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Countdown 2027 

2027 is already here. So where is the plan?



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Nairobi lights candles for Raila in Uhuru Park tribute

BY MKT REPORTER

@themtkenyetimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

Hundreds of Nairobians gathered at Uhuru Park yesterday evening for a candlelight vigil in honour of ODM leader Raila Odinga, in a ceremony organised by the party and attended by senior officials and city leaders. ODM National Chairperson Gladys Wanga and Secretary General Catherine Omanyoma led the party's delegation, joined by Nairobi Governor Johnson Sakaja at the head of a broad-based assembly of city leaders who set aside political differences to mark the occasion together.

The vigil carried the quiet weight of genuine reflection. Candles flickered across the park as speakers recalled a political career defined less by the offices Raila sought than by the causes he refused to abandon — multiparty democracy, constitutional reform, the rights of ordinary Kenyans in moments when defending those rights came at considerable personal cost. Much of the Kenya present at that park — its contested freedoms, its hard-won constitutional architecture, its expectation that power must answer to the people — bears the imprint of battles he chose to fight when others calculated the safer path.

Nairobi did not gather to mourn a defeat. It gathered to remember what conviction looks like, and to acknowledge, by candlelight, that some legacies are built not in office but in sacrifice.



Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times



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NEWS IN BRIEF



Forty-three families from Samburu East yesterday petitioned the National Assembly's Security Committee for KSh70 million in compensation after police killed more than 700 of their livestock during a security operation in the county. Governor Lati Lelelit, who led the delegation to Parliament, said the victims were innocent and noted that the Interior Cabinet Secretary had already acknowledged that transgressions occurred. "We are not asking for too much, but compensation for their mistakes," Lelelit said. For pastoralist communities whose entire livelihoods are anchored in their herds, the losses carry consequences that extend far beyond economics — disrupting school fees, food security and the psychological stability of families who have lost everything. Residents have called on President William Ruto to intervene personally.



The Standard Group condemned a protest outside its Mombasa Road offices in Nairobi yesterday, accusing a group of youths claiming to represent President William Ruto and the Kenya Kwanza administration of harassing staff and hurling profanities at the media house. The company described the incident as a direct assault on media freedom, invoking Articles 33 and 34 of the Constitution in its defence. It alleged the same group had previously targeted KTN and other Standard Group platforms over their coverage of the administration. "We condemn this intrusion by paid goons ready to harm our journalists and staff," the company said, commending police for preventing protesters from entering the premises. The Standard Group said it would not be intimidated and would continue reporting without fear or favour.



The Linda Mwananchi Movement secured the reservation of its preferred party name on Wednesday after the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties approved the application following a tribunal ruling that overturned an earlier rejection. Registrar John Cox Lorionokou confirmed the approval in a letter dated October 1, reserving the name for 90 days under the Political Parties Act. The breakthrough followed a September 30 Political Parties Disputes Tribunal judgment that set aside the Registrar's August decision, which had cited name similarity concerns with the Liberty National Democratic Alliance. The tribunal found that the LINDA reservation had lapsed after its promoters failed to file for provisional registration within the statutory 90-day window. Suba South MP Michael Caroli Omondi, former Law Society president Faith Odhiambo and activist Pauline Njoroge had challenged the original rejection.



A pregnant woman died and her husband was seriously injured in Mwea, Kirinyaga County, yesterday after the couple were allegedly thrown from a moving police vehicle following a dispute over a KSh1,000 fare demand. Catherine Mwende Njeru died at the scene while her husband, Anthony Muturi, survived with serious injuries after the two accepted a lift from a police Land Cruiser from Itangi Police Station in the early hours of the morning. Muturi said officers refused to stop at their destination and demanded payment. Angry residents blocked the Piai-South Ngariama road and barred police from retrieving the body until authorities pledged action. The two officers involved are being sought as detectives from Wang'uru Police Station have launched investigations into the incident.



University lecturers across Kenya downed tools yesterday, disrupting teaching and learning at public universities after talks over the 2025–2029 Collective Bargaining Agreement collapsed between the Universities Academic Staff Union and Kenya University Staff Union on one side and the Inter-Public Universities Councils Consultative Forum on the other. The unions rejected a proposed KSh9.76B settlement and a four per cent annual salary increment, insisting that employment terms must be negotiated through a CBA rather than imposed through government circulars. Staff shortages and unsustainable workloads featured prominently among the grievances. UASU Secretary General Constantine Wasonga warned the strike could be prolonged, drawing comparisons to a nine-month industrial action in 2003 that ultimately secured a 116 per cent salary increment for lecturers. Negotiations had broken down the previous day.



The High Court yesterday quashed notices issued by the Judicial Service Commission requiring seven Supreme Court judges to respond to removal complaints, ruling that the commission had bypassed a mandatory preliminary assessment before triggering the process. A three-judge bench declared the JSC's communications unconstitutional and barred the commission from taking any further steps on the complaints. The ruling protects Chief Justice Martha Koome, Deputy Chief Justice Philomena Mwili and Justices Mohammed Ibrahim, Smokin Wanjala, Njoki Ndung'u, Isaac Lenaola and William Ouko. The court found that the JSC had lumped all seven judges together in a flawed omnibus process without specifying which constitutional grounds applied to each individual, violating their right to fair administrative action under Article 47 of the Constitution.

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Business Jambojet chief executive Karanja Ndegwa said the airline was returning with the experience of its first chapter on the route and a stronger operational foundation

Jambojet returns to Entebbe with daily flights and fares from KSh22,950

BY Grace Wanja

@themkenyaintimes

Jambojet resumed daily flights between Nairobi and Entebbe yesterday, relaunching a route it first operated in 2018 and positioning itself to capture the growing movement of people and commerce between Kenya and Uganda with fares starting at KSh22,950 one way.

The first flight departed Jomo Kenyatta International Airport on Wednesday morning, marking the formal return of the 65-minute connection to Entebbe International Airport. The relaunch was accompanied by a flag-off event that drew airline leadership, government officials and tourism representatives — a gathering that reflected the significance attached to the route beyond the commercial interests of a single carrier. For those present, the occasion represented something larger: the gradual stitching together of East Africa's aviation fabric at a price point that ordinary travellers, not just corporate executives, can access.

Jambojet chief executive Karanja Ndegwa said the airline was returning with the accumulated experience of its first chapter on the route and a considerably stronger operational foundation beneath it. "We are returning to Entebbe with the experience we gained from our first chapter on the route, a densified network and a clear ambition to make regional travel more accessible and reliable," Ndegwa said.



The Permanent Secretary, State Department for Aviation and Aerospace Development, Ms. Tere-siah Mbaika (centre) leads Jambojet management and guests in celebrating the inaugural flight to Uganda.

"We are therefore bringing our low-cost proposition together with direct, reliable and on-time connectivity." The carrier plans to begin with daily frequencies and increase services as demand develops, a cautious approach that reflects both the lessons of the original service and the realities of a route that must be built as much as it must be launched.

The commercial logic is straightforward enough. Kenya and Uganda are bound by significant flows of trade, tourism and family travel, and the two capitals sit less than an hour apart by air — a journey that overland travellers can spend an entire day completing. For Ugandan travellers, the Jambojet service provides

a direct link into Nairobi and onward access to the airline's domestic network, which covers Mombasa, Diani, Malindi and Lamu. Kenyan travellers, in turn, gain a convenient direct route to Kampala for business, tourism and leisure. The airline said it would work with travel agents, corporate clients and tourism organisations in both markets to develop the route and identify further opportunities for regional connectivity.

Kenya Tourism Board chief executive June Chepkemei welcomed the resumption, framing it as an opportunity to build cross-border visitor itineraries that neither country could as easily offer alone. "This Entebbe-Nairobi service will make it easier

for visitors to combine experiences across our two countries," Chepkemei said. "A traveller can enjoy Uganda's wildlife, culture and natural beauty, then connect conveniently to Kenya's savannahs, mountains, cities and coast." She added that visitors arriving in Kenya would have a more accessible gateway to Uganda and the wider Great Lakes region, and that Jambojet's daily service would give the market the frequency and flexibility it needed to grow meaningfully.

Jambojet board director Patricia Ithau placed the Entebbe relaunch within a broader shift in the airline's identity and ambition. Having carried more than 10 million passengers since its founding

and built a commanding position in Kenya's domestic aviation market, the carrier's focus is no longer purely internal. "When Jambojet started operations, our role was fundamentally about making air travel more accessible within Kenya. Today, having carried more than 10 million passengers and built a strong domestic network, our ambition is expanding. We want to connect more people, more markets and more opportunities across East Africa," Ithau said. She was careful to frame regional expansion not as a numbers exercise but as something more considered. "Regional growth is not simply about adding routes. It is about building a network that responds to genuine demand and creates sustainable value for the markets we serve. The return to Entebbe is one step in that journey."

The relaunch drew a pointed endorsement from government. Aviation and Aerospace Development Principal Secretary Teresia Mbaika said the expansion of air connectivity supported Kenya's broader ambition to entrench itself as the region's dominant aviation hub. "Today, we are not simply celebrating a new flight schedule. We are celebrating the opening of another gateway through which people can travel, businesses can thrive, investors can explore opportunities, tourists can discover our region, and communities can strengthen their links with the wider East African market and beyond,"

Mbaika said, commending the Jambojet team for what she described as an important investment in connectivity.

The relaunch arrives during a period of considerable momentum for the carrier. Jambojet expanded its active fleet to 11 aircraft in April, welcomed its 10 millionth passenger in June and recorded an on-time performance rate of 86.45 per cent in July — a figure that compares favourably with regional peers. By that same month the airline held an estimated 57 per cent share of Kenya's domestic aviation market, a dominance that gives it both the operational depth and the commercial credibility to pursue regional ambitions without overstretching its core business.

What the Entebbe route ultimately represents, beyond the schedules and the fares and the flag-off photographs, is a bet on East African integration — the idea that closer, cheaper and more reliable connections between the region's cities will generate demand that does not yet fully exist, and serve communities whose mobility has long been constrained by cost. At KSh22,950 one way, Jambojet is making that bet affordable enough to test properly.

The Nairobi-Entebbe service operates daily, with tickets available through the airline's direct channels and travel partners across both countries.

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Three Bikeke schools unite in prayer ahead of national exams



St Teresa's day teachers cake cutting as they celebrate the day

BY Daniel Kipchumba
@themkenyatiimes

Catholic institutions mark Saint Teresa's Day with mass, celebrations and a shared pledge on discipline and results

By Daniel Kipchumba

Three Catholic-sponsored schools in Bikeke came together yesterday to mark Saint Teresa's Day in a joint celebration that combined religious observance, cultural performances and a collective dedication of candidates sitting national examinations later this year.

The annual occasion brings together Bikeke Comprehensive School, St Teresa's Bikeke Girls Senior School and Bikeke Boys Senior School — three institutions that share a Catholic founding and a common commitment to academic and moral development. This year's host was Bikeke Boys Senior School, whose principal, Bernard Masinde, oversaw an event that drew clergy, teachers, students and guests from across the three campuses.

The day's programme included a Holy Mass, prayers, songs, dance and the formal dedication of candidates preparing for this year's Kenya Primary School Education Assessment, the Kenya Junior Secondary Education Assessment and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. The liturgy was presided over by Episcopal Vicar Fr Moses Nandakonya, alongside Parish Priest Fr George Sindani, school chaplain Fr James Nandakonya Omasete, Fr Moses Wekesa and Fr

Cyprian Tum. Seminarians Laban Kipchumba and Kizito also took part, supported by catechists Elia Tabalia and James Simiyu.

All three principals used the occasion to call for prayers and Saint Teresa's intercession over their institutions. Masinde emphasised the importance of discipline as a foundation for meaningful academic results, while St Teresa's Girls principal Eva Wendy Tsuma expressed confidence in her candidates and looked forward to strong performances in the forthcoming assessments. Bikeke Comprehensive School head of institution Ronald Francis Toili Wamalwa extended warm wishes to all candidates and joined colleagues in marking World Teachers Day, saluting the dedication of teachers across the three schools.

Wamalwa also shared personal news, informing those gathered that he had represented the county at the regional World Teachers Day competition, placing fifth in the Rift Valley region in the Sustainable Development Educator category. He is set to travel to Nairobi on Sunday for the national celebrations at Kasarani Stadium.

The three principals used the occasion to reaffirm their commitment to closer collaboration, pledging to work together for the continued growth and wellbeing of the Bikeke schools community. A vote of thanks was delivered by Cedric Ogetto before guests and students were treated to a meal at the boys' school.



North Imenti businessman and resident Paul Thurania Addresses the press | Photo: Brian Gitonga

Dawood's "no one can beat me" boast draws anger in North Imenti

Businessman tells MP to thank voters, not taunt them — but urges residents to let him finish his term

BY Brian Gitonga
@themkenyatiimes

A North Imenti businessman has publicly rebuked area Member of Parliament Rahim Dawood over remarks about the 2027 election, accusing the legislator of taking years of constituent support for granted with comments that residents found dismissive and arrogant.

Paul Thurania, speaking in Meru town yesterday, took direct aim at Dawood's reported declaration that no one had been born capable of unseating him, saying such language was unbecoming of a leader who had relied on the same voters to send him to Parliament. "The thing that hurts us most is the comments by our MP, Rahim Dawood. Instead of thanking the people, he is making remarks that appear to insult us," Thurania said.

He said residents had expected gratitude, not bravado. "We were shocked to hear Rahim saying that no woman in Meru has given birth to someone who can oppose him. We expected him to appreciate us for the years we have support-

ed him, rather than make such remarks."

Despite the sharp criticism, Thurania stopped well short of calling for Dawood's removal before his term ends. He said residents should allow the MP to complete his current term and focus on delivering development rather than dragging the constituency into premature political battles. Voters, he added, would have their say at the ballot in 2027. "We do not want to disturb Rahim. We want to give him time to work because his term is not yet over. We want him to complete his term as we also prepare ourselves," he said.

Thurania said residents were already quietly assessing what kind of leadership they would want beyond the current term and should organise themselves carefully in the period ahead.

Turning to county affairs, Thurania offered measured praise for Governor Mutuma M'Ethgingia, saying he had observed tangible progress in hospitals, roads and other public services since the governor took office. "Even though everything

cannot be completed at once, I can see work being done compared with the situation before Governor Mutuma M'Ethgingia took office," he said.

He also welcomed the ongoing redevelopment of Gakoromone Market and urged residents not to allow political differences to obstruct projects designed to serve the constituency. Thurania alleged that some opposition to the market project was politically motivated and urged residents to separate development from political competition, arguing that blocking such initiatives would harm both current and future generations. "We should not deny ourselves projects that the national government has chosen to bring to us. Let us stop making unnecessary noise and allow these developments to proceed," he said.

Construction of the KSh1.2B Gakoromone Market is under way, with traders relocated to temporary sites to allow the redevelopment to proceed.

Politics Somewhere in this political chessboard, there is a danger that Kenya’s most important player disappears entirely: the ordinary citizen

2027 is already here. So where is the plan?

Kenya’s politicians are assembling coalitions and calculating tickets — but nobody is telling the country what they actually intend to do with power

BY Levis Wangamati
@themkenyatimes

Kenya has a peculiar political habit. The next election is discussed long before the current political questions have been answered. The ballot may still be months away, but the machinery is already running. Leaders are travelling, alliances are being negotiated and political camps are calculating who should occupy which position when the music stops. The language of 2027 is growing louder than the language of 2026, while ordinary Kenyans continue negotiating the very different realities of today.

The signals are now impossible to ignore. Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka, Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna and former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang’i have all been linked to efforts aimed at producing a single opposition presidential candidate for the 2027 general election. Gatanga MP Edward Muriu has reportedly been tasked with preparing a framework for co-operation. The move confirms that opposition leaders are thinking seriously about how to organise before the next electoral contest arrives.

But that development does not answer the hardest question. Agreeing that there should be one candidate is considerably easier than agreeing on who that candidate should be. The opposition’s dilemma is not simply about unity. It is about ambition, trust, ideology, regional calculations and the difficult mathematics of coalition politics. Several leaders are positioning themselves simultaneously, while different groups attempt to determine how their interests can fit into a single arrangement without something giving way.

Somewhere in this political chessboard, there is a danger that Kenya’s most important player disappears entirely: the ordinary citizen. A young person looking for work does not wake up wondering which politician has secured which coalition position. A parent struggling with school fees is not concerned about who has negotiated the running mate slot. A patient searching for affordable healthcare is not impressed merely because politicians have managed to sit around one table. The Kenyan



Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna, Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka, and former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang’i

voter is not a pawn to be repositioned whenever political calculations shift. The question that should follow every political announcement is therefore a simple one: what exactly is being offered to the country? Political parties have every right to negotiate alliances and build coalitions within the law, and leaders are entitled to pursue the presidency. But political unity becomes meaningful to citizens only when it connects to a clear programme for governing. Without that connection, unity risks becoming a mathematical arrangement designed primarily to win an election rather than a national agreement about how Kenya should actually be run.

Kenya has seen grand alliances before. Politicians who once appeared permanently opposed have shared platforms, photographs and microphones when an election approached, only to rediscover their differences after the votes were counted. Manifestos filled with carefully worded promises have given way to distant memories once campaigns ended. The country should understand by now that political chemistry on a campaign trail is not the same thing as a governing philosophy. A coalition is not a programme.

The emerging 2027 contest must

therefore move beyond the question of who can assemble the biggest political crowd. It must ask what each formation intends to do with the country once the campaign music stops. How will Kenya create sustainable employment for millions of young people? What will be done about the cost of living? How will public healthcare become more reliable and more accessible? What is the plan for the country’s debt burden? How will corruption be confronted beyond speeches? These are not questions that should appear only when politicians need votes. They are Kenyan questions — and they are asked every day, in homes, markets, hospitals and classrooms across the country.

They concern the student in a crowded lecture hall wondering what happens after graduation. The boda boda rider trying to pay school fees from an unpredictable daily income. The small trader whose business survives from one day to the next. The farmer facing rising production costs and uncertain markets. The millions of young Kenyans who have been told repeatedly that they are the country’s future but are still waiting to understand when that future is supposed to begin.

President William Ruto’s adminis-

tration is already positioning itself for the next contest and has challenged the opposition to present what it describes as a coherent agenda. That challenge deserves a response built on substance rather than another round of political slogans. The opposition has an opportunity to tell Kenyans not merely why it disagrees with the current government, but what it would do differently, how it would finance those commitments and what mechanisms would prevent the same problems from returning under a different name.

That is where political competition becomes genuinely useful. A functioning democracy gives citizens real alternatives. One side explains its record. Another explains its alternative. Citizens examine both and decide. The problem begins when politics becomes so consumed by personalities that policies become secondary. Kenya does not need another election in which the central question is who is standing beside whom on a stage. It needs one in which citizens can understand what each political formation actually intends to do with power.

A coalition can produce an impressive photograph and still leave fundamental questions unanswered. A rally can fill a stadium and say nothing

about how a government would create jobs, strengthen institutions or make public services work. Numbers matter in elections, but numbers do not run a country. At some point every political formation must move from arithmetic to administration, from mobilisation to policy and from promises to measurable commitments.

This matters most for young Kenyans. For a generation that has grown up amid economic uncertainty, political promises are increasingly judged against lived experience. Young people want opportunities but they also want dignity — to work, to build businesses, to access education and to participate meaningfully in the country’s future. They do not need politicians to tell them they are the leaders of tomorrow. They need a political system that gives them reason to believe tomorrow will actually be better than today.

That means the 2027 conversation must become bigger than the presidential ticket. Kenya should be discussing the quality of Parliament, county governments, independent institutions, public procurement, the judiciary, electoral integrity and the accountability of public officials at every level. Presidential politics matters enormously, but Kenya’s problems do not begin and end at State House. Government is ultimately experienced through the hospital, the classroom, the police station, the county office, the market, the farm and the workplace. That is where political promises eventually meet reality.

The opposition’s attempt to formulate a single ticket will face a test far greater than choosing one name. The leaders must demonstrate that their unity can survive disagreement, competing ambitions and difficult negotiation. They must explain how decisions will be made, how responsibilities will be shared and how disputes will be resolved. Most importantly, they must show Kenyans that their cooperation rests on something more substantial than the shared desire to defeat another political camp.

The same standard applies to the governing side. Kenya should not

Teachers Sustainable agriculture educator carries regional honour to Kasarani after placing fifth across Rift Valley

Bikeke teacher reaches national finals in World Teachers Day contest

BY Daniel Kipchumba
@themtkenyaintimes

A head teacher from western Kenya has earned a place at the national World Teachers Day celebrations in Nairobi after placing fifth in the Rift Valley region in the Sustainable Development Educator category, putting his school firmly on the national map.

Ronald Francis Toili Wamalwa, head of institution at Bikeke Comprehensive School, will be among educators recognised at Kasarani Stadium in Nairobi tomorrow, after a competition that drew participants from across the country through a rigorous

multi-stage selection process.

The contest began at sub-county level, with the top three finishers in each category advancing to county competitions. County winners then proceeded to regional level, where the top five in each category qualified for the national finals. Across seven regions — with the Rift Valley divided into northern and southern zones, each covering seven counties — competitors were assessed across 13 categories. The regional round was held at Moi Girls High School in Eldoret.

Wamalwa's entry in the Sustainable Development Educator category was built

around an impressive body of environmental and agricultural work at Bikeke Comprehensive School. His achievements include establishing a one-million-tree nursery project, operating as a certified herbal practitioner with clients across Kenya and beyond, and transforming the school's grounds through innovative gardening practices. He has championed environmental conservation using waste plastic and other recycled materials for crop propagation, organised Farmers Field Days to pass practical agricultural skills to the wider community, and introduced a Moringa seedlings



Mr Francis Toili HOI Bikeke at the word teachers day held at Eldoret



World Teachers Day

nursery project with a target of 30,000 seedlings. His work also includes the cultivation of spices and active participation in the Presidential Award Scheme through the school's 4-K Club.

The Sustainable Development Educator category recognises teachers whose work

addresses climate change, promotes food security and advances environmental conservation — challenges that sit at the heart of Kenya's development agenda.

Wamalwa's progression to the national stage is the latest in a series of achievements that have brought recogni-

tion to Bikeke Comprehensive School, a institution that continues to distinguish itself through innovation and community impact well beyond the classroom.

2027 is already here. So where is the plan?

Kenya's politicians are assembling coalitions and calculating tickets — but nobody is telling the country what they actually intend to do with power

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be asked to choose between competing personalities without being offered competing visions. Every formation seeking power should face the same questions: what will you change, what will you retain, what will it cost, who will benefit and what will stop your promises from becoming the next government's excuses?

Those questions may not generate the loudest rally or trend on social media, but they are the ones that matter after election day. Campaigns end, posters come down and political songs leave the

streets. What remains is the hospital that either has medicine or does not, the school that either has teachers or does not, the economy that either creates opportunity or does not and the institution that either serves citizens or frustrates them.

The 2027 campaign has already begun. That is now a reality of Kenyan politics, and there is nothing unusual about it. But there is still time to demand something better from it. Let politicians negotiate their coalitions. Let parties calculate their numbers. Let presidential aspirants make their ambitions known. That is part of democracy. But let citizens ask the harder questions — because an election

should not simply be a contest over who occupies an office. It should be a national conversation about what that office will be used to accomplish.

Do not just tell Kenyans who is coming together. Tell them what those leaders are coming together to do. Do not just tell us who will carry the flag. Tell us what is written beneath it. Do not just ask for votes. Explain what your promises will cost, which institutions will deliver them and what will hold you accountable when you fall short.

Kenya has enough slogans, political photographs and carefully rehearsed speeches. What the country needs now is an agenda.

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Dangote Refinery For some residents, the refinery is not just something being built on the coast. It is shaping how they think about the businesses they could build around it

From Lamu to the region: What the Dangote Refinery could mean for Kenya's energy economy

BY Oduor Rosequillet Nabwire

@themkenyaintimes

asi village, on Lamu's mainland, life has long revolved around activities that sustain the local community. Homes, farms and small businesses sit within a landscape that is now being drawn into one of Kenya's biggest industrial developments.

A few kilometres away, construction on the Dangote East Africa Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals project at Lamu Port has begun. The investment is valued at about 16 billion US dollars and is expected to create jobs, drive demand for goods and services and support infrastructure development.

For some residents, the refinery is not just something being built on the coast. It is shaping how they think about the businesses they could build around it.

Sobana Aidarus is already planning for a refinery that has yet to produce a single drop of fuel. The local entrepreneur is thinking about the thousands of workers expected to arrive and what they will need once they get there.

Food is one of his answers. Aidarus is considering setting up an industrial catering business to serve the refinery workforce. In an interview with the Daily Nation, he said he was looking beyond fuel and direct employment to the smaller businesses that could grow around the investment.

It is a modest business idea beside a 16 billion US dollar investment.

But it captures a question being asked across Lamu: when a development this big arrives, how much of the activity around it will reach the people who already live and work there?

For Aidarus, the answer may start with a kitchen, a work-

force and a business of his own.

For Kenya, the implications extend far beyond Lamu.

At the groundbreaking ceremony on September 30, 2026, the scale and timeline of the facility were outlined. It is designed to process up to 700,000 barrels of crude oil a day, with completion targeted within about 40 months.

The wider development is planned to include petrochemical facilities and up to 1,000 megawatts of power generation. What is taking shape in Lamu is therefore an industrial complex, not simply a place where crude oil is turned into fuel.

But the refinery's impact will not end at its gates.

Thousands of workers will need food, accommodation, transport and other services. Contractors will also need local suppliers, creating opportunities for businesses involved in logistics, technical services and manufacturing as construction progresses.

The project is expected to create more than 60,000 jobs, while Dangote Group has also announced plans for a training school in Lamu that is expected to train 1,000 people.

The training is important because the longer-term issue is not only how many people will find work during construction, but whether local workers will gain skills they can use beyond the project.

And that brings the refinery to the port.

Lamu Port is part of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, which links the coast with northern Kenya and neighbouring countries. The refinery will give the port another major role.

President William Ruto has also linked the refinery to Lamu Port and the wider LAPSSET Corridor, pointing to opportunities for transport-

ers, engineers, contractors, service providers and manufacturers.

Lamu's deep-water berths provide the access needed for large vessels carrying crude and other cargo. The refinery is expected to source crude from outside Kenya, including other African producers, and supply refined petroleum products to Kenya and markets across the region.

Kenya currently imports refined petroleum products to meet much of its domestic demand.

President William Ruto said the country spent KSh530 billion on petroleum product imports over the previous year. He also cautioned that a refinery would not make that expenditure disappear overnight. Kenya would still need to buy crude, refine it and get the finished products to consumers at competitive prices.

The issue is what happens to the value created along that supply chain when more refining takes place in Kenya.

More of the processing would happen locally, while storage, transport, manufacturing and engineering could grow around it.

But the story does not stop at Kenya's borders.

Uganda is pursuing its own 60,000-barrel-per-day refinery at Hoima. President Yoweri Museveni has said Uganda will continue with the facility while supporting the Lamu investment, arguing that East Africa needs more refineries to process its resources and create jobs.

As refining capacity expands in the region, another issue comes into view: how will petroleum products move between countries and markets, and what will this mean for regional trade?

For Kenya, the ambition extends beyond producing fuel for domestic consumers. Its significance will also depend



President William Ruto and Nigerian industrialist Aliko Dangote

on how effectively the country connects the refinery to regional markets and trade routes.

Dangote Group's Aliko Dangote has placed the investment within that wider industrialisation agenda, describing it as "Africa coming together to build Africa."

But those benefits remain projections until the facility is built and operational. Its eventual impact will depend on how competitively it performs and how efficiently its products move across borders.

For some people living closest to the development, however, the immediate concern is the land on which the refinery is being built. For Kanywa Kamunde, the issue is what happens to the land his community says it has called home for generations.

Kamunde is among 133 Chandavai residents who have filed a case over LR No.

13061, the parcel at the centre of the dispute. The residents have raised concerns about displacement, resettlement and compensation.

They say the disputed area includes homes, farms, livestock areas, mosques, shrines and family burial sites. For the residents, these are places tied to their livelihoods, families and community history.

These are claims made by the residents and remain subject to determination by the court.

The Malindi Environment and Land Court has ordered the parties to maintain the existing status quo on LR No. 13061 pending a hearing on October 14, 2026. The order came days before the refinery's September 30 groundbreaking.

At the groundbreaking, President William Ruto addressed concerns surrounding land and the livelihoods of people living around the develop-

ment.

His assurance was specific: "Land matters will be handled lawfully and fairly. Environmental and social impacts will be assessed rigorously." He also said safeguards would be enforced during construction and operation.

For Aidarus, the months ahead will show whether the catering business he has in mind can become a reality. The workers he hopes to serve are still to come, and so is the market he hopes to build around them.

For Kamunde, the next step is the court process over LR No. 13061.

Construction has begun. What the refinery ultimately means for Lamu will become clearer as the project takes shape and the court process unfolds.



President William Ruto, Nigerian industrialist Aliko Dangote and African leaders broke ground on the KSh2.2 trillion (\$16B) Dangote East Africa Petroleum Refinery in Lamu

AI During her visit, Reese focused on menstrual health and the need for sustainable products that can keep girls in school while also creating income opportunities

From menstrual health to AI: Kenya keynote tour puts youth voices at the centre

BY Elizabeth Angira

@themtkenyatimes

By Elizabeth Angira

Some girls miss school, and it has nothing to do with lack of interest in education. Sometimes the reason is something as natural as a monthly period.

This reality came out strongly during the 2026 Kenya Keynote Tour, where educators, entrepreneurs, health professionals, creatives and humanitarian advocates from Kenya and the United States visited schools and communities to engage young people.

Each visitor brought a different skill, but the message was largely the same. Young people need practical support, opportunities, mentorship and safe spaces where they can find their voices and shape their futures.

A period should not end a girl's education

For Justine Reese, founder of Empowered Voice, empowering young people means giving them the confidence and tools to speak for themselves and solve the problems they face every day.

During her visit, Reese focused on menstrual health and the need for sustainable products that can keep girls in school while also creating income opportunities.

"If a girl cannot stay in school simply because of something that happens to her every month, this is a problem," she said.

She introduced menstrual cups and reusable pads, but stressed that the programme is about more than handing out products. It is also exploring how young people can learn to make reusable sanitary products themselves, turning menstrual health into a chance to gain skills and start small businesses.

Reese said the initiative is

working with local people in Kisii and Nairobi. One of the enterprises involved is Ahadi Reusable Menstrual Pads, in Nairobi.

According to Reese, she began making reusable pads after seeing how hard it was for girls around her to afford menstrual products.

"She knew that she could not stay in school, and she saw other girls around her," Reese said.

Reese believes the same approach can work in schools and prisons, where women and girls also struggle to access hygiene products.

She recalled meeting a woman in prison who said she could not afford diapers and sometimes had to make them herself or wait for donations.

Rather than depending only on donations, Reese would like to provide textiles and training so that women can make reusable products for their own use and even sell them.

"We feel that a period should not end a girl's education. It should end a sentence," she said.

Local action to keep girls in school

Local organisations working directly with communities are also taking up the issue.

Dominic Obadiah, a humanitarian diplomat and founder of Civility Voice Diplomat, said his organisation supports girls with sanitary pads and also deals with another need closely tied to menstrual hygiene: clean water. It is providing water tanks to communities and schools so that girls can keep themselves clean.

For Obadiah, keeping girls in school takes more than encouraging them to attend class. It means removing the practical barriers they meet once they get there.

Sanitary pads together with reliable clean water can make school a much safer and more

comfortable place for girls during their periods.

These efforts show a wider understanding of menstrual health: dignity, education, sanitation and economic opportunity are all connected.

Creativity as a pathway to opportunity

The tour brought together people from many professions, yet their experiences pointed to one thing: young people need chances to discover and grow their talents.

Diane Strand from California said the tour strengthened her belief in the power of creativity.

"I am all about the arts and bringing creativity to everything that you do in life, in business, because that's what provides our solutions when we have challenges that we need to overcome," she said.

Watching Kenyan students sing, dance and share their dreams showed her how creativity can help young people step out of their comfort zones.

She was especially encouraged by a project that brought students together to write books. Supported by Top Talent International, the project hopes to see the students' work published and, possibly, reach readers beyond Kenya.

For Strand, creativity is not only about art. It is also about taking the next step even when you are not sure how things will turn out.

Giving young authors a voice

Leslie Lattimore-Lorefield from Washington, D.C. described her time in Kenya as life-changing. A mother of 12 who served in the military for almost three decades, she said she came expecting to inspire Kenyan children, but ended up being inspired by them. She was impressed by how eager they were to learn and

how seriously they thought about their futures.

She runs Girl Organize That Life, a business through which she works with high-achieving women and young women aged 18 to 23.

Her experience in Kenya, she said, reminded her how important it is to invest in young people and build partnerships that continue after the tour ends.

Falling reading, habits were also a major concern. With children surrounded by digital content, participants urged students to keep finding ways to engage with books. One participant said reading is still a valuable source of knowledge, but young people should not feel pressured to read everything at once.

"If you don't like to read or that's not your favorite place, that's fine. Take a little bit, take baby steps, but find the knowledge within each page," she said.

Technology can also help keep stories alive. Reese said she uses audiobooks to reach people who cannot read. A young author's family or friends may not be able to read a printed book, but they can listen to an audiobook, which makes the author's story reach more people.

Education in the age of AI

Artificial intelligence was another big topic, especially how it is changing education.

Dennis Janoya, an educator with more than 37 years of experience, said AI should not be seen only as a threat to teachers or students. He began as a mathematics teacher and now develops maths courses for middle and high school students. In his view, AI can support personalised learning. A learner who grasps a concept quickly can move ahead, while one who needs more help can be guided back to topics that need more practice.

Still, he said teachers and parents remain important.

"We have to be the guides and the coaches of how to use AI and use it effectively," he said.

Beyond the classroom: health, confidence and well-being

For Dr Tina Cooper-Smith,



Justine Reese addressing media said that , she would like to provide textiles and training so that women can make reusable products for their own use and even sell them. | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

a gynaecologist and fertility doctor from the United States, education should go beyond exam results. Young people also need to understand their bodies, relationships and emotional wellbeing, said the founder of the Alive2Thrive Method. She described health as a mix of physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing.

She was struck by the Kenyan students she met, who were curious and eager to learn and remained closely connected to their communities. But she warned that as the world moves deeper into the information age and AI grows quickly, society must not lose human connection.

"We need to bring back the joy of living, the connection to our bodies, to each other," she said.

Cooper-Smith also called for age-appropriate conversations on sexuality, bodily autonomy, relationships and reproductive health.

She encouraged young people to know that their bodies belong to them, and that consent and respect must always be at the centre of relationships.

"No is a complete sentence," she said.



Dominic Obadiah, a humanitarian diplomat and founder of Civility Voice Diplomat, said his organisation supports girls with sanitary pads | Photo: Elizabeth Angira

She added that talking about delaying sex and talking about contraception do not contradict each other. Young people need accurate information and the freedom to make informed decisions about their bodies and futures.

Small steps, big possibilities

A sanitary pad can keep a girl in school. A water tank gives her a safe place to stay clean and keep her dignity. A reusable pad can become a business. A book gives a young writer a voice, and an audiobook carries that story to someone who cannot read. A computer opens new doors for a student. A conversation about consent helps a young person understand their rights. And used responsibly, AI can help teachers support learners with different needs.

For local advocates like Dominic Obadiah and visitors like Justine Reese, the goal is the same, to remove the everyday barriers that stop young people, especially girls, from learning, taking part and reaching their full potential.

Land By any measure, it was a remarkable statement from a sitting head of state: a direct challenge to the property rights of a class of landowners whose titles, he implied, may not have been acquired legitimately

Ruto puts Coast landlords on notice over squatter harassment

BY James Mwangi
@themkenyatimes

President William Ruto warned wealthy landowners at the Coast yesterday to stop harassing squatters or face losing their land claims, issuing the warning as he handed over 5,000 title deeds to residents at the Mama Ngina Waterfront in Mombasa on the seventh day of a coast-wide tour.

The warning was direct and deliberately personal. Ruto told landowners they would be required to produce valid ownership documents or risk losing their claims entirely,

while simultaneously telling squatters to stay put regardless of pressure being applied against them. “You wealthy, arrogant people — you cannot harass citizens who are living as squatters while you trouble them with titles you obtained through illegitimate means,” Ruto said, in remarks he delivered in Swahili before a crowd that responded with sustained applause. He added that his government would not be blackmailed on the matter and that residents would not be removed from land they currently occupy. “The government of Kenya cannot be blackmailed. I have told them — come, let us sit

down, I will give you money, but those citizens will not leave their farms.”

By any measure, it was a remarkable statement from a sitting head of state: a direct challenge to the property rights of a class of landowners whose titles, he implied, may not have been acquired legitimately in the first place. It was also a statement delivered with one eye fixed firmly on August 2027.

The Coast has one of the most complex and emotionally charged land histories in Kenya. Colonial-era alienations, absentee landlords holding vast tracts of coastal land under documents whose



President William Ruto

origins have long been disputed, and generations of families living as squatters on land their grandparents farmed — these are not new grievances. They are old wounds that successive governments have acknowledged, studied, commissioned reports on and largely failed to resolve. The fact that Ruto is now moving with visible urgency, pledging 300,000 title deeds across the Coast region and personally confronting landlords from a public platform in Mombasa, tells its own story about where the political pressure points lie as the election cycle begins to assert itself.

The arithmetic of Coast politics is not complicated. The region comprises six counties — Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, Tana River, Lamu and Taita Taveta — whose combined electoral weight is significant but whose political allegiances have historically been fluid, shaped less by party loyalty than by the perception of which administration is most likely to deliver on land, devolution and the enduring question of coastal marginalisation. Ruto’s Kenya Kwanza administration performed credibly at the Coast in the 2022 election, but the political environment has shifted since then. The cost of living, the economic pressures felt acutely in coastal communities, and the lingering question of whether promises made during campaigns ever translate into lived improvement — these are the currents running beneath the surface as candidates and coalitions begin positioning themselves.

Land is the issue that cuts deepest. At the Mama Ngina Waterfront ceremony, Ruto was not simply distributing pieces of paper. He was making a statement about whose side the state is on, and that statement was calibrated with precision for a Coast audience that has heard government assurances about land before and waited a long time to see them mean anything concrete. By directing squatters to remain on the land they occupy, by questioning the legitimacy of certain title deeds and by framing the government’s position in terms of standing with the poor against the powerful, Ruto was speaking a political language that resonates with a constituency that has felt consistently overlooked. Mombasa Governor Abdulswamad Nassir, who has positioned himself as an influential voice in Coast politics ahead of 2027, stood alongside the president and offered his own endorsement of the land distribution exercise. “On matters of land, every person will leave with what is theirs — that is why we decided to organise this work in this way,” Nassir said. His presence alongside Ruto carried political significance beyond ceremony. The governor commands real influence in Mombasa and his public alignment with the president’s land agenda is not a detail that opposition strategists are likely to overlook.

The deeper question is whether the title deed offensive represents a structural shift in how the state approaches Coast land issues or whether

it is a campaign-season intervention whose momentum will dissipate once the ballots have been counted. Kenya’s history offers reason for scepticism. Title deed ceremonies have featured in multiple election cycles. The communities that received them have not always found that ownership on paper translated into security on the ground, particularly when disputes continued after the cameras departed.

What is different this time, or what Ruto’s administration is working to project as different, is the tone. The president did not merely distribute title deeds. He directly confronted the class of people whose interests have historically been protected by the state, named their behaviour as harassment and told them explicitly that the government would not defend them. Whether the legal and administrative machinery behind that rhetorical commitment proves equal to the political promise it represents will matter enormously — both to the communities concerned and to the electoral calculation that underlies the entire exercise.

Ruto was due to conclude his week-long Coast tour on Saturday with a visit to Lamu County, the final stop in a regional tour that has served simultaneously as a governing exercise and a campaign opening statement. The distinction, as Kenya moves deeper into its pre-election year, is becoming increasingly difficult to draw.



My most beautiful mother...👩🏻❤️🔥



My most beautiful mother, my world from the start.

I need no wealth from this world at all,
My happiness comes from her prayers when I fall.
As long as my mother is here in this life,
I am rich beyond measure, blessed with her love.

There is love and light within her eyes,
One look from her, and all my pain subsides.
No love in all the world can compare,
To my most beautiful mother, beyond compare.

The traces of many years are in her hair,
The calluses of hard work are on her hands.
Every day of her life was spent for me,
My most beautiful mother, who gave all she had to me.

Whenever I fall, she stays right by my side,
One word from her can heal the pain I hide.
When she says, “My child,” spring blooms in my heart,

The beauty of this world will someday fade,
Years will pass, and youthful beauty will fade away.
But a mother’s love will never cease,
My most beautiful mother, my eternal peace.

O my Allah, protect her every day,
Let laughter always brighten her face.
I could never find a love equal to hers,
My most beautiful mother, the greatest gift on Earth.

Xolboyev Mashrab
Uzbekistan



Some of us have only You.
Dear God, I hope in You and trust You.
I believe that all Your deeds have a purpose, even when we do not understand them.
Whatever is meant for us will come to us, and no one can stop it.

I trust You.
What is meant for me, You will definitely give me, even if it takes time.
Trust and hard work never fail forever.

Dear God,

Dear God, some of us have only You.
We pray to You for what we need. You are our only hope and our divine strength.
You are my strength, my wealth, and my everything.

I do not put my hope in others; I only need Your mercy.
I believe that whatever is meant for me will surely come to me at the right time.

Everyone who puts their hope in You finds strength to face the future.
May Your mercy and guidance always be with us.

___G.YasminSirajudheen
Secondary grade teacher Melmalayanur block Villupuram dt

The God Within



Then why wander so far
searching for what already lives
in the temple of your heart?

The Bhagavad Gita reminds us:
“The self is the friend of the self,
and the self is also its enemy.”
So, when the world feels empty,
turn inward,not away,
seek the Divine
in the stillness of your own being.

For the hand that can lift you
may sometimes be your own,
the voice that can heal you
may rise from within,
and the light you seek in heavens
may already be glowing
behind your own heart.

So, when you feel
you have only you,
remember,
you are never truly alone.

For within you dwells the One
who has never left you,
the silent God,
the eternal friend,
the Light within the light.

Nandini Anandkumar
Educator,Writer,Motivator

Dear God,
Some of us have only You,
when every borrowed shoulder fades,
and every familiar voice grows distant,
You remain,
quietly holding what we cannot say.

With You, no mask is needed,
no rehearsed smile,
no careful words,
no fear of being misunderstood.
We can pour out our brokenness
without a single hesitation,
for You listen
without judging the scars beneath our skin.

The deepest communion
is not always spoken in prayer,
sometimes it is a silent meeting
between the soul and the Infinite,
where tears become prayers
and silence becomes sacred speech.

They say, “God is within you.”



Real heroes aren’t
always on the screen,
Nor do they dance to make us scream.
Lights and cameras chase them not;
Their deeds speak louder than the noise.

Invisible in everyday struggles,
They offer care, love, and kindness,
Never seeking the spotlight,
Never waiting for applause.

Real heroes are all around us—
Some stand at borders protecting us,
Some serve proudly in uniform,
Some work tirelessly every day.

Teachers guide us towards the light,
Parents nurture us with love,
And countless hearts serve in silence,
Showing us what true pride means.

You, too, can be a real hero—
Not through fame, but through your deeds.
Think, dream, serve, and choose your path;
Write your own destiny with courage.

— Viji . T
Ghs, Kvpudur
Namakkal
Tamilnadu
India

Beyond the spotlight

There is always a way



The next day, it gathered sticks without delay,
And taught me, There is always a way.’

When one door closes, don’t lose heart,
When one path ends, make a new start.
If tiny creatures can find their way,
Why can’t you and I, blessed six senses say,
‘There is always a way!’

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

I watched some ants moving in a line,
I blocked their path with a stick of mine.
They took a U-turn without delay,
And taught me, ‘There is always a way.’

I watched a bird from my balcony,
A strong wind destroyed its home so suddenly.



Whenever the heart breaks,
the whole world becomes dark.
Concentration becomes weak.
The next step becomes unclear.
Everything turns blank.
Healing is very important
to come out of such moments.
Healing brings strength
to overcome a broken heart.
Whenever people are hurt by words,
humiliated, or face failure,
remaining silent and patient
is a great strength.
One day, that silence

will reveal its true power.
It will make others realize
the pain caused by their words and actions.
Silence is powerful.

When the mind and intellect remain calm,
thoughts rise to a higher level.
Face every challenge with positivity.
See everything with a positive mindset.
Move forward in a new way.

Life is a bicycle.
Ride the journey of life manually.
Whatever happens in life,
whether it is a goal or a consequence,
both must be balanced
and managed by oneself.

The journey of life
can never be a smooth path.
It is filled with potholes, pits,
hills, mountains, and rivers.
Crossing all of them
and reaching the destination
is the true beauty of life.

K.Mohana , BT Asst, PUMS kovakkulam, karur (Dis),Tamilnadu, INDIA.

Meru Mikinduri stage, the main bus stage, Makaburini and Thimangiri have been identified as areas of particular concern

New police boss maps Meru hotspots and puts criminals on notice

Officers target early morning mugging zones and illicit brew networks as Imenti North’s new commander moves to reclaim the streets

BY Brian Gitonga
@themtkenyentimes

Police in Imenti North have intensified patrols across parts of Meru Town identified as mugging hotspots, deploying officers at the specific hours when criminals are most likely to strike as part of a coordinated crackdown on petty crime.

Hassan Bashir, the newly appointed Imenti North Sub-County Police Commander, said the operation brings together officers from the petty crime unit, the anti-crime team and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations. Speaking at a press briefing at Meru Police Station yesterday, Bashir said police had mapped the areas

most frequently reported by residents and traders and established clear patterns in how and when attacks occur.

Mikinduri stage, the main bus stage, Makaburini and Thimangiri have been identified as areas of particular concern. “After sitting down with my officers, we established that these thieves normally operate in the early morning, between 5am and 6am,” Bashir said.

The attacks, he added, do not follow a daily pattern but intensify on market days, when larger numbers of people enter the town. Gakoromone Market — one of the largest in Imenti North — draws traders and customers from across the region three times a week, and those arriving before daylight have been among the

most frequent targets. “Since I sat down with my officers, we have managed to reduce the number of these attacks,” Bashir said.

No mugging incidents have been reported since the beginning of the week, which the commander attributed to increased officer presence on the ground and a clearer understanding of both the locations and the timing of attacks. Muggers have primarily targeted passengers as they alight from vehicles in the early morning hours, though similar incidents had previously been recorded in the evenings before police stepped up their presence.

Officers have also profiled several youths suspected of involvement in the crimes, including individuals with

previous convictions for similar offences. Bashir said some repeat offenders had returned to criminal activity after their release, prompting police to intensify surveillance in areas where they were believed to be operating. “We have profiled several youths known for these offences, some of whom have previous convictions,” he said.

Beyond petty crime, the new commander has turned his attention to illicit alcohol. Parts of Majengo and Nthimbiri are under active scrutiny, with officers investigating both the production and supply of illegal brews in the area. “We have mapped some places around Majengo and Nthimbiri and are following up to establish whether the illicit brew is being produced



The New Imenti North Sub County Police Commander, Hassan Bashir Addresses the Press | Photo: Brian Gitonga

there or brought in from elsewhere,” Bashir said. Police are also profiling individuals suspected of involvement in second-generation alcoholic drinks as part of the same operation.

Bashir said anyone found to be involved in either petty crime or illicit alcohol would be arrested and prosecuted, and that operations across Imenti North would continue.

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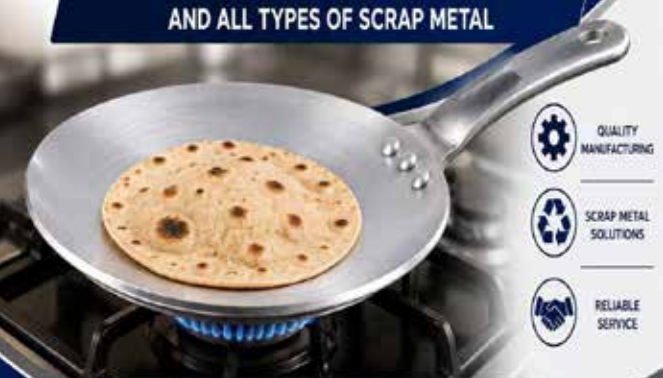
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Society & Culture For some women, that pressure carries an additional cruelty. There are women who want children deeply and cannot have them

A woman is more than a womb

The question society keeps asking women — and why it needs to stop

BY Collins Kibet

@themtkenyatimes

There is a question that follows many women through their adult lives with a persistence that no career achievement, academic distinction or personal milestone seems to silence. It arrives at family gatherings, in offices, across social media and in conversations that begin with something else entirely. “When are you having children?” For countless women, it is not experienced as casual curiosity. It lands as a verdict — a reminder that regardless of what she has built or become, society has already decided what a woman’s life is supposed to look like.

The assumption embedded in that question is rarely examined. Motherhood, in the framework many societies still operate within, is not simply one possible path among many. It is the destination. Marriage leads to it. Womanhood is completed by it. A woman who arrives at a certain age without children may find that the questions, which began gently enough, gradually harden into something closer to judgement. Relatives, neighbours and colleagues feel licensed to comment on a private circumstance that belongs entirely to the woman herself. What should be a personal matter becomes a public audit.

For some women, that pressure carries an additional cruelty. There are women who want children deeply and cannot have them. Infertility and reproductive challenges are medical realities that affect individuals and couples in ways that are rarely straightforward. Yet rather than compassion, such women may encounter blame, gossip and social marginalisation — treated as though they have failed at a duty rather than faced a difficulty. The emotional weight of that experience, compounded by public scrutiny, can be devastating.



A woman

Others carry stories that the people asking questions will never know. Financial instability, health challenges, the demands of caring for ageing relatives, the pursuit of education or the deliberate decision to establish professional foundations before considering parenthood — these are all legitimate circumstances that rarely feature in the social arithmetic applied to women of a certain age. Society tends to see only the absence of a child. It rarely pauses to consider what is actually present in that woman’s life.

And then there are women who have simply decided that motherhood is not what they want. That decision can be difficult for some to understand, but comprehension is not a prerequisite for respect. A woman who chooses a child-free life is not broken, selfish or incomplete. She has made a decision about her own existence, and that decision deserves the same dignity extended to any other personal choice.

What makes the pressure around motherhood particularly revealing is what it exposes about how society constructs the idea of womanhood itself. Women are routinely expected to occupy multiple roles simultaneously — devoted daughter, supportive wife, present mother, accom-

plished professional, engaged community member — and to perform each without visible strain. When motherhood is then positioned as the definitive proof of a life well lived, every other achievement is implicitly ranked below it. The woman who has spent years educating hundreds of children, the one who built a business and created employment, the journalist who gave voice to the voiceless, the researcher whose work changed lives — are their contributions genuinely diminished because they did not give birth? The suggestion is absurd, yet it is the logical conclusion of valuing women primarily through their reproductive choices.

The same principle deserves to be applied to women who are mothers. Motherhood is one dimension of a woman’s identity, not the sum of it. A mother remains an individual with ambitions, opinions, talents and a life that extends beyond her children. Society should be as willing to see the whole person in a mother as it should be in a woman without children.

The conversation, therefore, needs to change — not to diminish the importance of families or to suggest that motherhood is anything less than the profound undertaking it is. Raising a child requires patience, sacrifice, financial

commitment and emotional reserves that most people underestimate until they are called upon. Mothers deserve recognition and support. But appreciation for motherhood is a fundamentally different thing from making it compulsory evidence of a woman’s worth.

Economic realities also demand acknowledgement. Responsible parenthood requires resources — food, healthcare, education, stability. In an environment where many young people struggle to meet basic living costs and secure reliable employment, decisions about if and when to have children involve calculations that older social expectations were not designed to accommodate. Pressuring people into parenthood without regard for their circumstances does not strengthen families. It creates hardship.

What is needed is not a cam-

paign against motherhood. It is a wider and more honest recognition that women build meaningful lives in different ways, that personal circumstances are more complex than social expectations allow for and that a woman’s worth was never something that needed to be earned through reproduction.

A woman is a complete human being before she becomes a mother. She remains one if she never does. Her value is not created in a delivery room and it does not expire in its absence. The measure of her life is the life she has lived, the people she has reached and the person she has chosen to become.

Perhaps the more useful question — the one society has been slow to ask — is not whether a woman has met the expectations placed upon her, but whether she has been given the freedom and the opportunity to build something that is genuinely hers.




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By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor Odhiambo

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In Kenya today, roughly one in three citizens lives below the national poverty line, while extreme poverty claims have pushed the country toward the higher ranks of global deprivation even as GDP has expanded at averages near five percent in recent years. The richest 125 individuals hold more wealth than some 43 million of their compatriots combined. Food insecurity has surged by millions. These are not abstract numbers; they are the daily arithmetic of empty plates, deferred school fees, and clinics without medicine. Nevertheless, the Constitution of 2010 proclaims socio-economic rights food, housing, health, education as justiciable claims of human dignity. Here lies the central, damning fact: markets that should deliver those rights remain riddled with concentration, cartels, and barriers that function as an invisible tax on the poor. Competition law was meant to dismantle such cages. Instead, it has too often performed an elegant, underpowered dance around them.

This is no accident of history. Colonial commerce carved Kenya into protected enclaves for settler capital and metropolitan monopolies. Independence inherited and, in places, amplified state-owned dominance and political patronage networks that treated entire sectors sugar, cement, energy, transport as private fiefdoms rather than public trusts. The neoliberal turn of the 1980s and 1990s promised liberalization; what arrived was often liberalization for the already powerful. The Competition Act of 2010, replacing the earlier 1989 statute, and the subsequent birth of the Competition Authority of Kenya in 2011 were supposed to mark a rupture. The Act's objects are explicit and ambitious: enhance the welfare of the Kenyan people by promoting effective competition,



Gilded cages and paper tigers

protecting consumers, increasing efficiency, and aligning with international best practice. In theory, this is a human-rights instrument. Affordable bread is the right to food. Competitive cement is the right to housing. Fair access to telecoms and transport is participation in the modern economy. Market power that extracts supra-competitive prices is not mere inefficiency; it is the systematic denial of constitutional dignity.

Nevertheless, the irony is corrosive. The same Republic that elevated socio-economic rights to constitutional status continues to tolerate a product-market regulation environment ranked among the most restrictive in comparable economies. State-owned enterprises still distort competitive sectors. Barriers to entry remain thick in professional services, energy, transport, and agriculture. Cartels those quiet conspiracies of price-fixing and output restriction have been documented to inflate prices by 20 to 25 percent. In the steel sector, the Authority imposed penalties totaling hundreds of millions of shillings for coordinated price-fixing and output limits; the same sector feeds the cost of every bag of cement and every affordable-housing unit the government claims to champion. Paint manufacturers were fined for similar coordination.

Retail chains have been pursued for abuse of buyer power that starves suppliers and small producers of cash flow. Consumer complaints handled by the Authority jumped more than a third in a recent year, reaching over nine hundred. Penalties of 1.44 billion shillings were levied across

steel, retail, and finance. Consumer savings in paints and cement exceeded 900 million shillings; recoveries for SMEs reached tens of millions. These are not trivial interventions. They prove the machinery can work. But they also reveal the scale of the shortfall. A few hundred million in fines against firms whose annual turnovers run into billions is a slap with a velvet glove. Investigations drag. Dawn raids remain selective. Concurrent jurisdiction with sector regulators too often produces turf hesitation rather than coordinated assault. Public procurement constitutionally required to be fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective still leaks value through concentration and influence. The result is a structural transfer of wealth from the many to the few, dressed in the language of free enterprise. Growth becomes extractive rather than inclusive. The link between rising national output and falling poverty has weakened precisely because the competitive process that should diffuse gains remains choked.

Consider the lived correlation. A mother in Kibera or a farmer in Kitui pays more for iron sheets, cooking oil, or mobile data because dominant firms or coordinated sellers face insufficient discipline. That extra cost is not neutral; it is the difference between protein on the table and starch alone, between a child remaining in school and early exit into precarious work. Competition law that treats such outcomes as secondary "efficiency" questions rather than primary rights violations has inverted its moral priority. Economic justice is

not a residual dividend of competitive markets; it is the constitutional reason those markets must be kept competitive. When market power concentrates, it concentrates political voice, regulatory capture, and the capacity to shape the very rules meant to constrain it. The paper tiger of under-resourced enforcement then becomes complicit in the gilded cage.

History teaches that half-measures entrench the very distortions they claim to cure. Post-independence Kenya watched state monopolies calcify into inefficiencies that private cartels later mimicked. The 2010 constitutional moment offered a chance to re-anchor economic policy in human dignity. Competition law should have been the sharp edge of that re-anchoring an instrument that treats excessive concentration as presumptively hostile to the right to an adequate standard of living. Instead, advocacy often remains polite, exemptions proliferate under public-interest rhetoric that can mask private advantage, and structural remedies lag behind behavioral fines. The Authority's own caseload shows manufacturing, agriculture, ICT, and retail as recurring theatres of abuse. Buyer-power provisions, a progressive Kenyan innovation, still struggle against entrenched retail and insurance practices that delay payments and dictate terms to the weak.

This is not a call for romantic socialism or the dismantling of legitimate scale. It is a categorical demand that competition policy be treated as a frontline human-rights mechanism.

Parliament must strengthen the Act where gaps remain particularly around digital platforms, algorithmic collusion, and the cumulative effects of successive mergers that slowly strangle contestability. The Competition Authority must be resourced and insulated to pursue structural interventions with the same vigor it applies to settlements. Sector regulators must stop treating competition as an optional overlay. The judiciary must read competition decisions through the lens of Articles 27, 43, and 46 of the Constitution, recognizing that market foreclosure can be a form of discrimination against the poor. Civil society and consumer groups must refuse the quietism that treats cartels as technicalities rather than moral outrages. Business associations that still function as cartel incubators must be named and dismantled. Citizens themselves must treat every unexplained price spike in essentials as a rights claim, not merely a market fluctuation.

The deeper insight is this: competition law without a human-rights core becomes managerial tinkering. Human rights without competitive markets become empty aspirations. Kenya's tragedy is that both exist on paper while the lived economy continues to ration dignity according to market power. The steel that should roof affordable houses is marked up by collusion. The milk that should nourish children is filtered through concentrated retail power. The data that should connect the young entrepreneur is priced by residual dominance. Each instance is a small theft of constitutional promise. Accumulate them, and you have the architecture of economic injustice.

There is nothing inevitable about this. Other jurisdictions have shown that determined enforcement, transparent merger control, and public-interest tests that actually prioritize employment and consumer welfare can bend concentrated markets toward broader flourishing. Kenya has the legal skeleton. What it lacks is the political and institutional will to give that skeleton muscle and nerve. Until the Competition Authority is allowed and required to roar rather than whisper, until Parliament treats market structure as a constitutional question, and until the powerful accept that their excess is measured not only in profits but in the dignity denied to others, economic justice will remain a mirage shimmering above a landscape of gilded cages. The paper tiger must either grow real teeth or confess that it was never meant to protect the many. History, and the Constitution, will judge which choice is made.

The writer is a social commentator

Education The first of these concerns how schools explain their decisions. One of the biggest frustrations parents experience is sudden policy changes made without explanation

Beyond academic grades: Why parents stay in schools that build trust

How transparency, early intervention and celebrating every child drive parental loyalty far beyond exam results

BY Ashford Kimani
@themkenyatomes

Many schools mistakenly believe parents choose and remain loyal to institutions purely because of examination results. While academic performance matters, parents today are looking well beyond grades. They want schools that communicate clearly, demonstrate purpose, identify problems early and genuinely value their children as individuals.

Parental loyalty is built when families feel emotionally connected to a school community. It grows when schools become transparent, intentional and proactive in their engagement with learners and parents alike. Among the strongest drivers of that loyalty are five interconnected principles: explaining the reasons behind school decisions, focusing on academic achievement, showing learner improvement, identifying struggling learners early and publicly celebrating students.

The first of these concerns how schools explain their decisions. One of the biggest frustrations parents experience is sudden policy changes made without explanation. Shifts in fee structures, academic programmes, discipline procedures or timetables can trigger resistance when communication is poor. Parents do not like feeling dictated to. They want to understand the thinking behind decisions that affect their children. Even when they disagree with a policy, they are far more likely to cooperate if the school explains its rationale openly and respectfully.

When a school introduces tighter gadget regulations, new reporting times, curriculum adjustments or changes in assessment structures, parents expect clarity. They want to know why the decision was necessary, what problem it



Education

seeks to solve and how it benefits learners. Schools that fail to explain themselves create room for rumour, suspicion and misinformation. In many institutions, parents piece together information from students or social media because official communication lacks depth. Good leadership understands that communication is not simply about issuing directives — it is about building understanding and trust. This becomes especially important during periods of transition or crisis. Schools that explain themselves clearly retain credibility and loyalty.

Academic results remain central to that trust. Regardless of how warm or welcoming a school may feel, parents ultimately expect educational value. They want assurance that their financial sacrifices are translating into meaningful outcomes and that the school takes teaching seriously, monitors performance and pursues excellence consistently. Modern parents, however, increasingly appreciate schools that nurture creativity, communication skills, leadership, innovation and critical thinking alongside grades. Strong schools create a culture of achievement where learners are encouraged to excel in academics, sports, arts, music, science and debate. At the same time, schools must avoid the trap of pursuing grades at the expense of learner wellbeing. Institutions that overemphasise rankings while

neglecting emotional health eventually produce burnout, anxiety and dissatisfied families. Parents are drawn to schools that balance academic seriousness with humanity — producing children who are not only high-performing but also confident, disciplined and socially responsible.

Equally powerful is the ability to show parents how their child is improving over time. A learner may not be the top student in class, but visible progress reassures parents that the school is making a meaningful difference. Unfortunately, some institutions focus excessively on comparing learners against one another rather than tracking individual growth. This discourages both parents and students, particularly those who start from weaker academic foundations. A child who improves in reading fluency, confidence, discipline or participation deserves recognition even if they are not yet among the highest achievers. Schools that document growth effectively help parents appreciate the educational journey rather than obsessing over final grades alone. Regular feedback also enables parents to support learning at home, and showing improvement requires intentional assessment systems, quality record-keeping and teachers who genuinely know their learners individually.

Nothing frustrates parents more than discovering prob-

lems too late. Some schools ignore struggling learners until examination results expose serious weaknesses or only raise concerns after behaviour has significantly deteriorated. Strong schools identify warning signs early — whether academic, emotional, social or disciplinary — because early intervention makes a tremendous difference. Parents appreciate schools that approach such situations with empathy and professionalism rather than blame. When a learner struggles, schools should communicate clearly with parents, explain their observations, suggest interventions and provide realistic support plans, which may in-

clude remedial programmes, counselling, mentorship or differentiated instruction. Early intervention communicates care. It signals that the school is attentive and invested in every child, not only high performers.

Finally, recognition carries enormous emotional power. Parents love seeing their children appreciated and acknowledged, and celebrating students creates pride, motivation and a sense of belonging. Whether through assemblies, newsletters, prize-giving ceremonies, certificates or classroom recognition, appreciation strengthens the bond between families and schools. Crucially, celebration should

not be limited to academic stars alone. Schools should recognise kindness, leadership, resilience, creativity, improvement, teamwork and service. When schools celebrate diverse strengths, more learners feel valued, and parents appreciate institutions that see the whole child rather than focusing narrowly on examination rankings. Recognition builds confidence and reinforces positive behaviour. It also tells every family that the school notices effort and growth.

Parental loyalty, ultimately, grows where schools combine transparency, academic seriousness, learner support and genuine appreciation. Families remain committed to institutions where children are challenged, guided and celebrated. In today's competitive education environment, parents are not simply buying education — they are seeking partnership, trust, growth and belonging. Schools that understand this build communities, not merely enrolment numbers.

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South Sudan The question matters more urgently now because the country is approaching its scheduled general election on 22 December 2026

Garang's ghost: What South Sudan does with its liberation ideals

As the transitional government dissolves and elections approach, the question is not whether John Garang will be remembered — but whether his principles will survive



BY Dennis Wendo

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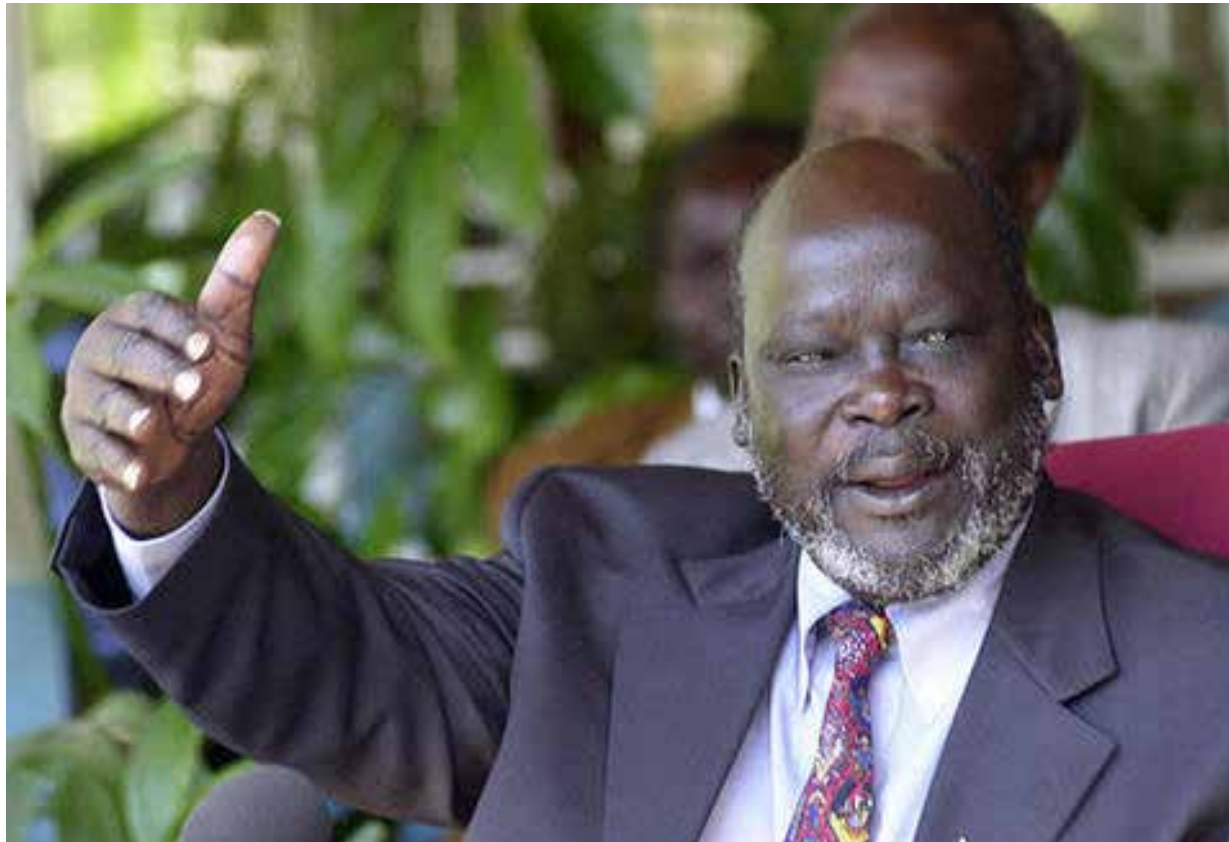
As the transitional government dissolves and elections approach, the question is not whether John Garang will be remembered — but whether his principles will survive

By Dennis Wendo

The dissolution of South Sudan's transitional government has closed another difficult chapter in a country that has known very few easy ones. It has also brought renewed attention to those who served within that administration and, more importantly, to the political ideas that have shaped South Sudan since the liberation struggle first gave them form.

Among those now departing office is Captain Mabior Garang de Mabior, who served as Minister of Environment and Forestry before the transitional cabinet was dissolved. His ministerial exit would, under ordinary circumstances, attract little more than passing notice. But Mabior is the son of the late John Garang de Mabior — founding leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and one of the most consequential figures in the modern political history of the region. That connection makes his departure from government something more than a routine reshuffle. It raises, again, a question that South Sudan has never quite managed to answer: what has become of the vision in whose name so much was sacrificed?

The question matters more urgently now because the country is approaching its scheduled general election on 22 December 2026. The National Elections Commission has confirmed the date and begun preparations for voter registration and related electoral processes. Another defining moment is arriving for a country that has seen several such moments come and go without the transformation they promised.



The late John Garang de Mabior

John Garang's New Sudan vision was not primarily about geography or statehood. It was about transforming a political system that had excluded vast sections of society for generations. It emphasised equality, democratic governance, human rights, political pluralism and equitable development. His argument, pursued across decades of armed struggle and political negotiation, was that capturing power was not the point. The point was what you did with it — whether government delivered services, restored dignity and answered to the people it claimed to represent.

South Sudan achieved independence in 2011, fulfilling an aspiration that had defined a generation. But independence was never meant to be the destination. It was meant to create the conditions in which citizens could build a state that actually served them. The years since have demonstrated, painfully, how wide the gap between that ambition and the reality has grown. Political instability, conflict, mass displacement and protracted transitional arrangements have consumed the space

that institution-building requires. The country arrives at December's election carrying the weight of that history.

An election, by itself, cannot resolve it. The more consequential question is what political culture emerges from the process. Whether citizens develop greater confidence in public institutions. Whether political competition learns to accommodate diversity rather than deepen the divisions that have already cost so much. Whether elected bodies provide genuine accountability. Whether public resources are managed for the benefit of communities across the country rather than for the benefit of those who control them.

These are not abstract governance questions. They are the practical content of what the Garang legacy actually means — or should mean.

Mabior's former portfolio offers an unexpected angle on that legacy. Environmental protection may seem distant from the debates of the liberation era, but it connects directly to the question of what independence means in the lives of ordinary people. South Sudan holds

extraordinary natural wealth: forests, wetlands, agricultural land and resources whose management will determine the quality of life available to its citizens for generations. A farmer whose land is protected from degradation, a community shielded from preventable flooding, a young person who finds meaningful work in a sustainable economy — each is experiencing, in concrete terms, what responsible government looks like. That, too, is part of what Garang argued government should be for.

Mabior cannot carry the weight of that legacy alone, nor should he be expected to. John Garang's legacy does not belong to his family or exclusively to the political movement with which his name is associated. A national legacy becomes genuinely meaningful only when its principles extend beyond individuals and become embedded in institutions, in public policy and in the expectations of citizens themselves. The real test is not whether the Garang name endures in South Sudanese political life — it will — but whether the principles behind it remain alive

in the country's institutions once the generation that lived the liberation struggle has passed from the scene.

The danger, as December approaches, is precisely that detachment. Not that John Garang will be forgotten. History will not permit that. The greater risk is that the ideals associated with his political vision — equality, inclusion, accountability, dignity — gradually become ceremonial rather than operational. Slogans invoked on anniversaries but absent from the daily conduct of government.

South Sudan therefore faces a specific opportunity in December: not simply to hold an election but to begin rebuilding a democratic culture capable of outlasting the election itself. Political competition will produce winners and losers. That is its nature. But the country cannot afford for the pursuit of political victory to consistently outweigh the stability and cohesion of the nation. The measure of whether this election means anything will be whether political differences can be managed peacefully, whether institutions can mediate competing interests without violence and whether citizens can participate without fear.

For Mabior and his generation, the end of this ministerial chapter is, perhaps, not an ending at all. They inherited the memory of a liberation struggle. They now carry the harder responsibility of building the state that independence was supposed to make possible.

That responsibility is considerably larger than preserving a family name. It is about preserving an idea — that government should serve citizens, that diversity is a strength rather than a threat, that natural resources belong to present and future generations alike, that justice and equality should be more than words on a founding document.

The ideals of the liberation era were forged in a different context. South Sudan has since taken its own path. But the principles remain relevant, and the gap between what was promised and what has been built remains wide. December offers a chance to begin closing it. What the country needs is not merely another election. It needs a stronger democratic culture when the voting is done.

That is the unfinished inheritance. And it belongs to everyone.

Dennis Wendo is a governance and social policy commentator.

Politics The contradiction becomes even more uncomfortable when examined against public expenditure on international benchmarking and institutional exposure

The Kenyan paradox: How political elitism and social stratification are mortgaging the ambitions of future generations

When political connections command greater recognition than competence, and locally acquired knowledge is sacrificed at the altar of privilege, a nation gradually loses faith in the very people upon whom its future depends



BY Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo

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A nation does not impoverish itself only when it loses money. It also impoverishes itself when it fails to recognise its brightest minds, disregards the sacrifices of its educated generation and allows privilege to stand where competence should prevail. There is something profoundly troubling about the direction Kenya's development journey is taking. Beneath the country's ambitious economic declarations, expanding institutions of higher learning and persistent promises of opportunity lies a painful contradiction that deserves an honest national conversation.

Kenya is producing educated young people, experienced professionals, researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs, yet the society they are expected to build increasingly appears unable to recognise, accommodate or adequately utilise their intellectual and practical contributions. The tragedy is not necessarily a shortage of knowledge. It is the growing disconnect between knowledge, opportunity, recognition and the exercise of power.

At the centre of this contradiction lies an entrenched culture of political elitism and social stratification, where access to influence can sometimes matter more than demonstrated competence. Political proximity, economic privilege and established networks have increasingly become important currencies in accessing opportunities, institutional recognition and decision-making spaces. For many ordinary Kenyans, however, the journey from education to meaningful employment, professional advancement and economic independence remains an exhausting



struggle. The result is a society in which the promise of meritocracy increasingly collides with the realities of privilege.

Consider the young Kenyan who spends years in university, often supported by parents who sacrifice their savings, borrow money or surrender opportunities of their own to finance an education they believe will secure a better future for their children. Upon graduation, that young person enters a labour market where qualifications do not necessarily translate into employment, and professional competence does not automatically create opportunity. Some remain unemployed; others accept positions unrelated to their training, while many abandon their original ambi-

tions altogether. What makes this situation particularly painful is that society continues to demand excellence from a generation to which it has failed to provide sufficient avenues for expressing that excellence.

Equally disturbing is the treatment of experience. Across Kenya are individuals who have spent decades acquiring practical knowledge in agriculture, administration, engineering, education, business management and community development. Their expertise has been forged through years of responsibility, experimentation, failure and achievement. Yet institutional systems can sometimes treat their experience as inferior to formal credentials, even where their demonstrated competence is

unquestionable. This is not an argument against academic qualifications, which remain indispensable in many professions. It is an argument against credentialism becoming a bureaucratic instrument that disregards knowledge already acquired and proven through practice.

The contradiction becomes even more uncomfortable when examined against public expenditure on international benchmarking and institutional exposure. There is nothing inherently wrong with learning from other countries. Indeed, international cooperation and the exchange of knowledge are essential to development. However, when institutions repeatedly spend public resources seeking expertise abroad without clearly demonstrating what they intend to learn, what local capacity already exists and what measurable improvements will follow, legitimate questions arise. Kenya cannot continually finance the search for knowledge while overlooking the professionals, universities, researchers and institutions already equipped to address many of its challenges. Travel is not expertise, observation is not competence, and reports are not development. The ultimate measure of any learning exercise must be what changes after the participants return.

This is where political elitism becomes a national development concern rather than simply a question of fairness. When political visibility overshadows technical ability, public institutions risk becoming less responsive to evidence and more dependent on personal influence. When opportunities are perceived to favour connections over competence, young people begin questioning the value of education, hard work and professional integrity. A society cannot sustainably inspire its next generation while simultaneously creating conditions that make merit appear insufficient.

The consequences extend far beyond the present generation. Young people who lose confidence in the relationship between education and

opportunity may disengage from productive pursuits, seek opportunities beyond the country's borders or abandon aspirations that could otherwise contribute to national transformation. Those who remain may increasingly conclude that success depends less on what one knows or can accomplish and more on whom one knows. Such a perception, if allowed to deepen, threatens institutional trust, social mobility and the country's capacity to retain its intellectual capital. The greatest casualty may ultimately be a generation that inherits diminished confidence in the very institutions established to protect its future.

Kenya must therefore reconsider what it values and rewards. Public appointments should respect professional competence; employers should recognise demonstrated ability alongside academic achievement; universities should connect education more meaningfully to innovation and productive enterprise; and government should establish clear accountability for expenditure undertaken in the name of knowledge acquisition. Recognition of Prior Learning should also become a meaningful pathway for experienced citizens whose competencies deserve formal acknowledgement.

Ultimately, the country must confront an uncomfortable question: what kind of future are we preparing for our children when political privilege can appear more rewarding than intellectual investment? National ambition cannot be sustained through political declarations, impressive delegations or the accumulation of academic certificates alone. It requires institutions that recognise talent wherever it exists and create opportunities for that talent to serve society.

Kenya's greatest untapped resource may not be beneath its soil, within its minerals or in the size of its public expenditure. It may be in the minds of millions of citizens whose potential remains constrained by a system that has yet to appreciate the full value of their contribution.

The future generation deserves more than promises of opportunity. It deserves a country in which knowledge matters, experience counts, hard work has meaning and leadership recognises competence beyond the boundaries of political and social privilege.

"History will not judge Kenya merely by the wealth its privileged accumulated, but by the opportunities it created, the talent it recognised and the future it secured for generations that had no seat at today's table."

SPORTS NEWS

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Sports >> *Leão steps into the No. 7 shirt as Portugal maintain their perfect Nations League start in Copenhagen

Portugal down Denmark 4-2 without Ronaldo

By Andalo Christine Ingutia

Portugal produced a stunning response to one of the most dramatic weeks in their recent football history, defeating Denmark 4-2 at Parken Stadium on Thursday to maintain their perfect start to the UEFA Nations League. But the six-goal thriller was only part of the story.

The night began with Cristiano Ronaldo thousands of miles from the pitch, having abruptly left the national team camp following a reported disagreement over his starting role. It ended with Rafael Leão wearing Ronaldo's famous No. 7 shirt and Portugal celebrating a convincing victory without their captain.

With Ronaldo gone, Leão inherited the number that has become almost synonymous with his absent teammate during two decades of international football. Leão normally wears No. 17, but UEFA competition rules meant the vacant number could not be left unused in the match squad. Fábio Silva moved into No. 17 while Leão stepped into No. 7.

Despite the noise surrounding Ronaldo's departure, Portugal started with purpose. The visitors took the lead after just 13 minutes when João Cancelo combined brilliantly with Gonçalo Ramos before finishing the move to put Portugal ahead. Denmark responded eight minutes later through a moment of individual quality from Mikkell Damsgaard, but Portugal refused to allow the hosts time to settle. Two minutes later, Ramos restored the advantage.

Denmark came out strongly after the break and were rewarded in the 53rd minute when Rasmus Højlund found space behind the Portuguese defence and finished calmly past Diogo Costa — celebrating the goal with Ronaldo's signature "Siuuu" salute. Portugal did not lose their composure. Their midfield began dictating



the game as Denmark struggled to contain the visitors' movement, and in the 67th minute Vitorinha timed his run perfectly to head the ball beyond Schmeichel and restore the lead at 3-2. Denmark pushed forward in search of another equaliser, but the space left behind their defence ultimately proved costly. In the 87th minute, João Félix found the back of the net to make it 4-2 and complete a memorable night for coach Roberto Martínez's side. The victory gave Portugal nine points from three matches and

strengthened their position at the top of Group A4. But despite the result, questions about Ronaldo linger. His departure has created uncertainty around his international future, though Portugal players have stopped short of closing the door on a possible return. Ronaldo's absence was felt throughout the night, even as his teammates demonstrated they could still produce fluid, attacking football without him. For Leão, the occasion carried personal weight. He later described Ronaldo as a childhood idol

and said wearing the shirt held special significance beyond the football. Portugal left Copenhagen with more than three points. They left with a perfect Nations League record and a national-team story that had shifted dramatically in under 48 hours. Whether Ronaldo's departure marks the end of an international era or simply another dramatic chapter in a career defined by them remains unanswered. For now, Portugal's new chapter has opened with a statement.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *Kenyan ace joins continental rally's elite after rival's withdrawal confirms title before Tanzania finale begins

Patel makes history with third African crown

By Martin Weche
Karan Patel etched his name into African motorsport history yesterday, becoming only the fourth driver in the 45-year history of the FIA African Rally Championship to win three or more titles after his sole remaining rival withdrew from the season-ending Serengeti Rally of Tanzania before a single competitive stage had been run.

The confirmation came through a statement released by Arrow Racing Team on Friday night, announcing that Aakif Virani and co-driver Zahir Shah had taken the strategic decision to withdraw from the final round in Morogoro rather than contest what had become a near-impossible points chase. "After a hard-fought season, Arrow Racing Team has taken the strategic decision to consolidate 2nd position in the overall African Rally Championship standings," the team said, offering their congratulations to Patel and his navigator Tauseef Khan.

The withdrawal was, in truth, a formality that simply brought forward the inevitable. Patel needed only to take the start in Tanzania to be crowned champion — the arithmetic had long since shifted decisively in his favour. But the announcement crystallised the achievement before Day 1 even began on Saturday, handing Patel and Khan an unassailable lead heading into the final two days of competition.

It is a third ARC drivers' title for Patel, who now stands alongside three of the most celebrated names in the championship's history. Only Zambian legend Satwant Singh, who dominated the competition across a remarkable span of seasons to claim eight titles, has won more. Patel joins Ivory Coast's Alain Ambrosino and fellow Kenyan Manvir Baryan — each a three-time champion — in a group



Kenya's Karan Patel in action in a past ARC event

of drivers whose consistency at continental level sets them apart from the field. Tauseef Khan is simultaneously confirmed as the 2026 ARC navigators' champion, a title that reflects his own quiet excellence across a grueling season-long campaign.

Patel also claimed the 2022 Kenyan national rally championship, and his progression from domestic champion to three-time continental title-holder with the KCB Racing Team represents one of the more compelling arcs in Kenyan motorsport in recent years. His 2026 campaign, conducted in a Škoda Fabia, demonstrated the kind of controlled aggression that separates championship-winning drivers from those who merely compete at the front.

The Kenyan crew wasted no time signalling their intentions even after the title had been settled. Earlier on Friday, Patel and Tauseef won the 2.40km SS00 Mkwawa Qualifying Stage in Morogoro, clocking 1 minute 58.1 seconds in their Škoda Fa-

bia to beat Tanzania champion Ahmed Huwel, who finished 0.6 seconds behind in a Toyota Yaris GR Rally2, with Manveer Birdi a further 1.1 seconds back in third. Under ARC regulations, the qualifying stage winner selects his road position for Day 1. Patel opted to start fifth, slotting in directly behind Huwel.

The rally proper, which runs until Sunday, begins Saturday in the Morogoro region with crews facing demanding stages across terrain that has long tested the endurance of both man and machine. Uganda's Oscar Ntambi heads the Day 1 start order at 09:00, followed by 2025 champion Yasin Nasser and Birdi. Ntambi had already secured the ARC2 category title without driving a single stage after his Rwandan rival Christian Kanan-gire failed to enter the finale.

Virani, meanwhile, departs the 2026 season with second place in the overall standings and the ARC Masters title — awarded to competitors aged 50 and above — secured at the penultimate

round in Rwanda. It is a meaningful haul for a driver and team who pushed Patel harder than any other crew this season.

The Serengeti Rally, running from 2 to 4 October, closes out an ARC season that began with several title contenders and progressively narrowed until only Patel and Virani remained with a realistic chance. Saturday's stages will now be contested without a championship at stake, giving Patel and Tauseef the freedom to race on their own terms as the sport in eastern Africa celebrates a new chapter in a storied rivalry between Kenya's finest.

SS00 Mkwawa Qualifying — Top 3:

1. Karan Patel / Tauseef Khan (KEN — Škoda Fabia) 1:58.1
2. Ahmed Huwel / Roheet Solanki (TZA — Toyota Yaris GR) 1:58.7 +0.6s
3. Manveer Birdi / Zubayr Piredina (TZA — Škoda Fabia Evo) 1:59.8 +1.7s

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SPORTS AS THEY HAPPEN



When the teacher breaks: TSC's quiet battle for mental health in the classroom



By: Wanjohi. P. Mugambi
@themkenyatimes



Worth Noting:

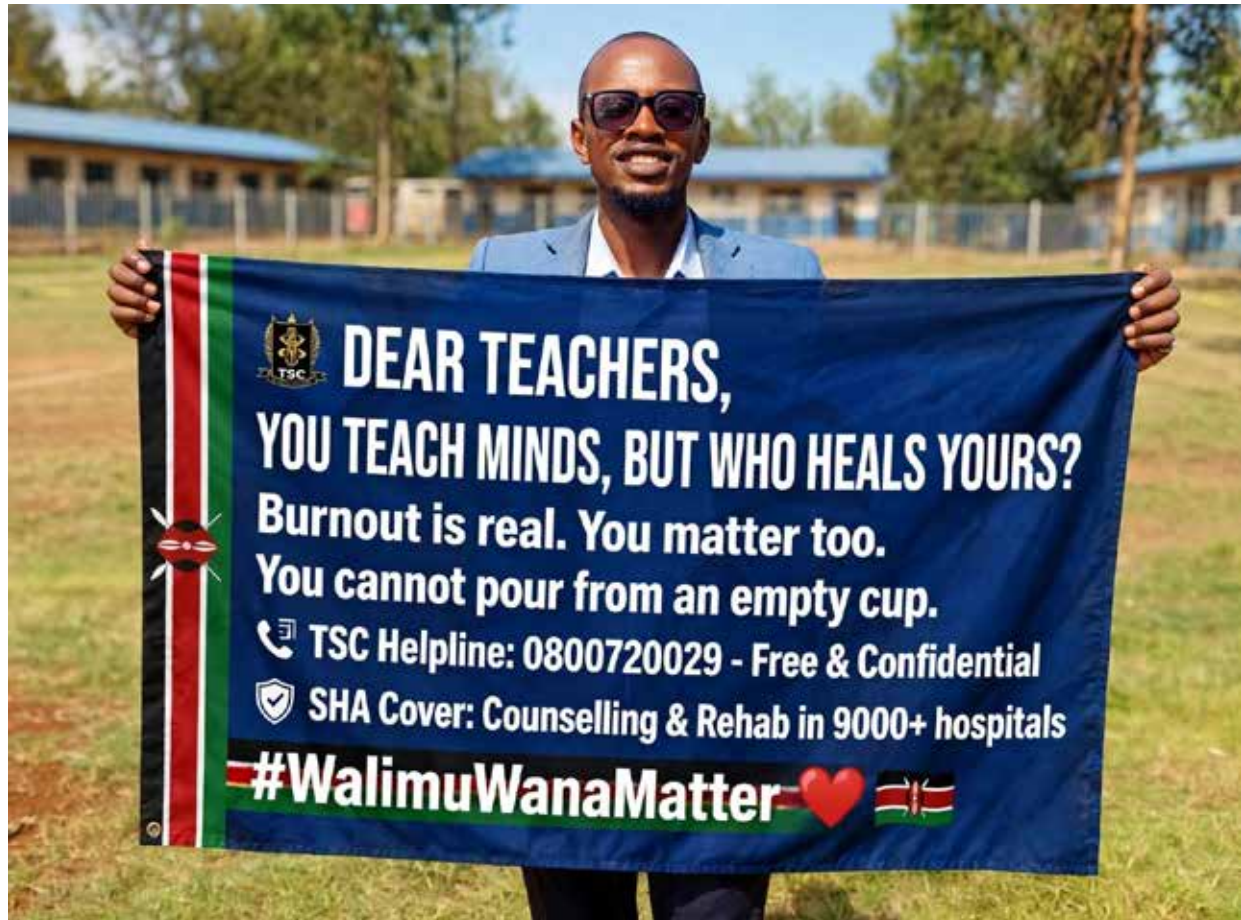
- The symptoms are familiar to anyone who has watched a colleague deteriorate under the load: persistent fatigue, irritability, withdrawal from students and fellow teachers, insomnia, a creeping loss of interest in the work. A teacher in that condition struggles to plan lessons with any creativity, to show patience with a slow learner or to manage a classroom with the steadiness that young people need. The result is not merely poor academic performance but an atmosphere of tension that learners absorb and carry with them.
- The TSC's most deliberate response to this crisis has been the creation of a dedicated Wellness Unit within the Commission.

A teacher cannot give what they do not have. When the person at the front of the classroom is emotionally broken, anxious or quietly defeated, the quality of learning breaks down with them. It is a truth that Kenya's education sector has been slow to confront, but one that the Teachers Service Commission is increasingly being forced to acknowledge.

Teaching in Kenya today is more demanding than at any point in recent memory. Classrooms are overcrowded. The Competency Based Curriculum has reshaped expectations without always providing the tools to meet them. The Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development system piles administrative demands onto already stretched professionals. Teachers are simultaneously expected to produce strong mean scores, counsel troubled students, maintain discipline and serve as role models — all while managing financial pressures, family responsibilities and, in many cases, the strain of separation from loved ones due to transfers. The cumulative weight of these pressures does not simply disappear at the school gate. It accumulates quietly, and when it is not addressed, it surfaces as burnout, anxiety and clinical depression.

The symptoms are familiar to anyone who has watched a colleague deteriorate under the load: persistent fatigue, irritability, withdrawal from students and fellow teachers, insomnia, a creeping loss of interest in the work. A teacher in that condition struggles to plan lessons with any creativity, to show patience with a slow learner or to manage a classroom with the steadiness that young people need. The result is not merely poor academic performance but an atmosphere of tension that learners absorb and carry with them.

The TSC's most deliberate response to this crisis has been the creation of a dedicated Wellness Unit within the Commission. The unit exists specifically to address the psychosocial needs of teachers, providing access to professional counsellors who offer confidential support across a range of challenges — grief, marital difficulties, financial stress and work-related burnout among them. Confidentiality matters enormously here. Many teachers will not seek



Wanjohi P. Mugambi holds a banner

help openly for fear of stigmatisation, of being seen as unable to cope in a profession that demands resilience. A discreet channel changes that calculation and encourages earlier intervention, before a manageable problem becomes a crisis.

The Commission has also moved to embed mental health within the medical cover available to teachers. Under the current Minet medical scheme, teachers are entitled to access psychiatric consultations, counselling sessions and treatment for diagnosed mental health conditions at accredited facilities. That may sound unremarkable, but it represents a significant shift. For years, mental illness occupied an invisible category — a condition that did not quite qualify for the same medical attention as a broken bone or a failing organ. Bringing it formally within the scope of medical cover reduces stigma, reduces cost and, critically, signals that the institution takes the matter seriously.

Awareness programmes have accompanied these structural changes. The TSC organises wellness clinics,

mental health workshops and capacity-building sessions across counties, reaching both classroom teachers and school heads. The training for headteachers and principals is particularly important. School leadership shapes the daily conditions under which teachers work, and leaders who understand the connection between wellbeing and performance are less likely to pile unnecessary duties on staff or resort to intimidation as a management tool. Changing the culture at that level has consequences that ripple downward through an entire school.

The Commission has also addressed some of the root causes of teacher stress through policy. Recruiting additional teachers to ease overcrowding, reviewing the delocalization policy to allow teachers to work closer to their families, and automating administrative processes all reduce the structural pressures that erode mental health over time. A teacher who is not overworked and who is close to their support network is a more resilient one.

Yet significant gaps remain. Teach-

ers in remote areas — in parts of Turkana, North Eastern and other underserved regions — are often unaware that these wellness services exist or how to access them. The number of counsellors within the system is still small relative to the more than 350,000 teachers the Commission employs. Stigma has not disappeared; in some communities, mental illness is still framed as a spiritual failing rather than a medical condition. More decentralised counselling infrastructure at sub-county level is needed, along with sustained outreach through radio, social media and teacher forums.

None of this diminishes what has been built. The TSC has made genuine and meaningful progress. But the work is incomplete, and the stakes are too high for it to remain so. The education of an entire generation rests, in part, on whether the people holding that responsibility are being properly supported. Care for the teacher, and the teacher can care for the nation.