo said.

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themtkenyatimes

More than 113,800 cattle targeted in two-month Foot and Mouth Disease vaccination campaign as farmers receive grants

Nyamira County has launched an ambitious livestock vaccination campaign targeting more than 113,800 cattle in a bid to contain Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and protect farmers from losses.

Governor Amos Nyaribo launched the two-month farm-to-farm vaccination exercise at Riokenye in Borabu Subcounty, where he also issued farmers' organisations with grants totalling Sh32.6 million.

Nyamira governor Amos Nyaribo Nyaribo urged farmers to register their animals and ensure they are vaccinated, warning that controlling the disease requires collective action. | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

The county government will subsidise the vaccination cost by paying Sh110 per animal, leaving farmers to contribute only Sh50 per head of cattle.

Nyaribo urged farmers to register their animals and ensure they are vaccinated, warning that controlling the disease requires collective action from livestock keepers across the county.

"Our officers are moving from farm to farm for the next two months vaccinating our cows. I call on our farmers to have their cattle registered and vaccinated. Equally, encourage your neighbours to do the same," he said.

The governor said the vaccination campaign is a proactive intervention aimed at protecting the livestock subsector and safeguarding food security in the county.

The programme is being implemented through the National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP), which is also supporting farmers with financing and other interventions aimed at improving agricultural productivity.

A total of Sh11.3 million will be issued as matching grants to 13 ward-based Community SACCOs, while Kemera and Bisembe Farmers Cooperative Societies will receive Sh17.1 million in Enterprise Development Grants.

Another Sh4.2 million will go to nine Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) as inclusion grants.

In addition, Sh3.8 million has been set aside to support 40 Farmer-Led Demonstration Farms focusing on dairy and coffee value chains.

Nyaribo said the investments were designed to address key challenges facing farmers, including livestock diseases, limited access to affordable finance, weak aggregation and marketing systems, low value addition, climate-related risks and inadequate access to modern agricultural technologies.

He urged beneficiary SACCOs to use the funds responsibly by strengthening governance, increasing savings mobilisation and providing affordable agricultural financing to farmers.

The governor further called on the organisations to ensure women and young people get equal opportunities to benefit from the programme.

"These interventions are aimed at building a productive, profitable and climate-resilient economy," Nyaribo said.

Nyansiongo Ward MCA Jackson Mogusu welcomed the funding, saying increased sensitisation was needed to encourage more cooperatives and farmers to participate.

"The cheques are to support agriculture. We need sensitisation to bring more cooperatives on board," Mogusu said.

Food security **Hunger is not merely an agricultural problem. It is a political and economic failure that demands serious attention. A hungry population is a vulnerable population**

Millions of Kenyans are going hungry: Where is the government's food security plan?

Rising acute food insecurity demands more than emergency relief — Kenya needs a credible, long-term strategy.

BY Collins Kibet
@themtkenyatimes

Kenyans are going hungry

Kenya is facing a serious food security crisis, and the growing number of hungry citizens demands an honest national conversation about the effectiveness of government policy. Recent reports point to a sharp rise in acute food insecurity, particularly in drought-affected regions. For millions of ordinary families, the struggle is no longer about earning a better income. It is about finding enough food to eat each day.

The situation raises an uncomfortable question: if Kenya is pursuing economic transformation and spending heavily on development, why are so many citizens still unable to afford basic food? Economic growth must ultimately show up in people's lives — in purchasing power, employment, agricultural output, and the affordability of essential commodities. When families reduce the number of meals they eat because food is beyond their reach, the country must ask whether economic progress is actually reaching those who need it most.

Hunger is not merely an agricultural problem. It is a political and economic failure that demands serious attention. A hungry population is a vulnerable population. Children struggle to learn. Farmers lose livelihoods when drought destroys crops and livestock. Families slide deeper into poverty. If the problem persists, its consequences will extend far beyond individual households and become a national crisis.

The government must move beyond emergency responses and commit to sustainable solutions. Kenya needs significant investment in irrigation, water infrastructure, climate-smart agriculture, affordable farm inputs, storage facilities, and reliable agricultural markets. Farmers cannot be expected to feed the nation while remaining exposed to unpredictable rainfall, expensive inputs, poor roads, and inadequate market access.

County governments share this responsibility. Agriculture and local food production cannot be left entirely to national policy. Counties must strengthen agricultural extension services, support small-scale farmers, invest in water projects, and develop programmes that help communities produce food even during dry periods. Kenya has enormous agricultural potential. That potential will remain unrealised as long as millions continue to go hungry.

Political leaders must also reconsider how they define development. Kenya's political conversation is dominated by roads, buildings, and large government projects. Infrastructure matters — but development must ultimately be judged by its effect on ordinary citizens. A country cannot claim meaningful progress if families cannot afford food, young people cannot find work, and farmers cannot earn sustainable incomes.

The hunger crisis is also a reminder that food security and economic stability are inseparable. When food prices rise beyond what ordinary households can bear, disposable income disappears. Families are forced into painful choices between food, school fees, healthcare, and other basic needs. That deepens inequality and places additional strain on households already under severe pressure.

Kenya has the resources, the farmers, the technology, and the human capacity to feed its population. What is absent is a consistent, accountable strategy that puts food security at the centre of national development planning. Emergency food relief offers temporary relief. It cannot substitute for the long-term investment and political will that a structural solution requires.

The government should therefore be measured not only by the size of its development budget or the number of projects it announces, but by whether ordinary Kenyans can afford a decent meal. Real economic transformation is visible in households, markets, and farms — not in government statistics or press releases.

Kenya cannot continue celebrating economic progress while millions of its citizens remain uncertain about where their next meal will come from. Hunger is not a statistic. It is a reflection of the country's priorities and a direct test of its leadership. If Kenya is serious about building an economy that works for everyone, ensuring that its people can afford to eat must be among the first and most fundamental measures of success.


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Tech **History does not whisper here; it shouts. Colonial companies once controlled the ports, the rails, and the telegraph.**

The gatekeepers' feast: How Africa's hybrid regulatory farce feasts on its own digital future

By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo
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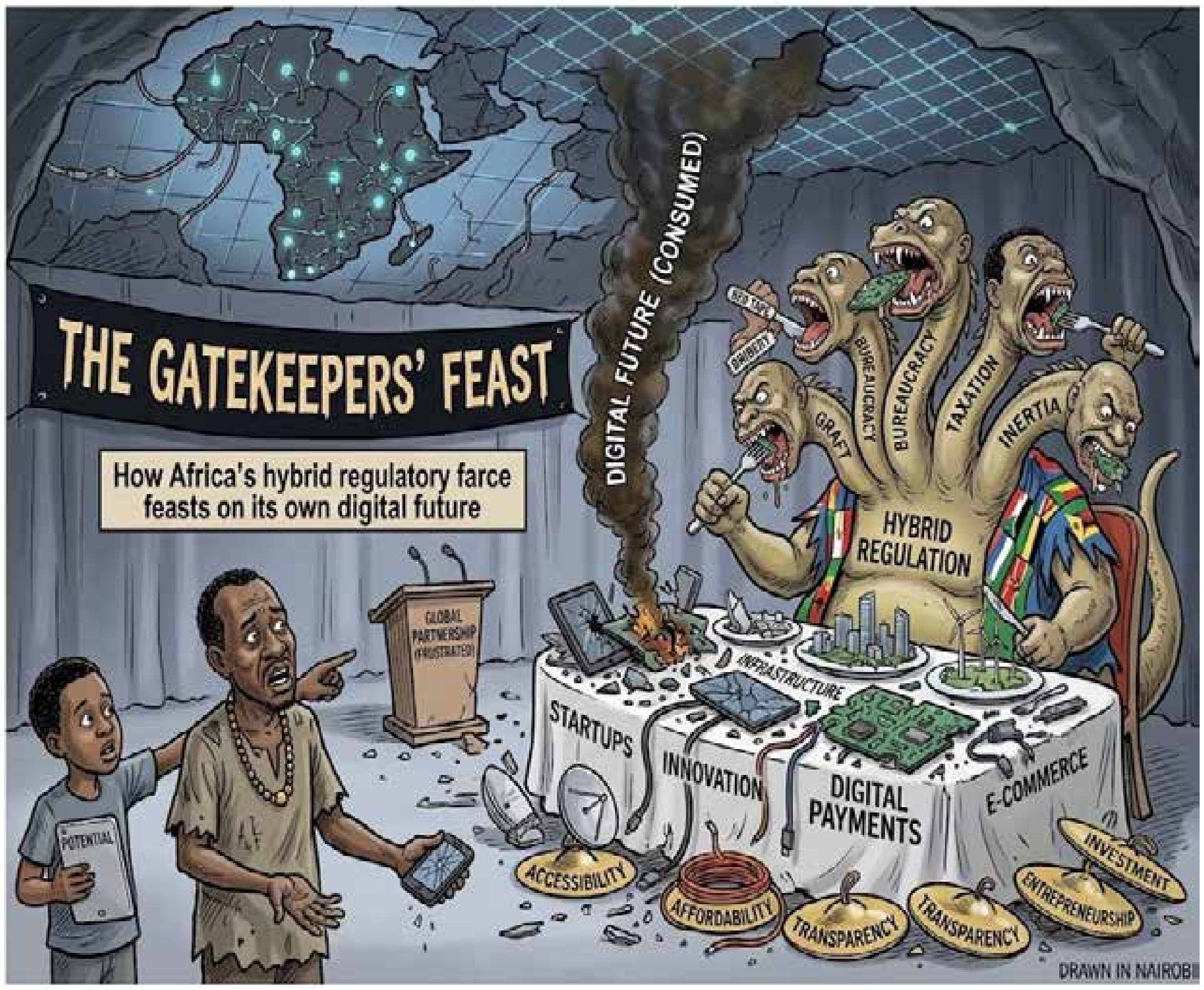

In 2025, Google still commanded more than 90 percent of search traffic across much of Africa, while in Kenya Safaricom controlled 62.7 percent of mobile broadband subscriptions and remained the indispensable partner for digital lenders and payment rails. These are not market shares; they are choke points. The factual reality is brutal: a handful of foreign and quasi-foreign platforms sit astride the arteries of African commerce, data, and attention, extracting value with the quiet efficiency of a tollbooth on a highway built by someone else. The issue is no longer whether regulation is needed. The issue is that Africa's emerging hybrid of ex-ante prescriptions and ex-post inquiries drawn from the AfCFTA Competition Protocol, the 2025 COMESA Competition and Consumer Protection Regulations, and national market studies has so far produced more paper than power, more aspiration than enforcement, and more deference than disruption.

History does not whisper here; it shouts. Colonial companies once controlled the ports, the rails, and the telegraph. Independence replaced those monopolies with state ones, then liberalisation replaced the state ones with private oligopolies dressed in the language of innovation. Today the digital gatekeeper is the latest iteration: a platform that decides who may reach the customer, whose data may be harvested, and which rival may be starved. The AfCFTA Competition Protocol, with its DMA-inspired list of prohibited practices self-preferencing, anti-steering clauses, data leveraging against business users, parity clauses, and discriminatory treatment of SMEs looks on paper like a continental declaration of independence.

Even so, the Protocol still awaits the regulations that would designate the gatekeepers themselves. COMESA's 2025 rules go further, introducing digital-transaction value thresholds and explicit gatekeeper obligations, and have even opened a probe into Meta's exclusion of rival AI services from WhatsApp's business interface. Kenya's Competition Authority has conducted inquiries into digital credit, USSD access, and online food delivery, and Parliament is considering a Competition Amendment Bill that would recognise "strategic market position" even below the traditional 40 percent threshold and prohibit abuse of superior bargaining power. On the surface, a hybrid architecture is forming: ex-ante lists of forbidden conduct married to ex-post investigative tools and market inquiries.

Look closer and the hybrid begins to resemble a carefully curated illusion. Ex-post enforcement has always been the tortoise in digital markets. By the time a case is investigated, the network effects have hardened, the data moat has deepened, and the rival has either exited or been acquired. Kenya's own experience with mobile money partnerships illustrates the pattern: the Competition Authority's 2021 Digital Credit Market Inquiry documented concentration among lenders tied to the dominant mobile network operator, yet the structural advantage remains largely intact years later. Market inquiries are valuable diagnostic instruments, but diagnosis without surgery is theatre. The COMESA Meta investigation is welcome; it is also a single probe against a company whose continental footprint is measured in hundreds of millions of users. Meanwhile the AfCFTA's gatekeeper provisions float in legislative limbo, waiting for political will that has so far preferred harmonisation rhetoric to confrontation.

The irony is almost literary. Africa champions continental free trade while its digital markets are anything but free. The Protocol on Digital Trade speaks of mobility for African digital services; the Competition Protocol seeks to restrain the very platforms that make that mobility contingent on their sufferance. The correlation is not accidental. Where regulatory capacity is thin, platform power expands. Where data localisation rules are weak or unenforced, value leaves the continent. Where national authorities lack the technical staff or the political cover to designate a global firm as a gatekeeper, the firm continues to set the terms. Kenya's proposed amendments are among the more ambitious national efforts, yet they still operate inside a fragmented landscape in which a platform can forum-shop across COMESA, the East African Community, and domestic regimes, or simply outlast the political cycle of any single regulator.

Consider the human texture beneath the statistics. In Kenya, internet penetration hovers around 40 percent of the population, with tens of millions still offline; those who are online conduct commerce, receive credit scores, and form political opinion inside ecosystems controlled by a few firms. Rural orders may now constitute a large share of certain marketplaces, yet the platform's commission, ranking algorithm, and data advantage remain opaque. The small Kenyan retailer who builds a following on a dominant social platform only to discover that the platform now sells competing goods using the retailer's own customer insights is living the precise harm the Protocol's prohibitions were meant to prevent. The fintech entrepreneur who cannot access a critical messaging API because the gatekeeper prefers its own AI offering is living the exclusion that COMESA is only now investigating. These are not abstract competition concerns; they are daily acts of economic dispossession.

The hybrid approach is defended as pragmatic: pure ex-ante risk is over-regulation that might deter investment; pure ex-post is too slow. Nevertheless, pragmatism that refuses to designate, to fine at scale, or to impose structural remedies is not pragmatism it is surrender dressed in technocratic language. The European Union's Digital Markets Act is imperfect, but it designates, it lists obligations, and it contemplates enforcement. Africa's version still largely contemplates. The result is a regulatory landscape in which Big Tech can claim compliance with vague principles while continuing the very practices the principles were written to stop.

This cannot continue. The African Union must accelerate the adoption and operationalisation of the designation regulations under the Competition Protocol so that gatekeepers are named, not merely described. COMESA and other regional bodies must treat digital dominance as a standing enforcement priority, not an occasional inquiry. National authorities, starting with Kenya's Competition Authority and Communications Authority, must be resourced and politically insulated to move from market studies to binding remedies, including data access obligations, interoperability mandates, and, where necessary, structural separation of core platform services from adjacent markets. Civil society and African businesses must stop treating regulatory capture as inevitable and begin treating it as a policy failure that can be reversed. Governments must recognise that digital sovereignty is not achieved by hosting data centres alone; it is achieved by ensuring that the rules of the digital marketplace are written in African capitals rather than Silicon Valley boardrooms.

The alternative is a continent that builds digital infrastructure only to watch the surplus flow outward, a generation of innovators who learn that the platform is both the market and the gatekeeper, and a history that will record this era as the moment Africa traded one form of economic dependence for another, this time wearing the smiling mask of "innovation" and "inclusion." The words of the Protocol and the Regulations already exist. What is missing is the courage to make them bite. Until that courage appears, the gatekeepers will continue their feast, and Africa will continue to set the table.

The writer is a legal writer and commentator.

BOOKS & LITERATURE
with Momina Riaz
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Pride And Prejudice: A Timeless Study Of Love, Pride And Society

A Critical Review of Jane Austen's Classic Novel
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An Enduring Literary Classic

Published in 1813, Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice is one of the best-known and most acclaimed novels in English literature. Although its plot may initially appear complicated, its memorable characters, lively dialogue, humour, and realistic depiction of society continue to attract readers. Austen offers a sharp criticism of class differences, marriage, relationships, and human nature while combining affection with irony and satire. The novel remains meaningful in the modern world because its questions about social expectations, personal judgement, and relationships are still relevant today.

The Story and Its Social World

The story is set in the English countryside and centres on the Bennet family, which consists of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters: Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia. Elizabeth Bennet is the protagonist, and much of the novel revolves around her experiences and changing understanding of other people. Mrs. Bennet is determined to see her daughters married, especially because the family estate is entailed away from the female members of the family. When the wealthy Mr. Bingley arrives in the neighbourhood with his sisters and his friend Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, Mrs. Bennet hopes that one of her daughters will marry into the wealthy family.

Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy

At a social gathering, Mr. Bingley is immediately attracted to Jane Bennet, while his friend Mr. Darcy makes an unfavourable first impression. Darcy refuses to dance with Elizabeth, and she forms a negative opinion of him. As the plot develops, misunderstandings, moral weaknesses, and concealed truths gradually transform Elizabeth's and Darcy's views of each other, eventually leading to mutual understanding and affection.

Elizabeth: Intelligent but Imperfect

Characterisation is one of the strongest qualities of Austen's novel. Elizabeth is intelligent, sharp, bold, and independent. She believes that marriage should not be based merely on money or social position; affection, understanding, and respect also matter. Her lively personality and witty conversation make her a charming and convincing protagonist. Nevertheless, Elizabeth is not perfect. She is sometimes too quick to judge people, particularly Darcy, and her mistaken assumptions become an important lesson in her personal development.

Darcy: From Pride to Self-Improvement

Mr. Darcy is one of the novel's most memorable characters. At first, readers may dislike him because of his proud and reserved behaviour. As the story progresses, however, Austen reveals a more generous and responsible side of his personality. Elizabeth criticises Darcy for his pride, while she also misunderstands his character. When Darcy recognises how his behaviour has affected others, he begins to change himself. His self-development is one of the most rewarding aspects of the novel, showing that genuine character is revealed through actions rather than first impressions.

Love, Misunderstanding and Growth

The relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy forms the central emotional and thematic focus of the novel. Their eventual marriage is not based on instant attraction but on struggle, reflection, and self-understanding. Elizabeth initially misunderstands Darcy because of his unfriendly behaviour and because she believes the false stories told by George Wickham. Darcy, meanwhile, must overcome his own pride and social prejudice. Gradually, both characters recognise their mistakes and correct their assumptions. Their love becomes meaningful because it develops through empathy, respect, and personal growth.

Supporting Characters

The minor characters make the novel authentic and fascinating. Jane Bennet is gentle, beautiful, and warm-hearted, while her relationship with Mr. Bingley represents a more traditional romantic love. Bingley is kind, cheerful, and easily liked by others. Mrs. Bennet provides much of the novel's comedy through her foolish behaviour and constant concern with marriage. Mr. Bennet is intelligent and ironic, but his failure to take his responsibilities as a father seriously creates difficulties for his family. Lydia Bennet is childish and irresponsible, and her elopement with Wickham creates a major crisis for the Bennet family.

Pride and Prejudice as Central Themes

Darcy's character represents the theme of pride. His wealth and social position contribute to his arrogance, and he initially judges others according to his own standards. Elizabeth, meanwhile, becomes a victim of prejudice because she makes quick judgements about Darcy. Her dislike prevents her from seeing his true character. Both characters therefore begin the novel with flawed attitudes, and their development demonstrates the importance of humility, self-awareness, and the willingness to reconsider one's beliefs.

Austen's Style and Social Satire

A major reason for the novel's lasting popularity is Austen's distinctive writing style. Her prose is clear, elegant, intelligent, and rich in irony. She exposes social realities through wit and satire while also entertaining her readers. Characters such as Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins provide comic relief, but their behaviour also reveals serious concerns about social class, gender roles, family expectations, and marriage. Beneath the humour, Austen presents a thoughtful critique of the social pressures faced by women and families in her society.

Setting and the World of Rural England

The charm of Pride and Prejudice is also connected with its setting in rural England. Austen presents a vivid social world through houses, visits, dances, dinners, walks, and gatherings. These settings are more than decorative backgrounds: they create spaces in which characters meet, observe one another, form judgements, and negotiate relationships. The social environment therefore plays an important role in shaping the characters and advancing the plot.

Conclusion

Pride and Prejudice remains one of the most famous novels ever written. It is a literary masterpiece because of its witty characters, memorable dialogue, humour, social criticism, and enduring themes. Through Elizabeth and Darcy, Jane Austen shows how pride and prejudice can distort human judgement, while self-awareness and mutual respect can lead to genuine understanding. Whatever the reason for reading it, the novel continues to leave a powerful and unforgettable impression on its readers.

Health Bipolar disorder is a serious, treatable medical condition — not witchcraft, not weakness, and not a life sentence.

Understanding bipolar: It is more than mood swings

By: Wanjohi. P. Mugambi
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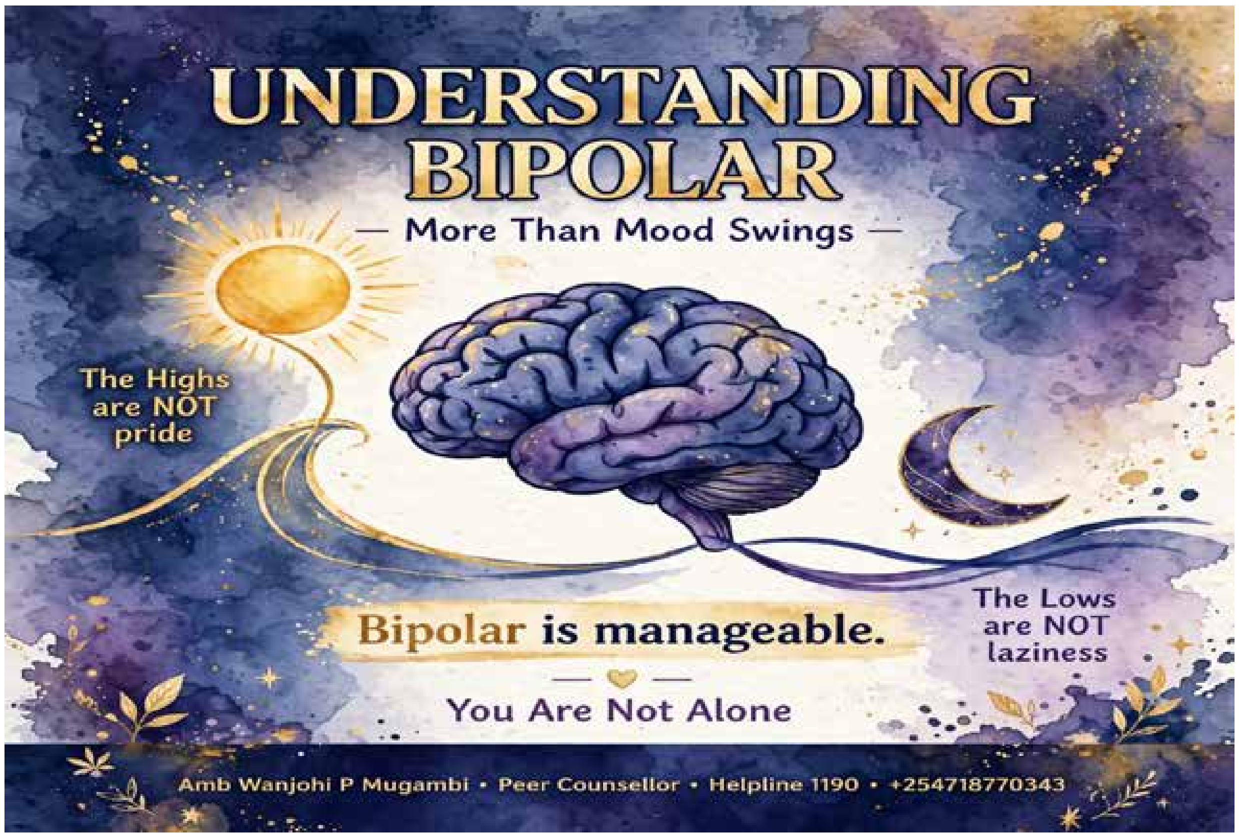

Bipolar disorder is a mental health condition in which a person's mood, energy, thinking, and behaviour shift in extreme ways. These are not ordinary daily fluctuations. They are intense, they last days or weeks, and they disrupt school, work, family, and friendships. Many Kenyans say someone has "mood swings" when they seem happy one day and low the next. Bipolar disorder is far more serious than that.

Think of mood as a radio dial. For most people, the volume moves gently up and down. For someone with bipolar, the volume shoots to its loudest extreme — then drops to complete silence. There is no middle ground, and no easy way to turn it down.

The high side

The first phase is called mania, or in milder form, hypomania. The person feels invincible — bursting with energy, needing little or no sleep. Thoughts race. They talk rapidly, laugh loudly, and draw up enormous plans overnight. They may feel like a prophet, a king, or a millionaire. In this state, they might spend all their money in a single day, launch multiple businesses simultaneously, become intensely irritable when interrupted, or engage in risky behaviour — gambling, reckless driving, or unsafe sex. It looks like euphoria. Underneath, the brain is exhausted from running too fast.

The low side

The second phase is depression. The energy vanishes entirely. The same person who was unstoppable now cannot get out of bed. The world turns grey. Deep sadness sets in — emptiness, worthlessness, a creeping feeling that nothing and no one matters. Things they once loved — football, music, church, friends — bring no joy. They sleep too much or too little. They eat too much or hardly at all. They withdraw. Some begin to feel the world would be better without them. This is not laziness. This is not attention-seeking. This is the low phase of bipolar, and it causes genuine, serious suffering.

The different forms

Bipolar disorder takes several forms. Bipolar One involves full manic episodes of high intensity, sometimes requiring hospitalisation, alongside severe depressive lows. Bipolar Two features less intense highs — hypomania — but very deep and prolonged depressive periods. Cyclothymia is a milder form in which highs and lows cycle repeatedly over years without reaching full manic or depressive severity.

One truth matters above all: bipolar disorder is not witchcraft. It is not a curse. It is not madness. It is a medical and psychological condition — like diabetes or hypertension — and it can be managed with the right support.

What causes it

No one chooses bipolar disorder, and no single cause explains it. Brain chemistry plays a central role — when the chemicals that regulate mood fall out of balance, the effects can be dramatic. Family history is another factor; if a close relative lives with bipolar, the vulnerability can be inherited, though it is not inevitable. Life stress and trauma also matter significantly. Many young Kenyans carry enormous pressure — exam results, unemployment, heartbreak, bereavement, domestic violence, childhood abuse — and these experiences can trigger the condition in someone already predisposed to it. Substance use is a fourth factor. Alcohol, cannabis, miraa, and other substances interfere with brain chemistry, amplify mood instability, and make recovery considerably harder.

Stigma causes its own damage

Misunderstanding fuels stigma, and stigma causes its own harm. Words like "amechizi" or "amepagawa" wound people more deeply than the illness itself. Because of those words, many young Kenyans hide their pain, suffer alone, and fear losing jobs, relationships, or their standing in the community.

The truth is this: a person with bipolar disorder is not violent by nature. Most are creative, loving, gentle, and hardworking. They are not possessed. They are not weak. What they need is not judgement but understanding.

What triggers an episode

Several things can push the brain into a high or low: insufficient sleep, sustained stress without rest, heavy alcohol use, stopping medication abruptly, prolonged isolation, persistent conflict at home, or the relentless pressure of comparing one's life to curated images on social media. Recognising these triggers is an important part of managing the condition.

How to support someone with bipolar

If you live with or care for someone with bipolar disorder, your response matters. Do not shout at them or gossip about their condition. Sit with them. Listen without rushing to fix things. Avoid phrases like "stop pretending," "be strong," or "just pray harder." Instead, say: "I am here. I see you are struggling. Let us walk through this together." Help them maintain a simple daily routine — consistent sleep times, regular meals, gentle movement. Encourage them to keep a mood diary, recording how they feel each day. Patterns in that diary can help them notice when a shift is approaching. And if they express thoughts of self-harm, do not leave them alone. Stay, listen, and connect them to professional help immediately.

Three pillars of healing

Bipolar disorder is treatable. People living with it become teachers, business owners, parents, pastors, and leaders. They live full, meaningful lives when they receive the right support.

The first pillar is counselling and talking therapy. A safe, non-judgmental space to speak openly allows a person to understand their triggers, develop coping tools, and learn to manage racing thoughts and negative thinking. Family counselling is equally valuable — when family members understand bipolar, conflict often gives way to support.

The second pillar is daily lifestyle. The brain responds well to routine. Sleeping and waking at consistent times, avoiding heavy alcohol and substance use, eating regular balanced meals, and staying physically active — even a daily thirty-minute walk — all contribute to mood stability. Staying connected to community — a church group, a youth group, or a peer support network — is equally important. Isolation feeds bipolar disorder. Connection helps contain it.

The third pillar is medical support. A psychiatrist may prescribe mood stabilisers to help prevent extreme highs and lows. These are not sedatives. They are tools to restore chemical balance in the brain. Stopping them suddenly, even when feeling well, can be dangerous. Feeling better is confirmation the treatment is working — not a signal to stop.

When to seek urgent help

Seek help immediately if someone expresses a wish to die or disappear; if they have not slept for three or more days and are engaging in dangerous behaviour; if they have stopped eating, bathing, or functioning for weeks; or if they are hearing voices or seeing things others cannot. These are emergencies. In Kenya, call the counselling helpline on 1190, the gender-based violence line on 1199, or go directly to the nearest hospital.

If your moods swing hard and you do not know why, hear this clearly: you are not alone, you are not cursed, and you are not beyond help. Many have walked this road and found stability and joy again. The first step is simply to talk.

ULTO Counselling Centre, led by Wanjohi P. Mugambi, offers individual counselling, group sessions, youth mentorship, and peer support. Contact: +254718770343 or ambwanjohi.pmugambi@gmail.com

Tackling drug abuse among Kenyan youth

By **Gladys Wanjiku**

Kenya is losing its youth to drugs — quietly, persistently, and at scale. Substance abuse has moved from the margins to the mainstream of young people's lives, dismantling futures before they begin.

The consequences are visible: school dropouts, collapsing academic performance, rising youth crime, fractured families, and unemployment. The drivers are equally well-documented — peer pressure, idleness, stress, and the dangerous ease with which drugs and alcohol reach young hands, including near school gates.

Punishment alone will not solve this. The response must be structural and sustained.

Parents and guardians must build home environments where young people can speak openly about pressures without fear. Schools must move guidance and counselling from the periphery to the centre of student welfare, equipping pupils to resist peer influence before it takes hold.

Government and county authorities must enforce laws governing the sale of alcohol and drugs near schools and residential areas — and follow through. Investment in youth empowerment, vocational training, and sports is not optional; it is prevention.

Communities, for their part, must stop treating addiction as a moral failure. Rehabilitation works when accompanied by professional support, genuine compassion, and real pathways back into productive life.

Parents, teachers, religious leaders, and policymakers must stop working in silos. The crisis is shared. So must be the response.

Kenya cannot afford to keep burying its youth's potential. The time to act is today.

The role of online platforms in language learning

By: Dildora Imonqulova
English Language Teacher, Zarbdor District Vocational Technical School No. 2

In recent years, online educational platforms have become an inseparable part of the language-learning process. As a technical college that trains future specialists, my institution constantly looks for ways to make English lessons more effective, engaging, and accessible. Websites and applications such as Duolingo, BBC Learning English, British Council LearnEnglish, and Quizlet give students the opportunity to practice vocabulary, grammar, listening, and pronunciation whenever and wherever they wish.

One of the greatest advantages of online resources is that they allow learners to study at their own pace. A student who struggles with a particular grammar topic can repeat exercises as many times as needed without feeling embarrassed in front of classmates. In addition, authentic materials such as videos, podcasts, and interactive quizzes expose students to real, natural English rather than only textbook language.

Online sites also make it easier for teachers to track progress and give immediate feedback. Instead of waiting until the next lesson to correct mistakes, platforms with automatic checking systems inform students right away, which strengthens memory and motivation. This immediate feedback loop is especially valuable for vocational college students, who often need to balance language study with technical subjects.

However, technology should support, not replace, the teacher. The most successful results come when online tools are combined with classroom communication, discussion, and guidance. A teacher's role remains essential in explaining complex ideas, correcting pronunciation, and encouraging students to use the language confidently in real conversation.

In conclusion, online educational platforms play a significant role in modern language teaching. When used thoughtfully alongside traditional methods, they help students of Zarbdor District Vocational Technical School No. 2 learn English more independently, confidently, and effectively.

Nairobi wins historic chance to host 2029 World Athletics Championships

Africa will stage the senior World Athletics Championships for the first time after Nairobi beat London, Rome and Munich to secure the 2029 edition.

BY Silas Tenai
@themtkenyatimes

By Silas Tenai

Nairobi has been chosen to host the 2029 World Athletics Championships, a landmark moment for Kenya and for an entire continent. World Athletics announced the decision yesterday following a council meeting in Budapest, Hungary. The selection means Africa will host the senior World Athletics Championships for the first time in the event's history.

The choice carries particular weight given Kenya's standing in the sport. Kenyan athletes have dominated global competition for decades across the marathon, middle-distance, and steeplechase disciplines, building one of athletics' most celebrated national traditions. World Athletics president Sebastian Coe praised the bid as compelling and acknowledged Kenya's profound connection with the sport.

Nairobi arrives at this moment with relevant experience. The city hosted the World U18 Championships in 2017 and the World U20 Championships in 2021, demonstrating an established capacity to organise major international athletics events. Those editions provided a practical foundation for the considerably larger undertaking that 2029 will represent.

The main competitions will be held at Talanta International Stadium, currently under construction. When complete, the facility is expected to meet the demands of athletes, spectators, and officials arriving from across the world. The championships are scheduled for September 2029.

The economic case for hosting is strong. The event is expected to boost tourism, generate business opportunities, create employment, and raise Kenya's international profile. For young people across Africa, it also carries a broader significance — a demonstration that world-class sport belongs on this continent.

Kenya's responsibilities as host are equally clear. Facilities, transport, accommodation, security, and overall organisation must meet the highest standards. World Athletics also pointed to Kenya's increased investment in anti-doping testing and athlete education as central to its confidence in the country's readiness.

The 2029 championships are more than a competition. They are Africa's moment to show the world what it can do.

Sports >> *A Paris appeals court awards the French club €60,000 in damages — a symbolic win after years of bitter legal warfare with their former star

From free transfer to court fight: Mbappé ordered to pay PSG

By **Andalo Christine Ingutia**

Kylian Mbappé

Kylian Mbappé has been ordered to pay Paris Saint-Germain €60,000 in compensation after a Paris Court of Appeal ruled yesterday that a legal manoeuvre by the French striker caused real financial harm to his former club. The ruling marks the latest development in a multi-year dispute that began when Mbappé left PSG for Real Madrid on a free transfer in 2024.

The case has its roots in the circumstances of Mbappé's departure. PSG withheld his final three months' wages after his contract expired and he joined Real Madrid without a transfer fee. The club claimed Mbappé had verbally agreed that PSG would not suffer financially if he left for free. Mbappé's legal team rejected that argument, citing French labour law, which requires any contract amendment waiving salary to be set out in writing. No such document existed.

The Paris labour court sided with Mbappé in December 2025, ordering PSG to pay him approximately €61 million to cover unpaid wages, a signing bonus, paid leave, and an ethics bonus. Mbappé's team had sought to expand the claim to more than €260 million, accusing the club of psychological harassment and deliberately isolating him from first-team activities. The court dismissed those additional claims.

The dispute took a sharper turn in the spring of 2025 when Mbappé's legal team obtained a conservatory order freezing €55 million in PSG's accounts for 45 days. The move, a procedural mechanism used to secure funds pending a ruling, caught the club off guard. PSG argued the sudden asset freeze disrupted its liquidity and forced it to arrange a credit line to meet normal financing obligations while the funds remained inaccessible.

The appeals court agreed that the freeze had created genuine financial cost for the club. Ruling on 14 September 2026, it ordered Mbappé to pay €60,000 in compensation for that disruption. However, the court drew a firm line there. PSG's additional claims — for moral damage and harm to its image and reputation — were rejected in full.

The €60,000 award represents a fraction of the damages PSG had originally sought. For a player of Mbappé's earning power, the sum is financially negligible. But the ruling carries symbolic weight. It is the first time a court has found against Mbappé in this protracted dispute, and it gives PSG a measure of legal vindication — however modest — after years of costly and reputationally uncomfortable litigation.

The broader context matters. Mbappé's exit from PSG was one of the most turbulent departures in European football in recent memory. Relations between player and club had deteriorated sharply in his final year, with reports of training exclusions, public standoffs over contract negotiations, and mutual accusations aired through lawyers and the press. The legal proceedings that followed his departure have kept the dispute alive long after he pulled on a Real Madrid shirt.

For PSG, yesterday's ruling offers partial closure. The club had sought broad damages — financial, moral, and reputational — and received only a narrow slice. The court's refusal to award moral damages or acknowledge reputational harm suggests judges were unwilling to extend the ruling beyond what could be directly and quantifiably attributed to the asset freeze.

For Mbappé, the outcome is a minor setback in proceedings that have otherwise gone largely in his favour. The December 2025 labour court ruling — ordering PSG to pay him €61 million — remains the defining judgment of this dispute. Yesterday's €60,000 award to PSG does not alter that picture materially.

What the ruling does confirm is that the conservatory freeze, while ultimately a successful legal tactic in securing Mbappé's wage claim, was not without consequence. Courts will not allow procedural instruments to be deployed cost-free when they demonstrably disrupt the operations of the opposing party.

The legal battle between one of world football's most recognisable players and one of its wealthiest clubs has run for years, consumed millions in legal fees on both sides, and generated headlines across Europe. Yesterday's ruling may not be the final chapter — but it signals the dispute is, at last, approaching its conclusion.

Sports >> *The 15-year-old academy prospect, fresh from a record-breaking Youth League hat-trick on debut, has requested his contract be terminated.

JJ Gabriel asks to leave Manchester United

By **Pascal Okoth**

JJ Gabriel

Manchester United are facing a significant setback after highly rated academy prospect JJ Gabriel, 15, asked the club to terminate his contract and release him from Old Trafford.

According to The Times, Gabriel's representatives are pushing for an early exit, with his camp viewing departure as the most likely outcome. United remain hopeful of reversing the situation and persuading the teenager to continue his development at the club.

The timing is particularly striking. Last week, Gabriel became the youngest player to score a hat-trick for United in the Youth League, doing so on his debut. The three-goal performance immediately amplified attention around him and confirmed why scouts across Europe already regard him as one of the most promising teenage talents in the game.

His technical quality, attacking instinct, and composure beyond his years have built him a reputation that extends well beyond United's academy. Several leading European clubs are monitoring him closely and are expected to move quickly should he become available as a free agent.

For United, the prospect of losing Gabriel is a painful one. The club has a long and proud tradition of developing young talent, and they regard Gabriel as a player of exceptional potential. Losing him at 15 would represent a bitter blow — not only to the academy but to the club's broader ambitions of competing for the best emerging talent in Europe.

The situation places United in a delicate position. They must balance their desire to retain him against the clear wishes of the player and his representatives. Further discussions between the club and Gabriel's camp are expected in the coming days as United seek a resolution.

For Gabriel himself, the decision carries considerable weight. Leaving a club of United's stature at 15 is a bold step. The environment in which a young player continues his development can shape the entire trajectory of a career, and wherever he goes next, the choice of club will matter enormously. Competition for places at Europe's biggest clubs is intense, and making the right move at this stage is critical.

The episode also reflects a wider reality in modern football. The battle among Europe's elite clubs to secure the best young talent has never been fiercer. Academies are scouting younger and younger, and a teenager capable of scoring a hat-trick on his Youth League debut will not lack for suitors.

Gabriel's record-breaking performance has ensured his name is now known far beyond Manchester. Should his contract be terminated, he would immediately become one of the most closely watched young free agents in European football, attracting serious interest from clubs already tracking his progress.

United have not given up. The club will continue working to convince Gabriel and his representatives that Old Trafford remains the right place for his development. Whether they succeed remains to be seen.

What is already certain is that JJ Gabriel, barely into his teenage years, has announced himself to European football in the most emphatic way possible. The coming weeks will determine whether that journey continues in the red of Manchester United — or somewhere else entirely.

The MT. KENYA TIMES

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Umida (Hope)

By: Narpulatova Gulruh
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Worth Noting:

- Umida was in serious condition. She was battling a severe illness that had lasted for a long time. At first, I was hesitant to speak to her. Looking at her condition, I simply did not know what to say.
- But as the days passed, a quiet closeness began to grow between us.
- At night, after the lights were turned off, we would talk in soft voices. She would tell me about her dreams with such enthusiasm that, despite her frail condition, her words seemed full of life.
- There was one thing she spoke about more than anything else.
- "I want to see spring. I want to see the trees covered in blossoms and the birds spreading their wings and flying freely across the sky," she would say.

It was winter, and snow was falling endlessly outside. Snowflakes struck the window before slowly melting and sliding down the glass, bringing a strange sense of peace to the cold, white walls of the hospital.

I had been admitted to the hospital for treatment of a relatively minor illness. A few weeks of following a prescribed diet and taking medication would be enough for me to recover. Perhaps that was why my first few days there passed mostly in boredom and longing for home.

Our room was not very large. It was a two-bed room with white-painted walls and two iron beds. Beside each bed was a small cabinet where we kept our belongings. Through the window, I could see the winter sky, while the snowy landscape outside cast a pale, silvery light into the room.

The air was constantly filled with the smell of medicine and antiseptic.

I was not alone in that room.

I had a roommate. Her name was Umida, which means "Hope."

Umida was in serious condition. She was battling a severe illness that had lasted for a long time. At first, I was hesitant to speak to her. Looking at her condition, I simply did not know what to say.

But as the days passed, a quiet closeness began to grow between us.

At night, after the lights were turned off, we would talk in soft voices. She would tell me about her dreams with such enthusiasm that, despite her frail condition, her words seemed full of life.

There was one thing she spoke about more than anything else.

"I want to see spring. I want to see the trees covered in blossoms and the birds spreading their wings and flying freely across the sky," she would say.

She spoke about it with such longing that I could still see a genuine hope for life shining in her tired eyes.

One day, she looked through the window and pointed toward the trees covered in snow.

"Look at that tree. In spring, it will be covered with beautiful white blossoms. I really want to see it."

I would smile and encourage her.

"Of course you will. And when spring comes, the two of us will go outside together and build nests for the birds."

The days passed, and eventually my treatment came to an end. I returned home, but I never forgot Umida.

Every week, I went to visit her and ask how she was doing. During our conversations, she would once again imagine the coming spring.

Together, we would lose ourselves in dreams, imagining the warm days ahead and making plans for all the things we would do when spring finally arrived.

Winter gradually began to loosen its grip, and February came. The weather was still cold, but the rays of the sun had begun to shine upon the frozen earth with a gentle warmth.

Whenever I visited her, she would ask me the same question:

"When will spring come?"

And I would count the days for her, as though each number I gave her could somehow help her hold on to her strength and hope.

Then, at last, the first day of March arrived.

In our land, as in many places around the world, spring is regarded as the beginning of a new season and a symbol of new life.

That morning, I wanted to call Umida. The sun had risen, the air had become warmer, and I wanted to tell her:

"Spring is here. Now we can finally go outside together."

But when I reached for my phone, I saw that I had received a message.

I opened it and began to read.

Something inside my heart seemed to tear apart.

The message was from Umida's parents.

It said that Umida had passed away during the night. She had gone to sleep and never awakened.

After reading those words, I remained motionless for a long time, unable to understand what I was supposed to do. It felt as though my mind was refusing to accept the truth.

Then I turned toward the window and looked outside.

It was the first day of spring.

The sun was illuminating the earth, and in the distance, birds were flying across the sky.

Yes.

It was exactly the world Umida had dreamed of seeing.

But now, that beautiful scene had become nothing more than a painful reminder of her.

That spring was unlike any spring I had ever known.

The trees blossomed.

The birds returned.

The air grew warmer.

Everything was exactly as she had dreamed.

Everything except one thing.

Umida was not there.

She could not see the spring she had waited for so patiently.

She could not see the white blossoms on the trees.

She could not watch the birds flying freely across the sky.

And she could not walk outside with me as we had promised.

Even now, every year, when the first day of spring arrives, I remember Umida.

I remember her quiet voice.

I remember her dreams.

And most of all, I remember her tired eyes—

eyes that, despite everything, were still filled with hope.

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