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**Friday,** September 4, 2026 No. 01628 KSh 60 (TSh 1,700 : USh 2,700 : RFr 900)

themtkenyatimes Voice of the People

# The Mt. Kenya Times

Daily ePAPER

www.mountkenyatimes.co.ke

**Countdown 2027** President Ruto's directive expelling Africa's largest soda ash producer from Lake Magadi has ignited a fierce political battle

# Ruto orders Tata out of Magadi: A century ends, a crisis begins

President William Ruto yesterday ordered Tata Chemicals Magadi Limited to leave Kenya, bringing to a dramatic close more than a century of industrial operations at Lake Magadi and triggering an immediate political firestorm as the country heads into one of its most consequential election cycles in a generation.

Speaking in Kajiado County yesterday, Ruto said the government would seek a new investor to take over the exploitation of resources at Lake Magadi, but with conditions requiring greater local value addition and employment. The declaration, delivered at a public rally, was blunt and unsparing. "We have Lake Magadi, we have a big company, we have resources that can change Kajiado County and Kenya as a whole. Tata Chemicals Company, which is here in Kajiado, has been running its contract for over 100 years," Ruto said, adding: "They have not constructed anything in Kajiado, including even employing people here. I recently told them to vacate and get out of this country. Let them go. They have been taking our resources to India."

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*President William Ruto*

# Magadi shutdown: Workers pay the price of political war

BY James Kamande
@themtkenyatimes

*Some of the moments as captured in pictures*

Chemicals Magadi as a politically motivated assault on Kenyan workers, as the shutdown of Africa's largest soda ash producer entered its fifth week with no resolution in sight and thousands of livelihoods suspended alongside the idle machinery.

DCP secretary-general and Nyandarua Senator John Methu led the charge, accusing the administration of orchestrating what the party described as state-sponsored economic sabotage dressed up as regulatory enforcement. The real motive, Methu alleged, had nothing to do with compliance and everything to do with control over the vast lithium and oil deposits believed to lie beneath Lake Magadi's alkaline crust.

"The flimsy excuses given are just a decoy," Methu said. "The truth of the matter is, there are huge deposits worth trillions of shillings of lithium metals underneath the Magadi area. Further, there are huge oil prospects in the same vicinity within which Tata Chemicals Limited operates."

The party demanded the immediate and unconditional reversal of the suspension, warning that closing a multi-billion-shilling investment through a ministerial directive — without a court order and without exhausting engagement — sent a chilling message to prospective investors across the continent. Over 500 direct employees have been rendered jobless since the suspension took effect on July 28, with thousands of

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Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times


**The Mt Kenya Times** is a Kenyan Newspaper that provides a unified view of Kenyan news, entrepreneurship, events, opinions, analysis, and a historical background to current affairs in a way that is both creative and innovative.
It is published by **Exponential International Limited**, a Private Limited Liability company incorporated in Kenya to provide Communications and Media services.

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# NEWS IN BRIEF

Kenya has launched a standardised framework for investigating and prosecuting cybercrime, marking a significant step toward bringing greater consistency and legal rigour to the handling of digital evidence and cross-border cases in an environment where online offences are rising sharply. The guide, developed in coordination with law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial agencies, sets out common procedures for gathering, preserving and presenting digital evidence in court — addressing a persistent gap that has seen technically complex cybercrime cases collapse at prosecution stage due to procedural inconsistencies and evidentiary disputes. Authorities say the framework will also strengthen Kenya's capacity to cooperate with international partners on cases that cross jurisdictions, a growing necessity as cybercriminals increasingly operate across borders and exploit gaps between national legal systems to evade accountability.

The High Court has frozen six vehicles and a parcel of land linked to Embu Member of County Assembly Peter Muriithi Nyaga following allegations that he irregularly acquired assets valued at KSh111.5 million, in an order that places his wealth under judicial scrutiny pending the outcome of a corruption investigation. The freezing order, granted on application by the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, prevents Nyaga from transferring, selling or otherwise dealing with the listed assets while investigators examine whether they were acquired through corrupt means. The case adds to a growing docket of county-level corruption prosecutions as anti-graft agencies intensify their focus beyond national government and into devolved institutions, where oversight has historically been weaker and accountability mechanisms less consistently applied.

Fresh produce exporters have called on the government to develop a dedicated national aviation protocol for perishable cargo, warning that the absence of standardised handling procedures is costing Kenya millions in spoiled exports and eroding its competitiveness in high-value international markets. Industry representatives say Kenyan horticultural and agricultural exporters continue to lose significant volumes of perishable goods to delays, inadequate cold chain facilities and inconsistent cargo prioritisation at airport level — problems they argue could be substantially reduced through a coordinated national framework governing how time-sensitive exports are processed, stored and loaded. The call comes as Kenya faces intensifying competition from regional rivals who have invested heavily in dedicated perishable cargo infrastructure, threatening the country's long-established position as East Africa's leading exporter of fresh flowers, vegetables and fruit.


A Nakuru magistrate's court has ordered the county government to pay KSh4.1 million in damages to a 61-year-old driver whose leg was amputated following treatment at Nakuru Level 5 Hospital, in a ruling that exposes serious questions about the standard of care at one of the region's principal public health facilities. The court found the county government liable for the medical outcome that cost the driver his limb, awarding damages that reflect both the physical harm suffered and the lasting impact on his livelihood. The case adds to a growing body of legal actions against county health facilities over negligence, arriving at a moment when public confidence in devolved healthcare services remains under considerable strain across Kenya.


Nairobi city enforcement officers yesterday arrested six individuals during a crackdown on illegal sewage disposal in Syokimau, in an operation targeting businesses and residents accused of discharging untreated waste into the area's drainage network and open spaces. The arrests signal a sharpening of the city's enforcement posture in Syokimau, a fast-growing residential and commercial corridor on Nairobi's southeastern fringe that has struggled to keep pace with the infrastructure demands of rapid development. Officials say unchecked sewage disposal has contaminated water sources and posed mounting public health risks to residents in surrounding neighbourhoods. Those arrested face charges under environmental and public health statutes. Authorities warned that further operations were planned and that individuals found responsible for illegal dumping would face prosecution regardless of their status or the scale of their operations.

Several former members of parliament have entered the contest for vacant positions on the Parliamentary Service Commission, signalling a determined effort by ex-legislators to retain influence within the institution they once served in an elected capacity. The commission, which oversees the administration, staffing and welfare of Kenya's parliament, has attracted a competitive field of former MPs who argue that their legislative experience equips them to provide informed oversight of the institution's operations and strategic direction. The contest reflects a broader pattern in Kenyan public life, where former elected officials frequently seek appointment to statutory and oversight bodies following the end of their parliamentary terms. Nominations are under review, with the final selection expected to draw considerable interest from political observers tracking the evolving balance of influence within the legislature's administrative structures.

**Meru** When a person is leaving the government, they won't say what has made them leave

# Expect the political exits, Meru official warns

**A senior county official says residents should brace for a wave of political defections and realignments as the 2027 election draws closer and electoral arithmetic begins to dominate every decision.**

**BY Brian Gitonga**
*@themtkenyatimes*

**Meru County Monitoring and Evaluation Director Alhaji Mwendia adresses the press.** | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

Meru County Monitoring and Evaluation Director Alhaji Mwendia yesterday told residents to expect a wave of political defections and realignments as the country moves toward the 2027 General Election, warning that shifts in loyalty — at both county and national level — are not only likely but inevitable.

Speaking at his office in Meru town, Mwendia said residents should prepare for what he called political migration: a period in which individuals recalibrate their positions, leave administrations or seek new political homes based almost entirely on electoral calculations.

"With only a few months remaining towards the General Election, you are going to witness what we call political migration," he said. "People are going to leave and go to other places, with some leaving the government and others joining the government."

Mwendia was candid about the motivations behind such movements, arguing that aspiring politicians rarely offer honest explanations when they exit an administration. The stated reasons, he said, typically obscure the real ones.

"When a person is leaving the government, they won't say what has made them leave. They won't say that they have their own calculations or that it is part of their political arithmetic," Mwendia said.

He said those seeking elective positions face growing pressure to secure their places in preferred political parties before the window closes. Waiting too long, he argued, carries its own risk: a party may settle on another candidate and leave a late-mover without a platform.

"There are some people who fear that if they do not move out of government and secure their chance in their preferred political parties, those parties are going to field other candidates and leave them out," he said.

Mwendia said the same dynamics could play out within Governor Mutuma M'Ethingia's administration. Some elected leaders currently allied with the county government may drift away if they calculate that distance serves their electoral ambitions, while others may move closer to the governor if association with his administration is seen as a political asset. Members of the County Assembly, he said, would be no exception.

"Even Members of the County Assembly who are going to ask for votes — we are going to witness some leaving Mutuma M'Ethingia and others coming to join him," Mwendia said.

His broader observation was characteristically direct. In electoral politics, he argued, self-interest is the most reliable constant.

"There is no single person seeking to be elected whose first loyalty is elsewhere, because their first loyalty is to themselves and their own interests in how they are going to be elected. This is why we say politics has no permanent enemies and no permanent friends," Mwendia said.

His remarks reflect the wider political restlessness now visible across Kenya as the 2027 election approaches. From Nairobi to the counties, alliances are being tested, platforms reconsidered and loyalties quietly renegotiated. Meru is not unique in that regard, but Mwendia's willingness to speak plainly about the mechanics of political self-interest offers a candid window into a process that political actors typically prefer to keep quiet.

For Meru residents watching their leaders navigate the coming months, the message was simple: the movement has already begun, and there is more to come.

# Magadi shutdown: Workers pay the price of political war

**DCP secretary-general and Nyandarua Senator John Methu**

**Contd from page 2**

support workers, contractors, transporters and local suppliers feeling the knock-on effects across an already arid and economically marginal county.

The human cost in Magadi is immediate and visible. The company has long been the town's economic spine, providing not only employment but water, healthcare and subsidised rail services to surrounding communities. Its absence has left a gap that no government programme has yet moved to fill.

President William Ruto, speaking in Kajiado yesterday, made no concession to those concerns. He defended the shutdown, told the company to leave Kenya and declared that a new investor would be brought in under stricter conditions requiring local manufacturing, job creation and genuine community benefit. "They have been taking our resources to India," Ruto said. "Let them go."

The government has not addressed the lithium and oil allegations directly. The case remains active before the High Court, with judgment expected on October 23.


NEWS PAPER
IN BUSINESS

**Politics** It is which politician will speak for Mt Kenya, and whether the region can remain united if more than one candidate courts its loyalty simultaneously

# Five aspirants, one ticket: The opposition's 2027 dilemma

*Kenya's fractured opposition faces a harder question than whether to unite against President Ruto — it must first decide who among five competing presidential hopefuls will carry the flag.*

**BY Hadassah Karangu**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Kenya's opposition is entering one of the most delicate phases of its 2027 General Election preparations, with the central challenge no longer simply whether its various parties and movements can unite against President William Ruto, but whether they can agree on who should carry the presidential flag.

At the heart of this emerging contest are five names that increasingly complicate the opposition's arithmetic: former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, Wiper Democratic Movement leader Kalonzo Musyoka, former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i, Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna and Kiharu MP Ndindi Nyoro. Each represents a different political calculation. Each commands a constituency that believes their preferred candidate can defeat Ruto. And each brings a distinct theory of how a winning coalition should be assembled.

That is precisely where the dilemma begins. Agreeing that the country needs a change of government is one thing. Agreeing on who should lead that change is another matter entirely.

Gachagua enters the contest with perhaps the most obvious regional calculation. As a former Deputy President and one of the administration's most vocal critics, he has positioned himself as a commanding political force in the Mt Kenya region. His supporters argue that his ability to influence the mountain vote makes him indispensable to any opposition coalition serious about defeating Ruto. But the emergence of Nyoro has introduced a second powerful voice from the same political backyard, and the tension between the two camps is already visible. Nyoro's departure from the ruling United Democratic Alliance and his subsequent takeover of the People's Party of Kenya dramatically altered the region's political arithmetic. He has declared his intention to seek the presidency while simultaneously suggesting that personal ambition should not prevent the opposition from settling on a single candidate

**Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, Wiper Democratic Movement leader Kalonzo Musyoka, former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i, Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna and Kiharu MP Ndindi Nyoro.**

— a position that is either admirably selfless or strategically calculated, depending on one's reading of his motivations.

The question facing the opposition is therefore not merely whether Mt Kenya will support it. It is which politician will speak for Mt Kenya, and whether the region can remain united if more than one candidate courts its loyalty simultaneously. Should both Gachagua and Nyoro pursue serious presidential ambitions, the opposition risks fragmenting the very vote bloc it needs to consolidate.

Then there is Kalonzo, who carries perhaps the longest presidential résumé of the five. A former Vice President who has contested the presidency and participated in successive opposition coalitions, his supporters make a straightforward argument: experience, a national network and an established political profile. But longevity in politics can become as much a burden as an asset. After years of contesting for and coalition-building around the presidency, some voters may reasonably ask whether this is the moment for a familiar face or for a generational shift. Recent polling has placed Kalonzo among the leading opposition hopefuls, though figures vary considerably by methodology. His real challenge will be converting a well-known name into a convincing national argument — not merely that he deserves another opportunity, but that he is best placed to build the broadest possible winning coalition.

Matiang'i offers a different proposition. Unlike Gachagua and Kalonzo, his appeal rests not on traditional opposition credentials but on his record as a firm and decisive administrator, particularly during his tenure at the Interior ministry. His supporters position him as a fresh face with real executive experience — someone capable of offering the opposition a leadership style that breaks from the familiar cycle of coalition politics. Matiang'i has himself called for an objective, even scientific, process for determining the opposition's candidate, and in doing so he has identified the opposition's central structural problem with uncomfortable precision. If five politicians each believe they can win, who decides which of them actually has the strongest case? Political negotiations risk becoming a contest of egos. Opinion polls invite disputes over methodology. Delegate processes invite manipulation by individual parties. Whatever formula is adopted, those who lose must accept the outcome — and in Kenyan politics, that is rarely straightforward.

Sifuna adds a generational dimension that the others do not quite represent. His politics resonate with younger voters and with the growing demand for leaders who engage directly and plainly with the concerns of ordinary citizens. His possible presidential ambitions have already placed him within the broader opposition conversation, though his challenge is whether an energetic national voice can translate into the geographical breadth of support that a presidential campaign requires. His presence matters, however, for reasons beyond his individual prospects. The opposition is not merely choosing between personalities. It is choosing between political generations — and that is a choice with long consequences regardless of who emerges as the candidate.

Nyoro may ultimately be the most intriguing piece of this puzzle. For years closely associated with Ruto and regarded as one of the influential younger figures within the ruling establishment, his break with UDA represents far more than an ordinary political realignment. It places a politician who once helped construct Ruto's electoral machinery on the opposite side of the battlefield. His supporters contend that this insider knowledge is an asset. His critics question whether his relatively recent transition provides him with sufficient political distance from an administration he once championed. Both arguments have merit, and how voters weigh them will say as much about the country's political mood as about Nyoro himself.

The deepest danger facing the opposition, however, is not the number of presidential aspirants. Competition in a democracy is legitimate and healthy. The danger lies in what happens if no agreement is reached — if five candidates reach election day each convinced they are the one, splitting the anti-Ruto vote and handing an incumbent the kind of fractured opposition that is easiest to defeat. Kenya's electoral history offers cautionary lessons on precisely this point.

The opposition's greatest enemy in 2027 may not be the government it seeks to replace. It may be its own ambition.

**Business** The Ministry of Mining ordered the immediate suspension of all mining operations on July 28, citing compliance failures under the Mining Act, the Mining

# Ruto orders Tata out of Magadi: A century ends, a crisis begins

*President Ruto's directive expelling Africa's largest soda ash producer from Lake Magadi has ignited a fierce political battle, threatened KSh7.4B in annual exports and plunged thousands of Kajiado residents into economic uncertainty — with the 2027 election now visible in every line of the dispute.*

**BY James Mwangi**
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President William Ruto yesterday ordered Tata Chemicals Magadi Limited to leave Kenya, bringing to a dramatic close more than a century of industrial operations at Lake Magadi and triggering an immediate political firestorm as the country heads into one of its most consequential election cycles in a generation.

Speaking in Kajiado County yesterday, Ruto said the government would seek a new investor to take over the exploitation of resources at Lake Magadi, but with conditions requiring greater local value addition and employment. The declaration, delivered at a public rally, was blunt and unsparing. "We have Lake Magadi, we have a big company, we have resources that can change Kajiado County and Kenya as a whole. Tata Chemicals Company, which is here in Kajiado, has been running its contract for over 100 years," Ruto said, adding: "They have not constructed anything in Kajiado, including even employing people here. I recently told them to vacate and get out of this country. Let them go. They have been taking our resources to India."

The remarks confirmed what had been building since late July. The Ministry of Mining ordered the immediate suspension of all mining operations on July 28, citing compliance failures under the Mining Act, the Mining (Licence and Permit) Regulations 2017 and the Mining (Royalty Collection and Management) Regulations 2024, following years of fruitless engagement with the company. Tata pushed back immediately, moving to the High Court in Nairobi on July 30 and seeking stay orders in case No. HCJR/E280/2026 before Justice William Musyoka, who ruled against the company on August 7. The case remains active, with judgment slated for October 23 and a mention scheduled for October 6, dashing hopes of operations resuming before then.

The economic stakes could scarcely be higher. Kenya exported 254,779.6 tonnes of soda ash worth KSh7.36B in 2025, according to the 2026 Economic Survey report, making the mineral one of the country's established export earners. More than 95 percent of the company's annual shipments — exceeding 350,000 tonnes — go to markets in Southeast Asia, India, the Middle East and other nations, ranking soda ash among Kenya's top export earners. For Kajiado County, the consequences are already visible and personal. The imposing Tata Chemicals facility, which for decades has been the centre of Magadi town's economy and essential services, stood silent, with the town appearing deserted and commercial activity markedly reduced.

President William Ruto

Over 500 direct employees and thousands of support workers have been rendered jobless overnight by the abrupt closure, and the ripple effects extend well beyond payroll. Tata has long provided the town with subsidised rail services to Kajiado, healthcare, student scholarships and, critically in an arid region, water. Ruto acknowledged this dependency when he instructed his Water Cabinet Secretary to allocate funds for water supply to Magadi, describing it as "the only thing Tata Chemicals claim to give our people." The admission was telling: even as the President ordered the company out, his government was scrambling to fill the services gap it would leave behind.

Into this volatile mix stepped the Democracy for the Citizens Party. Allies of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, led by DCP secretary-general and Nyandarua Senator John Methu, accused Ruto of frustrating Tata Chemicals for alleged personal monetary gains, terming the company's closure "a reckless, economically suicidal and legally rogue directive" that "amounts to a dictatorial decree, issued under the guise of regulatory compliance in a scheme of State-sponsored economic sabotage."

The DCP's allegations went further than the compliance dispute. "The truth of the matter is, there are huge deposits worth trillions of shillings of lithium metals underneath the Magadi area. Further, there are huge oil prospects in the same vicinity within which Tata Chemicals Limited operates," Methu said. The party alleged that Ruto wanted to push out Tata Chemicals or acquire a majority stake, then bring in companies associated with his government allies to explore those mineral and petroleum resources. The government has not responded to the specific lithium and oil allegations, and the DCP lawmakers did not accompany their statement with evidence.

Gachagua himself had previously raised the stakes at a Kajiado rally, accusing Ruto of having demanded a KSh3B bribe from the investor — an allegation also made without supporting evidence. The former Deputy President, now positioning himself as the principal opposition candidate for August 2027, has seized on the Magadi crisis as an emblem of what he characterises as an administration willing to sacrifice investor confidence and working-class livelihoods for political and personal gain.

That framing lands with particular force because of the timing. With less than twelve months to a general election, every major government decision is now filtered through a political lens, and the Magadi shutdown offers the opposition a ready-made narrative: a vulnerable community, lost jobs, threatened water supplies and a century-old institution ejected on a president's instruction. Whether or not the DCP's lithium allegations carry weight, they do not need to be proven to be politically effective. The allegation itself, repeated loudly enough, becomes part of the story.

Ruto's counter-argument is neither incoherent nor without merit. His position is that Kenya should derive greater value from its natural resources instead of allowing raw materials to be extracted with limited local industrial development, and that a new investor would be required to establish glass and chemical manufacturing facilities in Kajiado, creating jobs and enabling value addition. Kenya is the world's fourth-largest natural soda ash producer, supplying one percent of global output — a resource used in glass, cleaning products and increasingly in EV batteries — and the President's argument that a century of extraction has not produced a single glass factory in Kajiado is not easily dismissed.

But the mechanics of transition matter as much as the vision, and here the government's position is exposed. Ruto's plan faces unresolved legal disputes, and will test the administration's ability to attract an investor capable of preserving export revenues while delivering the local manufacturing the President says is missing at Magadi. No replacement investor has been publicly named. No timeline has been given. The High Court process runs to October at the earliest. In the interim, Magadi bleeds.

Tata, for its part, has refused to go quietly. The company confirmed it had submitted all information, reports and documentation requested by the Ministry of Mining, stating it had "responded comprehensively to the Ministry's concerns and demonstrated compliance with applicable regulatory requirements," while raising alarm about the uncertainty facing its employees, contractors, suppliers and transporters.

The Magadi crisis thus arrives as a precise distillation of the political tensions that will define Kenya's path to August 2027. It pits the government's industrialisation narrative against the immediate welfare of thousands of workers. It places Ruto's resource nationalism agenda alongside credible questions about investor confidence and due process. It gives the opposition, and Gachagua's DCP in particular, a tangible, human story to carry into the campaign season — one set not in Nairobi's political corridors but in a hot, arid town where people are queuing with jerricans for water.

The lake that built Magadi has not changed. The politics swirling around it have never been more combustible.

**Politics** The choice of Nyeri — and Othaya in particular — is not incidental. The constituency is the political home of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua

# Opposition takes the Nyeri road: Kalonzo and Muturi march into Gachagua's backyard

Wiper Patriotic Front leader Kalonzo Musyoka and Democratic Party leader Justin Muturi

**BY Agnes Wavinya**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Wiper Patriotic Front leader Kalonzo Musyoka and Democratic Party leader Justin Muturi Sunday lead a United Alternative Government delegation into Nyeri County, opening with a church service at St Paul's ACK Church in Othaya at 10am before hosting a public rally at 2pm in a coordinated push to deepen opposition roots in the Central Kenya heartland.

The joint appearance is the most visible sign yet of a coalition determined to demonstrate unity on the ground even as it grapples, behind closed doors, with one of the most consequential questions in Kenyan politics: who among the opposition's several presidential aspirants will carry the flag against President William Ruto in August 2027.

The choice of Nyeri — and Othaya in particular — is not incidental. The constituency is the political home of former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, the Democracy for the Citizens Party leader who anchors one wing of the United Alternative Government. Staging a major grassroots engagement there carries a layered message: that the coalition is not merely Gachagua's political project, that Kalonzo and Muturi command their own presence in Mt Kenya territory and that the opposition intends to contest every county rather than concede ground to the incumbent.

The tour comes days after UAG principals held consultative talks on coalition strategy. "We held a consultative meeting with the UAG principals to deepen our unity and chart the way forward for our alliance. Our mission remains clear: unite Kenyans, restore hope, and Komboa Kenya," Kalonzo said.

Jubilee Deputy Party Leader Fred Matiang'i has separately articulated the coalition's determination to avoid the fate of previous opposition alliances that formed primarily to win elections before collapsing after taking power. "We want to avoid that history where we unite and then after one year, or after the election, we start fighting," he said this week.

Those words carry weight precisely because the United Alternative Government has already shown early signs of the tensions that have undone past coalitions. The much-anticipated UAG retreat in Kiambu County last week ended after only one day's deliberations, having failed to resolve fundamental questions about how the coalition will operate, how decisions will be made and, critically, how the presidential candidate will be selected.

Insiders say the UAG has quickly morphed into a contest of competing strategies, pitting a Gachagua-Kalonzo axis against a Matiang'i-Munya bloc. At the heart of the dispute is a deceptively simple but politically explosive question: who decides the flag bearer, and how? The Gachagua-Kalonzo camp favours a consensus-based approach — essentially backroom negotiations among principals — while the Matiang'i faction demands a scientific, transparent and objective process anchored on opinion polls and measurable national appeal.

Muturi, for his part, has already signalled his position on the presidential question. In July, he told worshippers at a Nairobi church that if it were not to be him, he would support "my brother Dr Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka" as the opposition's presidential candidate. Kalonzo acknowledged the endorsement but maintained that his support for the opposition would not depend solely on his own presidential ambitions, saying he was equally prepared to back Muturi if the coalition coalesced around him.

That choreography of mutual endorsement — each man declaring he will support the other — is either a sign of mature political humility or a holding pattern designed to keep options open while the coalition's more combustible members negotiate. Probably both.

What Sunday's Nyeri tour does, regardless of those internal tensions, is advance the opposition's most urgent strategic imperative: demonstrating to Mt Kenya voters that the UAG is a credible, organised and genuinely national alternative rather than a coalition of personalities united only by shared resentment of the current administration.

The opposition has already tested its resolve in difficult terrain. During a Meru tour in March, opposition leaders overcame roadblocks and deliberate disruptions to press on with grassroots engagements in a county long considered solid Ruto territory, with Kalonzo describing the turnout as extraordinary and the movement as unstoppable.

The momentum from those engagements has fed directly into Sunday's Nyeri programme. The opposition is learning, methodically, that showing up matters. Presence builds credibility. Credibility builds coalitions. And coalitions, in Kenyan electoral arithmetic, win elections.

With eleven months to polling day, the United Alternative Government is racing against two clocks simultaneously: the external clock of a national campaign that must reach every county before August 2027, and the internal clock of a coalition that must resolve its candidate question before uncertainty hardens into a liability. On Sunday, Kalonzo and Muturi will address the first. The second remains the harder test — and no rally, however well attended, will resolve it on their behalf.

**Politics** The Maa region carries particular strategic weight because it sits at the intersection of development politics, regional identity and national coalition-building

# The long road to 2027: Kenya's election begins in the counties

**BY Levis Wangamati**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Kenya's 2027 general election is still months away, but the political contest is already moving faster than the electoral calendar, with President William Ruto, former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua and a clutch of opposition figures all repositioning simultaneously across the country's most contested counties.

The evidence is everywhere. Presidential tours dressed as development visits. Opposition rallies framed as grassroots mobilisation. Governors publicly choosing sides. Senators building national movements from city podiums. The formal campaign has not begun, but the decisions being made today — the alliances formed, the endorsements secured, the communities visited — will determine the electoral arithmetic of August 2027. Every rally, every public appearance, every political disagreement is becoming another piece of a puzzle that Kenya's leaders are already racing to solve.

Ruto's renewed political activity in the Maa region is therefore more than a routine presidential tour. Development projects may sit at the centre of the official programme, but politics follows wherever a sitting president travels, particularly when the country is steadily approaching a general election. Visibility itself has become political currency, and Ruto understands that the road to a second term cannot be built from State House alone. It must pass through communities whose votes will determine whether his administration earns another five years.

The Maa region carries particular strategic weight because it sits at the intersection of development politics, regional identity and national coalition-building. Ruto's presence there allows him to demonstrate government activity while reminding voters that the presidency retains enormous institutional and political reach. Yet every development announcement is now being read through the lens of 2027. The opposition will frame the tour as a consolidation exercise ahead of the campaign peak; the administration will present it as evidence of a government delivering across the country. Both readings contain truth, and both will be tested at the ballot box.

The opposition narrative, however, is being assembled from several different political centres simultaneously — and that may prove either its greatest strength or its most dangerous weakness. Gachagua has been steadily building the Democracy for the Citizens Party as a vehicle for his post-government political ambitions. His strategy depends on grassroots mobilisation, particularly in regions where he believes dissatisfaction with Ruto can be converted into electoral support. His political tours are not merely about addressing rallies or sharpening his critique of the administration. They are attempts to establish an alternative political network before the formal campaign season reaches full intensity.

But Gachagua faces a challenge that has defeated many opposition formations in Kenya's political history. Opposition politics here has long been vulnerable to fragmentation: leaders can agree on what they oppose while disagreeing sharply on who should lead, which party should carry the coalition banner and how power should be distributed after a potential victory. His task is consequently not simply to defeat Ruto politically. It is to convince competing opposition figures that cooperation is more valuable than individual ambition. If the opposition enters 2027 with several centres of power pulling in different directions, the mathematics that looks promising today could quickly become an electoral liability.

That is where Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna enters the picture. His Linda Mwananchi movement has continued a nationwide mobilisation effort following tours across multiple counties, with another Nairobi rally already announced. The geographical spread of those engagements matters because it reflects a deliberate attempt to transform political energy concentrated in the capital into a genuinely national movement. Sifuna's significance has grown because he represents something distinct from the traditional opposition formula. He is younger than most established presidential contenders, highly visible in public debate and demonstrably capable of communicating directly with an urban and increasingly politically independent generation.

Whether Sifuna ultimately becomes a presidential contender, a coalition negotiator or one of the most influential figures in an eventual opposition administration remains unclear. What is becoming increasingly difficult to dismiss, however, is the political space he occupies. Attempts to contain his influence within ODM's structures risk producing precisely the opposite effect — transforming him into a symbol of resistance, and political history demonstrates repeatedly that marginalising a popular figure can accelerate rather than arrest their rise.

Meanwhile, Mount Kenya remains one of the most consequential and contested pieces of the 2027 puzzle. Kirinyaga Governor Anne Waiguru's decision to reject Gachagua's political camp and reaffirm her support for Ruto illustrates just how complicated the region has become. Mount Kenya is no longer behaving as a single political constituency. It contains competing interests, personalities and ambitions, and politicians across the spectrum are being forced to choose between national alliances and intensifying regional pressures. The old assumption that Mount Kenya votes as a bloc has not merely been tested — it is being systematically dismantled by the very politicians who once relied on it.

President William Ruto

This is why 2027 will not be won by simply declaring that one region belongs to one politician. Kenyan politics has become too fluid for that model to remain reliable. The formula in which a presidential candidate secures victory by locking down a handful of ethnic or regional voting blocs faces mounting pressure from economic frustrations, generational change and increasingly independent political calculations. Voters are not abandoning regional considerations entirely, but they are becoming progressively harder for political leaders to treat as permanent property. Any politician who assumes that yesterday's pattern will automatically become tomorrow's risks discovering too late that the electoral mathematics has shifted beneath them.

There is another dimension to the intensifying mobilisation that deserves more serious attention than it has so far received: political violence. Migori Senator Eddy Oketch has warned that political goonism is occurring across the political divide and called for accountability regardless of party affiliation. His warning should not be treated as a footnote. Kenya has experienced the consequences of political violence before, and the country cannot afford to allow intimidation to normalise itself as part of electoral competition.

Political mobilisation should be about persuading citizens, defending records and presenting credible alternative programmes. Once intimidation becomes part of the toolkit, the quality of democracy begins to deteriorate long before a single vote is cast. Politicians who condemn violence when it targets their opponents while excusing it when it benefits their own side are not defending democracy — they are corroding it. The credibility of the 2027 election will depend not only on the conduct of the electoral commission but on whether political parties and their supporters respect the democratic space in which the contest takes place.

Kenya has, in this sense, entered two simultaneous political battles. The first is the familiar contest for State House, in which Ruto seeks to defend his presidency while Gachagua builds an alternative political centre and other opposition figures position themselves for coalition negotiations. The second battle is larger and potentially more consequential: a contest over the character of Kenyan politics itself. Will 2027 be an election defined by ideas, records and policy alternatives, or another cycle dominated by personalities, patronage and political identity?

That question is not abstract. It will shape what kind of country Kenya becomes in the decade that follows.

The decisive contest will not be settled in Nairobi's political corridors or at the largest rally. It will unfold in counties, constituencies and communities where millions of voters will weigh political promises against lived economic experience. Kenya's politicians are already counting. Soon, quietly and with characteristic patience, the voters will begin doing exactly the same.

**Business** The milestone, announced from Addis Ababa on Wednesday, is striking not just for the number itself but for the speed at which it was reached

# Safaricom Ethiopia's 15 million milestone: Africa's boldest telecom bet begins to pay off

Vodacom Group Chief Executive Officer Shameel Joosub, Safaricom Group CEO Peter Ndegwa and Safaricom Ethiopia CEO Wim Vanhelleputte

**BY Grace Wanja**
*@themtkenyatimes*

The milestone, announced from Addis Ababa on Wednesday, is striking not just for the number itself but for the speed at which it was reached. The movement from 10 million active customers in July 2025 to 13.6 million by March 2026 and now more than 15 million suggests that the commercial engine is gaining momentum — and doing so in a market that once looked like Safaricom's most consequential miscalculation.

When Safaricom led a consortium into Ethiopia in 2021, the decision drew as much scepticism as excitement. The consortium committed approximately KSh110B to secure a telecommunications licence. Safaricom was entering a market dominated by the state-owned Ethio Telecom, while Ethiopia was dealing with political instability, conflict, foreign-exchange shortages and an uncertain regulatory environment. The early losses were steep, the terrain was hostile and the timelines for profitability stretched uncomfortably far into the future.

That bet is now beginning to look prescient. The company reached the 15 million milestone as it marked five years since receiving a nationwide telecommunications licence from the Ethiopian government in July 2021, with commercial operations beginning in October 2022 after more than a year of building network infrastructure and distribution channels. That means Safaricom Ethiopia acquired 15 million active subscribers in under four years of actual trading — a pace that places it among the most remarkable growth stories in African telecoms.

The infrastructure behind that growth is equally impressive. The operator has built more than 3,500 mobile sites covering about 60 percent of Ethiopia's population, with every site supporting 4G services and ready for 5G deployment. Chief Executive Officer Wim Vanhelleputte has described the rollout in terms that, while clearly promotional, are difficult to dispute on the facts. "Since receiving our licence, we have built more than 3,500 network sites, with our network now reaching around 60 percent of the country's population. All our sites are 4G-enabled and 5G-ready, making our network state-of-the-art. This represents one of the fastest network rollouts by a greenfield telecom operator in Africa, and one of the fastest globally for a new entrant building a nationwide network from scratch," Vanhelleputte said.

The network's reach is not merely a commercial asset. In a country of more than 120 million people — Africa's second most populous — connectivity has historically been the privilege of urban centres. Safaricom Ethiopia's expanding footprint has begun extending reliable 4G coverage to smaller towns and rural communities that have never had meaningful access to high-speed data services, drawing more Ethiopians into the digital economy for the first time.

The financial trajectory is equally encouraging for a company that has absorbed years of significant losses in pursuit of long-term market position. During the financial year ending March 2026, Safaricom Ethiopia's service revenue increased by 130.9 percent to ETB15.9B. Its M-Pesa customer base more than doubled to 5.2 million, while mobile data generated ETB9.6B and became its largest revenue contributor. The company halved its losses in the year to March 2026, supported by an improved macroeconomic environment and tariff reviews on voice and data services implemented in late 2025.

Vanhelleputte is now speaking with growing confidence about the path to profitability. Safaricom Ethiopia said the operation was moving closer to its targeted EBITDA breakeven in the 2027 financial year. That target — earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation — represents the first meaningful profitability threshold for a capital-intensive business that has spent five years pouring money into infrastructure, licences, talent and distribution.

Beyond the commercial numbers, Vanhelleputte pointed to the company's contribution to Ethiopia's broader digital ecosystem. "We have also witnessed the emergence of world-class talent in information technology in Ethiopia, and we have played our part in supporting that journey. Beyond the impact of our core business, we have directly invested ETB139 million in community development and support, while our shareholders and partners have contributed an additional ETB545 million. This brings the total investment in communities to ETB684 million over the past four years of our operations," he said.

Vodacom Group Chief Executive Shameel Joosub highlighted the pace at which Safaricom Ethiopia had expanded its subscriber base, noting that the operator had reached its current subscriber scale within five years — a milestone that can typically take significantly longer for a greenfield entrant. The Global Partnership for Ethiopia board, which convened for a town hall session with Safaricom Ethiopia staff, offered similarly warm assessments of the company's trajectory.

The liberalisation of Ethiopia's telecommunications sector — one of the last major African markets to open to private competition — has produced effects that extend well beyond a single operator's balance sheet. The number of active customers on the network soared 46.1 percent year-on-year from 10.06 million in June 2025, and the acceleration of digital financial services through M-Pesa is drawing previously unbanked Ethiopians into formal payment systems at a pace that would have been unimaginable under the previous state monopoly.

Active data users were consuming an average of 6.5GB per month, representing a 53 percent increase in data consumption per user over the previous fiscal year — a figure that reflects not merely the spread of Safaricom's network but a genuine shift in how Ethiopians are using connectivity in their daily lives, from commerce and education to communication and entertainment.

The story of Safaricom Ethiopia is, in microcosm, the story of what telecom liberalisation can achieve when it is pursued seriously and a credible private operator is willing to absorb the initial pain of building from nothing. The first years were bruising. The losses were real, the currency depreciated sharply and the operating environment remained challenging long after the licence was signed. But the subscriber numbers, the revenue trajectory and the approaching breakeven point now suggest that the pain was an investment rather than a loss.

For Safaricom's Nairobi headquarters, the Ethiopian milestone also carries strategic weight. The Ethiopian operation was the company's most ambitious international expansion and, for several difficult years, its most uncomfortable liability. That it is now approaching profitability — in a market of 120 million people with enormous room still to grow — transforms the calculus entirely.

Fifteen million subscribers in under four years of trading. Three thousand five hundred network sites. Sixty percent population coverage. An EBITDA breakeven on the horizon. The numbers tell a story of a company that backed itself in the hardest possible conditions and is beginning to be proved right.

Vodacom Group Chief Executive Officer Shameel Joosub, Safaricom Group CEO Peter Ndegwa and Safaricom Ethiopia CEO Wim Vanhelleputte

**AI** The distinction matters acutely in public health. Errors in disease surveillance or health financing carry consequences that go well beyond a flawed spreadsheet

# Kenya's AI interns need a judgment portfolio, not just a certificate

**BY James Mwangi**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Kenya's ENGAGE project yesterday showcased an internship model that few countries have managed to build at scale, placing women trained in artificial intelligence and data science into real public health roles across 38 sites, with 209 paid positions already delivered — but the programme's next step should be as ambitious as its first.

The six-week placements give trainees practical exposure to AI tools in healthcare delivery, disease surveillance and health financing, connecting classroom learning to working environments where the stakes are real. That link between training and practice is valuable and relatively rare. What is currently missing is a structured way to measure something more important than course completion: judgment.

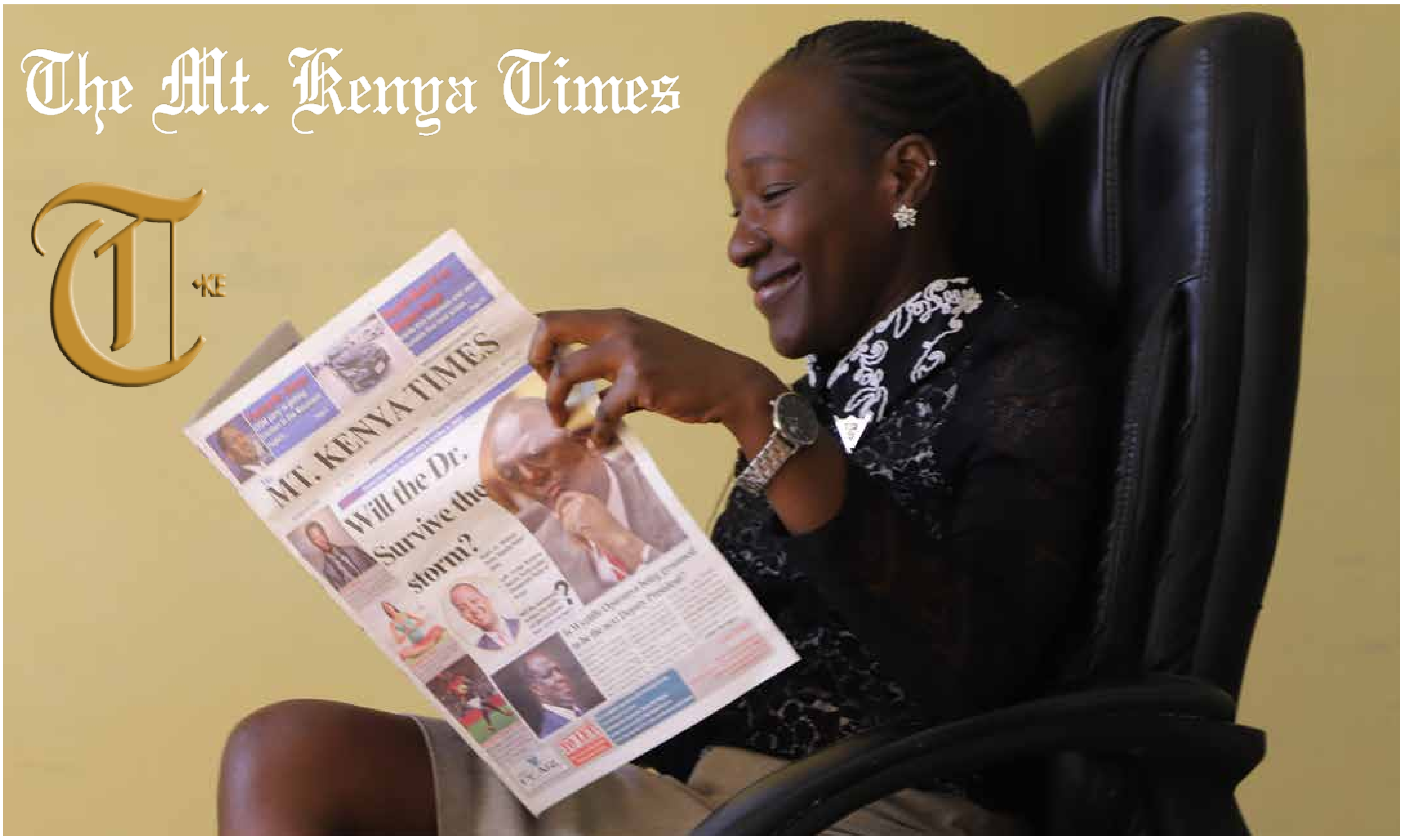
Every trainee should leave with what could be called a judgment portfolio — a concise collection of work samples demonstrating not only that she used AI tools, but that she verified their outputs, managed uncertainty, protected sensitive data and knew when to escalate a decision to a human expert. A certificate records attendance. A judgment portfolio reveals capability.

The distinction matters acutely in public health. Errors in disease surveillance or health financing carry consequences that go well beyond a flawed spreadsheet. Kenya's Ministry of Health has emphasised data governance and responsible AI adoption, which makes human verification more important, not less. AI systems produce plausible-sounding answers that are sometimes wrong, and the skill employers increasingly need is the ability to recognise the difference.

The portfolio itself need not be complex. Four documented elements per work sample would suffice: what task the trainee gave the AI system, what evidence she used to verify the result, what uncertainty remained and what rule determined whether she could act or had to escalate. Failures should be included. A trainee who can explain why an AI output failed and how she caught it demonstrates more than any polished demonstration can show.

Kenya does not need to choose between faster AI adoption and stronger human capability. The internship programme already exists. Adding a judgment portfolio requires will, not a new budget.

Gleb Tsipursky, PhD, a behavioral scientist, CEO of Disaster Avoidance Experts



# To those who are standing by my side right now

To those who are standing by my side right now,
To those watching me from afar,
And even to those laughing at me from the sidelines—
I will send my greetings 5 years from now...
I will become someone truly worthy,
I will complete all my studies,
I will stand firmly on my own two feet,
I will send my greetings 5 years from now...
To those who supported me in my hardest times,
And to those who doubted me, wondering who I would ever become,
When balancing my child and studies tested my patience—
I will send my greetings 5 years from now.
It is not easy to handle everything at once,
To envision your future and hold on to belief,
To build a strong foundation for your children—
I will send my greetings 5 years from now.
Do not come back later, those who abandon me now,
Those who shouted at me to "give up on your studies"—
And to those who truly trusted and loved me,
I will send my greetings 5 years from now.
The path of knowledge is never easy,
It tests your patience as you go further.
Just watch, that day will surely come,
I will give my greetings 5 years from now,
I will prove my worth 5 years from now...

By: Amirova Nodira

# Loneliness

Within four walls, I hold a conversation,
In the room, a single ray shines through a crack.
Like a flower longing to bloom in the darkness,
That ray, like the sun, brings comfort back.

Amid the borders of endless sorrow,
Pains stand in rows, though you may never know.
Beyond the boundaries of wounded pride,
I am the one who condemned myself to loneliness.

Vafo Manzura Asqarova

# Teamwork brings success surely unprecedented

Many things can be achieved when we stand united.
No weapon can withstand the strength of unity.
We can march towards our destination with confidence and dignity.
Every small step will move us towards establishment.
Every small effort will lead us to accomplishment.
If minds and hearts are united together.
Anything is possible, come what may, whatever the weather.

Different talents and multiple skills, work as one.
Will definitely help to achieve the mission.
Collective efforts and support will fetch a valuable perk.
Teamwork will definitely make the dream work.

By, Mrs. Gulzar Jahan.

# Laugh today and tomorrow

Laugh today and tomorrow,
Lose all your sorrow.
No need to lend or borrow,
Let it grow in its flow.

Start laughing, start healing,
Spread delight, erase darkness.
A magical tool of happiness
Lies in our lovable laughing.

Sheeba.S
Graduate teacher
Ghss, Pattukkottai
Thanjavur

# Take time to improve but don't waste time to prove

Every mistake can become a lesson and every small step can take us closer to our goals.
Focus on our development and growth to lead a successful life.
Spend more time to build ourselves than proving ourselves.
Sometimes we waste time to prove ourselves to everyone.

Our actions and achievemental will speak more strongly than our words.
We need not to win every argument
but answer every criticism to win.

Q. PATRICIA,
BT Assistant,
CREATIVE WRITER,
CUDDALORE.

# The beauty of life lies in simple moments

For some, a beautiful moment may be enjoying a delicious meal.
For others, it may be admiring the beauty of nature.
For people with physical challenges, a beautiful moment may be seeing others' kindness and enjoying the little things in life.
For those who always compare their lives with others, a beautiful moment may be learning to appreciate their own life.
For a bird, a beautiful moment is flying freely without danger.
For an animal, it is a precious moment when no one disturbs it.
For a child, it is a beautiful moment filled with laughter.
Every moment is precious, whether big or small.
It is not the size of the moment that matters,
but the sweetness and happiness it brings.

Mohana.K, PUMS Kovakkulam, Karur, Tamil Nadu, India.

# Simple & joyful moments make our life lovely!

Beauty is seen in rising sun
Tiny tots giggling fun
Time spent & laughed with our friends

Sudden unexpected rain
Cool atmosphere
Painted clouds & rainbow
Drizzling & shivering small birds
Crows & squirrels
With wet feathers & wet fur
Running to get into their nests & burrows

Tailor bird building its nest
Is always cute to watch
Stitching each leaf with its beak
To provide a cozy soft cushion like
to it's fledgling!

A small act of kindness
Kind words spoken to fellow passengers & friends!
Kind words spoken helps
To get rid of worries!
Simple words & simple activities
Makes our life more meaningful!
Beauty of life is seen in simple moments!
It's so precious, save it & enjoy!

GSwapna

**Business** **"I don't know why they took the governor there, because that site will even make it hard for them to get customers," Dawood said.**

# Rahim warns traders: Don't gamble with KSh1.2B market

Imenti North MP says disagreements over temporary trader relocation risk derailing a once-in-a-generation market project secured directly from the President.

**BY Brian Gitonga**
*@themtkenyatimes*

**Imenti North MP Rahim Dawood engages Gakoromone traders.** | *Photo:* Brian Gitonga

Imenti North MP Rahim Dawood yesterday expressed reservations about a proposed temporary relocation site next to the Gakoromone sewerage pond, warning that prolonged trader disagreements could jeopardise the KSh1.2 billion Gakoromone Market project and result in the funds being redirected elsewhere.

Speaking during a visit to the proposed relocation area, Dawood questioned the suitability of the sewerage pond site, which some traders had proposed to the county government as an alternative to an earlier temporary location they had rejected.

"I don't know why they took the governor there, because that site will even make it hard for them to get customers," Dawood said.

The MP said he had also reinspected the earlier temporary site — commonly referred to as "Shakahola" — which traders rejected several weeks ago. His initial concern had been the site's drainage and sewerage system, but he said that problem had since been resolved, leaving only the access roads as the outstanding issue.

"My problem previously was with the sewerage system, but now that problem has been solved. What is left are the entrance and exit roads, which have some challenges, but the contractor is already working on them," Dawood said.

He added that discussions had been held with the town board to address the access concerns before traders make a final decision on where to relocate during construction.

Dawood was emphatic that the KSh1.2B project must not be derailed by the impasse. He traced the origins of the market to his own lobbying efforts, which began at a meeting at the Deputy President's residence in Karen and continued at State House, where he raised the matter with President William Ruto alongside the governor, Members of the County Assembly and fellow MPs.

He said he initially requested a KSh800 million market, which the governor supported, before Ruto committed to a project exceeding KSh1B. The final allocation stands at KSh1.2B.

"What I have told the people is that we wanted the market to be built because when that money is awarded, instead of it being lost, let it be used to build the market," Dawood said.

The MP also acknowledged that some traders had proposed relocating the entire KSh1.2B market development from its current site to the sewerage pond area. He said he would consult the national government, including through the Deputy President, to establish whether such a change of site was feasible.

"I will ask the government through the Deputy President if it is possible, and if it is, then it is okay. But if it is not possible, it is them who will decide what they want," Dawood said.

While affirming that traders have the right to decide where they operate during construction, Dawood maintained that reaching a common position quickly was essential. He warned that sustained disagreement risked leaving the project in limbo at a time when the allocated funds could be redirected to other priorities.

He urged traders to set aside their differences and focus on the larger prize — a market that, once built, would serve the Gakoromone community for generations.

**Abductions** For President William Ruto’s administration, this represents one of its most uncomfortable political tests.

# Kenya’s shadow state: When disappearance becomes a political message

*The reported abduction of a senior journalist has reignited a national conversation about power, impunity and the price of dissent as Kenya moves toward a defining election.*

**BY Collins Kibet**
*@themtkenyatimes*

Standard Group associate editor Alex Kiprotich

Kenya is confronting a question that no democracy should have to ask: can a citizen criticise the government today and still be certain of returning home tomorrow?

The reported abduction of Standard Group associate editor Alex Kiprotich has once again forced that question into the open, adding to a growing catalogue of cases involving journalists, activists, bloggers and government critics who have allegedly been targeted under circumstances that remain murky and unresolved. The question facing the country is no longer simply who disappeared. It is who has the power to make a Kenyan disappear — and who has the power to stop it.

Since the 2024 protests, allegations of abductions and enforced disappearances have continued to haunt Kenya’s political landscape. Some victims have returned. Others have not. Families have been left searching for answers while citizens have increasingly turned to social media to demand accountability. In that environment, fear can become more powerful than any legislation, because people begin censoring themselves long before anyone instructs them to be silent.

For President William Ruto’s administration, this represents one of its most uncomfortable political tests. The government has denied responsibility for unlawful abductions attributed to state agencies and has called for investigations into individual cases. But governments are judged not only by what they deny. They are judged by what they do when citizens demand answers.

A government that genuinely believes in the rule of law should welcome scrutiny, not fear it. A journalist should be able to investigate power without wondering whether the investigation will make him a target. An activist should be able to criticise a president without that criticism becoming a security risk. An ordinary Kenyan should never have to calculate the personal cost of expressing an opinion.

That is where the politics becomes genuinely uncomfortable.

Kenya is heading toward the 2027 General Election, and the political temperature will inevitably rise. Leaders will make promises. Opposition figures will attack the government. Activists will mobilise. Journalists will investigate. Young Kenyans will question the direction of the country. None of that is a threat to democracy. That is democracy. The real threat emerges when citizens begin to believe that political criticism carries consequences beyond the ballot box.

But allegations must not become convictions without evidence. Claims of government involvement in disappearances must be investigated, not simply repeated. Every case demands credible evidence, independent inquiry and due process. Yet the state cannot simultaneously demand public trust while allowing serious allegations to dissolve into the same darkness surrounding the victims. Silence is not proof of innocence. It is usually evidence that questions remain unanswered.

Kenya’s Constitution promises fundamental rights: the right to life, personal security, freedom of expression and media freedom. Those rights do not belong to the president, Parliament, the police or any political party. They belong to the Kenyan people. That is precisely why every alleged abduction should be treated as a matter of national concern — not according to the victim’s political affiliation, profession or public profile, but according to the straightforward principle that no Kenyan is above the law and no Kenyan should be beneath its protection.

The government has a clear opportunity to break the growing culture of suspicion. It can open credible investigations, publish findings, hold perpetrators accountable and reinforce the institutions responsible for protecting citizens. Security agencies must understand that constitutional authority is not a licence for impunity. The mandate to protect Kenyans cannot coexist with the practice of making them disappear.

The opposition, civil society and media carry their own responsibilities in this moment. They must expose wrongdoing without converting unverified allegations into political weapons. Kenya cannot build justice on rumour. It must build it on evidence, functioning institutions and genuine accountability. Those who use the real suffering of victims to score political points are not defending democracy — they are exploiting it.

Because the greatest danger here is not merely the disappearance of individuals. The greater danger is the disappearance of courage.

When citizens stop speaking because they are afraid of who might be listening, democracy begins to suffocate quietly. When journalists soften their investigations because they fear the consequences, accountability loses its most essential function. When activists retreat into silence, power becomes answerable to no one. And when an entire generation learns that silence is safer than speaking truth to power, the country may still hold elections — but it will have lost something far more important than a government. It will have lost the freedom that makes elections meaningful in the first place.

Kenya’s 2027 election will therefore be about far more than who occupies State House. In a broader and more consequential sense, it will be a referendum on the kind of country Kenyans want to live in. A country where power answers questions, or a country where power makes questions disappear.

The ballot box should determine who governs Kenya.

Fear should never determine who is allowed to speak.

**Abductions** This is the second time in sixty-six days that Kiprotich has been hunted. In June, along the same corridor of road, armed men in a Toyota Probox tried the same thing

# The Subaru state: When the rogue government hunts down the fourth estate members

By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo
@themtkenyatimes

The Subaru state

On the night of September 1, 2026, along the Gilgil–Nakuru highway, four masked men brandishing AK-47 rifles forced a Toyota off the road, dragged its driver into a Subaru fitted with a police siren, and disappeared into the dark. Nine hours later, Standard Group Associate Editor Alex Kiprotich was found near Masinga Dam, more than two hundred kilometres away, shaken but alive, having sought refuge with a family that took in a stranger dumped by the roadside like refuse. That is the fact. Everything else the questions his captors asked about the Standard's headlines, the roadblocks that waved the Subaru through without a single officer demanding its papers, the vehicle registration that traces back to government fleet records is the accusation Kenya must now answer.

This is the second time in sixty-six days that Kiprotich has been hunted. In June, along the same corridor of road, armed men in a Toyota Probox tried the same thing and failed only because he locked his doors and drove for his life. A man cannot survive two ambushes in two months and still be told, by the institutions sworn to protect him, that this is coincidence. There is a word for a pattern that repeats itself with this much precision, this much impunity, and this much silence from those who command the men in uniform: policy. Not rogue policy, perhaps but policy nonetheless, in the sense that a river is policy for the valley it carves. It did not happen once by accident. It is happening again by design.

Let us not mistake this for an isolated crime against one journalist. It is an assault on the very idea that a citizen may ask a government an uncomfortable question and live to publish the answer. Kiprotich's supposed sin was doing his job editorial scrutiny of state conduct, headlines that made someone uneasy enough to send armed men after the man who approved them. When captors interrogate a hostage not about money but about "how headlines are decided," they are not committing a robbery. They are conducting an audit of dissent, and grading it with a rifle.

Kenya has walked this road before, and history does not forgive those who forget its geography. This is the country that swallowed Pio Gama Pinto in 1965, that buried J.M. Kariuki in the Ngong forest in 1975, that watched Robert Ouko's body smoulder on Got Alila hill in 1990 for the crime of knowing too much. It is the country whose basement at Nyayo House became a byword for what happens to citizens who think too loudly. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o wrote from a prison cell that the pen becomes dangerous precisely when it tells the truth the state cannot survive hearing; Chinua Achebe warned that a nation which will not punish those who abuse it teaches its children that abuse is simply how the strong behave. Kenya buried the men who built those chambers of silence, but it seems it exhumed their method and gave it a new registration plate.

And here is the theatre of it, the part that would be almost comic if it were not so grim: barely a week before Kiprotich was dragged from his car, President William Ruto stood at KICC for Katiba Day and declared, with full ceremonial solemnity, that no Kenyan should lose their life, liberty, or dignity for criticizing their government. Fine words, delivered in a fine hall, to an audience that applauded on cue. Then the Subaru rolled onto the Gilgil–Nakuru road, and the promise evaporated somewhere between the podium and the highway. A constitution is not honoured by a speech. It is honoured or betrayed in the space between what the state says at the podium and what its officers do on the tarmac at 9:20 p.m. On that measure, this government has failed a test it wrote for itself, in its own words, in its own week.

The mechanics of the abduction deserve their own indictment. A vehicle carrying a police siren and traceable government plates should not exist outside the chain of command unless that chain of command has grown a second, unaccountable branch. Officers at checkpoints who wave through armed, masked men without a single ID check are not merely negligent; they are, at minimum, complicit by omission, and any serious investigation must start with them, not end with a press statement. The Kenya Human Rights Commission has rightly refused to treat this as ordinary crime, pointing to a broader architecture of enforced disappearance that has metastasized beneath the language of routine policing. When the tools of the state its vehicles, its sirens, its checkpoints become the tools of the abductor, the distinction between government and gang collapses, and citizens are left asking not who will protect them, but from whom.

So let the demands be as categorical as the crime. The Independent Policing Oversight Authority must open an investigation that does not end in a drawer. The Inspector General must account, publicly and specifically, for a government-registered vehicle used in an armed abduction not with a denial, but with names. The Directorate of Criminal Investigations must be placed under scrutiny equal to the scrutiny it claims to apply to others. Parliament's security oversight committee must summon the officers who commanded that checkpoint corridor on the night of September 1. The Judiciary, so recently reminded by its own Chief Justice that its credibility rests on independence, must ensure that if charges are ever filed, they are not quietly starved on a court calendar. And the Kenya Editors Guild, the Media Owners Association, and every newsroom in this country must resist the oldest trick in the intimidator's playbook the slow return to normalcy that lets memory do the state's forgetting for it.

Heads must roll, not as spectacle, but as evidence that this republic still distinguishes between a government and an armed racket wearing its uniform. Until they do, every editor in Nairobi drives to work each morning wondering if the next Subaru is theirs.

*The writer is a social commentator.*

P[olitics **Mogaka urged school principals and administrators to consider the difficult circumstances facing some families, particularly those struggling to raise school fees.**

# MP Steve Mogaka Appeals to KNEC to Administer Exams with Humanity, Justice and Fairness

**BY Elizabeth Angira**
*@themtkenyatimes*

West Mugirango MP Steve Mogaka has appealed to the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) to ensure that national examinations are administered with humanity, justice and fairness, emphasizing that every candidate deserves an opportunity to sit for their examination without being subjected to unnecessary hardship.

Speaking at Kianginda Secondary School during prayer day, Mogaka urged school principals and administrators to consider the difficult circumstances facing some families, particularly those struggling to raise school fees.

He appealed to principals not to send home examination candidates because of school-fee arrears, saying that doing so could negatively affect their concentration, confidence and ultimately their performance in the examinations.

According to the MP, learners should not be punished for circumstances beyond their control.

He stressed that education remains an important pathway for children from vulnerable families to improve their lives and that every effort should be made to ensure that financial difficulties do not stand between a candidate and their national examination.

His appeal comes at a time when many parents and guardians continue to face financial challenges in meeting the cost of education.

For some families, paying school fees on time remains a major struggle, leaving parents torn between providing basic household needs and meeting education expenses.

Mogaka also demonstrated his commitment to supporting vulnerable learners by issuing a KSh100,000 bursary cheque to assist the most vulnerable candidates .

**West Mugirango MP Steve Mogaka Speaking at Kianginda Secondary School during prayer's Day. |** *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

**West Mugirango MP Steve Mogaka Dancing with Students|** *Photo:* Elizabeth Angira

The beneficiaries, he said, will be catered for through the support, helping ensure that financial challenges do not force them out of school or interfere with their education.

The bursary support is intended to provide relief to learners who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and whose families may not have the financial ability to meet their educational needs.

Mogaka emphasized that leaders, schools and education stakeholders have a responsibility to protect the welfare of learners, especially during examination periods.

He called for an approach that puts the interests and dignity of candidates first.

His message to KNEC was equally clear: examinations should be administered in a manner that is fair, transparent and humane.

"Let every child get the marks they earn while they were studying in school," he said.

Candidates should be given a conducive environment in which they can demonstrate what they have learned without unnecessary pressure or discrimination.

The MP's remarks highlight the wider need for stakeholders to work together to keep vulnerable learners in school and ensure that poverty does not determine who gets an opportunity to complete their education.

As national examinations approach, Mogaka's appeal serves as a reminder that behind every examination candidate is a family, a dream and a future.

"Ensuring fairness and humanity in the examination process, he said, is essential in giving every learner an equal chance to succeed," MP said.

The MP further urged parents, teachers, school administrators and education officials to work together to support candidates and ensure that financial challenges do not prevent deserving learners from pursuing their education.

Kianginda Secondary School has continued to record impressive academic performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations. In 2024, the school posted a mean score of 8.50, making it the best-performing Sub-County school in Nyamira County that year.

In 2025, the school improved its mean score to 9.02, and was ranked second in West Mugirango Constituency and fourth among schools across Nyamira County.

The consistent improvement in performance demonstrates Kianginda Secondary School's commitment to academic excellence and the dedication of its students, teachers, parents and school administration.

**Energy** The gathering was not ceremonial. It addressed something far more consequential: whether Kenya can build a domestic commercial banking framework

# Kenya's nuclear bet: Why the money must come from home

*The strategic meeting between NuPEA, KenGen and KCB Bank Group marks a decisive shift in Kenya's nuclear journey — from technical planning to the harder question of who pays, how, and on whose terms.*

**BY James Kilonzo Bwire**
*@themtkenyatimes*

NuPEA, KenGen and KCB group meeting

A strategic meeting between the Nuclear Power and Energy Agency, Kenya Electricity Generating Company and KCB Bank Group has moved Kenya's nuclear power programme from the realm of feasibility into the more demanding terrain of financial architecture, as the country confronts the central question of how it will fund its first 2,000-megawatt nuclear power plant in Siaya County.

The gathering was not ceremonial. It addressed something far more consequential: whether Kenya can build a domestic commercial banking framework capable of financing one of the most capital-intensive infrastructure projects the country has ever attempted, rather than surrendering the financial terms — and the leverage that comes with them — to foreign sovereign lenders or vendor-tied credit arrangements. The presence of KCB, a bank with a demonstrated record in lead-arranging large energy and infrastructure deals, signals an intent to treat the nuclear project as a bankable megaproject that can be structured, syndicated and serviced through local institutions.

The timing matters. Kenya has already moved beyond preliminary feasibility studies into the execution readiness phase of its National Nuclear Power Programme. NuPEA has been designated as the coordinator of the nuclear programme, while KenGen has been formally assigned as the owner and operator of the plant. The division of roles is significant: NuPEA will steer policy, regulatory engagement and international partnerships, while KenGen carries the operational burden of developing, constructing and running the facility under the oversight of the independent Kenya Nuclear Regulatory Authority. With governance structures now defined, the next logical step is securing financing that matches the scale, duration and risk profile of a nuclear investment.

Financing a nuclear power plant is fundamentally different from financing conventional thermal or renewable projects. Nuclear demands patient capital — capital that can endure years of construction before a single unit of electricity is generated, while accommodating complex procurement obligations, safety compliance requirements and eventual decommissioning costs. Construction timelines stretch across decades, not years. Revenue only flows once the plant is operational, meaning lenders must be comfortable with a protracted period of outflows before any returns materialise.

This is precisely why domestic commercial banking capacity matters so acutely. Local banks understand the Kenyan regulatory environment, currency dynamics and public sector payment patterns in ways that foreign lenders cannot replicate. They can structure debt in alignment with national budgeting cycles, power purchase agreements and sovereign guarantees. KCB's potential role as lead arranger is particularly relevant because that function demands not only balance sheet strength but the ability to syndicate debt across multiple lenders, manage covenants and coordinate disbursements in line with construction milestones. A foreign institution can provide capital; a local lead arranger can hold the whole financial architecture together.

The meeting's emphasis on domestic banking capacity also reflects a broader strategic preference for reducing Kenya's exposure to external debt denominated in foreign currencies. Nuclear projects are typically financed through a mix of equity, long-term debt and sometimes export credit or multilateral support. But overreliance on foreign currency loans introduces exchange rate risk that can destabilise project economics the moment the shilling weakens. By anchoring the financing framework in shilling-denominated debt and local institutional participation, Kenya can manage that risk more effectively while simultaneously deepening its domestic capital markets. This approach does not foreclose foreign participation; it simply positions local banks as the lead arrangers who set the terms and bring in international partners on conditions that protect national interests.

The alignment of financing with KenGen's owner-and-operator governance model will require rigorous work on revenue streams, tariff structures and off-take arrangements. Lenders will need assurance that the electricity generated will be absorbed by the national grid at prices that cover operating costs and debt service, and that KenGen's balance sheet can support the leverage a project of this scale demands. NuPEA's involvement in the financial discussions ensures that policy-level commitments — including any potential sovereign support or multilateral backing — are integrated into the financial model from the outset rather than bolted on as an afterthought.

The choice of Siaya County as the plant's location adds another layer of complexity that no financing framework can afford to ignore. Public consultations in the region have been contentious, with some meetings turning disruptive and even volatile, reflecting genuine community concerns about safety, environmental impact and equitable benefit sharing. These are not peripheral issues. They directly affect project risk and, by extension, lender confidence. A well-structured financing framework must treat social licence as part of project viability, ensuring that community engagement, compensation mechanisms and local development commitments are adequately funded, independently monitored and demonstrably credible. Lenders are increasingly attentive to environmental and social governance standards, and unresolved community opposition raises the cost of capital and delays disbursements. Community relations, in this context, is a financial instrument.

Kenya's broader energy transition lends urgency to getting this right. The country has made substantial progress in geothermal, wind and solar development, but these sources cannot alone meet the baseload requirements of an industrialising economy seeking to expand manufacturing, mining and digital infrastructure. Nuclear offers a carbon-free, high-capacity alternative capable of complementing renewables and reducing dependence on hydropower, which remains vulnerable to climate variability. But the promise of nuclear energy is only realised if the financing is structured to ensure timely completion, operational safety and long-term affordability for consumers. A poorly arranged deal — one that produces cost overruns, construction delays or tariff shocks — could set back Kenya's nuclear ambitions by a generation.

The NuPEA, KenGen and KCB meeting should therefore be understood as the beginning of a sustained institutional process, not a single decisive moment. It will require iterative engagement with the National Treasury, the Central Bank, and potential international partners including the International Atomic Energy Agency and export credit agencies. It will demand rigorous technical and financial modelling to determine the optimal mix of equity, debt and guarantees, and transparent public communication about how the project will ultimately be paid for and who will bear the risks if it does not go to plan.

KCB stepping forward as a potential lead arranger is an encouraging signal. But encouragement must be matched by discipline — in procurement, construction oversight and regulatory compliance — if the signal is to become a result.

Kenya's first nuclear power plant will ultimately be defined less by the technology it employs or the site it occupies than by the quality of the financial and governance frameworks that underpin it. The foundations are now being laid in the right place: in the boardrooms where finance meets policy, and where Kenya's energy future is being written in the language of shillings, covenants and long-term commitment.

**Skills** This skill becomes especially critical when leaders face pressure. A school principal confronting poor examination results, a company manager navigating a financial crisis ...

# The quiet skill that shapes great leaders

***Emotional regulation may lack the glamour of charisma or bold vision, but it quietly determines whether leadership succeeds or unravels under pressure.***

**BY Ashford Kimani**
*@themtkenyatimes*

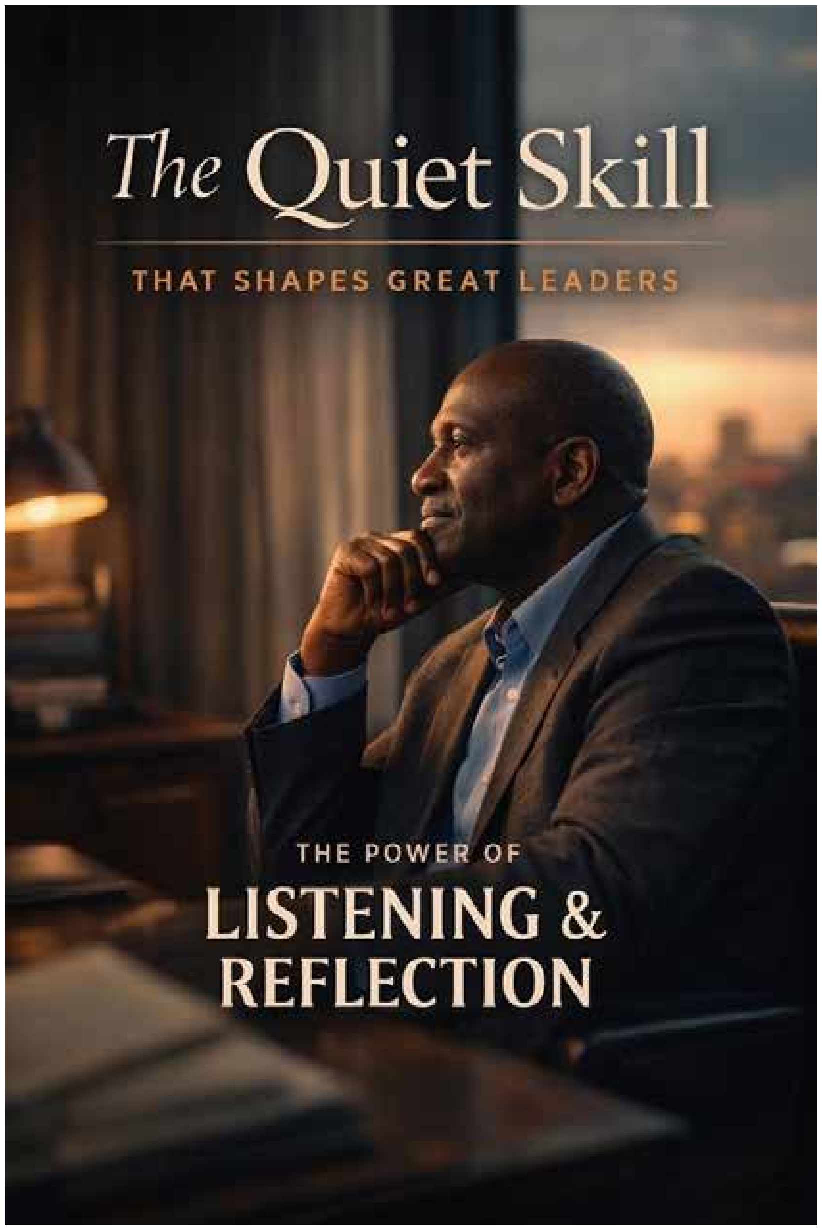
Leadership is most commonly associated with confidence, charisma, authority and the ability to make difficult decisions under pressure. Organisations seek leaders who can inspire teams, solve complex problems and steer institutions through uncertainty. Yet beneath these visible qualities lies a quieter skill that may ultimately determine whether a leader succeeds or fails: emotional regulation.

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognise, understand and manage one's emotions in ways that support sound judgment and constructive behaviour. It does not mean suppressing feelings, pretending that difficulties do not matter or maintaining a permanent mask of calm. It means becoming aware of emotions without allowing them to dictate one's words, decisions or actions.

This skill becomes especially critical when leaders face pressure. A school principal confronting poor examination results, a company manager navigating a financial crisis or a team leader managing internal conflict will naturally experience frustration, anxiety or anger. Such emotions are human. The real test of leadership is not whether those emotions arise, but what the leader does after they do.

A leader who reacts impulsively can turn a difficult situation into a crisis. An angry outburst can humiliate staff and breed fear. A defensive response can discourage honest feedback. Visible panic can send uncertainty rippling through an entire organisation. When leaders lose emotional control, those around them tend to become cautious, withdrawn or equally reactive.

Leadership emotions are rarely private. They shape the atmosphere of a workplace. Employees read a leader's tone of voice, facial expressions and responses to setbacks with remarkable precision. A leader who enters a room visibly irritated can make an entire team tense before a single word is spoken. A leader who responds to mistakes with ridicule can create a culture in which people hide problems rather than report them.




Skills

An emotionally regulated leader, by contrast, provides stability when it is most needed. Such a leader can acknowledge that a situation is serious while remaining focused on solutions. Rather than immediately assigning blame, they ask questions. Rather than responding to criticism with hostility, they listen and weigh the evidence. Composure does not eliminate challenges, but it prevents emotion from making those challenges worse.

This quality is especially valuable during conflict. Disagreements are inevitable in any institution — schools, businesses, government bodies or community organisations. People hold different priorities, personalities and interpretations of events. Conflict tends to become destructive, however, when leaders treat disagreement as a personal attack.

A reactive leader asks: "Why are you challenging my authority?" An emotionally mature leader asks: "What concern are you raising, and how can we address it?" The difference appears small. The effect is not. One response creates defensiveness; the other opens dialogue.

The ability to regulate emotion also sharpens decision-making. Strong emotions can narrow focus and accelerate poor conclusions. Anger may produce excessive punishment. Fear may cause a leader to avoid necessary action. Excitement may invite unrealistic commitments. Emotional regulation allows leaders to acknowledge what they feel while examining the facts, considering alternatives and thinking through consequences.

This is not to say that emotions are obstacles to good leadership. On the contrary, they carry useful information. Concern may point to a genuine risk. Frustration may signal that a process is not working. Disappointment may reveal unmet expectations. The challenge is to interpret that information wisely rather than to let emotion alone determine the response.

In schools, emotional regulation carries particular weight because education is deeply relational. Teachers interact daily with learners of different abilities, personalities and needs, while also working alongside colleagues, parents and administrators — often under mounting pressure to raise academic results.

A teacher who responds to indiscipline with uncontrolled anger may achieve temporary compliance but will erode trust over time. A school administrator who publicly humiliates a teacher is more likely to generate resentment than improvement. A calm, firm response achieves far more: it corrects behaviour while preserving dignity.

School leaders also shape institutional culture through their own conduct. If a principal's default response to every problem is blame, teachers become reluctant to surface difficulties. If leaders listen carefully, communicate with respect and address mistakes fairly, staff are more likely to collaborate and take ownership.

Crucially, emotional regulation can be developed. It is not a fixed personality trait. Leaders can strengthen it through deliberate practice. One useful starting point is identifying personal triggers — the situations most likely to provoke a reactive response. A leader may find that public criticism generates defensiveness, repeated errors produce anger or ambiguity creates anxiety. Recognising those patterns makes it possible to prepare for them.

Another valuable habit is the simple pause before responding. A moment of silence can prevent an emotional reaction from becoming a damaging statement. Leaders are not obliged to answer every challenge immediately or make every decision while emotions are running high. A measured response is almost always more effective than a quick one.

It also helps to separate facts from interpretations. A missed deadline is a fact. Concluding that the employee is lazy or disrespectful is an interpretation. Distinguishing evidence from assumption reduces the risk of unfair judgment and unnecessary conflict.

Listening matters enormously. People often become emotionally reactive because they feel ignored or misunderstood. Active listening does not require agreement, but it demonstrates respect and creates the conditions for constructive conversation.

Emotional regulation should not be confused with emotional detachment. A leader who never expresses concern, disappointment or vulnerability may appear composed but can easily seem cold or inaccessible. Effective leaders remain fully human. They show empathy, acknowledge difficulty and communicate genuine care. Their strength lies not in the absence of emotion but in the ability to use emotion responsibly.

Leadership is most severely tested when circumstances turn difficult — when plans collapse, criticism intensifies, conflict surfaces and pressure builds. At those moments, technical expertise and positional authority may not be sufficient. People look to their leaders for reassurance, clarity and direction.

The most effective leaders are not those who never feel anger, fear or disappointment. They are those who can sit with difficult emotions without allowing those emotions to drive harmful behaviour. Their self-awareness improves their judgment. Their restraint protects relationships. Their composure builds confidence in those around them.

Emotional regulation may not generate the headlines that charisma or bold vision attract, but it quietly shapes every dimension of leadership. A leader who can manage themselves is far better placed to lead others. In a world defined by pressure, uncertainty and rapid change, that quiet skill may prove to be among the most valuable of all.


**Sports >>** *The Real Madrid defender said he always trusted justice would prevail, but accepted full responsibility for a separate drink-driving incident.

# Asencio speaks out after acquittal

By **Pascal Okoth**

Real Madrid defender Raúl Asencio broke his silence yesterday after a court acquitted him following a lengthy judicial process he described as one of the most difficult periods of his life.

In a written statement, the 22-year-old reflected on the months spent under legal scrutiny and raised concern about information entering the public domain before the court had delivered its ruling.

"During these months, I have lived through a difficult situation, seeing information published before the courts had ruled," Asencio said.

He added that, despite the pressure, he never lost faith in the process. "I always trusted that justice would eventually set things right. Today, there is a court ruling that speaks for itself, and I receive it with peace of mind."

The acquittal ends a prolonged period of uncertainty for Asencio, who continued playing for Real Madrid throughout the proceedings. The case drew widespread attention given his standing at one of the world's most scrutinised football clubs. For a young defender still establishing himself at the highest level, the months of public attention surrounding the case placed him under a form of pressure few players his age are required to manage.

Asencio used the statement to thank those who stood by him. "I want to express my deepest gratitude to my family, my friends, my agent, my lawyers, and everyone who supported me," he said. He also acknowledged the club's handling of the situation. "I want to thank Real Madrid for allowing me to continue working, growing, and enjoying what I love most."

His ability to maintain focus on football during the process was itself a testament to his resilience and to the environment the club provided. Asencio made a number of first-team appearances during the period, suggesting that neither he nor the coaching staff allowed the off-field situation to derail his development.

*Real Madrid defender Raúl Asencio*

Separately, Asencio addressed a drink-driving incident unrelated to the criminal proceedings. On that matter, he offered no qualification. "I am deeply sorry for what happened and I fully accept my responsibility. It has been a learning experience," he said.

He also appeared to echo a message from his coach that extended beyond the training ground. "I completely agree with my coach — not only on the pitch, but off it as well," Asencio said.

The defender closed his statement with a pointed declaration. "Now it's my turn to speak."

Sports >> *Kenya's national women's volleyball team swept past Cameroon to reach the CAVB Africa Championships final, where a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics awaits

# Malkia Strikers one win from Olympic dream

*Malkia Strikers celebrate their win over Nigeria at Africa Nations Championships. PHOTO/MALKIA STRIKERS.*

By **Martin Weche**

Kenya's Malkia Strikers dismantled Cameroon in straight sets yesterday to reach the final of the CAVB Africa Women's Volleyball Championships in Nairobi, putting the record ten-time continental champions one victory away from securing a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

The match, played before a capacity crowd at Nyayo Gymnasium, was a statement of intent from a side that has long defined women's volleyball on the continent. Malkia Strikers took each set with authority, winning 25-19, 25-20, 25-20 to book a final showdown against Egypt, scheduled for today at 6pm, with Olympic qualification — and continental glory — the prize.

The atmosphere inside Nyayo was electric from the opening rally. Supporters packed every corner of the gymnasium, their noise rising and falling with each point in what became a controlled but relentless Kenyan performance. Cameroon arrived as credible opponents but were given little room to settle. Kenya served aggressively, defended with discipline and attacked with the clinical efficiency that separates champions from contenders.

Kenya's strength was visible across all three sets. The combination of experienced campaigners and emerging talent gave the side layers that Cameroon struggled to unpick. The first set established the pattern — Kenya out of the blocks quickly, building leads they never surrendered. The second and third followed the same script. Cameroon made adjustments and showed flashes of quality, but Kenya's collective composure proved too much to overcome.

The victory carried significance beyond the title race. With the win, Malkia Strikers officially secured qualification for the 2027 FIVB Women's Volleyball World Cup — a milestone in itself for a programme that continues to assert itself among the global elite. The World Cup berth guarantees Kenya another prominent stage on the international calendar and will provide valuable preparation ahead of the Olympic campaign they are now within touching distance of clinching.

The CAVB Africa Championships serves as the continent's primary Olympic qualifying route, and the final against Egypt will determine which nation carries African women's volleyball to Los Angeles. Egypt, a formidable side with their own proud continental tradition, will provide a far sterner examination than any Kenya have faced this week. But Malkia Strikers arrive at the final on form, on home soil and before a crowd that has treated every match as a national occasion.

Home advantage has been a genuine factor throughout the tournament. Nyayo Gymnasium has been filled to capacity for the knockout rounds, and the roar greeting every Kenyan point has carried the players through the more pressured moments. International tournaments on home soil carry a weight of expectation that can unsettle as easily as inspire — but Kenya have absorbed it and converted it into performance.

For the coaching staff, yesterday's win validated a tactical approach built on serve pressure and transition play. Kenya's ability to win rallies through defensive positioning and then convert on the counterattack repeatedly disrupted Cameroon's rhythm. When Cameroon found gaps, Kenya's blockers recovered quickly. The Kenyan serve — arguably the tournament's most potent weapon — kept the opposition's setters under constant duress throughout the evening.

What stands out about this Malkia Strikers generation is not only their skill but their composure. Semi-final pressure, with Olympic qualification in the background and a packed gymnasium watching every point, is not an environment that forgives hesitation. Kenya played as though they belonged there entirely, moving through the match with a collective confidence that spoke to preparation and belief.

Egypt in the final will be a different conversation. The north Africans are technically accomplished, strongly motivated and will contest every set. Kenya, however, carry momentum, home support and the knowledge that they are the continent's reigning standard-bearers.

Ten continental titles tell a story of sustained excellence that few sporting programmes in Africa can match. The possibility of securing Olympic qualification on home soil, in front of their own people, would add a chapter that goes well beyond the trophy cabinet — and transform a generation of players from champions into icons.

The wait is one more match. Kenya plays Egypt today at 6pm, and Nyayo will be full, loud and fixed on one outcome.


SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN

# Childhood trauma and the scars it leaves on young minds

*Research shows the majority of children in Kenya and across Africa will experience or witness a traumatic event before the age of four — with consequences that can last a lifetime.*

By: Wanjohi. P. Mugambi
*@themtkenyatimes*

*Childhood trauma .*

Research shows the majority of children in Kenya and across Africa will experience or witness a traumatic event before the age of four — with consequences that can last a lifetime.

By Wanjohi P. Mugambi

Childhood trauma occurs when a child experiences an intense or distressing event that threatens or causes harm to their emotional or physical wellbeing. These experiences range from extreme one-off events to prolonged, recurring stressors — among them community or domestic violence, neglect, medical emergencies, and physical or sexual abuse. Crucially, a child does not have to be the direct victim of such an event to be traumatised. Witnessing it can be equally damaging.

While trauma exists across a wide spectrum of severity, it is the individual's stress response — rather than the nature of the event itself — that most shapes how a child copes and behaves in its aftermath. Research consistently shows that the majority of adults can trace some form of abuse or difficult family circumstance back to their childhood. In Kenya and across Africa, an estimated 60 percent of children will witness or experience a traumatic event before they turn four.

Studies drawing on therapy sessions and structured interviews with young people — from birth through to age 17 — have examined exposure to violence across the home, school and community. The findings are sobering. More than 60 percent of children surveyed had been exposed to at least one form of violence in the preceding year. More than 10 percent reported five or more separate exposures. Around 10 percent had suffered maltreatment, been injured in an assault, or witnessed one family member attack another. Roughly a quarter had been victims of robbery or witnessed a violent act, and nearly half reported being assaulted at least once during that period.

The data also reveals a pattern of compounding harm. Children who have been victimised once are far more likely to experience further violence. Those assaulted in the past year are five times more likely to have also suffered sexual victimisation, and more than four times as likely to have experienced maltreatment during the same period.

Not all stress is equally harmful. Psychologists distinguish between three categories: positive stress, tolerable stress and toxic stress. Positive stress is the everyday pressure that is a normal part of life and healthy development — the nerves before an exam, for instance, which subside once it is over. Tolerable stress arises from more severe disruptions, such as the death of a loved one or a natural disaster. With the support of stable adult relationships and community networks, most children can recover. Without those supports, however, the experience can exceed a child's capacity to cope, putting their physical, social and emotional development at serious risk.

It is the third category — toxic stress — that poses the most lasting danger. When traumatic experiences are prolonged, as is the case with ongoing domestic abuse or persistent community violence, a child's stress response system is effectively kept in a state of constant activation. This sustained overload, in the absence of appropriate adult support, disrupts normal development, impairs brain growth and delays the acquisition of social and emotional skills. Left unaddressed, it can fundamentally alter the way a child behaves at home and at school, with consequences that follow them into adulthood.

It is important to recognise that no two children respond to trauma in the same way. An event that triggers a toxic stress response in one child — hearing about the death of a peer, for example — may produce little visible reaction in another. Individual characteristics, family environment and the broader social context all interact to shape how a child processes and responds to what they have experienced.

Age plays a significant role in that response. Very young children are among the most vulnerable. Infants and toddlers face the greatest risk of witnessing family violence or being assaulted by a sibling, at a stage when they are still developing the cognitive and emotional tools needed to make sense of the world around them. They are only beginning to acquire language and communication skills, and they depend almost entirely on their parents to protect them and to help them interpret unfamiliar or frightening events.

The immediate effects of trauma on very young children can be easy to miss, but the developmental risks — both in the short and long term — are real. When overwhelmed, infants and toddlers may re-enact distressing events through imaginary play or suffer recurring nightmares. Having not yet developed the cognitive capacity to reason through what has happened, they may form distorted assumptions about the world that affect how they relate to others. Behaviourally, this can manifest as clinginess, temper tantrums, sleep disturbances, toileting regression, phobias, social withdrawal, poor concentration and aggression. Children exhibiting these responses often struggle to engage positively with teachers and caregivers, compounding the difficulties they already face.

Understanding how trauma presents differently at each stage of development is essential — not only for identifying children who need support, but for determining what kind of support will be most effective. A developmental lens does not just help us understand what we are seeing. It helps us respond to it more wisely.

*Published at Shashil Court Westlands & Printed at Mombasa Road, Nairobi by Exponential International Limited. P.O. Box 101675 - 00101 Nairobi.*
*Email: editorial@mtkenyatimes.co.ke | To place Adverts: Email: ads@mtkenyatimes.co.ke Tel: 0700 161 866, 0705 215 262, 0781 894 777. www.mtkenyatimes.com*