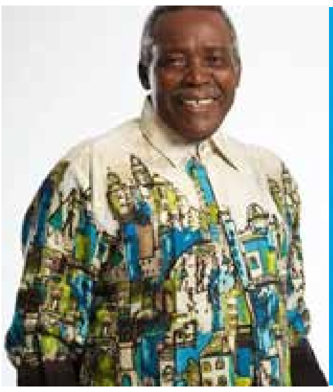

The Lion of Lufodo: Olu Jacobs, 1942–2026
Oludotun Baiyewu Jacobs, the Nigerian actor whose commanding presence defined the role of the patriarch across five decades of African cinema and television, died yesterday at the age of 84
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Countdown 2027 Ruto went further, labelling his predecessor a "rebel leader" for refusing to act as a statesman

Ruto brands Uhuru rebel

President William Ruto used a five-day tour of Nyanza this week to do something no Kenyan head of state has done in living memory: wage open, sustained political warfare against his own predecessor by name, in public, on a borrowed stage.

Speaking in Awendo during his tour of the Nyanza region, Ruto accused political opponents of being used by a sponsor to undermine his government and its development agenda, describing them as "puppets" and "people for hire." "They have been hired by a sponsor," he told residents. The sponsor, though not always named directly, was unmistakably Uhuru Kenyatta — the man who once made Ruto his deputy, helped deliver him the presidency and now, Ruto argues, funds the forces assembling to remove him.

In Siaya, Ruto went further, labelling his predecessor a "rebel leader" for refusing to act as a statesman and criticising him for clinging to the leadership of the Jubilee Party. The remarks were not an aside or a slip. They were deliberate, repeated across county after county, and escalated with each stop.

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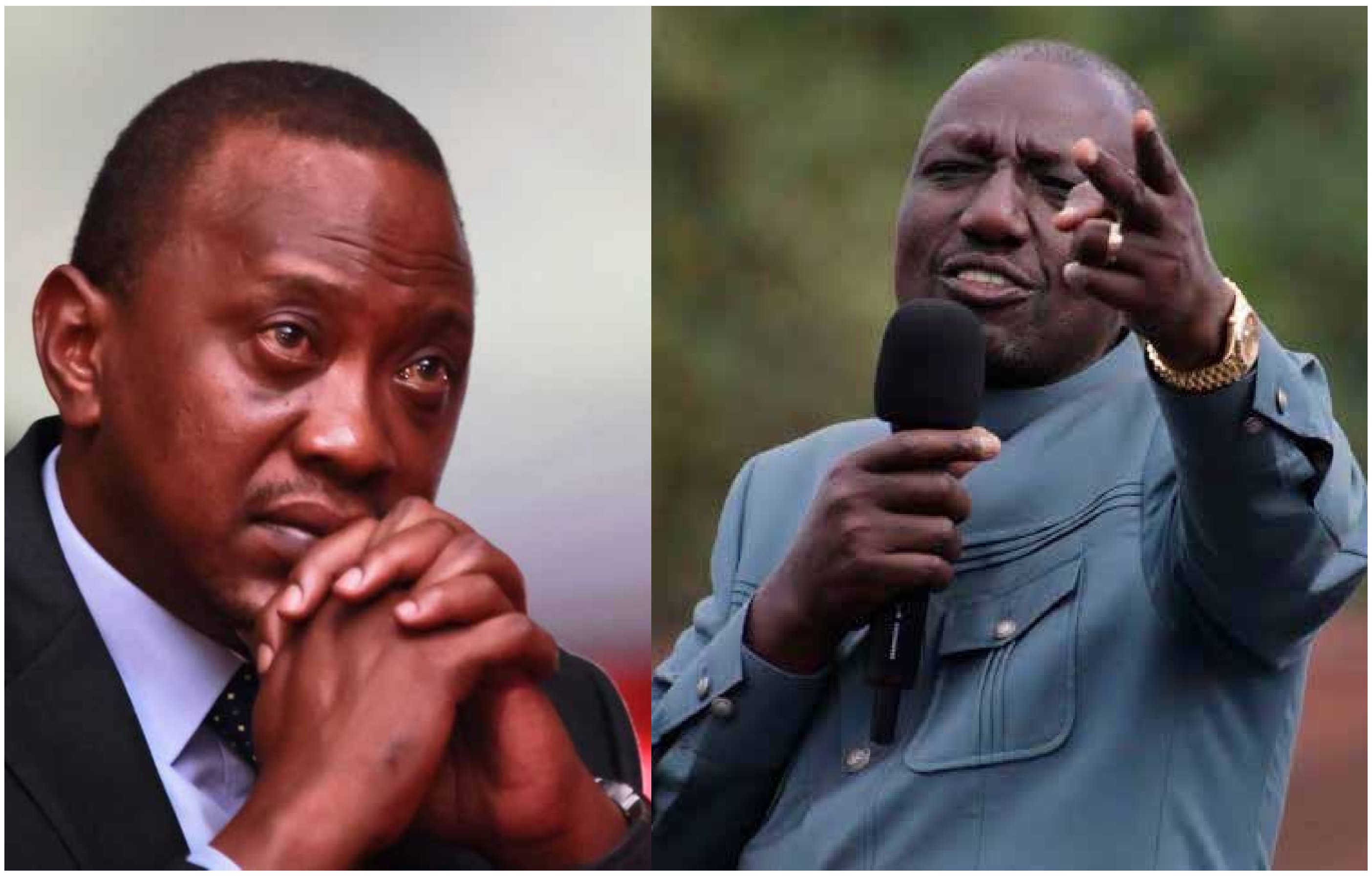

A collage of President William Ruto and his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta

Opposition leaders demand immediate restoration of KSh204B Safaricom stake

BY MKT REPORTER
@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

United Alternative Government leaders yesterday held a joint press briefing in Nairobi, welcoming the High Court ruling that declared the government's sale of its 15 per cent stake in Safaricom PLC unconstitutional and demanding the immediate restoration of the KSh204B shareholding to the Kenyan people.

Led by Wiper Party leader Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, former National Assembly Speaker Justin Muturi, Ford Kenya leader Eugene Wamalwa and Tony Gachoka, the coalition presented a united front against the Kenya Kwanza administration's privatisation agenda, condemning the attempted sell-off of one of Kenya's most strategic national assets.

Kalonzo, who served as lead counsel in the constitutional petition, called for the shares to be restored without delay. "This is not merely a legal victory. It is a declaration that Kenya's sovereignty is not for sale," he said.

Muturi, Wamalwa and Gachoka echoed the position, collectively rejecting the government's privatisation plan and expressing full support for the ongoing legal process.

The government has since filed a notice of appeal, with Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi insisting the transaction was lawful.

The United Alternative Government left yesterday's briefing with a clear message: the fight for Safaricom is far from over.

Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times

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

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

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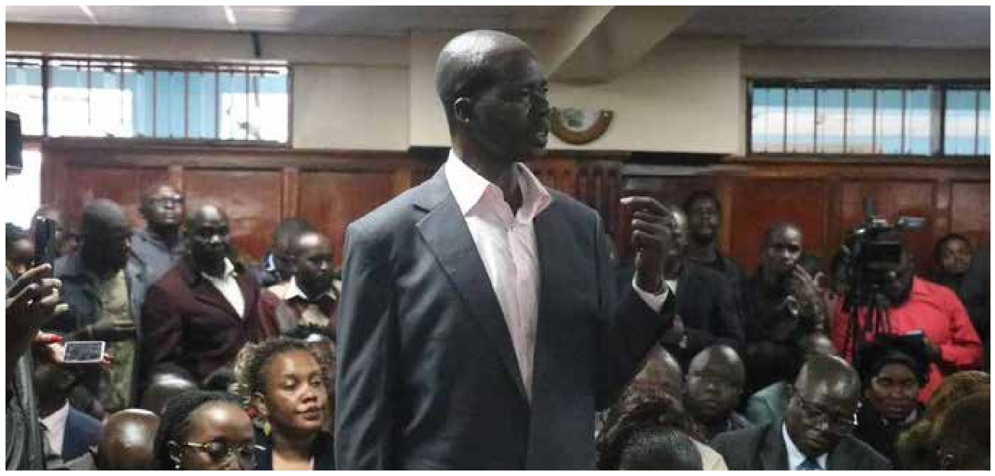
NEWS IN BRIEF

Kenya is bracing for a potentially dangerous long rains season, with Deputy President Kithure Kindiki warning that above-normal rainfall between October and December poses serious risks including floods, landslides and disruption to national examinations. Kindiki said the government was actively preparing for multiple scenarios, with particular concern for low-lying areas and communities living near rivers and steep terrain that have historically borne the heaviest cost during heavy rainfall seasons. The warning comes as education officials monitor the potential impact on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education and Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations, both of which fall within the October-to-December window and involve hundreds of thousands of candidates across the country. Authorities have urged counties to activate early warning systems and emergency response mechanisms ahead of the season.

Attorney General Dorcas Oduor has filed an appeal against the High Court ruling that declared the government's KSh204.3B sale of its Safaricom stake to Vodacom unconstitutional, joining the National Treasury in mounting a legal challenge to one of the most consequential judicial decisions in recent Kenyan corporate history. The move signals the government's determination to reverse a ruling that a three-judge bench delivered on 15 September, finding the transaction had been conducted without adequate public participation, with key documents concealed from both Parliament and the public. The appeal means the matter now heads to the Court of Appeal, leaving Safaricom's ownership structure in a state of legal uncertainty. Vodacom, which had moved to 55 per cent majority control following the June 2026 transaction, now awaits the appellate court's direction.

The chief principal of Limuru Girls' School, Susan Kariuki, appeared before the National Assembly Public Investments Committee on Governance and Education yesterday, facing pointed questions from lawmakers over the institution's expenditure records at Bunge Towers. Kariuki was grilled on financial decisions made under her watch, with committee members pressing for detailed explanations on spending patterns that had drawn the legislature's scrutiny. The session was at times tense, with members demanding accountability on the use of public funds at one of Kenya's more prominent national schools. The committee, which oversees public investments in the education sector, has been conducting a broader review of spending at several institutions. Kariuki's appearance signals that Limuru Girls' School has now come firmly within that investigative spotlight.

The Kenya Forest Service has moved to reclaim a section of Karura Forest it says Muthaiga Golf Club has been occupying without legal authority, asserting that its records show no documentation granting the club any right to the land in question. The service said access to the affected holes had since been restored, signalling that the dispute had reached an operational stage beyond written correspondence. The club, one of Nairobi's oldest and most exclusive sporting institutions, has not publicly responded to the assertion. Karura Forest, a protected urban forest in northern Nairobi, has long been a flashpoint between conservation interests and neighbouring institutions and developers. The Kenya Forest Service said its records were unambiguous and that the matter would be pursued through the appropriate legal channels.



The father of murdered university student Sharon Otieno told the High Court yesterday that he has forgiven former Migori Governor Okoth Obado following a personal reconciliation approach, but remains deeply bitter toward the other two men convicted in connection with his daughter's killing. The testimony offered a rare and deeply human moment in a case that has gripped Kenya since Sharon's body was discovered in 2018, her unborn child also killed in what prosecutors described as a calculated murder orchestrated by those closest to her. The father's account drew a clear distinction between Obado, who he said reached out directly to the family, and the remaining convicts, toward whom his pain remains raw and unresolved. The case returns for sentencing submissions.

More than 1,400 Early Childhood Development Education teachers in Taita Taveta County have downed tools over the county government's failure to remit statutory deductions running into millions of shillings, leaving hundreds of young learners without instruction across the devolved unit. The teachers said they had raised the matter repeatedly through official channels without resolution, ultimately leaving them with no option but to withdraw their services. The deductions, withheld from their salaries but never forwarded to the relevant bodies, have affected their pension contributions, insurance cover and other statutory benefits — obligations the county government is legally required to honour. The strike adds to growing pressure on the Taita Taveta administration over its handling of public sector employee welfare, with the earliest years of childhood education now caught in the standoff.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AI The turnout for the inaugural event was striking not only for its size but for what it represented

Africa's personal AI moment arrives at packed Nairobi conference

More than 400 developers, entrepreneurs and innovators gathered at Strathmore University for ClawCon Nairobi — and the conversation has shifted from what AI can say to what it can actually do

BY Joyce Kamande
@themtkenyatimes

More than 400 developers, entrepreneurs, technology professionals, students and innovators attended ClawCon Nairobi yesterday, Africa's first community-led personal AI conference, held at Strathmore University in Nairobi, marking a significant moment in the continent's engagement with artificial intelligence.

The turnout for the inaugural event was striking not only for its size but for what it represented: a growing constituency of African technologists no longer content to be consumers of AI products built elsewhere. The conversation at ClawCon was not about chatbots or generative text tools that have dominated global headlines. It was about personal AI agents — systems that do not simply answer questions but carry out tasks, automate repetitive work and coordinate activity across digital platforms on behalf of the people who use them.

Much of the day's discussion centred on OpenClaw, an open-source personal AI assistant that can run on a user's computer, server or cloud environment and, with the appropriate permissions, connect to selected communication channels, applications and digital services. Where a chatbot responds, a personal AI agent acts — managing workflows, handling administrative tasks, supporting research and coordinating recurring business activities with a degree of autonomy that previous software generations could not offer.

For African entrepreneurs and small businesses operating with lean teams and limited budgets, that distinction carries particular weight. Developer and OpenClaw community member Frank Odongkara captured the opportunity succinctly. "OpenClaw is an exciting technology leap for African entrepreneurs, professionals and students. It is now possible to have an intelligent, personal assistant in your WhatsApp DM that is just yours alone. And it costs next to nothing," he said.

The cost dimension is not incidental. Much of Africa's technology adoption has been shaped by affordability. If personal AI can be deployed at comparable cost to mobile money — which transformed financial access across the continent — the implications for productivity across Kenya's informal economy and small business sector could be transformative.

ClawCon Nairobi was hosted by First Circle Capital partner Agnes Aistleitner, who brought together developers, founders, researchers, creators and business

Agnes Aistleitner - Partner at First Circle Capital

operators from across Kenya's technology ecosystem. Through demonstrations and structured discussions, participants explored practical applications of personal AI in everyday work and new product development.

Aistleitner said the event reflected a fundamental shift in how African technology communities were approaching artificial intelligence. "Interest is no longer limited to using AI products developed elsewhere. Increasingly, developers and businesses are looking at how these technologies can be built, adapted and applied to local needs," she said.

OpenClaw was created by Austrian software developer Peter Steinberger, whose personal project has since grown into an international open-source community. That it is now being discussed in Nairobi as a productivity tool for African entrepreneurs is itself a measure of how quickly this technology is crossing borders and reshaping expectations.

"The question is increasingly shifting from what artificial intelligence can generate to what it can actually do," Aistleitner added.

Four hundred people showed up to discuss a technology that barely existed in public conversation two years ago. In Nairobi, the personal AI revolution has already begun.

Court clears USIU graduation

Police Deputy Inspector General Gilbert Masengeli

BY Jane Njeri
@themtkenyatimes

The High Court yesterday declined to stop the United States International University-Kenya graduation ceremony scheduled for 26 September, dismissing an application by Police Deputy Inspector General Gilbert Masengeli, who had sought to halt the event as a PhD student with an unresolved academic dispute.

The court found that blocking the ceremony was not in the public interest, a determination that weighed the rights of hundreds of graduating students against the grievances of a single petitioner. Masengeli, who holds one of the most senior positions in Kenya's National Police Service, had approached the court seeking conservatory orders that would have suspended the university's graduation proceedings pending the resolution of his complaint.

The ruling means the 26 September ceremony proceeds as scheduled, sparing hundreds of students — many of whom have waited years to cross the stage — from the disruption that a successful application would have caused. Courts have consistently applied a high threshold before interfering with institutional events whose postponement would impose disproportionate harm on uninvolved third parties.

Masengeli's underlying dispute with USIU-Kenya remains unresolved and is expected to proceed through the appropriate academic or legal channels separately.

For the class of 2026, the gowns stay on.

Olu Jacobs **He pursued it with uncommon seriousness, travelling to Britain to train at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London — one of the most demanding acting conservatoires in the world**

The Lion of Lufodo: Olu Jacobs, 1942–2026

Nigeria's greatest screen patriarch — trained at RADA, forged on the British stage and immortalised in Nollywood — has died at 84, leaving behind a continent's worth of memories

BY John Kamau
@themtkenyatimes

~~Oludotun Baiyewu Jacobs, the Ni-~~gerian actor whose commanding presence defined the role of the patriarch across five decades of African cinema and television, died yesterday at the age of 84, his family announced in a statement that asked the world to pause and grieve with them quietly.

His son, Olusoji Jacobs, broke the news on Instagram on the morning of 16 September 2026. His wife of many decades, veteran actress Joke Silva, confirmed the passing in a statement that described her husband in terms both intimate and grand. "It is with gratitude to God for a life well lived and fought that we announce the passing of our dear husband, father, grandfather and uncle," the family statement read. "The Lion of Lufodo." Silva asked bloggers and social media influencers to respect the family's privacy as they mourned. The request was gentle but the grief behind it was not.

Jacobs was born on 11 July 1942 in Kano, in Nigeria's predominantly Muslim north, to parents from Egba Alake in the south-west — a cross-cultural origin that perhaps foreshadowed a career built on inhabiting other worlds convincingly. He attended Holy Trinity School in Kano, where early teachers noted an unusual gift for drama and debating. The moment that changed everything came when a young Jacobs watched a performance by the legendary theatre practitioner Hubert Ogunde at the Colonial Hotel in Kano. Something in that encounter settled into a vocation.

He pursued it with uncommon seriousness, travelling to Britain to train at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London — one of the most demanding acting conservatoires in the world. The discipline of RADA shaped everything that followed: the precision, the physical authority, the voice that would become one of the most recognisable instruments in African cinema. He stayed in Britain long enough to build a body of work on the British stage and in television productions, earning screen credits that many of his contemporaries back home could only read about in newspapers.

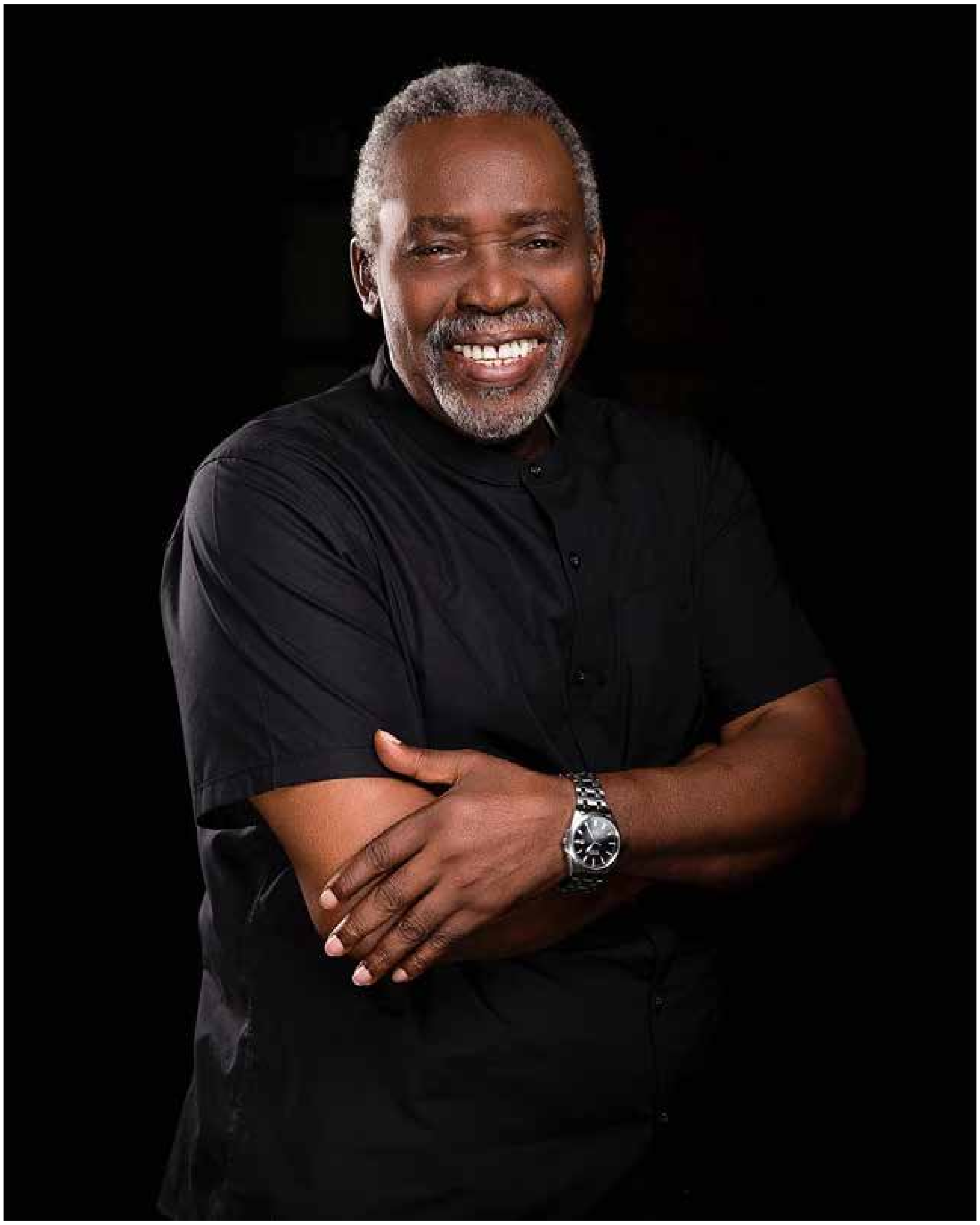
His international film work placed him in company that few African actors of his generation could claim. He appeared in The Dogs of War, Baby: Secret of the Lost Legend and Pirates, a 1986 Roman Polanski production that gave him a platform alongside some of Hollywood's most accomplished practitioners. The BBC, Walt Disney, Universal Pictures, MGM and the Royal Shakespeare Company were among the institutions he worked with during the British chapter of his career. These were not cameos or footnotes. They were the credentials of a serious working actor in one of the world's most competitive industries.

Then he came home. And home, it turned out, needed him more than Hollywood did.

Jacobs returned to Nigeria at a moment when the country's film industry was beginning the convulsive expansion that would eventually produce Nollywood — today the second-largest film industry in the world by volume. His arrival brought with it something the industry desperately needed: a performer whose training, range and professional discipline could anchor the new cinema in theatrical seriousness. He became the industry's patriarch on screen because he embodied patriarchal authority so completely — the deep voice, the measured stillness, the eyes that communicated entire histories without a word.

He became particularly associated with roles involving kings, traditional rulers, chiefs, fathers and men of consequence. In a film industry that was building its visual and moral vocabulary from scratch, Jacobs provided a template. Younger actors watched him and understood something about restraint, about how a commanding performance did not require noise.

His personal life was inseparable from his professional legacy. His marriage to Joke Silva became one of Nigeria's most admired and enduring partnerships, in an industry where marriages rarely survive the pressure of two prominent careers occupying the same household. They did not simply survive together — they built together. The couple co-founded the Lufodo Group, a company involved in film production and distribution, and established the Lufodo Academy of Performing Arts, an institution dedicated to training the next generation of Nigerian performers. The Lion of Lufodo was not only a name; it was a title describing someone who built something meant to outlast him.



Olu Jacobs

As recently as July 2026, Silva marked his 84th birthday with a tribute on social media, still calling him by that name, still celebrating a man she had loved and worked beside for most of her adult life. The photograph she shared showed Jacobs as the public had always known him — composed, dignified, present.

Africa has lost a great deal of its cinematic heritage to time and neglect. What Jacobs built — on film, in institutions, in the imagination of a generation of African audiences who grew up watching him embody authority and grace — belongs to a different category. Those performances cannot be misplaced. They exist, permanent and retrievable, in the archive of a continent that needed to see itself rendered with seriousness on screen.

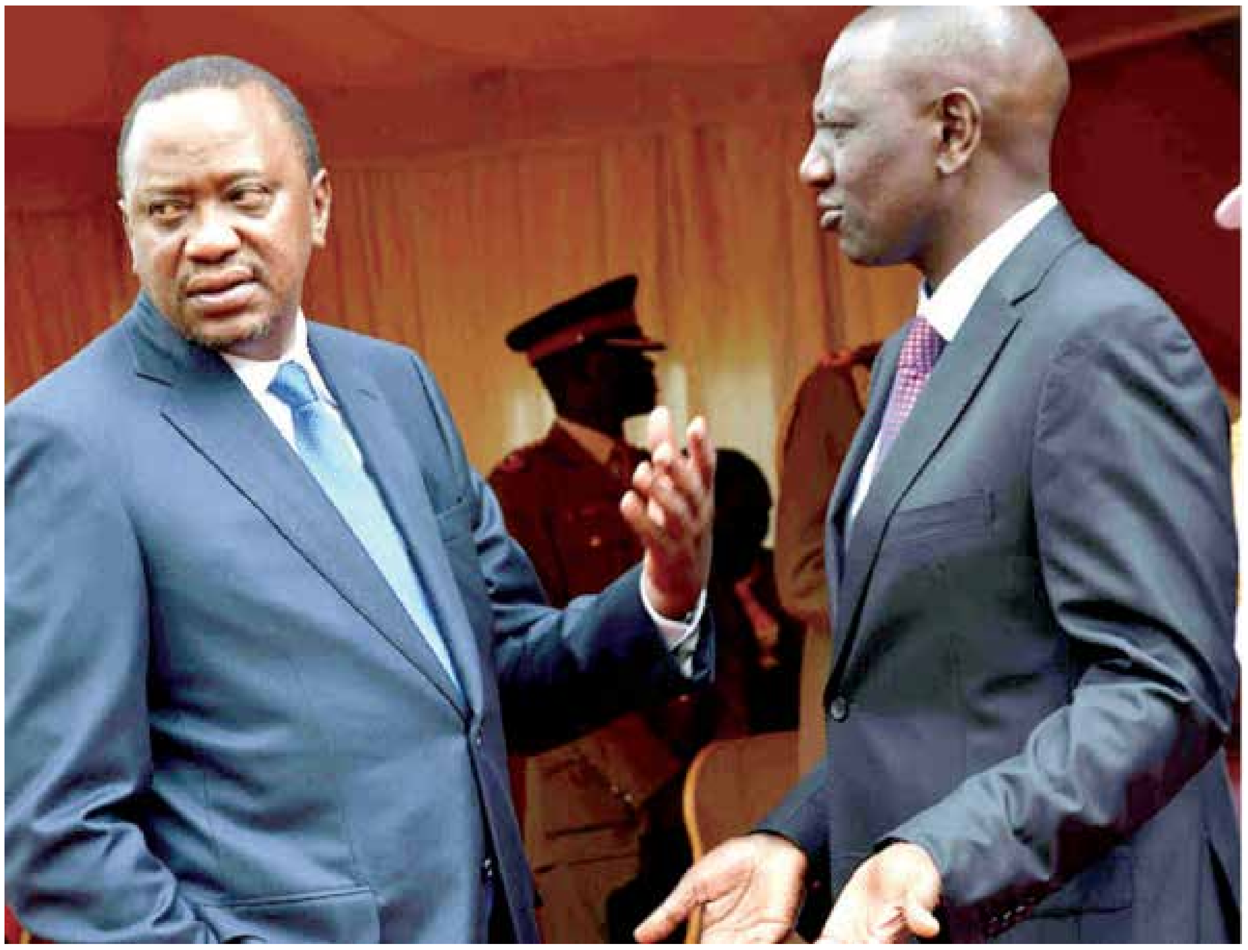
Olu Jacobs gave it that. Eighty-four years was a long life. It was also barely enough.

Politics In Siaya, Ruto went further, labelling his predecessor a "rebel leader" for refusing to act as a statesman and criticising him for clinging to the leadership of the Jubilee Party

Ruto and Uhuru: The rupture at the heart of Kenya's 2027 election

The president's Nyanza tour has torn away the last pretence of civility between Kenya's two most powerful political figures — and the fallout is reshaping the race for State House

BY David Kimani
@themtkenyatimes



President William Ruto and his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta

President William Ruto used a five-day tour of Nyanza this week to do something no Kenyan head of state has done in living memory: wage open, sustained political warfare against his own predecessor by name, in public, on a borrowed stage.

Speaking in Awendo during his tour of the Nyanza region, Ruto accused political opponents of being used by a sponsor to undermine his government and its development agenda, describing them as "puppets" and "people for hire." "They have been hired by a sponsor," he told residents. The sponsor, though not always named directly, was unmistakably Uhuru Kenyatta — the man who once made Ruto his deputy, helped deliver him the presidency and now, Ruto argues, funds the forces assembling to remove him.

In Siaya, Ruto went further, labelling his predecessor a "rebel leader" for refusing to act as a statesman and criticising him for clinging to the leadership of the Jubilee Party. The remarks were not an aside or a slip. They were deliberate, repeated across county after county, and escalated with each stop.

The accusations centre on two distinct but overlapping targets. The first is the Jubilee Party and its deputy leader Fred Matiang'i, who Ruto and his allies claim is operating as a proxy for Kenyatta's political ambitions. Matiang'i has strongly refuted the claims, urging Ruto to cease blaming others and look for alternative solutions. The second, and more viscerally charged, target is the Linda Mwananchi movement, a populist opposition grouping led by ODM Senator Edwin Sifuna that has drawn significant crowds. Senate Majority Leader Aaron Cheruiyot has accused the Linda Mwananchi convoy of being financed by "that retired man."

The accusation has become so routine that it now functions less as news and more as a running subplot of the 2027 campaign — Uhuru the sponsor of Jubilee, Uhuru the puppeteer, Uhuru the financier of bloggers against the government. But the narrative carries a significant vulnerability. When Ruto was challenged in a newspaper interview to substantiate his repeated assertions that Kenyatta was sponsoring the opposition, Sifuna said the president admitted his only source was media reports.

That evidentiary gap has done nothing to slow the rhetoric, and it has gifted the opposition a ready rebuttal. Democracy for Citizens Party leader Rigathi Gachagua, firing back from the United States where he was on a political tour, said Ruto was trying to shift attention from the issues facing Kenyans by portraying Uhuru as his political challenger. "President Uhuru Kenyatta is not your opponent in this election. You are just trying a bad deflection," Gachagua said.

Gachagua's response was methodical and sharp, delivered in layers. He said the political conversation should centre on Kenyans and the issues affecting their daily lives, rather than on the retired fourth president. He listed workers, young people, businesses, patients, parents and students among the groups he said were at the centre of the 2027 political conversation. "Your opponents are the people of Kenya," Gachagua said.

He also drew a pointed distinction on the question of opposition funding. "The leaders tasked with the responsibility of removing you from office by Kenyans require no sponsorship," Gachagua said, adding: "Olkalou was just a dress rehearsal for the forthcoming General Election."

> **In Siaya, Ruto went further, labelling his predecessor a "rebel leader" for refusing to act as a statesman and criticising him for clinging to the leadership of the Jubilee Party. The remarks were not an aside or a slip. They were deliberate, repeated across county after county, and escalated with each stop.**

Gachagua accused Ruto of deflecting criticism by invoking Uhuru's name, insisting the real opponents in 2027 would be ordinary citizens. "Your real opponents are ordinary Kenyans, and you should not confuse them with the shadow of Uhuru Kenyatta," he said.

The bitterness between the two men runs deeper than political competition. Ruto and Kenyatta governed together for a decade before their relationship collapsed publicly ahead of the 2022 election, when Kenyatta backed Raila Odinga against his own deputy. That betrayal — at least from Ruto's perspective — appears to have never been forgiven. In Siaya, Ruto wondered publicly how Kenyatta could defeat him in 2027 after failing to do so when he was president. "I want to ask you people of Siaya: Uhuru Kenyatta did not defeat me when he was President. Now I am the President, and he is retired; how can he defeat me?" Ruto posed.

The Linda Mwananchi movement sits at the centre of this argument. Senator Sifuna led thousands of Linda Mwananchi supporters through Nairobi's streets and into Jacaranda Grounds on 13 September, consolidating his position as the most visible opposition challenger to Ruto ahead of the August 2027 general election. Gachagua, reacting to the turnout, declared Nairobi "locked" against Ruto and predicted the opposition could take up to 2.5 million of the capital's 2.7 million registered votes in 2027.

The strategic logic behind Ruto's Nyanza tour is as important as the political combat. Only days before his arrival, Sifuna was mobilising supporters for the Jacaranda rally, while Gachagua was touring the United States positioning the united opposition for 2027. The broad-based cooperation between UDA and ODM continues reshaping Nyanza politics, with Cabinet Secretaries John Mbadi and Opiyo Wandayi now occupying senior positions in Ruto's government.

The president is therefore playing a dual game in Nyanza: commissioning development projects worth a reported KSh700B while simultaneously seeking to neutralise the political ground on which the opposition intends to fight. If Ruto can hold Luo Nyanza — or even split it — the path to his re-election narrows considerably for any challenger.

Gachagua has argued that Ruto's attacks on Kenyatta are a decoy to divert attention from corruption and the economic crisis facing ordinary Kenyans. Whether that framing gains traction will depend on how the electorate weighs a year of falling living standards against a government pointing an accusatory finger at a retired president.

Kenya's 2027 election has arrived, in all but name. The question it will ultimately answer is whether voters decide the country's problems have a sponsor — or a sitting president.

Elections **The responsibilities this creates are widely distributed. Political parties must campaign on substance and communicate honestly**

Kenya's 2027 election: Can technology strengthen democracy or manipulate voters?

As the campaign season approaches, digital tools are reshaping political communication — and the risks are as real as the opportunities

BY Collins Kibet
@themtkenyatimes

As Kenya moves toward the 2027 General Election, technology has emerged as one of the most consequential forces likely to shape the country's political landscape — for better or worse.

From social media and artificial intelligence to targeted digital campaigning, technology has fundamentally changed how politicians reach voters. A political message can now travel to millions of people within minutes, bypassing traditional media entirely. Candidates communicate directly with supporters, respond to criticism in real time and mobilise grassroots movements through platforms that did not exist a generation ago. For young Kenyans — who form a substantial share of the electorate and are among the most active online demographics on the continent — social media has become the primary arena for political debate, civic accountability and public engagement. In this respect, technology can genuinely deepen democracy by amplifying voices that once went unheard.

But the same tools that empower citizens can be turned against them. Artificial intelligence now makes it possible to generate convincing images, videos, audio recordings and written content that appear entirely authentic but are wholly fabricated. In an election environment, such material could be used to falsely attribute statements to political leaders, distort events or circulate damaging allegations before any verification is possible. The speed of misinformation compounds the problem. A false claim can be shared thousands of times within minutes, and even after it is conclusively debunked, the original content continues circulating. In a race where public opinion can shift overnight, the consequences of deliberate disinformation could be severe.

Data-driven targeting raises separate but equally serious concerns. Digital platforms generate detailed portraits of users — their interests, browsing behaviour and content preferences — that political campaigns can exploit to deliver precisely tailored messages to specific voter groups. Targeted communication is not inherently sinister; it is part of modern campaigning everywhere. The concern arises when citizens have no idea how their personal information is being used or why they are receiving particular political messages. When manipulation is personalised, it also becomes harder to see.

The responsibilities this creates are widely distributed. Political parties must campaign on substance and communicate honestly. Technology companies must address coordinated manipulation and protect users from synthetic disinformation. Journalists and media organisations must sharpen their fact-checking operations, particularly as AI-generated material becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from genuine content. Electoral institutions must update their thinking to account for forms of digital interference that simply did not exist during previous election cycles.

Citizens, however, cannot outsource their own responsibility. Before sharing a sensational video, photograph, quote or political allegation, Kenyan voters should pause and ask one simple question: has this been verified? Digital literacy is no longer optional — it is a fundamental requirement of responsible democratic participation in the modern age.

The deeper challenge Kenya faces is not about controlling technology. It is about ensuring that technology serves democratic participation rather than enabling deception. The 2027 election has the potential to demonstrate the best of what digital tools can offer — greater access to candidates and policy debate, more direct accountability between leaders and citizens, broader participation across the country. But without responsible use and effective safeguards, the very same technology could make manipulation faster, cheaper and significantly harder to detect.

Democracy rests on one foundational premise: that citizens make their choices freely and with accurate information. When voters are deliberately exposed to fabricated content, that foundation is undermined. Protecting the integrity of political information is not a technological challenge alone — it is an act of democratic self-defence.

As Kenya approaches 2027, the country faces a defining digital test. Technology itself will not determine whether democracy is strengthened or eroded. That will depend on the choices made by political actors, institutions, technology companies, the media and, ultimately, voters themselves.

The question is not whether digital tools will shape this election. They already are. The question is who benefits — the voter seeking truth, or those who profit from obscuring it.

Meru **Centre for Rural Justice chairperson Mwenda Murerwa said residents, traders and community groups would take to the streets to force authorities to act.**

Gakoromone traders and rights group demand closure of sewage discharge

Traders relocated next to a sewage facility say the county government demolished their market in the night then left them to sell food beside an open drain

BY Brian Gitonga
@themtkenyatimes

The Centre for Rural Justice yesterday condemned the Meru County Government over the relocation of Gakoromone Market traders to a temporary site adjacent to a sewage facility, warning that the arrangement exposes traders and their customers to serious health and environmental risks.

The rights organisation also announced peaceful demonstrations beginning today, demanding an immediate end to the discharge of raw sewage into nearby rivers — a problem residents say has gone unresolved since May 2026 and one they fear will worsen significantly once the rains arrive.

Speaking at a press briefing, Centre for Rural Justice chairperson Mwenda Murerwa said residents, traders and community groups would take to the streets to force authorities to act.

"We are calling on everyone to come out and demand that this sewage discharge is stopped so that it no longer flows into our rivers," Murerwa said.

Murerwa said the organisation wants the discharge halted immediately, noting that affected communities had been waiting for nearly four months for a response from the relevant authorities. He said the approaching rainy season had sharpened the urgency, warning that heavier water flow could carry pollution further downstream and contaminate a wider area. He called for the planned transfer of sewage operations to Rwanyange to be fast-tracked before conditions deteriorate further.

"Residents were told sewage would be redirected to Rwanyange," Murerwa said. "We are asking the agencies involved to honour that commitment before the rains intensify."

The organisation also raised concerns about how the demolition of sections of Gakoromone Market was handled, saying some traders sustained losses before being directed to set up businesses at the sewage-adjacent site. The combination of a midnight demolition, destroyed merchandise and an unsuitable replacement location has, according to the group, left many traders in a deeply precarious position.

North Imenti resident Muriungi O Kaaga was blunt in his assessment of the situation, questioning how any authority could consider the temporary site appropriate for traders selling food and goods for human consumption.

"This is very wrong. I wonder whether they have any mercy on these people — from demolitions carried out in the middle of the night and the destruction of their merchandise, to now expecting them to sell next to the sewage," Muriungi said.

Muriungi, who said he had lived in Meru town for many years, added that he had never seen traders placed in comparable circumstances. He warned that the environment would deter customers from buying food there, directly undermining the incomes of traders already struggling to recover from the disruption of their relocation.

"They are telling traders to sell their merchandise in the sewage area," he said. "If you were asked to buy food being sold in front of a toilet, would you do it?"

Gakoromone Traders Secretary Edwin Mwenda echoed the frustration, questioning why the Rwanyange sewerage project — which has been under development for several years — had still not been completed. He said traders had been repeatedly assured that the project was nearing the finish line, yet sewage operations remained in the same location.

"The government hastened to demolish our market in the middle of the night," Mwenda said. "We now wonder why they cannot put the same effort into getting rid of this sewage."

Mwenda called on both the county and national governments to urgently expedite the relocation of sewage operations to Rwanyange, arguing that the same decisiveness applied to the market demolition must now be directed toward creating a safe, functional and dignified trading environment.

The situation in Gakoromone reflects a broader tension in Kenya's urban development — between infrastructure projects pursued at speed and the human cost borne by the small traders and residents left to navigate the consequences. For those selling vegetables, meat and household goods beside an open sewage drain in Meru, the wait for a resolution is no longer simply inconvenient. It is a daily indignity.

Centre for Rural Justice chairperson Mwenda Murerwa adresses the press. | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

A trader stands next to the Gakoromone sewerage. | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

Muriungi O Kaaga, a North Imenti resident addresses the press. | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

Health SHA Chief Executive Dr. Mercy Mwangangi granted the extension, a concession that signals the authority's awareness of the depth of feeling among providers

Private hospitals draw a line in the sand over SHA's no-pay clause

SHA CEO Dr. Mercy Mwangangi

A single sentence buried in Kenya's new health contracts has united hospitals representing more than 3,000 facilities in a demand that could define whether universal health coverage survives its third year

BY Jane Njeri
@themtkenyatimes

Private hospitals have formally demanded that the Social Health Authority remove a clause from its new contracts that effectively allows the government to withhold payment without legal consequence, warning that signing an agreement with no enforceable payment obligation would make the entire universal health coverage framework financially unsustainable.

The Rural and Urban Private Hospitals Association of Kenya, known as Rupha, delivered the demand in a letter to SHA as the authority sought signatures on contracts governing the period from 1 October 2026 to 30 June 2029. The contested clause states that SHA's obligation to pay hospitals "is at all times subject to the appropriation of funds by the National Assembly and the availability of resources in the relevant Fund." To hospital owners and their legal advisers, those twenty-seven words are not a technicality. They are a disclaimer — one that transforms a binding commercial contract into something closer to a letter of intent, enforceable only when the government chooses to honour it.

The timing of the dispute is significant. SHA, which took over from the defunct National Health Insurance Fund in October 2024, has spent much of its first two years managing a payments crisis it inherited rather than created. In September 2025, Rupha suspended SHA services across its member facilities, citing KSh10B in unpaid claims as part of a broader KSh76B backlog that had left hospitals unable to pay suppliers or staff. The suspension was lifted only after President Ruto announced a payment plan and personally assured hospitals their claims would be settled. That intervention bought goodwill. The new contract clause is now threatening to spend it.

Rupha's objection is both principled and practical. In principle, the association argues that a healthcare provider cannot be expected to deliver services on credit to the state under a contract that expressly conditions payment on parliamentary appropriations — a process entirely outside the hospital's control and historically prone to delay. In practice, the clause would reproduce exactly the conditions that produced the KSh76B backlog under NHIF: facilities render services, submit claims, and then wait for a funding cycle that may or may not materialise on schedule.

> **The Rural and Urban Private Hospitals Association of Kenya, known as Rupha, delivered the demand in a letter to SHA as the authority sought signatures on contracts governing the period from 1st October 2026 to 30 June 2029**

Rupha is not alone in its concerns. The Christian Health Association of Kenya and the Kenya Association of Private Hospitals joined the association in requesting that SHA extend the feedback deadline by three weeks, to 1 October, arguing that their members — collectively representing more than 3,000 facilities across all 47 counties — needed sufficient time to understand the obligations before committing to contracts that would bind them until June 2029. "It is not our intention to delay implementation, but to ensure that when our members sign, they do so with full understanding of, and confidence in, the terms they are accepting," the associations said in a joint statement.

SHA Chief Executive Dr. Mercy Mwangangi granted the extension, a concession that signals the authority's awareness of the depth of feeling among providers. But an extended deadline does not resolve the substantive disagreement. The clause remains in the draft contracts, and hospital associations have made clear they regard its removal as a precondition for meaningful engagement, not an opening negotiating position.

The four funds covered by the new contracts — the Primary Health Care Fund, the Social Health Insurance Fund, the Emergency, Chronic and Critical Illness Fund, and the Public Officers Medical Scheme Fund — represent the full architecture of Kenya's universal health coverage system. Under that system, contracted hospitals provide services to enrolled members on the understanding that SHA will reimburse them within a defined period. If that reimbursement obligation can be suspended by reference to parliamentary appropriations, the system's financial logic breaks down. Hospitals cannot absorb indefinite credit risk on behalf of the state. Many of those most exposed are the smaller facilities in rural constituencies that the UHC programme was specifically designed to bring within reach of ordinary Kenyans.

The history of public health financing in Kenya offers little comfort to those inclined to dismiss the hospitals' concerns as negotiating tactics. NHIF's collapse into a KSh76B debt was not the result of bad faith by any single party. It reflected a structural failure in which services were delivered faster than funds were appropriated and disbursed. The new contracts, as drafted, contain a mechanism that could allow that same gap to recur — and, crucially, to recur without legal remedy for the hospitals caught inside it.

What Rupha and its partners are asking for, stripped of legal language, is a guarantee of a different kind: that when SHA cannot pay on time, it will not also be entitled to forget the debt. The distinction between delayed payment and no enforceable obligation to pay may seem technical. For a hospital administrator managing payroll, drug procurement and equipment maintenance on the expectation of SHA reimbursement, it is the difference between a temporary cash-flow problem and an existential one.

SHA has until October to produce a revised contract that the hospital associations can recommend to their members in good conscience. What happens if it does not will test not only the durability of Kenya's universal health coverage system, but the government's credibility as a partner to the private sector providers on whose capacity that system entirely depends.

Universal health coverage is only as strong as the hospitals willing to deliver it.

Court Justice Magare Dennis Kizito Ngwono certified the application as urgent and ordered that it be served to all respondents by close of business on 16 September

Mukunji wins court shield over Embu violence

The High Court has temporarily halted the arrest of the Manyatta MP over deadly clashes at Deputy President Kindiki's Nembure rally — but investigations continue

Manyatta Member of Parliament John Gitonga Mukunji

BY James Mwangi
@themtkenyatimes

The High Court in Embu granted Manyatta Member of Parliament John Gitonga Mukunji anticipatory bail of KSh1M — or KSh500,000 cash bail — yesterday, temporarily shielding him from arrest over the deadly violence that erupted during Deputy President Kithure Kindiki's political meeting at Nembure Stadium on 12 September.

Justice Magare Dennis Kizito Ngwono certified the application as urgent and ordered that it be served to all respondents by close of business on 16 September. Mukunji must report to the Directorate of Criminal Investigations headquarters in Nairobi on 21 September and subsequently on any Monday the investigators designate. The case returns to court on 29 September for directions. Critically, the court made clear that the anticipatory bail orders do not bar police from investigating or charging the MP — they merely prevent a summary arrest while the matter is before the court.

The violence at Nembure Stadium on 12 September left one person dead after being shot by police and saw six vehicles torched in scenes that shocked even a county accustomed to political tension. Kindiki, who was presiding over a UDA polling centre officials' meeting, strongly condemned the disruption. Embu Governor Cecily Mbarire publicly accused Mukunji of planning the chaos, a charge the MP has categorically denied.

Armed officers descended on Mukunji's rural home in Mutunduri at 6am the following morning, surrounding the residence in what the lawmaker described as an intimidation operation. He said he escaped on a motorcycle to evade arrest. Speaking during a church service on the same Sunday, he was characteristically defiant. "Today has been a challenging day for me. I am waiting for them to come and arrest me here at the house of God," he said. "I had made the decision that, even if they try to invade my house, I will sneak using a boda boda until I come here."

Mukunji then escalated the dispute dramatically, turning the constitutional lens on Kindiki himself. In his court application, he argued that the Deputy President had been heard issuing orders to police during the Nembure meeting and should therefore be investigated. "It is a matter of public record that Mr Abraham Kithure Kindiki was heard issuing such orders," Mukunji said. "Under Article 27 of the Constitution of Kenya, nobody is above the law. Article 143 makes it abundantly clear that Mr Abraham Kithure Kindiki enjoys no immunity from criminal prosecution." Kindiki has not publicly responded to the allegation.

Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua weighed in sharply on the side of Mukunji, accusing Kindiki and Mbarire of deploying state machinery against a political opponent. Gachagua claimed on social media that WhatsApp messages showed Kindiki warning Mukunji directly following the violence. "My brother, I have always respected you and your decision not to work with us. However, you have decided to fight me directly, but there is no problem; I am ready," the screenshot, purported to be from the Deputy President, stated. Neither Kindiki's office nor the National Police Service has publicly verified or denied the existence of those messages.

The Nembure episode and its political aftershocks have become a microcosm of the wider tensions gripping Kenya fourteen months before the August 2027 general election. In Embu, a county where Kindiki draws his political base, the alliance between the Deputy President and Governor Mbarire faces a credible local challenger in Mukunji — a lawmaker who has built his constituency profile precisely by positioning himself against the national government. The violence, whoever orchestrated it, has deepened those fault lines considerably.

What began as a UDA party meeting in a stadium has since become a courtroom battle, a social media war and a test case for whether Kenya's institutions can separate legitimate policing from political score-settling in the final stretch before an election. That question will not be answered on 29 September. It will take considerably longer.

Waiting

Today my heart remembered you again,
Your beautiful eyes, your black brows too.
The moments we laughed together, happy —
My poor heart recalled them, filled with blood.

Since the day you took yourself from me,
I long for those eyes of yours, my dear.

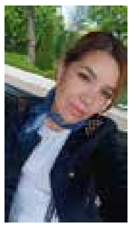
Even though you said you'd never return,
I still watch the road, hoping you'll come.

I keep saying "I've forgotten," every moment,
Always weaving lies about it to myself.
But whatever state you're in right now —
Believe me, it matters so much to me.

I know I'm a madman who never knew my worth,
Had I known, would I have fallen for you?
You, who never understood what love was —
Would I really wait through this torment of parting?

Kushbakova Gulmira Faxriddinovna
I was born on November 10, 2007, in Samarkand Region, Uzbekistan.
I am a first-year student at Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, Faculty of English Language and Translation Studies, majoring in Philology and Language Teaching (English).

I am so afraid of you



May I never need your aid.
Pray for me, dear doctor, please,
May my teeth not start to fade.
You drill, you dig, and you grind,
Patching up the holes you make,

From a single tiny spot,
A giant issue you awake.
The health of every single tooth,
And how long they will remain,
Is resting safely in your hands—
May you never tire or strain.
With you comes a charming smile,
Painless teeth for all to keep,
With you, winters feel at ease,
May your work bring blessings deep.

By: Amirova Nodira

Believe in yourself

You know who you are.
You know your capabilities.
Don't depend on others'
comments or reviews.
Believe in yourself
and confidently do
what you feel is right.

Chetna Bhatia
Rustomjee cambridge international school
Mumbai
India

Knowledge is not power when kept inside

It grows its wings when we use it with pride.
Learning gives us a light to see,
Applying it makes us truly free.
Read, learn, think, and take the right way,
Turn your ideas into action each day.
For knowledge becomes a powerful art,
When we apply it with a willing heart.
"Learn with purpose, act with courage,
And let your knowledge shape your future."

V.Mahalakshmi(PGT English Asst)
John dewey matric higher secondary school
Panruti

Start laughing to start healing

Laugh aloud even if you don't want to.
Laugh as if it is an exercise or a workout.
Because laughing relaxes muscles,
And releases feel-good chemicals, endorphins.

Laugh aloud even if you don't want to.

Laugh as if you are taking medicine.
Because laughing improves circulation,
Eases emotions and breaks tension.

You may not change the world with a smile,
But you can make someone's journey worthwhile.
And when laughter flows from a true heart,
The healing it brings may heal you too.

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

Happy teachers' day

There is a special joy in her heart
when she looks up at the student's art
who bends over his desk-writing
for she sees him rising
in the heights of achievement.

She is extraordinary—
the one who gives shape to letters,
teaches countless books,
explains the rules,
corrects the mistakes,
and brings a thousand wonders
before his very eyes.

She is the one who frees him
from being imprisoned within his mobile phone
and lets him breathe
the fragrance of a library…

She is the one who,
beyond the limitless reach of
Artificial Intelligence,
still connects with him
heart to heart.

With a love that goes beyond knowledge,
she teaches him virtue.
She sparks his curiosity
and nurtures his personality.

Along with physics, she teaches compassion;
within the complexities of mathematics,
she reveals solutions to life;
alongside science, she teaches politics;
and together with history,
she teaches society.

She lifts him, step by step,
up the ladder of success,
then quietly steps aside,
watching with graceful pride
as he stands tall and splendid above her.

The prizes belong to him,
but the victories belong to her.
The applause is for him,
but the pride of calling him
"my child" belongs to her.

As a teacher in learning,
a guide on the road to success,
a friend when he falters in defeat,
and in countless other dimensions,
she patiently shapes him
into a refined and worthy human being.

She is the one who can transform
even a rough stone
into a magnificent work of art…

She—the Teacher—
is the incomparable sculptor
of generations.

S.Sheeba
Graduate teacher
Gghss, Pattukkottai

Letter to my favourite toy as a kid

Dear Guddy
I love your cute dark graphy eyes
Attracted by it's size.
I have bought you glistening earrings
Sparkling my heart also by your cheering.
I hope you love the pendant?
That hugs your bottle neck elegant.
Are you satisfied with your hair style?
To comfort you underwent many trial.
Do you love the bracelet?
Mark my love within you as template.
I've designed your apparel
Adding your beauty more natural
You are my angel, my stress buster
Erasing my miseries as duster
For your smile & words soothens me
Stabilising me to be in glee.
Yearning to have you beside me ever: my little dwarf
But-time seeks to place beside your better half
Yes! its my daughter - my priceless toy
Gifted to play & enjoy.
By infinite lover
With white hair & blue heart
Mom...

G.Sarala

AI Across the world, governments and technology companies are racing to harness AI, pouring resources into innovation, deployment

AI, Kenya's big projects and global developments take centre stage

From Nairobi's infrastructure push to the worldwide race for artificial intelligence, the forces reshaping economies are moving faster than ever

BY Alex Nyongesa
@themtkenyatimes

Artificial intelligence, major infrastructure investment and shifting global economic currents are converging to define one of the most consequential periods in recent memory — and Kenya finds itself squarely at the intersection of all three.

Across the world, governments and technology companies are racing to harness AI, pouring resources into innovation, deployment and the increasingly urgent question of how to govern a technology that is advancing faster than the regulatory frameworks designed to contain it. What was once the preserve of research laboratories has moved rapidly into healthcare, finance, agriculture and public administration, forcing policymakers everywhere to make consequential decisions about adoption, investment and risk — often simultaneously.

Kenya is not standing on the sidelines. The government has been advancing a portfolio of infrastructure and digital projects intended to modernise transport networks, expand connectivity and lay the groundwork for sustained economic growth. These are not modest ambitions. From road and rail upgrades to broadband expansion and digital public services, the vision is of a Kenya that competes on the terms set by a technology-driven global economy rather than being left behind by it. International partnerships in technology and investment have added further momentum, with Nairobi increasingly positioning itself as the preferred gateway for companies and governments looking to engage with East Africa.

Globally, the pace of change is testing the adaptability of businesses and institutions alike. Supply chain realignments, shifting trade relationships, the energy demands of AI infrastructure and the uneven distribution of technological capability between wealthy and developing nations are all creating new pressures — alongside new opportunities for countries nimble enough to move quickly.

What ties these developments together is a simple but important reality: the decisions made now about technology, infrastructure and international cooperation will shape the economic and social landscape for a generation. Countries that invest deliberately, govern wisely and build the partnerships needed to access global knowledge and capital will be far better positioned than those that hesitate.

For Kenya, the opportunity is genuine. The infrastructure being built today, the digital systems being deployed and the international relationships being cultivated are not ends in themselves — they are the foundations on which a more competitive, more connected and more resilient economy can be constructed. The challenge, as always, lies in execution: ensuring that investment reaches communities beyond the capital, that digital access translates into real economic participation and that the benefits of growth are broadly shared rather than narrowly concentrated.

The world is moving. Kenya is moving with it. The question is whether the pace and the direction are sufficient to meet the scale of the moment.

Artificial intelligence

Politics **“A President may leave State House, but he does not leave behind his citizenship. Retirement should mark the end of an office—not the beginning of a lesser constitutional life.”**

Retirement is not disenfranchisement: Reclaiming the constitutional rights of Kenya’s former presidents

BY Fredrick Chelimo
@themtkenyatimes

A republic must be judged not only by how it treats those who hold power, but also by how faithfully it protects their rights after they relinquish it. Kenya’s Constitution did not establish citizenship in instalments, nor did it create a class of citizens who surrender their political freedoms upon leaving public office. Retirement from the presidency terminates an office; it does not, by itself, terminate citizenship, dignity, freedom of association or the constitutional right to participate in public affairs.

That principle is particularly important in the continuing debate surrounding retired President Uhuru Kenyatta. The question should not be reduced to whether Kenyans like or dislike his political interventions. It should instead be examined through the constitutional architecture of the Republic: what rights does a former President retain, what limitations may Parliament lawfully impose, and where should the boundary lie between legitimate regulation and unnecessary political disenfranchisement?

Article 2(1) of the Constitution establishes its supremacy, declaring that the Constitution is the supreme law and binds all persons and State organs. Article 2(4) is even more explicit: any law, including customary law, that is inconsistent with the Constitution is void to the extent of that inconsistency. The starting point, therefore, cannot be political convenience. It must be constitutional fidelity.

Retired President Uhuru Kenyatta

Article 38 protects the political rights of every citizen including retired presidents. It guarantees the right to make political choices, to form, join or participate in the activities of a political party, to campaign for a political party or cause and to participate in free, fair and regular elections. Article 36 protects freedom of association, while Article 27 guarantees equality and equal protection and benefit of the law. These provisions do not contain a general exception for former Presidents.

Article 24 nevertheless permits limitation of constitutional rights by law, but only where the limitation satisfies a demanding constitutional test. The limitation must be reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom. The Constitution requires consideration of the nature of the right, the importance and purpose of the limitation, the relationship between the limitation and its purpose, and whether there are less restrictive means of achieving that purpose.

The statutory provision at the centre of the controversy is section 6 of the Presidential Retirement Benefits Act. It provides that a retired President shall not hold office in any political party for more than six months after ceasing to hold office. It also envisages a consultative and advisory role for a retired President. Importantly, the provision does not prohibit a former President from being a citizen, expressing political views, belonging to a political party or participating generally in political discourse. The High Court has now expressly upheld this restriction, holding that the six-month limitation is constitutionally proportionate.

That judgment must be acknowledged honestly. It would be legally irresponsible to pretend that the matter has not been judicially determined. Justice Lawrence Mugambi concluded that the restriction serves the constitutional objective of preventing a former Head of State from retaining or extending political power beyond the constitutional term and found that the limitation satisfies Article 24.

Yet a judicial determination does not end constitutional debate forever. Kenya’s Constitution deliberately establishes mechanisms through which constitutional questions can be revisited through appellate litigation, legislative reform and constitutional interpretation. A citizen may therefore legitimately argue that the restriction should be reconsidered without claiming that the High Court has already declared it unconstitutional.

The case for reconsideration begins with a simple constitutional proposition: retirement from public office does not erase citizenship. A former President remains subject to the same Constitution, possesses fundamental rights and retains human dignity. If ordinary citizens can join parties, hold party positions and participate in political activity, the question whether a former President should be subjected to a special political disability deserves continuing constitutional scrutiny. The distinction between a former President and other citizens may be constitutionally permissible, but differential treatment must remain rational, proportionate and connected to a legitimate constitutional purpose.

Article 10 further requires national values including human dignity, equality, inclusiveness, democracy, participation of the people, good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability to guide State action. The constitutional conversation should therefore ask whether there are less restrictive mechanisms capable of protecting institutional stability without permanently diminishing the political participation of a former Head of State.

There is another principle that Kenya should never forget: laws and institutions create precedents. Those now demanding the narrowing of constitutional rights enjoyed by a former President should remember that constitutional protections are not designed exclusively for today’s political allies or opponents. Political power changes hands. The restrictions imposed upon one former leader may eventually become the rules governing another. What appears convenient when applied to an unpopular political figure may become deeply uncomfortable when applied to one’s own political generation.

That is why constitutionalism requires restraint. The proper question should never be, “Whose political interests are being served?” It should be, “What rule are we establishing for the Republic?”

Those calling for further mutilation of the political rights of retired Presidents therefore need to confront the broader constitutional consequences of their position. If a democratic society normalises the progressive reduction of citizens’ rights because they once occupied powerful offices, it risks establishing a precedent in which political retirement becomes a form of civic disability. Such an approach would require careful justification under Articles 24, 27, 36 and 38 rather than political rhetoric.

At the same time, supporters of full restoration must acknowledge the legitimate constitutional concern identified by the High Court: Kenya has experienced the danger of political power extending beyond formal constitutional tenure. The answer, therefore, cannot simply be to disregard institutional safeguards. Justice requires that the legitimate purpose of protecting constitutional transitions be balanced against the equally important principle that citizenship and fundamental rights do not disappear when an individual leaves high office.

The answer, therefore, should not be partisan retaliation or personality-driven constitutionalism. It should be a mature national conversation about whether the present restriction is the least restrictive mechanism capable of protecting democracy while respecting the political rights of former Presidents.

Kenya’s constitutional project was built on a profound idea: power belongs to the people. Presidents exercise delegated constitutional authority; they do not become owners of citizenship when they enter State House, and they do not cease being citizens when they leave it. The presidency has a beginning and an end. Citizenship does not.

For that reason, any proposal to restore or further protect the full political rights of retired Presidents should proceed through constitutional litigation, parliamentary review or appropriate legislative amendment, rather than through political pressure or selective enforcement. Equally, those seeking to preserve the present restriction must defend it through constitutional principle rather than political hostility.

The ultimate test is bigger than Uhuru Kenyatta. It is whether Kenya will build a constitutional order in which rights survive political transitions, where today’s precedent does not become tomorrow’s weapon, and where every citizen—including a former President—is governed by the same supreme Constitution.

“The true measure of a constitutional democracy is not how much freedom it grants its friends, but how faithfully it protects the rights of those whose politics may one day become inconvenient. When power changes hands, the Constitution must remain standing.” – Fredrick Chelimo.

Politics Lentupuru urged women to register as voters, join political parties and confidently seek elective positions while calling on the community to support women who step forward

NGEC calls for more women and persons with disabilities in Nyamira politics

BY Elizabeth Angira
@themtkenyatimes

NGEC Commissioner Caroline Lentupuru urged women to register as voters, join political parties and confidently seek elective positions | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) has challenged women and other special interest groups in Nyamira County to come out and actively participate in elective politics ahead of the 2027 General Election.

Speaking during a women's engagement forum at Nyamira National Polytechnic, NGEC Commissioner Caroline Lentupuru said the Commission was engaging grassroots communities to identify barriers preventing women, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons from fully participating in elections and leadership.

Lentupuru said women should not limit themselves to the Woman Representative position but should also seek seats in the National Assembly, County Assembly and other elective positions.

She expressed concern that Nyamira had not elected a woman to the National Assembly from any constituency in the 2022 General Election, apart from the Woman Representative.

"We would like to see more women participate in politics in Nyamira County, not only in the National Assembly but also in the County Assembly," she said.

Lentupuru urged women to register as voters, join political parties and confidently seek elective positions while calling on the community to support women who step forward.

She said NGEC was also working with relevant government agencies to address barriers such as insecurity, gender-based violence, financial constraints and cultural stereotypes that discourage women from participating in politics.

Persons with disabilities seek inclusion

Persons with disabilities also called for greater inclusion in political leadership, saying they should not only be encouraged to vote but also given an opportunity to contest and lead.

Zipporah Ogechi, who spoke during the engagement, urged the community not to look down on persons with disabilities, saying disability should not be a barrier to leadership.

"We also want to be voted for. Do not look down upon us because of our disabilities. We are capable of leading and serving our community," Ogechi said.

She urged voters to judge candidates based on their abilities and leadership qualities rather than their physical condition.

Ogechi said persons with disabilities have the capacity to contribute to decision-making and should be given equal opportunities to participate in the political process.

Nyamira County Commissioner Benson Leparimarijo has called on political leaders and their supporters to exercise tolerance and respect their opponents during the election period. | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

Zipporah Ogechi PWDs , has urged voters to judge candidates based on their abilities and leadership qualities rather than their physical condition. | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

Security assurance

Nyamira County Commissioner Benson Leparimarijo assured women and other aspirants that the government would provide a level playing ground for all candidates ahead of the elections.

"We want to give assurance to all our aspirants that we will ensure there is a level playing ground for all of them without favouring anybody or going against anybody," Leparimarijo said.

He urged women interested in elective positions to come forward confidently, saying no candidate would be allowed to intimidate or pressure another aspirant to step down.

Leparimarijo also called on spouses and families to support women seeking political office instead of placing conditions on their participation.

He urged residents who have not acquired national identity cards to do so and encouraged those with IDs to register as voters to enable them to exercise their democratic rights.

The county commissioner warned against political violence and the recruitment of goons, saying such activities are against the law.

He also called on political leaders and their supporters to exercise tolerance and respect their opponents during the election period.

"Do not be against your opponents. Let the masses decide. The electorate will decide who is best suited to lead them in whichever political position," he said.

Women cite insecurity and lack of resources

Nyamira County Director of Gender and Social Services Rachel Okong'o urged residents to support women and older persons and help create an environment where women can participate fully in leadership.

She called for an end to divisions among women and encouraged them to support one another.

"We want to change this narrative that women are enemies of their own. Sisters, support us," Okong'o said.

She identified insecurity and lack of financial resources as some of the major challenges facing women who want to participate in politics.

Okong'o said some women fear for their safety and called on the government to strengthen security measures.

She also said lack of campaign resources remains a major obstacle for women aspirants.

"Another big challenge that we face as women is that we don't have the resources to support our campaigns. Those who support us should give us funds. If women are supported, we can reach our goals," she said.

The Commission urged special interest groups to seek elective seats and challenges voters to support inclusive leadership

The three-day NGEC engagement is being held in Meru, Nyamira and Kisii counties, bringing together women, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons to promote inclusive participation in the electoral process and address barriers ahead of the 2027 General Election.

Nyamira County Director of Gender and Social Services Rachel Okong'o has called for an end to divisions among women and encouraged them to support one another | *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

Children Children rarely recall the gifts or the grand plans — what stays with them, decades later, is whether someone showed up

The moments children remember most: Why presence matters more than perfection

BY Ashford Kimani
@themtkenyatimes

Many parents spend years worrying whether they are doing enough for their children. They think about school fees, academic performance, discipline, clothing, nutrition, and the opportunities that might secure a brighter future. They invest enormous energy trying to create perfect childhoods. Yet when children grow into adults and look back at their early years, they rarely remember perfection. They remember presence.

Child development research and parenting conversations increasingly point in the same direction: children do not hold onto memories of expensive gifts, carefully planned activities, or flawless outcomes. They remember how adults made them feel. They remember laughter around a kitchen table, sitting beside a parent while drawing pictures, planting vegetables together, repairing broken things, reading stories before bed, baking simple meals, or talking while walking home from school. The activity itself becomes secondary. The emotional connection becomes permanent.

Children naturally attach meaning to moments where they feel valued and seen. A parent sitting quietly beside a child as they colour a picture communicates something powerful without a single word. The message is simple: you matter; your company matters; this moment matters.

Modern parenting exists under enormous pressure. Families navigate demanding work schedules, financial obligations, technology distractions and fierce educational competition. Parents often feel compelled to maximise every hour. Children are enrolled in tuition programmes, sports clubs, music classes, coding lessons and enrichment experiences all designed to prepare them for future success. Ambition has its place. But child development experts increasingly point toward something equally important: emotional availability.

Children need adults who are present. Presence does not require money. It does not demand elaborate planning. It simply requires intentional attention. A parent helping a child assemble a toy from recycled materials may create a stronger memory than purchasing an expensive gadget. A conversation over dinner may leave a deeper mark than a costly outing. Human beings are relational by nature, and children especially build their sense of safety, confidence and identity through relationships. When adults show up consistently — emotionally and physically — children develop trust. They learn that mistakes are acceptable. They grow more willing to attempt difficult things because they know support exists beside them.

There is another important lesson hidden inside shared activities: resilience. Children who create things alongside adults learn early that failure is normal. Paint spills. Projects collapse. Cakes burn. Drawings turn messy. Pieces refuse to fit. Yet when adults respond with patience rather than frustration, children internalise a truth that will serve them for life — imperfection is part of growth. Many adults carry a fear of failure that traces back to childhood environments that rewarded perfection more than effort. Shared creative experiences help dismantle that fear because they shift value away from outcomes and toward participation. A child who learns early that mistakes are not disasters tends to develop a confidence that extends into school, work and relationships.

Education leaders understand the same principle. Learners often remember teachers who cared far more vividly than teachers who merely delivered content. A teacher who patiently works through a difficult concept, encourages a struggling student and creates emotional safety in the classroom frequently leaves a mark that lasts a lifetime. Students may forget individual lessons eventually, but they rarely forget how an adult made them feel during learning.

Kenyan schools increasingly emphasise competence development, collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking. These priorities align closely with relationship-centred learning. Children thrive where they experience belonging, and parents and teachers therefore share a common responsibility. Beyond curriculum coverage and academic targets lies the deeper work of nurturing genuine human connection.

Technology adds another layer of complexity. Phones, social media, television and digital demands constantly compete for attention. Families can occupy the same physical space while inhabiting entirely separate worlds. A parent answering messages while a child is speaking may unintentionally communicate that other things matter more. Children notice attention. They can tell the difference between an adult who is fully present and one who is merely in the room. Small moments, repeated consistently, shape long-term memories.

This reality should not produce guilt. It should produce encouragement. Meaningful childhood experiences do not require extraordinary resources. They require ordinary consistency. Ten focused minutes can matter more than an expensive gift. A simple conversation can outlive a grand celebration. An afternoon building something together can remain in memory decades later.

Parents should release the pressure to be perfect. Perfection is not what children are looking for. They are looking for connection.

One day, today's children will be adults telling stories about their early lives. Many will not remember the exact projects they completed or every drawing they made. But they will remember sitting beside someone who cared. They will remember laughter. They will remember patience. They will remember feeling important.

In homes, classrooms and communities, relationships remain among the strongest foundations upon which confident, compassionate human beings are built. Childhood memories are not always formed by grand events. More often, they are built quietly inside ordinary moments shared with extraordinary care. Parents and teachers who invest time, presence and attention may never fully realise the impact they have made. Years later, however, children carry those moments into adulthood as invisible gifts that quietly shape who they become. Perhaps that is one of the greatest contributions any adult can make — not crafting perfect experiences, but offering faithful presence through ordinary moments that, in time, become extraordinary memories.

Kimani teaches English and Literature in Gatundu North Sub-county and serves as Dean of Studies.

Economy With record reserves masking two years of near-frozen exchange rates, a resumption of IMF programme talks could force Nairobi into a reckoning it has so far carefully avoided

Suppressed volatility: Kenya's managed shilling faces its IMF moment

BY Grace Wanja
@themtkenyatimes

Kenya's shilling has barely moved in more than two years. It stood at KSh129.45 per dollar in the week to 10 September, according to the most recent Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) data — a rate that would not look out of place in a snapshot from 2024. Over the same period, the central bank has accumulated foreign exchange reserves to an all-time high of $15.4B, providing what officials describe as a comfortable cushion against external shocks.

To most casual observers, this looks like stability. To analysts at EBC Financial Group, it looks like managed calm — and the distinction matters enormously as Kenya navigates unresolved IMF programme negotiations that could redefine the terms on which that stability is maintained.

"Suppressed volatility is deferred volatility, not absent volatility," said David Precious, Senior Market Analyst at EBC Financial Group. "Kenya's reserve position is genuinely strong, and that is worth saying plainly. A nominal rate that does not move, however, does not mean the pressure has gone. It means the pressure has moved: into the reserve line, into what importers pay, and into the real exchange rate as domestic inflation runs underneath a flat nominal one. For anyone holding shilling exposure, the implication is that two years of low realised volatility is a poor guide to forward risk."

David Precious, Senior Market Analyst, EBC Financial Group

A reserve build of historic proportions

The headline numbers are striking. Kenya's usable foreign exchange reserves surged by $1.55B in the week to 30 July 2026, jumping to $15.4B from $13.85B a week earlier and lifting import cover from 5.9 months to 6.4. The CBK attributed the increase largely to capital inflows from the government's partial divestiture of its Safaricom stake: a 15 per cent shareholding sold to Vodafone Kenya Limited, a subsidiary of South Africa's Vodacom, for approximately KSh204.3B, with proceeds placed in the National Infrastructure Fund held at the CBK.

Reserves eased modestly in subsequent weeks — to $15.155B on 20 August, $14.934B on 27 August, and $14.88B on 3 September — before rebounding by $371M to $15.253B in the week to 10 September, restoring import cover to 6.3 months. At no point did reserves fall below the four-month statutory minimum.

A further inflow remains possible following the CBK's 28 August approval of Nedbank Group's proposed acquisition of a 66 per cent stake in NCBA Group, a transaction valued at KSh116.3B. The reserve impact, however, may be limited: under the published terms, tendering shareholders receive 4.02994 Nedbank shares plus KSh2,100 in cash for every 100 NCBA shares held, meaning the bulk of the consideration is in stock rather than dollars.

Speaking in April, when reserves stood above $13B and external pressures were building across exports, remittances and tourism, CBK Governor Kamau Thugge said the bank had deliberately strengthened its buffers in anticipation of precisely such shocks. By conventional adequacy benchmarks, Kenya's current reserve position is comfortable. The harder question is what those reserves are being used to achieve.

Treasury's uncomfortable admission

What distinguishes Kenya's situation from ordinary currency stability is that senior officials have effectively said the rate is not purely market-determined. Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi said publicly in late 2025 that the shilling could trade at around KSh118 to the dollar if left to move freely, citing an improving current account and stronger export performance. He and Principal Secretary Chris Kiptoo have separately indicated that, without CBK dollar purchases to build reserves, the currency could have appreciated to between KSh118 and KSh120. Mbadi has rejected the language of manipulation, attributing the shilling's steadiness to higher diaspora remittances, improved export earnings, and government-to-government fuel procurement that reduced dollar demand in the open market.

Parliament's own technical research arm reached a similar conclusion. The Parliamentary Budget Office, in its February 2026 report Budget Options for FY 2026/2027 and the Medium Term, noted that the shilling had remained broadly stable against the dollar while weakening roughly 6.5 per cent against the pound over the year to June 2025. The report described the pattern, set against normal emerging-market volatility, as pointing to tight exchange rate management or active liquidity smoothing by the CBK.

The CBK's stated position is that Kenya maintains a flexible exchange rate regime and that the central bank intervenes only to smooth excessive volatility. It attributes the shilling's stability to a stronger current account, higher foreign direct investment, overseas purchases of local-currency bonds, and improved reserve adequacy. Because the CBK does not publish the volume or timing of its foreign exchange market operations, the official account and the Treasury officials' comments cannot be reconciled from public data alone.

Where the pressure goes instead

A managed nominal rate does not eliminate adjustment. It redirects it — and that redistribution carries real commercial consequences.

If the free-float level is KSh118 to KSh120, as Treasury officials have indicated, then at KSh129.45 as of 10 September, the shilling is roughly seven to nine per cent weaker than the government's own estimate of where an unmanaged market would price it. Every dollar of imports costs Kenyan buyers that premium in shilling terms — a difference that passes directly into domestic prices for fuel, fertiliser, pharmaceuticals, and industrial inputs. The cost lands unevenly: importers and dollar-denominated borrowers absorb it, while exporters and recipients of diaspora remittances benefit from a weaker conversion rate.

The second channel is the real exchange rate. A nominal rate held flat while domestic inflation rises produces real appreciation regardless of what the screen shows. Kenyan headline inflation climbed from 4.3 per cent in February 2026 to 6.6 per cent in August, driven by energy and transport costs. Nominal stability is therefore doing progressively less for export competitiveness than the unchanged rate suggests, and the gap accumulates quietly rather than resolving through visible currency movement.

The IMF question

An IMF staff team visited Nairobi from 24 February to 4 March 2026 for technical discussions on a successor economic programme. Thugge confirmed that talks continued into August, but no new agreement, loan amount, or board approval date has been announced. The Fund's most recent completed Article IV consultation — covering 2023 and concluded by the Executive Board on 17 January 2024 — stated that greater exchange rate flexibility and addressing foreign exchange market distortions would help keep Kenya's external position in balance.

That is general policy guidance, and it predates the current period of stability. It also remains the most recent full Fund assessment available: the 2025 Article IV consultation was rescheduled at Kenya's request so that programme discussions could be prioritised, meaning no full IMF assessment covering the current exchange rate arrangement has been published. If a new programme is agreed and carries conditionality along the lines of that earlier guidance, the arrangement described by Kenya's own Treasury becomes a subject of negotiation rather than domestic discretion.

The test ahead

For EBC's Precious, the measure of success in any transition is not a stronger or weaker shilling — it is a shilling that can move without triggering a crisis of confidence.

"It would be a rate that can move two or three per cent either way without being read as a loss of control, supported by published intervention data so participants can tell smoothing from steering," he said. "Kenya has spent two years building the buffer that makes that affordable. If a programme arrives with flexibility conditions attached, the test will not be whether the shilling moves. It will be whether a move is read as policy working rather than policy failing."

The market question, in the end, is one of sequencing: whether flexibility is introduced from a position of reserve strength and on Kenya's own timetable, or later, under external conditionality, and with less room to manage the narrative. Two years of carefully preserved calm may be about to meet its most significant test.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sensational reporting of suicide cases must stop

Kenya's media continues to ignore its own code on suicide coverage — and the cost is measured in lives

By **Victorine Nekesa**

Suicide is not a spectacle. Yet a troubling number of Kenyan media outlets continue to treat it as one, publishing graphic details, disturbing photographs and headlines that border on glorification. Every such report is a potential trigger for someone already standing at the edge.

The Media Council of Kenya's Code of Conduct is unambiguous. Article 18 requires journalists to report suicide with sensitivity, precisely to prevent copycat behaviour. The evidence behind that requirement is not theoretical — researchers have documented the contagion effect for decades. Irresponsible coverage kills.

Journalism school teaches one foundational principle above almost all others: prioritise public interest and minimise harm. Splashing method, location and imagery across front pages or social media feeds serves neither. It satisfies morbid curiosity at the expense of vulnerable readers who may be silently fighting the same battle.

Editors carry the heaviest responsibility here. A reporter may file a graphic story, but an editor publishes it. Every outlet that runs sensationalised suicide coverage without a helpline, without context and without regard for the guidelines it is legally and ethically bound to uphold is making a choice — and that choice has consequences.

The fix is not complicated. Report the fact. Omit the method. Add a helpline. Treat the subject with the dignity every human life deserves.

Kenya's media has the code. What it needs now is the discipline to follow it.

How gender-based violence destroys marriages

Behind closed doors, abuse quietly dismantles the trust, safety and dignity that every marriage depends on

By **Linda Omondi**

Marriage is built on love, trust and mutual respect. For far too many couples, however, that foundation is being quietly destroyed by gender-based violence — a reality that cuts across communities, income levels and social backgrounds, and whose damage extends well beyond the couple at its centre.

Gender-based violence, or GBV, refers to harmful acts directed at a person because of their gender. It takes many forms: physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic. In marriages, it rarely announces itself dramatically. It often begins with behaviours that seem minor — an insult here, a restriction there, a partner's phone monitored or their friendships gradually controlled. Left unchecked, those behaviours escalate. What starts as emotional manipulation can harden into beatings, forced sexual acts and complete financial domination.

Physical violence is the most visible form, but psychological abuse can be equally devastating. Constant humiliation, threats and intimidation erode a person's confidence and sense of self until leaving the relationship begins to feel impossible. Economic abuse compounds this trap: when one partner controls all household finances, prevents the other from working or withholds money entirely, the victim becomes dependent in ways that are extraordinarily difficult to escape.

Children are rarely shielded from what happens inside an abusive home. Those who witness violence between their parents experience fear and emotional distress that shows up in their schoolwork, their friendships and, ultimately, in how they understand relationships as adults. The cycle, if unbroken, tends to repeat itself.

Several factors contribute to GBV in marriages — unequal power between partners, harmful social norms, financial stress, substance abuse and beliefs that frame control as care. None of them, however, constitutes an excuse. Every person carries the right to a relationship free from abuse, regardless of circumstance.

One of the most persistent obstacles to addressing GBV is underreporting. Victims stay in abusive marriages for reasons that are entirely understandable: financial dependence, fear of retaliation, concern for their children, community pressure and the shame that abusers so often transfer onto those they harm. Many do not recognise economic control or emotional manipulation as abuse at all, which makes identifying and escaping it even harder.

Tackling GBV requires a coordinated response. Families, schools, religious institutions, government agencies and law enforcement must all play their part. Victims need access to safe reporting channels, counselling, medical care, legal support and economic assistance. Communities must actively promote relationships grounded in equality, consent and open communication — and must stop treating violence behind closed doors as a private matter.

A healthy marriage should offer safety and dignity, not fear and control. Preventing GBV begins with refusing to excuse it — and with standing firmly beside those who survive it.

Sports >> *The annual tournament is back on golf's premier European circuit, bringing with it fresh hopes of a first Kenyan winner

Magical Kenya Open returns to Karen in February for 2027 DP World Tour edition

By **Martin Weche**

President William Ruto presents the 2026 Magical Kenya Open trophy to South Africa's Casey Jarvis

The 2027 Magical Kenya Open will be held at the Karen Country Club from 18 to 21 February, the DP World Tour confirmed yesterday, securing the tournament's place on professional golf's most prestigious European circuit for another year.

The announcement cements what has become one of African golf's most anticipated fixtures. Since its elevation to the DP World Tour — formerly the European Tour — in 2019, the Magical Kenya Open has grown well beyond its origins as a regional club competition into a genuine international sporting event, drawing top-ranked professionals from across the globe to the leafy fairways of Karen on the outskirts of Nairobi.

Kenya Open Golf Limited director Patrick Obath said yesterday's confirmation reflected the tournament's expanding significance, describing it as far more than a week of competitive golf.

"This opportunity reaffirms that the Magical Kenya Open can no longer be defined solely by scores and leaderboards, but by the value it brings at the intersection of sport, business, culture, tourism, sustainability, and positioning the country into a global community," Obath said.

That positioning has been years in the making. First staged in 1967, the tournament spent nearly three decades on the second-tier European Challenge Tour before earning its DP World Tour berth in 2019 — a promotion that transformed both its profile and its commercial footprint. Business networking, entertainment and the sheer spectacle of world-class golf in an East African setting have since made it a fixture that sponsors, broadcasters and tourists plan their calendars around.

For Kenya's professional golfers, the tournament carries a particular weight. Each edition offers the rare opportunity to compete stroke-for-stroke against an elite international field on home soil — in front of home crowds, on familiar terrain. It is a platform that has produced credible performances from Kenyan players over the years, even if the ultimate prize has always slipped away.

And therein lies perhaps the most compelling subplot heading into February. In nearly six decades of staging the Magical Kenya Open, no Kenyan has ever won it. Not once. The tournament that Kenya hosts, funds and promotes on the global stage has never been lifted by a Kenyan hand. That fact has long sat quietly in the background of tournament week, acknowledged but never quite resolved.

With the world's best once again making their way to Karen, the question returns: could 2027 be the year that changes?

The competitive field is expected to be among the strongest the Karen Country Club has seen. DP World Tour events attract world-ranked professionals whose presence ensures the standard of play remains uncompromising. For any Kenyan golfer harbouring ambitions of making history, the window exists — but the margin for error against such opposition is vanishingly thin.

Beyond the scorecard, organisers are expecting the 2027 edition to deepen the tournament's reach across Kenya's broader economy. Sports tourism has become one of the country's more reliable revenue streams, and the Magical Kenya Open sits at its premium end. International visitors drawn by the golf tend to extend their stays, explore the country's national parks and coastal resorts, and return home as informal ambassadors. The tournament's hospitality villages, pro-am events and sponsor activations generate commercial activity that ripples outward through hotels, restaurants, transport and local enterprise.

The DP World Tour's continued commitment to Kenya is also a signal to the wider sports world. In a global calendar crowded with competing events, the Magical Kenya Open has earned and maintained its place through consistent delivery — of professional standards, of world-class facilities at Karen, and of an experience that balances sporting intensity with the warmth of Kenyan hospitality.

February's tournament will carry all of that history onto the first tee. Fifty-eight years since the first edition was played, the Magical Kenya Open remains a work in progress — growing in stature, expanding in ambition, and still searching for the one result that would make every previous edition feel like prologue.

A first Kenyan winner would not just be a sporting footnote. It would be a defining moment for golf on this continent.

Sports >> *The visitors overturned a two-goal deficit to knock United out of the Carabao Cup in a pulsating third-round tie

Brighton stun Manchester United with 3-2 comeback at Old Trafford

By **Andalo Christine Ingutia**

Manchester United were eliminated from the Carabao Cup yesterday after Brighton produced a stunning second-half comeback to win 3–2 at Old Trafford, overturning a two-goal deficit in one of the most dramatic cup exits the ground has witnessed in years.

United wasted no time making their intentions clear. Shea Lacey opened the scoring in the seventh minute, keeping his composure to finish cleanly, before Mason Mount doubled the advantage shortly after, burying his effort into the back of the net. Old Trafford was in full voice and the tie appeared to be heading only one way.

Brighton, however, refused to fold. As the first half progressed, the visitors grew into the match, turning it into a physical midfield battle and gradually wrestling back control of possession. Their persistence paid off before the break when Kostoulas found space inside the penalty area and fired past the goalkeeper to make it 2–1 at half-time.

United returned from the interval still in front, but Brighton came back with an entirely different energy. They pressed higher, won more second balls and forced the hosts progressively deeper. The equaliser arrived through a well-worked move that created space for Pascal Groß, who kept his nerve and finished past the goalkeeper to level at 2–2.

United manager Michael Carrick turned to his bench, introducing Joshua Zirkzee, Kobbie Mainoo and Bryan Mbeumo in search of fresh impetus. Brighton, though, had the final word. Substitute Maxim Cuypers finished confidently in the 69th minute to put the visitors 3–2 ahead, silencing Old Trafford and completing a comeback that had seemed improbable only moments earlier.

Bruno Fernandes was introduced as United pushed desperately for an equaliser, but Brighton's defence held firm. Their players blocked passing lanes, managed the clock intelligently and denied the hosts any clear route back into the contest.

When the final whistle sounded, the mood inside Old Trafford had shifted entirely — frustration for the home supporters, unbridled celebration for Brighton.

United's exit comes in the third round, which is, at least, an improvement on last season's humiliating second-round defeat to fourth-tier Grimsby Town — widely regarded as one of the most embarrassing early cup departures in the club's modern history. Yesterday's collapse, however, will sting almost as sharply.

In cup football, as Brighton reminded Old Trafford, the game is never over until it is over.

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Longing, growth, and gratitude

By: Narpulatova Gulruh

@themtkenyatimes

Worth Noting:

- As the days passed, the longing did not fade. Instead, on some days, it became even stronger. Especially in the evenings, when I returned from classes and sat alone in my room, I would take my phone and look at pictures of my family over and over again.
- Whenever my mother called, tears would fill my eyes the moment I heard her voice. But I tried to hide those tears because I knew that if they realized how much I was struggling, they would worry about me. And I did not want that.
- Even eating felt different without them. Instead of the delicious meals my mother used to prepare, I now ate food that I cooked myself or made in the dormitory kitchen.

I sat by the train window, gazing outside as the familiar landscapes I was leaving behind slowly disappeared from view—the streets where I had spent my childhood, the large mulberry tree standing in front of our neighborhood, and the distant foothills that gradually grew smaller and smaller before vanishing completely.

In the bag I held tightly in my hands were some clothes, a few books, and dried fruits my mother had prepared for me. Yet the heaviest burden was not in my bag; it was in my heart.

For the first time, I was leaving my family and my home to study in another city.

When I arrived in the new city, everything seemed unfamiliar. The streets, the buildings, and even the smell of the air felt different. After settling into the dormitory, I found myself alone in a small room surrounded by unfamiliar walls, and that was when I truly began to feel the loneliness.

That evening, I turned off the light and lay down in my bed. As I stared at the ceiling, I began to miss the familiar sounds of home—the clattering of dishes as my mother worked in the kitchen and the rustling of newspapers as my father sat beside the television.

The longing was so intense that I would hug my pillow and cry silently.

As the days passed, the longing did not fade. Instead, on some days, it became even stronger. Especially in the evenings, when I returned from classes and sat alone in my room, I would take my phone and look at pictures of my family over and over again.

Whenever my mother called, tears would fill my eyes the moment I heard her voice. But I tried to hide those tears because I knew that if they realized how much I was struggling, they would worry about me. And I did not want that.

Even eating felt different without them. Instead of the delicious meals my mother used to prepare, I now ate food that I cooked myself or made in the dormitory kitchen.

Whenever our family gathered together for holidays and celebrations, knowing that I could not be there, I would join them through a phone call, even if only virtually. Yet every time, I felt that seeing one another through a screen could never compare to being together in person and embracing each other.

However, as time passed, I slowly began to change as well.

The classes I had initially attended out of obligation gradually became interesting to me. The people I had met in the new city became my friends. I learned to spend time with them, study together, and laugh together.

I also began to transform my room. I hung photographs from home on the walls and placed the little keepsakes my mother had given me on my desk. Little by little, these small things began to make my room feel somewhat like home.

But the longing never disappeared completely.

I learned not to fear living with that longing, but rather to accept it as a reflection of the love I had for my family.

Several years passed, and I gradually began to see this city as my second home. I had friends here, my daily life, and a path of my own.

But that did not mean I had forgotten my home or my family. On the contrary, the farther away I was from them, the more deeply I came to understand their value.

Every time I returned home, walked through the door, and threw myself into my father's arms, the painful longing I had felt during those first days had transformed into a profound sense of gratitude.

Today, when I look back and remember that first night in the dormitory, when I was alone and cried while hugging my pillow, I do not remember it with regret. I remember it with gratitude.

Because that very longing taught me one important truth:

Distance does not separate a person from their family. Instead, it teaches them to appreciate their loved ones even more deeply.

Narpulatova Gulruh

Second-year student at the Faculty of English Philology,

Uzbekistan State University of World Languages

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