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Countdown 2027 

Kenya's 2027 race: Are defections reshaping the road to State House?



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President William Ruto



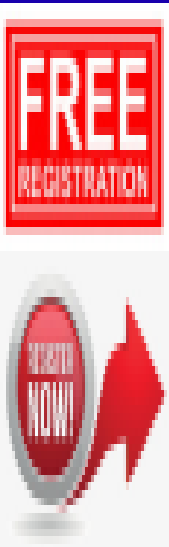
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Gachagua's team plants DCP flag in Kiambu as 2027 battle lines harden

BY James Kimani

@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

The Democracy for the Citizens Party yesterday took its grassroots campaign into Kiambu County, drawing a substantial crowd at Kwa Maiko in Githunguri Constituency in a public engagement led by party official John Methu, as former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua continues his political mobilisation from the United States.

The rally underscored the speed at which political organisation is intensifying across the Mount Kenya region, ten months before August's general election. Methu told the gathering the party had heard residents clearly, pledging that their support would not go unrewarded.

"We have heard you clearly. You are solidly behind DCP. We will not let you down," Methu told the crowd.

Gachagua, addressing supporters remotely, reinforced the message from abroad. "Our commitment to listening to you, always, remains strong. My DCP Party team called, and you answered," he said.

The Githunguri engagement follows a pattern of intensive grassroots outreach designed to convert regional goodwill into organised political capital ahead of the campaign peak. With President William Ruto's camp equally active across Kiambu, the county is fast emerging as the sharpest electoral battleground of 2027.

The ground is shifting — and both sides know it.



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



of devolution's original purpose.

Musyoka made the pledge at Kenyatta Stadium in Machakos County, where he joined Governor Wavinya Ndeti for an economic empowerment equipment distribution exercise targeting registered community groups from across the county. The event brought together organised grassroots enterprises seeking tools and resources to grow their businesses and improve household livelihoods.

"Devolution was never meant to be about creating more political offices or expanding government bureaucracy," Musyoka said. "We fought for devolution because we believed that resources, opportunities and development must reach the people at the grassroots."

The pledge, if implemented, would represent the most significant expansion of county fiscal autonomy since devolution was introduced under the 2010 Constitution, potentially redirecting hundreds of billions of shillings annually away from the national government to county administrations across Kenya's 47 counties. Musyoka argued that increased funding would translate directly into better healthcare, improved infrastructure, employment creation and broader economic empowerment at the community level.

Musyoka congratulated Ndeti for the equipment distribution initiative, describing it as precisely the kind of grassroots-centred governance that devolution was designed to enable. "This is the spirit of devolution we envisioned — a system of government that brings development closer to the people and ensures that no community is left behind," he said.

With ten months to the general election, the pledge signals that devolution's funding architecture is set to become a defining battleground of the 2027 campaign.



At least 84 Kenyans have been killed or gone missing after being recruited to fight in Russia's war against Ukraine, according to a United States government report that has reignited public outrage over what critics are calling an organised recruitment scandal. The figures, contained in a report submitted to the US Congress, represent the most authoritative accounting yet of the human cost borne by Kenyan families drawn into a conflict thousands of kilometres from home. Recruitment networks, operating largely through social media and informal channels, allegedly lured young Kenyans with promises of lucrative security contracts, only for many to find themselves deployed to active frontlines. Kenya's government has faced mounting pressure to investigate the recruiters, repatriate survivors and provide answers to families who say they were told nothing until their relatives stopped calling.



The United Energy and Petroleum Association Authority has urged the Kenya Revenue Authority to reconsider its compliance framework for small-scale petrol station operators struggling to meet the technical and financial demands of integrating into the new fuel monitoring system. The association, representing independent fuel retailers across the country, says the current rollout has created an uneven playing field that disproportionately burdens smaller operators who lack the capital infrastructure of major branded stations. Many small petrol stations, particularly those serving rural and peri-urban communities, have found the cost and complexity of full system integration prohibitive, raising concerns that rigid enforcement could force closures and reduce fuel access in underserved areas. The authority is calling for a phased compliance pathway and targeted government support to ensure the modernisation drive does not inadvertently drive small operators out of business.



Busia Senator Okiya Omtatah has challenged Parliament, the media and the public to demand full accountability over Kenya's public borrowing, arguing that the country's debt crisis will never be resolved without a transparent end-to-end tracking system for every loan contracted in the nation's name. Omtatah, who has built a reputation as one of Kenya's most tenacious public interest litigators, insists that borrowed funds must be traceable at every stage — from parliamentary approval and Treasury disbursement through to the specific project or expenditure the money ultimately financed. He described the current system as opaque and insufficient, warning that without rigorous oversight, public debt becomes a vehicle for misappropriation rather than development. The senator's call comes as Kenya's debt servicing costs continue to consume a growing share of national revenue, intensifying public scrutiny over how borrowed funds are managed and accounted for.



Burudi Nabwera, a founding figure of Kenya's diplomatic service and one of the last living links to the country's independence era, died yesterday aged 99. Nabwera served as Kenya's first permanent representative to the United Nations from December 1963 to September 1970, representing the newly independent nation on the world's foremost multilateral stage during a period of profound global and continental transformation. Concurrently, he served as Kenya's first ambassador to the United States, establishing the bilateral relationship between Nairobi and Washington at its most formative moment. A former Cabinet minister and veteran of public life spanning six decades, Nabwera belonged to a generation of Kenyans who built the institutions of statehood from nothing. His death closes a direct chapter in the nation's founding story, and leaves Kenya with one fewer witness to the world it was born into.

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TOURISM Miano said Kenya's hosting of the event reflected the country's growing profile

Miano: Kenya targets bigger share of Africa's luxury tourism market

BY John Kariuki

@themtkenyatiimes

Cabinet secretary tells Tatler dinner that high-value travel and international events are central to the country's tourism growth strategy

By John Kariuki

Kenya is stepping up efforts to position itself as a leading destination for luxury travel, hospitality and international events, as the government moves to attract higher-spending visitors and fresh investment into the tourism sector.

Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano said yesterday the government was working with the private sector to improve the quality of tourism products, infrastructure and visitor experiences, while placing Kenyan hospitality businesses before influential global travellers and investors.

Speaking at the inaugural Tatler Best Africa Dinner and Awards, Miano said Kenya's hosting of the event reflected the country's growing profile in the global luxury travel industry.

"Kenya is proud to host this first edition of Tatler Best Africa. Through the Kenya Tourism Board, our partnership with Tatler reflects our quest to make Kenya a leader in tourism, hospitality, luxury travel and international events," she said.

The partnership, she said, would give Kenyan hotels, restaurants and tourism businesses a platform to showcase



Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Miano in black outfit (C)

their offerings to influential travellers, investors and hospitality groups. The awards marked the close of the three-day 2026 Magical Kenya Travel Expo, which brought together tourism stakeholders to explore business opportunities, forge partnerships and promote Kenya as a preferred destination.

Miano said the government expected engagements generated during the expo to translate into increased visitor numbers, longer stays and greater investment in communities across the country. She added that Kenya's tourism offering had expanded well beyond the traditional wildlife safari, with the country now offering experiences built around its coastline, conservation, culture, gastronomy, wellness, adventure, fashion, art and sport.

"Tatler Best Africa celebrates excellence where it matters most: the visitor experience that decides a destination's competitiveness," she said, congratulating the hotels, restaurants and establishments honoured at the awards and urging the wider hospitality industry to continue investing in quality, innovation and distinctive service.

The cabinet secretary said the government's role was to create an enabling environment in which tourism could thrive — supporting investment, product development, connectivity and infrastructure in close collaboration with the private sector. She also called for greater continental cooperation, saying Africa needed more platforms capable of recognising excellence while connecting its tourism businesses to in-

ternational markets.

Invoking Karen Blixen, who lived and wrote in Kenya, Miano said the country wanted every visitor to feel the sense of belonging captured in the famous opening of *Out of Africa*.

"Many travellers feel exactly that on arrival, and we want every guest to carry that feeling home," she said.

The inaugural Tatler Best Africa awards brought together leaders from the tourism and hospitality industry, nominees, honourees and representatives of the international Tatler Group — a gathering Miano described as a springboard for deeper collaboration and stronger connections between Africa and global tourism markets.

KTDA releases September pay and bonus to tea farmers



Kenya Tea Development Agency National Chairman Enos Njeru

BY John Kariuki

@themtkenyatiimes

Kenya Tea Development Agency National Chairman Enos Njeru yesterday announced the release of September monthly payments and the second payment — commonly known as the bonus — to tea farmers across the country.

In a statement issued on Friday, Njeru said the funds had been transferred to farmers' bank accounts, with access available from Monday during normal banking hours. He explained that most banks would remain closed yesterday in observance of Mazingira Day, accounting for the short delay.

"As we celebrate, let us continue protecting our environment for sustainable tea production and better returns," Njeru said, using the announcement to reinforce the agency's conservation message.

He congratulated farmers on receiving their payments and urged them to remain

committed to environmental protection, noting that the health of Kenya's tea-growing regions is directly tied to the long-term productivity of the sector and the returns farmers receive. He also extended Mazingira Day greetings to tea-growing families, encouraging them to embrace environmental stewardship as a shared and ongoing responsibility.

The timely release of payments carries practical significance for farming households, supporting day-to-day expenses, farm maintenance and continued investment in tea production. For many small-holder farmers, the monthly payment and annual bonus represent their primary source of income.

Kenya's tea sector supports millions of livelihoods through production, processing and marketing, making the stability and regularity of KTDA payments central to rural economic welfare across the country's tea-growing counties.

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NAIROBI

A moment of recognition for service in energy

The honours conferred on Wandayi carry weight beyond ceremony — they set a standard for the work ahead



Energy and Petroleum Cabinet Secretary James Opiyo Wandayi receives national honours from National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula

BY James Kilonzo Bwire
@themtkenyaintimes

The honours conferred on Wandayi carry weight beyond ceremony — they set a standard for the work ahead

By James Kilonzo Bwire

The presentation of national honours to Energy and Petroleum Cabinet Secretary James Opiyo Wandayi by National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula affirms the value placed on sustained public service in a sector central to Kenya's development.

The awards — Elder of the Order of the Golden Heart and Moran of the Order of the Golden Heart, both conferred by President William Ruto — recognise contributions that extend beyond partisan roles. They speak to a record of leadership that spans parliament and now the executive, and to the expectations that come with both.

The moment carries a clear message about the link between recognition and responsibility in public office. National honours are not endpoints. They are public remind-

ers that service in critical portfolios such as energy and petroleum demands integrity, focus and delivery. The Speaker's presence in handing over the awards reinforces the continuity between legislative oversight and executive implementation — signalling that those entrusted with steering the country's energy agenda are held to a standard commensurate with the trust citizens have placed in them.

The deeper significance lies in what this recognition communicates about leadership in the sector. As Kenya advances plans for expanded electricity access, diversified power generation and more efficient petroleum regulation, the conduct and commitment of the cabinet secretary become a reference point for the entire industry.

The honours are therefore both an acknowledgement of past contribution and an unambiguous framing of the duty ahead — to manage energy policy and resources in a manner that justifies the distinction bestowed by the Head of State and affirmed by the Speaker of the National Assembly.



Cabinet in session

Cabinet clears path for pending bills payout in relief for Kenya's struggling suppliers

BY David Kimani
@themtkenyaintimes

Cabinet yesterday approved a framework to settle Kenya's long-standing pending bills, offering long-awaited relief to thousands of suppliers, contractors and service providers who have waited years to be paid for goods and services delivered to government.

The decision addresses one of the most damaging and persistent failures in Kenya's public financial management. Pending bills — money owed by national and county governments to private suppliers — have accumulated over successive administrations into a figure that independent analysts and the Controller of Budget have repeatedly flagged as a threat to both business survival and broader economic stability. For many small and medium enterprises, the unpaid invoices represent not deferred profit but existential debt: loans taken out to finance government contracts that were never honoured on time, staff wages delayed, and in the worst cases, businesses forced to close.

The scale of the problem is significant. Treasury data has placed

the national government's pending bills at hundreds of billions of shillings, with county governments adding further layers of obligation. Suppliers in the construction, healthcare, education and information technology sectors have been among the hardest hit, with some waiting upwards of three years for payment on completed and verified contracts.

Yesterday's Cabinet approval signals a formal political commitment to resolve the backlog, though the mechanism and timeline for actual disbursement will determine whether the announcement translates into tangible relief or joins a long list of pledges that stalled at implementation. The government has previously acknowledged the pending bills crisis and made partial payments, but a comprehensive settlement framework of this nature represents a more structured attempt to draw a line under the liability.

For the private sector, the implications extend beyond immediate cash flow. Confidence in the government as a reliable commercial partner has eroded sharply over years of payment delays, and that erosion carries a cost. Businesses that have been burned by late pay-

ments price risk into their government bids, submit inflated quotes to cushion potential delays, or withdraw from public procurement altogether. The cumulative effect is higher costs for taxpayers and a narrower pool of suppliers willing to engage with the state.

The broader economic context matters here. Kenya is navigating a period of constrained fiscal space, with debt servicing consuming a substantial share of revenue and the International Monetary Fund maintaining close oversight of public finances. Any pending bills settlement will need to be sequenced carefully to avoid compounding liquidity pressures — a technical challenge that Treasury must manage with precision if the Cabinet's approval is to mean anything in practice.

For the suppliers who have spent years chasing payments through government corridors, yesterday's announcement is welcome news. But Kenya's history with pending bills is long enough to counsel caution. Approval is a beginning, not a settlement.

The money must now actually move.

Politics Political defections have long been a feature of Kenyan elections. As polls approach, politicians move between parties, citing ideological differences, leadership disagreements

Kenya's 2027 race: Are defections reshaping the road to State House?

As politicians cross party lines with growing frequency, the question is whether realignment reflects genuine change or the same old search for electoral advantage

BY Collins Kibet

@themkenyatimes

Kenya's political landscape is shifting well ahead of the 2027 General Election. Politicians are crossing party lines, abandoning previous alliances and searching for new political homes they believe will improve their odds at the ballot. From the ruling coalition to the opposition benches, the political class is recalculating. The central question is whether these defections are merely individual decisions or whether, taken together, they are gradually reshaping the contest for State House.

Political defections have long been a feature of Kenyan elections. As polls approach, politicians move between parties, citing ideological differences, leadership disagreements or the need to better serve their supporters. In practice, electoral calculation plays an equally significant role. Leaders understand that party structures, regional influence and access to political networks can be decisive. The closer the country gets to 2027, the more intense that competition for political space will become.

The recent movement of politicians away from the ruling United Democratic Alliance has attracted particular attention. When elected leaders begin distancing themselves from the party that brought them to parliament, questions naturally arise about its popularity and internal cohesion. Does a defection signal genuine dissatisfaction with the government, or is it simply a politician repositioning for a more favourable electoral contest? The answer likely varies from one individual to another, but collectively, such movements shape public perception in ways that are difficult to ignore.

The Mount Kenya region sits at the centre of this political equation. It was a significant pillar of the coalition that carried President William Ruto to victory in 2022, and its direction in 2027 could carry considerable consequences. If influential leaders continue drifting away from the ruling camp, opposition parties will see an opening to expand their reach. The government, for its part,

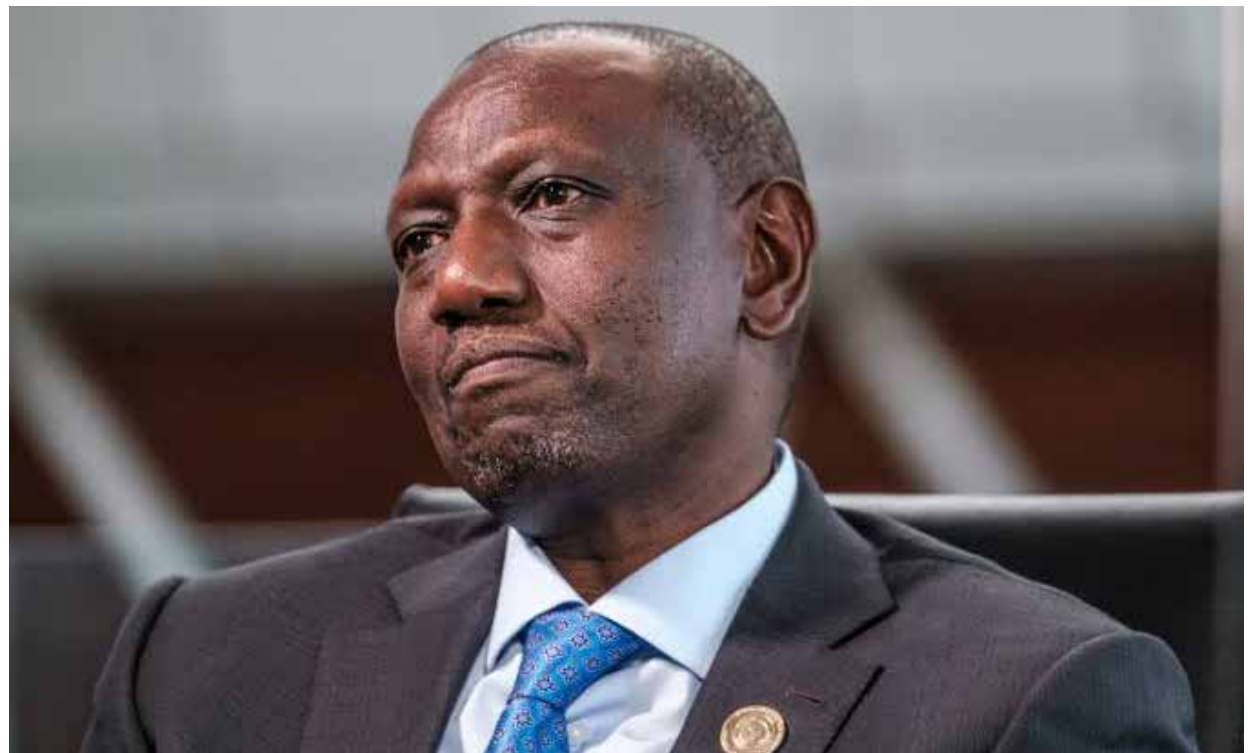
will intensify efforts to rebuild and consolidate support across the region before the campaign peaks.

Yet defections should not automatically be read as evidence that voters have changed sides. Kenyan politicians can move parties while their supporters remain anchored to different political interests. A politician who joins a new party does not necessarily carry an entire constituency along. This distinction will matter increasingly as 2027 approaches. Voters may take their cues from leaders, but they retain the power to make independent choices when they step into the polling booth.

The opposition faces its own complicated arithmetic. Several leaders are positioning themselves for greater influence, but assembling different personalities under one presidential coalition will require difficult negotiations. Who leads? Which parties receive the prominent positions? How are regional interests balanced? And can opposition leaders set aside personal ambition long enough to construct a credible national alternative? These questions will determine whether political realignment becomes a genuine threat to the ruling coalition or simply another episode in the familiar theatre of Kenyan politics.

A fragmented opposition could hand the incumbent a significant advantage by splitting the vote of those dissatisfied with the government. A united opposition, by contrast, could build a powerful national coalition capable of competing across multiple regions. The difference between those two outcomes will depend largely on whether individual ambition or collective strategy prevails.

Ideology remains a lingering concern. Kenya has dozens of registered political parties, yet voters frequently struggle to distinguish between them. Alliances form around electoral calculation rather than defined policy positions, allowing politicians to move from one vehicle to another with little discernible change in what they actually stand for. That pattern erodes public confidence and reinforces the perception that politics is primarily about access to power rather than service to citizens.



President William Ruto

The 2027 election should be about far more than defections. Kenyans are living with pressing economic and social challenges that demand serious policy answers. The cost of living continues to squeeze household budgets. Young people are searching for work in a constrained job market. Businesses are navigating economic headwinds. Questions surrounding public debt and government expenditure remain unresolved. Voters deserve to know what each political coalition intends to do about these problems, not simply who has joined or left which party.

For Ruto and the Kenya Kwanza administration, the emerging realignments should serve as a prompt to assess public confidence honestly. Political stability cannot rest on party loyalty alone — it must be sustained by tangible results. If citizens feel their lives are improving, defections will carry limited weight. If dissatisfaction deepens, opposition leaders will find fertile ground for building a broader movement.

For opposition politicians, the challenge is equally demanding. Criticising the government is not sufficient. Kenyans will want concrete alternatives — credible plans for job cre-

ation, the cost of living, healthcare, education, debt management and economic growth. A coalition built solely around defeating an incumbent may generate temporary momentum, but a coalition anchored in a serious national programme has a far greater chance of winning lasting public trust.

The danger is that political realignment becomes, once again, a competition among elites rather than a process centred on ordinary citizens. Kenyans have seen politicians make campaign promises and change positions after elections often enough to be sceptical. If 2027 follows the same script, that scepticism will deepen.

Political defections can, however, strengthen democracy when they reflect genuine disagreement over policy, leadership or principle. Politicians should be free to change parties, just as voters are free to reject them. What matters is transparency — leaders owe their constituents a clear explanation of why they are moving, what they stand for and how their new political home will serve the people who elected them.

No politician can guarantee a path to State House simply by switching

parties. Elections are won through credible candidates, effective organisation, convincing policies and voter confidence. Alliances may create momentum, but they do not determine outcomes.

Kenya's political chessboard is being rearranged well before the official campaign begins. More defections, new alliances and unexpected partnerships will emerge in the months ahead. Some will prove consequential. Others will dissolve as quickly as they were formed.

The real question is whether these movements represent genuine change or yet another search for electoral advantage. As 2027 draws closer, Kenyans would do well to look past the spectacle of defections and ask what each political camp actually offers the ordinary citizen. The road to State House will not be decided by politicians crossing party lines. It will be decided by millions of voters who will judge leaders on their records, their promises, their credibility and their vision for the country. Political realignment may redraw the battlefield, but the Kenyan people will decide who wins.

Meru “I ask people in Meru town to be mindful of where they conduct their businesses, and drivers to consider the lives of others, because human life is precious,” Mung’ania said.

Meru bans roadside trading and heavy trucks after four die in highway crash

Municipal board moves to clear traders and motorcycle taxis from Meru-Nairobi Highway following Thursday night’s accident near Riverland

BY Brian Gitonga
@themtkenyatimes

Municipal board moves to clear traders and motorcycle taxis from Meru-Nairobi Highway following Thursday night’s accident near Riverland

By Brian Gitonga

The Meru Town Municipal Board yesterday announced a crackdown on roadside traders and motorcycle taxi operators along the Meru-Nairobi Highway following Thursday night’s accident that killed four people and seriously injured 16 others near Rubis Petrol Station in Riverland.

The board also resolved to

ban trucks weighing more than nine tonnes from entering Meru town, directing heavy commercial vehicles to use existing bypass roads to reduce congestion and the risk of further accidents.

Speaking at a press briefing at Meru Town Municipality Hall, board chairperson Kirimi Mung’ania expressed



Gitobu Nkanata, the Meru town Municipal Manager speaks to the press. | Photo: Brian Gitonga

condolences to the bereaved families and called on motorists and traders to prioritise their safety.

“I ask people in Meru town to be mindful of where they conduct their businesses, and drivers to consider the lives of others, because human life is precious,” Mung’ania said.

He said county enforcement officers would immediately begin removing traders and motorcycle taxi operators from the stretch between Riverland and Kathita Bridge, an area he described as particularly dangerous.

“We are not going to tolerate people selling merchandise along the roadside. You find maize roasters and motorcycle taxi riders picking up and dropping off passengers in that section — all of them in serious danger,” he said.

Mung’ania recalled a previous accident at the same location involving a vehicle with brake failure, warning that continued roadside trading was inviting further tragedy. He said the municipality would erect road signs directing heavy vehicles to designated bypass routes, including roads connecting Meru National Polytechnic and the Meru-Maua Highway.

“The government has constructed bypass roads precisely for this purpose. Lorries above nine tonnes have no business entering Meru town and causing congestion and accidents,” he said.

Mung’ania also appealed to

the national government to honour its commitment to upgrade the Kathita-Meru National Polytechnic road to a dual carriageway, saying the project would significantly ease congestion and improve pedestrian safety.

Meru Town Municipal Manager Gitobu Nkanata, who also offered condolences to the affected families, acknowledged that previous efforts to relocate traders and motorcycle taxi operators had met with resistance. He said some operators feared losing customers if they moved away from the busy highway, and that local interference had undermined relocation efforts.

“I have personally gone there many times and spoken to motorcycle taxi riders. I showed them a safer place to operate from, but local interference has made them believe they will lose customers if they

move,” Nkanata said.

He warned that roadside trading would no longer be permitted in Riverland, Gakoromone, Gitimbine and Makutano, noting that motorists could lose control of their vehicles without warning.

Nkanata confirmed that Governor Mutuma M’Ethingia had authorised the board to take all measures within its legal mandate to prevent similar accidents.

“We have been given permission by the governor to do everything humanly possible. The board has powers under the Urban Areas and Cities Act to remove people from the highway,” he said, adding that the national government had previously issued directives discouraging roadside trading following public concern over highway deaths.



Meru town Municipal board members during the press briefing.

| Photo: Brian Gitonga

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The Pride of Africa

Economy “Chairman, a country without reserves is not sovereign,” he said. “The potential of this Bill to destabilise Uganda’s balance of payments is our primary concern.”

They called it sovereignty. We call it hunger

The law that killed the Ugandan shilling — and the man who begged parliament not to pass it



By: Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza
mukphix@gmail.com

I will tell you exactly when this country went wrong. Not when the dollar hit 4,100 shillings. Months before that, in a quiet committee room, when a man who understands money tried to save Uganda from itself.

April 28, 2026. Joint Committee of Parliament. Bank of Uganda Governor Michael Atingi-Ego did not shout. He came with numbers. He came with fear in his voice.

“Chairman, a country without reserves is not sovereign,” he said. “The potential of this Bill to destabilise Uganda’s balance of payments is our primary concern.”

He explained carefully. The previous year, Uganda recorded a balance of payments surplus of 1.5 billion US dollars. Diaspora remittances, NGO inflows and foreign investment had built reserves to 6 billion dollars. “The moment you tamper with these inflows, we risk running down our reserves — and that is economic disaster.”

Then he delivered the line that should have shamed every person in that room: “Bank of Uganda was never consulted.” The central bank, custodian of the national currency, learned about a law governing money from the news.

But who listens to a governor when politics is louder?

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, tabled on April 15 by Attorney General

Kiryowa Kiwanuka, sounded reasonable on the surface. Protect Uganda from foreign interference. Few would argue with that framing. Inside, however, it was something else entirely. Receive more than 400 million shillings from abroad without ministerial approval? Register as a foreign agent. Fail to comply? Face 20 years in prison. “Influence public opinion against government policy” on behalf of foreigners? You are a criminal.

In a country where nearly every family relies on mobile money transfers from a brother in Dubai, a sister in London, an uncle in Boston — where remittances reached 2.5 billion dollars in 2025 — this was not sovereignty legislation. It was economic self-harm.

Ugandans saw it clearly. Civic activist Job Kijja went on NBS Frontline and warned: “You are giving out the power of the Constitution to the Minister.” Opposition legislator Ibrahim Ssemujju Nganda was direct: “This Bill deals mainly with the movement of money. It is coming to regulate political funding.” Lawyer Godbar Tumushabe told a camera: “With a stroke of a pen, you can disrupt a 2.5 billion dollar diaspora economy.” Law Society President Isaac Ssemakadde, speaking from exile, called it a funeral: “Uganda is departing from the democratic world.”

Even former Aruu MP Odonaga Otto, no friend of the opposition, said bitterly: “Inside the Bill, they just fell short of adding the name Bobi Wine.”

Parliament was told that treason is already criminalised. That money laundering is already criminalised. That 45 days of required consultation were compressed to

two weeks. That microphones were switched off when members tried to object. They passed it anyway. May 6, 2026, after seven hours of shouting, the ruling party’s numbers carried it through. It became law on May 22.

Government announced amendments — diaspora remittances exempted, foreign direct investment exempted. But money does not read footnotes. Money reads fear. And fear is precisely what Uganda exported.

What followed was what the governor had predicted, word for word. The shilling, trading at 3,604 in March, began falling. By October 8, Reuters reported it had weakened more than 11 per cent since January. Commercial banks were quoting 4,040, 4,090, some reaching 4,100 — the worst depreciation in Uganda’s modern history.

Offshore investors began selling government securities and moving to safer markets. Manufacturers rushed to buy dollars. Energy companies faced higher import costs as global oil prices rose. On October 6, opposition leader Joel Ssenyonyi stood in parliament — not to oppose, but to remind: “We are going to have substantial depreciation of the Uganda currency because of our balance of payments, which are to be greatly destabilised by the sovereignty bill.” He quoted the governor’s April warning back to the chamber. “It is biting hard,” he said.

Biting hard is an understatement. Traders in Kikuu-bo market are struggling as Uganda Revenue Authority calculates import duties at the new exchange rate. Every container arriving through Mombasa costs millions more. Mbale legislator Karim



Bank of Uganda Governor Michael Atingi-Ego

Masaba appealed to the revenue authority to hold August rates because traders cannot absorb the difference. Fuel, which cost 6,529 shillings per litre in August according to the Ministry of Finance, now sells for between 7,000 and 8,000 shillings in Gulu, Arua and Mbarara. The motorcycle taxi rider who once earned 20,000 shillings a day now spends it entirely on fuel.

On Independence Day, October 9, President Yoweri Museveni offered his response. He was “totally against” the governor’s proposal to deploy dollar reserves to stabilise the shilling. He said the depreciating currency benefits coffee exporters. And he reduced a national currency crisis to a single image: imported wigs.

He forgot that Uganda imports fuel to transport that coffee. Fertiliser to grow it.

Medicine because people are unwell.

The Bank of Uganda, its hands tied, could not sell dollars. Instead, on September 24, it raised cash reserve requirements from 11 per cent to 13.5 per cent — restricting shilling liquidity to reduce dollar demand. It is the monetary equivalent of tying your legs because your head aches.

Who is sovereign now? The minister who can declare any Ugandan a foreign agent? Or the nurse in Manchester now afraid to send money home lest she appears on a government list? The legislators who signed the Bill in an air-conditioned room? Or the mother in Owino market who cannot afford rice because transport costs have doubled?

Uganda wanted to trap one man who was in America. Instead, it trapped itself.

A country without reserves is not sovereign. The governor told parliament in April. A country that drives away 2.5 billion dollars of its own citizens’ earnings to punish one political opponent has surrendered the sovereignty it claimed to protect.

You can minimise imports. You cannot minimise hunger. You can refuse to deploy reserves. You cannot refuse the reality that Ugandans are suffering.

Uganda was warned in April. The Bill passed in May. The country is weeping in October.

History will record that when Uganda had the chance to listen, it chose to clap instead.

Celebrations Mashujaa Day is a national remembrance of the men and women whose courage, sacrifice and determination helped build Kenya

Mashujaa Day 2026: A Presidential visit must honour heroes, open doors and leave no Kenyan behind



BY Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo

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As Kenya prepares to celebrate Mashujaa Day on 20 October 2026 at Kipchoke Keino Stadium in Eldoret, the North Rift stands at a defining moment. The joint hosting by Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Elgeyo Marakwet counties offer more than an opportunity to decorate streets, rehabilitate roads, showcase development projects and welcome the President. It presents a national test of whether Kenya can turn public celebrations into meaningful participation, responsive leadership and inclusive development. The central question is not simply what President William Ruto will see during his visit, but whose realities he will hear, whose progress he will witness and whose concerns will shape the promises made.

Mashujaa Day is a national remembrance of the men and women whose courage, sacrifice and determination helped build Kenya. Yet heroism is not confined to the history books or the distinguished citizens honoured at official ceremonies. It is also found in farmers struggling against unpredictable weather, young people searching for decent employment, athletes overcoming difficult circumstances, women sustaining households, and persons with disabilities confronting barriers

that society too often mistakes for personal limitations. A celebration that honours these citizens symbolically while excluding them practically risks contradicting the very spirit of the occasion.

The scheduled presidential visit matters because national leadership can bring visibility, urgency and accountability to challenges that have persisted for years. When the Head of State visits a region, inspects projects and engages communities, he can help accelerate stalled initiatives, demand explanations for unfulfilled commitments and align national and county priorities. But the value of such a visit should not be measured by the length of the motorcade, the size of the crowds or the number of projects displayed. Its true measure will be whether it leaves behind better services, stronger livelihoods, clearer commitments and a public that feels genuinely included in its country's development.

In Uasin Gishu, the inspection of Kipchoke Keino Stadium is particularly significant. Beyond providing a venue for the national celebration, the facility represents the relationship between sports infrastructure, youth opportunity, tourism and the identity of Eldoret as a city associated with world-class athletes. The President's visit should therefore look beyond construction progress and ask how the stadium will serve local talent, create employment, stimulate businesses and remain accessible to spectators and participants with disabilities. Ramps, accessible seating, toilets, parking, clear signage,

safe evacuation arrangements and inclusive transport are not decorative additions. They are essential requirements of a public facility intended to serve the entire nation.

The proposed focus on water and irrigation projects, including Kerita Dam and other agricultural initiatives in the region, is equally important. North Rift farmers are central to Kenya's food security, yet agricultural potential cannot be fully realised where water infrastructure fails to translate into reliable access for farms and households. A presidential tour should connect completed or ongoing projects to practical questions: who receives the water, how many farmers benefit, what support is available for smallholders, and how irrigation can improve production, incomes and resilience to climate change? In Moiben, Ziwa and other agricultural areas, development must ultimately be measured in better harvests, stronger markets and households able to withstand economic shocks—not merely in visible construction.

Visits to health facilities, markets, roads and education institutions across the three counties should follow the same principle. In Uasin Gishu, attention to Siwa Level Five Hospital and urban services can help expose gaps in healthcare access, emergency response, sanitation and mobility. In Nandi, agricultural value chains, markets, healthcare and education deserve attention alongside the region's sporting and cultural strengths. In Elgeyo Marakwet, water security, road connectivity, environmental



conservation and the development of athletic talent in Iten and surrounding communities offer opportunities to connect public investment with rural livelihoods. These visits should be guided by evidence, community testimony and transparent follow-up, rather than the temptation to present every project as a completed success.

Yet amid these development priorities, one question demands particular presidential attention: are persons with disabilities being included in the planning, preparation, economic opportunities and actual celebration of Mashujaa Day?

This question is especially urgent in Uasin Gishu, where persons with disabilities have recently raised their voices over the delayed county disability empowerment allocation, reported as KSh15 million, and demanded accountability and action. Their concerns cannot reasonably be separated from a national event whose declared purpose is to honour citizenship, sacrifice and the contribution of every Kenyan. When people must demonstrate, organise and repeatedly petition authorities to be heard, the issue is no longer merely about a fund. It is about trust, public accountability and whether vulnerable citizens can influence decisions that directly affect their lives.

The President should there-

fore find time in his schedule for a substantive meeting with representatives of persons with disabilities from Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Elgeyo Marakwet. This should not be a hurried greeting or a photograph designed to demonstrate goodwill. It should be an opportunity to hear concerns directly, establish the status of disability empowerment commitments, discuss employment and procurement opportunities, and identify practical measures to improve accessibility and participation. The engagement should produce clear commitments, responsible offices and realistic timelines for reporting progress.

The Constitution, particularly Articles 10 and 54, establishes inclusion, equality, dignity and the rights of persons with disabilities as national obligations. The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, which commenced on 27 May 2025, strengthens the framework for advancing these rights. These provisions require more than ceremonial acknowledgement. They demand that disability inclusion be considered when projects are designed, budgets allocated, services delivered and public participation organised. Mashujaa Day preparations—including transport, public health, security, entertainment, street improvements and stadium arrangements—must therefore be reviewed

through an accessibility lens. Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations should be consulted, not treated as an afterthought.

Inclusion must also have an economic dimension. Local businesses owned by persons with disabilities should have fair opportunities to supply goods and services, while qualified PWDs should be considered in temporary employment, exhibitions, cultural activities and other opportunities arising from the celebrations. Accessible information, sign-language interpretation where required, appropriate seating and assistance for people with mobility, visual or hearing impairments should be built into the arrangements. A celebration is not inclusive simply because a person with a disability can enter the venue; it is inclusive when that person can participate safely, meaningfully and with dignity.

The three county governments, national organising teams, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and disability organisations should work together to verify arrangements and publish practical commitments. The same accountability should extend beyond 20th October, with follow-up at agreed

Empowerment Residents welcomed the interventions and expressed appreciation for the government’s engagement with their community.

Njogu takes water pipes, seeds and jobs agenda to Buuri residents

Diaspora Affairs PS combines infrastructure delivery with community engagement in Meru County visit

BY Waithaka Kariuki
@themtkenyatimes

Principal Secretary for Diaspora Affairs Roseline Njogu yesterday visited Buuri in Meru County, engaging residents on water access, agricultural productivity and livelihood opportunities in a visit that combined infrastructure support with direct community interaction.

At the Naari-Nturukume Water Project, Njogu delivered

eight-inch water pipes to support efforts to extend supply to hundreds of households and strengthen irrigation capacity for local farmers. She also supported the Mbaaria Water Project with additional pipes, an intervention expected to boost water access and support onion farming in the semi-arid area, where reliable water supply is essential to agricultural production.

At a public meeting in Mbaaria, Njogu interacted with residents, listened to

their concerns and distributed maize and bean seeds to support ongoing farming activities. The gathering also provided a platform to discuss opportunities in dairy farming, agriculture and overseas employment under the government’s Kazi Majuu initiative.

Residents welcomed the interventions and expressed appreciation for the government’s engagement with their community.

The visit reflects a broader



Principal Secretary for Diaspora Affairs Roseline Njogu

approach to public service that pairs infrastructure delivery with grassroots engagement, with a focus on addressing practical needs and creating sustainable livelihood pathways. The water projects, farm inputs and employment discussions represent tangible interventions with the potential to support household incomes and strengthen community resilience in Buuri.

Sustained investment in water infrastructure, agriculture and employment remains central to translating the Ruto administration’s development commitments into measurable benefits for citizens at the local level.



Mashujaa Day 2026: A Presidential visit must honour heroes, open doors and leave no Kenyan behind

Contd from page 12

intervals so that the event’s promises are not forgotten once the flags come down and visitors depart.

Ultimately, the North Rift should welcome the President with pride, but also with honest expectations. Mashujaa Day must be an opportunity to celebrate achievement while confronting unfinished business. The dams must serve farmers, hospitals must serve

patients, roads must connect communities, stadiums must unlock opportunity, and public programmes must reach citizens who have too often been left at the margins.

On 20th October, President Ruto has an opportunity to demonstrate that inclusion is not merely a word in a speech or a provision in law. By meeting persons with disabilities, listening to their concerns and making commitments that can be measured, he can give practical meaning to the national values being

celebrated. Kenya’s heroes did not struggle for a country in which some citizens watch progress from the sidelines. They struggled for a nation in which dignity and opportunity belong to all.

Mashujaa Day will be most meaningful when the North Rift does not merely host the nation, but helps show what an inclusive nation looks like. No hero should be left behind, and no Kenyan should have to fight for the simple right to belong.

They pushed me aside, so I went global. Rejection is not the end;



They pushed me aside, so I went global. Rejection is not the end; it is a redirection. Rejection is not a shame. It gives us courage and leads us towards success.

If someone tells you that you are worthless or that you will fail, do not give up. Work hard and shine like the sun in front of them. Being pushed aside can become your strength and power.

Many successful people have achieved their goals after facing rejection. So, do not worry about rejection. Move ahead with a strong mind and confidence. If you have confidence, you can overcome failures and achieve success.

--G.YasminSirajudheen
Secondary grade teacher Melmalayanur block Villupuram dt

The secret ingredient



“What makes the food taste best?” The boy asked, adding salt with zest. “Hunger,” smiled Grandfather, calm and wise, “The finest spice beneath the skies.”

“Eat when your body whispers, now, Not whenever temptation tells you how. Listen closely to the signals within, Your body knows where to begin.”

“Food is nourishment, not a dumping ground; Don’t let every craving make you eat around. Eat to satisfy hunger, not merely desire, Let moderation keep your health entire.”

For hunger makes simple flavours sing, And helps the body absorb each thing. But when we eat without need or care, Excess becomes a burden we bear.

The Gita reminds us, in wisdom profound, “Yoga is not for one who eats too much, nor for one who eats too little.”

So honour the hunger your body reveals, Choose what nourishes, heals and heals. For food becomes medicine when wisdom leads, And excess, unchecked, can sow the seeds.

The secret ingredient, the grandfather knew, Is not salt, nor spice, nor a chef’s special brew, When hunger meets mindful eating at last, Even the simplest meal tastes unsurpassed.

Nandini Anandkumar
Educator, Writer & Motivator

Be unique be you



Social media celebrity you love, Can be attractive and trendy, But don’t copy them; be yourself.

Don’t walk in their footsteps, Find your own path and scheme. You may admire many people, But remember, there is only one YOU.

The world has enough copies, It doesn’t need another one. Be rare, be real, be yourself, For there is no second YOU.

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

The style and personality of a Hero you see on the silver screen, Is good to watch and admire, But don’t copy him; be yourself.

The costume and accent of a

The Silence between words



The Silence between words When sounds fail to echo in the wall, Everyone turns into statues for long, Breathing sounds fade into silence, A silence that stands with stillness.

Darkness enters with its crown, And not even birds chirp to break the silence. The sun rises and sets, Yet the silence remains the same, While nature’s melody Hides itself behind the sky. A minute passes like the endless Alps, Faces forget to smile, The laughter of heaven—the child— Brings all the statues to life. Viji. T CW writers group Namakkal

Some of us have only you



Some have no home to call their own, No loving voice to ask if they are fine; Yet in the quiet of their lonely nights, They hope Your light will gently shine.

Some lose their way in troubled days, When fear becomes too hard to bear; They lift their eyes towards the sky, Believing You are always there.

Some ask for neither wealth nor fame, But just a little strength to stay; A little hope to face the dark, A little courage for each day.

Dear God, when they have no one else, Be the shelter where they rest; For some may have the whole wide world, But some of us have only You.

V Durgadevi
Graduate Teacher GHS Nesal Tiruvannamalai district

Hunger - the secret ingredient



The biryani from a popular restaurant Sat at my dining table, asking me to eat. Neither its aroma nor its appearance Could tempt me—I simply wasn’t hungry.

The next week, I went on a short trip With my friends to a remote temple. No restaurants, no shops nearby, And I was ravenous by lunchtime.

Bitter gourd and rice from a humble home, Was all that we could find to eat. Yet every morsel tasted heavenly, As hunger made it a delicious feast.

“What makes food taste the best?” My son asked as he added some salt. “Hunger,” I said with no hesitation, “And sometimes, that is all you need.”

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

Some hearts walk through life alone, With no warm hand to hold them near; When every door seems closed to them, They turn to You and find You there.

Some carry wounds that no one sees, And hide their tears behind a smile; They speak to You in silent words, And rest with You for a while.

Politics The timing is deliberate. With the general election ten months away, political formations across the Mount Kenya region are hardening rapidly

Karanja quits UDA and targets Nakuru governorship on Gachagua's DCP ticket

The Nakuru senator's defection is the most significant Mount Kenya political realignment yet — and a direct challenge to President Ruto's grip on a county he cannot afford to lose

BY James Kimani
@themkenyaintimes

Nakuru County Senator Tabitha Karanja yesterday resigned from President William Ruto's United Democratic Alliance and joined former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua's Democracy for the Citizens Party, simultaneously declaring her intention to contest the Nakuru governorship on the DCP ticket in August 2027.

The defection is among the most consequential political movements in the Mount Kenya region since Gachagua launched DCP following his impeachment from the deputy presidency in October 2024.

Karanja is not a peripheral figure. As Nakuru senator and founder of Keroche Breweries, one of Kenya's most recognised homegrown brands, she carries both legislative standing and a business profile that commands national attention. Her departure from UDA is a calculated strike at the ruling party's foundations in a county that delivered substantially for Ruto in 2022 and which he cannot afford to lose in 2027.

The timing is deliberate. With the general election ten months away, political formations across the Mount Kenya region are hardening rapidly. Gachagua's DCP has spent recent weeks conducting intensive grassroots outreach — from Githunguri in Kiambu to

Nakuru town — converting residual goodwill from his deputy presidency into organised electoral infrastructure. Karanja's arrival gives that machinery a credible, high-profile candidate in one of the region's most competitive and politically significant counties.

Nakuru is not ordinary electoral terrain. It is Kenya's fourth-largest county by population, economically diverse, and home to a volatile mix of farming communities, urban professionals and Rift Valley constituencies that have historically swung between political camps. Whoever controls Nakuru's county government wields considerable influence over regional political narratives. For Ruto, losing the

county to a DCP candidate would represent both a symbolic and structural blow to his re-election campaign.

For Gachagua, the picture is different. The former deputy president has been methodically assembling a political coalition from Washington and Nairobi alike, directing his team's ground operations remotely while building a public profile as the aggrieved representative of Mount Kenya's unmet expectations under the Kenya Kwanza administration. Karanja's defection strengthens that narrative considerably. A sitting senator, elected on UDA, publicly abandoning the party to stand on DCP's ticket sends an unmistakable message to both the electorate and the political



Nakuru County Senator Tabitha Keroche joins DCP

class: the exodus from Ruto's coalition in the region is not over.

UDA has not yet responded publicly to Karanja's announcement. The party will, however, face immediate pressure to field a credible alternative candidate in Nakuru — a task complicated by the fact that its most prominent county figures now find themselves on the opposite side of a rapidly widening political divide.

What is unfolding across Mount Kenya is not simply a series of individual defections. It is the organised dismantling of a political alliance, executed constituency by constituency, county by county, ahead of an election in which the region's votes could again prove decisive.

Karanja has made her choice. Nakuru's voters will make theirs in August.

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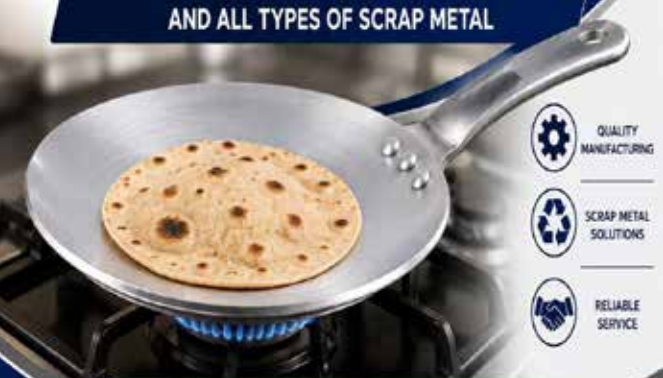
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mental health Psychology teaches us that human beings are wired to belong. Social Identity Theory holds that we define ourselves by the groups we are part of

When the voice needs to be seen

Kenya's mental health crisis lives not in policy documents but in the whispers that silence those who need help most



By: Wanjohi P. Mugambi
@themkenyaintimes

In every village and every town, among the young, the old and everyone in between, there is a force shaping mental wellness more powerfully than any policy document ever could. It is the whisper within. The whisper that says that teacher is not performing. That learner is spoiled. That family has been cursed. That young person has depression because they are weak.

Psychology teaches us that human beings are wired to belong. Social Identity Theory holds that we define ourselves by the groups we are part of. Whispers threaten that belonging. When a learner in Nyeri hears that she is slow, she does not simply hear words — she internalises a story. When a young teacher hears in the staffroom that he is too ambitious, too young to speak about mental health, he begins to shrink. When a young professional in Nairobi hears — in comment sections, in office corridors, across social media — that everyone else is succeeding while they are falling behind, they begin to experience what earlier research has described as youth stress mania: that intense, relentless pressure to succeed while being watched and judged.

The Ipsos Global Health Service Monitor 2024, which surveyed 23,667 respondents across 31 countries, found that 45 per cent of people now regard mental health as the biggest health issue facing their country, ahead of cancer at 38 per cent and stress at 31 per cent. One reason for this global rise is greater awareness. Another, which educators rarely discuss, is



that we are more exposed to whispers than at any point in history. In Nyeri, a whisper once travelled from homestead to homestead over days. Today, a whisper on TikTok, WhatsApp or X can reach 100,000 people within an hour. The speed has changed. The psychology has not. Whispers create fear, fear creates silence, and silence destroys mental wellness.

These differences are intimate and cultural, coded in proverbs, in mother tongue, in the silences at staff meetings. Wĩ mwega? — Are you well? — people ask, but the tone tells you the discussion has already happened without you. In Kikuyu culture, direct confrontation is often avoided, so mental health concerns are rarely spoken openly. A child who cries frequently is said to have a bad spirit. A teacher who seeks counselling is said to be weak. This whisper culture means many learners and educators suffer in silence, fearing they will become the next subject of gossip. They would rather say “I am fine” than be seen as broken.

In Nairobi, whispers wear a different face — louder, digital and deeply competitive. The city whispers through comparison. In an Eastlands

estate or a Westlands corporate office, the message is the same: everyone is earning more than you. Everyone is further ahead. Everyone is coping except you. A young person scrolling through social media at one in the morning sees filtered lives and hears an internal whisper: you are behind. Cognitive psychology calls this negative self-talk, and it is a direct pathway to anxiety and depression. The city never sleeps, and neither do its whispers.

So how do we make voice visible? Making voice seen means moving mental health from staffroom corners to classroom lessons, from whispered direct messages to community conversations held in the open.

The first step is teaching psychological literacy in schools. Learners must understand that whispers are not facts. This is cognitive restructuring — a core skill in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. When a learner hears “you are useless”, we must teach them to ask: is this evidence or is this a whisper? One effective classroom exercise involves writing a whisper on the board — “you will fail” — and asking learners to write three pieces of evidence against it. That

small act makes voice visible.

The second step is creating spaces where voice can be heard safely. In Nyeri, this means drawing on mother tongue and community elders. A Kikuyu elder saying Nĩ ũndũ wa mwĩrĩ na roho — it is a matter of body and soul — carries more weight than an English-language poster. In Nairobi, it means investing in peer support and digital platforms. When a young person says on TikTok, “I went for counselling and it helped me”, that single act of visibility breaks a thousand whispers.

Third, researchers and educators must document whispers as data — not to shame, but to demonstrate impact. When whispers become evidence, evidence can become policy.

The Teachers Service Commission Wellness Unit and the national helpline 1190 exist, but they are often whispered about rather than openly promoted. They belong on notice boards, in bold letters, in both English and Kiswahili, in Nyeri and Nairobi alike.

The Ipsos 2024 data confirms that whispers are no longer a private matter. They are a public health crisis. If we do not address the psychology of whispers, we will continue to lose young people — not because they lacked ability, but because they believed a whisper more than they believed in themselves.

The call is simple. Let us move from whispers to voice. Let us make that voice visible in our staffrooms and classrooms, in our languages, in our churches, mosques and schools. Let us ask openly — Uko sawa? Wĩ mwega? — and stay long enough to hear the real answer. Because when voice is seen, whispers lose their power, and wellness begins.




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Economy History supplies the irony. Colonial and post-independence price controls sought to protect consumers by decree

Cartels in court, monopolies on thrones: The ironic economics of Kenya's competition crusade



By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor
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In 2023, the Competition Authority of Kenya imposed fines totalling KES 338.85 million on nine steel manufacturers for price-fixing, output restriction, and coordinated import limits conduct that investigators traced through emails, WhatsApp exchanges, and meeting minutes spanning years. These firms controlled the vast bulk of the local steel market; their collusion inflated the cost of a material that accounts for more than 20 percent of expenses in housing and public infrastructure. That single decision stands as one of the largest cartel penalties in the Authority's history. However, the deeper issue is not the fine. It is the enduring architecture of concentrated power that the fine, and others like it, have failed to dismantle.

Kenya's competition regime was born in the twilight of price controls. The Restrictive Trade Practices, Monopolies and Price Control Act of 1989 emerged as the economy staggered away from state-directed pricing toward market rhetoric. It was a transitional instrument, heavy with exemptions for regulated sectors and still shadowed by the philosophy of price management. The Competition Act of 2010 repealed that framework and announced a modern ambition: to enhance the welfare of Kenyans by promoting and protecting effective competition and preventing unfair market conduct. The Competition Authority of Kenya was established to enforce it. Fifteen years later the statute remains largely intact, the Authority active, and the economic landscape stubbornly oligopolistic.

Consider the numbers that refuse to soften. In the financial year 2024/25 the Authority received 128 merger notifications and investigated 75 behavioural antitrust matters—28 involving coordinated cartel conduct, 39 concerning abuse of dominance, and eight relating to trade association agreements. Penalties

across interventions reached figures reported in the region of KES 1.44 billion in certain accounts. Merger approvals unlocked investment commitments exceeding KES 25 billion. On paper the machinery turns. In practice the Authority has never prohibited a merger. Remedies, when imposed, lean heavily toward behavioural conditions and employment retention rather than structural divestitures that would reconfigure market power. Public-interest considerations routinely eclipse pure competition analysis. The result is a regulatory theatre in which cartels are occasionally fined while the larger structures of dominance remain seated.

Steel is not an isolated pathology. In retail, the operator of Carrefour stores was fined approximately KES 1.1 billion for abusing buyer power extracting non-refundable listing fees, unjustified rebates, and unilateral delistings from suppliers of edible oils and honey. In freight and warehousing, the Kenya International Freight and Warehousing Association directed members to apply minimum tariffs, conduct the Authority treated as price-fixing. Paint manufacturers earlier received multi-million-shilling sanctions for coordinating prices and transport charges. Each case is prosecuted with procedural seriousness; each leaves the underlying concentration largely undisturbed. Studies by the World Bank and OECD estimate that cartels raise prices by 20 to 25 percent. That is an invisible tax levied on every household building a home, every contractor bidding on a road,

every small supplier negotiating with a supermarket chain.

The correlation is not subtle. High market concentration and weak structural enforcement move together. Safaricom holds roughly 65 percent of mobile subscriptions and over 90 percent of mobile-money transactions. Kenya's Product Market Regulation score stands among the most restrictive in available international comparisons, reflecting barriers to entry, distortions from public ownership, and constraints on trade and investment. Electricity prices remain among the highest in the region; non-competitive allocation of power-purchase agreements and limited open access compound the burden. These are not accidents of history. They are the logical fruit of a regime that polices the visible sins of collusion while permitting the quieter accumulation of market power through mergers approved with soft conditions and dominance left largely unchallenged.

History supplies the irony. Colonial and post-independence price controls sought to protect consumers by decree. Liberalisation in the 1980s and 1990s promised that competition itself would deliver that protection. The 2010 Act was meant to police the new order. Instead we have a hybrid: the language of competitive markets married to the practice of managed concentration. The Authority investigates, fines, and advocates. Trade associations still issue tariff directives. Dominant platforms still set the terms of participation. The consumer pays the difference in higher construction costs, more

expensive data, and thinner margins for the small producer who cannot refuse the buyer's terms.

Original thought must cut deeper than institutional self-congratulation. Competition law is not merely a set of prohibitions; it is an economic constitution. When that constitution prioritizes the survival of incumbents over the entry of rivals, it converts the market into a private enclosure. The steel cartel did not invent scarcity; it organised it. The supermarket chain did not invent buyer power; it institutionalised it. Each fine is a public confession that the prior equilibrium was extractive. Nevertheless, the equilibrium reasserts itself because the law's teeth are reserved for the most blatant agreements while the structural conditions that make those agreements profitable high barriers, limited imports, regulatory forbearance are left intact.

The emotional register of this failure is not abstract. It is the young family whose house costs more because steel prices were coordinated. It is the small oil or honey producer forced to absorb listing fees and arbitrary rebates. It is the farmer whose inputs and transport are shaped by concentrated intermediaries. It is the citizen whose data and mobile-money transactions flow through a single dominant channel. These are not externalities; they are the daily arithmetic of concentrated markets.

Categorical clarity is required. The present equilibrium is indefensible. Cartel fines, however large, cannot substitute for structural remedies. Merger review that never blocks a transaction and rarely imposes lasting structural conditions is merger review in name only. Abuse-of-dominance enforcement that focuses on buyer power in retail while leaving network effects and platform dominance largely untouched is incomplete. Public-interest conditions that protect employment for one year while allowing market power to harden for a decade are short-term political accommodations dressed as economic policy.

Action is therefore demanded from multiple actors. Parliament must amend the Competition Act to elevate structural remedies, tighten merger thresholds where concentration is already high, and clarify that public-interest considerations can-

not override a finding of substantial lessening of competition. The Competition Authority must shift from behavioural settlements toward divestiture and market-opening conditions, publish full reasoned decisions as a matter of routine, and accelerate cartel investigations that currently stretch across years.

Sector regulators in telecommunications, energy, and transport must treat competition as a primary objective rather than a secondary constraint, imposing access obligations and spectrum policies that reduce incumbent advantage. The judiciary and the Competition Tribunal must insist on rigorous economic evidence and resist dilatory appeals that turn enforcement into attrition. Business associations must abandon minimum-price directives and recognise that collusion is not industry coordination but consumer taxation. Civil society and the media must treat market concentration as a public-interest story equal in gravity to fiscal mismanagement.

The alternative is continuation of the present charade: fines that make headlines, mergers that proceed, and prices that remain elevated. World Bank estimates suggest that reforms in foundational sectors could raise annual GDP growth by more than one percentage point and lift labour-compensation growth by up to two percentage points equivalent to hundreds of thousands of additional jobs at average wages. Those gains will not materialise while the law continues to fine the shadows and leave the thrones occupied.

Kenya's competition statute was written to protect the process of rivalry, not to manage the comfort of incumbents. The steel fines, the retail penalties, the freight settlements are necessary but insufficient. They are the surface disturbances on a deeper current of concentration. Until the law is enforced as an instrument of structural openness rather than episodic chastisement, the economics of competition in Kenya will remain what it has too often been: a theatre in which the cartel is occasionally summoned to court while the monopoly keeps the throne. The cost of that theatre is measured not only in shillings extracted from consumers but in the slower growth, thinner innovation, and narrower opportunity that concentrated markets impose on an entire economy. The time for polite incrementalism has passed. The market must be made to compete, or the claim of competition law itself becomes the most elegant fiction of all.

The writer is a social commentator.

Learners The methodology is built around 42 letter sounds, which include not only the basic alphabet but also digraphs such as “sh”, “ch” and “th”.

Jolly Phonics: Making early reading click for Kenya’s youngest learners

How a multi-sensory phonics programme is transforming literacy instruction in classrooms across Kenya

BY Ashford Kimani
@themkenyaintimes

In the early years of schooling, few competencies matter as much as the ability to read and write. Literacy is not merely a subject — it is the gateway to all other learning. Among the most effective and widely adopted approaches to early literacy instruction is Jolly Phonics, a method that has transformed how young learners engage with language by making reading both accessible and genuinely enjoyable.

At its core, Jolly Phonics is a systematic, synthetic phonics programme that teaches children to decode words by learning the sounds that letters make. Unlike traditional alphabet instruction, which emphasises letter names — A, B, C — Jolly Phonics prioritises letter sounds: /a/, /b/, /c/. This enables children to begin reading simple words almost immediately. The shift from abstract naming to practical sound recognition is one of the principal reasons the programme works so well.

The methodology is built around 42 letter sounds, which include not only the basic alphabet but also digraphs such as “sh”, “ch” and “th”. These sounds are introduced in a carefully structured sequence, allowing children to start blending sounds into words early in the process. By learning just the first group — s, a, t, i, p, n — a child can already form and read words such as “sat”, “pin” and “tap”. That early success is crucial. It builds confidence and motivates learners to keep exploring language.

One of the programme’s most distinctive features is its multi-sensory approach. Children do not simply listen and repeat — they engage their whole bodies. Each sound is associated with an action, a story and often a song. The /s/



sound, for instance, is taught with a snake-like hand movement, while the /a/ sound involves pretending that ants are crawling up the arm. This integration of movement, sound and imagery strengthens memory retention and caters to different learning styles: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

The programme rests on five fundamental skills that together build full literacy. The first is learning the letter sounds themselves. The second is letter formation — teaching children to write each letter correctly. The third is blending, combining individual sounds to form words. The fourth is segmenting, breaking words into their constituent sounds, which is essential for spelling. The fifth is recognising tricky words — those that do not follow standard phonetic rules, such as “the”, “said” and “was”. By addressing all five areas comprehensively, Jolly Phonics ensures that children are not merely decoding words mechanically, but developing a genuine understanding of language.

In the classroom, Jolly Phonics introduces an element of play into learning. Lessons are dynamic and interactive, often resembling storytelling sessions rather than formal in-

struction. This matters enormously in early childhood education, where attention spans are short and engagement is everything. A child who associates reading with fun is far more likely to develop a life-long love of books.

The programme’s relevance is especially pronounced in contexts where English is taught as a second language — as it is in many Kenyan classrooms. For learners with limited exposure to English at home, the structured and repetitive nature of phonics provides a clear pathway to mastery. Rather than memorising words by sight alone, learners acquire the tools to decode unfamiliar words independently. That autonomy is a powerful outcome: it shifts the child from dependence to self-sufficiency.

Jolly Phonics also aligns well with competency-based education frameworks, which emphasise skills acquisition over rote memorisation. Reading is treated not as an isolated academic exercise but as a practical skill that enables communication, comprehension and critical thinking. By equipping learners with the ability to read fluently at an early stage, the programme indirectly supports performance across all subjects.

the programme with fidelity. The actions, songs and sequencing are not decorative elements — they are integral to the pedagogy. When delivered half-heartedly or inconsistently, the impact diminishes. When teachers fully embrace the method, the results can be remarkable.

Parental involvement also plays a significant role. When parents understand the phonics approach, they can reinforce learning at home through simple activities: reading aloud, practising sounds and encouraging children to blend words during everyday interactions. This home-school connection accelerates progress and strengthens a child’s confidence considerably.

Critics of phonics-based in-

struction sometimes argue that it may neglect comprehension in favour of decoding. The concern has some merit where programmes are poorly balanced, but Jolly Phonics is typically integrated with reading comprehension activities, storytelling and vocabulary development. The goal is not merely to produce children who can read words aloud, but learners who can understand and interpret what they read.

Jolly Phonics represents a pragmatic and effective response to one of education’s most fundamental challenges: teaching children to read. By focusing on sounds, incorporating multi-sensory techniques and building skills systematically, it demystifies the reading process and makes it accessible to all learners. For educators at foundational levels, it offers a structured yet flexible framework. For learners, it transforms reading from a daunting task into an enjoyable journey. And in the broader context of education, it lays the groundwork upon which all future learning is built.

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Uzbek An important stage in the development of Turkic written language was the Karakhanid period. In the 11th–12th centuries

The history of the formation and development of the Uzbek literary language



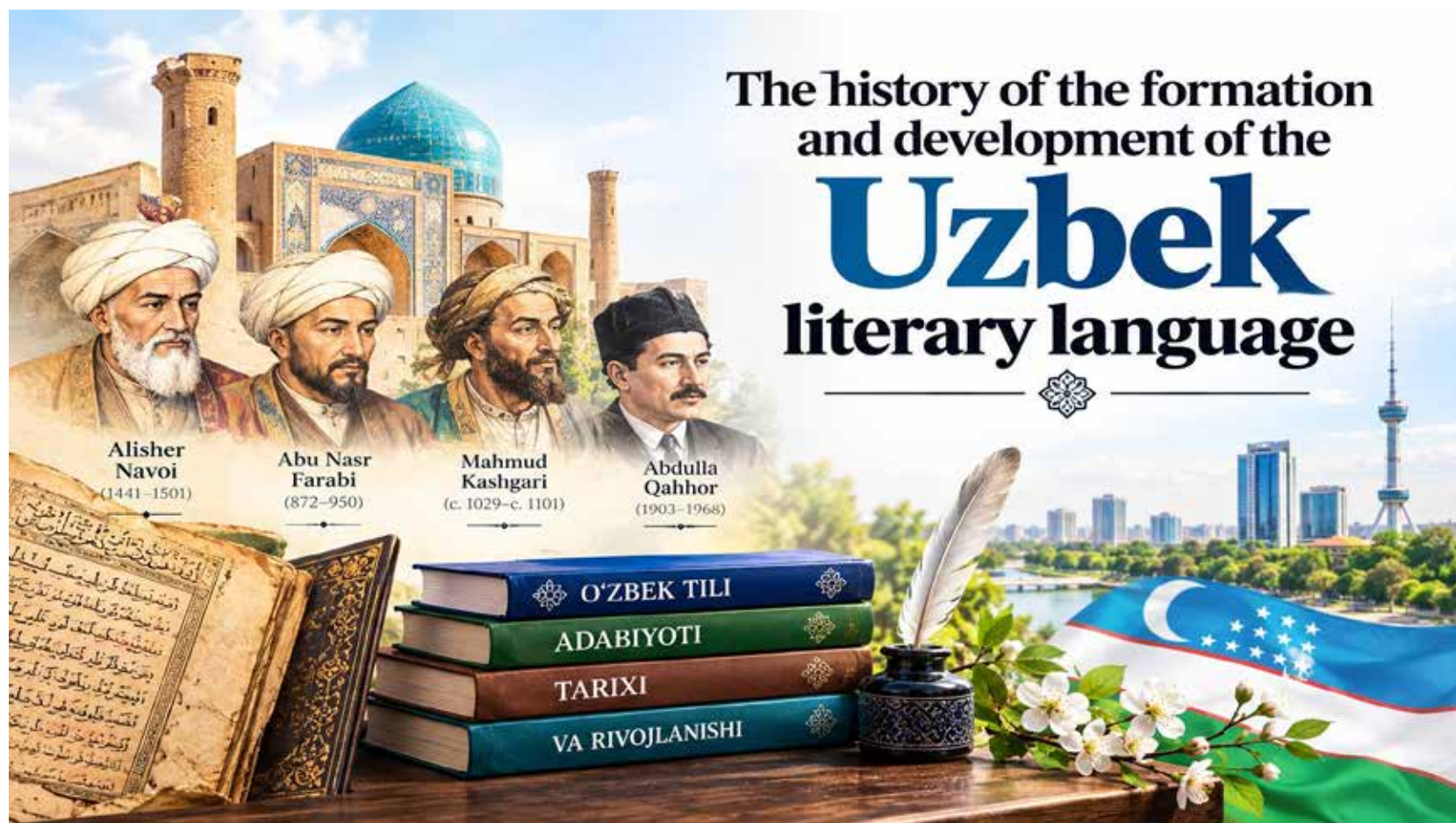
BY Shirin Mahmatqulova
@themtkenyatimes

Language is one of the greatest spiritual treasures of a nation. It reflects the history, worldview, culture, traditions, and values of a people. The Uzbek language is a priceless heritage that embodies the centuries-old history and intellectual development of the Uzbek people. The Uzbek literary language used today was not formed suddenly. It developed over many centuries through the contributions of scholars, writers, poets, and the rich oral and written heritage of the people. The roots of the Uzbek literary language go back to the ancient Turkic languages. The Orkhon-Yenisey inscriptions are among the oldest written monuments of the Turkic peoples. They contain ideas about the homeland, statehood, unity, courage, and human values. These monuments demonstrate the ancient written and cultural traditions of the Turkic peoples.

An important stage in the development of Turkic written language was the Karakhanid period. In the 11th–12th centuries, major literary and scholarly works were created in Turkic. Mahmud al-Kashgari's *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* (Compendium of the Turkic Languages) is one of the most valuable sources for studying the history of Turkic languages. The work contains information about language, customs, geography, and oral literature, as well as numerous proverbs and poetic examples.

Yusuf Khass Hajib's *Kutadgu Bilig* (Wisdom of Royal Glory) is another important monument of this period. It discusses justice, knowledge, wisdom, morality, and state administration. Ahmad Yugnaki's *Hibat al-Haqa'iq* (Gifts of Truth) also contributed to the development of Turkic literary language. These works prove that Turkic had already developed into a language capable of expressing complex intellectual and artistic ideas.

The 14th–15th centuries occupy a special place in the history of the



Uzbek literary language. During this period, the Turkic literary language became highly influential in Transoxiana and Khorasan. This tradition later became known as the Chagatai or Old Uzbek literary language.

The development of this literary language is closely connected with the name of Alisher Navoi. Through his works, Navoi demonstrated the richness and artistic possibilities of the Turkic language. His *Khamisa*, *Khazoyin ul-Maoniy*, *Lison ut-Tayr*, *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, and *Muhokamat ul-Lughatayn* occupy an important place in Uzbek literary history.

In *Muhokamat ul-Lughatayn* (The Comparison of Two Languages), Navoi compared Turkic and Persian and demonstrated the expressive richness of Turkic. He considered language not merely a means of communication but also an important instrument of thought and artistic creativity. His contribution raised the Turkic literary language to a high artistic level and created a strong foundation for its further development.

After Navoi, the Uzbek literary language continued to develop. In the 16th century, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur made an important contribution to Uzbek prose through his

famous work *Baburnama*. The work describes historical events, cities, nature, people, and personal observations in a clear and expressive language.

In later centuries, writers and poets such as Turdi Faroghi, Mashrab, Sufi Allah Yar, Gulkhani, Munis, Ogahi, Nodira, Uvaysi, Muqimi, Furqat, and Zavqi enriched the literary language. Their works reflected the social life, spiritual world, hopes, and concerns of the people. The literary language gradually became closer to everyday speech and more expressive.

The beginning of the 20th century brought a new stage in the development of the Uzbek literary language. Jadid intellectuals considered language an important means of education, enlightenment, and national awakening. Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, Abdulla Avloni, Abdurauf Fitrat, Cho'lpon, and Abdulla Qodiriy made major contributions to language and literature.

Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan Kunlar* (Bygone Days) and Mehrobdan Chayon (Scorpion from the Altar) played an important role in the development of Uzbek prose. Cho'lpon's poetry and prose further demonstrated the artistic possibilities of the Uzbek language. During this period, lan-

guage became an important means of strengthening national consciousness and expressing social and cultural ideas.

The modern development of the Uzbek language is closely connected with the period of independence. On October 21, 1989, the Law "On the State Language" was adopted, which was an important historical step in strengthening the legal status of Uzbek. After independence, the position of Uzbek as the state language became even stronger.

Today, Uzbek is widely used in education, science, literature, mass media, public administration, and other fields. At the same time, globalization, the Internet, social networks, and foreign languages influence modern speech. The appearance of new and borrowed words is a natural linguistic process, but preserving literary language standards and using words correctly remain important responsibilities.

The future of the Uzbek language depends not only on scholars and writers but also on every person who speaks and writes it. Young people have a particularly important role because their speech influences the language of future generations. Reading books, studying classical literature,

and learning from the works of our great ancestors help preserve and enrich our language.

Conclusion

The Uzbek literary language is a great spiritual heritage formed through thousands of years of historical development. Ancient Turkic monuments, the Karakhanid literary tradition, the Chagatai period, Alisher Navoi, Babur, classical poets, Jadid intellectuals, and modern writers have all contributed to its development.

The Uzbek language is more than a means of communication. It is the memory of our nation, reflecting its history, thought, culture, and spiritual values. Therefore, respecting the literary norms of our language, using it correctly, enriching it, and passing it on to future generations are the responsibilities of all of us.

If the language lives, the nation's memory, thought, and spirituality will live as well.

Shirin Mahmatqulova
2nd-year student of Uzbek Language and Literature
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The week lectures died at Laikipia

By **Simon Juma**, Laikipia University

The main gate of Laikipia University is open. The lecture halls are not.

For seven days, the campus along the Nyahururu-Nanyuki highway has been a ghost of itself. Students idle on hostel balconies, motorcycle taxi riders have no customers, and vegetable vendors count losses as students trickle home.

“I came to continue with my studies. Now there are no lectures,” said Nicholas Mwendwa, 22, a second-year Communication and Media student from Machakos. His father sold a goat to fund his KSh5,000 fare. “Now what do I tell him?”

Laikipia University, with over 8,000 students, is among the public universities paralysed by a nationwide lecturers’ strike now in its seventh day. The University Academic Staff Union is demanding the signing of the 2025–2029 Collective Bargaining Agreement. The government has offered KSh9.76B, but the union insists there is no written commitment from the Treasury.



At Laikipia, the pain cuts deeper. The institution, converted from an Egerton University campus in 2013, serves mostly first-generation learners from Laikipia, Samburu and Baringo counties. “University is the family’s escape from poverty,” said a dean who sought anonymity. “When we strike, we hurt our own people. But we earn too little to care for our own families.”

Around campus, landlords are knocking. One housing 40 students said none had paid October rent. Safety fears compound the misery — students say the road from campus to Nyahururu town is unlit and dangerous, a concern sharpened by the indefinite closure of Kibabii

University after a student was killed near its campus.

National talks were held yesterday at the NSSF Building in Nairobi. Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba urged a return to class. University Academic Staff Union Secretary General Constantine Wesonga was firm: no return without a Treasury letter.

Vice Chancellor Kibet Rono has given no timeline. If talks fail, the strike becomes indefinite — and for Nicholas, that means another semester lost, another goat sold, another year stolen from a young man who simply wants to graduate.

That should not be too much to ask.

The long walk to class

For thousands of Kenyan university students, the daily struggle to stay in school is measured in kilometres walked and meals skipped



By **Victorine Nekesa**

Before sunrise, Brian is already on his feet. Not at the gym, not on a morning jog — but walking kilometres to campus because he cannot afford the fare.

Brian is 21, a university student living well beyond comfortable distance from his lecture halls. Every morning he makes the same calculation: spend on transport, or save for food, printing, stationery and internet access. Transport loses. So he walks.

“I would rather walk and keep the transport money for food,” he says. “Sometimes I arrive tired, but I remind myself why I am here.”

The journey takes close to an hour in good weather. On rainy mornings it is longer, muddier and harder. He arrives with wet shoes and damp clothes, takes his seat and opens his books. Missing lectures, he has decided, is simply not an option.

What appears to be a small daily saving is, for Brian, the difference between eating lunch and going without. Between printing an assignment and submitting nothing. Between staying enrolled and dropping out. When every shilling is accounted for, the mathematics of university survival become brutally precise. “Sometimes I have to decide

whether to buy something for class or use the money for transport,” he explains. “It is not easy, but I focus on why I came.”

His experience is far from unique. Across Kenya’s public universities, students from financially constrained households navigate a quiet daily crisis that rarely makes headlines. They walk long distances, skip meals, defer buying textbooks and take on small jobs to bridge the gap between what their families can provide and what university life actually costs. The struggle is rarely visible in the lecture hall, but it shapes everything — concentration, participation, performance and, ultimately, whether a student completes their degree at all.

The rising cost of living has sharpened these pressures considerably. Beyond transport, students must find money for accommodation, meals, academic materials, internet access and basic personal necessities. For those dependent on limited family support, financial planning is not a budgeting exercise — it is a survival strategy.

Physical exhaustion adds another layer. A student who has walked for an hour before the first lecture of the day is already fighting fatigue before the teaching begins. Day after

day, that toll accumulates. Yet Brian says the walk has become something else entirely — not a burden, but a daily act of commitment.

“I know things are difficult now, but I don’t want to give up,” he says. “One day I want to look back and say the sacrifices were worth it.”

His friends have noticed. He arrives tired but participates. He submits assignments. He shows up. Having a clear goal, he says, makes the hard days bearable.

Brian’s story carries a quiet but important message for policymakers, university administrators and anyone who assumes that a student sitting in a lecture hall has simply walked through a door. Behind that presence may be a morning spent walking kilometres, a meal skipped, a sacrifice made invisible by determination.

University education remains one of the most powerful tools available to young Kenyans seeking a better life. But access does not end at admission. For students like Brian, staying in school is itself an achievement — earned one long walk at a time.

McCarthy’s blunt words shake Kenya’s AFCON 2027 hopes

By **Jeremiah Kingamu**

Benni McCarthy has never been a man to mince his words. But his latest remarks have ignited a storm that stretches well beyond the training ground.

Speaking to reporters, Kenya’s Harambee Stars head coach dismissed the country’s chances of winning the Africa Cup of Nations on home soil. “Even if you pay me millions, Kenya is not strong enough to win AFCON. Maybe in 10 years, but not now,” the South African declared. As a co-host, Kenya qualifies automatically for the 2027 tournament — making the remarks all the more pointed.

McCarthy argued that Kenya lacks the squad depth to compete with continental powers such as Morocco, Egypt and



Senegal, urging fans to treat AFCON 2027 as a platform for development rather than a title campaign. The backlash was swift. Supporters accused him of stripping the team of belief; analysts questioned whether a national coach should ever speak in ways that deflate rather than inspire.

Some defended his honesty. Kenya’s football structures do require long-term rebuilding, and the evidence supports it

— a 1-1 draw with Eritrea and a 1-0 loss to Guinea tell their own story. Yet the same squad stunned Morocco 1-0 at Kasarani Stadium in 2025, reduced to ten men. Belief, it turns out, is not nothing.

McCarthy’s candour may be factually grounded, but national coaches are hired not only to assess — they are hired to inspire. In football, words are tactics too.

SPORTS
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Sports >> *Matchweek Six brings high stakes across the Premier League, with title ambitions and managerial credibility on the line

Arsenal target top spot as United and Spurs face make-or-break clash

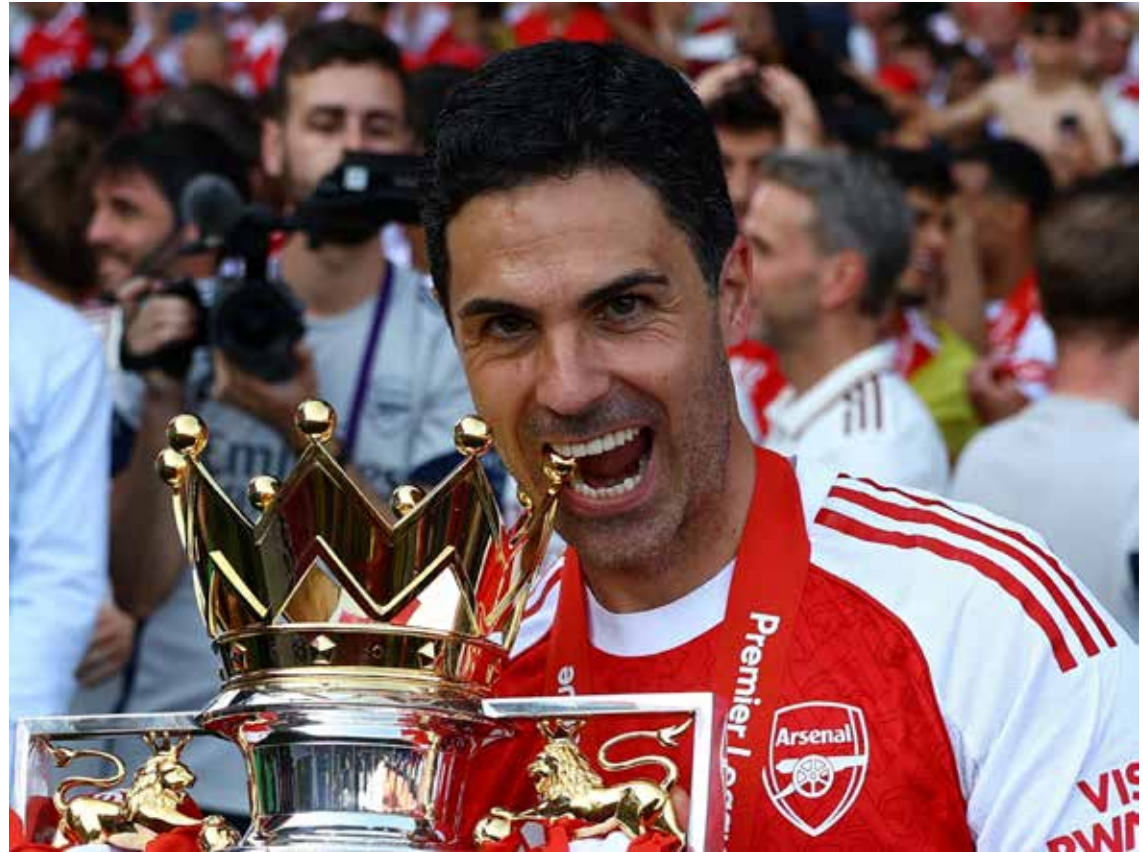
By Andalo Christine Ingutia

The Premier League enters Matchweek Six with pressure mounting on several of the division's most prominent clubs. Arsenal are looking to strengthen their title credentials, while Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur prepare for a high-stakes encounter at Old Trafford that neither side can afford to lose.

Saturday's fixtures arrive against the backdrop of renewed scrutiny surrounding Manchester City's long-running financial case. Reports of alleged financial breaches have placed the champions under fresh examination, and any confirmed sanctions could yet have significant implications for the title race — though the outcome of any appeal and the timing of potential disciplinary measures remain uncertain.

For Arsenal, the focus is firmly on the pitch. Mikel Arteta's side hosts Leeds United at the Emirates Stadium, knowing that three points would consolidate their momentum in what is shaping up to be a competitive early season. Leeds are unlikely to arrive as willing victims. If Arsenal fail to convert possession and attacking opportunities into goals, they could find the afternoon more demanding than anticipated. A convincing win, however, would keep the Gunners firmly in the conversation at the top of the table as the campaign begins to take shape.

The most compelling fixture of the day, though, is the meeting of two clubs searching urgently for form. Manchester United welcome Tottenham Hotspur to Old Trafford in a contest that carries unmistakable desperation on both sides. United have endured an inconsistent opening to the season, and their position in the lower half of the table has increased pressure on the squad



and management to produce a performance worthy of the club's stature. Playing at home, they will be expected to take the initiative, and their ability to control the midfield and convert possession into clear chances could prove decisive.

Tottenham's situation is, if anything, more precarious. A difficult start has left them at the foot of the standings, and questions are growing about their defensive organisation, attacking efficiency and capacity to respond when the pressure intensifies. Roberto De Zerbi, appointed to bring a fresh direction to north London, faces the challenge of finding answers quickly. Yesterday's defeat to Aston Villa exposed persistent defensive vulnerabilities, though the sight of Spurs scoring their first goals of the campaign offered at least a sliver of encouragement. Against United, they must demonstrate greater discipline without the ball and make better use of their

opportunities in attack. Another defeat would deepen the crisis and sharpen questions about the club's direction under De Zerbi.

The dynamic at Old Trafford is a familiar one in English football — two historically significant clubs, each underperforming relative to expectation, meeting at a moment when only one can take the relief that three points provides. The result will not define either season outright, but it will shape the mood around both clubs in the weeks that follow.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Aston Villa host Brentford at Villa Park, with the hosts keen to build on their midweek momentum. Chelsea welcome Bournemouth to Stamford Bridge in a fixture that offers Enzo Maresca's side an opportunity to climb the table. Ipswich Town face Fulham at Portman Road in a contest between two sides with contrasting ambitions, while Sunderland take on Brighton and Hove Albion at the Stadium of Light in

what promises to be a physical and competitive encounter. Each of these fixtures carries genuine significance as clubs work to establish their standing before the season gathers full pace.

The broader picture emerging from Matchweek Six is one of a league in flux. Arsenal look the most settled of the leading contenders, but consistency over a full campaign is a different challenge from early-season promise. United and Tottenham, meanwhile, are learning that the gap between reputation and reality can widen quickly when results do not come.

For Arteta, the task is clear: beat Leeds and keep Arsenal in the title conversation. For De Zerbi and his counterpart at Old Trafford, the priority is simpler still — find a result, restore belief, and buy time in a campaign that is already demanding more than many expected.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *Four straight Nations League defeats end the Italian’s tenure and open a three-way race to succeed him

Turkey seek new direction after Montella’s exit



Four straight Nations League defeats end the Italian’s tenure and open a three-way race to succeed him
By Pascal Okoth
Turkey are preparing for a new chapter in their international football story following the dismissal of head coach Vincenzo Montella after four consecutive defeats in the UEFA Nations League. The decision marks a significant moment for a national team that had shown genuine progress under the Italian, but whose recent results have raised urgent questions about tactical direction and the federation’s next move.
Montella took charge in September 2023 and quickly established himself as an influential figure in the national setup. Under his guidance, Turkey quali-

fied for Euro 2024 and delivered several impressive performances before reaching the quarter-finals — a run that generated real optimism among supporters and reinforced belief that the team could compete consistently against Europe’s stronger sides. That goodwill, however, has been eroded by the Nations League campaign. Four consecutive defeats have dented confidence, exposed tactical vulnerabilities and increased pressure on the coaching staff at precisely the moment when expectations were at their highest. The federation has concluded that a change is necessary to restore momentum and protect the progress built during Montella’s tenure.
Attention has turned swiftly to potential successors, and three names have emerged as the most

credible candidates.
Former Turkish international Arda Turan leads the speculation. He enjoyed a distinguished playing career at some of Europe’s most prominent clubs, including Atlético Madrid and Barcelona, where he was valued for his technical ability, creativity and competitive edge. He was also a significant figure for the national team during his playing days and has since been developing his coaching credentials. His understanding of Turkish football culture and the weight of expectation surrounding the national side could make him an attractive option for a federation looking for someone who connects with the country’s footballing identity.
Abdullah Avcı represents a different but equally credible possibility. He has previously managed the Turkish national team and several leading domestic clubs, and his familiarity with the local football environment and player pool would be a considerable asset. If the federation decides to prioritise experience within the system over a more ambitious appointment, Avcı is well placed.
Veteran manager Fatih Terim could also enter the conversation. Terim’s history with Turkish football runs deep — he has led the national team at major international competitions and carries an authority that few coaches in the country’s history can match. Whether a return is viable will depend on both the federation’s long-term plans and his own availability, but his name will inevitably feature in any serious discussion about the vacancy.
The decision facing the Turkish Football Federation is not straightforward. Replacing a coach of Montella’s experience requires more than identifying a recognisable name. Whoever takes charge will need to re-

build confidence quickly, make an honest assessment of the squad’s strengths and weaknesses, and establish a tactical identity capable of producing consistent results at international level. Dressing-room management, player development and long-term planning will all weigh heavily in the deliberations.
The squad Montella leaves behind carries genuine potential. Turkey’s Euro 2024 campaign demonstrated that the team can trouble the continent’s best sides when cohesion and confidence are aligned. But the Nations League defeats have shown how quickly that equilibrium can shift, and supporters will expect the next coach to address the problems exposed while building on the platform created over the past two years.
Montella’s tenure, viewed in full, was one of meaningful achievement. He arrived with Turkey in a period of transition and guided them to a major tournament quarter-final. That the relationship has ended in disappointment reflects the unforgiving nature of international football, where form can change rapidly and patience is rarely unlimited.
As the federation weighs its options, the names of Turan, Avcı and Terim offer three distinct visions for Turkey’s future — the emerging coach shaped by the game’s elite clubs, the experienced domestic hand who knows the terrain, and the iconic figure whose connection to Turkish football runs across generations. The final word, however, belongs to the Turkish Football Federation.

SPORTS NEWS



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Ruba A. Al-Zubi: A visionary leader shaping climate policy and sustainable development



By: Anila Bukhari
@themtkenyatimes

Ruba A. Al-Zubi is a distinguished environmental policy leader, climate advocate, and international development expert whose work has contributed to advancing climate action, green economy initiatives, environmental governance, and sustainable development across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Through her extensive experience in public policy, international cooperation, and environmental strategy, she has established herself as a respected voice in efforts to address the interconnected challenges of climate change, economic transformation, and sustainable growth.

Her professional journey reflects a commitment to strengthening environmental institutions, developing effective policy frameworks, and encouraging collaboration between governments and international partners. At a time when climate change is reshaping economies, communities, and development priorities worldwide, Al-Zubi's work highlights the importance of integrating environmental responsibility into national and regional decision-making.

Throughout her career, Al-Zubi has worked at the intersection of climate policy, energy, environmental protection, international development, and green economic transformation. Her expertise encompasses climate finance, environmental governance, and the development of strategies designed to support a transition towards more sustainable and resilient economies.

One of the defining aspects of her professional contribution has been her engagement with international development and foreign policy institutions. Through her leadership and advisory responsibilities, she has helped advance discussions and initiatives addressing environmental challenges across the Levant. Her work has involved navigating

the complex relationship between climate priorities, energy systems, economic development, and international partnerships.

Until recently, Al-Zubi led the climate, energy, and environment portfolio in the Levant region at the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). This responsibility placed her within an important international policy environment, where climate resilience, sustainable energy, and environmental protection intersect with broader development and diplomatic priorities.

The Levant faces a range of environmental challenges, including water scarcity, rising temperatures, pressure on natural resources, and the need for sustainable energy solutions. Addressing these issues requires coordinated action, informed policy decisions, and cooperation among governments, development institutions, and other stakeholders. Al-Zubi's regional portfolio reflected the importance of bringing environmental considerations into wider discussions about stability, prosperity, and long-term development.

Her professional experience also includes a significant contribution to environmental policymaking in Jordan. She served as the first policy director at the Ministry of Environment, a role that placed her at the forefront of institutional policy development. Establishing policy leadership within an environmental ministry is an important responsibility, involving the development of strategic priorities, the strengthening of governance processes, and the alignment of environmental objectives with national development needs.

This experience helped shape her professional engagement with the mechanisms through which environmental ambitions can be translated into practical policy. Effective environmental governance requires more than public awareness; it depends on institutions capable of developing policies, coordinating implementation, and responding to emerging environmental risks. Her work in government provided valuable experience in these areas.

Climate finance is another important dimension of Al-Zubi's pro-



Ruba A. Al-Zubi

fessional field. Addressing climate change requires substantial investment in adaptation, mitigation, clean energy, and resilient infrastructure. However, securing appropriate financing and ensuring that resources reach the communities and sectors that need them remain significant challenges, particularly in developing economies.

Green economic transformation similarly requires a long-term perspective. Countries must find ways to encourage economic opportunity while reducing environmental pressures, improving resource efficiency, and building resilience to climate-related disruptions. Al-Zubi's expertise across climate policy, green economy, and international development reflects the importance of approaching these priorities as interconnected elements of sustainable progress.

Her work also illustrates the value of international cooperation in addressing environmental challenges that transcend national borders. Climate change, energy security, water management, and environmental degradation cannot be effectively addressed through isolated action. Partnerships between governments, international organisations, development agencies, and local institutions can help strengthen technical capacity, encourage knowledge exchange, and support more coordinated responses.

Within this broader landscape, policy advisers and environmental leaders play an important role in connecting strategic ambitions with the practical realities of implementation. They help identify priorities, assess challenges, and encourage approaches that balance environmental protection with social and economic needs. Al-Zubi's experience across national and international institutions has placed her within these important conversations.

Her professional journey also underscores the importance of women's leadership in environmental policy and international development. Women leaders contribute essential expertise and perspectives to discussions about climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods, institutional development, and the future of communities affected by environmental change. Their participation in senior policy roles helps broaden leadership representation and strengthen the diversity of perspectives informing public decisions.

For aspiring environmental professionals and future policymakers, Al-Zubi's career offers an example of the opportunities that emerge when specialised knowledge is combined with institutional experience and international engagement. Her work spans government policy and international development, demonstrating the value of understanding environmental issues not only as sci-

entific concerns but also as questions of governance, financing, diplomacy, and economic opportunity.

As countries across the Middle East and North Africa continue to confront environmental pressures and pursue sustainable development, the need for informed leadership remains significant. Building climate-resilient societies requires long-term planning, effective institutions, investment in sustainable solutions, and partnerships capable of responding to evolving regional needs.

Ruba A. Al-Zubi's professional experience across environmental policy, climate finance, green economy, and international development places her among the practitioners contributing to these critical areas of work. Her career reflects the importance of connecting policy expertise with international collaboration and recognising that environmental sustainability is fundamental to long-term economic and social progress.

Ultimately, her professional legacy will be shaped by the continuing influence of sound environmental policy, effective cooperation, and the pursuit of sustainable development across the region. At the heart of this work lies a shared objective: building a future in which environmental responsibility, economic opportunity, and resilient communities reinforce one another for generations to come.