



Mackenzie guilty: Court convicts cult leader of 191 murders at Shakahola
 The High Court in Mombasa yesterday convicted self-proclaimed preacher Paul Nthenge Mackenzie and 28 co-accused of murdering 191 people — 190 of them children

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Kenya's weekly political weather: Mashujaa day, President Ruto's re-election message and the storms gathering beyond Eldoret
 Kenya enters the coming week under the shadow of a national celebration that could become one of the most consequential political moments before the 2027 general election

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Countdown 2027 Kenya's history with political violence and accountability is long and largely dishonourable

Arrest the sponsors, not just the foot soldiers

Wiper Democratic Movement leader Kalonzo Musyoka yesterday demanded that police move beyond arresting low-level perpetrators and pursue the financiers behind the machete attack on mourners at the memorial service for former Prime Minister Raila Odinga's brother, Oburu Oginga, in Bondo, Siaya County.

Writing on social media after attending the service at Migweni, Kalonzo said the attack was premeditated and organised. "Nobody carries weapons to a memorial by accident," he wrote. "My message is to the sponsors, not the foot soldiers: we know who you are. I call on the Inspector-General and the DCI to follow the money and the vehicles, and arrest the financiers, not just the young men holding the weapons." Five suspects were arrested at the scene, with a machete, a sword and a knife recovered. But for Kalonzo and a growing number of opposition figures, five arrests mean nothing if the architects of the violence remain untouched.

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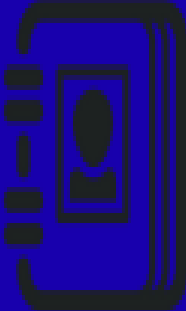


Wiper Democratic Movement leader Kalonzo Musyoka





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Ruto rallies Kalenjin elders in Rift Valley unity push

BY Annita Njoki

@themtkenyatimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

President William Ruto yesterday met more than 5,000 Kalenjin elders from the North and South Rift at Eldoret State Lodge, Uasin Gishu County, in a consultative session focused on development progress and regional unity.

The meeting covered infrastructure, agricultural reform and youth employment, with Ruto committing to fast-track priority programmes across the region. The gathering adopted “Usawa ni Sawa, Mbele Pamoja” — meaning “Equity is Right, Forward Together” — as a rallying call for unity and shared prosperity. The scale and timing of the meeting were unmistakable. With the August 2027 general election now fourteen months away, consolidating the Rift Valley — the electoral bedrock of Ruto’s 2022 victory — is not merely good governance. It is political necessity. The President’s standing nationally has faced sustained pressure from a resurgent opposition, rising living costs and the fallout from the anti-government protests of 2024. Returning to Eldoret with 5,000 elders and a unifying slogan signals that his campaign for a second term has quietly begun.

The Kalenjin vote delivered the presidency once. Ruto is making certain it is not taken for granted the second time.



Editor's Desk

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Cabinet Secretary Hassan Joho sparked a fresh health and governance row yesterday after publicly directing police not to arrest fishermen operating in Lake Nakuru, declaring at an empowerment event in Nakuru that he had personally licensed them to fish — in direct contradiction of standing government restrictions on the lake. “I am the minister for fish. Police, do not try to arrest anyone. I have given them permission to go and fish,” Joho said. His remarks collide head-on with scientific findings by the Kenya Fisheries Service, whose April 2026 study detected lead concentrations of up to 0.74 milligrams per kilogram in sampled fish from the lake — above permitted safety limits — alongside parasites and traces of endosulfan and heptachlor epoxide identified in an earlier Kenya Wildlife Service study. Government agencies have issued repeated health warnings since 2021, cautioning that prolonged exposure to lead can impair neurological function, harm children’s cognitive development and damage kidney, cardiovascular and reproductive health in adults. The Senate Committee on Security, Defence and Foreign Relations has already ordered fresh testing following petitioner challenges to earlier findings. Joho’s public declaration now raises a pointed question: whether a Cabinet Secretary can unilaterally override a protected national park’s fishing restrictions — and who, precisely, is responsible when the fish reach someone’s plate.



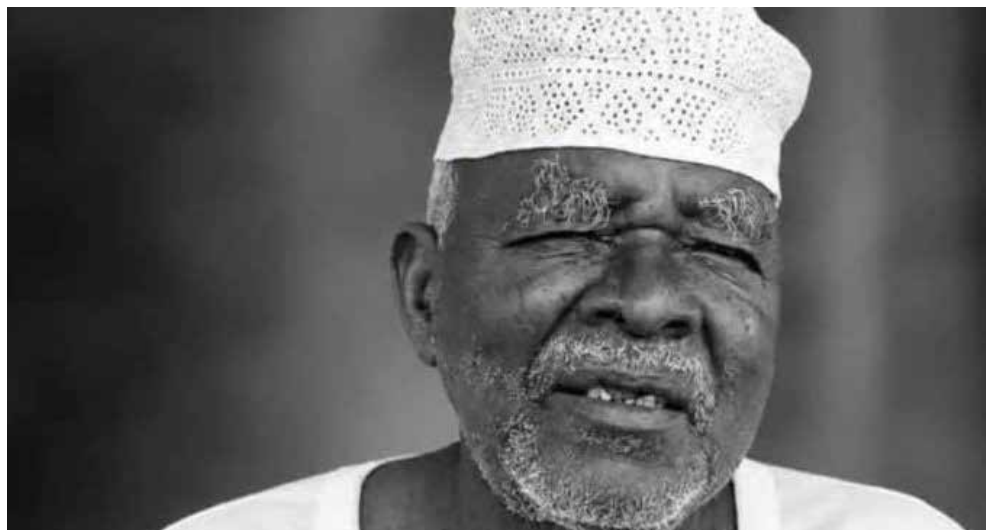
Kenya’s government yesterday found itself at the centre of a regional diplomatic row after Uganda’s prominent opposition leader Dr Kizza Besigye and his aide Hajj Obeid Lutale accused the Kenya Kwanza administration of complicity in their controversial arrest and forced transfer to Kampala for trial. Besigye, who has been a persistent thorn in Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni’s side for decades, was detained under circumstances that human rights observers described as an abduction conducted on Kenyan soil — a characterisation that placed Nairobi in an uncomfortable position between its obligations under international law and its diplomatic relations with a neighbouring government. The case has drawn sharp criticism from regional human rights bodies and opposition figures across East Africa, who argue that Kenya’s failure to protect Besigye on its territory sets a dangerous precedent for the treatment of political dissidents seeking refuge or transit across the region’s borders.



President William Ruto yesterday declared himself ready for the August 2027 general election, telling supporters at a roadside rally in Tinderet, Nandi County, that he welcomes public judgment on his administration’s performance. “I am ready for next year for the people to judge our administration based on the commitment we made, because we said we are going to transform the nation,” Ruto said during a tour of the North Rift in which he launched infrastructure projects and inspected ongoing road works. The declaration, made in the heart of his Kalenjin political base, marks one of his most direct acknowledgments yet that the campaign for a second term is under way. It comes as opposition coalitions intensify efforts to present a united front ahead of what is shaping up to be a fiercely contested election.



Final preparations are under way at Kipchoge Keino Stadium in Eldoret ahead of today’s Mashujaa Day national celebrations, which President William Ruto is expected to preside over in the heart of his North Rift political base. The stadium, named after Kenya’s legendary Olympic champion and one of the country’s most celebrated living heroes, provides a fitting backdrop for a day dedicated to honouring the sacrifices of those who shaped the nation. Eldoret, long established as the home of Kenyan distance running and a city that has produced generations of world-beating athletes, carries its own claim to the spirit of mashujaa. Security and logistics teams were yesterday putting finishing touches on the venue as delegations, dignitaries and members of the public began making their way to Uasin Gishu County for the occasion.



Mzee Mohamed Achani, the father of Kwale Governor Fatuma Achani, died yesterday aged 80 after collapsing while performing the Fajr dawn prayers at his rural home in Bodo Village, Ramisi Ward, Msambweni Sub-County. The circumstances of his passing — a man of faith falling in the act of prayer at the break of day — drew an outpouring of condolences from across the Coast region and beyond. Governor Achani, who made history as Kenya’s first elected female governor when she won the Kwale seat in 2022, has not yet issued a public statement. Mzee Achani is remembered by those who knew him as the quiet foundation behind a daughter who broke barriers in Kenyan politics. Funeral arrangements are yet to be announced by the family.

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Charity The initiative, driven by community stakeholders and well-wishers

Bikeke students benefit from charity support

A Trans Nzoia school and a family-driven disability marathon are showing what community solidarity looks like in practice.

BY Fridah Roktok and Daniel Kipchumba

@themkenyaintimes

Students at Bikeke Comprehensive School in Trans Nzoia County have received charitable support aimed at improving welfare and ensuring vulnerable learners have the resources they need to stay in school and succeed.

The initiative, driven by community stakeholders and well-wishers, has provided needy students with uniforms, books and essential learning materials — practical interventions that can determine whether a child remains in school or drops out. Head teacher Ronald Francis Toili Wamalwa thanked partners for their sustained contributions, noting that the support had made a tangible difference to learners who would otherwise struggle to participate fully in school life. “These contributions help create an environment where every child can take part in school activities without being held back by their family’s financial circumstances,” Wamalwa said, adding a direct appeal to anyone willing to help: even small contributions to vulnerable students are deeply appreciated.

Central to the outreach is the Benard Juma Disability Marathon International, widely known as the Kitale Marathon. The initiative was founded by Benard



Students receiving bags from well wishers

Juma and his family after their son Francisco was born with complications that left him living with a disability. Moved by that experience, Juma built a platform rooted in a simple conviction: disability can touch any family at any time, and society’s duty is to respond with compassion and practical support, not discrimination.

Since launching in 2021, the Kitale Marathon has run annual campaigns bringing together persons with disabilities, needy children and elderly community members. The initiative raises awareness about inclusion, mobilises resources and extends its reach into schools and communities across Sirende and neighbouring areas. Juma has drawn support from business people, churches, families and entertainers — among them comedian Mulamwah — whose contributions have broadened the initiative’s reach considerably.

The partnership with Bikeke Comprehensive School reflects a growing under-

standing among education stakeholders that academic instruction alone is insufficient. A child who attends school without a uniform, without books and without a basic sense of dignity cannot learn effectively regardless of the quality of teaching in the classroom. Addressing those material gaps is not charity in the patronising sense — it is an investment in the community’s future.

The timing is also significant. As Kenya rolls out Competency-Based Education across its school system, the emphasis on nurturing practical skills, talents and individual potential makes community support more im-

portant than ever. Learners from vulnerable backgrounds need inclusive environments that affirm their abilities, not circumstances that remind them daily of what they lack.

The work of the Benard Juma Disability Marathon International demonstrates what is possible when individuals, families, businesses and institutions act together around a shared purpose. It asks nothing extraordinary of its partners — only that they recognise a need and respond to it.

Wamalwa has called on additional well-wishers to join the effort. Whatever the contribution, the school and its students will put it to use.



Receiving boxes in the school from well wishers

Sonko’s impeachment challenge fast-tracked

A disgraced judge’s presence on the bench has given the former Nairobi governor fresh legal ammunition — but the constitutional questions are far from straightforward.



Former Nairobi Governor Mike Sonko

BY Annita Njoki

@themkenyaintimes

High Court Judge Gregory Mutai yesterday directed that a petition by former Nairobi Governor Mike Sonko seeking to nullify the judgments that upheld his impeachment be heard at the earliest opportunity.

Sonko is challenging those decisions on the ground that former High Court judge Said Juma Chitembwe, who sat on the three-judge bench that dismissed his original impeachment challenge, was subsequently found guilty of judicial misconduct — misconduct Sonko argues was connected to the very dispute Chitembwe presided over. The Supreme Court upheld those findings against Chitembwe, and Sonko contends that his participation fatally compromised the fairness of the proceedings and rendered the outcome constitutionally in-

valid.

The former governor wants the court to declare the original High Court judgment of June 24, 2021, and all subsequent appellate decisions a nullity, and to order a fresh hearing before an expanded bench appointed by the Chief Justice. He is also seeking orders restraining enforcement of the existing judgments, compelling Kenya Law Reports to remove the affected decisions from its online records, and awarding him exemplary and punitive damages for the alleged violation of his constitutional rights.

The petition places before the court a question with significant implications beyond Sonko’s personal case: can established judicial misconduct reopen concluded proceedings that have already exhausted the appellate process?

The court will decide. Kenya’s judicial integrity may depend on how carefully it answers.

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Guilty The judgment brings to a close one chapter of a tragedy that has haunted Kenya since April 2023, when authorities first uncovered shallow graves on Mackenzie's 325-hectare ranch

Mackenzie guilty: Court convicts cult leader of 191 murders at Shakahola

A landmark Mombasa verdict draws the curtain on Kenya's darkest cult tragedy — but justice for hundreds more victims is still pending.

BY Valentine Atieno and Jane Njeri

@themkenyatimes

The High Court in Mombasa yesterday convicted self-proclaimed preacher Paul Nthenge Mackenzie and 28 co-accused of murdering 191 people — 190 of them children — in what is now confirmed as one of the worst cult-related atrocities in modern history.

Justice Diana Kavedza delivered the verdict at the Mombasa Law Courts, finding all 29 accused guilty on all counts of murder under Section 203 of the Penal Code. "I am satisfied that the prosecution has proved the case against all the 29 accused persons for the murder of 190 children and one adult," she ruled. "I reject the defence by the accused persons that the victims, who were all below the age of 16 years, voluntarily fasted to death."

The judgment brings to a close one chapter of a tragedy that has haunted Kenya since April 2023, when authorities first uncovered shallow graves on Mackenzie's 325-hectare ranch in Shakahola Forest, Kilifi County. More than 400 bodies have since been recovered from the surrounding area, and investigations into the wider massacre continue.

The court heard how Mackenzie, founder of Good News International Ministries — a church he established in 2003 that eventually spread to 25 branches across Kenya — constructed an elaborate theology of death. Justice Kavedza identified six pillars of radicalisation at the heart of his doctrine: the denunciation of formal education and modern medicine, the rejection of government authority, the systematic isolation of followers, their forced relocation to the forest, and the enforcement of fatal fasting. The court noted that Mackenzie told followers that doctors were witches and that medicine was made by Satan, citing scripture to argue that believers should rely on prayer and anointing, not hospitals.

Prosecutors described a "structured hierarchy of death" under which children were to die first, followed by teenagers, women and then men. Child survivors testified they were denied food and water despite sup-



Justice Diana Kavedza

plies being available, while armed guards were posted to prevent followers from leaving the compound. "Fasting was implemented sequentially, beginning with children, while guards controlled movement and prevented followers from escaping," the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions said in a statement. The prosecution called 120 witnesses and presented forensic DNA results, medical reports, digital records and evidence recovered from the mass graves.

The defence had maintained throughout that the case was "largely founded on circumstantial evidence, hearsay accounts and inconclusive forensic findings." Mackenzie's lawyer, Lawrence Obonyo, was defiant after the ruling. He called the verdict "perplexing," said his clients were "surprised and disappointed," and announced his intention to appeal, adding: "We have so much confidence that the verdict will be overturned."

The most pointed legal criticism

of the judgment came from Senior Counsel Charles Kanjama, President of the Law Society of Kenya, who raised substantive concerns about the jurisprudential approach taken by the court. Writing on social media yesterday, Kanjama said the judge had ventured beyond her proper legal domain. "Here the judge ventured into Christian theology, and even scriptural hermeneutics, and became a preacher, which is a legally-shaky approach to jurisprudence," Kanjama wrote. He questioned what the ruling meant for the more than half of the global Christian population that accepts the Books of Maccabees as part of the scriptural canon, and challenged whether a court of law should be judicially affirming the Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura — the principle that scripture alone is the source of religious authority — while failing to account for the diversity of views on revelation within Christianity. "The Constitution and the Penal Code should suffice in determining whether the Shakahola

tragedy amounted to criminal acts," Kanjama said, drawing a clear line between what he regarded as the proper tools of jurisprudence and the theological territory into which the judgment had strayed.

His commentary does not challenge the facts of the massacre, nor the guilt of those convicted. It raises a narrower but constitutionally significant question: whether a court can ground a criminal conviction in a contestable interpretation of religious scripture without undermining both the separation of church and state and the right to freedom of conscience guaranteed under the Constitution of Kenya.

Director of Public Prosecutions Renson Ingonga described the verdict as "momentous." For the families who had travelled from coastal communities to Mombasa to hear the ruling, the day carried a weight that no legal term could adequately contain. Francis Wanje, 62, who lost eight family members including his daughter and two grandchildren, said

before the session: "We are expecting a ruling that will be a lesson to the whole public, so that such kinds of things will not happen again." After the verdict, he expressed relief, though his grief remained raw and visible.

Not everyone in the courtroom received the outcome the same way. At least one woman was heard saying of Mackenzie: "I still love him and he is still my pastor" — a sobering reminder that the psychological hold of the cult endures for some survivors even now, three years on.

Sentencing is set for November 6, when all convicts will be physically produced in court. Pre-sentence reports are due on October 30, after which the defence will make mitigation submissions before Justice Kavedza hands down her sentence. The court will determine whether to impose the death penalty — which, given Kenya's effective moratorium on executions, would in practice mean life imprisonment — or another sentence under Kenyan law.

Yesterday's 191 convictions, however, represent only a fraction of the full Shakahola death toll. In January this year, Mackenzie faced fresh charges linked to the discovery of another 52 bodies in a nearby village, and he continues to face separate proceedings on charges of terrorism, radicalisation and child cruelty.

The case has prompted renewed calls for the government to impose tighter regulations on religious organisations, particularly given that Mackenzie had been arrested twice previously and released on both occasions before the full scale of the Shakahola tragedy came to light. The question of state failure — of how a man whose activities drew police attention as far back as 2017 was able to oversee the deaths of hundreds of children on a forest ranch — remains unanswered and unlikely to be settled by this verdict alone.

What the court did settle yesterday, with unambiguous authority, is this: 191 people did not choose to die. They were killed. And the men and women responsible have been found, named and convicted.

Violence The attack at Bondo is not an isolated incident. It is the latest episode in a pattern of organised political violence that has shadowed Kenya's public life for years

Arrest the sponsors, not just the foot soldiers, Kalonzo tells police

The Bondo memorial attack exposes a pattern of political violence that Kenya's security forces have consistently failed to prosecute to its source.

BY David Kimani

@themkenyatimes

Wiper Democratic Movement leader Kalonzo Musyoka yesterday demanded that police move beyond arresting low-level perpetrators and pursue the financiers behind the machete attack on mourners at the memorial service for former Prime Minister Raila Odinga's brother, Oburu Oginga, in Bondo, Siaya County.

Writing on social media after attending the service at Migwena, Kalonzo said the attack was premeditated and organised. "Nobody carries weapons to a memorial by accident," he wrote. "My message is to the sponsors, not the foot soldiers: we know who you are. I call on the Inspector-General and the DCI to follow the money and the vehicles, and arrest the financiers, not just the young men holding the weapons." Five suspects were arrested at the scene, with a machete, a sword and a knife recovered. But for Kalonzo and a growing number of opposition figures, five arrests mean nothing if the architects of the violence remain untouched.

The attack at Bondo is not an isolated incident. It is the latest episode in a pattern of organised political violence that has shadowed Kenya's public life for years and that the state has shown a consistent and troubling reluctance to prosecute beyond its most visible and most expendable participants. Hired young men are arrested, charged, occasionally convicted. The businessmen, politicians and fixers who recruited, transported and paid them are rarely named in court, rarely charged and almost never convicted. The architecture of impunity has been constructed carefully and maintained deliberately.

Kenya's history with political violence and accountability is long and largely dishonourable. The post-election violence of 2007 and 2008 killed more than 1,300 people and displaced hundreds of thousands. The International Criminal Court eventually opened cases against six Kenyans, including the men who

would become President and Deputy President. All cases collapsed, partly through witness intimidation and partly through what the court's own prosecutors described as interference with the process of justice. Not a single individual was convicted in a Kenyan court for the orchestration of that violence. The foot soldiers bore what little legal consequence there was. The sponsors walked free and back into public life.

The years since have produced variations on the same theme. Political rallies disrupted by hired gangs. Opponents' vehicles stoned. Journalists assaulted while covering protests. In nearly every case, the response from Kenya's security establishment has followed an identical script: swift arrests of visible perpetrators, statements of condemnation from senior officials, promises of thorough investigation, and then silence. The investigations rarely produce charges against anyone of political consequence. The silence is the point.

What makes the Bondo attack particularly significant is its timing and its symbolism. Mourners had gathered to honour a member of one of Kenya's most prominent political families. Raila Odinga, whose brother was being remembered, is a figure of continental stature who recently concluded his campaign for the African Union Commission chairmanship. His family opened their grounds to the nation in grief. That violence should intrude on that occasion, in that place, sends a message that is difficult to read as anything other than deliberate provocation — and one directed not merely at a family but at the political constituency that family represents.

Kalonzo's appeal to Inspector-General of Police Douglas Kanja and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations to follow the money and trace the vehicles used to transport attackers reflects a sophisticated understanding of how organised political violence actually works. Machetes do not appear at memorials spontaneously. They are purchased, transported and distributed. The young men who carry them are recruited through networks that have



Wiper Democratic Movement leader Kalonzo Musyoka

identities, bank accounts, mobile money records and vehicle registration numbers. Every tool of modern financial investigation is available to Kenyan law enforcement. The question has never been capability. It has been will.

That will has been conspicuously absent across successive administrations. The current government came to power partly on the strength of promises to break with the impunity of the past. President William Ruto's administration has spoken repeatedly about the rule of law and the protection of constitutional rights. Those commitments are now being tested in Bondo in a manner that is direct, documented and very public. The weapons have been recovered. The vehicles, by Kalonzo's account, are known. The financial trails exist. What happens next will say more about this government's actual com-

mitment to accountability than any speech delivered from a podium.

Kalonzo himself struck a careful dual note in his statement, addressing not only the security establishment but the young people who participate in political violence directly. "The Constitution protects your right to speak and to assemble, and no government can take that away," he wrote. "But a freedom that silences others is not freedom. Criticise us, argue fiercely, but join the Ukombozi movement, not the goons." It is a message worth amplifying. The young men arrested in Bondo are themselves victims of a system that recruits the economically desperate to do the dangerous work of the politically powerful.

Kenya is 295 days from what Kalonzo calls "Wantam" — a term his movement has used to signal the general election due in August next

year. The political temperature will not fall between now and then. It will rise. The parties are positioning, the alliances are forming and the competition for power is intensifying by the week. In that environment, incidents like Bondo do not remain isolated. They escalate. They normalise. They invite retaliation. And they erode, incrementally but fatally, the public confidence in democratic processes that Kenya can least afford to lose.

The Inspector-General and the DCI have been named. The call has been made publicly and on the record. The question is whether this time, the answer will be different.

Politics The government has not issued a detailed public response to the events in Kitale. That silence will be noted in a county watching closely.

Police and politics shut down Kitale's busiest market

The Ruto-Natembeya standoff has moved from rhetoric to roadblocks — and it is traders who are paying the price.

BY Joakim Wekesa

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Heavy police deployment at Kitale's newly commissioned Masinde Muliro Market yesterday shut down business across Trans Nzoia's central business district as tensions

between President William Ruto and Governor George Natembeya boiled over into a direct confrontation on the streets of the county town.

General Service Unit officers and anti-riot police moved into position around the market from midnight, ahead of a planned prayer service organised by Natembeya at the

facility. The security presence — roadblocks, armed units and riot equipment deployed in a commercial district at the start of a trading week — was enough to keep traders away from stalls they depend on for their livelihoods. By morning, one of Trans Nzoia's busiest economic hubs had been reduced to a tense standoff



President William Ruto and Governor George Natembeya

between state power and a governor who has made his defiance of the presidency a defining feature of his political identity.

Businessman Anthony Masiaka captured the mood plainly. "Businesspeople are not operating because there is tension. Police officers are everywhere, and even as we speak, there are roadblocks preventing traders from accessing town," he said. His words were not dramatic. They were simply accurate.

The planned prayer service did not proceed at the market. Natembeya held a brief gathering at his county offices instead, before police arrived and dispersed even that. Later in the afternoon, officers reportedly attempted to arrest the governor at his Milimani residence. The operation did not succeed. By evening, Trans Nzoia had become the most visible theatre of a political conflict that has been building for months between a county boss who has aligned himself firmly with the opposition and a president heading into the final stretch before the August 2027 general election.

The business community's response was immediate and unambiguous. Trans Nzoia Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry chairperson Titus Kilongi appealed directly to the President to step back from confrontation and engage through dialogue. "I am appealing to our President. We know you are a good man. Sit down and reason with us. Maybe if you had involved the business

community leadership and the Chamber of Commerce, this matter could have been put to rest," Kilongi said. It was a plea wrapped in the diplomatic language of commerce, but the frustration beneath it was clear.

Trader Martin Waliaula was less measured. "We have never experienced this kind of tension affecting business in Trans Nzoia. If it is politics, conduct your politics at the national level, but do not bring it into business," he said. It is a distinction that political actors rarely observe when their disputes become personal enough, and the Ruto-Natembeya conflict has long since crossed that threshold.

The immediate trigger is the Masinde Muliro Market itself — its commissioning, its management and who gets to claim credit for it. But the market is merely the latest flashpoint in a wider confrontation. Natembeya has been among the most outspoken governors in his criticism of the national government, aligning himself with opposition movements and positioning himself as a voice for a region that has historically been part of the political calculations of whoever seeks to consolidate western Kenya ahead of an election.

With 295 days to the next general election, that calculation is now urgent. The Linda Mwananchi movement, in a statement issued by its head of communications Pauline Njoroge, framed the episode in the starkest political terms. "Ruto's determination to at-

tach himself to the market exposes his evident lack of national government projects to launch," Njoroge said, adding that the deployment of security agencies confirmed what the movement described as a government increasingly reliant on state force as a political survival mechanism. "His dwindling political fortunes have reached a point where he increasingly relies on state force as a survival mechanism," the statement read.

The government has not issued a detailed public response to the events in Kitale. That silence will be noted in a county watching closely.

What happened at Masinde Muliro Market yesterday was not, at its core, about a market. It was about the contest for Trans Nzoia's political soul ahead of an election that both the President and the governor understand will be decided, in part, by who controls the narrative in counties like this one. The traders caught between them did not choose this contest. They simply paid for it — in a day's lost business, in roadblocks that kept customers away and in the creeping realisation that the political season has arrived in Trans Nzoia whether the county was ready for it or not.

Markets exist to trade. When they become battlegrounds, everyone loses — except the politicians.

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Training Since 2024, the institute has delivered 101 certified pipeline welders to the market, most employed at KPC, with the rest working as expatriates abroad

KPC Plc-owned Morendat National Polytechnic scales up training of certified pipeline welders to meet growing energy sector demand

...as Dangote's Lamu Refinery and South Lokichar oil developments create new opportunities for skilled Kenyan technicians

BY James Murimi
@themtkenyaintimes

The Morendat Institute of Oil & Gas National Polytechnic (MIOG-NP), a technical training institution wholly owned by Kenya Pipeline Company Plc (KPC Plc), is scaling up specialised training and international certification of pipeline welders and other technical professionals to bridge critical skills gaps in Kenya's and the region's rapidly expanding oil and gas sector.

The National Polytechnic is targeting the training and certification of more than 30 pipeline welders annually as demand for specialised technical expertise grows, driven by major energy investments, including the Dangote East Africa Petroleum Refinery in Lamu County and the Gulf Energy-led South Lokichar oil development project in Turkana County.

The initiative is part of KPC Plc's broader strategy to develop a highly skilled, globally competitive technical workforce that can support Kenya's industrialisation agenda, strengthen local participation in major infrastructure projects, and expand employment opportunities for

Kenyan professionals at home and abroad.

Speaking in Nairobi as he flagged off the first Morendat Institute of Oil and Gas (MIOG) roadshow to raise awareness of technical and vocational training opportunities, KPC Plc Acting Managing Director and CEO, Mr Pius Mwendwa, said the institute is well positioned to deliver more than 100 certified pipeline welders annually.

Since 2024, the institute has delivered 101 certified pipeline welders to the market, most employed at KPC, with the rest working as expatriates abroad. This year, Morendat Institute of Oil and Gas graduated 10 certified pipeline welders, up from less than ten a decade ago.

"At KPC, we are working hard to fuel growth in Kenya and the region by unlocking and tapping into emerging opportunities in the oil and gas sector, including the transformation of Morendat Institute of Oil and Gas as an industry training hub for technical workforce development. This will help to stem brain drain and importation of technicians," Mwendwa said.

He noted that the expansion of MIOG-NP's specialised training programmes comes

at a critical time as Kenya positions itself to benefit from increased investments in petroleum production, refining, pipeline infrastructure and related industries.

"Major developments such as the Dangote East Africa Petroleum Refinery in Lamu and the South Lokichar oil project in Turkana present significant opportunities for Kenyan professionals. Our priority is to ensure that Kenya has the technical capacity to participate meaningfully in these investments, reduce reliance on imported expertise and create sustainable employment opportunities for our young people," he added.

Mr Mwendwa emphasised that KPC Plc's investment in MIOG-NP reflects the Company's commitment to supporting national development beyond its core petroleum transportation and storage business through skills development, knowledge transfer and industry-focused capacity building.

MIOG-NP Director Dr Nancy Kosgei said the institution is strengthening its training portfolio with competency-based diploma and certificate programmes, specialised short courses, and internationally recognised technical cer-

tification pathways tailored to the evolving needs of the energy and industrial sectors.

These include advanced welding training aligned with international standards such as ISO 9606-1, alongside programmes developed through partnerships with recognised international welding and technical training organisations.

"Our focus is to equip trainees with practical, industry-relevant skills that improve their employability and enable them to compete in

"Our focus is to equip trainees with practical, industry-relevant skills that improve their employability and enable them to compete in an increasingly demanding labour market. Through this roadshow, we are taking our training opportunities directly to prospective students, experienced artisans and industry professionals seeking to upgrade their qualifications," Dr Kosgei said.



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She added that MIOG-NP is expanding access to certification through its Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme, which allows experienced artisans and technicians to have skills acquired through practical work experience formally assessed and recognised.

"Many Kenyans possess valuable technical skills acquired through years of experience but lack formal qualifications. Our Recognition of Prior Learning programme provides a structured pathway for these individuals to obtain recognised certification, advance their careers and access new opportunities in Kenya and beyond," she explained.

Beyond welding and pipeline operations, MIOG-NP is exploring strategic partnerships with county governments, industry players and other institutions to expand specialised training in firefighting, occupational health and safety, emergency response, electrical installation and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) handling and management.

The partnerships are expected to strengthen technical capacity, promote workplace safety and support compliance with

occupational health and safety requirements across various sectors of the economy.

Established in 2014 as a regional centre of excellence in oil and gas training, MIOG-NP was elevated to National Polytechnic status in September 2024, reinforcing its mandate to deliver industry-responsive technical and vocational education.

Over the past decade, the institution has trained more than 6,000 professionals across various technical disciplines, contributing to skills development and capacity building in Kenya and the wider East African region.

The institution operates training campuses in Nairobi, Naivasha and Eldoret, offering specialised facilities for welding, pipeline operations, instrumentation, mechanical training, firefighting and occupational safety.

The Nairobi roadshow will allow prospective trainees, parents, employers, and other stakeholders to meet MIOG-NP representatives, explore available training programmes, and learn about admissions, professional certification, and career development pathways.

The initiative underscores KPC Plc's commitment to developing a technically competent, competitive workforce while positioning MIOG-NP as a leading centre for specialised industrial training and professional certification in East Africa.



During the show flagging off in Nairobi

Mashujaa Day The dominant forecast is that the coming week will be characterised by a contest between the politics of delivery and the politics of accountability

Kenya's weekly political weather: Mashujaa day, Ruto's re-election message and the storms gathering beyond Eldoret

"The true measure of a nation's heroes is not the grandeur of its celebrations, but the government's willingness to honour their sacrifices through justice, accountable leadership and opportunities for every citizen."



BY Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo

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Kenya enters the coming week under the shadow of a national celebration that could become one of the most consequential political moments before the 2027 general election. Eldoret's Mashujaa Day celebrations, 20 October, will provide President William Ruto with a national platform to demonstrate his government's development record, consolidate his political support in the North Rift and reinforce the argument that his administration deserves another term. Yet the political weather surrounding the occasion is considerably more complicated than the celebratory atmosphere suggests. Unresolved public grievances, competing political ambitions, economic pressures and questions of inclusion are converging at a moment when the government needs to demonstrate not merely visibility, but credibility.

The dominant forecast is that the coming week will be characterised by a contest between the politics of delivery and the politics of accountability. President Ruto's North Rift tour has featured roads, markets, affordable housing, hospitals, technical training institutions, electricity connections and land titles. His rally in Eldoret on

Saturday, 17 October, attracted thousands, while his Sunday engagements in Nandi reinforced the message that development programmes should continue beyond the next election. The President has also warned voters against electing leaders who promise to discontinue his flagship projects. These interventions suggest that the administration is already framing the 2027 election as a choice between continuity and disruption.

The coming week is therefore likely to see intensified efforts to convert development announcements into political confidence. However, the government faces a familiar challenge in Kenyan politics: the distance between commissioning a project and demonstrating its sustained public value. Residents will increasingly ask whether roads are completed, hospitals adequately staffed, markets occupied by traders and economic empowerment funds reaching intended beneficiaries. The administration's political advantage will depend less on the number of projects presented during the tour than on whether citizens experience tangible improvements in their livelihoods. Opposition leaders, meanwhile, are likely to scrutinise stalled projects, implementation gaps and the distribution of public resources, seeking to challenge the government's narrative of delivery.

Mashujaa Day will also test the relationship between national and county politics. Trans Nzoia Governor George Nitembeya's criticism of the government's political approach, alongside his calls for opposition unity, illustrates the growing competition for regional influence. The participation of leaders from different political camps in presidential engagements does not necessarily indicate a durable alliance. In Kenya's fluid political environment, cooperation over development can coexist with rivalry over electoral strategy. The coming days may reveal more about which leaders intend to work with the President, which are positioning themselves for an alternative coalition, and which are keeping their options open. The North Rift's political significance will extend well beyond the ceremony because its voting patterns, influential leaders and economic interests will remain important to the national contest.

The most immediate threat to the celebratory narrative, however, may come from the unresolved Finland and Canada overseas education programme. On 16 October, affected parents and students threatened demonstrations during Mashujaa Day, demanding refunds and presidential intervention following the conclusion of the criminal proceedings. Reports indicate that more than KSh1 billion was collected from hundreds of families. The proposed mediation process has not yet extinguished their frustration. The forecast is for renewed public pressure, with the possibility that the grievance could overshadow parts of the national celebration if the families feel ignored.

The judicial outcome must be respected, and no individual should be presumed guilty contrary to the court's determination. Nevertheless, the families' demand for financial accountability remains a separate public concern. The government and county leadership will need to demonstrate that the matter is receiving a credible, transparent and lawful response. A carefully managed dialogue, a clear accounting of funds and an explanation of available recovery options could reduce tensions. Political speeches or appeals for patience without verifiable progress are unlikely to restore confidence. The issue may also become a wider campaign talking point about public accountability, the protection of families' savings and the responsibilities of county institutions.

Disability inclusion presents another important test, particularly in Uasin Gishu. Representatives from the county's 30 wards have challenged delays affecting the KSh15 million disability empowerment allocation and demanded meaningful participation in decisions concerning their livelihoods. The reported proposal to channel KSh500,000 per ward through Inua Biashara has raised expectations, but the critical question is whether the funds will be released transparently and reach eligible beneficiaries. The coming week offers an opportunity for county and national leaders to demonstrate that disability rights are part of ordinary public administration rather than a ceremonial concern. Accessible facilities, reasonable accommodation, inclusive procurement and clear funding commitments would provide more persuasive evidence of inclusion than symbolic appearances at the stadium.

The national health situation will demand a different kind of political attention. On 18 October, reports indicated that Kenya's confirmed Ebola cases had reached seven, including one death. The government's response will increasingly be judged by the effectiveness of contact tracing, infection prevention, healthcare worker protection and public communication. The coming week should bring heightened scrutiny of



President William Ruto

preparedness and coordination between national and county health authorities. Authorities must communicate verified information without provoking panic, while ensuring that political celebrations do not distract from essential public health responsibilities. Economically, the central question will be whether the government's development narrative translates into household relief. Farmers need dependable markets and water, young people need employment, and small businesses need predictable costs and access to finance. Affordable housing and new markets can contribute to economic growth, but their impact depends on affordability, effective management and the ability of ordinary citizens to benefit. The government will need to demonstrate how investment supports jobs, productivity and household incomes as the electoral period approaches.

The week's final political weather system will be the growing demand for credible inclusion in national development. The Constitution's principles of public participation, equality, accountability and equitable distribution of resources provide a standard against which government claims should be measured. Mashujaa Day celebrates sacrifice and national service; it should also challenge institutions to explain why some citizens must repeatedly protest to obtain services, funding or opportunities already provided for in policy and law.

The most likely outcome is a politically successful national celebration accompanied by continued pressure over unresolved grievances. Whether the event produces lasting political gains will depend on the government's response in the days that follow. If the promises made during the North Rift tour acquire budgets, deadlines and transparent implementation, the administration will strengthen its case for continuity. If outstanding grievances remain unresolved, the opposition and dissatisfied communities will have further evidence with which to challenge its record.

Kenya's political weather for coming week is therefore best described as sunshine on the national stage, with gathering storms over accountability, inclusion and the approaching election. Eldoret will host the nation's heroes, but the real political verdict will emerge from what leaders do after the celebrations end. The public is increasingly interested not simply in what government promises, but in what it delivers, whom it includes and whether it can be held accountable when commitments fail.

The coming week will test whether Mashujaa Day becomes a celebration of national achievement or a reminder that the unfinished business of justice, inclusion and accountable development remains Kenya's most demanding political challenge.

Athletics KeNHA has designated Mombasa Road, through Uhuru Highway, as the principal diversion for affected drivers

Southern Bypass to close this weekend for Nairobi Marathon

Motorists travelling between Ole Sereni and Kikuyu have days to plan alternative routes before Sunday's disruption.

BY Collins Kibet
@themkenyaintimes

The Kenya National Highways Authority has announced a temporary closure of a section of Nairobi's Southern Bypass this weekend to accommodate the 2026 Standard Chartered Nairobi Marathon, with significant traffic disruptions expected between Ole Sereni Interchange and Kikuyu Town.



The closure takes effect at midnight on Saturday, October 25, and lifts at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 26. Motorists who regularly use the bypass are advised to identify alternative routes before departure, confirm the specific sections affected through official KeNHA announcements, and allow considerably more travel time than usual. The window to prepare is narrow. It closes at midnight on Saturday.

KeNHA has designated Mombasa Road, through Uhuru Highway, as the principal diversion for affected drivers. Motorists heading from Dagoretti towards Mombasa Road may be redirected through Waiyaki Way or Ngong Road via Mbagathi Way, while those travelling from Lang'ata towards Kikuyu are likely to be routed through Karen. Drivers



Standard Chartered Nairobi Marathon

should follow official traffic signs and instructions from police officers and marshals deployed along the corridor, as the appropriate diversion will vary depending on destination. Attempting to navigate informally or relying on unverified directions risks compounding delays and, more seriously, endangering marathon participants whose safety depends on controlled road conditions throughout the event.

The closure will affect a wide cross-section of road users. Commuters who depend on the Southern Bypass for daily movement between Nairobi's western and southern corridors face the most immediate disruption. Public transport operators running matatu routes through Ole Sereni, Kikuyu and surrounding areas will need to adjust their stops and schedules, potentially affecting thousands of passengers who rely on those services for work, medical appointments and essential travel. Operators who fail to communicate changes to their passengers early enough risk contributing to the congestion that the diversion arrangements are designed to prevent. Commercial freight companies and businesses dependent on timely deliveries face their own set of pressures. Sunday morning is not a low-traffic window in Nairobi. Wholesale traders, logistics operators and suppliers moving goods across the city will find key corridors under strain. Transport companies are advised to notify customers of potential delays in advance, adjust delivery windows where operationally possible, and brief drivers thoroughly on the

approved alternative routes before Saturday. A failure to plan at the company level will translate directly into missed deliveries, frustrated clients and vehicles stalled on roads already carrying diverted traffic from the bypass.

The broader challenge the closure exposes is one Nairobi confronts repeatedly during major public events: how to manage a city with a constrained road network when significant sections of that network are temporarily removed from use. Nairobi's arterial roads — Mombasa Road, Uhuru Highway, Ngong Road and Waiyaki Way — already carry volumes of traffic that regularly exceed their designed capacity during ordinary weekday conditions. Redirecting bypass traffic onto those same roads on a Sunday morning, when the marathon itself will be drawing spectators and participants across the city, concentrates pressure onto corridors that have limited room to absorb it.

Authorities must therefore ensure that the logistical arrangements match the scale of the disruption. Diversion signage must be clearly displayed and positioned well in advance of the closure points, not erected hastily on Saturday evening. Traffic personnel must be stationed at critical intersections along all designated alternative routes, not only at the closure barriers themselves. Emergency vehicle access to Nairobi's hospitals, including Kenyatta National Hospital, MP Shah and the various facilities along Ngong Road and Mombasa Road, must remain unobstructed throughout the closure period. A marathon

that saves seconds for elite runners while blocking an ambulance for critical minutes is an event that has failed in its most basic duty of care to the city it runs through.

Public communication is equally non-negotiable. KeNHA should ensure that closure notices reach motorists through every available channel — radio bulletins, social media updates, SMS alerts and public address systems — in the days remaining before Saturday midnight. Information posted only on official websites or circulated exclusively through formal government channels will not reach the matatu driver, the night-shift worker or the family planning a Sunday outing. Broad, accessible, repeated communication is not a courtesy. In a city the size of Nairobi, it is the difference between a manageable disruption and a chaotic one.

Kenya's marathon tradition is a source of genuine national pride. Nairobi consistently stages a world-class event that draws elite athletes and recreational runners from across the globe and showcases the country's unmatched distance-running heritage. That tradition deserves to be celebrated and protected. But a great race and a well-managed city are not competing ambitions. With adequate preparation, clear communication and disciplined traffic management, Nairobi can deliver both.

Plan your route now. The marathon starts Sunday. The disruption starts Saturday night.

You do not see their smile when they laugh



You do not understand the feelings in their heart.
You are unaware of their sleepless nights—
Oh fathers, your own child becomes a regret to you...
Growing up far away, distant from you,
With their eyes sometimes filled with tears,
They sigh bitterly seeing others with their “dads”—
Oh fathers, your own child becomes a regret to you...
Even if I write this, your status is still grand,
Yet you blame us for everything that happens.
Weigh yourself on the scales for once—
Oh fathers, your own child is wasted on you...
Playing, laughing, falling down—they will still grow up,
Waiting continually, their patience will run out one day.

Thinking “I have no father,” the light of hope fades at last—
Oh fathers, who became a lifelong regret to your child...
You darkened the youth of your children,
From an early age, they faced the hardship of fate.
Failing to fill the void in their tender hearts—
Oh fathers, who played games with destinies...
When I look into their eyes, I feel pity for them,
You did not know the value of a child—I feel anger toward you.
Even if the mother was bad, let that be her own path,
You are the ones who even ran away from paying child support, oh fathers...
You too will grow old one day, time is the ultimate judge,
I swear by Allah, you will remember them then.
At the end of your life, crying “my child,” you will suffer in grief—
Oh “fathers,” who were unworthy of fatherhood!

By: Amirova Nodira
A student of the Psychology program at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Alfraganus University, Republic of Uzbekistan.

You are the butterfly



I was born inside a little cocoon,
Just a worm, wiggling with no way.
No wings, no sense, no sky to see,
Only a leaf to eat every day.
Ugly and small, I grew alone,
Wrapping myself in a single thread.
Hibernating through cold and heat,
Through wind and storm inside my bed.

No one saw the pain inside,
The waiting, the breaking, the prayer.
I pushed so hard to break the wall,
It hurt to breathe the open air.
My wings were stuck, wet and small,
I could not fly, I had to wait.
I let them dry in patient sun,
For freedom never comes in haste.
Now I fly, higher and higher,
Because I waited through that night.
Your wings are also stuck in you,
Let them dry, one day you will take flight.

RAJITHA D
Creative writer,
GGHSS, PADAPPAL,
KANCHEEPURAM.

Patience and kindness



The Patience person will excel in life,
The envious person loses their joy in strife.
One who loves life deeply and true
Doesn't know how to stay angry with you.
They carry no jealousy hidden inside,
Their heart stays open, gentle with pride.

Being polite is truly their art,
Kind words flow straight from the heart
They win not by noise, anger, or fight,
But by calm minds and actions right.
In patience they grow, in kindness they stay,
Such souls light the world every day.

V. JAYANTHI
Graduate teacher
Creative writer
PUMS Konganancherry
Chengalpattu district
Tamil Nadu

Success & failures are temporary



Success is not permanent for any person nor failure!
Real care is perpetual
What we need is timely help!
Hard times helps us to find out who is wearing mask!
When we succeed, thousands of people celebrate it!

When we fail, the same people won't come for our rescue!
Some will come & wipe our tears away
Those people live in our heart forever!
When we are successful
We never need appreciation from everyone!
When we fail
We need a soul to console!
Hardships define human nature
Finger that wipes tears is far more better than the hands that clapped!
GSwapna
Agricultural Instructor
GHSS, Thirupputkuzhi
Kanchipuram District
Tamilnadu India

Where there is a will there is a way



The one who says, “I have no time to study,”
Will never score the marks he wants,
The other who studies by candlelight.
Will pass out in flying colours.
The one who says, “The gym is far away,”
Will find an excuse to skip every day.

The other who walks a mile each day,
Will keep health issues at bay.
The one says, “I'm too old to start,”
Will let age stop a new mission,
The other who says Age is just a number,
Will keep growing and never cease to wonder.
The one who has a will will find a way,
The one who doesn't will always delay.
Who do you want to be?
The choice is yours; make a wise choice.

M.Raddhika
Freelance content writer
Sivakasi Tamil Nadu India

A finger that wipe away your tears during hard times



A finger that wipe away your tears during hard times
is greater than the thousand hands that clapped for your success
Felt that the rainbow hand
Which wipe tears that understand

The sorrow/ the violent verbal thunder
That clashes as exploder
Saves from drowning heart from rescue
Consoling as the tissue
Is not better than the hand
Though strongly stand
With greets & claps
Helping the wings flap
For the goals to impress.
To fly towards success
So the fingers that wipes tears
Take care
And assist giving space
To step up later in grace.

G. Sarala.

Politics In a statement, he maintained that the government must prioritise the welfare of citizens and protect the country’s long-term interests instead of pursuing political survival and personal ambitions.

DP Chairman Ndubai Calls for Leadership Change in 2027

BY James Murimi
@themtkenyaintimes

Democratic Party of Kenya (DP) National Chairman Peter Ndubai has urged Kenyans to use the 2027 General Election to bring about political change by electing leaders who uphold integrity, accountability and responsible governance.

Ndubai said the country needed a new approach to leadership to address persistent challenges, including the rising cost of living, unemployment, corruption, misuse of public resources and poor governance.

In a statement, he maintained that the government must prioritise the welfare of citizens and protect the country’s long-term interests instead of pursuing political survival and personal ambitions.

He said the Constitution places a responsibility on the President to protect Kenya’s



DP Chairman Peter Ndubai

sovereignty, security and territorial integrity while safeguarding the rights and freedoms of all citizens.

“Leadership is a sacred public trust. Those entrusted with power must never mortgage the country’s future or com-

promise its national interests for short-term political gains, personal interests, or the survival of political alliances,”

Ndubai said.

The DP chairman criticised what he termed misplaced government priorities, political patronage, intimidation and the growing use of goons in political activities.

He argued that public offices should be occupied by competent and ethical individuals selected on merit rather than political loyalty, sycophancy or involvement in violence.

Ndubai also called for prudent management of public resources, saying government spending should directly improve the living standards of ordinary Kenyans instead of enriching a privileged political class.

With political realignments and campaigns expected to intensify ahead of the 2027 elections, he urged voters to scrutinise candidates and reject leaders who exploit public expectations, promote divisions or misuse state resources.

He called for the election of leaders with practical plans to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, lower the cost of living, combat corruption and strengthen public institutions.

According to Ndubai, safeguarding the country’s future requires citizens to demand transparency from elected officials and ensure that national resources are distributed and utilised for the benefit of all Kenyans.

He described the ballot as the most important constitutional instrument through which citizens can hold leaders accountable and influence the country’s direction.

“The ballot is our constitutional instrument for change,” he said, urging Kenyans to participate peacefully and courageously in the next General Election.

Ndubai maintained that the country’s future would depend on voters making informed decisions and holding those elected to office accountable for their promises and actions.

“Kenya belongs to its people, not to the political class,” he said, calling on citizens to take an active role in shaping the nation’s future through responsible voting.

He concluded by urging Kenyans to embrace collective responsibility in the pursuit of accountable leadership and national progress, declaring: “Our country. Our future. Our responsibility.”

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Corruption According to the World Bank's 2004 work on social accountability, citizens possess important mechanisms for holding the state accountable beyond the ballot box

Kenya's missing link in the war against corruption: Why government must invest in grassroots social audits

"The true measure of accountability is not how many institutions a country establishes, but how effectively its citizens can ensure that public resources serve the public good."

Fredrick Chelimo



BY Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo

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"The true measure of accountability is not how many institutions a country establishes, but how effectively its citizens can ensure that public resources serve the public good."- Fredrick Chelimo

Kenya's war against corruption has reached a defining moment. Despite an elaborate constitutional framework, a network of oversight institutions and successive government commitments to integrity, the country continues to grapple with allegations of public resource mismanagement, questionable procurement, stalled development projects and public services that fall short of citizens' expectations. The challenge is no longer simply whether Kenya has sufficient laws and institutions to fight corruption, but whether these mechanisms can detect wrongdoing early enough, prevent avoidable losses and compel meaningful accountability where public money is actually spent. It is within this context that social accountability, particularly through structured community social audits, presents a timely and potentially transformative opportunity.

According to the World Bank's 2004 work on social accountability, citizens possess important mechanisms for holding the state accountable beyond the ballot box. Elections remain indispensable to democracy, but they cannot provide continuous



oversight of public expenditure or guarantee that elected leaders and appointed officials fulfil their responsibilities. Citizens may vote for development, yet subsequently discover that promised roads remain impassable, health facilities lack essential services, water projects are dysfunctional or publicly funded empowerment programmes have failed to reach their intended beneficiaries. Social accountability bridges this gap by empowering citizens to participate continuously in monitoring government decisions, expenditure and service delivery.

Social audits provide a particularly practical expression of this principle. They enable communities to examine public records, compare approved budgets with actual expenditure, inspect completed and ongoing projects, consult beneficiaries and demand explanations from responsible authorities. Their purpose extends beyond identifying financial irregularities to establishing whether public institutions are complying with the law and whether public expenditure is producing the intended social and economic benefits. A building may exist on paper, for example, but remain incomplete or unusable in reality. A project may also appear successful while ex-

cluding the vulnerable people it was intended to serve. Effective social auditing examines both administrative compliance and the actual experiences of citizens.

Kenya already possesses a strong constitutional foundation for this approach. Articles 10, 35, 37, 201 and 232 of the Constitution establish important principles relating to public participation, access to information, transparency, accountability and responsible public administration. The challenge is to translate these principles from legal provisions into practical experiences that ordinary citizens can exercise without intimidation, excessive bureaucracy or dependence on political patronage.

The National Anti-Corruption Campaign Steering Committee (NACCSC), through its public education mandate and County Anti-Corruption Civilian Oversight Committees (CACCOCs), offers an important platform for advancing this grassroots accountability agenda. The emerging social audit programme should not be mistaken for an attempt to establish another anti-corruption agency or usurp the responsibilities of existing institutions. Rather, it offers an opportunity to strengthen the connection between com-

munities, public projects and the legally mandated bodies responsible for investigation, audit, administrative justice and prosecution.

Its greatest contribution may be to address the distance between formal oversight and the everyday realities of citizens. National institutions cannot independently observe every procurement, construction site, dispensary, agricultural programme or county development project. Communities, however, are often best placed to notice when a project has stalled, when delivered materials appear inconsistent with specifications or when promised services are unavailable. Properly trained social auditors can document these concerns, verify available evidence and refer substantiated findings to the appropriate authorities. This creates an additional layer of vigilance without diminishing the independence or statutory powers of established institutions.

The benefits extend beyond detecting corruption. Regular community monitoring can discourage misconduct by increasing the likelihood that irregularities will be noticed and questioned. Early identification of implementation failures can enable corrective action before losses escalate. Public officials who perform their duties diligently can demonstrate their achievements through transparent evidence, while contractors can be held to account for the quality and completeness of their work. Government consequently gains an opportunity to improve value for money, strengthen project effectiveness and rebuild public confidence through demonstrable results rather than declarations of commitment.

Social audits can also deep-

en inclusion. Women, young people, persons with disabilities and economically marginalised communities frequently experience the consequences of inadequate public services while remaining underrepresented in decision-making processes. Their participation can expose barriers that conventional financial audits may not capture, including inaccessible infrastructure, exclusion from empowerment programmes and services that fail to respond to local needs. Accountability becomes more meaningful when communities can influence priorities, monitor implementation and verify whether the promised benefits reach the intended beneficiaries.

For these benefits to materialise, government must move beyond occasional training sessions and invest in a structured, adequately resourced national programme. CACCOCs require practical training, standardised audit tools, access to public information, reasonable facilitation, technical support and clear referral procedures. Implementation should expand progressively across counties and sectors, supported by digital systems that track findings, referrals, official responses and corrective action. Independent evaluation must distinguish allegations from verified irregularities and actual recoveries, ensuring that achievements are credible and measurable.

The economic argument is equally compelling. Preventing waste, identifying defective projects early and improving service delivery may protect resources that would otherwise require additional expenditure to replace or repair. Government should therefore evaluate social audits as a potential investment

in expenditure protection and institutional efficiency, measuring programme costs against independently verified savings, improved services and other demonstrable outcomes. Funding should be linked to clear performance indicators, while safeguards protect auditors from intimidation, political manipulation and conflicts of interest.

Ultimately, social audits cannot eliminate corruption independently, nor can citizen participation substitute for enforcement. Their effectiveness depends on credible evidence, responsive institutions and the political will to act on findings. A report that attracts attention but produces no institutional response will quickly undermine public confidence. NACCSC and its partners must therefore prioritise follow-up, transparent reporting and practical cooperation with the relevant oversight bodies.

Kenya's anti-corruption strategy must bring accountability closer to the people whose taxes finance public development and whose lives are affected by its outcomes. Investing progressively and decisively in grassroots social auditing would strengthen existing institutions, improve public participation and help transform citizens from passive recipients of government promises into informed partners in protecting public resources.

Public money belongs to the people, and its protection must begin where it is spent. The ultimate success of this programme will not be measured by the number of workshops conducted or reports produced, but by the resources safeguarded, projects improved, services delivered and citizens empowered to demand accountability without begging for what the Constitution already guarantees. Kenya should invest in this opportunity now, because a government that enables its citizens to protect the public interest strengthens not only its fight against corruption, but also the legitimacy of democracy itself.

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Economy Consider the historical continuity. In the decades after independence, many African states liberalized trade and invited transnational capital under the banner of development

The emperor's new markets: How cartels in fertilizer, cement and steel still rule the regional kingdoms of SADC, COMESA and the EAC



By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo

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In 2024 and into 2025, the COMESA Competition Commission publicly flagged two dominant fertilizer importers operating in Kenya Yara and ETG for applying mark-ups that reached as high as 142 percent even as global fertilizer prices fell. Kenyan farmers, already squeezed by drought, debt and delayed rains, continued paying inflated prices for the very input that determines whether their maize will stand or wither. This is not an isolated scandal. It is the latest public face of a deeper, older pattern: regional cartels in fertilizer, cement and steel that treat national borders as convenient lines on a map while their collusion flows freely across them.

These are not abstract market imperfections. They are organised extractions that reach into the soil, the foundations of houses and the steel rods that hold up bridges and schools. They operate across the Southern African Development Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the East African Community the very institutions created to dissolve barriers and deliver scale. Instead, the cartels have learned to use those institutions' incomplete competition regimes as camouflage.

Consider the historical continuity. In the decades after independence, many African states liberalized trade and invited transnational capital under the banner of development. Industry associations emerged bodies that looked like forums for standards and logistics but functioned as clearing houses for information exchange, market division and quiet price discipline. In southern Africa the cement cartel that crystallized in the late 1990s inside the Southern African Customs Union divided territories, coordinated supply and kept prices high until South African authorities finally conducted dawn raids in 2009.

The overcharge estimates ranged



from roughly 8 to 20 percent in South Africa itself and climbed higher in neighbouring markets where single suppliers ruled under the regional understanding. The same pattern appeared in fertilizer: bulk importers controlling ports, blending plants and inland logistics coordinated to keep margins elevated. Transnational firms presented themselves as development partners while leveraging infrastructure bottlenecks and regulatory favour to sustain oligopoly. What looked like market liberalisation often became a more sophisticated form of enclosure.

Kenya supplies a living laboratory. In fertilizer the market remains concentrated among a handful of bulk importers Yara, ETG and others who control the critical nodes from port to agro-dealer. When global prices dropped, local prices lagged. The COMESA Commission's findings of excessive mark-ups were not surprising to farmers who had watched subsidized bags diverted, repackaged and sold at commercial rates. The East African Community Competition Authority has now opened an inquiry into the Kenyan fertilizer market precisely because high concentration, behavioural practices and barriers to entry keep prices sticky. The human cost is measurable in reduced application rates, lower yields and the quiet desperation of households that must choose between fertilizer and school fees.

Cement tells a parallel story. Across

the EAC the East African Cement Producers Association facilitated the exchange of sales volumes until the Competition Authority of Kenya secured undertakings to stop the practice. Real prices in Kenya declined by around 11 percent between 2014 and 2018 once new entry and greater rivalry began to bite yet the earlier period of coordination had already extracted its premium. In Zambia, the entry of large-scale challengers drove real price reductions exceeding 40 percent in a short window, revealing how much excess had been built into the previous equilibrium. Regional cartels that allocate countries rather than compete across them convert the promise of a larger market into a collection of protected national fiefdoms. Trade statistics may rise, but the competitive pressure that should discipline prices remains artificially suppressed.

Steel follows the same logic of concentrated power and coordinated restraint. In 2023 the Competition Authority of Kenya imposed record fines totalling hundreds of millions of shillings on multiple manufacturers after uncovering evidence of price-fixing, output limitation and efforts to restrict certain imports. Electronic communications and meeting records revealed the everyday language of collusion routine business talk that treated the market as a shared asset rather than a contest. The fines were significant, yet the structural conditions that made

coordination feasible capital intensity, limited alternative suppliers, and the ability of large players to shape distribution have not vanished.

The deeper insight is this: extra-territoriality is already practiced by the cartels. They coordinate across borders with ease. The law lags behind. National competition authorities can reach conduct that affects their domestic markets, but regional cartels exploit gaps in jurisdiction, information-sharing and political will. COMESA's Competition Commission has developed merger control and has begun investigating restrictive practices, yet cartel detection remains thin. The EAC Competition Authority is still finding its operational footing. SADC lacks a fully-fledged regional competition regime capable of binding action. The result is a jurisdictional patchwork that rewards the sophisticated and penalizes the fragmented.

This is not merely inefficiency. It is a moral and developmental failure. Fertilizer cartels raise the cost of food production at the precise moment African populations are growing and climate volatility is intensifying. Cement and steel cartels inflate the price of housing, roads, schools and clinics. Every excess shilling extracted is a shilling denied to public investment or private accumulation by ordinary households. The correlation is brutal: the same oligopolistic structures that keep input prices high also weak-

en the industrial deepening that regional integration was supposed to unlock. New entrants capable of disrupting the equilibrium whether Dangote-scale cement plants or aggressive fertilizer traders have demonstrated that prices can fall and investment can follow. Where such entry is blocked or co-opted, the old equilibrium reasserts itself.

The call is therefore categorical. National competition authorities in Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Tanzania and elsewhere must treat cross-border information exchange and market allocation as presumptively suspicious and pursue leniency, dawn raids and substantial penalties without apology. Regional bodies COMESA Competition Commission, EAC Competition Authority, and any emerging SADC mechanism must be given the resources, the investigative tools and the political cover to act against conduct that harms consumers across multiple member states. Governments must stop treating dominant firms as untouchable development partners and start conditioning infrastructure access, import licences and public procurement on genuine competitive behaviour. Civil society, farmers' organisations and consumer groups must keep the pressure public and sustained; opacity is the cartel's oxygen.

History has already shown what happens when market power is left unchallenged: the formal language of regional integration becomes a theatre in which private coordination continues behind the curtain. The fertilizer bag that costs too much, the bag of cement that prices a young family out of a house, the steel that inflates the cost of every public works contract these are not accidents of geography or temporary supply shocks. They are the visible results of arrangements that have been allowed to mature across borders while enforcement remained largely national and timid.

The emperor's new markets are still the old markets, dressed in the rhetoric of free trade and regional solidarity. It is past time to strip the costume away and insist that competition law reach as far as the collusion already does. Anything less is complicity dressed as caution.

The writer is a social commentator

Students Appreciating a teacher or a principal is not inherently wrong. Teachers invest their time, knowledge and emotional resources in shaping young lives

Let students reward their teachers with excellence, not expensive gifts

A couch presented to a principal by her graduating class opens a necessary debate about gift culture in Kenya's schools.

BY Ashford Kimani

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The news that the Class of 2026 at St Joseph's Girls Senior School has honoured its principal, Dr Rosebella Munzala Orwaru, with a seven-seater couch has opened an important conversation about the culture of students rewarding teachers and school administrators. According to a report published by Education News yesterday, the students, who identify themselves as the Royal Zenith Girls, presented the couch in appreciation of Orwaru's leadership, mentorship and support during their four years in secondary school. The gesture has been framed as a symbol of gratitude and the bond between the school head and her learners. Yet beyond that touching narrative lies a question Kenya's education sector must confront honestly: should students be encouraged to purchase expensive gifts for the very people entrusted with their education, welfare and academic assessment?

Appreciating a teacher or a principal is not inherently wrong. Teachers invest their time, knowledge and emotional resources in shaping young lives. Some go well beyond their formal responsibilities to mentor vulnerable students, counsel troubled teenagers and encourage learners who have almost given up. A principal who provides a supportive environment and demonstrates genuine concern for students deserves recognition. There is, however, a significant difference between expressing gratitude and establishing a culture in which expensive material gifts become the preferred form of appreciation. The problem is not gratitude itself. It is the potential consequences of turning gratitude into a costly tradition within



an institution defined by unequal power relationships.

Expensive gifts risk normalising the commercialisation of the relationship between students and their teachers. A couch is not a handwritten card or a collective letter of thanks. It is a material asset with a clear financial value. When a graduating class pools resources to purchase an expensive gift for a principal, it creates a precedent that future classes may feel compelled to match or surpass. What began as a voluntary gesture could quietly become an unofficial expectation, with students measuring appreciation by monetary value rather than sincerity. Education should cultivate character, responsibility and service — not encourage a competition in material generosity towards those in positions of authority.

Such gestures can also place unnecessary financial pressure on parents and guardians. Students rarely act independently of their families when organising expensive gifts. Even where the initiative originates with the learners, parents are eventually asked to contribute. Some families can comfortably afford such expenditure. Others struggle to provide basic necessities — school fees, uniforms, meals and revision materials. Consider a parent who has borrowed money to keep a child in school being asked to contribute towards a gift for the principal. What happens when that parent cannot

afford it? Will the child feel embarrassed or excluded? Schools must be careful not to introduce financial obligations that deepen inequalities among learners. No parent should feel that an expensive gift is part of the hidden cost of secondary education.

Rewarding school administrators with expensive gifts can also create the perception — whether justified or not — that students are purchasing favour. A principal exercises considerable authority over school discipline, student welfare and the allocation of opportunities. Teachers similarly hold authority over learners and participate in assessing their academic progress. In that context, gifts of significant material value can blur the boundary between professional responsibility and personal relationship. Even where the recipient has acted with complete integrity, observers may question whether the relationship has become excessively personalised. Public confidence in an institution depends not only on the absence of wrongdoing but also on the avoidance of circumstances that reasonably invite suspicion.

Timing matters considerably here. The St Joseph's Girls gift was presented as the Class of 2026 prepared for its Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations, with the students publicly declaring an ambition to achieve a mean score of 8.7. There is no suggestion in the available

reporting that the gift was connected to examination outcomes or any improper conduct. Even so, schools should remain sensitive to perceptions surrounding gifts presented during high-stakes academic periods. Examination integrity depends on confidence that every candidate is treated fairly and that professional decisions remain independent of personal relationships.

What, then, should students do when they genuinely wish to appreciate their teachers? They can write heartfelt letters, prepare a collective message, present a framed class photograph or organise a modest farewell ceremony. They can demonstrate appreciation through discipline,

hard work and the practical application of values learned in the classroom. Alumni can return to mentor younger students, support school libraries or establish bursaries for disadvantaged learners. These alternatives communicate gratitude without creating an expensive precedent or placing pressure on families. They demonstrate that appreciation is measured by meaning and impact, not monetary value.

The Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission, school boards and individual institutions should consider providing clearer guidance on appropriate gift-giving practices. Such guidance should protect teachers from inappropriate expectations while also

shielding students and parents from financial pressure. Principals and teachers should feel comfortable declining excessively valuable gifts and explaining respectfully that a sincere message of appreciation is sufficient. School leadership must model the ethical restraint that students are expected to learn.

Ultimately, the question is not whether Orwaru deserves appreciation from her students. The question is what kind of culture Kenyan schools should cultivate. A principal may cherish a couch, but the greatest evidence of successful leadership is not the furniture presented by a graduating class. It is the character of the learners who leave the institution, the opportunities created for those who remain and the integrity of the educational environment that has been built. Let students reward their teachers with excellence, discipline and lifelong gratitude. Expensive gifts may make headlines, but the lasting measure of education is transformed lives, not material possessions.

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Uganda That is not rhetoric. It is the lived experience of the man writing this article. The author's father died on the cold cement outside an operating theatre at Mulago Hospital

Uganda's healthcare crisis: A nation that buries its people at the theatre door

Two personal tragedies expose the catastrophic cost of Uganda's failure to build a national health insurance system.



By: Mukama Phillip Kahigiriza
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Uganda has no functioning national health insurance scheme, and its citizens are dying and losing limbs at the doors of public hospitals while their leaders fly to Nairobi and New Delhi for treatment.

That is not rhetoric. It is the lived experience of the man writing this article. His father died on the cold cement outside an operating theatre at Mulago Hospital, waiting for surgical gloves and iodine that the state had failed to stock. The theatre stood ready. The doctors stood ready. The system did not. He did not die because medicine failed him. He died because planning failed him — decades of deliberate neglect dressed up as fiscal constraint. A man waited at the door of the place that was supposed to save him, and the door never opened.

Last week, a classmate of the author, a young civil servant barely into his career and described by those who know him as one of the most promising minds of his generation, was struck by a speeding vehicle on the Entebbe Express Highway. He lost his leg. He now lies in the accident and emergency ward at Mulago, on the same floor where that father breathed his last. Doctors have told his mother he will need plastic surgery and an artificial limb to walk again, to work again, to serve the country he had only just begun to serve. His starting government salary cannot cover a single night at a private hospital in Nairobi. The government he was serving had no plan for him. It never did.

These are not isolated tragedies. They are the daily arithmetic of a broken system. Visit Mulago at six in the morning and you will find a mother who delivered at midnight still lying on the floor, holding her newborn, because the beds are full. Beside her, a young man with a fractured leg is told to go and purchase



his own gloves, iodine and syringes from a private pharmacy before anyone will touch him. The government says healthcare is free. The hospital hands you a shopping list.

Travel to Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital and you find a motorcycle rider told the X-ray machine has been broken for three months. He must pay UGX 80,000 privately. He does not have it. He sits, his leg swelling, waiting for a miracle that should have been in the budget. According to available data, 53 percent of Ugandan families borrow money to pay medical bills. Twenty-one percent sell land, livestock or household assets to meet those costs. This is not healthcare. It is economic cannibalism. The state has effectively outsourced the right to life to whoever can afford it on a given morning.

The numbers behind the crisis are damning and have been damning for years. The World Health Organisation and Uganda's own Ministry of Health data show that households contribute 49 percent of all health financing in the country, donors 35 percent, and government a mere 15 percent. UNICEF puts health insurance coverage at just 1.1 percent of the population. Afrobarometer places it at one percent. That means 99 percent of Ugandans are one serious illness away from financial ruin. Twenty-two point eight percent of households already spend more than ten percent of their entire con-

sumption on health in a single year. Uganda allocates between 6.1 and 7.8 percent of its national budget to health, a figure that has barely shifted in two decades despite the Abuja Declaration of 2001, in which African governments — Uganda among them — pledged to commit at least 15 percent. The pledge was made. The budgets told a different story.

Uganda's troubled relationship with public health financing has a documented history. At independence, the country had one of the strongest public health systems on the continent. Then, in 1993, under pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, user fees were introduced as a condition of loan access. Those fees generated less than five percent of hospital budgets while triggering a dramatic collapse in health service utilisation across the country. By 2001, following the damning findings of the Participatory Poverty Assessment Report of 1999, user fees were abolished — ten days before a general election. Utilisation recovered. Funding did not. The result was free entry to empty shelves, a condition that has defined Uganda's public hospitals ever since.

Parliament passed the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill in March 2021. It was returned. The government has promised to re-table it every year since 2023. It has not. In the vacuum left by that inaction,

private insurers collected an estimated UGX 2 trillion in premiums in 2025 alone, with Jubilee Insurance recording UGX 131.68 billion in a single quarter — while routinely excluding pre-existing conditions, capping coverage at 65 years of age and limiting their networks almost entirely to the capital. The market is thriving. The patients are not.

The most bitter dimension of this failure is its selective application. When a permanent secretary develops a headache, he is transported to Nairobi Hospital. When a minister's child requires specialist care, the family flies to Apollo Hospital in New Delhi or Aga Khan in Nairobi. They know precisely what they are serving the public. That is why they do not consume it themselves. It resembles a restaurant whose owner insists the food is excellent but whose family has never been seen eating there.

Meanwhile, the state has found UGX 166.8 billion to purchase vehicles for 529 members of parliament, at UGX 315.3 million each. That figure alone could fund the construction of 13 to 14 community hospitals. The Parliamentary Commission will absorb UGX 944.745 billion. The combined budget of the presidency and parliament stands at UGX 1.648 trillion — nearly double the entire allocation to the Ministry of Health. The government has set aside UGX 83 billion for presiden-

tial donations and UGX 20.25 billion for fuel and vehicle maintenance at the Ministry of Finance alone. These are not the expenditure patterns of a country that cannot afford to care for its people. They are the expenditure patterns of a country that has decided not to.

This is not a poor country. It is a country with catastrophically poor priorities.

Rwanda, operating with considerably fewer resources, has achieved 90 percent health insurance coverage at approximately six US dollars per person per year. Uganda has Village Health Teams embedded in communities across the country, mobile money infrastructure that reaches villages where tarmac roads do not, and a population long accustomed to making small, regular payments for shared goods. Research indicates that a daily contribution of UGX 500 through mobile money is both acceptable and feasible for most Ugandan households. The architecture for a workable national scheme already exists. What is absent is political will.

The path forward does not require invention. Pass the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill with income-banded contributions modelled on the Pay As You Earn system. Have government fund premiums for the indigent directly. Regulate private insurers to eliminate exclusionary practices that deny coverage to the most vulnerable. Introduce a dedicated two percent levy on betting, alcohol, airtime and sugary drinks to provide a sustainable revenue stream for the health fund. Take enrolment to the village, communicated in Runyankole, Luganda and Acholi, through the same mobile money agents who already handle daily financial transactions for millions of Ugandans.

Public health insurance is not a favour the state extends to its citizens. It is a constitutional obligation and a debt that has been accumulating interest since 1978.

Uganda made its promise at Alma-Ata. It renewed that promise at Abuja. It has spent the intervening decades converting its hospitals into auction floors and their entrance steps into waiting graveyards, while reserving first-class seats to Nairobi for those who write the budgets. The man who signs the health ministry's allocation does not sleep in Mulago. He never has.

Today it was a father who died at the theatre door. Last week it was a young man who lost his leg on the highway to Entebbe. Tomorrow, if nothing changes, it will be someone you love.

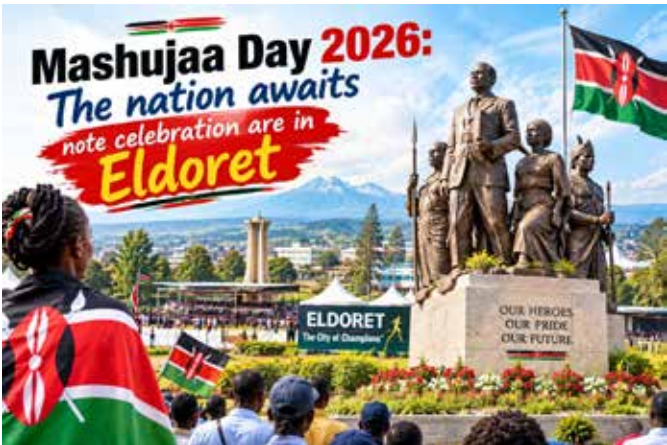
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Mashujaa Day 2026: The nation awaits

By Jeremiah Kingamu

Kenya marks Mashujaa Day today against a backdrop of economic strain, educational paralysis and a public growing visibly impatient with its leadership. The day honours those who fought for independence, but in 2026 the heroism most Kenyans understand is the daily grind of survival. Fuel prices have hit historic highs following recent hikes by the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority, driving up transport costs and pushing food prices beyond the reach of ordinary households. Manufacturers are absorbing shocks they can no longer pass quietly down the supply chain. Universities, meanwhile, remain paralysed by a lecturers' strike that has left thousands of students stranded, their exams, graduations and academic futures suspended in bureaucratic limbo. For a generation already



battered by unemployment and shrinking opportunity, the message from the state has felt less like support and more like abandonment. President William Ruto takes the podium today carrying the weight of those expectations. Kenyans will not be satisfied with ceremonial tributes and patriotic verse. They want a credible roadmap on fuel pricing, immediate relief on the cost of living, and a firm commitment to ending the univer-

sity crisis. They want governance, not performance. Mashujaa Day has always been a mirror held up to the nation. The fighters of the past demanded freedom. The citizens of today demand something equally fundamental: dignity, accountability and a leadership equal to the moment. The podium is set. Kenya is watching.

Preparing for the long holidays: Are parents ready?

By Mercy Njoki

Schools across Kenya are closing this week, sending millions of children home for more than two months. The question every parent should be asking today is not what the children will do — it is whether there is a plan. Eleven weeks is a long time. Without structure, it becomes a vacuum quickly filled by unchecked screen time, idle routines and fraying patience on both sides. Three practical steps can make the difference. First, manage social media access deliberately. A significant number of school-going children now have smartphones, smart televisions and internet connections. Without clear boundaries, the holiday becomes an eleven-week scroll. Parents should set defined hours for internet use and enforce them consistently — not as punishment, but as



habit-building. Second, arrange home tuition. A few hours of structured learning each week keeps young minds engaged, consolidates concepts that did not fully land during the term, and eases the return to school in January. It need not be expensive — a trusted neighbour, an older student or an organised group session works just as well as a private tutor. Third, plan for fun. Children need to rest, genuinely. A year

of academic pressure deserves a proper release. Swimming, visiting relatives, day trips and family activities cost little but return a great deal in energy and renewed enthusiasm. The holiday is an opportunity, not a problem. As the last bells ring across the country this week, the planning starts now.

The best time to plant a tree was 30 years ago. The second best time is now

By Simon Juma

The best time to plant a tree was 30 years ago. The second best time is now. This proverb is about the environment, but it is equally about leadership. In Trans Nzoia County, two villages tell the story plainly. In Siata Village, farmers sit in the sun complaining about high fertiliser costs, poor maize prices and roads that disappear after every election. In Big Tree Village, an entire community owes its name and identity to a single tree planted generations ago by men who thought beyond themselves. One act of foresight made a village famous. Decades of wrong choices made a county poorer. We planted bad seeds. We planted tribalism, corruption and the politics of person-



al gain. We asked whether a candidate shared our clan, not whether he had integrity. We treated elections as harvests rather than planting seasons. Small wonder the shade never came. But we cannot change 30 years ago. We can only change today. That means selecting seeds of principle over personality, competence over connection, and vision over short-term reward. It means understanding that voting is not the end of the

work — leadership, like a tree, demands continuous tending, accountability and strong institutions. The children in Siata and Big Tree Village will inherit whatever we plant now. In 2055, they will either sit in the shade of honest, visionary leadership or curse the same hot sun their parents cursed. The second best time is now. Plant wisely.

Mashujaa Day: Honouring Kenya's heroes and heroines

By Sharon Mumo

Kenya marks Mashujaa Day today, honouring the men and women whose courage, sacrifice and determination made independence possible — and challenging every living Kenyan to ask what they are doing with the freedom that was won. The word mashujaa means heroes in Kiswahili. Before 2010, the day was known as Kenyatta Day. The new Constitution renamed it deliberately, broadening recognition beyond one man to embrace the many — Dedan Kimathi, Mekatilili wa Menza, Harry Thuku, Tom Mboya and the countless unnamed fighters who endured imprisonment, suffering and death so that Kenya could attain independence on December 12, 1963. But Mashujaa Day was never meant to be only a backward glance. It celebrates living he-



roes too — the teacher in an under-resourced classroom, the nurse on a double shift, the farmer feeding a nation, the young entrepreneur refusing to wait for government to create opportunity. Heroism, as Kenya's history makes plain, is not confined to battlefields. That history makes today's failures harder to excuse. Corruption, unemployment, poverty and inequality persist not because Kenya lacks the tools

to fight them, but because too many of those entrusted with the nation's resources have chosen personal gain over public duty. The heroes of 1963 did not endure colonial prisons so that their successors could loot public coffers. Honouring the mashujaa means more than parades and speeches. It means finishing the work they started.

SPORTS NEWS

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Sports >> *The fate of African football's most coveted trophy hangs on arbitrators in Switzerland as a landmark verdict draws near.

CAS to rule on Senegal's AFCON title fight by end of November

By Martin Weche

The Court of Arbitration for Sport announced yesterday that its ruling on Senegal's appeal against the decision to strip the West African nation of the Africa Cup of Nations title and award it to Morocco is expected by the end of November, setting the stage for one of the most consequential verdicts in the history of African football.

The Switzerland-based body, which serves as the supreme court of international sport, confirmed that a closed-door hearing took place at its Lausanne headquarters on October 8, and that a panel of arbitrators is now deep in deliberations. "The CAS arbitrators have decided to issue a complete ruling which includes legal grounds, known as a CAS Award," the organisation said in a statement. "This process will require several weeks, with the CAS Award expected at the end of November 2026."

The dispute traces back to a night of extraordinary drama at the January 18 final in Rabat. Senegal appeared to have won the tournament when Pape Gueye scored in extra time to seal a 1-0 victory over the host nation. But the match had already descended into chaos long before Gueye's decisive strike. Late in normal time, with the score still goalless, referee Maguette Ndiaye awarded Morocco a penalty — a decision that prompted Senegal's players to walk off the pitch in protest. Sections of the Senegalese support attempted a pitch invasion, and play was suspended for nearly 20 minutes before the players returned to complete the match.

Senegal ultimately prevailed on the night, but the celebrations proved short-lived. In March, the Confederation of African Football overturned the result, awarding Morocco a 3-0 victory by default and handing the



CAF Africa Cup of Nations - Morocco 2025 - Final - Senegal v Morocco - Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, Rabat, Morocco

Atlas Lions the continental title. CAF cited the abandonment of the pitch by Senegal's players as the basis for its ruling, a decision that provoked fierce controversy across the continent and prompted Senegal's football federation to lodge an immediate appeal with CAS.

The case has since become a lightning rod for broader tensions within African football governance. Critics of CAF's ruling argue that punishing Senegal for protesting a questionable refereeing decision sets a troubling precedent, effectively penalising players for responding to what many observers considered an injustice on the field. Supporters of the decision counter that no team can be permitted to abandon a match mid-play without consequence, regardless of the grievance.

For Senegal, the stakes could scarcely be higher. The Lions of Teranga have long been one

of the continent's most celebrated footballing nations, and the January final in Rabat represented a rare opportunity to claim AFCON glory on foreign soil. Gueye's extra-time goal had appeared to deliver exactly that. Should CAS rule in Senegal's favour, the title would return to Dakar and the match result would be restored. A ruling against them would confirm Morocco as the rightful champions and close one of the most contested chapters in the tournament's modern history.

Morocco, for their part, have conducted themselves with characteristic restraint throughout the proceedings, making few public pronouncements while the legal process runs its course. The Atlas Lions, who have risen dramatically in global football standing since their historic run to the semi-finals of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, would regard an AFCON title on home

soil as a fitting addition to that legacy.

The CAS panel's decision to issue a full award with legal reasoning, rather than a summary ruling, signals that the arbitrators regard the matter as one of significant institutional importance. Such awards typically carry detailed analysis of the governing rules, the conduct of officials and the proportionality of sanctions — all of which will be scrutinised closely by football administrators, legal scholars and supporters across Africa.

With the verdict now weeks away, African football holds its breath. Whatever CAS decides, the ruling will reshape not only the record books but the standards by which on-field protests and referee decisions are managed at the continent's most prestigious tournament for years to come.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *The Uruguayan defender is thriving at Liverpool but insists it is too early to discuss a full transfer ahead of a crucial Champions League night.

Araujo sidesteps Liverpool permanency question as Anfield stint gathers momentum

By **Martin Weche**

Ronald Araujo said yesterday it is too early to discuss making his loan move to Liverpool permanent, even as the Uruguayan defender continues to impress in his role at Anfield under manager Andoni Iraola.

The former Barcelona captain, on loan from the Catalan giants, has settled quickly into Premier League life, establishing himself as first-choice right-back despite his well-documented preference for playing in the heart of defence. His performances across ten appearances have earned him considerable goodwill among the Anfield faithful, and the question of his long-term future has inevitably begun to circulate. Liverpool hold a £47 million option to sign Araujo on a permanent basis, a figure that will concentrate minds in the boardroom given that the defender turns 28 in March.

For now, however, Araujo is not entertaining the conversation. “It’s very early to talk about these things,” he said ahead of Tuesday’s Champions League home fixture against Villarreal. “I’m really happy to be here, my family are also very happy, but it’s a bit early to be talking about these things.” The measured response was consistent with a man who appears to have arrived at Anfield with a clear sense of purpose, keen to let his football do the talking before any contractual discussions take shape.

His adaptation to English football has been notably smooth for a player making his Premier League debut at 27. Araujo acknowledged that the transition was never going to be straightforward, but suggested his experience of performing under intense scrutiny at Barcelona equipped him for the particular pressures that come with wearing a Liverpool shirt. “Coming to Liverpool, it’s not easy,” he

said. “There are those demands, that responsibility. Personally I’d already experienced that at Barcelona. It depends on the personality of each player and how they face that challenge. I knew it was a new challenge coming to the Premier League but from the first moment I arrived I had no doubts I had to give everything here. And that’s how I live it.”

Those words carry the unmistakable ring of a footballer who has found his footing. Araujo’s composure in possession, his reading of the game and his ability to defend aggressively without recklessness have made him one of Liverpool’s more consistent performers in a season still finding its rhythm. “It’s not easy to be in big sides,” he added, “but that’s what we came to do. That’s the work we have to do.”

The timing of Tuesday’s match lends his comments additional weight. Iraola’s Liverpool enter the Champions League group stage fixture against Villarreal sitting fifth in the league phase standings, having won both of their opening two matches — against Atletico Madrid and Austrian side LASK. A third consecutive victory would significantly strengthen their position and send a statement of intent to the rest of the competition. For Araujo, it represents another opportunity to demonstrate that his quality is not diminished by playing out of his preferred position.

Whether Liverpool will ultimately trigger the purchase option is a question with no straightforward answer. At £47 million for a player who will be approaching the latter half of his twenties, the investment demands careful consideration, particularly if Araujo continues to be deployed at right-back rather than in the central role he covets. Liverpool’s recruitment team is renowned for its analytical rigour, and the com-



Ronald Araujo

ing months will likely determine how highly Iraola and the club’s sporting directors value Araujo’s long-term contribution to their plans.

For the moment, Araujo’s focus is squarely on the present. The loan spell that raised eyebrows when it was first announced — a Barcelona captain swapping the Camp Nou for Anfield in search of first-team football — has thus far vindicated those who argued he simply needed a fresh envi-

ronment to rediscover his best form. His family have settled, the fans have taken to him, and the football has spoken for itself.

What happens at the end of the season is, as Araujo himself put it, a conversation for another day.

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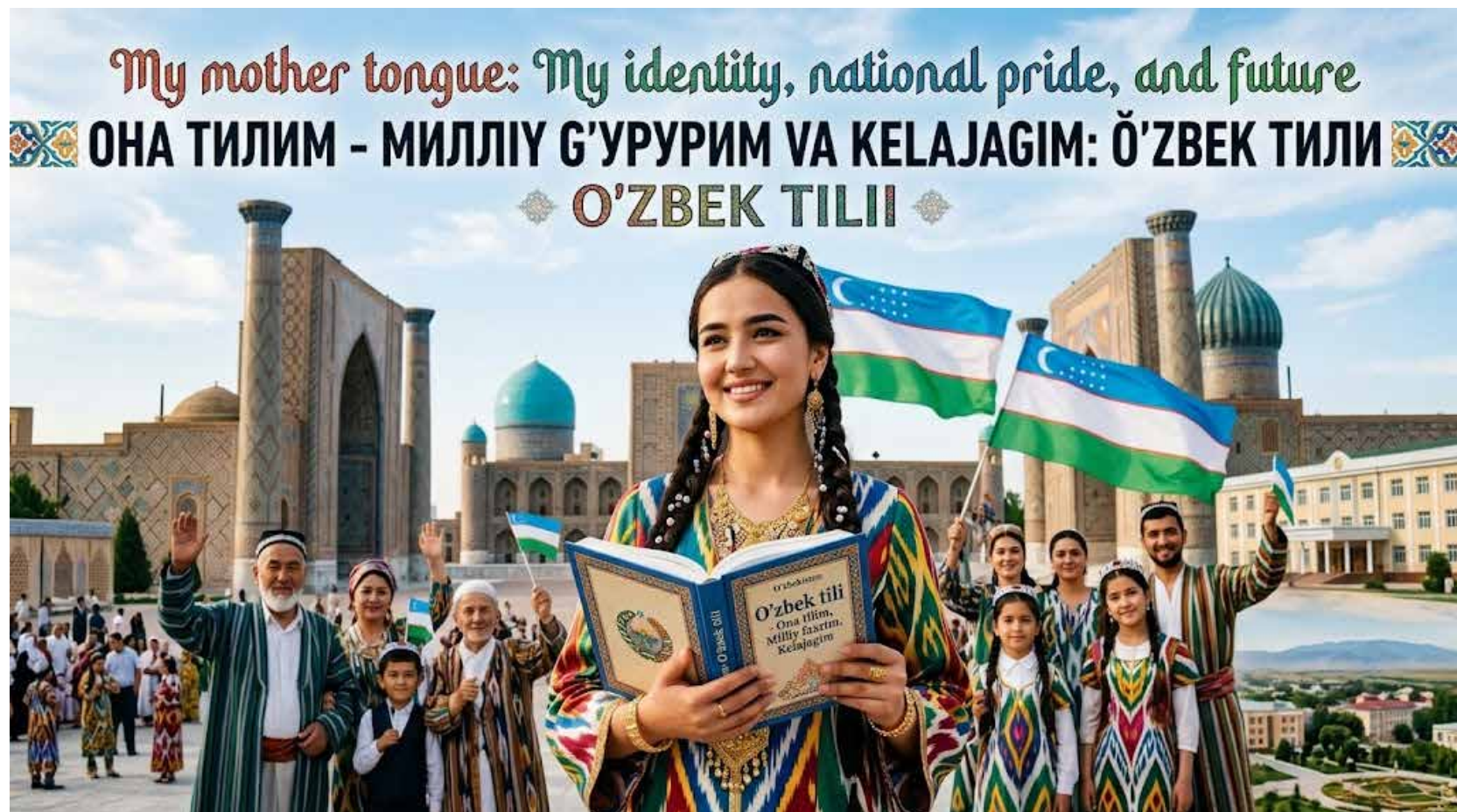




My mother tongue: My identity, national pride, and future



By: Ravshanova Niginabonu
@themtkenyatimes



Worth Noting:

- My mother tongue, the Uzbek language, is not just a means of communication for me, but an incomparable treasure that unites my entire existence, national pride, great history, and future.
- The Uzbek language belongs to the Turkic language family and is distinguished by its attractiveness, clarity, expressiveness, and unique grammatical structure. Its centuries-old history reflects the difficult journey of our people. The great thinker Alisher Navoi played an incomparable role in the development of the Uzbek language. Through his immortal works, Navoi proved to the whole world how powerful the Turkic language is. His historical heritage continues to be significant even today.

Every language is not just a collection of words. A person begins to understand their identity by first knowing and learning their own language and history. Every nation has a priceless treasure that represents its identity and culture and passes its history from generation to generation. This is the mother tongue. Every person introduces the values, traditions, and culture of their people, which have been formed over centuries, to the world through their own language. Language is an important means that elevates a nation, introduces it to the world, and determines its present and future.

My mother tongue, the Uzbek language, is not just a means of communication for me, but an incomparable treasure that unites my entire existence, national pride, great history, and future.

The Uzbek language belongs to the Turkic language family and is distinguished by its attractiveness, clarity, expressiveness, and unique grammatical structure. Its centuries-old

history reflects the difficult journey of our people. The great thinker Alisher Navoi played an incomparable role in the development of the Uzbek language. Through his immortal works, Navoi proved to the whole world how powerful the Turkic language is. His historical heritage continues to be significant even today. Just as every language has its own characteristics, the difference between Uzbek and other languages is that it is possible to form new words and change the meanings of words by adding suffixes. Most importantly, in Uzbek, it is possible to use one word with different meanings.

Nowadays, learning foreign languages and reaching the heights of modern science are the main responsibilities of every young person. Learning foreign languages creates an important opportunity to introduce the Uzbek language internationally. It is the responsibility of each of us to bring our mother tongue to the international stage. For this purpose, we can increase its in-

ternational reputation by translating our literature into different languages, teaching our language to foreigners, and developing various kinds of Uzbek content in the digital world. Indeed, if our language resonates throughout the world, our national values and history will spread even further. Our homeland will rise one more step. Language unites an entire nation. Without language, there is no nation, and where a nation disappears, the concept of homeland gradually fades away. Therefore, we must cherish our Uzbek language, our mother tongue, preserve it in its pure form, and introduce it to the world. Indeed, we must ensure that our language is included not among endangered languages but among developing languages. The purpose of introducing the Uzbek language to the world is not only to show our history and values, but also to teach other nations a new language, new literature, and a new culture.

Although the Uzbek language may not be among the most developed

languages in the world today, my mother tongue will always stand at the highest level for me, at all times and in every situation. I am proud of my incomparable language. The Uzbek language is our identity, our pride, our bright path to the world, and our future.

Biography

Ravshanova Niginabonu was born in the Urgut District of the Samar-kand Region, Republic of Uzbekistan. She is currently studying at a specialized school within the agency system. She strives to acquire new knowledge, work on self-improvement, develop her abilities, and discover new opportunities. Her main goal is to become a diplomat in the future and make a meaningful contribution to the development and prosperity of her motherland, Uzbekistan.